

Section 8 Sharing Learning with Others

Introduction

Many social enterprises work with or employ people who have a disability or learning difficulty of some kind. In this section we look at the following key topics:

Topic 1: A Learning Organisation

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- describe the key features of a learning organisation
- describe the different levels of learning difficulty which people can experience
- list the attitudes and behaviours which are an integral part of an inclusive learning organisation.

Topic 2: Creating Meaningful Learning Opportunities

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- describe the three key features of person-centred planning
- list three of the different tools which can be used for person-centred planning
- explain the purpose of a circle of support
- identify how best to begin the process of creating meaningful learning opportunities within your own social enterprise.

Topic 3: Communication Practices

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- describe some of the practical strategies which can be used to make learning more relevant and easier for people with different kinds of disabilities.

Resource finder

Organisation	Website address
Department of Health	www.doh.gov.uk
Royal National Institute for the Blind	www.rnib.org.uk
Royal National Institute for the Deaf	www.rnid.org.uk
SANE	www.sane.org.uk
IBV	www.ibv.org.uk
Paradigm	www.paradigm-uk.org
Circles of Support Network	www.circlesnetwork.org.uk
National Bureau for Students with Disabilities	www.skill.org.uk
Learning and Skills Development Agency	www.lstda.org.uk

Make a note here of any other helpful resources you find.

Section 8 Sharing Learning with Others

Topic 1 A Learning Organisation

Businesses around the world, both commercial and social enterprises, are beginning to recognise the importance and the value of shared learning and experience. As a consequence, many enterprises are striving to become learning organisations. In this topic, we shall examine the key features of a learning organisation.

What is a learning organisation?

A learning organisation is one which places great value on learning in the widest possible sense, not just in the narrow sense of promoting staff development. A learning organisation views every aspect of its activities as a potential source of learning and a possible catalyst for change.

‘... a learning organisation continuously transforms itself through better knowledge and understanding, linked to the development of all its members.’

M. Bateman, *Micro Learning Organisations*

Learning organisations derive impact and advantage by maximising the learning that occurs:

- 1 in the **internal** world of the organisation – i.e. relating to the skills, knowledge, experience and capabilities within the enterprise
- 2 at the **interface** between the social enterprise and its business environment – i.e. in the management of critical stakeholder relationships, and in the review and evaluation of its range of products and services
- 3 in the world **external** to the organisation.

STEEP

The change that can impact on an organisation in relation to the **external** world can be summarised in the acronym STEEP.

- S** = Social change
- T** = Technical change
- E** = Environmental change
- E** = Economic change
- P** = Political change

STEEP sets out to identify some of the key types of change that take place in the external world, and that will have an impact on any business, but may well have a more significant impact on a social business. These types of changes are described below.

Social change

A flourishing and growing social enterprise sector is a prime example of a significant change, as would be the increasing awareness that social exclusion deprives society (as well as individuals) of highly valuable social capital.

Technical change

Despite the bursting of the ‘dot.com’ bubble, internet technologies are here to stay. This is undoubtedly providing ready access for many to unparalleled information and services, but does it also create a social change, i.e. the creation of a new socially excluded group who do not have access to this technology?

Environmental change

Global warming, waste reduction/recycling, organic food production, pollution ... take your pick! Genetic engineering is a much-debated topic – if this is a change that impacts on your business at all, is it an environmental change or a technological change?

Economic change

The move towards a common European currency, the local economic conditions that might impact on the size and value of your customer base, levels of unemployment, growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – these are some economic changes that may well have an impact on your business.

Political change

Either locally or nationally, how will a change of political leadership affect the way in which social enterprise is received and supported. Are there particular individuals who act as ‘champions’, and who, if they move on, will affect social enterprise in general? If you have a local authority contract, could a change in a local champion seriously affect your income stream and viability?

