CHCDIV001
Work with diverse people

Release 1

Learner guide

aspire
learning resources

CHCDIV001
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Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.2

Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Release 1, version 1.1	October 2015	First release
Release 1, version 1.2	January 2019	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program

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Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCDIV001 Work with diverse people*, 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	▶ 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	▶ 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	▶ 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	▶ 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	▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	▶ 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	▶ 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	▶ 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	▶ Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents ▶ Communicating through written letters, email and online ▶ Recording progress; reporting incidents
Oral communication	▶ 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	▶ Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance ▶ Interpreting measurements
Teamwork	▶ Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport
Planning and organising	▶ Planning your workload and commitments ▶ Implementing tasks ▶ Completing work on time ▶ Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks
Making decisions	▶ Understanding and applying decision-making processes ▶ Reviewing the impact of your decisions
Problem-solving	▶ Identifying problems ▶ Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes and reviewing the outcome
Innovation and creation	▶ 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	▶ 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 Reflect on own perspectives	1A Identify and reflect on own social and cultural perspectives and biases	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1B Recognise limitations in self and social awareness	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1C Reflect on ability to work inclusively and with understanding of others	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1D Identify and act on ways to improve self and social awareness	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
Topic 2 Appreciate diversity and inclusiveness and their benefits	2A Value and respect diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2B Contribute to workplace and professional relationships	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2C Keep the workplace safe	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and situations	3A Show respect for diversity in communication	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3B Use verbal and nonverbal communication to establish effective relationships	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3C Use effective strategies to communicate when a language barrier exists	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3D Seek assistance according to communication needs	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
Topic 4 Promote understanding across diverse groups	4A Identify issues that may cause communication misunderstandings	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	4B Consider the impact of cultural differences if difficulties or misunderstandings occur	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	4C Resolve differences and take account of diversity considerations	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	4D Address difficulties with appropriate people and seek assistance when required	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

1A **Identify and reflect on own social and cultural perspectives and biases**

1B **Recognise limitations in self and social awareness**

1C **Reflect on ability to work inclusively and with understanding of others**

1D **Identify and act on ways to improve self and social awareness**

Reflect on own perspectives

You may be exposed to many different social and cultural groups when working in a care environment. The people you care for, their family and friends and the staff you work with may be of a different social or cultural group to your own. You must know how to work in a way that reflects a cultural awareness and understanding of others.

1A Identify and reflect on own social and cultural perspectives and biases

Australian society is made up of many different social and cultural groups, each with a range of different lifestyles and patterns of interaction. When working in a care environment, you need to respect this diversity and treat everyone with courtesy, regardless of their race, religion, gender, beliefs or culture. To do this, it is important to examine own social and cultural perspectives and biases so you can unravel the assumptions that keep you from working more inclusively.

Define culture

Everyone has culture. However, while we are born into cultures, we are not born with culture. Culture is something that is learnt.

Culture is dynamic and adapts to changing circumstances. Aspects of culture are tied up with our identity, such as:

▶ ethnicity

▶ age or generation

▶ gender

▶ sexual orientation

▶ education

▶ occupation and socio-economic status

▶ ability/disability.

Culture can also be used to describe our way of life and the values, beliefs and attitudes we use in everyday life. Many definitions of culture focus on art, religion, eating habits, rituals, humour, science, law, sports and ceremonies. It is important to understand that there is as much variation within cultures as there is between them, and that individuals express their culture in various ways depending on the circumstances.

Australian culture

Australians of all background all have culture; however there are many different cultures within Australia.

In the past

The original inhabitants of Australia are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been living in this country for at least 45,000 years. Before colonisation there was no concept of a single people called 'Aborigines'. There were several hundred different language groups on the mainland and two major different language groups in the Torres Strait. So, as for all cultures, there is tremendous diversity.

Today

Today, Australia has a population of more than 23 million people. The majority of Australians are of Anglo-Celtic ethnicity, but there are also migrants from over 200 countries around the world. In fact, 43 per cent of Australians were either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas, making Australia a culturally rich and diverse society.

An overarching framework

However, while Australian government policies allow people the freedom to maintain ethnic identities, values and lifestyles, it insists that this must be done within the overarching framework of common laws and shared values and institutions. English is our national language, and our legal and parliamentary systems are largely British in origin. Diversity does not diminish, but arises out of, this inheritance.

Cultural identity

Within Australian culture, each person has their own unique cultural and social identify. This is shaped by the groups and subcultures they belong to, and the individual factors that make up their own personal experience of life.

SOCIETY

Culture
Social names
Social values
Social behaviours
Social rules
Laws

Sub cultures
Religion
Social/economic class
Family/birthplace
Sexuality
Special needs

YOU

Individual factors
Social names
Gender
Education
Experience
Age

v0006
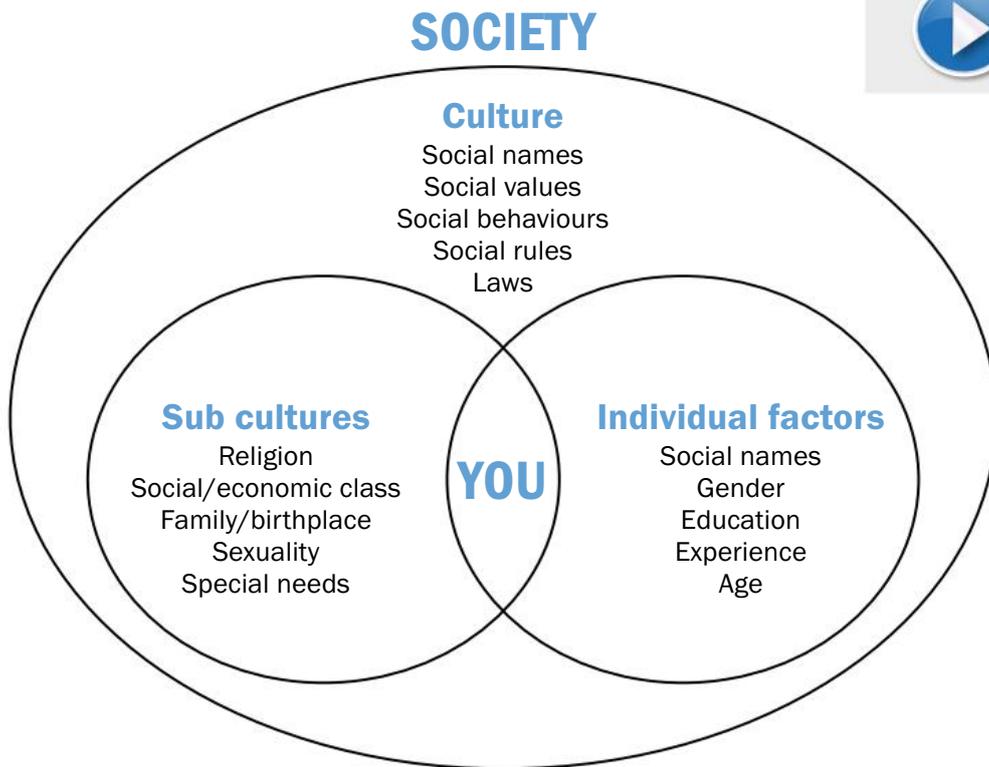
Social and cultural perspective and bias

As a person grows up, they learn about other cultures and social groups in various ways. They might get to know people directly, listen to what other people have to say or seek information in books, newspapers, and other forms of media. All of these experiences help shape their view of the world and lead to assumptions about other social or cultural groups.

A person's view of the world is referred to as their perspective. Any assumption made about other social or cultural groups is called a bias.

Social and cultural bias can be as general as thinking, 'those people are not like me'. Or, it can be focused on a particular group, for example, 'the Chinese only eat rice' or 'unemployed people don't like to work'.

Bias can affect the way people communicate and act towards other people and may lead to inappropriate practices at work.

Causes of social and cultural bias

Social and cultural bias exists because people tend to interpret and judge other people and situations by the standards they have formed from their own culture and social upbringing.

Here are some reasons why people can be biased towards others.

Lack of knowledge about other cultures

You may need to provide support to a person of a culture you have never come across before. You may not have had time to read or learn about the culture, and may make assumptions about people from that culture.

Lack of understanding about language

Many people expect migrants who come to Australia to be able to speak fluent English and don't understand when they can't. However, people settling in a new country have many new things to understand and learn, so language is often not their main concern.

Fear

Some people feel frightened or threatened when they don't understand a culture and may be alarmed or feel uncomfortable about another person's appearance.

Stereotyping

A stereotype is a belief or idea about a person or a group of people that may or may not be true. Stereotyping is when you apply those beliefs or ideas to a person without treating them as an individual.

Racism

Racism is a belief that one race of people possess certain characteristics. Racism is against the law and is never acceptable.

Stigma

Stigma is a negative label attached to a group. It is usually based on certain attributes, which may give them a negative image to the public. For example, despite a lot of public education, mental health still carries stigma in society today.

Social and cultural bias in a care environment

In a care environment, there are many ways people may be treated unfairly because of their cultural or social background. This is less likely to happen in a workplace that has a cultural policy that all staff understand and abide by.

It is your responsibility as a care worker to work well with others. Sometimes, you may find you have a problem with someone of a different culture that isn't caused by cultural difference; rather, the other person may simply be acting rude or unreasonable towards you or others. If this happens, remember to treat people equally and to never mention their culture or refer to any personal characteristics when trying to deal with the issue.

Unfair treatment can occur in ways outlined here.

Not providing culturally appropriate food for a person. For example, not providing kosher food for Jewish people or giving meat to vegetarians.

Not respecting cultural views regarding gender. For example, using male doctors, nurses or care workers to provide personal care to Muslim women.

Not making an effort to resolve language barriers. For example, ignoring people when you have difficulty understanding their verbal communication.

Excluding people because they are culturally different. For example, laughing at a staff member because of the clothes they wear.
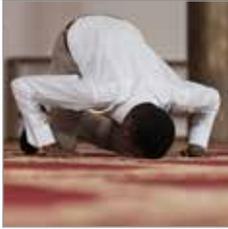
Not respecting religion or different days of worship. For example, not allowing Muslims time to say their prayers at work.

Strategies to eliminate social and cultural bias

Workplaces within the care environment should promote cultural awareness to all their staff. They should also have strategies and techniques in place to help eliminate social and cultural bias.

Some of these strategies are explained here.

Provide a welcoming environment

It is important that people with support needs, staff, families and visitors are made to feel as welcome as possible when visiting or accessing a service. Always smile as you greet a person. Remember to follow cultural customs of a person, such as taking off your shoes when you enter the room or shaking a person's hand, even if they are not from your own culture. Try to provide signs in different languages, as this helps people with language or communication barriers. If these signs also contain symbols, it will make them easier to understand.

Encourage diversity

Embrace and encourage diversity in the workplace. Staff and people with support needs from all cultures should be part of the organisation and involved in the activities. Share other people's cultures by having international food days, singalongs, dancing exhibitions and art displays. Include people from a variety of cultures on committees to contribute to the development of a broad, inclusive policy.

Work in a cross-cultural team

Employ staff from a variety of cultures and social groups. This helps staff to learn more about other people, removes fear and insecurity and helps provide appropriate care for individuals of different social and cultural groups.

Have a good attitude

Have a positive attitude at work. This means being punctual, participating in activities and sharing your knowledge with others. Be willing to learn about how and why people act the way they do, including learning about their culture or social group. If you have a positive attitude, you are more likely to enjoy your work and achieve more for yourself and others.

Don't judge other people

Never make judgments about people based on their looks, culture or social group. Your job is to care for and help people with support needs, not judge people and their actions as being right or wrong. It is also not your job to tell people what you think they should or shouldn't do. You are entitled to your own views and opinions; however, people with support needs have the right to have their individual thoughts and actions respected at all times.

Include people in decision-making

Consult people from other cultures or social groups when decisions need to be made about new procedures. This will ensure they are culturally and socially suitable. Provide support if an individual needs help to be included in a consultation. For example, if they don't speak English, an interpreter or a family member should be used.

Encourage people to have their say

Community care services often rely on committees or groups of people when making and implementing decisions. Committees work out what people with support needs, families and staff think and pass this information on to the care service. To state their views and assert their rights, some people with support needs may need to use an advocate. It is important to help and support people with disabilities, and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds to participate in decision-making that affects them.

Provide staff training/information sessions

Regular training and information sessions help staff members learn about the various cultures and social groups represented by staff and the individuals they care for. Invite guest speakers, show videos and provide written information. It may also be necessary to educate people with support needs and residents, as well as staff members.

Arrange cultural events

Cultural events are an enjoyable way to learn more about other cultures. When planning various activities, try to include all the cultural or social groups that are represented by the people you are providing support to. For example, you and the team may arrange:

▶ an Italian music day

▶ a regular Friday lunch with different cuisines

▶ outings to culturally specific festivals, such as Chinese New Year in Chinatown

▶ guest speakers to talk about a particular culture or social group.

Reflect on your own social and cultural bias

When you work in a care environment, you need to recognise and respect diversity and understand that everyone must be treated with courtesy and respect regardless of their race, religion, gender, beliefs or culture. People have a right to be different and everyone must be treated equally. You need to recognise and understand different cultures and how cultural differences can affect your work.

Keeping a reflective journal is a good way to examine your personal experiences of working with culturally diverse groups of people, and to reflect on your own social and cultural bias.

Here is a reflective cycle that is commonly used to help people think about and make sense of their personal experiences.

Use the reflective cycle to examine cultural bias

To use the reflective cycle to examine your own social and cultural bias, follow these steps.

1 **Description**
Think of a recent incident where you were working with a socially and/or culturally diverse person or group of people. What happened?

2 **Feelings**
What did you already know about the background of about this person or group of people? What did you think and feel at the time?

3 **Evaluation**
Were these good or bad thoughts and feelings? Why?

4 **Analysis**
Were these thoughts and feelings realistic? On what do you base this opinion? Do you think you could have reacted in another way?

5 **Conclusion**
What do you conclude about this situation and your reaction to it?

6 **Action**
If it happened again, what might you do differently? Why?

Become more culturally aware

Building cultural awareness is the first step towards changing your perspective and breaking down any social and cultural bias.

Cultural awareness involves the ability to stand back and become aware of your cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. Why do you do things in that way? Why do you react in that particular way?

Cultural awareness is essential if you interact with people from other social and cultural backgrounds. People see, interpret and evaluate things in different ways. Misunderstandings can easily arise if you try to use your own view of the world to try and make sense of somebody else's reality.

Degrees of cultural awareness

For most people, cultural awareness does not happen overnight. It is something that must be worked on and cultivated as you live and work with people from different social and cultural backgrounds to your own.

There are several levels of cultural awareness outlined below.

Levels of social awareness
My way is the only way People are aware of their way of doing things, and their way is the only way. They ignore the impact of cultural differences.
I know their way, but my way is better People are aware of other ways of doing things, but still consider that their way is best. Cultural differences are seen as a problem and usually ignored or downplayed.
My way and their way People are aware of both ways of doing things. They realise that cultural differences can lead to both problems and benefits and use diversity to create new solutions.
Our way People from different backgrounds come together to create a shared culture. They talk with others to create a new solution to meet the needs of a particular situation.

(Adapted from Quappe and Cantatore, 2007, 'What is Cultural Awareness Anyway? How do I build it?' www.culturosity.com/articles/whatisculturalawareness.htm).

Have the right attitude

You may not know everything about the socially or culturally diverse people in your care, but you still build bridges by having the right attitude. It is well known that the right attitude can form a strong link between people of different backgrounds, not matter what your work role.

Here are some useful suggestions to adjusting your attitude.

Admit that you don't know

▶ Admit that you don't know everything. This is part of the process of becoming culturally aware. Assume differences, not similarities.

Suspend judgment

▶ Suspend your judgment. Collect as much information as possible so you can describe the situation accurately before evaluating it.

Have empathy

▶ Have empathy. Try standing in another person's shoes. This is the best way to learn more about how other people would like to be treated.

Don't assume

▶ Don't assume. Ask your colleagues for feedback. Constantly check your views to make sure that you clearly understand the situation.

Don't seek to control

▶ Don't seek to control. Assume that other people are as resourceful as you are and that their way may well add to what you know.

Celebrate diversity

▶ Celebrate diversity within your organisation. Find ways to share the different cultures of the people receiving support services and your co-workers. There is much to learn from other people and their diverse ways of life.

(Adapted from Quappe and Cantatore, 2007, 'What is Cultural Awareness Anyway? How do I build it?' www.culturosity.com/articles/whatisculturalawareness.htm).

Cultural competence

Cultural competence grows out of cultural awareness. It refers to the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. This is something that every organisation wants to demonstrate, both on an organisational level and through the individual actions of its staff.

Here is a description of cultural competence as it applies at both the organisational and individual level.

At an organisational level

▶ At an organisational level, cultural competence should be:
  – embedded in the philosophy, mission statement, policies and key objectives of the organisation
  – demonstrated through culturally and linguistically diverse staff
  – promoted through training in cultural competence at the start of employment
  – supported by resources on cultural competence and ethno-specific information which are readily available to all staff.

▶ A culturally competent organisation is also likely to have:
  – a strong understanding of the cultural profile of your local community
  – employees who seek information on specific cultural behaviours or understandings so that their interactions with other individuals and co-workers are sensitive to cultural differences
  – people in higher management who actively promote the benefits of cultural competence
  – quick access to essential services, such as translating and interpreting, if required
  – a system of reward for initiatives in the workplace which are culturally competent.

At an individual level

▶ At an individual level, cultural competence involves becoming culturally aware. It is the ability to:

– identify and challenge one's own assumptions, values and beliefs

– develop empathy for other people and cultures

– see the world from a different point of view.

▶ A culturally competent individual is likely to have:

– a strong knowledge of how one's own culture shapes attitudes, perceptions and behaviours

– a willingness to learn about other people's cultures

– specific knowledge of the language, customs and values of particular cultures

– the skills to feel comfortable and communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds

– an unwillingness to stereotype individuals from certain cultures or ethnicities.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is the result of cultural competence. It describes an environment that accepts all people and is free of discrimination. It is a vital part of every organisation, at every level, in every work role.

The characteristics of a culturally safe workplace

▶ Treat everyone with dignity

▶ Respect people's culture, language, knowledge, experience and obligations to each other

▶ Allow no assault on a person's identity

▶ Provide pathways to empowerment and self-determination

▶ Allow people to promote, develop and maintain their distinctive customs, traditions, procedures and practices

▶ Acknowledge individual differences

▶ Work with people where they are, not where someone thinks they should be

Example

Identify and reflect on own social and cultural perspectives and biases

Rohini has just started working in a diverse care environment. Although she is aware of her own cultural background, she has little understanding of the other cultures represented in the facility and how they might impact on the behaviour of the new individuals to whom she is providing support. To improve her cultural awareness, she asked her manager if there were any resources with ethno-specific information available for her to read. She was pleased to find out that not only were there resources, but she was about to complete some cultural competence training as part of her induction.

Practice task 1

1. Identify three social and cultural perspectives an individual may possess.

2. Suggest two ways to eliminate social and cultural bias in the workplace.

3. Apply the reflective cycle to one instance when you demonstrated cultural or social bias in the workplace.

4. Provide one example of how one could demonstrate cultural awareness, cultural safety and cultural competence in the workplace.

Click to complete Practice task 1

1B Recognise limitations in self and social awareness

In the past few decades, it has become very important for people who work in the care environment to understand the diverse social and cultural factors that influence their work relationships and practices.

By understanding the impact of their own culture and how community attitudes, language, policies and structures of that culture impact on different people and groups, they become more aware of their own limitations in self and social awareness. This is the first big step towards providing a more culturally appropriate service.

To reflect on some of these issues, we are going to take a closer look at the factors impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupy a unique and important place in Australia's society and culture. They are the original inhabitants of the Australian continent and nearby Torres Strait Islands, and their cultures are amongst the oldest in the world. Aboriginal communities in Australia are diverse, with many cultures, customs and languages. Torres Strait Islander peoples also have their own distinct identities and cultures.

Successfully involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals in care service delivery requires addressing some of the historical cultural realities of life for Indigenous Australians. Many of the problems confronting Indigenous people today, including physical and mental health and contact with the justice system, arise out of the clash of Western and Indigenous cultures.

More information can be found through a series of fact sheets on the website Racism. No Way! at: http://aspirelr.link/timeline-racism-australia

Indigenous cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have diverse and complex cultures. Here are some factors that you should be aware of when working with or supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Kinship

In many Aboriginal cultures, interpersonal relationships and behaviour codes are governed by a complex kinship system. Kinship is based upon an expanded idea of family, and under kinship rules everyone in a language group knows exactly where they stand in relation to everyone else in that group and to people outside it.

Kinship system avoidance rules illustrate the complexity of relationships. For example, when strictly applied, a man and his mother-in-law are not allowed to communicate with each other.

Skin system

The skin system – the law governing social interaction and marriage – is an essential part of traditional Aboriginal culture. In skin systems, even people who are not actual blood relations are assigned a relationship. As a result, outsiders who have significant interaction with such groups may be given a 'skin name'. For example, non-Aboriginal people who work in a remote Aboriginal community are given skin names in order to belong to the community.

Language groups

Aboriginal language groups are similar to skin groups. Aboriginal tribes are really language groups made up of people sharing the same language, customs and general laws. The people of a tribe share a common bond in their own language group. Knowing that there are different language groups similar to skin groups can help you avoid uncomfortable or embarrassing situations.

