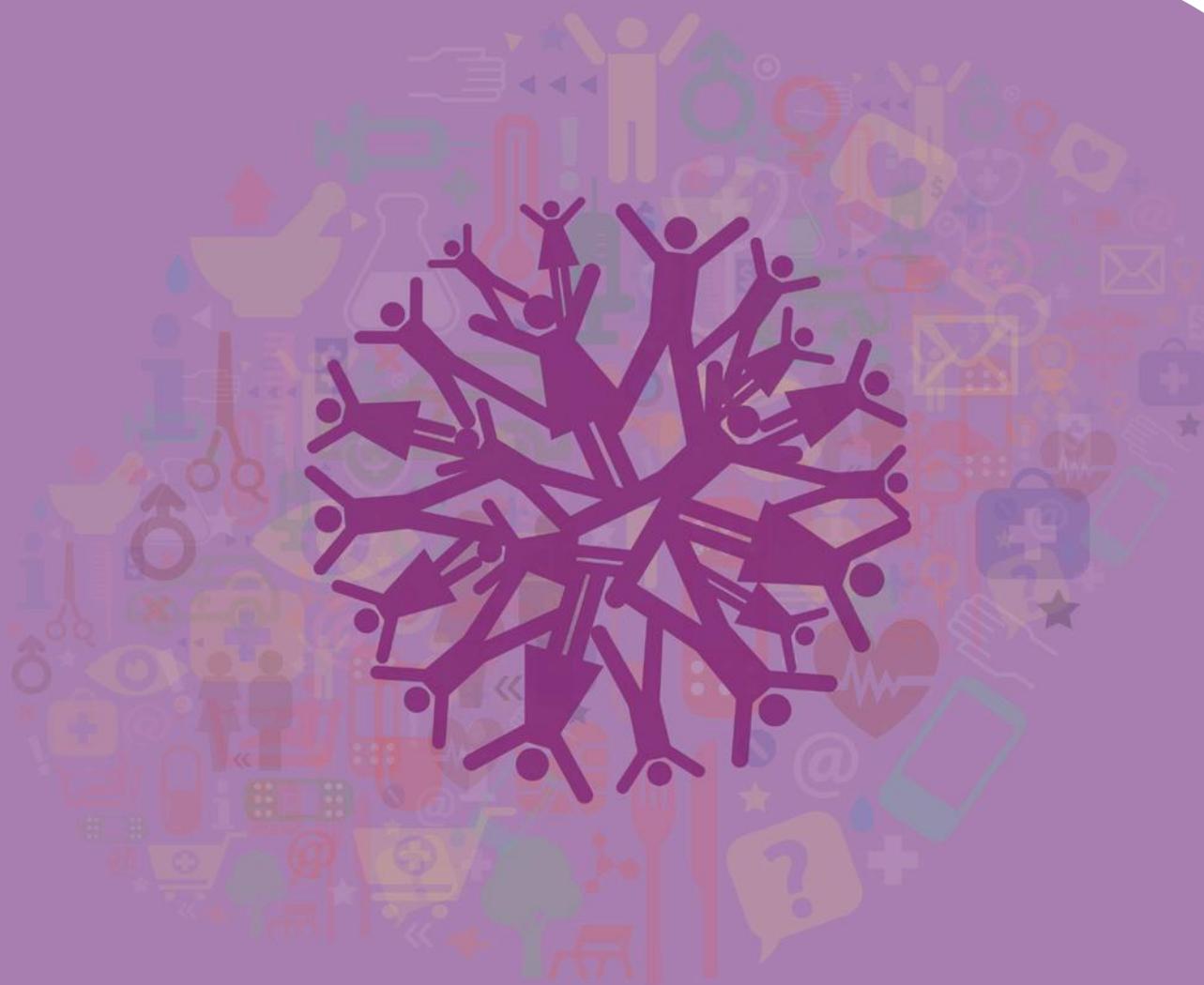


CHCDIS003

Support community participation and social inclusion

Release 1



Learner guide

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Learner guide

Aspire version 1.3



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Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Release 1, version 1.1	April 2017	First release
Release 1, version 1.2	January 2019	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program
Release 1, version 1.3	July 2019	Updated to reflect the new Aged Care Quality Standards

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCDIS003 Support community participation and social inclusion*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. ▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help 
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities ▶ Managing your work and seeing how well you are going and making goals for yourself at work ▶ Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents ▶ Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology ▶ Interpreting key information in relevant documents ▶ Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents ▶ Communicating through written letters, email and online ▶ Recording progress; reporting incidents
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clarifying instructions ▶ Providing information ▶ Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution ▶ Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance ▶ Interpreting measurements
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Planning your workload and commitments ▶ Implementing tasks ▶ Completing work on time ▶ Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks
Making decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding and applying decision-making processes ▶ Reviewing the impact of your decisions
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identifying problems ▶ Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes and reviewing the outcome
Innovation and creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas ▶ Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something ▶ Making suggestions to improve work

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Technology and digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely ▶ Accessing, organising and presenting information ▶ Using equipment correctly and safely

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Identify opportunities for community participation and social inclusion	1A Assist a person with disability to identify strengths, preferences and requirements for social engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Provide information on community participation to meet requirements of the person with disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Identify and access appropriate community participation options and services according to the person's needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Recognise and accommodate the cultural and religious needs of the person with disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 2 Implement strategies for community participation and inclusion according to the individualised plan	2A Assist the person to identify and access community options to meet needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Support the person to access opportunities to establish connections through shared interests	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Seek feedback from the person and relevant others to meet current and changing needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Regularly review strategies with the person and supervisor to enable positive outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Monitor level of engagement in consultation with supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3 Identify, address and monitor barriers to community participation and social inclusion	3A Recognise physical, skill-related and other barriers to participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Collaborate with the person and supervisor to identify solutions to overcome barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Support the person to implement strategies to address barriers to planned participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Monitor the success of strategies in consultation with the person and supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3E Recognise own limitations in addressing issues and seek advice when necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Assist a person with disability to identify strengths, preferences and requirements for social engagement**

- 1B Provide information on community participation to meet requirements of the person with disability**

- 1C Identify and access appropriate community participation options and services according to the person's needs**

- 1D Recognise and accommodate the cultural and religious needs of the person with disability**

Identify opportunities for community participation and social inclusion

Supporting a person to become an active, involved and social member of their community requires careful planning. You should work with the person with disability you are supporting to set goals and select appropriate options that represent their desires, preferences and interests. You can help a person work through the stages of planning, organising and implementing an activity plan. This plan will build social competency skills and support a person in becoming actively involved in planning their own recreation, hobbies and social pursuits. Remember to allow your support to be directed as much as possible by the person with disability, although there will be situations where input from others, such as family members, is required.

1A Assist a person with disability to identify strengths, preferences and requirements for social engagement

Everyone has differing interests, abilities and needs. These often change over time, so that a person who has interests in one area may later in life become interested in different activities. Interests will often be wide ranging and particular to a person's own personality, experiences and opportunities. To make sure a person with disability is able to do things that interest them, it is important to work closely with them to identify what those interests might be and what strengths and requirements they have which need to be considered. Knowing what a person is interested in, as well as understanding their needs and areas of strength, will help promote engagement in social and community activities. It is important to focus on using a strengths-based approach to your tasks, as this philosophy underpins best practice in community service provision.



Principles of strengths-based practice

Strengths-based support involves acknowledging that all people have strengths, that they possess the potential to change and that they are experts in their own life. Strengths-based practice focuses on empowerment, self-direction and self-determination so that the person receiving support is also the person directing the support. It is a way of thinking and working that provides a framework which values collaboration. Working together in a planned and appropriate way helps create stronger, more resilient communities and empowers the people living within them.

A strengths-based approach does not focus on the disability of an individual but rather sees it as being a feature of interactions between an individual and their community. Using this approach, a worker and the person they support collaborate and plan together. The worker takes on a role of facilitating, guiding and carrying out tasks, rather than assuming a position of authority where they make the decisions for the person.



Social networks

A key reason for supporting a person with disability to engage in activities is to promote their engagement with a social network. Links with social networks are important for emotional, psychological and cognitive stimulation. Individuals with a very limited social network may be at an increased risk of isolation, lowered mood or increased stress and anxiety. They may also lack significant others with whom to

share experiences and obtain support and enjoyment. It is important to recognise that some people prefer to have a small social network for a variety of reasons and that the individual has the right to make this choice.

A social network can be made up of a small or large group of people. It can be a group of people who see each other on a regular basis, or people who have only occasional contact.

A social network can even be made up of people who only ever meet in an online setting, such as people who engage with blogs, social networking sites or computer gaming activities.

Social networks can take various forms, as listed below.

Examples of social networks

- ▶ Parents who meet once a week at a playgroup for children with disability held at a local community centre
- ▶ A group of young adults, some of whom have disability, who attend a monthly disco
- ▶ A group of older adults who meet at a local Probus club each month for a meeting, guest speaker and morning tea
- ▶ Men with mental disability who attend a recreation program run by a mental disability support organisation
- ▶ A mother and her young child who visit older family members each week in their home in a housing commission flat
- ▶ An older man who lives with his son and daughter-in-law and visits the race track on weekends to share a meal with friends and watch the horses

Make-up of social networks

Social networks are formed by people sharing something they have in common with each other. However, this does not mean they are similar in every way. For example, people who are members of the same neighbourhood watch organisation might not be the same age or gender, or have the same social interests. They may only share a common interest in the neighbourhood watch group. Most people have more than one social network.

Social networks are made up of people who fall into one of the following groups:

- ▶ Immediate family (parents, children, siblings)
- ▶ Extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents)
- ▶ Friends (people we know well and value)
- ▶ Acquaintances (people we know less well, sometimes by name only)
- ▶ Work groups (work colleagues who may or may not also fall into the 'acquaintances' or 'friends' groups)
- ▶ Neighbourhood communities (people who share a residential area, such as those in the same street or block of flats)
- ▶ Sporting groups (such as a horse riding club, a sailing club or a hockey team)
- ▶ A special interest or hobby group (such as a sewing class, a choir or a theatre group)

Change social networks

As people move through different stages of their lives, their social networks change. Some people may remain a long-term member of a social network while others may only be involved for a short time. People often move to different locations or change their daily activities. This can make it difficult for people to retain contact with a social network. These changes can also mean that a person comes into contact with new people, who may then form a new network. These new people often begin as acquaintances who share the same interests as an individual, and over time they become friends.

It is important that people with disability are able to change their social networks as they choose and as their life situation changes over time, and that they are supported in making this change if required.



Identify interests

It may be part of your role to assist a person with disability in clearly identifying their interests and preferred activities. The best way to begin is to ask them. The person may have very clear ideas about what they enjoy doing and what interests they have. If this is the case, simply document your conversation and then establish a plan of action.

You might find that sometimes people struggle to think of ideas about their interests and preferred activities. They may not be aware of what activities are available. You may need to prompt the person and offer some suggestions. Be careful not to lead the person to choose something they may not really want to do.

You may need to work with another specialist, such as a diversional therapist, to identify interests for an individual. If a person is able to communicate their ideas independently, they should be encouraged to make their own decisions about activities, preferences and social engagement.



You can read more about diversional therapy at: <http://aspirelr.link/diversional-therapy>

Help people with limited communication identify interests

Some people may have limited communication or cognitive skills, which can make it challenging for them to express their ideas and preferences clearly. As a result, they may find it difficult to plan and implement their own social activities. You may need to adapt communication and planning strategies to determine social activity preferences with these people. Involving a speech pathologist in the process can help you with complex communication needs.

Some people may be at risk of becoming passive or of learning a cycle of helpless behaviour, known as 'learned helplessness'. This means that rather than being independent decision-makers, they run the risk of other people making their decisions for them.

Although the long-term goal should always be to promote independence in life decisions, this is not always going to be possible for everyone.

Use a survey to identify interests

Sometimes it is important for significant others to share information about a person. This information can help the person receive the most appropriate care and support, and can help them get the right assistance in joining their preferred activities.

You can use a survey tool or questionnaire to support decision-making by involving other members of the family or an advocate. You may work with others, such as diversional therapists or activity leaders, to develop a leisure profile or similar document to identify interests.

Survey questions may include:

- ▶ What are the person's preferred items to use in recreation time (such as books, sensory toys and scooter boards)?
- ▶ Does the person prefer to spend time mostly indoors, mostly outdoors, or do they have no particular preference?
- ▶ What are the person's favourite indoor activities?
- ▶ What are the person's favourite outdoor activities?
- ▶ Does the person like being in a small group or large group?
- ▶ What activities result in an expression of pleasure or happiness from the person?
- ▶ How does the person show they want to stop doing an activity?
- ▶ Are there any activities the person cannot do safely, or must be limited for some reason? (Give details.)

Cater for different abilities and requirements

People have many differing abilities and requirements which you need to consider when planning support structures and mechanisms for community-based activities. Support workers need to learn about the abilities of an individual person and then plan how to support them in their activity choices. People who are limited in one of the areas below may require more or different kinds of support to engage in social activities and establish a social network. In many cases, activities can be successfully adapted to suit the abilities of a person with a disability.

Here are the categories of abilities.

Abilities

Cognitive abilities

Being able to think, understand and use logical reasoning and good judgment

Physical abilities

Being physically able to complete tasks such as moving from one place to another, climbing stairs, getting up a ladder or walking around a shopping centre

Social abilities

Being able to interact successfully with others

Communication abilities

Being able to communicate through words, symbols, pictures, gestures, signing or a computer-based system

Emotional abilities

Being able to manage and express emotions

Sensory abilities

Being able to see, hear and touch

Understand the context of information

Information about how to meet an individual's requirements may already be known and documented, which means you may not need to recreate it. You do, however, need to ensure you have appropriate permission to access information from another source and that it is relevant to the context in which you are going to use it.

The type of information included depends on the age and abilities of the person, on the type of setting the document is prepared for (such as a school, play group, teenage activity group, adult social group or senior citizens' program) and on the location of the support.

Support can be provided in a range of different locations, as listed below.

Locations where support is provided

- ▶ Aged care facilities
- ▶ Disability-specific service settings
- ▶ Individual, private homes
- ▶ Community centres
- ▶ Respite programs conducted in a centre
- ▶ Respite programs conducted in varying locations according to people's requirements
- ▶ Hospitals
- ▶ Neighbourhood houses, play groups or play centres

Use the person's plan

Existing plans and documentation will vary widely depending upon the frameworks and systems of support and funding currently being used by a person. It may be appropriate to use an existing plan or document, but it is vital that this is done in accordance with relevant legislation such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). If you need additional information you should source this from the person themselves, or from relevant others such as family members, case managers, mental health workers or allied health professionals. Remember that when you are writing or using a planning document you should focus on using language and terminology which focuses on strengths and abilities and which is clear, concise and appropriate.

