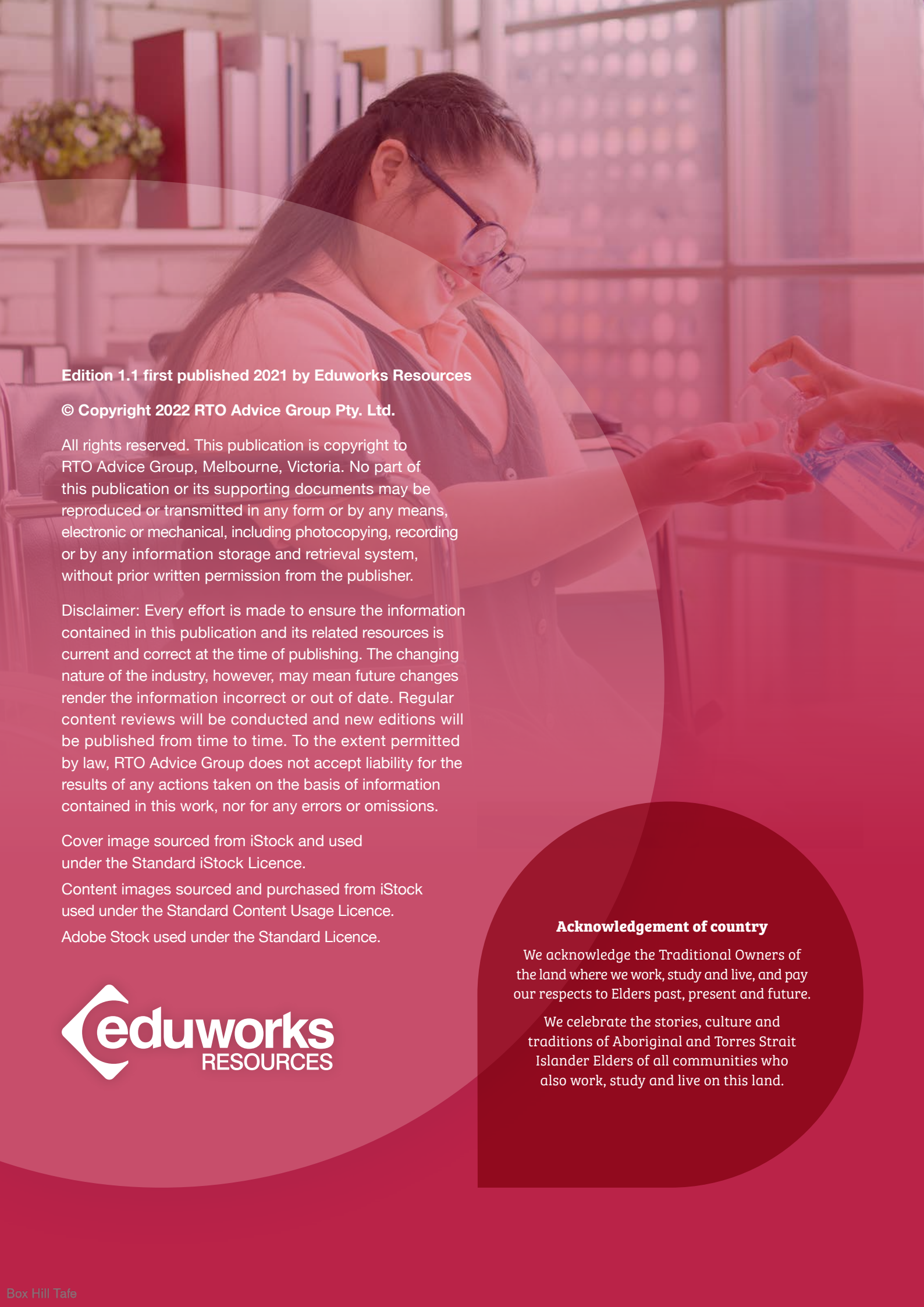


Learner Guide

CHCCOM005

**Communicate
and work
in health or
community
services**





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Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we work, study and live, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We celebrate the stories, culture and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of all communities who also work, study and live on this land.



About this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide covers the following unit of competency:

CHCCOM005 Communicate and work in health or community services

Trigger Warning: This Learner Guide discusses topics in relation to child abuse and neglect that may be difficult and trigger painful memories for some readers. If you need support, please reach out to a trusted friend or family member, speak to your community supports or call Lifeline on **13 11 14**.

Using this Learner Guide

Look for the following throughout this Learner Guide



Learning Activities

A range of different learning activities are provided throughout this Learner Guide. You may be required to conduct your own research, interpret information, practice something in your own time or reflect on your own experiences and opinions on a topic. You may be asked to provide other students with feedback. It is suggested that you take time to write down your responses to the learning activities.

Chapter 1 Review Questions

At the end of each chapter you will find a series of review questions which will help to assess your knowledge of the content from that chapter before you move onto the next.



QR Codes

<https://scnv.io/b58a>

QR codes and Watch boxes are used throughout to aid in your streamlined use of this Learner Guide.

To use the QR codes, download a QR reader on your smart device from the app store on your device.

Simply scan the QR code by using the camera on your device. The media will be shown on your device. If it is a Watch box it will be a video on YouTube. Other media may include a website, or PDF or so on.

"Learn More" appears throughout, to provide additional information on a topic.



LEARN MORE

Example of the title for the link or article to read for more information:

<https://scnv.io/b58a>



Icons and Information Boxes

You will find the following icons and call out boxes throughout this Learner Guide.



THINK

Encouraging you to think about a topic or idea further.



CASE STUDY

A scenario that puts the content into its practical application and a real life situation. The situation doesn't necessarily have to be based on a real example, but the case study will help you bring life to the content.



EXAMPLE

An example that helps you put the content into context.



NOTE

A tip or useful information that may be particularly important to remember.



WEBSITE

A link to a website that provides additional useful information.



WATCH

A link to a video to watch online with the duration eg <https://scnv.io/b58a>



under 5 mins



under 10 mins



under 15 mins



under 30 mins



under 1 hour



over 1 hour



KEY POINTS

Key points to remember.



READ

Additional reading such as a link to a PDF or relevant website, research article, legislation.



RESOURCE

A useful resource that you may wish to save for your future reference such as a template or guide.

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Chapter 1

Working in the Sector

In most community services and health workplaces, you will spend at least some of your time working with other people as you provide services and support to clients. Collaborative practice is a key component of working in the sector and your success as an employee is linked closely with your colleagues and your organisation.

By the end of this chapter, you will understand:

- ✓ ways of working that allow you to carry out workplace instructions effectively
- ✓ links between your own organisation and other services
- ✓ words and phrases that are used frequently in health and community services
- ✓ expectations for your communication with key people and groups in the workplace.



1.1 Your Role in the Sector

Your roles in the health and community services sector across your career may range quite broadly in their responsibilities. Your duties, and the people you work with, will vary depending on the role you are working in at the time.

Some of the common entry level roles include:

- Personal care assistant
- Support worker
- Personal care giver
- Health support worker.

When you first start out in a role in health and community services, you are often the first point of contact with a client coming into a health or community services setting.



1.2 Your Duties

It will be important you are aware of the responsibilities of your role, and only work within the boundaries and limitations of your role.

A position description, also known as a job description, is a document that outlines the day to day responsibilities of a role. When you start any new role, always make sure you have a copy of the job description as this will guide you in the expectations of the workplace. It will also tell you:

- Who your day-to-day supervisor is
- Any important organisational policies and procedures to follow
- Anyone you have responsibility for.



Your Position Description

Your position description is the document which sets out the duties and responsibilities for your own role and is a very useful source of information. You should keep a copy of your position description where you can access it quickly, so you can check any details as required.

When you first begin in your job, read the description carefully and make sure you understand the details. Talk to your supervisor and ask them to go through the description with you, so you can discuss any areas where there are details that are unclear.

Many workplaces provide an induction period where you spend time with a more experienced worker for the first few days in the workplace. This is a great time to clarify your job role and make sure you know:

- What is expected of you.
- Who to ask if you have concerns or need information.
- What tasks are not a part of your job.
- What the limits of your authority and responsibility are.
- Whether you have any people who report to you.
- Who you report to.

Position descriptions can change over time, and with negotiation. Before you agree to any changes to your position, make sure you refer to your original position description and think carefully about your job role and responsibilities.



Note

A key expectation of your role is to ensure you carry out your tasks in accordance with policies and procedures, and only carry out tasks that you are authorised to.

Role Boundaries

From time to time you may be asked by a client or someone other than your supervisor to do something that you would not normally do. In these situations, it's important you remember the limitations and boundaries of your role. You must always have clear instructions from your supervisor to carry out additional tasks if they are outside your normal duties.

Your Position Description may look something like this:



POSITION DESCRIPTION

CARE ASSISTANT – DAY RESPITE CENTRE

✓ Position Summary

As a care assistant you'll be responsible for looking after our clients during the day at our respite centre, assisting in the day to day running of the centre.

✓ Position Responsibilities

- Assist in the planning and running of activities for clients
- Provide physical, personal and social support to clients each day as required
- Assist in the day to day running of all aspects of the centre including meals and excursions as well as in the transport of clients to and from excursions
- Assist clients in and out of their homes
- Assist clients into and out of vehicles and into and out of the centre and other destinations as required
- Drive the facility bus and other commuter vehicles as required
- Report and document all client changes, concerns and incidents in a timely manner to the centre coordinator

✓ Role Requirements

- Certificate II in Community Services, Certificate III in Individual Support or Certificate IV in Ageing Support
- Good computer and mobile device skills
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Current national police check
- First aid and CPR certificates
- Current driver's licence

1.3 Working With Others in a Team

Many community services and health workplaces are team based. There are often members of the team who have different skill sets and backgrounds, and these team members collaborate to provide a wide range of services and supports.

Working within a team context is a useful way of meeting multiple client needs and providing care and support in many different and individualised ways.



Note Multi-Disciplinary Teams

A multidisciplinary team is one with many team members who have different backgrounds, skills and experiences who collaborate to provide a single but wide-ranging set of services to meet client needs.

For example, social workers, youth workers, mental health practitioners and allied health professionals might all work together as part of a multi-disciplinary team.



Example

Mavis works as a member of a multi-disciplinary team which includes case managers, care co-ordinators, family support workers and outreach workers.

Her team has people who are highly specialised and skilled at the work they do, and they are supported by a team of administrative and office-based workers who provide ongoing assistance with documentation, reporting and management of people, tasks and activities.

Her team is effective because everyone contributes something different and there is a strong focus on collaborative planning, professional development and networking and a culture of continuous improvement.



1.4 Listening to Instructions

Instructions will be given to you in different ways in the workplace, depending on the tasks that are required and the role you have in the organisation. You should listen carefully to all instructions you are given so you can carry them out effectively.

Let's explore some of the situations where you might receive instructions in the workplace:

1 Instructions in Team Meetings

Team meetings are a way of bringing workers together who are part of a work group.

They might all share a single goal, work area or be a part of a single work site such as a group home, residential facility or service location. Most groups will get together regularly to discuss issues, plan strategies and collaborate on tasks and activities that need to be completed. This is often done at a team meeting, which will usually be run by an experienced worker or supervisor.

Team meetings may be quite formal, with a set of minutes taken to record what happens during the meeting and an agenda to guide the discussion. Team meetings can also be informal, and involve a more casual, unplanned approach to discussions and no set agenda.

Both approaches have their role to play in different settings, and both can involve the giving and sharing of tasks and instructions.

2 Instructions Within a Project or Group

Sometimes groups within an organisation might work on a project or task in collaboration with another work group, or with people from an external organisation.

This is a great way of building networks and skills across a wider area and helping people from various organisations learn more about each other's' work.

If you are involved in a project or group activity, you will receive instructions about your specific role and tasks. You might be invited to join in discussions and put forward your own ideas as part of the group.

3 Instructions in Daily Tasks

Your supervisor or more experienced workers will guide you in your daily tasks. This may be included in a daily planner or task list, or you may be asked to meet with your supervisor each morning so you can be briefed on what you need to do for the day.

Daily tasks will usually be very specific and will include details of the tasks you need to do, as well as information about times, dates, places and people that are relevant.

You will need to report back to your supervisor to tell them what has been completed during the day and whether there are any tasks which have not yet been finished.

4 Instructions During a Handover

Some workplaces have workers who need to receive client-based information which must be passed from one shift to the next. There could be specific instructions or information which is critical to the appropriate care and support of the client, or details of tasks that are still to be completed.

These instructions may be shared verbally or in writing, and it is important to check carefully to make sure you don't miss anything important during the handover period.



Activity 1A

1. Research some community services or health organisations which collaborate on projects in your state or territory.
2. Find examples of projects where there are two or more partner organisations and then create a summary chart of a project that you can share with your class or group.
3. Find out about the aims, timeline, tasks and outcomes of the project.
4. Predict the instructions that would be shared with individual team members who are collaborating on the project from partner organisations.

1.5 Clarifying Instructions

You may not always understand the work instructions you have been given or understand what is required of you at work. If this happens, it is always better to seek clarification.

Clarifying information can be achieved by:

- Asking the person to repeat the instructions
- Using a clarifying statement or question
- Asking the person to show you what they mean
- Looking at a flow chart, diagram or video of the task being completed
- Watching another worker do the task first.

Some information in a health care or community services workplace can be complex or challenging to understand. Never feel worried or afraid of asking for instructions to be clarified, even if you must ask multiple times.



Clarifying Safety Instructions

Some instructions relate to safety; either your own safety or that of other people in the workplace. These instructions could include:

- What to do in the event of a fire or evacuation
- How to respond to a situation of violence or physical danger
- What to do if there is a medical or first aid emergency
- How to report equipment, which is faulty, damaged or dangerous.



Example

Henrico works with clients who participate in community access activities regularly. Part of his work duties involve taking clients out in a 12-seater bus to visit local community venues such as the library, shopping centre and swimming pool.

He does not usually need to provide physical assistance for any of the clients as they board the bus, however, today is different.

Henrico has been told there is a new client who will require assistance to manoeuvre his wheelchair onto the ramp and then into the bus. The wheelchair will need to be strapped to the floor correctly and the brakes applied so the chair does not roll forwards. Henrico has seen this process done by another worker once before, but he cannot remember all the steps to operate the hoist and ramp.

He asks a more experienced worker to show him how to use the equipment again. Henrico watches the steps and takes notes so he can remember what to do.

Clarifying Client Specific Instructions

Some clients have specific needs and requests that should be met. These instructions could be included in part of an individual planning and support document, or within a client file or case notes.

Accessing and sharing these instructions can assist in providing appropriate support to a client, particularly when there is more than one worker involved.

Clarifying Duty of Care Instructions

In some situations, you will have a duty of care responsibility to a client. As part of your duty of care, you may need to clarify the instructions you receive in order to fulfil your obligations.

You might need to check what your own role is when working with a particular client, seeking guidance about the level of supervision and support which is expected or find out about the age and capacity of the person to make their own judgements and decisions in particular situations.

Clarifying instructions in relation to the client will help you to maintain your duty of care responsibilities and carry out your work effectively.

Duty of care refers to a legal responsibility owed by one person to another. In a community services or health workplace, a worker may owe a duty of care to a client which requires them to act in a reasonable, responsible and effective manner to ensure the client is safe.



Note Duty of Care

Duty of care refers to a legal responsibility owed by one person to another. In a community services or health workplace, a worker may owe a duty of care to a client which requires them to act in a reasonable, responsible and effective manner to ensure the client is safe.



1.6 Agreeing on Timeframes

Workplace instructions give you information about what tasks need to be completed as part of your work role, and they usually include information about the timeframe which applies to the instruction.

The instructions you receive as part of your job may affect the completion of the work of others as well as having an effect on the health, wellbeing and outcomes of your clients, so it is important to do your best to carry them out in a timely manner.

If you are collaborating with others on a task or project, think carefully about the timeframe which is reasonable for you. Try to avoid over committing to tasks that you cannot finish on time; it is far better to give an honest estimate of how long a task will take you to complete than to commit to something that you cannot really do.

Your own timeframe for tasks will be influenced by:

- Your own skills and experience
- Your other duties and responsibilities
- Your ability to delegate other tasks
- Your skills at time and task management.



Using Digital Tools

Some organisations use a planning and collaboration tool such as Trello, Open Project or Slack to help them organise tasks, timeframes and collaborative approaches to work.

Individual workers and small work teams may also use tools such as Google Docs to allow them to share input into a single document, edit the document and agree on comments and changes as they work towards a final piece of communication.

Digital tools can be an effective way of helping workers who may not all be in the same physical location to work together on tasks and to set and check timeframes for projects and activities.



Activity 1B

1. Access an online planning tool and explore how it can be used for recording tasks, collaborating on documents and activities and keeping track of timeframes.

2. Write a brief summary of what you discover to share with your colleagues or classmates.

3. Give the tool a rating out of ten and provide reasons for your answer.

4. Discuss the pros and cons of the software, as it could be applied to a health or community services workplace.

1.7 Lines of Communication

Some health and community services workplaces are very large, with people employed across multiple locations and in many different roles. Other workplaces are quite small, employing only a few people who provide services in specific areas and programs.

