

Towards inclusive cities and social sustainability: A scoping review of initiatives to support the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in civic and social activities

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ABSTRACT

The inclusion of people with intellectual disability in cultural and civic activities is an important point for discussion, particularly in the context of supporting the social sustainability of our local communities and cities. In line with a human rights approach to disability and inclusion, local governments and community organisations are poised to play a pivotal role in the inclusion of people with intellectual disability. Using PRISMA-P guidelines, we undertook a scoping review of local inclusion building initiatives in Australia and comparative international countries that helped connect people with intellectual disability with their local council and community. We also examined what role people with intellectual disability played in the assessment and evaluation of these resources in the literature. We analysed the initiative outcomes discussed in the included papers across the five themes outlined in framework for Building Inclusive Cities (Broadband & Keiran 2019) and through the lens of Simplician et al.'s (2015) framework for community participation. Participation-building initiatives that were investigated included more general community groups, specific community groups (Men's Shed, Unified Sports teams), dog walking, peer advocacy, community conversation and community mentorship. One out of the 11 studies reported an inclusive research methodology (Power, Bartlett, & Hall, 2016). Analysis of the results offers opportunities to consider the ways in which the personal preferences of people with intellectual disability can be interwoven with structure and levels of participation to improve social inclusion in their local communities.

1. Introduction

In line with a localised human rights approach to disability and inclusion, and one which reflects both a “rights to the city” and “rights in the city” approach to urban inclusion (Tempin Reiter 2019), local governments and community organisations are poised to play a pivotal role in the inclusion of people with intellectual disability. This contributes directly to both the notion of the inclusive city and concepts of social sustainability. *Social sustainability* is an overarching theme that represents one of the three principal pillars of sustainable development, sitting alongside economic and ecological sustainability. It is strongly represented within the sustainable development goals identified by the United Nations (United Nations, 2012). Definitions of social sustainability are diverse across scholars (Diesendorf, 2000; Enyedi, 2002;

Chiu, 2003; Atanda & Öztürk, 2020). For the purposes of this paper, social sustainability can be understood to include the overarching dimensions of *social equity* and the *sustainability of community* at its core, acting through social inclusion and cohesion (Dempsey, Bramley, Power, & Brown, 2011).

The inclusion of people with intellectual disability in cultural and civic activities is an important point for discussions around the social sustainability of our local communities and cities – and is founded in the awareness that many marginalized groups do not get the opportunity to be present and participate in daily urban social life for a range of overlapping reasons which can include the built environment, strategy and policy structures, social or economic inequalities.

This scoping review was conducted as part of a project that was exploring ways to include people with intellectual disability in more

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mainstream services and activities provided by Australian Local Governments. This larger project was focused on finding ways to capacity-build local governments and be more inclusive of people with intellectual disability, and in so doing, build more inclusive communities at a local level.

This is particularly important in Australia and other similar countries as policies of individualized funding for people with disability grow. Across disability support and aged care, funding through individual packaging is now the preferred approach of national governments (Olney & Dickinson, 2019). One result of this is increased mobility of people with disability and their support workers throughout local communities as people exercise more choice and control over the way they use their personal support budgets, such as through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Malbon, Carey, & Meltzer, 2019). To meet this increasing movement away from activities located in disability organisations towards community involvement, a wider range of activities and amenities are needed to improve social and economic participation opportunities for local community members with intellectual disability.

It is also important to locate this increasing expectation of local participation in a citizenship framework. While it might seem remote from local neighbourhood activity, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), Australia's responsibilities for activating the rights of people with intellectual disability at a local level are increasingly clearly mandated through localised inclusion policy, such as Australia's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) frameworks. DIAPs serve the purpose of outlining how Australian government departments and organisations, including local governments, put the principles of inclusion into practice across their organisation and jurisdiction. This distinction recognises the responsibilities of local governments as agents of inclusion, as set out in Australia in the National Disability Strategy (Council of Australian Government, 2011) and the Disability Inclusion Act (New South Wales Government, 2014). The localised nature of the policy is important as it signifies that the responsibility for human rights and inclusion does not solely lie with multilateral, international organisations such as the United Nations, or at a national level.

For the purposes of this paper, inclusion can be considered to be a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from mainstream settings and communities (Booth & Ainscow, 1998), it is not the responsibility of people with intellectual disability to change in order to be included. This review therefore focuses on inclusion as a responsibility of communities at a localised level and is not the responsibility of people with intellectual disability themselves. The authors distinguish between initiatives that self-develop people with intellectual disability to be a "better fit" in community and focus on initiatives that relate to capacity-building community, local government and neighbourhood connection.

