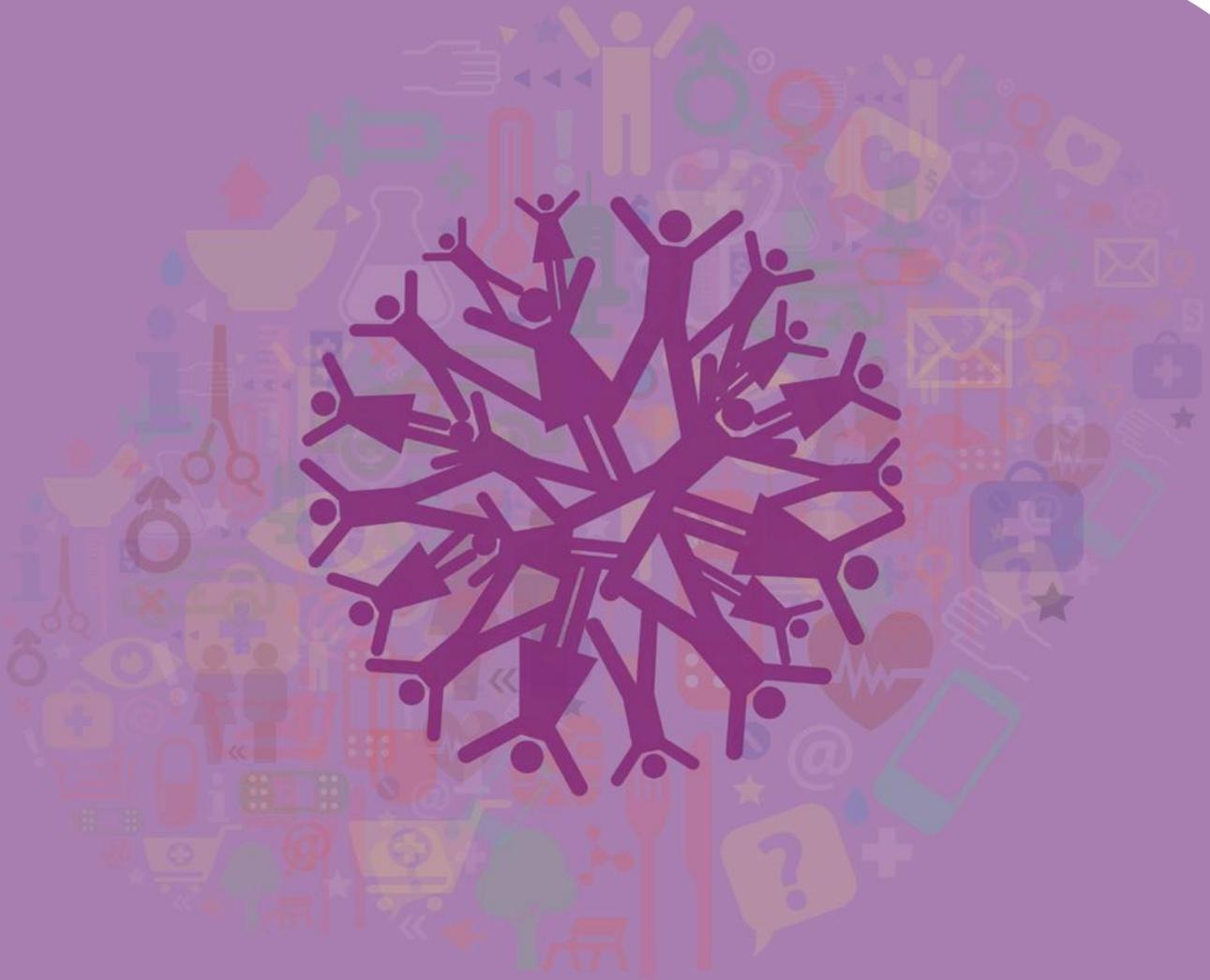


CHCDIS007

Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability

Release 1



Learner guide

CHCDIS007

Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability

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	January 2019	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program

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CHCDIS007 Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability Release 1

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Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

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Postal address (if different):

Phone number:

Fax:

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Mobile:

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCDIS007 Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

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

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

Foundation skills

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

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

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

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

What do you already know?

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

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Demonstrate commitment to empowerment for people with disability	1A Identify changes in the legal, political and social frameworks within which the work is undertaken	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Identify ways society affects the level of impairment experienced by a person with disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Reflect on and acknowledge the impact of personal values and attitudes when working in disability contexts	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Develop and adjust your own approaches to facilitate empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2 Foster human rights	2A Assist the person with disability to understand their rights	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Deliver services that ensure the rights and needs of the person are upheld	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Ensure the cultural needs of the person are identified, accepted and upheld	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Identify, respond to and report breaches of human rights	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Identify and report indications of possible abuse and/or neglect	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Facilitate choice and self-determination	3A Use a person-centred approach that acknowledges the person with disability as their own expert	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Facilitate and discuss person-centred options for action on relevant issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Provide assistance to facilitate the communication of personal goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Provide person-centred support to encourage and empower the person to make their own choices	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3E Assist with strategies to ensure the person is comfortable with decisions that are being made	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3E Assist with accessing advocacy services and other complaint mechanisms	<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 Identify changes in the legal, political and social frameworks within which the work is undertaken**

- 1B Identify ways society affects the level of impairment experienced by a person with a disability**

- 1C Reflect on and acknowledge the impact of personal values and attitudes when working in disability contexts**

- 1D Develop and adjust your own approaches to facilitate empowerment**

Demonstrate commitment to empowerment for people with disability

As support worker, you have the opportunity to significantly improve the lives of the people with disabilities who you support. Many people with a disability have experienced stigma, discrimination and social isolation. Your commitment to facilitating people's empowerment in practical ways and through your own understanding profoundly affects how people view themselves, feel valued and gain access to the supports they need.

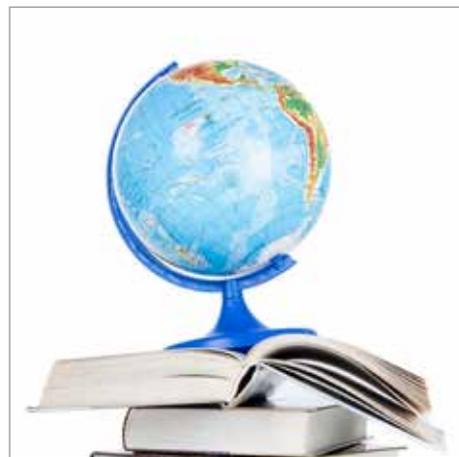
1A Identify changes in the legal, political and social frameworks within which the work is undertaken

The way we understand disability has changed significantly over time, which is reflected in the legal, political and social frameworks that support people with disabilities. You can see this by examining the history and recent developments in disability services, including the differences between:

- ▶ the social versus the medical model of service
- ▶ institutionalised versus the person-centred, self-directed model of support.

