

Anti-Racist Practice in Children's Safeguarding



These cards have been designed for use as a reflective/discussion tool for practitioners and professionals working with children and young people. They aim to promote anti-racist practice in children's safeguarding.

They are designed for use in pairs, teams or small groups, to facilitate discussion and shared learning, but they can also be used individually. Use them how best suits, but we have some suggestions:

The images can be a starting point – what do you think the image is about? What would you expect the messages to be for this issue?

The core messages in the text can be used to reflect on understandings. Do the messages align with your own thinking and practice? Do they align with the practice contexts you work in?

The 'stop and think' sections provide specific examples/questions to focus on for discussion. Reflect on good practice too! Are there other examples?

Finally, are there any challenges presented by or in the messages? What can be changed, what can you do? What can others do? Who is important here?

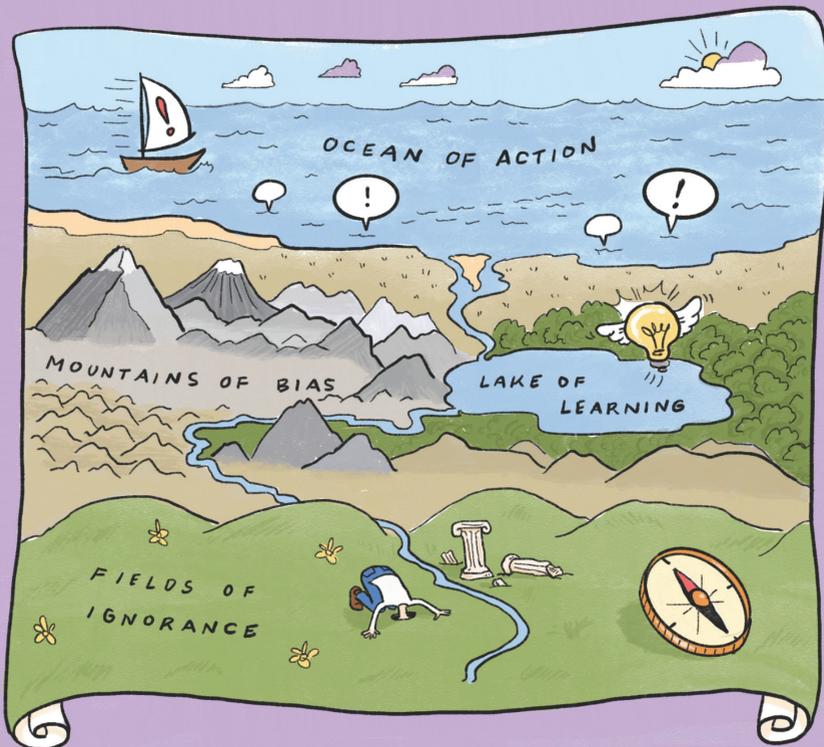
What is the challenge for you? What can you do?



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Illustrations by Laura Sorvala: www.laurasorvala.com
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ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE



Racism means nasty or unfair treatment of someone because of where they come from, their language, history, skin colour, religion or culture.

The families, young people and children that you work with will have experienced racism. This may be as a result of individuals' actions or unfair systems and processes.

Being anti-racist means acknowledging that racism happens. It **means checking your thinking** about how you think about race and racism. It is about acknowledging how you can be biased, and it involves making a commitment to understanding the views you have and changing them.

Anti-racism is also about **action** to make sure people are treated fairly. Being anti-racist is about having a commitment to challenging racism and **speaking up** when you see it and hear it.

Stop and think:

What is your understanding of racism?

How does racism directly, or indirectly impact the children, young people and families you support?

How can you reflect your personal commitment anti-racism practice in your everyday life?

What actions can you commit to doing now?

What is the challenge for you? What can you do?



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CLASS

NATIONALITY

GENDER
IDENTITY

RACE

SEXUAL
ORIENTATION

ABLED/
DISABLED

ETHNICITY

AGE

INTERSECTIONALITY



'Intersectionality' is a term that can be used to help us think about discrimination, inequality and disadvantage.

Intersectionality asks us to think about how every person has a combination of different social identities (like class background, religion, sex and gender identity, race, sexual orientation, if they are disabled, and more). These could mean they are marginalised or treated unfairly, and we must take all these into account and consider how those we work with and care for will have their own unique experiences of discrimination through how these experiences combine.

For example: a young person of Bangladeshi descent, who is female and disabled they might experience racism, sexism and ableism. In combination there is increased discrimination and disadvantage.

Stop and think:

What are your social characteristics and how have these influenced your life experiences?

What are the interrelated (intersecting) experiences of the children, young people and families you work with and care for? Why can these affect them and in what different ways?

What is the challenge for you? What can you do?



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I SHOULD SAY
SOMETHING...

WHAT IF I SAY
THE WRONG THING?

I DON'T WANT TO
OFFEND ANYONE...

BUT I DON'T
KNOW ENOUGH
ABOUT RACISM...

WHAT
SHOULD
I DO?

WHAT IF
THEY THINK
I'M RACIST?!



COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS



Conversations about race and racism between practitioners and with children, young people and families may feel uncomfortable.

It can be helpful to reflect on **why** we find these conversations uncomfortable and what concerns and anxieties we may have about discussing race and racism. Creating a reflective culture in teams and organisations to ensure conversations are normalised and professionals feel supported to have courageous and at times uncomfortable conversations is important.

It is important to consider how **not** talking about race and racism can feel and might affect children, young people, families and those you work with.

It is important to talk about race, racism and discrimination because it helps to give you the fullest understanding of the lives of the young people and families you are working with and caring for. This also helps you to understand the broader context of safeguarding concerns, risk and care and support needs.