This paper addresses an identified need to understand approaches that have been used to encourage and support the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in local community and neighbourhood life. As such, it brings together concepts of intellectual disability, local communities and participation. The backgrounds to these concepts are explored further in the following paragraphs.

Intellectual disability is a term that refers to a type of disability involving cognitive capacity. Other terms used in literature include developmental disability, learning disability, cognitive disability or intellectual impairment. Some people may have a diagnosis, linked to a specific condition like Down syndrome, others may not or may have been labelled or diagnosed in some way in their childhood. Intellectual disability can be an 'invisible disability', which in turn may make it harder for other people to identify what people's specific needs are, and how to make sure these are met. Whilst a diagnosis can mean access to support, health care or resources, it does not always reflect a person's strengths and potential, nor does it account for the influence of adequate support, education, access to opportunities or an inclusive community (Moeschler et al., 2014). More recent legislation emphasises the role that

community structures, attitudes, policies, resources and environmental factors play in enabling a person to be able to function and participate in the world. It also means embodying principles of dignity, non-discrimination, full participation, respect, equality and accessibility for all people with disabilities (Lawson & Beckett, 2020; United Nations, 2007).

This paper conceptualises *local communities* as components of cities and regions, with an understanding that sustainability of communities can be conceptualised across a range of dimensions including economic, social and environmental (Kohon, 2018). *Social sustainability*, framed in terms of social inclusion and sense of belonging have been identified as key values integral to creating sustainable communities (Dempsey et al., 2011). From a community planning perspective, initiatives to foster social inclusion and in turn sense of belonging, bring with it challenges of marginalization, lack of representation, leadership, power and influence meaning that community leaders can be forced to make choices and trade-offs in order to address goals of local social inclusion (Kohon, 2018).

Recognising that historically neighbourhoods, communities and cities have been designed and operate day to day without the influence and input of marginalized communities – recent research is contributing to new ways of encouraging participatory practices around local social inclusion (Ferilli, Sacco, & Tavano Blessi, 2016). Understanding what practices support inclusion and how they are valued by diverse groups within the local community contribute to making more socially responsible, inclusive neighbourhoods and communities where all people, regardless of disability or disadvantage, have opportunities to feel a sense of local belonging.

Social inclusion and participation is spoken about broadly as a positive construct, socially desirable and something to be promoted. For people with intellectual disability it is often ambiguous and contested, with differing meanings. This is not particularly helpful when seeking to build practical initiatives that support concrete change that builds demonstrated improvements in local communities and people's lives. Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek, and Leahy (2015, p.18) identify social inclusion as 'the interaction between two life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation'. Interpersonal relationships vary according to category, structure and function. A growing body of research notes the significance of convivial encounter between people with and without disability for developing personal participation (Bigby & Wiesel, 2019; Milot, Couvrette, & Grandisson, 2020). Despite social inclusion being a significant contributor of well-being for all people, it remains something that many people with intellectual disability rarely experience in the broader community. In fact, people with intellectual disability continue to experience high rates of social isolation (Emerson, Fortune, Llewellyn, & Stancliffe, 2020; Merrells, Buchanan, & Waters, 2019; Milner & Kelly, 2009). In this light, the increasing academic and community interest on related multi-layered and multi-perspectival concepts of belonging and connectedness are promising – particularly because they are grounded in the experience and priorities of people with disability (Hall, 2010; authors 2020).

Of particular interest for this paper is Simplican et al.'s organising framework for community participation. They consider the way in which three domains intersect to create or limit opportunities for deep and rich participation at a personal level: the category of participation activities (e.g. leisure, employment, education, cultural, access to goods and services, political and civil activities); the structure of participation (segregated, semi-segregated, or mainstream) and the level of participation (presence, encounter or participation).

Two previous scoping reviews explore social inclusion in the wider community for people with intellectual disability. Overmars-Marx, Thomese, Verdonschot, and Meininger (2014) scoped literature published between 2000 and 2010, examining which elements of social inclusion were covered by the literature and barriers and facilitators to inclusion. The authors identified five environmental domains: of particular relevance for this paper were neighbourhood characteristics

and government policies. Lack of activities or facilities and negative attitudes of community members were the primary barriers to inclusion identified within the neighbourhood characteristics domain. Facilitators included the ‘atmosphere’ of the neighbourhood, defined by a sense of safety and calm and contact with mainstream community members. This was found to be meaningful whether brief and superficial or long-term. Within the domain of government policies, the authors found that involvement of people with intellectual disabilities in the development of inclusion policy at a local level was supportive of effective policies and interventions.