Historical perceptions of disability

In the past, people with disabilities were treated very poorly and were shut away from the rest of the world. They were sometimes abused, treated in a childlike manner, and considered a source of shame or of no value. By the 20th century, society viewed people with disabilities as patients who had no power over the decisions that affected their lives. In recent decades, the concept of disability has been shaped by the social model of disability, which contrasts to the medical model.



The way we define and view disability directly affects how people with disabilities are treated and supported. In the past, when disability was perceived as shameful and people with a disability were perceived as broken or incompetent, they had few legal rights and no political or social voice. Today, we view all people as equal and this view is supported by a recognition of people with disabilities' equal legal rights including the right to be free from discrimination. People with disabilities have an equal right to participate politically and to participate as valued members of their communities. Your work can provide valuable support to people to engage socially and politically, if they wish, and to uphold their legal rights as equal, valued and respected citizens.

Social model versus medical service model

Today, how we understand the concept of disability is shifting to greater support people's rights and capabilities. There are two models of understanding disability that influence what is experienced by people who have a disability and that result in very different attitudes, strategies and supports.

The outdated medical model of disability sees disability as a problem, the person as 'abnormal' and the responsibility for their needs resting on individuals. In contrast, the social model supports all people as equal and valued and seeks to change societal barriers to equal participation. The social model of disability is the internationally recognised model upheld by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Here are some of the main differences between the two models.

Social model

- ▶ The social model sees disability as a usual part of human experience and strives to overcome social, physical, attitudinal and communication barriers that prevent people from participating fully. This model focuses on what people can do and places 'the problem' at the societal level, which does not fully include and support access for people with disabilities. It also focuses on solutions and is based on respect and equal rights.

Medical model

- ▶ The medical model sees disability as primarily a health matter that is dealt with by health professionals. Disability is the 'problem' of the individual, who needs to be 'fixed' or cured. Access and participation are the responsibilities of the individual, who should 'fit in' as much as possible. This model also focuses on what people cannot do and perceives disability as tragedy and people as pitiable.

Institutionalised versus person-centred, self-directed model

One of the other significant changes in how people with a disability are supported is the transition from an institutionalised model of treatment to a person-centred, self-directed model of support. In the past, people with disabilities were placed in institutions with limited control over their own lives. Today, we recognise the person as the expert in their own lives and support them to make decisions and direct the supports and care they need.

Here are some of the main differences between the two models.

Institutionalised model

- ▶ The institutionalised model segregates people with disabilities from the wider community and perceives people as incapable of making decisions about their own lives. It treats people as a single group, who need to be controlled and invisible to the wider community, and focuses on the needs of the institution, not the individual and on medical interventions.

Person-centred/self-directed model

- ▶ This model sees people as the experts in their own lives and supports them to make decisions about their own care. It supports equal rights, equal access and participation and recognises each person as an individual, with individual needs, goals and aspirations, and focuses on inclusion, problem-solving and achievement.

Current legal and ethical considerations

The Australian legal system establishes the rights of individuals and makes sure these rights are enforced by law. As a support worker, you need to understand the legal and ethical framework relevant to your work role and support service. Part of your professional obligations involves keeping up-to-date with any changes in relevant laws and ethical standards, which you can do by regularly researching online, contributing to your professional network and joining industry organisations and forums.

There is a wide range of legislation and ethical considerations when working with people with disabilities, including the following.

Legal/ethical considerations for disability support services	
▶ Codes of conduct	▶ Informed consent
▶ Discrimination	▶ Mandatory reporting
▶ Dignity of risk	▶ Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure
▶ Duty of care	▶ Work role boundaries, responsibilities and limitations
▶ Human rights	▶ Work health and safety

Codes of conduct

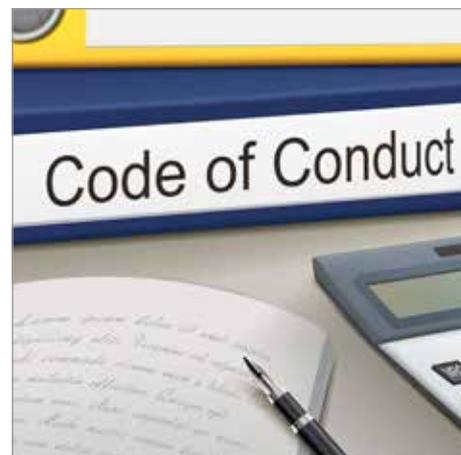
A code of conduct is a set of rules that underpin professional practice and provision of care.

In community services, codes of conduct may include ethical behaviour and underlying principles such as integrity, respect and accountability. These may be called a code of ethical conduct.

A code of conduct is developed and implemented to ensure the legal and ethical provision of care. For example, the *Disability Advocacy Code of Conduct* addresses key principles that underpin advocacy. The Code outlines how advocacy organisations should conduct the service and what attributes advocates must demonstrate. These codes guide you to provide appropriate services and supports.

Read the Disability Advocacy Code of Conduct at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/daru-code-of-conduct>



Discrimination

To 'discriminate' means to treat someone unfairly or favour others. Discrimination is never acceptable behaviour and is against the law. There is an exception in a particular employment situation, however, when a potential employer would be placed under unjustifiable hardship to employ a person with a disability, although the employer is expected to make reasonable adjustments.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) provides a definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. It also prohibits discrimination against people associated with people who have disabilities such as friends, relatives, carers and co-workers. Here is some more information.

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of:

- ▶ employment
- ▶ education
- ▶ access to public premises
- ▶ purchase of house and land
- ▶ provision of goods, services and facilities
- ▶ administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.

Dignity of risk

The rights of people to dignity and choice, upheld in legislation and service standards, also require that duty of care or safety is not used as a reason to limit a person's freedom or personal choice. Your adherence to duty of care and safety must be coupled with the concept of dignity of risk, which means that a person with a disability has the right to make their own choices and to take risks.

The right of people to make their own choices (and to fail, make mistakes and learn from them) upholds their right to self-determination. In practice, this right can sometimes come into conflict with your obligations of duty of care and mandatory reporting. Generally, a person must be allowed to make their own choices, unless it involves the likelihood of significant harm to themselves or others. If you are in any doubt, speak to a supervisor for clarification.



Duty of care

People who provide community support to others in their work have legal obligations that shape their work. You have a duty of care to people with a disability and to yourself and other workers and people in the work environment. Your duty of care is expressed by ensuring that you contribute to providing a safe, healthy and supportive environment, where everyone's rights are upheld and supported. This involves reporting work health and safety (WHS) hazards and risks, ensuring access for all people, and supporting the wellbeing of all the people you support.



Duty of care describes the legal obligation that individuals and services have to anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment or as a result of their actions. A person or organisation must do everything they can to remove or minimise the possible cause of harm.