Within both large and small organisations, there will be clear lines of communication which help establish and maintain the flow of information.

1.8 Inter-Organisation Communication

In some organisations, there is capacity to communicate beyond the workplace itself and to create information links with other workplaces. This is an effective and commonly used approach to communication and operations which fits well with capacity building and empowerment models of support.

Reasons for Inter-Organisation Communication

Inter-organisation communication occurs for many different reasons:

- To provide support to clients which cannot be provided by one organisation working alone
- To enhance community capacity and build locally based skills and knowledge
- To access specialist advice and guidance
- To meet the diverse needs of clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- To establish and maintain projects which achieve health and community services goals.



Activity 1C

1. Research an organisation in community services or health which interests you.
2. Find out what links the organisation has with other organisations and agencies.
3. Make a table in your workbook to show the types of links they have and the reasons these links might exist.

1.9 Shared Vision and Values

Many organisations have very similar reasons for doing the sort of work they do. They may agree on the reasons underpinning their work, hold similar values and beliefs and practice their support services in similar ways.

We can describe these types of organisations as having a shared vision and values, and it makes sense for them to collaborate to complete tasks and projects which can improve outcomes for their clients.



Example

QUIT Victoria is a collaborative partnership with Cancer Council Victoria (CCV), the Department of Health & Human Services

(DHHS), VicHealth and the Heart Foundation (Victoria).

These organisations all hold similar public health values and have come together with a common vision of reducing smoking rates in Victoria and therefore improving health outcomes for people who are currently smokers.

They are unwilling to get a ticket for their car, so they say they have understood the information to avoid the discussion running any longer. This means they can finish the conversation quickly and get back to their car in time.



Activity 1D

1. Visit the website for QUIT Victoria and download and print the strategic plan.
2. Use highlighters to colour the words and sentences you can find which tell you about the views and values of the organisations which are involved in the collaboration.

1.10 Utilising Expertise

Some clients have requirements and needs which may not be met within a single organisation. They may require very specific support or have needs which are complex or frequently changing.

Complex and Changing Needs

We know that many of the people who utilise community services are impacted by more than one issue, and many of these issues relate each other. For example, people who are experiencing homelessness may also live in poverty and have reduced physical health and higher incidence of mental illness.

We also know that some people are affected by more than one disability or have a disability which has multiple impacts upon their activities of daily living. For example, a person who has cerebral palsy may also have epilepsy, experience vision loss and communication needs.

People who are Aging

In Australia, one in seven people are aged over 65 years. People who are older may have changing physical and mental health care needs, and these needs can become more complex and challenging as they increase in age. They may require additional support to complete their activities of daily living, attend social and community-based activities, maintain family and friendship networks and participate in the life of their local community.

Meeting the needs of people who have complex or changing needs as well as those who are older may require collaboration and interaction with other organisations. This can be an effective way of accessing skills and knowledge which have been developed over long periods of time and are held by highly qualified practitioners.

Here are some strategies you can use to access expertise to meet the needs and goals of people with complex, changing or higher-level needs:

- Identify people in your network who hold specific skills and knowledge, such as mental health practitioners, adolescent specialists, youth workers, speech pathologists, diabetes nurses, alcohol and other drug workers.
- Make and maintain links with experts by contacting them regularly, keeping their contact details up to date and updating your own records if their details change.
- Ask more experienced workers in your own organisation about who to contact for specific concerns or needs in relation to a client.
- Use established policies, procedures and referral forms within your organisation to help you refer a client to another organisation or service.



Activity 1E

Go online and find a specialist organisation or service which operates in your state or territory to meet the needs of each of these clients:

- A client who has a physical disability and has asked for assistance to access community-based recreation activities.
- A client who has a mental illness who is experiencing a sudden and acute psychotic episode requiring specialist intervention.
- A client who has an alcohol related acquired brain injury and has requested assistance with their activities of daily living.

Questions to answer:

1. What is the name of the agency or organisation?
.....
2. What services do they provide to clients?
.....
3. How could you make a referral to them for these clients?
.....
.....



1.11 Using the Correct Terminology

Like most sectors, there is a specific 'language' associated with the health and community services area of work. This language can seem unfamiliar and strange at first, and it can take a while before you can use and understand the terms which are used as part of your daily work practices.

What is Industry Terminology?

If you think about any activity you do, you will probably find there are words and phrases which are used that are very specific to that activity. This applies to everything from sports and recreation to hobbies, travel and workplaces.

Some people use the term 'jargon' to refer to words which are known and understood only by people who are familiar with that activity. It is easy for 'jargon' words to slip into our everyday communication and make the language we use difficult for others to understand.



Activity 1F

1. Think of a topic or activity that is very familiar to you. It could be a sport, recreation activity, hobby or type of work; anything that you know well but may not be well known to other people.
2. Write a list of all the words and phrases you can think of that relate to that activity. Include abbreviations, shortened forms of words and initials that are used to represent whole words.
3. Share your list with another person and see how many of them they know and understand.
4. Can you find examples of words where the other person does not know what the word means, or where they think it has a different meaning to the one you meant?
5. Discuss how this activity could relate to your work in community services or health care settings.

It is important to remember that, even when you do master the terminology of the community services and health sector, it will probably be unfamiliar to people who are outside the sector.



1.12 Digital Communication









Digital communication is used frequently in many settings. It is an important tool in sharing information with a wide range of people across multiple locations, quickly, efficiently and cheaply.

Digital communication allows for mixed media messages to be shared and to create highly visual and engaging pieces of communication. It is important to use the correct terminology when using digital communication.

You will need to learn about the words and phrases which are used frequently in your sector, and make sure you are using them correctly and appropriately.



This table shows how digital communication can be used effectively in health and community services:

Type of digital communication	What is it?	How can it be used effectively as a communication tool?
 Web	Digital connection between services, allowing for a wide range of applications including communication, sharing of files and data, and display of information.	Use appropriate privacy protections to ensure the correct information is only shared with the relevant audience. Use a less formal language for broad communication with the general public, such as on the organisation website, and a more professional language for internal or inter-organisation communication.
 Email	Internet based tool for communicating messages with a single person or a group.	Use professional language and check you are sharing the message with the correct person or group.
 Social media	Internet based tool for posting images, audio and text to share with a closed group or with the general public.	Use less formal language and focus on visual and audio elements as well as text. Check for privacy limits particularly in relation to images of clients and children.
 Podcasts	Audio tool for presenting information and news.	Record audio content professionally using high quality microphone and recording equipment. Keep podcasts to a length which suits the audience needs and ability to maintain interest and engagement.
 Videos	Visual tool for presenting information and news.	Record video content professionally using high quality camera and a tripod to remove shudder and rapid camera movements.
 Tablets and apps	Mobile tool for accessing internet-based content and applications in locations away from an office setting.	Ensure privacy is maintained and practice using apps before applying them to a clinical or community engagement setting so they can be used quickly and effectively.
 Newsletters and broadcasts	Information which is shared with a general or specific audience.	Use a clear font style and size and add images and text features to help make the content accessible to a wide audience.
 Intranet	Internal communication system for sharing information, messages and files within the organisation.	Protect login names and passwords to maintain data security of the intranet system.

1.13 Written Communication

Written communication is used frequently in most workplaces, so it is important to refine your skills and ensure you can share information effectively in your work role.

There are many situations where you will need to communicate in writing:

- Taking notes during a meeting with a client
- Documenting actions and outcomes
- Filling out forms and requests
- Completing internal documentation in your workplace
- Writing emails
- Writing reports
- Requesting support or guidance
- Recording your daily tasks and goals.

Each of these situations requires you to use industry terminology correctly and appropriately. You should think about the audience needs for your communication, the language which matches the audience and whether there are any privacy or confidentiality requirements you should follow.

This table shows you how:

Communication factor	What to consider
Audience	Think about age, gender, disability and cultural features of the audience with whom you are communicating. Ask yourself if they are a general audience, a workplace audience or a specific client group—this will help you plan your written communication appropriately.
Communication needs	Find out about the literacy and numeracy skills of the target audience, as well as their interests, goals and needs. This will help you decide how to manage features of your communication such as sentence length, vocabulary level, use of images and captions and amount of words to use on a single page.
Privacy and confidentiality requirements	Check what organisation policies and procedures might apply to the information you communicate, as well as any legislative restrictions that could be relevant, such as the Privacy Act 1988 or the Spam Act 2003.





1.14 Verbal Communication

There are many situations when you will need to communicate verbally with your colleagues at work and you will need to be able to do this effectively to ensure the best care for your clients.

Just as with written communication, you should think about the audience with whom you are communicating. Plan your communication so that you are using language and terminology that will be easily understood.

Remember that words and phrases you use commonly within your organisation may not be understood by people who are outside it. This can cause confusion, embarrassment and loss of meaning. Ultimately, it can make your communication less effective and more likely to cause a communication breakdown.



Example

Patrice is used to communicating with people within her organisation. She is naturally a rapid speaker and she is confident at speaking

in front of large groups of people. She is a highly motivating and engaging speaker who happily leads teams of other workers and provides highly professional and skilled support and guidance.

When Patrice works directly with clients, she needs to remind herself to change the language she uses. She consciously slows her speech rate and changes the vocabulary she uses so that she does not use any industry specific terms that might not be understood by the client.

She is careful to avoid speaking in a manner which could be patronising or belittling, but rather she makes sure she speaks in a way which is professional and respectful.



Activity 1G

1. Collect information from at least five different organisations or agencies. You could access web pages or look at brochures, service guidelines or newsletters.
2. Find examples of vocabulary which is specific to the sector and which might not be easily understood by people who are outside the sector, or which you do not understand yourself.
3. Do some research to find the meanings of the words or phrases and make a display or poster of industry specific vocabulary based on your research.

1.15 Communication Protocols

The way you communicate with people within your organisation is important. Just like any interaction, you do not communicate with every person in the same way.

You need to manage and modify your communication to suit the needs and requirements of your audience so that you are maintaining a professional and appropriate manner that suits the situation.

Communication Protocols With Your Organisation

When you communicate with others in the workplace, it may be important to share the information with more than one person.

If you are using an email, you can include a 'Courtesy Copy' (CC) or 'Blind Courtesy Copy' (BCC). You should use a CC if you want the person to whom you are sending the email to know who else will receive it. You should use a BCC if you do not want the person to whom you are sending the email to know who else will receive it.



Communicating Appropriately Within Your Organisation

It is expected that you will always maintain a professional and appropriate method of communication when you are in the workplace.

You should always think about:

- Using polite, clear language.
- Avoiding swearing or poor language.
- Avoiding colloquialisms and expressions which may not be easily understood.
- Remaining professional.
- Matching your communication style to the audience.



Activity 1H

1. Imagine you are working in a community services organisation and you need to provide your team leader, Ms Jacinda Pring, with an update about the number of support hours that have been provided this month.
2. You need to tell her your program area has delivered 240 direct contact hours this month and that you estimate that you will deliver around 260 next month.
3. Practice writing a professional email to your team leader to share this information with her. Include a courtesy copy of the email to your co-worker, Mr Jeremy Hunt, with whom you share program responsibilities.

1.16 Understanding Your Organisation

Many organisations operate in a hierarchical model, with a leadership team providing high level direction and guidance to others within the workplace.

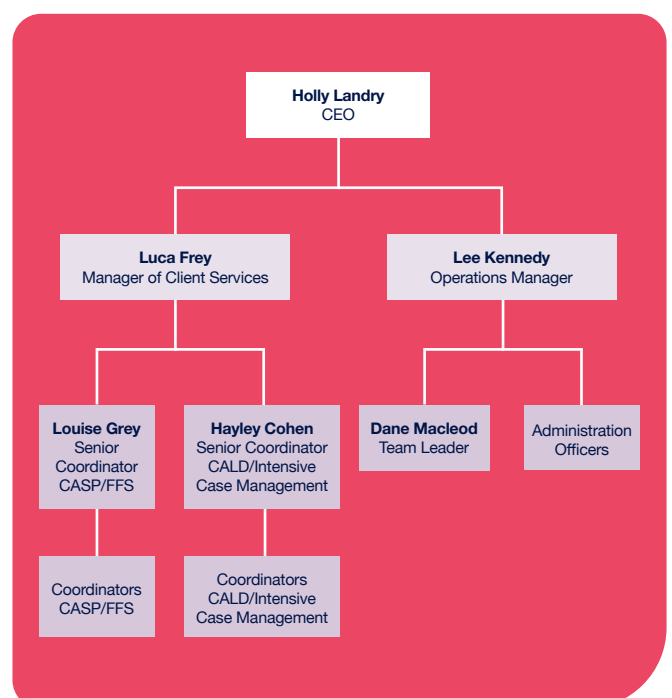
There may be departments or areas which provide support and care services settings or fields of work, and people who work at a range of levels of seniority. Many workplaces operate with a multi-disciplinary team which provides specific support and expertise to clients.

Organisational Charts

Your organisation may have an organisational chart. This is a written or visual document which shows you who holds which position in the workplace and who is responsible for providing supervision and direction to other workers.

You can use this chart to help you communicate effectively with others:

- Look at the chart to find out the official title of a person who is in a specific role.
- Check the spelling of their full name.
- Refer to them appropriately, using terms such as Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms as required.



1.17 Understanding Other Organisations

Often teams within an organisation will collaborate and refer clients to other organisations so that they offer the most appropriate support to meet specific needs. To do this, there needs to be capacity to communicate between different members of the health and community services workforces.

This capacity is based on a relationship where there is mutual trust, understanding and shared agreement on outcomes, goals and directions. It is also based on a sound knowledge of the various roles provided by support services, such as:

- Family support services
- Alcohol and other drug support
- Mental health
- Child protection
- Youth work
- Home based support services
- Homelessness support



Read Human Rights

The concept of human rights is reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the

United Nations in 1948 as a common standard of achievement for all people and nations.

Read more at <https://scnv.io/pKB1>



Information Directories

You may be able to access information and contact details about people in other organisations through an information directory.

This can give you general information about the services provided, the names and contacts of people who are responsible for various program areas, and the links for making referrals or seeking further information.

Communicating Appropriately With Other Organisations

Just as you do within your own organisation, your communication with external organisations should be polite, professional and respectful.

Make sure you use clear speech and written communication and that you use the correct terms to refer to the names of people who hold different positions in the organisation.

Sometimes you may need to communicate via a referral form or online document, whilst other times you may be able to communicate verbally on the phone or in person.

Regardless of the method of communication, you should work to establish a professional relationship that is based on mutual understanding and agreement, and a clear focus on client outcomes and achievements.



Key Points

- Listen to, clarify and apply instructions given by others in your organisation.
- Use correct terminology when communicating with others.
- Avoid jargon terms which may not be easily understood by clients.
- Understand the structure of your own organisation and how it relates to the work of other organisations in health and community services.
- Use appropriate communication methods for interacting with others in your organisation and in external workplaces.



Chapter 1

Review Questions



Use the following questions to check your knowledge.

Q1. What are three types of information you could get from your position description?

Q2. What should you do if you were unsure what was expected of you at work?

Q3. What is meant by Duty of Care?

Q4. Why is it important to establish and maintain links within community services sector and not work in isolation?

Q5. What does an organisational chart tell you?

Chapter 2

Communicate Effectively with People

Good communication is fundamental to succeeding in community services work. Communication lies at the heart of your interactions with others, so it is vital you are able to do so effectively with a wide range of people.

By the end of this chapter, you will understand:

- ✓ verbal and non-verbal communication strategies
- ✓ clear communication techniques to share service information
- ✓ active listening techniques
- ✓ strategies for communicating in a timely manner
- ✓ confidentiality procedures that apply to your communication.



2.1 Understanding Person-Centred Support

Person-centred support is a fundamental aspect of health and community services work. It is a highly effective, evidence-based approach that places the person receiving care and support at the centre of all the planning and decision-making activities that surround them.

Person-centred support requires high-level communication skills from workers so that they can provide information, offer services, ask questions and give advice and guidance appropriately.

Person-centred support means thinking about how to individualise and focus on specific needs and requirements, as well as meeting the interests, preferences and desires of the person in the most effective way possible.

As a worker in community services and health care, you can use your communication skills to help you work effectively with clients in providing person-centred care and support.



Note

Person-Centred Support

Person-centred support involves placing the person in the centre of all the planning, decision making and tasks that are a part of their care and support. It is a concept that is fundamental to health and community services practice and is encapsulated by the saying 'Nothing about us, without us.'

This saying expresses how important it is to always involve the person receiving care and support services in every aspect of that care and support.



2.2 Rights Based Approach

Many organisations within health and community services operate on a rights-based approach.

This is a model of support which begins with a slightly different premise to some traditional models, where there is a focus on needs, deficits and remediation or rehabilitation of a loss or problem.

A rights-based approach begins with the concept of fundamental human rights and examines what rights are not being maintained in a given situation. This approach sees all people as holding universal rights and that service provision should work towards upholding or restoring those rights.