The second, more recent review relevant to this field is by Bigby, Anderson & Cameron (2017), exploring the literature through the lens of community participation as a specific tenet of social inclusion. The authors examined 17 studies published between 2000 and 2015 focused on 13 separate interventions, identifying three conceptualisations of community participation. These are social relationships – between people with intellectual disability and mainstream community, convivial encounter with a focus on non-segregated spaces, and a sense of belonging/identity. They argue that adoption of a socio-ecological framework that recognises the complex interaction between these different domains of participation could help avoid the ‘presence vs participation’ binary, leading to more effective community participation policies and interventions. Our scoping review is standing on the shoulders of these two previous works; aiming to add contemporary research evidence to inform policy and practice on inclusive cities.

To understand the ways that capacity-building initiatives can play a role in building inclusive cities for and with people with intellectual disability, the findings from papers in this scoping review are analysed using the Inclusive Cities framework (Broadhead & Kierans, 2019). Developed for analysing cultural inclusion for recent migrants, we apply the framework in a new context. It provides a useful lens through which to view the inclusive initiatives to ensure the participation and involvement of people with intellectual disability in social and civic life, well aligned with emerging local government and community empowerment policy agendas (Rolfe, 2016). The aim of the Inclusive Cities approach is to use positive messaging to develop an inclusive narrative for the city which informs and drives practice and is local authority led, working in close partnership with business, public and voluntary sector organisations to achieve shared goals. The Framework proposes five core areas of action, intended to set out policy areas for local authorities and community partners to make step-changes in their approaches to building inclusion throughout the city. These five core areas of action are:

1. Leading in the development of a shared local story of inclusion
2. Supporting and driving inclusive economic growth
3. Connecting communities
4. Mainstreaming and building inclusive public services
5. Encouraging civic participation and representation

2. Material and methods

2.1. Protocol

Our protocol was developed using the scoping review methodological framework proposed by Arksey and O’Malley (2005) and Peters et al. (2015).

2.2. Eligibility

The aim of this scoping study was to map key concepts underpinning interventions to include people with intellectual disability in their local community, and the main sources and types of evidence available. This aligns with the Arksey and O’Malley (2005) definition and role of a scoping review. Our paper is intended to build upon previous similar reviews of interventions (Bigby, Anderson, & Cameron, 2018;

Overmars-Marx et al., 2014).

2.3. Inclusion criteria

We included academic literature that reported on the provision of programs to support community inclusion for people with intellectual disability. Eligible study designs included qualitative and quantitative methodologies. We reviewed papers published between 2014 and 2020.

2.4. Exclusion criteria

The review excluded commentary and methodology papers. We excluded theoretical papers, and initiatives that were not focused on community or neighbourhood inclusion (i.e. in segregated settings).

2.5. Information sources and search strategy

Comprehensive literature searches were conducted for the period 2015 to 2020. We searched for English language studies in the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, PsychINFO, ProQuest. Grey literature was searched using Google Advanced Search, Grey Matter checklist an Analysis and Policy Observatory (APO). The search strategy was not limited by study design. We scanned references of all relevant systematic and scoping reviews.

2.6. Study selection process

Studies were screened at two stages. At stage one, 4,520 records were identified of which 3,148 were removed as not-relevant. After screening citations and abstracts (n = 1,372) we removed those not relevant and proceeded to stage two where we did a full-text review of the 53 remaining results. At the end of this, we were left with 11 reports.

Stage one results were imported into Microsoft Word as listings with abstracts. The inclusion/exclusion criteria (outlined in Fig. 1) were used for screening studies at both stages. Both reviewers agreed on a paper’s suitability for stage two before it was included in the final review.

2.7. Data items and data collection process

We extracted data on:

- year of publication
- country of research
- journal/location of report
- study design
- study participants
- main findings
- sample size
- outcomes and outcome measures
- who the intervention is facilitated by
- important results

Data extracted on each paper was shared between the researchers. The final matrix was verified as a whole by one of the researchers.

3. Methodological quality appraisal

We did not appraise methodological quality or risk of bias, as per guidance on scoping review conduct (Levac, Colquhoun, & O’Brien, 2010). However, we did capture research design, whether it was quantitative or qualitative, and the sample size. Those, along with how people with intellectual disability were included in the design or evaluation of interventions, were considered important criteria in mapping the range and type of evidence about community programs.

