A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Career Long Professional Learning guide:
supporting school staff to understand the
impact of a visible difference

CHANGING
FACES

ANTI-BULLYING
ALLIANCE
Member

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Teachers and other education professionals have a key role in supporting students with a visible difference and creating an inclusive learning environment.

Introduction

More than a million people in the UK have a visible difference – a mark, scar or condition that affects their appearance – including 86,000 children and young people of school age. With the number of children and young people with a visible difference increasing in our schools, it's vital that all eduction staff are given the confidence and resources to cope with the challenges this presents.

It is important for all of us to be aware of our own implicit bias and reflect on our feelings and ideas about appearance and disfigurement.

This pack aims to provide resources for Career Long Professional Learning providers to use in supporting staff to better understand the strategies and challenges when working with students with a visible difference.

CHANGING FACES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

An Implicit Attitudes Test found that 66% of people held negative attitudes towards people with a visible difference.

Attitudes towards looking different

Many of the issues facing children and young people are similar to those facing children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there are some experiences that are particularly common for children and young people with a disfigurement or visible difference.

According to Changing Faces (2018), only three in ten young people would consider being friends with someone who has a visible difference.

An Implicit Attitudes Test (IAT) carried out on behalf of Changing Faces in 2017 found that 66% of people held negative attitudes towards people with a visible difference. There are also a number of persistent myths and assumptions which affect how people with a visible difference are viewed by society, including the idea that people who look different have little chance of a successful, happy life.

Unconscious attitudes can lead to some teachers having significantly lower expectations of students with a visible difference and becoming resigned to appearance-related bullying being inevitable for students with a visible difference. It is crucial that we are able to recognise and challenge our own implicit bias, as well as supporting students to do the same.

KEEP IN MIND

Appropriate language

When using these resources, it is important to bear in mind that not everyone feels comfortable with the word 'disfigurement', preferring instead to use 'visible difference', 'unusual appearance' or 'looks different'. However, the term 'disfigurement' is used in a legal context, as it is enshrined in law in the Equality Act 2010, which gives legal protection to people with 'severe disfigurements'.

The language we use in relation to people with a visible difference is very important, so appropriate use of language needs to be modelled from the start. When talking about visible difference, support staff to use non-judgemental, matter-of-fact language. For example, 'Amina has a cleft lip', 'James has a large birthmark on his face' and 'Fiona is a burns survivor'. Avoid using phrases such as 'burns victim' or 'terribly scarred' as these are examples of sensationalist, judgemental language.

Potential triggers

It is possible that some of the resources may be emotionally triggering for some staff. Some images and videos are included and it is important to monitor staff responses to these.

There may be staff who have a visible difference, or have a family member or friend who does. We do not expect anyone to share their personal or family experience, although they may make the choice to do so. If any staff are distressed by the experience, they should be advised to seek immediate support from appropriate agencies.

SUPPORT FOR TUTORS

Information for staff and education professionals

Here are some tips on some of the difficulties you may encounter when dealing with the issue of visible difference:

Be aware of unconscious bias leading to different treatment of students or staff
Unconscious attitudes towards people who look different can lead to education staff having lower expectations or being resigned to appearance-related bullying. We need to be aware of this and challenge our unconscious bias to ensure equity and the same high expectations for everyone.

Challenge negative stereotypes of visible difference
Negative stereotypes of visible difference reinforce the myths that people who look different can't have a happy life, require surgery to 'fix' their appearance, or are bad and scary people.

Clarify the meaning of face equality
Remind staff that 'face equality' means equal expectations and equal respect, not compensatory special treatment because you feel sorry for someone.

Understand our responsibility for tackling bullying
Emphasise the importance of addressing appearance-related bullying and taking it seriously. So that bullying can be stopped, school staff can – and must – intervene every time someone in their school is harassed or bullied.

Support staff to support their students
We need to equip students with personal and social tools for the times when they feel vulnerable about the way they look. Encourage staff to talk to their students about visible difference to raise awareness and increase their knowledge and understanding.

For further information and support, click on the following links:

- Teacher Guides for supporting pupils

- Changing Faces Classroom Resources

SESSION NOTES

Introduction to using the CPD resources

The resources have been designed for a 2 to 3-hour session. The amount of time available will vary, so you'll need to organise the activities to fit in the time you have.

Throughout the session, staff will have the opportunity to listen to experiences of school from children and young people with a visible difference. Giving children and young people a voice is vital in devising strategies to meet the needs of any child or young person, but especially those with a visible difference. Staff will also hear from parents and teachers. By providing a range of perspectives, staff will be able to reflect on the diverse needs and priorities that exist for those involved in the care of children and young people with a visible difference.