With a rights-based model, people who are currently lacking in their ability to assert their rights are empowered to do so and can make decisions, take actions and promote approaches and systems which build their capacity and capability within the community.



2.3 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

If you have ever looked closely at people who communicate, you will notice they use more than just their voice to share a message. This is because communication is about a great deal more than just spoken words.

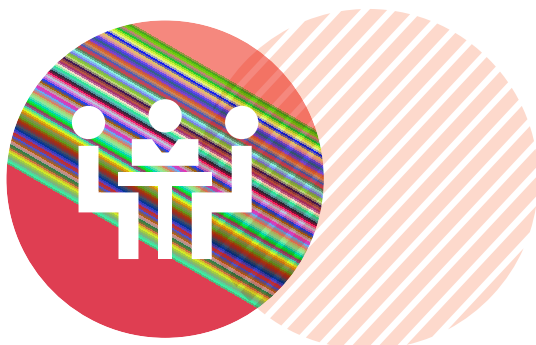
Communication refers to the whole system which is used to give and receive a message between individuals and groups. To communicate well takes time, effort and lots of practice.

It is important to think about all the components which make up communication when you are working in a community service or healthcare context. This will help you to communicate effectively with a wide range of people and in many different situations.

In a community services or health care context, verbal and non-verbal communication is used widely. It is an essential part of:

- Motivational interviewing
- Communicating with clients
- Providing health and community services information
- Providing individualised support and care
- Making ethical decisions and judgements
- Collaborative planning with clients as part of person-centred support.

Verbal and non-verbal communication can be affected by factors related to the situation, the person and their individual and specific communication needs.



Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is a technique based on the principles of person-centred support, which aims to build capacity and confidence, and enhance intrinsic motivation for the client.

Motivational interviewing uses four key strategies which can be remembered by the acronym OARS:

- **Open Questions**—these encourage the person to begin talking and sharing their story, without being guided in one direction.
- **Affirmation**—statements or gestures which recognise and affirm achievements or positive elements in a genuine manner.
- **Reflective Listening**—this can include paraphrasing, repeating and confirming or reflecting on what the other person has just told you.
- **Summary Reflections**—these allow the listener to reflect on a section or component of the discussion before moving on to the next part of the conversation.

It is important to recognise there is a clear difference between motivational interviewing and coercion. In the former, you are accompanying your client on a journey of learning for which they have decided they are ready to embark. In the latter, you are persuading and controlling the journey yourself, without truly allowing the client the right to be in the driving seat.



Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the part of communication that relates to language. It can include:

- Spoken words
- Sign language
- Assistive and augmentative technology.

Effective verbal communication means that the person who is giving the message and the person who is receiving it can understand each other easily. They take turns in the conversation and use pauses, silences, questions and answers to help add meaning to their communication.

When people communicate using spoken language, they use a combination of sentences, statements, questions and answers to share meaning. In a community services or healthcare context, verbal communication is one tool that is used to provide services to other people.

Workers do this in many ways, such as by offering assistance, asking about someone's current health and wellbeing or providing information about services and programs which might meet the needs of a person.



Example

For example, for someone who has hearing loss, they may communicate using Auslan, the language of the Australian deaf

community, or Signed English, a literal translation of spoken words into sign. Sign language works just like any other verbal language—it allows two or more people to give and receive information so that they can understand each other.

Some people use assistive or augmentative technology as their preferred communication method. They may use a technology tool such as a text to speech device which speaks words aloud that the user has entered into the device as text. This sort of device is often used by people who are unable to communicate verbally, or who find other people do not always understand what they say.

Strategies to enhance understanding and show respect

Strategies to enhance verbal communication include:

Open Questions—these are questions which encourage deeper thought and input from the responder. They usually begin with *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.



Examples:

- How do you feel about the change to your services?
- What would you like for dinner?
- Which jumper would you like to wear today?

Closed Questions—these are questions which have a predictable answer, and the number of possible choices is limited.



Examples:

- Would you like tea or coffee?
- Do you smoke?
- Would you like the heater turned on?

Statements—these are sentences or phrases which do not have a direct answer. They are used to give meaning or information to another person or to express an idea or opinion.



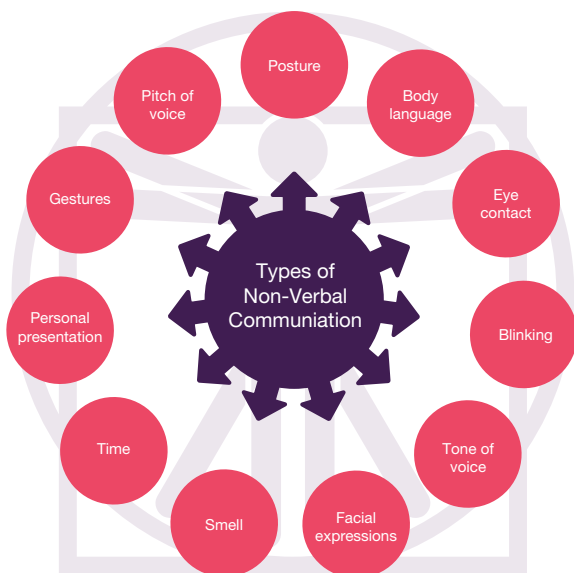
Examples:

- I don't like to drink coffee.
- Today I would prefer to get dressed and not have a shower because I am feeling tired.
- The bus will be departing for the community centre at 2 p.m..

Non-Verbal Communication

Watch closely the next time you interact with someone. You will probably notice they are not completely still when they are communicating. It is likely that their body is moving, their hands are making gestures and their facial expression and body position is changing while they speak. This is because people use non-verbal communication as another important part of sharing a message with another person.

Non-verbal communication helps the other person to gain more meaning about the message and to find out about what the person is thinking and feeling as they speak.



All of these elements can be used on their own or together to create a package of communication that helps the other person to truly understand the message.

People use non-verbal communication in different ways. Sometimes this can be confusing and may lead to the message becoming confused or mixed. Sometimes the gestures, expressions and movements that one person makes are interpreted differently by the person they are communicating with.

Non-verbal communication is only useful when there is a shared understanding of what a gesture or movement means. Sometimes people from different cultural backgrounds have differing expectations of non-verbal communication. They might use gestures more often when they speak, avoid eye contact with groups of people or use facial expressions in particular ways to emphasise a point or express an emotion.

Strategies to enhance understanding and show respect

Strategies to enhance non-verbal communication include:

- Learning about the different ways that people from cultures other than your own might use gestures, facial expressions and movement as part of their communication
- Thinking about how body language can relate to the emotions and thoughts of the person who is communicating
- Focusing on your own non-verbal communication and making sure it matches closely with what you are saying.

When and how to use Non-Verbal Communication

You should use non-verbal communication in ways that enhance and support the communication you are having with another person. Use gestures, facial expressions and body position to support the message you are trying to convey.

For example, if you are trying to appear confident and assertive, you could stand tall, put your hands on your hips and look directly at the person. If you are trying to show you are listening attentively, you could face the person, orient your body towards them and nod and smile as they speak.



2.4 Providing Information

In a health or community services workplace, you may need to provide information to people in many different situations. This could include:

- Explaining how a service is provided
- Giving details about how you can provide assistance
- Engaging with someone to build rapport and understanding
- Providing details of services, programs and options
- Providing information about eligibility for service provision.

Sometimes the information you provide can be time critical, meaning it is needed in a specific timeframe or with some urgency. Sometimes the information you provide can be complex, requiring detailed or challenging information to be shared with another person.

To communicate health and community services information effectively, you need to think carefully about strategies that will ensure the details are understood by the person. People have many different needs for information based on their individual circumstances and characteristics.



2.5 Strategies to Communicate Information

Strategies that can help communicate service information to people in different cohorts across the community are shown in the table below:

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	Elderly People	People with literacy, numeracy or cognitive needs
Provide information which is culturally appropriate.	Provide information that is relevant to their age group and experiences.	Use a plain English writing style that is easy to read and understand.
Have written information translated into community languages.	Consider larger font size and a clear, easy to read format for written information.	Add meaning with captions, pictures and infographics.
Use a professional interpreter for face to face discussions.	Only provide web-based information if there is a print version available as well.	Check that information is age appropriate and not patronising or demeaning, particularly for adults who have a cognitive impairment.

Many of the strategies in the table will be effective for more than one group of people.

For example, you are likely to find that providing a blend of online and print resources is helpful for people who are elderly, those who have a reading need and those for whom English is not their first language.



Think

- What would it be like for someone who is unable to communicate in the same language as the person with whom they are discussing a health or community services issue?
- How would the experience impact them emotionally?
- What impact could communication across a language barrier have on the outcomes of a healthcare or community services interaction?



Resource

TIS National provides translation and interpreting services across Australia. Visit their website to find out how they can work with agencies to support clients who are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds. Learn about their work here:

<https://scnv.io/WkSz>



The Human Rights Commission has developed information to guide you in planning the best way to communicate with a wide range of people. Find out more on this web page:

<https://scnv.io/cUVp>



2.6 Enhancing Information

When you are providing information to other people, it can be tempting to assume they understand exactly what you mean. Sometimes we have read or listened to a piece of information so many times, we feel like we know it off by heart.

It is important to remember that for clients, this may be the very first time they have read or heard the information you are providing, so they are less able to remember it all.

We know that people take in information in chunks and that their capacity to retain details is limited. Most people can only remember a small number of new pieces of information in their memory without a prompt or reminder.

We can communicate information in a way that builds on this capacity, simply by enhancing the information and adding built in reminders.

These can include:

- **Examples of the information in action**—case studies or short stories where information is applied to a situation can give new information a practical relevance.

- **Pictures**—the old adage of a picture telling a thousand words is very true and is a great way of helping prompt recall of details or key points.
- **Don't overdo the detail**—sometimes less is more, and people can retain more information if you don't overwhelm them with details which are not critical.
- **Captions**—we know that people almost always read the captions underneath an image, so use captions as a tool to encourage people to read key points that relate to a picture you have included in some information.
- **Remind often**—pause and build in reminders about what has been said or written so far, as a way of helping people retain one part of the information before you move on.

Deciding on the features you will use to enhance understanding of spoken or written information will depend on the individuals and groups with whom you work.

Thinking about individual needs will help you decide on the best way to enhance the information you provide.

2.7 Checking For Understanding

Once you have provided information to a person, it is important to check they have understood what you meant. This is not as simple as asking 'Did you understand?' because most people will generally respond 'Yes', and you will never be sure if they have understood what you intended from your communication.

People may not completely understand the information you have provided for reasons related to their own needs and characteristics, as well as to the situation and your own communication approach.



2.8 Reasons People May Not Understand

There are many reasons people may be reluctant to tell you they have not understood information you have provided to them. This could include:

- Being embarrassed
- Not wanting to waste your time
- Feeling like you are in a rush
- Having other important commitments of their own
- Thinking they have understood the information
- Not wanting to ask silly questions
- Feeling there is a power imbalance between the parties who are communicating.

Each of these can act as a constraint on the flow of information between yourself and the person with whom you are communicating.



Think

You are interviewing a new client. You notice they are looking at their watch many times during your conversation, and they appear distracted and uneasy. You try to put them at ease by talking calmly and encouraging some light-hearted conversation about your own daily activities, but this only seems to make things worse.

Think about what might be happening for this client to make them appear so distracted.

- What could you do to find out?
- How could you help the situation?



Example

Mike is listening to Annalise explain information to him however he knows he only paid for 45 minutes in the parking meter and he's already been gone for 39 minutes. Annalise doesn't appear to be approaching the end of the information. Mike keeps thinking about all the bills he currently has and his recent late rent and how we wouldn't be able to afford a fine if he got one.

Finally Annalise asks Mike if he has any questions. Mike hasn't been listening or absorbing the information from the last ten minutes because he's been too busy thinking about the parking meter. He tells Annalise that everything's fine and 'all clear' and thanks her and rushes back to his car. He hopes he won't need the important information that Annalise gave him towards the end of their conversation.



Activity 2A

Write down three strategies you could use during an information-providing session to ensure the other person has understood the information you have provided to them.

Make sure you stay away from closed questions and use tactics that help make the other person feel at ease during the process.

2.9 Speech Mechanisms

People speak in many ways. If you listen to a group of people closely, you will probably find that there are different rates of speech, as well as different ways of constructing sentences, using expressions and punctuation.

These mechanisms of speech are part of how we add meaning to what we say. They help bring spoken language to life, so that it is more interesting and engaging, and reflects our thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Some mechanisms of speech include:

Punctuation

Punctuation occurs in verbal speech, just as it does in written language. In written language, punctuation is the marks used to define or break up a sentence or phrase, such as a full stop, comma or question mark.

Punctuation also occurs in spoken language, so that people understand where one idea ends and another begins, and so they can attach greater meaning to what is being said. Punctuation occurs when we use a pause, a break or silence, or increase the pitch of our voice to emphasise a point or ask a question.

Grammar

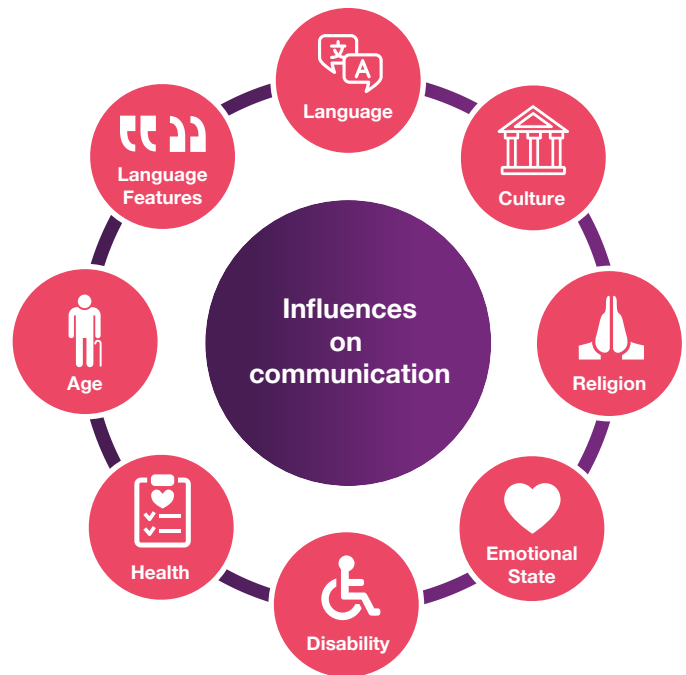
Grammar is the system of putting words together to create sentences and phrases. People use grammar in spoken language in many ways, often depending upon their cultural, linguistic and familial background.

You may hear people construct spoken sentences in different formats and use different linkages between words. Sometimes this can be because they are speaking a language they learnt as an additional language to their first, and so they may take longer to master the grammar conventions of their additional language.



2.10 Influences On Communication

There are many factors which can influence the way an individual responds to and participates in a communication exchange.



These include:

- **Language**—speaking a different language to the person with whom you are communicating can make understanding and clear sharing of information difficult.
- **Culture**—sometimes people have different cultural expectations about who and how communication should occur, such as between people of different age groups or genders.
- **Religion**—this can affect the views, values and ideas that a person brings to a communication exchange, which can affect the understanding and sharing of information.
- **Emotional State**—some emotional states make clear communication and retention of information problematic, such as when a person is stressed, anxious or distressed.
- **Disability**—having a cognitive or sensory disability or a condition such as an Autism Spectrum Disorder can affect communication and mean that adaptations or alternative communication methods are needed.

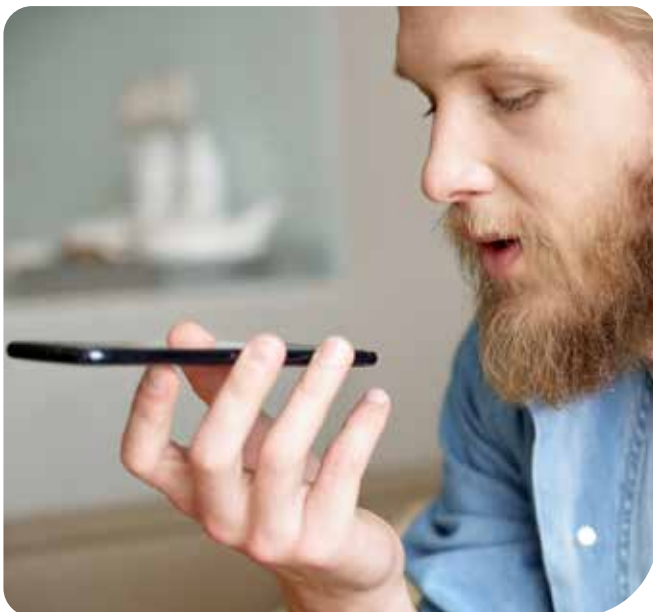
- **Health**—health can affect the ability of a person to listen to, understand and respond to written and spoken information. This can happen if the person is affected by changed judgement, fatigue, altered mental state or changed levels of consciousness or alertness.
- **Age**—people who are older, as well as those who are very young, may communicate in different ways based on their level of understanding and their ability to retain information.
- **Language Features**—grammar, speed of speech and punctuation can all make a significant difference to the level of understanding another person has of a communication exchange or a written document.



