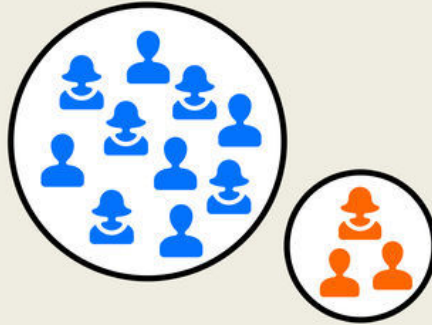


SEPARATION



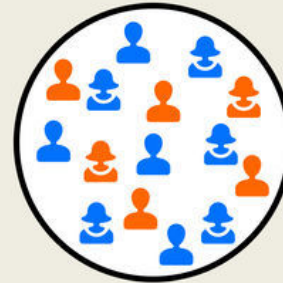
EXCLUSION



INTEGRATION



INCLUSION



**Advocacy's Role in reducing
Social Exclusion**

Introduction

Social exclusion means being unable to access the things in life that most of society takes for granted. It is a build-up of problems across several aspects of people's lives. Focusing on social inclusion means emphasising things like access to services, good social networks, enjoying relationships, decent housing, adequate information and support, and the ability to exercise human rights.

Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a short-hand term for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are often linked and mutually reinforcing.

Social exclusion is an extreme consequence of what happens when people don't get a fair deal throughout their lives, often because of disadvantage they face at birth, and this disadvantage can be transmitted from one generation to the next.

What is social exclusion?

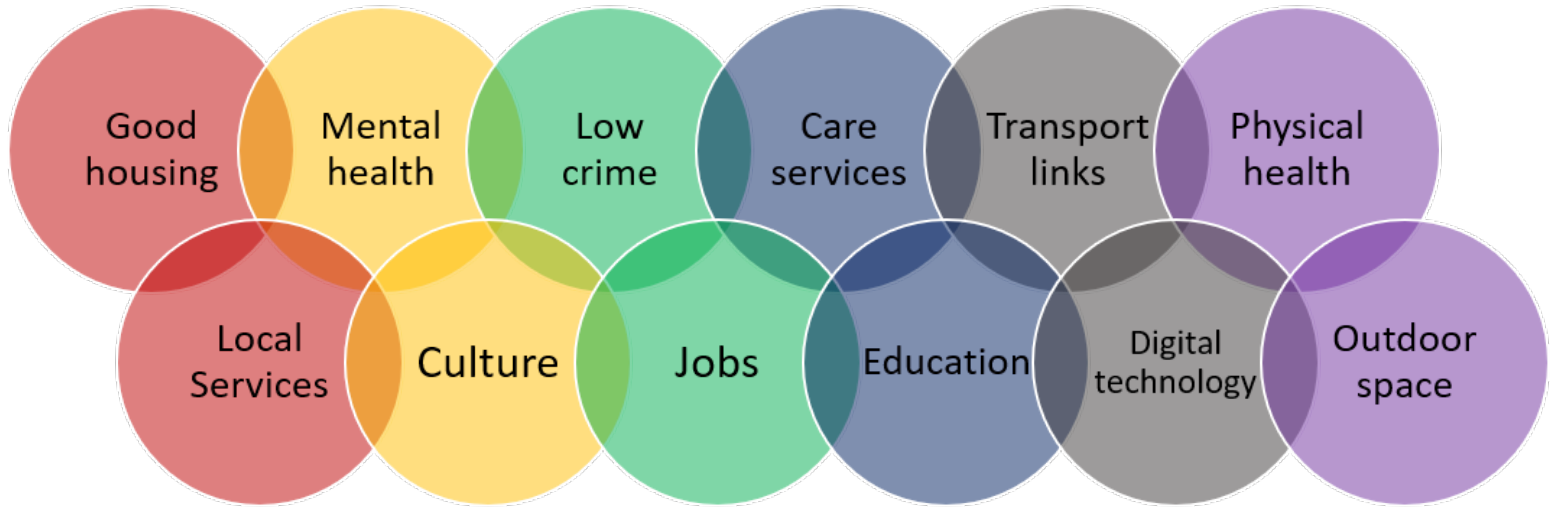
Government defines social exclusion

'as a process by which certain groups are systemically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household'.

