Workshop 5: Social Inclusion: Disability and Gender

“A world where every child with cancer has equal access to the best treatment and care”  
*World Child Cancer’s vision*

“Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for those who are disadvantaged”.  
*United Nations*

**Individuals and Groups can be disadvantaged on:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Economic Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Migration Status</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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Promoting social inclusion involves removing barriers to people’s participation so that access and participation is available for everyone. This can involve changing policies, traditional ways of doing things as well as discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. It can result in:

- **Greater equality**: A fundamental human right
- **Improved health and well-being**: Those excluded are likely to experience poor health (both physical and mental), isolation, stress, and loneliness
- **Increased self-esteem**: A move from social isolation to social inclusion can build self-esteem
- **Wider engagement**: The organisation becomes less insular and more productive through diversity
- **Reduced potential for conflict and criticism**: As people feel welcomed and included
- **Increased satisfaction**: For the individual, team and organisation

**Disability**

Definitions of disability have changed over the years.

**Traditionally** disability would be defined solely as something physical or medical.

**Today** definitions also take into account the external factors in which people exist, where barriers can hinder their participation in society on an equal basis.

- **Disabilities on a child cancer ward can include:** Amputation, Enucleation / blindness, Deafness
- **Barriers that can hinder equal participation include:** Language, Accessibility, Ward layout
Fatigue
“Chemo” Brain*
Learning difficulties
Behaviour changes
Resource availability
Discrimination
Lack of awareness / information
Poor communication
*Chemo Brain: Memory problems, difficulty concentrating, problem solving, lack of interest or slow speech.

Strategies designed to minimise barriers to participation for children with a disability can include:

- Inclusive posters, handouts, publicity designed to emphasis inclusion and raise public awareness
- Bring children with disabilities and their families into the decision-making process
- Gather feedback on the disabled individual’s user experiences
- Collect disability data (Numbers / Types / Feedback)
- Evaluate ease of access and layout of services
- Ensure communication methods are appropriate
- Ensure safeguarding measures are in place and implemented
- Increase disability education at all levels in the Organisation
- Recognise the impact of healthcare professional’s behaviour on others and where appropriate challenge
- Reflect on our own attitudes and behaviours and their impact on others

Gender Equality

“The concept that women, men, girls and boys having equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realising their full potential human rights and dignity……”

UNICEF

Gender Inequality

“Inequalities faced by girls can begin at birth and follow them all their lives. In some countries, girls are deprived of access to health care or proper nutrition, leading to higher mortality rates”

United Nations

How gender inequality can impact on health care:

- Girls are often less likely to be taken for medical assessment
- Mothers may have less access to education therefore uncertain how to respond to medical issues
- Where a conscious or unconscious bias exists healthcare professionals may direct a conversation towards the father rather than mother
- Where “son preference” exists in families, girls maybe perceived as a lower priority
Because of the cultural, religious, and political influence in many countries achieving gender equality can be challenging with much beyond our control.

**Strategies for Healthcare Professionals designed to reduce Gender Equality barriers**

- Inclusive posters, handouts, publicity designed to emphasis inclusion and raise public awareness
- Ensure women and girls are included in decision making process
- Gather feedback from women and girls on their experiences
- Collect relevant data to evidence
- Ensure safeguarding measures are in place and implemented
- Increase gender education at all levels in the Organisation
- Recognise the impact of healthcare professional's behaviour on others and where appropriate challenge
- Reflect on our own attitudes and behaviours and their impact on others

Implementing strategies alone can be challenging, some maybe easier to implement as part of a team.

*If you found this section on Social Inclusion interesting and you would like to find out more, you can register your interest in the Psychosocial Support Training Package by emailing megan.cruise@worldchildcancer.org*