While aspects of WHS legislation vary between states and territories, there are common legislative requirements and obligations under the duty-of-care principle. Everyone in the community services environment has the responsibility of duty of care for themselves, the people they care for, visitors and each other. Your workplace will have a specific duty-of-care policy that you must use to guide your actions.

You can read an example duty-of-care policy at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/csisa-quality-standards>

Human rights

Underpinning all work activities is the fundamental recognition that all people, including people with disabilities, have basic human rights that need to be upheld. One of the foundation documents that sets out these rights is the 2007 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is not a law, but an international convention that countries voluntarily ratify and use to guide their own laws. Australia was one of the original signatories.

The Convention sets out from the basis that all people are equal and that all people have the same rights, such as the right to equality, safety, privacy and the right to a home and family. In practice, this convention informs all of your workplace procedures and activities.

You can read more about discrimination, and about the rights of people with disabilities at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/uncrpd>

Additionally, you can find an easy-to-read explanation of these rights, designed to give to people with support needs at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/uncrpd-easy-read>

Informed consent

There are ethical and legal reasons for involving a person in your care in decisions about the support services they receive, and to gain consent before any type of care is given. Only a mentally competent person over the age of 18 years can provide legal or valid consent.

Consent must be given voluntarily, be informed (the person must be aware of what they are consenting to and understand the risks involved), and specific to the activity involved. Consent can be given verbally, in writing or it may be implied. In some cases, a person may need the participation of an advocate or guardian to ensure they provide informed consent.

The types of consent you can obtain are described below.

Types of consent

Verbal consent

Verbal consent means the person requests that they want a service or agree to one being implemented.

Written consent

Written consent means the person signs forms requesting or agreeing to the provision of a service.

Implied consent

Implied consent means that consent is assumed in certain circumstances, such as the person's presence at a medical appointment.

Supported consent

Supported consent means the person may need the support of an advocate or guardian to help determine the appropriate service.

Seek a person's agreement before providing services

People receiving support services must be supplied with information about appropriate services to allow them to make an informed choice about their needs. As part of the process of providing support, each individual should be encouraged to identify their own needs and to participate in the support they receive. Including a person in decision-making helps to preserve their dignity and self-esteem.



Use an advocate

When seeking informed consent from a person receiving support, an advocate may be required. An advocate is appointed to help a person make decisions about their care. A person may need an advocate to give informed consent for issues surrounding provision of care. In some instances, you may act in an advocacy role, supporting the rights of people with disabilities.

The roles of different advocates are explained below.

Family and friends

An advocate may be a family member, support staff, a friend or an independent member of the community, who actively negotiates on behalf of the person to ensure their individual or civil rights are upheld. They make sure the person's best interests and preferences are known and taken into consideration. They may attend discussions about the person's support and care and take an active part in decision-making to ensure the person receives the service they want and need. Sometimes, they may need to speak on behalf of the person to service providers and other agencies about any concerns they have.

Care workers

People you provide support to have vulnerabilities. You have a responsibility to work in a way that is empowering but also to protect their rights and advocate on their behalf if necessary. For example, you may need to discuss with your supervisor on behalf of a person in care regarding an aspect of their care that is unsuitable or with which they are unhappy. Advocacy plays an important role in protecting the rights of people in your care. As an advocate, you must always represent the person's point of view and not express your own view of the matter.

Appointed advocates

An advocate may also be assigned to a person by an advocate agency. Having an advocate present when negotiating and developing a service delivery or care plan is important. There are a range of services available that provide advocacy for people and/or their carers.

Guardians

A guardian may be appointed if a person is unable to provide informed consent. A guardian may be appointed by the state or territory. For example, the NSW Guardianship Tribunal protects the rights and interests of people with a decision-making disability by appointing guardians.

Here are some responsibilities of a guardian.

Guardians have a duty to:

- ▶ protect the rights, welfare and best interests of the person receiving support
- ▶ consider the views of the person receiving support
- ▶ preserve and recognise the cultural and linguistic needs of the person
- ▶ protect the person from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporting refers to your legal obligation to report instances of suspected abuse or neglect. Reporting requirements vary between the states and territories, but in most cases, any suspicion that a person is endangered requires the worker to report their concerns to appropriate authorities.



In many workplaces, mandatory reporting requirements are extended and set out in the workplace's reporting policies and procedures. While reporting suspected abuse or neglect of people with support needs may not be legally binding, your workplace will have best practice reporting procedures that you must follow. As

these procedures vary, it is important to know your workplace's definition of abuse and neglect and its procedure for reporting (that is, who to report to and when). If in doubt, speak to your supervisor immediately.

You can read more about mandatory reporting at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/mandatoryreportingrequirements>

Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure

Workers who are providing support to people with disabilities need to be familiar with their legal obligations regarding the privacy of the people they support.

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012* (Cth) set the framework for how information should be collected, disclosed, used and stored. This framework is detailed in the 13 Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) provided by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC). These Principles cover the collection, use, storage and disposal of personal data. Organisations base their privacy policy and confidentiality maintenance procedures and protocols on these Principles.

For more information about the APPs, visit:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/app-guidelines>

People have a right to expect that their personal and health information will remain private and secure. Records about a person (such as a progress note or incident report), are legal documents and must be collected and archived according to your workplace's policies and procedures, which are guided by legislation.

Confidentiality

It is important to maintain the confidentiality of the people you provide support for and their carers and never share their information. Confidentiality relates to written information such as personal details including bank accounts, medications, care plans, family contacts, data collected in a survey, or information on a complaints form. A person's record is highly confidential and you may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement when you are employed.

Maintain confidentiality

When you are employed by an organisation, there is an ethical expectation that you will not reveal any sensitive or confidential business information relating to that organisation. This may include individualised service plans, profit or loss amounts, client databases, employment terms or contracts. If you are responsible for handling any of these, always ensure these have secure access and are not left open for other staff to read.

Here are some of the considerations regarding maintaining the confidentiality of specific documents.

Clarity

When writing confidential documents, write clearly and legibly in black or blue pen. Do not use liquid paper; if you need to correct errors, draw a line through the error and initial it. Always double-check the name of the client or resident you are writing about.

Storage

To maintain privacy and ensure confidentiality, make sure completed documents are filed appropriately, such as in a locked filing cabinet or a password-protected file.

Disclosure of information

There are some instances where you are permitted to disclose information as part of your duties. For example, if the person receiving support is being referred on for medical treatment, the hospital, specialist or doctor needs to know the person's history, allergies and personal details.

Here are some of the common instances when you may be required to disclose information.

Disclosure may be required when:

- ▶ compelled by law; for example, if the person has a reportable disease or at police request
- ▶ a person's interests require disclosure; for example, if they have threatened suicide or harm to another person
- ▶ there is a duty to the public; for example, if there is a public threat or concern
- ▶ the person has consented to the disclosure
- ▶ your organisation has policies and procedures in place regarding confidentiality and privacy.

