



Social Inclusion

FACT SHEET



Loddon's Commitment to Supporting Families

Our shared core competencies

This competency refers to practice that enables children, young people and families to participate fully in the economic, social and political life of the community. It means making sure people have access to good health, education, training, employment and other services, the skills and support they need to work and connect with the community, and a say in what services they need and how these are delivered.

What does this competency mean?

- Understanding the causes of poverty and disadvantage and their long-term effects on the ability of individuals and families to participate fully in society
- Recognising the range of barriers that can make it difficult for people to exit poverty, access employment or training, or engage in civic society
- Applying this understanding and responding respectfully to people experiencing vulnerability
- Developing effective ways of engaging with people who are experiencing social exclusion and linking them into the community to increase opportunities for social and economic participation
- Taking responsibility for helping to create a socially inclusive workplace.

What does the research say?

The Australian Social Inclusion Board describes social inclusion as when people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities to:

- Learn (e.g. participate in education and training)
- Work (e.g. participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities)
- Engage (e.g. connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities); and
- Have a voice (influence decisions that affect them).¹

While there are high levels of social inclusion in some parts of Australia and relating to certain areas, many people continue to experience poverty and multiple and entrenched disadvantage which prevents them from participating fully in Australian society.² The circumstances that see poverty persist across generations are generally complex and involve more than individual characteristics or lack of income.³ Families experiencing poverty often face broader challenges of disadvantage, vulnerability and social exclusion.

Social exclusion strongly relates to lack of connectedness and community participation. Many people can face a variety of additional barriers in securing and maintaining a job.⁴ For example, limited education can affect the capacity to develop necessary job skills. Inadequate transport options can be an obstacle for some people as well as personal circumstances such as physical and mental health issues. Single parents can face additional challenges raising children while trying to maintain work.⁵ Helping to achieve social inclusion for all Australians requires efforts from government, the community, business and individuals.⁶

The Social Inclusion Board suggests that support services need to address the psychological impact of disadvantage, to be flexible, tailored and specific, and have a long-term vision. Families and individuals experiencing vulnerability might have additional needs that services have not previously needed to consider. Flexible service delivery means being able to meet the variable and distinctive needs of clients.⁷

¹ Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012. *Social inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring*, p. 12.

² Australian Social Inclusion Board, p. 5.

³ Australian Council of Social Service, 2016. *Poverty in Australia 2016*. ACOSS. Social Policy Research Centre.

⁴ Perkins, D. 2006. 'Improving employment participation for welfare recipients facing personal barriers'. Paper presented at the Social Policy Association Conference, University of Birmingham.

⁵ Millar, J., & Ridge, T. 2008. Relationships of care: 'Working lone mothers, their children and employment sustainability'. *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(1), pp. 103-121.

⁶ Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011. *Social Inclusion in Australia Australia's Welfare Conference*. Canberra.

⁷ Yoshikawa, H., Aber, J., & Beardslee, W. 2012. 'The effects of poverty on the mental, emotional, and behavioral health of children and youth: Implications for prevention', *American Psychologist*, 67(4), pp. 272-284.



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What are the implications for practice?

- Take steps to ensure the known barriers to service access for disadvantaged people are addressed
- Demonstrate respect for people experiencing long-term poverty and avoid further stigmatisation
- Have an awareness of local services available to assist people with their particular needs
- Be ready to offer assistance to address vulnerable people's basic needs and link them with appropriate support services
- Be flexible to accommodate the particular needs of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion.

For further information

Communities and Families Clearinghouse
Australia Resource Sheet: *Social exclusion and social inclusion; resources for child and family services*, written by Myfanwy McDonald, 2011.
Available on the AIFS website: www.aifs.gov.au
aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/social-exclusion-and-social-inclusion-resources-child



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