

# CHCCCS009

# Facilitate responsible behaviour

Release 1



*Learner guide*

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Release 1

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.2



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## Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Release 1, version 1.1	April 2017	First release.
Release 1, version 1.2	December 2018	Updated references to ACWA practice guidelines. Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program.

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## Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCCCS009 Facilitate responsible behaviour*, 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](http://www.training.gov.au).

## How to work through this learner guide

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

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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.</li> </ul>
Examples and case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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.</li> <li>▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.</li> </ul>
Practice tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.</li> </ul>
Video clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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: <a href="http://www.aspirelr.com.au/help">www.aspirelr.com.au/help</a></li> </ul> 
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.</li> </ul>
Learning checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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.</li> </ul>

## Foundation skills

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

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

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

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

## 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 Observe individuals	1A Use formal and informal methods to observe and monitor individuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Recognise situations for potential conflict and identify appropriate preventative and defusing strategies that can be employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Evaluate the person's behaviour and interactions in a fair, objective and consistent manner	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Ensure decisions on action are consistent with available evidence and organisation policies	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1E Seek specialist advice and make necessary referrals	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2 Manage conflict	2A Conduct interactions with individuals in a fair, just, humane, equitable and positive manner	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Use communication strategies for effective interaction and problem-solving	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Consider cultural sensitivities and adapt style and language to accommodate different cultural values and practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
	2D Identify potential causes of conflict and use a range of appropriate and effective defusing responses	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Use negotiation techniques to divert and minimise aggressive behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2F Use negotiation to examine cause and effect and encourage appropriate responsibility and accountability for behaviour and its outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3 Respond to behaviours of concern	3A Challenge behaviours of concern and clearly outline options and opportunities to change with positive encouragement	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Confirm using clear, calm and objective language, the implications of continuing behaviours of concern	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Follow procedures to ensure the personal safety of yourself, the individual, colleagues and others	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Select strategies and responses for their potential to provide role models and examples of confident assertive behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3E Carry out interventions based on an analysis of the situation and organisation policies and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 4 Complete reporting requirements	4A Report incidents in a manner that complies with policy, procedures and legislation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4B Prepare reports and other documentation according to organisation requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4C Maintain currency of documentation by making appropriate updates	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



## Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Use formal and informal methods to observe and monitor individuals**

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- 1B Recognise situations for potential conflict and identify appropriate preventative and defusing strategies that can be employed**

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- 1C Evaluate the person's behaviour and interactions in a fair, objective and consistent manner**

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- 1D Ensure decisions on action are consistent with available evidence and organisation policies**

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- 1E Seek specialist advice and make necessary referrals**

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## Observe individuals

Support workers in the community services sector play a significant role in maintaining the wellbeing of people requiring assistance. You belong to a team of people who provide services to improve a person's quality of life. An important aspect of the role is to monitor and observe individuals.

A person's behaviour, for instance, can communicate needs. It can tell us if someone is happy, sad, tired, irritable, feeling pain or even if they are becoming forgetful but don't want to admit it. Sometimes behaviour is obvious, sometimes it is difficult to spot if you are not looking for it.

You need to monitor, evaluate and handle different behaviour in order to provide adequate support. You must also be able to refer to the appropriate place if the people you support need additional assistance.

# 1A Use formal and informal methods to observe and monitor individuals

A person may change and their behaviours may deteriorate or improve. As this occurs the level of support you provide will need to change. Monitoring the wellbeing of people is integral to support work.

You need to recognise behaviour so you can help manage the person promptly and effectively. Behaviour can vary in their severity: some need to be dealt with immediately; others need to be monitored regularly. You must be able to identify acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and know when to act to prevent problem behaviour jeopardising the health or safety of the person or others.



There is range of formal and informal methods of observation you can use.

## Reasons for monitoring and observation

Continually monitoring and observing people you support is important to the care you provide. You need to detect if changes occur, when changes occur, or if no progress is being made. The person may need their support plan revised to better accommodate their needs. Monitoring allows you to assess whether a reassessment is required.

Reasons for monitoring or observing people you support, and the types of things you may monitor or observe are listed below.

Reasons for monitoring	What you may monitor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Assessing change in behaviour, health or other status</li> <li>▶ Assessing if progress towards goals is made or not made</li> <li>▶ Assessing whether the support plan is suitable</li> <li>▶ Assessing whether person's needs are met appropriately</li> <li>▶ Assessing whether funding is appropriate</li> <li>▶ Identifying patterns, such as behavioural patterns, to identify solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Emotional behaviour, such as expressions of emotion or aggression</li> <li>▶ Health, such as wellbeing, or health issues</li> <li>▶ Physical behaviour, such as toileting patterns or eating habits</li> <li>▶ Medication and effects of medication</li> </ul>

## Methods of observation

You need to use both formal and informal methods of observation and monitoring. Generally, when you observe a change in behaviour that points to a new or emerging need, it should be reported. Likewise, any incident that could affect a person’s health or wellbeing should be documented. If in doubt, be guided by workplace policies and procedures.

While support workers are always informally observing, monitoring and assessing the people they support, formal assessment needs to be done at certain times for a particular purpose. Formal assessment is particularly important for people who were previously socially active and who may be withdrawing or isolating themselves.

Here is a description of formal and informal methods of observation.

Informal methods	Formal methods
<p>When you observe the people you support, note their behaviour and determine if different levels of support are required, you are informally observing and monitoring.</p> <p>Informal reporting is when you tell your supervisor or other relevant people what you have seen, what you have heard and what you have done.</p> <p>Even when you are using informal methods of observation, it is important to be objective and factual in your report.</p>	<p>Formal observation, monitoring and reporting occurs at designated times and is documented in a particular way. You may need to observe someone if they have a tendency to become aggressive. Sometimes a checklist is used to see if people exhibit certain behaviour. Sometimes observations are detailed in a behavioural chart, toileting chart, medication administration report or an incident report. Healthcare professionals decide whether the behaviour needs further support.</p> <p>Formal methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ checklists</li> <li>▶ interviews</li> <li>▶ observing scheduled tasks, such as a particular skill</li> <li>▶ behavioural charts</li> <li>▶ medication administration records</li> <li>▶ toileting charts.</li> </ul>

## Recognise behaviours of concern

A person’s needs may change and behaviours may deteriorate or improve as a result of changing needs. As this occurs the level of support you offer will also need to change.

You need to recognise behaviours of concern so they can be dealt with promptly and effectively. Behaviours can vary in their severity: some need to be dealt with immediately; others need to be monitored regularly. You must be able to identify acceptable behaviour and behaviours of concern and know when to act to prevent problem behaviour jeopardising the health or safety of the person or others.

Here are the differences between acceptable behaviour and behaviours of concern.

### Acceptable behaviour

- ▶ Acceptable behaviour is not dangerous, offensive or detrimental to the person, their environment or other people. The person's needs must be considered when making decisions about whether their behaviour is acceptable.

### Behaviours of concern

- ▶ Behaviours of concern are dangerous, offensive or damaging to the person, their environment or others; for example, if they are:
  - verbally aggressive
  - physically aggressive
  - stealing
  - acting in a sexually inappropriate manner
  - behaving inappropriately.

### Unacceptable support worker behaviour

- ▶ Support workers can also demonstrate unacceptable behaviours if they:
  - neglect a person's needs
  - accept money from a person they support
  - steal
  - do not report incidents
  - do not perform designated tasks
  - treat the people they support unfairly because they hold different beliefs.

## The role and responsibility of support workers

Support workers must regularly observe and monitor the behaviour of the people they support. Behaviour can be concerning or challenging, but when understood in context can provide a clue to the person's needs. Workers need to know what is 'normal' for a particular person and what to do if their behaviour changes. Understanding behaviour helps to avoid or reduce difficult situations. When a person commences with their care service, their behaviour is assessed and recorded in their care plan.

Consider the advice below when observing and monitoring behaviour.

### Observing and monitoring behaviour

- ▶ Understand and support cultural, spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological needs. These factors can affect a person's behaviour.
- ▶ Encourage cooperative behaviour, which makes life more enjoyable for the people you support and makes your job as a support worker more rewarding.
- ▶ When you are monitoring behaviour, gather specific information about the person.
- ▶ Collect information at specific times, whether daily, weekly, fortnightly or when something out of the ordinary occurs.

- ▶ Different workplaces may have different forms for reporting, such as care notes or incident forms.
- ▶ Document and report the information collected to your supervisor. The information is then used to evaluate the person's care.

## Understand behaviour

Many stressful events occur throughout life. Some cause great distress; for example, a family dispute, retirement, physical illness, mental illness, loss of independence, moving into an aged care facility and/or the breakdown of a relationship. Different people have different reactions to stressful occurrences. As a support worker, you will experience a range of behaviours.

Here are some examples of behaviours of concern that may occur.

### Examples of behaviours of concern

- ▶ Verbal or physical aggression
- ▶ Self-harm or property destruction
- ▶ Non-compliance with tasks; for example, refusing to walk with a walking frame
- ▶ Socially inappropriate behaviours; for example, urinating in public, withdrawn behaviour

**Example**

**Behaviour chart**

Behaviour chart			
Name: Bert Woods		Date of birth: 3 August 1941	
Number: BW3823		Date: 5 September 2015	
Support worker: Melanie Cartwright			
Issue	Frequency (Tick for each)	Comments	Sign/date
Swearing or yelling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yelled and swore when I was helping him get dressed in the morning	MC 5/9/14
Hitting or punching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Slammed his fist into the wall when he could not bend to tie his shoelaces	MC 5/9/14
Wandering, withdrawn or isolated	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Refusing to participate in activities	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Confused	<input type="checkbox"/>		

## Practice task 1

1. Provide two reasons why behaviour should be monitored.

.....

.....

2. List one method you could use to monitor a person informally.

.....

3. List two behaviours of concern.

.....

.....

**Click to complete Practice task 1**

# 1B Recognise situations for potential conflict and identify appropriate preventative and defusing strategies that can be employed

Behaviour is how people express what they feel, think and need. Sometimes a person's behaviour results in conflict that the support worker needs to resolve. At other times, a person's behaviour may be challenging and difficult to manage but may not cause harm to anyone.

Identifying potential conflict early helps you better manage behaviour, and implement prevention strategies before behaviour escalates. Being well acquainted with a person, their behaviour, likely triggers of behaviour, and behaviour management strategies will help you effectively identify and defuse potential conflicts. While some conflicts are unavoidable, if you can defuse conflicts early, you have better scope to offer care and support to all the people you support.



## Identify behaviour

Changing behaviour patterns may be indicative of changing needs.

Below are some of the more common behaviours of concern you may observe.

### Common behaviours of concern



#### Personal friction

Not everyone will get along with others all of the time. Signs of personal friction include calling another person names, arguing or constantly complaining about or criticising another person. These issues should be addressed as they arise. Initial friction could lead to major and irreparable conflict if not addressed immediately. As a support worker, it is your responsibility to remain professional and to treat each person fairly.



#### Anxiety

When someone is anxious, physical and mental behavioural changes occur that allow them to deal with a threat or danger. However, older people or people with disabilities may develop a greater degree of anxiety than what is considered 'normal'. When there are symptoms of anxiety such as shortness of breath, sweating and chest pain, behaviour should be monitored, checking for the causes of the anxiety and then addressing or reporting the situation.



### Mental conditions

When a person is confused, they can become disorientated, distressed, angry or even aggressive. They may not know who you are, where they are or what year it is. A person may wander inside or outside their home without purpose. They may get into danger. If the confusion and wandering worsen, the person may no longer be safe in their home alone and their situation should be reviewed.



### Chronic complaints

A chronic complaint is a persistent and recurring condition that may be treatable but is not curable. Chronic complaints may become a problem to people if they feel there is no hope for the future. Support workers must remain positive and not become complacent about chronic complaints. A person's complaints must be constantly monitored as the nature of the problem or complaint may change and warrant a review of the person's support plan.



### Threatening behaviour

People display threatening behaviour when they are angry, frustrated, annoyed or have a medical condition. You may find yourself caring for a person who is unhappy about needing care. They may be resentful and angry that a stranger needs to come into their home. Threatening behaviour may be observed as physical aggression such as slapping, biting or other violent acts, or may be verbal aggression such as berating, accusing or criticising. All forms of aggressive behaviour are unacceptable.



### Provocative behaviour

An example of provocative behaviour inappropriate sexual behaviours such as undressing in public, making sexual approaches, masturbating in public, using sexually explicit language or touching others inappropriately. These types of behaviour occur in both men and women. Dementia sufferers sometimes exhibit this behaviour. Support workers must understand these behaviours are not directed at them personally and may be a symptom of the person's illness.



### Apathy and mood

Apathy, withdrawal and mood changes can all be symptoms of depression; however, you may find that people you support experience these symptoms on occasion without being depressed. If symptoms worsen, it may indicate a person is becoming depressed. As a support worker, you may encounter these behaviours if the person has been diagnosed with an illness, have lost some of their independence or lost a loved one.



### Self-harm

Self-harm is a broad term that describes those who injure themselves by scratching, cutting or burning their skin; by hitting themselves against objects; taking a drug overdose or swallowing poison. It may also take less-obvious forms, including taking dangerous risks, staying in an abusive relationship, developing an eating problem, being addicted to alcohol or drugs, or simply not looking after their own emotional or physical needs.



### Threatened suicide

Identifying whether an individual is suicidal is a challenge to those with little training and experience and is often difficult for trained professionals. Warning signs include statements about death and suicide or reading material about death and suicide. Statements of hopelessness or helplessness; for example, 'I don't know if I can go on' and disrupted sleep patterns are also possible warning signs.



### Irrational behaviour

Irrational behaviour is unexpected or abnormal behaviour. A support worker may informally observe a person doing or saying odd things that may not make sense. Assess whether the behaviour is placing the person at risk. Dignity of risk entitles people to make their own decisions and you need to respect those decisions, as long as the person is not placing themselves or others in danger.

## Potential causes of behaviour changes

You must understand the person's needs in order to respond appropriately to their behaviour. Cooperative behaviour should be encouraged. People you support, either as individuals or as a group, may demonstrate behaviours of concern if they feel their needs are not being met. This may be their way of communicating with you. Behaviour may change for many reasons, due to ageing, worsening health, mental health conditions, developmental issues and external factors.

### Ageing

Ageing is a part of human development. Ageing is individual and the patterns of ageing vary greatly among older people. It can depend on a person's life experiences, their physical health, how they cope with stress, genetics and their level of support.

Here is a list of changes that may occur as a result of ageing.

- ▶ Vision and hearing may worsen.
- ▶ Skin becomes thinner, drier, more wrinkled and prone to injury or bruising.
- ▶ The body's organs may become less efficient.
- ▶ Support networks may decrease through loss of loved ones or retirement.
- ▶ There may be difficulty getting enough oxygen to body parts.
- ▶ Memory problems are common; however, dementia is not a usual part of ageing.
- ▶ The amount of sleep needed may be less.
- ▶ Movement and walking may become difficult, unsteady or unsafe.
- ▶ The body may become sensitive to temperature.
- ▶ The appetite may reduce, or sensitivity to certain foods may develop.
- ▶ There may be an increased risk of heart problems.
- ▶ The bladder and bowel may weaken, which may result in incontinence.

### Health concerns

Health problems can cause stress and anxiety; sometimes people may not be aware of a health issue, yet their behaviour can indicate some kind of problem exists. Health problems can affect a person's behaviour. For example, they may become frustrated,

confused or disorientated; or they may become more isolated and withdrawn. They may become more dependent as they are unable to do the things they could previously – such as walking, reading or driving.

Here are some health problems that could cause behaviour changes.

<b>Health problems that could cause behaviour changes</b>	
▶ Pain	▶ Lung disease
▶ Loss of mobility	▶ Sensory decline (deteriorating vision or hearing)
▶ Infections	▶ Depression
▶ Arthritis	▶ Dementia
▶ Heart disease	

## Mental health issues

Mental health is how people feel, think and behave as they manage life. It contributes to how people relate to others, how they deal with stress and make decisions. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood through to old age. Mental illness is common, affecting about one in five families in Australia. Some of the more common mental health disorders that may affect people in your care are depression, psychotic disorders and dementia. You need to understand the type of behaviour that may be exhibited as a result of mental health issues, as described below.

Mental health issues include:

- ▶ depression: an intensely negative feeling that may persist for long periods of time and often without reason
- ▶ psychotic disorders: people with psychosis often lose touch with reality and may see or hear things that other people don't see or hear
- ▶ dementia: the symptoms of a large group of illnesses that cause changes in a person's brain.

## External factors

External factors are those outside the person, such as family relationships, social supports and access to services. These factors change a person's behaviour; for example, a person's relationship with their children may change if they stop visiting or argue over the person's care or will. A person may become more withdrawn if social opportunities diminish. A person may become more interested in participating in social interactions if more support services are available.

## Recognise situations for potential conflict

Learn to recognise situations that may result in potential conflict. These will vary depending on the context you work in, and the people you support. Common causes of conflict include working with a range of people with differing attitudes and backgrounds; working in a workplace that is under-funded and under-resourced; misunderstandings and misinterpretations; lack of time and poor communication.

Here are some specific situations where potential conflict may occur.

## Situations of potential conflict



### Limited resources

You may be working with a large group of people, with many and varied needs, and you may have limited resources to provide support. In this situation, needs may not be met. For example, you may not be able to listen to individual people, and attend to needs. If people feel ignored, or misunderstood, they may respond using aggressive or threatening behaviour.



### Poor communication

Communication is essential to a smooth running operation. It is also important to meeting individual needs. If information is poorly communicated the situation can quickly escalate. Having clear workplace communication strategies in place is important; hold and participate in regular team meetings, read all communication emailed to you, and clearly articulate all information you need to share with others. Likewise, communicate clearly with people you support. Read personal records, and make records pertaining to that person's needs.



### Misunderstandings

It is ideal that your work with diverse groups is harmonious. However, working with people with a range of cultures, opinions, attitudes and backgrounds can lead to conflict if communication is poor, and intentions are misunderstood. People from different cultural groups may have different ways of expressing or understanding each other. In some cultures, for instance, it is polite to make eye contact; in others, it is considered impolite. Develop your own cultural awareness, and encourage your workplace to be culturally confident.



### A person's needs are not being met

Behaviour is often a way of communicating a need. If a need is not being addressed, behaviours of concern may eventuate. The person may be in physical pain, for instance, and may have no other means to communicating pain. Be familiar with each person's care plan, and well-practised in monitoring and observing changes to detect early signs that a need is not being met.

## Preventative strategies

Conflict arises occasionally and the most effective approach for a support worker is to prevent conflict from occurring or minimising the severity of the conflict.

Here are some strategies to prevent or minimise conflict.

### Preventative strategies

- ▶ Know the person's likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses.
- ▶ Develop a rapport with people you support, and treat people with respect and dignity.
- ▶ Involve people in their own care and be flexible, innovative and encouraging, and provide support.
- ▶ Be positive and have realistic goals.
- ▶ Provide care that meets all people's needs.
- ▶ Be open and honest with people about behaviours of concern.

## Defuse problem situations

Everyone has the right to a safe working environment that is free from conflict. However, this does not mean you will never be exposed to conflict. If conflict does occur, you must address it sensitively and quickly to defuse the situation and minimise emotional or physical damage.

Tips for defusing conflict:

- ▶ Stay calm. Do not become agitated.
- ▶ Try to understand the other person's point of view. Use the 'How can I help?' approach.
- ▶ Back out gracefully, if possible.
- ▶ Use your communication skills to move the conflict along. The parties may calm down once they air their grievances.
- ▶ Listen for key words and emotions when trying to find a solution.
- ▶ Remain positive and remember that the situation will end.
- ▶ Do not engage in the conflict. Remember that blame achieves nothing.
- ▶ Do not react to their actions with hurtful responses.
- ▶ Learn from the incident to help prevent it happening again.
- ▶ Report and document the incident on the appropriate forms.

## Use behaviour to defuse conflict situations

Always display positive behaviour with people you support and your colleagues to prevent or defuse conflict situations.

The following points outline behaviour that defuses or fuels conflict.

