

SDF Community Inclusion Initiative - Community of Practice Topic 3: Carving out meaningful roles

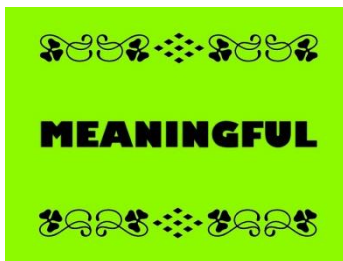


This is the third in a series of resources to support providers of disability day services and community participation to increase community inclusion for people with disability. It is based on best practice and feedback from organisations participating in the Community Inclusion Initiative. It is intended as a conversation starter with frontline workers and team leaders, but can also be used with people with disability and their families.

1. What are 'meaningful roles'?

NDIS Principles

- Right to **realise potential** for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development
- Supported to participate in and contribute to **social** and **economic** life to the extent of their ability
- **Supported to exercise choice**, including reasonable risks in the pursuit of their goals
- Receive supports outside [NDIS] and assisted to **coordinate** with supports provided under [NDIS]



"Meaningful" can mean...

- ✓ A sense of contributing
- ✓ Having purpose
- ✓ Acceptance
- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Recognition

"If a person with disability has few or no valued social roles, there will be limited opportunity to grow personally, be seen positively and connect with others" (Sherwin)

- ✓ **Meaningful roles lead to good outcomes for people**
 - Build community connections
- Increase friendships – shares 'likes' with similar people
 - Promote a sense of achievement and self respect
- Contribute to good physical and mental health – pleasure
 - Learn new skills
- Increase independence and reduce reliance on others
 - Exercise rights and encourages self-advocacy
- Improved job prospects and financial independence
 - Increase lifestyle options

2. What roles are meaningful to you?

Complete these two checklists for yourself and with people who use your service (Oakley 2006)

Part 1: Tick if you performed these ROLES in the past, present or intend to in the future	Past	Present	Future
Student at school part or fulltime			
Worker part or fulltime employment			
Volunteer regularly for a community group, school , political campaign			
Care giver regularly for a family member or friend			
Home maintainer regular doing housework or yard work in your home			
Friend regularly spending time or doing something together			
Family member regularly spending time or doing something with a relative			
Religious participant in activities associated with your religion			
Hobbyist involved regularly in a hobby (e.g. sewing), activity (e.g. playing a musical instrument), participate in a club (e.g. stamp collecting)			
Participant in organisations regularly as a member of a group or club (e.g. committee member), civic or political organisations			
Other: any other role not already listed (give details)			



Part 2: Tick how IMPORTANT these roles are to you (even if you haven't done some of them)	Not Important	Important	Very Important
Student			
Worker			
Volunteer			
Care giver			
Home maintainer			
Friend			
Family member			
Religious participant			
Hobbyist			
Participant in organisations			
Other: (give details)			



Topic 3: Discussion questions

- Do you have a choice about what roles you do and when?
- How different are your meaningful roles to those of people who use your service?
- Which of these roles can help increase community inclusion? Why?

3. The importance of strengthening people's social networks

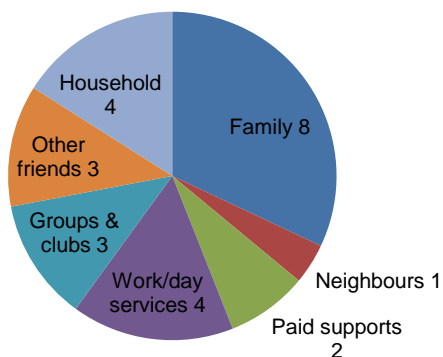
Social Networks

- ✓ Increase opportunities for community participation
- ✓ Make connections with range of people across different areas of interest (informal supports)
- ✓ Decrease time spent in group or specialist activities for people with disability
- ✓ Involve taking risks to develop new roles and form relationships
- ✓ Can be facilitated by paid supports by routinely going to places where friendships are more likely to happen.

Assessing people's social networks

- ✓ List all the person's **close** social networks
- ✓ **Look for balance** - informal supports should significantly outnumber paid supports

People in Joe's social networks



Things that strengthen close connections & networks

Time	Frequency and length of time spent together
Intensity	Level of emotion invested – ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’
Intimacy	Level of sharing of confidences and trust
Reciprocity	Exchanging things with others where both people benefit

Source: Clement & Bigby 2008

Tools: Facilitating community connections

- ✓ Assess people's close social networks – do informal supports outnumber the paid supports?
- ✓ Look at people's interests and think laterally
- ✓ Work together to think broadly and creatively about community options
- ✓ Support the person to make informed decisions about taking reasonable risks – *nothing will change by doing the same thing over and over*
- ✓ Ensure staff understand a person's right to take chances and make mistakes – *we all do*
- ✓ Make sure there is a back up plan in case something goes wrong
- ✓ Engage family in discussions about choices, potential risks and how they can be managed
- ✓ Ensure staff will be supported by the organisation where the person has made their own decision



Topic 3: Discussion questions

- Think about people who use your services. How many close people are in their networks?
- What are the possibilities for strengthening their social networks?
- Who is best placed to facilitate new social networks and relationships for people?

