

## Information leaflet

# Supporting your child's cultural heritage

Children of minority heritage need active support from their carers to ensure they have a strong and positive relationship with their cultural identity. Having an understanding of their cultural heritage can help them sustain a sense of continuity with their past and their place in the world. In addition, taking a sense of pride in their heritage will also help them deal with discrimination that may take place within their lives.

If you do not share your child's heritage try to make connections with others who can provide you with the best insights into how the child feels and how to best support them.

### Additional barriers your child may face

Children's sense of who they are and who they can be develops from the world around them and the people and relationships they have in their lives.

If you do not share your child's heritage you should try and develop knowledge and awareness of the racism they could face. It is important to acknowledge that discrimination can take place and help your child develop ways of coping with the challenges they might face as a result of their heritage.

### Relationships and role models

Children's relationship with their culture will be strengthened and developed by contact with other people who share, identify with or support their heritage.

Children need positive role models or mentors and regular contact with people who share their background. If possible try and grow a network of people around them who reflect their cultural background.

If there are no existing links between your child and their culture, you can develop them through local community organisations and events run by people of your child's background or faith group.

## Family and daily life

It is important that children feel they are in an environment where their culture and traditions are part of their lives and are respected and understood.

Learn about the history and culture of your child's birth family.

- Keep up traditions such as meals, festivals, dress, community and religious events. Provide multicultural entertainment for your family.
- Practical things such as food, hair care, social activities, language, clothes, film and music are important when forming a child's identity.
- Immersing a child within their culture, reinforced by visits to their country of origin can provide them with a sense of belonging. Hearing first hand accounts of life lived in their culture from relatives such as aunts, uncles, grandparents or family friends will also inspire them and inform ideas of their own history.
- Check to see if the child has dietary restrictions related to culture or religion or ask them what their favourite foods are. Involve other family members in preparing and planning meals.
- It is important that foods are familiar to look and taste to the child where possible and are prepared in line with their religious beliefs.
- All children are different and embrace their cultural identity in different ways. Listen to your child and support them in their choices.

## Practical tips

- Work with your child to develop skills they may need when faced with hostility or discrimination aimed at them as a result of their heritage.
- Empower your child and help them to develop a strong sense of self by praising them, helping them to find and take part in activities they enjoy.
- When finding pictures for life story work ensure you include photos from both sides of the child's birth family.
- If you want to take your child to a religious ceremony, it is best to let your social worker know and if possible discuss your plans with the child's parents. Changing your child's religion is something that you cannot do without the birth parents or court's permission.
- Choose books, toys and music that represents and respect children's backgrounds and highlights diversity.
- Newspapers such as Asian Times and The Voice can be a familiar sight to your child and can help them stay up-to-date with development and stories within their community.

## Key points

- Having an understanding of your child's cultural heritage can help them sustain a sense of continuity with their past and their place in the world.
- If you do not share your child's heritage try to make connections with others who can provide you with the best insights into how the child feels and how to best support them.
- Children's sense of who they are and who they can be develops from the world around them and the people and relationships they have in their lives.
- Children's relationship with their culture will be strengthened and developed by contact with other people who share, identify with or support their heritage.
- It is important that children feel they are in an environment where their culture and traditions are part of their lives and are respected and understood.

## Useful organisations

### **Black History Month 365**

[www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk)

Black History Month 365 website with news and resources for Black families throughout the year

### **Brighton and Hove Fostering**

[www.brightonandhovefosteringhandbook.org.uk](http://www.brightonandhovefosteringhandbook.org.uk)

Brighton and Hove Fostering team have good general advice on meeting a BME child's identity needs including concise information on looking after skin and hair.

### **Race Equality Foundation**

[www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk)

The Race Equality Foundation promotes race equality for communities and professionals.

'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' is an inclusive evidence-based parenting programme designed to promote protective factors which are associated with good parenting and better outcomes for children.

### **The Institute of Race Relations**

[www.irr.org.uk](http://www.irr.org.uk)

The Institute, independent educational charity, has produced a series of key print and multi-media publications on aspects of racism including black British history which are suitable for use in formal and informal educational settings. Some of these are available to purchase, others are produced as free downloads from this site.

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