The value to individuals of the learning organisation

A learning organisation is one in which everyone within the organisation has the opportunity to learn and develop. Any business or enterprise seeking to transform itself into a learning organisation needs to become better at:

- giving every member of staff chances to gain knowledge and experience, and then apply that newly learned knowledge and experience at work
- encouraging its people to identify new ways of doing things at work, and providing a safe, supportive environment in which they can try out the new ideas and approaches they have identified
- allowing individuals the time and space to reach their full potential
- promoting a ‘no-blame culture’ where it is recognised that, from time to time:
 - mistakes happen
 - everyone makes mistakes
 - mistakes provide learning opportunities.

A learning organisation doesn’t just focus on sending people on training courses, or paying tuition fees at colleges and universities, although training and academic activities are warmly encouraged within a learning organisation. A learning organisation seeks to enable people to learn and develop in whatever way is best suited to the individual.

Checklist

- In a learning organisation people:**
- value opportunities to learn and develop
 - recognise the way in which their learning and development can have a beneficial effect on the organisation
 - collaborate in order to share learning
 - are supported during the learning process
 - learn through doing
 - are rewarded for learning and developing
 - are never made to feel foolish or incompetent because they need to learn.

Check Point

In the space below, list the most important changes that you can identify in each of the five categories that could impact on to your business.

Area	Changes affecting your business
Social change	_____
Technical change	_____
Environmental change	_____
Economic change	_____
Political change	_____

You may well find that a number of the issues appear in more than one of the headings. For example, you might have decided that increased levels of Government support for the concept of social enterprise is a social, economic and political change, or that e-commerce is both a technical and economic change.

Section 8 Sharing Learning with Others

Topic 2 Creating Meaningful Learning Opportunities

This topic continues our look at learning organisations by exploring how they can create meaningful learning opportunities for people with disabilities. It starts therefore by defining exactly what is meant by 'disability'. It then goes on to look at person-centred planning, and how that can be used in a social enterprise to develop meaningful learning opportunities.

Defining disability

Many social enterprises focus on helping and working with people with disabilities, or people who have (or who are) experiencing social exclusion. It is important to understand what is meant by the term 'disability', and different kinds of disability, so that you will know where to look for the right kind of help and expertise for the needs of your enterprise's learners. It will also enable you to dispel myths and prejudices.

Learning difficulties

The 1996 Education Act defines a person with a learning difficulty as someone who has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of learners of the same age.

This definition covers a wide spectrum of needs, ranging from learners with:

- relatively mild or moderate difficulties (MLD)
- severe learning difficulties (SLD)
- profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD).

According to the Department of Health figures, at least one million people in the UK have learning difficulties. In addition, seven million people have literacy problems, and two million may not understand your message if it is in English.

Physical disabilities

According to the Disability Discrimination Act:

'The DDA defines a disabled person as anyone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities ... The tests of whether an impairment affects normal day-to-day activities is whether it affects the broad categories of capacity, listed as mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, the ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects, speech, hearing or eyesight, memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand, or perception of the risk of physical danger.'

Website to visit

www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/specneeds/quiz/DDA.htm
– the full text of the DDA.

Mental health problems

According to statistics provided by the Office of National Statistics:

- every year around 300 out of every 1000 people in Britain will experience mental health problems
- of these 300 people, 230 will visit their GP
- of these 230 people, 102 will be diagnosed as having a mental health problem
- of these 102 people, 24 will be referred to a specialist psychiatric service
- of these 24 people, 6 will become in-patients in psychiatric hospitals.

Websites to visit

www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2001/20010010.htm – the full text of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

www.natdisteam.ac.uk/guidsen.html – the National Disability Team; information about the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) Part IV (SENDA).

www.doh.gov.uk – the Department of Health website, for health-related statistics.

www.rnid.org.uk – the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

www.rnib.org.uk – the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

www.sane.org.uk/About_Mental_Illness/Mental_Illness.htm – detailed information about mental health issues, diagnosis and treatment.

Check Point

Does your organisation provide an inclusive learning environment for its members? Tick one circle in response to these statements.

