Culture and faith: learning from case reviews

Summary of risk factors and learning for improved practice around culture and faith



Published case reviews highlight that professionals sometimes lack the knowledge and confidence to work with families from different cultures and religions. A lack of understanding of the religions and cultural context of families can lead to professionals overlooking situations that may put family members at risk; whilst the desire to be culturally-sensitive can result in professionals accepting lower standards of care.

The learning from these reviews highlights that professionals need to take into account families’ cultural and religious context when undertaking assessments and offering support. The rights and needs of the child need to remain the focus of interventions at all times, regardless of this context.

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This briefing summarises the learning from case review reports. It is an analysis by the [NSPCC Information Service](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/information-service/), highlighting risk factors and key learning for improved practice.

Reasons case reviews were commissioned

This briefing is based on learning from case reviews published since 2010, where culture and faith were highlighted as significant issues.

The children in these case reviews faced a complex and wide range of risk factors. They became the subject of reviews following:

* death after a lengthy period of [abuse and neglect](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/), which was not picked up due to social isolation
* serious injury or [sexual exploitation](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/) through involvement in gangs
* suicide of young people whose issues included confusion about their ethnic/cultural identity
* death of a new born baby after pregnancy concealed for religious/cultural reasons
* [physical](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/physical-abuse/) and [emotional abuse](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/emotional-abuse/) by family members due to a belief that they were defying religious/cultural norms, or in the most extreme cases “possessed by spirits”.

Risk factors for culture and faith in case reviews

[Social and cultural isolation or fear of isolation](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Cultural and religious beliefs overriding self-interest](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Cultural conflict within families](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Religion and culture as a distraction from child protection issues](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Challenge of children developing their own self-identity](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Converting to a partner's religion](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Belief in spirit possession](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Interplay between religion and mental health issues](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

Learning for improved practice

[Culturally informed assessments](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Taking into account families' cultural and religious needs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Culture, faith and pregnancy](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Recording information](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

[Challenging parents](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/)

