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DIVERSITY IN CARE ENVIRONMENTS

Learning Resource Tool



JAN 2022



Introduction to the tool

This learning resource is intended to accompany the five podcasts from the DICE study – Diversity in Care Environments, a research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. A further episode, Part Six, is about the DICE study – listen to this to learn more about the research project. You can also find out more, including the accompanying policy report and an infographic by ILC-UK at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/DICE/>

The learning resource is aimed at managers and staff working in housing schemes that provide care and support services for older people. This may include extra care schemes and independent living schemes that seek to maximise older people's independence while providing a connected community. The resource includes a summary of each podcast contributor and key questions to consider for each podcast. In addition, four vignettes are included – these are short stories about four fictional residents who represent different characteristics.



Listen to the podcast

The aims of this resource are:

1. To increase staff awareness of social difference and diversity amongst older residents.
2. To illustrate forms of discrimination and inequality experienced by residents on the basis of social minority identities.
3. To facilitate critical and practical thinking about the ways in which staff and managers can promote socially inclusive environments at individual and scheme-based levels.

Here are some ways in which this resource and the accompanying podcasts may be used by housing providers:

- In staff recruitment activities, for example using the vignettes in recruitment interviews to gauge the awareness of applicants' awareness of resident diversity and the importance of recognising and addressing inequality and discrimination.
- As part of equality¹ and diversity training for new members of staff.
- As the basis for a group discussion exercise amongst managers and staff – for example a 1-hour education session based on two of the podcasts.
- For individual managers and team members to engage with and reflect on as part of their ongoing professional development.
- For awareness-raising sessions with small groups of residents, for example where concerns have been raised about the exclusion of or discrimination towards particular residents.

¹ The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) defines equality as: 'ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability... recognises that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination.'

Link: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/useful-information/understanding-equality>

Part One:

Ann

Ann is a woman in her late 60s, who has lived at an extra care housing scheme for the last nine years. Her career as a nurse saw her working in the field of mental health and with people with learning disabilities. She grew up as a black woman in a largely white neighbourhood. During her childhood, Ann experienced racism from other children. While in the minority as a black woman, she does not perceive that she has experienced racism where she is currently living.

In the accompanying podcast, Ann describes how, whilst she enjoys living at her housing scheme, the attitudes of a minority of residents makes living there difficult. She speaks of feeling encouraged by how the staff at her scheme have responded to resolve the situation.



[Listen to the podcast](#)

Questions to consider:

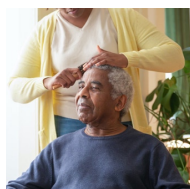
- How does your organisation seek to challenge discrimination and to support the social inclusion of residents?
- What processes exist in your organisation for residents to report discrimination?
- How can scheme staff get to know new residents and what matters to them?
- How can staff and managers encourage a more respectful environment amongst residents?
- How can staff and managers ensure that residents feel that their concerns matter and that they will be acted upon?
- What are the roles of staff and managers in recognising social difference and making residents feel safe and valued?
- What does a whole-community approach to social inclusion look like within housing schemes?

Key learning points:

- It is important for scheme staff and managers to develop relationships of trust with residents. Such relationships will ensure that residents feel that they can approach staff and managers and that managers and staff will also feel able to enter discussions with residents where there may be difficult relationships and potential conflict. This includes ensuring that residents are aware of the processes for reporting discrimination.
- Housing providers need to provide staff and managers with equality and diversity training, which includes training in inclusive language. Training for staff in how to respond to and mediate difficult resident relationships should also be mandatory. Staff need to ensure that they model attitudes of respect and inclusion in their own practice and conduct.
- The visibility of posters and affirming images (such as pictures of people in same-sex couples or of ethnically diverse people and groups) within communal areas of schemes can send a message that housing communities support inclusion and value resident difference.

Key legislation to consider:

[Equality Act 2010](#) - race and disability are protected characteristics under the Act.



Part Two:

Jane

Jane is a white woman who identifies as transgender. Jane has lived at her housing scheme on the outskirts of London for the past 11 years. The housing scheme has shared outside space which residents use during warmer weather. Besides a laundry room, there are no other indoor communal areas. During Jane's time living at the scheme, transphobic literature was found in the communal laundry room. Jane feels that this was a 'one-off' incident, which the scheme manager handled to her satisfaction.

