Inclusive Youth Work Practice

- practical suggestions for inclusive youth work
A two part approach to bring about a revolution
within your centre or project.

Part 1.
Courtney Taylor and Alison John
attempt to set the scene, develop the
concept of Inclusion and suggest
ways leaders could apply this ethos
within their work

There may have been times in your life that you have been excluded from an activity or event. As a young person you may recall an event where 'all' your friends were going, to which you were prevented from attending.

- You may have been prevented because of **External** factors - a parent decided that it was not an event you should attend
or
- **Internal** factors - you felt uncomfortable about the group, or did not have the confidence.

At other times the exclusion may have been-more personal and direct. Remember the occasion that you were not invited to that party or picked for a team? Since other people are more aware of this exclusion, which is a direct reflection on the individual, strategies are brought into play.

These may include:
- A determination to be part of the group
- A. withdrawal of your interest
- A determination to get your own back e.g. not inviting that person to your party

These disappointments do continue into adult life and are evident within a number of personal and social situations.

However, where a person falls within a visible group these exclusions occur on a regular basis. Decisions are then made on society's perception of the group based solely on being physically marked out as being part of that group.

These groups include:
- Women
- Disabled people
- People within other ethnic or cultural groups

(This list is much longer but we would like to use these groups to highlight the issue)

Women have faced exclusion from many clubs and associations within our society -for example, until recently the MCC (The Marylebone Cricket Club) did not allow women entry - as well as, more importantly,

access to employment and services which men enjoy. Although major inroads are being made, many centuries of 'withdrawal of interest' will require a major change in the viewpoint held within society. This is about raising the consciousness of everyone so that action can be taken.

However, to gain access to those groups who have been excluded there is a need to recognise the cultural change that must take place within any club or project. Recently, a number of Police Forces have highlighted the existence of 'Institutional Racism' implying that racism runs deep within all aspects of the force's operation. (This could have easily included ingrained prejudices directed at women, disabled people and a number of other groups). One implied solution is to increase the number of black officers within the force. This will not however cure the perceived problem -just as increasing the number of disabled people, minority ethnic groups or girls and young women within a club offers only an immediate solution- as it does not get to the heart of the issue.

Of course within your club or project, you do not exclude any groups? Or do you?
Try to answer this question honestly.
How do you cater for
- Girls and young women
- People with disabilities
- People from differing ethnic groups or cultures?

If the answer is you don't or in a very limited way, then approaches within inclusion must commence. One worker once said that he does not have to because none of these groups attend the project. This is not an acceptable response since not taking action perpetuates the situation and fails to challenge the views of young people. Also, as this involves excluding more than 50% of young people, further consideration needs to be given. Numbers should not be the deciding factor on developing an ethos of inclusion, the need can be shown to be greater where young people and staff have little contact with different groups.
Many centres and projects also mistakenly believe that they are involved within

inclusion because they have access for wheelchair users or include 'welcome' in several minority languages on all literature. Although these processes are important they should not begin and end there, or be seen as an expensive reason not to commence any work. Inclusion must go deeper than this and should form part of the culture and thinking within the unit.

Centres need to consider a policy that covers every facet of the organisation, which include recruitment, programme planning and training. Each has an important role to play in development on the road to Inclusion.

Some practical steps would include
- **Attitudes**
- Are attitudes of staff and current members enabling?
- How can present thinking be challenged?
- **Environment**
- Does it meet the needs of all groups?
- Is appropriate language being used?
- Are positive images clearly displayed within posters and other materials?
- Is the programme relevant to the needs of all young people?
- **Staffing**
- Are positive role models of differing groups available to young people?
- How are positions filled? Do you need to look at alternative approaches to attract, for example, disabled people?

The greatest influence on inclusion is the right attitude of all involved and forms the most important part of the access issue; it is only through a major attitude change can inroads be made. Discussion can begin now to enable this process.

In the next edition of Ymlaen, Part 2 will look at some practical approaches to Inclusive Youth Work Practice.

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