Allied Health Professions Support Service: supporting disabled student and qualified allied health professionals in educational and employment settings throughout the UK

Factsheet 8: Inclusion

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What does it mean?

Inclusion is based on the principle that everyone is valued. Inextricably linked to the concept of equality, it positively welcomes diversity within society. Disability is regarded as a welcome difference, not as a deficit or burden.

“…..labelling learners, in terms of what has been deficient within them, can form a barrier to listening to them as learners with distinct voices. This barrier can deny learners the opportunity to contribute to the culture, organisation and character of educational institutions, and, as a result, can ensure they are excluded within them”.

(Veck 2007 p1)

How does inclusion apply to AHP education?

Taking an inclusive approach means that students are well prepared to work with a diverse range of people: both colleagues and patients. This could be seen as the desired ‘product’ of inclusive education.

When planning an inclusive curriculum, be aware of the implications of the terms "success, failure and ability" (Moran 2009 p46). Because AHP education and employment regularly focus on standards and competences, it is easy to discourage
students from being different or valuing diversity. Use positive examples of diversity in your teaching and encourage students to discuss their thoughts and feelings about difference.

Of course, you have to juggle many priorities when developing a curriculum. It will help if you reflect on your own values and beliefs and think about how these might influence how you interpret the standards and competences. Students will only begin to challenge society’s dominant ideologies and those of the healthcare system if you give them opportunities to do so. This will, in turn, influence their practice.

- How inclusive is your teaching practice?
- How inclusive is your institution as a whole?
- In what ways do you think that your own knowledge, beliefs, opinions and expectations influence the ways in which you interact with colleagues and students?

Equality Impact Assessments

The Equality Act (2010) requires HEIs and NHS Trusts to involve people from under-represented groups in the development and monitoring of policies, practices and procedures. This can be done through the process of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs). The Department for Work and Pensions note: “An equality impact assessment involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people in respect of disability, gender and racial equality. It helps us to make sure the needs of people are taken into account when we develop and implement a new policy or service or when we make a change to a current policy or service”.

The Improvement and Development Agency state that "EqIAs remain a useful tool to enable you to assess the implications of your decisions on your communities. Good equality analysis will help your organisation to tackle inequality and target resources efficiently." (www.idea.gov.uk 2012).

EqIAs should be applied retrospectively to all existing policies, procedures and practices and modifications made as necessary. New and future policies should be impact assessed as they are being developed – not as an afterthought.
Look at all aspects of the curriculum. A number of opportunities present themselves for you to do this, for example, when you are:

- developing existing teaching/learning opportunities
- creating new teaching/learning opportunities
- designing assessments
- modifying assessments
- implementing change

It is also important to consider the physical environment.

Think about rights as well as responsibilities. Value disabled students as a resource rather than regarding them as ‘problems’ to be overcome. Listen to their feedback and respond to it when designing the programme. Include a wide range of learning opportunities so that everyone can access the curriculum. In doing so, you will be taking steps towards including traditionally excluded groups of people.

Having conducted EqIAAs, you should be able to make appropriate adjustments that take account of differences in learning styles and requirements and make the overall teaching and learning environment more inclusive for all.

**Be proactive**

Encourage student involvement in all aspects of programme development and change management. This will foster a climate of mutual trust and support, enhancing everyone's experience.

> “Don’t say you are right too often, teacher  
> Let the learners realise it.  
> Don’t push the truth:  
> It’s not good for it.  
> Listen while you speak!”

(Brecht, 1953-56 p436)
References


Veck W (2007) Listening to include. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 1 – 15 (To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/13603110701322779 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603110701322779 )

Web links

Web link for general inclusion issues: http://www.csie.org.uk/inclusion/what.shtml

The Equality Challenge Unit has a specific focus on HE and is a good resource for all equality issues. http://www.ecu.ac.uk/

For specific information on inclusion and disability go to: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/inclusive-practice/?browse=subject&filter=disability

This website also provides guidance on how to carry out equality impact assessments in HE. Access this at: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/conducting-equality-impact-assessments.doc/view?searchterm=equality%20impact%20assessment

Another toolkit for Equality Impact Assessments can be found at: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=8017247

Web links for work on inclusive teaching and learning practice:


http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pesl/resources/disability/

For case studies about disabled students’ experiences of transition into HE http://dart.lboro.ac.uk/case.html
A range of inclusion resources on disability equality for students can be found at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/disability-equality

Contact Us

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Acknowledgment

The Allied Health Professions Support Service (AHPSS) was launched in 1991 in response to the closure of the Royal National Institute for Blind People's (RNIB) School of Physiotherapy which catered exclusively for visually impaired students. AHPSS's remit was to provide support to disabled allied health profession students in mainstream higher education in the UK. It also offered information, advice and specialised disability awareness training to academic and practice-based staff.

In 2002, AHPSS staff were invited by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) to join a team of specialists to produce a training manual specifically designed to provide guidance for practice based staff in supporting disabled students on practice based placements. The document: "Supporting Physiotherapy Students on Clinical Placement", was published in 2004 and received very positive feedback from all stakeholders.

By 2007, it was evident that the document needed updating in response to UK legislative and technological changes and the increasing use of online information. Following discussions with CSP staff, it was agreed that the AHPSS team (Jane Owen Hutchinson, AHPSS Manager and Karen Atkinson, Senior Lecturer and Manager of the RNIB Resource Centre at the University of East London), would take on this project.

Between 2007 and 2010, considerable time was spent in obtaining feedback from a wide range of stakeholders regarding the content and format of the future document. Whist it was unanimously agreed that it should be available in both hard copy and electronically, all staff identified the importance of being able to access some of the specific guidance on disability management from the AHPSS website.

"Into Physiotherapy" was published by the CSP and RNIB in 2010. Thirteen related information sheets were subsequently uploaded onto the AHPSS website (between 2010 and 2013), at which point the AHPSS was decommissioned by NHS London. As a result of the positive feedback these fact sheets received and requests from a number of organisations, Jane Owen Hutchinson and Karen Atkinson have given permission for these materials to continue to be available online.