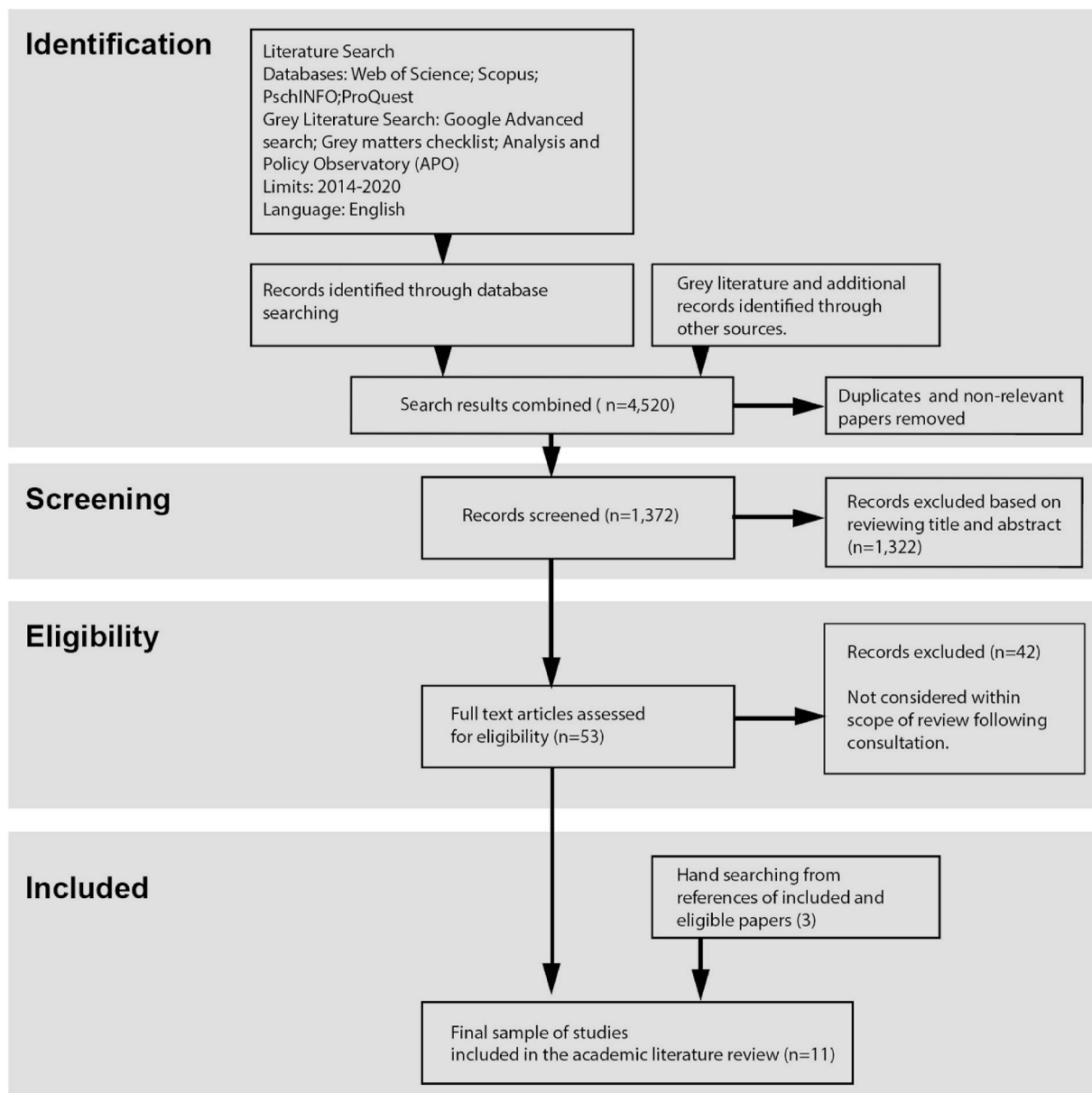


Fig. 1. PRISMA-P flow chart showing the selection, inclusion and exclusions of studies identified in the search process.

3.1. Synthesis, visualisation and analysis

Author three identified, coded and charted information into tables, which were verified and further coded by authors one and two. This allowed for synthesis and analysis of papers across a range of indicators.

4. Results

There were eleven papers identified as relevant for this review, all were published between 2014 and 2020 and are described in Appendix A. Four of the papers reported on research conducted in Australia, three in the US and one in the UK.

Within the eleven papers, the reported initiatives included the potential for more inclusive mainstream community-based groups such as walking groups, Op Shops, Men's Sheds and community kitchens (Craig & Bigby, 2015; Wilson et al., 2015), reflections on inclusive employment experiences (Institute for Corporate Productivity, 2014), the effectiveness of dog walking as a social connector (Bould, Bigby, Bennett, & Howell, 2018), the potential for peer advocacy to as collective sources of

support (Power et al., 2016), Community Conversations facilitated by local governments (Bumble, Carter, McMillan, Manikas, & Bethune, 2018), sports teams (McConkey et al., 2019a; 2019b; 2020) and community mentorship in exercise (Shields, Buhlert-Smith, Van Den Bos, & Taylor, 2018).

