

Critical issues and debates in the delivery of welfare essay sample



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With reference to two different groups of people discuss how social exclusion might manifest itself. Use evidence from research to substantiate your arguments.

There is no straightforward definition of social exclusion, however it is closely linked to concepts of poverty and social deprivation and inequality. Social exclusion is about becoming detached from the opportunities and normal ways of life of mainstream society with little or no step of ever bridging the gap.

Social exclusion affects an individual's opportunity to find good work decent housing, adequate health care, quality education and safe and secure living conditions as well as their treatment by the legal and criminal justice systems. The most important characteristic of social exclusion is that these problems are linked and mutually reinforcing, and can combine to create a complex and fast moving vicious cycle. The complex problem of social exclusion appears to be intensified and more severe for individuals that belong to multiple excluded groups.

The stigma and discrimination which users of mental health services face on a daily basis make them amongst the most socially excluded groups in our society.

Mental health problems are common and widely misunderstood; one adult in six suffers from mental health problems of varying severity which include a wide spectrum of conditions from anxiety to psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. Mental health problems often co-exist with other problems

such as substance abuse, homelessness, poor physical health and learning disabilities.

Once mental health problems develop they can often have a negative impact on employability, housing, household income, opportunities to access services and social resources, which potentially lead to severe economic deprivation and social isolation, and experience a wide range of types of exclusion which can affect an individuals quality of life, increase their social exclusion and also contribute to mental health.

Public attitudes to mental health problems surface in many different ways. They are apparent in the language people use to describe mental illness and in their reactions to those experiencing mental distress.

“ All societies have struggled with the impact of mental illness and rejection and avoidance of mentally ill people are common. Even when the mad have been accorded a place of honour as in culture that believe mentally ill people have been touched by the Great Spirit, they have remained outside the group and have been feared”

(Sam Sussman, the community's response to mentally ill people British Medical Journal, 314, 15th February 1997 p458)

For many mental illness is a taboo subject, this can prevent people from seeking help when faced with a mental health problem. Negative attitudes are evident in the discrimination users of mental health services face. Users often encounter difficulties on matters of employment and under the Mental

Health Act 1983 may have basic human rights denied, People suffering from mental health problems are often subjected to verbal and physical abuse.

Over the last ten years there has been very little increase in the proportion of adults with neurotic or physic disorders particularly in the workforce. This is in contrast to the significant increases in the employment rate for the general population and for people with physical disabilities.

Data about disabled people from the labour Force Survey show that

628. 000 adults of working age in Great Britain regard mental illness as their main disability. Only 21 per cent of these adults are in employment, which is the lowest rate for any group with disabilities.

Results from the survey “ An uphill struggle” shows that people with mental health problems are doubly disadvantaged both by their illness and their poverty. They face significant hurdles in trying to return to employment with many anticipating discrimination and ignorance.

Only 13 per cent out of people with mental health problems are in employment compared with about a third of people with long-term health problems.

A survey completed by minds not sticks and stones reports that a third of the people with mental health problems said they had been dismissed or forced to resign from jobs, 69 per cent of people had been put off applying for jobs for fear of unfair treatment and 38 per cent had been harassed intimidated or teased at work because of the psychiatric history. The small numbers of people with mental health problems who do work regard their income as low.
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The consequences of long-term unemployment and lack of opportunities to work go beyond lack of money. It cannot only affect both physical and mental health but the loss of skills and contacts can make it much harder to get back into the workforce.

In many ways people with mental health problems are associated with the use of street drugs, alcohol and substance abuses, and their face the most unsympathetic public attitude because people see their problems as self-inflicted, because of their condition or addiction they become homeless or unemployed and the vicious cycle has begun.

Women are also a group, which is socially excluded in many ways and the vicious cycle is able to continue.

Although the massive growth in female employment in postindustrial capitalism has changed the notion that we had about women being the dependant members of the household, dependency still does remains significant and gendered.

There are approximately 600, 000 women working full time in an unpaid capacity in the home. Some women are dependant on income from either their partner or the state and they do not have equal access to paid work or to the mainstream education and training.

As well as financial barriers women experience many other barriers to access educational opportunities such as lack of childcare facilities, location and timing of courses.

These barriers have a huge role in social exclusion as women who cannot acquire education and skills are substantially more likely to spend long periods out of work, and twice as likely to be made redundant or sacked, which decreases their chances of a better income which begins the vicious cycle.

Single mothers again face a severe amount of social exclusion as the single mother acquires all the liabilities of care, which cause difficulties for full time economic engagement; single mothers also quite regularly have a dependency on the welfare state and are labelled as underclass citizens although it is rather unlikely for men to be placed in financial underprivileged situation after divorce. Single mothers have a label by society to be poor.

Longitudinal studies have shown that for a variety of reasons children born into and brought up in circumstances of poverty have a greater prospect of experiencing health, social and educational problems in later life. It is also said children who grow up in lone parents families or within families under significant stress are said to have a greater susceptibility to social exclusion

As lone female parents often do not have the access to education opportunities because of financial or child care reasons etc their income is usually low and dependant on the welfare state causing them to live in poor houses and neighborhoods. Poor neighborhoods are considered to be a major contributory factor towards social exclusion; some neighborhoods are particularly badly affected by a range of social and economic problems such as high crime rates, drugs, high unemployment, restricted access to facilities and services. These can be in rural or urban areas but the effect is that those

who live in such poor neighborhoods face significant disadvantages and deprivation and are very likely to experience social exclusion.

Concluding, that 'lifelong effects' and 'reinforcement' link those mentioned above, which, again, is basically the vicious circle idea. For example, if a child has a poor start in life it will have a greater chance of educational underachievement, be closer to crime, and face a higher risk of unemployment, poor housing and so the cycle of disadvantage is maintained