Example

Identify a person’s interests and abilities to plan

Melinda is a young woman who has only recently been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She has variable physical skills and is emotionally fragile. She is more comfortable at home, as she is not yet used to being perceived as a person with disability. Her mother is concerned that Melinda is becoming socially isolated. Melinda used to enjoy water sports, particularly kayaking, but is now unable to physically manage the activity. She has trouble adapting to a less physical life which is dictated largely by the constant change she faces due to her disability.

Melinda has decided to use some of her packaged funding to purchase recreation support. Paula comes to meet Melinda to plan some social activities. Firstly, she asks to have a formal meeting with Melinda, her mother and her case manager. She checks whether Melinda is happy for these people to be present. During the meeting she asks Melinda to fill out a questionnaire addressing her social activities preferences. Her mother is on hand to provide emotional support and encouragement while she fills it out. Paula is then able to talk with Melinda about planning some recreation activities in a supportive, safe environment that will meet her needs and preferences and build on her strengths.

Practice task 1

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Jim has been asked by his supervisor to facilitate a recreation program with Marco, a young man who lives at home and who has a moderate intellectual disability. Marco loves art and is fascinated with digital photography and media. He has told his mum that he would love to be a filmmaker or photographer. Jim arranges to meet with Marco at home as he knows this is where Marco feels comfortable. Jim begins his conversation with Marco by telling him about the football group that goes to see a game each week. He invites Marco to join the group and tells him he will enjoy it. He does not ask Marco about his photography or filmmaking interests, and Marco feels it would be rude to ask if there are any other recreation options available. Marco’s Mum is surprised to hear Marco tell her later in the day that he will be going to the football each weekend to watch a game.

1. What is one thing Jim did well?

.....

.....

2. What are two things Jim could have done better to reflect a strengths-based practice?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 1

1B Provide information on community participation to meet requirements of the person with disability

Once a person's activity needs and requirements have been identified, it is important to provide this information to the person so they understand the options, networks and services available to them. They can then begin to make informed choices about their preferences.

It is important that people with disability are given sufficient information so they can make choices about community participation options, networks and services which fit best with their own requirements and preferences. Insufficient information could lead to a poor activity choice or the person's needs not being fully met. Information should be both general (options available) and specific (details on participation).

Options may include the following.

The type of activity

Some activities may be a very comprehensive, while similar activities may only offer basic elements. Both options should be discussed with the person.

The cost

The activity may be free for the person or there may be a cost involved. If the cost is too high for the person, they may prefer a different or more basic activity.

The location

There may be an activity in the local community hall, or the person may have to travel to another suburb. If transport is not a problem, then the person may choose the one for which they have to travel because the activity itself is more comprehensive or suitable.

Participation level

Many activities can be undertaken at different levels of participation.

The timing

The timing of an activity needs to fit with other lifestyle and work or study commitments.

Person-centred practice

Person-centred practice is a philosophical concept which underpins much of the work within the community services sector. It is an approach that places the person at the centre of the service planning and provision, with all aspects of support stemming from that point.

Person-centred practice includes several critical elements, as shown here.

Sharing

Power and responsibility must be shared between the service recipient, the service provider and other staff members.

Individual focus

The focus must be on the person rather than the system or organisation and its processes and operations.

Flexibility

Being able to be flexible and adaptable in the face of changing needs or requirements is important.

Careful design

The environment and systems should be designed to promote person-centred practices and ensure this type of approach is possible and practical.

Management

A commitment by management to providing person-centred practice flows on to all levels of the workforce within the organisation.

Staff

Staff members need to be committed to the person-centred approach and ensure it is carried out in their daily work tasks.

Services and resources

Where possible, aim to link a person to services and resources within their local area unless they have specifically requested to do otherwise. Local support services have the benefit of providing social- and community-based support structures that are geographically nearby and therefore easier and cheaper to access. They also make it easier for the person to meet new people and develop social networks within their own locality. Services and resources often have eligibility criteria which include location, so this can make it more likely that a person will be able to access a particular service or program.

Good sources of information about local services and resources include the local council website, booklets produced by the council, the library, the community health centre and the neighbourhood house or community centre.



Sporting groups

Sporting groups are often able and willing to provide support to facilitate participation by people with disability, either through a tailored program or as part of general, open participation. Some groups may provide 'come and try' days or other introductory activities to enable people to try out activities before they make a decision.

Forming relationships with local sporting groups that are committed to supporting participation by people with disability can be useful towards your work in community access and inclusion. You can learn about sporting groups through your networks or by looking online.

Examples of sporting groups with programs to support people with disability:

- ▶ Sailability – Supports sailing for people with disabilities using modified sailing boats and equipment
- ▶ Fishers with Disability Association – Provides opportunities to learn to fish
- ▶ Disabled Winter Sport Australia – Focuses on sports in the snow and ice
- ▶ Disability Sports Australia – Supports athletes with disabilities of all ages
- ▶ Riding for the Disabled Association – Helps young people with a disability build equestrian skills

Cultural and specific interest groups

Some people may prefer to participate in activities that are relevant and appropriate to their particular cultural background or that relate to a specific interest area. To meet this requirement you might need to conduct some research to learn about cultural groups and networks, or to find out about options which meet specific interest areas of the person you support. For example, you may need to contact the local council and ask for a directory of services that might include cultural groups and specific interest clubs, or find out about community languages which are spoken in the area.



Service options

People may choose from a range of service options according to their preferences and specific areas of need. As a worker, you should aim to guide and facilitate decision-making by the person you support, and provide information as required to help them fully understand their choices and be in a position to make an informed decision. In some situations the person may make a direct purchase of services using packaged funding while in other cases they may need to apply to a program or service according to service guidelines and eligibility criteria.

There are many types of service options available, such as:

- ▶ respite programs to give carers a break
- ▶ day activity groups to provide activities and develop living skills
- ▶ education programs to learn new skills
- ▶ rehabilitation services to recover from an injury
- ▶ transition programs to move from one life stage or situation to another
- ▶ home-based services to assist a person to live at home.

Provide information to meet needs and wants

It is important to consider the needs, wants and abilities of a person when sharing information with them. Some types of disabilities, such as having memory support needs, may make it difficult for a person to understand and retain information.

Communicate information that is relevant to what the person wants to do or find out about. This way you are only providing details that are useable, appropriate and relate to the requirements expressed by the person.

It is important to consider how you will give a person the information. You may need to communicate in different ways with different people.

Below are ideas that can help you communicate effectively with people who have different kinds of disability.

Physical disability

A person with physical disability:

- ▶ may find it offensive if someone talks to them while standing, or leans on their wheelchair during a conversation
- ▶ may not be able to move easily to correct problems such as having sunlight in their eyes during a conversation outdoors
- ▶ may become upset with others who assume they have intellectual disability.

Things to remember:

- ▶ Position yourself at the same height as the person (sit down or squat).
- ▶ Position yourself so you do not have the sun behind you.
- ▶ Never lean on a wheelchair during a conversation.
- ▶ Talk in a way that reflects what you know of the cognitive skills of the person; never assume they don't understand just because they have a physical disability.

Intellectual disability

A person with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment:

- ▶ may find it hard to discuss complex ideas or manage a sustained, lengthy conversation
- ▶ may not be able to discuss abstract thoughts and concepts
- ▶ may not be able to judge mood or challenging situations and respond to them appropriately.

Things to remember:

- ▶ Share information in a language style that suits the person.
- ▶ Check the person has understood each part of your communication before continuing.
- ▶ Take frequent breaks if you are sharing complex or lengthy pieces of information.
- ▶ Provide information in other forms (such as notes, graphics, pictures or charts) to assist understanding.
- ▶ Reinforce information that has been given at an earlier time to check it has not been forgotten.

Vision impairment

A person with vision impairment:

- ▶ may not be aware that someone is talking to them
- ▶ may lack the accepted norms of body language and habits of a sighted person
- ▶ may only be able to absorb information in auditory form or through braille
- ▶ may be frustrated by others who talk loudly to them as if they cannot hear.

Things to remember:

- ▶ Use the person's name to gain their attention first.
- ▶ Speak in the same way as you would to a sighted person.
- ▶ Provide information through spoken language or braille.
- ▶ Intervene if needed to support a conversation the person is having with another person, if they have previously asked you to do so.

Identify who to share information with

Communicate first with the person you are supporting. Ensure you direct your attention and interaction towards the person and look directly at them. Avoid speaking to others, such as family members, rather than directly to the person. This can be disrespectful and does not reflect a strengths-based approach as it does not build capacity or capitalise on existing strengths of the person.

However, there are some times when communication may need to be directed to others.

People who may need communication to be directed to others

- ▶ Children
- ▶ People with a court order in place that requires a parent or guardian to make decisions on their behalf
- ▶ People who have a disability that makes it difficult or impossible for them to make sound decisions without assistance
- ▶ People who prefer to communicate through an advocate

Share information

Establish who communication should be directed to (if not the person themselves) when sharing information, such as a parent, guardian, family member or advocate. These people are often experienced in sharing information with the person and may be able to effectively communicate ideas and concepts that you might not be able to yourself. It is preferable to have the person present and involved in the conversation as much as possible. The person may be able to join in part of the conversation or use yes/no responses, visual or electronic communication methods, or other strategies to help them be a part of the conversation.



Example

Communicate with a parent while involving a child you are supporting

Alex is 12 and has Down syndrome. He has a moderate intellectual disability and a mild heart condition. He is able to communicate verbally but his intellectual disability means he struggles to manage complex conversations or to use good judgment.

Mary is his support worker. She is talking with Alex and his mum about a new recreation group that has just started. Mary explains to Alex and his mum that there are several eligibility criteria for the program and that Alex meets them all. It is vital that Alex is able to initiate his own preferences and choices as much as possible, with support from his mum when required. Mary deliberately talks to Alex’s mum about the criteria when Alex is out of the room getting a drink, as she knows Alex would struggle to manage this part of the conversation and may become bored. When Alex returns she says to him, ‘Alex, I’d love to know which of these activities you like the most. Can you point to your favourite activities?’

She then shows Alex an activities list with text and cartoon-style pictures, and reads each choice aloud to him. She checks that he understands what all the activities are. She makes sure she is facing towards Alex during this part of the conversation and that she gives him her full attention. She keeps her questions brief and to the point, watching and listening carefully as Alex points to his preferred activities. She also asks Alex to tell her about other things he likes to do or is interested in that are not on the list.

Practice task 2

1. The following is a definition of what principle?
 ‘A best practice concept whereby a person with disability is seen as central to the planning and implementation process of service provision.’

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2. Give three examples of types of information you might provide to a person with disability about a community activity.

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3. What is one way you could find out about local sporting groups?

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4. What is one key benefit of accessing programs or services within the local area of the person with disability?

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Click to complete Practice task 2

1C Identify and access appropriate community participation options and services according to the person's needs

Once you have helped plan and organise the activity, the next stage is to identify any resources that may be needed to facilitate participation. These resources may include transport services, aids and equipment to meet physical or communication needs, additional staff members, personal care services, supported programs and resources from other agencies or programs.

By ensuring that all necessary resources are in place before starting an activity, you can ensure a smooth beginning for the person you support. Failing to put appropriate resources in place can lead to difficulties in accessing a planned activity or program.



Identify and access transport services

Where possible, activities should be located as close to a person's place of living as possible. This reduces the potential transport requirements and costs to the person. It also has the added benefit of encouraging long-term social links with people in the local community. However, many people will still need some form of transport to access an activity away from their home. They may also require support or training to enable them to access certain forms of transport.

Specialised transport could be needed if a person has:

- ▶ a mobility issue and is unable to drive themselves or use public transport
- ▶ a health condition that means they are unsafe on public transport or when travelling independently
- ▶ not yet learnt to travel independently
- ▶ behaviour that is difficult or dangerous when in a public setting.

Types of specialised support

There are many types of specialised transport available. Here is an outline of transport options and for whom they may be suitable.

Public 'low rider' bus (floor can be lowered) or train

Benefits:

- ▶ Low cost
- ▶ Regular services at predictable times
- ▶ Space is available for group travel
- ▶ Concession card can reduce the cost further
- ▶ Space is usually set aside for wheelchair or scooter users
- ▶ Trains generally have a designated space for wheelchair users to wait so a ramp can be provided to access the carriage

Limitations:

- ▶ It may be full or have limited space available at the time of travel.
- ▶ Some people may be fearful of being out in public.
- ▶ It may not be appropriate or safe for younger people, those with behavioural problems or those with memory loss conditions.

Could be suitable for people who are:

- ▶ able to negotiate bus or train doorways and gain access to the floor area
- ▶ able to manage use of a ticket machine and purchase of a ticket
- ▶ mobile
- ▶ able to safely and appropriately manage their behaviour in public
- ▶ not at risk of harm in a public, open situation.

Taxi

Benefits:

- ▶ Accessible taxis are available.
- ▶ Taxis can be pre-booked.
- ▶ A taxi subsidy voucher (such as the M40 card) can reduce the cost.
- ▶ Drivers of accessible taxis are generally experienced in assisting people with disability.

Limitations:

- ▶ It can be expensive, especially on longer trips.
- ▶ Only a limited number of people can travel together.

Could be suitable for:

- ▶ shorter trips
- ▶ individual activities
- ▶ people with higher levels of physical or behavioural need.

Volunteer drivers

Benefits:

- ▶ The cost is low.
- ▶ Drivers are often experienced in helping people with disability to access a vehicle.
- ▶ It can be pre-arranged.
- ▶ It is another avenue for developing social skills and social contact.

Limitations:

- ▶ Only a limited number of people can travel together.
- ▶ The person needs to rely on the checking procedures of the organisation to ensure the volunteer is a safe and suitable person to be with.
- ▶ Some people may not be comfortable with a volunteer providing support.

Could be suitable for:

- ▶ people who wish to travel to destinations where public transport is not available
- ▶ individual activities
- ▶ people who are relatively independent and confident in dealing with a volunteer.

Identify and access mobility aids

There are many different types of mobility aids. These are usually specific to the individual person and are often made specifically to suit their needs. Support workers need to ensure the individual is aware of how a particular mobility aid functions, and that they have a good understanding of its purpose. Some examples of mobility aids are electric wheelchairs, manual wheelchairs, scooters, walking frames and crutches. Training may be available from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist.



Sometimes people may require support or referral to other agencies to obtain new mobility aids or to seek additional funding for changing needs or requirements. They may be able to access funding through a government program such as the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP) or the Community Aids and Equipment Program in Western Australia (CAEP).