### Positive behaviour that can prevent or defuse conflict

- ▶ Smiling, being positive and supportive
- ▶ Encouraging feedback
- ▶ Listening and respecting the person
- ▶ Involving the person in their own care
- ▶ Being professional and non-judgmental
- ▶ Accepting the person for who they are
- ▶ Giving positive feedback

### Negative behaviour that can fuel conflict

- ▶ Ignoring a person's request
- ▶ Continually ordering a person around
- ▶ Not listening
- ▶ Talking down to a person
- ▶ Passing judgment
- ▶ Saying yes but meaning no
- ▶ Making fun of the person

## Example

### Recognise situations for potential conflict

Andrea is an 83-year-old, wheelchair-bound lady living with her husband. She is a double amputee, who has had several health complications including heart problems, diabetes and respiratory problems. She is now starting to experience memory problems. Andrea finds her problematic health very frustrating and she is aware of her increasing memory problems. She is embarrassed about her disabilities and has started to become increasingly difficult to support.



One morning Carol, the support worker, notices Andrea becoming distressed. Andrea clenches her fist and starts wheeling herself around the room with her head down muttering to herself. She yells at Carol to get out and tells her that if she goes near her she is going to run her over. Andrea has never been aggressive toward Carol before.

Carol remains calm and professional. She calmly asks Andrea if there is anything wrong, she'd like to talk about. Andrea is dismissive, at first, but Carol stays calm. She moves herself out of harm's way, and tells Andrea she will wait in the kitchen, and when Andrea is ready, she should come and talk.

Andrea eventually comes into the kitchen, and tells Carol that her funding has been cut, and she's worried about how it will affect her support. Carol validates Andrea's concerns, and says they are very reasonable worries. She suggests she arrange a meeting with Andrea's case worker to discuss the current funding situation, and to help Andrea make a plan that suits her needs.

## Practice task 2

1. What are three positive behaviour techniques you can use if a conflict occurs?

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2. Describe three preventative strategies to minimise conflict.

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3. Describe three possible situations when conflict may occur.

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**Click to complete Practice task 2**

# 1C Evaluate the person's behaviour and interactions in a fair, objective and consistent manner

You must be fair, objective and consistent with all the people you support. This ensures everyone is treated equally and receives a quality service. It is unacceptable to treat people differently, discriminate against them or not provide appropriate care. As a support worker, you have a duty of care to the people you support. You must provide quality service in a safe, caring and supportive environment. Your organisation's policies and procedures will outline the professional behaviour you are expected to demonstrate.

To practise in a fair, objective and consistent manner means that no matter what you are feeling, you remain professional and focused on the person's needs. Know your workplace policies and procedures when it comes to enforcing and possibly impinging on a person's rights.

Consider these questions when supporting people:

- ▶ How would I like to be treated in this situation?
- ▶ How would I like my loved one to be treated in this situation?
- ▶ Would I treat people this way if I were being observed?

## Evaluate behaviour

A person's behaviour is informally evaluated each time the support worker has contact with them. Formal methods are used when the worker reports and documents what they have seen, heard and done. When you document an incident, you reflect on what happened. Never assume you know why the behaviour is happening. Your assumptions could be totally wrong, which means the strategies you develop to address the problem will be ineffective. Instead, investigate the problem further. For example, if an older person who has always been bright and alert seems more forgetful, don't just assume this is related to their age. Many things could cause this change in behaviour; for example, they may have slept badly, they may have a medical problem or they could be feeling depressed.

Here are some things to consider when evaluating behaviour.

Use evaluation tools to establish:

- ▶ What happened before the behaviour?
- ▶ Who was present?
- ▶ Where did the incident occur?
- ▶ What was the nature of the incident?
- ▶ Was it a sudden or gradual change?
- ▶ Who or what was the behaviour directed at?
- ▶ What was the effect of the behaviour?
- ▶ What interventions were tried and did they work?
- ▶ Was anyone hurt or upset by the event?

## Tools for evaluating behaviour

There are a range of tools you can use to evaluate behaviour. Ideally, you should use a combination of formal and informal methods and always remain fair and objective in your evaluations.

Possible tools you could use are described below.

<b>Tools for evaluating behaviour</b>
▶ Behavioural charts
▶ Formal observation
▶ Informal observation
▶ Comparative behaviour charts
▶ Questionnaires or surveys
▶ Communication diaries
▶ Monitoring goals
▶ Interviewing people you support, their families and other staff

## Evaluate fairly, objectively and consistently

When evaluating behaviour either verbally or in writing, always ensure you are fair, objective and consistent. You have a legal and ethical obligation to be fair, according to discrimination legislation, such as *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth) and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth). This means not making discriminatory remarks in relation to age, sexuality, race, ethnicity or gender when making evaluations.

These Acts protect the rights of the people you support. One of the key components of these rights is the right to fair treatment. Further information about community guidelines and legislation can be found in the Community Work Practice Guidelines at: <http://aspirelr.link/acwaguidelines>

Tips for evaluating fairly, objectively and consistently:

- ▶ Use templates provided by your organisation.
- ▶ Sign and date all documentation to increase accountability.
- ▶ Ask for supervision to ensure evaluations are ethical.
- ▶ Focus on the behaviour rather than the person.
- ▶ Use objective language, such as, 'I observed that ...' rather than 'I think that ...'
- ▶ Avoid including personal opinions and making assumptions.
- ▶ Be specific in your evaluation, using concrete evidence.
- ▶ Don't discriminate on the basis of age, sex, gender, race, disability or ethnicity.
- ▶ Be professional in all communication.
- ▶ If personally confronted by behaviour, seek supervision to address your response, rather than undermining the rights of the person displaying the behaviour.

**Example**

**Evaluate the person’s behaviour and interactions**

Alec is a support worker, who supports Vincenzo, a 93-year-old man who lives in shared accommodation. Alec visits him once a week to take him shopping and help him pay his bills. Vincenzo is a very determined man who knows exactly what he wants.

One afternoon when Alec arrives to take Vincenzo shopping, Alec suggests that Vincenzo tries a new supermarket that will save him money. Alec has already looked at the catalogue and knows that many of the things Vincenzo regularly buys are on special this week. Alec thinks that Vincenzo could do with the extra money, as the pension he receives doesn’t leave him with much money once the bills are paid.

Vincenzo refuses to try the new shop, and becomes agitated that Alec is interfering in his decisions. He tells Alec to ‘Nick off!’ Alec acknowledges his role in the situation – Vincenzo wants to make his own decisions, and doesn’t like being told what to do. When Alec communicates the events of the day in the notes, he says that he suggested a new supermarket, but Vincenzo was resistant. He didn’t go into reasons why, or include any personal affront at being told to ‘nick off’. He checks the communication note, then signs and dates it.

## Practice task 3

1. A person is verbally threatening. If you were to evaluate the incident, what key factors would you include?

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2. What tools and techniques can you use to evaluate behaviour?

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3. What are three things should you do to ensure your evaluation is consistent, fair and objective?

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**Click to complete Practice task 3**

# 1D Ensure decisions on action are consistent with available evidence and organisation policies

An important part of the support worker's role is to observe and evaluate behaviour. A decision can then be made about what to do, based on what has been seen, heard and read about the person and their behaviour. Actions taken should be in accordance with organisational policies, procedures, practices and the support worker's level of authority.

While some decisions must be made quickly, others must wait until the person has been monitored for a period of time and all of the relevant information has been gathered. You can then decide whether to act, and how to act. It is essential that the worker's decisions are based on all the available facts so the response is the most appropriate one. Make sure you know what actions you are allowed to take and what decisions your supervisor must make, as described below.

Make sure you:

- ▶ know your role and responsibilities
- ▶ follow your organisation's policies and procedures
- ▶ act quickly, when appropriate, to prevent a situation from worsening
- ▶ use your initiative
- ▶ access all the necessary information about a person and their behaviour.

## Know your level of authority

You need to know what is expected of you based on procedures, guidelines and your job description. Part of your role may be to remain calm, then inform your supervisor; they will decide what action to take such as whether to seek additional help or change their care plan. Alternatively, the procedures or guidelines may tell you to act decisively to prevent further conflict, such as providing the person with games and books to occupy them.

You should also follow instructions in the person's behaviour support plan. The triggers, behaviours, preventative and management strategies will be outlined in this plan.

If the person has a medical issue, practice first aid to keep the person safe, and refer the person on to an appropriate medical practitioner, such as the GP or a registered nurse.



## Interpret the available evidence

The cause of the person’s behaviour may not be immediately visible. You may need to interpret the evidence to determine the trigger for the behaviour, and the need being expressed.

When interpreting the evidence, you need to be responsible and fair. Do not make biased assumptions. For example, if the person swears in conversation with you, you may be personally offended, but this may not mean the person is acting aggressively.

You also need to see the evidence within its context. Ask: Who is giving the evidence? Is the evidence factual? What bias may impact the evidence? Is there any other evidence to support this evidence?

To remain objective, consider the following when interpreting the evidence available to you. Types of evidence are also discussed below.

Types of evidence	Remain objective
▶ Visible observations	▶ Talk to your colleagues and supervisor before making decision
▶ Behaviour	▶ Look at facts, rather than opinion
▶ The person’s case notes, charts, history	▶ Ensure all written evidence is signed and dated, and is objective
▶ Observation of others	▶ Remain calm and professional
▶ The person’s behaviour support plan	▶ If you are distressed, seek supervision

## Respond appropriately

There are three choices you can make when determining an appropriate response. First, you can do nothing if you believe the behaviour may stop. Second, you can observe and then act. Behaviour that is harmless may only need to be recorded in the person’s care notes. If the behaviour worsens you may have to intervene. Finally, you can act immediately if the behaviour is affecting other people or has the potential for harm. You can either intervene directly or contact your supervisor.

## Follow organisational policies and procedures

Collect and review the evidence presented to you at the time of the behaviour, and then make a decision to act, which is in keeping with organisation policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure all workplace practices comply with industry standards, legislation and ethical conduct. They are also instructional templates staff should follow in order to know how to act in a given situation.

Read, or listen to, organisational policies and procedures relating to decision-making in the workplace. If you are unclear, consult your supervisor for clarification.

Policies and procedures may relate to the following issues, in relation to decision-making.

### Privacy and confidentiality

- ▶ Privacy and confidentiality procedures are intended to protect people's privacy in relation to their personal information. Ensure only appropriate people are consulted.

### Safety

- ▶ WHS policies and procedures need to be followed to ensure the person, and others you work with are safe at all times.

### Hierarchy

- ▶ Refer to the appropriate person for advice before taking any action. Policies and procedures will detail who you should report to for supervision in any given situation.

### Documentation

- ▶ All actions need to be recorded using appropriate templates. Documentation must be accurate and objective, and stored in the appropriate place.

### Equal and fair treatment

- ▶ All actions need to treat people fairly and humanly. Be familiar with the human rights and anti-discrimination policies, as well as the ethical code of conduct.

## Example

### Ensure decisions on action are consistent with available evidence and organisation policies

Elly, a support worker, has been visiting Mrs Doran for the last two months. Mrs Doran has lived with her daughter and son-in-law for the past four years; she moved in with them as she was not managing well on her own. Elly has been visiting to give the daughter respite as Mrs Doran has started having memory problems and is unable to be left alone for long periods.

Mrs Doran is very distressed one morning when Elly arrives. She tells her that her daughter has been stealing her money. The worker feels very upset for Mrs Doran and says that she will sort it out.

Elly confronts the daughter when she returns home and tells her she is going to report her to the police. Elly then calls her supervisor to tell her what has happened.

The supervisor tells Elly that Mrs Doran's daughter has power of attorney due to her mother's memory problems and regularly does her banking for her.

In this example, the worker should not have reacted before understanding the situation. Elly should have reassured Mrs Doran that she would help her and then contacted the supervisor immediately to get some guidance.



# Practice task 4

1. What are three considerations you should make before making a decision and taking action in any given situation?

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2. List two ways you can remain objective when evaluating a person's behaviour.

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3. What are three organisational policies or procedures you should follow when making decisions about action to take?

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**Click to complete Practice task 4**

# 1E Seek specialist advice and make necessary referrals

The people who come to your organisation have varied needs: some are urgent and require immediate attention; others, though important, are not urgent and can be attended to as soon as possible. For you to be able to meet a person's needs, you need to understand the operations of both your own organisation and organisations that may also be in a position to provide support.

Some people may have issues that can be potentially unsafe for them, you and others in your workplace. You need to fully understand the processes to follow when an unsafe situation arises. Most importantly, you need to be very clear about how to seek assistance when you need it, and make necessary referrals.



## Identify the limitations of your service or your role

Your organisation will have the expertise, and will provide resources and services in certain areas; however, it will not necessarily be able to meet the full spectrum of the person's needs. To meet needs holistically, and effectively, a range of services may need to be accessed. Learn how to recognise the limitations of your own services, and identify situations when referrals need to be made.

To understand what services the organisation does provide, consult policies and procedures, and talk to your supervisor. To understand the limitations of your role, consult your job description, industry guidelines, policies and procedures and talk to your supervisor.

Possible limitations and questions to ask when identifying the limitations of your service and your role are described here.

Reasons for limitations	Questions to ask
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Staff do not have skills or qualifications to meet the person's needs.</li> <li>▶ The service is full to capacity.</li> <li>▶ There is no funding to meet the person's requirements.</li> <li>▶ Another service can better meet the person's needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Does the organisation provide a service to match the person's needs?</li> <li>▶ Does the organisation have staff who are experienced in the area of need?</li> <li>▶ Do you have experience and qualifications to meet these needs?</li> <li>▶ Do staff have the skills and qualifications to safely and effectively meet these needs?</li> <li>▶ Does the organisation have the funding and resources to meet these needs?</li> <li>▶ Is there an agency or organisation that can better meet these needs?</li> </ul>

## Encourage participation

The main methods of identifying needs include the formal assessment processes, which may include the use of assessment tools such as questionnaires and checklists, and discussion with the person. Sometimes, the person's needs are outside the limitations of your role. They may require specialist advice or assistance.

It is important to encourage people to be active participants in identifying their needs and choosing the services they receive. This approach empowers a person so they have a sense of control over their own lives and are not just passively receiving services, but making decisions about what they do and do not want. By being active participants, the people you support are more likely to follow through with changes recommended by specialist services.

## Provide information about sources of assistance

Once a person's immediate needs have been identified, you should provide them with information about available sources of assistance.

This may include:

- ▶ services provided by the agency
- ▶ services provided by external agencies
- ▶ specialised services such as counsellors and healthcare professionals
- ▶ informal sources of support such as self-help groups and social networks.



Where possible, provide people with a range of options and help them weigh up the positive and negative aspects of each option.

## Methods for providing information

Present information in a way that is meaningful to the person. Most organisations have their own website where people can access information. However, it is important not to assume that everyone knows how to use a computer and has access to the internet. Many people, including those affected by issues such as literacy, homelessness, poverty and age may not be able to access or use a computer.

Here is a list of other ways to provide information about services.

Your organisation may provide information:

- ▶ verbally, either in person or by telephone
- ▶ in leaflets or brochures, which may be mailed, emailed or provided in person
- ▶ in letters or reports
- ▶ audiovisually; for example, in a PowerPoint presentation
- ▶ in regular newsletters, which may be posted, emailed or sent as updates by SMS
- ▶ in other published materials; for example, learning resources
- ▶ on posters or other graphic presentations.

## Relevance of information

Your organisation would have to keep a lot of information if it were to attempt to cover all of the services available to community service users. This is one reason why you need to limit the information you provide so it is relevant to the people you work with. Using active listening and questioning skills also enables you to provide people with information that is relevant to their needs. For example, a person may ask for information on services to assist them in finding a job. They may need language and literacy training to improve their ability to find employment, so you also need to provide them with information on how to access this kind of support. Remember, information should always be provided in a way that ensures that the person can understand it.

## Consider needs holistically

When identifying and prioritising needs, remember that needs do not exist in a vacuum, and often correlate with other needs. Health needs impact drug and alcohol issues, which may impact financial issues, which may impact homelessness, for instance. Although it is important to prioritise and organise needs, to ensure appropriate response strategies can be developed, it is also important to take a holistic view, and ensure you've helped the person consider how needs will impact on each other.



For example, if the person decides to prioritise homelessness and financial issues, but does not prioritise their drug and alcohol issues or mental health issues as a priority, it may be difficult to develop an effective strategy to address finances.

Listen attentively, when collaborating with the person, but also be prepared to clarify their perspective by repeating what you have heard, summarising their perspective, and possibly probing and challenging their perspective, so they develop a greater holistic awareness of their perspective.

## Refer the person according to the priority of needs

There are often insufficient resources available to meet the needs of all people at all times. This means that people you support may need to wait until services can be provided. You need to assess the urgency of the person's needs. Can they wait? Or should they be referred? For example, if you have two people asking for accommodation support, but you only have one vacancy, you need to make a judgment about whose needs are more urgent.



Your organisation's policies and procedures provide the guidance you need to make such decisions.

## Determine the priority of needs

There is sometimes a need to determine which person needs access to a service more urgently than others. This occurs when demand is greater than the number of services available. Your organisation's procedures set out how it determines priority; these criteria should be clear to people being referred and other referring services so that priority determination is seen to be fair. If the person presents with needs that do not fit neatly into criteria, ask your supervisor. Remember that you have a duty of care, which includes ensuring that people receive the support they need in a timely manner.

The following outlines some criteria for identifying priorities.

### Immediate

**Example:** A woman has presented with a child, and both exhibit signs of stress and obvious bruising. She indicates that a male family member has assaulted them.

### High

**Example:** A person is homeless or at risk of homelessness; a person who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background; a person who has an intellectual disability or a serious mental illness.

### Routine

**Example:** A family has requested an assessment for support for their elderly parent, who has started to exhibit signs of dementia. In this case placing the person on a waiting list is unlikely to affect them negatively.

### Low

**Example:** A school counsellor has asked a youth health service to speak to the school's Year 10 students about mental health and managing stress.

## Types of organisations you could refer to

The person's specific needs, and their preferences, as well as funding options will determine the type of organisation or service you may refer them to. Here are some options.

### All community services organisations

- ▶ The nature of the services provided by a community organisation will vary according to the service sector. A community mental health agency may provide support and assistance with activities of daily living but not provide clinical services related to diagnosis and medication management. This must be carried out by a psychiatrist or clinical mental health service.

### Larger organisations

- ▶ Larger organisations generally cater for a range of groups with a variety of needs such as counselling and community-based care, to housing and employment services for a broad range of people. Smaller organisations may only provide advocacy and support services for a particular group, such as people with a particular disability, like dementia.

### Smaller organisations

- ▶ Some organisations employ community services workers as well as specialist staff such as counsellors, psychologists, behavioural consultants, cultural liaison officers, recreation officers and occupational or diversional therapists. This reduces the need to seek services and support outside the organisation.

## Sources of assistance

The nature of the person's needs and the risk the need poses will help you determine where assistance can be sought. Respond to urgent, high-risk needs immediately. Assistance may come from the following places.

### Other staff

Your supervisor, more-experienced staff or staff with specialisations may be able to help; for example, they may be trained in behaviour management or, in cases involving non-English-speaking people, may be able to communicate with a person in their first language.

### Consumer groups

Consumer groups are generally volunteers who form to provide help and support to people with particular needs. There is a range of consumer groups, including support groups for carers, people living with chronic pain, people who need financial management aid, and people who wish to access toy libraries or playgroups.

### **Clinical mental health services**

Your organisation may have a list of organisations that provide services to people with mental health needs. You can access information about mental health government policy, consumer participation and programs at: <http://aspirelr.link/mental-health-publications>

### **Acquired brain injury specialists**

Acquired brain injury may be the result of an accident, or alcohol or drug abuse. You can find out more about acquired brain injury services online at: <http://aspirelr.link/brain-injury-australia>

### **Other specialists**

The key specialists in community services organisations are psychologists and counsellors. These people can be critical for dealing with a potentially dangerous person, particularly when the specialist knows the person and is involved in their treatment. Many specialist medical practitioners offer different health services. Most community services organisations hold a list of these.

### **Community-based services**

Other community-based support services may include aged care and support services; multicultural services; children's services; community bus, health and wellbeing programs; housing, transport, finance and employment support services.

### **Police**

The standard procedure in the event of an emergency is to phone 000 and explain the situation to the operator, who can arrange for the appropriate response. It is good practice to have an established arrangement with the local police station or office. Some community services organisations have formal agreements in place with the police because they deal with difficult people frequently.

### **Ambulance**

In Australia, phone 000 for ambulance assistance. If a person is in a critical situation, ongoing communication with an ambulance in transit may be necessary. Many community services organisations have a qualified first-aid officer or nurse on duty, who should be on hand to talk to the ambulance staff if required.

