Supporting Inclusion
Workbook for Online Training Program - November 2014

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About 'Supporting Inclusion'

'Supporting Inclusion' is an online learning program which has been developed with you, the support worker, in mind. It can also be used by trainers or teachers to support their teaching. The purpose of this program is to create a space where disability support workers can think about what social inclusion means for people with intellectual disability, and learn or refresh some useful tools and strategies to support people with intellectual disability in ways that will promote their social inclusion.

On the 'About' Tab within the website there is a video clip for you to watch which gives you some information about this training program and the materials and resources available on the website.

The program is based on the principles of person centred active support, and is focused primarily on how this framework can be applied not just within supported accommodation services, but also out in the community.

The contents of this interactive online training program are the result of many years of research both in Australia and overseas. A substantial body of research evidence clearly shows that people with intellectual disability experience extreme forms of social exclusion. At the same time, our recent study on encounters between people with and without intellectual disability, also shows that disability support workers can play a crucial role in facilitating opportunities for people with intellectual disability to be more socially included.

How to Use this Online Learning Resource

You can access the online training program from any computer or tablet with internet access. This Workbook contains all the material in the online program, except for the videos which must be viewed online.

The program is made of 8 modules and completing each of these modules should take no longer than 30 minutes, except for Module 2 which includes an activity that can take about two hours to complete. We encourage you to work through each of the 8 modules in order. You can do the training alone or as a group at your workplace in a team meeting for example. Each module includes short videos introducing key concepts and examples of support workers supporting service users out in the community. You can turn on English subtitles for each of the videos by clicking the "CC" button at the bottom of the video and choosing the "English CC" option.

Each module includes activities and questions that can be completed using this Workbook or the Activities Questions Booklet (available for download in the resources section). The Activities Questions Booklet is a much shorter version of this Workbook, with just the activity questions. You can discuss your answers with supervisors and colleagues in team meetings.
How this training program was produced

Many of the videos in this training program were produced in collaboration with the Ever After Theater Group that includes actors both with and without intellectual disability. These videos involve Ever After actors role-playing encounters between a person with intellectual disability, a support worker and a stranger or a friend. Although there was some improvisation by the actors, these scenes are not fictional. They are based on encounters that really did happen and were observed and recorded by researchers. These videos were produced in order to illustrate typical situations and in particular some of the things support workers do that can contribute to, or in some cases undermine, social inclusion for participants.

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Module 1: Understanding social inclusion
Module 1: Understanding social inclusion

In this module you will learn about the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion, their significance for people with intellectual disability and the concept of encounter as one aspect of social inclusion.

Introducing the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion

What are social exclusion and inclusion?

Social exclusion means being shut out from the social, economic and political systems which make up our society. Experiencing social exclusion can mean one or more of the following:

- Struggling financially to make ends meet and having limited options for improving your financial situation;
- Feeling socially isolated or lonely, having few friends and limited opportunities to meet new people or make new relationships;
- Having limited access to community resources such as health, educational and recreational services;
- Having no ‘voice’ and influence over decisions that affect your life.

Social inclusion means the exact opposite, being actively engaged in our society’s social, economic and political systems, and consequently feeling a sense of belonging and having more choices and opportunities in life. The various aspects of social inclusion are illustrated in the figure below:
While inclusion and exclusion have social, economic and political dimensions, in this training program we focus on the 'social' dimension which concerns connections to other people.

One aspect of social inclusion is long lasting and meaningful relationship with family and close friends. These relationships play a very powerful role in our lives for many different reasons:

- Our relationships with family and friends define and shape who we are;
- Family and friends provide all sorts of help and support, from small to big things;
- Having positive relationships with family and friends makes us happier and healthier;
- Much of what we know about the world, we learn from our family and friends;
- Family and friends provide us with 'social capital' – material and non-material resources that we can use to achieve things we cannot achieve on our own;
- Through existing friends, we can get to meet new friends;

**Encounters with strangers**

Social inclusion is not just about lasting relationships with family and close friends, but also about our more fleeting interactions and connections with acquaintances and strangers.

Most Australians today live in cities. One characteristic of living in cities is that when we leave our homes or workplace, we often find ourselves surrounded by strangers, people we know nothing or very little about. We are not only in the presence of strangers, but are also actively and constantly interacting with them. Some of these interactions are explicit and direct – an exchange of words or conversation, direct eye contact or a smile. Other forms of interaction between strangers are more implicit. For example, when we make way for a person coming in front of us in the supermarket lane, even without saying a word or even making eye contact we are communicating with our body.

