

FIVE KEY MESSAGES FROM RESEARCH INTO INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

1. Inclusive communities, with strong social networks ('social capital'), bring rewards of strong political institutions, improved economic development, improved health and more effective public services
 - However disabled people do not have equal access to the processes that generate social capital
2. Contemporary local communities can only be strong if their diversity is considered and valued.
 - The idea that a local community is either strong or diverse is a myth. There is a need to move beyond idealised, traditional notions of homogeneous 'community'
 - One in five of the population lives with disability or a long-term health condition; and in an age of 'superdiversity' many families live with multiple experiences of disability, as well as diversity of faith, ethnicity and sexual orientation
 - Strength comes from shared activities and goals – from solidarity – not just similarity. People may come together in identity groups (as 'disabled people') for particular ends (using 'strategic essentialism') but joining forces across differences of identity, on specific topics, can be at least as important. How local people come together to forge common perspectives, and who is included or excluded, is important.
 - Contact between disabled and non-disabled people, on equal terms, with common goals, tends to change attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people
3. Unequal communities are less well equipped to come together in this way.
 - There is a danger that those with greatest needs are least likely to benefit from participation

- Social exclusion of disabled people does not derive only from poverty (maldistribution of resources) but also from status inequality based on difference (malrecognition)
 - At worst public space can exclude people who are 'different': through the physical organisation of space and/or through the rules that exclude people who behave differently – the 'purification of space'
 - An inclusive community includes people unconditionally – not only if they 'fit in'. This may require new forms of community activity, open to all
 - Engagement by public bodies that results in an emphasis on obligation to others and self-help can be experienced as 'imposed'
 - A bottom-up, grassroots re-working of 'community' can re-empower people, particularly through spaces that nurture communities of identity within local communities.
4. An inclusive community is one in which all citizens have the opportunity to participate – socially, economically, politically.
- Public authorities can enable participation at different levels, from consultation through to full co-production and leadership by disabled people. To achieve fully inclusive outcomes (ie disabled people taking part in society) requires fully inclusive processes (ie disabled people participating at all stages in planning and decision-making)
 - Disabled people need accessibility and often individualised support/adjustments to be able to contribute. Rights to support and adjustments are therefore important precursors to citizens' participation.
 - There is a need for an attitudinal shift: moving away from the discourse describing disabled people as either productive (active citizens) or parasitic (dependent); and instead thinking of disabled people in terms of the assets they bring and the contributions they make. For instance, disabled people are twice as likely to be carers as non-disabled people.

- The concept of a ‘right to contribute’ places a helpful emphasis on the support and attitudes that enable people to contribute according to their potential
 - Capacity building and community development can support disabled people’s participation – including through expanding the leadership base of disabled people, and connecting people through networks
 - Social capital is an important driver for local development. When people can exercise a broad range of talents and contributions, that connects more individuals – including disabled people – into social networks, strengthening them and simultaneously resisting social exclusion.
 - An inclusive community is one based on participation as a human right; and helps fulfil the spirit of the Public Sector Duty under the Equality Act, which expects public sector organisations (with partners) to advance equality, human rights and good relations.
5. There are implications from the research for both public authorities and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs)
- DPOs are critical in nurturing disabled people and acting as a springboard for wider participation
 - DPOs can support disabled people’s leadership and capacity building of grassroots groups
 - Public authorities can work with DPOs in co-production to ensure effective participation, leading to inclusion in practice
 - Health and well-being boards can promote social citizenship, working with disabled people and DPOs to strengthen social connectedness, improve health and overcome isolation
 - LEPs and local authorities can promote economic citizenship, working with disabled people, DPOs, employers and training providers to enhance skills and economic contribution
 - Local authorities can promote political citizenship in enabling full participation of disabled people at all stages of planning

and decision-making; and to enable disabled people to take up leadership role