Work role boundaries, responsibilities and limitations

Ethically, you need to be careful at all times not to blur the distinction between being a professional and a friend, when working with people requiring support. Avoid boundary violations such as lending money, accepting gifts, doing special favours, excessive self-disclosure, social contact, physical contact and romantic involvement. All these actions can confuse a person and are outside the bounds of professional care.

There may be times when you must make a difficult decision based on an ethical, rather than a legal, situation. When working with people on a regular basis and as relationships form, there is the potential for boundaries to blur. It is essential to maintain a professional relationship. As a support worker various types of ethical issues may arise, as described below.

Relationship boundaries

If people and their families develop a strong relationship with you, they may extend invitations to significant social events or celebrations. Maintain a professional relationship at all times and politely decline or discourage such invitations, unless the circumstances for attending is a part of your job role, (that is, to provide transport and assistance for the person to attend an outing).

Accepting gifts

Community services workers may be offered gifts, money or nominated as the beneficiary in a person's will. Accepting gifts, money, a loan or benefiting from a will is strictly prohibited under codes of conduct for employees in the disability industry. Services are required to keep a gift registry; you are obliged to report and record any gifts you receive from a person.

Conflicting priorities

A person in your care may live in circumstances that are a threat to their safety and security. They may refuse suggestions about changing their living arrangements. You have a duty of care to protect the person from harm. However, it is not appropriate for you to enforce lifestyle changes or make demands of people in care.

Conflicting rights and responsibilities

There may be a conflict in rights and responsibilities when a person requiring support may object to you using a lifting machine during transfers as they find it degrading. Although you make every effort to respect the individual wishes of the person, you also have an obligation under WHS legislation to use the lifting machine to protect the health and safety of the person receiving support, yourself and your co-workers.

Work health and safety

It is within the work role boundary of everyone in the workplace to uphold WHS principles. The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) is a national law that sets out responsibilities for health and safety in the workplace. This Act replaces the *existing Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (Cth) and the individual state and territory Acts for health and safety. At the time of publication, not all state and territories have harmonised with the new legislation – Victoria and Western Australia still follow their individual state OHS legislation.

WHS legislation states that employers must take practical and reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of employees at work, and workers have a general duty of care to ensure that they work in a manner that is not harmful to their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others.

WHS legislation is designed to create safe working environments and reduce work-related incidents and illness and their related costs. WHS policies and procedures are based on legislation, regulations, codes of practice and standards.

As a worker, you need to access this information and ensure it is upheld in your service in the following ways.

To make your workplace safer, you should:

- ▶ take reasonable care of your own health and safety at work
- ▶ tell your supervisor about potential hazards or physical problems in the workplace
- ▶ follow any safety guidelines according to your training and instructions
- ▶ take reasonable care not to affect the health and safety of others by your acts or omissions
- ▶ work with your employer in any action taken to make your workplace safer
- ▶ report any injury immediately to a supervisor
- ▶ not wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuse safety equipment provided
- ▶ not wilfully put at risk the health and safety of others.

Example

Identify changes in legal, political and social frameworks

Jennifer is working with Esmeralda, an older person with a disability. Esmeralda spent her early life in an institution and is accustomed to having other people make decisions for her. She is currently involved in several support activities that are not of her preference, but to which she has agreed because her doctor (the 'expert') has told her she should participate in them.

Jennifer spends some time educating Esmeralda about her rights, including her right to make decisions about her care. Jennifer supports Esmeralda's self-esteem by asking her about her interests and the activities that she enjoys. She uses these activities as a way to support Esmeralda to make choices, by encouraging her to participate more fully in social activities with other people in the community. She provides Esmeralda with appropriate information about her rights (according to her communication needs) and realises that Esmeralda will need continued support to improve her confidence in making appropriate decisions.



Practice task 1

1. Name two changes that have occurred in the legal, political or social frameworks for working in the disability support area.

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2. Name one difference between the social and medical models of disability.

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3. What is the preferred alternative to the institutionalised model of service delivery for people with disabilities?

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4. What are five legal and ethical considerations related to working with people with disabilities?

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5. List two ways you can identify changes that may occur in the legal, political and social frameworks of working in disability services.

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[Click to complete Practice task 1](#)

1B Identify ways society affects the level of impairment experienced by a person with a disability

The social model of disability helps us to identify how the wider environment and community contribute to the level of impairment experienced by a person with a disability. Physical barriers, economic barriers, social attitudes and discrimination all make it increasingly challenging for someone with a disability to reach their goals or even to undertake basic daily activities. By addressing these societal issues, we can improve access for all and demonstrate our respect for all members of our community, including people with disabilities. This includes becoming aware and taking responsibility for any unintentional attitudes or actions that can equally affect a person with disabilities.

Social constructs of disability

While we recognise that people with disabilities have levels of impairment, which may be physical or intellectual, these challenges can be compounded by the way society treats people and creates barriers to their full participation. For example, a person with a disability who has been discriminated against may become increasingly isolated and distrustful of others. This may lead to them not receiving the support they are entitled to, and affecting their emotional and mental and physical wellbeing, increasing their level of impairment.

In this way, we can see how society can ‘construct’ disability, and how our actions and attitudes can directly contribute to a person’s health, wellbeing and level of impairment. As a representative of society as a whole, your attitudes and actions can impact how people experience their disability and either improve or worsen their experiences, access and wellbeing.

Society constructs disability by:

- ▶ defining ‘normality’ as a fully functioning, able-bodied person
- ▶ limiting physical access; that is, lack of ramps, elevators etc.
- ▶ setting expectations of ‘normal’ levels of performance, time or participation; that is, at work or study
- ▶ limiting communication access; for example, not providing communication options for people with vision impairment, etc.
- ▶ having a lack of visual representations of people with disabilities in ‘normal’ areas, such as on TV or in advertisements
- ▶ having economic barriers due to lack of suitable employment
- ▶ having social stigma, discrimination and lack of education about disability issues
- ▶ having technological barriers; that is, lack of physical supports, education or equipment to access technology
- ▶ not overcoming cultural and social exclusion
- ▶ having a lack of a political voice.

Example

Identify ways society can affect the level of impairment experienced by a person with disabilities

Marco is visiting Virginia, who has an intellectual disability and some mobility challenges.

‘Hi Virginia! It’s great to see you!’ Marco notices Virginia’s withdrawn face. ‘Are you okay? Your mum says you haven’t gone to day program this week – and you would usually love it!’

Virginia still doesn’t smile and mumbles, ‘Don’t wanna go anymore’.

‘You don’t want to go anymore? Well, that’s your decision, but can you tell me why you don’t want to go? Maybe we can find something better for you?’

Virginia rubs her hands and looks uncomfortable. ‘People are mean.’

‘Who was mean, Virginia?’

‘At the bus stop. Kids made fun of me and knocked over my cane.’