Elders

Some senior male members of a traditional language group may become tribal Elders. They are the link between past and present. Elders are initiated men who become ritual leaders because of their personal qualities and their knowledge of tribal law. Elders make decisions on behalf of the tribe and provide leadership in matters affecting the group. In many Aboriginal cultures, the wisdom of the Elders is rarely challenged.

Elders may also include grandmothers, who play a main role in the upbringing of children. Children also look up to their grandmothers as a source of love and security.

The terms 'uncle' and 'aunty' are used as a term of respect for older people in the community, even when they are not blood relations.

Extended family

Many Aboriginal family structures have been fragmented since European settlement, due to interracial marriages, the effect of assimilation and the child protection policy. However, the extended family remains a strong constant in the lives of Aboriginal people.

Many Aboriginal families live in larger households than non- Aboriginal families. Extended families may share things such as food, clothing, money and housing with other family members and provide a support network, sharing the care of older people or sick relatives and children.

Children

Kinship also defines the roles and responsibilities family members have for raising and educating children in the community.

Children are often not just the responsibility of their parents. They are the responsibility of the whole community. It is common for children to live or stay with family members other than their parents, sometimes for long periods of time.

In Torres Strait Islander communities, traditional adoption – when a child is permanently transferred to another extended family member – is a widespread practice. This can be done for a number of reasons, perhaps to continue a family bloodline, to provide an infertile couple with a child, to strengthen family bonds or to meet the care needs of an older relative.

Diverse and complex cultures

Here is a brief overview of some other aspects of cultural life of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Birthing and 'women's business'

Birthing is 'women's business' at which only women can be present. Many Aboriginal women don't like to be seen naked by men. Although a male doctor may be acceptable for consultation and information sharing, it is good practice to ensure a female doctor is available to attend the birth. It is also a good idea to consult with an Aboriginal health liaison officer or Aboriginal staff for ethical and culturally appropriate advice.

Women's business can also include matters to do with the land or spiritual matters.

Attitude to death

Many Aboriginal Australians have a particular approach to death. To speak or use the name of a deceased person indicates lack of respect for the deceased and for their bereaved family. Accordingly, a deceased person may be mentioned only indirectly. The name of a dead person is never mentioned and photographs or videos of the deceased have to be destroyed. This is important to know if you are working in a hospital or a nursing home.

Death ceremonies

Death ceremonies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can take up to two weeks or even longer, depending on the status of the person who has passed away. People with support needs or co-workers may request extended leave to attend funerals. Give them time to practise their 'sorry business'; it is an important part of Aboriginal culture where everyone expresses their grief.

Refrain from thinking about the notion of 'walkabout' when they haven't returned on the day they are supposed to. This is often an insult to Aboriginal people.

Time

Aboriginal observance of time and measurement may sometimes cause concern or conflict in the workplace because it is often in contrast to non-Indigenous attitude to time. For example, a meeting may be due to start at a certain time, but it is not uncommon for an Aboriginal person to turn up long after that because they do not follow structured time and schedules. They call this Koori time.

Communication

Aboriginal English may be difficult to understand at first. You may need to use an interpreter so that the person can express themselves in their chosen language.

Indigenous people are more likely to respond to an indirect question than a direct one. They may feel suspicious about the reasons for blunt questions. They may also not respond to a question where the answer is already known.

In some Aboriginal cultures, looking a person directly in the eye is considered rude or disrespectful. Likewise, pointing at a person when trying to emphasise something should be avoided.

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is a natural part of Aboriginal communication. For instance, silence does not mean an Aboriginal person does not understand. Instead, they may be listening, thinking, remaining non-committal or waiting for community support or input.

Time and trust may be required before people offer their opinion. They may also prefer to defer to an older or more authoritative person. It is also common for Aboriginal meetings to be punctuated by long periods of silence and thought.

Art and religion

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples express their ceremonial and religious life through art, songs and dance. Art forms such as body painting, ground sculpture, bark painting, wood carving and rock painting and engraving can represent multiple meanings about Aboriginal ownership of the land and their relationships to ancestral beings. Often these arts forms are believed to be manifestations of original ancestors who possessed special powers.

Current issues and realities

The following information explains some of the current issues and realities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Loss of culture, land, identity and Indigenous law

The loss of culture that bound Indigenous communities together and the breaking up of their complex kinship system has contributed to the loss of their identity.

The two main factors that contribute to this cultural crisis are:

▶ the dispossession of Indigenous Australians from their land and subsequent inability to practise their rites and ceremonies; Aboriginal identity is closely tied up with their relationship to their lands

▶ the imposition of non-Indigenous law that has broken down a number of strict Aboriginal customs and watered down their culture.

Loss of family links

The legacy of the stolen generation and subsequent family dislocation brought despair to many Aboriginal families.

Community service workers must be aware that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals may remember an unhappy mission life or could be victims of the stolen generation, either directly or indirectly through their parents or relatives.

Alcohol abuse, family violence and poor health are some of the potential outcomes of the loss of family connections so important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Lack of relevant and culturally appropriate education

Learning styles that are not based on oral, visual and demonstrative methods have left generations of Aboriginal people with inadequate education.

This presents a significant barrier to their ability to participate in the delivery of health, welfare and community services, a problem exacerbated by information that relies on the written word and sometimes unfamiliar technical language.

Traditional art, oral and visual information can be used to provide information and advice in an accessible way to Indigenous people.

Lack of meaningful employment or occupation

Indigenous perceptions of employment are often misunderstood by non-Aboriginal people.

Money and material possessions are not integral to their life. Keeping their culture and maintaining relationships with family, the community and the land take precedence over work and earning a living. Likewise, sharing whatever possessions they have with each other is embedded in their culture.

Sometimes, Aboriginal people have problems keeping occupations that are not meaningful to them. Indigenous Australians often avoid jobs that need a lot of paperwork, reading or conceptual thinking, or authoritative/ bureaucratic positions in a hierarchal working environment.

Lack of relevant health knowledge

The health problems faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples are characterised by proportionally high incidences of alcohol and substance abuse, poor diet and nutrition leading to obesity and diabetes, sexually transmitted disease and mental illness.

A contributing factor to Indigenous physical and mental illnesses is lack of knowledge about proper diet and nutrition as well as the effect of drugs, alcohol and other substance abuse.

Recent state and Commonwealth government programs have provided health and health services promotion activities among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Food and nutrition

Healthy 'bush tucker' has been replaced by an abundance of fatty, low fibre, high salt and sugar food of questionable nutritional value. As a result, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases are disproportionately common among Indigenous communities.

Education, training and targeted promotion about diet and health are important factors in addressing health, food and nutrition issues.

Coordinators and support workers in community services settings have the capacity to play an important role in raising and maintaining awareness of what contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

Geographical remoteness

The remoteness of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities results in people having less opportunity or inclination to access services.

A trip to a city or regional centre for health or welfare services, particularly if a period of separation from family or community is involved, can result in stress and further illness for the individual or their relatives.

Flexibility of visiting times and number of visitors may be required, and possibly support with temporary accommodation.

Smoking

Research indicates that the prevalence of smoking is much higher among poor and marginalised groups than mainstream society, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feature as one of the heaviest demographics of smokers.

Among the reasons given for this trend are that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples consider smoking as a 'normal' or socially acceptable practice, reinforced by their culture of sharing with members of the family and community.

Mental stress

Although it is difficult to obtain reliable statistics detailing mental stress in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, indications are that mental health problems significantly affect around a third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also have a similar rate of hospitalisation for intentional self-harm compared, with the non-Indigenous population.

Alcohol and substance abuse

Statistics indicate that Aboriginal people as a proportion of the Australian population are less likely to consume alcohol than their non-Aboriginal counterparts; however, those that do are more likely to consume harmful quantities.

Once again, the impact of European social and economic systems on traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures has contributed to patterns of alcohol and substance abuse. Among the causes of these patterns are:

▶ the breakdown of traditional social control mechanisms

▶ loss of group identity

▶ the sharing ethos

▶ resistance to imposed controls on Aboriginal society

▶ boredom and dislocation.

It is claimed that Aboriginal men in particular suffer from the loss of their cultural status in the transition from a traditional to a welfare-based lifestyle. Programs to manage alcohol and substance abuse are often said to fail because they fail to actively involve Aboriginal communities in their development.

Violence

Violence in its many forms such as assault, family violence, sexual abuse and violence among men is also a reality in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Violence in general, and family violence in particular, is often caused by:

- ▶ racism, marginalisation and dispossession
- ▶ loss of land and traditional culture
- ▶ breakdown of community kinship systems and traditional Aboriginal law
- ▶ entrenched poverty
- ▶ alcohol and drug abuse
- ▶ the effects of institutionalisation and forced removal policies
- ▶ Aboriginal males, compensating for feelings that their traditional role and status is undermined, with aggression towards women and children.

Environmental factors

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing are also affected by a number of environmental health factors (e.g. housing, sewerage, water supply, hygiene) resulting in unhygienic conditions and the transmission of disease and illness.

Environmental health factors include:

- ▶ poor housing conditions and overcrowding
- ▶ poor hygiene standards
- ▶ unsanitary conditions caused by open sewerage and inadequate or poorly maintained water supply
- ▶ health issues caused by dogs and other animals living in close proximity to humans.

Impact of Western systems and structures

Acknowledging the impact of events and issues throughout the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly the impact of colonisation, gives non-Aboriginal people an insight into the physical, mental, social, economic and political situations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. It also provides insight into the way that these peoples engage with services.

Here are some examples of why Western systems and structures may be found confronting and alienating.

Admission and discharge procedures

If you want to foster confidence in a care services organisation, practising cultural awareness and sensitivity at the point of entry and exit is essential. A welcoming, friendly face and a show of warmth can help Indigenous people feel comfortable in seeking advice from a community services provider.

Past experiences of rejection, racism and discrimination can arouse suspicion of institutions, including those seeking to help Indigenous Australians. This can be exacerbated where the service is staffed wholly by non-Indigenous workers.

There is also a better chance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples returning and utilising the service if, at time of discharge, they are reminded that they and their people are welcome to use the service.

Referral protocols

Referring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to other services may not be as straightforward as anticipated, due to their complex kinships. They may want to consult first with other members of the family regarding the referral and should be allowed the time to do this.

Reception and inquiry services

The reception or inquiry service should show empathy and positive communication when dealing with any information or service inquiry. An understanding of how family relationships work, skin systems, death and dying helps avoid misunderstandings. For example, refrain from mentioning a deceased relative's name, as this is taboo in many Indigenous cultures.

Diagnostic services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may not like their blood or urine being taken. They may find it shameful or embarrassing. So an interpreter or an Aboriginal liaison officer should be involved in explaining the necessity of taking specimens as a process of treatment.

Inpatient services

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship systems emphasises that everyone is related to one another, so in most Aboriginal affairs, including sickness, death and ceremonies, the whole community participates. The presence of extended family may assist the individual's recovery and wellness. If you work in a hospital setting, visiting rules may need to be flexible to accommodate the many relatives of the sick individual who may visit at different times.

Non-inpatient and community services

Learning about Indigenous people can de-construct the negative stereotypes and assumptions that many people have about Indigenous Australians. An open mind can make a difference in your dealing with Indigenous people as non-inpatient customers of community services. For example, practise listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, rather than telling them what to do; show empathy and effective communication skills to avoid conflict and misunderstanding.

Screening services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may have personal barriers that make it difficult for them to participate in screening services, such as breast, cervical, bowel or prostate scans and tests. Many Indigenous Australians, particularly women, do not like taking their clothes off in the presence of carers/workers.

Health promotion

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples respond better to visual information about social and health matters, than to written material. Using Aboriginal arts to explain and promote health intervention and treatment may be helpful to Indigenous people. The use of drama or role-play instead of written communication can send powerful messages for educating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, alcoholism, drug addiction and other substance abuse.

Public health

Current strategies for Indigenous public health focus on the community. They also recognise the need to staff services with Indigenous health professionals and support workers.

Priorities include:

▶ Aboriginal health worker education in mental health

▶ education of non-Indigenous health workers on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history

▶ health services that are culturally appropriate and accessible

▶ adolescent services for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at risk

▶ recognition and employment of traditional healers

▶ professional and support services to deal with domestic violence, mental health, child abuse and neglect (including sexual assault and incest).

Non-government or agency

The participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the delivery of privately provided services can be encouraged through consultation in policy and procedure development. Exclusion from participation in employment and decision-making potentially creates a sense of once again being 'managed' by non-Indigenous people.

Urban, rural and remote community settings

Practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is stronger in remote and rural communities than among city dwellers. Non-Indigenous people who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in rural and remote areas should respect their culture of performing rites and ceremonies such as 'sorry business', 'women's/men's business', initiation to adulthood and other business they undertake. Refrain from interfering with their culture especially if they have to settle disputes between themselves.

Understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture enables non-Indigenous workers to dismantle the traditional power relations between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous co-workers.

Reflect on the impact of diversity practices and experiences

Use the reflective cycle to reflect on the impact of diversity practices and experience on your own behaviour, interpersonal relationships, perception and social expectations of others.

Write down your answers, using the following as a prompt.

1 **Description**
List the diversity practices used in your workplace. Briefly describe how they have impacted on your own behaviour at work and/or affected your interpersonal relationships with people with support needs and co-workers.

2 **Feelings**
What do you think and feel about the diversity practices used in your workplace?

3 **Evaluation**
Are these good or bad thoughts and feelings? Explain why.

4 **Analysis**
Have any of these practices changed your perception or social expectations of others? Why or why not?

5 **Conclusion**
What do you conclude about the diversity practices used in your workplace and your reaction to them?

6 **Action**
If given the chance, what might you do differently? Why?

Example

Work with awareness of own limitations in self and social awareness

It is important to be aware of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures, because of their impact on the perceptions and feelings of these peoples today.

In some communities in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a minority. As a result, people like Albert can find it quite intimidating when using services:

'I am always hesitant to go to the doctor when I am sick. I only go when I have to, because I am very sick. I do not like the waiting room as mostly I am the only black person there. It's always so much easier if someone from your own people is there to help.'

Practice task 2

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

Case study

Martha is a 48-year-old Aboriginal woman living in a remote community in South Australia. Martha has smoked since she was 14. She also has an alcohol addiction. Martha has had a chronic cough for the last four months. Her chest aches. Because of her location, however, Martha has not received medical treatment. Martha also feels uncomfortable around nurses and doctors who are not from Aboriginal backgrounds. She has difficulties communicating in English, and does not like being around white people.

1. Identify two diverse or complex issues or events that may have impacted Martha's current situation.

2. Identify two current social, political or economic issues or events that may impact Martha's ability to access health services.

3. Explain how the impact of diversity practices and experiences may impact Martha's behaviour, relationships, perception and social expectations of others.

4. Imagine you are supporting Martha. Use a reflective cycle to determine how you could support her.

Click to complete Practice task 2

1C Reflect on ability to work inclusively and with understanding of others

Care service organisations need to consider the diversity of the values, beliefs and expectations of people with support needs. To work more inclusively, you need both knowledge and skill.

Inclusivity requirements of care organisations and their staff

▶ Be aware of your own cultural background/experiences, attitudes, values, and biases that influence ability to help individuals from diverse groups.

▶ Self-educate by learning the cultural, social, psychological, political, economic, and historical factors specific to particular ethnic groups.

▶ Recognise that ethnicity and culture may have an impact on the behaviour of a person with support needs.

▶ Help people with support needs to become aware of their own cultural values and norms and apply this to their own lives and to society at large.

▶ Respect the individual's religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values.

▶ Work to eliminate biases, prejudices and discriminatory practices.

▶ Provide information in a language that the person with support needs can understand.

▶ Provide information in writing, along with oral explanations.

Specific needs of socially and culturally diverse individuals

To work more inclusively, it helps to be aware of the specific needs of your socially and culturally diverse individuals. Here are some examples of specific needs that may need to be addressed.

Specific needs

Religious practice

Care services workers need to be aware to the possible differences in religious ritual and the impact of a person's religious practice on their beliefs and value system.

Here are some tips that may help you become sensitive to different religious practices:

▶ Clarify the person's religious practice.

▶ Consult others who know or follow the same religious practice to gain further understanding.

Age

You need to consider cultural views on the social significance of youth or age, and the specific needs of young people and elderly people.

Disability

You also need to consider different cultural views of disability and care of family members with a disability, putting the person before the disability, and facilities for people with a disability. Focus on the person, not the disability.

Gender preferences

You need to be aware that some cultural groups have quite definite views on the opposite sex providing services to individuals. Work practices may need to be adapted to allow for different cultural views and protocols governing interaction and physical contact with the opposite gender. For example, a single woman may refuse to be alone in an office with a male, or a male may be uncomfortable with being interviewed by a pregnant women.

Sexual preferences

It is also important to consider cultural views of homosexuality, transgender and non-traditional partnerships.

Work inclusively

It is unrealistic to expect that every care worker will know all of the cultural practices and expectations of every diverse group in Australia. However, it is realistic to expect that you to acknowledge the potential areas of difference, and seek clarification before taking action.

The following outlines some questions you might ask.

Physical contact

▶ Is touching appropriate?

▶ Which part of the body should not be touched? For example, touching a person's head could be a cultural taboo for some cultural groups.

▶ Is it appropriate to touch or be touched by the opposite sex?

Eye contact

▶ Is it appropriate to make direct eye contact? For example, in some cultures, not having direct eye contact shows respect to others.

Emotional expression

▶ Is it appropriate to express emotions (such as grief and loss) overtly or covertly?

▶ When can a person smile? For example, in some Asian cultures, people sometimes use smiles to cover sadness, anger and worry, to save face or to be polite.

Personal appearance

▶ What is appropriate clothing?

▶ What is considered to be 'clean and tidy'?

Personal belongings or possessions

▶ What is the perception of ownership?

▶ How should a person's personal belongings be handled?

Forms of address (greetings)

▶ What is the appropriate way to address the co-worker or person with support needs?

▶ What is the correct way to pronounce their name?

▶ Is there any difference in addressing people who are older or younger than you?

Reflect on your ability to work inclusively

Use the reflective cycle to reflect on your ability to work inclusively. Write down your answers, using the following as a prompt.

1 **Description**
Describe an incident where you worked inclusively with a diverse co-worker or person with support needs.

2 **Feelings**
What did you think and feel at the time you were working with them?

3 **Evaluation**
Where these good or bad thoughts and feelings? Why?

4 **Analysis**
Are these thoughts and feelings realistic? Were any of these assumptions?

5 **Conclusion**

What do you conclude about this incident and your ability to work inclusively?

6 **Action**

If it happened again, what might you do differently? Explain why.

Example

Work inclusively with others

Pete is the coordinator of a respite service that provides in-home short-term respite support for families caring for someone with a disability. Many of the families in Pete's region are newly arrived immigrants from Africa, and many do not speak English as a first language. Pete's job is to organise workers to provide personal, recreational or social activity support for people with disabilities so their families can have a short break. He needs to work closely with interpreters, case managers and other service providers.

Pete is meeting with a case manager from Somalia, who is there to support a new family and help organise their respite care. Pete greets her with his hand outstretched, and says, 'G'day, how are ya? Hot enough for you?' The woman is surprised by Pete's informal greeting, and offended that he referred to her using the term 'hot', which she interprets as referring to how someone looks. The case manager frowns at Pete and greets him formally, saying, 'It's nice to meet you, Mr Barry. I think we should keep this meeting professional, don't you?'

Pete is embarrassed, and decides he needs to improve his communication skills before their next meeting. He realises that perhaps he needs to work more inclusively so that he does not cause offence.

Practice task 3

1. Describe how you would work inclusively with a person from one diverse group.

2. Reflect on your performance when demonstrating inclusivity. Use the reflective cycle to identify where you could make changes.

Click to complete Practice task 3

1D Identify and act on ways to improve self and social awareness

Improving your cultural and social awareness is a lifelong journey, but there are many benefits. You will not only gain a better understanding of the people you work with and care for, but will begin to appreciate the connections between all people, rather than the differences.

The responsibility for making a workplace more culturally and socially aware belongs to everyone: managers, care workers and the people with support needs. However, it is the time spent in reflection that could be of most value. Focusing on self and examining your own perceptions can bring about worthwhile and lasting personal change.
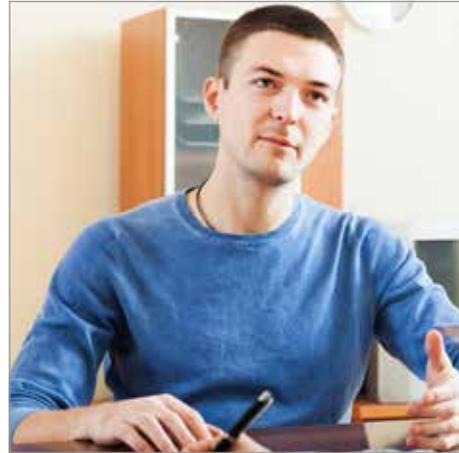
A lifelong journey

Care workers are increasingly trying to develop their own cultural and social awareness so that they can provide the best care to as many people as possible.

Unfortunately, no single event, course or experience will make you culturally sophisticated or more socially aware. However, by embracing many opportunities throughout your lifetime, you will begin to appreciate the connections between all people, rather than the differences.