Example

Patricia speaks very rapidly and has a natural speaking voice which is quite high in pitch. When she works with older clients or those who have a communication difficulty such as dysfluency, she makes sure she consciously slows her speech rate down and lowers the pitch of her voice.

She finds this is a useful way of ensuring her clients are better able to understand what she says.



Activity 2B

1. Speak to another person for one minute and record yourself using a phone or tablet or similar.
2. Listen to your own speech played back and count how many words you have spoken in one minute.
3. What do you notice about the pitch of your voice—would you describe it as high, medium or low in pitch?
4. Compare your results to other people you know.
5. Think about how your rate of speech and pitch could affect your communication with other people.

2.11 Checking For Understanding

It is important to carefully check that someone has understood what you meant during a conversation or when you have provided written information.

Reasons for Checking for Understanding

There are many reasons for checking that someone has understood the information you have provided. Sometimes it is simply a matter of doing your job well and making sure you are being effective. Other times, it is vital for the health and wellbeing of the person that you check they are completely aware of important details.



Example

You explain to a client that you will meet them at 14 Albert Road at 2.30 p.m. next Wednesday 12 October. The reason for the

meeting is to complete an individualised plan for mental health support services in collaboration with a mental health nurse. It is important that the client can retain all the details of the appointment, so they are able to attend at the right place and time. The appointment is an important way of maintaining their mental health and wellbeing.

2.12 Ways of Checking for and Enhancing Understanding

There are many ways you can check someone has understood the information you have given them. Here are some approaches that are particularly useful in a community services or health care setting:

Asking Questions

Asking questions is a great way of finding out how much of the information you have just provided to someone has been understood.

You can use this approach for finding out how someone has interpreted what you have said or written, and for checking how they will apply the information to their own situation.

Retelling

This approach is where you ask a person to repeat key information back to you, so you can see what they have understood and what they have not.

You can use this approach well when you have given complex or detailed information, where it is likely the person may have missed some important parts.

Repeating Key Points

Sometimes it can be helpful to provide information more than once, so that you can remind a person about what is important to retain. Think back over the information you have provided and consider which are the most important points. Summarise these at the end of a document or conversation, so that they are the last thing the person hears or reads.

A summary is a very effective communication tool which works for both verbal and written information and helps reinforce the points, so they are retained.

Writing Important Information Down

People don't always remember what they hear, but a paper or digital copy of the information can help prompt their memory later. After you have met with a client, you could make notes about your meeting or send them a copy via email or SMS.



Activity 2C

Have a discussion with a classmate or friend, with one of you playing the role of a case manager and one playing the role of a client. Practise providing information about the services your organisation can provide to the client and asking the client some questions about their specific needs. Use these strategies:

- Retelling
- Repeating key points
- Writing important information down.

Discuss with your classmate or friend how effective you found these strategies at helping you check for and enhance understanding.

Ask for feedback about your performance at this task.



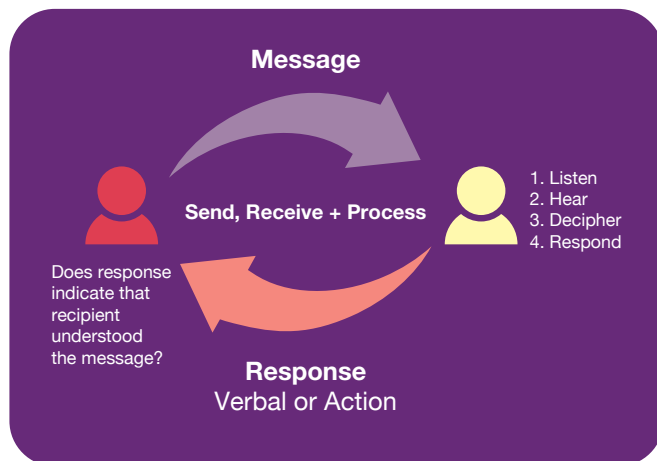
2.13 Two-Way Communication Process

Communication is a two-way process, based on the giving and receiving of information. It is a transmission of information back and forth between each party that is involved in the communication.

As part of the communication process, each party will need to:

- Listen
- Hear
- Decipher
- Respond.

Each of these are important aspects of being able to effectively communicate with clients.



Listening Skills

Listening skills take time and skill to refine. Listening skills involve consciously taking in information from a client and thinking about how you can apply your knowledge of their individual needs to provide appropriate support.

If you are listening to a client, you should ensure you are meeting in a location where they feel comfortable, so they are able to communicate freely and openly, and you are able to listen effectively. Check for distractions such as outside noise, movement and other people as these can hinder the listening process.

Make sure you are not interrupted by others, so that you can give the person your complete attention.

Clarifying Information Through Feedback

You may not always be sure you have understood the person with whom you are communicating. In this case, you might need to clarify the information using a technique such as feedback.

People often give each other feedback about their understanding of the communication exchange. This feedback is helpful in working out what has been understood by the other person and what has not.

Feedback also tells you whether you have the attention of the other person and that they are actively participating in a verbal interaction.

Here are some ways you can provide feedback to and clarify information with the other person:

- Looking at them as they speak and making eye contact.
- Smiling and nodding.
- Orienting your body towards them, keeping arms uncrossed.
- Avoiding doing other tasks while they are speaking.
- Asking questions and making affirmative statements.
- Using your facial expression to show interest and engagement.

Each of these communication techniques can help provide positive feedback to the other person which can encourage them to start or continue interacting with you.

Negative Feedback

You can also provide unintentional negative feedback which can stop or hinder a conversation too. This type of feedback gives the other person the message that you do not agree with their ideas, that you are concerned about what they are saying or that you are not interested.

Some examples of negative feedback include:

- Frowning and turning your face away from the individual
- Appearing distracted or lacking interest
- Orienting your body in a different direction
- Completing other tasks at the same time
- Asking a question which is unrelated to the topic.

Feedback can support or hinder clear and effective communication and can give the other person a guide about how their message is being received.



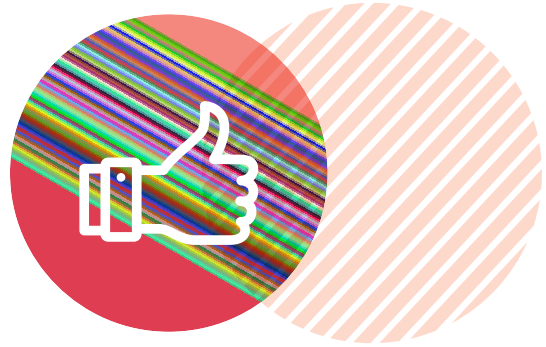
Example

Meg is conducting a home visit with Martha. Martha has told her about how she would like assistance to do her laundry each week because she finds this task too difficult and tiring to do herself. Meg wants to find out if there are specific parts of the laundry process that Martha finds challenging, so she smiles and nods at Martha to encourage her to keep talking. She uses a statement and asks some questions to seek more information:

'I understand that doing the laundry is difficult for you on your own. Is it the heavy items like sheets and towels that are most difficult for you? Are you able to operate the machine yourself, or do you need assistance to use the machine?'

She then listens closely as Martha tells her how she can no longer turn the dial on the machine because she has arthritis in her fingers, and she finds this frustrating because she used to enjoy doing the laundry and making sure all the clothes, sheets and towels were clean, fresh and hung outdoors in the sunlight.

Meg now knows more about how to offer appropriate support to Martha and suggests that she might enjoy walking out to the line to help a worker hanging out the washing each week.



2.14 Confirming Understanding

Once you have clarified the message, it is important to confirm you have understood. This could be by using verbal or non-verbal communication.

Confirming lets the other person know that their communication with you has been understood, so the conversation or discussion can continue.

Here are some ways you can confirm you have understood the message:

- Using a statement such as 'I understand' or 'I get what you are saying'
- Nodding and smiling
- Writing down the information, showing the person what you have written and asking them to check it is correct.

Confirming information is vital, particularly when it is related to specific requirements, individualised needs, health care needs or information which affects care and support of people who are vulnerable or at risk.



Activity 2D

1. Go online and watch some videos of communication exchanges between two or more people, such as people having a discussion, argument or mealtime conversation.
2. Watch for examples of negative feedback being used in the communication exchange and write down what you notice.
3. Can you find examples of items from the list above?
4. Do you see any other types of negative feedback being used?



Activity 2E

Watch an experienced worker in a health care or community services setting as they communicate with someone.

1. What techniques do you see them use?
2. Do they do things that help confirm they have understood the communication which is being used by the other person?

Write down three things you observe and how you could apply them to your own work practices.

2.15 Exchanging Information

The exchange of information occurs in many ways in health and community services settings. Information can be in formats such as:

- In handwriting
- In printed text
- In digital formats
- Through verbal communication.

The format used to exchange information will vary depending on the setting and the task and information requirements. Your supervisor will explain the requirements for information exchange in your workplace.

Types of Information

This table shows some of the types of information that you might exchange in a health or community services workplace:

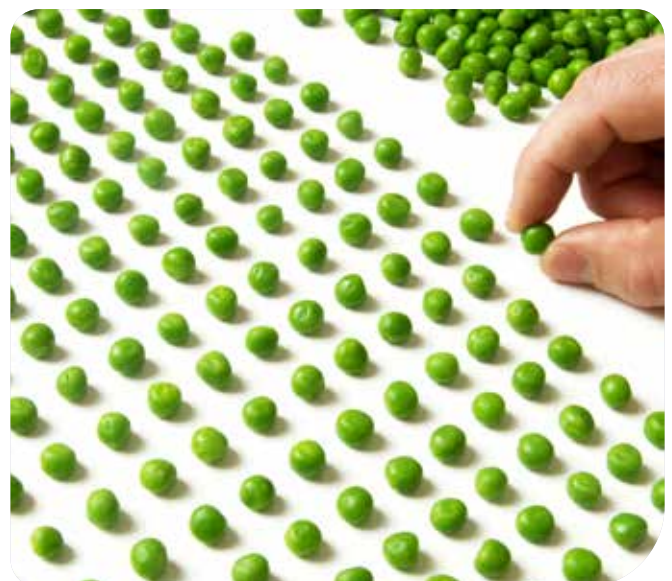
Information type	Description	Example
Handwriting	Recording information by hand, into a template, form or general notes.	Notes which are made by hand, such as recording observations of a client during a home support session or reflections made by a worker in a self-reflection journal.
Printed text	Information in English or other languages which can be given to or received from clients and workers.	Documents which are shared with others in printed format, such as service guidelines, frequently asked questions documents, promotional posters and brochures and consumer service agreements.
Digital format	Information in digital format which can be transmitted and shared electronically.	Information for parents, caregivers and clients about the achievements and activities completed during a program, which are displayed on a website.
Verbal	Information which is shared through spoken language.	Discussions during a staff meeting about actions and outcomes for a service.
Social media	Blended information format which combines written text, audio, images and music to engage and share information and ideas.	A social media page used by an organisation to share news, updates and reminders with clients and others about upcoming activities and events.

2.16 Attention to Detail

You can use your written and spoken communication skills to make sure you exchange information effectively.

You should always pay close attention to detail when you exchange information, because incorrect or poorly shared information can have negative outcomes for clients and for the workplace. Make sure you check written work carefully so that you can find any errors which have occurred and correct them.

Think about what you have heard and shared in a spoken conversation so you can record the details accurately.



2.17 Confidentiality

In many situations, information you exchange with others will be subject to confidentiality requirements. This means you need to know exactly what you can do with information you collect and share.

The rules about confidentiality are designed to protect the rights of the people with whom you work and make sure that information is not shared with people who do not have a right to it.

Your supervisor will explain the ways your workplace protects the rights of clients and others in the workplace in relation to information privacy and confidentiality. They will tell you about:

Legislation

These are the laws which relate to information that you might collect or use in your daily work tasks. One of the most important laws is The Australian Privacy Act (1988) and the associated Australian Privacy Principles.

These principles set out how you should manage information that you collect, and who can access the information.

Policies

These are written documents which explain how information should be managed at work and tell you about how your workplace acts to ensure it complies with legal requirements such as the Australian Privacy Act.

Procedures

These are the step by step guides to help you implement a policy. Procedures give you more detail than policies and you can think of them as the 'how to' guide to your daily activities at work.

It is likely that your workplace will have step by step procedures that will help you when completing tasks such as interviewing a client, referring a client for services, completing an individualised support document or requesting additional support needs.

Checking the Requirements

It is important to check the requirements of your workplace to make sure you are communicating correctly and appropriately. Always think about how information should be shared with others and what rules might apply.

Your supervisor can assist you in making sure you understand the requirements.



Example

Sephira is excited about the success of a recent visit she has organised with a group of young people who attend a residential

support program. She has taken the group into the city and spent the day visiting the sites and learning to read maps and understand directions.

She writes a short article about the activities and posts it on her workplace social media page, along with lots of photos. She thinks the post looks terrific, but she is dismayed when she gets to work the next day to find her supervisor is less than impressed.

Sephira has not checked whether she can display photos of clients and unfortunately some of the clients in her group had not given permission for their image to be shared online. Her supervisor explains that for one client, there are safety issues because there is a court order that protects the client from a family member who is known to be violent towards the client.

Without realising, Sephira's actions have put the client at risk of harm by displaying her image in a public social media post. Sephira has learnt an important lesson about checking the policies and procedures that apply to information exchange in her workplace.



Activity 2F

Go online and find an example of a social media page which is used by a community services organisation. Take a screen shot of a recent post and copy it into your workbook or notes. Use arrows and captions to show:

1. How individual people are shown—are they engaging in an activity, participating in a discussion, completing a work task?
2. What personal details are included—are people named, can they be identified from the photo?
3. What actions or follow up are possible—can members of the public interact with the post, can they like, follow or share it?
4. How accessible is the information—does it meet the communication needs of the likely client or target group, is it easy to read and understand?

2.18 Timely Information

Sometimes information needs to be communicated to others in a specific timeframe. It is important that you check if there is a timeframe which applies so you can make sure you follow it. Information can be time critical if:

- It relates to a specific work task or activity, such as a meeting or event
- It is health related, such as a change to health status or a referral to another provider
- It is related to an escalating or changing situation, such as when a client's needs increase significantly, and intervention is required by more experienced workers
- It is date or time specific, such as an inter-departmental briefing which is happening on a set date and time
- It relates to a milestone or check point for a client or program, such as an individual plan which must be updated every 12 months.



Key Points

- Communication includes verbal and non-verbal elements
- Communication can be modified and planned to ensure it meets individual and situational needs
- Information should be shared in a way which is respectful, effective and timely
- There are many formats for information sharing, including handwritten, print and digital
- Communication and information collection should adhere to the requirements of the Australian Privacy Principles and the Privacy Act
- People communicate in different ways, based on their individual differences and cultural and linguistic factors.

Strategies for communicating in a timely manner

There are many strategies which can help you organise your work and tasks so that information you need to share with others is completed in a timely manner.

Some workplaces provide access to tools and software which can help you organise your work and communication tasks.

Other workplaces encourage you to develop your own systems of work, based on what you find most effective.

Here are some strategies you could try to help you communicate in a timely manner in your workplace:

- Allow enough time in each day for information sharing and communication tasks
- Use technology tools to help you reduce the time it takes you to process information and share it with others
- Use a calendar on your phone, tablet or desk to record important dates and times
- Use a reminder to prompt you about upcoming tasks
- Check you have completed all the information-based tasks that are needed at the end of each week and month.



Example

Janti receives an email from his supervisor to ask for a quarterly report about the program he manages.

The email informs Janti that the report will need to be ready by 28 March, so it can be included in the department's briefing report to the Head of Department. Janti records the date in his calendar and makes a reminder to himself for 20 March.

He knows the reminder will help him complete the task well before the deadline, so he can have it ready for his supervisor in time.

Chapter 2

Review Questions



Use the following questions to check your knowledge.

Q1. What are four ways you can show someone you are actively listening to them?

Q2. What is meant by a rights-based approach?

Q3. Practice your attention to detail skills. You meet with a client named James Katakis on the 3rd of September this year. You normally meet at 3:30 each week however you have made arrangements to meet him next week but you will be meeting 45 minutes later than normal. You need to let Paula and Jane at work know of the changes at well. Write the details into the following notepad.

Date: _____

Client Name: _____

Client Notes:

Attention to:

Q4. Why is it important that you provide information as it arises and don't delay passing information on?

Chapter 3

Communication Constraints

From time to time, there may be factors which cause communication to break down, become limited or restricted in some way. It is important to recognise when this is likely to occur, and to know how to respond. This chapter explores communication constraints and conflict in the workplace.

By the end of this chapter, you will understand:

- ✓ the situations that are challenging in a community and health setting
- ✓ the early warning signs of conflict and challenging situations
- ✓ what the indicators of risk are that a child, young person or adult is at risk of abuse, harm or neglect
- ✓ your duty of care and mandatory reporting obligations
- ✓ factors that affect communication
- ✓ how to manage, defuse and resolve conflict.