Identify and access communication aids

Some people use a communication aid for expressive and receptive communication with others. These aids have been designed to suit the communication needs of the individual. There may be instructions or prompts to encourage others to converse with the person using the aid.

If you are working with a person who has a communication aid, take the time to learn how to use it competently and efficiently, and how to help the person access and maintain their aid. As a support worker, you need to be able to adapt your communication skills to meet the needs of the people you support. You must ensure that you can understand and share ideas about daily tasks, personal care needs,

requests, problems or illnesses, emotional needs and engage in social conversation. A speech pathologist may be able to help you learn more about communication aids used by individuals with whom you work.

Communication aids are often funded through specific programs which vary from state to state and according to the type of funding a person normally uses. You may need to find out about services such as the Electronic Communication Devices Scheme and learn what the process is for applying for funding.

Here are some commonly used communication aids you might encounter in your work.

Common communication aids

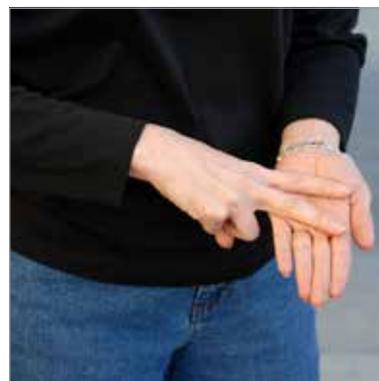
- ▶ Hearing aids for people with hearing impairment
- ▶ TTY telephones to assist a person with hearing impairment to type a message via their telephone which is then converted into speech
- ▶ Communication boards to allow a person to point to a picture or word to indicate what they want, need, think or feel
- ▶ Communication books that work like a communication board, but allow for greater detail and for information to be divided into categories
- ▶ Voice output electronic devices to convert typed text into spoken words
- ▶ Sign language to communicate with a person or with hearing impairment or who signs for other reasons (for example, some people with autism may sign)

Communication needs

Many people are wary of talking with a person with communication impairment. This is often because they are worried they may not be able to understand them. Members of the general public may take the easier option and talk to the support worker instead, and simply ignore the person with communication impairment.

Always attempt to redirect a conversation back to the person you are supporting. Do not answer for them unless they have already given you permission. Show other people how they can easily communicate with the person and assist them to do so. It may take a little more time, but the end result is that others will have gained important skills and confidence in communicating directly with the person. In turn, the person will feel empowered and respected.

Many staff in larger organisations and government agencies such as the Department of Human Services have learnt how to cater for people who use communication aids. They are able to assist with completing forms, providing information in an appropriate format and meeting the needs of people who have hearing or vision impairment. Generally government agencies have websites that are designed to be accessible for people with communication needs and include features such as text to speech, font options, transcripts for video clips, translated text and logical reading order.



Identify human resources to support participation

People with disability may need other people to help them with certain activities. Such people might include a personal carer, a respite worker, staff with activity-specific qualifications, group leaders or volunteers.

When thinking about the personnel needed for an activity or task, you need to consider factors related both to the requirements of the activity and the needs of the person. For example, someone who requires a catheter to be changed at a particular time may require support from the District Nursing Service to enable them to access a program or activity. A person with disability who wishes to undertake rock climbing as a recreation pursuit will need to be instructed by someone who holds qualifications in rock climbing and can competently teach others.



Access support

Once appropriate services, personnel, agencies or resources have been identified, you will need to move onto a process of assisting the person to access them as needed. You will need to research the process required in each case and make sure you obtain permission from the person before completing any paperwork or documentation on their behalf. In some cases the person will be able to complete an application on their own, but sometimes they may require assistance to access supports.

Here are some approaches you might use to access supports.

Accessing supports

Application form

Some services and resources require an application form to be completed.

Phone call

Sometimes a phone call may be all that is needed to seek supports or resources.

Informal networks

You may know of resources or supports available in the local community.

Waiting list

In some cases, a waiting list might apply if a program, service or resource is already fully subscribed.

Direct purchasing

Some people may be able to purchase supports or resources directly using individual funding packages.

Identify service guidelines and eligibility criteria to access support

Some organisations and program types have service guidelines and eligibility criteria that explain how funding, resources or support services can be accessed by individuals. They explain how a person would know if they are able to access a particular program and exactly what is offered and how services are provided.

Some service guidelines relate to individual packaged funding (where services can be purchased based on the choices of the person) and some relate to general community based programs (where the guidelines apply to anyone who wishes to access the program). For example, a recreational respite program may have funding to provide services to children who are living with a primary carer and so can only provide services to children who fulfil that criteria.

Example

Access resources for a person to attend a camp

Paul Golding is a 15-year-old boy who plays Powerchair Football. He has expressed a wish to attend a training camp interstate and requires financial support as well as a personal carer to attend the camp with him. He has some funding which he is able to use to purchase personal care support for the duration of the camp. He also is successful in gaining some funding through a philanthropic trust to pay for the cost of his transport to and from the camp as well as some new equipment that he needs.



Paul’s family support worker is instrumental in helping Paul and his family access the funding from the trust and ensuring all the arrangements are in place for him to attend. She helps Paul’s mum book the flight to the camp and makes sure the airline knows about his specific needs for getting in and out of his wheelchair during the flight. Paul is excited about being able to attend the camp and make his dream of becoming a Powerchair Football champion a little closer to reality.

Practice task 3

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Abdhul is a young man who lives at home with his family. He is in his early teens and is keen to begin participating more in recreation activities out of the house. He has autism spectrum disorder and epilepsy and requires constant supervision to ensure his safety. He is not able to use public transport independently. Abdhul communicates using some spoken language and some signed English. He is interested in learning to fish and the nearest fishing program is in the next suburb, six kilometres away.

1. What is one example of an appropriate transport option for Abdhul to get to the fishing program?

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2. If you do not know how to use signed English, what is one thing you could do?

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3. What are two key advantages in the location of the fishing program?

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Click to complete Practice task 3

1D Recognise and accommodate the cultural and religious needs of the person with disability

People do not always make the choices you think or assume they will make. All people are different, and their previous experiences and background can often play a part in the choices they make about their lives. Remember that if you are a support worker, you are there to support the person in their choices and decisions. You are not there to make decisions for them. Think about the many different backgrounds and experiences that people may have. Bear this in mind when planning, organising and implementing plans related to activities and social groups.

For information about cultural needs and cultural groups you could visit the library, local council, neighbourhood house, community centre or a community information centre. These places may have brochures, program outlines or information on their websites to help you learn about cultures and languages within a particular community.



Cater for individual choices

People with disability reflect a spectrum of experiences, backgrounds and personality types. As with people you may meet in other area of your life, there will be some people with whom you will have an instant rapport, while with others you may have to work much harder to maintain a good working relationship.

As a support worker it is important to cater for individual differences and to remember these differences when helping a person plan and implement activities that will assist them in social networking. Some people may only feel comfortable associating with people from a similar background to their own, or with people who have similar shared experiences to theirs. Other people will be quite happy to mix with a wide range of people.

Here are some examples of different choices that people you support may make.

Choices for community participation

- ▶ A person may decide they only want to do activities in their local area because that is where they feel comfortable and safe.
- ▶ A person may only want to spend time with other people with the same type of disability as theirs.
- ▶ A person may want to join an activity or social event that does not have other people with disability attending.
- ▶ A person may only feel safe if they are doing recreation activities with people who also attend the same day centre as they do.
- ▶ A person may request that they do activities with their partner present.
- ▶ A person may not be willing to do swimming or water aerobics because they do not want others to see them in their swimming attire.

Understand and cater for cultural differences

Cultural differences also affect the planning and implementation of social activities. While it is not possible to know everything about each culture, in time and with some careful research and professional development training, you can learn about the cultural needs and differences that are present in your community.

Get in touch with community groups if you need specific information about a cultural group. You could also contact the support group Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC) as it has expertise in working with many different cultural groups on disability issues.

You need to learn how culture plays a part in determining what activities an individual participates in, and should acknowledge and gain an understanding of certain culture-specific clothes, food and rituals. You can then plan appropriate activities such as a cooking program which considers food preferences based on religious needs.

Cultural differences may mean that a person:

- ▶ does not want to participate in an activity with both males and females
- ▶ wishes to eat specific foods or cannot eat certain types of food
- ▶ needs to wear specific clothes at all times such as a head covering
- ▶ needs to be able to carry out religious or spiritual ceremonies, such as praying at certain times of the day
- ▶ cannot participate in activities on a specific day because of their beliefs
- ▶ cannot watch certain kinds of movies
- ▶ does not like people to stand too close to them.

Understand and cater for language differences

Around 200 different languages are spoken in Australia, and 2.8 million Australians speak a language other than English at home. It is quite likely that you will work with an individual who does not speak the same language as you do, or who has family members or primary caregivers who have a different preferred language to your own. Note information about language needs in the individual plan and ensure everyone who works with the person understands their language requirements. You may need to plan a group training session for your team to ensure you all know how to provide for specific language needs.

There are several ways to manage this situation and ensure that good communication still occurs.

Use an interpreter

An interpreter is a person who interprets information from one language into another, so that both people can understand what is being said.

Ask a co-worker

Some workplaces have workers who are fluent in more than one language, and may be available to interpret for you.

Ask a family member

Sometimes there is another family member who can act as an interpreter in an emergency, although this is not a preferred option due to issues with mistranslation, privacy and confidentiality. You would need to check that the person is willing to share their information with this person.

Use a translation

Some organisations are able to translate policies, procedures and service guidelines into another language so people from that language group can read them.

Telephone interpreter

A telephone interpreter service provides a person who speaks the same language as the individual over the phone. The phone call is effectively a three-way call with the interpreter providing the link between you and the person.

Use gestures

Although using gestures does not allow for complete communication, it can be useful to get your point across if you have nothing else available.

Deal with possible communication issues

If you do not allow for individual or cultural differences, you run the risk of upsetting the person you are providing support to, causing offence or the activity being unsuccessful. For example, if you failed to consider the cultural needs of a Muslim woman, you might suggest she join in a mixed gender swimming group and not be aware that this would be culturally inappropriate in most situations.

Of course, mistakes and misunderstandings can and do occur. The important thing is to learn from them and to do your best to avoid a similar problem happening again. When a problem occurs, apologise for any offence caused and do your best to deal with the situation. Then move on.

Culturally and linguistically diverse people with support needs are generally happy to explain their individual preferences and choices based on their cultural needs to you. All you have to do is ask.



Example

Accommodate cultural differences in an exercise group

Mark runs a chair-based exercise group for older adults at the local recreation centre. Most of the people in his group have Russian or Polish backgrounds, and many in the group are quite loud and exuberant. They love to chat and joke with each other.

A new woman has just joined the group and Mark notices immediately that she is very quiet. She avoids conversation with others in the group and doesn't like to be too close to them physically.

Mark brings her a chair so she can join the group. He deliberately places the chair close to his own, and leaves a reasonable space between her and the other group members. During the class he makes sure he has regular eye contact with the woman and that he smiles and makes her feel welcome. At the break time for morning tea he pairs her with Beth, a quieter woman, and distracts some of the louder group members into a discussion in the other room about recent events in the newspaper. This gives the new woman and Beth time to get to know each other.



Practice task 4

1. What are two things you could do if asked to organise an activity which includes participants who speak a different preferred language to your own?

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2. You make a mistake during the first session of your recreation program and accidentally offend some of the participants. What should you do?

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Click to complete Practice task 4

Summary

1. People are often members of many different social networks, including family, friends, sporting groups and local neighbourhoods.
2. It is important to adopt a person-centred approach to planning and implementation which sees the person as the central focus.
3. A person receiving services should direct the planning and decision-making processes wherever possible, with input from others as required.
4. People with support needs may need to use various forms of assistance, such as transport, mobility aids, communication devices and relevant personnel to facilitate their involvement in activities and social networks.
5. You should take the time to learn how to identify and access local supports and resources within the neighbourhood of a person who is seeking services.
6. It is important to provide a range of options for people to choose from and to share information about these options in an appropriate manner.
7. It is important to consider the cultural and religious needs of people who are participating in activities or seeking support.

Learning checkpoint 1

Identify opportunities for community participation and social inclusion

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in identifying interests, abilities, preferences and requirements of the person with disability to engage with a social network.

Part A

1. Identify one issue which may arise when helping a person to identify their interests, abilities, preferences and requirements to engage with a social network, and explain two possible ways that you could address this issue.

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2. Provide three examples of cultural or religious needs that might need to be considered and accommodated when you are working with a person to help them access community-based activities.

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3. Write a definition of the term 'strengths-based practice'

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4. Write a definition for the term 'person-centred practice'.

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Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Jack lives alone after a recent divorce. He has significant difficulties with problem gambling which have greatly affected his life choices and current financial position. Jack has a learning disability and hemiplegic cerebral palsy. He used to be a skier and enjoyed the outdoors. He also used to enjoy artistic pursuits but has not been able to find the motivation for this in recent years. Jack does not work and has recently been treated for depression as well as his gambling addiction. Jack has reached out for assistance and is now meeting with you to help him identify and plan some ways he can link back into the local community.

1. What could you do to assist Jack to identify and access some community-based activities and become more engaged in the community?

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2. What might be an appropriate format you could use for providing information to Jack about community-based activities?

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3. What is one potential barrier to Jack’s participation? What could be done to manage it, and what information would you provide to Jack to assist him in doing this?

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4. What are two sources that may be able to provide information about local sporting or activity groups?

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5. Identify one possible need of Jack’s and then describe a resource or strategy that could be used to assist Jack in managing that need in the context of a community-based sporting activity.

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Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Assist the person to identify and access community options to meet needs**
- 2B Support the person to access opportunities to establish connections through shared interests**
- 2C Seek feedback from the person and relevant others to meet current and changing needs**
- 2D Regularly review strategies with the person and supervisor to enable positive outcomes**
- 2E Monitor level of engagement in consultation with supervisor**

Implement strategies for community participation and inclusion according to the individualised plan

Most people with disability who access community-based programs will do so through an individualised plan to ensure that their particular needs, goals, preferences and requirements are addressed. An individual plan also means that support workers and others involved in implementing the plan are held accountable for their actions. Having regular meetings, identifying any barriers, reporting on outcomes and following up on tasks or goals not achieved all mean that an individual plan becomes an effective working document.

