Race, Religion and Cultural Awareness
(Support and Guidance)

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Introduction
This guide has been created to support SFT staff with race and cultural awareness. It is not an exhaustive list, but covers key aspects of this topic which relate to our workforce, local community and wider society. It will detail why Equality & Diversity matters and what behaviours are expected from all staff. It will provide quick reference guide for staff who may meet patients from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities during the working day but it also provides a useful insight into other cultures and religions. This handbook can be read all at once or sections can be read as and when required.
Why Equality & Diversity does matter.....

There are three reasons why equality and diversity matter:

1. A moral reason
2. The legislation – Equality Act 2010
3. And the business case.

There is very little argument about the moral reason, equality and diversity is all about social justice and doing the right thing.

The legislative reason is also very persuasive as the Equality Act 2010 with the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) strengthens equality legislation through the 9 protected characteristics.

The business reason why equality and diversity are so important is that it is patient care at its very best. Equality and diversity is all about knowing who your patients and potential patients are, knowing about the community in which you operate or want to operate and providing services in response to their diverse needs/requirements.

Equality is not about treating everyone the same, but as an individual with respect and consideration. Having an awareness of the impact our words and action can have on other in society, it's not about giving certain groups ‘special treatment’ or ‘extra rights’.

Diversity is about celebrating the richness of society by ensuring we value and respect differences between people of all background and abilities.

Although equality and diversity are different they are not mutually exclusive and should be considered together because concentrating on equal opportunities without thinking about diversity could mean that you concentrate on specific groups whereas diversity alone may ignore the potential for disadvantage for some individuals.

SFT Equal Opportunities Policy

Extract from our Equal Opportunities Policy:

“Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust respects and values the diversity of our patients, relatives, carers, visitors and staff. We are committed to serving our community in ways that are appropriate, accessible, fair and culturally sensitive. We will be proactive in ensuring and promoting equal opportunities through everything we do and among all those people and organisations that we are associated with.

We will make best use of the range of talents, skills, experience and different perspectives available in today’s society, enabling people to feel they are respected and valued, and can achieve their potential and access the services they need regardless of age, race, colour, ethnic background, religious belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability (including learning disability and mental health), marital status, civil partnerships, domestic circumstances, carer responsibility, HIV status, political, trade union or other opinion or belief, national or social origin, property, birth, social or other status.

We recognise that individual and institutional discrimination obstructs the fundamental aims of any organisation, and are therefore committed to taking any steps necessary to eliminate it. We will do this by ensuring that we consider the impact on equality and diversity of all aspects of the Trust’s
work, from service delivery and development, to recruitment and employment. We will ensure that all our staff are well trained in respect of equality, diversity and anti-discriminatory behaviour. A zero tolerance of discriminatory behaviour, including bullying and harassment, by anyone towards anyone, on Trust premises, is endorsed throughout the organisation.”

The Equal Opportunities policy can be found on the staff intranet under ‘Personnel. Policies’

Appropriate Terms and Language

Using inappropriate words or terms can sometimes cause offence. Some words and terms that were once acceptable, for example ‘coloured’ are no longer acceptable.

Some terms and phrases NOT to use, with reasons, are as follows:

**Coloured:** This is not acceptable. It is also inaccurate, everyone has a colour! It is therefore better to use the words ‘black’ and ‘white’ or to refer to people by their nationality or ethnicity.

**Half-Caste:** This is not acceptable. It is considered offensive. It is better to use the phrase ‘dual heritage’, or just ask the individual how they would describe their ethnicity.

**Immigrant:** Since a large percentage of Black and Asian people were born in this country and some are in their third/fourth generation, this is an inaccurate and unacceptable term. Refugees and asylum seekers are words which can be used as they are factually correct and refer to immigration status, but may not refer to the majority of BME people.

**Oriental:** This is a generic term, which is not acceptable because some of the people labelled are likely to be offended. It is therefore better to refer to people by their nationality, for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese. Or ask the individual how they would describe their ethnicity, do not assume.