A graphic with three thought bubbles. A red arrow points to the first bubble. The bubbles are pink, purple, and yellow.

Stop and think:

What stops you from asking about race and talking about racism?

What might be the impact of silence and **not** talking about race and racism, for the children, young people and families you work with, and you and your colleagues?

How do you and those professionals and carers you work with ensure any anxiety to talk about racism does not compromise the responsibility you have to address it?

What is the challenge for you? What can you do?

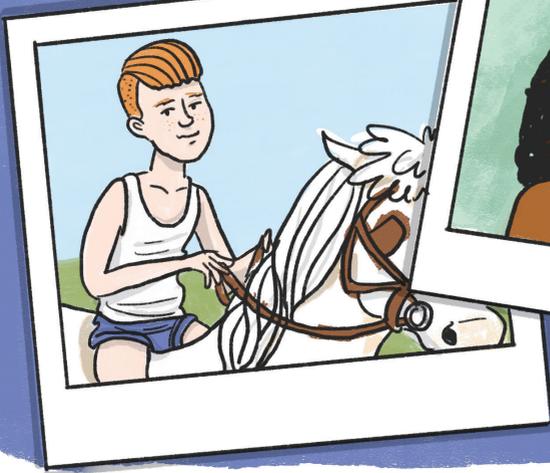


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WHAT IS THE
PROBLEM?



CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES



We know that there are common assumptions and stereotypes that can be made about children and young people, and about particular groups of children and young people. These views can also be underpinned by racist assumptions.

We know from research that some groups can be viewed as 'streetwise', as less in need of care and support, or more as 'a risk' than being 'at risk' of violence, abuse and exploitation.

Some examples of stereotypes:

- A black teenaged boy will be involved in county lines.
- Only girls are sexually exploited.
- Gypsy Traveller children will be involved in criminal behaviour.
- A group of young people hanging out in the street are anti-social.
- Black girls are loud and less vulnerable.
- All young people living in local authority care are sexually active.

It is important that you reflect on your own views and beliefs about children and young people and how this may impact on your every-day practice and actions.



Stop and think:

What are the assumptions that you may make about different groups of minoritized children and young people?

Can you think of an example when assumptions you have made about a young person or young people have been challenged by a young person you have worked with? What did you learn and has it changed anything about how you work with or care for young people?

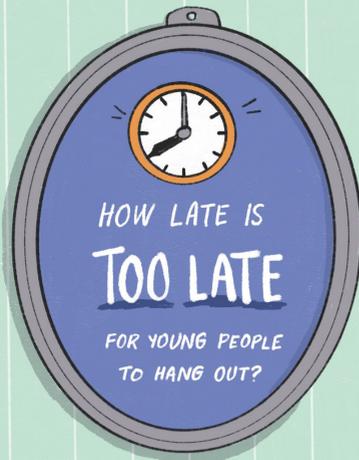
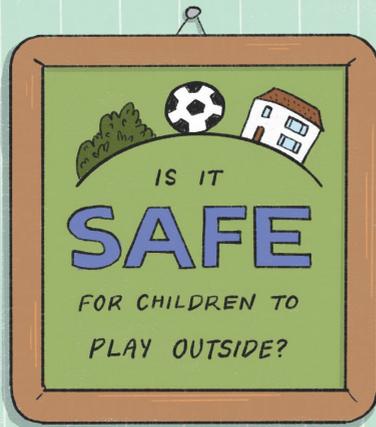
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BEING CURIOUS



*What does a good childhood look like? How should birthdays be celebrated?
What does a messy house look like? Is it safe for children to play outside?
What are the key festivals and celebrations in the year? How late is too late
for young people to hang out?*

The answers you give to these and other questions about childhood, youth, parenting, family life and communities will depend on your biography, the country and place you were born in, where and how you grew up, whether you practice a faith or religion, your family, your life experiences and the body you are in. These also inform your values and what might seem **normal**, common sense, or the way things should be, **to you**.

Being reflexive is a term that means becoming aware of our values, norms and **what** we think and **why** we have these views. Doing this acts as a check and a balance, because it helps us to consider different or alternative ideas or ways of doing things.

Asking curious questions enables you to learn about yourself and people who might be different to you. This can help you to understand different traditions, religions, practices and cultural norms and be respectful about them. It can help you to see similarities too.

This is important in your work with children, young people and families, because it helps to build your ability to have discussions about and understand the broader context of safeguarding concerns. It is also a skill that enables you to make better and more informed judgements and decisions.

Stop and think:

What examples of curious questions can you think of? How would you ask them, when and to whom?

What is the challenge for you? What can you do?



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SHOULD I BE
CONCERNED?



ANTI-RACISM IN SAFEGUARDING



Racist views or uninformed assumptions can lead to disproportionate intervention or leave children and young people at greater risk of harms.

Practitioners or professionals may be afraid they will be accused of racism if they take action when they have concerns about a child or young person. They may also make racist or ignorant assumptions about minoritized children, young people, families or cultures within communities, meaning that they fail to see vulnerability and report or respond to concerns when they otherwise would.

It is your duty as safeguarding professionals and carers to be fair in all aspects of your practice.

A key principle for safeguarding is that the rights of the child or young person should be central to your approach and their welfare and best interests should always be paramount. Ensuring that a child-centred approach underpins your practice is a safeguard, because it also directs to an anti-racist approach based on a full understanding of that individual child or young person and their needs and circumstances.

Stop and think:

Difference does not always mean something is a problem or a safeguarding issue.

What situations or circumstances would you find difficult to judge when you encounter them? Why?

How might an anti-racist approach help equip you to respond proportionately and in the best interests of a child or young person if you encounter circumstances you find uncomfortable or difficult?

What is the challenge for you? What can you do?



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