In the accompanying podcast, Jane speaks of why she was attracted to live at the housing scheme and how, while she values her privacy, opportunities for her to socially connect with other residents are limited.



Listen to the podcast

Questions to consider:

- What role do staff and housing providers play in making residents feel valued and included where they are living?
- What role do pets have in supporting residents to feel 'at home' where they are living?
- How do you support residents to live the life they want to live?
- How welcoming is your organisation to residents identifying as transgender?
- How can residents be supported with experiences of grief and loss?
- How can residents be encouraged to maintain a balance between privacy and interacting with other residents which is right for them?
- Indoor and outdoor communal areas are much-needed spaces where residents can connect with other residents on an everyday basis. If these areas do not exist in your housing scheme, are there community rooms and spaces that residents could access in the local area?

Key learning points:

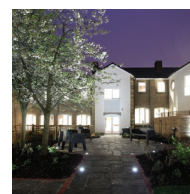
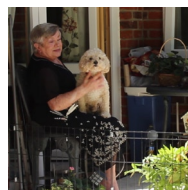
- Animal companions are vital to some residents' wellbeing. Housing schemes that allow and encourage pet ownership can positively impact resident wellbeing. Pet ownership may also counteract feelings of loneliness and help to reduce isolation.
- Staff and managers can support individual residents to find the right balance of privacy and solitude without becoming isolated. This is particularly important for those who have experienced loss through a change in relationship or bereavement (including the loss of animal companions).
- Housing providers need to provide mandatory equality and diversity training for staff, which includes discussions about the importance of respecting residents who belong to minority groups and using inclusive language, such as the correct use of gender pronouns.

Key legislation to consider:

[Data Protection Act 2018](#) - protecting people's personal information, including details about their gender identity.

[Gender Recognition Act 2004](#) - an Act of law that provides transgender people with legal recognition of their gender identity.

[Equality Act 2010](#) - race, disability and gender reassignment (inclusive of all trans people) are protected characteristics under the Act.



Part Three:

Robert

Robert is a 78-year-old man who lives in an extra care housing scheme for older people. Robert identifies as gay and moved into the scheme with his long-term partner 10 years ago, as Robert required some extra support with caring for his partner's needs. They moved into the scheme when it was first built and Robert praises the design of the scheme with its wide corridors, large bathrooms, open plan living and dining room, and communal spaces, including an on-site restaurant and a large garden surrounded by woodland.

In the accompanying podcast, Robert describes the transition of moving into the scheme, being welcomed by the manager and interactions with other residents.



[Listen to the podcast](#)

Questions to consider:

- How important is the design of housing schemes for the inclusion of residents? How can communal spaces be used in an inclusive way?
- What role do scheme staff have in encouraging greater inclusion? How do you think they can do this?
- How can scheme staff recognise and support new residents who may identify as LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)?
- Unlike Robert, not all residents can speak up for themselves or feel confident to challenge discriminatory views from others. What role do staff and housing providers have in challenging discriminatory remarks and actions within schemes?
- How can staff support residents to speak up for themselves amongst other residents?
- What training and support should staff receive to help them to support residents?
- How can staff support residents to engage in the activities that matter to them?

Key learning points:

- The built environment is important for supporting the continuation of care for a partner (for example, appropriate adaptations).
- Housing providers and scheme managers need to work with residents from minority backgrounds to ensure inclusion. On-site staff who have built rapport and trust with residents are vital to ensuring that residents from minority backgrounds are not discriminated against and that they feel valued and included.
- Robert suggests that scheme managers could play a role in encouraging the inclusion of new residents through introductions at coffee mornings in communal areas. He discusses his hope to have his wedding party in the communal area of the scheme, highlighting the value of communal spaces, and the importance of managers and other residents being receptive to the hosting of life-events that are significant to residents.
- Scheme staff and managers need to make sure that the Equality Act 2010 is fully implemented and ensure that they provide safe, inclusive living environments for all residents. They need the full support of their employer to do this well.

Key legislation to consider:

Sexual Offences Act 1967 ('1967 Act') - this Act led to the decriminalisation of sex between men. Prior to this Act sex between men was a criminal act in England and Wales.

[Equality Act 2010](#) - race and sexual orientation are protected characteristics under the Act.