3.1 Recognising Challenging Situations

Challenging situations can and do arise in community services and health workplaces. When they do, it is vital that you have the skills and knowledge to be able to:

- Recognise the situation.
- Plan a response.
- Take action.
- Utilise the skills of others when required.

It is far better to seek assistance in managing a situation than to attempt to resolve it on your own and then discover that you do not yet have the capacity to do so safely and effectively.

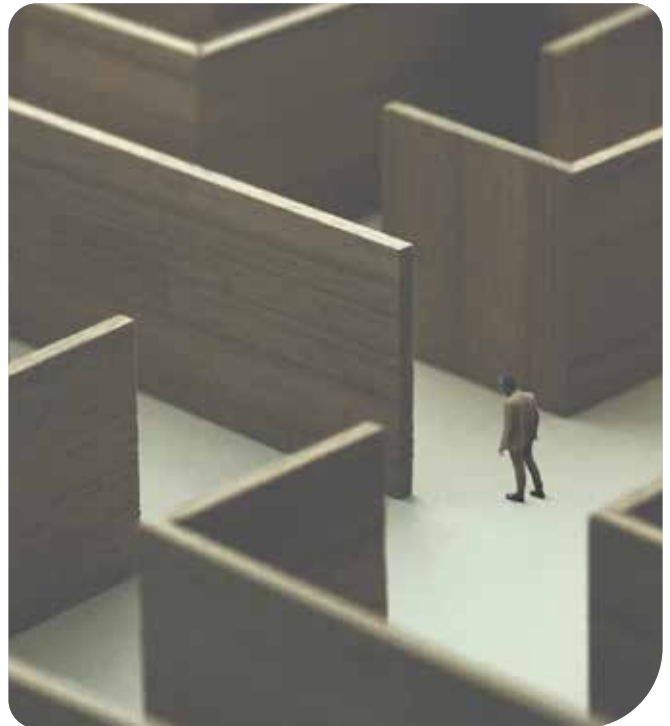
3.2 Situations Which Challenge Us

Working within community services and health involves working with people across many different types of interactions and communication exchanges. Some situations are predictable and easy to manage, while others are far less predictable and can change rapidly.

These complex situations can require intervention and guidance from more experienced workers in order to ensure safety and appropriate outcomes for everyone involved.

Here are some examples of situations which can be challenging to manage:

- Providing support to a person experiencing trauma or grief.
- Managing a critical incident.
- Dealing with threats of violence or harm.
- Dealing with verbal and physical abuse.
- Managing a complex situation involving multiple points of view.
- Providing support and guidance to a person affected by alcohol or other drugs.
- Responding to a potential situation of child abuse, harm or neglect.
- Addressing a situation where an older person is at risk of harm or in danger.



Activity 3A

1. There are many challenging situations which can occur at work.
2. Discuss with a friend or classmate the challenges which you might experience in a community services or health workplace, and how you think you might respond.
3. What do you think you might find most difficult? What do you think you will find less challenging?

4. What skills and knowledge do you have already that might assist you in responding to challenging situations?

3.3 Identifying Challenges Through Early Signs

Sometimes there are early signs that indicate a situation might become more complex and challenging. It is useful to recognise these early signs, so you can respond appropriately to them.

Some early signs and their descriptions are shown in the table below:

Sign	Description
Behaviour triggers	Known triggers that have been identified in a person's support plan or case notes that have previously triggered behaviours of concern.
Changes in response	Differences which occur in the way a person responds to your communication or interaction with them, such as a difference in mood, language, tone of voice or body movements.
Language	Words or phrases which are threatening, aggressive, confused or difficult to comprehend.
Presence of dangers in the environment	Objects, equipment or environmental factors which could contribute to a situation becoming more challenging or higher risk.

If you observe an early sign which could indicate a situation may become more complex and challenging, you should stop and think carefully about how to respond.

Consider your organisation's requirements for dealing with complex or challenging situations. Often there will be a policy or procedure to follow, or information in a flow chart about how to act.

You may have a more experienced colleague or supervisor close by who can offer you guidance and tips on the best way to manage a situation. Sometimes just having another person close to hand can give you the confidence to manage a situation with minimal support.

In some situations, it may be more appropriate to seek direct intervention from another person who has more skills and experience than you do.



Note Behaviours of Concern

Some clients may display behaviours of concern.

This term is used to describe a wide range of behaviours which can be damaging for the client or others. These behaviours are often triggered by specific features in the environment or situations which arise that prompt the behaviour.

For example, a person who is triggered by loud noises may respond with physical aggression if a worker inadvertently starts the blender in the kitchen without warning. Behaviours of concern are sometimes called challenging behaviours.



3.4 Indicators of Risk

You need to be alert to indicators of risk which can suggest that a child, young person or adult may be experiencing abuse, harm or neglect. Some of these indicators are shown in the table below:

Area of abuse	Indicators
Physical	Signs of physical harm including bruises, lacerations, swelling, fractures, or burns. Associated behaviours may include poor sleep patterns, excessive compliance with requests from workers, passive, withdrawn, changes to mood or behaviour over time.
Sexual	Signs of physical harm including bruising, pain around genitals or torso, torn or stained underwear or bedding. Associated behaviours include the inability to explain physical harm features, changes to behaviour, suicide or self-harm attempts, reluctance to be alone around particular people, anxiety or panic attacks.
Emotional	Signs may include delayed development, failure to achieve milestones, changes to behaviour or mood, self-harm, withdrawal, or anxiety.
Financial	Signs may include not having sufficient money for daily tasks and activities, frequently asking for or stealing money, making financial decisions without the legal authority to do so, financial transactions not accounted for appropriately, no records or receipts to account for questionable expenditure.
Neglect	Signs may include being frequently tired, unprepared for activities or tasks, lacking appropriate clothing for weather and tasks, lacking sufficient food or money to buy food, lack of footwear, clothing which is frequently torn, damaged or unwashed, a lack of access to others and inability to socialise or interact.

3.5 Following Organisational Procedures

Your organisational procedures will determine how you respond in a situation where you observe early indicators of risk. Often you will need to seek guidance and direction from others or take action to respond to the situation and then report it to others.

You should always follow the procedure of your organisation, and make sure you inform your supervisor or team leader if you need to manage a complex or challenging situation. Your supervisor or team leader may need to provide additional or different support or make a change to intervene in some way.



3.6 Duty of Care

You will often have a duty of care responsibility to clients, as well as to others in the vicinity. You should act in a way which shows you are doing your best to keep yourself and everyone around you safe from harm.

This means making decisions which promote physical and mental safety and wellbeing and avoiding doing anything which puts safety and wellbeing at risk.

Duty of care can be complex and require careful thought and planning. Sometimes your duty of care responsibility to one person might impact your responsibility to another person.

Duty of Care Aspects

You should consider all aspects of duty of care in your work role:

- **Legal**—what the law says you must do.
- **Ethical**—what is morally the best course of action to take.
- **Organisational**—what the policies, procedures and directions of your organisation require you to do.
- **Professional**—what the expectations are for a person holding your qualifications and position.

Duty of care can sometimes be more complex if the person is an adult rather than a child, or when it is not clear if you have a duty of care responsibility to that person.

Your duty of care may be higher if a person has a mental illness, is frail and elderly, has a cognitive or behavioural disability, is affected by substances or alcohol or if they have an acquired brain injury. In situations such as these, you may owe the person a higher duty of care because they may be less able to make sound and reasonable decisions for themselves.

It is important to remember to interact with people based on their age and to avoid treating people as though they are younger than they are, simply because you owe them a higher duty of care. Think about how you can fulfil your duty of care requirements whilst also treating the person appropriately, with dignity and respect.



Example

Maddi works with young adults who have moderate acquired brain injuries. She organises discos and get togethers each month at a local

hall. She makes sure there is supervision provided at the venue and that the young people are offered transport to and from the discos and get togethers.

She recruits other workers who are able to provide supervision and transport in a way which is fun, engaging and age appropriate so that the young people do not feel as if they are being treated differently just because they have an acquired brain injury.

The workers dress casually and interact in a friendly, engaging manner, and they focus on encouraging safe independence and autonomy in a managed environment.



3.7 Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting is a very specific type of communication that is sometimes required in a community services or health workplace.

Mandatory reporting is a process of making a notification to the relevant authorities that you know or suspect that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm. This risk can relate to physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect.

There are very specific rules about mandatory reporting, and they are different across the states and territories and depending upon the work role you hold in your organisation. It is important you access the most up to date information which is relevant to your location regarding mandatory reporting.

Child Protection Legislation

Each state and territory have their own legislation which relates to child protection. These laws apply the principle of acting in the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.

This table gives you a brief summary of the legislation which may apply to your own jurisdiction:

Jurisdiction	Legislation which applies
New South Wales	Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
Australian Capital Territory	Children and Young People Act 2008
Victoria	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Queensland	Child Protection Act 1999
Tasmania	Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997
Western Australia	Children and Community Services Act 2004
Northern Territory	Care and Protection of Children Act 2007
South Australia	Children's Protection Act 1993

Choosing What and How to Report

In some situations, you may need to report concerns or challenges directly to your supervisor. In other situations, you may be required to report directly to an authority such as the Department of Human Services.

This will depend on several factors:

- What your job role is.
- Whether you hold a duty of care responsibility towards the person.
- Whether you believe or know that the person has experienced harm or neglect.
- Whether you are required by law to make a report under mandatory reporting requirements.

You should check your organisation's policies and procedures and the legal requirements which apply in your state or territory.



Example

In Victoria, people holding a role as a youth justice worker, out of home care worker or school counsellor (among others) are mandated by

law to make a report under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 if:

“in the course of practising their profession or carrying out duties of their office, position or employment they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.”

Department of Human Services Victoria website

3.8 Communication Constraints

A constraint is something that limits or restricts you so having a communication constraint means there is something that is restricting clear communication. There are many factors which can affect the communication you have with another person.

It is important to be able to identify as many of the factors that affect communication as possible. Once you have identified them, you will be able to take steps to resolve them using your communication and interpersonal skills.



3.9 Factors That Affect Communication

Some of these relate to environmental factors, whilst others are specific to the person and their characteristics and experiences.

Environmental Factors



These include:

- Distractions such as outside noise, wind, rain, movement of others.
- Temperature such as being too hot or cold.
- Threats to safety such as violence, road accidents, dangerous workplace situations, risk of infection.
- Comfort and familiarity such as being in a place which is unknown, feels uncomfortable or is not culturally appropriate or relevant.

You can use your observation skills as well as your knowledge of the person with whom you are communicating to help you identify environmental factors which might affect communication.

Person Specific Factors



These include:

- Medication effects such as changes to thinking processes, impact on short term memory, reduced ability to concentrate and focus, or fatigue.
- Mental illness effects such as changed perception, disturbed thinking, hallucinations, loss of sense of reality, or post-traumatic stress.
- Triggers such as those related to previous trauma or those known to prompt a behavioural change in the person.
- Disability or condition related factors such as communication impairment, sensory loss, cognitive impairment or acquired brain injury.
- Requirements of other tasks and responsibilities such as needing to pick up a child from school, attend to caring duties or go to work or study.

You can use your knowledge of and relationship with the person, and your knowledge of factors related to their medication, condition and potential triggers to help you identify situations where communication may be affected.





3.10 Resolving Communication Constraints

Once you have identified the factors which affect communication, you can take steps to resolve them. In some cases, your response can be quite simple, while in other cases you may need to think carefully about how to respond.

Resolving environmental constraints

Many environmental constraints are relatively simple to resolve. This table shows you how:

Environmental constraint	Strategy to resolve
Distractions	Look for options to remove the distraction or change the location of the communication so the distraction is further away. For example, close a window to reduce effect of wind, close a blind to reduce sunlight into a room, or move the conversation to another room.
Temperature	Ask if the person is comfortable, then adjust the temperature as required by turning on/off an air conditioner or fan, turning on/off a heater, or offering a glass of water.
Threats	Remove the immediate threat if safe to do so or move the person and yourself away from the threat. Provide immediate support and reassurance and seek additional input from others as required.
Comfort and familiarity	Think about what might help the person to feel comfortable and at ease. Ask questions or conduct research to find out how to provide a setting which is culturally and age appropriate.



Activity 3B

Reducing Constraints on Communication

Imagine you are having a discussion with a client who you know is an indigenous Australian.

Conduct some research into what constraints might happen during your discussion, and what strategies you could use to reduce their effect on your discussion.

Questions:

1. What can you find out about communication with people from indigenous Australian backgrounds?
.....
.....
2. What should you consider when planning the environment so that you reduce constraints on your communication?
.....
.....
3. How could you apply a rights-based approach to planning communication with someone who is an indigenous Australian?
.....
.....
.....

3.11 Managing Conflict

Situations of conflict can occur in community services and health care settings. Conflict requires careful management and it is important to act appropriately so you can ensure safety for everyone involved and achieve a positive outcome for clients.

You can use your communication skills to assist you in reducing the chance that conflict occurs, defusing the situation quickly and efficiently when it does occur and finding a resolution that is acceptable and appropriate.

3.12 Understanding Conflict

Before you begin to manage conflict, it is important to understand what conflict means, and what it can look and feel like for different people.

When can Conflict Occur?

Conflict can occur between individuals, amongst workers and between people in the general public. Children, adolescents and adults all experience conflict in different ways.

Conflict can have an emotional and mental impact on a person and can negatively affect their wellbeing. Some conflict situations can also involve physical effects, including the physical experience of stress and burnout and the physical impact of actual violence and harm.

How Conflict Affects Individuals

People experience conflict in different ways, depending on:

- Their age.
- Their previous experiences.
- Any disabilities or mental illness which they may have.
- Their cultural and linguistic background.
- Whether there is a power imbalance between the people.
- Whether there is a systemic or broader rights-based issue related to the experience of conflict.

Some people may find that conflict has a profound effect on their wellbeing, while others may move on quickly from a conflict situation. This does not mean that being able to move on from conflict is 'better' in some way; it simply means that people are different and come to a situation of conflict from many different standpoints.

3.13 Avoiding Conflict

Situations of conflict can sometimes be avoided with some careful planning.

Think about the situation and the person with whom you are communicating. Assess the situation and consider what factors might make conflict more likely, as well as factors which will reduce the chance of conflict. Where possible, take steps to avoid conflict by encouraging the factors which reduce the chance of it occurring and removing any which make it more likely.

You could delay a conversation until a better time, ask the person if they feel ready to discuss a situation, observe the person for signs of stress or agitation, or locate your interaction in a neutral, non-threatening place.



Example

Duwait is planning a conversation with a client, Mitchell. He knows that Mitchell has displayed violent behaviour in the past, and that he can sometimes react hastily or spontaneously, later regretting his actions.

Duwait decides to sit outside in the garden with Mitchell, in an open, neutral space where he knows Mitchell feels relaxed and comfortable. He keeps his manner casual and relaxed and watches Mitchell closely to observe his body language and listen to his tone of voice.

Duwait knows that these strategies have helped avoid a conflict situation with Mitchell previously, so he is confident that similar strategies will be effective again.





3.14 Defusing Conflict

Sometimes it is important to work within a conflict situation in a way which keeps everyone safe and avoids the situation getting worse.

In health and community services contexts, emotions sometimes run high and people can be experiencing significant levels of stress and anxiety. Many people also experience situations which challenge them mentally and psychologically, such as homelessness, poor physical health, poverty, lack of social connection and social isolation. All these factors can make it more likely that conflict will occur.

Communication skills are fundamental to defusing a potential conflict before it escalates.

Here are the steps to consider:

1. Identify the potential for conflict to escalate.
2. Monitor your own safety and that of others around you.
3. Consider a safe option for removing yourself and others from the situation if needed.
4. Discuss options that are based on a win-win approach where there are benefits for both parties.
5. Offer the option of coming back to the discussion later.
6. Use neutral vocabulary and a calm, relaxed but confident approach.
7. Keep the amount of words to a minimum.
8. Provide clear, direct information.
9. Focus on what you would like the person to do first, then next.
10. Work towards a safe, mutually beneficial resolution.

Defusing conflict does not mean you are simply ignoring a problem and hoping it goes away. Rather it means that you are setting the scene for the conflict to be resolved at a time and in a place where everyone can approach the situation calmly and there is a greater chance of success.

Consider the characteristics of the person with whom a conflict has occurred, so that you can take these into account when planning your response. Think about factors such as age, developmental stage, medication, mental and psychological health and triggers and stressors in the environment.

Remember that the approach you use with one person may not necessarily be appropriate with another.



Example

Jenna is having a discussion with Max, a young person who she knows has recently changed medication and has been

experiencing significant side effects from it.

Max appears determined to have an argument with Jenna and is unwilling to listen or take in any new information. He is rapidly becoming highly emotive and distressed, and his body language has become more aggressive and confrontational.

Jenna decides the best option is to move back from Max, so she is closer to the doorway. She gestures to other staff to remain out of the room, so Max does not feel crowded or controlled by others. She talks to him calmly and quietly and uses clear, direct speech.