**West Indian or Afro Caribbean:** This shouldn’t be used as a generic term. It is preferable to refer to people by their nation of origin, for example Jamaican or Barbadian. If you are unable to identify them in this way, then the preferred terminology is African Caribbean.

Remember that it is particularly offensive to describe people by their nationality in a derogatory way, for example, the Irish as “Paddy’s”, the Scots as “Jocks”, Pakistanis as “Pakis” and Chinese as “Chinks”. As a general rule of thumb you should refer to someone by their country of origin.

How to address people

Naming systems in BME communities can be quite complex and as such you are not expected to know all of them. Instead you should treat people with courtesy and ask how they would like to be addressed asking how to pronounce a name correctly should this be required.

Remember the following basic rules:

- Don’t ask for a Christian name.
- Don’t assume that everyone you deal with will have a surname as in the British sense.
- Don’t assume that everyone will have a family name and that this name will come last.
**Do’s and don’ts**

It is easy to offend when you do not know religious etiquette or customs. It is important to never make assumptions about an unfamiliar belief system.

Remember, if in doubt ask! A polite enquiry about a particular religious belief or language requirement will not be offensive if promoted by a genuine desire to get it right.

**Do**

☑ Seek advice where possible from colleagues/other groups about how to communicate effectively with cultural groups.

☑ If the person cannot speak English find out the language of the person/group you wish to communicate with.

☑ Where accent or language hinders communication take care to speak clearly and to be patient.

☑ Be sensitive and refrain from using jargon or slang. Do not use unacceptable racial or ethnic terms.

☑ Avoid using colloquialisms or terms of endearment that may cause offence.

☑ Be aware that it may not be the custom in some cultures to shake hands especially among women.

☑ Appreciate that cultural differences in body language exist and can cause misunderstanding, e.g. not looking people in the eyes.

☑ Be aware that in some instances women may not like to be questioned by a man or that men and women may not attend a meeting in the same room.

☑ Keep up to date with the correct race equality terminology to use to avoid causing offence as meanings and significance can change over time.

**Don’t**

✗ Don’t make generalisations about groups or individuals.

✗ Never assume because they are from a particular country they speak that language.

✗ Never assume which is the first name and which is the family name.

✗ Don’t assume because someone has raised their voice they are becoming aggressive.

✗ Don’t underestimate the influence of your own cultural background in the way you perceive and behave towards others.

✗ Don’t assume everyone from a particular country has the same cultural background/faith and way of living.
How can we tackle racism?

Challenging racism is a positive action but it can also be a difficult action and such people often ignore offensive remarks. Effective challenging is not necessarily about showing somebody up or making them feel small but about showing an individual that what they are doing/saying is not acceptable so they do not do it again. The best ways to do this will differ according to the person and situation. Some things to bear in mind when challenging a racist remark or action are:

- Assess the circumstances and decide if it is appropriate to challenge them straight away or wait to speak to an individual privately. Private one to one discussions may have a more positive effect. If you have any concerns then share them with a line manager.
- Think about how you want to challenge the individual or individuals – what will be the best way to show the person that what they are doing is wrong so they do not do it again.
- Making people stop and think about what they are saying is often enough to make people realise that what they are saying is wrong and offensive. For example you could say ‘Could you explain what you mean’ or ‘I don’t quite understand what you are saying’.
- Make it clear that you are personally offended by the racist behaviour demonstrated. For example ‘I don’t want to distract from our main business but I am offended by that comment…’ or ‘I think it is wrong to say things like that’.
- Don’t hide behind others and avoid saying things like ‘Other people might find that offensive’ but instead try ‘I hope I’m not the only person who feels this way,…’
- Try to back up your challenge with facts that support your view and undermine the view of the individual.

