SDF Community Inclusion Initiative – Community of Practice
Topic 2: Workforce

What is this?

This is the second in a series of resources to support providers of disability day services and community participation to increase community inclusion for people with disability. It is based on best practice and feedback from organisations participating in the Community Inclusion Initiative. It is intended as a conversation starter with frontline workers and team leaders, but can also be used with people with disability and their families.

1. The right workforce to increase community inclusion

- Workforce will increase significantly
- Roles and skill mix will change in response to consumer demand
- Staff need a different balance of workforce skills to support community inclusion

ndis National Disability Insurance Scheme

Past ➜ **NDIS Future**

- Emphasis on technical or 'hard' skills - hired for set roles
- Activities often based on staff skills
- Work to a regular timetable

- More emphasis on behavioural or 'soft' skills which maximise independence
- Capacity to support different individuals
- Flexible work hours

HARD SKILLS
('Technical' skills)

- Instructing
- Teaching
- Qualifications
- Hobbies
- Measurable

SOFT SKILLS
('People' skills)

- Communication
- Flexibility
- Problem-solving
- Team work
- Empathy
- Negotiation

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Discussion Questions

- What does your workforce look like? What skills do they have?

- Do their skills influence the services you provide?

- Is there a good match between skills, NDIA goals and what people with disability and families want?

2. What soft skills support community inclusion?

✓ **Person-centred**
- Always has the person at the centre of decision making
- Uses a strengths-based approach based on human rights

✓ **Can support participation & inclusion**
- Provides just the right amount of support to enable education, employment, recreation and lifestyle choices
- Knows how to step back from providing ongoing support

✓ **Innovative**
- Flexible, creative and resourceful
- Thinks outside own experience and knowledge
- Always looking for ways to improve outcomes
- Uses time and resources effectively – a good researcher

✓ **Good customer relations**
- Communicates appropriately with people with disability
- Works cooperatively with families, the organisation and other important stakeholders
- Respects culture and diversity of people and their families
- A team player

✓ **Personal accountability & awareness**
- Takes responsibility for own work practices, learning and skill development
- Reflects on own practice and can change approach
- Understands how own values and attitudes can increase or decrease community inclusion opportunities
- Understands the role of facilitator of community inclusion – they are not a 'special friend'

✓ **Community engagement & education**
- Develops networks
- 'Gets' community inclusion
- Presents disability positively to community, volunteers and stakeholders

Discussion Questions
- Which soft skills are most relevant for day services to increase community inclusion?
- Are there any other soft skills needed for day services to support community inclusion?

3. Does your service have the right mix of skills?

✓ **Determine hard and soft skills**
- Complete a skills matrix for staff and volunteers

Example of a hard skills matrix

4. Highly skilled: expert who can train others   3. Skilled: competent and does not need assistance
2. Partially skilled: some gaps in skills and requires assistance   1. Not skilled: skill gap and cannot perform work

Skill	Betty	Bob	Bruce	Bindi	Brenda	Bowen	No. of people with skill*
Medication administration	4	1	2	3	1	2	4
Sewing	3	4	3	1	3	1	4
Using an iPad	4	2	3	3	3	3	6
First Aid	4	4	4	4	4	4	6
Behaviour Management	3	3	2	2	1	4	5
Graphic Design	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

* Only ratings of 2 or above are counted for the person having the skill

✓ **Determine soft skills**
- Ask 'real life questions'
- Role play different scenarios
- Observe performance over a period of time
- Ask staff to self-assess
- Ask service users to assess staff
- Review complaints data and 'compliments'

"*Tell me about the best example of community inclusion you supported and the change it made to the person's life .*"

✓ **Identify good coverage and gaps**
- Assess existing skills
- Determine whether skills available match service users' choices
- Identify additional skills required
- Include service users in the assessment
- Recognise skills and attributes need to be relevant to the organisation as well as the individual client

"We profiled our staff for hard and soft skills using this matrix. The most popular staff had personality, were problem solvers, flexible and team players."

✓ **Develop strategies to address gaps**
- Be clear about expected behaviours
- Always model best practice
- Reward good practice and act immediately on poor practice
- Provide internal & external mentoring opportunities
- Use active coaching to change behaviours
- Review policies & procedures to support community inclusion

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Discussion Questions
- What issues have you faced in trying to bring about change in the workforce?
- What strategies have been successful in getting staff to change historical work practices?

