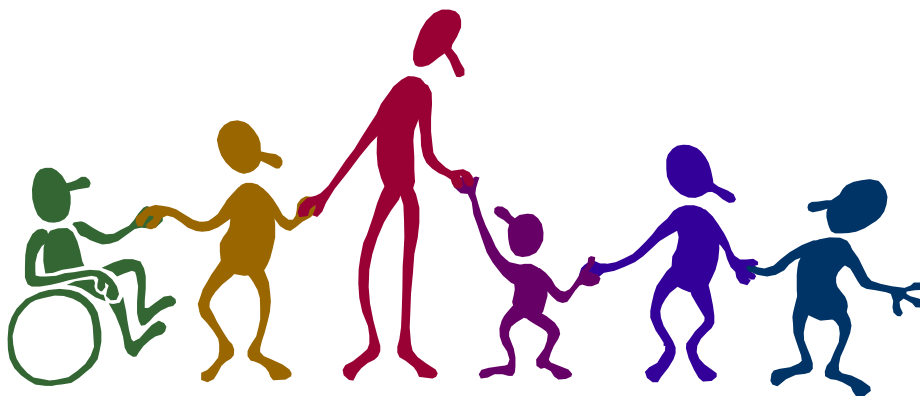


# ***Return to Social Work: Learning Materials***



## **MODULE 5: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

## Contents

Introduction to the module.....	3
Learning outcomes .....	4
Defining equality and diversity.....	6
The legal framework.....	8
Human rights.....	8
Equality Act 2010 .....	9
Social work values and practice .....	11
Understanding power .....	12
Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice .....	14
Useful information: Good practice checklist.....	14
Anti-oppressive practice .....	14
Anti-discriminatory practice .....	16
Thompson's personal-cultural-social (PCS) model .....	16
Working with diversity .....	18
Considering culture and ethnicity .....	20
Cultural competence .....	22
Asylum seeking children.....	24
Module summary .....	26
Module self-assessment exercise .....	26
Final reflection and further development needs.....	28
References .....	29
Learning activities: Suggested answers .....	31
Learning activity: Applying the Equality Act 2010 .....	31
Module self-assessment exercise: Answer sheet.....	32
Appendix 1: Diversity check .....	34
Appendix 2: Identifying differences worksheet .....	35
Appendix 3: Diversity dimensions worksheet .....	36

## Introduction to the module

Equality and diversity is another theme that is integral to the return to social work materials and Module 5 provides the opportunity to focus specifically on issues associated with equality and diversity.

In social work professional practice we work with some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised individuals, families and communities, often at the most difficult points in their lives. This module reminds you of the importance of power and structural inequalities that exist in wider society.

Social workers need to be aware of power dynamics and be proactive in addressing these through anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive approaches. Working with diversity and becoming a culturally competent practitioner are core tools in the social worker's toolkit and this module revisits, refreshes and updates knowledge in line with current legislation and evidence.

Module 5 contains an overview of the legal framework, social work values and principles of non-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice. It provides some key definitions and helps you to reconnect with your own values and experiences. The activities focus on helping you to think about cultural differences and to develop cultural competence in your practice. Thompson's (2005) Personal-Cultural-Structural (PCS) model is introduced to help build understanding of discrimination within its social context. The Diversity Check is another useful tool to help you assess your own learning around equality and diversity.

The learning outcomes for Module 5 are focused on understanding power and diversity issues, increasing awareness of legislation, rights and risks, and applying learning to develop your social work professional practice. The links to the domains in the PCF will support you in structuring your learning and developing a CPD plan that will help you to ensure the principles and issues set out in this module underpin all of your practice with children, young people and families.

After studying this module you might want to reread the learning outcomes and the links with the PCF before completing the end of module final reflections, as this might support you in identifying ongoing learning needs.



*As you work through this module remember to keep a note of your thoughts, reflections and answers to any of the exercises. You can include these in your social work portfolio as evidence of your continuing professional development (CPD).*

## Learning outcomes

By reading this module and completing the associated reflective exercises and learning activities you should achieve the following outcomes:

- Understand the impact of diverse needs on the experiences and outcomes for individuals receiving social work/social care services.
- Increased awareness of the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics.
- Understand, and apply, the principles of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice, including a sound understanding of cultural competence.
- Understand, and identify, the power relationships and dynamics involved in social work practice, including the impact of diversity on those relationships.
- Recognise risk factors and how these interact with the concept of cultural sensitivity.
- Reflect on and identify further learning or development needs in relation to this module.

## Links to the Professional Capabilities Framework

By working through this module and completing the activities and self-assessment exercise, you will be able to reflect on and further develop your professional capabilities in the following areas at *Social Worker* career level.

### **Domain 1: Professionalism: Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development.**

- *Identify and act on learning needs for CPD, including through supervision*

### **Domain 2: Values & Ethics: Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.**

- *Critically reflect on and manage the influence and impact of own and others' values on professional practice*

**Domain 3: Diversity: Recognise and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice.**

- *Recognise the complexity of identity and diversity of experience, and apply this to practice*
- *Recognise discriminatory practices and develop a range of approaches to appropriately challenge service users, colleagues and senior staff*
- *Critically reflect on and manage the power of your role in your relationship with others*

**Domain 4: Rights Justice & Economic Wellbeing: Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing.**

- *Routinely integrate the principles of and entitlements to social justice, social inclusion and equality, and with support, consider how and when challenge might be needed*
- *Routinely apply the law to protect and advance people's rights and entitlements, identifying and highlighting situations where interpretations of the law are neither proportionate nor fair to promote autonomy and self-determination*
- *Apply the principles and entitlement of human and civil rights to analyse, evaluate and challenge interventions that are unlawful and/or disproportionate*

**Domain 7: Intervention & Skills: Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse.**

- *Recognise and appropriately manage the authority inherent in your position*

As a qualified social worker you should be very familiar with the principles underpinning equality and diversity. However, there have been some significant changes to both law and practice over the last decade, and this module will update and refresh your knowledge and capabilities in this important area.