Part Four:

Sasha

Sasha is a lesbian in her late 60s. She has lived alone in a one-bedroom flat, located in a rural retirement village, for the past six years. The scheme benefits from a large communal grassed area, however it has no internal communal spaces. Sasha originates from Germany but has been living in the UK since the 1980s, when she was an active member of the LGBT+ community. She currently experiences poor physical and mental health which sees her confined to her flat on most days. She views herself as very much a minority amongst other residents at the scheme where she lives and reports that she stopped attending summer outdoor activities due to some xenophobic and racist attitudes expressed by other residents.

On the accompanying podcast Sasha describes her past, the fact that she previously worked as a housing scheme manager, and how this has informed her expectation of the role of a scheme manager.



[Listen to the podcast](#)

Questions to consider:

- How can staff support residents to maintain their individuality and sense of self when their life is restricted by poor health or disability?
- What role does digital technology play in supporting residents to maintain their independence?
- How does your organisation celebrate the different cultural, spiritual and social beliefs of residents?
- What processes exist in your organisation for residents to report discrimination?
- What links does your organisation have to community groups and services that represent the rights of people belonging to different characteristics? For example, groups and services for LGBT+ people or for different ethnic communities.
- How can residents experiencing poor health or restricted mobility be supported to be included in resident communities?
- Who at your organisation can residents speak to about equality and discrimination concerns? How are residents informed of this?

Key learning points:

- On-site staff and estate managers are key to ensuring that residents do not become isolated, especially residents who are not able to leave their homes due to physical and/or mental ill health.
- Good digital connectivity and access to Wi-Fi is important to ensure that residents can connect with online groups and communities. This is particularly relevant for residents who have minority identities and value connections with other individuals and groups with shared or similar identities, and for residents confined to their homes due to poor physical or mental health or long-term impairments.
- Residents should be made aware of local community groups and organisations that support residents identifying with minority groups. Broad awareness could be raised via the display of information in communal areas or via resident newsletters.
- Providers need to issue policies on responding to and challenging discrimination from scheme staff or residents and such policies need to be publicly available for all staff and residents to read. Managers must also ensure that there are confidential channels available for residents to report discrimination and that they are regularly reminded of these.

Key legislation to consider:

[Equality Act 2010](#) - race and sexual orientation are protected characteristics under the Act.



Part Five:

Ward

Ward is a 73-year-old man who lives in an inner-city retirement housing scheme. Ward identifies as gay and, over the course of his adult life, has been heavily involved with LGBT+ campaigning and social groups. He has lived in his current scheme for eight years, having previously lived in a similar scheme owned by the same housing provider.

In the accompanying podcast, Ward describes his long-term interest in issues of equality and diversity, the built environment of the scheme where he lives and his involvement with his housing provider's training of staff.



Listen to the podcast

Questions to consider:

- In his discussions of equality and diversity, Ward discusses social justice. What is meant by social justice and why does it matter in housing communities?
- Ward discusses social connections inside and outside of the scheme where he lives. Why are social connections within schemes and outside of schemes important to residents? What role do staff have in supporting residents to develop and maintain these connections?
- How would you address the isolation of residents within the scheme where you work, for example when residents might be 'stuck in their flats'?
- Ward mentions the need for more adaptations for disabled residents and people with dementia within housing schemes. How can housing communities be made more inclusive for disabled residents and people with dementia?
- How can residents be encouraged to be actively contribute to and be involved in staff training on inclusion, equality and challenging discrimination?
- How can schemes actively encourage older people from diverse backgrounds to join their community? What groups and services within the locality may be vital here?

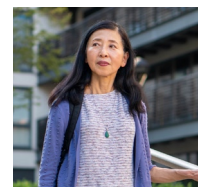
Key learning points:

- It is important for staff and residents to understand the concept of inclusion, being aware of its focus on protected characteristics as well as people's individual values. In relation to this, staff need to be aware of what individual biases and prejudiced beliefs they might hold about people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender (sometimes referred to as unconscious biases²). These biases and beliefs might make it difficult for staff to respond appropriately to resident complaints of discriminatory or unfair treatment. Staff awareness training around equality and diversity should include this.
- Scheme managers and staff have a vital role in learning about and improving awareness of different sexual identities and relationships. Ward highlights the good practice of residents and local LGBT+ groups being consulted about staff training - this could, and should, be integrated across whole organisations rather than just occurring in individual schemes. Managers need to be consistent in their approaches to promoting and instigating inclusive practices across housing providers.
- Scheme managers and staff need to support residents to maintain connections both inside and outside of schemes. A sense of community within schemes and in their surrounding areas can facilitate a sense of inclusion amongst residents.