Although we often take very little notice of them, such encounters with strangers play a very important role in our lives. When we encounter strangers, we take part in a 'ritual' where subtle messages are exchanged through words and gestures. By nodding to a
stranger at the café, we might be telling them "I acknowledge your presence here and welcome it". By averting our eyes to avoid direct eye contact with a stranger at the shop, we might be communicating the message "I respect your privacy, and do not wish to disturb you". Or, by frowning at a stranger at the bowling club, we might be implicitly telling them "You are different and you do not belong here."

Through such rituals of words and gestures, people draw invisible boundaries of social inclusion and exclusion. Most encounters with strangers are very short-lived, and might be the first and last time we ever see a person. Even then, there is an opportunity for us to learn something from that stranger. Just by looking at strangers, we might learn for example which outfits are now in fashion. Or, by talking to a stranger, we might hear for the first time about a culture or lifestyle we know very little about. And by trying to see ourselves for a moment through a stranger’s eyes, we might even learn something new about ourselves.

Sometimes, we might encounter a stranger once, and then once again, and again, and over time we will get to know that person well, become acquaintances or even close friends. And although this might seem very rare and unlikely, think about this - all the friends you now have were once strangers you encountered for the first time!

Inclusion and exclusion of people with intellectual disability

On the 'Module 1' Tab within the website there is a video clip for you to watch about the social exclusion of people with intellectual disability. The transcript from this video is provided below.

The concepts of social inclusion and exclusion apply to any person. But some groups of people experience deeper and more systematic social exclusion. This includes people with intellectual disability who experience some of the more extreme forms of social exclusion.

When talking about social inclusion for people with intellectual disability, we have often used the terms 'community presence' and 'community participation'. 'Community presence’ meant visiting places and using services which are available to everyone in the community. For example, going to the cinema. 'Community participation’ meant having meaningful relationships with people who are not family, paid support workers or other people with disability. For example having a friend with whom you can go out to the football .

In recent years, we have begun to think about social inclusion a little differently, and consider all the things that fall between just being present in the community and having a strong friendships with people in the community who are not paid workers or family.

We now talk about ideas such as:
'Active participation' as being actively involved in the activities that occur in a community place. For example, being a volunteer in a community garden.

Or

'Encounters' as social interactions between strangers in public spaces, that can be fleeting contact or longer and more convivial moments where a common purpose is shared. For example, talking to the person next to you in the bus queue, or sharing a joke with another member of the cooking class.

Until not very long ago, many people with intellectual disability were shut out in institutions and had very few opportunities to experience 'community presence' or any type of social inclusion.

And although in the last few decades many institutions have closed down and more people with intellectual disability live in the community, many of them still experience limited social inclusion and have fewer relationships and less contact with people outside their own household compared to the rest of the population.

In the next modules we will examine the reasons for the persistent social exclusion of people with intellectual disability, and also think of ways in which you and other disability support workers can help address this problem.

Activity 1

Think back on some of your own encounters with strangers, and describe 2-3 of those encounters that were particularly meaningful for you, for example:

1. a gesture or a word said to you by a stranger that has made you feel welcome or unwelcome in a place
2. a brief encounter with a stranger that has challenged some of your initial pre-conceptions about a certain 'social group'
3. a situation where seeing yourself through the eyes of a stranger has taught you something new about yourself
Conclusion

In our daily lives we experience numerous brief encounters with strangers. Some encounters make us feel welcome and included in our community. Sometimes, an encounter with a stranger can even be the first step in a lasting and meaningful friendship. Other encounters, however, make us feel excluded.

The next modules in this training program are all about 'encounters' and how you can support people with intellectual disability to plan, initiate and manage encounters that enhance their social inclusion.
Module 2: Exploring your community
Module 2: Exploring your community

In the previous module we discussed random encounters with other people in the community as one way for people with intellectual disability to experience social inclusion.

There are many ways that you, as a disability support worker, can help create more opportunities for the people you support to experience such encounters with others in the community.

One way to do this is to support them to spend more time out in the community.

But in order to make the most out of time spent out in the community, in this module we consider which places in the community offer the best opportunities for encounters.

Exploring opportunities for encounter in the community

When planning where to go, one of the dilemmas is between going to a familiar place or trying out a new one.

On the 'Module 2' Tab within the website there is a video clip for you to watch about the importance of finding a balance between the going to familiar and new places. The transcript of this video is provided below.

One way you can support the people you work with to be included in their community, is to support them in making informed choices about the places they go to. You could assist them by proposing places where they are more likely to experience encounters with others. This could mean either going to a familiar place, or trying out a new place.

Going to familiar places

When repeatedly visiting the same place, you are more likely to get to know some of the other people who visit there regularly. At first they will be complete strangers. After a few occasional encounters they will become ‘familiar faces’. A waiter might know your favourite coffee. Another regular customer might give you a smile or a nod when they recognise you. Over time, opportunities may occur for you to get to know them better, become acquaintances or even friends.