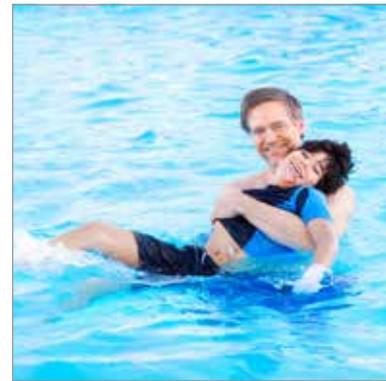
Role modelling and ongoing support help a person maintain their community involvement. This has a direct benefit in that the person is able to continue being an active participant in a particular activity. Your support work is then supplemented by a greater level of involvement by other members of the wider community.

2A Assist the person to identify and access community options to meet needs

People with disability have the right to receive services based on their identified needs and preferences and to be involved in planning and directing the services they use. An individualised plan is one way that these rights are upheld and documented.

An individualised plan will cover many different areas depending upon the needs and abilities of the person, as well as on their age and capacity to manage and direct their own services and support. An individualised plan will generally include goals or outcomes which identify what the person wants to achieve over a given timeframe and how they are going to do this.

A person who has a higher level of support needs will often have a plan which is more detailed and complex whilst a person who has lower support needs may have a plan which is briefer and less complex. Reading and understanding an individualised plan will help you gain a better understanding of how various community options can help a person meet the goals and outcomes of their plan.



Identified needs

An individualised plan will include information about the identified needs or goals of the person. It will state clearly the information required to guide people who are working with the person in accessing community based activities.

Arrangements for developing and maintaining an individualised plan will vary depending on the type of funding arrangement that exists for the person.

Some people may have their own individualised funding which allows them to make decisions directly about the types of services and support they require and to choose how to work towards their chosen goals and outcomes. It is important to understand your job role when assisting someone to access community activities and to know which aspects of a plan relate to your own work tasks.



Identify options that meet needs in a plan

It is useful to read an individualised plan carefully along with the person to ensure you are interpreting its information correctly. Once you have done this you can talk together about community options that will help meet specific outcomes identified in the plan.

Here are some examples of options that might help a person meet specific needs in various areas using community-based activities.

Social	Sporting
<p>Develop social skills such as interacting with others, making new friends, learning to communicate in social situations and gaining confidence by participating in activity programs, respite activities, out and about programs, arts and crafts programs or travel and related activities.</p>	<p>Build skills, knowledge and abilities in participating in sports that can assist with increasing fitness, muscle strength, endurance and other health parameters.</p> <p>Sporting activities can include water- and land-based sports with participation in specifically designed groups for people with disability, or in open or mixed settings or competitions.</p>
Recreation	Living skills
<p>Learn to participate in recreation pursuits and hobbies or leisure activities that can be completed individually or in groups.</p> <p>Recreation activities can build social and physical skills and assist with developing confidence and the ability to interact and participate socially within the community.</p>	<p>Enhance abilities related to activities of daily living such as managing personal finances, using public transport or knowing what is expected in social situations.</p> <p>Living skills outcomes can be achieved through activities such as going shopping, visiting a library, reading a map to locate a particular street or using personal organisation skills to plan for and attend an event in the community.</p>

Access options

Many community options can be selected to meet individual needs and preferences and it is important to think carefully about which ones are most appropriate for the person. Keep in mind that if the person is purchasing support directly they need to consider the cost of various choices. Transport needs, timing and ease of access should all be considered in helping a person plan for how they will access a community option in a practical sense. Remember that sometimes things that look good on paper simply do not work when it comes to implementation; it is at this point that some clear thinking, problem solving and common sense can be particularly useful.



Meet requirements

You may be responsible for identifying and assisting a person in accessing community options to meet their needs, or you may be asked to provide services where you are employed directly or indirectly by the person as part of an individual funding package. If you are asked to help complete, or implement, a community access plan it is important to know what to include and how to link activities to areas of need or specific requirements.

Here are some examples of programs and activities that have been matched to individual requirements.

Build physical fitness

- ▶ Need: To safely build physical fitness in a low impact manner and be involved in a group activity with people without disability
- ▶ Type of service: Community-based exercise program
- ▶ Example: A community recreation centre has a Tai Chi class that is low impact and run by a qualified fitness instructor. The class has some participants with disability as well as some older and younger adults without disability.

Attend the theatre

- ▶ Need: To attend art- or theatre-based activities and experiences that can accommodate a person with moderate intellectual disability
- ▶ Type of service: Specific accessible arts service provider
- ▶ Example: An Arts Access program can assist people with intellectual disability to experience the theatre.

Attend a full day activity

- ▶ Need: To attend a full day activity that combines recreation, education and social activities for a young adult with disability
- ▶ Type of service: A Futures for Young Adults program or package that combines various recreation, educational and social activities
- ▶ Example: A local TAFE provides a Futures for Young Adults funded program which also has extensive social activities, both within the program and as part of the wider TAFE.

Attend a structured program

- ▶ Need: To attend a structured program of daily activities for a person with a severe intellectual disability in a regional centre
- ▶ Type of service: A Day-to-Day Living program offering a permanent place for a person with severe intellectual disability
- ▶ Example: A non-government organisation in the regional area provides a Day-to-Day Living program based at the community health centre.

Offer choices that will meet identified needs

Often more than one service or activity will suit the needs of an individual. If you are working in a support or case management role, it is important to offer choice where possible and to encourage people to consider which service or activity they would prefer.

Consider also that some people may have more than one disability. This is often referred to as having a dual or multiple disabilities. You need to consider the needs of people based on their disability as a whole. Sometimes people can have extremely complex care needs, so you need to identify the services that are tailored to meet the needs of these people. Often people may be using an individual funding package to allow them to purchase services directly.

Here are some services for people with complex or multiple disabilities.

Services for people with complex or multiple disabilities

Scope – for people with a range of disability caused by cerebral palsy

Acquired Brain Injury Slow to Recover program – for people who have a catastrophic brain injury with slow progress and recovery

Victorian Dual Disability Service – for people with an intellectual disability and mental health condition

Australian DeafBlind Council – for people who are both deaf and blind

Involve the family in accessing community options

In many cases, it is appropriate to involve family members in accessing services and making decisions about options in the community, particularly if you are working with a child. The family may have had a service recommended to them by a friend or they may have done research and want to ask your opinion about a service provider they have found. In the case of adults, the role of the family may become one of providing encouragement and support rather than decision-making.

Family is also a valuable resource in helping a person with disability to access community services by providing assistance for no cost and by being present at times places that others may be unable to accommodate, often on short notice.

Family members may be able to:

- ▶ provide transport
- ▶ provide supervision
- ▶ provide personal care needs
- ▶ make day-to-day arrangements
- ▶ liaise with service providers.

Work with others in accessing community options

There are many other people who may be involved in identifying and accessing community options which meet the needs of an individual's plan. These people may be included in planning and discussion meetings or they may provide direct services to meet specific goals or outcomes within the plan. Some people may be involved for a short time in sharing information, providing training or developing programs and services during an initial phase.

To work well with relevant others, it is important to think about your own work role and how you can best reflect your organisation in a professional, competent manner.

To work effectively with relevant others, always:

- ▶ make sure you are polite, courteous and professional in your interactions
- ▶ be punctual for meetings
- ▶ ensure you are well presented and dressed appropriately
- ▶ prepare for meetings by reading and understanding material provided
- ▶ be willing to ask questions and ensure you understand what is going on
- ▶ allow time for others to speak and ask their own questions
- ▶ work in a way that creates a professional, competent image of your workplace.

Example

Prepare for a planning meeting

Pauline has been invited to attend a planning meeting to discuss an update to an individual plan for a person who receives services from a number of different providers. This is the first time Pauline has attended a meeting like this and she is quite nervous. She makes sure she reads the person’s existing plan carefully before the meeting and makes some notes to remind herself about key points. She looks up the address for the meeting and plans how to get there on time. She prepares for the meeting by making sure her iPad is fully charged, her notes are in a folder and ready to use and she is dressed in neat, smart clothing. When she enters the meeting room she feels confident and is proud that she is able to represent her organisation well.



Practice task 5

1. What are three ways you could prepare for a meeting that will be attended by other service providers and health professionals, at which you will discuss a person receiving services?

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2. Identify an activity that would suit a person who has identified a desire to increase their physical fitness and lose weight.

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Click to complete Practice task 5

2B Support the person to access opportunities to establish connections through shared interests

Shared interests are important in helping social relationships develop and continue. It means that a person is able to start a conversation and find common interests and experiences.

A shared interest is anything that two or more people like to do and have in common with each other. Shared interests can include activities such as sport, going to the movies, reading, bush walking, music, travelling, art, blogging or visiting chat rooms, cooking and sewing. Shared interests encourage people to be physically and cognitively active.

Sometimes people with disability may be socially isolated. Helping them to form links with community-based activities that facilitate shared interests with others who live nearby can be a positive and enjoyable experience for the person. It can also assist them in meeting many of their identified needs and wants. Activities that are community-based are generally preferable to activities run in isolation as they are consistent with best practice inclusion principles.



Link people with shared interest groups or individuals

Shared experiences are a good basis for developing social relationships. Building on shared experiences often means moving away from specialised disability service providers and encouraging people with disability to look for mainstream opportunities to build social connections. This is a valuable way of fostering greater community inclusion and acceptance. In contrast, activities that are only for people with disability can have the undesired effect of fostering seclusion and isolation, preventing people with disability from interacting with the greater community. It is important to remember that it is the person's choice as to where, how and why they choose to participate in activities in the community. It is not your role to tell them what style of activities they should choose to do.



Linking a person with a shared interest group or individual may mean helping them make contact. This could be through assisting with a phone call, helping them visit a location, helping make travel arrangements or asking questions on a person's behalf about accessible facilities.

Link people with shared interests to specific programs

It also helps to learn more about the specific services that can help a person with disability to form links with shared interest groups or activities, community groups or individuals.

Here are two examples.

Respite programs

When offered on an individual basis, respite programs can have the double benefit of allowing a family carer to take time off for their own activities, as well as helping a person to link with a shared interest activity or person.

Access programs

Programs such as Arts Access help people with disability or disadvantage to access arts and the theatre through discounted tickets, information about Auslan interpreted performances, captioned performances, information about wheelchair accessible venues, appropriate seating choices in a venue and companion card information.

Encourage relationships with shared interest groups

Relationships are often based on conversation or a shared activity. As a support worker, it can be your role to give a developing relationship a bit of a helping hand. This is often the case when you are working with people who have limited social experience, or who lack social skills and communication abilities. However, make sure the people involved don't start to rely on you to do all the talking. If you are not careful, you may find that you become the active participant in a group setting, rather than the person you are supporting.

Here are some ideas for helping to get a relationship started.

Ideas for helping to get a relationship started

- ▶ Start a conversation with another person and assist the person to join in.
- ▶ Ask questions that are directed at a number of people in a group.
- ▶ Prompt the person to participate directly in a conversation by asking questions you know they can answer easily.
- ▶ Begin conversations about topic areas you know are of interest to the person and others.
- ▶ Role model appropriate communication skills.
- ▶ Act as an interpreter to begin a conversation, for example using key word signing.
- ▶ Encourage other people in the group to assist with a task when you are not there; you may need to find an excuse to leave for a moment.
- ▶ Show other people how to use communication equipment such as alphabet boards or electronic devices.

Use technology to access information

The internet can be a wonderful starting point if you are unsure about opportunities that exist in the local community. Try searching for a specific region or suburb along with the type of activity you are seeking. Often you will find a good listing of local activity groups or clubs that are available. You could also try looking up the local council website for a particular area as there will often be up-to-date information about local organisations as well as council-run programs and services that might be appropriate and useful. If you find using the internet challenging, many libraries run free classes to help you get started in finding information online.



Assist the person to become an active member of their neighbourhood

People living in an area have a shared interest in that area, but the people within neighbourhoods vary greatly. Being an active member of a neighbourhood can therefore mean different things in different contexts. It is helpful to promote opportunities for people with disability to become active members of their neighbourhoods, but only if they choose to do so. Some people may prefer to remain disconnected from their neighbourhood for a variety of reasons. If they do, it is important to respect their right to do this. It is not your role to ensure people link themselves with their neighbourhood if they do not want to.

The benefits of being involved in a neighbourhood and some ideas for becoming involved are outlined here.

Benefits of involvement	How to be involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Social relationships that are accessible and not geographically limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Join a neighbourhood group or committee, such as Neighbourhood Watch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The safety and security of knowing the neighbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Participate in free community events in public places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The social benefits of casual conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Introduce yourself to local people with a simple 'Hi, my name is ...'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Being part of social events such as street Christmas parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attend community events such as Carols by Candlelight or movies in the park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The development of longer term and more significant friendships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consider buying a dog and going for walks in the neighbourhood

Help to foster neighbourhood interactions

Support workers can play a role in fostering neighbourhood interactions simply by being there and taking opportunities when they arise. Sometimes people from the wider community are wary of interacting with a person with disability. As a support worker, you can take the lead and encourage interactions when you see the chance.

Say hello to a neighbour, and make sure you introduce the person you are supporting and explain your own role as a support worker or personal carer. Encourage a conversation between the person and the neighbour, if it seems appropriate, and fade out your own involvement if the conversation is going well.

Of course, it is vital to remember that interactions with the neighbours are not always appropriate or a good idea. Use your common sense and judgment to appraise the situation, and weigh up the benefits against the potential risks. In some situations, it may be wiser to pay only limited attention to the neighbours, or to make sure a person you are supporting is aware of whom they should not interact with. Remember that people with disability are vulnerable in many situations, and there are those in our society who will deliberately prey upon their vulnerability.



Best practice inclusion principles

The concept of universal design has become integral in the way new fields, products and services are designed across many areas of daily life. Best practice inclusion means providing a seamless, fully accessible environment, service or product which can be used easily by all people rather than one which has just been designed for a person with disability. For example, a playground might be designed to be accessible to children who use a mobility aid as well as those who are ambulant. An art centre might ensure it has fully accessible toilets and a wide range of programs to meet the needs of patrons who have specific requirements.



Best practice inclusion means ensuring programs and services operate in a way that is deliberately accessible and inclusive to people of all abilities. It is not sufficient to adopt a responsive approach where strategies are developed to promote inclusivity only after a person with a disability attempts to use them. Best practice means taking a proactive approach so that management decisions, systems, processes and facilities are made accessible and inclusive beforehand, so that the environment is welcoming and appropriate for everyone who wishes to participate.

You can learn more about inclusive play spaces, at: <http://aspirelr.link/inclusive-play-space>

Capacity building in the community

Capacity building is an important concept in community services practice. It means working in a way that shifts skills, knowledge and confidence from those who have specialist knowledge (such as those working in community services) to providers in the wider community, such as sporting clubs. Capacity building is important because it strengthens local groups and organisations and ensures they are better able to provide a wide range of options and services to people who with disability as well as to those without.

