

Trainer's notes

Unit No. 5 Disability

Unit objectives

- To provide a basic introduction to the Equality Act 2010
- To provide information about disability in the population of looked after children
- To provide a basic introduction to the different models of disability
- To raise awareness of "invisible disabilities" and their impact on learning

Outline of Unit

- The legal context
- Group activity "Revolution"
- Presentation: Models of Disability
- Presentation and large group discussion: power of language and labels
- Video Clip: "Best Foot forward with Dyslexia: Rossie Secure Accommodation Services"
- Presentation: Recognising and responding
- Group activity

Resources required to deliver unit

Handouts: "Models of Disability", "Revolution", and

Video Clip: "Best Foot forward with Dyslexia: Rossie Secure Accommodation Services," available to download from Journey to Excellence website at http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/video_tcm4540777.asp.

PowerPoint presentations: "The Equality Act", "Models of Disability" and "Looked after children and disability"

Resources required to support this unit

PDF - "Equality Act- a quick start guide"

Introduction to trainer

This module is a **very basic introduction** to some fundamental concepts underpinning work with disabled children. It does not focus on children with serious difficulties although it does point out that some children are looked after primarily as a result of a disability and also that a significant number of disabled children receive a short break service away from their homes on a regular basis. It also includes a brief introduction to the legal context as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The main purpose of the module is to alert participants to the potentially

disabling effect of their own attitudes or behaviours on children and the importance of ensuring that the organisations and environments they work within do not provide further challenges to disabled looked after children. Participants may already know that some of the looked after children they teach or care for have disabilities, but research has shown that, in some cases, disabilities, that can have an adverse effect on learning, remain unrecognised in looked after children.

Brief Introduction

Explain to participants that although there are a number of children with severe and complex disabilities who are looked after, this module does not attempt to address their needs nor does it explore in detail the specific supports that may be required for children with any particular disabling impairment.

The Legal Context

Use the 'The Equality Act 2010' PowerPoint slides to create a presentation to introduce the Act, explaining its relation to the earlier Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005. The Acts aim to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. The **Quick Start Guide** in the materials for this unit gives more detail about the differences between the Acts.

The slides outline the definition of disability under the Act. The existence of impairment is not in itself sufficient to meet the criteria for a disability. It also has to have a disabling effect on the person's ability to undertake normal day to day activities. The Act lays an obligation on public bodies to ensure that they do not treat a disabled person less favourably, for a reason relating to the person's disability, than they treat (or would treat) a person who did not have a disability. They are expected to make reasonable adjustments to make sure that disabled people are not placed at substantial disadvantage. A number of looked after children would meet this legal definition of disability. For some children the Act may be a way of tackling unfair disadvantage.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Section 23, requires local authorities to provide support and services to children affected by disability (their own or that of another family member). Under this Act a parent may request the local authority conducts an assessment of the child's needs. Provision should aim to minimise the affect of disability on the child, safeguard and promote their wellbeing and help them to live a life which is as normal as possible. This is likely to include services which are tailored to individual need, but could for example include short break services or support at home or school.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, disabled children have the right to enjoy a full and decent life, to receive special support to access services and opportunities to reach their fullest possible integration and development.

See: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/.../children_disability_rights.pdf

Other relevant legislation, which should be referred to, depending on the focus of the group, are the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (in relation to

incorporation of the UNCRC, children's services planning and the Child's Plan), and the Education (Scotland) Additional Support Needs) Acts of 2004 and 2009

Group activity: Revolution

Provide participants with the handout "*Revolution*". If you have concerns about the literacy of any of the participants you could read it as a story to the whole group. Ask participants to discuss the story in small groups.

- What impact has it had on them?
- Can they recognise in their organisations or themselves factors that could have the same disabling effect on people as is described in the story?

Presentation: Models of Disability

Use the 'Models of disability' PowerPoint slides and the handout to develop a presentation on the social and medical model of disability referring back to the story when this is helpful. It may also be useful to read the article by Tom Shakespeare and Nicholas Watson "*The social model of disability: an outdated ideology?*" available at <http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/files/library/Shakespeare-social-model-of-disability.pdf>.

At this stage do not provide a critique of the two models. Ask the group for their ideas about what is positive and what is negative about the two models. When this has been fully explored give out the handout "*Models of Disability*".

Presentation

Use the 'Looked after children and disability' PowerPoint slides 1 – 3 as an introduction to a large group discussion about language and labels. Point out that many people are confused about the legal status of disabled children who are cared for or educated away from home whether on a long term basis or for short breaks. The Scottish Government is of the view that children who receive these kinds of services are "looked after" and deserve all the support and protection that this entails. There is resistance from some parents and professionals to accepting this, however, as they are concerned about the stigma associated with the looked after status. For local authorities the additional cost of providing an appropriate level of service to these disabled children once they accept that they are looked after is considerable. Emphasise that this difference can have real impact on the service children and their families receive. Point out that recently some disabled children had additional money made available to them to support their education as they were classified as looked after whereas others who had not been given that status got nothing.

We also know that within the looked after children group there are a number of children who have impairments or conditions that are to a varying degree disabling to them. Some of these children are receiving appropriate support but others are not. It is not easy to pin down a clear definition of what constitutes a disability. "Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties" is categorised as a disability in the Scottish Government's statistics. A substantial proportion of

looked after children would meet this criteria but neither they nor their carers would necessarily view this as a disability. Point out that the advantage of the new legislation on additional support for learning is that a child is eligible for help if there are any factors which adversely affect their learning and these do not have to fit into a particular box.

We know from research that some looked after children have a range of disabling conditions that are not recognised. These include learning difficulties, communication difficulties, sensory impairments and physical difficulties. The traumatic backgrounds of many looked after children can lead professionals to assume that their behaviour or difficulties in learning are only to do with the adverse experiences they have had in their earlier lives. This type of confusion can lead to serious difficulties, which are amenable to help, going unrecognised. This can have a cumulatively adverse effect on children's emotional, social and cognitive development. Engage participants in a discussion about the complexities of labelling. Encourage them to explore how the language of disability has changed over time and the impact and power of such changes.

Video Clip: You might like to select a suitable film from the "Journey to Excellence" website and follow with discussion. For example, "Best Foot forward with Dyslexia: Rossie Secure Accommodation Services"
(http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/video_tcm4540777.asp).

Presentation and large group discussion: Recognising and responding

Use the 'Looked after children and disability' PowerPoint slides 4 as triggers for a discussion of all the points. Involve participants in thinking about their own work places and children they have worked with. Encourage them to identify what they will take back from this module to their work.

Final thoughts

Encourage learners to take ideas from this module into their working lives:

Consider how the getting it right for every child approach can be used to support children with different impairments and minimise the impact of disability on them.

Reflect back over the whole unit. Identify any areas of practice that you would like to improve or training that you would like to attend. Discuss these with your supervisor or line manager. Attempt to engage colleagues to help you conduct an audit of your own organisation.

Try to identify and challenge any aspects of the environment or attitudes of staff that prevent disabled looked after children successfully engaging with their education or other day to day activities.