



Social Inclusion Meeting

10/02/2011

Apologies: Gill Allen (Ellen Tinkham), Brenda Bartlett (Assistant Director Integrated Children's Services Delivery), Julie Choules (parent), Jo Evans (parent), Ste Hogan (Torbay Inclusion Project), Sarah Mumford (Inclusion Services manager, Devon) Gwen Pearson (Children and Young Persons Commissioning Lead)

Attended by: Chris Morris (Chair) Kim Antonio (parent), Liz Carroll (Out of School Inclusion, Devon), Tony and Marian Gilbert (parents), Tamzin Gribble (Head of Speech and Language Therapy, Dame Hannah Rogers Trust), Becky Hart (parent), Bel MacDonald (parent and Face2Face), Camilla McHugh (Cerebra Research Unit), Jude Odell (Inclusion Team Manager, Plymouth), Val Shilling (Cerebra Research Unit), Mark Tarrant (PCMD), Ellen Williams (parent)

This was another well attended and exciting discussion to develop our programme of work around social inclusion. We covered a broad range of topics including:

What is our working definition of social inclusion?

We agreed on a working definition of social inclusion, drawn from the 'capability approach', that inclusion equated to having **both the opportunities, and freedom to choose, to take part in a range of key life situations and experiences that all children should have, regardless of disability.**

This naturally led to a discussion about what the range of key life situations might be. Things such as going to the park, the beach, the leisure centre or on school trips were all mentioned. This is a difficult question because the experiences and desires of families will be very different and there could be an almost infinite list.

Action: CRU will plan a systematic approach to identify the key life opportunities that should be available to young people. This will be a consultative or collaborative piece of work with both parents and young people. Funding will be sought for the resources required, the NIHR Public Health Research Programme or ESRC may be suitable to approach.

The group felt strongly that our interpretation should view social inclusion as being about possibilities not limitations. That it should be child centred not activity centred and should reflect the rights of the child as detailed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Every Child Matters and other policy and practice documents.

We discussed potential barriers to social inclusion which included the 'stuck in their ways' attitudes of some of the older generation in positions of leadership but also barriers that can be raised by parents and by professionals. Parents can sometimes isolate themselves because it is emotionally too difficult to

cope with social situations, with a knock on effect of reducing their children's opportunities. Professionals can put up barriers by underestimating the capability of disabled children.

The group agreed that the target group for the research should be young people and that the transition to secondary school may be the point for intervention. Peer identity is difficult at this stage for all young people and differences may be highlighted at this stage.

PhD proposals:

Mark and Chris have put together two proposals for PhD projects:

Promoting positive attitudes towards childhood disability

Understanding caregivers' experiences of disability discrimination

We are waiting to hear about funding for these projects, if successful the student(s) would start in September

We discussed that one way to change attitudes is through greater exposure and contact. Both Woodlands school and Ellen Tinkham school have programmes where children can move between special and mainstream school settings and work together. These schemes may not be possible in all schools and Mark described a research technique where children would imagine positive contact with disabled children, which can be as effective as actual contact to promote empathy.

The goal is to provide evidence in the long term that children's attitudes to disability can be changed. Although we talked mainly about school based interventions the Scouts and Cubs may provide another opportunity – children may be able to work towards a badge. Similarly young people completing the Duke of Edinburgh awards are another possible group.

Next step:

We didn't discuss the inclusion services at this meeting. In particular we need to think about what their programmes have in common, what are the 'active ingredients' and can we use this to think about a training/intervention programme to promote inclusion. This will be the topic of another meeting (tba).