Before moving on to work through the module, complete the following reflective exercise, and note down your answers to refer back to later.

**Reflective exercise:**

*Think about the terms equality and diversity, and write down your definition for each term. Now consider the following questions:*

- *What are the differences between equality and diversity, and where do they overlap?*
- *What impact can each have on social work practice?*
- *What capabilities do you think you need to work with diverse needs?*

## Defining equality and diversity

The terms equality and diversity are often used interchangeably but while linked, they each have a different focus that is important to understand.

- **Equality** focuses on creating a fairer society, where all individuals can take part in and access the same opportunities. It is underpinned by a legal framework which places statutory duties on individuals, communities and organisations to ensure that no one is disadvantaged as a result of a number of protected characteristics.
- **Diversity** literally means difference, and is concerned with the range and variety of individuals and groups. It is often linked, within social policy, with differences in life chances and social inequalities arising from individual (or group) characteristics.

The identification of difference has both positive and negative effects, and as a social worker returning to practice it is important that you both refresh your understanding of some of the key themes and issues and update your knowledge of the underpinning legal frameworks that shape contemporary social work practice. The following table provides an overview of the differences between the two areas.

Equality	Diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concentrates on issues of discrimination</li><li>• Perceived as an issue for women, ethnic groups, disabled people and homosexual people</li><li>• Focuses on meeting objectives rather than changing cultures</li><li>• Relies on affirmative action</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focuses on maximising potential and making a contribution</li><li>• Encompasses everyone, no one is excluded</li><li>• Focuses on changing culture and valuing difference</li><li>• Does not rely on affirmative action</li></ul>

**Source:** Adapted from Billsberry, 1996.

Equality is largely concerned with opportunity and access, with a particular focus on social justice and ensuring all groups have the same life chances; diversity is focused on supporting needs and potential and is concerned with valuing difference.

There are three dimensions which shape and influence diversity:

1. Dimensions determined by birth – these are aspects of the individual over which they have no control and are born with or into (e.g. sex, race, family culture and religion, sexual orientation, family roles etc.)
2. Dimensions that evolve through a person's life – these are aspects of the individual that grow and develop through life and are dynamic in nature (e.g. gender, spirituality, lifestyle, culture, preferences, relationships etc.)
3. Dimensions influenced by experience – these are experiences the individual has throughout their life that leave an imprint and reshape the individual's world view (e.g. starting school, the birth of a sibling, going to college, moving out of the parental home, the start and end of relationships etc.)

Each individual is influenced by these three areas, and their beliefs, values, culture and needs are shaped by each, both on its own and as the three dimensions interact.

### **Learning activity: Identifying diversity dimensions**

*This exercise is in three parts and is designed to encourage you to think about the three diversity dimensions and the impact they may have on individuals and families.*

1. *Read the following brief case scenario and identify the different diversity factors that are present for the young person and each family member.*

*Mark is a 12-year-old boy with mixed heritage parents. His mother, Anna, is an Italian Roman Catholic and his father, David, is from Israel and is Jewish. David moved to England to study at university, which is where he met Anna. Following graduation the couple were married, they remained together for ten years and are now separated. Since separating from Anna, David has returned to his faith and is encouraging Mark to join the synagogue and learn about Judaism. Anna is keen that Mark is aware of both sides of his heritage but feels that David is being too pushy and this is leading to conflict between the two parents. Mark is very close to both his mother and his father, and while he does want to learn about both his parents' religions, he does not want to take part in either.*

2. *In the additional resources section at the end of this module you will find a table to complete – place each of the factors you identified into the relevant diversity dimension.*

3. *Now consider how these factors are likely to impact on how each family member understands the world and what you would need to consider if you were working with Mark and his family.*

- ✓ For this exercise refer back to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and think about which Articles would support the best outcomes for Mark.

Before you move on to explore the legal framework and approaches to working with diversity it is useful to reflect on how your understanding of equality and diversity links to the definitions provided here.

#### **Reflective exercise:**

*Refer back to your own definition and ideas that you noted down.*

- *How do these compare with the definitions we have provided?*
- *Have you changed how you define these terms as a result of these definitions?*

## **The legal framework**

While equality and diversity in social work practice go beyond what is set out in legislation, it is important to be aware of the legal provisions and protections that underpin work in this complex area.

The issue of power, and its use, is a key consideration in both equality and diversity. Diversity issues may sometimes be more difficult to identify and respond to, but ensuring a fair and equal society is underpinned by a legal framework that you will need to apply to your practice regardless of your particular setting.

## **Human rights**

Human rights are the rights that belong to us all, regardless of individual or group differences. They regulate the relationship between the individual and the state by setting the basic standards expected of public authorities. They were first legally defined by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights following the holocaust at the end of World War II, and were adapted to become the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), to which UK became a signatory in 1951. In 1998 the European Convention became enshrined in UK law in the form of the Human Rights Act.



Human rights cannot be 'taken away', but sometimes they need to 'claimed' or 'fulfilled'. In certain circumstances, however, they can be 'limited' (e.g. deprivation of liberty for committing a crime/mental health). It is also essential to understand that in a liberal society, the punishment for not obeying its rules is deprivation of liberty, but this should not be at the cost of personal security or other basic civil liberties. Module 4: Law considers the Human Rights Act 1998 in more detail and provides a reminder of the key articles.

As a social worker you will be acting on behalf of a public authority, and as such you are bound by the duty to treat people and groups with fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy – the FREDA principles (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2008). These principles should underpin all of your practice, but are particularly in focus when considering working with equality and diversity.