Religions and cultural awareness

Buddhism

Buddhism originated about 2,500 years ago in Nepal. It stems from the enlightenment and teachings of Prince Siddharta Gautama, who lived around 480 BC, thereafter known as Buddha. Buddhism is a major religion, 300 million world-wide, mainly found amongst people who originate from South East Asia, and the Far East. It is multi-faceted and is both a philosophy and a way of life. Buddhism is the world’s fourth largest organised religion. The core belief is to develop kindness and awareness to all living things to achieve freedom from suffering and eventual delivery through reincarnation to ‘Nirvana’. Buddhists believe they may attain ‘Nirvana’ or enlightenment by following the ‘Eightfold Path’. The ‘Eightfold Path’ consists of right understanding, thought, action, livelihood, speech, effort, mindfulness and meditation. Buddhists believe that humans can reach an ideal state through meditation and that our actions in this life have repercussions for future cycles of rebirth. This is the law of ‘Karma’. Emphasis is placed upon self-responsibility, compassion, the one-ness of humanity and life. Prayer may include yoga and meditation.

Main festivals

Wesak (May)  Full moon, celebrates Buddha’s birth
Obon (July to Sept)  Celebrates the passing on of Buddha
Buddhist New Year  Varies from country to country.

Diet, taboos and social etiquette

There are no particular taboos although, for monks and nuns, lying, stealing and taking intoxicants is prohibited. Monks and nuns should also remain celibate. A strong vegetarian tradition is predominant though some may eat fish or eggs.

No special dress is worn except for religious communities. Buddhists undertake to live according to five precepts, which are:

- To refrain from injury to living things
- To refrain from undertaking things which are not given
- To refrain from using one’s body to hurt or harm oneself or others
- To refrain from falsehood, prejudice and anything less than the truth
- To refrain from the abuse of elements which cloud the mind

Buddhism in Britain

From small beginnings in 1907, Buddhism has developed into quite a strong minority faith in Britain and is said to be the fastest growing in the Country. In the UK Buddhists speak mainly English, Cantonese, Hakka, Japanese and Shinhalese. Texts are written in either Sanskrit or Pali.

Chinese traditions

Chinese people are likely to be influenced by a variety of beliefs. They may be Buddhists, Catholic, Christians, Taoists and a few may practice Confucianism.

The official language of China is Mandarin but the mother tongue of most Chinese living in Britain is Cantonese, a substantial minority also speak Hakka. More people speak Cantonese than any other language in the whole world. There are no dietary restrictions. Chinese cookery is an expression of a whole set of attitudes to life, health, balance and right arrangements.

Main festivals

Lunar New Year

The biggest family occasion with reverence paid to ancestors and parents. A time for family reunions, visiting friends and relatives and exchanging gifts.

Teng Chieh

The Lantern Festival which marks the first full moon of the year and the lengthening of the days. Strings of lanterns in various designs are hung out as decorations.

Ching Ming

A public holiday in China and Hong Kong – a time for people to visit their ancestral graves.

Dragon Boat Festival

Celebrated with dumplings (wrapped in lotus leaves) and boat races to commemorate the tragic death of a patriotic poet who jumped in the river in order to convince his Emperor to change the
style of his administration.

**Taoism**

Based on the teachings of Lao-Tzu it is literally the concept of life ‘the way’ sharing much of its philosophies with other Eastern religions—particularly Buddhism and Hinduism. It sees life as a balance of fire, water, earth, metal and wood. Illness occurs when there is an imbalance in these elements.

**Confucianism**

Confucius was a teacher of social and moral studies and he established a practical philosophy to meet the needs of those who did not understand the teachings of Lao-Tzu. The majority of followers live in China and the rest of Asia. It is primarily an ethical system emphasising respect for authority, seeing law as an essential order to make life possible, to which rituals at important times during one’s lifetime have been added.