Here are the most important aspects of capacity building to strengthen the options, networks and services available in the community for people with disability.

Knowledge building

This means building knowledge about various types of disability, their potential impact on participation and appropriate and safe strategies that can be utilised to promote inclusion and participation in programs and activities.

Skills building

This refers to building skills and abilities to effectively manage, coach or lead groups of people who have varying needs, abilities and requirements, and over time increasing the level of confidence in providing appropriate services to a wider range of people across many areas of need.

Organisational change

Organisational change requires considering inclusive concepts and intent within the focus and direction of the group or organisation at a management and leadership level. This in turn drives change and builds capacity amongst group members and the wider organisation or group.

Documentation of intent

Document intent to actively attract and promote participation to people with disability and inclusion of the 'how' and 'why' of inclusion within the vision, values, procedures or other formal documents of the group or organisation.

Example

Demonstrate best practice inclusion principles to enable greater access for people with disability

A board of community members has the responsibility for establishing a new community centre. They have some important decisions to make. First they need choose a location for the centre. They agree to site the centre directly across from the train station as it will provide better access to a wider group of people from the local community.

They then contact the local council and ask for uneven areas of the road between the station and the proposed centre to be addressed, for tactile paving to be placed along the route from the station to provide safe access for people with low vision, and for a pedestrian crossing to be installed.

These small steps taken early in the planning process ensure the community centre board and the council are both working together to provide safe access for community members with disability.



Practice task 6

Read the case study, then answer the questions.

Case study

Pauline has recently been discussing activities with some older women who live in a small country town. The women all have memory support needs and require some supervision to ensure their safety and wellbeing. All of them like books and reading and have expressed interest in participating in a reading group or book club. Pauline contacts the library to discuss the situation and finds the head librarian is very receptive to the idea of developing a new program. She asks Pauline to tell her more about what the library can do to help develop a reading group for the women. She explains that she has no expertise or knowledge of this specialist area. Pauline prepares some information for her and emails it to her. She then works with the librarian to develop a set of guidelines and principles to help get the group started. A few weeks later Pauline visits the library and is pleased to see the librarian putting up a poster about a new group that she has called Memory Moments.

1. What is the name of the principle that is being used in this situation to transfer knowledge and skills from Pauline to the librarian?

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2. Why is it better for the reading group to be run at the library rather than in a specific centre for people who have memory support needs?

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3. What are two benefits for the women of becoming involved in the reading group?

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Click to complete Practice task 6

2C Seek feedback from the person and relevant others to meet current and changing needs

Feedback can be useful in helping you take action and make changes to how you provide support to a person. Feedback can come from a number of sources, such as the person themselves, family members, colleagues, supervisors or relevant others. Feedback may suggest that a change is required in some aspect of support, such as a need which has increased over time. It can also indicate when an activity or community option is working well and is currently meeting the needs and wants of the person.



Actively seeking feedback is useful in ensuring the support provided is always appropriate and represents best practice. Feedback can be obtained formally or informally, depending on the situation.

Informal feedback

Informal feedback can be useful in allowing you to make small but important changes to your daily work practices. Informal feedback can come from a variety of sources. Consider how you respond to feedback; remember it is not usually intended as a criticism of your work but rather as a suggestion for how things can be improved. For example, a person might tell you they are finding it very tiring going out for so long during a recreation activity. You could use this feedback to help them plan and organise a shorter activity which will not be so tiring.

Examples of feedback that might be provided by different people:

- ▶ The person receiving services may provide specific feedback about the nature, timing or type of activities which are provided.
- ▶ A family member may comment on a changing need or issue for the person and ask you what you have noticed.
- ▶ A colleague may discuss with you a problem they have noticed so you can plan a solution together.
- ▶ An advocate may tell you the person has asked them to provide informal feedback to you about how much they are enjoying their activities.
- ▶ A mental health nurse may suggest a better way of responding to an upsetting comment made by the person.

Formal feedback

Formal feedback can be sought from the person you support, family members, colleagues, your supervisor or relevant others involved in supporting the person. Formal feedback is typically provided in a different way to informal feedback and within a different time frame. You should feel confident in seeking formal feedback as it is a good way to learn and to improve your skills and knowledge. Try and see

formal feedback as a way of achieving best practice standards in the work you do with a person. Feedback is the best way of knowing what you are doing well and what is working well for the person, as well as what is not working.

One of the most common ways of receiving feedback in a formal context is through an update to a support plan. This is a time where a group of people can come together and seek and share information about services, goals, outcomes and the effectiveness of strategies and activities currently being used. These can then be adapted as required to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the person.

Use human resources support to meet needs

As people's needs change, so do their needs for services. They may require more or different support from workers or they may need assistance with different tasks. Extra staffing may be required to ensure full and appropriate inclusion and participation by people with disability in a range of activities within the community. This ensures that participation is safe and enjoyable for all and that specific needs are met. You may need to suggest additional human resources to meet a person's changing needs, or make a request for a change to a staffing plan through your supervisor. In many situations, staff will work together as a team to provide services and supports, including planning, collaborating, discussing ideas, developing improvements and finding solutions to issues. A team approach is used frequently in community services workplaces, and often involves team members with a variety of skills and backgrounds. Here are some situations where additional staff supports may be appropriate.

Personal care support

- ▶ Toileting assistance
- ▶ Dressing assistance
- ▶ Showering assistance
- ▶ Behavioural support and supervision

Examples:

- ▶ Personal care allows an adult wheelchair user to attend a day-long cooking school.
- ▶ By providing skilled meal assistance from qualified nursing staff, a teenager with Duchenne muscular dystrophy is able to safely attend a school holiday program. This gives his younger brother the chance to do some one-to-one activities with his mother at home.

Community support

- ▶ Shopping
- ▶ Banking
- ▶ Posting items and letters
- ▶ Carrying out general administrative tasks related to daily living

Example:

- ▶ Recipe cards help a person shop independently.

Respite care support

- ▶ Care that provides a regular unpaid carer (usually a family member or partner) with a break from their caring responsibilities

Example:

- ▶ By providing out of home respite care for a young child with severe physical disability, a family is able to go away camping for the weekend while the child participates in recreation activities at a host family home.

Transport services

- ▶ Services delivered by a volunteer or paid worker in order to transport a person with support needs safely from one location to another

Example:

- ▶ Disabled parking permits and passes give workers and people with support needs the ability to park easily and obtain discounted rates on travel and other ticketed activities such as the theatre, sporting events or movies.

Request supports to meet changing needs

You may need to provide assistance to a person with disability to request a particular support they require as their needs change. This could be the case if a new need or interest arises for the person, or if they learn of a support that could be useful to them. The person may simply decide that they wish to focus on a new area of their daily life and would like to purchase support to allow them to meet an existing or upcoming need or interest. When providing assistance, you should ensure you are keeping within your assigned job role and that you are clear about what is (and is not) considered a part of your duties for your employer.



As a support worker, you may be able to assist by doing the following.

Actions to assist with requests for support

- ▶ Refer a request to your supervisor
- ▶ Talk to a person (and sometimes their family) about how particular supports could help
- ▶ Assist a person to complete a form or online application
- ▶ Make enquiries on behalf of a person you are supporting

Example

Change a start time

Sui Lee has arrived early for her shift with Mr Smithson. She is keen to make a good impression as this is her first day and she wants to do well. She knocks on the door and is surprised when his wife answers it rather gruffly and does not acknowledge her as she comes into the room. Mrs Smithson then proceeds to rush about the house, clearing away papers and putting the dishes in the sink. She appears embarrassed that the kitchen has not yet been cleaned from breakfast and that the house is untidy.



Sui Lin asks her what is wrong and whether she has done anything to cause offence. Mrs Smithson tells her that she is not yet feeling used to having respite and that she only likes people to come into the house when it is clean and tidy. It is only then that she feels she can relax and go out for a while to enjoy herself. Sui Lin apologises and quickly realises that Mrs Smithson’s feedback is telling her she should make sure she arrives exactly on time rather than early the next time she comes to the house.

Practice task 7

1. Give an example of informal feedback that you might seek from a family member to ensure the services you provide during a respite at home activity are meeting the current needs of the person.

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2. Give an example of a situation where formal feedback might be obtained and used to adapt service provision to meet a changing need of a person.

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Click to complete Practice task 7

2D Regularly review strategies with the person and supervisor to enable positive outcomes

Regularly reviewing strategies ensures that the services and activities you provide are relevant, appropriate and enjoyable. Reviewing should occur in the first instance with the person themselves. This is based on the concept of person-centred practice, where the individual is in charge of their planning and management of services, particularly in situations where they are using individual funding to purchase their own supports. Reviewing can also occur in conjunction with your supervisor in line with organisational practices and procedures. Reviewing strategies with your supervisor can be useful in ensuring you are working in a safe and appropriate way and that your work and actions will lead to positive outcomes for the person.



Identify community participation strategies that may require review

As a support worker you must pay close attention to the person you are supporting during activities while using their individual plan. Any variations or concerns should be discussed in the first instance with the person as appropriate. For example, you may observe that the person no longer feels confident in a particular environment or seems to have lost enjoyment in an activity they once enjoyed. In some cases you may need to discuss issues with a family member or report issues or concerns to the supervisor for review and follow up as needed.

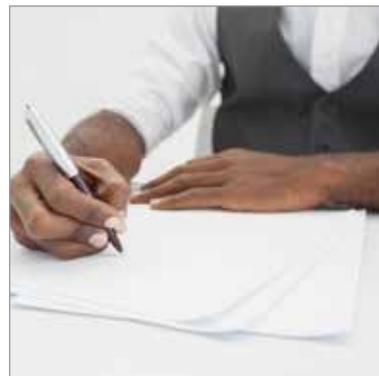
Remember that the plan is a document that requires regular input from the person you support where possible, as well as those closest to the person. It is your responsibility to observe and monitor changes in the individual's needs and to refer these to the person in charge of updating the plan. The following situations should trigger a review.

Situations where a person's plan may need to be altered

- ▶ They are no longer as mobile as their plan suggests.
- ▶ They have a fall or near miss accident.
- ▶ They have decreased or increased skills in a particular area.
- ▶ A therapist, nurse or doctor talks to you or the person about changes in their abilities and needs.
- ▶ They express concern about their own abilities.
- ▶ They ask you for help or advice about other ways of meeting their needs.
- ▶ A person, family member or advocate asks for the plan to be reviewed.
- ▶ You have concerns about the person and their abilities and needs after observing them.

Report community participation strategies that may require review

If you feel an individual plan needs amending because of problematic community participation strategies, write your concerns and ideas down. You could do this in the plan itself or in a section of the plan for notes and comments. Your workplace may use a system of weekly or daily reporting, where you fill out a report after working with a person. You will need to use the system that exists in your workplace. If there is not a formal, recognised system for reporting available, make a note in your diary or in your digital files and provide this information to your supervisor. Your supervisor is the person you should contact for advice and they will be able to give you direction about what actions you should take.



Community participation strategies will generally also be reviewed according to a regular time line, such as biannually or annually, but it is important to also conduct a review at other times if the situation indicates it is necessary.

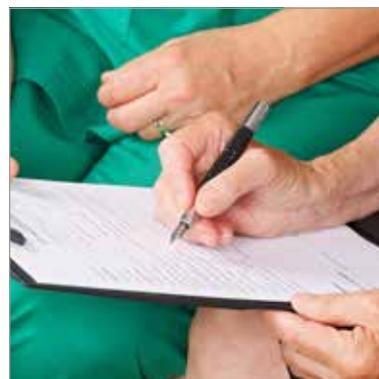
Refer to others if a plan needs reviewing

In most workplaces you will operate as part of a team. Although your work may feel solitary sometimes, remember there are others around you to offer support and guidance. These people can include your supervisor, a senior manager, colleagues that are more experienced, as well as family members and advocates of the person you support.

Check with your supervisor about the best way of letting them know you think a plan needs updating because of changing needs. They may ask you to refer the situation to another worker such as a case manager, or they may decide to deal with the situation themselves. They could ask you to alter the care plan and print out another copy. You will need to follow the method that best suits your supervisor and your organisation's requirements.

Responsibilities of the person with a disability

The person with disability has a responsibility to share information that is necessary for providing safe and appropriate support and care. They should follow and comply with the requirements of any policies or standards that are relevant to the services they receive. In some settings, the person may be asked to sign a document or agree that they will provide accurate and up-to-date information as needed, and that they will let the service know of changes that might affect their care and support. The person with disability has a responsibility wherever possible to act in a way that does not place workers at risk of injury.



Seek support from your supervisor

You may require support from your supervisor to help you identify and resolve community participation strategies that might not be working for achieving positive outcomes for a person. Your supervisor is likely to be more experienced and have better knowledge of local resources and appropriate strategies that might work for a person. They are also able to authorise or instruct you in how to approach other agencies or service providers as required to seek additional support for a person, or to make a referral.

Here are some ways you could approach your supervisor to ask for assistance and support.

Approaching your supervisor for assistance

Email

Send an email detailing your concerns and asking specific, clear questions so your supervisor can respond in writing.

Team meeting

Ask for assistance during a regular team meeting where your supervisor is present; this approach could also support others in your team.

Mobile phone

If the matter is urgent, use a mobile phone to contact your supervisor directly for an immediate response.

Informal conversation

Raise your questions during an informal conversation where you can talk for an extended period if needed.

Informal conversation

Raise your questions during an informal conversation where you can talk for an extended period if needed.

Formal meeting

Request a formal meeting with your supervisor and take notes about their responses, information and instructions.

Example

Amend a plan

Rachel provides support to Chantelle during regular weekly outings. Chantelle has multiple sclerosis and her condition changes from time to time. Chantelle has just begun a new medication, and Rachel reads this information in her plan.

During an outing, Rachel notices Chantelle appears less focused and is quite sleepy and distracted. She has trouble staying awake and Rachel needs to provide much closer support and supervision than normal.

Rachel is aware Chantelle's family are away on holidays next month and Chantelle will be receiving 16 hours of in-home care per week for a few weeks.

Rachel refers the issue to her supervisor via email and suggests a meeting be called with Chantelle and her family before they leave for holidays. Rachel suggests the plan be reviewed with an emphasis on medical details regarding medication and any effects on Chantelle's behaviour and mood. The meeting is called for the following week. Chantelle's doctor provides medication advice and comments via email to share with workers and others at the meeting.

This information, together with Rachel's observations, means Chantelle receives good quality care while her family is away.

Practice task 8

1. What are two things you could do if you noticed a person seemed less engaged and interested in activities that you know they had previously enjoyed?

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2. Your workplace does not have a formal system for communicating information about changing needs or other problems or observations related to people who are receiving support services. What should you do to report a concern you have?