Key legislation to consider:

Sexual Offences Act 1967 ('1967 Act') - this Act led to the decriminalisation of sex between men. Prior to this Act sex between men was a criminal act in England and Wales.

[Equality Act 2010](#) - race and sexual orientation are protected characteristics under the Act.



.....
² The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) defines unconscious biases as: 'the views and opinions that we are unaware of; they are automatically activated and frequently operate outside conscious awareness and affect our everyday behaviour and decision making. Our unconscious biases are influenced by our background, culture, context and personal experiences.' (p. 4-5)

Link: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-113-unconscious-bais-training-an-assessment-of-the-evidence-for-effectiveness-pdf.pdf>

Vignettes

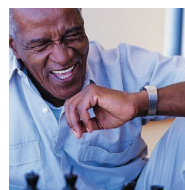
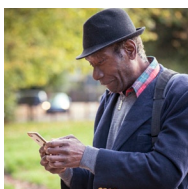
The following four vignettes (short fictional stories) were developed by the DICE team to explore issues of social inclusion and equality in interviews with residents and staff of housing schemes. We present these here as an additional training tool for raising awareness amongst staff and residents about discriminatory attitudes and actions and how to actively address these.

Cliff and Sally

Cliff (84) and Sally (80) are a couple who live in a supported housing scheme. They attend almost every social event put on at the scheme. At an event to mark the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, and in some events since, Cliff and Sally have made comments about Meghan Markle saying that she is *'polluting the royal blood line'* and that members of the British Royal Family shouldn't be marrying *'coloured people'*.

Questions to consider:

- How should scheme staff respond if they overheard a conversation like the one above?
- What policies should staff draw upon in order to address this situation?
- What do housing providers need to do to make sure all residents are included and supported? [prompts: training provision; resourcing events and activities; inviting external community groups and services to visit schemes; addressing policy gaps].





Phillip's coming out

In 2019 Phillip Schofield (a popular TV presenter in his 50s) came out as a gay man to the media. In the scheme where you currently live/ work lots of residents have been discussing this news and you have observed one resident, Bob, making loud comments that he thinks it's disgusting, especially for a married man, and that *'those sort of people should keep their gay thoughts and feelings to themselves'*. You know there are at least two other people in the scheme who identify as gay and lesbian and you have recently seen one of those residents walking away looking upset after having a conversation in the courtyard with Bob.

Questions to consider:

- What do you think should happen in this scenario?
- How should scheme staff respond if this was reported to them or they witnessed this?
- Is Bob's behaviour illegal?
- What approach should staff adopt to best address the situation? Or does it need to be escalated to a higher authority?



Hayat

Hayat is a 78-year-old Muslim woman who lives in a large extra care scheme. The scheme has a café and restaurant area where some of the residents like to meet to eat lunch together. Prayer is an important part of Hayat's faith. She performs prayers five times a day. One of these prayers falls at around the same time as lunch time which is the busiest time of the day in the scheme for the staff on site and the estate manager. She would like to join other residents for lunch once she has finished her prayer, however her flat is located some distance from the restaurant. Hayat uses a walking frame and often needs assistance to get from place to place.

Questions to consider:

- How should the scheme manage the mismatch between scheduled mealtimes and Hayat's prayer routine?
- What could the scheme do to support Hayat? Should the scheme provide her with more support for prayers? If not, why not?
- What would help Hayat to be more included where she lives?

Lewis

Lewis is an 82-year-old widower who moved into the scheme two years ago after his wife died. Lewis is an ex-rugby player who recently began using a wheelchair. There aren't many older men in the scheme who share Lewis's interests and, since he began using a wheelchair, it has been difficult for him to meet up with his friends at his old rugby club which he used to enjoy visiting regularly. Lewis is becoming increasingly isolated and is reluctant to take part in social activities happening in the scheme.

Questions to consider:

- What should staff at Lewis's scheme do to include him?
- How can staff help Lewis connect with relevant interest groups in the wider community?
- If Lewis was living in your scheme, how accessible would the scheme be to him? What would make it better?



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