**Christianity**

Christianity dates back about 2,000 years and is the main religion in the UK. 37 million of the world’s 1 billion Christians live here. The four main Christian groupings or denominations are Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal. Interpretation and belief vary widely between the different denominations. Christians believe in one God, creator of the world, often referred to as three in one: God, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. God wants everyone to be in relationship with him. However, because he is holy and righteous, but human beings “sin”, (don’t live according to God’s standards), this creates a barrier between them and a perfect God. In order to deal with this, and restore the relationship between himself and his people, God became man, in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, who came to earth as the ultimate mediator, to remove this barrier. He was crucified to pay the full price for everyone’s sin, and so made it possible for everyone to live in relationship with God. He rose from the dead and later ascended to heaven. God’s presence remains on the earth today in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Christian’s holy book is the Bible. This sets out God’s standards, and gives accounts of all God’s attempts to draw his people back into relationship with him, which culminated in him sending his son, Jesus. The Bible includes details of the life, death, resurrection and teachings of Jesus, who showed us how we should live. Christians try to live in accordance with the example set by Jesus: with God as the first priority, serving and treating other people as Jesus did.

**Main festivals**

The main festivals celebrated by Christians are Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

**Diet, taboos and social etiquette**

There are no dietary laws. Many Christians object strongly to abortion, euthanasia, pornography and blasphemy. Alcohol and smoking are offensive to some groups.
Christianity in the twenty first century

Modern theology and philosophy, scientific theories, secularisation and rapid social change have all exerted a considerable influence on Christian thinking. In some cases, this has challenged the Christian community to re-examine its beliefs and debate issues like population, birth control, abortion, women, marriage and divorce, and medical ethics. As a result, within Christianity today there is a very wide range of interpretation, from those with a very liberal view, to those who believe that the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God and who strictly interpret all aspects of life in line with biblical standards.

Hinduism

Hinduism originated in India and can be traced back 4,000 years. It has no single sacred book but has many books, the most important being Bhagavad Gita, Vedas and Upanishads. Hindus believe in many manifestations of God (deities), but ultimately believe in one God.

Around 550,000 of the world’s 500 million Hindus live in Britain. Although Hinduism is the world’s third largest religion it makes up the majority of the population of only three nations: Nepal, India and Mauritius.

Beliefs and customs vary widely though astrology is central. Daily worship at home is predominant (morning and evening), though temple worship takes place regularly. Before entering the temple, shoes are removed and hands washed. Prayer may include yoga and meditation. Hinduism’s core belief is that one can be reunited with God through study, devotion, prayer and service to others. Hinduism emphasises that we are all different and, as such, God can be approached in different ways. Unlike other religions, Hindus believe prophets of spirituality are not restricted to ancient times but continue to be born into ages and nations.

There are 3 Pathways:
1. Sanctity of life.
2. Tolerance towards other races.
3. Tolerance towards other religions.

Main festivals

There are many important festivals, some celebrated locally and some throughout India and the Hindi community globally. The same festival have a different name and even different emphasis in different areas.

Navaratri
Also called Norata Durga Puja takes place in October and is in honour of the mother goddess consisting of 9 days of dancing.

Rama Navami
Celebration of Rama’s birthday.

Diwali or Deepvali
Festival of Lights which celebrates the New Year in late October and mid November.
Raksha Bandham
Celebrated around July/August time and is a popular family festival. Sisters tie red and gold amulets around their brothers’ wrists. This is a symbol of the strong bands in Hindu families. There are also a number of festivals that celebrate particular gods and goddesses.

Diet, taboos and social etiquette
Beef is prohibited. Some Hindus are entirely vegetarian, avoiding all meat and eggs.

Hinduism in Britain today
Hinduism is a very tolerant religion and it is happy to associate closely with many faith commitments such as Sikhism and Buddhism. Such a variety and diversity means that dividing lines between religions can become blurred. In the UK Hindus speak mainly English but also Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati and Tamil.

Islam
Followers of Islam are known as Muslims. Muslims believe that there is one God (Allah) who is the supreme creator and sustainer of the universe. Islam’s main religious text, the Holy Qur’an or Koran, covers all aspects of life, including international relations, worship, economics, politics and personal hygiene.

