

How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

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Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) states that for children to thrive the three prime areas of learning must be supported, with the principle that 'every child is a unique child' recognised (DfE, 2017, p.6). Inclusion is the process by which we recognise these unique qualities and value individuals (Rogers and Wilmot, 2011). Fundamental to inclusion is children's rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) actions that children are empowered to develop to their full potential and are entitled to protection from harm to such development. Inclusive education is about being active in discovering the barriers children meet in accessing education and eliminating those barriers (UNESCO, 2012). Many marginalised groups need to be considered when discussing inclusion (Lavery et al., 2018). This essay will consider lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) families and disability as factors which may influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Defining an inclusive education is an ambiguous task (Miles and Singal, 2010), the concept of inclusion can alternate in conformity with the context in the environment under deliberation (Berlach and Chambers, 2011). Education environments play an essential role in valuing diversity and are quintessential for incrementing the inclusion of students (Lavery et al., 2018). In the Early Years, an inclusive environment is where a child's identity and attributes are cherished, empowering them to feel belonging within the setting (Crawford, 2015). Children form preferences due to their curiosity by differences (Trawick-smith, 2020); which may lead to exclusionary behaviour (Wymer, Williford and Lhospital, 2020). Early Years practitioners can encourage critical thinking and positive self-image in children to capacitate them in forming non-discriminatory behaviours (Dimitriadi, 2014). In the EYFS, the idea that 'every child is a unique child' determines that practitioners must facilitate each child's learning needs (DfE, 2017, p.6) these needs should be distinguished within an inclusive environment (Alegria et al., 2010). A fundamental determinant that may impact a child's ability to thrive in a diverse society is the inclusion policies in Early Years settings (Brodie and Savage, 2015). In the National Curriculum for primary schools, children with disabilities are recognised under the inclusion section (DfE, 2013); however, the Early Childhood Forum (2013) found that the primary curriculum needed to improve on differentiating learning to meet each child's needs and in addressing inequalities. Positive steps forward have since been made, with the promotion of different family dynamics recently becoming compulsory in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2019). Even in diverse settings, importance can be established on a specific value/ability that makes those with conflicting abilities/beliefs in a minority, thus, risking adverse experiences (Matlin et al., 2019). UNESCO (2012) specifies that education is about being active in discovering the barriers children meet in accessing education, and then removing those barriers. The EYFS (DfE, 2017; 2021) and the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) ascertains that every child is taught the same curriculum. However, an inclusive setting expresses an eagerness to accommodate the needs of every child (Scholes et al., 2017), adopting the social model of disability (Smart and Smart, 2006) instead of the medical model of disability (Shakespeare, 2006) whereby a child adapts their own needs to the setting. Early Years practitioners should be offered strategies and training tools for them to acknowledge their own beliefs and attitudes towards diversity and inclusion (Hernandez-Amoros et al., 2017) subsequently, utilising approaches that meet all children's needs (Scholes et al., 2017). The momentousness of equality within the Early Years can be consolidated in the Equality Act (2010), as practitioners cannot discriminate against a child based on the protected characteristics, including disability and sexual orientation.

As defined in section 6 of the Equality Act (2010), an individual is disabled if they have an impairment that has a long-term and considerable detrimental effect on their capacity to do normal day-to-day activities. 15.5% of all school-age children in England have Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (DfE, 2020). The use of the word normal in the Equality Act (2010) denotes that people with disabilities are not, which may lead to social exclusion (Sakakibara, 2018), based on pre-existing prejudices (Sterkenburg, Olivier, and Van Rensburg, 2019). The

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Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

medical model of disability is a notable origin for disability prejudice (Dirth and Branscombe, 2017); the emphasis is on an individual's biomedical status over their personhood (Levesque and Malhotra, 2019). People with disabilities are consequently heeded as lesser than to those without an impairment (McLaughlin, Clavering and Coleman-Fountain, 2016). Engagement with the medical model by parents, practitioners and broader society may hinder children's development (Rees, 2017). Children who encounter social exclusion are in threat of poorer mental health (Richter and Hoffmann, 2019), lower academic achievement (Xiong et al., 2020) and early school withdrawal (Silva et al., 2020). The Children's Commissioner found that 45% of children with SEND leave school without any formal qualifications (Childrens Commissioner, 2019), such school failure is affiliated with adversities, such as marginalisation from adult society (Vargas et al., 2019). If the principle of children's best interests were actualised, there would not be such withdrawal and disjunction in education (Howe and Covell, 2013). Children need to feel safe and emotionally secure in their education environment (Bowlby, 1998) before they can develop their learning (Pianta, 2006).