## **Refer within the organisation**

It is important to understand exactly what services are provided in your organisation and who does what. You can then refer people correctly when the time comes. Your organisation also has guidelines for the referral process, linked to the types of services offered. Always keep the person informed about who you are referring them to and why. This puts them in a better position to make their own decisions about the program being suggested for them. In most organisations referrals are made by appointment, unless the person's needs are urgent.

The best ways to find out about your organisation include:

- ▶ attending an induction/training program
- ▶ asking your supervisor
- ▶ reading organisational information given to people (brochures/websites)
- ▶ talking to work colleagues to find out who does what/who specialises in what role.

## Refer to external organisations

Your organisation may not always have all the resources required to meet needs. In these situations you may need to refer a person to a service that is better able to meet their needs. When referring to another organisation, encourage the person to make their own decisions about the suitability of the service.

All organisations have procedures for referring people to other organisations, as well as for receiving referrals. When referring people internally or to another organisation, inform the person about how long they may have to wait before an appointment can be made and explain why. Ensure they are aware of costs, and other access issues, such as location. Complete all required forms. Consider the following.

### Obtain consent

- ▶ A person's information is private and confidential, and consent should be sought for that information to be shared with others. Organisations may also refer people to your organisation, so you need to understand your own organisation's policies and procedures for incoming referrals.

### Inform

- ▶ Informing people about their referral involves explaining:
  - details about the organisation and why you are referring them there
  - what the other organisation will expect from them; for example, if any fees and charges are associated with the referral
  - what information you provide to the other organisation.

### Accept referrals

- ▶ Methods for accepting referrals include:
  - a telephone call, with you logging details of the referral directly into your organisation's database or onto a paper form – in some cases the person will be present when this referral occurs
  - an email or an online form
  - the person attending with a letter or other written document from the referring organisation.

## Types of referral processes

The referral process involves contacting the service provided to confirm accessibility and eligibility, providing the person with information about the service and completing a referral form/ providing the service with relevant information about the person, with their consent.

There are four main types of referral processes:

- ▶ urgent referral
- ▶ passive referral
- ▶ facilitated referral
- ▶ active referral.



### Urgent or emergency referral

If someone requires urgent medical or psychiatric assistance, an emergency or urgent referral should be conducted.

For example, you are required to contact the Crisis Assessment Team (CAT) because a person tells you they are planning to commit suicide, and have collected enough prescription medication to do so.

### Passive referral

A person is given the contact details of an external service, and other relevant information. The person is encouraged to contact the service and make an appointment.

For example, a person has described the experience of having panic attacks in the assessment interview. You suggest that the person should contact their GP, and seek a mental health care plan to obtain a referral to a psychologist. The person leaves the meeting telling you that they plan to call their GP that afternoon to arrange an appointment.

### Facilitated referral

The person is assisted to contact the referral. For example, the community services worker contacts an external service with permission to make an appointment for the person. The person is given necessary assistance to access service; for example, transport support.

For example, a person has presented with dementia and is at risk of homelessness. The caseworker consults the person about available public care facilities, which have a specialised dementia care unit that can provide housing and support. The caseworker asks if the person requires assistance contacting the specialised dementia care unit. She does, so in the person's presence, the caseworker phones the unit to make an appointment on their behalf.

## Active referral

The community services worker contacts the other service with the person's permission, and in the presence of the person, to make an appointment. With consent, the worker shares relevant assessment and personal information with the service, and ensures that the person has the means to access the service. The worker reviews the referral to ensure that the service continues to meet the person's needs.



For example, a person has presented to an AOD agency with complex issues, including bipolar disorder, suicide ideation and risk of homelessness. The person is currently severely depressed, and unmotivated to access the required services. The caseworker discusses the options with the person, and asks consent to phone the CAT team, an appropriate mental health service and housing services to make referrals. The person agrees, and in the person's presence, the caseworker arranges appointments for the person. She makes sure the person attends all the scheduled appointments, and phones the service after each appointment to update the case plan.

## Assist people to contact services

Some services are easily contactable and others are by referral only. People, for a wide range of reasons, may not be capable of making contact with these other services by themselves and may require assistance.

To be able to support the person, you need to know as much as possible about the different services available. One way to do this is to build and nurture professional networks. Here is a list of ways you can do this.

### Methods to develop networks in other service organisations

- ▶ Join online forums and actively participate.
- ▶ Join key community network organisations and attend meetings and conferences.
- ▶ Take opportunities to meet people in related industries.
- ▶ Continue your education, and keep in touch with the people in your course.

## Confirm available services

A comprehensive knowledge of your own organisation's services and those offered by other relevant organisations is useful for understanding what options are available to help people you support. Some community services organisations have in-house specialists such as counsellors, medical practitioners, psychologists, occupational therapists and others. Other community services provide advice only.

You must have a good knowledge of the operations of your organisation and others where you are referring the people you support. It is also useful to get to know the names and roles of the people you deal with on a regular basis, particularly in other organisations. Consider the following information.

Things you need to know about the organisation include the:

- ▶ hours of operation
- ▶ contact details – phone numbers, mailing and email addresses
- ▶ after hours emergency contact information
- ▶ services provided, including any associated fees and charges
- ▶ locations of referred organisations to help people access a service in a convenient location.

## Promote independence and participation

As much as possible, support a person's independence, and encourage their participation in the referral process, to maximise the chance that the person will both seek out the referring service, and make a commitment to positive change.

Support the person to take responsibility by encouraging them to access the referral themselves. Here are ways to promote independence and participation in the referral process.

To promote independence and participation:

- ▶ give the person more than one option
- ▶ ensure all services presented are appropriate and relevant
- ▶ present all the information, such as cost, location and eligibility criteria as clearly as possible, so the person can make an informed decision
- ▶ present information in an unbiased way, to avoid influencing the decision
- ▶ when presenting different options, ensure the information is presented in a way the person will understand
- ▶ where necessary, ensure the person receives translating or interpreting services, or advocacy
- ▶ encourage the person to ask questions, and seek clarification about the service, and how it will meet their needs
- ▶ invite the person to make their decision, and avoid guiding them by using persuasive language
- ▶ treat the person respectfully and without prejudice.

## Assist people to contact other services

While some people can source their own information or make contact with organisations to which they are referred, many cannot; for example, because of a disability or communication issue. It is important to consider the level of assistance needed by people to access services. The following explores when and how to access services on behalf of a person you support.

## Accessing services for a person

- ▶ When a person needs support to access other services, you may choose to access the other service on behalf of the person. You could also encourage the person to contact the other organisation while you are present.

## Obtaining informed consent

- ▶ Always remember that you require the person's consent before passing information to another service provider. This includes case information and personal details.

### Example

#### Referral form

Here is an example of a referral form that may be completed.

Referral form for disability services		
Applicant name		
Date		
Referral to		
Do you require assistance completing this form?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Format type	<input type="checkbox"/> Audio tape <input type="checkbox"/> CD <input type="checkbox"/> Large print	<input type="checkbox"/> Interpreter <input type="checkbox"/> Oral presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Sign language
Applicant personal information		
Last name (please print)		
First name		
Middle initial		
Address		
Phone	Mobile:	Work:
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Birthplace		
Relationship status	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> De facto <input type="checkbox"/> Partnered <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed	
Citizenship	<input type="checkbox"/> Australian <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Ethnicity			
Languages spoken			
Religious preference (if any)			
Guardian/next of kin information			
Name			
Address			
Phone	Mobile: Home:	Work:	
Relationship to person			
Legal guardian/custodian status (court order must be attached)	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Custodian		
<b>Applicant history</b>			
Personal strengths (including interests, hobbies, preferences)			
Does applicant have criminal/juvenile court record?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (details):		
<b>Education</b>			
Current employment	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Type of work</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Past employment	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Type of work</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Other social services agencies (for example, home care, crisis services, medical services, child welfare)	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Contact person</b>	<b>Phone</b>

Financial information	<b>Source</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<b>Debit</b>
Health insurance	<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Policy number</b>
Disabilities	<b>Type</b>	<b>Describe current function and support</b>	
	Intellectual disability		
	Down syndrome		
	Cerebral palsy		
	Motor neuron disease		
	Communication		
	Visual impairment		
	Hearing impairment		
	Autism		
	Dementia		
	Other (please specify)		
Medical history	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Medical professional contact</b>
Medication	<b>Name of medication</b>	<b>Reason for taking</b>	<b>Medical professional contact</b>

Consent obtained	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Signature of applicant	Date:
Signature of person completing form	Date: Position:
Supervision	Date: Name:

## Practice task 5

1. Provide one way you would determine the priority of needs of a person.

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2. What would indicate that a person needs an urgent referral?

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3. List two ways to promote the independence and participation of a person in the referral process.

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**Click to complete Practice task 5**

## Summary

1. Support workers need to understand changing behaviour in the context of the person's age, physical and mental health, developmental issues and other external factors.
2. Carers need to observe and monitor behaviour to be able to deal with it promptly and effectively. Observation and monitoring can be formal or informal.
3. There is a wide range of behaviour that indicates a person's needs are not being met.
4. Behavioural changes should be documented and reported, particularly if there is a risk to the health or safety of the person or other people.
5. Support workers should be alert to the signs of potential conflict, acting quickly and decisively to defuse problem situations.
6. Behaviour should be evaluated in a fair, objective and consistent way, following organisational policies and procedures.
7. Decisions should be based on the available information and follow workplace practices.
8. Support workers must be aware of the limitations of their role and seek specialist advice and support where required.

# Learning checkpoint 1

## Observe individuals

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in observing individuals.

### Part A

1. Identify two formal and two informal methods you could use to observe and monitor individuals.

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2. Describe one situation for potential conflict, and explain how you could prevent or defuse the situation.

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3. Identify who you should refer to if a conflict occurs as a result of a mental health issue, and explain how you would make this referral.

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4. Explain why you need to be objective, fair and consistent when evaluating a person's behaviour.

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## Part B

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

### Case study

Joaquin has mental health issues. He attends a weekly meeting at a local drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. Dave facilitates the group sessions and notices that tonight Joaquin appears particularly agitated and distressed. He is responding strongly to everything people say and tries to start an argument with Dave about how the group is run. He even asks Dave, 'Do you want a fight?', as he slaps his hands against his chest, then stands over Dave to intimidate him. Dave calmly and assertively asks Joaquin to sit down, or says that he can wait outside if he prefers. Joaquin leaves the room, and slams the door. Later, when Dave goes to check he is okay, Joaquin has disappeared. He calls Joaquin's mobile, then his home number, but there is no answer. Dave keeps trying, and when he doesn't hear anything, he alerts Joaquin's mental health case worker, who says she will follow up.

1. Describe how Dave could have possibly prevented the conflict that occurred.

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2. How can Dave be sure his decision to respond to the situation would be in line with his organisation's procedures, and with available evidence?

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3. Who could Dave collaborate with to ensure his response is appropriate?

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4. Describe the referral process Dave should use when seeking further support.

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## Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Conduct interactions with individuals in a fair, just, humane, equitable and positive manner**
- 2B Use communication strategies for effective interaction and problem-solving**
- 2C Consider cultural sensitivities and adapt style and language to accommodate different cultural values and practices**
- 2D Identify potential causes of conflict and use a range of appropriate and effective defusing responses**
- 2E Use negotiation techniques to divert and minimise aggressive behaviour**
- 2F Use negotiation to examine cause and effect and encourage appropriate responsibility and accountability for behaviour and its outcomes**

## Manage conflict

Good communication is the key to good working relationships and is especially important when dealing with people who display behaviours of concern. The support worker's role is to help people they support cooperate so a high standard of care can be maintained, and disruptions are kept to a minimum. Workers need to know how to speak calmly and in a positive manner to defuse problem situations.

If someone is particularly aggressive, negotiation skills are required. Each person must also be treated fairly and in a caring and positive manner, regardless of their background.

## 2A Conduct interactions with individuals in a fair, just, humane, equitable and positive manner

All your interactions with the people you support must be conducted in an open and reasonable manner to help prevent conflict, and when managing conflict.

Listen to what people are saying, give them the chance to have their say and not judge their behaviour. People from other cultures, or those who speak English as a second language, may find communication difficult. It is important to listen carefully and not interrupt to ensure you have understood them. People with vision, hearing or cognitive impairments may also experience difficulties. If communication between people is poor, it may cause frustration or lead to aggressive behaviour.

The way you communicate with the people you support is fundamental to your relationship with them. If you do not communicate clearly, people you support may misunderstand what you are saying. When you listen carefully to people, they know you respect them and care about their needs. Here are some examples of interactions.

### Example interactions

- ▶ Listening to a person telling you about something that has happened
- ▶ Explaining a process or task
- ▶ Discussing issues or potential problems
- ▶ Having a general chat
- ▶ Carrying out tasks

### Legal and ethical considerations for managing conflict

Australia has laws designed to protect people from discrimination on the basis of their age, physical or mental abilities, gender and background. These laws include the *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*.

You must follow your organisation's policies and procedures, which are based on this legislation. These laws ensure the people you support are treated with respect and are informed of their rights. Legal and ethical considerations should always be followed when managing conflict.

The requirements of support workers are outlined below.

### **Fair**

- ▶ Support workers must treat all people equally. This means finding the best way to communicate with them and encouraging their opinions by not making assumptions about them. Sometimes it is not possible for a person to communicate in the usual way if their communication skills are limited or lost because of physical or mental impairment. In these cases, you may need to use communication aids such as a chat book, communication board or the services of an interpreter.

### **Just**

- ▶ To act in a just way means treating people equally, truthfully and ensuring their rights are maintained. As a support worker, you must ensure people have all the necessary facts so they can make informed decisions. Communicate clearly with people and avoid unfamiliar or confusing language as this may cause misunderstandings. When communicating, remember your level of authority and your role and responsibilities in terms of the information you are providing.

### **Humane**

- ▶ A humane and compassionate worker understands a person's situation and helps them retain their dignity while managing their behaviour. People may worry if they feel they are losing their independence or control of their own lives. Humane workers consider a person's point of view and ease their suffering and concerns. Keep people informed, help them make their own decisions, be patient and explain things as many times as is necessary.

### **Positive**

- ▶ Always encourage and support people by showing empathy and understanding. Being positive has a huge effect on a person's behaviour and outlook. It can make a person more confident or help them to work out a problem. You may provide constructive advice or listen to their plans. They will feel they are not alone if you show you understand and are willing to give them some time. Sometimes you need to be positive to help them accept a situation.

## **Duty of care**

Community support workers are obliged to ensure the health and safety of people they provide support to and others affected by the work they do. When managing conflict, you need to ensure you first consider your duty of care.

If you are aware that a person is in a situation of risk or have experienced abuse, harm or neglect you have a duty of care to act to take reasonable steps to protect the person.

Here are three ways to ensure your duty-of-care obligations are met.

### Act to prevent foreseeable harm

- ▶ If it is clear to you that the person you support or others are in a situation of risk or harm, you should act to minimise or remove the risk. This may involve calling the police to intervene in a situation where someone is threatening violence.

### Provide appropriate care

- ▶ You must provide people with care appropriate to their needs and ensure that you respect their rights to privacy and confidentiality. You may be required to break your duty of confidentiality if the person or others require urgent assistance from others to prevent harm or abuse.

### Take reasonable action

- ▶ The actions you take will be judged on the basis of whether they meet the standard of what a reasonable person in your circumstances would do. You must always take a considered and reasonable approach to anything you do in response to situations of risk; for example, you should try to de-escalate situations of high tension that may lead to aggression or violence if not dealt with.

## Principles of duty of care

People who require help from community services organisations are often vulnerable, and dependent on community services workers for their wellbeing. Because of this situation, the law has established that community services workers (and others) provide duty of care, as described below.

Factors to consider when providing duty of care:

- ▶ The risk of harm and the likelihood of the risk occurring
- ▶ The type of injury and the seriousness of the injury that may occur
- ▶ Precautions that could be taken
- ▶ Professional and ethical standards concerning the issue
- ▶ The policies and procedures of the organisation
- ▶ Community and personal attitudes and values regarding the issue

## Duty-of-care breaches

It is very serious if a worker breaches their duty of care as this may put a person in danger of harm. Here are some of the ways that a community services worker can avoid breaching their duty of care.

Avoid breaching your duty of care by:

- ▶ taking reasonable steps to protect a person from physical, emotional or financial injury when such injuries are foreseeable
- ▶ providing appropriate care
- ▶ maintaining and respecting confidentiality and privacy
- ▶ listening or responding to complaints or needs
- ▶ following the organisation's policies and procedures

- ▶ following the standards, ethics or principles of their profession
- ▶ recording an incident truthfully
- ▶ reporting information appropriately
- ▶ only performing activities that you are qualified to do.

## Individual rights and equality

In supporting people, you and your organisation are upholding the human rights of that person. Human rights recognise the value of every person, regardless of their background, where they live, what they look like, think or believe. Rights are based on principles of equality and respect, shared across cultures, religions and philosophies. They are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make genuine choices in our daily lives. Respect for human rights underpins the values and principles of the community services sector.

Parents and guardians have a legal duty of care to provide children in their care with necessities of life such as food and accommodation. They also have a duty to protect children in their care from harm.

Community services workers are required to meet general or occupational duty-of-care requirements, and also to meet the requirements of their organisation's policies, which are likely to duplicate the legal requirement that they report abuse.

The Australian Government supports and respects many of the United Nations Universal Declarations of Human Rights developed after World War II, as described below.

UN Human Rights Declarations include the:

- ▶ Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ▶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- ▶ Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- ▶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ▶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- ▶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## Constraint

Constrain means to limit or restrict a person. It is morally wrong, and a breach of human rights, to constrain a person without their permission.

Sometimes, a person's individualised care plan will outline the needs for restrictive practice. Restrictive practice is an arrangement between the person, medical professionals, the case manager and the support workers, where a limit or restraint is given to a person to protect their own interest. For example, a person with obsessive compulsive disorder, who is at high risk of diabetes, may have a restrictive practice in place to limit their obsession with cola to one drink a day. Workers must follow the organisation's policies and procedures regarding restrictive practice, when it is absolutely necessary.



## Imprisonment

Imprisonment is the removal of a person's freedom. It is a breach of human rights to constrain or limit a person's freedom against their will. Imprisonment can only be authorised by legal authorities that have the right to restrict a person on the basis of criminal activity.

If you believe a person has had their freedom restricted, you must report the incident as part of your duty of care. For example, you may be aware that a person is being locked in their room by a carer to avoid behaviours of concern occurring. Without a restrictive practice or legal authorisation, this is a breach of human rights that must be reported.



## Neglect

Neglect occurs when the person with support needs, either through intentional or unintentional acts, is not being provided basic necessities. Some indications of neglect may be subtle or may arise from other causes (wearing the same clothes several days in a row may be the person's choice or it may indicate possible neglect), so you need to carefully consider if it occurs as a pattern and report appropriately.

People with disabilities or high needs may be at risk of neglect because they are dependent on the support of others, or may not have the intellectual ability to perceive the neglect. They may also not have the ability to communicate or report the neglect. It is within your duty of care, and your legal responsibility to report any evidence of neglect of people you support.

Here is further information about neglect.

### Neglect

- ▶ Not providing enough food or drinks.
- ▶ Not spending time with the person - leaving them alone for prolonged periods.
- ▶ Inadequate provision of clothing or personal items.
- ▶ Unwillingness to allow for adequate medical, dental or personal care
- ▶ Inappropriate use of medication, for example overdosing a person so they sleep for longer periods of the day.
- ▶ Leaving the person in the same continence aid for the whole day.

### Indicators of neglect

- ▶ Weight loss, dehydration, poor skin quality.
- ▶ Person appears unkempt - same clothing worn every day of the week, loose or baggy clothing, clothing in poor state, hair unwashed, untrimmed nails, poor hygiene.
- ▶ No dentures, hearing aids, mobility aids or glasses.
- ▶ Skin burns from urine being in contact with the skin for prolonged hours.

## Abuse

Abuse can be intentional or unintentional. Intentional abuse is when a person deliberately causes harm to the other person by depriving and/or hurting the other person. Unintentional abuse can occur when another person doesn't realise, through ignorance or other reasons, that their behaviour towards the person with care needs is abusive. An example would be when a primary carer hasn't had a break and is caring for someone with very high needs. If there is no-one else the carer can call on, they can become very tired and resentful and not provide the appropriate care as a result. This is still abuse and needs to be reported.