## **Equality Act 2010**

This piece of legislation replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act designed to make the framework simpler, remove inconsistencies and strengthen the various protections. Most of its provisions came into force in October 2010 and April 2011 as a phased implementation process. The Act extended previous equality legislation and introduced a general equality duty across nine protected characteristics.

### **Useful Information: Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics**

- *Age*
- *Disability*
- *Gender reassignment*
- *Marriage and civil partnership*
- *Pregnancy and maternity*
- *Race*
- *Religion or belief*
- *Sex*
- *Sexual orientation*

The Act applies in the context of employment, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the management of premises, associations, and the exercise of public functions.

### Useful information: Understanding terminology

- **Sex:** *an individual's sex is determined biologically – they are male or female as determined by physical characteristics.*
- **Gender:** *is linked to the individual's identity in society, the roles and behaviour, psychological and cultural understanding of what is appropriate and what it means to be male or female.*

Under the Equality Act 2010 the nine protected characteristics cannot lawfully be used as a reason to treat anyone unfairly. The Act also defines treatment considered to be unlawful, which includes:

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic
- **Indirect discrimination:** circumstances or requirements that place a person/group at a disadvantage (where there is no lawful basis for such)
- **Harassment:** engaging in unwanted contact towards another that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment
- **Victimisation:** treating someone less favourably because they have made or intend to make a complaint or allegation, or have given or intend to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination
- **Failing to make reasonable adjustments:** the Act recognises that the environment can create significant barriers and creates a specific duty to make reasonable adjustments – for example the removal of physical barriers or providing extra support – to make sure that a disabled person has the same access and opportunities as a non-disabled person. Failure to make such adjustments is considered to be unlawful treatment.



*More information and guidance about the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights and associated provisions can be found on the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)*

### **Learning activity: Applying the Equality Act 2010**

*Read the following case example.*

*Angela is 11 years old and lives with her parents. She has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user. Angela has very limited verbal communication and is completely dependent upon other people for all her daily living needs. She attends a local comprehensive school where she receives 1:1 support.*

*Now answer the following questions:*

- *Which organisations have a duty towards Angela in this situation?*
- *What would each of these organisations need to consider in meeting its duties towards Angela under the Equality Act 2010?*

✓ You will find the suggested answers to this exercise at the end of this module.

## **Social work values and practice**

Social work is a value-based profession, and one of the core capabilities, at all career levels, is recognising, and where appropriate addressing, personal and professional values and prejudices.

Social workers are humans, and as such are subject to and influenced by the same beliefs, attitudes and behaviours as the rest of society. Discrimination occurs as a result of a particular prejudice, whether this is conscious or unconscious. Being critically reflective and open to, and willing to, challenge is an essential element of being a professional social worker. The PCF (Domain 3: Values and ethics), the HCPC code of conduct, performance and ethics and the TCSW code of ethics all set out the expectation that social workers will seek to critically reflect and where appropriate address and challenge discrimination where it occurs.

As you return to practice, it will be important for you take stock of your own values and prejudices. Identifying your own beliefs in relation to diversity issues is a helpful first step in identifying and refreshing your capabilities and becoming a critically reflective practitioner.

### Reflective exercise:

*Think about your own culture, beliefs and attitudes.*

- *How do these impact on how you work with children and families?*

*Now consider any prejudices you hold and identify any stereotypes and assumptions that you may make as a result.*

- *How could these impact on your decisions and actions?*

### Useful information: Defining prejudice and discrimination

- **Prejudice:** *An attitude or belief (what you think)*  
*A learned attitude towards an individual or group based upon stereotypes and grounded on emotion rather than reason (can be positive but usually used in the negative)*
- **Discrimination:** *An action (what you do)*  
*Unequal treatment of individual(s) or group(s) on the basis of real, or assumed, characteristics*

### Understanding power

An understanding of power and power relationships has been a core component of most social work training programmes for many years. However, if you have been away from practice you may not have had to think about or deal with these types of issues for some time. Refreshing your understanding of power and the key theories that underpin power relationships in social work practice is an important aspect of your return to social work journey.

Equality and diversity are both underpinned by the use of power by individuals, groups and societies. This is not just the statutory powers, as discussed in other modules, which are set out in law, but includes a focus on how individuals and groups exercise control and authority over other individuals and groups as a means of achieving a particular aim or agenda. There are several theories of power that have been developed and a range of different types of power has been identified.

Hassenfeld (1987) applied some of these theories to social work practice and identified four sources of power that social workers have and should remain alert to in their use.

- **Power of expertise** – professional power acquired through professional training, continued development and specialised knowledge
- **Referent power** – individuals defer to a particular social worker because of the strength of their personality or because they have very specialised knowledge in a particular area
- **Legitimate power** – social workers are mandated through legislation, policy, agency duties or organisational procedures to take particular decisions and actions
- **Power of resources** – social workers have a gatekeeping role and they decide who is eligible to receive services.

Within this range of power types, the impact of prejudice and discrimination is potentially far-reaching. As such it is important that you act both with professional integrity and in accordance with professional values and ethics.

The application of a critically reflective approach to your practice, which includes effective use of supervision, will help you to make sure you use your own power appropriately and redistribute it effectively. By working in partnership with children and families, empowering individuals to make informed choices, sharing information, advocating for individuals' rights and facilitating self-directed support where possible, social workers can ensure that the use of their own power, and the awareness of power relationships with those they work with, can be kept in focus.

