Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Work with Children & Young Individuals
Analyse the impact of prejudice and discrimination on children and young people

As with adults, prejudice and discrimination against children and young people can be focused on their race, religion, and ethnicity and culture. It can also be aimed at their age or their sex.

For example, a football team may only take on boys, even though there are girls who also try out. They may justify it because of the difficulties around having mixed gender groups getting changed together in limited changing room space, but it would be possible for them to consider and apply 'reasonable measures' to ensure that girls can have their own changing room, so therefore it is still discrimination.

They may also justify it by saying that the girls aren't good enough, which is an argument that might always win through, but it wouldn't always be true, especially as girls who are prepared to try out for a soccer team would already be confident that their abilities and skills were good enough.
Discrimination against children & young people can lead to ...

- Low self-esteem
- Low self-worth
- Loss of confidence
- Disengagement
- Mental health issues
- Difficulty making friends
- Isolation
- Relationship difficulties
- Difficulties learning / achieving
- Absenteeism

Discrimination against children and young people.
Impact on children and young people

Discrimination has a negative impact on everyone to whom it is applied. This is partly because human beings are social creatures, who tend to rely on 'fitting in' or 'belonging' to their wider community or group. People who feel they do not fit in - unless they are mature and experienced and comfortable within their own skin - often feel left out, bullied, and rejected, and these types of feelings bring their own negative impact on a person, including damage to their social and emotional development, in the way they learn, and in their relationships with other people.

Self-esteem and self-worth

Because they are still forming their own personalities and experiences, children and young people are especially vulnerable to the effects of discrimination, and this may be seen in the way their self-worth and self-esteem is affected.

For example, one of the girls from the example above, may have felt confident in her skills to try out for the soccer team. Rejected two years in a row, she may begin to feel that she just isn't very good at the sport. She may stop playing, or stop trying out for the team, or both.

This type of confidence-busting discrimination can only work effectively if the girl does not realise that she has been discriminated against (the 'justifications' given show ways in which the action of discrimination is covered up by 'common sense'; i.e. girls aren't good enough; there isn't an appropriate changing area for girls).

If she then goes to a few matches and realises that some of the boys are not as skilled as she is, she may realise she has been discriminated against, and may then be able to form some level of defense against the negative feelings about herself. In some cases these may transform into negative feelings about the football team, the manager and coach, or the way in which the wider social system treats women and girls.

So it is only in recognising discrimination that a person - child or adult - can form some kind of defense against the negative personal impact it can have.
**Mental health issues**

Where discrimination against a child occurs a great deal, it can have an impact similar to that of continual bullying. Not only the self-esteem of the child is damaged; they may also begin to suffer with their mental health. Self-esteem and self-worth are strongly linked to mental health; someone with good self-worth is less likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and other issues.

Where a person's self-worth has been disrupted or damaged early on, the longer-term effects may have a serious impact on their mental health, both at the time, and later as an adult.

Teenage suicides, particularly around pressured years, such as the period between 14 and 16, are relatively common, and are often linked to bullying and the pressure to do well at exams. If a young person believes that no matter how hard they try they will still fail, they may become depressed and anxious, and find that their work suffers even more as a result.

Even if they recognise that they are being discriminated against, they may feel that there is no point in trying or continuing to try, because the wider world appears to be against them. Teenagers and children are very vulnerable to the way in which they believe others view them, and behaviour that may be written off as rebellion (for example, absenteeism) may actually have a link to on-going discrimination or bullying.

**Social relationships**

Relationships with others can be much harder to initiate and establish for those people and children who have low self-esteem and self-belief. Social and emotional development can be arrested, and they may demonstrate immature emotional intelligence around circumstances to do with other people later in life. They may feel very awkward when meeting new people, and they may not reach out to others so readily as those who have not suffered from discrimination in the past.

Once burned, twice shy, is an old adage that may not always be precisely correct, but if someone has repeatedly suffered the discrimination or bullying, they are less likely to follow previous behaviours that led to the discrimination, including opening up to others.

In extreme cases, this can lead to a child feeling very isolated and friendless, and most children are very aware when they are different in this type of way.
Difficulties in education

Where a child is unhappy for any reason, it is known that their educational achievements can be severely affected. Not just in terms of things that older children do sometimes, such as absenteeism, but in terms of their ability to take in new information and learn things.

A child who has emotional issues, whether that is through difficulties at home, or discrimination or bullying at school, will not be able to put everything into learning and getting the most out of the learning environment, which is one of the extra reasons why staff at school need to be vigilant and open to the possible origins of difficulties that some children have when learning.

It is clear to see that there are no positive effects of discrimination, and this applies also to the person or people who are discriminatory. Those people may be unable to see the positive ways in which widening their groups, social groups, and general situation, can affect them, and while their minds remain closed-off, so their experiences of the wider world remain limited.