Here are some other causes of abuse.

### Causes of abuse

- ▶ The primary carer may be stressed at home or at work.
- ▶ A person may be in debt and may steal from the person.
- ▶ There is conflict, arguments and fights within the family.
- ▶ The person is isolated and alone and the abuser thinks no-one will find out if they treat them badly.
- ▶ A carer may be using drugs or drinking too much alcohol and cannot care for the person properly.

## Indicators of abuse

The importance of observation and getting to know the person you are supporting can assist in identifying indicators of abuse. When you know someone, you are more likely to pick up on changes in their behaviour. Changes in behaviour can be a result of other things as well as being an indicator of abuse, so it is important to check your assumptions before coming to the conclusion that the person is in fact being abused.

Here are some indicators of abuse.

### Behaviour changes in a person with care needs

A person may become withdrawn, depressed, anxious or display signs of being scared. They may become quite ambivalent or non-responsive.

You may find the person is becoming disorientated or making contradictory statements. (This of course can be a sign of a range of illnesses, so a thorough assessment should be undertaken before making an assumption that the person is being abused).

### Behavioural signs from the carer

You may encounter situations where the carer makes lots of excuses so you cannot gain access to the person with care needs.

The carer may be overly affectionate and flirtatious with the person, which may indicate an inappropriate sexual relationship.

You may find the carer is giving conflicting accounts of incidents or is hostile towards the person with care needs.

**General indicators**

- Changes in the person’s health such as unexplained weight loss, bed sores, poor colouration, sunken eyes and cheeks
- Unexplained injuries or continual injuries
- Person’s personal care needs are not being met, which can be indicated by dirty hair, dirty clothing, soiled bedding and unclean living conditions
- Inappropriate use of medication, such as drugging the person so they sleep for longer periods of the day and night

**Example**

**Conduct interactions with individuals**

Jennifer is a support worker with her local council. She sees many people every week, all of whom have different disabilities, illnesses and needs. Jennifer believes they are all very nice people and enjoys working with them. While she feels closer to some people she supports than others, no-one would ever know it, as Jennifer treats everyone the same.

Jennifer always:

- ▶ knocks before she enters a person’s home
- ▶ greets people by saying ‘Good morning/Good afternoon’ and asks how they are feeling
- ▶ asks if she can help with tasks such as washing the dishes or tidying the bathroom
- ▶ explains her planned activities and asks if the person is happy with the plan
- ▶ encourages people to have their say and helps them to make their own decisions
- ▶ listens carefully to what they tell her and never judges them
- ▶ uses the most appropriate method of communication
- ▶ asks for feedback about the service at the end of her visit
- ▶ says goodbye and clarifies the time and date of the next visit.

## Practice task 6

1. Provide one example of how you could ensure your duty-of-care obligations are met.

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2. Provide two examples of neglect.

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3. Provide two indicators of abuse.

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**Click to complete Practice task 6**

# 2B Use communication strategies for effective interaction and problem-solving

Support workers need a range of communication skills to effectively meet people's different needs and expectations. Effective communication skills not only help to get the right message across, but they can also help solve problems and minimise conflict.

The differences between verbal and nonverbal communication are outlined below, along with the importance of feedback during communication.

## Verbal and nonverbal communication

- ▶ Verbal communication is using your voice to give another person a message. The words you choose, your tone of voice and the way you speak all contribute to the way the message is received.
- ▶ Nonverbal communication is communicating through actions, gestures, facial expressions, sign language or pictures.

## Giving and receiving feedback

- ▶ Feedback is also essential to effective communication. It is a way the listener can check that what they are hearing is the message that the other person is intending to send. Feedback can be as simple as acknowledging a person's emotions, or a nod to let them know you have heard and understood what they are saying.

## Principles of communication used in conflict management

Communication techniques and principles you use may vary depending on the context. There are similarities, such as always using clear, empathic communication. But there are differences, such as using a more assertive tone in a conflict situation.

Below is a brief description of aspects regarding communication and conflict management.

## Facilitate agreements

When you facilitate agreements, you mediate between different sides and perspectives. You need to remain neutral and objective, and ensure both sides are satisfied with the outcome. Encourage each person or group to listen to the other party. Ask open questions, and allow each person or group enough time to answer the question. Summarise what has been said for the benefit of all parties, ask both parties if they are satisfied with the agreements, then document the process.

### Resolve conflicts

You may be involved in a conflict. You may also be mediating a conflict between others. When resolving a conflict, the goal is to find a win-win solution that satisfies both parties. To reach this outcome, help parties listen to each other's perspectives. Ask open-ended questions, and encourage active listening. If parties become heated, you may need to ask them to separate momentarily, or use calming techniques, such as a soft, low but assertive voice. Resolving a conflict can take several sessions.

### Interpret situations correctly

Having a clear perspective on a situation can be difficult if a situation is very emotional or complicated. People also have their own agenda, and it can be hard to see the perspective objectively and clearly. Interpret situations correctly by asking open-ended questions, and practising active listening. Try to focus on what the other person is saying, and remain as objective as possible.

### Negotiate solutions

You may need to help others negotiate solutions, or you may be involved in a negotiation yourself. When negotiating solutions, allow each person to speak clearly about their perspective, while the other people or person listens. Summarise what was said and present the solutions to both or all parties and ask for feedback or comments. If conflict arises, practise conflict management techniques, such as being assertive, and encouraging empathy.

## Key principles of communication

Consider using the following key principles of communication when managing conflict.

### Empathise with the person

- ▶ Always consider the other person's perspective in a dispute. It can often be hard to do when caught in the conflict, but try to take a step back to allow for empathy.

### Actively listen

- ▶ When you listen actively, you are paying attention to what a person is saying, not trying to form a response in your head while they talk, and responding directly to what they say.

### Be open and honest

- ▶ Be open and clear about your position and your thoughts when establishing effective communication. Allow yourself to be vulnerable, but remain professional.

### Observe your nonverbal language

- ▶ Nonverbal language is the way you stand, your facial expressions and eye contact. It can powerfully reinforce or undermine what you say, or how you listen.

### Respect the person

- ▶ When you respect a person, this means listening to them, not discriminating against them, or using derogatory language, and being honest with the person.

## Barriers to effective communication

The way you say something can significantly affect how the person reacts. For example, if you are positive, the person is likely to be calm and listen to you. If you speak in a negative way they may become angry. There are many barriers to effective communication. Barriers, such as those listed below, inhibit the way a message is given and received, meaning it may not be well understood.

### Barriers to effective communication

- ▶ Being distracted and not listening carefully
- ▶ Focusing on something else while the other person is talking
- ▶ Being insensitive to the needs of the person receiving the message; for example, someone with a sensory impairment or someone from a different culture
- ▶ Feeling emotions that make it difficult to concentrate; for example, feeling angry or sad
- ▶ Lacking congruence between your words and body language
- ▶ Providing too much or unclear information
- ▶ Being distracted by pain
- ▶ Using language that the other person doesn't understand
- ▶ Jumping to conclusions before the conversation is finished
- ▶ Lacking confidence to say what you need to

## Communication styles

Be aware of how others communicate. This way you can identify the most appropriate communication strategies to use. A situation can be easily handled if a worker's communication skills match the person's needs and communication style.

The three main communication styles – passive communication, assertive communication and aggressive communication – are outlined below.

### Passive

- ▶ Passive communication may result in someone not asserting their rights. They may let other people make decisions for them. Commonly, people who are passive communicators don't say what they really need or what they really mean.

### Assertive

- ▶ Assertive communication is direct and honest communication of opinions, feelings, needs and rights in a way that does not violate the personal rights of others. It involves standing up for your own rights, while acknowledging the rights of others.

### Aggressive

- ▶ Aggressive communication may result in another person's rights being ignored. The aggressive communicator may be intent on getting their own way to the detriment of the situation or outcome.

## Communication strategies

People can communicate in many different ways to share information effectively, solve problems or deal with unacceptable behaviours. Effective communication focuses on using positive and assertive language that is accompanied by appropriate nonverbal gestures. When people you support and workers are assertive, their communication is clearer, more direct and they understand others' needs. Conversely, negative language may cause conflict. It tells the person what can't be done, sometimes with a tone of blame. Negative language does not stress positive actions or consequences.

The benefits of using assertive language are shown below.

### Benefits of assertive language

- ▶ Expresses opinions, feelings, attitudes and rights without being anxious and in a way that does not impinge on the rights of others
- ▶ Defuses potential conflicts and aggression; remember that behaviour is an expression of need
- ▶ Allows you to acknowledge the other person's need without passively accepting their 'angry' view
- ▶ Expresses opinions, feelings, attitudes and rights without being anxious and in a way that does not impinge on the rights of others

## Positive and assertive language

Positive language is helpful and encouraging; it focuses on what can be done and stresses positive actions and positive consequences.

Consider these examples of communicating using negative and positive language.

### Positive

- ▶ 'I'm sorry Mr Jones, I'm not qualified to give you that information. Do you need to make an appointment to see your doctor? Can I help you with that?'
- ▶ 'It's a shame that you are short of money Mrs Menzies. I'm sorry, but I can't lend you any money. Can you ask your family? Do you need someone to help you with a budget?'
- ▶ 'Are you having trouble with that task? Do you need to speak with my supervisor about extra support? I can't help you today but I may be able to help next time if my supervisor changes the care plan.'

### Negative

- ▶ 'That is a silly question Mr Jones. Of course I can't tell you if you have high blood pressure; I'm not a doctor.'
- ▶ 'Don't tell me about your sore leg. I'm here to clean your house not listen to you complain.'
- ▶ 'There is no way I am going to give you some money until your next pension payment, Mrs Menzies.'
- ▶ 'That's not my job. I'm not going to the shops for you. I am here to shower you, that's it! Instead of asking me, talk to my supervisor.'

## Use nonverbal gestures

Nonverbal communication is considered to be just as powerful as verbal communication. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the impact of your body language. Nonverbal gestures generally reflect a person's mood, attitude or state of mind. They can be intentional or unintentional; often people have little control over them.

People with hearing difficulties may use sign language. In Australia people use Auslan, the sign language for communicating with people with hearing impairments. You may need to learn some of the signs or arrange for a specialist to help you communicate with a person who has a hearing impairment.

Examples of nonverbal gestures include:

- ▶ nodding your head in agreement
- ▶ shaking hands to greet or welcome someone
- ▶ smiling to show you are happy
- ▶ crossing your arms across your chest to show you are annoyed or impatient
- ▶ shrugging your shoulders to indicate that you are not sure about something or don't care
- ▶ glaring at someone if you are angry
- ▶ yawning and looking away from someone if you are bored.

## Use constructive questioning

You need to be able to get the right information to help you solve problems or calm a person who is behaving unacceptably. The best way of doing this is by using constructive questioning and active listening.

There are two types of questions you may ask: open and closed. Explanations and examples of each are provided below.

### Closed questions

- ▶ Closed questions can be answered with either a single word such as 'Yes' or 'No', or a short phrase such as 'I'm okay'. Examples of closed questions are 'How are you today?', 'How old are you?' and 'What time is your doctor's appointment?'
- ▶ Closed questions give you facts and are quick and easy to answer and give the person asking the question control of the conversation.

### Open questions

- ▶ Open questions encourage a person to speak in detail and provide the basis for exploring their feelings. For example, 'How are you feeling?' or 'What did you do on the weekend?' Open questions receive answers that are more than one or two words.
- ▶ Open questions provide additional information, and give control of the conversation to the other person.

## Active listening

Active listening is a skill that, when combined with effective questioning, allows a worker to fully explore feelings and behaviour. Active listening is more than hearing words; it is about fully appreciating all aspects of the communication process, including body language, barriers and giving feedback.

When you communicate with the people you support, you need to reassure them that you are paying attention and understand them. The best way to do this is by briefly paraphrasing what the person has said. Paraphrasing is summarising the person's comments, repeating them in your own words and then confirming if you are correct.

Consider the guidelines for active listening below.

### Tips for effective listening

- ▶ Focus on the person speaking and concentrate on what they are saying.
- ▶ Avoid distractions.
- ▶ Be aware of nonverbal gestures.
- ▶ Be involved in the conversation and give feedback.

### Barriers

- ▶ You think you already know what the person is going to say.
- ▶ You are thinking of your answer while the person is still speaking.
- ▶ You are only half listening because you are thinking about other things.
- ▶ You interrupt while the person is still speaking.

## Paraphrasing

- ▶ Listen carefully to what the other person has said.
- ▶ Think about what they said.
- ▶ Say it back to them, using your own words.
- ▶ Check to make sure you understood correctly.

## A problem-solving approach

When communicating with others to solve problems, you can also use a problem-solving approach. An example of a problem-solving approach is outlined by Gerard Egan in *The skilled helper: a problem-management and opportunity-development approach to helping* (2007).

Egan proposes a three-stage model to help people answer basic questions about their current situation and what they want for the future. People are encouraged to take an active role in identifying and prioritising their concerns. If an individual is not able to do this, you must consult with an advocate, legal guardian or significant other.

Here is an overview of Egan's model.

### Stage 1

#### What's going on?

This question is designed to encourage people to examine their current situation including their problems and issues.

### Stage 2

#### What do I need or want?

People consider what they would like their life to be like and what changes would make their life better. This is called the preferred picture.

### Stage 3

#### How do I get there?

People start to consider what they could do to make their life fit the preferred picture they have previously outlined. At this stage they begin to set goals and make a plan that nominates the specific actions they need to carry out in order to achieve the preferred picture.

## Teach conflict management techniques

Teaching conflict management techniques can help a person manage a situation before it becomes a crisis. Techniques include:

- ▶ using deep breathing and mindful breathing to stay calm
- ▶ talking about difficult issues after anger has subsided
- ▶ considering the other person's perspective
- ▶ empathising with the other person
- ▶ finding a win-win solution that satisfies both people.

**Example**

**Use communication strategies for effective interaction and problem-solving**

Mr Crow confronts his support worker, James, as soon as he walks in the door. He says, 'I'm sick of you people always being late. I have used this service for three years now, and I think I deserve better than this. Every time I have an appointment, I'm worried that we are going to miss it. I know we don't have one today, but see, look at the time, you were meant to be here 10 minutes ago. It's just not good enough. Don't you care about what other people like me think? Aren't we important enough for you to be on time? I'm going to speak to your boss about this!'



James responds: 'I'm really sorry that I was late Mr Crow. I got stuck in traffic. I do care about what you think and I do value your opinion. I know you get worried when I am not on time. I could arrange for you to speak with my supervisor if you would like me to.'

## Practice task 7

1. List two conflict management techniques you could use when communicating.

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2. Describe two key principles of effective communication when managing conflict.

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3. Describe the preferred communication style when managing conflict.

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**Click to complete Practice task 7**

## 2C Consider cultural sensitivities and adapt style and language to accommodate different cultural values and practices

Be mindful of cultural differences when communicating with the people you support. What is acceptable to people of one culture may be offensive to others. For example, people of one culture may find prolonged eye contact aggressive, whereas another culture may find that avoiding eye contact means the person has something to hide. You need to ensure that you don't impose your own cultural values and beliefs onto others. Be objective, non-judgmental and relate to each person individually.



There are many ways you can show you respect and understand another person's culture through the way you communicate with them. This helps you build rapport and develop a trusting relationship.

### 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 is some more information about 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.
- ▶ 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.

## Cultural considerations

Communication is a very important element of your work, as you need to communicate with the people you support, 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 ways you can show you respect and understand another person's culture through the way you communicate with them. This helps you build rapport and develop a trusting relationship.

Here are some tips for working effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

### Tips for working effectively with people of diverse backgrounds

- ▶ Greet people in the way they would like to be addressed.
- ▶ Show cultural understanding and empathy. Don't make negative comments about another country. Don't talk about events that may be upsetting to someone.
- ▶ Assist people to complete forms if they have trouble writing in English.
- ▶ Show courtesy and respect; be polite. Know when it is appropriate to smile, make eye contact, touch, bow to a person or shake their hand.
- ▶ Don't call someone by their first name or 'love' unless they want you to.
- ▶ Learn some phrases in the person's language such as 'Hello', 'Thank you' or 'How are you?'
- ▶ Talk to the person as an equal; speak in your usual voice. Don't shout or speak as if you are talking to a child.
- ▶ Include everyone; don't leave someone out of a conversation because you have trouble understanding their accent. Never ignore people in a group.
- ▶ Use language everyone can understand. Speak to your supervisor if specific communication issues arise.
- ▶ Never make assumptions; when considering specific communication needs based on a cultural background.

## Adapt style and language to accommodate different cultural values and practices

There are many strategies you can use to overcome a language barrier and help a person communicate. Knowing these strategies 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.

Consider using these strategies.

### **Use multilingual signs**

Multilingual signs are notices and posters that are written in more than one language. These are usually provided in the languages of the main cultural groups of people at a particular service.

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.

### **Use 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. It is a good idea for family members to help. Together you can choose words the person needs to be familiar with, like 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 people you care for.

### **Use music, games and activities**

Music, games and activities can be a powerful aid in communication. They help build relationships between workers and the people you support, and help them express themselves. Many people communicate more easily when they have shared enjoyable activities. Ensure activities are ability and age appropriate.

### **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 very differently in another.

Some people 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 so you can separate these from body language and nonverbal communication.

### **Demonstrate**

Often, a good way to communicate a message 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 pretending to hold a glass and putting it to 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 have to use sign language as much in the future.

## Provide information in a first language

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

- ▶ the services the workplace offers
- ▶ the things the person needs to know
- ▶ instructions for doing something; for example, catching a bus to a community centre, paying their bills
- ▶ who the person can call for more information about the service the organisation provides.

## Multilingual staff

Many care environments employ staff who speak languages other than English. In fact, some aged care facilities cater specifically for people from a certain culture. 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 (CALD) 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 older members of Macedonian and Chinese communities.

## Translation and interpreting services

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 onsite interpreting services in over 160 languages and dialects.

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 Auslan Signbank at: <http://aspirelr.link/auslan>

## Inclusive communication

Make sure you are inclusive of all cultural considerations when communicating with a group. All people are important. 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. To help include everyone, look at each person from time to time; don't focus on only one person, as others may feel left out.

### Spend time with everyone

- ▶ Spend time with everyone, including those who are culturally or socially different, and always make an effort to understand them. Remember that people who speak English as a second language or who have a speech difficulty as a result of a disability 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 their opinions

- ▶ You should also include people from various backgrounds in the planning and activities at your workplace. Make sure their opinions are listened to. You may do this by asking people to be on staff committees or by seeking advice from community social and cultural groups.

## Use words everyone can understand

Use words everyone can understand. Keep your message clear and simple, by following these tips.

### Tips for using clear and simple language

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

## Adapt communication and conflict management style

Cultural beliefs, traditions and values affect how people communicate. Some cultures have rules about eye contact, touching and how you communicate with someone who is senior to you in age. It is especially important to understand what various gestures mean in other cultures.

Be sensitive to another person's culture and communication style when communicating with them generally, and managing conflict.

Here are the meanings of some common gestures.

### Beckoning

In the Middle East, Asia, Portugal, Spain, South America, Japan, Indonesia and Hong Kong it is rude to beckon with index finger to indicate 'come here'.

### Pointing

It is rude to use the index finger to point in the Middle East and Asia.

### Showing your soles

In some cultures, such as Thai, Japanese, French and Middle Eastern cultures, to sit showing the soles of the feet or shoes is exposing the lowest and dirtiest part of your body and is therefore insulting.

### The okay sign

In Brazil and Germany, forming a circle with your fingers to indicate 'okay' is an obscene gesture. In Japan, this gesture means 'money'. In France, this gesture can mean 'zero' or 'worthless'.

### Waving

In some parts of Europe waving your hand can mean 'No'. In Nigeria, it is very rude to wave too close to another person's face.

### Nodding

In Bulgaria and Greece, nodding the head up and down means 'No', not 'Yes'.

### Eye contact

In some Indigenous Australian communities, there are rules about who a person can make eye contact with. Making direct eye contact can be very disrespectful.

## Adapt nonverbal style

Nonverbal communication is very important when communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds. What is culturally appropriate in one culture may not be culturally appropriate in another.

If you work with a cultural group, familiarise yourself with appropriate nonverbal communication styles appropriate for the culture. For example, many Indigenous Australians use minimal eye contact in conversation. Here are some tips.