In a familiar place you might also feel more welcome and safe, and therefore more confident to approach other people and initiate a conversation.

Going to familiar places where there are likely to be familiar faces is therefore a good strategy to create opportunities for fleeting sociable encounters.
**Trying out new places**

Sometimes it is also worthwhile to try out new places. Trying out new places can be beneficial in many ways:

- to get to know your community better;
- to get to have more options of places you can later choose to return to;
- to get to meet new people;
- to challenge yourself by occasionally breaking out of your routine and stepping out of your comfort zone. Breaking routine every now and then is particularly important for people with intellectual disability living in group homes, where routines can sometimes be a little rigid, creating the feeling of an ‘institution’ rather than a home.

As a disability support worker, exploring in advance some options of places to go to with a person you support can be very beneficial. This can help you try to identify in advance those ‘meeting places’ that provide the best opportunities for encounters.

**Meeting places**

We use the term 'meeting places' to describe those places that provide the best opportunities for people with intellectual disability to meet both familiar and new people.

Meeting places share three important characteristics:

- They are mainstream places that are open to anyone in the community (as opposed to specialist places where people with disability are segregated)
- They are accessible places which are welcoming to people with intellectual disability
- They are convivial places where friendly interaction and conversation between people is encouraged

**Accessibility**

If a service user has a physical disability such as mobility restrictions or, for example, needs support to use the toilet, it is important to check in advance that the place you will be visiting is physically accessible and designed in such a way that it could be used conveniently and as independently as possible by the service user.

Accessibility for people with intellectual disability means other things as well, beyond physical access.

‘Communication accessibility’ relates to how information is presented, and whether these formats are accessible for people with communication disabilities. Part of the ‘communication accessibility’ of a place is whether a venue’s staff - such as shop keepers or librarians - are able to communicate effectively with people with intellectual disability.

In a more general sense, an accessible environment is one where people are not excluded because they have an intellectual disability. A place where people with intellectual disability are asked to leave, or are not allowed to engage in activities with others, is an exclusionary rather than an accessible place. For example, a bowling club where people with intellectual disability cannot participate in games with others.
**Conviviality**

How do you know if a certain place is convivial?

Often as soon as you enter a place, you feel that it has a friendly atmosphere that encourages friendly encounters. This is what we mean by 'convivial places'.

The table below helps characterise convivial places in more detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convivial places</th>
<th>Non-convivial places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Alienated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An atmosphere which encourages friendly interaction and conversation between people, including strangers.</td>
<td>An atmosphere which discourages interaction between people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intimate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Impersonal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where people feel more comfortable, informal and experience more personal communications with others.</td>
<td>Places where people tend to remain anonymous and communications are more formal and less personal in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exclusive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where people of different gender, age, cultural background, ability or other differences feel welcome and safe.</td>
<td>Places where only certain types of people are welcome; although these places can be very sociable for some people, for others these may be experienced as unsafe or unwelcoming places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vibrant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dull</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places teeming with life and energy, where exciting things are happening or can be expected to happen; there are opportunities for strangers to engage together in purposeful activity such as singing in a choir, drawing in an art group, or discussing a book in a reading club.</td>
<td>Places where nothing too exciting is happening or can be expected to happen; each person seems to be 'doing their own thing' in isolation from others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the 'Module 2' Tab within the website there is a video clip for you to watch with an interview with Dr Kurt Iveson about the meaning and importance of convivial places.
Activity 2

Activity 2a: map meeting places in your own community

Select any four places in the local area (neighbourhood or suburb) where you live, such as a park, a shop, a café, an entertainment venue, a library, a community centre or other. Include at least one place you have never visited before.

You can find ideas and information about such places in your local newspaper or google maps.

Make time in the next two weeks to visit each of these places at least once. Think of yourself as an explorer, an amateur detective trying to capture the atmosphere and essence of places just by strolling through and observing the physical settings and the social interaction that is taking place there.

Based on your observations, describe in a few sentences whether the place is welcoming, and whether the atmosphere in the place is sociable or alienated, intimate or impersonal, inclusive or exclusive, vibrant or dull. Which of the places you visited would offer the best opportunities for you to encounter strangers.
Activity 2b: map meeting places in the community of the people you support

Now that you have mapped meeting places in your local area, it is time to try and map meeting places in the area where a person with intellectual disability you support lives.

You can do this individually, or as a team (for example, a team of disability support workers working in the same area).

Start by listing a number of places in the local area which you think might potentially be good ‘meeting places’. Include both familiar and unfamiliar places.

