



## **Equality in Practice**

### **Outline:**

Equality training, unlike awareness training, tackles the problems of inequality through revealing the language and behaviour that exposes discriminatory thinking. It provides insight into stereotypes and the resulting prejudice that different individuals face within our communities. Equality training promotes wellbeing by enabling participants to develop positive action to eliminate the barriers and resolve systemic marginalisation, by reaching shared understanding that contradicts alienation.

### **Aim:**

Our enjoyable programme shows you simple steps to ensure colleagues, children and parents are fully respected and accommodated as equal members of the organisation and the wider community. Participants will discover that rather than being a legal nightmare, meeting Equality & Diversity requirements is an exciting challenge and a welcome tool for enhancing all children's wellbeing.

### **Programme:**

- Intentional welcome
- Ground rules – learners outcomes
- Stereotypes – feelings and behaviour
- Language – political correctness or not – that is the question?
- Legislative overview - short
- Equality & Diversity - definitions
- Inclusive practice: strategy
  - Positive – capacity building
  - Possible – resilience
- Shared perspectives – relationships



### **Welcome and listening**

- Practitioners need to encourage diversity to come through door, and have a multitude of strategies on offer to suit all types of individuals.
- Get the welcome right and then really listen!
- Safety and belonging are everything!
- What do we need to feel both confident and competent in delivering our service.
- We can all participate when we get what we need, in order to be catered for, we need to be listened to.
- It is more important for us to feel heard than it is to actually get what we say we want; compromise is fine as long as the decision is shared.



### **Acknowledging difference and celebrating diversity**

- It is about being valued for who we are, and not been treated the same.
- Being equal is being treated as individuals, this individuality needs to be respected and celebrated.
- As humans, our basic needs are similar, but the way we get them satisfied will be different.
- If we feel safe, secure and included, we can be ourselves, and be honest about what our needs are, so that these can be met.
- All individuals need to feel in control about what happens to them, both physically and emotionally.
- It is about recognising choice (or its lack as an abuse of power), and also recognising that there are some demands on our lives where we cannot always make a choice, but being aware, particularly as providers, of the difference between the two.

### **The values of inclusion:**

**Every one is born 'in'** - We are all born as equal and part of a community; it is only later that we are excluded.

**All means all** - Everyone capable of breathing (even if breathing requires support) is entitled to be included: no one is too difficult, too old, too poor or too disabled to qualify.

**Everyone needs to be 'in'** - When physical impairment excludes, individuals must be actively included. If you're not there, no one knows you're missing.

**Everyone needs to be 'with'** - Being there is necessary - but being 'with' takes time and effort. A community is not just a locality; it is a network of connections and relationships. People should not remain as lonely visitors to or residents within communities; we must help them be part of and belong to their communities.

**Everyone is ready** - No-one has to pass a test or meet a set of criteria to be eligible. Everyone is ready to be part of community now and it is every community's task to find ways of including them.

**Everyone can learn** - Everyone should be given the opportunity to learn new things, grow as individuals and develop to their full potential. Everyone can learn and we can all learn to be better teachers.

**Everyone needs support** ... and some need more support than others. No-one is fully independent and independence is not our goal: we are all interdependent and require differing degrees and kinds of support at different times.

**Everyone can communicate** - Just because someone cannot or will not use words to communicate does not mean that they have nothing to say.

**Everyone can contribute** - Every individual has strengths and a unique contribution to make. Our task is to recognise, encourage and value each person's contribution - including our own!

**Together we are better** - Delivering education would be easier if everyone were the same. However, the problem lies not in *difference* but in *how we each deal with difference*. We have a responsibility to think carefully and prevent our attitudes from

destroying the precious connections we share with one another. To treat every person equally demands that we respond to each differently: some people *will* need more than others. We believe that diversity brings strength and that we can all learn and grow by knowing one another.

