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# Health Inequalities & Equity: **Mental Health & Disability**



Social Work and Health Inequalities Network  
[www.warwick.ac.uk/go/swhin](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/go/swhin)

## Beyond the front door: evaluating the impact of independent living on social inclusion

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# Aims

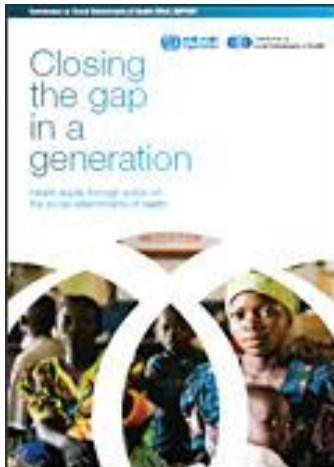
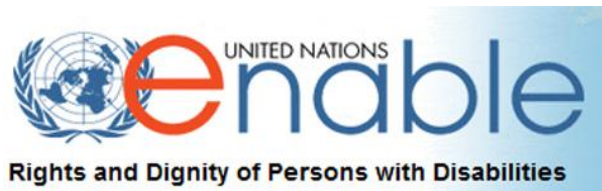
- To briefly introduce the overall purpose and methodology of the study
- To locate study in wider literature
- To examine key findings in relation to social inclusion
- Recommendations and conclusions



# Project Overview

- A 3 year partnership project between Progress Care Housing Association, Leeds City Council and Leeds Metropolitan University, funded by the Big Lottery.
- The aim was to see how the move from large, hostel accommodation can lead to more independence, integration into local communities and increased social and employment opportunities for people with mental health problems or learning difficulties .
- Over 340 people have moved into new supporting living accommodation between 2009 and 2011.
- The research featured a high level of service user and carer involvement, with an initial group of 6, increased to 10, co-researchers working with the research team.
- The research involved ‘before’ and ‘after’ move interviews and questionnaires with service users (53), staff (61) and family carers (17).

# Human Rights & Social Determinants of Health



- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007)
- WHO Draft mental health action plan 2013-2020
- Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008) *Closing the Gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health.*

Emphasis on recognising the social determinants of health

Principles of participation and inclusion

- 2007 UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, highlights the importance of ‘meaningful engagement and reciprocal relationships’ recognizing :

*the valued existing and potential contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and .....full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty.*

# Social inclusion

- ...a virtuous circle of improved **rights** of access to the social and economic world, new opportunities, recovery of status and meaning and reduced impact of disability. .... [includes access to] for example, education, work, joining social, cultural and religious groups, friendships and relationships, raising a family and participating in civic life (Sayce, 2002)
- Social inclusion as policy imperative may be problematic - focus on community cohesion may obscure underlying structural inequalities (Muntaner et al, 2000)

# Social capital

- Bourdieu - networks of power together including *bonding* and *bridging* forms of capital
- Need to recognise co-operative & collusive forms of power (Tew, 2011)
- Focus on relationships and reciprocity and..... belongingness (Prince, 2013)



# Independent living & wider environment

- Limited literature in UK and need to refer to North American sources (Prince & Prince, 2002; Townley et al, 2011 Wong & Solomon, 2002; Wong & Stanhope, 2009;)
- Gulcar (2007) physical, social & psychological integration
- Social capital, place and neighbourhood (Burns et al, 2004; Yanos, 2007)

# Findings: Relationships

- Relationships with families were maintained and in some examples, improved
- Some MH residents said they now saw more of their friends
- Others felt lonely and expressed the view that there was insufficient support to see people
  - I 've got no friends in this flat, I'm lonely here*
- Some family carers and staff expressed concerns about reduced social opportunities for both MH & LD tenants
- Social contacts remained service and family-based. Little evidence of support for making new social contacts or increased social integration

# Findings: Use of community facilities & services

- Examples of increased use of community facilities were offered eg local post office, pharmacy and sports centre, public transport
- Staffing limitations:

*We do try and get them out in the community....sometimes its difficult...you have to book the extra staff*

- Variation in age & reduced activity with older residents

# Findings: Employment & community involvement

- Small increase in LD tenants with employment or voluntary work.
- Many said they would like work but mixed views regarding support available
- Others expressed wish to learn about computers, attend the gym or watch football. However some reservations about availability of support

# Findings: Belongingness and safety

- Some accommodation built on sites previously used. Some challenges in obtaining new sites.
- LD residents particularly felt part of the community & that local people were friendly
- Some concerns re name-calling and harassment, also safety after dark. Concerns reported by carers:  
*Kids come round at nights and bang on the windows and things like that. You could say it's a fact of life but it is very upsetting, and ... there's nobody there capable of going out and confronting them*
- Staff also had concerns re safety and some conveyed sense of helplessness although others more confident about tackling this & liaison with police

# Conclusions

- Although evidence of physical integration, limited social integration in terms of new & reciprocal relationships. Psychological integration / sense of belongingness may be superficial
- Strongest relationships within service and families
- Question of staff resources and attitudes to effect change and promote inclusion
- Need to consider use of power - potential for collusion / coercion by staff
- Continuing marginalisation and lack of participation with wider consequences for health and wellbeing

# Messages for practice

- Further training for staff on promoting social inclusion as part of a rights-based approach
- Use of creative approaches to increase involvement eg use of volunteers / buddying
- Greater attention to neighbourhood & community environment
- Recognition of importance of participation and involvement as social determinants of health

# References

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## Further information

Include Me In Research Project

[www.progressgroup.org.uk/about\\_us/subsidiaries/pch/include-me-in](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk/about_us/subsidiaries/pch/include-me-in)

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