

3. Am I prejudiced?

A quick check on whether our attitudes cause barriers



Prejudice and Discrimination

We all have views about the world, our work and other people. Some of these we may be aware of and some may be more hidden. This section will start you thinking about your opinions, preferences and the impacts that they have.

Exercise 3.1: Checking out starting points

Look at each statement and tick a box to show whether you **strongly agree**, **agree**, **disagree**, **strongly disagree** or are simply **unsure**. Answer as honestly as you can.

(You might like to repeat this exercise in a few months' time, when you've had a chance to look at more of the *Open Hearts Open Minds* resources, and see if your opinions have changed.)

1. I can see it's important to understand how Social Inclusion relates to my role
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
2. The area I work in is a multicultural society
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
3. Our services would be more effective if adapted to suit various cultures
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
4. I am always conscious about using appropriate language and behaviour
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
5. Everyone has some prejudices
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
6. Communication (i.e. understanding and meaning) can differ across cultures
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
7. I am aware of how discrimination (e.g. racism, sexism) can manifest itself
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
8. I will always challenge inappropriate policy and practice
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
9. My communication skills are likely to affect the inclusiveness of my service
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

10. My prejudices could affect the service I provide
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
11. Strong community links and networks make our work more socially inclusive
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
12. I know where to refer my clients for further support
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
13. If our work practices exclude people, I'm confident to explain this to colleagues
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**
14. I am actively involved in promoting social inclusion within my work
Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

Exercise 3.2: Checking out likes and dislikes

Prejudice

"Prejudice is a preconceived notion or idea based on little or no fact."

Prejudice means pre -judgment: making your mind up about something on the basis of inflexible generalisation, which either is, or maybe, wrong. Therefore prejudice is about ideas we hold of others who are different from us and about the negative assumptions and pre -judgments we might make about them.

Consider the following list and honestly tick your "dislikes".

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Germans on holiday | Irish people | |
| Gypsies | Black people | |
| People with weak handshakes | Rottweiler owners | |
| Manchester United fans | Caravan drivers | |
| Men wearing earrings | The French | |
| Fat people | Northern accents | |
| People with dirty fingernails | "Born-again" Christians | |
| People with tattoos | Americans | |
| The Welsh | Muslims | |
| Gays | Ugly people | |
| The Scots | Bus drivers | |
| Women drivers | English people | |
| "Upper-class" people | Smokers | |
| Ginger headed people | Bald men | |
| Nondrinkers | Asian people | |
| Women breast-feeding in public | People using mobile phones in public | |
| Vegetarians | Women in short skirts | |
| Urban 4X4 vehicle drivers | Social workers | |
| Men with hairy backs | Arabs | |

How many did you tick? On average, a person will tick between 5 and 10. Perhaps that exercise has proved to do you that everyone is prejudiced in some way. We make assumptions based on our own likes and dislikes, for example certain clothes, hairstyles, cars, mannerisms. As professionals, it's important we recognise the need to act without prejudice or favour to prevent discrimination. This means being aware of the views that we hold.

Exercise 3.3: Thinking further about prejudice and discrimination

Discrimination

Discrimination is about the way we act and the disadvantage it can bring about. When prejudice, assumptions and even lack of thought lead us to act unfairly in the ways we treat people, we are discriminating. Quite simply, discrimination in this way is unfair treatment and leads to exclusion.

Use the following questions as the basis of a discussion with friends or colleagues. If you are unable to do this, consider them on your own.

1. What does Exercise 3.2 tell you about your prejudices? Where do they come from?
2. What does the exercise tell you about how you're already using your self-awareness?
3. Do you think it is possible to know all your prejudices?
4. Do you accept that prejudice is learned behaviour?
5. Do you accept that other things can be learned which alter prejudice?
6. Is it possible to dislike someone and still treat them professionally?
7. Can you think of any situations where you have been the victim of prejudice?
 - what was it about you that triggered it?
 - how did you feel as a result?
 - how did you respond?

Make a note of your answers and the reasons why