### Body language tips

- ▶ 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 would be considered very rude and disrespectful.

## Accommodate different cultural values and practices

It is important to appreciate and understand how diversity affects the way you communicate and work with people, 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.

### Language

Language is 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 Indigenous Australian language.

A person 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 in 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, to name a few.

Understand how different religions influence the way people live and do things like eat, dress, pray, celebrate, honour the dead, and how they choose to receive their 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 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 to maintain their traditions by celebrating special days.

## Dress

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

Respect people's choice of dress, and encourage other workers and the people you support 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 household 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. 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 assert the right of the person to express their own views and direct their own care.

## Gender, gender relationships and sexuality

A person's gender is defined as male or female. 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 a person may be embarrassed about their sexuality or may treat you in a certain way because of your gender. Ensure you show respect for a person'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 and what is not.

## Age and respect for older people

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 people with disabilities are aware of their rights under Commonwealth, state or territory laws.

### Example

#### Consider cultural sensitivities

As a case manager, Jessica supports a number of families. She has been working with a particular family for several months. The parents were born in Pakistan, and after they immigrated to Australia, they had children. Jessica knows, from the family's file, details about their ethnicity and that they are Muslim.

One afternoon during a home visit, Jessica says to the mother that she is interested in learning more about Islam. She asks if the mother can recommend any books on the subject. The mother's face lights up. Ramadan had recently ended and her kitchen is full of treats made for the celebration that comes at the end of fasting. The woman makes tea and offers Jessica some sweets. She tells Jessica all about Ramadan and explains how her family adapted some of the traditions to incorporate their son with a disability. She also shares the story of her arranged marriage.

Jessica feels honoured to hear this woman's story. She learnt so much more than if she had read a book or attended a workshop. The trust and rapport that underscored the professional relationship was enhanced by this exchange. While Jessica still did not understand everything about this family's culture and religion, the family knows she is interested and making an effort to understand.

## Practice task 8

1. Describe three ways you can support people in a culturally sensitive manner.

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2. Describe one way you could ensure you demonstrate inclusive communication.

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3. Explain how you can respect the family structure of a person you are providing support for.

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[Click to complete Practice task 8](#)

## 2D Identify potential causes of conflict and use a range of appropriate and effective defusing responses

When conflict occurs, the person may become verbally or physically aggressive. They may swear, shout or punch the wall; or they may become very quiet and withdrawn. Support workers must recognise potential conflict situations and try to defuse them. This becomes easier as your skills increase and you become more confident.

Some examples of conflict you may experience with the people you support are listed below.

Examples of conflicts include:

- ▶ refusing to attend to tasks such as cleaning and taking their medication
- ▶ becoming verbally abusive
- ▶ becoming physically threatening or aggressive
- ▶ displaying discrimination against the worker; for example, behaving in a racist manner
- ▶ being sexually inappropriate
- ▶ involving you in a personal or family argument.

### Identify potential causes of conflict

Conflict can occur for many reasons. The first step is to identify the cause or causes of the conflict. Avoid jumping to conclusions or assuming you know what the cause is. Rather, observe the behaviour; ask questions; ask others such as family members or other carers for their input; and then make an assessment.

Potential causes of conflict may include:

- ▶ a reaction to a stressful situation; for example, the death of a loved one
- ▶ a communication problem; for example, the person cannot understand the worker
- ▶ an issue with the environment; such as the person's room is too hot, too cold or too noisy
- ▶ the person feels they don't have enough support
- ▶ physical or mental problems; for example, the person may be in pain or have dementia
- ▶ the service not meeting the person's needs
- ▶ workers not understanding cultural needs
- ▶ a person being afraid, frustrated, angry or manipulative
- ▶ learnt behaviour and the only way the person feels they can deal with an issue.

## Indications of conflict

There may be times when an underlying cause triggers behaviour that could escalate into a serious situation. You need to quickly identify what is causing the behaviour and defuse the situation.

Use the verbal and nonverbal clues below to help you assess whether the conflict is starting to escalate.

Verbal signs	Nonverbal signs
▶ Yelling, speaking loudly and angrily	▶ Clenching fists, gritting teeth
▶ Threatening violence	▶ Intruding into someone's personal space
▶ Swearing	▶ Slamming doors
▶ Moaning	▶ Rocking and folding arms
▶ Breathing loudly	▶ Pacing and rubbing hands
▶ Muttering, talking rapidly or talking to themselves	▶ Wide, staring eyes; eyes are narrow slits
▶ Silence	▶ Face changes: tears, glaring, colour change

## Appropriate responses to defuse a situation of conflict

There is no single way to defuse a volatile situation as circumstances or stressors may vary from person to person; what may defuse a situation one day for someone may not work the next. Stay alert, be flexible and observe what is happening so you can make an informed decision about what to do. In all conflict situations, respect the person and help them maintain their dignity.

Sometimes a person's illness or condition may affect the way they behave. Act promptly, and remove the person from the situation, if required. Look for signs that the strategies you are using are having a positive effect.

If the strategies are not working, use others. Alternatively, sometimes doing nothing may be the best thing.

Here are some ways to defuse conflict.

- ▶ recognise the warning signs that things are escalating
- ▶ acknowledge the situation and applying effective communication skills
- ▶ reassure the person that you are there to support them
- ▶ remove the cause of the conflict
- ▶ address basic needs; the person may be in pain, be hot, cold or confused
- ▶ meet their request if possible
- ▶ distract the person or offer them an alternative activity; for example, change the subject or offer them a cup of tea or coffee
- ▶ reduce stimulation that may have caused the situation; for example, lower the level of noise or take the person a quiet area
- ▶ encourage relaxation such as breathing deeply or going for a quiet walk.

**Example**

**Identify potential causes of conflict and use defusing responses**

Lisa, a support worker, visits Mary twice a week to assist her with the tasks she is unable to do for herself. Mary became ill last year and ended up in hospital for many weeks. She became weak and needed a lot more assistance to do everyday tasks. As a result of her illness and extended hospitalisation Mary has an exercise program to help her regain her strength and Lisa helps Mary with the exercise program every visit.



Mary has been feeling very frustrated with her progress lately, and has occasionally refused to do the exercises. Lisa has been able to encourage Mary and support her through this tough time. Today Mary becomes verbally abusive and threatens to hit Lisa if she comes near her. Lisa doesn't take this personally, as she knows Mary is upset and afraid she will never improve. Lisa keeps her distance and doesn't intrude on Mary's personal space. She reassures her and acknowledges her frustration. Lisa tells Mary she only wants to help. She offers her a cup of tea and they have a chat about Mary's frustrations. Later Lisa offers to help Mary make an appointment to see her physiotherapist to review her program and progress. She says they should miss the program for today but try again in two days when Lisa is due to visit again.

Lisa reports and documents the events at the end of her shift.

## Practice task 9

1. List two potential causes of conflict.

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2. List two nonverbal signs may indicate a person is in conflict with you.

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3. List two strategies that may be used to defuse a situation of conflict.

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**Click to complete Practice task 9**

## 2E Use negotiation techniques to divert and minimise aggressive behaviour

Aggression is any behaviour that another person finds offensive, hostile, threatening or frightening. Aggressive behaviour can be physical or verbal and ranges from raising voices and speaking harshly, to inflicting physical injury.

Verbal aggression seeks to cause psychological pain to another and can include name-calling, nasty remarks and using hostile humour or threatening language.

With physical aggression, the intention is to inflict physical damage to another person. Examples include hitting, punching, scratching, biting, kicking or slapping. Do not make yourself a target. If you are afraid for your own safety, remove yourself from the situation.

Some examples for handling aggressive behaviour are listed below.

### How to handle aggressive behaviour

- ▶ Stay calm and speak in a calm, simple and reassuring voice.
- ▶ Use the person's name and ask them to stop. Use short, clear and direct sentences.
- ▶ Do not raise your voice.
- ▶ Address the cause of aggression if possible.
- ▶ Try a distraction such as suggesting a cup of tea or going for a walk.
- ▶ If there is the potential for injury, stay out of reach.
- ▶ Do not intrude on their personal space as it may cause the other person to react badly.
- ▶ Keep yourself and the person as safe as possible.
- ▶ Follow your workplace policy for dealing with the situation.
- ▶ Call for help from a carer, co-workers, supervisor or even the police if needed.

### Minimise aggression

You must know how to minimise aggressive behaviour. You will need to recognise the signs that aggressive behaviour is escalating or becoming worse so it can be managed quickly and effectively.

While you should make every effort to ensure your behaviour does not contribute to escalating aggression, sometimes preventive measures do not work. Concentrate on remaining calm and using strategies to minimise the aggression and change the situation.

Aggression may occur if a person:

- ▶ threatens you or makes you feel threatened
- ▶ tells you of their intention to harm you
- ▶ paces and become agitated
- ▶ uses threatening facial expressions such as glaring, grimacing or gritting their teeth
- ▶ uses body language such as clenching their fists or rubbing their hands
- ▶ intrudes upon your personal space
- ▶ starts to yell or swear
- ▶ slams doors or starts throwing objects.

## Negotiation techniques

Although aggression may be difficult to deal with at first, as your skills develop and your confidence grows, you will handle these situations more effectively. Usually, aggressive incidents only last a short period of time.

Negotiation is a good tactic to control aggressive behaviour as it allows you to make decisions and manage the conflict.

Here are some guidelines that may help you to divert and minimise aggressive behaviour.

### Identify a safe place for negotiation

- ▶ People who act aggressively need to be in an environment where their aggression will have little effect. Before you can even begin to discuss their behaviour, make sure they are in a quiet place away from other people. The place should be minimally furnished so there is no opportunity for them to do any damage. Sometimes, just the change of environment can minimise the aggression.

### Clarify the cause of the conflict

- ▶ Make sure you understand why the person is behaving aggressively. It may be a reaction or response to a specific situation.

### Be prepared to listen

- ▶ It is very important that you listen carefully so you understand what the other person has to say. Don't interrupt them. Ask questions if you are unsure and repeat back what you have heard. This lets the person know you are listening to them. Once they have aired their grievance, they may be more inclined to listen to your comments. They may just need someone to listen to their story.

### Assert needs clearly

- ▶ State very clearly the outcomes you expect of the situation. Know what you want or are prepared to accept from the negotiation. Tell them what you are going to do; ask them what they are prepared to do. This helps the person focus on the future rather than their current behaviour. Be fair and non-judgmental. Ask the person about their needs.

### Have a flexible approach to problem-solving

- ▶ Offer compromise as a way forward, without giving away what is important to you. Negotiation involves being able to identify needs and how best to meet those needs; be prepared to look 'outside the square' for potential solutions. Use distraction, humour or encouragement to calm the situation down if you believe this is appropriate.

### Negotiate calmly, respectfully and patiently

- ▶ Respect the other person's feelings. You may not agree with their views but you must respect their right to say how they feel. Do not criticise, anger or frustrate the other person. This will only inflame the situation. Speak calmly and in a reassuring tone. Be patient. You may need to wait while the person considers what you have said.

### Reach an agreement that works for both parties

- ▶ The most important thing to remember when negotiating is that both sides need to get what they want. It is important that you retain your relationship with the person. Learn to give and take, remembering that a person's wellbeing and safety is the most important thing, followed by your ability to deliver an effective service.

## Example

### Use negotiation techniques to divert and minimise aggressive behaviour

Marie has organised a meeting with Cynthia, a person she supports, to discuss Cynthia's support plan, and her goals. When Cynthia arrives for the meeting, she appears agitated. During the meeting, her behaviour escalates. At one point, she stands and yells at Marie, telling her that the service is 'hopeless'.

Marie tries to stay calm. She keeps her voice level and gives Cynthia a moment to air her aggression. Marie doesn't feel physically threatened, so she feels safe enough to stay where she is.

When Cynthia has finished, Marie tells her she hears her concerns, and acknowledges that Cynthia does not feel her needs are being met. She asks Cynthia if this is correct. Cynthia nods. Marie asks Cynthia if she wants to spend the rest of their meeting talking about options for better meeting her needs. Cynthia visibly calms down, and the meeting progresses.



# Practice task 10

1. List two signs that aggression may occur.

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2. List two negotiation techniques you could use to handle aggressive behaviour.

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3. List two guidelines that will help you divert or minimise aggressive behaviour.

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**Click to complete Practice task 10**

## 2F Use negotiation to examine cause and effect and encourage appropriate responsibility and accountability for behaviour and its outcomes

Negotiation is used to reach a compromise by encouraging the parties involved to consider a situation from all sides. Support workers should encourage people to take responsibility for what they do. Some people may not understand the effect their behaviour has on others – a medical condition may make it difficult for them to understand or be aware of what they are doing. In these cases your role is to look for signs of unacceptable behaviour and put planned responses into action to decrease the risk of harm to the person and other people.



### Examine the cause and effect of behaviour

You cannot force another person to take responsibility for their behaviour. However, you can have a discussion about the cause of the behaviour, its causes and its possible or actual consequences. You can also work together to find ways to minimise or prevent it from happening again.

Create a safe space for a person to examine the cause of their behaviour. Ask open-ended questions, listen attentively and clarify and summarise to help the person reflect on what they are saying.

Here is an example of cause and effect.

#### Example

- ▶ Cause of behaviour – the person is frustrated because they can't perform tasks that used to be easy for them
- ▶ Result of behaviour – yelling and pacing is increasing their blood pressure
- ▶ Effect of the behaviour – the behaviour is inflaming the problem

#### Possible causes

- |                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| ▶ Medical issues                   | ▶ Low self-esteem |
| ▶ Mental health issues             | ▶ Anxiety         |
| ▶ Drug- and alcohol-related issues | ▶ Confusion       |
| ▶ Conflict                         | ▶ Frustration     |

### Possible effects

- ▶ Physical injury to self or others
- ▶ Emotional harm to self or others
- ▶ Increased stress and anxiety
- ▶ Failure to complete an activity
- ▶ Broken relationships
- ▶ Damaged property

## Encourage responsibility and accountability

You can quietly and calmly explain to the people you support that it is your responsibility to support and encourage them to take responsibility for their own behaviour. This involves modelling appropriate behaviour, listening to their needs and wishes and being empathetic. You are also responsible for highlighting the consequences of behaviours of concern, helping people with strategies to cope with the behaviour and negotiating agreements so everyone is happy. Remember, you can also look for additional services that may be a benefit to them and can explain that they too have responsibilities in the partnership.

Encourage the person to identify their responsibilities by asking questions, such as, 'How do you think your behaviour will affect you tomorrow?' Responsibilities and other techniques for encouraging the person to take responsibility are listed below.

### The person's responsibilities

- ▶ Follow any guidelines or rules in regard to behaviour.
- ▶ Know what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is.
- ▶ Be aware of their behaviour and its consequences.
- ▶ Work with the support worker to find a solution to difficulties.

### Encourage responsibility

- ▶ Ask open-ended questions.
- ▶ Ask the person to identify the cause of their behaviour, and possible effects.
- ▶ Suggest the person identify possible ways of addressing their behaviour.
- ▶ Ask the person how their behaviour will impact them in the future.
- ▶ Ask the person how the behaviour makes them feel.
- ▶ Discuss contractual agreements, and consider developing a new contract, which the person has to agree to and sign. For example, 'I will not swear when I don't get what I want'.

## Set boundaries

People must know your expectations and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They must understand what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and realise that this type of behaviour has consequences – including the withdrawal of services. This is especially important in the case of aggressive behaviour. Other types of behaviour may need different types of boundaries.

Consider the strategies below when setting boundaries.

### Be specific about what is and is not acceptable

- ▶ Be specific so people are quite clear about what they can and cannot do. For example, if a person has isolated themselves and refuses to eat, you may provide small goals for them to reach each time you visit.

### Set rules to handle disagreements

- ▶ Provide an opportunity for people to discuss the situation without interruption.
- ▶ Listen and ask questions.
- ▶ Give suggestions that help the person take responsibility for their behaviour but also let them back down without feeling embarrassed.
- ▶ Refer the situation to a supervisor or other relevant people if the problem can't be resolved.

### Monitor behaviour and suggest support services

- ▶ Your goal is to encourage the person to build their self-esteem and confidence.
- ▶ Watch their behaviour as you go about your duties.
- ▶ Give them positive feedback.
- ▶ Discuss the person's behaviour with your supervisor.
- ▶ Their care plan may need to be revised.
- ▶ You may seek other services, if appropriate.

## Example

### Use negotiation to examine cause and effect

Mike has recently been assessed by the local council and is to receive home help twice a week. Vince, a support worker, arrives at Mike's home at the pre-arranged time. After initial introductions, they begin to discuss the care plan and how they will work together. Mike says he wants to change his support from showering and house cleaning, to being taken on errands and to the local pub.

Vince explains that this is not possible and any changes to his care need to be made by the supervisor. Vince explains the role of home and community care and confirms that all people need to have input into their support. However, the things that Mike is requesting are not available as part of home and community care support.

Mike immediately becomes verbally aggressive and physically threatening. Vince asks Mike to stop yelling at him, otherwise he will leave. Mike refuses, so Vince leaves and rings his supervisor immediately.

The supervisor and Vince return an hour later to speak with Mike. Mike apologises, takes responsibility for his inappropriate behaviour and says he'll never do that again. He says he is just very anxious about the meeting, but now realises that there is nothing to worry about. The supervisor, Vince and Mike agree that Vince will return the following day to attend to the initial care plan.



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# Practice task 11

1. List two ways you could encourage a person to be responsible for their actions.

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2. List two strategies you could use to set boundaries.

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**Click to complete Practice task 11**

## Summary

1. All interactions with people must be conducted in an open, reasonable, professional and supportive manner. People should be treated in a way that upholds their rights and dignity.
2. Support workers must be skilled in effective communication to meet needs and expectations, as well as to minimise conflict. Language should be positive and assertive.
3. Communication should take into account the particular cultural values of people and be sensitive to cultural practices.
4. An awareness of cultural differences should contribute to enhancing the quality of service delivery.
5. Support workers must recognise potential conflict situations and develop strategies to defuse them. Understanding the causes of conflict behaviour is the key to dealing with potentially difficult situations.
6. Aggressive behaviour can be dealt with by understanding its causes and then using negotiation to find a solution acceptable to all parties.
7. People can be encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour by first understanding the consequences of unacceptable behaviour, then finding ways to prevent the behaviour from recurring.

# Learning checkpoint 2

## Manage conflict

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in managing conflict.

### Part A

1. Describe two ways you can ensure an intervention is fair, just, humane, equitable and positive.

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2. Describe communication strategies you could use when helping the person displaying behaviours of concern to solve a problem.

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3. Complete the following table, explaining how you can observe each requirement when addressing behaviours of concern.

Requirement	Meeting the requirement
Duty of care	
Individual rights and equality	
Constraint	

Imprisonment	
Abuse	

4. A person refuses to participate in their counselling session. Identify potential causes for this behaviour, and discuss a range of appropriate and effective defusing responses.

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5. Describe three negotiation techniques you could use to divert or minimise aggressive behaviour.

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## Part B

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

### Case study

Marcia supports a group of young people in the juvenile justice system. The group is racially and culturally diverse. During an activity one day, there appears to be conflict between two of the cultural groups – a group of four young Islamic men, and a group of three white Australian men. The conflict begins as a discussion about politics, and quickly escalates to become a physically and verbally abusive conflict.

1. How could Marcia consider cultural sensitivities and adapt style and language to accommodate different cultural values and practices in this case study?

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2. How might the cultural practices and customs of the service users' impact on their behaviour, and how can Marcia accommodate these?

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3. Explain how Marcia can use negotiation to examine cause and effect, and encourage appropriate responsibility and accountability for this behaviour and its outcomes.

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4. Identify the principles of effective communication Marcia should use to manage this situation.

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## Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Challenge behaviours of concern and clearly outline options and opportunities to change with positive encouragement**
- 3B Confirm using clear, calm and objective language, the implications of continuing behaviours of concern**
- 3C Follow procedures to ensure the personal safety of yourself, the individual, colleagues and others**
- 3D Select strategies and responses for their potential to provide role models and examples of confident assertive behaviour**
- 3E Carry out interventions based on an analysis of the situation and organisation policies and procedures**

## Respond to behaviours of concern

Managing behaviours of concern successfully is a valuable skill for support workers. The behaviour must be dealt with promptly to ensure it does not develop into a serious problem. How quickly and effectively the behaviour is defused depends on the way it is dealt with. Behaviour management strategies need to be clear, consistent, fair and non-judgmental.