	Yes	Sometimes	No
We give all our members opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in ways most appropriate to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We give all our members opportunities to apply their newly acquired knowledge at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We provide a positive, supportive, no-blame environment in which people can try out new ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We encourage all our members to take power and control over their lives, by helping them have information about their rights and exercise those rights, and enabling them to have their say.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you were unable to answer 'Yes' confidently to all these questions, you will find the next two topics very helpful in defining a learning strategy. If you did answer 'Yes', you have obviously given a lot of thought to your learning strategy. You might still want to look at the suggestions in the next two topics, as you are obviously keen to keep your enterprise up to date, and to help your members in every way possible.

What is person-centred planning?

Person-centred planning is an approach to creating meaningful learning opportunities for people with disabilities, and is recommended by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities and the UK government.

The key features of person-centred planning are as follows.

1 The person is at the centre of the process

Person-centred planning is rooted in the principles of rights, independence and choice.

For a social enterprise that wants to provide meaningful learning opportunities, person-centred planning can be used to create an action plan for learning which is relevant, and which meets the needs of each individual.

2 Person-centred planning reflects an individual's capabilities

In the context of providing meaningful learning opportunities, this means that the process can be used to provide opportunities to gain knowledge, skills and experience which genuinely enable the individual to move towards fulfilling their potential. (They are given chances to do what they are interested in and what they really want to do.)

3 Person-centred planning builds a shared commitment

The person who is at the centre of the process is an active participant in the process, and not just an observer.



Tools for person-centred planning

MAPS – McGill Action Planning System

MAPS is a planning system which has been developed by Marsha Forest and Judith Snow. If, for example, the person at the centre of the process is Susan, then Susan and her facilitator would address the following questions:

- What is Susan's history?
- What would be your dream for Susan?
- What is your nightmare for Susan?
- Who is Susan?
- What are Susan's needs?

Once each of these questions has been fully explored by Susan and her facilitator, an action plan can be created. In the case of a social enterprise keen to share learning and experience, the action plan would focus on learning and development opportunities.

Websites to visit

www.ibv.org.uk/maps.html – to find out more about MAPS.

www.ibv.org.uk/personcentredplanning.html – to find out more about a range of different approaches to person-centred planning including:

Multimedia Profiling

PATH – Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

ELP – Essential Lifestyle Planning

PPF – Personal Future Planning.

Circles of support

The idea of a circle of support was developed in Canada, and the first UK circles were started in the mid-1980s. A circle of support is a group of people who meet together on a regular basis to help someone (the focus person) to accomplish their goals.

A circle of support:

- meets regularly
- consists of the focus person, who decides:
 - who is to be invited to join the circle
 - the overall focus of the circle
- is facilitated by one individual chosen from within the circle
- is devoted to providing help, support and assistance to the focus person, to help them achieve their personal, life or learning goals.

You must
look into people,
as well as at them.

Lord
Chesterfield,
politician

Websites to visit

www.circlesnetwork.org.uk/circles_of_support.htm – to find out more about circles of support.

www.ibv.org.uk/pushlindsay.pdf (download the file) – read how a circle of support helped someone with learning difficulties to make significant life changes.



Check Point

This check point has been designed to give you an opportunity to think about how you can create meaningful learning opportunities within your social enterprise. You can work through this on your own, or together with your team.

For us and our members/customers/users

- 1 Person-centred planning would be:
- very useful
 - quite useful
 - not very useful at the moment

In order to implement person-centred planning we need to:

- 2 Circles of support would be:
- very useful
 - quite useful
 - not very useful at the moment

In order to implement circles of support we need to:

- 3 The best way to start creating meaningful learning opportunities would be to:

If you are not sure yet about what exactly person-centred planning or circles of support would entail in your enterprise, try to find out more information about these from the websites suggested in this topic.

Try to make your suggestions about what you can do to implement these as specific as possible, to start creating meaningful learning opportunities.

For example: in order to implement circles of support, we need to:

- inform all our members about circles of support
- allow as much time for discussion and consideration about this as they need
- ask each member whether they would find their own circle of support helpful
- give all the help they need to set up circles of support, e.g.
 - a place to meet regularly
 - a definite route for learning ideas from the circle to be heard and acted on in the enterprise.