#### **Learning activity: Types of power**

*Read the following case study.*

*Katy is 23 months old. She was taken into local authority care when she was two months old and has been living with a foster family. Her mother regularly uses drugs and alcohol and has been told that she is not able to prioritise Katy's needs. She has been allowed limited supervised contact with Katy while she has been in care as she has been contesting the care order and children's social care have been looking into other options. Contact with Katy's birth mother has now stopped as a placement order has been made and Katy is in the process of getting to know her intended adoptive parents and will shortly be permanently living with them.*

*The foster mother contacts the office upset that the adoptive mother has been calling Katy by a completely different name while she takes her out on visits and has made it clear that she will not be calling her Katy once she is living in their home.*

*Now consider the following questions:*

- *Who has power in this situation and what types of power are they?*

- *What assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes are likely to impact on this situation?*
- *What type of power would you as a social worker have in this situation?*

## Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice

Social work aims to '*alleviate poverty; liberate vulnerable and oppressed people with the ultimate aim to promote social inclusion*' (International Federation of Social Workers, 2012).

The means by which this is achieved is via approaches such as anti-oppressive practice (AOP) and anti-discriminatory practice (ADP). While linked, these two approaches differ in focus – ADP focuses on tackling or reducing the discrimination faced by individuals from other individuals or organisations/institutions, whereas AOP seeks to tackle discrimination by focusing on the wider problems of discrimination within society itself and how this is perpetuated by social structures and systems (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; Dominelli, 2002).

The following checklist is designed to help you think about your own capabilities and identify any development needs you may have in relation to AOP and ADP. It is not a complete list, but if you are applying good practice principles these are the main things you will need to have in place.

### Useful information: Good practice checklist

- ✓ *You have knowledge of the legal framework underpinning equalities and in relation to the area you are practising in e.g. Children Act 1989, Children and Adoption Act 2002.*
- ✓ *You have an awareness of your personal values and how they impact on practice.*
- ✓ *You are self-aware and reflective, taking a critical approach to your own decision making and open to challenge.*
- ✓ *You are able to examine and question sources of your own power and the ways in which you exercise it in your practice with children and families.*
- ✓ *You are able to own up to, and learn from, your mistakes.*
- ✓ *You practise, and continue to develop, the capabilities (e.g. communication, partnership working etc.) expected of a professional social worker.*
- ✓ *You research areas you are not familiar with and reflect on how what you learn is applied to your practice.*

## Anti-oppressive practice

Anti-oppressive approaches are concerned with the implementation of social justice. They aim to challenge the structure of society, and the use of power, where they are being used to maintain some groups in disadvantaged positions. This is rooted in the notions of improving

the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities and the intrinsic value of a diverse society.

Concepts of power, and how groups use power to achieve their mutual aims, underpin the ideas of oppression and anti-oppressive practice seeks to redistribute power by challenging structures and championing rights.

Oppression is defined by Barker (2003) as:

*'...the social act of placing severe restrictions on an individual, group, or institution. Typically, a government or political organization that is in power places these restrictions formally or covertly on oppressed groups so that they may be exploited and less able to compete with other social groups. The oppressed individual or group is devalued, exploited, and deprived of privileges by the individual or group who has more power' (pp306-307).*

The source of oppression can be either structural (e.g. arising as a result of the way systems and processes operate) or individual (e.g. arising as a result of an individual's prejudice or action). Users of children's social care services are predominately from groups that would be considered to be socially disadvantaged, and as such anti-oppressive practice is an important practice capability for all social workers, as it seeks to counter oppression experienced by individuals or groups. It is based on a specific set of practice values, which include empowerment, partnership and minimal intervention (Parrott, 2010) and links to the code of ethics set out by The College of Social Work (TCSW, 2013) which states that social workers will aim to *'promote social justice and the values of compassion and respect that underpin social work'* (p2).

**Reflective exercise:**

*Think about and note down particular groups that you consider as being disadvantaged in our society.*

*Now consider the following questions:*

- *How are these groups disadvantaged?*
- *What is the impact of that disadvantage?*
- *How do public services and communities add to or challenge this disadvantage?*
- *How could you challenge this disadvantage in your social work practice?*

## Anti-discriminatory practice

Anti-discriminatory practice is at the core of social work values. It is an approach that seeks to reduce, undermine or eliminate discrimination and oppression and remove the barriers that prevent people from accessing services. Payne (2005) defined discrimination as a *'...means of identifying individuals and groups with certain characteristics and treating them less well than people or groups with conventionally valued characteristics'* (p272).

Discrimination can be overt (in the open) or covert (hidden). Overt discrimination is usually more obvious and hence easier to identify; an example would be that a woman is told her career progression will be limited because she has taken a career break to have a child.

Covert discrimination is far more subtle and may involve deliberate acts that are hidden from view but result in less favourable treatment. This type of discrimination is often more difficult to identify and challenge; for example the same woman's career progression is limited but the reason given to her is that other colleagues were performing better, but the period used to assess performance is the same period as her career break. The first example is likely to be received as offensive and discriminatory – it is clear what needs to be challenged. With covert discrimination, it is likely that a whole range of justifications is involved, which would need to be unpicked to be able to challenge the discrimination effectively.

### Reflective exercise:

*Think about a time when you felt discriminated against or disadvantaged by a system, another person or a service. Now consider the following questions:*

- *How did this experience make you feel?*
- *What did you do in response to being discriminated against/disadvantaged?*
- *What impact has this experience had on how you approach similar situations?*

By recognising that discrimination exists, in many different forms, it becomes possible to challenge it when it does occur. Social workers are expected, both as part of their professional codes of ethics and as part of their professional capabilities, to apply anti-discriminatory principles to all elements of their professional practice.

