

SDF Community Inclusion Initiative - Community of Practice

Topic 4: Bricks and Mortar

What is this?

This is the fourth 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. What role do buildings play in community participation?

What do we mean by 'Bricks and Mortar' ... ?

- Dedicated buildings for providing a day service
- A dedicated place for people with disability to go to
- Typically open 9am - 3pm, Monday to Friday

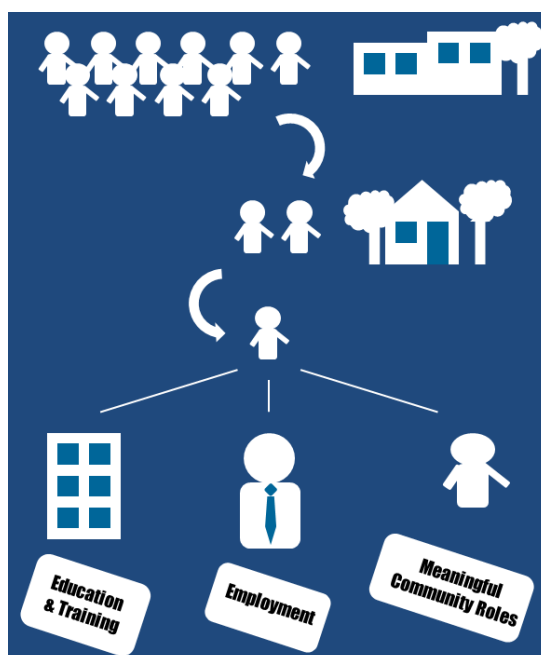


Transitioning from the old to the new

Groups doing activities in buildings on-site

Smaller groups accessing the community

Individuals choosing own pathways



CHOICE

ndis National Disability Insurance Scheme

Discussion questions

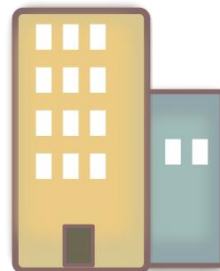
- What buildings does your day service have?
- What are they used for?
- Do the buildings influence the types of activities you offer?

2. Understanding segregation

Many day services operate from buildings or sites used exclusively by people with disability and staff. This can mean people are segregated from the community instead of participating in it. Finding ways to reduce reliance on segregated environments can be challenging - especially where alternatives in the community are hard to identify - but the impacts of segregation on people with disability are significant.

Reasons why services still rely on segregated environments

- Seen as financially economical to operate
- Offers respite and sense of security for families
- Meets some family expectations of 'a place to attend' (like school)
- 'A safe place' where people with disability can mix with peers
- Lack of essential community infrastructure (bathrooms, hoists) to go elsewhere
- Allows for planned activities five days-a-week
- Logistically easier for transport arrangements
- Often co-located with other organisational buildings
- Tradition (a sense of 'this is how it has always been done')
- Funding contracts which require number count of people attending centres
- Suits shifts of shared accommodation staff
- History – honours fundraising of past members who 'built' the centre
- Boards who may be risk adverse about support being provided in the community
- Asset on the balance sheet - security for loans
- Too hard to change – too expensive to change



What are the impacts of segregated services?

- Segregation is the "least desired" (*Shut Out report 2009*)
- Adds to stigmatisation of people with disability
- Often geographically distant from the community
- Limits choice about who people spend time with
- Reduced opportunity to socialise with other community members
- People required to fit in with timetabled activities
- Significant \$\$ spent on maintaining buildings and providing transport
- Staff uniforms can create sense of unequal relationships
- Increases reliance on paid support
- Applies restrictions that others in the community would not accept
- Creates low expectations, people 'settle for less'
- Fosters a charity model

EXPECTATIONS
vs
REALITY

'the consequences of spending years of their lives in day centres is that people have low expectations of what can be achieved in their lives because they rely on a narrow range of people for support.'
(Cole & Williams 2007)



Discussion questions

- How much investment does your service have in buildings?
- What factors contribute to buildings being retained by your organisation?
- Whose interests do the buildings serve?

3. How can providers make the change?

What is required to make the change from centre-based to more community-based...

- ✓ Vision to see a different way for people to realise their goals
- ✓ Leadership and capacity to 'steer the course' from the old to the new
- ✓ Co-design with people and families to deliver something that is right for them
- ✓ Work with staff, the community and other organisations to create something that works for all
- ✓ Accept that some staff will be committed, engaged and dedicated but others may leave
- ✓ Recognise that some people may need support to see the possible benefits
- ✓ Understand that it takes time, will falter along the way but persists 'no matter what'
- ✓ Lobbying and partnering to improve essential community infrastructure



Governance Questions

- ✓ How do buildings fit with our mission?
- ✓ Whose interests do our buildings serve?
- ✓ What percentage of our services rely on our buildings?
- ✓ Is our building a central 'hub' (starting and finishing point for going out) or do most activities occur here?