There are around 1 billion Muslims in the world. There are over 40 countries where the majority of the population is Muslim, these are mainly in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The specific acts of worship, called the pillars of Islam, provide the framework of spiritual life. They are:

- Declaration of faith that there is only one God (Allah) and Mohammed his Prophet;
- Prayers are said five times a day;
- The giving of alms or money to the poor;
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan;
- Making a pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) at least once during a Muslim’s life for those who can afford it financially and physically.

Prayer
Devout Muslims pray 5 times a day, some may go to the Mosque others pray at home. The Islamic holy day is Friday. Most men will go to the mosque on Friday for noon prayers. Women may pray at home or go to the mosque if facilities for women are available.

Main festivals
There is no fixed date for the festivals, they are based in the sighting of the new moon.

Ramadan Festival of fasting in the ninth lunar month.

Eid-UI-Fitr Fast Breaking marking the end of Ramadan.

Eid-UI-Adha Festival of Sacrifice on the tenth day of the twelfth month. Most Muslims make their pilgrimage to Mecca during this festival.

Muharram Marks the beginning of the Islamic year.
Diet, taboos and social etiquette

Alcohol and drugs are forbidden and blasphemy is offensive. Pork is prohibited and any meat eaten must have been slaughtered in accordance with the Qu’an and must be ‘Halal’ (permissible).

Muslims in Britain

Muslims form the largest religious minority in Britain, of which 10% are white British converts. Britain’s Muslim population has grown markedly since the end of World War II due to demand for labour met largely by people arriving from Commonwealth Countries including Pakistan and India. Also many arrived due to having to flee war and ethnic conflict in their home Countries. In the UK Muslims speak mainly English but also, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi and Hausa.

Judaism

The religion of the Jewish people originated in the Middle East and can be traced back over 3,500 years. In Israel Jews make up the majority of the population (83%) however, there are a larger number of Jews in the US than in Israel.

The core belief is to believe in one God and to live by his laws. These cover all aspects of life and focus on ritual prayer, Sabbath observance and the cycle of holy days throughout the year. Within the religion there are variations, some based on geography and other on religious beliefs and practice, ‘Orthodox’ (traditional) and ‘Progressive’ Jews.

In progressive Judaism, men and women play an equal part in religious ceremonies including becoming ‘rabbis’ (spiritual leaders of the community). Orthodox Jews pray 3 times a day and where possible attend Synagogue (temple) for the morning, afternoon and evening services. Women do not have a similar role in religious ceremonies. Orthodox Jewish men keep their heads covered at all times with a hat or skullcap and most have beards. Orthodox Jewish women cover their hair at all times, often with a wig and will cover most of their body. ‘Hasidic’ men are distinguishable by their dark clothes, wide brimmed hats, long coats, beards and sidelocks. They are members of ultra-orthodox sects. Hebrew is the main language of worship. Circumcision is required of all male babies on the 8th day of life. At the age of 13 a young male (or female in progressive sects) takes part in a ceremony which confirms their responsibilities, called Bar mitzvah or Batmitvah.

Main festivals

The Jewish year is both lunar and solar, in a 19 year cycle, so timings vary. The Jewish day goes from evening to evening with all festivals beginning in the evening.

Shabbat or Sabbath

The Sabbath is central to Jewish life, beginning an hour before dusk on Friday evening and ending at nightfall on Saturday night. Jews are forbidden from engaging in activities considered as work (including activities such as travelling and writing) on Sabbath, which is a day of worship and rest, with special Synagogue services and meals and time for the whole family.

Rosh Hashanna (Sept/Oct)

Jewish New Year commemorating the creation of the world.
Sukkot (Sept/Oct)
Feast of Tabernacles. This is the third harvest festival in the year and one of the three occasions when Jews travelled to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Shavuot (May/June)
Feast of weeks or Pentecost.

Hanukkah (December)
Jewish festival of lights to celebrate the miracle of light.

Diet, taboos and social etiquette
The Jewish dietary rules are known as ‘Kashrut’. The extent to which Kashrut is observed varies from person to person. Animals, birds and fish are either ‘kosher’ (permitted) or ‘trief’ (forbidden). Kosher meat must be slaughtered and prepared in a prescribed manner. Milk and meat products must not be prepared or eaten together. The laws extend to utensils used in preparation as well as the foods themselves.