Social exclusion affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.'

Accessibility

Key factors contributing to social inclusion can include:



Definitions

There are some words and phrases which are often used when exploring social inclusion which are useful to be mindful of:

Social exclusion

The compounding problems of impairment, discrimination, diminished social role, lack of economic and social participation and disability. Loss of status, work, decreased opportunities to establish family, reduced social networks, repeated rejection and consequent restrictions of hope and expectation.

Stereotype

A stereotype is a simplified image often held in common by people about another group. Stereotypes are typically generalisations based on limited knowledge about a group of people to which the person doing the stereotyping does not belong. Stereotypes are often negative.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion can be defined as people having the same opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, society and community as the rest of the population.

A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity.

Advocacy and Social Inclusion

Advocacy has an important role to play in challenging social exclusion, discrimination and making communities more inclusive. In fact, all independent advocacy has its roots firmly grounded in the longer term citizen advocacy role which developed partly in response to the isolation and disconnection experienced by people with a learning disability. The citizen advocate became a natural ally to the individual by helping on day to day issues, activities that might normally be undertaken by a friend or family member (like shopping, filling in forms, attending meetings, going to the cinema or pub)

Statutory independent advocacy has developed in a way which focuses on the single issue being presented - this could be making a complaint, or applying for a Tribunal in a mental health hospital, or providing IMCA representation. The downside of this can often mean that the wider life experience of a person is either forgotten about or neglected.

But there is nothing to prevent an Independent Advocate - whether you are working in a statutory role like IMCA or IMHA - or a general advocate, to take action to address social exclusion.

The simplest way of doing this is by asking the following question:

"When our advocacy has finished and our relationship comes to an end, will my partner be more supported and connected in their community? Will they have more or less natural allies in their life?"

Improving social exclusion

Whenever you support a person to get something stopped, changed or started and you help them to take power - you are likely to be improving their social inclusion. But there are a number of specific activities you could undertake as an advocate which will specifically reduce social exclusion.

You can achieve these through your 1:1 relationships or through your organisation. When your organisation takes action to reduce exclusion and discrimination we call this work 'systemic advocacy': action taken to change systems within society.

Good social networks

A common feature of social exclusion is being lonely and not having a sense of being connected in your local community.

People often feel that having strong social networks help them to feel connected, safe and is an important way to develop relationships (which in turn leads to improved outcomes).

Whenever you work with a person, especially if your role involves care and supporting planning, see if the person would like to explore social networks and add any! This might include exercise classes, craft groups, local history or walking groups, church networks, sport, volunteering.... anything!

You can

- help show a person what networks and groups are available locally
- explore options for direct payments to cover any membership fees
- access the community groups by attending their first session with them

Housing

Housing can be a major part of social exclusion. The most obvious example being homelessness. But poor quality housing, run down accommodation, lack of play space, lack of facilities and local services and living in deprived areas can add to a person being socially excluded.

As an advocate always ask 'is this person living in the right home?'. And if the person (or you) believe it is not the right home, then do everything in your ability to change that. This might be requesting a change of accommodation decision and requesting the local authority to undertake assessments which consider the best type of housing to meet the persons needs.

Meaningful work

Take a look at the following statistics in 2020*

- 53.6% of people with disabilities were in employment, up from 51.7% a year previously. The employment rate for people without disabilities was 81.7%.
- The unemployment rate for people with a disability was 6.5%. This compared to an unemployment rate of 3.5% for people without disabilities
- People with disabilities were considerably more likely than those without disabilities to be economically inactive. While, the economic inactivity rate for those with disabilities was 42.6%, the corresponding figure for those without disabilities was 15.3%

Many of the people you will be supporting and representing will have a disability and may face extra barriers to finding meaningful employment and work - and we stress the word 'meaningful' in this sentence! Working in a voluntary capacity in the local charity shop can be a wonderful role for many people - but it is not the only option people should be offered.

As an advocate try and take time to look at where your advocacy partner spends most of their day and - especially if they are of working age - explore whether they would like to spend time in a place of work or at college. For instance an increasing number of FE colleges offer adult education courses to people with a learning disability.

* <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7540#fullreport>.

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