Then, like in the previous exercise, visit those places and take notes based on your observations: are these places accessible and welcoming for people with intellectual disability? Sociable or alienated? Intimate or impersonal? Inclusive or exclusive? Vibrant or dull? Which of these places would offer the best opportunities for people with intellectual disability to encounter strangers and experience social inclusion?
Conclusion

Some places can be described as ‘meeting places’, because they provide many opportunities for encounters between strangers. These places are accessible and welcoming for people with intellectual disability, but they are also mainstream places which provide opportunities to meet other people who do not have an intellectual disability. The atmosphere in such meeting places is convivial, encouraging friendly encounters between strangers. Exploring your community to identify in advance such ‘meeting places’ can be a very effective way to support people with intellectual disability to achieve greater social inclusion.
Module 3:
What gets in the way?
Barriers to social inclusion
Module 3: What gets in the way? Barriers to social inclusion

Let’s refresh our memory!
In Module 1 we discussed the limited social inclusion of people with disability.

In module 2 we already started thinking of ways you and other disability support workers could help amend this situation, for example by identifying ‘meeting places’ where service users can encounter other members of their community.

Before we move on to think of other ways you can support the people you work with to be more socially included, it is also important to step back and think why it is that people with intellectual disability experience such limited forms of social inclusion.

Barriers to social inclusion

The reasons for the social exclusion of people with intellectual disability are many and complex, including community attitudes, communication barriers and also the design of disability services and accommodation and some of the practices of disability support workers.

On the 'Module 3' Tab within the website there is a video clip for you to watch about the main barriers to social inclusion for people with intellectual disability. The transcript of the video is provided below.

Until not very long ago, many people with intellectual disability were shut out in institutions and had very few opportunities to participate in their local communities. In the last few decades many institutions have closed down and more people with intellectual disability live in the community. They also experience greater ‘community presence’, and frequently use those same public facilities and services that are open to anyone in the community.

However, the research evidence shows many people with intellectual disability might be living in their community, and still are not fully accepted as part of the community. They have fewer relationships and contact with other people who are not their family, support workers or other people with intellectual disability. Why? There are many reasons, but here we will focus on three:

First, community attitudes

Part of the explanation for the exclusion of people with intellectual disability is the attitudes of other people in the community towards them. Some people avoid making
contact and having relationships with people with intellectual disability for various reasons such as:

- Negative, stereotypical beliefs
- Embarrassment
- Feeling unsure what is and is not appropriate.
- Worry that it might be difficult to ‘disengage’

**Second, cognitive and communication differences**

Communication between people with different cognitive abilities and communication skills can sometimes be difficult.

Some people with intellectual disability communicate in non-verbal ways which could be misunderstood by others.

**Third, the practices of disability support staff**

Disability support workers can play a very positive role in solving some of the problems discussed above, such as community attitudes and cognitive and communication differences which stand in the way of social inclusion.

But disability support workers can also be part of the problem when they act as a barrier to, rather than a facilitator of, community participation, as discussed below.

**Common staff practices which limit opportunities for encounter and social inclusion**
Although a primary role for disability support workers is to facilitate social inclusion for service users, some support practices result in the exact opposite. One very common example is group outings planned and facilitated by support workers. When going out in a group, opportunities for encounter are more limited. Members of the group interact with each other and miss out on opportunities to make contact with others in the community who are outside their group. Some people who might be interested in making contact and getting to know a person with intellectual disability would be more reluctant to make such contact if that person was in a group.

Sometimes disability support workers deliberately prevent or disrupt an encounter between a service user and other people. Sometimes they do it because they are worried about how other people would react to a person with intellectual disability, or they feel that there is no time for spontaneous encounters with strangers because they need to get on with their planned schedule. It is also quite common for a disability support workers to speak on behalf of a service user – for example taking an order for them at the restaurant – which effectively prevents direct contact between that person and other members of the community.

Activity 3

In your experience as a disability support worker, what community attitudes have you faced that prevented opportunities for encounters and social inclusion?
Conclusion

There are many barriers to the social inclusion of people with intellectual disability, and an important part of your role as a disability support worker is to help the people you support overcome such barriers. This includes ensuring your own practices as a support worker assist rather than prevent social inclusion. An even more challenging role for you is to support a person with intellectual disability to overcome other barriers such as stigmatising community attitudes towards people with intellectual disability, and in some cases cognitive and communication differences which make meaningful social inclusion more challenging. In the following modules we will cover in some detail some of the things that you can do to achieve this.
Module 4: Planning to go out
Module 4: Planning to go out

For any person, to experience social inclusion means leaving the relative convenience and privacy of home, and venturing out to the ‘public realm’.