4. What does this mean for the future?

NDIS plans and the planning process

NDIS participants will have a plan containing **Social Participation** & **Independence** goals which include:
- What I want to achieve (my objectives)
- How I will know that I have achieved it (measure)

✓ **Staff readiness…**
- Understand the NDIS principles and planning process
- Know how to support people to implement their plans
- Are clear about their role and the roles of family members, informal supporters, volunteers and specialists

ready. set. go!

✓ **Organisational readiness…**
- Staff are encouraged to show innovation
- Policies support staff discretion and exercise of judgement
- Staff know the organisation will support them
- Successes are celebrated
- Poor practice is used as a learning opportunity
- Policies and procedures promote community inclusion

✓ **Sharing effective practice…**
- Regular opportunities to share new ideas and effective strategies
- Group problem solving
- Outcomes are shared
- ✓ **People with disability are part of the team**

TEAM
T TOGETHER
E EVERYONE
A ACHIEVES
M MORE

Discussion Questions
- How ready is your workforce and organisation for facilitating greater community inclusion of people with disability?
- Are there any industrial relations and rostering implications?
- Are there any other critical workforce issues?

5. Community inclusion looks like…

Presence   **Encounter**   **Participation**

Presence

Max is a support worker at a day service. He loves cooking and TV cooking shows so decided to do a course in hospitality and food management.

Max and his boss realised they could use his new skills to run a cooking program at the day service.

Each Thursday Max takes a group of people from the service to his old TAFE to use the commercial kitchen.

They spend a few hours cooking at the TAFE using Max's menu idea and then go back to the day centre.

Encounter

Max recognises that not everyone in the group is interested in cooking in the same way. Some people just want to learn basic skills whilst others want to be more involved.

Max suggests everyone choose their own dishes. He then asks who wants to go shopping to get ingredients.

He starts going to the local market with some of the group to buy fresh ingredients. Over time the local stall holders start to chat to the group now they are regulars.

Participation

Max realises that each member of the group has different cooking ambitions so he uses local networks to explore possible community connections:

- Ash gets work experience to learn pastry cooking
- Bonnie attends a 'Cooking for 1' class at the neighbourhood house to help prepare for moving out of home
- Tran volunteers at a meals program for homeless people.

Max provides different levels of support as each person participates in their cooking choice.

Initially this support is intensive but reduces over time as each person learns more skills and becomes more confident

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Discussion Questions
- How are your staff encouraged to use both their hard and soft skills?
- How are your staff encouraged to 'play to their strengths' to meet the individual interests of service users?
- How difficult is it for staff to 'step back' in their role as a paid supporter and build informal supports?

6. Sharing ideas and practice

Recruitment

"We changed from a three day orientation course to a three day paid training course prior to employment to assess suitability for positions and a match with the organisation's values. Not everyone is offered a position at the end of training."

"Potential staff complete a one page personal profile that tells us about them and their strengths. People with disability are always on the interview panel."

"We employ people on a contract to provide support to just one person. They know they have work for as long as the person with disability wants them."

"We offer TAFE placements to students and get a good idea of whether they will be a fit for our organisation when qualified."

"Six weeks is the critical point in employment. If a person is not performing by then, waiting for the three month probation period to end is too late."

The following quotes were made by our Community of Practice reflecting on their current workforce and readiness for the NDIS

Hard and Soft Skills

"Both hard and soft skills need to be balanced but soft skills are more important."

"We're in a remote region and rely almost exclusively on a casual workforce. The right soft skills are essential, we provide training for the technical skills."

"We get our really good staff to mentor new staff. They see good practice and how it meets our values."

"Position descriptions list the required soft skills."

"We need people who can make good decisions in the grey areas, where there is no clear right or wrong answer."

"Our staff must be culturally aware, take time to build trust with families, not make assumptions and always ask questions if they are unsure."

"We rely heavily on feedback from people and their families on their satisfaction with staff."

Transitioning existing staff

"We have some great staff who really get community inclusion. We ask them to share their experiences with other staff."