Discrimination is rooted in segregation and harmful social attitudes (Shakespeare, 2007), this requires resolution in legislation and corroborative action (Fleisher and Zames, 2011). The Warnock Report (HMSO, 1978) was a turning point for education; it sustained the first inclusive review of SEND provision in England. It became the grounds for subsequent legislation, such as the Education Act (1981) and the Children and Families Act (2014). The report states that the goals for children's educations are parallel, but the assistance that each child needs varies (HMSO, 1978). Taking differences into account is essential to achieving fairness and to identifying and correcting subordinating hierarchies to achieve equality (Dowd, 2019). Under the Equality Act (2010), practitioners must make reasonable adjustments in their approach and provision to ensure that services are accessible. The Children and Families Act (2014) guides practitioners to make reasonable adjustments overseen by a Special Educational Needs Coordinator, a role established from the 1994 SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994). Progress should be monitored with an assess, plan, do, review cycle (DfE, 2015), ensuring that the assessment process is meaningful, thereby facilitating early intervention (Esposito and Carroll, 2019). Emphasis is placed upon the power of the child's voice, for example, the 2001 Code of Practice states that the beliefs of the child should be solicited (DfE, 2001) and the 2015 SEND Code of Practice's principles are concentrated on the child's best interests (DfE, 2015). Attending to the child's voice in policy leads to desired outcomes (Casadó et al. 2020) for all involved. However, both codes of practice have been criticised by the House of Commons Education Committee (2019), whereby they attest that more must be done when decision-making in taking into consideration children's views about the support they receive. Parent and teacher partnerships are also crucial (Boit, 2020) when addressing the needs of children with disabilities (Walz, Wang and Bianchini, 2019). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) stipulates that the connections within the various systems can shape a child's development and learning. Thus, with effective parent-teacher partnership, there is more linkage between the mesosystem and microsystem, which can benefit the child's development (Sánchez-Romero et al., 2020).

How parents, educators and broader society work with and include children with SEND, is influenced by whether they see differences as problematic or opportunistic (Dimitriadi, 2014). Children are predisposed to discriminate and ostracise if they believe their social group endorses such behaviour (Birtel et al., 2019), with prejudices towards children with SEND originating in early childhood (Killen, Mulvi and Hitti, 2013). Roberts and Smith (1999) discovered that children interacted with a child with disabilities when they thought the relation would be straightforward as opposed to challenging. If educators and parents perceive the differences children with SEND have as opportunistic (Dimitriadi, 2014), according to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) children's perception of disability would change accordingly (Nowicki, Brown and Stepien, 2015).

How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

Schools promoting inclusion utilising high-quality provision (Ziegler et al., 2020), can observe positive outcomes such as enhanced skill development (Kauffman, 2020) and social relationships (Watkins et al., 2015). Such integration also results in improved attitudes towards disability (Leigers et al., 2017); these experiences of inclusion have a profound impact on development (Fox, Levitt, and Nelson, 2010). If a child feels that they have meaningful relationships, it can help them thrive in their development and learning (Weiss and Riosa, 2015). Children who have disabilities can have a purposeful and fulfilling life when they are integrated into their community (Weingarten and Worthen, 2017), with their participation in education and society a legal imperative guaranteed by the UNCRC (1989).

The introduction of same-sex marriages in 2014 (Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2014) has resulted in a sudden rise in same-sex marriage couple families, an increase of 40.0% since 2015 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Ordinarily cohabiting couples are more likely to separate due to their lack of legal protection (Raley and Wildsmith, 2004). However, a recent study (Kolk and Andersson, 2020) found that children in cohabiting LGBTQIA+ families were mostly unaffected as separation, instability and poverty were rare. This is because LGBTQIA+ parents are generally educated, financially stable, and in a secure relationship (Cutas and Chan, 2014) before they build their family. The diversification of family demographics calls upon educators to develop an inclusive climate (Fabes, Martin and Hanish, 2019); unfortunately, LGBTQIA+ parents and young children are facing mistreatment within Early Years settings (Orel and Coon, 2016). Children of same-sex parents are susceptible to facing discrimination (Watkins, 2018) because of the stigmatisation of their parent's sexual orientation (Matviiko and Shkoliar, 2019). Children who are bullied tend to exhibit low self-assurance and increased behavioural problems (Schwab, Eckstein and Reusser, 2019), harming their self-belief (Sidiropoulou et al., 2019) and positive identity (Howarth and Andreleouli, 2015). The emotional health and well-being of children is a crucial part of development (DfE, 2017). DiVerniero and Breshears (2017) believe that the variety of poorer economic, social and health outcomes of LGBTQIA+ people and their families is caused by their persistent lived inequality (Badgett, 2018).