‘That’s awful Virginia, I’m so sorry that happened to you. But when people are mean like that, I think it’s because they’re sad inside and don’t know what they’re talking about. It’s got nothing to do with you at all. I think it would be a real shame if a couple of mean kids stopped you from seeing your friends and getting out, don’t you think?’

Virginia nods, ‘I missed swimming yesterday and my back hurts’.

‘That’s no good. Let’s come up with another option for transport and we’ll come up with a plan of what to do and say if someone is ever mean like that.’



Practice task 2

1. Name two ways that society ‘constructs’ disability.

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2. Name one way that your attitude towards people with disabilities affects how you work with them.

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3. Name one way that not being aware of your own attitudes and actions may affect people with disabilities.

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Click to complete Practice task 2

1C Reflect on and acknowledge the impact of personal values and attitudes when working in disability contexts

You have a responsibility to be aware of your own thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs and biases, as these may affect the way you work and communicate with the people you provide support services to. While you can engage in self-reflection practices, it is often useful to discuss your work practices with a supervisor and to ask for help from more-qualified and experienced staff when confronting challenging issues or requiring more information about specific disabilities. A lack of knowledge and inexperience is often the cause of fear or unsupportive attitudes towards others.



It is important to regularly reflect on your own values and attitudes to ensure you are demonstrating respect and upholding the rights of people with disabilities. By doing so, you can have a significant role in assisting people to participate fully as valued members of the community.

Personal values and attitudes

Your personal values and attitudes may affect the way you conduct yourself with others. Ensure you provide non-judgmental and non-biased care at all times, as all people have a right to equal treatment. Everyone has preferences and biases, but by self-reflecting, we can become aware of attitudes and values that we may not have acknowledged before. It is important to be honest about your beliefs and attitudes, as they may affect how much time you spend supporting one person compared to another, how you communicate with them and the level of support you provide.

In some situations, you may encounter values and attitudes that conflict with your own, such as different religious beliefs or lifestyle choices. While your values and attitudes are important, you need to acknowledge that other people's values and choices are valid too, and support them in their needs. If you feel that your personal values and attitudes may prevent you from being able to support a person's choices or infringe on their rights, seek out a supervisor, trusted colleague or member of your professional network and talk through the conflict with them (being sure to protect the person's privacy).

Work without bias

At all times, supporting the person's rights, health and wellbeing is your goal, so make sure you support them in a non-judgmental and unbiased way.

Here are some tips for working without bias.

Know yourself

Do you really know what you think, believe and value? Are these expressed in your actions? Do any of your actions express different attitudes or beliefs? Regular self-reflection is a vital part of working ethically. You could use a journal, create a checklist that you use to assess your work interactions or any other method that feels comfortable to you. Remember not to judge yourself either – we all have areas where we can improve and being willing to do so is a sign of your professionalism.

Know the person

Make sure that the person's goals, needs, preferences and rights are foremost on your mind. Helping someone meet their goals (even if that goal conflicts with your values) does not mean that you are agreeing with them – you are upholding their right to choose. Consider whether you provide equal services to all the people you work with and assess whether there is any bias involved. Know what each person needs and take pride in your ability to support their goals. Take the time to research and learn more about each person, about their disability and about the issues that affect them.

Know when to ask for help

We all need to talk things through sometimes and knowing when to ask for help is an important aspect of working ethically. If you identify a judgment, bias or challenge in working with a person, speak to your supervisor, trusted colleague or member of your professional network. Gaining another perspective can help you see the situation from another point of view or provide access to different materials, information or resources that could help. While you must uphold people's privacy and confidentiality, you can discuss situations with appropriate people in a way that doesn't identify the person. Be open to helping your colleagues too.

Types of disability

It is important to remember not all disabilities fall neatly into groups. When providing support to a person with a disability, avoid making assumptions. One disability may present very differently in different people, so acknowledge these differences and demonstrate your attention, respect and commitment to each person by treating them as an individual, not as a disability.

Any personal values and attitudes that may conflict with your ability to provide unbiased and non-judgmental services need to be acknowledged and addressed to ensure they do not affect the way that you work with people. Ask for help from supervisors or other appropriate people if you feel conflicted or if you need more information, resources or help. Each person with a disability is different, with different needs, challenges, goals and preferences, so make use of the knowledge and expertise of other staff and experts to help.

You may work with people who have any of the following disabilities.

Types of disability:

- ▶ Acquired brain injury
- ▶ Autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ Cognitive disability
- ▶ Developmental delay
- ▶ Neurological impairment
- ▶ Physical disability
- ▶ Sensory disability, including hearing, vision impairment
- ▶ Speech/language disability

Acquired brain injury

The term acquired brain injury (ABI) is used to describe all types of brain injury that occur after birth. ABI occurs as a result of circumstances such as a stroke, brain tumour, infection or disease, poisoning, alcohol and drug abuse, physical injury or trauma to the body, or near drowning.

A person who has an ABI may experience cognitive changes such as changes in memory, thinking, planning and sequencing skills, walking, vision and hearing, concentration, communication and personality. They may display signs of frustration, agitation, depression or anxiety. Although they may have some communication issues, remember that having an ABI is not the same as an intellectual disability.

There is a wide variation in the way that people with an ABI present and it is important to acknowledge these differences. Getting to know each person individually demonstrates your personal values and attitudes, which should not affect the support that you provide in terms of 'liking' one person over another or making judgments about them. Your personal attitudes can impact a person with an ABI either positively or negatively, so make sure you are patient, knowledgeable and respectful of people's individuality.

You can learn more about ABI at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/abi>

Autism spectrum disorder

Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability characterised by impaired social and communication skills and repetitive behaviour. Asperger's syndrome is a related disorder, which has milder symptoms and is not accompanied by an intellectual deficit. Autism has a strong genetic basis and is four times more common in males. People with autism often like routines, may lack social skills and empathy, and may have one fixed interest.



It is important to note that autism is described as a 'spectrum' because of the huge variations in behaviour and impairment between individuals. It is therefore vital to understand each person's individual needs and characteristics. As always, you need to ensure that your personal values and attitudes do not affect the support you provide to people by judging their capacity to use social skills or by taking outbursts personally, for example.

You can learn more about autism at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/autism-spectrum-fact-sheets>

Cognitive disability

You may need to provide support services for a person with a cognitive disability, which is an umbrella term for any disability that affects the brain, including intellectual disabilities, developmental delay, or any disorder that is defined by changes to cognitive and adaptive development. The challenges and issues experienced by a person with a cognitive disability may be conceptual difficulties such as sequencing tasks, comprehension and skill development; although the presentation will vary widely between individuals depending on the cause of the disability and its results.

Each person with a cognitive disability is an individual with different needs, challenges and goals. Make sure you support all people equally and that your personal values and attitudes remain unbiased. Your personal attitudes can impact a person with a cognitive disability, so remember to be patient, not to judge or make assumptions about a person's capacity and use respectful language (that is, describing someone as 'slow' or 'retarded' is offensive, discriminatory and infringes on people's rights).