Strategies range from walking away, to dealing with emergency situations where the worker may need to use some kind of restraint. In all situations, support workers must be positive and supportive and work within organisational policy and procedural guidelines.

# 3A Challenge behaviours of concern and clearly outline options and opportunities to change with positive encouragement

Behaviours of concern can make it hard for the support worker to provide quality care. The best way to manage and assist people to change their behaviour is to try to understand why they are behaving that way.

Behaviour is a sign or symptom of how a person is feeling. It is a form of communication and may be the only way the person can show their feelings or needs. The support worker's role is to identify the behaviour and help people find appropriate ways of behaving. You can try to manage the behaviour yourself, otherwise you must notify your supervisor. However, a supervisor must be notified immediately if the behaviour is a danger to others.

Here are some strategies for how to manage behaviours of concern.

## Tips for managing behaviours of concern

- ▶ Define what is acceptable and what is not.
- ▶ Identify the behaviours of concern.
- ▶ Explain why the behaviour is unacceptable or of concern.
- ▶ Work with the person to outline some options for alternative behaviour.
- ▶ Support the person and provide them with the opportunity to change.
- ▶ Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement.

## Types of behaviours of concern

Behaviours of concern are those that cause harm, either to the person or to others. There are various causes of behaviours of concern, including mental or physical health issues such as anxiety, drug and alcohol substance abuse; autism; issues with medication; boredom; feeling disempowered; or difficulties communicating.

You will usually receive information about expected behaviours, and how to respond. But if you or other staff are in a dangerous situation, or the person you support is at risk in any way, you should engage your supervisor, or emergency services.

Examples of behaviours of concern are outlined below.

## Behaviours of concern

- ▶ Hurting oneself, such as self-harm, hitting or scratching
- ▶ Hurting others, such as biting, punching or kicking someone

- ▶ Aggression towards others, such as raising their voice or swearing
- ▶ Breaking objects, such as household items
- ▶ Refusing to participate
- ▶ Deliberately doing things people don't like, such as undressing
- ▶ Repeating the same activity to cause harm to themselves or others
- ▶ Hiding away from people

## Identify possible cause of behaviour

Behaviours of concern may be caused by a range of events and occurrences. Each person will be affected in different ways. What is distressing to one person may not cause any disturbance for another. This is why it is important to look at individualised support plans, and ensure each plan is tailored to the individual, and their specific needs.

Here is a list of possible causes of behaviours of concern.

### Mental health issues

Psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder may result in aggressive behaviour. The mental illness may be pervasive, but there may be certain triggers that stimulate behaviour. For example, paranoia is one effect of schizophrenia, and may be caused by anxiety or a feeling of discomfort. The person's support plan should outline any mental health issues.

### Medical issues

A person may be in chronic or severe pain, which may cause them to act aggressively towards themselves or another person. If the person is on medication for their pain, monitor signs of discomfort or changes in physical characteristics or mood, which may indicate the medication is ineffective or needs review.

### Substance abuse

Alcohol and other drugs can cause certain activity in the brain that can effect a change in behaviour. If a person has a history of substance abuse, you may be familiar with possible triggers and associated behaviours. The behaviour support plan should indicate what puts a person at risk of substance abuse, and ways to minimise associated behaviours.

### Unfamiliar environment

Changes, such as an unfamiliar environment, can cause a person to feel uncomfortable or distressed. This can trigger behaviour of concern.

### Stress

Stress can have many causes – social discomfort, fear of failure, a new environment and paranoia are just some examples. Stress causes adrenalin to be released, and adrenalin is often associated with aggressive behaviours. It may also cause a person to withdraw and hide. Stress will affect different people in different ways.

## Challenge behaviours of concern

Before a person can change their behaviour, they need to recognise it is a problem. Support workers must be confident and clear on why certain behaviour is not acceptable, and need to explain the reasons for this.

When challenging behaviour of concern, do it in a calm yet assertive manner. Always avoid becoming aggressive, no matter how confrontational or aggressive the other person is, as you need to model the correct behaviour and communication. You may need to allow a person time to calm down before you challenge or discuss their behaviour.



## Communication and behaviours of concern

Communication is essential when working with people effectively and managing behaviours of concern. You need to understand the needs of the people you support, and use effective communication skills to meet these needs. Ineffective communication can cause problems as a person's needs may not be met, and these may lead to behaviours of concern. If a person feels misunderstood, for instance, they may be aggressive because they feel frustrated.

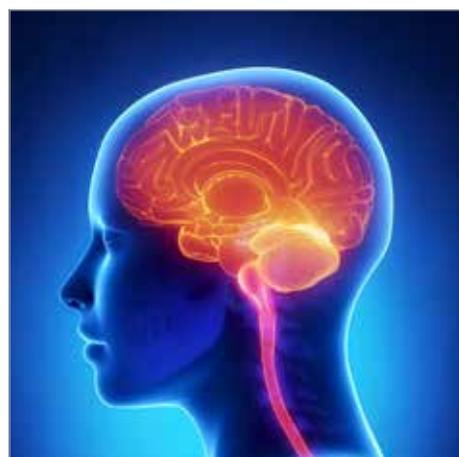
If a person has motivation or engagement issues, they may be related to communication issues. Issues may lead to frustration, or possibly behaviours of concern. Use appropriate communication to understand the underlying cause of low motivation or engagement levels.

Some people you work with will have higher communication needs. For instance, a person may have a language barrier, or their ability to communicate may be impacted by physical impairment.

## Provide a safe environment conducive to positive and adaptive responses

The way you manage situations can encourage the people you support to respond appropriately. Use your communication skills and knowledge to create circumstances where people feel motivated to act in positive ways.

Be mindful that some people with a cognitive impairment (for example, acquired brain injury) or a psychiatric condition may be impulsive as a direct result of their disability or disorder, and may find it difficult to control their behaviour. Similarly, people experiencing pain, fatigue or increased stress levels as a result of a disability may also be less tolerant and less cooperative. Recognise also that people have the right not to change their behaviour, even when they are made aware of the difficulties it causes.



## Create a positive and adaptive environment

A positive response to an event (such as an activity, routine or conversation) is one that adds something to the interaction. A person you support may agree to carry out a task, for instance. If a person refuses to carry out a task, they are having a negative response.

An adaptive response is when the person adapts to changes in the environment or circumstances. Very often, this involves responding constructively to disappointments. For example, if a person is told that the newspaper has been thrown away by accident, her adaptive response may be, 'That's okay. I'll read a magazine instead.'

The features of an environment conducive to positive and adaptive responses, and guidance on setting up and maintaining such an environment, are presented below.

### Features

The environment:

- ▶ is low stress
- ▶ has appropriate levels of stimulus
- ▶ offers individuals reasonable choice and the ability to make their own decisions
- ▶ is safe and predictable
- ▶ rarely uses behaviour management that may be viewed by other people as punitive and manages these rare events calmly
- ▶ has a staff culture that values listening, individual choice, dignity of risk and inclusiveness.

### Maintenance

- ▶ Reinforce values such as how people respect each other.
- ▶ Encourage a problem-solving approach to changes and unforeseen events.
- ▶ Reward and acknowledge adaptive responses
- ▶ Discourage negative responses and encourage positive ones instead.
- ▶ Implement teamwork where all staff share an understanding of the goal for the environment.

## Respond to unacceptable behaviour

The way you approach the person displaying behaviours of concern is vital. You must be aware of the person's feelings when you are speaking to them. Be open and honest and ready to explain the reason why you want the behaviour to cease or change.

Remain calm and professional. Ensure your own safety and the safety of the other people you support as a first priority. If you need to, remove yourself from the situation. Remember, the person cannot be constrained, so removing yourself may be the only ethical solution if the behaviour is very threatening. If the situation is beyond the scope of your role, seek supervision or ring emergency services immediately.

Here are some unacceptable behaviours and possible responses.

### Being physically aggressive towards others

- ▶ 'I'm sorry Ted, but you must not use your stick to hurt other people. I'll just take it and help you back to your room.'

### Socially inappropriate behaviour

- ▶ 'Bill, it is not acceptable to behave in this way. You need to pull up your pants and get ready to go home.'

### Racism

- ▶ 'I am sorry you feel that way Rupert. However, please don't speak that way as it is very offensive.'

### Destroying property

- ▶ 'You need to stop that Mavis. You are wrecking the couch. Let's go for a walk outside.'

### Being violent when refusing to cooperate

- ▶ 'John, stop. You are frightening me. The door is open for you to go into the yard and calm down.'

## Principles of responding to behaviour relating to violence and aggression

Responding to behaviours of concern can be very challenging, and confronting. Ideally, you will receive training to help you manage difficult behaviours. If you are likely to deal with suicide prevention, you may undertake specific training, such as Suicide Assist.

If behaviours of concern escalate to violence, you need to prioritise your own and others' safety. Prevention is preferred. Become familiar with triggers of violence and aggression, and intervene early to minimise escalation. Become familiar with the person's behaviour support plan, talk to the person and others who are familiar with the person about triggers, and learn to manage behaviours within the scope of your practice.

Principles of responding to behaviour related to violence and aggression are summarised below.

### Principles of responding to violence and aggression

- ▶ Remember that the person is a person; treat all people equally and with respect.
- ▶ Remember that violence and aggression is usually the expression of a need; try to identify what this need is.
- ▶ Prioritise the safety of yourself, the person and others in the vicinity; you may need to remove yourself and others from the situation for safety.

- ▶ Do not constrain or restrain the person without a restrictive practice.
- ▶ Be familiar with the behaviour support management plan, and follow behaviour management strategies, according to organisational policies and procedures.
- ▶ Stay calm and professional; being grounded will help the other person de-escalate, and will not add to the stress response.
- ▶ Seek supervisor assistance immediately.
- ▶ Always follow workplace policies and procedures.

## Principles of responding to behaviour relating to suicide

Suicide in Australia is all too common. Eleven per 100,000 deaths in Australia are related to suicide; this is almost seven deaths per day. Males are more vulnerable to completing suicide than females. The risk of suicide is also greater in Indigenous Australian communities.

It is estimated that for every completed suicide, there are 30 attempts. Working in community services, you work with vulnerable people who may be at risk of suicide. It is important to be aware of indications that a person is suicidal, and to be aware of the appropriate responses to suicidal behaviour.



### Indications of suicide

It is important to be aware of indications that a person is suicidal. It can be very difficult to judge in some circumstances; however, here are some signs, which may indicate that a person is having suicidal thoughts.

Indications a person is suicidal may include the following:

- ▶ A person expresses that they no longer want to live.
- ▶ Someone tells you they have nothing to live for, or want to give up.
- ▶ A person is in possession of weapons, or other devices they can use.
- ▶ A person is depressed or experiences manic episodes.
- ▶ A person experiences psychotic episodes.
- ▶ A person has attempted suicide in the past.
- ▶ A serious and complicated event has just occurred in the person's life.
- ▶ A person self-harms.

### Responses to suicidal behaviour

Respond to suicidal cues as soon as possible. If the person mentions they have nothing to live for, it may be a call for help. Clarify that the person is suicidal by asking, 'Are you thinking about suicide?' If they admit they are, you need to enact a suicide intervention, as described here.

A suicide intervention involves:

- ▶ finding out the extent of the person's suicidal intentions
- ▶ finding out how the person plans to commit suicide, and how prepared they are
- ▶ helping the person explore the reasons why they feel suicidal
- ▶ helping the person identify their will to continue living; this may be very difficult, but at the very least, the person is having a conversation with you, and that indicates they may have a small amount of hope
- ▶ entering into a contractual agreement with the person to either seek professional help or informal support from friends and family
- ▶ identifying where weapons or tools for suicide are located, and helping the person remove them
- ▶ entering into a contract that prioritises safety; if necessary the person may sign the contract
- ▶ asking the person to identify what will help keep them safe.

## Outline options and opportunities to change using positive encouragement

An important part of telling someone their behaviour is unacceptable is to offer options and alternatives to the behaviour that you are trying to stop. Giving people a choice gives them a chance to meet their needs and achieve their goals without conflict. The worker can support the person to behave in a socially appropriate and acceptable way. Be creative and think of different ways you can change the person's behaviour while helping them retain their dignity and privacy. The options you offer should give them an incentive to change their behaviour.

Consider the examples below.

### Dealing with inappropriate behaviour

- ▶ If you observe a person urinating onto their bed, gently steer them toward the toilet. This should reinforce the appropriate place to empty their bladder. Explain that they must always use the toilet. Give them a buzzer to use if they need assistance.

### Dealing with aggression

- ▶ A person keeps punching the wall and yelling. Check their medication chart and watch them take their medication. Provide activities to keep the person occupied and distracted. You may suggest a medication chart to hang on their wall to help them know when they should take their tablets.

### Dealing with sexually inappropriate behaviour

- ▶ A person makes sexually suggestive comments to you as you walk past. Immediately explain to the person that the suggestions are totally unacceptable and they make you feel uncomfortable. Offer to sit and speak with the person, if they agree to speak with you in an appropriate way.

### Dealing with unacceptable behaviour

- ▶ You have observed a person spitting onto the carpet. Explain that this is very unhygienic and suggest they stop. If the person says they had a revolting taste in their mouth and can't get up to go to the toilet every five minutes, offer to get them a drink, a box of tissues and a small bucket.

**Example**

**Challenge behaviours of concern and outline options and opportunities to change**

Jess is a support worker for Mrs Johnson, who has been receiving physiotherapy. Mrs Johnson hates doing this but she knows if she wants to improve she has no choice.

Jess is very experienced and has often dealt with people who are reluctant about undertaking an aspect of their care. One morning Mrs Johnson starts the exercise program but feels that she is not improving. She stops midway through her program and refuses to go any further. Jess gently encourages her to continue, but Mrs Johnson becomes angry. She swings her arms at Jess and refuses to cooperate.

Jess firmly says, ‘Mrs Johnson, you need to stop!’ She moves out of the way so she won’t get hurt and tells Mrs Johnson that she understands she is frustrated. Jess explains that her behaviour is unacceptable and she will not put up with any violence. ‘Let’s talk about this. Would you like a cup of tea?’



## Practice task 12

1. List two principles you should follow when responding to violence and aggression.

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2. List two aspects involved with suicide intervention.

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**Click to complete Practice task 12**

## 3B Confirm using clear, calm and objective language, the implications of continuing behaviours of concern

To change behaviours of concern, appropriate behaviour needs to be reinforced. Sometimes the behaviour of concern may be inappropriate but harmless. Repeating instructions to the person gently and calmly may contribute to minimising or stopping the behaviour. However, if the behaviour is potentially harmful to the person or others, firm, decisive action is required.

If you are having trouble making the person understand, think of other ways to help. For example, notify your supervisor, ask for an interpreter or arrange for a health professional to intervene. The main aim is to alert the person to the implications of continuing the behaviour.

Outline implications to a person if their behaviour:

- ▶ is physically dangerous to them, the worker or others – someone may be hurt
- ▶ is making their medical condition or mental health worse, or affecting their psychological wellbeing
- ▶ is causing family members to be concerned
- ▶ continues despite warnings – the service may be suspended or cancelled
- ▶ may isolate them from their peers or family.

### Clear, calm communication

When outlining implications of behaviour, it is important to be clear and calm in your communication. Use simple, short sentences, and repeat important phrases. When a person's behaviour escalates, they may have trouble focussing on what you are saying, but if you remain calm and consistent, it will help the person de-escalate.

Consider the following.

#### Use simple statements

- ▶ Simple, clear statements include, 'Sit down, Peter' or 'Take a breath. That's it. Take a breath.' Although it is important to facilitate choice, when a person's behaviour and emotions have escalated, they often appreciate clear, simple instructions, so they know what to do.

#### Be assertive

- ▶ Be assertive and confident. Being in control of the situation will help the other person take control of themselves and their behaviour.

#### Ground the person

- ▶ Help ground the person by focusing on their physical surrounds. For example, suggest the person describes what they are looking at, or the chair they are sitting in.

### Take personal responsibility

- ▶ If the behaviour is affecting you, take deep breathes, and lower your tone of voice. This will help you stay grounded and calm.

### Address continuing behaviours

- ▶ Allow time and space to address repeated and continual behaviours. This requires helping the person identify possible triggers for behaviour and possible effects. Help the person develop strategies for preventing future behaviour. They should suggest ideas, or choose from options. Ensure the person is in a good mental and emotional state when having this discussion.

## Objective communication

Behaviours of concern often arise because a person feels personally threatened. Remaining objective is important when helping the person address their behaviour. You should focus on what is happening; that is, the behaviour, rather than the person. This is important when addressing a conflict situation.

Remain objective by using phrases such as:

- ▶ 'I can see you are very upset.'
- ▶ 'Biting Sue is making her cry.'
- ▶ 'We cannot proceed with the activity if your behaviour continues.'
- ▶ 'You appear frustrated. Is this correct?'

### Example

#### Confirm using clear, calm and objective language, the implications of continuing behaviours of concern

Susan has schizophrenia, and lives alone in the community. She has been receiving support for the past three years and knows her worker, Josephine, very well. The support Josephine provides includes hygiene assistance and social support such as paying the bills.

Susan has become increasingly demanding over the last few weeks. She has asked Josephine to do extra things for her, such as stay longer than scheduled, take her washing home and she has even asked Josephine to lend her some money. Josephine at first carried out the requests but then refused, as Susan continually asked more of her.

Susan then became verbally aggressive towards Josephine for not doing the extra things. Josephine now needs to manage Susan's aggression and the escalating situation, before addressing the original problem. Josephine realises she should have said something when the behaviour first began.

The next time Susan's behaviour escalates, Josephine calmly and clearly explains that she cannot lend her any money. She acknowledges that Susan appears upset, and says she can understand why. Josephine takes responsibility for her part in the situation, by saying she needed to be clearer about what she can and cannot do in her role. She calmly asks Susan to sit down and take a breath and suggests she will come back later when Susan is more calm, and happy to talk.



## Practice task 13

1. Describe why it is important to use calm and clear communication when addressing behaviours of concern.

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2. What should you focus on in order to provide objective communication?

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**Click to complete Practice task 13**

# 3C Follow procedures to ensure the personal safety of yourself, the individual, colleagues and others

When you start work as a support worker, you are given instructions about working safely in the support environment. The service that employs you will have policies and procedures in place to guide you. These rules provide instructions about what you are to do when situations become unsafe. They are based on work health and safety legislation designed to protect a worker's right to a safe workplace. Ensure you can access this information and know how to use it to support your work practices. Discuss anything you are unsure of with your supervisor. An unsafe workplace or work practices could result in damage to property, injury to a person or injury to a worker.

Some of your responsibilities as a worker are listed below.

As you have a responsibility to act safely, you need to:

- ▶ follow organisational policies and procedures in place to minimise hazards and risks
- ▶ perform tasks in a way that does not place you at risk
- ▶ work within the limitations of your education and experience, and not become involved in a dangerous situation if you are not trained to handle it
- ▶ attend training on health and safety issues
- ▶ use planned strategies when managing behaviours
- ▶ report and record incidents following your workplace's procedures.

## Personal safety

You need to know what you must do to protect your safety if a situation looks as if it may escalate into violence or conflict with the person becoming verbally or physically abusive. Know your organisation's policies and procedures and your level of authority. Do not enter a situation that you feel is unsafe; you have the right to refuse to enter an unsafe environment. If in doubt, ask for support.

Some techniques to ensure safety are outlined below.

### Personal safety techniques

- ▶ Be familiar with the person's care plan so you are aware if there is a possibility they may behave in a dangerous manner.
- ▶ Remove yourself physically from an unsafe situation; this may involve locking yourself in an office and contacting your supervisor or emergency services.
- ▶ Your reaction is crucial, so remain calm and pay attention to your body language; don't clench your fists as the person may see this as threatening.
- ▶ Give the person space, don't crowd them. Move slowly into their field of vision. Move to one side. Don't stand in front of them.

- ▶ Keep your language short, simple and to the point. Speak slowly, clearly and don't give too many instructions that may confuse the person more.
- ▶ Use the person's name during the interaction.
- ▶ Be patient. Give the person plenty of reassurance.
- ▶ Distract the person where possible; give them realistic options such as having a cup of tea, going to the toilet or listening to their favourite music.
- ▶ Leave an escape route; don't allow yourself to be trapped without a way of leaving.
- ▶ Watch what others do to deal with the situation; learn from experienced people about how to act in a serious situation.

