
Social Inclusion Managed Innovation Network Report Executive Summary

Exclusion and discrimination are a reality for many people who use mental health services, in particular those diagnosed with serious mental health problems. In recent years there has been a focus on inclusion within policy, leading to a call for health and social care services to prioritise social inclusion as a core part of their practice.

The social inclusion Managed Innovation Network (MIN) was made up of members of Making Waves, a psychologist from residential services and a nurse. It was interested in how social inclusion has been supported at a local level. The network aimed to explore experiences of involvement in the local community from the perspectives of those using and working in rehabilitation adult mental health services.

The social inclusion MIN was developed to explore these issues and use this to try and influence practice. This involved gathering information using three different methods from the seven units within rehabilitation services. It was an important part of the MIN to try and reach those people who would not normally be involved in sharing their views through attending meetings or doing interviews.

Mapping Community Networks

This was conducted using a questionnaire based mapping tool to gather what connections each rehabilitation unit had with the community. These were identified by the staff teams from each area. The tool explored frequency and quality of contact with community organisations. Findings suggested that most teams had developed strong and sustained relationships with housing and primary healthcare providers. While there were a number of other examples of contact with community organisations, the greater part of involvement tended to be within statutory services.

Focus Groups with staff teams in residential services

In order to gain a more detailed view of inclusion from the mental health workers perspective, focus groups were conducted with the staff teams. Findings highlighted a number of factors perceived as promoting inclusion. These included an absorbing community, staff employed within the unit who were part of the local community, residents being valued as a member of the organisation, effective relationships between mental health services and community organisations. Factors that were identified by staff to maintain social exclusion were a lack of finances and opportunities, association with mental health services and rigid employment expectations.

"People you know, Places you go" participatory photo project

Photography was used to capture the perspective of people being supported by rehabilitation services. The participatory photo project was inspired by the organisation ©Photovoice. Their approach enables individuals who are perhaps more used to being the subjects of photography or research to exert more control over the way they are represented and therefore seen by the rest of the world. Residents on the units were encouraged to look at different ways of portraying places and people they know, using photographs to tell a story and capture their interactions with their local community. Support and guidance was provided by members of Making Waves and identified workers on the unit. This approach also provided the opportunity for people to learn new skills through using the cameras. Analysis of the photographs was conducted by categorising them into themes and then reviewing each individual narrative. This led to the identification of 10 categories; green spaces, art and music, sport, local, city, home, food, transport, relationships, self and spirituality and 4 overarching themes; past, social networks, aspirations and observation.



"I try to go on my weight bench once a week, it's less expensive than gym membership"



"That's the bus stop. I go there every time I go out. Whenever I can get out, watching traffic and going to the shops, watching traffic"

Key Findings and Recommendations from Social Inclusion MIN

- Community development should be built through skills enhancement of mental health staff and training for community organisations. Key individuals including community development and college link workers could be invited to residential units. This will also provide the opportunity for tackling wider community issues.
- Relevant and up to date information on community resources should be made available for example the local paper or parish newsletters. Information on financial entitlements for residents should be fully accessed such as bus passes or concessionary cinema card.
- To promote social inclusion creative and flexible approaches are necessary. Creative means should be used to open up dialogues about people's hopes and wishes. Social inclusion and promoting recovery are interwoven and need to be supported by a recovery approach being implemented at the local level.
- Social inclusion is a subjective and fluid experience which can vary for everyone. Isolation appears to be a barrier to community participation. Support should be tailored to the individual. It should include the setting of small goals, graded reduction in support, recognition of the significance of friendships and connecting people with common interests.
- People's choices of housing and preferences for locality need to be explored. Enabling people to get to know a new area would be a vital part of their move to ensure they feel safer, secure and have opportunities to become familiar with the new surroundings, shops and facilities.

Social Inclusion Managed Innovation Network

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Making Waves is an organisation with sole membership consisting of people with personal experience of mental distress. It aims to use its member's experiences to transform mental health services through research, training and involvement in professional education.

The Institute of Mental Health
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