Often, this requires some planning. In previous modules we discussed some aspects of planning, for example planning where to go to. But there are other ways you can support a service user to plan their time out in the community in such a way that will not only make it more pleasant, but will also create opportunities for them to experience encounter and social inclusion.

The importance of good planning (and the importance of spontaneity)

Planning before going out can help achieve several things:

- Preparing for potential complications can lead to a smooth event with minimal hiccups.
- Encouraging an open discussion between a person with intellectual disability and their support worker about their expectations from time spent in the community.
- Planning stimulates creativity. Without planning, people sometimes stick to the same familiar places. Planning involves thinking of other options and making a more informed choice about where to go and what to do.

That said, the beauty of encounters with strangers is that they are random and cannot be planned. In fact, sometimes they even distract from the original plan. As important as it is to plan, it is also important to leave much space for spontaneity and surprise.

Who's making the decisions?

In the past, disability services have been designed in such a way that people with intellectual disability had very little say in decisions affecting most aspects of their life - from where and with whom they live, to what they eat for dinner.

This is changing, and 'choice and control' for people with disability is becoming one of the most important principles in the design and delivery of support services today.

This means, for example, that decisions about where, when and how to go out should ultimately be made by the person with intellectual disability.

This also means that your role as a support worker is not to plan and make decisions for a service user, rather it is to support that person to make their own plans and decisions
about when, where and how to go out. You can do this by helping that person understand their options so that they are able to make a more informed choice.

Good planning before going out

On the 'Module 4' Tab within the website there is a video clip for you to watch which gives you some information about some of the principles of good planning before going out.

Before leaving the door

To ensure service users take advantage of the time they spend in the community, it is important to prepare before going out.

- **Neat and appropriate physical presentation:** making sure the service user is dressed neatly and appropriately for the place they are going to visit. Being dressed in a 'representative' way is an important condition for positive encounters with other members of the community.

- **Communication aids:** if necessary, make sure the person you support goes out with communication aides which are appropriate for the place they are going to. For example, chat books or flip cards with pictures of the choices on a menu in a restaurant that will help them choose and order on their own.

- **Cash:** make sure the person you support carries enough cash on their own to be able to pay for goods and services on their own.

- **Transport:** plan in advance transport arrangements so that the service user can participate in activities and events from beginning to end and does not miss out on opportunities for encounter.
Preparing for encounter

A support worker can help prepare a service user for a specific encounter they know is likely to occur. For example, when planning to go out to a bar, the support worker can help prepare by:

- Talking with the service user about the encounter that is going to occur, who they will meet and what might be expected of them. For example, they are likely to meet a barman and will be expected to order and pay for their own drinks.

- Role playing the expected encounter, to help the service user gain practice and confidence. This will not always be necessary, and depends on the service user’s personality, abilities, and also the specific situation.

On the 'Module 4' Tab within the website there is a video example that shows how a beautiful moment of active participation and encounter is cut short because of poor planning.
Conclusion

Good planning and preparation before going out increases opportunities for encounters. Support workers can assist service users in making informed choices about where to go, what to do there and be well prepared for both planned and unplanned encounters. Having an overarching person-centred plan, that captures the service user’s interests and aspirations, can be helpful when planning time out in the community. But always keep in mind that while it is important to plan and prepare in advance, it is just as important to allow for spontaneous change in plans as you go, to allow unexpected encounters take place!
Module 5: Making encounters happen
Module 5: Making encounters happen

As discussed in Module 3, people with intellectual disability often miss out on opportunities for encounter because of community attitudes, communication differences and staff practices.

Disability support workers can try to amend this situation by pro-actively trying to facilitate opportunities for encounter, when it is appropriate to do so.

When (and when not) to initiate encounter

As a disability support worker, there are times you need to make a judgement on whether it is appropriate or not to support a service user to initiate encounter with others.

Seizing opportunities for encounter

One of the essentials of Person Centred Active Support is 'every moment has potential'. This also applies to supporting people with intellectual disability out in the community. There are many moments when there a potential for encounter when it might be appropriate for you to provide support to initiate an encounter.

Without support there may be many 'missed opportunities'. For example, when someone in the community communicates that they are ready and willing to interact - for example, by making eye-contact or smiling - but the person with intellectual disability misses the signs or seems unsure how to respond.

Another example for a missed opportunity is when the person you are supporting seems keen to initiate encounter with another person, but is not sure how to do it.

Sometimes you will join a service user in situations where there are 'natural' opportunities for encounter. For example, by participating in a shared-purpose activity with other people where it is common for strangers to interact with each other. If you notice that the person you support is excluded from such interaction, it might be appropriate to try and facilitate their engagement.