Section 8 Sharing Learning with Others

Topic 3 Communication Practices

This topic suggests practical strategies, for people with different kinds of disabilities, which you could adopt in your training programmes. Your specific approach will depend on the people you work with, but here are some suggestions for teaching strategies which you may want to incorporate into your training programmes.

Strategies for people with hearing difficulties

- Speech should be clear and reasonably paced. Don't shout, as this distorts the sound and distorts the lip pattern for lip readers.
- To attract an individual's attention, wave a hand, flick a light on and off, or tap the person on the arm. Don't come up behind someone, as this could startle them.
- Address the person by their name ... and then start speaking.
- Make sure that your mouth isn't obscured when you are speaking; excessive facial hair can present a problem.
- Face the hearing impaired person at all times when you're talking to them – 1 to 2 metres is a good distance.
- Make sure that your face is in good light; don't stand in front of a strong overhead light or a window.
- New words are impossible to lip read. If you are introducing new words – e.g. IT terms, plant names – write them down so people can read them.
- It is impossible for someone to make notes and lip read and watch an interpreter and think all at the same time. Give people a chance to write things down before moving on to the next sentence or topic.
- Hearing-impaired people may need specialist help, such as signing, hearing aids or induction loops.

Strategies for people with visual difficulties

- Diagrams and charts can be made easier to read by presenting them drawn with thick black lines, by enlarging from A4 size to A3 size and, for people with severe visual impairment, by using special plastic film to create a tactile version which can be 'read with the fingers'.
- Some people may find it helpful to use a tape recorder to record meetings, training or counselling sessions, as the tapes can be played back later and listened to again.
- Dictaphones can also be helpful for people who can't take notes, as ideas and comments can be recorded during a meeting or training session.
- Notes, notices, leaflets, handouts and all written material should be produced in black on white type (or handwriting) and should be a large-sized typeface – at least 14 point.

Strategies for people with dyslexia

- Remember that people with dyslexia may have a much slower reading speed.
- Words can easily be misread – and consequently misunderstood – so limit the amount of written training material that is used.
- Provide photographs of staff on a notice board, together with symbols telling people who they are and what they do. For example, Tom works in the woodwork department, so his photograph is pasted onto a red background (the colour of the woodwork department), and alongside his photograph is a drawing of a hammer and a nail (the symbols for the woodwork department).
- If people with dyslexia are encouraged to acquire computer skills, then any decent word-processing package will provide spell check, punctuation and grammar check facilities.

Strategies for people with mental health difficulties

- Stress can be caused by change, new people, noise, new environments, etc. Some medications can also cause individuals to have difficulty concentrating or staying alert.
- When introducing new ideas or new techniques, be prepared to go over the same information a number of times, and be ready to answer questions.
- Provide lots of support and encouragement and opportunities to talk things through.

General teaching strategies

Everyone, regardless of their state of health or their ability to learn, needs and will respond to:

- respect
- courtesy
- warmth
- honesty
- integrity
- clear, direct language.

Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.
Booker T. Washington, educator and writer

Website to visit

www.doh.gov.uk/nhsidentity/accessibility – a government website with excellent information on preparing resources for people with learning difficulties, plus a list of relevant and useful websites to visit.

www.uoregon.edu/~tep/ideas/groups.html – contains an excellent list of teaching strategies to use with groups with learning difficulties.

www.skill.org.uk – the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities.

www.lsd.org.uk – the Learning and Skills Development Agency where, amongst other things, you can read about the ‘Enhancing Quality of Life’ project, a resource pack for people working with learners with profound and complex learning difficulties.

Check Point

Think of the difficulties that people in your enterprise experience. Then tick one circle only in response to each of these questions.

	Yes	Some	No
Have you asked people what they would like to help them in their learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have specific strategies in place to help them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now think of three specific things that your enterprise could do to help.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

You may have put down some things suggested in this topic, or other strategies that you know would be relevant to the difficulties which your members experience.

For instance, if you have members with hearing difficulties, you could call a meeting so that they could tell everyone what they would find helpful; you could agree certain strategies, such as rearranging the teaching room so that the lighting is more suitable for lip reading.