Stakeholder Questions

- ✓ Are all our service users engaged and satisfied with our services?
- ✓ Can we meet their goals here?
- ✓ Do families expect that people will attend a 'day centre'?



Executive Questions

- ✓ Is our leadership team committed to finding alternatives to dedicated buildings?
- ✓ Is there interest in exploring other ways to use our buildings to bring the community in?
- ✓ If not, why not?

Human Resource Questions

- ✓ Do our staff believe community participation is preferable to segregated settings?
- ✓ Will staff travel to work in the community?

Finance Questions

- ✓ How much do our operations rely on a group funding model?
- ✓ How does increased funding for 1:1 support change things?
- ✓ What portion of our budget is spent on building overheads?
- ✓ What are the transition costs?



Risk Management Questions

- ✓ Is unequal weight given to the risks of community options compared with the 'benefits' of buildings?



Discussion questions

- If there were no buildings what could your service look like?
- Do you need or use all your current buildings? Could they be used by the community?
- What is the cost (\$) of providing centre based services compared with those in the community?
- What support needs are difficult to meet in the community?

4. What are the alternatives?

Sharing Ideas and Practice

Making the change from many years reliance on a building or centre can be very challenging. Focus on one person at a time, and one brick at a time, to increase community inclusion options. Here is what disability organisations are doing as alternatives to dedicated buildings...

People out and about as active members of their local community

Using community facilities, e.g. gyms, clubs, libraries



Go home during the day to rest if needed

Meeting up with a group of friends to have a barbeque, go fishing, see a movie

One person at a time



Be a volunteer in an area or organisation of interest to YOU

Participating in non-segregated community venues e.g. Men's Sheds and Neighbourhood Houses

Using free WiFi locations in the community to join online community forums or gaming



Organisation's offices have chill out spaces for 'down time'

Use infrastructure of other disability services in local areas e.g. accessible bathrooms, hoists

Hiring venues for a specific purpose, e.g. commercial kitchen, church hall, music studios

Rebuilding a new fully accessible community centre for all on the day service site

Share/hire resources with other groups, e.g. pottery kilns, music studio



Opening up classes to anyone in the community, e.g. Zumba, music production, Pilates

One brick at a time



Offering accessible toilets to others in the community, e.g. older people, parents with young children

Having a shop front and 'hub' drop in centre in the heart of town



"Bringing the community in" converting segregated services into community hubs – hire out rooms to other groups, e.g. community choirs, U3A



Mixing it Up: Red Inc (Lismore)

- ✓ Support people to access local community groups
- ✓ Local experts conduct specialist classes, e.g. street artists
- ✓ Drop in centre and community hub open to all
- ✓ A community Pop Up Shop sells participants' arts and crafts; and provides experience for Certificate in Retailing
- ✓ Has onsite studio for performing and creative arts

Lobbying for accessible toilets, public buildings, footpaths

5. New thinking about bricks and mortar looks like...



Presence

Common starting point

Through a day service people participate in a range of activities that are linked to the goals in the individual plans.

There are some outings into the community but these are mostly conducted as a group.



Encounter

Transition example 1

The Board of Directors sets a strategic direction to sell off the service's buildings and offer all services in the community. Gradually more people access community based programs.

Transition example 2

The day service had a major flood so the service was **temporarily closed** and people did activities in the community.

Transition example 3

The day service building was old and no longer met the needs of people who attended. There was no other local accessible community facilities that met the needs of the people who attended the day service.



Participation

Transition example 1

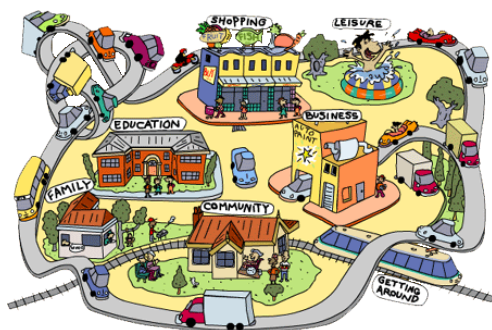
The Board of Directors set key performance indicators and once they reached a critical mass of supports being conducted in the community the buildings were sold. A church hall was leased for 12 months until the full transition was made. (*Inclusion Melbourne*)

Transition example 2

The day service never returned to the building mostly due to the participants indicating a strong wish not to. All people now attend a range of options in the community (*Outlook*).

Transition example 3

The former day centre buildings were demolished and a new fully accessible community centre is being built on the site. The building project is overseen by a Community Reference Group comprising many partners. A funding application has been made for a Neighbourhood House Co-ordinator. (*Karingal*)



Resources:

- *Adult Day Services and Social Inclusion*: Better Days, Chris L. Clark [Link](#)
- *Changing Places* campaign for accessible public toilets and 'find a toilet' [Link](#)
- Cole and William, *Having a Good Day* (Ch 2) [Link](#)
- Halton Borough Council, *Unleash the Entrepreneurs* [Link](#)
- *Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia* 2009: [Link](#)



Changing Places
Transforming Lives