Letting go

Even when going out to public places, people often expect to be left alone and have their privacy respected. This does not mean that they are acting in an 'exclusionary' way towards a person with intellectual disability. They may be wary of strangers, tired, in a hurry or not in the mood for conversation.

Sometimes a person's body language will tell you that they are not interested in any sociable interaction. For example, they will avert their eyes or turn their face away.
It is every person's right to keep to themselves, and it would be inappropriate and unhelpful for you to try to initiate an encounter despite signs that they are not interested.

How to make encounters happen?

Creating an inviting atmosphere

When accompanying a service user in public, you can help set-up a mood or atmosphere that is more inviting for other people to make contact.

If you and the service user seem to be having a good time, other people might want to make contact and be part of the fun too. But if you and the service user (or group of service users) focus your full attention exclusively on each other, others might shy away. While friendly interaction between the support worker and a service user can be a great thing, try also to stay attuned to the environment and the people around you.

Responding to opportunities

When a stranger initiates conversation, or even just hints that they are interested in conversation by making eye contact, smiling or moving closer, there might be an opportunity for encounter!

If the service user has not responded to that opportunity, it might be because they have missed these signs, or might not know or be unsure how to respond.

You can support them by directing their attention to these signs and subtly prompting their response.
On the 'Module 5' Tab within the website there is a video that shows an example of a support worker supporting a person to respond to an opportunity for encounter.

**Prompt person with disability to initiate encounter**

If you notice an opportunity for encounter but the person you support does not respond, you might be able to gently prompt them to initiate contact with someone else on their own. This way they will get to 'practice' more direct contact with others without your involvement.

**Making an introduction**

When the opportunity is there – for example, a person has made eye contact and smiled at the person you support – but he or she seems unsure how to respond, you might help by informally introducing them to the other person. A simple friendly and straightforward introduction is sometimes all that is needed to get a conversation started.
On the 'Module 5' Tab within the website there is a video that shows examples of support workers supporting service users to initiate conversation through prompting and making an introduction.

It is important to avoid those practices that might prevent encounters from happening. As you remember from Module 4, sometimes people with intellectual disability miss out on opportunities for encounter because they are taken out to community places in large groups.

Sometimes support workers prevent an encounter between a service user and others in order to avoid embarrassment or in order to get on with other plans. Sometimes, a person with intellectual disability misses out on an opportunity for an encounter because the support worker interacts on their behalf.

If you, as a support worker, avoid these practices, the person you support will benefit from more opportunities for encounter with other members of their community.
Activity 4

Should a support worker proactively try to initiate encounters for a service user who is shy, and usually prefers to avoid social interactions with strangers?

Write down some examples of tactics you have used to initiate encounters for the person you support:
Conclusion

It is easy to miss out on opportunities for encounter, especially for people who are less experienced in interacting with strangers. Through very simple acts - such as making a brief introduction or prompting a service user to initiate conversation on their own - support workers can help service users overcome these difficulties and experience encounter and greater social inclusion. These support practices are easy to master and very effective, but require support workers to be alert to opportunities for encounter when accompanying a service user in the community.
Module 6: Managing encounters
Module 6: Managing encounter

In the previous modules we discussed the significance of encounters as a form of social inclusion. We also discussed how you, as a disability support worker, can make encounters happen, by informing service users about places to go to where they might find more opportunities for convivial encounters, and by supporting service users to initiate and respond to such opportunities.

But the role of support workers does not always end here. In some cases, you may be able to provide important support for the person you support to manage the encounter after it had started.

Often when a service user is engaged in an 'encounter' with another person, you will need to make careful judgment on whether it is appropriate for you to intervene at all, and if so, how.

Let's have a look at some of the options.

Stepping back

Often the best thing for you to do is... nothing!

The person you support and the stranger they meet will manage their 'encounter' on their own, without any intervention on your side. You can step back and observe the situation quietly, ready to offer your assistance only if it becomes necessary.

But even if you do nothing, the service user and other people they meet will be aware of your presence, and it will affect the nature of their interaction.

As discussed in Module 3, some people do not feel comfortable making contact with a person with intellectual disability, because they worry that they will not know what to do and how to communicate. For these people, your very presence might be reassuring even if you step back and do not interfere. Just knowing that you are there might give them more confidence to engage with a person with intellectual disability, as in the situation in the next video.
On the 'Module 6' Tab within the website there is a video that shows how examples of support workers stepping back but making their presence known to give a stranger the confidence to chat with a person with intellectual disability.

Facilitating communications

Sometimes you may need to assist the person you support to communicate with others, particularly if the person you support has communication difficulties or communicates in unconventional ways.

