

# Towards Inclusive Practice: Disability Awareness Training Module

## IATL Report

### Introduction

*"...people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference... they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.*

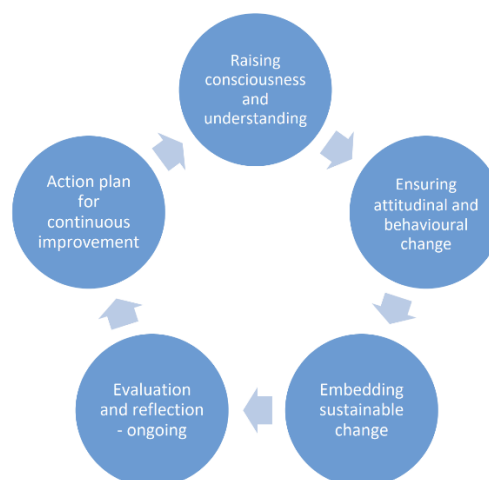
*The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control."*

Scope, Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK,  
[Accessed 22.08.22]

This project relating to **sensory impairments (hearing and visual) and neurodiversity** is rooted firmly in the principles of co-production and inclusivity. In keeping with the inclusive education (IE) model it aims to produce novel resources to add to the Warwick University IE resources which:

- Raise consciousness and understanding
- Ensure attitudinal and behaviour change
- Embed sustainable change
- Provide opportunity for reflection and improvement

This training has been approached to complement the 'Change Model' that the University of Warwick has adopted as part of the aforementioned Inclusive Education Model. The holistic approach to the training provides ample opportunities to incorporate feedback, thus forming an evolving training strategy that will remain relevant to each incoming student and faculty cohort.



It is important to contextualise the discriminatory practices that are still prevalent in modern medicine in order to fully appreciate the necessity for this project. Research has revealed that patient with disabilities often have negative experiences with the healthcare profession, with clinicians focussing on their disability, regardless of whether that was the reason for their

presentation to the clinic<sup>1</sup>. While rarely indirect, and seldom overtly malicious, these discriminative attitudes from clinicians, focusing on the disability rather than the individual can result in inferior care<sup>2</sup>.

These negative perceptions about individuals with disabilities are rooted in a lack of exposure and awareness of these conditions, with the first interaction of Medical Professionals often years into their training. These attitudes contribute to adverse outcomes and can form barriers to people with disabilities.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this Disability Awareness Course is to inform the development of medical education and training with specific focus on developing our Students' understanding of the lived experiences of individuals with sensory impairments and how we can all embrace Inclusive Practice to empower our peers, future patients and communities. We hope that this project can contribute to the inclusive education goals established Warwick University that can encourage both students and staff to expand their own understanding and improve the experiences of students with disabilities.

Stemming from feedback from current Students and Faculty, it was noted that there is currently a gap in providing our students and faculty a way to empathise with the experiences of people with sensory impairments, communicate with them effectively and provide inclusive education.

Learning from training courses, such as the Anti-Racism Training Module and the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme, this project aims to not only promote awareness of students and staff with additional needs but empower participants to stimulate positive change in their communities and future careers.

The primary aim of this project is to provide students and staff at Warwick University the opportunity to engage in **experiential** and **reflective** learning about sensory impairments and neurodiversity.

Learning materials have incorporated:

- Lived experiences of sensory impairments from community members, staff, and students in the form of videos, quotes and reflective case studies.
- Simulation Spectacles which allow participants to experience the impact of visual disability on daily activities and gain some insight into the spectrum of visual impairments.
- Online Resource introduction hands-on skill of Sighted Guiding, followed by In-Person Workshop providing students and staff with opportunities to put into practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Drainoni M, Lee-Hood E, Tobias C, Bachman S, Andrew J, Maisels L: Cross-disability experiences of barriers to health-care access. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 2006, 17:101-115.

<sup>2</sup> Paris MJ: Attitudes of medical students and health-care professionals toward people with disabilities. *Archives of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation* 1993, 74(8):818-825.

## About the Disability Awareness Training Resource

These resources have been developed into 3 training packages in line with the Inclusive Education Model 2020/21 goal of “ensuring that the barriers faced by different groups are widely understood and tackled.”