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3. A person for whom you are providing support tells you they have been recently diagnosed with a mental illness and that they are currently receiving treatment. What is it their responsibility regarding communicating this to support service organisations they use? This information is new and so is not included in their individual plan. What should happen?

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Click to complete Practice task 8

2E Monitor level of engagement in consultation with supervisor

Ongoing monitoring and reviewing processes ensure that a person is able to get the most out of their community activities. Monitoring is a useful approach that can inform the review process and identify when there is a need to undertake a review or make a change in a particular area. Monitoring simply means paying attention to what is going on during your work with a person. One area where monitoring is important is that of engagement, such as how involved and enthusiastic a person is about their activities. Monitoring a person's engagement can tell you a lot about how successful the community access strategies and activities are in meeting their individual needs and goals.



Why monitor engagement?

Monitoring engagement is important in ensuring positive outcomes for the person receiving support and is a good indication of whether a program or service is operating at a best practice level. Well-planned, flexible and appropriate community activities are more likely to be positively received by people. Conversely, activities that are poorly planned and carried out or that do not satisfy the needs and expectations of the person are less likely to receive a positive response. People are only going to remain engaged with activities that continue to meet their needs and expectations. By monitoring engagement in activities, you are able to adapt and change the activities and amend the support plan as required to ensure positive outcomes in the longer term.



How to monitor engagement

Monitoring engagement in a program or activity can provide you with important information about how successful it is for a person. There are several ways you can monitor engagement so that you can take action as required.

Strategies you could use to monitor engagement by a person in community access activities include:

- ▶ visual observations of what you see when you are working with the person
- ▶ auditory observations of what you hear the person say
- ▶ feedback from others (when you cannot observe directly)
- ▶ written notes to remind you about your observations of the person's engagement level later on.

The role of the supervisor

Your supervisor is able to offer advice and direction in situations where you are unsure what course of action to take. If you are working with a particular person and you are concerned about their level of engagement, you should feel confident in approaching your supervisor to discuss the situation.

Here are some things your supervisor might be able to do.

Supervisor's actions

Observe you working with the person and see if they can provide useful feedback

Talk to you about possible strategies that might assist

Sit in on a discussion session with the person to help you talk to them about engagement

Suggest reasons that the person's level of engagement may have changed

Provide advice in situations where you feel the person may be at risk of harm

Give direct instructions about what you should do in a particular situation

Example

A change in engagement

Gemma has been working with Phil for several months. He has been coming to a drop in arts program and at first seemed to be gaining a great deal from it. He had made some new friends and was enthusiastic about mastering water colours and pastels. Now he is still attending the sessions but his enthusiasm for the activities seems to have disappeared. He arrives later and later each week and is quiet and withdrawn. He no longer initiates conversation although he is still content to respond to questions. Gemma decides to speak firstly with Phil and then with her supervisor to decide what to do to help Phil.



Practice task 9

1. What are four things you might observe if a person is becoming less engaged with a community activity?

2. What are two ways your supervisor could assist you if you felt a person was becoming less engaged in activities?

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Click to complete Practice task 9

Summary

1. Shared interests can promote good social interactions and the development of positive relationships.
2. A support worker can use a variety of social and direct care strategies to help a person they are supporting to link in with neighbourhood activities in their area.
3. Some people may need to utilise supports such as communication aids, transport services or personal care supports to help them participate in community-based activities.
4. A support worker can advise an individual and their family about suitable activities that are more likely to lead to positive experiences.
5. Role modelling is one useful way of assisting a person to develop skills that will lead to positive social and community-based outcomes.
6. Some skills and tasks may be outside the skill set of a support worker; in this case, help should be sought from the appropriate person.
7. An individual plan may require reviewing or updating as the needs and abilities of a person change.

Learning checkpoint 2

Implement strategies for community participation and inclusion according to the individualised plan

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in implementing strategies for community participation and inclusion according to the individualised plan of a person with disability who you are providing support to.

Part A

1. Janet’s individual plan states that she ‘needs to have access to a quiet, clean area where she can check her blood sugar levels and administer insulin’. You do not know much about diabetes management and you think it is important to increase your knowledge in order to support Janet appropriately. What are three strategies you could use to assist Janet in finding an appropriate community option to allow her to pursue her dream of becoming an artist?

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2. What are three possible benefits to participating in an activity based on shared interests?

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3. Simone communicates through gestures and facial expressions. She does not use spoken language. Describe three ways you could obtain feedback about whether a day activity program is continuing to meet her needs and preferences.

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4. Explain one right and one responsibility of a person with disability participating in a community-based activity.

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5. You are not sure how engaged a person you are supporting currently is in their chosen community activity. What is one thing you could do to monitor their level of engagement?

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6. Write a definition of 'best practice inclusion.'

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Part B

Read the scenario, then answer the questions that follow.

Scenario

You have assisted Mark to become active in a local theatre group that meets once a week on a Saturday. The program leader has contacted you by phone to say she is worried about Mark. She tells you he has had several falls at the theatre lately and that his mood and level of awareness seem to have changed in recent weeks. You know Mark has had difficulties with medication management in the past and he is taking several different medications. You also know his physical health is poor and he does not have a strong family support network to assist him at home.

1. List three people you could contact to seek feedback about Mark to address his current and potentially changing needs.

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2. What action should be triggered by the information provided by the program leader?

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3. What benefit might there be for Mark if you decide to take action following the program leader's phone call to you?

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4. It is now three months later. Mark contacts you to say he has met a friend who is in a band and this has prompted Mark to become interested in learning to play an instrument. What actions could you take to support Mark in this new shared interest?

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5. You decide to spend some time with the program leader at the theatre to assist her in planning strategies to help the group become more inclusive and welcoming for people with disability. What is the broader benefit of doing this in terms of the community as a whole?

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A** Recognise physical, skill-related and other barriers to participation
- 3B** Collaborate with the person and supervisor to identify solutions to overcome barriers
- 3C** Support the person to implement strategies to address barriers to planned participation
- 3D** Monitor the success of strategies in consultation with the person and supervisor
- 3E** Recognise own limitations in addressing issues and seek advice when necessary

Identify, address and monitor barriers to community participation and social inclusion

There are many barriers which may keep a person from accessing community-based activities and pursuits. Sometimes these barriers relate to the physical environment and sometimes they have to do with things such as attitudes or societal expectations.

Where possible, support workers should identify and remove barriers that cause difficulties for a person in accessing activities in the community. In many cases, a team approach will be required to deal with barriers, implement strategies and assist with issues as they arise. By identifying barriers and removing or reducing their impact, a person is more easily able to make their own choices about how they participate in their local community.

3A Recognise physical, skill-related and other barriers to participation

Although the right to access and participation is supported by Australian legislation, many people with disability still experience barriers in their daily lives. Barriers to participation can occur for many different reasons. Sometimes they relate to the physical environment and are a result of shortcomings such as poor building design, older premises, lack of maintenance or problematic locations of facilities. Other times they relate to issues that are specific to the person, such as their ability to perform a particular skill or task.

Here are some examples of types of barriers which might limit participation and inclusion.

<p style="text-align: center;">Physical barriers</p> <p>These include barriers that relate to the physical or built environment, such as a natural slope in a park which is too steep for access by a wheelchair or a carpeted floor in a hotel which has pile too deep for wheels to run across it.</p> <p>Physical barriers often relate to areas such as toilets and changing room facilities, and to the ability to use toilets, showers and hand basins in a safe and dignified manner.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Societal barriers</p> <p>Societal barriers are often formed by the attitude of other people and can include statements or comments which are derogatory or belittling.</p> <p>They can also be caused by decisions made by staff or management that can have the effect of limiting or reducing access.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Skills and abilities</p> <p>These are barriers related to the ability of the person to function independently or with some support in a community context.</p> <p>It is important to distinguish between a true barrier related to a skill or ability and one that is a feature of a potentially discriminatory physical barrier.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cultural or linguistic barriers</p> <p>Sometimes people can be limited by barriers related to their cultural or linguistic background, such as when a person is not able to participate in an activity due to cultural beliefs or because they are unable to read and understand written or spoken information, signs, brochures or instructions.</p>

The right to fully participate in activities

In Australia and around the world, it is accepted that people with disability have the right to participate fully and without discrimination in all aspects of community life. Australia has endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Under the convention, countries must agree to 'identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers and ensure that persons with disabilities can access their environment, transportation, public facilities and services, and information and communications technologies'.

The convention challenges everyone in our society to actively seek out opportunities to promote inclusion, and to take additional steps to assist a wider range of people with disability to participate fully in community life. This includes creating a better understanding of disability and the needs of people with disability, providing open choices and opportunities for people with a disability, and building better alliances within the community.

There are two important documents you should be familiar with.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

- ▶ This is an important piece of federal legislation that promotes the right of people to participate in areas of life including employment, education, living situations, sporting and recreation activities, and buying goods and services.
- ▶ It is against the law in Australia to discriminate against a person, or against others associated with that person (such as support workers, carers or family members), on the basis of their disability.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- ▶ This document recognises the inherent human rights of all people, regardless of who they are or where they live, although this is not a legally binding document. The declaration covers areas of life such as the right to free speech, education, health, life, social and economic security and, above all, the dignity of being a human being.
- ▶ Because Australia has endorsed the declaration there is an expectation that the government will promote the inclusion of people with disability into the community with effective strategies and guidelines.

Laws relating to access to buildings

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* is a piece of legislation that relates to physical barriers and access for people with disability. However, the Act does not contain technical information about how buildings and other locations should comply with the legislation; it simply says that people with disability should not be discriminated against.

The Building Code of Australia is a compliance-based code. This means that new or modified buildings are required to comply with the rulings of the code. The Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standard) came into effect in 2011 and were written to give greater certainty to the building industry that it was complying with the *Disability Discrimination Act*, and to ensure equitable, dignified access to premises for people with disability.

Identify existing barriers

There are many different types of barriers that exist in the physical environment for people with disability. As a general rule, newer buildings and premises should have a

higher degree of compliance with access requirements than older buildings; however, there are still many places in the community where access is poor or non-existent for many people with disability.

Some of these physical barriers and how they affect people with varying disability are shown below.

Steps, stairs, escalators and small lifts

Example:

- ▶ To gain entry to a building
- ▶ To move around inside a building
- ▶ To move from one area to another within a room

These affect people who:

- ▶ use a scooter
- ▶ use an electric wheelchair
- ▶ use a manual wheelchair and who cannot climb a step with their chair
- ▶ have arthritis affecting their ability to step upwards
- ▶ have impaired vision and cannot see that the step or stair is there.

Doors and doorways

Example:

- ▶ Doors to and from rooms or buildings
- ▶ Standard 900mm doorways, which can limit access
- ▶ Doors with varying access methods such as handles, remote sensors or a push-pull mechanism

These affect people who:

- ▶ use a chair or scooter that does not fit easily through a 900mm doorway
- ▶ cannot manage a push-pull door, particularly when it is heavy
- ▶ cannot see that a door is there
- ▶ are not tall enough to activate a remote sensor door, such as when the sensor is set above the height of someone sitting down.

Lighting

Example:

- ▶ Lighting to illuminate a room, entry or exit point or workspace within or outside a building or other area
- ▶ Lighting to indicate emergency exit points

These affect people who:

- ▶ cannot identify certain colours
- ▶ find excessive light a problem
- ▶ find flickering light a problem
- ▶ have limited vision and cannot identify changes in slope, direction or surface due to poor lighting.

Signs

Example:

- ▶ Signs to indicate:
- ▶ direction
- ▶ change of level
- ▶ location of toilets
- ▶ location of rooms or buildings
- ▶ hazards
- ▶ entry and exit points.

These affect people who:

- ▶ are unable to interpret the sign correctly due to a cognitive impairment
- ▶ cannot see the sign due to a vision impairment
- ▶ do not read and write in English and who also have disability.

Toilets

Example:

- ▶ Toilets with narrow doorways
- ▶ Toilets without grab rails
- ▶ Toilets that are not identified using raised tactile symbols
- ▶ Toilets that have ambiguous or difficult-to-interpret signage

These affect people who:

- ▶ use a wheelchair or scooter that cannot fit through a toilet doorway or manoeuvre within the toilet room
- ▶ cannot identify which is the male or female toilet because of a visual or cognitive impairment.

Assess barriers

The ways barriers affect different people will always vary. There are many things that make participating in an activity more or less attractive. Factors such as being able to easily get to an activity, feel safe while participating, understand key information and interact comfortably with others can all make a difference. The absence of any of these features can potentially create barriers to limit participation.

As a rule, people with physical disability will have greater problems with physical barriers. Older people may also struggle with physical barriers due to decreased muscle strength or issues such as arthritis, and may have trouble with small text, complex instructions, or activities offered late at night or involve highly vigorous activities. People from particular cultural or linguistic backgrounds may experience barriers with activities at particular times of day, or that are offered in a mixed gender context or that include certain kinds of media or music that might be inappropriate for them.

You must have a good understanding of the needs of a client before you are able to assess how a physical barrier affects them. The care plan or individual plan should



help with this. You should also talk to the client directly where possible, as they will have a much greater understanding of how physical barriers affect them. Take notes of your conversation if you need to.

Assess barriers for specific people

Physical barriers may not be challenging in situations where there is one person with support needs and one worker involved. But these same barriers can become a problem when there is a group of people with disability all trying to move beyond a barrier. For example, a group of people who use wheelchairs may find it difficult to visit a small cafe with a large number of tables and chairs, even though there is a ramp providing entry into the cafe itself. The sheer number of people trying to use the venue at the same time creates the problem rather than the ability of a single person to access the venue.

Assessments of barriers will also vary depending on which group of people with support needs you are considering. Some barriers will only be a problem for particular people, while some will be problematic for many different groups of people.

Assess barriers to maximise community participation

Remember that there may be barriers that cause a person to choose not to access support services in the first place. These potential users of a service can be put off by negative expectations, poor word of mouth reports from others who have used a venue or service, or simply by their perceptions of how difficult they think it will be to access something.

Involving the person is a vital part of this process. As a support worker, you need to provide care in a way that is person-centred, meaning that you consider their needs, abilities and preferences as the most significant part of what you do. It is not useful to provide care that focuses on what is easy for a venue operator or for you as the worker. The needs of the person should come first.

There are five steps to go through when assessing a barrier.

