INCLUSION IRELAND
National Association for People
with an Intellectual Disability

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An easy to read guide to the research project on

19 Stories of Social Inclusion – Ireland:

**Stories of
Belonging, Contributing and Connecting**

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Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
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19 Stories of Social Inclusion –Ireland: Stories of belonging, contributing and connecting

Easy to read summary

About this document

This is an easy to read summary of a report on Social Inclusion and people with an intellectual disability.

For more information on the research visit the Inclusion Ireland website at: website

There are also 19 people's stories of Social Inclusion on the website.

These stories are told in videos and through pictures and words.

Introduction

People with intellectual disabilities in Ireland are more likely to be socially excluded than other people.

But this research focuses on the people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland who are included.

These people are living and participating in their communities, all over Ireland.

The aim of this research was to have other people hear their stories.

This research wants to show that it is possible for people with intellectual disabilities to live socially included lives in communities.

Social Inclusion

This research talked about what social inclusion is.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) guided us.

It says that everyone has a right to live independently and to be included in their community.

This research also agreed that having a choice and making your own decisions is a very important part of social inclusion.

Inclusive Research Methods

"Nothing about us without us"

As this research is about people with intellectual disabilities it was important that people with intellectual disabilities were involved.

Researchers with intellectual disabilities were employed in the team.

A team of three researchers, two with intellectual disabilities, worked together to carry out the interviews and to discuss what we learnt.

The research had a group of experts who provided advice to the project.

This was called the Research Advisory Group.

This group included people with intellectual disabilities.

Who took part in the research?

9 men and 10 women were interviewed. They are called the participants in this document.

They were aged between 19 and 68 years old.

They were living in cities, towns and villages all over Ireland.

All the participants had an intellectual disability.

17 of the participants had another disability as well.

For example, people had a physical disability, autism, a long- term illness or a mental health difficulty.

All the participants were living socially included lives in different ways. For example

- Some were employed in mainstream work or went to mainstream colleges.

- Others took part in local clubs and community activities.

- Some were living in their own homes in the community.

- Others had friendships and relationships in their communities.

What participants told us about social inclusion:

- Participants said social inclusion gave them a good feeling of being part of the community.

- Participants said being socially included created opportunities for more social inclusion.

  For example, a move to his own home in the community made it possible for one person to get involved in a local music group.

  For another person getting a job meant he had enough money to think about moving into his own home.

- Participants said they helped other people with intellectual disabilities to get their rights and to be more socially included.

What helped to make social inclusion happen?

- Planning for a life in the community was helped by focusing on the unique person and their talents and interests rather than on the disability.

- Participants helped themselves by having self-advocacy skills and leadership qualities.

- Some workplaces or colleges or community spaces supported people to be included. These places were
  - physically accessible,
  - welcoming,
  - open to change, and
  - valued diversity and difference.

- Having good support was very important to becoming socially included.

What participants told us about good support?

- Good support was based on a respectful relationship.

  It was based on a common sense of humanity, two-way relationships and shared interests.

- Good support started with identifying the person's goals, strengths and interests.

- Good support helped to change things in the community so that participants could take part.

- Good support was smart at finding opportunities for work, education or community activities.

- Good support advocated for the participants to be included and to get the support they needed.

What does this mean for policy and practice?

- It's important that policymakers understand what social inclusion means for people with intellectual disabilities and that **choice** is a very important part of this.

- Supports for decision-making are very important but the government has been very slow to put the new law about decision-making into action.

  This law is called the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act.

- Personal or individual supports are important to live a socially included life, but many services are still 'one size fits all'.

  The HSE should make sure that people with intellectual disabilities can make choices about their supports.

- It is very important that ordinary places and services that everyone in the community uses are also accessible to people with intellectual disabilities.
  We need policies and actions to make this happen.

Recommendations for policy and practice:

- The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 should include a plan to support people with disabilities with relationships, self-advocacy and other types of advocacy.
  At the moment they are not included in the Strategy.

- The Government must put supports for decision-making in place and make sure they have enough funding.

  This includes the Decision Support Service under the new law called the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act.

- The Government must provide support and money for more self-advocacy and leadership training.

  This can be done by putting the HSE's Plan for Effective Participation in Decision-Making into action.

  The Plan should include promoting self-advocacy, providing training in services and starting equality and rights committees in services.
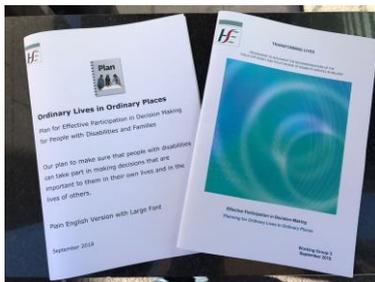
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD. This protocol allows individual people to make complaints to the UNCRPD Committee.

- Disability services should separate out the funding for each person using the service. This would help people to choose the supports that are right for them.

  The HSE should make sure that services do this by asking them to sign an agreement when they are getting funding.

- The Department of Housing and the Department of Health should work together to make sure people with intellectual disabilities can get housing and the supports they need to live independently.

- Public bodies should check to see if their services are accessible to people with intellectual disabilities.

  If not, they should plan to remove any barriers. This is what the Public Sector Duty says.

This Easy to Read Document was developed by Inclusion Ireland for 19 Stories of Social Inclusion research project.

The document was proof-read by men and women with a disability.