Here is a short list of general ideas that may be useful in your efforts to become more culturally and socially aware:

▶ Learn a foreign language.

▶ Use your foreign language in community service.

▶ Make cross-cultural friendships.

▶ Organise a multi-cultural event at your organisation.

▶ Put yourself in a situation where you are in the minority.

▶ Volunteer at a minority health clinic or an HIV education program.

▶ Volunteer at a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) community centre.

▶ Volunteer at a women's shelter or homeless shelter.

▶ Volunteer with refugees.

▶ Volunteer at an ethnic community festival or celebration.

▶ Join an organisation working to end racism.

▶ Bring strategies for ethnic harmony to the places you live and work.

Everyone is responsible

Everyone is responsible for making the workplace more culturally and socially aware.

Here are some things to keep in mind when considering the cultural needs of all individuals in the workplace.

Managers

The following are some considerations for managers to keep in mind:

▶ Provide regular feedback to staff about the way they incorporate cultural awareness into their day-to-day duties. For example, tell staff what they do well and how they can improve.

▶ Conduct staff surveys to determine if there are any cultural issues they need to address. For example, staff may want more information about kosher meals or how to respect an individual's privacy.

▶ Provide staff training about cultural issues. For example, each month there may be training about the important cultural days in that month.

▶ Obtain feedback from individuals and their families and have regular discussions with them.

▶ Listen to advice from the residents' committee or similar meetings and committees.

▶ When possible, employ some staff from the same cultural background as the people being cared for.

▶ Allocate time and a portion of the service provision budget to meeting cultural needs. These resources can then be used to access training related to cultural needs, and to have written material translated into community languages. It can also be used to employ interpreters for meetings, resident meetings and care plan meetings, if necessary.

▶ Ensure staff members have a safe workplace at all times, and address any culturally-based issues that may affect this.

Care workers

The following are some considerations for care workers to keep in mind:

▶ Always be aware of any cultural issues relevant to the tasks you are doing.

▶ Ask for regular reviews and feedback about your performance.

▶ Attend regular cultural education sessions relating to the cultures of the people you care for.

▶ Be encouraged to discuss any cultural problems as they arise, and ask for help.

▶ Talk with experts in the community, including religious and social leaders and groups, to learn more about a particular culture.

▶ Include people with support needs in decisions being made about their care to ensure their needs are met.

▶ Report any conflicts, difficulties in meeting care needs or communication problems to your supervisor.

▶ Assert your right to a safe and inclusive workplace.

People with support needs

People with support needs should:

▶ be encouraged to tell the care worker if they are unhappy about their care

▶ explain to the care worker if their cultural needs are not being met

▶ explain what they would like changed to meet their needs

▶ communicate in a way that makes them feel comfortable and secure – either by speaking in English, by speaking in another language via an interpreter or to a care worker who speaks their preferred language.

Reflect on self and social awareness

Use the reflective cycle to focus on yourself and examine your own cultural and social awareness. Write down your answers, using the following as a prompt.

1 **Description**
Describe an incident at work that demonstrated your social and cultural awareness (or lack of it).

2 **Feelings**
What did you think and feel at the time?

3 **Evaluation**
Were these good or bad thoughts and feelings? Explain why.

4 **Analysis**
Were these thoughts and feelings realistic? On what do you/did you base this cultural opinion?

5 **Conclusion**
What do you conclude about your social and cultural awareness from this incident? Do you think it needs to improve? Why or why not?

6 **Action**
If the incident happened again, what might you do differently? List two things you can do in the next week to improve your social and cultural awareness.

Example

Improve self and social awareness

Here are two examples that illustrate the importance of social and cultural awareness.

Example 1

Lack of awareness causing stress
When a young man from a remote Aboriginal community died in a regional hospital, an Elder came to view the body and carry out tribal post-death practices. However, hospital staff denied the Elder access because hospital policy did not consider him close blood kin. This caused a great deal of distress to the family who wanted their son to receive traditional rites and also offended the Elder, an important community leader.

Example 2

Promoting effective service through understanding
After the person Rosanna was providing support to died, she had to explain to the family that it wasn't the hospital's fault he was sick. She was their only support and helped them contact relatives, then organised food and accommodation when they all started arriving. Because the brothers and sisters of the deceased didn't understand the Centrelink system, Rosanna helped them to fill out paperwork, as well as informing other relevant agencies. Rosanna understands that her job is not just nine-to-five. She can't just walk away from work and be anonymous.

Practice task 4

1. Suggest three ways you could improve social awareness in the workplace.

2. Explain why learning cultural awareness is a lifelong responsibility.

3. Imagine a person with support needs is told they cannot use your service, on the basis of their ethnic background. Use the reflective cycle to demonstrate how you would apply social awareness.

Click to complete Practice task 4

Summary

1. You may be exposed to many different social and cultural groups when working in a care environment.

2. It is important to identify and reflect on your own perspectives and biases so you can improve your ability to work inclusively and with an understanding of others. To do this, you need an understanding of culture and your own cultural identify. You also need a structured process that will help think about and make sense of your own experiences.

3. Becoming more culturally aware is the first step towards changing your perspective and breaking down any social or cultural bias. Cultural competence grows out of cultural awareness. This is something that every organisation should aim to demonstrate – both as an organisation and through the behaviour of its individual workers. Cultural safety is the result of cultural competence. It describes an environment that accepts all people and is free of discrimination.

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have diverse and complex cultures. Care workers need to understand the social, political and economic issues that impact these cultures if they are working with or caring for Indigenous Australians. Care workers also need to understand the impact of Western systems and structures and how these impact on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples engage with services.

5. To work more inclusively, care service organisations need to consider the diversity of the values, beliefs and expectations of the person with support needs.

6. Although it is unrealistic to expect each care worker to know the cultural practices and expectations of every diverse group in Australia, they should be able to acknowledge potential areas of difference and seek clarification.

7. Improving your cultural and social awareness is a lifelong journey, but the benefits are many. You will not only gain a better understanding of the people you work with and care for, but will begin to appreciate the connections between all people, rather than the differences.

8. The responsibility for making a workplace more culturally and socially aware belongs to everyone: managers, care workers and people with support needs. However, it is the time spent in reflection that could be of most value. Focusing on self and examining your own perceptions can bring about worthwhile and lasting personal change.

Learning checkpoint 1
Reflect on own perspectives

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in reflecting on your own perspectives.

Part A

1. Read the diagram below while reflecting on your own cultural identity. Select two factors from each section (Culture, Subcultures and Individual factors) and write how each applies to you.

SOCIETY

Culture
Social names
Social values
Social behaviours
Social rules
Laws

Sub cultures
Religion
Social/economic class
Family/birthplace
Sexuality
Special needs

YOU

Individual factors
Social names
Gender
Education
Experience
Age
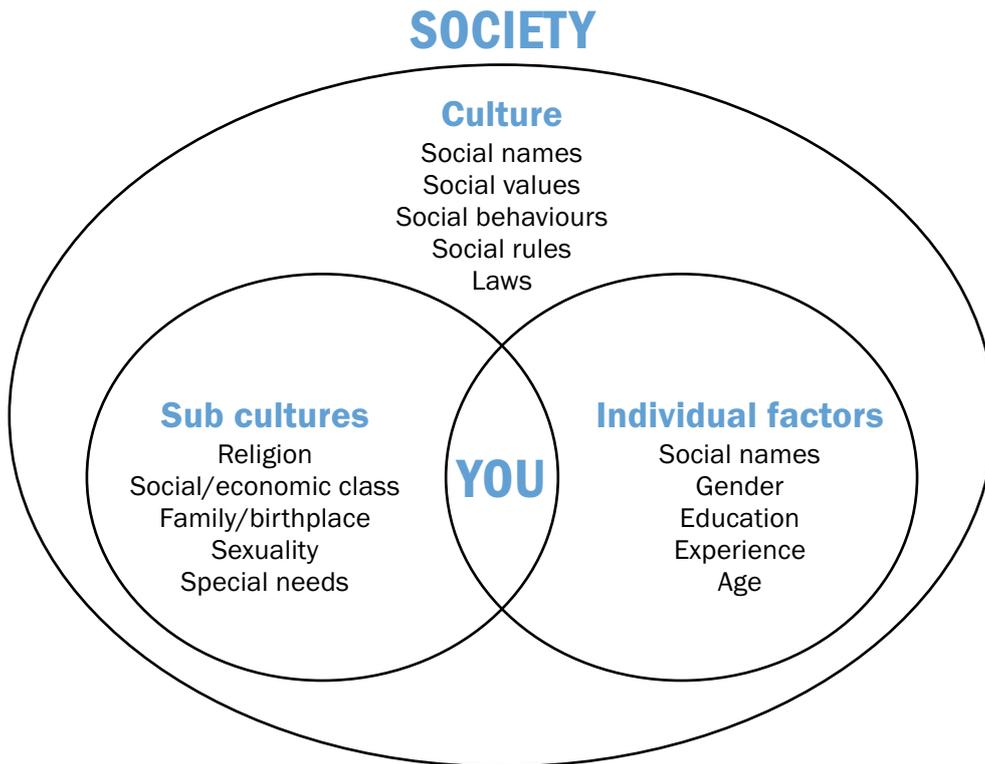
2. In a paragraph, discuss how your own cultural and social perspectives and biases will impact your work with people with support needs. Use examples.

3. Describe one strategy you could use to eliminate cultural or social bias in the workplace.

4. Think of and describe one situation when your work was impacted by diversity issues. Then apply the reflective cycle to identify where you could make improvements.

5. Identify three diverse and complex factors that you should be aware of when working with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and explain why they may impact your work.

Part B

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

> ## Case study
>
> Toni is a white Australian who is working for an alcohol and other drug counselling and rehabilitation service. Matthew, is Aboriginal, is one of the newer people in the clinic with support needs, and has an extensive history of drug issues. This is the first time Matthew has used a professional health service. In the first week, Matthew demonstrates a number of aggressive behaviours, which is not unusual in the centre, especially in the first two weeks. However, Toni overhears two of her colleagues, Lisa and Xu, talking in the common room about Matthew. Toni hears Lisa and Xu say that a lot of Matthew's problems stem from the fact that he is Aboriginal. Toni feels this is a very unfair statement, and although she doesn't like to listen in on a conversation, she does feel she should do something about this situation.

1. Why do you think Toni is upset towards her colleagues?

2. How might diversity issues impact Matthew's ability to use the service?

3. How does Toni's own culture, western systems and structures impact on Matthew's engagement with the service?

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A Value and respect diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace

2B Contribute to workplace and professional relationships

2C Keep the workplace safe

Appreciate diversity and inclusiveness and their benefits

An effective care worker recognises and respects diversity and understands that everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect regardless of their race, religion, gender, beliefs or culture. They understand that people have a right to be different and that everyone should be treated equally. They also recognise and understand different cultures, how these differences affect their work with people with support needs and co-workers and are able to address any personal prejudices.

2A Value and respect diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace

Australian society is made up of many diverse communities and cultures. When working in Australia, it is reasonable to expect your role in the care service industry to involve working with people from diverse backgrounds. This is a chance for you to meet people you may not otherwise have the opportunity to meet; to learn about cultures you may not know anything about; and to gain an understanding of a wide range of traditions, customs, languages, beliefs and ideals. It is also an opportunity to learn how to be more inclusive as you work with people from a different social or cultural background to your own.

Workplace expectations

To work effectively in a care environment, you need to master the basic skills and knowledge required to work well with people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

Skills and knowledge required to work well with diverse people
▶ How your cultural background can affect the behaviour, beliefs and language skills of people your co-workers and people support needs
▶ Australian laws relating to equal opportunity
▶ An awareness of resources that exist in the community to support people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds
▶ Being prepared to enlist help and support from others as you do your job
▶ Using respectful and inclusive language and behaviours when dealing with people from various cultural and social backgrounds
▶ An understanding and tolerance towards others, and considering why they may be acting in a particular way
▶ Understanding the standards, policies and procedures related to the organisation and to the wider industry or sector in which you work

A wide variety of needs and experiences

The nature of your work means that you provide care and support to the people who need it. However, the type of care and support each person needs may vary according to their age, ability, the service you are employed to provide and the nature of their special needs.

Consider the following points.

Assisting individuals

People with support needs may require assistance with:

▶ maintaining their current way of life and living situation

▶ developing new skills

▶ maintaining existing skills

▶ forming new social networks and friendships

▶ coping with day-to-day living

▶ maintaining their independence

▶ learning to live and work in Australian society without fear or distress.

Your understanding

Your understanding of different cultural and social backgrounds can help you to meet the individual needs of each person with support needs. It will help you know what to say and what not to say; to behave in ways that show respect and do not cause offense; to create harmonious and enjoyable group situations, and to solve situations where conflict arises.

Your knowledge

Your knowledge will also help your understanding of the particular needs of people who have migrated to Australia to escape situations of political turmoil, war, poverty or fear of persecution. And, it will help you remember that there are often good reasons why two people from different cultural backgrounds may simply never get along with each other, no matter what you or anyone else tries to do to help.

A positive way forward

You may find there are others within your workplace who don't value and respect diversity and inclusiveness, or share your positive attitude to working with people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. You may find it frustrating to see and hear things that you don't agree with, or that you find offensive or intolerant. In these situations, you should simply do your best to be a positive role model for changing attitudes.

You can't force someone else to change. Remember, they too are a product of their own cultural background, upbringing, history and experiences. All you can do is work within your own job description and role model the behaviours and attitudes that you believe are right for each situation you encounter.

Discuss any problems with your supervisor, as they are there to help you learn to do your job better and more effectively.

Key areas of diversity

Being an effective role model comes from understanding. So, what is diversity? What kinds of people might you encounter within an Australian care environment?

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ from each other. Here are some of the key areas of diversity and their characteristics.

Culture/race/ethnicity

Culture is the shared system of learned and shared values, beliefs and rules of conduct that make people behave in a certain way. It is the standard for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting.

Race is a term applied to people purely because of the way they look. It is often difficult to say a person belongs to a specific race because there are so many individual variations (such as skin colour). All human beings belong to the 'human race'.

An ethnic group is a distinct people with specific characteristics. People of the same ethnicity might share the same physical characteristics (skin colour or bloodline), linguistic characteristics (language or dialect), behavioural or cultural characteristics (religion or customs), and/or environmental characteristics (living in the same area).
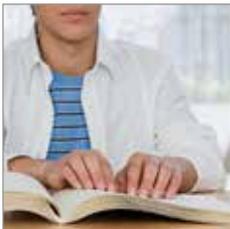
Disability

The categories of disability include:

▶ Physical: affects a person's mobility or dexterity

▶ Intellectual: affects a person's abilities to learn

▶ Psychiatric: affects a person's thinking processes

▶ Sensory: affects a person's ability to hear or see

▶ Neurological: results in the loss of some bodily or mental functions

Also included are disabilities resulting from physical disfigurement or from the presence of organisms causing, or capable of causing, disease in the body.

Religious and spiritual beliefs

Religion is a specific set of organised beliefs and practices, focused on the belief in and worship of a god or gods. Religion is usually practised by a community or a group.

Spirituality is a broader concept than religion. It is more of an individual practice and has to do with having a sense of peace and purpose.

Gender identity

Gender refers to the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person. This includes the way people express or present their gender and recognises that a person's gender identity may be an identity other than male or female.

Terms commonly used to describe a person's gender identity include trans, transgender, gender diverse, genderqueer and neutral. It does not matter what sex a person was assigned at birth or whether the person has undergone any medical intervention.

Intersexual status

Intersex status refers to people who have physical, hormonal or genetic features that are:

▶ neither wholly female nor wholly male

▶ a combination of female and male

▶ neither female nor male.

Being intersex is about having biological variations, not about gender identity. An intersex person may have the biological attributes of both sexes, or lack some of the biological attributes considered necessary to be defined as one or other sex.

Generational

Research shows that each generation approaches life and work in a different way. Their unique attitudes, ambitions and world views being shaped by the social and historical events that they have lived through. Within Australia we have:

▶ The Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1945)

▶ Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964)

▶ Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980)

▶ Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1994)

▶ Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009).

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation means a person's sexual orientation towards:

▶ persons of the same sex

▶ persons of a different sex

▶ persons of the same sex and persons of a different sex.

Terms commonly used to describe a person's sexual orientation include gay, lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, straight and heterosexual. All of these groups are represented in Australian society.

Diversity in Australia

Australia is a culturally diverse society. Our Indigenous people have always had a rich variety of cultures, languages and customs. Even the members of the First Fleet came from a number of ethnic backgrounds. Our diversity has grown continually ever since, as a result of large-scale migration from non-English speaking countries and the eventual adoption of a non-discriminatory immigration policy.

Today, Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the world. This diversity is a central feature of modern Australian life.

Here are some statistics depicting the level of cultural diversity in Australia.

Cultural diversity statistics
A migrant arrives in Australia every 1 minute and 29 seconds.
The majority of the population are Australian-born. However, more than 75% of Australians claim ancestry other than Australian.
About 2% of the population come from Indigenous backgrounds. 43% have at least one parent born overseas. 30% were born in another country. Of these, 8.5% are from non-English speaking countries.
Almost 400 different languages, including Indigenous languages, are spoken collectively by Australia's almost 23 million people.
By 2026, net migration is expected to account for 55% of the total population growth, with more than two-thirds coming from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds.

Diversity and government policy

One of the biggest changes in Australia over the past 50 years has been the evolution of government policy from the White Australia Policy to the non-discriminatory immigration policy we have today – moving from assimilation to integration, and then to multiculturalism.

Each of these aspects is described in the following information.

Assimilation

The policy of assimilation was based on a belief in the benefits of homogeneity and a vision of Australia as a racially pure white nation. It effectively excluded non-European immigration. It also dictated the treatment of the Aboriginal population, including the adoption of Indigenous children into white Australian families. Assimilation implies that the individual gives up their own cultural identity to become part of the dominant Australian culture.

Integration

The policy of integration was a transitional phase between assimilation and multiculturalism. It allowed newer minority cultures to exist within the dominant Australian culture, which was modified to some extent by their presence. However, it did not encourage ongoing cultural diversity – everyone was expected to adopt the integrated culture.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism recognises and positively accepts that Australia is, and will remain, a culturally diverse country. It offers a set of guidelines for enhancing social harmony and seeks to ensure that diversity is a positive force in our society. It recognises that absorbing newly arrived people into the Australian community involves adjustment for all parts of the community.

The newcomers are also expected to take on many aspects of the Australian way of life, including the law, our democratic form of government, and English as the national language. But, equally, this policy recognises that many migrants and their children will choose to keep many of their customs and cultural traditions. Some of these will also be adopted by other Australians.

Source: www.dss.gov.au

The impact of diversity on Australian society

The evolution over the past fifty years in migrant selection has had a profound impact on Australian society. As the Australian community has become progressively diverse, each successive government has used policies, programs and public messages to help newcomers settle in and to encourage positive community relations.

Here are a few of the initiatives in place in Australia.

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECC)

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national body that represents Australians on issues relating to cultural diversity. It is funded by the government to:

▶ advocate and promote a just, inclusive, multicultural Australia

▶ network with Australia's diverse communities and provide advice

▶ facilitate inclusion of new and emerging communities into the broader Australian community.

The Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS)

The Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) provides:

▶ initial information and orientation assistance

▶ assistance in finding accommodation

▶ a package of goods to help establish a household

▶ information and assistance to access services and become part of the local community

▶ short term torture and trauma counselling.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides language classes for eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English. It is designed to provide people with support needs with basic language skills to help them settle successfully in Australia.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

▶ The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) service provides a national translating and interpreting service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It allows non-English speakers access to information and services.

Settlement Grants Program (SGP)

▶ The Settlement Grants Program (SGP) provides community organisations with funding to deliver settlement services to help people with support needs become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible.

Source: www.dss.gov.au

The concept of social cohesion

In general, Australians support cultural tolerance and value the diverse nature of our society. However, many are still concerned about the social cohesion of multicultural Australia, as depicted in the following information.

Difficult to define

The concept of social cohesion can be difficult to define. In its broadest sense, it refers to the 'ties that bind' a society together and prevent it from falling apart. The principles of social cohesion can be easily identified when all citizens share the same values and standards - but not when individuals or cultural groups interpret the ideas of cohesion and disorder in different ways.

Five indicators

To solve this problem, the Scanlon Foundation developed five indicators to use in their ongoing research on social cohesion in Australia. Social cohesion is, therefore, measured by a sense of the following:

1. Belonging: shared values, identification with Australia, trust

2. Social justice and equity: evaluation of national policies

3. Participation: voluntary work, political and cooperative involvement

4. Acceptance and rejection, legitimacy: experience of discrimination, attitudes towards minorities and newcomers

5. Worth: life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations

Sense of belonging

In 2013, the Scanlon Foundation questioned whether multiculturalism's impact on the 'Australian way of life' had been good for Australia. 84% of respondents agreed that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, while 75% agreed that it benefits the economic development of Australia. The survey also found that 92% of the people surveyed felt they belonged to Australian society. This demonstrates that, as a nation, we have made important gains in making Australia more inclusive and respectful.

Racism

Despite these findings, racism in Australia still exists. In 2012–13, there was a dramatic increase of 59% in complaints based on racial vilification and hatred. In the same year, the Australian Human Rights Commission received 500 complaints under the Racial Discrimination Act. This equalled nearly a quarter of the complaints received by the Commission.