Steps to assess a barrier

- 1 Set goals**

Decide what the person wants to achieve during the activity; for example, learning to do ballroom dancing
- 2 Plan**

Work out a plan for the preferred way of doing the activity, based on the person's preferences. For example, the person may prefer to attend a single gender group rather than a mixed gender one, or to attend with a chaperone.
- 3 Identify the person's limitations**

This involves talking with the person or taking note of factors in the individual plan that could limit that person's ability to deal with a barrier. For example, using an electric wheelchair is a potential limitation to getting up and down stairs.
- 4 Identify venue or access limitations**

This involves assessing the venue or route to be taken and identifying potential problems along the way; for example, a flight of stairs leading to an upstairs toilet in a restaurant.

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Seek alternatives

Where possible, look for options and alternatives that can help get around the problem. For example, choose a sporting club that has a positive attitude to inclusion.

Identify big picture solutions to barriers

In some cases there are 'big picture' solutions to physical barriers. These involve direct and often costly action by building authorities, councils and government to ensure that buildings comply with the appropriate building legislation and the spirit of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).

Here are examples of actions to solve physical barrier problems.

Actions to solve physical barrier problems:

- ▶ Widening a doorway
- ▶ Installing a ramp
- ▶ Adding extra lighting
- ▶ Installing auditory systems to supplement visual systems
- ▶ Installing a lift
- ▶ Removing steps within a building and replacing them with a ramp or lift
- ▶ Installing grab rails in toilets
- ▶ Altering doors so they can be opened from a sitting position

Identify simple solutions to barriers

There are also some solutions to barriers that are much easier to implement. For example, you could take a portable ramp when attending activities, choose to visit venues that offer good access or foster strong relationships with clubs or groups that are committed to inclusion. While in the short term these options are often preferable, in the longer term they do not work towards supporting the right of people with disability to equal and unrestricted access to all areas. Ultimately there needs to be a balance between advocating for the rights of people with disability to be given access to buildings and other locations, and the practicalities of day-to-day activities in a support worker role.

Simple solutions to barriers include:

- ▶ teaching a person how to safely step a manual chair up a kerb or small step
- ▶ using good sight guiding skills when walking with a person with visual impairment to ensure they are safe
- ▶ being assertive and confident in supporting the right of a person to access an activity
- ▶ planning activities at a variety of times of day
- ▶ using a council or volunteer transport service
- ▶ asking a supermarket to open a checkout with a widened aisle so it can be used by a person with disability
- ▶ planning activities that offer mixed gender and single gender options
- ▶ supporting a person if they wish to make a complaint directly to a venue or via the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

Identify alternatives to physical barriers

In most situations, there are other options to solve physical barrier problems. Some careful planning before an activity can help with this. Steps such as phoning a venue before visiting or checking out the route to get somewhere in the community can help you determine alternatives. Look at other ways you can get to the places you want to go, or other entrances that might be easier.

Examples of alternative options to solve physical barriers:

- ▶ Many buildings have more than one toilet location; find out if you are using the most accessible.
- ▶ Most buildings have more than one entry and exit; is the one you have found the easiest?
- ▶ Most cities have many different places to eat and drink; is the one you have found the most readily accessible?
- ▶ Most staff are able to help by moving tables and chairs or coming out from behind a counter to serve a person with a disability; have you asked them?

Ensure safety when identifying solutions to barriers

The only exception to taking a person-centred approach is in a situation where you as the worker are asked to put yourself at risk to give access to an area or venue for the person you are supporting. For example, if a person asks you to lift their wheelchair up a step so they can get into a venue, this could put you at risk of a back injury. Similarly, if a person requests that you lie to a family member about where you have been or what activities have been completed, this could create a difficult situation for you which might be dangerous. You should never do any tasks or act in any way that may cause an injury or danger to yourself.

You have a responsibility under work health and safety laws and your own workplace policies to ensure you act in a way that is not likely to cause injury to yourself or others. Doing tasks that are heroic, risky or motivated by a desire to please or impress are not a part of your job role. It is important for the person with disability to

also remember that they have a responsibility to ensure you are able to work safely and without fear of danger or injury. This is particularly true if the person is also taking on the role of employer; if they are employing you directly there will need to be some careful consideration of rights, responsibilities and roles in providing a safe working environment.



Example

Plan an outing to ensure easy access

Jim is planning an activity to go Christmas shopping with a group of older people, many of whom have physical disability.

As part of the shopping trip, the group has said they want to have lunch out somewhere. They say that they are happy to go anywhere that is cheap and easy to get to.

Jim phones local cafes and restaurants to see what is available. He asks specific questions about access, and gives clear information about the physical needs of the people in the group. One cafe owner says she is able to accommodate the group, and has catered for groups with access needs many times before.

When they arrive, they find a wide space has been cleared down the side of a long table, giving good wheelchair and walking-frame access. The path to the toilets is easy to navigate and is free of any obstacles that could cause a tripping hazard.

The cafe owner welcomes the group personally and ensures they are able to sit easily and comfortably at the tables. She encourages the people in the group to order from the table rather than ordering at the counter as other patrons do. This means they do not need to get up from the table again once they are seated.

Jim makes sure he collects a business card and menu from the cafe so they can visit again. He tells others at his work about how the cafe caters well for people with disability.



Practice task 10

1. Identify one group of people for whom signs may be an issue.

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2. Give an example of a big picture solution to barriers caused by low lighting in council buildings?

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3. Identify a benefit for a person with support needs if solutions to physical barriers are addressed.

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4. Why is planning a useful tool for overcoming physical barriers?

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- 5. List five steps in assessing a physical barrier to maximise community participation for a person you support.

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- 6. Give one example of a situation where your rights as a worker and your responsibilities to your organisation might override a request made by a person with disability.

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Click to complete Practice task 10

3B Collaborate with the person and supervisor to identify solutions to overcome barriers

In community services you will generally act in a support role or as a facilitator to assist a person to carry out their desired activities and pursue their interests in the way they see fit. When the person encounters barriers to participation your role changes slightly to become one where you need to listen carefully, think about possible solutions and help act upon these in an appropriate manner. Remember you have additional support and guidance available to you from your supervisor. You may also need to involve a professional interpreter (not a family member) so you can accurately understand what the person wishes to tell you.

The following will help you collaborate to identify solutions to barriers that might exist.

Steps to collaborate and identify solutions to barriers

Listen actively to what the person tells you about a barrier and check you have understood correctly.

Think about possible solutions to the barrier and discuss possible solutions with the person.

Include the supervisor in discussion as needed, or seek advice if required. ow

Help the person decide on a suitable course of action.

Provide support as required or directed to carry out the actions chosen.

Advantages and disadvantages

When collaborating with a person about barriers to participation and potential solutions, it can be wise to use an approach that examines both advantages and disadvantages. This lets you and the person see what the reasons might be for deciding upon a particular course of action. For example, you and the person might decide there are more advantages than disadvantages in the person learning to catch public transport to attend an art program at their local neighbourhood house. This might lead you both to the conclusion that public transport is an appropriate way to overcome a transport barrier that may currently exist for the person.



Communicate well for collaboration

It can take some time and practise to master good communication skills for various situations. Good communication is essential for collaborating with a person and ensuring you are both on the same page when it comes to finding a workable solution.

Here are seven ways to improve your communication based on the way you speak and listen with a person for whom you are providing support.

Practise active listening

- ▶ Repeat what you have heard to clarify.
- ▶ Paraphrase where necessary.
- ▶ Use attentive body language.
- ▶ If things are unclear, state what you do not understand.

Listen rather than talk

- ▶ It is more important that you hear what the person is saying than getting the point across; it is their plan.
- ▶ Be comfortable with silence; give the person time to think.

Use appropriate language

- ▶ Consider the cognitive ability, education, gender and age of the person.
- ▶ Ensure language is appropriate to the situation.
- ▶ Simple, plain language is always better than jargon.

Avoid acronyms and clinical language

- ▶ Avoid acronyms and technical terms unless both people in the discussion will understand them readily.

Try to understand what is important to the person who is speaking

- ▶ Listen carefully and ask about feelings and fears if relevant to situation.
- ▶ Ask about needs and also about wishes.
- ▶ Ask them to prioritise their concerns or rate them on a scale of 1–10.

Summarise what has been agreed

- ▶ Summarise what you think has been agreed or ask the person to do this.
- ▶ At the end of the discussion summarise key points.

Use an interpreter if necessary

- ▶ If the person has language difficulties because English is not their first language or they use Auslan, consider using an interpreter.
- ▶ If you cannot understand the communication system they use, ask for assistance.
- ▶ Avoid using family members as interpreters as this is not generally appropriate and can compromise privacy and confidentiality.

Brainstorm for collaboration

Brainstorming is a useful approach when collaborating with others. It helps to generate new and interesting ideas and develop solutions to barriers and problems. It is an appropriate strategy to use in a team situation where a person-centred approach is being used. It ensures ideas are seen as equally valuable regardless of who suggests them, and it makes sure contributions are recorded and considered by all members of the team. Team membership should include the person receiving services and may also include others such as your supervisor and the person’s family members.



Brainstorm with an interpreter

If you are brainstorming via an interpreter, make sure you still direct your communication and ideas towards the person, keeping in mind that the interpreter is simply there to help you and the person communicate together, not to be a part of the discussion.

Here are some key points to remember about brainstorming.

Brainstorming tips

- ▶ Be prepared with pens, paper, textas and any other work tools required.
- ▶ Work in an area that is accessible and welcoming for everyone.
- ▶ Write down all ideas that are suggested; do not discard or reject any ideas during the process.
- ▶ Look for ways that ideas might link together, or patterns in the information.
- ▶ Avoid making negative comments or judgements about ideas during a brainstorming process.

Example

Solve to a transport dilemma

Jackson is a young man who is ready to start a new learning program at the local TAFE. His individual plan has been prepared to include goals about education, social skills, life skills, recreation and sporting activities. Unfortunately no one has considered the need to include a goal about developing travel skills.

Jackson has enrolled in the course he wants to do and is now ready to start planning for his first week of classes. But the issue for Jackson is that he does not live close to the TAFE and his mother has recently returned to work full time. Jackson is suddenly faced with needing to get to TAFE on his own, and he has not thought about how he is going to do this.

Jackson asks to meet with Sally, his case manager, as well as a disability liaison officer from the TAFE and Sally’s supervisor. Together they brainstorm some possible solutions to the transport issue. They write down all the ideas they can think of and make sure none are rejected during the brainstorm process. Soon they have a page of possible solutions and are able to begin making some choices about which is the most suitable for Jackson.



Practice task 11

1. Why can brainstorming be useful as a collaboration tool when using a person-centred approach to support?

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2. What are three things you should remember to ensure you are using good communication with a person when collaborating?

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Click to complete Practice task 11

3C Support the person to implement strategies to address barriers to planned participation

Once barriers have been identified and solutions planned, it is time to consider how to implement them. This may involve only yourself and the person for whom you are providing support, or it may include other people as well. The people involved in implementing strategies will depend upon the situation and the preferences of the person receiving support. For example, if the barrier relates to transport opportunities (such as a geographical, social or attitudinal barrier) then a potential solution might lie with a family member providing transport to and from an activity. This could be a simple solution identified by the person and agreed to by their family. While it is important to consider all the possibilities for resolving a barrier, avoid a situation where family members feel overburdened, or are perceived as being the voluntary solvers of all problems.



Transport options

Various transport options might provide a solution to a potential barrier to a person's participation. Here are some transport options to consider when working with people with disability, and their advantages and disadvantages.

Accessible taxi

Possible advantages:

- ▶ They are able to go to a specific location.
- ▶ They can be pre-booked.
- ▶ It is a very safe form of transport.
- ▶ People can usually remain in their wheelchair.
- ▶ Depending on disability type and severity, a discount is available to subsidise the cost of the taxi (eligibility varies from state to state).

Possible disadvantages:

- ▶ There are limitations on funding available during the year to use a taxi.
- ▶ Booking is not always available when desired.
- ▶ It cannot transport a large group.
- ▶ It does not promote integration of people with and without disability together on one form of transport.

Public transport – buses

Possible advantages:

- ▶ Some have lowered floors for easier access and ramps to enable full wheelchair access.
- ▶ Some have specific storage areas for walkers and chairs.
- ▶ Timetables often show which buses have disabled access.
- ▶ They are inexpensive to use.
- ▶ They promote integration and community understanding of disability transport needs.

Possible disadvantages:

- ▶ They are only available at specific times.
- ▶ They only go to set locations.
- ▶ They may be overcrowded.
- ▶ They may not arrive on time.
- ▶ There can be a risk of wheelchairs moving around within the bus.
- ▶ It may not be easy to get on board.

Public transport – trains

Possible advantages:

- ▶ Most have a front carriage available with the driver providing access for wheelchairs via a portable ramp.
- ▶ Many drivers are experienced in providing transport for people with disability.
- ▶ They are inexpensive to use.
- ▶ They promote integration and community understanding of disability transport needs.

Possible disadvantages:

- ▶ They are only available at specific times.
- ▶ They only go to set locations.
- ▶ They may be overcrowded.
- ▶ They may not arrive on time.
- ▶ There can be a risk of wheelchairs moving around within the train carriage.
- ▶ The driver may forget to bring the ramp to allow exit from train at designated station.

Local council services

Possible advantages:

- ▶ They can be tailored to suit individual needs.
- ▶ They often go to specific locations and provide a door-to-door service.
- ▶ They are staffed by people with skills and experience in meeting accessible transport needs.
- ▶ They are usually cheap or free to use.

Possible disadvantages:

- ▶ They are often only available within a certain region.
- ▶ They are often only provided on a certain day.
- ▶ They don't promote integration of people with and without disability together on one form of transport.

Involve the family in identifying transport barriers and options

Talk to a family member about transport options that you are aware of, as well as funding and support that is available.

It may not always be appropriate for workers to talk with other family members. In some cases, you may be asked to only work with a person you are supporting, and they will be solely responsible for directing their own care. In other cases, you may have a close ongoing relationship with family members of a person. Use your judgment about the topics you discuss with family members and ensure you do not show disrespect for the person you are supporting by talking about them as if they are not there.

Sometimes your organisation may receive updated information about services and funding for transport. Make sure current information is passed on to families or relevant others as appropriate.

Other transport considerations:

- ▶ People with certain types of disability can apply for a card to reduce the cost of using a disabled access taxi.
- ▶ A worker or carer may be able to use a companion card or obtain reduced cost or free travel.

Strategies to deal with barriers to participation

Many different approaches can be taken to deal with barriers to participation. Although sometimes it may be tempting to make complaints in every situation in which a barrier presents itself, this is not always the most effective.

Firstly, it is important to remember the need for a person-centred approach. Ask the person how they would like barriers to be addressed. Do they want you to help them write a letter of complaint about a lack of access? Or do they have another way they would like to deal with a problem of access? Are they looking to you to provide some support and leadership in dealing with access issues? Once you have answered these questions, you will be better able to decide on the most appropriate course of action.