Research shows that LGBTQIA+ families experience exclusion (Oswald et al., 2018), disapproval (Leland, 2019), and a lack of representation from their school and curriculum (Glass et al., 2016). Parental involvement increases student achievement and attendance (Grundmeyer and Yankey, 2016), the exclusion LGBTQIA+ parents experience impacts partnerships with schools in addition to posing threats to the pedagogical achievement of their children (Goldberg and Allen, 2013). This highlights the paramountcy of relationships with families and the cooperative attitude that Early Years practitioners should pursue to strengthen the outcomes for children (Beck and Wikoff, 2019). This can be done by staff training on creating LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculums (Educate and Celebrate, 2020a), one school reported that after such training, there was an increase of 23% in families reporting feeling safe to be open about their family (Educate and Celebrate, 2020b). Stonewall has a 'getting started' toolkit for practitioners on celebrating difference and challenging stereotypes (Stonewall, 2017) to confront homophobic bullying (Hall, 2016). Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are social support networks for LGBTQIA+ families (Wimberley, 2015), they build community and provide a positive environment for students to facilitate favourable outcomes (Toomey et al., 2011). Although they are a significant source of support, many students report that their community had no access to a GSA (Colvin, Egan and Coulter, 2019).

Thirty-two years ago, the Local Government Act (1988) banned materials which displayed LGBTQIA+ families in schools (Moran, 2001). In September 2020, relationship education became compulsory for all primary pupils, including the promotion of different family dynamics (DfE, 2019), which works with the 'No Outsiders' campaign (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009). 'No Outsiders' provides practitioners with a curriculum that stimulates equality and implements the Equality Act (2010) in a way that young children can comprehend (DfE, 2014). Despite this positive

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Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

momentum, some feel it is not an appropriate curriculum for young children (BBC News, 2019), with others contesting it is fundamental for inclusive practice (Moffat and Field, 2020). Early Years education has no guidance on the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ families; nevertheless, the EYFS has an emphasis on learning about differences (DfE, 2017; 2021). As homophobic bullying starts at a young age (Chapman, 2013), the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) states it is crucial that Early Years practitioners continue to confront discrimination through inclusive provision. Practitioners can foster comprehensive family representation through educational materials such as books and having open discussions (Beck and Wikoff, 2019). Roleplay such as the use of persona dolls, can advance young children's knowledge and understanding (EHRC, 2019) as well as supporting social and cognitive development (Johnston et al., 2018). Developmentally appropriate conversations through circle time provides children with the possibility to explore and express their feelings and beliefs (Cefai et al., 2014). These activities can assist in the development of empathy (Postolache, 2020) and understanding (Strelkova, 2020) which combats heteronormativity (Lester, 2014). Overall, children in an LGBTQIA+ family achieve just as well as those with heterosexual parents (Boertien and Bernardi, 2019), they are affected by the intolerance they face by society not the sexuality of their parents (Knight et al., 2017). Therefore, it is paramount that the inequalities LGBTQIA+ families face is further ascertained (Sharp and Metcalf, 2016).

Whilst many of today's Early Years settings are diverse learning environments (Knowles, 2017), for as long as children face inequality and exclusion, one can never claim that enough has been done (Dimitriadi, 2014). Early Years practitioners should begin to view diversity as a strength and asset to learning, rather than a problem to vanquish (McAnuff Grumbs, 2020) and reflect on how their own biases could impact their practice (Shaw, 2017). Early Years professionals are equipping and preparing children to live in society; thereby, it transpires how critical their role is in providing inclusion within a diverse environment (Dimitriadi, 2014). Henceforth, governments have a civic and moral responsibility to provide education that is responsive to and supportive of the diverse abilities and needs of all children (Dimitriadi, 2014). In conclusion, having a disability and living in an LGBTQIA+ family both contribute to a child's ability to thrive in a diverse society, with both factors providing individual adversities to overcome. However, it is not the disability or LGBTQIA+ family that children are harmed by, but rather the discrimination and intolerance they face by broader society (Knight et al., 2017).

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How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

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How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

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How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

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How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

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How living in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) family and disability can influence a child's ability to thrive in society.

Aurora Lastrico Costa – Norland College

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