

Introduction to and use of the Guide

Census 2006 demonstrates that the growth in the Irish population is accompanied by significant diversity in national origin, ethnicity and religious affiliation. This builds on the diversity of religious communities and ethnic groups that were present in Ireland before the last wave of migration. The increasing diversity is evident both among those who use the health services and the staff teams who provide these services.

This Guide was developed in response to an expressed need by healthcare staff across a range of cultural backgrounds for knowledge, skills and awareness in delivering care to people from backgrounds other than their own. To this end the Guide profiles the religious and cultural needs of twenty-five diverse groups who are being cared for in healthcare settings. These groups comprise twenty-one religious groups, 3 ethnic/cultural groups and people without religious belief.

The Guide was developed under the *HSE National Intercultural Health Strategy 2007 to 2012* as part of a framework of initiatives designed to build capacity to deliver culturally competent care in Irish health settings.

USING THE GUIDE

The Guide comprises thirty-one sections. It commences with 6 general sections.

The first of the general sections *Development of the Guide* outlines the research process underpinning the document, highlights the contribution made by cultural informants for each group, and recognises the helpful input of colleagues across a range of professions and projects.

The second section *Context of the intercultural Guide* explores the context, scope and nature of the document.

The third section *Terminology and descriptions* explains the use of terms in the Guide, defines terms related to interculturalism and discusses appropriate terms to be used in describing the diversity of traditions within Christianity.

The fourth section *Good practice in person-centred intercultural care* itemises and explores eight key pointers that all staff should keep in mind in intercultural interactions in order to work to the principles of quality healthcare.

The fifth section *Overview of headings and themes* explains the key headings and related themes used to present information for the twenty-five groups profiled in the document.

The sixth section *Other helpful resources available* itemises other initiatives, either in place or developing at present, which could be helpful locally.

We have highlighted essential learning points throughout these first six sections.

These general sections are followed by twenty-five specific sections, one for each of the groups profiled in this Guide. These twenty-five sections have been presented alphabetically, and categorised under the headings and themes outlined in the fifth section.

We recognise that it may not be feasible for a staff member to read the entire Guide at once. We recommend that a staff member begins with the general sections. Particular attention should be paid to the eight key pointers itemised in the section *Good practice in person-centred intercultural care* so that these can be kept in mind in all intercultural interactions and *Overview of headings and themes* so that the staff person understands the layout of each specific group section.

We suggest that the staff person then proceeds to reading and practicing the guidelines in the specific sections for each of the twenty-five groups. Over time, a staff person can build their knowledge, awareness and skills in working with each of the groups.