Some people with intellectual disabilities communicate differently, and may not follow conventions such as constructing logical sentences or taking turns in conversation. Therefore, it can be difficult for other people to understand what they are trying to say, and they may have difficulty understanding what others are saying to them.

During encounters between a service user and other members of the community, you may need to serve as an ‘interpreter’. This is because you understand how the person you support communicates whereas others in the community may have difficulty understanding them.

Being a good ‘interpreter’ means trying as much as possible to explain messages without omission or distortion to allow more genuine communication to occur. This means, for example, explaining what another person said accurately, even when you do not agree with it. It could be difficult in some cases for the interpreter to avoid projecting their own views while interpreting others. It could also be difficult to interpret ambiguous or inconsistent messages.
By offering your services as an 'interpreter', you can help facilitate more effective communication between a service user and other people and also prevent potential misunderstandings. For example, some unconventional ways of communicating can be misunderstood as offensive, and a brief explanation by the support worker can help clarify the situation and facilitate a more positive, friendly encounter for all involved.

**Activity 5**

Think of situations where you have acted as an interpreter to facilitate more effective communication between a service user and a stranger.

Did you manage to interpret their messages to each other? Would you do things differently now?

On the 'Module 6' Tab within the website there is a video that shows a support worker 'interpreting' a service user who communicates in unconventional ways.
Conclusion

In many situations, service users will be able to manage an encounter with a stranger on their own. The best thing you can do then is to step back and let it happen. However, in some cases your help might be needed in facilitating communications, depending on the situation, the service user's skills and those of the person they encounter. Sometimes you will need to act as an 'interpreter' that helps the service user and the stranger understand each other. Your challenge then will be to interpret and assist with communications without speaking 'on behalf' of the service user, so that they can experience a genuine moment of 'conviviality' with a stranger despite their cognitive differences.
Module 7: Challenging encounters
Module 7: Challenging encounters

The research evidence shows that most encounters between people with intellectual disability and other people in their communities are positive, friendly encounters. But there are some more challenging encounters as well. Sometimes the difficulty lies in the behaviours of a person with intellectual disability, sometimes in the behaviours of a stranger, and sometimes in the interaction and miscommunication between the two. In such challenging encounters you will face difficult dilemmas about how to deal with a service user or a stranger's behaviour. While there are often no absolute 'right' or 'wrong' answers to these questions, in this module we offer some ideas and guidance for support workers dealing with challenging encounters.

Supporting inclusion for people with challenging behaviour

People considered as having 'challenging behaviours' – often people with a more severe intellectual disability - experience more limited opportunities for encounter and social inclusion. It is common that people with challenging behaviours are discouraged or prevented from going out and experiencing encounters, because their support workers are worried about potentially harmful or socially unacceptable behaviour in public. This leads to the social isolation of people with challenging behaviours.

Therefore, as with any other service user and perhaps even more so, support workers should proactively support people with challenging behaviours to go out to various places in the community and experience encounters with strangers. This would increase their social inclusion and may also, over time, reduce their challenging behaviours.

How can people with challenging behaviours be supported to experience encounter? The same principles discussed more generally in previous modules apply here as well:

**SUPPORTING ENCOUNTER FOR PEOPLE WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS**

**INDIVIDUAL PLANNING**
- Learn and document service user's social inclusion goals and behaviour support strategies;
- Provide service user choice and control in the planning process;
- Encourage people who know the service user well to participate in the planning process;

**CONVIVIAL PLACES**
- Encourage service user to return to familiar places where they are most comfortable;
- Over time, research new places to try out, fitting the person's interests and preferences;
- Avoid environments that could potentially trigger challenging behaviours;

**ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT**
- Support the service user to go out on their own rather than in a group;

**INITIATE ENCOUNTER**
- Create a pleasant and friendly atmosphere that will encourage strangers to interact with the service user;
- Encourage the service user to initiate or respond to encounter;
- Introduce the service user to strangers;

**INTERPRET COMMUNICATIONS**
- Explain unconventional communications and behaviours to strangers;
- Help service user understand strangers;
Dealing with disruptive behaviour in public

Despite good planning and support, some people might still present behaviours that are not merely 'unconventional', but are socially unacceptable and potentially harmful, such as:

- Causing physical harm to other people
- Inappropriately touching other people's body and belongings
- Disobeying the formal or informal rules of a venue, for example by being very noisy

In such situations, you might decide it is appropriate for you to intervene, to try and stop the harmful or inappropriate behaviour. You should always do so in a manner that is respectful both to the person you support and to the stranger they have encountered. Depending on the situation, removing the service user from the place may in some extreme cases be appropriate. For example, you may decide to remove the person from the place and talk to them in private until they are calm then help them to calm by talking in private, and then returning to the place can be effective.