## Ensure the safety of the individual and your colleagues

Support workers and service providers also have a duty of care to people they support. You have a responsibility to keep these people and co-workers as safe as possible, in accordance with your role and responsibilities.

Here are some suggested techniques for defusing aggressive behaviour.

### Ways to defuse aggressive behaviour

- 1 Be calm**  
Look reassuringly at the person. Do not show fear or alarm. Do not look stressed or angry
- 2 Speak in an even tone**  
Use effective communication and do not raise your voice.
- 3 Stand back from the person**  
Relax your shoulders and give the person room. Do not take on a threatening posture. Do not make sudden movements or wave your arms about.
- 4 Talk to the person**  
Explain what you would like the person to do in a gentle manner. Do not order the person around.
- 5 Call for assistance**  
If a person has a weapon, call for assistance or remove yourself from the scene. Never try to grab a weapon from a person who is behaving aggressively.
- 6 Appraise the situation**  
Identify if you should continue with a task that is causing aggression. Don't add to the situation by insisting on a person doing something they obviously are not enjoying.
- 7 Ask the person to stop**  
Let the person know their behaviour is inappropriate and is making you uncomfortable. Don't yell at them and make them feel embarrassed.

8

**Only touch the person if you feel it is appropriate**

Do not attempt to physically restrain or restrict their movement or use force unless you have no choice.

9

**Be patient**

Give the person time to speak. Repeat what you would like them to do. Do not argue – it only makes the situation worse. The person may not have the ability to be rational or logical.

10

**Remove the person to a quiet, safe area as soon as possible**

Offer choices or diversional activities to the person. Don't try to control the situation in full view of other people. Don't force the person to do something if they don't want to do.

11

**Call for back-up support**

Don't try to manage alone if the situation is beyond your control or authority. Call your supervisor, the police or the person's family.

## Safety procedures

Duty of care is part of the body of common law. While there is no specific 'Duty of Care' Act, duty of care is part of the broader legal concept of negligence. Another word for negligence is carelessness.

Duty of care means that in any situation where one person's actions may affect another person, there is a legal duty to act in a way that is not careless and that does not cause harm to the other person.

Part of your duty of care is following your organisation's safety procedures, which are written in accordance with WHS requirements. Safety procedures that may relate to your duty of care are described below.

Safety procedures and duty of care include:

- ▶ responding to all physical injuries using first aid as soon as possible
- ▶ remaining calm and professional
- ▶ removing all dangerous equipment
- ▶ seeking supervision
- ▶ administering PRN medication if authorised
- ▶ knowing safety and emergency exits
- ▶ working within your role and limitations
- ▶ respecting the rights and dignity of the people you support.

## Critical incident procedures

Critical incidents are severe or traumatic incidents that may cause harm or sudden death to an individual. They also include threats of death or injury. Some behaviours of concern can escalate and cause a critical incident. This may or may not be predictable. You have a duty of care to perform any interventions necessary to keep the person and others safe, and to report the incident as soon as it occurs. This is called notification.

Follow your organisation's intervention and notification procedures if a critical incident occurs, or is at risk of occurring. A critical incident form should always be made after a person or worker has been involved in an incident that has put them at risk or caused

harm, such as being injured. Workers should provide an accurate account of how this happened and the actions they took to support the person. This ensures that correct follow-up action is taken to meet the needs of the person.

Examples of critical incidents are described below.

### Types of critical incidents

- ▶ A medical emergency such as cardiac arrest, stroke or an acquired brain injury
- ▶ An unusual condition, such as sudden swelling of a limb or loss of movement
- ▶ A threat to harm another person physically
- ▶ Assault, such as physical harm caused with a weapon
- ▶ Abduction
- ▶ Violent events in the community such as a bomb threat or siege
- ▶ A natural disaster such as fires, floods or chemical spills
- ▶ Industrial incidents, such as the loss of a limb

## Respond to critical incidents

You have a duty of care to report if a notifiable injury or incident occurs. Your organisation will have specific procedures about how to respond in the case of such an incident. Generally, the first step is to contact emergency services; however, who you contact will depend on the nature of the incident. If it is a natural or industrial disaster such as a fire or chemical spill, notify the fire department. If the incident is a medical emergency, notify an ambulance.

You should also notify your supervisor. If the supervisor is onsite, they may be able to assist you with the situation. If they are not onsite, they will be able to guide you to take an appropriate response. Ensure that you, other workers and the people you support are safe. You may need to leave the premises if there is an environmental emergency, or may need to practise first aid until emergency services arrive.

## Organisational procedures for responding to critical incidents

Your organisation will have specific procedures for responding to critical incidents. These should be easily accessible; for example, pinned on the wall in an obvious place. Procedures will be step by step, and outline the exact process you should follow. They should also specify who to contact in particular situations, and provide necessary contact details.

Procedures may involve calling emergency services, contacting the supervisor or making a written report to child protection services or Safe Work Australia. The procedures will also provide information about how to complete an internal incident report.



**Example**

**Follow procedures to ensure safety**

Raj supports four younger people with disabilities in a before-school activity. Raj notices that one of the kids, Steph, is not using her arm. When he looks closer, he realises it is looks dislocated, as it is at a strange angle. He asks Steph if it hurts, and she looks away. Raj tries to find out what happened to Steph’s arm by asking gentle, open questions. Steph appears reluctant to talk about it, but finally she says, ‘Dad’. When Raj clarifies whether Steph’s dad was responsible, she nods.



Raj is very concerned about Steph’s safety. He knows Steph’s dad has a history of alcohol abuse. He also knows he has a legal responsibility to report this incident.

Raj calls his supervisor to confirm, and then phones an ambulance. He asks Steph not to use her arm until they arrive. When Raj is sure Steph is getting the medical attention she needs, he calls child protection. He provides all the details, including when he first observed the injury, and exactly what Steph said. They say they will start an inquiry. Raj also reports the incident in the case notes.

## Practice task 14

1. List two safety techniques you could use to ensure your personal safety.

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2. List two ways you should respond to a critical incident.

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**Click to complete Practice task 14**

# 3D Select strategies and responses for their potential to provide role models and examples of confident assertive behaviour

Support workers need a range of strategies to deal with various situations. In order to be prepared for problems and ready to respond, workers should become familiar with organisational policies and procedures, fully understand their role and responsibilities and know who to contact in case of emergency. You also need to have an escape plan and use two workers when situations are potentially risky; know the people you work with and what they respond best to; use assertive communication that is clear, concise, simple and effective; and understand the formal and informal reporting process and requirements.

Remember that in a crisis situation, you are the role model, so your personal behaviour in a crisis is very important. Being confident and assertive will let others know you are in control of the situation.

During or after the crisis, you will need to seek supervisor support to address your emotions and your response at the time of the incident. Many threatening or critical occurrences have the potential to cause trauma. Seeking supervision may address this.

## Select strategies and responses

You need to know the appropriate action to take for specific situations. Some strategies will be specific to the person your support, and will be outlined in their behaviour management support plan. Other strategies will be specific to your organisation, and may apply to all critical incidents, or high-risk incidents. Familiarise yourself with strategies, and know which strategies you can use, within your role.

Here are some specific behaviours of concern and suggestions for strategies to handle them.

### Verbal aggression

- ▶ Calm the situation down as soon as possible. Speak to the person in a calm and reassuring tone.
- ▶ Tell the person what you are going to do and where you are taking them.
- ▶ Give them realistic choices. Use distraction, encouragement or humour where appropriate.
- ▶ Do not criticise, anger or frustrate the person

### Inappropriate sexual behaviour

- ▶ Ask them to stop the behaviour.
- ▶ Pay attention and give praise when the person does something helpful.
- ▶ If possible, avoid paying attention to inappropriate behaviour.
- ▶ Make it part of the routine to spend time doing something positive with the person, such as having a chat over coffee, walking or gardening.

### Self-harm

- ▶ Calm the person down.
- ▶ Isolate them from others. Call for help if the situation is likely to cause harm to others.
- ▶ Minimise opportunities for self-harm by watching the person and removing items that may be used in this behaviour.
- ▶ Reduce stressful situations and environments, perhaps by speaking calmly, playing peaceful music or spending time with the person.

### Destroying property

- ▶ Observe the situation and see if you need to call for help.
- ▶ Approach the person slowly.
- ▶ Speak calmly.
- ▶ Tell them what you want them to do.
- ▶ Make sure you or others are not in any danger

## Explain strategies to the people you support

Whatever strategy is used must be clear and accurately target the person's behaviour. You also need to make sure the person understands the instructions.

The following tips can be applied to any type of behaviour and may help you explain the situation to the person and ensure they understand.

### Tips

- ▶ Ask the person to tell you how they feel.
- ▶ Tell the person you are there to help them.
- ▶ Tell the person what you are going to do and where you are taking them.
- ▶ Give the person realistic choices.
- ▶ Remind the person where they are.
- ▶ Remind the person of things they know and are familiar with.
- ▶ Explain to the person the inappropriate words and actions they have used.

## Respond in a positive and supportive manner

Being positive in a difficult situation is important. Focusing on the negatives may escalate the situation. Ways to be positive and supportive in a difficult situation are explained below.

To remain positive and supportive:

- ▶ focus on and reinforce positive behaviours; for example, 'I can see you seem a bit calmer. That is very good. What else can we do?'
- ▶ allow the person choices; provide a range of alternative behaviours and encourage the person to choose
- ▶ respect the person's dignity; never belittle or patronise the person causing the behaviour
- ▶ create a positive and supportive environment to prevent behaviours of concern; ensure people know they can approach you if they need support
- ▶ calmly and consistently remind the person that you are on their side, and you are not the enemy; in a crisis, they may forget that your role is to support them.

## Respond with problem-solving skills

Workers should always keep in mind that their role is not to 'fix' things for people or make decisions for them but to support people to help themselves and manage their behaviour effectively. Workers should use skills and strategies designed to motivate, support and encourage people.

The focus of such strategies should be to build a person's confidence and their abilities to solve problems. Strategies may include drawing on the support of significant others, empowering people, using a strengths-based approach, helping the person to learn decision-making and problem-solving skills and providing constructive feedback.

## Respond using negotiation

Negotiating to prevent escalation usually involves a discussion about a person's concerns and needs. Once you can identify what the person's needs are, you can begin to negotiate with the person about how these needs can be met or resolved. Knowing what a person's needs are helps you understand what may trigger a potential emergency or crisis situation. Negotiation may not be possible when the person is not in a rational state; for example, they are intoxicated or have the symptoms of acute mental illness.

Once a person is calm enough to discuss the situation, you can engage them in negotiation and mediation regarding the steps they need to take to secure their safety.

In the case of someone with symptoms of acute mental illness, this may involve asking them to consider voluntarily admitting themselves to hospital for treatment rather than having to be taken by the police on an involuntary basis.



## Model assertive behaviour

Be a positive role model for the people you support in difficult and high-risk situations. People you support and co-workers should be treated with dignity and respect. You must always be fair, objective and open-minded and select strategies and responses that are helpful and supportive. Being a positive role model means that you show the person the type of behaviour you expect from them. Being confident and assertive in a crisis helps ground others around you.

Here are some examples of how to model positive assertive behaviour.

### How to model positive assertive behaviour

- ▶ Speak confidently to build trust and be assertive so there is no opportunity for the person to misunderstand you.
- ▶ Be positive at all times and build their self-esteem.
- ▶ Keep your voice at the same level; if the person shouts at you, remain calm and keep speaking in the same tone and volume.
- ▶ Treat the person as you would anyone else, as their behaviour may be beyond their control.
- ▶ Politely tell the person that what they said is inappropriate and continue on with your tasks.
- ▶ Provide positive reinforcement for appropriate interactions.
- ▶ Use humour when appropriate.
- ▶ Never talk down to, or patronise, a person.
- ▶ Give people choices; point out the benefits of what you are suggesting.
- ▶ Listen carefully to what the person tells you; don't assume you know how they feel.

### Example

#### Select strategies and responses to model confident assertive behaviour

Rosa, a support worker, is assisting Georgina who has had a stroke and needs assistance with many tasks. Since her stroke, she has had difficulty communicating with people and has become increasingly moody and angry. In frustration with herself and others she has yelled at workers when they have not understood what she has been trying to say. Giving her time to calm down always seems to work best with Georgina.

One afternoon, Georgina becomes frustrated with a task she is trying to do. She begins yelling at Rosa and tries to hit her when she comes to assist.

Rosa asks Georgina to stop her behaviour and tells her it is not okay to hit out. Rosa speaks calmly, quietly and in a non-threatening manner. Rosa leaves the room because she knows Georgina is safe and this has worked in the past.



## Practice task 15

1. Describe one strategy and response you could use if a person becomes verbally aggressive.

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2. Describe two ways you could respond in a positive and supportive manner.

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3. List two ways that you can model assertive behaviour.

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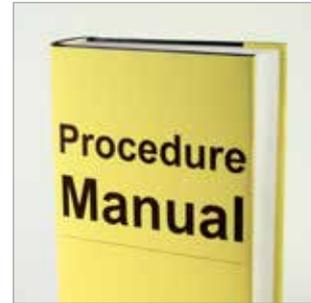
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[Click to complete Practice task 15](#)

# 3E Carry out interventions based on an analysis of the situation and organisation policies and procedures

Your response to a person depends on the individual and the type of behaviour they are displaying. Just as each person is an individual and has different needs, each situation will vary and require specific strategies to manage it. A person's care plan will provide information regarding the type of behaviour to expect and what triggers it. Your organisation's procedures and protocols will outline who to contact if a crisis occurs, how to document the incident and how to follow safety requirements.



## Analyse the situation

Every time the person displays behaviours of concern, the situation should be assessed and analysed in accordance with organisational policies and procedures, as there may be a different cause each time. Investigate the behaviour to implement the best intervention.

All challenging situations are different; however, your organisation's procedures will set out the steps to follow to analyse behaviours of concern so that nothing is missed. Consult with your colleagues when analysing the situation.

Here are some tips for analysing behaviours of concern.

### Tips for analysing behaviours of concern

- ▶ Observe the environment.
- ▶ Identify the cause of the behaviour.
- ▶ Listen to the person.
- ▶ Analyse the context and the situation; who is at risk, how high is the risk, and if the risk be controlled.
- ▶ Look at the situation from all viewpoints.
- ▶ Assess behaviour; who is at risk, how high is the risk, can the risk be controlled.
- ▶ If you have time, complete forms or charts that rate the risk of the behaviour.

## Analyse the risk

You need to be familiar with the processes used in risk analysis and the systems you can use to identify, evaluate, prioritise and document risks. The following information gives a summary of the steps in risk analysis and the types of qualitative scaling systems you can use. You may not have time to complete these steps in a critical situation, but they can be used as a rough guide.

## Risk analysis steps

- 1 Analyse the cause of risk**  
Determine whether the cause of the risk is internal or external. Determine what factors contribute to the cause of the risk. Use existing records and research information to pinpoint causes.
- 2 Determine the potential consequences of the risk**  
A risk's potential consequences can be set in terms of:

  - ▶ high/medium/low
  - ▶ major/moderate/minor.
- 3 Determine the frequency of exposure to the risk**  
How often does this risk occur? Qualitatively, this means making determinations in the context of whether exposure is expected, probable, possible, unexpected or rare.  
  
The organisation's past records should be examined for signs of exposure. Research can determine similar likely circumstances in the future.
- 4 Determine the likelihood of the risk occurring**  
Express the likelihood of occurrence in qualitative terms of:

  - ▶ probable/improbable
  - ▶ possible/nearly impossible
  - ▶ likely/unlikely.
- 5 Categorise risk**  
Combine the qualitative information from the preceding steps. Place the risk into a high/medium/low category, based on its possible consequence and likelihood.
- 6 Prioritise risk**  
Assign the risk a qualitative priority value such as high, medium or low.
- 7 Evaluate risk**  
Based on the organisation's criteria, the risk may be evaluated as negligible/tolerable/acceptable (in that its advantages may balance its disadvantages)/unacceptable/intolerable.
- 8 Document the results of the risk analysis**  
Record all the information gathered and the determinations resulting from each step of the risk analysis. Include data sources and information on existing controls.

## Strategies for interventions

Developing the skills and knowledge to deal with a range of challenges will allow you to make informed and educated decisions that are in the best interests of the person. Being prepared helps you to make the best decision possible, whereas making decisions under pressure often leads to poor outcomes. You must intervene appropriately. For example, the following information compares strategies for a withdrawn and anxious person with those for a hyperactive or aggressive person.

### **Anxious person**

- ▶ Assess the risk of self-harm or suicide.
- ▶ Listen and be non-judgmental.
- ▶ Give reassurance and comfort.
- ▶ Do not criticise the person.
- ▶ Encourage the person to participate in activities or a hobby they enjoy.
- ▶ If the person's behaviour is beyond your expertise and authority, refer them to an appropriate person.

### **Aggressive person**

- ▶ Speak to the person in a calm, firm tone.
- ▶ Do not criticise them.
- ▶ Remove the person from the scene so they do not disturb others and they keep their dignity.
- ▶ Use distraction and humour.
- ▶ Encourage self-help strategies such as getting regular exercise or sleep.
- ▶ If the behaviour is beyond your expertise and authority, refer them to an appropriate person.

## **Statutory requirements related to the treatment of people with special needs and requiring special support**

People you support may have special needs, such as a disability, or being children. When carrying out interventions, it is important to be aware of statutory requirements related to these needs. Below is a description of statutory requirements you should be aware of when carrying out interventions with people who have special needs. Ensure you refer the relevant legislation for your specific state or territory.

### **Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)**

- ▶ All people, regardless of their race, age, ability or gender have basic human rights, such as the right to dignity, respect, security, privacy and freedom. If a person becomes aggressive or uncooperative, it is not ethical or legal to force them to do something, or to restrain them without a restrictive practice.

### **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)**

- ▶ The Disability Discrimination Act ensures that people with disabilities receive the same rights and treatment as those without a disability. It promotes elimination of discrimination and community acceptance. Your intervention cannot involve force or restricting a person against their will.

**Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth)**

- ▶ The Aged Care Act ensures that older people's rights are protected. It requires that all elder abuse or suspected abuse is reported to authorities. Interventions involving older people must respect the person's right to dignity, privacy, security and safety.

**Mental Health Act 2007 (NSW)**

- ▶ This NSW Mental Health Act promotes and protects the rights of people with mental illness, and ensures that mental health is treated with the best possible care. Treat people with mental health issues with respect and dignity, and allow them to make their own decisions as much as possible.

**Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)**

- ▶ Child protection legislation protects the rights of children. If you suspect harm or risk to the child, you have a mandatory obligation to report the harm or risk. The interventions you use should not use restraint or constraint, and should always prioritise the safety of the child.

**Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)**

- ▶ All interventions should be in line with the privacy act. Respect the person's right to privacy of their information when documenting interventions.

**Example****Carry out interventions**

Kathy is a support worker who supports Mai-Lin once a week with her social needs. They often go shopping, attend appointments or pay bills. Mai-Lin can be very demanding and sometimes has unrealistic expectations about what can be done in the time allocated.

Mai-Lin has a dentist's appointment, and while they are waiting in the dental surgery Mai-Lin insisted that Kathy go to the bank, withdraw Mai-Lin's money and go and pay her bills while she sees the dentist. Kathy explains that she is unable to do this, as only Mai-Lin should know and use her personal identification number (PIN) at the ATM. Mai-Lin becomes loud and demanding and starts calling out her PIN.

Kathy performs an on-the-spot analysis of the situation. She determines that neither she, nor Mai-Lin or others in the office are at risk. She also thinks back to Mai-Lin's behaviour support plan, which recommends remaining calm and assertive to defuse a situation. It also recommends that Mai-Lin responds well to negotiation and problem-solving.

Kathy speaks quietly and calmly and acknowledges that Mai-Lin has many things to do. Kathy says she would like to help, but explains again that the bank would not allow her to withdraw money from an account that isn't hers; Mai-Lin must be with her.

Mai-Lin complains that everything takes so long and she never has time to do the things she wants. 'Why don't I do the grocery shopping then and when you have finished with the dentist we can both go to the chemist?' Kathy suggests. 'I'll be sure to get the vegetables you like. Then we'll have time to go to the park for a while.' Mai-Lin agrees and visibly calms down.



# Practice task 16

1. Describe three possible techniques you could use to analyse a situation before deciding which intervention strategy to use.