4. The role of employment

What is employment?

- Open Employment
- Self-employment
- Supported Employment
- Part-Time and Full Time Employment
- Casual and Contract Employment
- Permanent Employment
- Paid and Unpaid employment
- Volunteering
- Work for wages or salary, in exchange or in kind
- Internships and apprenticeships



Employment and disability

- Australia 21st out of 29 OECD countries in employment participation for people with disability
- NDIS wants to enable people to access and move into employment.
- Government is exploring pathways for more people with disability to access employment (Disability Employment Framework consultation: [Link](#))
- Transition to Work programs for 18-21 year olds in some jurisdictions



Day Service responsibilities

- ✓ Employment is seen by all as a real option for people
- ✓ Career planning forms part of individual plans
- ✓ Opportunities are provided for people to know what work is
- ✓ Job readiness skills are taught
- ✓ Develop clear pathways for people to transition from :
 - Volunteering > work experience > job placement
- ✓ Close connections with community and local businesses
- ✓ Link people with:
 - Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE)
 - Disability Employment Services (DES)
 - Job Services Australia (JSA)
 - Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs)

Create



Enterprise Examples

- ✓ A young woman has a business collecting, washing and delivering office tea towels
- ✓ A woman has an arrangement with neighbours to pick flowers and put small posies in local cafes
- ✓ A man contracts to owners corporations to put out and put away rubbish bins on collection days
- ✓ A woman waits in private houses for trades to arrive

Tools: Use these questions to understand how your organisation supports employment as an option for the people using your service

- Do your staff believe people with disability can work?
- What does your organisation do to assist people to think about employment?
- What opportunities does your organisation provide for people to know what work is?
- What opportunities are there for your organisation to facilitate employment opportunities under the NDIS?
- How do organisations balance government expectations of people having a job with people's right to choose not to work?

5. Creating other meaningful community roles

Activities (Past)

- Busy days filled with group activities
- Activities don't interest everyone – people fit the group
- Have a limited purpose
- Rely on paid support
- Expectations are set low and people 'settle for less'



Interests (Future)

- Personally chosen
- Tailored to passions, abilities and values
- Culturally significant
- Have purpose
- Build connections with the community and informal supports
- Information, Linkages and Capacity Building
- Lifelong learning
- Choice and control

'If ordinary citizens see people being 'occupied', 'programmed' or 'minded' in the community, then they are likely to assume that that is all they can cope with, and that they need a special worker to be with them to do those things. This squeezes out the possibility of an ordinary citizen being in an accepting relationship with the person (Sherwin 2008)'



Support worker responsibilities

- ✓ Think broadly about all the different roles a person can have in life
- ✓ Build peoples' capacity over time for decision making and risk taking
- ✓ Look out for opportunities where people can contribute
- ✓ Identify organisations and services that are funded to make disability inclusion part of their business, e.g. neighbourhood houses, state sporting associations, libraries, council run recreation and leisure centres, TAFE
- ✓ Understand your role as a facilitator and community connector
- ✓ Encourage new opportunities to explore new interests
- ✓ The first connection or group might not be the right one – be ready to try something else
- ✓ Plan to withdraw support over time as informal supports increase



?

Topic 3: Discussion questions

- What challenges has your organisation faced in creating meaningful and sustainable roles?

6. The role of volunteers in community inclusion



Volunteers...

- ✓ Are the key players in most sporting, cultural, spiritual and recreation clubs and groups
- ✓ Can be found in every community
- ✓ Have a shared interest they are passionate about
- ✓ Are motivated to contribute to their community
- ✓ Keen to welcome new volunteers
- ✓ Enjoy valued status in the community

Volunteers can support people's community inclusion

- ✓ Broaden a person's informal support networks
- ✓ Teach new skills based on interests e.g. photography, sailing, IT, bushwalking, cake decorating, campaigning
- ✓ Share and further interests, e.g. provide information about events such as demonstrations, meets, exhibitions and rallies
- ✓ Provide opportunities for social events, e.g. meetings, nights out, meals, fundraising, holidays
- ✓ Introduce new people who may become friends
- ✓ Help make connections to culture, spiritual, political interests



Role of support workers in facilitating volunteer opportunities

- ✓ Be honest about the amount a person requires
- ✓ Provide the agreed level of support
- ✓ Provide a back up plan to manage any potential issues
- ✓ Help the person to become a good contributor/member, e.g. arrive on time, help with setting up and packing/cleaning up
- ✓ Help the person learn the names of key people
- ✓ Help the person to engage with others, e.g. prompt conversations, remember names and personal details
- ✓ Make sure the person has the necessary money, equipment, specialist clothing to participate



Topic 3: Discussion questions

- Does your organisation work with volunteers to increase community inclusion for people?
- What challenges has your organisation faced in working with volunteers and how have these been overcome?
- Have you explored volunteering opportunities for service users as a way to increase community inclusion? What challenges did you all face?