Analysis of the research methodologies with each paper revealed that five of the eleven papers reported on a qualitative methodology (interviews). There were two papers that were considered mixed-method; one paper reported on a prospective feasibility study trial that included both quantitative and qualitative data (Shields et al., 2018), one applied a mixed methodology of interviews, surveys, observations and reflection (Bumble et al., 2018). One paper reported on surveys that were distributed to community centre staff as part of a pre-post study (Wynne, 2016).

We analysed each of the papers to see how people with intellectual disability had been included in the research activities, whether that is through consultation or more deeply in the design and implementation, for example as members of the research team. We found that only one of the papers had co-researched with people with intellectual disability

(Power, 2016). Power's study design is framed as a 'co-produced methodology' to enable people with intellectual disability to undertake more active roles as conductors and advisors of research.

Overall, we found less evidence of evaluation or description of the outcomes by people with intellectual disability. This is possibly because the initiatives focus on capacity-building community more broadly, although these initiatives all directly impact the lives of people with intellectual disability. Across the eleven papers, we found evidence of detailed descriptions of resources and activities by support workers (Bould et al., 2018), community centre staff (Wynne, 2016), sports coaches (McConkey, Pochstein, Carlin, & Menke, 2019), community participants (Bumble et al., 2018) as well as people with intellectual disability (Power 2016; McConkey & Menke 2019), as well as people with intellectual disability and their parents (Shields et al., 2018). Some of the studies included observations by researchers (Wilson 2015; Bumble 2018). The study by Wilson (2015) utilised multiple data types including interviews with people with intellectual disability who participated in the initiative, the mentors and also observation by researchers.

4.1. Applying the inclusive cities framework

The findings and conclusions of all included papers were extracted and analysed using Broadhead and Kierans (2019) Inclusive Cities Framework as a thematic organising frame to support policy and practice relevance.

Analysing the findings through the lens of each of the core areas of action amplifies understanding about the role that capacity-building initiatives such as these can play in building cities naturally driven towards being more inclusive of people with intellectual disability through more targeted and applied strategies.

4.2. Leading in the development of a shared local story of inclusion

Working towards a "shared" experience of inclusion can involve a number of approaches.

It can mean the taking up of responsibility of inclusion by all community members, not just people with disability. Capacity-building local governments and partner organisations to take more responsibility for, and embrace, inclusion of people with intellectual disability by supporting and providing information is a key theme of papers by Craig and Bigby (2014) and Bumble et al. (2018). Craig and Bigby (2014) explore how a shared story of inclusion can be made possible within a range of community group activities including walking groups, op shops and community kitchens. The study identifies approaches, pathways and criteria needed for community groups to become more inclusive of people with intellectual disability including a leadership response, access to expertise, a shared activity and guidance dealing with what the authors term 'difference dilemma' (Stainton, 2005).

Shared stories can also mean shared conversations and shared learning. Work by Bumble et al. (2018) highlights the importance of these shared stories in their research into the role of 'community conversations'. *Community conversations* are based on a World Café model (Brown, 2010) and are structured events that engage a diverse group of people from within the local community to share their knowledge of opportunities, approaches and social capital to address an issue important to their community. Bumble et al. found that '*Community Conversations provide an efficient and effective way of listening to diverse stakeholders about pressing needs facing their communities*' (p241). They are therefore particularly relevant as an approach for local governments to develop a community-led shaping of policy and practice around inclusive cities.

The potential for the shared experience of sport as an instrument of inclusion is another opportunity explored in the suite of included papers which report on the experiences of coaches and athletes (both with and without intellectual disability). These papers report on the potential of

unified sports teams to increase the levels of social inclusion experienced by people with intellectual disability in their local community – the skills that sports coaches bring to their roles in the recruitment and management of their teams is explored as having potential to be developed further in inclusive community teams (McConkey, Pochstein, et al., 2019). Athletes, both with and without intellectual disability are interviewed across 10 countries in McConkey and Menke's (2020) study. Athletes with intellectual disability reported increased inclusion in their community as a result of participating in sport (in both unified and non-unified teams).

4.3. Supporting and driving inclusive economic growth

People with intellectual disability consistently experience lower levels of employment than the population as a whole, and also relative to people with other disabilities (Khayatzaadeh-Mahani, Wittevrongel, Nicholas, & Zwicker, 2020). Lack of employment and underemployment limit the capacity of people with intellectual disability to economically participate in the city, despite being willing and able to participate in the paid workforce (Till, Leonard, Yeung, & Nicholls, 2015). The reviewed paper by Bumble et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for an initiative like 'community conversations' to support inclusive employment, by sharing the experiences of employers and people with intellectual disability who either are employed or would like to be employed. This initiative supports inclusive economic growth by building networks between employers and employees and most importantly, by breaking down the assumptions that potential employers might have about employing a person with intellectual disability.