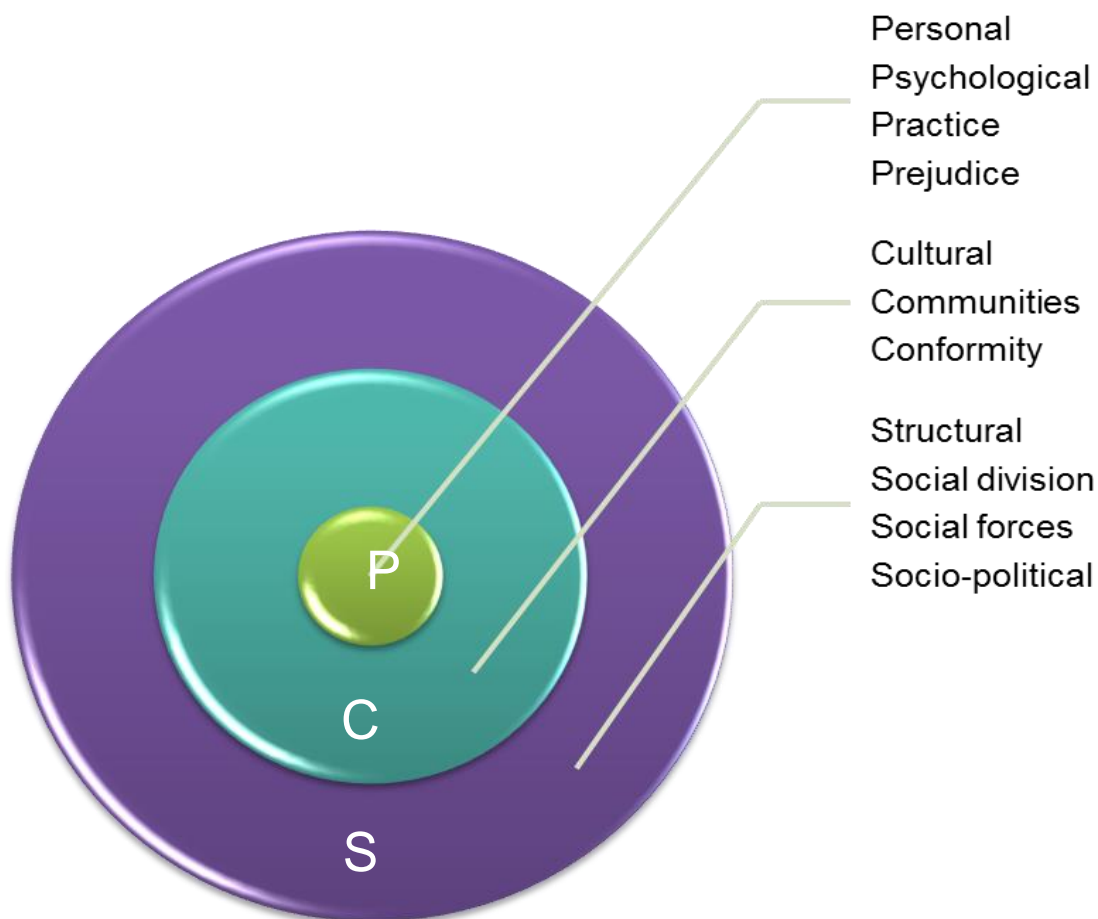
## Thompson's personal–cultural–social (PCS) model

One of the most influential models in social work from which to understand discrimination



and the focus of anti-discriminatory practice is the PCS model. This model, defined by Professor Neil Thompson (2005), links personal experience, beliefs and attitudes with the wider social group, and places it in the overall context of society. It recognises that

discrimination is not just an individual issue, but is also present within cultural and social structures and networks.



In order to understand and analyse discrimination and oppression, you will need to understand the relationship between the individual and different social contexts and consider:

- how these three levels interact
- what the resulting impact is upon both the individual and their immediate social system

- how you can challenge and influence these to improve the outcomes and experience of those affected.

### **Learning activity: Applying the PCS**

*Children with disabilities and their families have particular needs, and research has shown some common themes experienced by families. Read the following summary and consider the information provided within the framework of Thompson's PCS model.*

*Patterns of care for disabled children mirror more general childcare arrangements, with mothers being more likely to take primary responsibility, but with fathers playing an active role in two-parent households. The caring workload remains weighted towards the mothers even where the fathers are unemployed or at home for other reasons. Mothers also play a key role in mediating and negotiating between the child and health and social care services.*

*Parents and carers often find it difficult to get out and about with the disabled child, and activities take far more planning than for families with non-disabled children. Issues such as individual mobility and behaviour and the response of others to the child with a disability can be difficult to manage, and environmental factors such as the availability of accessible transport, inaccessible public areas and expensive admissions to public attractions have all been cited as barriers to social life.*

*Now consider the following questions:*

- *What are the personal, cultural and structural elements that are impacting on the children with disabilities and their families?*
- *How could this understanding inform your assessment or support plan if you were the social worker for a family experiencing these issues?*

## **Working with diversity**

As a social worker practising in today's society it is likely that you will be working with, assessing and supporting children and families from a range of diverse backgrounds. As such you will need to make sure that you are both familiar with the demographics of your practice area and aware of how diversity can impact on both the needs and experience of those you are working with.

Diversity is not just about race, gender or sexual orientation. In its literal sense it means difference, and in our communities there are many factors that make each of us different and individual. The role of values, culture, attitudes and power are all important considerations, and each of these has the potential to disadvantage or negatively affect individuals or groups.

Assumptions and prejudices about particular individuals or groups can lead to their needs and perspectives either not being recognised or being attributed in a preset way. In this context working with diversity is about considering both visible and non-visible differences (which will include factors such as sex, age, background, class, race, disability, personality among others) and taking account of the impact of these in your assessments and interventions. This will include thinking about not only how the individual sees the world, the needs they might have, and how they experience receiving services, but also taking a critical view on your own perspectives and how these impact on your practice.