"We are taking a person-centred approach to our staff now. We asked staff why they were resistant to change. They told us they don't feel valued and couldn't play to their strengths."

"We have put in significant effort to buddy, mentor, supervise and train existing staff. Some end up leaving and in many cases this has been the best outcome for everyone."

"We reward and recognise good staff by highlighting their work across the organisation."

"We run regular temperature checks with staff to see how they are coping with change. We engage 'difficult' staff in the solutions and also make sure they can attend external events such as conferences."

"Role playing is a great way to act out different scenarios and get staff to reflect on different ways of doing things."

6. Sharing ideas and practice

Organisational readiness

"Staff need to understand their role as a facilitator, step back and withdraw support and see a world where they are no longer required in that person's life."

"People with disability and families are a key part of our change process in training staff. We get them to tell their stories of the change in their lives."

"Organisations have nothing to fear if they are delivering what people want. We must work as a customer service organisation by responding quickly to their requests and delivering exactly what they want. We take time to build natural supports and then reduce paid support over time. This takes a lot of time."

"It's really important to do what you say you are going to do and to do it in a timely manner. We are also realistic and honest about the services and support we can provide."

"We no longer have EBAs but employ solely on the Award. We're reasonably confident the Fair Work Commission won't award big pay increases so that is helping set our salaries budget."

"We have a mix of casual staff who can work for an hour to do specific tasks and permanent staff who can work regular shifts."
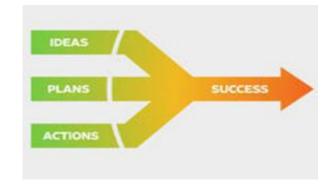
"Enabling dignity of risk is essential and part of our mandatory training. We use therapists to help increase independence such as mobility and communication."

"We are using this Workforce Topic paper at staff meetings and during supervision to discuss hard and soft skills, the difference between the two and why they matter."

"We have copied some of the content of these papers into our newsletters to promote discussion."

"Our pathway training for support workers includes monthly modules with competency components to be completed. The training is a way of valuing and enhancing the great role our support workers perform and staff comments indicate they appreciate the opportunity to learn and develop in their role."

6. Sharing ideas and practice

Addressing challenges

"How to be an ethical organisation? How to balance the needs of people with disability with the needs of generally low paid staff? We have lost several good staff to completely different sectors because we transferred them to casual contracts and now they cannot get loans or mortgages because of their employment status. It's just not sustainable to have an all casual workforce. We cannot invest training in people who can leave at the end of a shift. It also leaves us open to poaching – we train people and other services take them."

"Casual staff incur a 25% oncost. This can't be recovered through smart rostering. And there are big risks to quality if the workforce is nearly all casual."

"It's almost impossible to fund training within the NDIS funding."

"It's really difficult to supervise staff when they are working out in the community. It can take days out of a manager's week to assess and supervise staff working across large areas."

"Dealing with industrial issues is very challenging and emotionally draining."

"There is still tension around what community inclusion looks like within a day service model. The Presence, Encounter and Participation model is helpful to understand the difference."

"We don't have the number of networks or level of volunteer support in small communities. There are less and less people available to do this work."

"We need to improve the way information is given to support workers. I don't think they all know what community inclusion looks like now and how it will be different in the future. Most of them only want to know how it will impact on them and whether they can still work 9:00 - 3:00."

RESOURCES

Read
Carer Careers, *Jobs and career advice for the care sector* Link

I'm here to help report: The role of the support worker in the NDIS, Griffith University 2015 Link

RMIT Workforce Guide: Making it Work, RMIT University Link

Life Without Barriers, 2013. Lived Experience Recruitment Toolkit Link

St. Laurence, 2013, *The GRAND Coordinated Training Manual for disAbility Support Workers* Link

Watch
A series of short videos showing how support staff can facilitate inclusion Link (Password: encounter)

Carpentaria Disability Services, online videos for indigenous workers Link

Open Future Learning, online learning modules for the disability workforce Link

Contact
Disability Workforce Innovation Network Advisors are located in each state and territory. Link

Contact Us!

We are interested to hear from people about community inclusion. Tell us what you think about these resources or any of the issues raised. What do you agree with? What have we missed?

Get in touch with James Bannister on james.bannister@NDS.org.au