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2. Plan and describe an intervention using strategies to defuse a situation involving an aggressive person.

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3. Provide a brief explanation of the legislation you could refer to if you need guidance regarding the rights of a person with a mental illness.

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**Click to complete Practice task 16**

## Summary

1. Behaviours of concern can vary in type and severity. Support workers must respond to behaviour as a form of communication – a sign and symptom of how a person is feeling.
2. Changing behaviour takes time; appropriate behaviour therefore needs to be reinforced.
3. Intervene at the first sign of unacceptable behaviour with a calm but firm response. Be alert for signs that behaviour may be worsening.
4. When dealing with behaviour issues, follow workplace guidelines, policies and procedures to ensure everyone's safety. Support workers should have a clear understanding of the boundaries of their role.
5. Minimal physical force to deal with behaviours of concern should be used only as a last resort and after attempts at using effective communication have been exhausted. Whenever force is used it should be reported and fully documented, following appropriate procedures.
6. Know people you support, including their likely behaviour patterns and the triggers for behaviour. Being prepared with accurate, appropriate strategies assists in intervening to deal with behaviours of concern.
7. Workers must be a positive role model for people they support, and treat them with dignity and respect.

# Learning checkpoint 3

## Respond to behaviours of concern

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in responding to behaviours of concern.

### Part A

1. How could you challenge the following behaviours of concern? Clearly outline options and opportunities to change in each field.

Behaviour of concern	Strategy/Option
Hurting oneself	
Aggression towards others	
Deliberately doing something others don't like	
Hiding away from people	

2. Explain how you could confirm using clear, calm and objective language the implications of continuing behaviours of concern.

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3. Identify three procedures you should follow to ensure personal safety of yourself, the individual, colleagues and others.

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4. Identify three key principles of responding to human behaviour relating to violence, aggression and suicide.

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5. Identify three specific statutory requirements related to the treatment of people with special needs and requiring special support.

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## Part B

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

### Case study

Veronica supports people with disabilities in a small respite service. The service supports a new person, Daley, who has autism and schizophrenia. On his first night at the service, Daley's behaviour quickly escalates. He paces around the common room, holding his hands over his ears. He starts hitting the wall and tables. Jane, another person receiving support, appears very distressed by his behaviour. Daley punches a window breaking the glass breaks, which results in his hand and arm being cut and him bleeding profusely. Jane runs crying to her room.

1. Select two strategies and responses Veronica could use for their potential to provide role models and examples of confident assertive behaviour.

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2. Explain how Veronica may carry out interventions based on an analysis of the situation and organisation policies and procedures.

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3. Identify critical incident procedures Veronica should follow.

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## Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 4A Report incidents in a manner that complies with policy, procedures and legislation**

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- 4B Prepare reports and other documentation according to organisation requirements**

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- 4C Maintain currency of documentation by making appropriate updates**

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## Complete reporting requirements

You have a legislative requirement to complete all necessary reports and records following or during the occurrence of a behaviour of concern. Documentation is important as it maintains the accountability of the workers and the organisation. Accuracy and objectivity in reports is essential. Reports can be used as legal evidence, so must accurately reflect an event. Be thorough in your report-making and when storing documents.

# 4A Report incidents in a manner that complies with policy, procedures and legislation

Incidents involving behaviours of concern, and general behaviour, must be reported and discussed with all of those involved. These incidents must be recorded using the relevant form or template. The records demonstrate whether the behaviour has been resolved, remained the same or is worsening. This information becomes part of the person's and the organisation's history.

All support workers have workplace health and safety responsibilities. Communicating with others about risks is part of these responsibilities. If you witness a workplace accident involving another person, you may be required to fill out an accident report form. Recording near misses or incidents also assists in making improvements to workplace safety to minimise hazards or risks.



## Effective reporting

Familiarise yourself with the documents used in your workplace. You need to know what forms to complete; what you should do with them when you have completed them and where they are kept. Poor or incomplete documentation about behaviour management can lead to poor care. For example, there may be an increased risk for workers who are not aware of a behaviour change; workers may misunderstand the care needs; or behaviour may worsen and cause a serious incident. Be sure to follow workplace advice about completing documents objectively, accurately and neatly.

Accurate documentation is important because:

- ▶ the information in reports helps service providers maintain quality care for people who need support
- ▶ supervisors and healthcare professionals can identify appropriate follow-up action
- ▶ the information helps management minimise risks to workers and people you support
- ▶ well-written records help to maintain effective communication between workers.

## Types of reports

There are various types of documentation that the support worker is required to complete. Formal reporting occurs at a designated time and on a particular form. This might include time sheets, incident reports and care notes. Informal reporting occurs when you tell your supervisor what you have seen, heard and done.

Make sure you report in the appropriate way for the different types of documentation, as outlined below.

### Care plans

- ▶ Workers need to be familiar with individual care plans. If you are unsure of anything, ask the supervisor. If an incident occurs, the information recorded on the incident report form will be included in the person's records. The care plan may need to be altered as a consequence of changing behaviour or changing needs.

### Incident reports

- ▶ An incident report is a form that details what happened during an incident of unacceptable or aggressive behaviour or an accident. This form also indicates required follow-up action. It should be completed as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. Workers should check their workplace policy to see who the report needs to be given to. Verbal reporting is also important to keep the supervisor informed.

### Care notes

- ▶ Care notes or case notes are used to document the care and support given to people. They are a legal document and an accurate record of care provided. They also provide a history of what a person has done, what they have experienced and what care they have received. Make sure you complete notes according to organisational policy and procedure.

### Special reports

- ▶ Types of special reports vary between organisations. They might be used for particular types of incidents such as a medication error, serious injury or death. You must be accurate, objective, timely and professional. All details need to be included to ensure the report is clear and correctly reflects the event described.

### Inquiries

- ▶ Your supervisor, management, family members or health professionals may ask for information about a particular person. This advice may include writing an outline of a situation or providing a verbal account. In providing information or advice to people outside the care service, uphold your obligations in relation to privacy and confidentiality.

### Legal reports

- ▶ Records may be needed for legal reasons in a court case, quasi-judicial or formal inquiry. Common examples are WorkCover inquiries into injury, court cases relating to criminal matters. Any completed forms and other documents related to the allegations will be used in the inquiry as part of a review of events leading up to the incident.

## Legal requirements

Confidentiality and record management must meet legislative requirements. Seek advice from your supervisor regarding questions about the protocols surrounding the recording of information.

Often case notes, programming and incident reports include interactions that involve events with others. Confidentiality must be maintained when writing notes or reports recorded in another file or record.

Below is more information about legal requirements.

### Confidentiality

- ▶ People you support are protected by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), which requires all personal information must be protected. Only share information if the person has consented. Make sure all documentation is securely stored, either on a password-protected computer, or locked in a filing cabinet.

### Anti-discrimination

- ▶ When reporting an incident or completing documentation, you must ensure that no person is discriminated against on the basis of age, gender, ability, race, ethnicity or religion. Anti-discrimination requirements align with anti-discrimination legislation, such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).

### Human rights

- ▶ According to the *Human Rights Act 2004* you are required to respect and maintain the rights of all people you support. When completing documentation, ensure information is dignified, accurate and fair.

## Reporting procedures

The protocols of recording information may be inferred from or detailed in organisational policies and procedures. You will receive an induction to reporting procedures when you begin your work with an organisation. If you are unsure of any aspect of reporting, consult your colleagues or supervisor for clarification.

Common reporting procedures are below.

### Reporting procedures

- ▶ Maintain confidentiality.
- ▶ Be accurate, clear and objective.
- ▶ Avoid using jargon.
- ▶ Correctly spell names and terminology.
- ▶ Use appropriate template or form.
- ▶ Complete report in a timely manner.
- ▶ Sign and date record.
- ▶ Seek supervision.
- ▶ Store record securely in appropriate place.

## Record facts objectively

Professional standards require that reports and documents use objective language based on fact and observation. Objective language describes what has been observed or heard, while subjective language may be based on feelings, emotions or opinions. Objectivity is important for accuracy and accountability and ensures individuals are described in ways unaffected by judgments, stereotypes, assumptions or opinion.

Below is a comparison of objective or factual information with subjective information.

### Objective versus subjective language

Objective: Mrs Smith stated, 'I am feeling depressed'.

Subjective: Mrs Smith seemed depressed.

Objective: Alex rose quickly, slammed the door and raised his voice.

Subjective: Alex acted inappropriately.

Objective: When Tam was asked about her relationship with her parents, she avoided the question.

Subjective: Tam didn't want to answer when I asked about her parents.

Objective: Mark uses heroin regularly.

Subjective: Mark is a drug addict.

Objective: Mr Thompson requires assistance with meal preparation.

Subjective: Mr Thompson is unable to cook for himself at home.

## Meet record-keeping requirements

When completing workplace documentation, there are other factors that need to be considered. These considerations are addressed below.

### Meet timing requirements

The nature of a report or document determines the time lines and protocols for their completion. Reports such as funding submissions or statistical reports for the government have externally set time frames. Internal documentation is dictated by urgency, organisational policy and the end use of the information.

Your organisation will have standard operating procedures regarding record-keeping requirements.

### Maintain confidentiality

Case notes, programming and incident reports include interactions that involve events with other people. Confidentiality of people you support and others must be maintained when writing notes or reports recorded in another person's file or records.

### Record details accurately

Accuracy is a critical aspect of recording information. Incorrect spelling of medical terms can cause confusion. Read information back to the individual and/or their advocate to confirm its accuracy. While this may take extra time, clarifying information helps prevent mistakes that may take considerable time and effort to rectify.

### Use forms and control changes

Use the appropriate form or report template. Completed documents generally must not be changed. Errors or alterations should be identified in an additional note or new record, clearly explaining the reason for the change. Computer-based records may not allow changes to saved information.

### Authorise records and obtain authorisation

Records should be signed and dated by the person completing them. Computer-based records may require a log-in to access records that identify the author. For reports, show drafts to another authorised person for feedback; some organisations have a requirement that any outgoing reports are signed off by a manager.

## Report-writing tips

Here are some tips to assist with report writing.

### Tips for writing reports

- ▶ Use the correct format; check if there is a template.
- ▶ Use the organisation's letterhead when appropriate.
- ▶ Follow protocols about using organisational stationery.
- ▶ Use terminology that is appropriate for the intended audience.
- ▶ Ensure all reports are objective, accurate and easy to read.
- ▶ Make sure your reports are sending the message you want to deliver as a professional, and use appropriate language, presentation, grammar and spelling.
- ▶ Show drafts to another authorised person for feedback; some organisations have a requirement that any outgoing reports are signed off by a manager.

**Example****Report incidents in a manner that complies with policy, procedures and legislation**

Josè is visiting Ivan. He notices that Ivan is very agitated and appears to be having strong auditory hallucinations. When Ivan's wife comes into the room, Ivan accuses her of plotting against him. He becomes increasingly aggressive. Josè tries to calm him but Ivan grabs a baseball bat and starts threatening his wife and Josè. He swings the bat randomly smashing furniture and windows.

Josè knows that under state mental health legislation he can call the police and/or a mental health crisis team when there appears to be a risk that a person will harm themselves or others. He rings the crisis team who are able to restrain Ivan and take him to hospital for treatment.

Josè reports the incident as soon as the crisis team leaves and the situation is defused. He uses the incident report form provided by the organisation. He is required to:

- ▶ write the person's name, number and date of birth
- ▶ record witness details
- ▶ record his own name and the date
- ▶ provide details of the incident, including whether it was an injury or not, where injury occurred, time and place injury occurred and what action was taken.

Josè is required to present the report to his supervisor. A copy is made. One is filed in Ivan's personal file, and the other is filed in the incident folder. Josè is asked to report the incident at the next team meeting.

## Practice task 17

1. Describe one piece of legislation documentation you should comply with, and explain how.

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2. Describe two procedures you should follow when completing reports.

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3. Explain why the details in a report must be accurate and how you can ensure accuracy.

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[Click to complete Practice task 17](#)

# 4B Prepare reports and other documentation according to organisation requirements

Reporting and documentation requirements in community care settings are extensive. There are two main purposes for accurate record keeping based on communication and accountability.

These two issues are discussed in more detail below.

## Communication

Records and documentation may identify needs; act as a guide for planned action and provide a reference point to ensure the person is receiving the required services. Information lacking accuracy or currency about a person's status or the issues affecting them may mean incorrect care or disjointed services are provided.

Written records provide evidence that actions have been performed and give an account of procedures that have been followed. Passing on documentation regarding changes in individuals, incident reports or hand-over records may also assist in meeting individual duty-of-care requirements. Documents provide evidence of the actions or lack of due care and compliance with industry standards in the event of an incident, accident or other adverse effect.

## Accountability

Another reason for complying with organisational reporting and recording requirements is to demonstrate accountability to service users, funding bodies, government and other stakeholders. Service providers receiving government funding must complete and maintain records that demonstrate compliance with department expectations and benchmarks. Inaccurate or ineffective reporting and documentation may impact an organisation's professional reputation.

## Follow organisational requirements

It is important to follow organisational requirements when completing documentation. Be familiar with procedures and policies and, if you need clarification, consult your supervisor. Remember that documents are legal documents, so policies must be followed exactly.

What policies and requirements dictate and the requirements they meet are listed below.

What policies dictate	Requirements policies and procedures meet
▶ How information is gathered	▶ Privacy laws
▶ Who receives information about a person's progress	▶ Freedom of information legislation
▶ How the information is stored	▶ Regulations and codes of practice
▶ Who may access the information	▶ Aged care or disability services standards and principles.

## Procedures to follow when completing documentation

Your workplace will have specific procedures for completing documentation. Use the appropriate template or form, complete the documentation digitally or in paper form as advised, and ensure you include all necessary information.

Important aspects to remember when completing documentation are listed below.

Documentation procedures
▶ Accuracy
▶ Objectivity
▶ Currency and timeliness
▶ Ensure information is thorough and complete
▶ Date and sign documents
▶ Seek supervision

## Objective and factual

Professional standards require that reports and documents use objective language based on fact and observation. Objective language describes what has been observed or heard, while subjective language may be based on feelings, emotions or opinions. Objectivity is important for accuracy and accountability and ensures individuals are described in ways unaffected by judgments, stereotypes, assumptions or opinion.

### Example

#### Prepare reports and other documentation according to organisation requirements

Jenna is a support worker for an in-home support service. When she visits a person in their home, she signs a sheet to indicate that care has been provided as per the care plan. If there is information that other workers or the person or their carer may need to know, this is noted in the communication book in the person's home. Urgent information is reported by phone to her supervisor. Once a week, Jenna is paid for an additional hour to go into the office and enter information about the care she has provided into each person's computer record. It is expected that information about each person is never more than one week out of date.



# Practice task 18

Read the following case study, then complete the tasks that follow.

## Case study

Ronald McGregor, aged 60, has Parkinson’s disease and anxiety. When you arrive at his home, Ronald is shaking severely. He becomes very frustrated and drops the kettle he is holding. Boiling water spills on the ground, and splashes on his legs. Ronald has burns on his skin.

You call the ambulance, and practise first aid to keep Ronald safe until the ambulance arrives. While you wait, you need to help calm Ronald down as he is very agitated and distressed. You use grounding techniques, such as deep breathing and mindfulness.

Ronald’s burns are treated, and his care is under review.

1. Report the incident using this incident report form.

Incident report
Name of person:
Name of support worker:
Date of report:
Details of incident:
Time/date of incident:
Injuries incurred:
Action taken:
Supervision:
Additional comments:
Signed: Date:

2. List three report writing tips you should follow in order to complete documentation according to organisational requirements.

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**Click to complete Practice task 18**

# 4C Maintain currency of documentation by making appropriate updates

There are many internal records that need to be kept current and accurate. These include the organisational and operational documents, human resources and health and safety documents. Maintaining records is important for communication and accountability. Out-of-date records need to be updated. If records are older than 8–10 years, you may not need to keep them on file. Check with your state/territory legislation to find out how long records should be maintained.

Examples of workplace documents you may need to maintain are below.

## Work health and safety checklists

- ▶ Work health and safety (WHS) checklists record when safety inspections have been carried out and any actions required to improve or maintain safety. Documentation may be used to record safety checks on a workplace, vehicles or people's homes. It may relate to physical safety, infection control, safety with chemicals, food safety or equipment. You may be required to complete and document safety checks as part of your role.

## Personal files

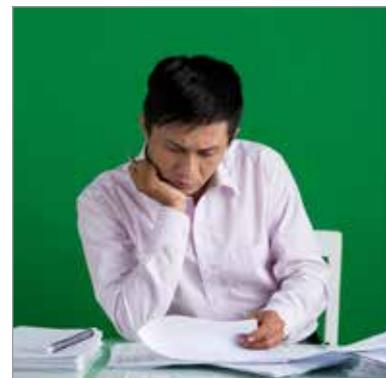
- ▶ Each person you support will have a case file, which includes details of their case, support plan, medical charts and history, medication charts, risk assessment and other assessment results, goals and personal information details, such as next of kin. Personal files need to be maintained for currency and accuracy to ensure effective care provision and current emergency details if required. Ensure files are stored correctly; each person's file should be secure, yet accessible. The most current and relevant information should be facing out in front, so staff can view important documents first. Maintain personal files for 8–10 years for possible subpoena.

## Review and maintain documentation

You may need to review documentation for accuracy and relevance. This may be done at specific times; such as prior to an interview with the person and at the end of their case. It could also be done incrementally, to ensure documentation requirements have been met.

If you detect an issue with documentation, such as a medication error on the support plan, report the error immediately. The person may need an urgent assessment to ensure information meets their needs. Always be vigilant when maintaining documentation.

Don't leave files in public or insecure places. Put files away that you retrieve, and place them in the correct place. If the files are digital, you need to access files using a secure password and username. Never share your details, for privacy reasons. Passwords and usernames should be updated regularly for security reasons. Avoid emailing and faxing personal details unless there is a good reason to. Always double check where information is being sent, so personal information does not fall into the wrong hands.



**Example**

**Maintain currency of documentation by making appropriate updates**

Karen is a support worker in an adult training and support service for people with intellectual disabilities. Before people arrive, she checks the personal care supply cupboard and completes a supplies request for items that need restocking or replacing.



When people arrive, Karen assists them as necessary with personal care tasks such as transfers, toileting and putting on and taking off coats, aprons and shoes. Each task she completes is recorded in the person's progress notes in their file.

In the afternoon, Karen takes a work vehicle to the shops to buy supplies. She records the kilometres and reason for travel in the vehicle logbook and, on her return, completes a petty cash form to record the money she has spent. Karen updates the supplies checklist to record her purchases.

## Practice task 19

1. Why is it important to review documentation in the workplace?

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2. What steps should you take to review and maintain information?

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**Click to complete Practice task 19**

# Summary

1. Documentation can be used to identify and keep a record of needs and the steps taken to meet these needs.
2. The integrity of information is critical to the care and support your organisation provides.
3. There is legislation that affects information collection, use, access and storage, which is reflected in organisation requirements.
4. Protocols require that information contained in reports is objective and factual.
5. When completing documentation, support workers must check the content, accuracy and currency of the information.
6. Information must also be complete. Your workplace will have policies and procedures to ensure all required information is collected.
7. Information must be maintained and reviewed according to organisational procedures.

# Learning checkpoint 4

## Complete reporting requirements

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in completing reporting requirements.

### Part A

1. Identify three policies and pieces of legislation you need to comply with when reporting incidents.

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2. Identify three reporting protocols you should comply with when reporting incidents and accidents.

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3. Why is it important to maintain currency of documentation by making appropriate updates?

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4. Discuss three ways to ensure confidentiality of documents, according to organisational procedures.

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## Part B

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

### Case study

Vivek Singh is an older man being supported by a home care service. Vivek drinks heavily and his behaviour can be abusive. James is a support worker who visits Vivek regularly. When he arrives one afternoon, Vivek is inebriated, and becomes verbally abusive. He tells James to go away. James is concerned to leave Vivek alone, as he is prone to falling when drinking, and may injure himself. James calls his supervisor, who suggests that James stay outside to ensure he and Vivek are safe and, if the behaviour escalates, to call the police. Vivek soon lies down and goes to sleep.

1. Follow your organisation's policies and procedures and any necessary requirements to objectively report the incident as if you were James.

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2. Explain why it is important to be objective and factual when reporting incidents.

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3. How could James maintain this document by making appropriate updates?

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