Importantly, these challenging encounters can also be excellent opportunities for social inclusion. For example, if the person you support apologises to a stranger for any discomfort they have caused, this could develop into a conversation and a more convivial encounter.

If certain challenging behaviours persist over time, a positive behaviour support strategy can be developed with the service user and other people who know them well, and who can propose effective strategies to deal with such situations.

The two videos below illustrate different ways in which support workers have managed 'challenging encounters'. These are followed by 'Activities' asking you to reflect on whether the support workers acted appropriately or could have done things differently.
Activity 6

On the 'Module 7' Tab within the website there is a video that shows a support worker trying to manage a challenging encounter. You will need to watch the video to complete Activity 6.

In the video example, the support worker explains Larry's behaviour to a stranger, but does not try to stop Larry from taking the bottle without permission. Do you think the support worker did the right thing? Would you have done it differently?
Activity 7

On the 'Module 7' Tab within the website there is a video that shows a support worker intervening in an encounter between a service user and a hairdresser. You will need to watch the video to complete Activity 7.

In the example video, do you think the support worker's intervention in the conversation between a service user and a hairdresser was necessary and appropriate? Why?
Dealing with a stranger's disrespectful behaviour

Sometimes an encounter becomes challenging because of a stranger who treats the person you support disrespectfully. For example, by making abusive remarks, treating the service user as a child or interacting with you while ignoring the service user.

Always put the service user's safety and your safety first. When facing intentionally abusive behaviour towards the service user, do not try to educate or publicly shame the abusive person. This is risky and most likely futile. Ensure the service user's and your safety first. Later, when you are in a safe place, you can consider options of responding to the situation, for example by making a formal complaint.

But when you come across people who act disrespectfully to a service user, but seem to be doing this unintentionally, for example as a result of misconceptions and lack of experience in encounter with people with intellectual disability, you could try to intervene to guide that person to engage in a more respectful way with the service user. In the video below, for example, a support worker tactfully guides a bank teller and the service user to interact directly with each other:

On the 'Module 7' Tab within the website there is a video that shows a support worker tactfully guides a bank teller and the service user to interact directly with each other.

Activity 8

Can you share an example from your own experience of trying to deal with a stranger who has treated the person you support disrespectfully? Would you do things differently now?
**Conclusion**

Certain behaviours and miscommunications by a service user or a stranger can result in challenging encounters. In such situations support workers are required to make difficult judgements about whether and how to intervene. Intervening in a way that is disrespectful to a service user or a stranger can sometimes do more harm than good. The challenge for support workers is to try to very tactfully and respectfully guide a service user and a stranger to communicate and behave in a more socially acceptable manner and be respectful to one another.
Module 8: Learning from encounters
Module 8: Learning from encounters

Congratulations! You have reached the final module of this online training program. Let's take a moment to summarise and reflect on what we've learned.

From online learning to learning from experience

To recap, the program covered a number of issues:

- The importance of 'convivial encounter' with strangers as a significant part of social inclusion
- The various barriers to social inclusion and to 'convivial' encounters
- The principles of good planning before going out
- Ideas of how to support service users to initiate encounter
- Ideas of how to support service users to manage encounter with strangers, including in more challenging situations.

The training program was meant to bring these issues to your attention, and to offer you some specific ideas and tools on how to support people with intellectual disability to experience more meaningful social inclusion and 'encounters' with other members of the public.

But this is not the end of your learning journey - just the beginning! The most significant learning will come not from online training but from 'real life' experience and practice!

Every encounter that you and the person you support experience is an important opportunity for learning.

One way to improve your own practice is to make time at the end of a shift to reflect on the encounters you and the service user experienced. Try to think about what went on there and what might have been different if you had done things differently. Try to think about what you have learned from that encounter, and what can be improved in terms of planning, initiating and managing future encounters.

It is important to also talk about these encounters with the person you support. Make time when you return home or at the end of your shift to 'debrief' by talking about their encounters during that day or week. This could be a good topic for a casual conversation over dinner or coffee at home.

Talking about more challenging encounters can be a way to release some of the tensions and negative emotions that may have come up. For example, if a stranger treated the person you support with disrespect, it is important to ask how they feel about this. Talking about these issues openly and emphatically can help make sure such negative incidents do not undermine a service user’s confidence to continue and engage with
other members of the public.

It is also important to talk about the more pleasant encounters and the moments of humour, joy and conviviality shared with strangers. Such encounters are important achievements that are worth celebrating!

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**Final remarks**

On the 'Module 8' Tab within the website there is a video with some final remarks on the training program by Prof. Christine Bigby and Dr Ilan Wiesel.
References
References


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