Resources required:

- Presentation slides

- Access to the internet

- Audio speakers (for the videos)

- Other resources (depending on how you decide to carry out the session)

Slides

Slide 3

If time allows, we recommend you start with a group-work discussion activity to begin considering visible difference/disfigurement. In small groups, ask staff to discuss the questions on Slide 3. Allow time for individual groups to feed back to everyone. They may have unanswered questions, but at this stage it is useful to get their initial thoughts and ideas.

Some people with a visible difference prefer not to use the word 'disfigurement' due to its negative connotations. However, 'disfigurement' is the term used in a legal context as it is enshrined in law in the Equality Act 2010. If you need to talk about a student's visible difference, make sure you use the phrase or description your student and their parents/carers are happy with.

Slides 4-5

These slides provide some examples of the causes of visible differences and some images of people with visible differences. It may be useful to allow some discussion around any issues that arise from either of these slides.

There may be questions about the people in the images that you cannot answer. There is no need to worry about this, as the images are only there to provide examples of a few visible differences, there is no need for you to be able to provide any information about the specific details or causes of the visible differences.

Slides 6-11

This section begins with the definition of 'disfigurement' in the Equality Act (2010). This is useful to highlight the fact that 'disfigurement' (visible difference) is a protected characteristic.

The following slides present information from various research projects. Ask staff to think about key issues such as:

- If a person has a visible difference, they are perceived as 'different' and will always be noticed wherever they go.

- People will often make assumptions about what a person with a visible difference is capable of based solely on their appearance.

- People may avoid making contact with a person with a visible difference because they feel uncomfortable.

- Some people may be embarrassed to be seen with someone with a visible difference and so may avoid going out with them.

Slides 12-17

This part of the session is based on the trailer for the film 'Wonder'. The trailer provides opportunities for staff to reflect on the thoughts and feelings of those who may be impacted by the arrival of Auggie, including Auggie himself.

Play the video for staff and then look at the questions to give them specific aspects to focus on. Play the video a second time and then discuss the questions.

Slides 18-21

These slides focus on implicit bias and how this impacts our behaviours and the decisions we make. This part of the session is very important and can be quite challenging to discuss. Make sure that staff understand that we all have implicit biases, but that what's important is that we are aware of this and can challenge ourselves when we make judgements about people. After watching the video, review and discuss the information on Slides 11 and 12 in the light of what you have seen.

Slides 22–29

This part of the session provides staff with the opportunity to listen to the voices of children and young people and their parents. The video clips provide advice from children and young people, and teachers. They showcase interesting contrasts and similarities. The questions will help staff reflect on why it is so important to allow children and young people a voice, and for them to know that they are heard.

It is important to take the time to cover this section in plenty of detail, and to provide time for staff to think about the implications on the wellbeing of students with a visible difference if they feel marginalised. There is research that suggests that students with a visible difference are at greater risk of social isolation/ exclusion, so the issues raised in response to the students' voices need to be discussed and possible solutions identified.

Slide 30

The poem by Hannah Lindfield provides a young person's experience of living with a visible difference. For more information about Hannah's life, go to hannahlindfield.co.uk. This ending will provide staff with a description of what life is like for a child or young person living with a visible difference.

Slide 31

This slide provides an opportunity to think about how to take the learning forward.

Slide 32

On this slide there is a link to the Changing Faces website where staff can find more useful resources.

Education objectives

The Changing Faces resources are linked to the following education objectives:

*   I understand that people can feel alone and can be misunderstood and left out by others. I am learning how to give appropriate support.
    HWB 0-08a / HWB 1-08a / HWB 2-08a / HWB 3-08a / HWB 4-08a

*   I recognise that each individual has a unique blend of abilities and needs. I contribute to making my school community one which values individuals equally and is a welcoming place for all.
    HWB 0-10a / HWB 1-10a / HWB 2-10a / HWB 3-10a / HWB 4-10a

RESOURCE FEEDBACK

We would love to know what you think of these resources and how we can improve them. If you are willing to give feedback please use the QR code below to take you to our feedback form or visit: www.changingfaces.org.uk/awod-cpd-feedback

Or you can email education@changingfaces.org.uk

How to scan QR codes

1. Open your camera app.

2. Focus the camera on the QR code by gently tapping the code.

3. Follow the instructions on the screen to complete the action.