

Equality and Inclusion Matters



All Early years settings should ensure that a child's right to be included is at the heart of their practice.

- *The EYFS seeks to provide equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported. (EYFS 2014)*

Equality is the term used to mean the recognition of the diversity of needs that individuals may have and the removal of discrimination, prejudice or barriers. These may be physical, attitudinal or institutional.

Diversity is the term used to mean the range of visible and non-visible differences that exist between people. Valuing diversity means respecting and acknowledging differences to create a culture of inclusion.

Inclusion is the term used to mean the process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging (Early Childhood Forum definition).

Every child deserves to be treated with respect and the Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on early years settings to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and access for all children, regardless of their own or their parents' race, disability, religion, gender, age, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation. These are the protected characteristics covered by the Act.

Race: The Act defines the term 'Race' as ethnic or national origin, nationality or colour. Everyone has a racial group which is based on shared characteristics that include geographical, language and cultural factors. All racial groups are covered by the Act. People who define themselves as Gypsies or Travellers belong to racial groups that are also protected from discrimination by the Equality Act.

Disability: A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Religion and belief: Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (for example Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.



The Common Inspection Framework requires settings to promote

Fundamental British Values

These values are defined as:

Democracy: making decisions together

Rule of law: understanding rules matter

Individual liberty: freedom for all

Mutual respect and tolerance: treating others as you want to be treated.

By meeting the duties of the Equality Act 2010 and by following the EYFS, settings will already be promoting these values. In the EYFS this is through the areas of: **PSED** managing feelings and behaviour and making relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness, and **Understanding the World** people and communities.

Further guidance is available on the [Essex Early Years and Childcare website](#).

In Essex, early years settings are supported to meet the requirements of the Act by having an Equality Named Co-ordinator (**ENCO**).

For a setting to be truly inclusive, a belief in equality needs to be held by everyone. However, the ENCO leads inclusive practice by supporting understanding, consulting with families and children and identifying actions to advance equality of opportunity. This is achieved through a process of completing an **Equality Impact Assessment (Equality Check)** and **Access Audit**. The actions identified form an **Early Years Equality Scheme** (Action Plan) and the ENCO also leads on ensuring that these are completed.

Group settings and childminders can access Role of the ENCO training in the **EYCC Training Programme** through the [Essex Early Years and Childcare website](#).

You can also visit the resources section of this website for lots of information and an **Early Years Inclusive Environment Audit** template which can be used as a good practice checklist.

There is other legislation that protects the rights of children in your care.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international treaty that applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18. It gives children and young people a comprehensive set of rights and is separated into 54 articles or sections covering different aspects of childhood and rights and freedoms. All children and young people have all the rights in the Convention. Some groups of children and young people – for example those living away from home, and young disabled people – have additional rights. The UK Government agreed to make all laws, policy and practice compatible with UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when it ratified it in 1991. This means that the legislation that applies to you as an early years practitioner will also reflect the principles of the UNCRC. A child friendly poster listing the articles is available to download from the [Essex Early Years and Childcare website](#).



The rights of children with special educational needs or disabilities are protected by the **SEND Code of Practice 2014**. Every setting is required to have a SENCO. Their role is to identify and help meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and some elements may overlap with the ENCO role.

- Details of SENCO training, e-learning, one planning, the Local Offer, Good Beginnings and lots more can be found by visiting the SEND page on the [Essex Early Years and Childcare website](#)
- Practitioners requiring guidance for children with SEND should contact their Area SENCO.



Understanding the Local Offer

All local authorities must provide a Local Offer. Its purpose is to improve choice for families by providing information about services for children and young people aged 0-25 years who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It provides, in a single place, all the support and services available locally for children and young people with SEND and their families. It is also a comprehensive resource for professionals. Settings are required to publish their offer to children with send for inclusion in the Essex Local Offer, more information on how to do this is detailed on the page in the web link above.

You can view the Essex Local Offer at essexlocaloffer.org.uk



Supporting children with English as their additional language (EAL)

Being bilingual or multi-lingual has many advantages. A child's home language is part of their identity; it is a connection to their family, community and culture. The home language forms the foundations for learning English. The skills used to learn a home language are transferable when learning English and any other new languages and strengthen children's understanding of language use.

The EYFS Statutory Framework (1:7) states that: 'for children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.'

Settings must meet this requirement and can do so by providing dual language books, signs and words around the setting, using recordable devices and photo books to involve parents in their

child's learning; using key words and greetings and inviting parents to spend time in the setting using the home language.

Supporting EAL in the EYFS Training is available in the [EYCC Training Programme](#).

Checklist for Inclusion:

- ✓ Our setting has an **ENCO and SENCO**
- ✓ All staff are aware of the **Equality Act 2010**
- ✓ All staff understand the importance of removing barriers to **inclusion**
- ✓ We have completed an **Equality Check**
- ✓ We have completed an **Access Audit**
- ✓ We have identified actions for an **Early Years Equality Scheme**
- ✓ We have published our **Local Offer** information
- ✓ All staff are aware of the importance of **home language** and strategies to support children with **EAL**.