Casual racism

There is also the disturbing rise of 'casual racism' in the public domain, whether on public transport, on the sporting field or in social media. While it was disheartening to realise that racism still exists in our society, it was heartening to see how many people have publicly confirmed that there is no place in sport, public transport or any other aspect of Australian life, for racism.

Anti-racism campaign

The *Racism. It stops with me* campaign was launched in 2011 by the Australian Human Rights Commission, to empower Australians to take practical action against racism. This campaign now has support from organisations across business, sport, education, local government and civil society – including the AFL, Cricket Australia, Telstra, ANZ Bank, SBS, and Universities Australia to name a few.

Diversity and economics

It is common knowledge that cultural diversity has had a positive economic impact on Australia as a nation.

These positive impacts are described in the following information.

Resilient and adaptable

▶ Generally speaking, migrants and refugees are very resilient and adapt well to new challenges and surroundings. They are willing to take on menial jobs, work hard and make sacrifices to establish themselves in their new country. This willingness to make the best of their new life is demonstrated by their participation in VET and University courses, and the number of new businesses created in the last 30 years.

Skilled and productive

▶ The most obvious economic benefit to Australia from migrants is their employment. They help fill job vacancies and reduce skill 'bottlenecks'. This is in line with Commonwealth policy, which, for many years, has pursued the same three drivers for economic growth: population, productivity and participation.

Creative people

▶ In recent years, it is thought that diversity, particularly in the cities, attracts creative people with different skill sets and ideas. According to this line of thought, the greater the concentration of diversity, the higher the rate of innovation, high technology, business information, job generation and economic growth.

> **Exceptional people**

▶ Migrants are also thought to be exceptional people. Generally speaking, they are strongly motivated, more educated and skilled. They can also be risk takers and entrepreneurs who have had substantial business and economic success, as seen in the *Business Review Weekly*'s Rich 200 List 2015.

> **The global marketplace**

▶ Having people in our midst who speak other languages and understand other cultures has helped business and trade in Australia. They are able to tap into others of their community here and help open up markets in other countries overseas.

Source: www.dss.gov.au

Diversity and culture

Australian culture is dynamic. It has been modified and enhanced by the arrival of many migrant groups, and continues to be shaped by the evolution of ideas and customs, both from within Australia and from overseas. Consider the following points.

Changing practices and influences of diversity in culture

Food

Australian supermarkets, grocery stores, markets, delicatessens, cafes, restaurants and take-away stores offer an enormous variety of foods from around the world. Not only have many of these foods been incorporated into the mainstream Australian diet, but they have also become the basis for much of Australia's social life.

Architecture

Buildings throughout Australia follow a range of cultural styles. Our terrace houses are from English pattern books. Our civic buildings show elements of classical Greek. Our modern cities are a blend of English and American ideals. As well, there is a flavour that is uniquely Australian. Most recognised is the Australian homestead, which was the first building type to respond to the new living conditions, the new landscape, the Australian sunlight and a new diverse society.

Organisations

There are many cultural organisations in Australia that help to support different communities. Some of them are social places, some provide services and some are multi-ethnic. Some service a particular cultural community, while others seek to bring communities together. Among these organisations are community radio and television stations. There are many non-English newspapers around the country too.

People and language

Australians are becoming more and more diverse as a people. More than 40 per cent of Australians were born overseas or have at least one parent who was born elsewhere. There are people from about 200 countries who speak many different languages. We are now a people of many colours, accents and styles of dress and appearance.

Religion and customs

With various cultures come diverse religions and customs. Sometimes other Australians take part in these, particularly through cultural festivals. Some of these religions, particularly Buddhism and Islam, have been taken up by people in the broader Australian community.

Appreciate the differences

It is important to appreciate and understand how diversity affects the way you communicate and work with people with support needs, their families and your co-workers.

Here are some of the cultural and social factors you may encounter in a diverse workplace and how to incorporate each element into your work.

Race

Race refers to a group of people who have similar features such as skin colour, type of hair, eye colour and other physical features.

Treat everyone equally regardless of the colour of their skin or where they are from.

Ethnic group

Ethnic groups have interests, history and cultural features in common. Cultural features include language, religion and the way people interact with each other. An example of an ethnic group is the Jewish people.

The predominant culture in many countries is often associated with a single ethnic group; for example, Italians. However, some Italians belong to other ethnic groups, for example; the Jewish, Albanian and Ethiopian ethnic groups who live in Italy.

Be aware of a person's ethnic group so you can understand and talk about their culture with them. This may help you avoid stereotyping people. An example of a stereotype is someone believing that all Italians love to eat pasta.

Language

Language refers to the way people communicate with each other, and is a very important part of a culture. Some common languages spoken in Australia are English, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Croatian, Macedonian, Turkish, Serbian and Hindi. Around 60,000 people in Australia speak an Australian Indigenous language.

A person with support needs may miss the opportunity to speak in their native language. If possible, arrange for someone who speaks their native language to come to talk with them.

Religion

Religion is the belief of a superhuman or supernatural power, such as a god that has divine control over human life. Religions include Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto and Sikhism.

Understand how different religions influence the way people do things such as eating, dressing, praying, celebrations, honouring the dead, and their approach to health care.

Spiritual beliefs and customs

Many people have spiritual beliefs that are not based on a formal religion. Some people believe spirits inhabit the land, animals, and objects such as rocks. These beliefs affect the type of food people eat, the way they treat animals and the way they live their lives.

You must respect other people's spiritual beliefs; even if you don't believe them yourself. See if a member or leader of a relevant spiritual group can visit a person at home or in a community setting if they are unable to attend spiritual gatherings.

Cultural values

People value many things about their culture, including their language, food, religious practice, sport and family life. Different cultures have different values that are usually based on tradition.

You can build good relationships with people with support needs by learning about the things they value in their culture; for example, food and dress choices. Do this by talking to them or looking at photo albums with them.

Traditions, ceremonies and festivals

In most cultures, festivals and celebrations are very important; for example, Chinese New Year, Anzac Day, Easter, Hanukkah and Greek national days.

Learning new and different cultural beliefs and customs can make the workplace interesting and fun. Encourage people with support needs to maintain their traditions by celebrating special days.

Dress

The way people dress may be influenced by their religion or culture. Some people with support needs only want to dress the way they have always dressed.

Respect people's choice of dress, and encourage other workers and people with support needs to do the same. Be aware of your role in dealing with unwanted or derogatory comments related to dress or appearance.

Family structure and roles

Family structure and roles may be quite different between cultures. In many cultures, the male is the head of the home and is responsible for the family. In other cultures, the grandmother or mother is the matriarch (the female head of a tribe or family).

Be aware of which family member you may need to contact about a person with support needs. Ensure you don't breach Australian laws and service standards when doing this. You may also need to be respectful of other family members but also assert the right of a person with support needs to express their own views and direct their own care.

Gender, gender relationships and sexuality

The following points relate to gender and culture:

▶ Australia promotes equality between the sexes.

▶ Some cultures uphold traditional gender roles; for example, that men should work and women should care for children.

▶ In some cultures, women and girls have their husbands chosen for them.

▶ In some cultures, girls are married as soon as they are of childbearing age.

▶ Attitudes to a person's sexual preferences vary between cultures.

Understand that people with support needs may be embarrassed about their sexuality, or may treat you in a certain way because of your gender. Ensure you show respect for an individual's values and views, but also that you maintain your own value as a worker by being clear about what sort of behaviour is acceptable from a person with support needs, and what is not.

Age and respect for the elderly

In some cultures, especially Asian cultures, older people are particularly valued for their knowledge and age.

Treat all older people with respect. This may involve being patient and tailoring your communication to suit the individual.

Disability and special needs

The people of some cultures don't like others to see people who have a condition that impairs or interferes with the 'normal' way of doing things; they may put disabled people in special homes. In some poor countries, people with disabilities may be sent out to beg for food and money. Other cultures include people with disabilities in everyday life. It is against the law in Australia to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Help people with disabilities retain their dignity and independence by providing them with the care and support they need, according to your role and their care plan. Ensure individuals with disabilities are aware of their rights under Commonwealth, state or territory laws.

Working in an appropriate way

Everyone is different. You must never stereotype or make assumptions, as people may act and think differently even though they belong to the same cultural or social group. Workers must provide care to suit the individual and meet workplace policies and procedures. To do this, you must respect a person's diversity while meeting their care needs.

The following duties and tasks must be carried out in a culturally sensitive and inclusive manner.

Collecting and providing information

Care organisations need to ask questions to identify the level and type of care for each person with support needs. Part of this assessment includes asking personal questions; for example:

▶ Which country were you born in?

▶ How long have you lived in Australia?

▶ Do you speak English?

▶ Do you read and/or write in English?

▶ Do you speak any other languages? What are they?

▶ What is your religion?

▶ Do you have food preferences?

▶ What are your health practices and beliefs?

▶ What are your cultural ideas about sickness and death?

These questions ensure that the person's cultural requirements are respected. For example, if a person says they don't eat red meat on Fridays due to their religious beliefs, then they shouldn't be served this food on this day.

Communicating

Having good communication skills makes it easier for you to work with culturally diverse people. If people don't speak or understand English very well, you may need to communicate with pictures or signs. Learning some words in the language of the person with support needs can also make them feel more comfortable. Avoid using slang or casual language, such as 'She'll be right', as many people find this hard to understand.

You must also listen very carefully to a person who doesn't speak English confidently or well, or who has a strong accent that is difficult to understand. They may use common English words, but mean something other than the usual meaning of those words.

Providing assistance

Part of a support worker's role is to provide care, which includes showering, toileting and grooming. Some people get upset and embarrassed when they need personal care, so having a good relationship with the person with support needs and understanding their cultural background helps to make this easier.

For example, some Muslim women may not accept personal care assistance from males. In this case, a female care worker should be used for these tasks.

Also, in some cultures, people take their shoes off when they enter a house. This requirement should also be respected, but only if it does not put them at risk or go against work health and safety (WHS) requirements. For example, a worker who assists an individual who uses an electric wheelchair should have covered footwear to protect their feet from injury.

Making physical contact

In many cultures it is usual practice to kiss people when you greet them or to touch them on the arm when you are speaking to them. In other cultures it is considered very rude to touch others. For example, you may be caring for a person who is very upset about something. You want to comfort them and put your arm around them. To many people this may be rude or even threatening. Always ask the person with support needs if it is okay to touch them.

Contacting families and other carers

It may be necessary to communicate with the family of the person with support needs and carers to learn about their cultural needs. Remember, you must respect the family's cultural values as well as the individual's.

For example, you may be providing care to a person in their home and not understand why they want a task done in a particular way. Family members can often help you to understand the person with support needs. It is important to know who to contact; sometimes the entire family is involved in decision-making, while at other times, just one person makes decisions for a family.

Be clear about who the person with support needs is in your service, ensure you understand your job role well and if in doubt, refer to your supervisor for advice.

Treating deceased persons with respect

Each culture has its own beliefs and customs for caring for deceased people. For example in Australian Aboriginal culture, the name of the deceased is not spoken for a certain amount of time after death. People of the Hindu faith are usually cremated and their ashes thrown into a river. White clothes or armbands are usually worn by people of some Asian cultures when there is a death in the family, and they perform ceremonies to assist the dead person into the next world. Some religions such as Islam forbid autopsy and cremation. Jewish people are usually buried within 24 hours of their death.

You need to know how to treat a deceased person and their family with respect.

Providing food services

Many cultures have specific beliefs relating to food. If your organisation provides meals to people with support needs, you must meet their cultural and dietary requirements. For example:

▶ Jewish and Muslim people do not usually eat pork.

▶ Some people may be vegetarian, which means they do not eat meat (even fish).

▶ Many people of Asian cultures do not eat dairy products and like to include rice with every meal.

▶ Some people prefer to eat with chopsticks.

▶ Some people are used to eating very hot and spicy food.

▶ Some people's culture or religion may forbid them to drink alcohol.

▶ In some cultures, there are times when people go a period of time without eating. This is called fasting.

If you are ever unsure about an individual's food needs, it is better to ask than offer the person something that may upset or offend them.

Assisting with clothing

You must be familiar with the clothes each person with support needs likes to wear. For example, in some cultures it is important to wear clothes that cover particular parts of the body. Some people may like to wear the traditional clothes or observe the clothing customs of their culture as part of their everyday life; for example:

▶ wearing a headscarf to cover their hair

▶ taking shoes off when entering a house

▶ wearing a tie

▶ wearing a Jewish yarmulke/kippah (skullcap)

▶ wearing an Indian sari.

Always respect the choices of the people with support needs and talk to your supervisor or the individual themselves, if their choice makes it difficult for you to carry out your work tasks. You may need to negotiate a compromise that allows you to do your job safely and effectively but also shows respect for the person with support needs.

Treating people with understanding and empathy

You must respect the dignity of the people you care for. You can do this by showing empathy and understanding. For example, to understand how an older man whose wife has just died may feel, you should imagine how you may feel if you were in their situation.

Empathy doesn't mean you know exactly how they feel, rather you understand that they would be very upset.

An individual's culture may affect the way they feel or express their emotions, so understanding the cultural background of a person with support needs will help you to treat them with respect. If you are ever unsure of how to treat a person with support needs, read their care plan or ask your supervisor.

Example

Value and respect diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace

An older Indigenous man, Jimmie, is admitted to a respite care centre because his daughter has to go to hospital for few weeks. Jimmie is frightened and visibly shaking. Sue, his daughter, is worried about her father and is quite reluctant to leave him at the centre.

Sensing the distress this experience is causing both Sue and Jimmie, the centre coordinator calls in a carer who has an Indigenous background to talk to Jimmie and Sue about what Jimmie's stay will be like. She also helps identify Jimmie's needs and explains how the centre will provide care. The coordinator also asks Jimmie if he would like to meet another Indigenous man who is also at the centre.

Once Sue learns there are Indigenous people at the centre she is much more relaxed. As a group, they discuss how Jimmie's need for family and cultural contact can be met, and the kind of activities he can participate in to make his stay in the centre more enjoyable.

Practice task 5

1. Identify one feature of political diversity in Australia, and explain its impact on your work.

2. Identify one feature of social diversity in Australia, and explain its impact on your work.

3. Identify two ways that diversity has a positive impact on the Australian economy.

4. Identify one feature of cultural diversity in Australia, and explain how this impacts your work.

5. Discuss your workplace's diversity policies and procedures with your supervisor. In a paragraph, briefly explain how your organisation accommodates culture, race and ethnicity diversity; disability diversity; diverse religious and spiritual beliefs; and gender, intersex, generational and sexual orientation and identity.

6. Identify one influence and one changing practice in Australia, and explain its impact on diverse communities within Australia.

7. How can you, as a support worker, adapt to meet the diverse needs of those you support?

Click to complete Practice task 5

2B Contribute to workplace and professional relationships

Part of a support worker's job is to develop good working relationships with the people they care for. It is important all support workers undertake their work in a way that meets the cultural needs of a person with support needs, respects all cultures and is free from stereotyping, racism and prejudice.

An effective support worker learns to recognise and respect diversity in the workplace and understands that everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect, regardless of their race, religion, gender, beliefs or culture. They should respect that people have a right to be different and that everyone should be treated equally. Support workers should also be able to recognise and understand different cultures, how these differences affect their work with people with support needs and colleagues, and to be able to address any personal prejudices.

Be aware of diversity when working with others

Try to be aware of diversity when working with others. Use your knowledge of different cultures every time you communicate and work with a person with support needs, another staff member, other health professionals, family members and other people who visit.

Your understanding of other cultures affects:

▶ the way you speak

▶ the language you use

▶ the words you choose

▶ the body language you use

▶ the way you interact with other people

▶ what you think about a person's culture.

Use your knowledge of diversity

The more you know about the culture of the people you are working with, the more you can use this information to form a good working relationship with them. As a support worker, your tasks may include dressing, showering and toileting, helping with meals and assisting with social activities. All of these tasks may be undertaken differently for people of different cultures. The individual needs of people with support needs are listed in their care plan.

The following information explains why you need to be aware of the individual's care plan, and why tasks need to be done in certain ways.

Everyday tasks

Here are some things you can do to understand a person's culture and their language abilities, so you can help them with everyday activities:

▶ Use language the person understands; for example, avoid using slang and use plain English.

▶ Arrange for an interpreter if necessary.

▶ Follow cultural practices, such as looking people in the eye when speaking to them, or taking your shoes off when entering their home or their room (providing it is safe to do so given your work role and tasks to be performed).

▶ Learn a few words or phrases from the language of the person you are supporting to make them feel confident.

▶ Help prepare a book of pictures and words to assist an individual with speech or language difficulties.

Modesty and privacy

To ensure you respect the modesty and privacy of people with support needs in-line with their cultural requirements, consider the following points:

▶ Have a female care worker to help shower, assist with toileting or provide intimate personal care to a female person with support needs.

▶ Understand why a person chooses to wear clothes that fully cover their arms and legs.

▶ Make sure no-one disturbs people when they are praying.

▶ Suggest alternative ways to protect modesty and privacy if there is a need for a person with support needs to dress in a way they would otherwise find unsuitable; for example, to allow care workers to safely and easily hoist them from one position to another, or to keep the individual safe when walking with a walking frame or crutches.

Social activities

Use your knowledge of culture to help with social activities by:

▶ understanding why some people enjoy having lots of family members around them at times

▶ helping to keep a the traditions alive

▶ using body language to encourage a person to join in group activities

▶ helping to arrange special cultural events.

Treat all staff and people with support needs equally

It is important to treat all people as equals. It doesn't matter which cultural group they belong to or the circumstances of their socio-economic background. All people deserve to be included and all people deserve your respect. This applies to your co-workers as well as people with support needs.

Try to remember the following.

Treat all people as equals
Don't speak in a patronising or demeaning manner.
Never make people from different cultures feel they and their opinions are not valued.
Don't speak loudly and slowly to people from another culture – it may seem like you think they are stupid.
Ensure you treat people with different gender preferences equally.
Sit down to speak to someone in a wheelchair, so they don't feel intimidated or powerless.
Communicate in a way that is appropriate for each person's abilities and age.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the act of treating someone unfairly or favouring others. Discrimination is never an acceptable behaviour in a care environment.

Here are some different forms of discrimination.

Age

Age discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation, because of their age. For example, someone may not allow an older person to participate in a social activity or they might tell them they have to meet special rules. Many people don't realise that being ageist is wrong; however, Australia does have laws and rules that protect people from discrimination.

Disability

Disability discrimination is when a person with a disability is treated less favourably than a person without the disability in the same or similar circumstances.

For example, it would be disability discrimination if an organisation refused a person access to their building and services because they were blind and have a guide dog. It is also disability discrimination if the only way to enter a building is by a set of stairs because people with disabilities who use wheelchairs would be unable to enter the building.

Racial

Racial discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation because of their race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status. For example, it would be racial discrimination if an organisation refused to service a person with support needs because they are of a particular racial background or skin colour.

It is also racial discrimination when there is a rule or policy that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on people of a particular race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status. For example, an organisation may say that workers must not wear hats or other headwear at work, as this is likely to have an unfair effect on people from some racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Sex

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their sex. It is sex discrimination when someone is treated unfavourably because of their gender, or when people make assumptions about the type of work or activities women and men are capable, or not capable, of doing.

Sex discrimination could include:

- not hiring a woman because the boss thinks she won't fit into a male-dominated workplace
- offering women and men different rates of pay or benefits for the same job
- not promoting a woman to a more senior position because it's assumed the other staff won't respect her authority
- dividing up work tasks based on whether staff are male or female
- insisting women wear different clothing at work to men
- not considering women for a particular role.

Causes of discrimination

There are a number of reasons why people may discriminate against others. Some of the causes are listed here.
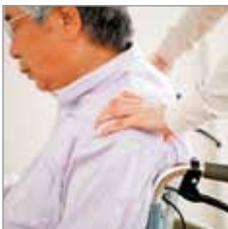
Lack of knowledge

At times workers may need to care for a person from an unfamiliar culture. They may not have had time to read or learn about the culture and make assumptions. They may think that all people from that culture behave in a certain way because of things they have seen on television or in the movies. Lack of knowledge is no excuse for discrimination; it is up to the support worker and their employer to have and provide workers with the necessary knowledge.

Fear

Some people become frightened or threatened when they don't understand a culture or why a person behaves the way they do. People may become alarmed or feel uncomfortable about another person's appearance. For example, some people don't understand why Muslim women cover most of their bodies with scarves and robes.

Stereotyping

Some people stereotype others without learning more about them. For example, some people think that all Africans are refugees, or that all Italians like soccer. People may assume all Buddhists are vegetarian or all Christians go to church on Sunday. Not all members of a cultural or religious group are the same. Everyone makes their own choices, even though they may share the same (or similar) background or beliefs with others.

Lack of understanding

Many people expect migrants who come to Australia to be able to speak fluent English, and can't understand why people find English a difficult language to learn. However, people who are settling in a new country have many other things they need to understand and learn, so language is often not their main concern.

Racism

Racism is a belief based solely on the race of a person or people, rather than their individual characteristics. Racism can be the cause of conflict and problems in a workplace. People may make jokes about a person's race or laugh at how a person dresses. Racism is against the law and is never acceptable behaviour.

Discrimination and the law

Eliminating discrimination continues to be a main focus of the United Nations. International laws have been developed that require countries to work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and in particular, racial discrimination.