### **Learning activity: The diversity check**

*In the additional resources section of this module you will find a diversity health check worksheet. Complete the activity and then review your answers.*

*Now consider the following:*

- *Were there any questions in the diversity health check that you found difficult to answer?*
- *Why do you think this was the case?*
- *What development needs do you think you have in relation to working with diversity based on your answers from the diversity health check?*
- *How could you start to address your needs in this area (be specific – tasks, activities, reading, additional training etc.)?*

To work effectively with diversity you will need to consider a wide range of factors and take into account any specific needs the child or their family have as a result. SCIE/NICE recommendations on looked after children and diversity (SCIE/NICE, 2010) stated that social workers must:

- Ensure that core assessments contain an accurate and comprehensive picture of the child or young person's needs relating to their cultural, religious and ethnic identity, and pay particular attention to race, sexual orientation, language, faith and diet.
- Ensure that the review of the care plan reflects the developing nature of the child or young person's cultural, religious and ethnic identity and sexual orientation and how these might change as a child or young person grows and matures

While these recommendations are in relation to looked after children, the principles should be applied across all social work with children and their families.



*More information and all the NICE/SCIE recommendations for working with looked after children are available on the SCIE website at:*  
[www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide40/recommendations/diversity.asp](http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide40/recommendations/diversity.asp)

## **Considering culture and ethnicity**

Culture and ethnicity are core features of an individual's identity and world view, and a child or young person will be heavily influenced by both as they develop and move towards adulthood. Understanding and responding to the potential impacts and specific needs arising from culture and ethnicity is an important aspect of working with diversity, and is commonly called 'cultural competence' in health and social care practice.

Anthropologists Bates and Plog (1990) state that culture is an inherited system of shared beliefs, customs, and behaviours, used by members of society to cope with their world and with one other and transmitted from generation to generation through learning. Storkey (1991) defines ethnicity as all the characteristics which go to make up cultural identity, for example origins, physical appearance, language, family structure, religious belief, politics food, art, music and literature, attitudes towards the body, gender roles, clothing and education.

Cultural characteristics have been shown to have the potential to impact significantly on parenting styles, development milestones, how families respond to the wider community and how they receive services. For example the work of Barn et al (2006) and Thoburn et al (2005) found that while there was no significant difference in the frequency of use of physical punishment between ethnic groups, the way in which punishment is delivered in some cultures has brought some parents into the formal child protection or criminal justice systems. Parents in this group were identified to be more likely to use implements in cases of physical abuse; studies also found that the consequences for these children were more likely to be long lasting.

**Learning activity: Case study:**

*Read the following case study.*

*You are a social worker seconded to work in secondary school. You are confronted by an irate parent of one of the students, who has made it clear that they are unhappy about a recent referral to children's services as a result of them disciplining their 13-year-old daughter, Massey. You made the referral following several attempts to contact the parents to arrange a meeting to discuss bruising on the child's back, noticed by her PE teacher.*

*The child says she was punished because she spoke back/disrespected her parents following an argument with her brother about using her iPod without her permission. Massey says that both she and her brother are regularly beaten with a belt or shoe. Massey's parents believe no one has the right to tell them how to discipline their child and if necessary they will return their children to Sudan to live with their aunt.*

*Now consider the following questions:*

- *What cultural considerations should be taken into account?*
- *Are the children at risk? If yes, what are the risks?*
- *What sort of knowledge might you need to better understand the parents' views?*

It is important to understand the cultural values that often influence motivations behind parental behaviour and actions. This does not mean that you should collude with behaviour that is placing a child's safety at risk, but if you are to effectively support families you will need to consider how they interpret different situations and the norms and beliefs that are influencing actions.

Social workers working in children and family settings will need to become familiar with their local areas and the demographic and diversity make-up of children and families receiving social care services. Service delivery data has shown that children from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are more likely to:

- be supported in private fostering
- enter the country as an accompanied asylum seekers
- suffer as a result of loss, grief and separation as a direct result of parental HIV/AIDS
- be recipients of child protective services
- have complex attachment needs that require skilled detailed assessments.

Children of mixed heritage are the fastest growing ethnic group in the UK. Black children are twice as likely to be a recipient of social services as their white counterparts (DfES, 2006).

For BME children and young people, and their families, a range of needs arises as a result of culture and ethnicity and you will need to ensure that these are considered in your practice. These needs may include:

- Language and communication, which may require access to high quality interpreting and translating support in their preferred language
- Exploration of how religious needs impact on day-to-day existence and functioning
- The core values they hold
- Impact of culture or traditional beliefs
- Previous experience of state intervention
- The impact and experience of racism
- Family structures, roles and responsibilities
- Help-seeking behaviour
- Lifestyle
- Cultural parenting practices.

The impact of these factors on a child's development, welfare and wellbeing mean that a universal, one-size-fits-all approach is not only not a valid way to work, but could also be considered to be oppressive and discriminatory.

**Reflective exercise:**

*Think about examples when you have witnessed or been a recipient of an insensitive or inappropriate cultural response.*

- *How did this experience make you feel?*
- *What can you do personally to ensure that you continue to develop your capabilities in cultural sensitivity?*

**Cultural competence**

Cultural competence sits alongside social work principles such as ethics and values and ADP/AOP. Social workers embracing anti-oppressive practice are expected to engage with individuals in a manner that values their uniqueness, experience, expertise, and self-determination while simultaneously challenging and confronting the features of the society that adversely affect and oppress not only the individual service user but other people who constitute members of the same devalued group (Horner 2009).

Cultural competence is about understanding cultures as being dynamic and containing difference within them. It is concerned with challenging stereotypes and rejects a prescribed cultural understanding in favour of focusing on individual characteristics and diversity dimensions.