Physical disability

Physical disability relates to total or partial loss of a person's body functions. There are many types of physical disabilities that can affect a person. Some physical disabilities exist from birth, while others are acquired through trauma to the body or as a result of contracting a disease. A physical disability may require adaptation requiring the use of aids, such as a cane, wheelchair or an artificial limb.

Treat every person as an individual and acknowledge their differences. Make sure that your personal values and attitudes do not affect the supports that you provide. Having a physical disability does not imply that someone's intellectual capacity is diminished, so it is vital not to make assumptions or treat people in a childlike manner.

The challenges and issues experienced by a person with a physical disability will vary widely between individuals, but may include the following.

Challenges and issues may include:

- ▶ accessibility
- ▶ using devices that require motor skills
- ▶ completing compound actions, such as reaching and pulling
- ▶ maintaining independence.

Developmental delay

Developmental delay is when a physical or intellectual impairment results in a person's expected development being delayed. This affects areas such as acquiring language, mobility, learning, self-help and independent living. Disabilities associated with developmental delay include autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, hearing loss and vision impairment.

Clearly, people with a developmental delay will present very differently and you must acknowledge these differences and treat each person on an individual basis, ensuring that your personal values and attitudes do not affect your service provision. People with a developmental delay are not less intelligent, they may simply process information differently. It is vital not to make assumptions, judge a person's capacity or use discriminatory language.

You can learn more about developmental delay at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/developmental-delay>



Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability is a term used to describe a permanent condition of significantly lower-than-average intellectual ability. People with an intellectual disability may have difficulties with thought processes, learning, communicating, remembering information and using it appropriately, making judgments, and problem-solving. They may also have limitations with communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, leisure and work.

An intellectual disability may be caused by the following factors or conditions.

An intellectual disability may be caused by:

- ▶ a brain injury
- ▶ infection
- ▶ growth or nutrition problems
- ▶ abnormalities of chromosomes and genes
- ▶ drug misuse
- ▶ excessive alcohol intake during pregnancy.

Intellectual disabilities may be mild or severe, so it is important to acknowledge the differences between people and treat them on a case-by-case basis. Providing equal, unbiased and non-judgmental support is your goal, which means that your personal values and attitudes do not affect your work activities. Each person's capacity should be valued and respected and the focus should be placed on their strengths.

You can learn more about intellectual disability at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/intellectual-disability-fact-sheet>

Neurological impairment

Neurological impairments are a group of disorders related to the central nervous system. They may affect motor skills, speech, vision, muscle actions and learning ability or any combination of these. The most common forms of neurological impairment include cerebral palsy, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis (MS) and Tourette syndrome.

Neurological impairments vary enormously and each person should be supported as an individual, acknowledging their differences, needs and goals. Your personal values and attitudes should not affect the level of care and support that you provide each person. Each person's capacity and individuality should be respected and valued. Be patient and do not make assumptions about people or treat them differently based on their level of disability.



You can learn more about the different types of neurological impairment at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/brain-disorders>

Sensory disability

Sensory disabilities include impairments of hearing and vision, smell, taste, touch or spatial awareness.

A hearing impairment is the loss of hearing in one or both ears, and can be caused by a wide range of biological or environmental factors. Impairment may be ranked as mild, moderate, moderately severe, severe or profound. Profoundly deaf people may use sign language to communicate, while other people may use hearing aids or rely on lip-reading.

Blind, vision (or visually) impaired or having low vision are terms that may be used to describe a person who experiences difficulty seeing. A person may be born with reduced vision or it may be acquired through eye disease, health conditions or damage to the eye. Vision impairment can also occur if the brain does not process visual information correctly.

People with a sensory disability will present very differently and you must acknowledge these differences. Keep your personal values and attitudes aside and support each person with equal, unbiased and non-judgmental care. Do not make assumptions about people's level of capacity and support their capabilities and strengths.

You can learn more about sensory disabilities at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/sensory-disability-types>

Speech/language disability

A speech or language disability may involve any kind of impairment in a person's ability to communicate, in speaking, writing, reading, language use or social communication. Some communication disabilities may involve physical challenges including trauma or injury to the brain or vocal cords, while others may be related to trauma or developmental delay.

Every person with a speech, language or communication disability is an individual and will present differently to others. Acknowledging these differences means getting to know each person, their needs, goals and preferences. This forms part of your commitment to working ethically, including ensuring that your personal values and attitudes do not affect the support you provide each person. A speech or language disability does not indicate any intellectual impairment, so it is important not to judge a person's capacity or make assumptions about their needs.



You can learn more about speech, language and communication impairments at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/communication-impairment-australia>

Example

Reflect on personal values and attitudes and acknowledge the potential impact

Brian has had a long week and is not looking forward to his last meeting of the day, a visit with Jacob, who has cognitive impairments. On the drive to Jacob's house, all Brian can think about is his frustration in communicating with Jacob, who needs everything to be repeated over and over again and who spends a lot of time complaining. Jacob has no physical disabilities, compared to the person Brian has been working with that morning, who requires multiple physical supports and who Brian finds inspiring.



As he drives, Brian realises that he has not been treating Jacob fairly, that he has been viewing the other person as 'more disabled' without realising it. Brian acknowledges his bias in not wanting to spend time with Jacob and commits to learning more about Jacob's impairment and being more patient with his needs. He realises that a lot of Jacob's complaining may be the result of not feeling heard or feeling rushed. Brian also decides to make an appointment with his supervisor to discuss alternative methods of working with Jacob and how to communicate better with him.

Practice task 3

1. Name two ways that you can reflect on your own personal values and attitudes in working with people with disabilities.

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2. Name one way that your personal values and attitudes can affect how you work with people with disabilities.

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3. Name two situations when it is appropriate to seek support from more-experienced and qualified staff.

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4. Name five types of disability that you may encounter in your support work.

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Click to complete Practice task 3

1D Develop and adjust your own approaches to facilitate empowerment

Your work in supporting people with disabilities can have a profound effect on their lives. One of the most effective ways to do so is to develop specific approaches to facilitate the empowerment of each person. By developing and adjusting your approaches to working with each person in a manner that supports their empowerment, you have the opportunity to support people to meet and exceed their goals and to be valued as respected members of the community.

Some of the approaches that you can use to facilitate people's empowerment include the following

Approaches include the following:

- ▶ Rights-based approaches
- ▶ Person-centred practice
- ▶ Self-advocacy
- ▶ Active support
- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Social justice and the importance of knowing and respecting each person as an individual
- ▶ Strengths-based approaches

Provide quality care

Your commitment to providing quality care underpins all of your work activities. Quality care is targeted for each individual and results in positive change in the person's life.

