National Day Nurseries Association

Brighter thinking for early years

Factsheet



The Role of the Equality Named Co-ordinator (ENCO)

England

The Role of the Equality Named Co-ordinator (ENCO)

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on all services to promote equality and end discrimination. Some local authorities require that you have a named person to lead on identifying all aspects of inequality and work towards your setting being fully inclusive; this is the role of the ENCO. If your setting in is receipt of local authority funding, you will need to check their requirements.

Everything you do must be non-discriminatory, which may require regular reviews of practices, policies and procedures to ensure you do not discriminate against people.

The act details a range of protected characteristics. Under this legislation, it is illegal to discriminate against anyone based on any of the protected characteristics listed below.

> The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

It is a specific legal requirement in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that you promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, you must ensure that every child is included and not disadvantaged because of their protected characteristics. However, it's crucial to ensure that no child is ever treated unfairly for any reason, so that all children in your setting feel equally valued, respected and included.

What is an equality named co-ordinator?

Appointing a member of staff as an equality named coordinator (ENCO) demonstrates that you are committed to meeting these requirements and have a designated person to lead this area of practice that underpins everything you do.

There are two identifiable areas in which an ENCO can use the EYFS framework to support the work of their role.

Access

The EYFS framework states that in regard to the outdoor area: "providers must follow their legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (for example, the provisions on reasonable adjustments)."

A good starting point would be to carry out an audit of the setting to ensure that children with special educational needs or disabilities are able to use the outdoor area as independently as possible. It is useful to bear in mind the current range of sensory and physical needs within your setting and the specific barriers that a child's disability may present them with when using any space within the

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nursery. These needs can include visual impairment, auditory impairment and multi-sensory impairment. It is important for your ENCO to work together with the SENCO and specialist partners in meeting these needs.

Additionally, your ENCO can also audit the accessibility of the entry path for children and their parents and carers, e.g. looking at aspects of the environment outside of the nursery for lowered kerbs or if there is an induction loop fitted to check it's working.

Equality

This is the second aspect of the ENCO's role will be to either create a culture of equality or embed one within your setting. Here are a few practical pointers to help establish this.

- Create a mission statement about equality and how the setting works to ensure this is central to practice
- Establish an equality working group which is representative of the diversity of the setting and gives a voice to staff and stakeholders at every level
- Make sure the setting has an up-to-date equal opportunities policy and diversity policy which are regularly reviewed by the working group
- Ensure all policies and procedures are inclusive to establish a foundation of respect, acceptance, understanding and support for all children and their families, regardless of their backgrounds, languages spoken or individual needs
- Ensure the staff team represent local diversity and the ENCO has a part to play during the recruitment processes
- Create clear progression routes for all staff members
- Reflect on any surveys which are sent out to parents, such as whether they seek to capture parents' views on how inclusive the setting is
- Monitor communication with parents, verifying that they take into account the needs of families who have English as an additional language and parents and carers with literacy needs.

The ENCO can support delivering on the setting's statutory duty that there is "fair treatment of all staff" (EYFS). By taking some of the practical steps outlined above settings are "creating a culture of safety, equality and protection within the services they provide" (Inspecting safeguarding in early years).

An ENCO can play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive environment where all children can thrive and develop, ensuring that equality and diversity are embedded in every aspect of your early

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Further support, resources and references

- Equalities Act 2010: **https://bit.ly/2XiY0KM**
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage: **https://bit.ly/EFYS**
- Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills, Ofsted: **https://bit.ly/2lx9oQj**

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NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

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