These international laws, called treaties or conventions, apply throughout the world. A treaty or convention operates like a contract. When a country, such as Australia, becomes a party to a convention, it is bound to act in accordance with the rules contained in that convention. Australia is a party to a number of anti-racism conventions, which impose obligations on Australia in regard to racism and racial discrimination in schools and other contexts.

You can read more about international laws against discrimination at:

▶ http://aspirelr.link/racism-international-law

Legal and ethical considerations

There is a range of legislation at both national and state level that impacts on the way workplaces operate. Laws define the way that employers must carry out their activities – many of these laws are directly beneficial to the organisation, its employees, people with support needs and customers.

Working in a safe, healthy environment benefits both management and employees, as absenteeism is less and quality of working and home life for everyone is improved. Equal employment legislation and anti-discrimination laws ensure that everyone gets a fair chance to be employed and to work free of harassment and intimidation.

Organisations within Australia must comply with a variety of Federal Acts and national standards.

National anti-discrimination legislation has a number of aspects, as shown here.

Age discrimination

Age Discrimination Act 2004 **(Cth)**

The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* is a relatively new law, which is especially important with regard to Australia's ageing population. It protects people who are discriminated against because of their age and states that, regardless of age, everyone has the same right to equality before the law.

The Act also allows appropriate benefits to be given to people of a certain age, particularly younger and older people, according to their circumstances. Objectives of the Act also include removing barriers to older people participating in society and challenging negative stereotypes about older people.

Exemptions include stipulations regarding youth wages, health care and voluntary work.

Disability discrimination

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 **(Cth)**

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. It also prohibits discrimination against people associated with people who have disabilities; these may be friends, relatives, carers and co-workers. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in the areas of:

▶ employment

▶ education

▶ access to public premises

▶ purchase of house and land

▶ provision of goods, services and facilities

▶ administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.

Exemptions to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* include when a potential employer would be placed under unjustifiable hardship in order to employ a person with a disability, although the employer is expected to make reasonable adjustments. An example of an unjustifiable hardship might be the cost of extensive renovations to allow for wheelchair access to and throughout a small, second floor studio owned by a small business.

Racial discrimination

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* covers all of Australia and prohibits racial discrimination and offensive behaviour based on racial hatred. It covers discrimination based on race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin. It also protects those who may be discriminated against based on their association with people of a particular ethnicity. The Act applies to everyone in Australia and all organisations.

The *Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cth) was added to the Racial Discrimination Act in 1995 and provides an avenue for people to complain about racist behaviour that offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates others in public. Exceptions to the law include when the behaviour is a matter of public interest (such as a newspaper report on racially-based violence), or is part of an academic discussion which is not malicious or spiteful. These exceptions often involve rights to free speech.

Sex discrimination

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* explains that it is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy. It sets out laws against sexual harassment, as well as dismissal from work based on family duties, including pregnancy.

According to the Act, it is unlawful to refuse to provide goods or services, education or employment based on a person's sex. The Act also covers discrimination within awards and enterprise bargaining, insurance and superannuation, Commonwealth laws and programs, and accommodation.

Sexual harassment is included in the Act because it is a form of discrimination to treat a person unfairly because of their sex.

An exception to the Act includes when goods or services can only be applied to one sex, for example female or male-specific health care. Another exception covers employing a person to look after a child in the child's home. Sexual discrimination in the training and ordination of religious ministers is also not covered under the Act.

Human rights

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

The Australian Human Rights Commission (initially called the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) was established in 1986 to deal with breaches of anti-discrimination laws and to promote human rights education.

This Act only covers actions or policies of the Commonwealth.

The Act promotes human rights for all people, and covers most forms of discrimination not already covered in the other Acts, including discrimination on the basis of:

▶ criminal records
▶ marital status
▶ medical record
▶ political opinion
▶ religion
▶ sexual preference
▶ social origin
▶ trade union activity.

Privacy

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

If your organisation is in the habit of collecting information about customers or people with support needs, its operations will come under the auspices of this Act. This Act deems personal information about individuals to be sensitive, such as information about:

▶ criminal records

▶ health

▶ membership of a professional or trade association

▶ membership of a trade union

▶ political affiliations or opinions

▶ racial or ethnic origin

▶ religious affiliations or beliefs

▶ sexual orientation or practices.

This information about a person could be used by others to discriminate against them or identify them, although they may wish to remain anonymous. Your organisation should inform you of your responsibilities regarding your customers' privacy. It should also inform you of its responsibilities with regards to your privacy. It is always advisable to take any information provided to you about any individual as confidential.

People generally have a right to see and correct, if necessary, files of personal information kept about them by organisations. Individuals are usually only denied access to files about them if their own or another person's safety is at risk, or if there are other legalities involved.

State and territory anti-discrimination legislation

Anti-discrimination legislation varies between states and territories with respect to the specific aspects that each covers. However the overall intent of each piece of legislation is the same – to prevent unlawful discrimination and harassment of individuals within the Australian community. This table lists the agencies that deal with discrimination legislation in your state or territory and the legislation that they administer.

State/Territory	Agency
Australian Capital Territory	Human Rights Commission: *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT)
New South Wales	Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
The Northern Territory	Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission *Anti-Discrimination Act 1996* (NT)
Queensland	Anti-discrimination Commission Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (QLD)
South Australia	Equal Opportunity Commission *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA)
Tasmania	Office of the Anti-discrimination Commissioner *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (TAS)
Victoria	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (VIC)
Western Australia	Equal Opportunity Commission *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA)

Equal employment opportunity

In Australia, national, state and territory laws cover equal employment in the workplace. Everyone is entitled to have equal opportunity when it comes to getting access to jobs, benefits and associated services within the workplace. Equal employment opportunity is aimed at ensuring that the job recruitment and selection process is fair, and that access to information, workplace outcomes with respect to supervision and management are not biased.

Equal employment opportunity legislation is designed to ensure:

▶ fair practices are in place in every workplace

▶ the best person is recruited and/or promoted when there is a position vacant, and skilled staff are retained

▶ workplace management decisions are fair to all employees

▶ training and development needs address customer and employee requirements

▶ the workplace is free of harassment and discrimination

▶ social and cultural differences between staff are recognised and respected.

When discrimination occurs

When discrimination occurs in a workplace, there are consequences. Here are some examples of what may happen.

Company reputation

If discrimination is happening in a workplace, employees will talk about it to their friends, family and possibly even the media. These accusations can cause serious damage to the company's reputation. In addition, they may find fewer qualified applicants apply to work at their organisation and people may take their business elsewhere.

Morale

Discrimination also creates poor morale. Employees may feel that benefits, rewards and promotions have little to do with performance and stop doing their best work. People may wish to be with another organisation that does not discriminate.

Discrimination complaints

Employees who have been discriminated against can file a complaint against the organisation with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC will examine all your organisation's employment practices including hiring and firing; promotions; recruiting and job advertisements; compensation and benefits; training programs; and other conditions of employment. If the company is found guilty of discrimination, the EEOC will try to reach a conciliatory or settlement agreement that may include back pay, promotion, hiring or reinstatement. As well, your organisation may have to pay attorney and court fees.

Lawsuits

If an organisation is found guilty of discrimination and they don't reach a conciliatory agreement with the EEOC, it may file a federal lawsuit against the organisation. If the EEOC charge is dismissed, the employee could file a personal lawsuit against the company.

Universal declaration of human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is probably the best known list of human rights. The United Nations adopted it in 1948, when the whole world was recovering from the wounds of the Second World War. After a period that showed some of the worst of human potential, the world community tried to focus on and promote the best of human potential.

The Declaration is a key starting point for understanding human rights – most other human rights conventions expand on specific parts of it.

You can read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at: http://aspirelr.link/ universal-declaration-human-rights-pdf

Human needs and human rights

Each person is born with inherent human rights – the right to freedom, equality and dignity. Each person has the right to safety, security and privacy. When supporting people, workers have an obligation to maintain and recognise basic human rights. For example, when supporting older people in their homes, support workers should respect and maintain the person's dignity and privacy.

Everyone also has the right to have their basic needs met. The human needs approach ensures that all people have access to basic needs, including food, water, shelter, sanitation, education and healthcare. As well as maintaining human rights, ensure that people you work with have their basic needs met.

Human rights in the workplace

Community service workers are, by definition, human rights workers. Your daily tasks should ensure that human rights and needs are met.

Here is a description of how human rights are integrated into work practices, procedures and policies.

Human rights in the workplace
Practices The workplace should inherently support individuals' human rights and needs. Workplace practices will observe the right to dignity, privacy, security and safety.
Procedures Workplace procedures are step-by-step instructions that underpin practices. Procedures such as WHS procedures ensure people maintain safety.
Policies Policies inform procedures and practices. Policies such as the anti-discrimination policy ensure all individuals are treated equally and fairly.

The legal process

The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act* (AHRC Act) *1986* brings to Australian law a number of rights contained in international human rights law. You can make a complaint under the AHRC Act if you believe your human rights have been breached.

Consider the following points.

The basis of the *AHRC Act 1986*

▶ The following international instruments are declared under the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*:
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief
- Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

Lodging a complaint

▶ If you lodge a complaint under the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*, it will be investigated and, if possible, resolved through conciliation.

If conciliation is not successful – and if the Australian Human Rights Commission finds that your human rights have been breached – they will report it to the Attorney General and have the matter tabled in Parliament.

Important

▶ It is important to note that discrimination under the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* is not unlawful – instead, it is regarded as unfair conduct. Unlike the other anti-discrimination laws that the Commission has responsibilities under, you can not apply to have your complaint heard in court if conciliation is unsuccessful.

Adapted from Australian Human Rights Commission: www.humanrights.gov.au/ complaints-about-breaches-human-rights.

Example

Contribute to workplace and professional relationships

Todd has worked for a number of years with a charitable organisation run by a church. He receives great satisfaction from his job. Prior to starting his job, Todd began a stable and long-term same-sex relationship. If asked about his sexuality, he does not hide it, but does not openly advertise his sexual preference. He has some close work colleagues with whom he and his partner socialise.

After working for the organisation for three years, Todd opens the intranet home page one morning to discover a biblical quote that portrays homosexuality in a negative light. Todd requests a meeting with management asking that it be removed. Several of his work colleagues attend the meeting in support.

Following this, Todd begins to be singled out and is told that his gay agenda does not belong in a Christian organisation. He is rostered on to work at times he has previously indicated he is unable to and his professionalism is questioned.

Rather than continue to experience this bullying and harassment, Todd resigns. Consequently, he experiences severe depression. He leaves his partner and loses contact with his work friends, becoming socially isolated.

Practice task 6

1. Identify which Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation relates to which group:
   ▶ Age
   ▶ Disability
   ▶ Racial
   ▶ Sex

2. Describe a mechanism where a workplace can ensure human rights and human needs are supported.

3. Explain how one of your workplace's frameworks, approaches or instruments is used to support human rights.

Click to complete Practice task 6

2C Keep the workplace safe

It is important that people with support needs are happy with the care they receive, whether it is in their own home, a residential setting or a care facility. Part of the national standards relating to care services is that the personal requirements of the person with support needs are taken into account when planning a service for them. An important part of this is helping people with support needs feel safe and secure.

Understanding plays a large part in making a person with support needs feel protected and cared for. For example, a person with a physical disability may need to be hoisted from a wheelchair into a pool chair to let them participate in a hydrotherapy session. They may feel very insecure in the hoist, as they are wearing bathers and in a particularly vulnerable and exposed position. You can help them feel more secure by talking to them as they are hoisted, making sure they know what to expect next and addressing any immediate concerns.

Your rights and responsibilities

You are born with inherent rights to safety, equality, dignity, respect and fair treatment, as are the people you work with. Human rights should be protected in the workplace. Both workers and people with support needs also have responsibilities – to themselves, and to others.

Here is a description of the rights and responsibilities of workers and people with support needs.

Worker rights

▶ The worker has right to fair and equal treatment in the workplace, as well as industrial rights, such as being paid the award rates. The worker also has the right to work in a safe environment.

Worker responsibilities

▶ Organisations and workers have the responsibility to provide duty of care, ensure people's safety and provide best practice. Responsibilities also include ensuring privacy, dignity, equality and fair treatment for all people who use the service.

The rights of people with support needs

▶ People with support needs have the right to freedom, equality, fair treatment, safety, privacy and dignity. Workplace policies and procedures will outline the need to maintain individual rights at all times. These individuals also have the right to first refusal, and to lodge a complaint if they are dissatisfied with a service.

The responsibilities of people with support needs

▶ People with support needs have specific responsibilities to themselves, to others who use the service, and to the organisation and support workers. If a people with support needs behave aggressively towards another individual, or a support worker, for instance, the organisation will respond accordingly.

When rights have been infringed

A person's rights may be breached either knowingly or unknowingly. Workers' rights may be breached if the award is not being met, or safety standards are not followed. A worker may knowingly, or unknowingly, breach a person's rights by sharing personal information. The degree of consequence will depend on the specific infringement, and the context. There may be organisational procedures for lodging a complaint if rights are infringed. If the situation is more serious, people should be supported to lodge an official complaint, and use the provided networks and frameworks intended to protect rights, such as the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*.

Help people with support needs feel safe and secure

Part of your day-to-day work includes helping people to feel safe and secure. To do this, think about the cultural background of the person with support needs and talk to them to find out how they feel and what makes them feel comfortable and at ease. Helping people maintain their cultural needs can help them stay healthy, happy and comfortable.

Here are some ways to help a person with support needs feel secure as you go about your daily duties.

Personal hygiene procedures

When attending to the personal hygiene requirements of a person with support needs, you must respect their dignity. Always explain what you are going to do and offer choices.

For example, when assisting with showering, encourage the person with support needs to be independent as much as possible, within the limitations of their mobility, balance and coordination skills. Only wash the parts of their body that they can't wash themselves.

The abilities of some people with support needs may change from day to day as a result of their health needs. For example, an individual with multiple sclerosis may be able to wash with little assistance one day but require more support another day. Always ask what help the individual would like.

Personal rituals

All people must be allowed to follow their religious or spiritual beliefs wherever they are living. It is your job to help them achieve this. For example, a person with support needs may want to:

▶ pray

▶ read religious texts

▶ join a religious study class

▶ meditate

▶ receive a blessing or give thanks before a meal.

Make sure you know about any regular or special rituals a person with support needs likes to follow and how you can help them follow these. For example, if you are providing meal assistance in a home setting, you may need to wait while other family members carry out rituals related to food service before you begin your meal assistance tasks.

Privacy

Some people need time alone or in a quiet place when they are observing a religious or cultural ritual. Talk to the person with support needs about when they would like to do this. You may agree for them to close their door, leave a note or tell you when they don't want to be disturbed.

Never interrupt a person who needs to be alone to follow their beliefs. However, you must never put an individual at risk, so you should check the care plan of the person with support needs prior to leaving them alone.

For example, an individual with muscular dystrophy may be completely reliant on you for all their mobility and transfer needs, and may not be able to call you easily if they need help. You may need to check on them regularly in a way that respects their privacy needs, but also ensures their physical safety.

Nutritional needs

People's nutritional intake is vital for their health. The cultural needs of a person with support needs may impact on their nutritional requirements. For example, it is important to offer a Muslim man who is fasting for Ramadan enough food and drink during the non-fasting time so he can stay healthy. It is also important to observe him during the fasting time for signs of any health problems such as dehydration.

If you are worried about an individual's nutritional or cultural needs, speak to your supervisor.

Social environment

Older people and people with disabilities can often become isolated from other people as they may not have a family or friends to visit them.

For example, a Polish woman who migrated to Australia to be with her son and daughter-in-law is then left at home alone when the family members then go to work and school. She can't speak English and finds it hard to make friends, and ends up feeling isolated.

You could assist her by finding out if there are activity groups in the area suitable for Polish or Eastern European people. You could inform her family and encourage her to attend the activity groups.

Social activities and recreation

Most people enjoy going to social activities and spending time with other people. In most care facilities there are usually activity sessions organised at least twice a day. These sessions should include a variety of activities so people from all cultures have a chance to join in and be social. An example is playing bocce (an Italian bowling game), which may cater to Italian residents, or bingo for English or Australian residents. Home and community care services also operate day care centres for older people or people with disabilities in the community. These centres run various activities for people to attend.

Some people with support needs may access respite or recreation services as part of their care routines. This may be on an individual or group basis. Respite and recreation services provide excellent opportunities for assisting individuals to participate in culturally specific and relevant social activities.

Religious needs and ceremonial needs

All people must be allowed to celebrate festivals and special days. There are groups that help people meet their cultural and spiritual needs; for example, by meeting to discuss the culture, hold classes or organise social events.

Some local councils also hold festivals for different cultural groups so people can celebrate and share their cultural traditions. To assist, you could help to organise a dragon to come to the facility for Chinese New Year, or organise carol singing for Christmas.

You might also arrange for special decorations to celebrate a national day, such as bunches of daffodils for St David's Day, the Welsh national day.

Personal space and touching

Different cultures have different beliefs relating to touch. You must understand these beliefs so you don't upset people with support needs and the people you work with.

For example, men from Western Europe often hug and kiss each other on both cheeks when they meet. Australian men often slap each other on the back or shake hands. In many Asian cultures, touching in this manner is an invasion of their personal space.

The acceptable distance between two people interacting also varies between cultures. In some cultures, people stand quite close to each other when they talk. In others, people prefer a space between them and may feel uncomfortable or threatened if a person stands too close to them.

Solve problems

Solving problems is another way to make a workplace feel safe and secure.

Some facilities have residents committees to discuss any issues they have. These issues are then reported to management and dealt with accordingly. Issues might include the following:

▶ A group of people believe the air conditioning is set too high

▶ Some people want an extra ramp for better wheelchair access

▶ Some residents are concerned about the behaviour of a particular individual.

All people with support needs should be free to raise any complaint or dispute they have regarding the service and to have it resolved to their satisfaction. It is therefore important that residents' complaints or issues are taken seriously.

Care services will often have a form, procedure and policy that allows a person to make a complaint or request a change to service delivery. Many services also have a contact person, such as a program coordinator, to take care of any minor queries, questions and difficulties that may arise.

Make decisions inclusively

People with support needs will also feel safer if they are always consulted about the decisions that affect them. You may need to include the family as well as the individual to help make a decision, especially if there are cultural factors involved. Remember, within a family unit there may be differences of opinion about what decisions should be made, so be clear about who the person with support needs in your service or facility is, and who has the ultimate say about what is decided.

If the person with support needs speaks a language other than English, you may need to use an interpreter to make sure they completely understand and can make their own decisions. People with support needs may also require an advocate to help them make decisions and if the person with support needs is unable to make decisions, it may be up to their guardian to determine how to best meet the individual cultural needs.

Provide counselling and support for emotional trauma

Many people who migrate to Australia have been involved in wars or conflict and may have experienced or seen distressing things. Many people don't want to talk about their experiences, so you must respect this. If you think an individual needs help with their physical or mental health, talk to your supervisor. Sometimes talking to a trained counsellor can help a person feel less stressed and safer in their new environment.

There are many organisations and support services designed to help meet the needs of people who have experienced trauma. For example, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB) has developed a suit of grief information resources for those bereaved by the 2009 Victorian Bush Fires.

You can read more about the ACGB resources at: http://aspirelr.link/acgb-2009-bushfire-bereaved

Provide medical assistance and treatment

To make the people you are caring for feel safe and secure, you may also have to take into account their beliefs about medical assistance and treatment. For example, a person from the Jehovah's Witness religion will most likely refuse to have a blood transfusion, as it is against their religion to do so.

Make sure you know and understand the medical needs of every person you care for. The beliefs and information about the medical needs of an individual are documented in the individual's care plan when they first enter a residential or care facility, or start to receive a service in their home. Ensure this information is updated regularly or as the person's needs change.

Understand the impact of inequality

While Australia has traditionally been recognised as an egalitarian society (that is, a society ideologically underpinned by the ethos of political, economic and social equality), disparities between the rich and the poor in Australia are growing.

There are many marginalised populations within Australian society who are subject to inequality, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples; migrants; women; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender; and people who have mental health issues.

The effects and consequences of inequality are great and include:

▶ decreased social, mental, emotional and physical wellbeing

▶ reduced ability to participate in citizenship-based activities

▶ poverty

▶ reduced life expectancy

▶ isolation

▶ homelessness.

Physical, mental and emotional health needs of marginalised groups

You work with many people from marginalised groups. People may be marginalised on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and identity, religion or disability. Some people may be marginalised for health reasons, such as physical or mental health.

You need to be aware of your organisation's policies and procedures for working with marginalised groups, as well as an understanding of relevant legislations, standards and code of ethics, such as anti-discrimination standards.

Here are some examples of physical, mental and emotional health needs of specific marginalised groups.

Physical needs

▶ Physical needs may include medical issues such as diabetes, heart conditions, skin disease or respiratory illness. It may also relate to lifestyle habits, such as over-eating, smoking and alcohol and other drug use. Be aware of the individual's specific physical needs, and how they impact them. Become familiar with the individualised care plan, and ensure the person has the medication or support they need. The person should not be discriminated against on the basis of their physical needs.

Mental health needs

▶ Mental health refers to a person's state of mind. In Australia, one in four people will experience mental illness at some stage of their life. Mental health issues include depression, anxiety, alcohol and other drug additions, and schizophrenia. Understand the person's specific mental health needs; for example, the medication they require, and the frequency medication is administered. Ensure that people with mental health issues receive the support they require, and are not discriminated against on the basis of their mental health.

