

Disability: Tackling stigma.

NID Training Disability Diary

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Introduction

The social model of disability understands that disability is caused by the barriers to opportunities and participation created by society, rather than by a person's physical or mental impairment itself. It recognises that people with disabilities can live as equal members of society once these barriers to inclusion, created by attitudes and stigma, are removed.

Discussion

When people with disabilities (PWD) experience stigma, they can become vulnerable to psychological and physical abuse and feel worthless (Rohwerder,

2018). Bonaccio et al. (2020) claim that negative attitudes of employers of PWD filter through every stage of employment and often result in stigmatisation. Because of this many PWD do not feel comfortable disclosing or talking about their disabilities, especially at work.

Stigmatisation can be challenged by:

- Raising awareness of the myths and challenges faced by PWD.
- Providing support to PWD and their families.
- Encouraging families to nurture the development of children with disabilities; to include them in community activities, and support them in their attempts to be independent.
- Encouraging the immediate community to become involved in campaigns that support PWD.
- Providing information about education and training opportunities available to PWD.
- Empowering PWD to be skilled and independent, able to earn a living.
- Employing PWD for their skills, not merely to comply with score cards and legislation.
- Training staff to interact and include PWD in the workplace.
- Supporting government interventions to tackle discrimination against PWD.
- Ensuring that approaches and interventions acknowledge that there are variations in the way people understand and perceive disability.

(Bonaccio, et al., 2020; Progression, 2020; Rohwerder, 2018)

Conclusion

Stigmatisation is a major cause of discrimination and exclusion of PWD. Unless stigma is effectively addressed in policies and programmes, PWD will remain marginalised in communities and workplaces. While false perceptions might be difficult to overcome, beliefs can change and evolve over time. Interventions must aim to raise awareness and change behaviour to combat ignorance, intolerance and discrimination.

References

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