### 1. Student / Staff Training Module “Towards Inclusive Practice: Disability Awareness Training”

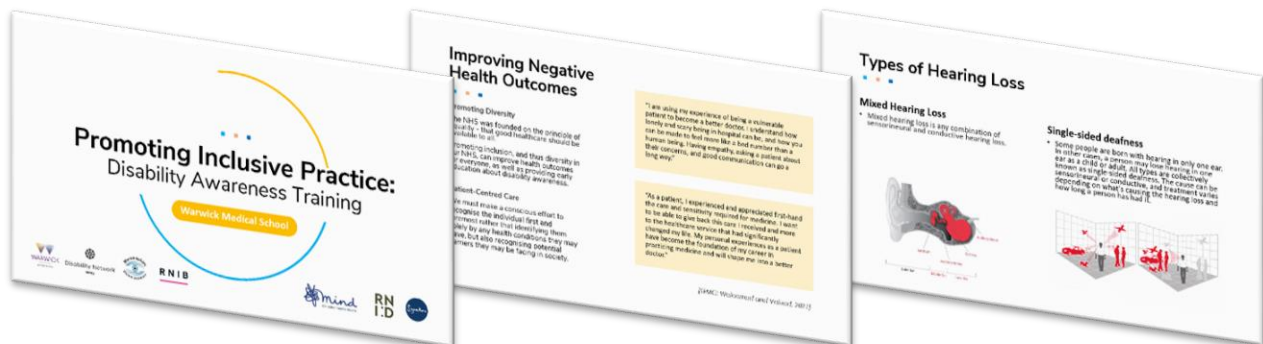
Including lesson plan, objectives and outcomes suitable for undergraduate students

### 2. Sighted Guiding Introductory Course “Clinical Skills: Sighted Guiding”

Including online Lt. Workbook outlining best practice and situational techniques

### 3. Experiential Workshop “Simulated Patient Session”

Including all resources required to encourage Phase II Students to adopt the facilitator role, thus providing opportunities to disseminate knowledge. Simulation Spectacles and course structure designed in such a way as to encourage an empathetic approach to Clinical Skills.



## A Collaborative Approach

Throughout the development of these resources, we have been mindful to ensure that the content and terminology have been representative, informative and respectful. It was imperative to the success of the programme that the lived experiences and views of individuals with disabilities (Students, Staff and Patients) were at the forefront of the project, with the training firmly rooted not only in improving awareness, but providing actionable routes by which we can all improve our Inclusive Practice. As such, this training resource has been produced in close collaboration with several charities and support services.

As part of the interview process with staff and students, there have been several potential improvements to the Institution that have been suggested that have further been incorporated into a separate project seeking improved accessibility to learning resources.



## **The Relevance of Disability Awareness to Students and Staff**

From recent student research, we learnt that there is a significant attainment gap between MB ChB students with declared disabilities and those without. This project will be part of the effort to eliminate the gap. We have already learnt much from our work to reduce the attainment gap for students with ethnic minority backgrounds. Ability to empathise is crucial to the change we are looking for. Equally, it is a crucial trait that we seek to foster in our future doctors.

Therefore, the aim is not just to teach people about disabilities and lived experiences but to foster empathy through an immersive experience that goes beyond understanding. This will encourage a more inclusive behaviour in all workplaces that Warwick students, not just medical students, will go into. Equally for members of staff, this training will empower them to change our organisation from within.

A training package that is flexible to adapt to new technologies and practice as well as different audiences will ensure a lasting impact of this project, to make it a sustainable offering. It will complement the current offerings on the Inclusive [Education Resources page](#) with a dedicated resource for sensory disabilities.

## **Evaluation of the Disability Awareness Training Module**

Reflection is fundamental to this model of learning and the project will encourage students to reflect on lived experiences and case studies. The success of the training will further be monitored through each cohort via. questionnaire and requests for feedback, providing opportunities for adaptations as required.

## **Future Plans**

- The experiential workshop will be piloted with student volunteers and their ideas for assessment and evaluation will be used in the project.
- The training will initially be rolled out to students on the MBChB course at WMS, wherein the feedback will be incorporated into the learning package.
- These resources will then be offered to other departments.
- “Session in a box” established format for engagement with local schools, to be developed further with Student Cohort for Community Outreach Programme.
- Staff training: plan to train DSEPs as trainers for onward dissemination to departments.
- Incorporation of Physical Disabilities (limiting mobility) to be incorporated into future Disability Awareness Training.