### **Learning activity: Culture and parenting**

*Thinking about a particular ethnicity or culture, using the internet or other resource materials, or by asking colleagues or individuals, find out how that culture views the following parenting behaviours and any particular roles or expectations of family or community members in relation to:*

- *discipline*
- *dressing*
- *feeding*
- *gender roles*
- *communication – verbal and non-verbal*

*Now compare this with your own views on the same areas.*

- *What are the differences and similarities between your own culture and the culture you have researched?*
- *How would you make sure what you have found out is applied to your assessments and interventions in future?*

You should check the validity and reliability of any information you source for this activity and remember that each individual and family is unique and may not reflect what you discover. The individual/family is the expert on their own culture and you should always seek to check your understanding with the family concerned.

How families are constituted, the roles, relationships and responsibilities of, and between, individual family members, and how the family unit relates to the wider community structures are all significantly influenced by both culture and ethnicity. In some cultures families are constructed differently from conventional British nuclear family models – what used to be depicted as ‘2.4 children’. Family households can be made up of non-blood related kinship arrangements, (for example, household members who are not biologically related), and rooted in the notion of connectedness, interdependence and collective responsibility. These are core cultural values that are central to some social and family structures, and it is important that these are considered and responded to appropriately, in both the way you approach families and in how you interpret situations and behaviours.

Social workers should not collude with oppressive practices that can be disguised as cultural issues, for example female mutilation or methods of physical punishment, but you should take account of individual and family understandings and experiences. One way to do this is to use resilience or a strengths perspective. By doing so social workers can illuminate how parents draw on culture as a resource in circumstances of adversity, while at the same time not excusing harmful behaviour because a cultural explanation has been given to justify it. For example, sometimes a child's challenging behaviour is misunderstood and linked to the belief that the child is possessed or suffering from a curse. Caregivers may seek traditional therapeutic measures because it is considered to be in the child's best interest and these practices may be alien to practitioners and viewed to be detrimental to the child.

Kohli (2006) suggests that communication and partnership working also can prove to be a challenge, due to lack of trust or fear of state intervention based on previous experiences. The task for the social worker is to establish whether the abusive behaviour is as a result of a different set of values or intent to cause harm. Communication and partnership with parents is considered in more detail in Module 7 of the return to social work materials.

Social workers must challenge culture specific practices that are harmful to children without pathologising all the parents' caregiving practices. In order to become a culturally competent practitioner you will need to demonstrate respect and understanding of service user situations, histories and belief systems and ensure that these are reflected in your practice, including, where appropriate, the willingness to challenge oppressive and discriminatory practices and attitudes.

**Reflective exercise:**

- *How would you rate your own capabilities in relation to working with diversity and being a culturally competent practitioner?*
- *How could you further develop your capabilities in this area?*

***Asylum seeking children***

Working with asylum seeking children or young people can present particular challenges for social workers, and developing cultural competence is an essential ingredient of good practice in these cases.



Recent arrivals will be unfamiliar with family- and community-based services, particularly where socio-economic factors, political instability and violence overshadow intra-familial child maltreatment and effective state interventions into child abuse and neglect.

Professionals can be overwhelmed, disempowered and feel ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of need that these children face.

Social workers should establish and maintain contact with the Border Control case officer responsible for resolving the child's immigration status. For children who are returned to their country of origin, social workers have a responsibility to ensure that the assessment and pathway plan is sufficiently robust to equip the child for their life in their own country. (This only applies to those aged 16+.)

### **Learning activity: Case study**

*Read the following case study:*

*Iqbal is 15 years old and he is from Afghanistan. He came to the attention of services in the UK when he was picked up by the police for criminal damage. During an interview, he stated that he had just arrived into the UK on the back of a lorry, after an 18-month journey from Afghanistan. He fled his home village with his mother after his father and sister were killed by the Taliban, leaving his surviving sister behind. However, during his journey from his home, his mother also died from injuries received at the point they fled the country.*

*There are concerns around Iqbal's mental state, due to reports of suicide attempts, and a referral was also made to children's services, who moved him to a hostel for young people. He was told that there are no available foster placements for him, which left him isolated and unhappy.*

*Now consider the following questions:*

- *What are the various diversity factors and dimensions that are impacting on Iqbal?*
- *What information and knowledge do you need to make sure you consider these diversity issues?*

*Note down your answers; they are evidence of your CPD in Domains 2 and 3 of the PCF.*

Asylum seeking children often experience psychological problems associated with seeking refuge from war torn countries, and language difficulties. They often experience insecurity of not knowing the outcome of the application to reside in the UK. This can lead to mistrust of state representatives, which is likely to include social workers. They are also likely to face a continuing sense of dislocation, isolation, fragmentation and fear of the unknown.

## Module summary

This module has considered the areas of equality and diversity and how these can impact on the experience and outcomes of individuals. As a returning social worker you will need to make sure that the principles and issues set out in this module underpin all of your practice with children, young people and families.

Before you move on to other modules or materials, complete the following self-assessment exercise to check your learning.

## Module self-assessment exercise

Complete the following quiz. You may find it helpful to discuss your answers with a colleague or supervisor if available. Remember to keep a note of your answers and any reflections as part of your ongoing CPD portfolio.

1. What are the two key pieces of legislation that underpin equality and diversity?
2. What are the nine protected characteristics?
3. What are the factors that make up a person's culture?
4. What is cultural competence?
5. What are four types of power as defined by Hassenfeld?
6. What are two of the risks associated with children from BME groups?

When you are happy with your answers refer to the accompanying resource pack to check how many you got right.

### *How did you score?*

**Less than 12 =** Revisit the entire module and complete the relevant exercises and additional reading indicated

**1 -16 =** Revise the relevant sections where you did not answer correctly

**17+ =** Well done! Check any answers that you did not get right and make a note of them. Now review the references and resources and follow up on any areas of interest or professional development needs.