Jews in Britain
In Britain, Jews constitute a small percentage of the population, with 260,000 people accounting for less than 1% of the total. Jews in the UK speak mainly English though may also speak Hebrew or Yiddish. Texts are written in Hebrew.

Sikhism
Sikhism was started by Guru Nanak in the Punjab area of India in the 16th Century. Sikhs believe in one God who is present in all people. Sikhs tend to be very tolerant of others and vow to protect the weak. Their core belief is remembering God in daily and truthful living with service to others being particularly important. It is believed that this will reunite them with God.

Of the 20 million Sikhs world-wide, around 340,000 live in the UK. Sikhism does not make up the majority of the population of any nation, it makes up the majority of the population of only one Indian Province: the Punjab. Amritsar, in India is where the Golden Temple, the holiest of the Sikh shrines, is situated and is the world religious focus point. There is no specific Holy Day though Sunday is used, as it is the most convenient for community gatherings. The main service or worship is on this day in the ‘Gurdwara’ - the temple. Before entering shoes are removed, hands washed and heads covered. Sikhs have Five Articles of Faith (the five Ks).

These denote devoutness and a baptised Sikh should wear all 5 (although the sword carrying in Britain is reserved for special festivals):

- **Kacha** - shorts to symbolise modesty
- **Kesh** - uncut hair covered with a turban
- **Khanga** - a comb to hold the hair
- **Kara** - a steel bangle symbolising unity with God
- **Kirpan** - a short sword symbolising readiness to fight against injustice and protect the oppressed.
Main festivals
Most Sikh festivals are related to the lunar year as such the date on which they are celebrated changes each year.

Vaisakhi (April)
The most important Sikh festival – The Sikh New Year.

Divali (October)
The Festival of Light, celebrated by lighting candles and exchanging sweets and presents.

Birthday of Granth Sahib
Celebrated by the complete reading of the Guru Nanak, the holy book, in temples.

Diet, taboos and social etiquette
Most Sikhs are vegetarian and abstain from alcohol and tobacco. If they eat meat, it will normally be chicken, lamb or pork.

Sikhs in Britain
Sikhism remains a significant but minority faith tradition. The origins of the relationship between Sikhs and Britain date back to the days of the Raj and the British Empire. Today there are Sikh communities in most of the Countries which are formerly part of the British Empire and Britain itself has the largest Sikh population of any Country except India. In the UK Sikhs mainly speak English but also Hindi, Punjabi, and Swahili. Texts are written in Gurmukhi.

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma
The term ethnic minority doesn't just apply to black and or Asian communities, it also includes travellers and Roma.

Of the 200,000 to 300,000 Travellers in England, by far the largest group are Roma, who have been in England since the early 16th century. Roma people have been recognised in law as a racial group since 1988.

There is also a group of Irish Travellers, who have been travelling in England as a distinct social group since the 1800s. They received legal recognition as a racial group in England and Wales in 2000. Roma are traditionally nomadic and because of this nomadic lifestyle, there has been a great deal of mutual distrust between the Roma and their less mobile neighbours which has resulted in a great deal of persecution. Whilst a nomadic lifestyle was historically true almost 90% of Roma across the world now live in houses. There are more than twelve million Roma located worldwide. There is no way to obtain an exact number since they are not recorded on most official census counts.

The Roma culture is as diverse as the number of countries they inhabit and there is no universal culture per se, but there are traditional attributes common to Roma:

- loyalty to family (extended and clan);
- belief in Del (God) and beng (the Devil);
• belief in pre-destiny. The Roma cannot be said to have a “religion” of their own. They have usually adopted the faiths of the Countries in which they live. Among the Roma can be found Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants and Muslims. Many prefer to carry out religious rituals in their own homes or in the context of folk observances.

Further information

If you would like to join a patient or staff group, or would like to discuss issues that relate to race, religion or culture, please email race@salisbury.nhs.uk