The research conducted by The Institute for Corporate Productivity (2014) reinforced the importance of breaking down the assumptions made by potential employees about employing people with intellectual disability. This paper found that what is most important to encourage and support more inclusive employment of people with intellectual disability across local communities is to provide information for employers, to make sure that workplace activities include shared experiences and as with all employee/employer relationships, that expectations are made clear to everyone involved. Finally, the report emphasises the importance of championing positive experiences of inclusive employment within the community. The sharing of 'success stories' was seen as providing a way forward for other employers to emulate.

4.4. Connecting communities

The initiatives reported in the papers address the opportunities brought by more connected communities in a number of ways, both structured and unstructured, and via a range of activities.

Two of the six papers in this theme explore ways of facilitating communications between diverse groups, and between participants and facilitators of community programs. The study by Bumble et al. (2018) explored the potential for structured and diverse conversations to be facilitated by local governments and/or partner organisations. As reported in the study findings, these types of conversations are an opportunity to better understand the experiences of people with intellectual disability, and to build connections across networks (such as local business, education and other community groups). Craig & Bigby (2014) explored in detail the process and experiences of people with intellectual disability as well as the community group leaders and mapped pathways towards a continuum of participation, including identifying tensions that can arise. This work is important in understanding how community groups, whether they be an Op Shop or a community kitchen, can build an understanding of what it means to be inclusive of people with intellectual disability, the values and approaches that are important and the benefits that arise from more connected communities.

Sport and physical activity was the vehicle for community

connection in the remaining four included studies. The study by [Bould et al. \(2018\)](#) explored the potential for dog walking activity, this was the least structured activity of all assessed. This study found that a dog-walking initiative has the potential to encourage convivial encounters and potential friendships across the community -connecting people in the neighbourhood in a more unstructured and informally developing way ([Bould et al., 2018](#)). More structured exercise initiatives were covered by the pilot study by [Shield \(2018\)](#) and both [McConkey and Menke \(2020\)](#) and [McConkey et al. \(2019\)](#). [Shield \(2018\)](#) explored the potential for a community-based exercise program where people with intellectual disability are paired with a student mentor for the community to exercise together at their local gym. They found that the social benefits of the program played a key role in contributing to the positive health results experienced by people with intellectual disability. [McConkey and Menke \(2020\)](#) and [McConkey et al. \(2019\)](#) investigate the potential for unified sports teams to increase connection and networks of people with and without intellectual disability in local communities.

4.5. Mainstreaming and building inclusive public services

This action lies at the core of this review – that is to develop local government and community practices that are inclusive and to build mainstream services and activities that are welcoming and accessible to people with intellectual disability throughout the city.

The work of [Craig & Bigby \(2014\)](#) and [Wilson et al. \(2015\)](#) explored the potential of what are considered ‘mainstream’ community groups (Men’s Sheds, op shop, community kitchens etc.) as spaces and activities that can be developed in a way to be more inclusive of people with intellectual disability. The role of mentorship, information and ongoing support are emphasised as important to the success of these approaches. [Bumble et al.’s \(2018\)](#) study demonstrated the potential for structured and diverse conversations to share experiences and from there, inform policy and practice around inclusion in a citizen-led way.

The dissertation study by [Wynne \(2016\)](#) examines the role of communication training for staff at a community centre to address attitude, skills and knowledge deficits in staff relating to communication with people with intellectual disability. The pre-post survey study found that the training improved knowledge, skills and confidence of staff in communicating and working with people with intellectual disability. This study did recognise in its findings that face-to-face training was a deficit of this particular information sharing inclusion training.

4.6. Encouraging civic participation and representation

Being represented in community groups (offered through local government and organisations) is an important development in civic participation and representation for people with intellectual disability. [Wilson’s](#) study determined that these groups are an ‘untapped space’ where people with disability are welcome, particularly when coupled with an active mentoring program for the community group leaders.

Representation of people with intellectual disability in sports is discussed across the three papers led by [McConkey \(McConkey, Peng, et al., 2019; McConkey, Pochstein, et al., 2019; McConkey & Menke, 2020\)](#) as a potential for increasing levels of community inclusion.

More structured civic participation in governance and policy-shaping has been less explored in the literature. The study by [Bumble et al. \(2018\)](#) explored the potential for facilitated and diverse conversations to be hosted by local governments and/or partner organisations. As mentioned earlier, the study indicates that these Community Conversation initiatives have the potential to be run by local governments to shape community-led inclusion practices and policy that can directly impact our experiences of the city.

