

FACTFILE: GCE HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Discrimination and anti-discriminatory practice in health, social care and early years settings

Students should be able to:

- define the terms prejudice and discrimination
- describe examples of discrimination and anti-discriminatory practice relevant to:
 - race;
 - beliefs;
 - gender;
 - disability,
 - cognitive ability;
 - mental health and;
 - sexuality;
- analyse how managers may promote anti-discriminatory practice in health, social care and early years settings, for example, through:
 - policies such as complaints and whistle blowing;
 - practices such as training and supervising staff;
 - setting examples in their own practice;
 - directly challenging discriminatory practices and using disciplinary procedures or reporting staff to their professional bodies.



Course Content

Discrimination impacts on health and well-being and it is important that anti-discriminatory practices are promoted in all health, social care and early years settings.

What are prejudice and discrimination?

Prejudice is an attitude, usually negative, which is based on ignorance and stereotypes, for example, believing older people are less intelligent than young people



Discrimination is treating people unfairly because of their race, beliefs, gender, mental illness, sexuality or physical or learning disability.

Examples of discrimination in health, social care and early years settings

- staff using inappropriate racial terms, for example, a GP in a health centre referring to a patient as a gypsy rather than a traveller;
- staff ignoring or isolating service users because of their disabilities, for example, a care worker in a day centre not bothering to talk to a service user who has a hearing disability as he is difficult to understand; or
- early years workers in a playgroup with children from a range of cultures organising activities to celebrate holidays and festivals from one culture and not others, for example, making cards for Christian festivals like Christmas but not doing anything to acknowledge Vaisakhi, a Sikh festival



Anti-discriminatory practice

You will examine legislation that is designed to prevent discrimination in other units, for example, the Disability Discrimination Act that requires all settings to have disability access. This unit, however, focuses on **anti-discriminatory practice** i.e. what staff in health, social care and early years settings **do** to promote equality on the basis of race, beliefs, gender, disability, cognitive ability, mental health and sexuality. This is good practice but it is a very specific type of good practice. For example, it is good practice to give service users in a day centre for older people a choice of foods so they can have a meal they enjoy, but it is anti-discriminatory practice when the choices are designed to meet the dietary requirements that service users may have based on their religious beliefs, for example, an alternative to pork for Muslim and Jewish service users.

Examples of anti-discriminatory practice in health, social care and early years settings

- a practice nurse in a health sector taking account of disabilities in communicating with patients, for example, using easily understood terms with patients with learning disabilities or making sure to face patients who need to lip read when she is talking;
- staff in a crèche ensuring resources such as play materials and other resources reflect different cultures and backgrounds, for example, having books and posters showing people of different races; or
- care workers in a day centre for people with mental health problems making it clear that all activities are open to both genders, for example, encouraging both men and women to take part in baking and decorating cupcakes.



The role of managers in health, social care & early years settings

Managers have a particular responsibility for promoting anti-discriminatory practice in the health, social care and early years settings they work in.

Some examples of what managers can do –

Organise staff training in anti-discriminatory practice

- managers can make training in anti-discriminatory practice a key part of staff induction for new members of staff so they understand its importance before they even come into contact with service users. Induction should promote the values of care which have a clear focus on anti-discriminatory practice; and
- they can organise ongoing staff training in anti-discriminatory practice, such as keeping staff up to date on equal opportunities legislation and making sure they are aware of equal opportunities policies and procedures in the workplace. This might include having forums for discussion for staff so that they understand what is discriminatory and how to engage in anti-discriminatory practice. Other training might include how to communicate effectively with adults with learning disabilities, for example, training in basic Makaton.

Have a complaints policy for service users:

- managers can have a complaints policy in place to encourage service users to complain if they feel they have been treated unfairly on the basis of their race, beliefs, gender, disability, cognitive ability, mental health or sexuality. This policy should make it clear to service users that they have a right to complain and the manager can ensure that they are aware that the policy exists, for example, by making reference to it in literature about the setting.
- the policy should set out how to complain and how complaints will be dealt with. When service users make complaints about discrimination the manager should investigate them as quickly as possible and inform service users of the outcome.

Have a whistleblowing policy for staff:

- managers can have a whistle blowing policy that encourages staff to report discriminatory practice by other staff, even those who have a more senior position in the organisation. It is important that the manager makes sure all staff are aware of the policy;

- managers can encourage staff to use the whistle blowing procedures to report others who engage in discriminatory practices so that discrimination can be routed out of the organisation. They can encourage a culture in the setting that means staff are not afraid to be whistleblowers;
- the policy should set out exactly how to report incidents and these should be investigated promptly; and
- the manager can use disciplinary procedures to deal with the members of staff who have engaged in discriminatory practice if allegations are substantiated.

Directly challenge staff and service users when discrimination occurs

- managers should never ignore discrimination in the setting whether it is by staff or service users
- the manager should speak to staff who engage in discriminatory practice to explain what they have done wrong and should use disciplinary procedures to deal with members of staff where appropriate- this can involve verbal and written warnings and even dismissal;
- the manager could report staff to their professional body when serious incidents occur, for example, nurses who engage in discriminatory behaviour can be reported to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) which can also discipline them or even strike them off the register so they can no longer practice.; and
- if service users behave inappropriately, for example, using racist language, the manager also has a responsibility to challenge their behaviour. Where this is unintentional, for example, unwittingly using inappropriate language, the manager can explain what is more appropriate and where it is deliberate and malicious, for example, bullying by name calling, the manager can be more strident, making it clear discrimination will not be tolerated in the setting.

Activities

1. Read the report '[Race Equality in Health and Social Care](#)' by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland available and list three examples of anti-discriminatory practice recommended for each of the following:

- education
- employment
- accommodation and housing
- social welfare

2. Other things managers can do to promote anti-discriminatory practice are –

- supervise inexperienced staff to help them adhere to anti-discriminatory practice in their day to day work with service users
- make sure resources and activities in the setting reflect a range of cultures.
- setting an example in their own practice

Choose one of these points and write a paragraph giving examples of how managers could achieve this.

3. Past paper question

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Describe two examples of discriminatory practice in health, social care or early years settings.