She doesn't respond to his taunts or threats, and instead, keeps repeating her request to him to take some deep breaths, relax and become calm. She observes his body language gradually becoming more relaxed and his speech rate slowing. She recognises that the conflict has been defused and that she and Max will be able to return to the discussion at a time when he is feeling calm and ready to communicate with her.



Activity 3C

For this activity, work in a group of three. One person plays the role of a supervisor and the other two play the roles of two workers who are disagreeing over the duties that each should perform during a shift in an out of home residential care facility.

Usual duties include taking children to appointments, cleaning the residence, supporting cooking and shopping tasks, supervising homework and organising daily routines.

The two workers have previously attempted to resolve the conflict, but they have been unable to reach an agreement.

Now they are meeting with the supervisor acting as a mediator to help them work towards a common understanding and resolution.

Carry out the discussion and see if you can reach a common agreement about the tasks to be performed during the shift.

Competing Style

This is an approach where one party pushes ahead with their own goals with no concern for the other party's needs in the conflict.

Although this can seem counter-productive, it can be an appropriate strategy in situations where you need to quickly deal with the conflict in order to complete a time critical task or be able to move forwards.

For example, if a health care professional needed to provide emergency care to a patient and a bystander was disagreeing, it would be essential that a conflict is resolved quickly, and bystanders moved away from the location so professionals can do their work. This approach requires highly confident, assertive behaviour and clear, direct speech with specific instructions and limited words.

Accommodating Style

This is an approach where one party focuses on the needs of the other and allows the person to succeed in the conflict by conceding or giving in to their requests.

It can be thought of as a 'win-lose' approach, but it can also be empowering in some situations. It's important to be wary of it providing the other person with a false sense of power and control.

Collaborating Style

This is an approach based a win-win outcome, where both people in the conflict achieve success in some way.

Collaboration requires a high level of communication and the ability to read and interpret body language effectively. It revolves around finding a common goal or looking for options which are mutually acceptable to both parties.

Clear thinking, appropriate timing for the discussion and the ability to set and understand goals and outcomes are required for this approach to succeed.

Avoiding Style

This approach to conflict resolution is where no measures are taken to resolve the conflict, instead the conflict is avoided and each party may pretend as if the conflict doesn't exist. This is often not recommended as it has low concern for the goal of either party and low concern for the relationship with the other person.

3.15 Resolving Conflict

There are times when you need to work with the conflict situation and plan a way forward. There are a number of Conflict Resolution Approaches you can use depending on the situation.





Activity 3D

Imagine you are working in a health setting, with families and young people. Sometimes situations can become complex and challenging and require careful communication to resolve conflicts.

Work with a partner to practise resolving a conflict in a health care setting, using each of the following:

- Competition
- Accommodation
- Collaboration

Discuss the different approaches and what you noticed as you used each one.

Questions:

1. Which seemed the easiest to use?

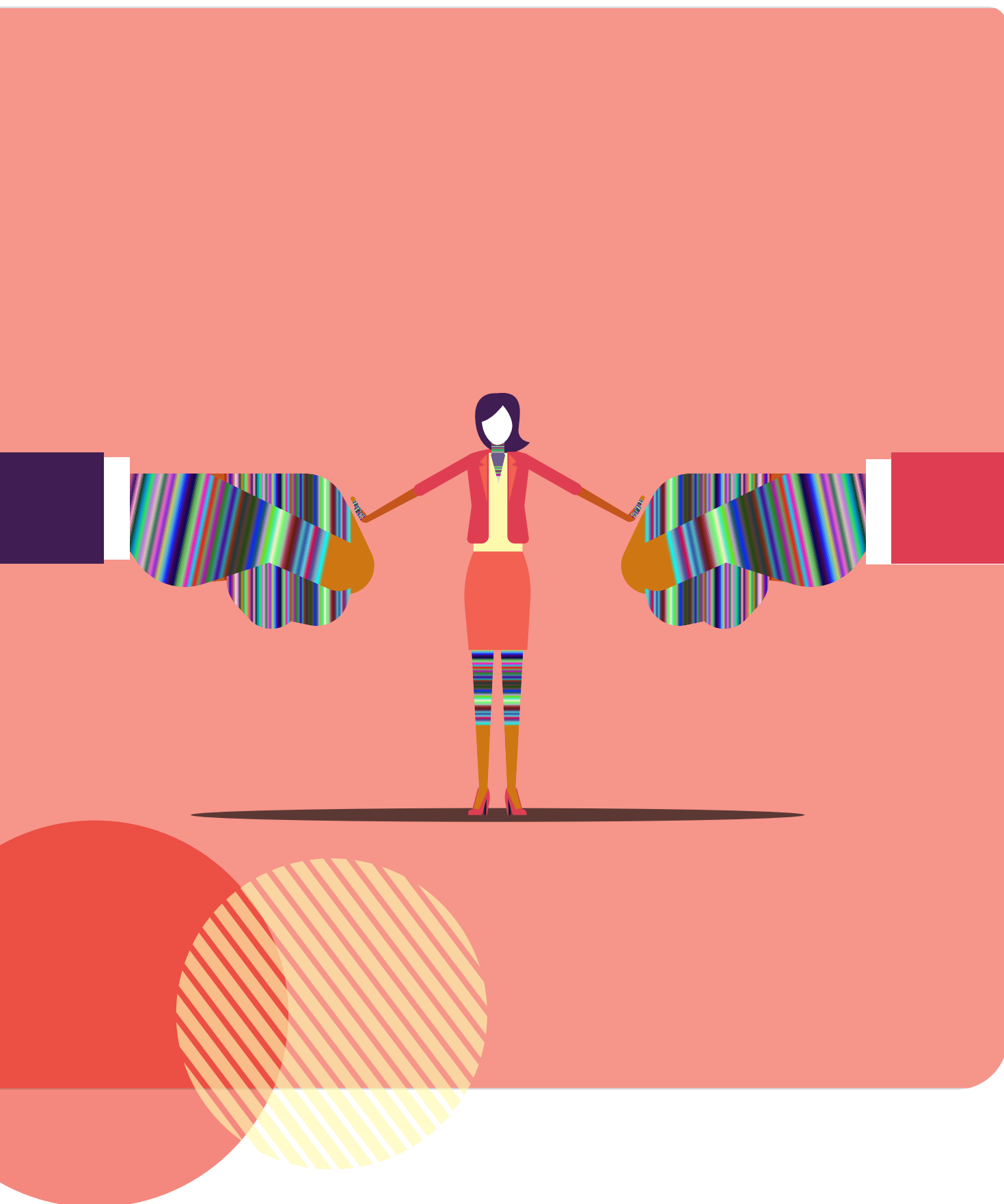
2. Which was the hardest?

3. Can you describe a situation where each strategy might be appropriate?



Key Points

- You may need to recognise, plan for and respond to challenging communication situations at work.
- Mandatory reporting and duty of care are important concepts within community services and health care workplaces.
- It is important to recognise and respond to the early signs of a situation becoming more complex and challenging.
- Environmental and person specific factors can influence communication constraints.
- You can use communication skills to defuse or resolve conflict.
- Competition, accommodation and collaboration are all approaches to conflict resolution.



Chapter 3

Review Questions



Use the following questions to check your knowledge.

Q1. What is meant by a behaviour of concern?

Q2. Everyone's behaviours of concern are the same.

☐ True ☐ False

Q3. What is meant by a trigger and how do they relate to a behaviour of concern?

Q4. What are four indicators of potential neglect?

Q5. What are four indicators of potential emotional abuse?

Q6. Summarise the four approaches to conflict resolution and the key features of each.

Chapter 4

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

This chapter discusses the legal and ethical responsibilities you will have in your role as a health and community services worker. This includes protecting the rights of your clients and colleagues as well as protecting your own boundaries whilst at work. We will also explore what to do if there is unresolved conflict at work and how to manage adverse events – situations where something goes wrong with a client.

By the end of this chapter, you will understand:

- ✓ your legal and ethical responsibilities including relevant legislation that applies to your role
- ✓ what ethical decision-making means and ethical situations you may be faced with in your role
- ✓ what to do if something goes wrong with a client
- ✓ how to make links across the sector and make referrals with other professionals
- ✓ what to do if there is unresolved conflict at work.



4.1 Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

You should always work in a way which complies with your legal and ethical responsibilities in health and community services. These relate to many different aspects of your daily practice.

Some of these, such as mandatory reporting and child protection, have been discussed in previous chapters.

There are many acts and sets of regulation which can apply to community services and health care work. Here are some of the laws which can apply to your work:

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

This act makes it illegal to discriminate against people based on their race, cultural background or ethnicity.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

This act makes it illegal to discriminate against people based on their disability or perceived disability, or against the people providing care and support to them.

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

This act aims to promote equal access and participation of all people across society and to ensure rights are protected and maintained.

Health Records Act 2001

This act protects the rights of people who provide health information and that service providers store, protect, transfer and dispose of health care information appropriately and that they only use health information for its intended purpose.

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

This act promotes the safety and wellbeing of children through policy, planning and systemic development and promotes compliance with Child Safe Standards.

4.2 Ethical Requirements

As well as legal requirements, your work in community services and health care will also involve ethical requirements and decision making. Ethical decision-making means considering:

- Your own views and values.
- The views and values of your organisation.
- The legal requirements.
- The model of support under which you are working.
- The rights of the people with whom you are working.
- Whether you have a conflict of interest in the situation.



Watch

Watch this YouTube video titled What is Ethics by The Ethics Centre



<https://scnv.io/DWwb>

You will need to think and plan carefully to help you determine the best options in each situation.

Although it may seem that each situation will have a single correct response, work that involves people and communities is often more complex than that. There may be times when you find yourself managing a situation where there is no clear-cut answer that is perfect for everyone involved. You will need to work, plan and collaborate to find the best option.



Sources of Information About Ethical Decision Making

There are many sources of information which can guide you in making ethical decisions.

These may be within your own organisation or external to it. You could contact your supervisor, a more experienced worker, a mentor or colleague within your own organisation.

You could also network with a peer support worker or counterpart who holds a similar role in another area of your workplace or seek advice from a professional organisation such as the Australian Community Workers Association.

You can find out more about this association on their website:

<https://scnv.io/Gb79>



Example

Reika is working as a family support worker. She often comes across situations where there is no clear correct way to respond.

She uses a rights model and focuses on capacity building and empowerment with her clients. She decides to join the Australian Community Workers Association so she can access some of their professional development activities and workshops.

Reika decides that continuing to learn and build her own skills as well as networking with other professionals in similar roles will help her manage challenging situations more easily.



Activity 4A

1. Locate a professional organisation which you could join.
2. Find their professional development page on their website and record the details of five possible activities you could do to build your skills and knowledge in the future.

Responding to Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

Some of the legal and ethical responsibilities which apply to your work are shown in the table below:

Area of responsibility	What you should do
Privacy, confidentiality	Only collect health and personal information that is needed to provide support and services to your client. Store and maintain records in a secure location.
Disclosure by children and adults	Provide information to children and adults about how you are obliged to respond to disclosures which they may make to you, based on your knowledge of the legal requirements and your organisation's policies and procedures.
Discrimination	Treat all clients and other workers fairly, equally and with respect. Do not discriminate against others based on their gender, religion, racial background or ethnicity, age or disability. Be aware of your own unconscious bias and values that can influence your responses.
Duty of care	Provide an appropriate level of care based on the situation, your relationship with the person, the activity or task, and whether you owe the person a duty of care.
Mandatory reporting	Comply with any mandatory reporting requirements which apply in your location and based on the work role that you hold.
Translation	Provide information in a way which is accessible and relevant for all, including providing translation of written documents into an appropriate community language.
Child protection	Comply with child protection legislation requirements which are relevant for your state or territory, based on the principle of acting in the best interests of the child.
Informed consent	Provide information to clients so they can make a reasonable decision in a situation to the best of their ability, based on the information you give them.
Work-role boundaries	Refer to your position description and task requirements to make sure you work within the limits of your job role, and that you do not take on responsibilities which lie outside the scope of your skills and knowledge.



Note

In a community services or health workplace, you will usually always have a supervisor who is closely involved in directing, supporting and guiding your daily work activities.

This person is key to your success in the workplace, and they will encourage you to seek out their advice and direction at times when you are unsure of how to respond. You should never feel concerned about referring to your supervisor for guidance; this is an important part of their own role in the workplace.

You may need to consider the legal and ethical requirements which apply to referring to your supervisor, and to think about the issues which are useful to discuss with them, such as conflict which cannot be resolved or breaches of procedure.

You can also refer to your supervisor for support with situations where the rights and responsibilities of clients, other workers and the organisation are affected.

4.3 Making Links Across the Sector

Legal and ethical requirements can be challenging and can sometimes prompt a response in a situation where the solution is not clear cut.

In these situations, it may be important to refer to, and link with, other parts of the community services and health care sector. You may need to access specialist information and guidance to help you resolve a legal or ethical challenge, or to find out how an aspect of the law applies to a client's situation.

Over time, you will establish links with others who work in different areas of the sector, so that you are easily able to access their expertise when it is required.

Discussing Difficulties

Many new workers find it is useful to set aside time each week to debrief with their supervisor. This can be helpful in discussing problems which have arisen and talking about possible strategies that could be effective.

Sometimes using notes or a reflection journal where you record ideas about how you have responded to a situation can be helpful when you debrief with your supervisor.

If you use this approach, be sure to avoid recording any identifying details such as names, ages or case information as this could compromise your duty of care responsibilities and the need to comply with confidentiality and privacy requirements.



Example

Kellie works with young parents who are isolated and vulnerable as they begin their parenting journey.

She receives referrals from workers

in various parts of the community services sector about situations where there is a possible risk to the health and wellbeing of a child or young person, but where there is no clear mandatory reporting or child protection issue which must be reported to the relevant authorities.

Her role is to provide support, guidance and links to community services so that young people can learn about their parenting role in a supported and managed way.

The aim of her service is to avoid young people and their new families experiencing further social isolation and to reduce the incidence of abuse and harm which occurs.



4.4 Referring to Appropriate People

From time to time you may experience situations where procedures in the workplace are not followed correctly. You may need to take action to respond by informing the appropriate people in your workplace.

Standard Procedures

Most workplaces have standard procedures which set out how tasks should be carried out.

Procedures are usually written documents which can be accessed in print or via an intranet.

You should carefully read and understand the procedures which apply to your own work role and responsibilities.

Breaches of Standard Procedure

Sometimes procedures are not followed in a workplace. This can happen for a range of reasons. It may be because workers:

- Do not understand the procedure
- Don't think it is important
- Have found a quicker or easier way to do something
- Have done most parts and will do the rest later.

Breaches of procedure can reflect a procedure which needs to be altered because it no longer meets the needs of the workers who carry out the tasks it refers to.

However, in some situations a breach of procedure can have significant consequences. If you notice that a procedure has been breached, you need to respond appropriately and quickly.

Do not assume that procedures do not need to be followed just because someone does not think they are important. Procedures can be changed using formal processes as part of the continuous improvement system of the workplace. While a procedure is current, it must be followed.

If you observe any breach of a procedure, it is important to act and refer the situation. Usually you will refer this to your supervisor, but there may be other people who need to be informed.



Example

For example, a breach of infection control procedures may need to be referred to the infection control manager or a clinical practitioner, while a breach of contact arrangements for a child who has restricted and supervised access to a parent may need to be referred to the police.





4.5 Adverse Events

Adverse events are situations where there is an outcome that was not desired or planned for, often involving a client.

Examples of adverse events include:

- An illness or health condition which deteriorates.
- A client who is harmed or injured.
- A conflict situation which escalates.
- A medication error which occurs.
- A worker who is injured or becomes sick as a result of their work.

Referring Adverse Events

Any adverse events need careful management. You should follow the steps which have been put in place at your workplace.

This may require both immediate, acute care responses as well as longer term responses. You will need to assess each situation and then plan how to respond following organisational policies and procedures.

In many cases you will need to refer to others for support and responses to an adverse event.



Example

You could seek medical intervention if there is an injury or illness, emergency services if there is a medical or other emergency or a mental health professional if there is a mental health emergency.

4.6 Rights and Responsibilities

Workers, employers and clients all hold rights and responsibilities in a workplace.

You need to be aware of your own rights and responsibilities as well as those of other people. For example, clients have the right to be informed about options for care and support which are available to them, whilst workers have the right to work without threats of harm or violence and organisations have the right to expect that workers carry out the duties required of them during their regular hours of work.

Some rights and responsibilities are referred to in legislation, whilst others may be an intrinsic part of the expectations of the sector and the organisation.

Rights and responsibilities can relate to:

- Work health and safety.
- Functions of a work role.
- Services and care provided.
- Infection control and management.
- Responses to a critical incident.
- Professional development and ongoing learning.

Rights and responsibilities should be communicated and shared openly and clearly so everyone is aware of what is required of them.



Strategies for Rights and Responsibilities

Some strategies for sharing information about rights and responsibilities include:

- Holding regular meetings within teams and groups.
- Writing clear policies and procedures.
- Providing clients with service guidelines and expectations.
- Displaying posters and visual information about areas of work where rights and responsibilities apply.
- Embedding standards which relate to specific areas of work in the sector in the policies and procedures of your organisation.



