

## The Commissioner's Leadership Programme for Senior Managers

### INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

#### Executive summary - Leading on Inclusion

**A shared vision + equal treatment + flexible practice = inclusive outcomes.**

#### **The how to, can do, approach! 6 steps to more inclusive practice**

*Leading on Inclusion* (LOI) is a framework developed specifically for those working with communities who aspire to inclusive practice. It unlocks individual responsibility for long-term change. What can we **each** do differently today in order to enable change tomorrow? The framework's effectiveness lies in its adaptability to the needs of any organisation. It facilitates team-building, goal-setting, and the sharing of responsibility and accountability in policy making, implementation and evaluation.

The overall goal of the session is to help participants understand the framework's six basic steps towards more inclusive practice.

1. **Welcoming change** – researching the community and outreaching to alienated individuals
2. **Working together** – valuing diversity
3. **Collaboration** – a shared vision; seeking diverse voices
4. **Implementation** – Identify and ownership of barriers to be tackled
5. **Participation** – building communities that support change
6. **Managers of change** – using management and policy as a dynamic tool.

LOI's robust process facilitates the implementation of change towards equality. The framework also responds to the new public sector duty of the DDA – a duty to promote disability equality. All public authorities must introduce a disability equality scheme by 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Our process encourages individuals to take responsibility for different roles in an environment of shared overall responsibility. Furthermore, accountability lies within the execution of the process.

This process also satisfies a burning question from participants on inclusion training: “I totally agree with the values – but how can we do it?” Or: “These are great ideas but they won't work in practice because ‘the systems’ in our organisation are too restrictive.” The traditional approach to inclusion training tends to be theoretical rather than practical. It doesn't help people find **how** to change things. Books and academic papers may have their place, but what is important is that communities address matters that are important to them through creative action. Co-operative effort demands that we envision our understanding of our world, and in response, transform practice within it.

Finally, the concept of ‘Positive Action’ addresses the issue of power. It seeks to create a space for so-called ‘hard-to-reach’ or ‘silent’ minorities by proactively levelling the playing field and tackling current issues of inequality. This deliberate intent is often absent from inclusion training; although ‘all means all’ may seem transparent enough, it is impossible to know what it actually means to others as it fails to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping head-on. The same groups remain excluded or vulnerable to institutionalised discrimination. Positive Action aims to ensure that people from previously excluded groups can participate on equal terms with others. It is intended to counteract the accumulated effects of past discrimination.

LOI's step-by-step process specifically calls for the recruitment and involvement of these communities on their terms. It is a way of getting closer to seeing those most vulnerable to exclusion as leaders and as stakeholders who share in catalysing change. In the past the Civil Rights movement emerged from minorities who were angry at the inequalities of power within systems. Such minorities were consulted (if at all) only at the final stages of change that was designed and organised by professionals. At this stage only two options remained: to agree or disagree. But they had no say on the goal, the process, the collaborative solutions or the allocation of resources. Self-perpetuation powers inequality.

**Leading on Inclusion** has the advantage of separating content and process, thereby allowing individuals to hold on to their experiences and dreams by allowing them to participate in way that is meaningful and achievable to them. Whilst spreading the responsibility for change and accountability by increasing community participation, it allows for shared roles that will also help combat blame culture.

### **Step 1**

The first step concerns research – finding out about the communities we work in and for. The task must be prepared – who do we need to invite, consult or visit? We must listen to the voice of to excluded groups and find a safe space for those who are not traditionally invited to share in decisions about resources and change. We must maximise warmth, flexibility, safety, comfort and acceptance as keys to belonging – a feeling without which we are unable to proceed. It is a fundamental step in understanding power sharing. If we share at the decision stage, it is unlikely we will want to criticise the implementation.

### **Step 2**

Collaboration: good practice means working *with* people rather than *for* people. The process goes on to find a shared understanding of how we work together. Why inclusion is an important underpinning value for organisational change. What it means to the group, and how it can be implemented in a structured way.

### **Step 3**

Sharing the vision/goal, desired outcomes, are all crucial to belonging and participation. Ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own ideas and can work together in a co-operative group to see these ideas make sense of their world and work in practice. This step looks at the meaning of our shared vision, how it affects us individually, and how it affects the relationships we have within our communities. By agreeing and sharing a vision we can be sure that everyone's needs are met.

### **Step 4**

Identifies the barriers that might stand in the way of the group and each individual within it on the journey towards the vision. What must each particular organisation do to reach each communal goal? Attention to detail is important, and provides the basis of the next step for individuals and the whole community. It will be refreshing to hear the minority voice playing a part in the decision-making and allocation of limited resources!

## **Step 5**

Finds ways of overcoming, avoiding or dismantling barriers by engaging communities and valuing their diversity. All members are invited to explore what they can contribute to their community in order to achieve the shared vision. This will have implications for every organisation.

## **Step 6**

This step focuses on the management of the process – identifying lines of accountability and responsibility. Managers organise the process for change. This involves setting the focus, calling for fair participation at each step, and ensuring that the rules are observed. They take responsibility for summaries, overviews, conclusions and next steps. The result is a dynamic model for the creation and review of policies and procedures to support ever improving practice through the management of change. Outcomes are assessed against measurable indicators and key milestones.