Emotional health needs

▶ Emotional health may be linked to mental and physical health. A person's emotional health may impact their relationships, and their behaviour towards themselves and others. Ensure that people are given the opportunity to express and communicate their specific needs. Provide the appropriate support. People may benefit from being part of a network, such as relationship guidance group counselling, which enables them to develop positive behaviours, and emotional habits.

Other impacting factors of marginalised groups

People from marginalised groups may experience discrimination, trauma, exclusion or negative attitudes from others. For example, people with little understanding of alcohol and other drug addiction may stereotype a person on the basis of their drug use, and they may be discriminated from social or workplace activities. Support workers have a responsibility to ensure that people from marginalised groups have their needs met and their rights protected.

Here is a description of possible impacts of discrimination, trauma, exclusion and negative attitudes on people from marginalised groups.

Impact on marginalised groups

Impact of discrimination

Marginalised groups may be discriminated against on the basis of their physical, emotion or mental health. This can have a further detrimental effect on emotional or mental health, as a person may feel alienated and misunderstood. Certain people may refrain from seeking the support they need. For example, Aboriginal people who have been discriminated against in the past may avoid seeking the support they need.

Impact of trauma

Trauma may be caused by war, poverty, neglect or abuse. Trauma can have physical, emotional and mental impacts on a person. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may result from exposure to trauma. It may cause a person to repeatedly relive a traumatic experience, cause numbness or an inability to relax, and avoid all reminders of the traumatic incident. PTSD affects 12% of Australians in their lifetime, and may result in depression, anxiety and/or drug use.

Impact of exclusion

A person from a marginalised group may be excluded on the basis of their physical, mental or emotional health needs from employment, leisure activities, community activities or receiving services. Exclusion, like discrimination, may compound a person's issues, such as their drug and alcohol use. Be aware of the person's specific needs and rights, and ensure they are met.

Impact of negative attitudes

A person may be subject to negative attitudes, such as stereotyping or prejudice. People may make assumptions about a person from a marginalised group, such as their ability to participate in the workplace, or in social or community activities. Negative attitudes can once again compound mental and emotional health issues, as a person may feel misunderstood or unsupported. If you observe negative attitudes towards marginalised groups, consult your supervisor and the workplace anti-discrimination policy. Be aware of your own bias or prejudice towards people from marginalised groups.

Protective factors of marginalised groups

Protective factors reduce the likelihood of risk. Protective factors can be individual factors, family or social factors or community factors. Identify the relevant factors that protect the groups you work with. Protective factors for obesity, for example, include good food and nutrition and exercise.

Here is a list of examples of protective factors for physical, mental and emotional health.

Physical protective factors

Protective factors against physical issues include:

▶ good food and nutrition

▶ avoiding smoking

▶ avoiding alcohol and other drug use

▶ adequate sleep

▶ sun safety

▶ immunisation

▶ cancer screening

▶ regular health checks

▶ social and community support, such as organised activities.

Mental protective factors

Protective factors against mental health issues include:

▶ good food and nutrition

▶ adequate sleep

▶ avoiding alcohol and other drug use

▶ family and social support

▶ counselling and therapy

▶ medical attention

▶ community support.

Emotional protective factors

Protective factors against emotional health issues include:

▶ good food and nutrition

▶ adequate sleep

▶ avoiding alcohol and other drug use

▶ family and social support

▶ counselling and therapy

▶ relationship building support.

Example

Keep the workplace safe

Tuyet accesses the home and community care service through her local council. She has cerebral palsy, and needs help with some personal care and home-based tasks, as well as community access support.

Maggie is the worker who spends the most time with Tuyet. Maggie notices that Tuyet appears very fearful sometimes when they are out shopping. This is most apparent when there are groups of men in the vicinity, as Tuyet is jumpy and constantly looks over her shoulder. She walks close to Maggie in the shops and often puts her hand on Maggie's arm for reassurance. Maggie knows Tuyet lost some members of her family to violence in her home country before moving to Australia, but she is unsure whether Tuyet herself experienced the violence or trauma.

Rather than approach Tuyet directly, Maggie talks to her supervisor who then works a shift with Maggie and Tuyet. The supervisor tactfully suggests to Tuyet that there are many support services available to help people who have had difficulties in their home countries. Tuyet decides to let the supervisor refer her to a counselling and support service designed to help individuals who have been victims of torture, trauma and violence.

Practice task 7

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

Case study

Meg is addicted to heroin, and has been recently been in hospital with liver failure. Her rehabilitation includes methadone treatment, as well as frequent drug and alcohol counselling support in both individual and group sessions. Meg has progressed well with rehabilitation and is looking forward to getting back into the workforce. She also wants to try and work things out with her ex-fiancé, Rodney. However, Meg finds it difficult reforming friendships and rekindling her previous relationships. Friends and family felt abandoned by Meg, and disappointed in her behaviour. They feel like she is unwilling to change. Employers are also concerned about Meg's health status. They feel her time out of employment will affect her ability to work well, and Meg feels like the employers don't trust her.

1. What marginalises Meg from society, and how does this marginalisation impact Meg?

2. What are the protective factors that prevent Meg from experiencing further mental, emotional and physical health issues?

3. If you were supporting Meg, what would your rights and responsibilities be?

4. How could Meg's rights and responsibilities be supported?

Click to complete Practice task 7

Summary

1. An effective care worker recognises and respects diversity, and understands that everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy regardless of their race, religion, gender, beliefs or culture.

2. The key areas of diversity in Australia include: culture, race and ethnicity; disability; religious and spiritual beliefs; gender identity; intersexual status; generational diversity; and sexual orientation.

3. Australia is a very diverse society, both socially and culturally.

4. It is important to appreciate these differences and understand how diversity affects the way you communicate and work with people with support needs, their families and your co-workers.

5. Everyone is different. Never stereotype or make presumptions, as people may think differently even though they belong to the same cultural or social group.

6. Be aware of diversity when working with others. Use your knowledge of people's culture and/or social background to develop a good working relationship with them.

7. Understand the impact of inequality on marginalised groups. This understanding will give more insight and make your work more inclusive as you will work with more empathy and understanding. You must treat all staff and people with support needs equally.

8. Do not discriminate or breach another person's human rights. There are international and Australian laws against this. Discrimination is never an acceptable behaviour in the care environment.

9. All people are born with inherent rights. These are called human rights, and include the right to safety, fair treatment, equality, freedom and dignity. People are also entitled to have basic needs met. These include receiving food, water, shelter, clothing, education and healthcare.

10. Get to know the frameworks, approaches and instruments used in your workplace that uphold human rights. All people have rights and responsibilities: workers, management and people with support needs.

11. Help to keep your workplace safe and secure. This should be part of your daily activities involves issues such as personal hygiene, cultural rituals, privacy, nutritional needs, social environment, religious needs and personal space.

12. Solving problems is another way to help people with support needs feel safe and secure. It is also important to involve them in any decisions that affect them.

13. It is essential that people with support needs have ready access to counselling and support for emotional trauma and medical assistance and treatment if required.

14. People may belong to a marginalised group on the basis of their physical, emotional or mental health needs. People from marginalised groups may experience negative attitudes from others, exclusion, trauma or discrimination. Know how to support the rights of people in marginalised groups, and be aware of risk factors.

Learning checkpoint 2
Appreciate diversity and inclusiveness and their benefits

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in appreciating diversity and inclusiveness, and their benefits.

Part A

1. Explain why valuing and respecting diversity in the workplace is an advantage to the organisation, the individuals who use the service and the staff.

2. Describe some of the diverse groups you work with, or who you engage with in the community. Identify key areas of diversity, and how you demonstrate tolerance and inclusion.

3. Identify two legislation and ethical practices that relate to working with and interacting with the diverse groups you have mentioned in question 2.

4. Using one of the diverse groups you listed in question 2, explain how the group influences, or is influenced by the following diverse factors:

    a. Political

    b. Social

    c. Economic

    d. Cultural

5. Describe three different ways you can work appropriately with people from diverse groups.

6. Briefly describe the following key aspects of these diversities, and their characteristics:

   a. Culture, race, ethnicity

   b. Disability

   c. Religious or spiritual beliefs

   d. Gender, including transgender

   e. Intersex

   f. Generational

Part B

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

Case study

Tia is Maori, and has been the victim of domestic violence. She has contacted a women's shelter and is seeking assistance for herself and her three young children. Tia has experienced severe psychological and physical abuse over the last eight years, so has severe post-traumatic stress symptoms, such as sleeplessness, nervousness and vigilance, and she constantly relives traumatic experiences. Aria and Sam are providing support and care to Tia and her children, which includes meeting Tia's basic needs, providing counselling and referring her for medical assistance, and arranging legal support. Tia's partner is also Maori, and Tia says his family background explains a lot of his behaviour. She excuses much of the violence because of the culture she grew up with. Tia's culture, and her trauma, also affect the way she interacts with Aria and Sam. She does not comfortable making eye contact, and finds it difficult to interact with the staff and other clients.

1. Discuss Tia's human rights, and how these relate to her human needs.

2. What frameworks, approaches and instruments might be available to Aria and Sam when working with Tia?

3. Discuss Tia's physical, mental and emotional issues or needs.

4. What impact could discrimination, trauma, exclusion and negative attitudes have on Tia's wellbeing?

5. Discuss Sam and Aria's rights and responsibilities when providing care, and identify what would happen if these weren't carried out.

6. What are Tia's protective factors?

7. How can Sam and Aria ensure a workplace that is safe for Tia, her children and other clients, as well as themselves?

Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A Show respect for diversity in communication

3B Use verbal and nonverbal communication to establish effective relationships

3C Use effective strategies to communicate when a language barrier exists

3D Seek assistance according to communication needs

Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and situations

Communication is important in a care environment, as it affects nearly every task performed. You need to listen to what people say, receive instructions, explain things to other people and ask questions. At times communication may be difficult when you are dealing with people from diverse backgrounds and situations. People's customs, language and religion may all affect how they communicate and understand others. To help overcome any communication barriers that might exist, there is a range of communication skills and techniques you can use.

3A Show respect for diversity in communication

Always use your knowledge of diversity when communicating with a people with support needs, other staff members, other care professionals, family members or other people who visit.

Your understanding of other social and cultural groups affects:

- ▶ the way you speak
- ▶ the language you use
- ▶ the words you choose
- ▶ the body language you use
- ▶ the way you interact with other people
- ▶ what you think about another person's social or cultural background.

Different forms of communication

Communication is a very important element of your work, as you need to communicate with people with support needs, their families and friends, other staff in your workplace, volunteers and members of the general community, advocates, visitors and other care professionals.

There are many methods of communication. It is important to understand each method so that you can use the most appropriate one to provide the best care for people with support needs and communicate effectively with everyone you work with.

Here are the most common forms of communication.

Verbal communication

Verbal communication is what you say and hear; for example, when you talk with friends, ask directions or listen to instructions.

Written communication

Written communication is what you read and write; for example, when you take notes in class or read a train timetable. There is a lot of written communication when caring for people with support needs; for example, the care notes and reports that you write and the instructions you read.

Posters and signs

Posters and signs are also a form of written information, as are pictures, which are often used to provide warnings or give instructions.

Body language

Body language is the actions you make when you are talking to someone; for example, smiling, making hand movements, folding your arms or turning your body away from someone. Body language is something you exhibit without realising.

Signing

Signing is a language of hand movements people use to communicate with each other if they are unable to speak and/or hear. The sign language used by the deaf community in Australia is called Auslan, but a deaf person born in another country may use a different sign language.

Show empathy and understanding

When communicating at work, always show empathy and understanding. Consider these two examples.

Example 1

Try to understand the customs of other people's culture by greeting them in the way they prefer. In Australian culture people are addressed with their given name, followed by family name; for example, Jennifer Smith. In other cultures, such as Vietnamese and Chinese, the family name comes first, followed by the person's given name, like Chang Sui-li. Some people are happy to be addressed by their given name, while other people may prefer you to use their title, such as Mrs or Mr.

Example 2

When you first meet someone, you should find out what they would like you to call them. Remember, names are very important to people, so never shorten a name just because you can't pronounce it. Always learn how to pronounce names correctly. Some people alter their names so they are easier for English-speaking people to say. For example, a Polish man named Wradislav may change his name to Rod, while another person may wish to keep their name.

Be courteous and polite

Remember to be courteous and treat everyone politely.

Being polite in Australian culture

Being polite in Australian culture means you should:

▶ smile and shake a person's hand when you meet them

▶ look people in the eye and give them your full attention when they are talking to you

▶ not interrupt a person when they are talking

▶ wait until someone has finished speaking before you walk away.

Other cultures have different ways

Other cultures may have different ways. For example, people of some Asian cultures smile when they are embarrassed and tend not to make eye contact during a conversation. If you smile and make eye contact with them, they may think that you are being rude.

Ask your supervisor

Always ask your supervisor if you are unsure how to treat someone to ensure that you are not being disrespectful to them. You must also remember that some people may not like you touching them.

Include everyone

All people are important, so be sure to include everyone when working in a care environment. Consider the following points.

Don't ignore people

▶ Some people avoid talking with others because they have trouble understanding what the other person is saying. Don't ignore people or leave them out of a group discussion for any reason. When speaking to a group of people, look at each person from time to time. Try not to focus on just one person, as others will feel left out.

Spend time with everyone

▶ Spend time with everyone, including those with cultural or social differences, and always make an effort to understand people. Remember that people who speak English as a second language or who have difficulty with speech may be hard to understand. Try not to reduce the amount you communicate with someone just because it is time-consuming and challenging.

Listen to the opinions of others

▶ You should also include people from various backgrounds in the planning and activities at your workplace. Consider asking people that you care for to be on staff committees, or seek advice from community social and cultural groups.

Use words that everyone can understand

Use words that everyone can understand. Keep your message clear and simple.

Keep your message clear and simple
▶ Speak in plain English.
▶ Give instructions in simple and clear steps.
▶ Use a normal voice tone and speed.
▶ Check if the individual understands by asking them to repeat the key points in their own words.
▶ Avoid using 'foreigner talk' or broken English.
▶ Avoid complex questions; for example, ask 'Did you like that orange juice?' rather than 'You did not like that orange juice, did you?'
▶ Avoid using jargon, colloquial terms or expressions that may cause confusion.

Watch and listen

Care workers have many chances to watch and listen to people with support needs. You can learn a lot about people from doing this. For example, a person might say one thing, but their body language may imply something else. If you watch a person, this may help you to determine how they really feel.

Be aware of the people you care for who have trouble with their speech, hearing, vision or cognitive skills, as you may need to modify how you communicate with them. For example, you may need to always face a person with a hearing impairment, or speak in shorter sentences with someone who has a cognitive impairment, such as an intellectual disability. You may also need to listen carefully to someone who has had a stroke or has a condition, such as cerebral palsy that affects facial muscle control.

Honesty

Always be honest when communicating with others. If you have a problem understanding or communicating with someone with a diverse background, be honest about it and speak to your supervisor. They may be able to help you resolve the difficulties, as most communication barriers can be easily resolved.

Show respect for diversity in communication

Amala visits Sandra's activity program each week. She prefers to dress in long saris that reach the floor. Recently, her mobility has decreased and she needs to use a walking cane to increase her safety.

Sandra notices at one program session that Amala almost tripped several times as her clothing got caught under the base of her cane. Sandra notes this in her record sheet for the day and mentions it to her supervisor. Sandra's supervisor then contacts Amala directly and organises a physiotherapist to see her at home to address her mobility and safety issues tactfully and respectfully.

Practice task 8

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

Case study

Aaron works in a day program that supports younger people with disabilities. The service is based in metropolitan Sydney, and individuals come from a range of cultural backgrounds, such as Korean, Chinese, Indonesian, Sudanese and New Zealand. Many of the people Aaron supports are Muslim. Aaron is planning a schedule of activities to suit the range of abilities, as well as cultural needs in the group.

1. How can Aaron show respect for the diversity in the group?

2. How can Aaron include all members of the group in the activities?

Click to complete Practice task 8

3B Use verbal and nonverbal communication to establish effective relationships

To work well in a care environment, you need to be able to work effectively with the individuals you care for, their families, advocates and other staff members. Communicating well, using both verbal and nonverbal communication, is the most effective and positive way to build and maintain effective relationships, mutual trust and confidence.

Verbal and nonverbal communication

Verbal and nonverbal communication shapes our interaction with other people. Understanding the different aspects of verbal and nonverbal communication is the first step to improving communication and building effective relationships.

Verbal communication

Verbal communication, sometimes called oral communication, refers to any communication that is spoken. You communicate verbally with people with support needs when you:

▶ talk to an individual in person or on the telephone

▶ talk to or interview an individual to get information

▶ talk with people with support needs in a small group

▶ talk in a meeting to present information to people with support needs or co-workers

▶ have a discussion to reach agreement on behalf of people with support needs.

You need to be careful when you communicate verbally with people. You must make sure that your language is simple and easy for the other person to understand. Try not to use a lot of long or technical words.

Good verbal communication means using the right words and speaking in the right way. You should use clear and simple language if possible and pay attention to the tone your voice as you speak. For example, you should speak quietly and slowly, rather than loud and fast, so the individual can hear and understand what you are saying.

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication occurs when you give information with the actions of your body, rather than your voice. When messages are delivered face to face or in person, they can be influenced by nonverbal cues, signs or signals. When used in the right way, these cues can be used to reinforce your message.

Nonverbal communication includes:

▶ how you move your hands and body; for example, nodding your head when listening to a person shows you are interested and that you understand their message

▶ the way you sit or stand; for example, crossing your arms may indicate that you are not willing to listen to another person's views

▶ facial expressions such as frowning or smiling; for example, frowning may show that you disagree with their message or what they are saying

▶ eye contact; for example, when you speak or listen to another person, these actions show you are interested in them

▶ how you look and dress; for example, your hairstyle and how clean your clothes and fingernails are show how much you care about your impression on others

▶ how close or far away you stand; for example, standing too close may come across as aggressive, and standing too far away may make you look afraid or hesitant

▶ touching the other person; for example, shaking or holding their hand or patting them on the back.

Build effective relationships

There are many ways to build effective relationships with others. This often depends in part on who the person is, as well as your role in interacting with them. You may need to behave and speak in different ways for different people. For example, you would speak to a senior manager you were meeting for the first time in a more formal way than a co-worker you know very well. However, what never changes is the need to build effective relationships with other people, regardless of their cultural background.

To build good relationships with others you should:

▶ think carefully about your words and actions

▶ always be professional when undertaking your work tasks

▶ think about different ways the things you say and do may be interpreted

▶ avoid making any comments that may be seen as discriminatory, racist or biased

▶ avoid using colloquialisms or slang terms that may not be understood by others

▶ be aware of the laws regarding discrimination that apply to all Australians

▶ look for opportunities to make positive, helpful comments about others

▶ model appropriate behaviour in front of other workers.

Understand how people are different

Different people communicate in different ways, regardless of their culture. Some people are quiet and don't say much; others talk loudly and often. Some people always like to tell you what they are thinking about, while other people prefer to keep their thoughts to themselves. To work well with others you should learn how your different people with support needs communicate. Learn who likes to have a long chat with you, who is happier if you speak quietly, and who doesn't mind speaking at all.

Build mutual trust

If someone tells you something private, they do so with the expectation that you will not tell anyone else. Keeping information private is extremely important for developing trusting relationships.

Trust occurs when you are confident that at person can be relied upon to do or act as they say they will; for example, not sharing private information. Trust usually cannot be gained immediately, usually it requires making an effort to develop and maintain the relationship. By doing this and being respectful, you may earn a person's trust.

As a care worker, you must demonstrate trustworthy behaviour at all times so people with support needs feel comfortable and confident with the support they are receiving. This is good work practice, and is also in line with the service standards of the aged care and disability sectors.

Build people's confidence in you

Building people's confidence in you is a key element of developing an effective relationship. Consider the following points.

Listen carefully and don't interrupt

▶ A person with support needs will gain confidence in you if you always listen carefully to them and don't anticipate what they are going to say, or say it for them. Never interrupt people, even if they speak slowly and take a long time to finish their sentences. Instead, provide encouragement and praise them when they learn a new word or ask a question, but ensure you do this in a way that is not patronising or insulting.

Clarify if you are unsure

▶ Remember, many older people or people who have disabilities may wish to direct their own care. This means they will give you instructions about what they want you to do, and how. It is your role to listen, follow reasonable directions from the person with support needs and ask them for clarifying information if you are unsure.

Communicate effectively

▶ You shouldn't just rely on following instructions in the individual's care plan if they direct their own care. You should also communicate effectively with them when doing your work tasks. You may see others increase their confidence in you as your communication skills improve.

Have confidence

▶ As you are given more responsibility and gain more experience in care work, your confidence in yourself will grow. Always try to be confident with the individuals you care for, but don't try to do things if you are unsure or don't know how. Others will have more respect for you if you ask for help in these situations.

Improve your communication skills

It is a good idea to regularly evaluate your communication skills to work out where you can improve.

How to improve your communication skills:

▶ Ask other people for feedback on your communication skills.

▶ Consider how you use body language – can you establish how other people feel by looking at their body language?

▶ Do you speak in an even tone (not too loud and not too soft), with a pleasant voice?