7. Meaningful roles in community inclusion looks like...



Presence

Sarah loves completing jigsaw puzzles.

Staff at the day centre bring out simple puzzles everyday for Sarah to complete in the quiet period before she goes home at the end of the day.

Staff occasionally take Sarah to the local library where she can borrow different puzzles. The puzzles are mostly targeted to young children.



Encounter

Support staff start stopping by the local op shop while on their way to the coffee shop with Sarah. They look for reasonably priced puzzles Sarah can purchase.



Participation

The volunteer staff at the op shop tell Sarah and the support worker how they never know if they are selling completed puzzles or if pieces are missing.

The op shop volunteers ask if Sarah is interested in spending time in the sorting room with the other volunteers to complete and check the donated puzzles.

Sarah now spends three mornings a week at the op shop checking and completing a range of different puzzles. The stock of puzzles are turning over regularly and poor quality ones are not put on the shelves.

Sarah is included in all the volunteer celebrations and is welcomed as a member of the team.



Bec attends a day service which is close to her home. She likes many of the things she does with the service but her real dream is to work with children.

Bec and two other women are part of a kids education project. She learns how to plan lessons to pre-schoolers. Bec then delivers 6 lessons on inclusion using art & craft to a class at a local childcare centre.

Bec is now a paid employee at a local childcare centre. Facebook status: 'Employee of (name) Childcare'.

A girl from the childcare centre was really excited to introduce her Mum to Bec when they met in the street the other day.



Topic 3: Discussion questions

- How have people been supported to have meaningful roles through your organisation and move from Presence and Encounter to Participation?

8. Sharing ideas and practice

"We ask people who they want to be their friend, think about why they like that person and we help them become a friend and be a friend, like calling them up. We include friendships on Individual Plans."

"Helping people find meaningful work is really important. Even two or four hours a week of employment can make a difference. We are getting NDIS plans with this specified."

"Recreation and leisure are great ways to build skills and confidence. They build networks, people can take on volunteer roles which helps them to practice their skills and realise their strengths and interests."

"Meaningful roles is like throwing mud that sticks. We need to try many different options to see which ones people are most interested in."

"Volunteers work best where they are engaged for a specific task for a set period of time. If the relationship works well during this time it will continue naturally."

"Volunteers are hugely valuable. They enable so many different interests to be met and come with skills, networks and potential broader opportunities."

"We are using the meaningful roles checklist in training staff. We're also using it when developing individual plans to help people think about the different roles they can have."

Challenges

"Many schools and families don't have expectations of employment. We need to start much earlier putting employment forward as a real option."

"Some people limit their work hours because they don't want to lose their Disability Support Pension."

"Volunteers are not free. They need to be screened, trained, supported and supervised. NDIS does not pay for this."

"Many people with autism don't want to spend time with others. Finding a meaningful role in the community can be difficult."

"Need to negotiate what a volunteer can and cannot do, such as personal care. There can be industrial issues if volunteers are putting people out of a job."

Resources:

Watch

- Stella Young: *Inspiration porn and the objectification of disability*. TED talk [Link](#)
- Inclusion, belonging and the disability revolution. TED talk [Link](#)
- Steve's Story [Link](#)

Read

- *Design and Implementation of a Leisure Buddy program* [Fyffe & Raskin 2015] [Link](#)
- 'I get by with a little help from my friends': *Adults with intellectual disability on loneliness*. McVilley et al 2006 [Link](#)
- *National Disability Employment Framework: Issues Paper, May 2015* [Link](#)
- *Mapping Natural Supports* - Golden City Support Services 2013 [Link](#)
- *Making it Personal for Everyone* - Scown / Sanderson 2011 [Link](#)
- *Making Life Good in the Community* – Clement & Bigby 2008 [Link](#)
- *Acceptance and belonging: the helpfulness of being in valued roles*. Sherwin 2008 [Link](#)
- *Employment and Volunteering for Adults With Intellectual Disability* Trembath et al 2010 [Link](#)
- *Social Inclusion and Community Participation of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities*: Amado et al 2013 [Link](#)

Thanks to Northcott for sharing their newsletters on meaningful roles and community inclusion [Link](#)

See also *Gig Buddies Sydney* where people with disability and volunteers go to live music together [Link](#)



We are interested to hear from people about community inclusion. Tell us what you think about these resources or any of the issues raised. What do you agree with? What have we missed?

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