Example

The Practice Standards for Child and Youth Protection in the Australian Capital Territory set out the expectations for how rights are upheld, and responsibilities achieved for children and young people.

You can learn more about these standards by accessing the PDF download document at the link below:

<https://scnv.io/1NA2>



Activity 4B

1. In your workbook, create a table with three columns—one each for workers, clients and the organisation.

2. Under each column, list at least three rights and three responsibilities which might apply to workers, clients and organisations.

3. Share your ideas with a classmate and compare what you have both written.



4.7 Unresolved Conflict

Sometimes situations of conflict may occur at work. Although you should endeavour to resolve the conflict using the strategies discussed earlier, this may not always be possible within the bounds of your work role and responsibilities. You may need to seek assistance to resolve a conflict if it continues, escalates or cannot be resolved easily. Here are some examples:

- A case meeting about a client deteriorates into an argument between two professionals who hold very different views about the best practice approach
- A conflict about duties to be performed during a shift cannot be resolved between two workers
- A client expects that a worker will arrive at their home for a visit at 7:00 a.m., even though the worker's usual hours of work are from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- One worker who wants to meet to discuss a conflict, and another worker who refuses to participate in the discussion

Often the best approach for resolving conflict is a collaborative one, based on a shared agreement of the need to resolve the conflict and an affirmation of the intent to work positively towards a resolution.

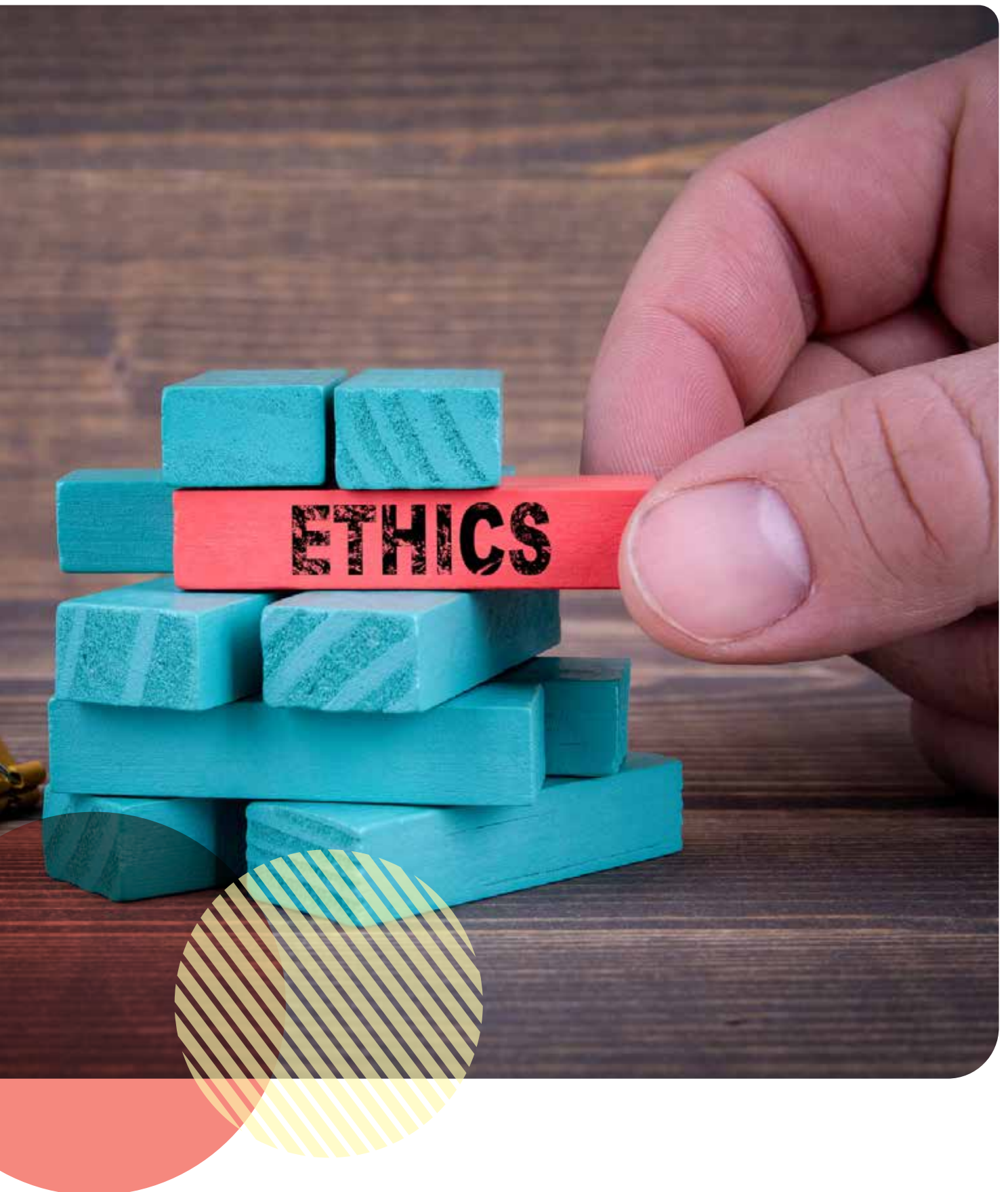
If a conflict situation cannot be resolved, you should refer the situation to your supervisor. You can do this in several ways, depending on the usual communication channels in your workplace. You might send an email, make a phone call or speak to the supervisor directly.

The supervisor may be able to become involved in resolving the conflict by providing suggestions, directions or working as a mediator to facilitate the discussion.



Key Points

- Legislation and ethical principles are used to guide tasks and activities within the organisation.
- Referrals can be made across the sector as well as within the organisation to provide for better outcomes for clients.
- Issues, unresolved conflicts and breaches of procedure should be referred to the supervisor.
- Rights and responsibilities should be maintained and respected for workers, clients and the organisation.



Chapter 4

Review Questions



Use the following questions to check your knowledge.

Q1. What is the difference between a legal requirement and an ethical requirement?

Q2. What is meant by an adverse event?

Q3. Why would it be important to resolve any conflict in the workplace as and when it arises?

Chapter 5

Workplace Documentation

Workplace documentation is vital to ensure accurate recording keeping, sharing of information, maintenance of funding data requirements and adherence to sector wide standards and expectations. Workplace documentation must be completed regularly, in line with the policies and procedures of your organisation.

By the end of this chapter, you will understand:

- ✓ workplace documents you may need to complete and why they're important
- ✓ how to read documents related to your own role
- ✓ how to complete documents to organisational standards
- ✓ what you need to consider in relation to your organisation's brand and digital media
- ✓ how and when to document events
- ✓ common conventions for recording information
- ✓ how to record a summary of information
- ✓ meeting funding body record keeping requirements.



5.1 Recordkeeping

Each workplace will have its own set of requirements around the documentation it requires its staff to complete. However keeping accurate records will be a key part of your role. You must be sure you understand the organisation's policies and procedures around record keeping that relate to your role and that you follow them.

Many records are kept and maintained by organisations to meet legislative requirements.

Your organisation will have specific policies and procedures which guide the way you must complete workplace documents and records.

This can apply to areas of work such as:

- Completing your timesheet and recording hours of work.
- Making case notes after an interaction with a client.
- Making appointments and bookings.

- Reporting incidents and issues.
- Documenting referrals for services.
- Maintaining data about hours of service, client numbers, outcomes and achievements.
- Team meeting minutes and agendas.

You should follow the policies and procedures which explain why you should complete documentation in a specific way. You may use online or intranet-based record keeping and documentation for tasks or print based.

You should check that you comply with the specific requirements of each procedure, such as:

- Writing in blue or black pen.
- Completing all sections of the document.
- Checking you have signed and dated the document if needed.
- Writing in legible handwriting.
- Using clear, precise language.



Example

Matilda needs to fill in some notes from an interview with a client. She reads the procedure for case notes which tell her she must:

- Sign and date the notes in the space provided.
- Write using handwriting in blue or black pen, or typed notes.
- Inform the client that the notes will be stored securely, and that the client can access the notes on request.
- Inform the client that she will be taking notes during the interview.
- Use clear, specific note taking and avoid any subjective or biased opinions which are not evidence based.

Here are Matilda's notes for the interview:

Interview date: 14/3/2020

Time: 2-3pm

Location: Family interview room

Client name: Zaheb Grossinger

Notes:

Zaheb attended the interview voluntarily to seek support with his drug use. He was given information about the services available to him, including residential and outreach support.

We discussed his current drug use, and he said he uses most days of the week and that his use has increased significantly during recent weeks. He has experienced some periods where he states he seems to have 'lost days' and has limited memory of events from the previous week.

We set a short-term management goal for the next few days and agreed to meet again on 17/3/20 to further consider options for treatment and management of his drug use.

Zaheb indicated he was satisfied with this approach and that he intended to return on the 17/3/20 as he recognised that his need for support is significant at this time.

Case worker: Matilda Evans

Signed: Matilda Evans

Date of record: 14/3/20



Activity 5A

Imagine you are a case worker who has the task of writing notes following an interview on 14 June with a young person, Ben Crispin, who is socially isolated and has recently moved out of home.

He has left school, is not attending further education and does not have a job. His funds are limited, and he has not accessed income support payments.

He has spent the past week on a friend's couch, but the friend's mother has now asked him to leave.

Ben has come to see you to help find new accommodation and to plan his finances.

Questions:

1. Highlight the critical information in the case information.

2. Type a set of case notes using this information.

3. Sign and date your case notes.



Example

Trudi oversees making client appointments for the case workers at her service. She needs to make sure everyone can read and follow

the appointments and that there are enough rooms available for sessions to be booked, without having any room clashes.

Here is her booking sheet for today:

Room	Time	Case worker name
Room 4A	9-11.30am	Jenny Matthews
Room 5	9-10am	Matilda Evans
Room 5	11.15am-1.45pm	Fernando de Capril
Room 5	1-4pm	Abdhul Mharaishkah
Room 7	9-11.30am	Doug de Havenin
Room 7	11am-1.30pm	Patrick Spitts
Room 7	1-4pm	Cindi Watkins
Room 12	2.30-3.30pm	Ben Smyth

Trudi looks at her booking sheet carefully and realises she has some rooms which have been double booked. She decides to move Cindi Watkins into Room 4A instead of Room 7, and she moves Patrick Spitts into Room 12.

She sends an email to each worker to confirm the room changes for the day:

To: Patrick Spitts, Cindi Watkins

Dear Patrick and Cindi,

Please note the following room changes for your client meetings today:

Patrick will move into Room 12 for his 11am-1.30pm meeting.

Cindi will move into Room 4A for her 1-4pm meeting.

Please let me know if you have any concerns or require anything to be organised prior to your meetings.

Kind regards

Trudi

5.2 Role-Related Documents

When you begin in a community services or health workplace, you will mainly focus your attention on documents and information which relate specifically to your own job.

Although there are likely to be other documents within your workplace, it makes sense to think first about the documents which are most relevant to you.

These could include:

- Case notes for your own clients.
- Team meeting agendas and minutes.
- Emails from your supervisor and co-workers.
- Your position description.
- Policies and procedures which relate to your job.

Careful Reading

Take your time when you are reading workplace documents.

It is a mistake to skim quickly over a document because you may miss important details such as names, dates, times and places. Read carefully and think about whether you should take notes or make a summary of what you have read.

It might be useful to make simple notes about a document that can help you remember the important details.



Example

Elizavetta reads an email from her supervisor about a team meeting:

To: Elizavetta Smolenskaya

From: Max Stone

Subject: Team Meeting change

Dear Elizavetta,

We have decided to change the location for our next team meeting to Conference room 3B instead of the small meeting room.

The conference room is on the third floor of the main building. The meeting will begin promptly at 4.30pm.

Thank you,
Max Stone

Team Leader
Family support services





5.3 Asking Your Supervisor for Assistance

You should always ask your supervisor for assistance if there is information in a document you do not understand.

Some workplace documents are complex and detailed or contain critical instructions which must be followed precisely. It is better to ask your supervisor to explain information you do not understand than to pretend or simply ignore a document completely.



Example

Pauline has been reading the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for a cleaning chemical she is about to use to clean the table in the meeting room. She can understand some of the information, but she is not sure what personal and protective equipment she should use.

She decides to ignore the MSDS because she thinks she will only be using the cleaning product for a short time, so there is unlikely to be any harm. Unfortunately, the information Pauline has ignored contained guidance about using the product in a well-ventilated area only, and that users should wear a mask and eye protection.

Pauline keeps the doors and windows closed while she cleans, and later finds she is experiencing a severe headache and nausea. She tells the First Aider, who fills out an incident report form and sends her to see her doctor straight away.

Pauline realises she should have asked her supervisor to clarify the information in the MSDS document before she began cleaning the room.



5.4 Completing Documents to Organisational Standards

Your organisation will have an expected standard for written and electronic documents. These are often included in the policies and procedures of your workplace, but you can also ask your supervisor for guidance if needed.

The standards of your organisation may also be implied, rather than being directly stated in policies and procedures. Look at the work completed by others in the organisation who hold similar roles to your own. Compare their standard of work with the policies and procedures which you know apply to the tasks and see what standard is expected.



Standards for Electronic Documents

Some standards will relate to electronic documents. When we talk about standards, we mean the set of expectations that your organisation expects. Standards are useful for ensuring that legislation, or the law, and your organisation's requirements are maintained and that documents are user friendly and accessible.

Many people prefer to read documents which are well laid out, clear and easy to read. Some people find documents that include images with captions and a clean simple font easier to read.

Standards for electronic documents might include:

- Using a certain font and size.
- Avoiding coloured backgrounds.
- Limiting the amount of movement and animation on a page.
- Making navigation features obvious and intuitive.
- Including options for text to speech and Plain English versions.
- Matching the document features to the audience.

The standards which are required for electronic documents will vary depending on the intended audience and the type of work undertaken by your organisation.

For example, if you provide services to many people who are elderly, you may need to provide documents which have a larger font, more traditional styling and limited animation. If you provide services to a younger age group, you may need to increase the use of video and audio and add more colour and movement to increase the visual appeal and engagement of the document.



Standards for Written Documents

Just like electronic documents, it is important to think about the needs of the audience when preparing a written document. Your organisation is likely to have requirements for the preparation of written documents, and you should check the policies and procedures which will guide you.

Standards and requirements could include:

- Version control information.
- Whether the document is available to anyone in the workplace or has a limited purpose.
- Whether the document can be printed and used.
- Whether there is an electronic version available.
- What the intended purpose of the document is.
- Including a footer, logo and slogan or other branding features.

Some documents are only for use within the organisation whilst others are designed for external use and can be read by anyone in the general public.

It is important to check how a document is allowed to be used as some information should not be shared with the general public due to its confidential nature.



Version Control

Workplace documents such as reports, policies, procedures and project plans include a version number or code. This

tells the reader which version of a document they are reading.

Version control is useful if a document is drafted and edited several times, or if it is written by more than one person over a period of time.

5.5 Brand Features

Many organisations have a brand or identity that they maintain through their documents. This helps the general public to recognise information which has been sourced from the organisation and builds recognition of the work of the organisation more generally.

Brand features can relate to:

- Logo
- Slogan or key phrase
- Colours
- Font size
- Font style
- Headers and footers

Brand features are usually common across written and electronic documents. Many workplaces will use a template system for letters, flyers and publicity documents to help workers maintain the branding which is required by the organisation.



Activity 5B

1. Go online and research three community services or health care organisations.
2. Make notes about the brand features you notice on their website and written or electronic documents.
3. Prepare a summary and write a paragraph explaining the strengths, weaknesses and interesting features you notice for each one.

5.6 Digital Media

Most workplaces are aware of the challenges posed by digital and social media for workers, clients and the organisation.

Even though digital media is extremely useful for promoting a business, information sharing and communication, it also presents challenges. These can range from lack of appropriateness of content through to readability issues, cultural relevance and use of images of children.

The digital media landscape is a rapidly evolving one, and it is important to think, read and plan carefully when using or creating any digital content.

Digital Media Use

Some workers are very familiar with the digital world and can quickly and easily create highly visual, engaging content that has strong appeal for an audience.

They may be frequent users of social media or have developed excellent digital skills at school or through further training. This familiarity can lead to a lack of caution when creating content. This causes difficulty recognising the difference between the rules which govern private use of social and digital media and the rules which apply in the workplace.

It is important to be aware that just because you are familiar with digital content and use it frequently in your personal life, does not mean you should be as casual about how it is used when using it on behalf of your organisation.

Remember that your workplace is very different to your personal life, and there should be clear and firm boundaries which are maintained between the two.



What Not to do

It can be tempting to share posts, ideas and photos just the way you do with your own social media in your personal life. But it is important to remember that there are some things you must not do with electronic and social media at work:



- Post personal, rude, discriminatory or distressing comments.
- Use images of a person without their permission.
- Breach privacy or confidentiality rules.
- Breach organisational guidelines.
- Make derogatory comments.