Quality care is based on the principles of empowerment, of approaches that are rights-based, person-centred, strengths-based and uphold principles of social justice, self-advocacy and active support. Quality care relies on active listening to get to know each person as an individual, and demonstrating respect for their individual choices, needs and goals. It is vital to get to know each person individually and to provide them with the care that meets and respects their needs, choices and goals.

By developing your own approaches to all your work activities with these principles in mind, and adjusting them to suit each individual, you are contributing to providing best-practice, quality care that supports the individuality, human rights and valued contributions of all people.



Empowerment

As a professional in the community services sector, you will work using an empowerment approach when providing support. Empowerment refers to a state where people take control of their own lives, where they make their own decisions and set their own goals.

Many people in receipt of support services are vulnerable because of their care needs and the myths and stereotyping that occurs. Information, resources and support should be provided to assist people to build capacity, gain confidence and take control of their lives. People with disabilities have the same needs for safety, comfort, connection and happiness as everyone else, and your demonstration of respect and valuing them as individuals can help support their self-esteem and help them reach new goals.

Here are some basic tips to encourage anyone to become more empowered.

We can support a person's empowerment by:

- ▶ demonstrating respect and valuing difference and diversity and honouring a person's individual experience
- ▶ expressing appreciation, praise and admiration appropriately
- ▶ focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses
- ▶ acknowledging progress and achievement
- ▶ facilitating individual goals; what is important for one person may not be for another
- ▶ encouraging people to look for new options and to try new experiences
- ▶ facilitating community involvement and working collaboratively towards shared goals
- ▶ supporting, not directing; offer your help, suggestions and assistance but let the person take the lead in their own lives.

Rights-based approaches

As services evolve to provide support to people with support needs, the models of service delivery they use continue to develop to support people's rights and quality of life. The rights-based approach was initiated in the disability sector in the late 1970s and was based on the work done around social role valorisation (SRV) or normalisation.

The rights-based approach focuses on people being able to access and enjoy the same rights as other people in the community. This is a basic principle of social justice and underpins all your work activities.

Here are some examples of how this applies when providing support services.

Rights in practice includes:

- ▶ providing opportunities for people to participate in elections; that is, assistance getting to a voting booth or using communication aids
- ▶ ensuring the person has the right to develop relationships and express their sexuality
- ▶ ensuring the person has access to the community; that is, fulfilling their language and communication needs, etc.
- ▶ ensuring they are free from discrimination; for example, by creating strong, supportive environments, or educating the public etc.

Person-centred practice

Person-centred practice is a service model that places the person at the centre of their own care. The service responds to the whole person and focuses on a social model of care rather than a medical model of care. A social model of care considers all factors that affect or influence a person's life (social, psychological, physical, cognitive, cultural etc.); a medical model focuses on the problem or illness.

Person-centred practice philosophy embraces a process that sees the person making decisions about their own care needs, which forms part of their human rights. Person-centred practice relies on person-centred planning. This is where the person, or in instances where the person cannot make sound judgments, their advocate, family and/or primary carer, state what they want their plans to focus on. The plans are driven by the person's goals and aspirations. For example, the person can choose what service they want, the time the service is given to them and when and how long they receive the service.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy refers to the way people act in their own best interests, how they speak up for themselves, make decisions about their care and express their individual goals and preferences. As a support worker with people with disabilities, you will work to extend and develop people's self-advocacy skills as a primary tool for their empowerment.

People with disabilities may not be confident self-advocates as a result of previous discrimination or stigma, difficulty communicating or thinking strategically, a lack of awareness of their own rights or a lack of confidence, among many other reasons. A vital component of your job is helping people meet any challenges they face in becoming successful, confident self-advocates.

Here are some ways you can help people self-advocate.

Education and training

- ▶ Make sure people know their rights and understand that they are the experts in their own lives. Provide them with appropriate information, materials and training, if required. For example, some people may benefit from assertiveness training or even informal practise in speaking up for themselves.

Aids and supports

- ▶ Make sure people have access to all the aids and supports they need to communicate effectively and to support their decision-making. This may include interpreters, physical aids, communication aids, and the presence of a carer, family member or advocate for support during appointments, etc.

Strategise and plan

- ▶ Skills in planning and strategising are particularly useful in developing self-advocacy. For example, many people are not confident speaking up for themselves in medical appointments or other situations involving authority figures. You could help the person by role-playing the situation beforehand and forming a strategy that will support the person.

Active support

The active support model is used in the disability sector as a way to provide assistance that focuses on ensuring people are engaged and willing to participate in their own support. Active support is opposed to the old idea of doing everything for a person. It is about achieving positive results by promoting participation and involvement.

This model is used to plan and provide support for people with intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injury, physical disability or age-related loss of ability and disabilities.



Active listening

As a support worker, you must learn to listen not just with your ears but also with your eyes. Remember, people with disabilities have a long history of not being heard. To hear what they are saying, you need to put your own opinions aside and see things through their eyes. Your willingness to really listen demonstrates respect and will be highly valued by people.

Here are effective elements of active listening.

Tips for active listening:

- ▶ Face the person who is speaking.
- ▶ Observe their body language.
- ▶ Be patient: don't interrupt the person while they are speaking.
- ▶ Don't finish the other person's sentences.
- ▶ Don't assume that you know what the other person is going to say.
- ▶ Repeat things back to clarify what you have heard.
- ▶ Ask the person to repeat or rephrase what they have said if you do not understand.
- ▶ Nod, smile and show encouragement.

Social justice

A commitment to providing quality care is underpinned by the fundamentals of social justice, which means that everyone has the right to participate fully in society and to be respected and supported as a valued contributor to society. People with disabilities have been marginalised and excluded in the past and your work directly helps to support equal treatment and respect for all.

One of the important principles of social justice that affects your work is the right to be treated and respected as an individual. Often, people with disabilities feel as though they are viewed only in relation to their disability, not as a whole, complete and worthwhile human being. Acknowledging people's differences, their diversity, their choices, goals and preferences demonstrates that you respect and value all people as fundamentally equal. Working individually is the only way to provide targeted, efficient, effective quality care to people in need.

Here are the basic principles of social justice that underpin quality care.

Social justice principles

Equity – everyone has the right to be treated equally

Access – everyone has the right to access the same facilities, opportunities and activities

Participation – everyone has the right to participate in society, their community, politically and in employment

Rights – everyone has the same rights, including being free from discrimination, abuse or neglect

Strengths-based approach

A strengths-based approach to community services practice identifies and uses a person's inherent strengths and interests to assist with growth and empowerment.

Strengths based practice focuses on the potential, strengths and capabilities of a person, and engages people with respect and dignity with the aim of enhancing the person's strengths.

Strategies to promote strengths-based-practice include:

- ▶ engaging the person in capacity building
- ▶ empowering the person
- ▶ recognising the person's strengths
- ▶ affirming the potential in the person.