▶ Think about what you do with your hands and arms when speaking to others. Are they folded on your chest or do you wave them about a lot?

▶ Do you speak clearly and slowly enough for people to understand what you are saying?

▶ Do you interrupt a lot, especially when you think you know what the other person is going to say?

▶ Do you ask people questions to increase your understanding?

▶ Do you use different ways of expressing yourself, like using alternative words, making signs or using language that the other person is familiar with?

Example

Use verbal and nonverbal communication to establish effective relationships

Roland works in the community service environment. He provides information and support to people looking for affordable housing to rent.

Roland meets with a young man named Tim, who has a mild intellectual disability. Tim has trouble communicating and focusing on what is being said. He wants to live closer to his new church, where he now works as the gardener.

Roland greets Tim with a smile and a friendly handshake. Tim seems nervous so Roland chats to him about his work in the garden and his friends at the church. Roland smiles a lot and nods his head when Tim speaks. He is also patient when Tim has trouble choosing the right words to say or asks the same questions again. Roland makes sure that his own language is clear and easy to understand.

He speaks slowly and calmly so that Tim can understand the information. Tim starts to feel more comfortable because he feels he can trust Roland. Roland gives Tim some information sheets about the services they provide. The information is written in plain English so that it is easy to read and understand. Roland also spends time explaining the information to Tim. Tim is happy with the information and help Roland has given him.

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Practice task 9

1. What are some examples of verbal communication?

2. What are some examples of nonverbal communication?

3. How can nonverbal communication be used to build relationships?

4. How can verbal communication be used to build relationships?

Click to complete Practice task 9

3C Use effective strategies to communicate when a language barrier exists

A language barrier may exist when a person finds it difficult to explain things or understand what other people say due to their language skills. A language barrier may exist when two people don't speak the same language. Even if people do speak the same language, they may still have difficulty in understanding each other, as they may come from a different part of the country and speak a different dialect. They may also have left one country to live in another country and have forgotten their first language.

There are many strategies you can use to overcome a language barrier and help a person communicate. Knowing the strategies available can help you determine the best one to use. Bear in mind that you may have to try more than one strategy to successfully overcome a language barrier.

Multilingual signage

Multilingual signs are notices and posters that are written in more than one language. These are usually proved in the languages of the main cultural groups of the people with support needs at a particular care centre.

Some service providers do an audit or ask their local council for information about the commonly spoken languages in the local community. This allows them to tailor their information to make it useful for people who may use the service, and prevents money being wasted translating text into languages that are not required.

Imagery

Using imagery is a good way to help people communicate when a language barrier exists.

Create a book of pictures with words to suit the person's needs – family members may like to help. Together, you can choose words the person needs to be familiar with, such as medication, toilet, dining room, privacy and hairdresser. You can also buy picture dictionaries in English and other languages, which contain illustrations of a variety of words.

Ask your supervisor if you think a word or picture dictionary would be beneficial for the individuals you care for.

Music, songs, games and activities

Music, games and activities can be a powerful aid in communication. They help build relationships between workers and people with support needs, and help people with support needs express themselves. Many people communicate more easily when they have shared enjoyable activities. Here are some examples of these types of communication aids.

Using music, songs, games and activities

Music

Music is especially useful to communicate with people who have dementia. Many older people love hearing the music of their culture, as it often brings back happy memories of when they were younger. It may also remind them of the country where they were born.

Games and activities

Having people with support needs play games and activities together and joining in yourself helps to build relationships between all these people. It is a good idea to watch individuals as they participate to decide if they seem to be enjoying themselves.

Movement exercises

Individuals with intellectual disabilities often enjoy learning new songs and participating in movement activities and exercise to music. They may do this as part of a mainstream group or as a program within a day activity or recreation program.

Body language

Body language is a form of nonverbal communication. Understanding and using body language correctly is essential, as the body language used in one culture may be interpreted differently in another.

Some individuals with physical disabilities or medical conditions may display involuntary movements that complicate your interpretation of their body language. You need to use your professional skills and judgment to correctly interpret their body movements that you can separate these from body language and nonverbal communication.

Consider the differences explained here.

Body language

▶ In some Western European countries, when two friends meet they may kiss each other on both cheeks.

▶ In many parts of Eastern Asia, people bow when they meet each other.

▶ If someone from Europe went to Asia and kissed a person when first meeting them, they may be considered very rude and disrespectful.

Body movements

▶ An individual with athetoid cerebral palsy may often display extra involuntary movements that accompany a voluntary one.

▶ An individual with spastic cerebral palsy may often have contracted muscles or muscle groups that don't move as fully or easily as others.

▶ An individual with Parkinson's disease may have a tremor (a slight slow paced shaking action) and an individual with muscular dystrophy may not have the ability to move their body easily or have the full range of movement of their limbs.

Demonstration of an activity or a request

Often, a good way to get a message across is to use sign language. For example, if you need to find out if someone wants a drink, you could act out having a drink, by holding a glass and putting it your mouth, and then pointing to the person and then the glass. To help the person learn the language you should also say the word 'drink' as you point. People may learn new words this way, so you don't can use less sign language in the future.

Information in the person's first language

Many care services produce brochures in relevant community languages. These explain:

▶ the services the workplace offers

▶ the things the individual needs to know

▶ instructions for doing something; for example, catching a bus to a community centre, paying their bills

▶ who the individual can call for more information about the services provided by the organisation.

Information such as service agreements, care plans, health and safety documents, medication information and quality standards is also available in other languages from the relevant councils, government agencies, not-for-profit and community-based organisations, information services and private care providers.

For example, the Carers Australia website lists numerous resources that are available to carers who may not communicate comfortably in English. These resources are available in Arabic, Italian, Chinese, Maltese, Croatian, Polish, Dutch, Serbian, German, Spanish, Greek, Vietnamese and Hungarian.

You can read more about Carers Australia at: http://aspirelr.link/carers-australia

Multilingual staff members

Many care environments employ staff who speak languages other than English. In fact, some aged care facilities cater specifically for people of a certain background. These facilities employ staff who can speak the same language as the residents, to provide a comfortable and culturally appropriate environment.

There are also organisations that specialise in providing care and support to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. An example of one such organisation is the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre in Victoria, which offers services such as:

▶ multicultural home support services

▶ aged in-home and centre-based care for adults

▶ a culturally diverse choir

▶ a CALD Senior Surfers Program, which is an internet access program for aged members of Macedonian and Chinese communities.

You can read more about the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre at: http://aspirelr. link/smrc

Others who speak the same language

Often the best person to help overcome a language barrier is somebody you know who can speak the same language as the person with support needs. This may be another person with support needs, a friend, a family member or a volunteer.

Someone who speaks the same language can help interpret for the individual, which may make the person with support needs feel more comfortable in their surroundings.

Be careful when asking another person to help you communicate, as the individual may not want a friend or family member to know about their health issues. In this case, you would use an official interpreter who is required to keep all information confidential.

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Example

Use effective strategies to communicate when a language barrier exists

Lena, who was born and raised in Germany, has been at an aged care facility for two weeks. She doesn't speak English very well and finds it difficult to understand things that people say. She usually smiles and nods her head when people speak to her. She thinks it's easier for her to do this.

Lena has injured her ankle and can't move without assistance. She likes to sit up in her chair and read. A support worker asks her if it is all right if he leaves the door to Lena's room open. Lena smiles and nods, so the support worker leaves the door open on his way out. Lena becomes very upset as she values her privacy and doesn't want other people to see her in her bed clothes. She is also frustrated that she can't get up and shut the door herself.

Another worker, Annie, sees Lena is upset and she tries to calm her down. Annie finds out why Lena is upset by using sign language and demonstrating closing the door. Lena nods eagerly when Annie does this, so when she leaves, Annie closes the door. When she checks on Lena half an hour later, she is happily looking at some magazines.

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Practice task 10

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

> ### Case study
>
> Azim is being supported by HACC. Azim is Muslim and was born in Iran. He has lived in Australia for nearly ten years, but he has not learnt much English due to living in a close-knit Iranian community.

1. What image resources could you use to support Azim, to minimise language barriers?

2. What language and cultural interpreter resources could you use when supporting Azim, and why would these be useful?

3. How might language barriers impact Azim?

Click to complete Practice task 10

3D Seek assistance according to communication needs

If a person speaks very little English, you may need to seek assistance according to your communication needs. You may try to find another person who speaks their language, such as a family member or work colleague, or you might use an interpreter.

Interpreters translate one person's words into another language so that both people understand each other. Where possible, try to access a formal, qualified interpreter who is able to accurately communicate the words said by a person without bias or influence.

Translator/interpreter services

Translators and interpreters are used when the individual is first assessed for care. An interpreter is used for verbal communication, while a translator is used to convert written text from one language into another. Although you can use a family member or friend, remember that a trained interpreter may provide a more accurate and unbiased interpretation of what is being said.

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) provides access to phone and on-site interpreting services in over 160 languages and dialects.

Some individuals with disabilities may also use signed English or Makaton, which uses key word signs and symbols. Individuals with intellectual and speech difficulties may also use key word signs. For example, they may learn the sign for words like finished, drink, food or toilet.

Auslan Signbank is a useful reference that includes a dictionary, number signs and finger spelling.

You can read more about the Translating and Interpreting Service at: http://aspirelr.link/tis-national

You can read more about the Auslan Signbank at: http://aspirelr.link/auslan

Use an interpreter

The following people may benefit from using the services of an interpreter.

People who could benefit from an interpreter

Staff

Staff caring for person with support needs may need to use an interpreter to ensure the facility or agency has the correct information about each individual. Staff can then develop a care plan and provide the appropriate service. For example, staff must know each individual's health issues, food preferences, and ability to self-direct their own care, mobility needs, and any other special requirements such as whether their condition or disability may change or deteriorate over time.

Individuals

An individual may be empowered through the use of an interpreter, particularly if it is a professional and objective person. If a trained interpreter is used, individuals are also more able to direct their own care; self-advocate; make a complaint, request or suggestion; or make their own legal, medical and financial decisions.

Family or carers

Family members or carers of the people you are providing care for are also important. They need to understand what is happening to the person with support needs, as they may get very upset if they don't know why a particular type of care or medication is being given.

Hearing impaired

People who are hearing impaired and who use Auslan can use an interpreter to help them communicate with others. Remember that some people may use Signed English as an alternative to Auslan, or may have learnt another signing method such as American Sign Language. Auslan is only used in Australia.

Types of interpreters

An interpreter should be used whenever there is a language barrier and decisions about care need to be made, including changes to existing care. Remember, interpreters can be used in different ways, including face-to-face and on the telephone.

Here are some of the different types of interpreters you might use.

Interpreter from the same culture

▶ A workplace that provides care to individuals from more than one culture often has a register of interpreters that includes their name, contact details and the language/s they speak.

Interpreter of the same gender

▶ Workplaces usually try to use an interpreter of the same gender as the person with support needs. This may help the individual to feel relaxed if personal questions are being asked. For example, an older woman who has a urinary tract infection may not want to talk about this with a male interpreter.

Professional interpreter

▶ Professional interpreters are those who have passed an examination and are accredited with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI).

Here are some reasons why you might choose to use a professional interpreter:

▶ Accuracy: Professional interpreters ensure a high level of competence both in their home language and in English. This helps ensure accuracy and avoids unnecessary mistakes.

▶ Professional ethics: Professional interpreters are bound by professional ethics, such as confidentiality and impartiality.

▶ Duty of care: It is your responsibility to ensure that people with support needs receive the best service for their needs through accurate information.

Language interpreter

▶ A language interpreter is used for verbal communication, including sign language. Some people with disabilities may use Signed English or Makaton, which uses key word signs and symbols to teach communication, language and literacy skills to people with communication and learning difficulties.

Keyword signing is often used with people with intellectual and speech difficulties who have difficulty learning more complex signing systems. They simply need to remember a single sign for key items or actions in their daily life. For example, they may learn the sign for words like 'finished', 'drink', 'food' or 'toilet'. You can use a dictionary of Australian signs to help you communicate with these people.

Cultural interpreter

▶ A cultural interpreter is an active participant in a cross-cultural/lingual interaction. They help the care organisation understand the beliefs and practices of the individual's culture. They also help the person with support needs to understand the dominant culture, by providing cultural as well as linguistic assistance.

A cultural interpreter must have:

– an intimate knowledge of their ethnic community

– an ability to make a cultural connection with the person with support needs

– familiarity with Australian culture

– an ability to act as cultural broker – to use their linguistic skills and cultural perspective to explain why a particular suggestion may or may not be acceptable or unrealistic to the individual

– an ability to understand the culture of the organisation.

Other interpreters

Other people who may be used if a professional interpreter is not available include:

▶ staff members

▶ community groups

▶ other people from the care facility

▶ volunteers

▶ family members

▶ friends.

Work with an interpreter

Interviews and conversations take longer when you are using an interpreter, as everything needs to be said twice – by the person speaking in their preferred language, and then by the interpreter. Using a professional interpreter from a professional agency costs money, but it is often the most appropriate method of obtaining the facts. A professional interpreter can make sure a person understands everything that is discussed and the contents of any documents that have to be signed.

Tips for using an interpreter

▶ Always speak to the person, not the interpreter.

▶ Speak in short sentences and segments that allow the interpreter to effectively relay information.

▶ Avoid using complex terminology that will be difficult for the interpreter to explain.

▶ Allow the interpreter to finish before you start to talk again.

▶ Make sure the person with support needs is given the opportunity to ask questions.

▶ Conclude by summarising the points you've talked about. Make sure you both have the same understanding.

Confidentiality and interpreters

Confidentiality is a very important issue when using interpreters. The person, the interpreter and all staff members need to understand the importance of keeping information private. All people with support needs have a right for their details to be kept private.

The Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) contains information about specific laws and requirements for privacy and confidentiality in the care environment.

Some people may not want to use family members as interpreters. Similarly, people may not want an interpreter from a local community group, as they may think the person will talk about them in the community. They should be reassured that a professional interpreter will maintain the confidentiality of their information at all times.

You can read more about the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) at: http://aspirelr.link/privacy-act-compilations

Example

Seek assistance according to communication needs

Dana works in a care facility. A Malaysian-speaking male individual has just been brought to her office following a minor altercation. It seems that he is still quite upset and in shock. Dana tries to speak to him a couple of times but he does not seem to respond to her questions. She suspects that he has a language barrier. Dana knows that there is a Malaysian-speaking colleague on duty, so she decides to ask them to act as an interpreter. She needs to collect information on the incident and the history of the individual.

Practice task 11

1. List some reasons why an interpreter may be required.

2. List a situation that would require engaging the following interpreters:

   – Interpreter from the same culture
   – Interpreter of the same gender
   – Professional interpreter
   – Language interpreter
   – Cultural interpreter

3. Explain why confidentiality is important when using an interpreter.

Click to complete Practice task 11

Summary

1. Communication is important in a care environment, as it affects nearly every task performed. It is important to show respect for diversity when communicating with a person with support needs, other staff members, other care professionals, family members or other people who come to visit.

2. There are several methods of communication. Always use the most appropriate method for the situation.

3. When communicating with people from diverse backgrounds and situations, you need to show empathy and understanding. Always be courteous and polite. Include everyone and use words that everyone can understand. If you watch and listen, you can learn a lot about what the other person is trying to say. Above all, be honest. If you have a problem understanding someone, speak to your supervisor.

4. You need to use both verbal and nonverbal communication to establish effective relationships. Understand how people are different. Often what is 'not said' carries more meaning than the words.

5. You also need to establish other people's confidence in you and build a mutual trust.

6. It is a good idea to regularly evaluate your communication skills to work out what you can improve.

7. There are many strategies you can use to overcome a language barrier if this is preventing you from communicating effectively. These include use of imagery, information in the person's first language or multilingual staff members.

8. Sometimes you will need to seek assistance from an interpreter. When choosing an interpreter you need to consider whether you need to use a person from the same culture or gender, and whether you need a language or a cultural interpreter.

9. Although a professional interpreter is always the best option, other people may be used if they are not available, for instance other staff members, volunteers, family members or friends.

10. Confidentiality is extremely important when using an interpreter. The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) contains the laws and requirements for privacy and confidentiality in the care environment.

11. When working with an interpreter, realise that the conversation will take longer as everything needs to be said twice. Yes, using a professional interpreter costs money, but it is often the most appropriate and effective method of obtaining information.

Learning checkpoint 3
Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and situations

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in communicating with people from diverse backgrounds and situations.

Part A

1. Describe your own communication style in the workplace. How could you improve your communication style to show respect for diversity?

2. Explain why trust is important when building relationships with all people in the workplace. Think of one example of how you can establish trust.

3. Discuss the difference between verbal and nonverbal communication, and list of one example of each.

4. Explain what a language barrier is, and think of three strategies you could use to address language barriers.

Part B

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

Mohammad and Talia are Sudanese teenagers, who are part of a youth outreach program. Mohammad and Talia are brother and sister, and came to Australia a few years ago.

Erika works for the youth outreach program as a facilitator. She has found that of all the youth supported by the program, she has least rapport with Mohammad and Talia. They tend to sit on their own during activities, and express little or no interest in what everyone else is doing.

Erika doesn't have a lot of experience working with people from Sudan. Although the service supports people from diverse backgrounds, most youth have grown up in Australia, and have a good grasp on the English language.

When Erika consults Roger, her supervisor, about how to engage Talia and Mohammad, Roger asks about the language barrier. Erika hadn't really thought much about it, as she thought their engagement had more to do with their attitude than their language.

1. Discuss the impact language barriers may have on Mohammad and Talia's engagement with the program.

2. What verbal and nonverbal strategies could Erika use to build a more positive relationship with Talia and Mohammad?

3. What strategies could Erika use to address the language barrier?

4. How could Erika access a translating or interpreting service?

Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

4A   **Identify issues that may cause communication misunderstandings**

4B   **Consider the impact of cultural differences if difficulties or misunderstandings occur**

4C   **Resolve differences and take account of diversity considerations**

4D   **Address difficulties with appropriate people and seek assistance when required**

Promote understanding across diverse groups

From time to time there may be disagreements or problems between a person with support needs and a support worker or the service provider. There is always the possibility for a misunderstanding or difficulty in a care environment where there are lots of personal interactions between carers and the person with support needs. You may have to deal with a situation that occurs due to social or cultural difference. It is important that you are able to resolve these situations effectively. To do this, you need to know what caused the problem, what solutions are available and your ability and authority to resolve the situation.

4A Identify issues that may cause communication misunderstandings

Misunderstandings can make people feel very uncomfortable, and often happens if a problem hasn't been properly recognised and dealt with. In a care environment, it is important to deal with problems straight away so everyone can continue working effectively as a team and providing care to other individuals.

Be aware that communication misunderstandings and difficulties may occur between colleagues, people with support needs, management, visitors, volunteers, family members and other primary carers and health professionals.

The first step in resolving a situation is to identify the issue that is causing the problem.

Issues that may cause communication problems

There are many issues that may cause communication misunderstandings and difficulties. For example, the person you're caring for may find it difficult to communicate because of a physical condition, such as a hearing difficulty or visual impairment, or they may have a condition affecting the brain, such as Alzheimer's disease or stroke. These communication problems can come on gradually or happen overnight, leaving you unprepared and unsure or what to do. In this type of situation, misunderstandings may easily occur.

Here are some conditions that may cause difficulties in communication.

Cultural differences

Misunderstanding may occur because people don't understand the practices of other cultures. For example, an older Chinese individual may become upset when you talk with them, as making eye contact is considered disrespectful in their culture. This is why it is important to understand the culture of the individuals you care for.

Language difficulties

People may also have difficulty filling out forms, reading or making calculations if English is their second language. Don't assume this means their mental abilities are poor; rather, understand that it is their lack of experience with English that may make it hard for them to do things that an English-speaking person can usually do with ease.

Speech or language problems

Speech disorders can interrupt speech. They can result from a stammer, cleft palates, brain injuries or hearing loss, or for no known reason. Language disorders can cause problems understanding words or using them, such as difficulties resulting from a stroke or a brain injury. Some people grow out of these disorders during their childhood, while others live with them throughout their adult life.

Selective mutism

Selective mutism is an anxiety disorder that prevents people speaking in certain social situations, usually in public. However, they may be able to speak freely at home or when nobody else is listening. If this affects one of the individuals you are caring for, be patient and don't put pressure on them or use bribes to try to encourage them to speak.

Deaf blindness

Deafblind people have impaired vision and hearing. If they are unable to use words, it can be difficult to work out just how to communicate. Sometimes they have difficulty understanding the world around them, which can make them behave in inappropriate ways. Although communicating with a deafblind person can be frustrating and slow, with patience and trust a form of communication can develop.

Rehabilitation after a stroke

A stroke can cause mental and physical impairment. The person who has had the stroke may find it difficult to form words or understand what someone says to them. This may make it hard for you to work out what they want. When communicating with someone who is recovering from a stroke, it's important to give them your full attention and try to avoid any background distractions. Try to speak clearly at a normal volume.

Acquired brain injury or intellectual disability

People with conditions such as an acquired brain injury (ABI) or an intellectual disability may find it difficult to recall information they have learnt previously. This applies to people who are also communicating with you across a cultural barrier. They may find it hard or impossible to recall a name you told them last time you visited, and this may be compounded by it being unfamiliar due to cultural differences.