What to do

There are many things you can and should do in the digital world, and you may find that your skills at using digital media can be a great asset to your workplace.

Some things which are useful that you can do include:



- Sharing images of activities or places with permission from anyone who can be identified.
- Sharing general information about programs, services and activities.
- Maintaining a social media page with up to date information.
- Linking with other professionals in related services or areas.
- Developing a strong, positive network.
- Posting news stories, articles and tips that can be informative and helpful.

Whenever you use digital media, make sure you check the policies and procedures of your organisation before you click 'post' to ensure you are adhering to organisational standards, brand identity and appropriate confidentiality policies.

Example



Roger works for a youth justice organisation. He wants to promote the positive achievements of a young person who has recently completed a training program at a local TAFE.

Roger checks the policy and procedure for his organisation and finds that he is able to promote the program's activities through the social media page. He follows the guidelines in the procedure which set out the steps:

1. Contact the supervisor for permission and to discuss the story.
2. Contact the young person and their parent/guardian.
3. Have the young person and their parent/guardian fill out and sign a permission form.
4. Write a draft of the story.
5. Show the draft to the young person, their parent/guardian and the supervisor.
6. Have the draft approved by all parties before publishing it online.

Roger completes the steps and then publishes the article. It is very popular and, best of all, the young person is very excited to read about themselves in the post.



5.7 Documenting Events

Many tasks in community services and health care require documentation.

You often need to record actions, outcomes, goals and progress information. This information may be used by yourself as a way of staying up to date with progress and actions in relation to a client over time. It may be used by others who receive a referral for a client, or who access the information you have recorded to help them provide a service.

When you document events, you should complete the information in a required format. This format is common to many workplaces, although your own organisation may also have rules that you should follow.

5.8 Conventions for Recording Information

Here are some of the conventions for completing documentation for case notes, client records, referrals and individual plans and assessments:

Convention	What to do
Name	Include your own name so people know who has made the document or note.
Date	Include the complete date so it is easy to check when a record has been made and records can be maintained in a sequential order.
Signature	Some documents or notes require a signature, which should be made in blue or black pen.
Past tense	Documents such as case notes are often written in the past tense.
Objective	Keep your writing objective rather than including your own opinions and values.
Details	Include details relevant to the situation and the task or work you are doing and leave out non-relevant details.
Accuracy	Check your work for accuracy, so that you are confident the details are correct, and you have not included anything which is incorrect.
Courtesy copies and referrals	Check if the document needs to be copied and sent to another worker or organisation as a courtesy, or if you should attach a referral form or letter.

5.9 Making Summaries

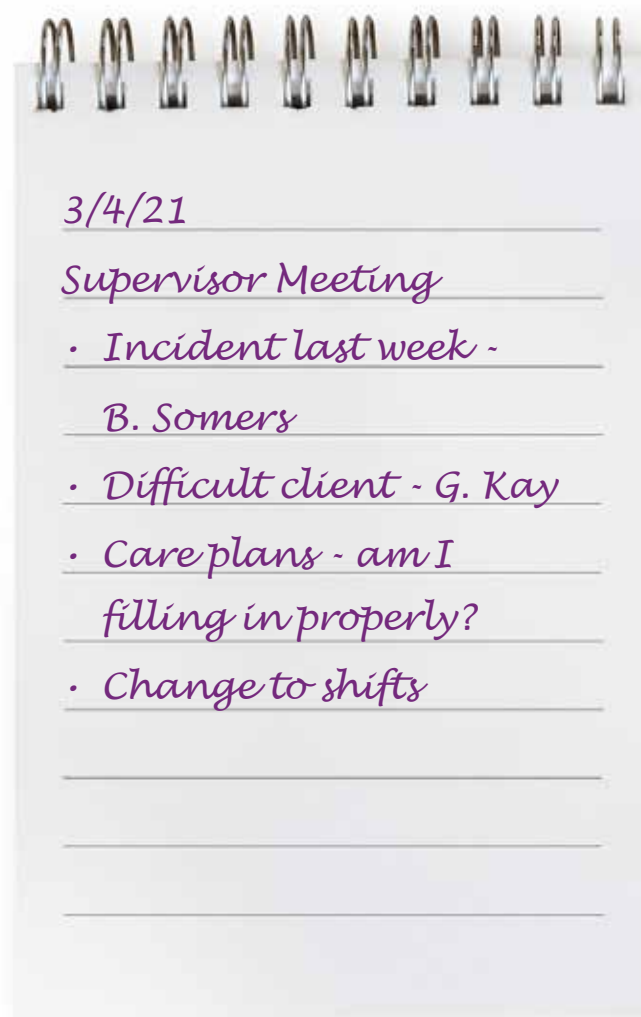
Summaries are written documents and are often less formal and structured than documents which require a specific convention to be followed.

They provide a brief outline or description of a situation, activity or task. Summaries only include the main points, rather than all the information.

You can use a written summary in situations where:

- You do not need to record all the details.
- You require a brief reminder or prompt about a situation or task.
- You will find a small amount of information helpful.

Summaries can be used in situations such as helping you prepare for a meeting or case conference, providing a brief outline of an incident or near miss, and reminding you of points you need to discuss with a supervisor or colleague.





5.10 Funding Body Requirements

Some programs are funded by state or federal governments through programs or grants.

If you are involved in working on a program which is funded by government, you may need to complete documentation in relation to the program.

You will need to follow the requirements set out by the funding body, and make sure you comply with the timelines for reporting that they set.

Reporting may include:

- Writing a summary of outcomes for the period the funding is provided.
- Confirming that your program has met the objectives.
- Stating how much money has been spent during a time period.
- Giving detailed information about achievements.
- Providing details of staffing, hours and resources used.

You may need to provide written information to meet funding body requirements or submit information online through a secure portal or website.



Key Points

- Follow organisational requirements when completing documents at work.
- Seek advice and guidance for documents and requirements in situations where you are unsure.
- Read and understand documents related to your position and work role.
- Use clear, accurate and objective language.
- Documents may include summaries and reports for funding bodies.

Chapter 5

Review Questions



Use the following questions to check your knowledge.

Q1. What is a MSDS and what information might you find on one?

Q2. Why is version control on a document important?

Q3. Why is it important that records are kept in a community and health service organisation?

Q4. Write down some examples of when you might use a summary of information rather than detailed notes.

Chapter 6

Continuous Improvement

Most workplaces use a continuous improvement cycle to help them develop their services and systems of work throughout the year. Continuous improvement is a formal cycle of tasks and documentation, but it is supported by contributions from workers at all levels in many ways. In this chapter, we discuss continuous improvement and the important role each individual person plays in contributing to improvement in an organisation.

By the end of this chapter, you will understand:

- ✓ how you can contribute to work practice improvements
- ✓ types of contributions you might make and how to suggest them
- ✓ how organisations use suggestions to make improvements to practices and procedures
- ✓ how modelling plays a role in an organisation that values continuous improvement
- ✓ how to provide, seek and respond to feedback
- ✓ the importance of continually building on your skills in your career.



6.1 How to Contribute to Work Practice Improvements

Work practices are generally not fixed, static arrangements. Rather, they grow and change over time and as the needs and expectations of your clients and the sector as a whole change.

Many workplaces participate in formal continuous improvement processes and use these processes to inform and drive positive change across the organisation.

6.2 Individual Contributions

You may be asked to contribute to continuous improvement as part of your work activities. This could include:

- Participating in continuous improvement meetings.
- Making suggestions about changes to work practices.
- Collecting feedback from clients and others.
- Implementing changes in your own work practices.

Being a part of a continuous improvement process can be extremely satisfying. It is a great way of contributing to your organisation as well as making sure you are striving to achieve best practice outcomes in the work you do.

Sharing Your Ideas

You may feel as though you do not have a great deal to contribute to continuous improvement cycles when you are first starting out in a workplace. However, this can often be the time when your ideas and feedback can be the most valuable.

As a new worker, you are quite likely to be experiencing many things for the first time. You have a fresh, new pair of eyes and ears and this means you are more likely to notice the little things that don't work as well as perhaps they should.

Feeding this information into the cycle of ongoing improvement in the workplace is a wonderful contribution that you can make for your organisation, as well as to future new workers.



There are many ways you can share your ideas, depending on how confident you feel at communicating with others.

Here are some suggestions you could try:

- Filling out a feedback form and submitting it.
- Making suggestions at a team meeting as part of a discussion.
- Join a continuous improvement committee.
- Make a time to speak one to one with your supervisor.
- Write an article for a staff newsletter.
- Write an email to send to your supervisor.
- Talk to a more experienced colleague.

You should not feel as though your ideas will be dismissed or that they have no value. Remember that the ideas of everyone in a workplace should be valued and considered and that you have an important role to play in helping your organisation grow and develop over time.



Activity 6A

1. Think about an organisation you have experienced—as a work experience student, a customer or observer.
2. Imagine you are working in that organisation and you have been asked to share your suggestions for improvement in just one key area.
3. You decide to write a brief article about your ideas and submit the article to a supervisor.
4. Write the article with your suggestions for improvement and write the email you would use to send it to your supervisor.

6.3 Improving Work Practices and Procedures

Work practices can often be improved simply by making little changes, or by noticing the things that are not working well and fixing them.

Pro-active organisations encourage an approach where people are willing to share and contribute to positive change. This does not mean simply ignoring processes and systems which have been established and deciding to do things your own way. Rather, it means being willing to participate in discussions, planning events and tasks that help drive the organisation and your work team forwards.

Goals for Improvement

Many work teams set goals for themselves about how they are going to improve and develop over time. These goals may contribute to the broader picture of the organisation, either as a way of meeting organisational goals and objectives, or as a part of a continuous improvement process.

Goals are written statements which explain what is being aimed for in the future. They set out what success will look like, and how you will know when you have achieved the goal.

The best goals are ones which can be easily measured, so that it is possible to recognise when the goal has been reached.

Promoting Changes

You can be an active participant in promoting changes based on goals and outcomes for your work team.

Promotion can be a formal or informal process, where you take on a leadership role to encourage and direct others to make a positive change. This may seem a little daunting if you are in the early stages of your career, but you will soon become more comfortable at helping to drive positive changes and help your organisation achieve its goals.

You can promote changes to procedures and systems of work by:

- Talking to others about changes that you think should occur.
- Being a positive, active listener and communicator.
- Taking on and responding positively to feedback from others.
- Being willing to provide clear, constructive feedback to others.
- Participating in formal and informal opportunities to promote change.



Example

Trishna has noticed that it takes a long time for a client to move from the intake system to the case workers who provide direct support.

Several times, clients have told her by the time they get to speak to a case worker, their need for support has changed completely. The problem seems to be worse on a Friday, leading to a backlog of work over the weekend and into the following week.

When Trishna watches closely, she sees that the intake worker on a Friday appears to have a higher number of files to manage than any other day of the week. Trishna thinks that if the intake worker on a Friday has some additional support, the files will not become backlogged and clients will be assigned to case workers more efficiently.

She suggests this change to her supervisor during a regular discussion and is pleased when her supervisor asks her to run a team discussion on the topic during their next team meeting.

The change is agreed and the whole team find the new system of work is far more efficient once the intake worker on a Friday is given an additional worker to help assign files and process applications for three hours each morning.

6.4 Modelling Changes

As well as participating actively in discussions and continuous improvement activities, you can also play a role in modelling changes to systems of work.

Modelling is an approach where you 'show' rather than 'tell' someone about how to make a change. Modelling is an important part of working in teams and it is a very effective way of helping people learn new skills.

Modelling is particularly useful for complex tasks, significant changes to systems and ways of working, and for communicating a change to people who do not share a common spoken or written language.

Modelling involves several steps:

- Think about the change you want to show or teach.
- Decide on the most important features of the change.
- Invite the other person to participate and learn with you.
- Focus on showing the task rather than telling.



Activity 6B

1. Think of a task you can already do well, such as a sporting skill, a household task, a hobby or a trick or challenge such as juggling or balancing cards.
2. Without using words, teach another person how to complete the task.
3. Use gesture, non-verbal communication, pictures or charts to explain what to do.
4. Focus on modelling the task to the person rather than telling them directly.
5. When you have finished, swap and have the other person model a new task for you to learn.
6. Compare your ideas and observations about how you could apply modelling in a workplace situation.

6.5 Feedback

Feedback is a way of learning how to improve your skills, knowledge and performance at work. People use feedback frequently in a workplace to help the organisation achieve its goals and to facilitate ongoing and continuous improvement.

Types of Feedback

There are two types of feedback:

- Knowledge of performance
- Knowledge of results

Both types of feedback are useful, but in different ways. Knowledge of results simply tells you about the outcome of a task; the end point of your efforts and activities.

Knowledge of performance tells you about the process of getting to the end point; it is more about the efforts and activities you have undertaken along the way.

In a workplace, knowledge of performance is useful in helping you build your knowledge and skills in very specific ways. It helps you understand the detail in what you are doing each day, so that you can learn to grow and improve.

Knowledge of results is useful in providing you with a way of measuring and comparing your achievements against a set of goals so you can tell clearly that you have fulfilled what you set out to do.



Asking for Feedback

There are usually many people in a workplace who will be happy to provide you with feedback—all you must do is ask. You could say:

- Can you watch me doing this task and tell me what you notice?
- Do you mind listening as I conduct this interview, so I can work out what I can do to improve?
- I'm not sure what I'm doing wrong here—can you watch and listen and then give me some feedback?

Feedback should be given in a way which helps you learn and improve your skills. Asking for feedback should not mean that other people simply criticise what you do.

Feedback should tell you about what you are already doing well and what you could change so you become more effective as a worker.

If your work involves clients and you would like to receive feedback, make sure you seek permission from the client first. Some clients may not be comfortable with another person being present.

Responding to Feedback

Once you have been given some feedback, it is important to respond to it.

You should think carefully about what you have learnt and think how you can apply it to your work.

Some people write feedback into a diary or journal so they can look back on it and reflect on what they have found out. This helps you to truly understand the feedback you have received and work out what you can do to improve your knowledge and skills over time.



Example

Magdella asks her supervisor to sit in on an interview she conducts with a new client. She seeks permission from the client first and makes sure they are comfortable with someone else being present.

The supervisor sits quietly towards the back of the room and watches and listens to Magdella.

Later, the supervisor and Magdella talk about the things she is already doing well, and what she can do to improve in her interviewing skills.



6.6 Building Skills

As a new worker in health and community services, it is important to realise that the learning does not stop as soon as you begin in an organisation. In fact, the learning cycle is only just getting started.

Many people consider that building new skills and gaining knowledge is something that happens throughout their whole lives and that we never really stop learning.

Building skills and gaining new knowledge can happen in many ways. You could:

- Attend a formal training activity such as a conference, workshop or learning session.
- Spend time with a mentor on a regular basis.
- Watch a more experienced colleague perform their work duties.
- Attend an industry information session or webinar about changes or updates.
- Network with other professionals who work in similar roles or fields to your own.

Make sure you keep a record of any professional development activities you attend, such as by writing them into your diary or making notes about what you have learnt.

Who to ask About Skill Development

Your supervisor or the Human Resources Manager at your organisation can advise you about the process of applying for professional development.

They may be able to offer training activities at your workplace, or suggest workshops, seminars or webinars which could be useful.

Understanding the Process

Once you have found the professional development activity you think will benefit you the most, it is time to put your plan into action.

Many organisations have a process for applying for professional development, and there may be a form you need to fill out. Sometimes the professional development will be embedded into a professional learning plan or performance evaluation plan that you complete each year with your supervisor.

This helps the professional development you complete to be closely aligned to your job performance and your regular tasks in the workplace.





Using Work Performance Goals

Writing goals can help you decide what you want to learn next, and help you work out what professional development activities could be useful. Make your goals as clear and specific as you can.

For example, you could write:

- I will learn to identify infection control breaches and problems and plan how to prevent them occurring in my daily work activities.
- I will be able to perform manual handling tasks safely using equipment.
- I will learn to use Auslan to communicate with clients who have a hearing loss.

Each of these performance goals tells you exactly what you are going to learn. This makes it easy to see when you have achieved your goal.

It also makes it easy to find a professional development activity that will support you in reaching it.



Activity 6C

1. Choose an area of work where you would like to develop your skills and knowledge in the future.
2. Write a goal about this work area and try to make it as clear and specific as you can.
3. Go online and find three activities you could attend or other sources of information you could access that would help you achieve your goal.
4. You could look for conferences, workshops, webinars or training sessions, or find journal articles or books that would help you.



Key Points

- Continuous improvement is an important process that helps everyone in a workplace contribute to the development of new skills, knowledge and ways of working.
- Modelling is a useful way of observing how to make changes at work.
- You can ask others for feedback and advice to help you improve your performance at work.
- Professional development activities help you build skills and knowledge.

Chapter 6

Review Questions



Use the following questions to check your knowledge.

Q1. Name two ways you can contribute to your organisation's continuous improvement.

Q2. What are three advantages of receiving feedback?

Q3. What are some ways you can ensure you get regular feedback at work?



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