Jaynie Mitchell – Inspiring Inclusion -  
<http://www.inspiringinclusion.com/>

### **Defining inclusive practice - Putting values into practice**

Definitions of 'inclusion' vary widely according to context, and many existing definitions are highly contradictory. Within education the whole notion of inclusion is still widely debated within a culture where success is equated to high examination results. From an learning perspective the following, put forward by Ainscow et al, is more useful:

It is focused on presence, participation and achievement; inclusion and exclusion are linked together such that inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion; and inclusion is seen as a never-ending process. Thus an inclusive school is one that is on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state. (Ainscow et al, 2006, p 25)

To reflect this never-ending process in this document 'inclusive practice' has been chosen here, in preference to 'inclusion', to reflect the understanding that it is not a state but a way of working. Furthermore, it reinforces the idea that both practice and ideas are subject to change. The emphasis is on practice, which means to do something repeatedly in order to adapt to changing circumstances, it also implies development and transformation. Development and learning are ongoing and this needs to be clearly articulated in the way people work.

Inclusive practice is an emergent process: rather than offering an alternative to existing habits, it builds on the best practice and develops new action for change that eventually transform culture. It is vital that inclusive practice is not understood as a tool to 'mainstream' the difficult or the needy. Crucially, practice needs to become person-centred within a culture that respects individual learning.

Inclusion: personalisation applies equally to the gifted and talented and those with special needs. In many ways it offers a powerful strategy to ensure optimum provision

for all young people that is geared to their particular needs and talents.  
([www.ncsl.org.uk/personalisinglearning](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/personalisinglearning) p 8)

Continual steps towards deeper equality through inclusive practice liberate and engage by creating a culture that fosters belonging and participation. The process of inclusive practice connects the underpinning philosophies of equality and diversity, and aims to improve the practice of supporting relationships within communities. It builds on existing good practice by improving mainstream policies and practice.

### **It is all about a positive attitude to difference**

Positive attitudes to families, to children and difference are essential. It is important that:

- the child is seen as a child, first and foremost
  - the child's needs are viewed holistically, rather than being defined by a diagnosis of difficulty or disability
  - the rights of children and families and the limits on professional involvement professional are clearly understood
  - professionals understand that each family will have its own needs and circumstances. No two families will be the same
  - professional interventions should be designed to strengthen families
  - professionals need a positive 'can-do' attitude and a professional disposition to 'support' but not to 'rescue'
- Making Inclusion Happen in North East Lincolnshire, Sharing Good Practice (October 2006)

A feeling of belonging is crucial to participation and engagement of people within any community. Because belonging is an emotion it can only be owned and experienced by the person, we cannot deliver or impose it on others. However, what we say and do will have a serious impact on how the people around us feel they belong. It is through other people's acceptance that we get a measure of our sense of belonging. So to express acceptance we need to behave in ways that say to those around us that they are both valued and wanted. We need to expect levels of complexity within our relationships when expressing these feelings and we cannot expect everyone we meet to experience the same feelings in the same way. Doing nothing and leaving it to chance is not acceptable, particularly if we are in positions of power within a relationship. We need to take responsibility for the part we play in each new relationship.

Expressing acceptance successfully demands far more than just a statement of tolerance. Tolerance is a passive state of acknowledgment of difference; it is too shallow to convey meaningful intent to work together as equals. Tolerance fails to understand difference and avoids engaging in interaction that may, for some, feel raw and uncomfortable to begin with. In the long-term, meaningful relationships unlock understanding that can fuel learning. So tolerance is only part of the answer, people are entitled to an unconditional acceptance of their presence within our communities. Furthermore, by being honest and open in our intent to actively understand each other we can behave in a manner that exemplifies this unconditional acceptance. At the heart of acceptance and belonging we need to find the meaning of respect for each other.

Respect also means honouring people's boundaries to the point of protecting them. If you respect someone, you do not intrude. At the same time, if you respect someone, you do not withhold yourself or distance yourself from them. I have heard many people claim that they were respecting someone by leaving them alone, when in fact they were simply distancing themselves from something they did not want to deal with. When we respect someone, we accept that they have things to teach us.