Emotional trauma

People who migrate to Australia sometimes do so because of wars in their own country. Be aware of this and be careful about questions you ask, as the person may not want to talk about their previous experiences, as they may be upsetting. You can't always know how someone feels; however, you can do your best to show empathy.

Stress

Another cause of misunderstanding is stress, which is often caused if you are unsure what is expected of you and what to expect of the other person. The other person, be it a person with support needs or a co-worker, may be in the same situation. If possible, try to discuss the situation with the other person and their expectations. As you learn more about other cultures, these stresses will be reduced.

Example

Identify issues that may cause communication misunderstandings

Jennifer is a young woman in an activity group that goes out once a month for social outings. She has an acquired brain injury and has very few social inhibitions as a result of this; therefore, she tends to act impulsively and speak without thinking. Jenny often shows quite provocative behaviour towards males she doesn't know and requires constant supervision to remain safe during social activities.

During one activity, Jennifer, who is from Hong Kong, becomes loudly abusive towards another person with support needs, who is from Beijing, in mainland China. She shouts at the other individual in Cantonese, then runs quickly to the support worker, Gail, and tells her that the other individual is being rude to her.

Gail decides to talk to the other individual first, and carefully writes down what they say. Because it is then her break time, Gail leaves the group in the care of another worker for 15 minutes while she goes outside for a short walk.

By the time Gail goes to talk to Jennifer about the incident after her break, she has forgotten what happened. She tells Gail that the incident involved a different individual, and that the problem was that the other person pushed her. Jennifer doesn't have the ability to retain information for very long, and the incident now can't be easily or reliably resolved. Gail decides that next time there is a problem she needs to talk to Jennifer straight away.

Practice task 12

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

1. Identify the possible issues that may have led to the communication difficulties in this situation.

2. How could Marianne have responded differently in this situation?

3. What could Marianne do now to fix the situation?

Click to complete Practice task 12

4B Consider the impact of cultural differences if difficulties or misunderstandings occur

Social and cultural misunderstandings often affect the working relationship between care workers and other staff. They can also affect the relationship between care workers and people with support needs. As a result, the care received by the individual can suffer. This may be because people feel they may say the wrong thing and upset each other, or because they don't know how to approach the problem and they stop communicating.

Always check if the conflict is caused by a social or cultural difference, or by something else. Remember, conflict can occur if people from one social or culture group feel they aren't accepted because of the prejudices of other people. Misunderstandings can also occur when people don't understand other groups and cultures.

Consider the impact of social and cultural diversity

When you work with people from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds, conflict is often caused by a simple misunderstanding or misinterpretation of a situation. There are six patterns of difference that impact on all service delivery, as outlined in the following information.

Verbal communication styles

▶ Some words and phrases are used in different ways across cultures. For example, 'yes' can vary from 'maybe I'll consider it' to 'definitely yes'. This can affect your perception of the individual's consent. When they say 'yes', or seem to agree to a suggestion, they may not actually agree, but do not want to cause offence by disagreeing with you.

Nonverbal communication styles

▶ Nonverbal communication refers to facial expressions, gestures, seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time. For example, avoidance of eye contact is a sign of great respect in some cultures, including many Indigenous Australian cultures. Some Australians regard this as a sign of hiding something.

Attitudes toward conflict

▶ Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others try to avoid it. For example, many Eastern countries deal with their conflict quietly. In this case, a written exchange might be a better way to resolve the conflict.

Approaches to completing tasks

▶ People from different cultures tend to complete tasks differently. Some are task-orientated, while others are relationship-orientated. For example, many Asian cultures tend to develop relationships at the beginning of a shared project and focus on task completion towards the end. On the other hand, Europeans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand and let relationships develop as they work.

Decision-making styles

▶ Decision-making roles also vary widely. Some cultures delegate, while others prefer to make decisions themselves. When decisions are made in a group, some cultures prefer majority rule, while others prefer consensus to reach a decision. Many Aboriginal cultures will only make important decisions after discussing them with others in the clan, particularly elders.

Attitudes toward disclosure

▶ When you deal with conflict, be aware that people may differ in in the way they express their emotions. For some people, direct questions such as 'What was the conflict about?' may seem intrusive and personal.

Adapted from DuPraw and Axner, Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges': www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html

Think about diversity when problems occur

It is easy for misunderstanding to occur if you have not carefully considered the social and cultural differences of your co-workers and the people you care for.

Here is a list of areas for potential misunderstanding.

Diet

If you are not aware of cultural preferences, you may upset someone by offering them the wrong food.
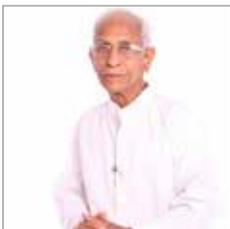
An example could be giving bacon to a person of Muslim or Jewish faith, as these religions discourage the consumption of pig products. However, don't assume that just because someone practices a certain religion, that they do or don't eat certain foods. It is always best to check with each person if they have any dietary requirements.

Sharing

Some individuals may not want to share a room, eat in the dining room or spend much time in the lounge area with others.

For example, being with lots of other people may remind some individuals of times when they were crowded in refugee camps or living with their whole family in a small room.

Behaviour

Different cultures have different ways of doing things and different values.

For example, an older man who is being admitted to an aged care facility doesn't have any relatives and speaks very little English. The facility organises an interpreter, who is a young female. The man becomes very upset. He doesn't feel comfortable having to divulge his personal information to someone so young and this is disrespectful to him.

Religion

Religion can be a major cause of cultural conflict.

For example, an older woman unexpectedly dies in an aged care facility and her family is upset that a priest was not called in to perform the last rites. The facility staff didn't know that she was a Catholic, as she hadn't mentioned this when she was admitted.

Trust

Older women may not trust men who work as care workers, respite workers, in-home support workers, therapists and nurses. Some feel that care tasks are a woman's job.

Or, some young women may be fearful of going out in a group where they are in the care of a male worker they don't know, and who isn't a family member. In some cultures, young women are often supervised by a male family member when on outings in the community.

Privacy and nudity

Some women may become upset and anxious when a male support worker showers or assists them with dressing or other personal care tasks. Some may not be willing to visit a swimming pool for hydrotherapy or a swimming session at a time when male patrons are present.

In some cultures, women never expose their hair or their body to men, even when wearing a bathing suit.

Care plan

You must learn everything you can about another person that may affect your working relationship.

For example, an older woman who has dementia has just been admitted to an aged care facility. She becomes very upset when she sees two ambulance officers walking past her room. This behaviour continues whenever she sees someone in uniform. Further investigation finds that the older woman was a victim of the Holocaust and thinks that the people in uniforms are guards coming to take her away.

Respond appropriately

The best way to work successfully with people with support needs and co-workers from different social and cultural backgrounds is to acknowledge the diversity and try and talk about the differences.

Try to remember two things:

1. It can be difficult to address social and cultural differences without resorting to stereotypes. No person is exactly like another person and no individual is a clone of another member of a group.

2. As diversity in an organisation grows, so does the complexity of communication and the need to make a greater effort to improve your communication skills.

Diversity creates opportunities for character development by teaching tolerance and respect. It also encourages concern for equity of people from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Practice task 13

1. List three communication issues relating to diversity that may cause conflict between workers and people with support needs.

2. Should you try to deal with conflict immediately? Why or why not?

3. A person with support needs feels she is being unfairly treated by other individuals who use the service, and is left out of activities and not consulted about decisions. She feels it is because she is much younger and female. If you were the care worker, what would be an appropriate response to this situation?

Click to complete Practice task 13

4C Resolve differences and take account of diversity considerations

Resolving differences isn't easy, especially if a diversity issue is part of the problem. To resolve a difference, you must first identify the cause of the problem and then find a solution that will satisfy everyone. You must be calm and patient and above all, act with sensitivity.

Here are some general guidelines to consider when resolving differences.

Don't stereotype or oversimplify

▶ Don't stereotype or oversimplify your ideas about another person. The best use of a generalisation is to add it to your storehouse of knowledge so that you are better able to understand and appreciate other interesting, multi-faceted human beings. Remember that social or cultural norms do not apply to the behaviour of every individual.

Don't assume there is one right way

▶ Don't think that there is one right way to communicate. Keep questioning your assumptions about the 'right way' to communicate. For example, think about your body language; postures that indicate receptivity in one culture might indicate aggressiveness in another.

Don't assume the other people are on the wrong track

▶ Don't assume that breakdowns in communication occur because other people are on the wrong track. Search for ways to make the communication work, rather than searching for who's at fault for the breakdown.

Listen actively and empathetically

▶ Listen actively and empathetically. Don't interrupt. Ask questions to make sure that you have understood what the other person is really trying to say. Respect others' choices about whether to engage in communication with you.

Put yourself in the other person's shoes

▶ Stop, suspend judgment. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Especially when another person's perceptions or ideas are very different from your own, you might need to operate at the edge of your own comfort zone.

Be prepared to discuss the past

▶ Use it as an opportunity to develop an understanding from 'the other's' point of view, rather than getting defensive or impatient. Acknowledge events that have taken place. Be open to learn more about the other person. Honest acknowledgement of mistreatment, current power imbalances and an openness to hear the other person's perceptions is the first steps to understanding and working together.

A four-step approach

To resolve a misunderstanding or a difference, it usually helps to take a structured approach. Try these four steps.

Steps to resolving differences

1 **Define the problem**

Try to get a clear picture of what the problem is. Be aware that you may need to involve your supervisor if the situation is outside your level of authority. Do this as soon as possible, as some people with limited memory skills may forget what has occurred, or have trouble relaying the details to you.

It may be your responsibility to arrange for an interpreter or a family member to help communicate.

If the situation needs to be resolved immediately, remain calm. Meet with everyone and listen to what they have to say. Notify your supervisor or another staff member if you think you need help. Be aware that some individuals may react to difficult situations or misunderstandings with physical aggression; for example, hitting, kicking or biting. In their care plan there should be information that tells you about their trigger behaviours (what may cause this to happen) and how to respond.

2 **Identify the cause**

After you have defined the problem, you must clarify the issue that is causing the misunderstanding. You need to know why the situation is upsetting the other person. You may need to seek expert advice from someone who understands the culture or situation that has arisen.

The people involved in the difference should explain what the issue is for them and how they feel. It is important that no-one is rude to others. You must remain respectful towards the other people involved (and encourage others to do the same), even if you don't agree with everything that is said.

3 **Suggest solutions**

The person who is handling the situation – the care worker or supervisor – should then suggest a possible solution. More than one solution may need to be suggested, or a solution altered, so both parties involved in the conflict can decide on a solution that is the most appropriate.

4 **Check the problem is resolved**

The final step is to check that the problem has been resolved. Is the solution working? After a few days, talk to the people involved to see how they are going. If there is still a misunderstanding, you need to start the process again, beginning with Step 1.

A workplace code of practice

Having a workplace code of practice that takes into account the diversity within your service is a good way to make sure that everyone operates within an agreed framework of understanding.

Here are some points to consider.

Professional and ethical behaviour

Care services providers must make sure they do not do or say things that are unprofessional or detrimental to the health, emotional and mental wellbeing of people with support needs and co-workers. This could include culturally unsound practices, such as being judgmental or failing to acknowledge family obligations or dietary needs.

Individual rights

The rights of people with support needs include their right to be treated with dignity and respect, with equal access to services and that confidentiality of information about them is maintained. These rights should also extend to the right to have important aspects of their cultural heritage recognised in all dealings.

Empathy

Any workplace code of practice should make reference to empathising with people with support needs and workers of different social and cultural backgrounds, to share and understand their emotions, feelings and their experiences.

Flexibility

Flexibility in dealing with diversity issues acknowledges that other social and cultural groups of people do things differently to western society. This is not wrong, but it does need to be understood.

Taking turns

The ability to stand back and wait for your turn to speak or do things is important in developing a good working relationship with all people from different social and cultural backgrounds to your own.

Example

Make an effort to sensitively resolve differences

Dennis, an Aboriginal man who uses the services of a local disability service provider, approaches Mardi, a coordinator, with a concern that his requests for help in getting a hearing aid have not been acted on.

According to Dennis, for almost 12 months he has been asking his support worker, Stan, to organise an appointment with the company that provides funded hearing aid services. Dennis explains what has been happening and asks Mardi to do something to get his hearing aids.

Mardi checks Dennis's case notes and also talks to Stan, who is adamant he has contacted the hearing aid provider and Dennis has already received forms for funding and instructions on what to do next. A doctor needs to make a referral and sign one of the forms. Stan says Dennis has not made an appointment with a doctor, so the whole process has been stalled.

Mardi decides maybe Dennis is not sure how to go about the process, so she assigns a liaison officer to talk with Dennis and find out what sort of help is required to get him his hearing aids.

Practice task 14

Read the case study then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Julio is the only Hispanic person working in the service. His English is good, and he works well with a range of people with support needs. But Julio feels that some of the other staff members don't include him in decision-making. He also feels that when there is a conflict, or even just a passionate discussion, his colleagues cut him short before he can speak. In one past incident, Julio was expressing is opinion in a very passionate way. His colleagues thought that Julio was losing his temper. But from Julio's perspective, he was just passionate about the topic, so spoke louder than he usually would. Julio is nervous about upsetting his colleagues, so when difficult issues arise, he tends to stay quiet.

1. How could Julio's colleagues treat Julio with more respect, and ensure that he is involved in workplace discussions?

2. Apply the four-step approach to resolving this issue.

3. Consult a workplace's code of practice, or the code of practice from a community service centre near you. What key points in the code of practice relate to managing differences based on diversity issues?

<div style="background-color:#F5A623; color:white; padding:10px; font-weight:bold; font-size:28px;">Click to complete Practice task 14</div>

4D Address difficulties with appropriate people and seek assistance as required

At times you will need help from other people to resolve a difficulty or misunderstanding. This might be another older person, your supervisor or a colleague. Depending on the situation, you may need to contact an external person, such as an interpreter.

Appropriate people

It is important to know who you can and should go to. First, try to talk with the person you are having the problem with. If you can't talk to them, talk to someone who can help you; for example, your supervisor or manager, or the other person's manager.

When you speak to the other person involved, tell them what you are unhappy about; why you are unhappy about it; what you want to happen; and what you will do if the problem is not fixed.

Try to remain calm, and control your emotions before you speak to the other person. You are more likely to resolve the matter if you can clearly and calmly discuss it with the other person.

With some misunderstandings it helps to have someone you trust to support you. Always ask for help when you feel you need it.

Use a mediator

At times, it may be beneficial to ask a mediator to organise and run a meeting between you and the other person involved in the misunderstanding. They will make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

Mediation has long been a form of conflict resolution in some communities. For example, in many Aboriginal communities, the Elders or community leaders take on this role. If this is a known form of conflict resolution within a culture, it makes sense to use it to resolve difficulties that individuals may have with care service providers.

Cultural liaison officers may be used as mediators on behalf of individuals and families. This provides a middle path if there is a dispute with a care service agency.

Follow policies and procedures

If a problem concerning you and another staff member is due to a cultural misunderstanding, it may be resolved by the supervisor, who will listen to both sides of the situation and make a decision about what action is best to take. If both sides agree with the solution, then the problem is solved without documenting and recording the complaint.

If the situation can't be resolved, you should follow the policy and procedures for dealing with complaints in your workplace. The policy is often called a grievance policy.

It deals with any type of conflict, including those that are cross-cultural in origin. If you have a grievance and want to make a complaint you need to follow the grievance process.

You should be given details of the grievance process when you first start work. However, if you are ever unsure how to deal with a problem, ask your supervisor, manager or someone you trust.

Other people who may help

Some situations will be outside your authority and the limitations of your job description. In this case, you may need to enlist the help of another person to resolve the issue.

Here are some people who may be able to help.

Work colleagues

Other care workers can often help as they may know the person better or come from a similar culture.

Supervisors

Your supervisor should always be notified if there is conflict, as they are often the most appropriate person to handle the process.

Individuals

Other people with support needs may be able to calm another older person down or speak to them in their own language.

Advocacy services

There are many advocacy groups that can act on behalf of both parties if necessary. Remember that all individuals, whether they receive care in the community or in a care facility, have a right to an advocate.

Community groups

Community groups are often an excellent source of information about specific cultural groups and can provide advice as well as staff training. Migrant resource centres can also offer assistance when needed.

Education/training providers

Staff may need additional training in some aspects of different cultures, such as how to apply cultural sensitivity and how to deal with people with support needs and/or other staff.

Doctors and other health professionals

Other health professionals can often help when there are issues regarding the care being provided; for example, doctors may have known the individual for many years and understand their history.

Family members

Family can provide background information that may not be written on the individual's care plan. For example, a family member may tell you that many of the person's friends were killed in a conflict between two countries. The person may be very sensitive about any mention of the situation or jokes about the countries involved.

Ministers of religion/spiritual representatives

Religious and spiritual ministers have often known the person for many years and may be able to provide the guidance and support that you or your supervisor cannot.

Social workers/counsellors

It is often a good idea to use the services of people who are specially trained to resolve conflicts and can provide useful strategies to cope with a difficulty.

Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission organisation people with problems at work. You can visit their website to read what the commission does.

Example

Address difficulties with appropriate people

Gerald is a middle-aged French man who lives at home with his aging mother. Gerald has an acquired brain injury as a result of excessive alcohol consumption over many years. He is prone to outbursts where he becomes verbally aggressive and has yelled at the English people who live next door a few times while his support worker, Tino, is present. Tino gathers that there has been a long-running cross-cultural feud in the neighbourhood.

Tino has worked with Gerald for many years, providing in-home respite care while his mother has a break and goes to her quilting group. Recently Tino has noticed that Gerald has started becoming more physical in his aggressive outbursts. Tino's extensive knowledge of his history and behaviour makes him wary, and he takes careful notice of the changes.

Tino observes Gerald punch a wall one day, then slam his fist onto a tabletop just near his own hand. One day, when Gerald is walking past Tino in the hallway, he pushes his shoulder into Tino's back as if he is trying to knock him over. He mumbles to himself about 'those noisy Poms next door', although Tino knows there is no-one living in the house next door at present, as the English people have recently moved out.

Tino notes this in his care notes, and contacts his supervisor straightaway and asks her to send another worker to support him until the end of the shift. He then asks his supervisor to organise a review of Gerald's care and support arrangements, as Tino feels that he can no longer safely manage Gerald's behaviour without intervention.

Practice task 15

1. Who should first be consulted if a worker is involved in conflict, or experience a difficulty with another individual?

2. Think of three other people who may be able to help if a problem arises.

3. What role does a mediator play?

4. Explain how a grievance policy can be used.

Click to complete Practice task 15

Summary

1. From time to time there may be problems between a person with support needs and a support worker or a service provider. You may have to deal with a situation that occurs due to a social or cultural difference. It is important to know how to resolve these situations effectively.

2. There are many issues that may cause misunderstandings or difficulties. The first step in resolving the situation is to identify the problem.

3. Where there is a difficulty, always consider the impact of social and cultural diversity. There are six patterns of difference that affect all service situations.

4. Areas of potential misunderstanding include diet, sharing, behaviour, religion, trust, privacy and nudity, and the care plan.

5. It can be difficult to address misunderstandings due to social and cultural differences without resorting to stereotypes. It is better to acknowledge the diversity and try and talk about the differences. Also, take the situation as an opportunity to improve your communication skills.

6. To resolve a difference, never assume that one way is right or that the other person is on the wrong track. Listen actively and empathetically and try and put yourself in the other person's shoes.

7. You might like to use a four step problem-solving approach: define the problem; identify the cause; suggest solutions; and check that the problem has been resolved.

8. If your workplace has an inclusive code of practice, then all employees will be able to operate within an agreed framework of understanding. Such a code should include guidelines on professional and ethical behaviour, rights of people with support needs, empathy, flexibility and taking turns.

9. It may be beneficial to ask a mediator to organise and run a meeting between you and the other person involved. It is their job to make sure that all parties have a chance to speak and be heard.

10. If the situation can't be resolved, you should follow the policy and procedures for dealing with complaints in your workplace. The policy is often called a grievance policy.

11. Some situations will be outside your authority and the limitations of your job description. In this case, you may need to enlist the help of another person to resolve the issue.

Learning checkpoint 4
Promote understanding across diverse groups

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in promoting your understanding of diverse groups.

Part A

1. Briefly explain how the following issues may impact communication and relationships in the workplace:

   a. Acquired brain injury

   b. Stroke

   c. Stress

   d. Emotional trauma

   e. Cultural differences

   f. Language barriers

2. List of one misunderstanding that may occur in the workplace that may be caused by diversity. Describe what the appropriate response would be.

3. Who in your organisation could you consult if a significant difficulty arises as a result of diversity?

4. Why do you think it is important to seek assistance if difficulties or misunderstandings occur?

Part B

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

> **Case study**
>
> Antonis is an 80 year-old Greek man living in supported accommodation. Antonis is generally very friendly with staff, and has a good rapport with support workers. Lately, several staff members have found Antonis to be particularly gruff, and unwelcoming. He even raised his voice at one staff member, who was helping him shower.
>
> Edith, his supervisor, organises for the assessment team to observe Antonis in his environment, and make an assessment. The assessment demonstrates that Antonis may have had a minor stroke, which has affected Antonis' memory and moods.

1. What issues might be affecting communication between staff and Antonis?

2. How could staff address these issues to improve the situation?

3. How might diversity issues impact Antonis' situation?

4. Who could provide assistance in this situation?