Finally, before you move on, complete the following template to identify any further development needs in relation to this area and identify how your learning relates to your capabilities under the PCF.

**Maximum score = 19 marks**

## Final reflection and further development needs

**Module:** Equality and diversity

**What are the three key areas of learning you have achieved as a result of working through this module?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**This module is linked to the PCF. Write a short reflection about how you think your learning has contributed to your capabilities in each identified domain:**

- Domain 1: Professionalism: Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development.
- Domain 2: Values and Ethics: Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.
- Domain 3: Diversity: Recognise and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice.
- Domain 4: Rights Justice and Economic Wellbeing: Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing.
- Domain 7: Intervention and Skills: Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse.

**What else do you need to know and/or learn to demonstrate your capabilities in this area?**

## References

- Barker, R. (2003) *The social work dictionary* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Barn, R., Ladino, C., and Rogers, B. (2006) *Parenting in Multi-Racial Britain*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Bates, DG. and Plog, F. (1990) *Cultural Anthropology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Billsberry, J. (Ed) (1996) *The Effective Manager: Perspective and Illustrations*. London: Sage Publications.
- Dalrymple, J. and Burke, B. (2006) *Anti-oppressive Practice: Social Care and the Law* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). Buckingham: Open University Publications.
- DfES. (2006) *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*. London: DfES. Available at:  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Care-Matters Green Paper.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Care-Matters%20Green%20Paper.pdf)
- Dominelli, L. (2002) *Anti-Oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hassenfeld, Y. (1987) Power in social work practice. *Social Service Review* 61(3):469-483.
- Horner, N. (2009) *What is Social Work? Context and Perspectives* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Essex: Learning Matters.
- International Federation of Social Work. (2012) *Definition of Social Work*. Available at:  
<http://ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work/>
- Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2008 FREDA Principles.  
EHRC: *Equality Act Starter Kit*. Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-act-guidance/equality-act-starter-kit/>
- Kholi, RKS. (2006) The comfort of strangers: social work practice with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people in the UK. *Child & Family Social Work* 11(1):1-10.
- Parrott, L. (2010) *Values and Ethics in Social Work Practice*. Essex: Learning Matters.
- Payne, M. (2005) *Modern Social Work Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Storkey, E. (1991) *Race, ethnicity and gender*. Open University, Unit 8 of D103, Society and Social Science.
- TCSW. (2013) *Code of Ethics*. Available at:  
[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Members\\_area/TCSW Code of Ethics.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Members_area/TCSW%20Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf)
- Thoburn, J., Chand, A. and Procter, J. (2005) *Child Welfare Services for Minority Ethnic Families: The Research Reviewed*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Thompson, N. (2005) *Anti Discriminatory Practice* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Learning activities: Suggested answers

### Learning activity: Applying the Equality Act 2010

- The Equality Act 2010 applies in the context of employment, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the management of premises, associations, and the exercise of public functions. In this situation it is likely that
  - local authority
  - school
  - health services
  - youth services
  - transport servicesall have a duty towards Angela in this situation, along with other community organisations and service premises.
- Each organisation would need to consider any barriers to services, including physical barriers, and make any reasonable adjustments needed. They would also need to consider the support needed for both Angela and her family, and the impact of any policies or procedures.

## Module self-assessment exercise: Answer sheet

**1. What are the two key pieces of legislation that underpin equality and diversity? (2 marks)**

The Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 are the two underpinning pieces of legislation.

**2. What are the nine protected characteristics? (1 mark for each correct answer)**

- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership.

**3. What are the factors that make up a person's culture? (1 mark)**

Culture is an inherited system of shared beliefs, customs, and behaviours, used by members of society to cope with their world and with one another and transmitted from one generation to generation through learning.

**4. What is cultural competence? (1 mark)**

Cultural competence is about understanding cultures as being dynamic and containing difference within them. It is concerned with challenging stereotypes and rejects a prescribed cultural understanding in favour of focusing on individual characteristics and diversity dimensions.

**5. What are four types of power as defined by Hassenfeld? (1 mark for each type)**

- **Power of expertise** – professional power acquired through professional training, continued development and specialised knowledge.
- **Referent power** – individuals defer to a particular social worker because of the strength of their personality or because they have very specialised knowledge in a particular area.



- **Legitimate power** – social workers are mandated through legislation, policy, agency duties or organisational procedures to take particular decisions and actions.
- **Power of resources** – social workers have a gatekeeping role and they decide who is eligible to receive services.

**6. What are two of the risks associated with children from BME groups? (2 marks)**

Service delivery data has shown that children from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups as being more likely to:

- be supported in private fostering
- enter the country as an accompanied asylum seekers
- suffer as a result of loss, grief and separation as a direct result of parental HIV/AIDS
- be recipients of child protective services
- have complex attachment needs that require skilled, detailed assessments
- children of mixed heritage are the fastest growing ethnic group in the UK
- black children are twice as likely to be a recipient of social services as their white counterparts. (DfES, 2006)

**Maximum score = 19 marks**

## Appendix 1: Diversity check

Question	Answer
What do you understand by the term diversity?	
What are your six most important personal values?	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
If you were asked what your prejudices were, what would you say? What would you say you are doing to manage them?	
What diversities do you recognise in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• society</li> </ul> your work context?  When you discuss diversity with people, how do you do it and what issues make you feel defensive?	
How do you promote diversity in your practice?	
What communities do you identify with?	
How do you demonstrate leadership in support of diversity in your practice context?	

## Appendix 2: Identifying differences worksheet

Personal difference	Cultural difference	Structural difference
Comments:	Comments:	Comments:

### Appendix 3: Diversity dimensions worksheet

<b>Factors shaped by birth</b>	
<b>Factors which evolve</b>	
<b>Factors shaped by experience</b>	