William Issacs (1999) Dialogue and the art of thinking together.  
New York Doubleday

To feel respected as people we need to be understood as complex individuals with a multitude of facets. Unfortunately, all too often we draw conclusions from a single perspective, more alarmingly if it is only from our own. As humans, our basic needs are similar, but the way we get them met will be diverse. Some will say that it is unfair if certain people get different treatment. However, if your definition of fair is: everyone gets the same, then the experience for each person is likely to be unfair. If we are to create respectful environments then we will need to expand our definition of 'fair' to mean 'everyone gets what they need to participate fully' (not necessarily what they want) and using this definition in our practice we are much more likely to accommodate diversity and respect difference.

**Every Child Matters - Every person matters!**

The development of inclusive practice also tackles the issue equity - equal outcomes. Developing inclusive practice is a way of taking action to remedy one of the most serious issues in education: the ratio between excellence and equity.

As a system we are very good at excellence, we are less confident about equity, inclusive practice offers a direct means of sustaining excellence and moving towards equity. (West-Burnham 2009)

The most challenging aspect of this work will be ensuring that teaching practice reflects a real understanding of learning. Changes in practice made to address culture will secure entitlement for all learners and ensure an increasing quality and better standards across all provision. Most sources available describe inclusive practice in terms of maximising potential and recognises how our understanding of learning is changing. As a learning organisation attitudes need to move away from a belief that the 'gifted' are at risk from the practice that supports 'others'. In short, teaching practice that enhances the learning experience needs to benefit all students equally.

The principle of equality has to be reinforced and extended by the practice of equity. On the basis of the discussion so far three broad principles about the nature of social justice will inform the rest of this document:

Equality: every human being has an absolute and equal right to common dignity and parity of esteem and entitlement to access the benefits of society on equal terms.

Equity: every human being has a right to benefit from the outcomes of society on the basis of fairness and according to need.

Social justice: justice requires deliberate and specific intervention to secure equality and equity. (Chapman & West-Burnham 2009)

Inclusive practice is an important component of a wider move towards enabling environments and positive relationships, one which will ensure all children can reach and exceed expectation, fulfil early promise and develop latent potential. At the heart of inclusive practice is the expectation of participation, fulfilment and success. (NCSL West-Burnham 2008).

On the most basic level if we feel accepted we can be ourselves, and be honest about our needs. Getting the understanding right applies to the environment, the attitudes and the community we live in. The strategies that are needed to help people feel they

belong are often straightforward. However things go wrong when practice and language do not support a shared meaning of equality.

We all need to feel in control of what happens to us both physically and emotionally. It is the 'shared and common agreement' that often is not expressed in our behaviour, and this lack is further reinforced by rigid systems. All too often decisions are made without any thought as to who holds power in decision making. It is all too tempting for adults to take charge and organise activities in ways that suit them and not the needs of the child.

### **People, not categories**

Sadly, it is still a necessity for some people with specific impairments to have to justify their needs with a diagnosis that explains their difference. However, when used as a method to categorise others, labels reinforce expectations based on assumption.

Unfortunately, assumptions can be wrong and prevent a more flexible approach to children's needs irrespective of difference. Categorising young people is particularly damaging when projected onto children from marginalised communities as these are often associated with negative stereotypes.

### **The Every Disabled Child Matters campaign misses the point**

Many, sadly, still perceive inclusion as a "disability" issue. And that a solution will be achieved by changing practice to accommodate this 'other' group of young people; or by finding these 'others' separate provision more suited to their access requirements. Unfortunately, if we separate groups by order of perceived potential we are denying their basic human rights. We also run the risk of behaving in a way that says that our values, principles, and practice are only relevant to typical children and can be ignored for those perceived as too different.

In order to support aims / mission / values in practice we need mainstream services to change significantly so as to naturally serve the needs of all young people –



disabled or not. And that the right to full participation and must be extended to the whole community, by responding with flexibility to cater for all people’s needs, irrespective of ability. This is emphasised in advice to governors in the publications that support the Every Child Matters agenda:

Changes came into force in September 2002 designed to improve access to education for disabled pupils, and to prevent discrimination for a reason related to such impairments. This includes a duty on schools and local authorities to plan strategically to increase access to school premises and the curriculum and the provision of written materials in alternative formats. These duties and responsibilities will need to be taken into account when planning educational and associated activities outside the school day.