5. Discussion

The findings from the studies included in the scoping review map well into [Broadhead and Kierans \(2019\)](#) Inclusive Cities Framework, demonstrating that across the five core actions there are areas of policy and practice relevance that relate to both the lives of people with intellectual disability and clear actions that local authorities can take to improve inclusion of local communities.

5.1. What it means for an inclusive cities approach

From the perspective of building more inclusive cities that reflect the inclusion of people with intellectual disability, this review demonstrates that inclusive practices, such as the initiatives reported, have the potential to contribute to successful inclusion-building across all of the core activity areas in the inclusive cities framework. Importantly, these core actions can be applied across a range of levels – at the information gathering and community engagement stages of local government policy development; and at the community level, where all citizens can participate in collective learning as part of mentoring and capacity-building inclusion across the community and neighbourhood experience. The application of the Inclusive Cities framework in this context demonstrates its usefulness for local community building which invites inclusion of people with intellectual disability into diverse communities.

This points to the usefulness of the inclusive cities framework for local government in that it is already being used to understand and apply principles and practice of inclusion for a wide range of communities (e.g. age, new migrants). Applying the breadth of the inclusive cities framework shows that inclusion building for people with intellectual disability resonates with principles for building diversity that align with the experiences of many other groups. For every single person within every community, inclusion and participation is achieved through a multitude of unique combinations of opportunities informed by, amongst other qualities, lived experience.

For people with intellectual disability, the benefits of the inclusive city can extend far beyond a community’s activities being offered, and as recognised by [Simplican et al. \(2015\)](#) social inclusion can mean contributing to society, overcoming systemic exclusion, overcoming poverty and unemployment, improving awareness of and access to services, and building feelings of safety and protection against abuse.

[Simplican et al.’s \(2015\)](#) organising framework for community participation for people with disability shows that this is of course more complex than merely the presence or absence of people with disability in local community spaces. In emphasising the ways in which participation is interwoven with the structure (how segregated from other community members), and level (how connected to other community members) of participation, this framework problematises concepts around local inclusion building in important ways. A number of studies in our review identify related concepts, such as convivial encounter ([Bigby et al., 2017](#)). In light of the [Simplican](#) model, other concepts revealed within the studies offer practical insights into the potential inclusive approaches to support meaningful participation:

- **Information and support** for community groups, local businesses, potential employees and potential mentors. There is strong evidence for community mentorship approaches ([Wilson 2015; Shields 2018](#))
- **Shared activities** (both structured and unstructured) to share learning, activities and build relationships
- **Conversation and sharing of stories** – in formal and informal ways, to share information and networking both across and within community groups and all citizens, whether they identify as having an intellectual disability, as potential employers, employees, and community leaders.

These qualities can be used to further interrogate what the Inclusive City really is for people with intellectual disability, and more

importantly, what it is not. A significant omission in the review, however, is evidence that the priorities of people with intellectual disability themselves are driving the types of local inclusion initiatives, and prioritising their most important features.

Implications for policy and practice are that, like all people in the community, in order for people with intellectual disability to make meaningful contributions and have fulfilling lives as citizens, they should have the opportunity to develop a variety of interpersonal relationships throughout the entire community, across a range of leisure and employment activities and with active participation. Participation and inclusion does not mean simply being on the members list or in the room with other people. The quality of participation is something that, for people with intellectual disability, is a critical focus to achieving the inclusive city. Considering the quality of participation in a more nuanced way is an important step forward, according to the priorities of people with intellectual disability themselves; and the ways in which their personal preferences are interwoven with structure and levels of participation opportunities in their local communities.

6. Conclusion

A city aiming to be inclusive is an important aim, and one that is recognised in the papers being reviewed here. However, the experience of participation can remain elusive to people with intellectual disability, despite intentions of open membership of community activities. The aim of inclusion and the experience of participation are intrinsically linked and understanding that aiming to be inclusive for all does not automatically lead to participation for all people is critical to understanding the experiences of people with intellectual disability. This is increasingly important in a climate where opportunities for collective action are diminishing. Where government commitments to community-building have been abraded, for example, people with disability have been left in receipt of individual funding packages in communities where there

are few new opportunities to build meaningful connections through accessible and engaging activities. Social sustainability is a generative approach to countering thin narratives around personalisation policy and practice, or at least to identifying gaps.

As local councils and communities work to generate inclusion plans and build more open and inclusive communities, there is ripe opportunity to apply new understanding about how the personal preferences of people with intellectual disability intersect with changes to policy and practice (such as the NDIS) and structures that support and constrain citizen involvement. Alongside this sits the opportunity to dovetail specific plans with existing initiatives for other communities with related interests in inclusive lives.