Here are some possible strategies that could work for dealing with barriers to participation and inclusion.

Access local services

Many communities have local services that can help an individual access an activity. Check with the council or a disability support service about what is already available. For example, some councils organise volunteer drivers to take people with disability to activities or appointments. Fostering these links has the added benefit of promoting interaction at the local level.

Use portable or adaptive equipment

Sometimes a portable device such as a ramp that can be stored in the boot of a car can assist in dealing with physical barriers such as steps or curbs. This can be an effective alternative to requesting that alterations be made to the physical layout of an area or building.

Involve family members or relevant others

Sometimes family members are happy to assist in dealing with barriers. For example, a mother might be happy to drive her child to a drama club that provides an integrated program for children with and without disability after school hours. Remember this might not always be appropriate or reasonable.

Educate about rights and raise community awareness

Educating community members about disability can be helpful in promoting community acceptance and understanding. For example, a marketing campaign that encourages shops and restaurants to consider the cost to their income if people with disability are not able to get in the door, might encourage better physical access.

Make formal requests and complaints

There is a time and a place for making a formal request to improve access for people with disability. This could be in the form of a written letter, an email or a complaint form lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Empowered, active citizens

The concept of active citizenship refers to a model of democratic participation where everyone has a right and a responsibility to participate in activities that contribute to society and the environment. This concept provides support for people with disability to participate in civic life and it obliges organised activities to provide measures which support inclusion; for example, Auslan interpreters at a public speech, or multiple text options and text to speech functions on websites.



By supporting a person to identify solutions to barriers that prevent their active participation, you are also supporting them in becoming more empowered and active within their own community. This in turn strengthens the community as a whole, as

it means that all members of the community are able to participate fully. People with disability are vital members of the community and it is imperative that they are able to be active and feel empowered as they operate within it.

Example

Join a community leadership council

Paul is a wheelchair user following a fall from a motorbike several years ago which left him with hemiplegia. He has never been particularly active within his local community before and has tended to stay at home because it is easier for everyone. Paul has recently become interested in local issues and has joined a youth leadership council. The group is active in finding solutions to issues such as restoring some parkland that has become a dumping ground for old cars, and reducing graffiti around the train station.



Paul initially found it difficult to get to the meetings so he asked his support worker, Patti, to investigate transport options with him. He does not want his mother to drive him to the meetings; this is something he wants to do on his own. Patti helps him identify two options: volunteer drivers or public transport on a low rider bus. Paul decides to learn to use the bus and asks Patti to help him work out how to buy a ticket and read the timetable. Paul is soon able to attend the youth council meetings independently and becomes much more involved and active within his community.

Practice task 12

1. A community environmental action group does not have an accessible website; it is only available in one font size and the text is small and difficult to read. What effect might this have on participation by people with disability?

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2. What are three ways you could solve a transport issue for a person with disability?

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Click to complete Practice task 12

3D Monitor the success of strategies in consultation with the person and supervisor

Monitoring success is the final stage in the process of managing barriers to participation. Monitoring needs to occur in collaboration with the person and may also include input from your supervisor. Using a person-centred model, it is vital that you seek input from the person about their participation and how successful strategies have been at reducing barriers to their participation.

Monitoring should be seen as part of a cyclical process, feeding information back to allow further choices and actions to be considered if needed.

Here is an outline of the monitoring process for barriers.

Identify barriers	Identify strategies
<p>Identify barriers to participation and consider how these may impact upon the person. Remember that barriers can occur across many areas, including those related to the environment as well as skills and abilities and the attitudes of others in society. Barriers can change over time and sometimes the management of one barrier could lead to the unintentional creation of a new barrier.</p>	<p>Identify several different strategies which could be used to reduce the impact of a barrier or remove it completely. Remember that it is important to consider strategies that suit the person and are in keeping with their needs, wants and goals. Strategies need to be appropriate for the situation and may have both advantages and disadvantages to consider.</p>
Implement strategies	Monitor success
<p>Take action to carry out the identified strategies in consultation with the person and relevant others. Use observation skills and feedback to seek information that will guide and inform the next stage of the process.</p>	<p>Monitoring the success of strategies lets you know if they have been successful or not. Aim to seek specific, useable information which will allow for in-depth monitoring and facilitate careful changes to be made as required. Monitoring can be according to a planned schedule or based on needs or situations which arise. Monitoring information can then lead back to the start of a new process of identifying any new or still existing barriers to participation.</p>

How to monitor for success

Monitoring for success is a planned and deliberate task. It involves thinking carefully about what you want to find out and deciding the best way of seeking that information. Consider the situation, the activity and the specific needs, wants and goals of the

person. Then decide what indicators you might notice that would give you information about how successful the strategy is for the person and their activities. You might need to collect various types of information to allow you to appropriately monitor success.

Examples of data collection methods include:

- ▶ visual observation of the person participating in their community activities
- ▶ informal feedback from group leaders or other key staff members
- ▶ assessments by allied health staff such as physiotherapists
- ▶ formal assessments or evaluations
- ▶ record keeping of time, date and duration of participation in activities
- ▶ questionnaires or surveys designed to suit the literacy, numeracy and cognitive abilities of the person
- ▶ observations about changes to mood, behaviour or skills over a period of time
- ▶ responses by the person to specific questions about their satisfaction and engagement with activities.

Consult with your supervisor

During the monitoring process it may be necessary to consult with your supervisor. They will be able to offer support, guidance and information about processes used in your workplace for monitoring success. They may be able to show you existing templates or documents that are used to record information. They can also assist with challenging situations, such as when a barrier still exists despite action being taken. In this situation they will be able to talk to you about what may have gone wrong and what steps could be taken to better manage barriers to ensure the person can participate fully in their activities. Your supervisor might offer to sit in on meetings and provide support if required.

Example

Monitor strategies with the person you support

Esmerelda, a woman you support, has worked closely with you over the last few weeks to identify and find strategies for some barriers that have been preventing her from joining a lawn bowls club. Her barriers include a lack of confidence in meeting new people and difficulties with transport to and from the bowls club.

You have helped Esmerelda by introducing her to a few of the club members and researching volunteer drivers who can provide transport once a week to her activity. Now it is time to monitor the success of these strategies. You visit Esmerelda and ask her to tell you about her participation in the bowls club. She tells you that she has been going every Monday and that she no longer needs a volunteer driver; one of the other ladies has offered to pick her up in the morning and drop her home afterwards.



As the strategies seem to have been highly successful you decide to simply include a note about Esmerelda's positive outcomes in your monthly report and give the report to your supervisor. There is no need for your supervisor to have any further involvement as the strategies have been effective and the barriers removed.

Practice task 13

1. Identify four methods for monitoring the success of strategies used to reduce barriers to participation for a person.

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2. Briefly describe one situation where you might need to consult your supervisor when monitoring the success of strategies to reduce barriers.

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Click to complete Practice task 13

3E Recognise own limitations in addressing issues and seek advice when necessary

The tasks you do will vary depending on your workplace, daily activities and level of responsibility. As you become more experienced you are likely to be given more complex tasks and greater responsibility. As a beginning worker, you are more likely to work under direct or indirect supervision. This supervision will help you learn your job and will reduce the chance of you making an error in your work. Being a beginning worker can mean you are limited in how readily you are able to address issues and find solutions.



There are several key sources of information that should guide your understanding and knowledge of your job role, such as your job description, policies and procedures, relevant laws, your supervisor, manager and colleagues. It is important to only operate within the confines of your job role and to avoid the temptation to act outside your role and limits of responsibility. If you are unsure if a specific task or decision is one you should attempt independently, make sure you ask first and seek advice before you begin the task or make a decision.

Job description

Your job description will tell you the broad outline of your role. It will inform you about whom to report to, and whom you can ask for help. It will tell you which tasks are part of your job and which are not. Sometimes people in a workplace are asked to do tasks that they are not sure they have the skills to do. Your job description is one way of finding out if the task is meant to be part of your duties. For example, you might be asked by a person to provide transport to a venue but feel unsure if you should do so. By checking your job description you can find out if providing transport is an expectation of your job.

You should read your job description when you first start work and then every so often once you are working. Check to see if your job has changed over time. If it has, you may need to ask for your job description to be altered as well.



Policies and procedures

Policies and procedures often contain information about who is able to perform certain tasks. They also explain exactly how tasks are to be done within the workplace or in community settings. You should read the policies and procedures that relate to your daily tasks and work role. You may find them in a folder, or they may be located on an intranet site. If you need help finding them your supervisor should be able to direct you.

Policies and procedures are updated frequently so it is important to check you are using the most up-to-date edition. Check with your supervisor or human resources department to clarify which edition of a policy or procedure is the current one.

Laws

Regardless of where you work or what you do, you are protected and bound by the laws of Australia and your state or territory, and you have certain rights and responsibilities under these laws. Some examples of important laws are the workplace health and safety laws, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and state-based mental health Acts. You should never be asked to do something in your work that is against the law. If you are unsure, you can ask your supervisor, a senior manager or your appropriate union official or contact person.



Supervisor, manager and experienced colleagues

Being an inexperienced worker has its own unique set of challenges. It can be tiring and stressful to learn many new procedures and policies, as well as remembering names, dates and places. It is hard work meeting the physical challenges of direct care work. Always check with your supervisor or manager if you are unsure about anything. It is better to seek advice than to guess your way through.

If you have been a support worker for a while, it is worth remembering what it was like when you first started work. Think about what you can do to support new workers as they learn their roles. Take steps to ensure they are not asked to do things that are beyond their capabilities. Offer support and guidance where possible so the chance of an error is reduced.



Confidence

In some situations you may find you lack the confidence to deal with a situation independently, even though you may have the authority within your job description to make a decision or take a particular course of action. Confidence often develops over time and with greater experience in doing your job after dealing with a wide variety of situations. Make sure you give yourself as many new experiences and opportunities to learn as possible. This will help you increase your confidence to act in the best interests of the people for whom you provide support.

Methods of building confidence in your own abilities include:

- ▶ attending professional development activities
- ▶ working with a mentor
- ▶ observing experienced colleagues.

Seek advice from appropriate others

It can be difficult to work out who is the best person to ask for advice. The most obvious is probably your supervisor, but you should also have an understanding of the roles of other professionals. Always ensure you have permission from the person and relevant others (such as family members, particularly in the case of a child) before consulting with professionals to seek advice.

Here is a guide to other people who may provide advice.

Family doctor

A family doctor provides direct medical care and advice, and may provide a case management role or refer to other specialists as required. They may also provide training in some situations.

Nurse

Nurses provide direct medical care and some advice, and gives medication. They may provide care in a home, in an aged care setting or hospital, and can provide training in the use of some medical devices and equipment, management of epileptic seizures and other medical problems.

Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist provides diagnosis, care and management of injuries and musculoskeletal problems.

Occupational therapist

An occupational therapist provides care and management of disabilities and injuries with a focus on helping a person function in the best possible way in their daily tasks. They may provide training in transferring and manual handling and lifting skills.

Psychologist or mental health nurse

These specialists provide care and management of mental health issues and may have a role in the diagnosis of some mental illness, or may refer to other professionals as needed. They may have a training role in mental health issues and appropriate strategies.

Drug and alcohol worker

Drug and alcohol workers deal specifically with people who have difficulties caused by excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol.

Example

Seek advice when necessary

Kelly provides personal care support several times a week for a veteran who receives services at home through the Department of Veteran’s Affairs. One day the veteran asks Kelly to mow his lawn for him. Kelly knows the veteran receives this service as part of household services provided to him but she does not think this is part of her duties.

Kelly is not sure what she should do. She checks the individual plan, which has a list of daily tasks to do. Mowing the lawn is not on the list, so Kelly calls her supervisor on her mobile phone. She asks what she should do.

Her supervisor reassures her mowing the lawn is not part of Kelly’s role and that there are other staff who do this. She tells her to explain to the veteran that she is only allowed to complete the tasks documented on the list in the support plan. She praises Kelly for her initiative in asking for clarification rather than getting into a potentially dangerous situation by mowing the lawn.



Practice task 14

1. You are not sure if you should be taking the younger brother of the person you are supporting on an excursion to the zoo. What should you do?

2. You are concerned your lack of confidence in written communication is holding you back from being able to help a person write a letter of complaint about an access issue at a local cinema. What is one action you could take?

Click to complete Practice task 14

Summary

1. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the Building Code of Australia contain legal requirements that increase the ability of people with disability to access venues and buildings.
2. It is important to talk with a person about managing potential barriers to access when planning community-based activities.
3. Many barriers can be dealt with through careful planning and by seeking alternatives.
4. Workers need to be aware of their job role as well as organisational policies and procedures that apply to their work when providing support to people with disability.
5. Types of barriers can include social, attitudinal, cultural, linguistic, physical or person-specific (related to skills and abilities).
6. A person-centred approach is important in identifying and acting upon solutions to barriers.
7. There are many people who can offer assistance in identifying and dealing with barriers, including family members, your supervisor and relevant others.
8. It is important to only operate within the framework of your job role and to avoid the temptation to act outside your role and limits of responsibility.

Learning checkpoint 3

Identify, address and monitor barriers to community participation and social inclusion

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in identifying, addressing and monitoring barriers to community participation and inclusion.

Part A

1. Identify one physical and one skill-based barrier that might limit community participation in a theatre group for a person with physical disability and vision impairment, who uses an electric wheelchair for mobility.

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2. You have been asked to perform a task that you think might be outside your normal job requirements but you are not sure. What should you do?

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3. Write a definition for the term 'active citizenship' and describe one benefit it has for people with disability.

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Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Magda, a middle aged woman who has epilepsy, has some vision loss and a mild cognitive impairment as a result of an acquired brain injury sustained in a car accident. She lives in a small flat in a high-rise building. She is socially and geographically isolated as she does not speak or read in English. She speaks fluent Russian and communicates mainly with members of her immediate family. She is interested in becoming more involved in her local neighbourhood and wants to make some new friends, but she is not really sure how to overcome the barriers she is experiencing in achieving this goal. You are working with Magda to identify and implement strategies to manage these barriers and assist her with engagement in community activities.

1. Identify two barriers to participation for Magda.

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2. Describe a step-by-step strategy you could implement to assist Magda to address her social and geographical isolation and monitor the success of the strategy selected.

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3. Just prior to an important follow-up meeting with Magda to clarify information about her current health conditions, the regular interpreter you have been using phones to say she is not available. You suddenly feel very limited in your ability to communicate with Magda and to manage the situation. Her son offers to interpret instead. Should you accept his offer or not? Why or why not?

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4. What would be a benefit for the community if Magda is able to become more actively engaged in community activities?

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