Adapted from Extended Schools – a Guide for Governors I

In addressing lack of opportunity for all the main thrust of the Every Child Matters agenda is to put energies into addressing issues that are the cause of marginalisation across the country. There are those who still believe that a whole community will still have their needs denied as their separation is still actively maintained in the structure of our service provision.

If we now look at the practice, outlined in the table below, that supports the principles of Every Child Matters, very few of the outcomes can be achieved by segregated provision. Particularly if we look at the sections: ‘enjoy and achieve’ and ‘make a positive contribution’.

**Every Child Matters: The principles**

When children, young people and families were consulted they wanted the government to set out a positive vision of the outcome we want to achieve. The five outcomes that mattered most to young people were:

Every Child Matters Five Outcomes:	
THE PRINCIPLES	THE PRACTICE
Be healthy	

Enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle	<p>Understanding personal health</p> <p>Making healthy choices about diet and lifestyle</p> <p>Strategies to enhance mental and emotional health</p> <p>Awareness of issues relating to sexual health and drug abuse</p> <p>Developing a positive self image</p>
Stay safe	
Being protected from harm and neglect	<p>Strategies for personal safety</p> <p>Freedom from bullying, intimidation and abuse</p> <p>Freedom from discrimination</p> <p>Access to appropriate support and intervention</p> <p>Living and learning through secure relationships</p>
Enjoy and achieve	
Getting the most out of life and developing skills for adulthood	<p>Access to balanced and relevant learning experiences</p> <p>Support in learning how to learn</p> <p>A culture of high aspirations and expectations</p> <p>Opportunity for success and achievement</p> <p>An integrated and developmental curriculum</p>
Make a positive contribution	
Being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour	<p>Participate and contribute to all aspects of life</p> <p>Share in social learning, activities and projects</p> <p>Volunteer and provide to the wider community</p> <p>Develop tolerance and respect</p> <p>Engage in social, cultural and sporting activities</p>
Achieve economic well-being	
Not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life	<p>Opportunity to develop skills, abilities and interests</p> <p>Awareness of career and employment possibilities</p> <p>Awareness of economic and social options</p>

**Every Child Matters: implications**

Does the organisations' aims / mission / values reflect the principles of Every Child Matters?

How far do policies translate the aspirations of Every Child Matters into consistent practice?

To what extent do strategies for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating policies and practice focus on the outcomes of Every Child Matters?

Do job descriptions reflect the principles of Every Child Matters?

'Every Child Matters', 'Every Person Matters'; what would be the implication of these changes?

How might young people be involved in the Every Child Matters debate?

What are the implications of Every Child Matters for working with: other agencies, families and the community?

(With thanks to Professor John West-Burnham )

#### **Locating capacity and building resilience**

- It is dangerous and wasteful to label marginalised groups as essentially impoverished or deficient.
- Communities and their members own capabilities and assets that can be engaged for the benefit of all.
- Achievement and fulfilment promotes personal morale as well as a spirit of belonging, loyalty and collaboration within teams.
- The more an organisation reflects the community it serves, the more its members will feel valued, safe and wanted. A shared approach results in all community members growing in strength and confidence together.
- As belonging and trust increase, the value of the community as a whole adds up to far more than the sum of individual skills and qualities. In addition to significant benefits for individual wellbeing, greater diversity in teams and communities gives better flexibility and responsiveness in products and services. Everyone wins.

#### **Meaningful relationships - social capital**

- Relationships are the lifeblood of an organisation; they turn dreams into experience and give tangible meaning to organisational communication and culture.
- Fulfilling relationships are essential to satisfy our need to belong and make sense of our participation: without them we have no reason to give.
- Our level of engagement within a community is directly proportional to the quality of its interpersonal interactions.
- We gauge the worth of an organisation according to the welcome, acceptance and honesty of the individuals within it.

#### **Further reading**

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