This paper also demonstrates that the experiences and situations of people with intellectual disability can inform how the Inclusive Cities Framework is understood and applied to define meaningful participation for *all* people, and further, how this relates to social sustainability in terms of social inclusion and cohesion. Far from being limited to the presence or visibility of people in the community, participation is linked to economic inclusion and social equity - all informed by practices of shared conversations and activities and built with an understanding of the need for appropriate information and support.

Declaration of competing interestCOI

None.

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APPENDIX A. Included Papers

No.	Included Paper Citation	Country	Initiative	Year
1	Institute for Corporate Productivity (2014). Talent that drives business results Fewer challenges and more support than expected pg. 16 Employers featured: Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities A Report by the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp) In partnership with Best Buddies International	US	Sharing employers' perspectives of employing people with intellectual disability in their businesses - to encourage Employment in organisations throughout the community	2014
2	Bould, E., Bigby, C., Bennett, P. C., & Howell, T. J. (2018). 'More people talk to you when you have a dog' – dogs as catalysts for social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. <i>Journal of Intellectual Disability Research</i> . https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12538	Australia	Examining the effectiveness of a dog walking program to facilitate encounters with other community members.	2018
3	Craig, D., & Bigby, C. (2015). "She's been involved in everything as far as I can see": Supporting the active participation of people with intellectual disability in community groups. <i>Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability</i> , 40(1), 12–25. https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2014.977235	Australia	Participation of People with Intellectual Disability in different weekly mainstream community-based organisations	2015
4	Wilson, N. J., Stancliffe, R. J., Gambin, N., Craig, D., Bigby, C., & Balandin, S. (2015). A case study about the supported participation of older men with lifelong disability at Australian community-based Men's Sheds. <i>Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability</i> , 40 (4), 330–341. https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2015.1051522	Australia	"Active mentoring" technique to explore how older men with lifelong disability can be supported to participate in Men's Sheds	2015
5	Power, A., Bartlett, R., & Hall, E. (2016). Peer advocacy in a personalized landscape: The role of peer support in a context of individualized support and austerity. <i>Journal of Intellectual Disabilities</i> , 20(2), 183–193. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744629516634561	UK	Attitudes and outcomes around peer-advocacy groups.	2016
6	Wynne, E. (2016). Developing your community toolbox: An online, face-to-face, and hands on training program [Duquesne University]. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1881532412?accountid=10910	USA	'Community toolbox' – communication training for staff at community centre to address attitude, skills and knowledge deficits in staff relating to communication with people with intellectual disability	2016
7	Bumble, J. L., Carter, E. W., McMillan, E., Manikas, A. S., & Bethune, L. K. (2018). Community conversations on integrated employment:	US	How planning and local government teams approached Community Conversations about expanding employment for people with disabilities AND to analyse the views and recommendations arising.	2018

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No.	Included Paper Citation	Country	Initiative	Year
8	Examining individualization, influential factors, and impact. <i>Journal of Disability Policy Studies</i> , 28(4), 229–243. Shields, N., Buhler-Smith, K., Van Den Bos, R., & Taylor, N. (2018). A mentored community-based exercise program for youth with disability: translating evidence into practice. <i>Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology</i> , 60, 47–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/dmnc.13665	Australia	Mentored community-based exercise program for youth with disability. (PWD paired with mentor from community to complete an exercise program twice a week for 12 weeks)	2018
9	McConkey, Roy, Florian Pochstein, Liz Carlin, and Sabine Menke. "Promoting the social inclusion of players with intellectual disabilities: an assessment tool for sport coaches." <i>Sport in Society</i> (2019): 1–10.	US and Seven European Countries	Unified Sports Teams Program – including players with and without intellectual disability. Survey of coaches across US, and seven European Countries Development of tool	2019
10	McConkey, Roy, Cheryl Peng, Marie Merritt, and Amy Shellard. "The Meaning of Social Inclusion to Players With and Without Intellectual Disability in Unified Sports Teams." <i>Inclusion 7</i> , no. 4 (2019): 234–243.	US, Germany, India	Unified Sports teams – focus groups with players How unified sports teams with both people with and without intellectual disabilities support inclusion in both sport and community settings.	2019
11	McConkey, Roy, and Sabine Menke. "The community inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability: a transnational study of the impact of participating in Special Olympics." <i>Sport in Society</i> (2020): 1–10.	US and Seven European Countries	Role of sport in supporting inclusion in local communities. Study of 1000 athletes 9 both with and without intellectual disability) form 10 countries.	2020

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