Example

Develop and adjust your own approaches to facilitate empowerment

Janine is working with Marla, who has an acquired brain injury that affects her ability to communicate and to think clearly, particularly under stress. While meeting to discuss Marla’s service plan, Janine finds Marla worried.

Marla is to attend a large family gathering in a few weeks, which she has found challenging in the past. Many of her relatives do not understand her ABI and tend to offer suggestions about how to ‘fix what’s wrong with her’. Marla finds these situations very overwhelming and ends up agreeing to treatments and activities that she doesn’t want to do, simply to make her relatives leave her alone.

Janine and Marla spend time role-playing the situation, making each other laugh doing impressions of well-meaning, but bossy people. Together, they come up with a set of phrases that Marla can use to advocate for herself, and to deflect attention onto what she is achieving. In adjusting her approach to the meeting, Janine is able to support Marla’s self-advocacy and to adapt her service plan to include ways to extend Marla’s empowerment with her family. This has also proven to be a good opportunity for Marla to recognise and appreciate what she has achieved so she can communicate her achievements to her family.



Practice task 4

1. Name two ways you can develop and adjust your own work approaches to facilitate a person’s empowerment.

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2. What are three of the underlying principles of quality care?

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3. What is one technique you can use to ensure you are treating everyone individually?

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Click to complete Practice task 4

Summary

1. How we define disability affects how people with disabilities are treated legally, politically and socially.
2. It is part of your professional development to keep up to date with all changes to legal and ethical issues involved in disability support work. We support people with a disability as experts in their own lives and as the primary decision-makers in their own care.
3. Society 'constructs' disability through the lack of access, through stigma and discrimination. By expressing respect and upholding people's rights, workers contribute to people's health, wellbeing and full participation as valued members of society.
4. Reflect on your own attitudes and values about disability as this can affect how you work with people requiring support. Always ask for help from more-experienced and qualified staff if you encounter challenging situations or need more information about specific disabilities.
5. Use all your work activities as opportunities to empower people with disabilities. This is a fundamental aspect of providing quality care and profoundly affects people's lives in a positive way.

Learning checkpoint 1

Demonstrate commitment to empowerment for people with disability

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in demonstrating commitment to empowerment for people with disability.

1. Give an example of a change in the legal, political and social frameworks of disability support work that has occurred in recent decades.

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2. What are two ways that society can affect the level of impairment experienced by a person with a disability?

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3. Why is it important to reflect on your personal values and attitudes regarding disability?

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4. What overarching goal of your work affects how you develop and adjust your own approaches to working with people with disabilities?

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5. List two developments or changes in the way disability support services are provided today, as opposed to in the past.

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6. How might your attitudes affect the people with disabilities you work with?

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7. What are the main types of disability you may encounter as a support worker?

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8. What are the legal and ethical considerations involved in working with people with disabilities?

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9. Identify the principles underpinning the provision of quality care and explain two sets of them.

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10. What is one way to identify changes in the legal, political and social frameworks of your work environment?

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Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A Assist the person with disability to understand their rights

2B Deliver services that ensure the rights and needs of the person are upheld

2C Ensure the cultural needs of the person are identified, accepted and upheld

2D Identify, respond to and report breaches of human rights

2E Identify and report indications of possible abuse and/or neglect

Foster human rights

As a support worker, you have the opportunity and responsibility to foster the basic human rights of the people with disabilities you work with. When you fulfil this fundamental responsibility you improve the lives of people with disabilities.

2A Assist the person with disability to understand their rights

A person's rights do not change because they have a disability. People with disabilities are entitled to expect their rights to be upheld and to expect help if their rights are withheld. As a community services worker, you must ensure that the people receiving support have their rights upheld and maintained and that they understand their rights. The rights of a person with a disability are outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



The National Standards for Disability Services promote a person-centred approach and is based on human rights and quality management. There are six National Standards that apply to disability service providers that outline how a commitment to upholding and facilitating human rights is integrated into all disability support work.

You can read more about these Standards at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/nsds>

Uphold human rights

The term 'human rights' demands accountability and action, translating human needs into a matter of rights with dignity. Human rights include the right to life, freedom of speech, choice, and freedom from discrimination. The rights of people with support needs are protected by international human rights charters.

The Australian Human Rights Commission oversees Australian legislation on human rights and anti-discrimination, social justice and privacy. The Commission also works with international governments and organisations to ensure Australia meets its obligations to comply with international agreements or charters. It is the responsibility of a person providing support to ensure the rights of the people in their care are upheld.

Here is an explanation of human rights and how they can be implemented in a service.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an international document that sets out the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. It declares that human rights are universal and to be enjoyed by all people, regardless of where they live. The Declaration includes civil and political rights, such as the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to social security, health and education.

Human rights framework

At the federal level, the Australian Government has an obligation under international law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. The government must ensure that people can enjoy their human rights and refrain from action that would breach people's human rights. A human rights framework can inform and guide domestic policy in complex areas such as equality and discrimination.

Human rights approach

A human rights approach in community services requires that legislation, regulations, monitoring and reporting systems are developed with a focus on positive measures to achieve substantive equality.

Human rights instruments

Major international human rights instruments that expand on the rights in the Declaration and are relevant to community services work include:

- ▶ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – promoting and encouraging universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion
- ▶ the Convention on the Rights of the Child – entitling childhood to special care and assistance by recognising the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family
- ▶ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (which Australia has agreed to be bound to), which reaffirms the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the need for persons with disabilities to be guaranteed their full enjoyment without discrimination.

Understand human rights

It is important for everyone to understand their rights as a fundamental way to improve their sense of self-worth and wellbeing and to ensure that they can uphold their own rights and interests. Many people with disabilities experience marginalisation, exclusion, stigma and stereotyping and may not have a full understanding of the rights to which they are entitled as equal, valued and respected human beings. People need to understand their rights to be able to know when they are being discriminated against, abused or excluded and to know when to complain or ask for help.



You can find an easy-to-read explanation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities designed specifically for people with an intellectual disability at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/uncrpd-easy-read>

Assist people to understand their rights

As a support worker, you can assist people to understand their rights in many ways, as described here.

Assist people to understand their rights by:

- ▶ providing information that meets the person's individual needs, such as their cultural and language needs (that is, translated materials)
- ▶ providing information that meets the person's communication and access needs; for example, material suited to the person's capacities and ability to access such as material in large print
- ▶ providing several types of information; for example, discussing verbally plus providing written materials or links to a website where the person can follow up
- ▶ using active listening to ensure that the person understands
- ▶ providing plenty of time for people to talk, ask questions and repeat what they have heard
- ▶ providing examples of what breaches of rights look like
- ▶ providing people with clear instructions of what to do if they feel that their rights are being breached
- ▶ modelling your own respect and support of their human rights
- ▶ facilitating access to disability advocacy groups and organisations, etc.

Example

Assist people to understand their rights

Marco is visiting Virginia, who has an intellectual disability and mobility challenges. Last week, Virginia experienced some verbal abuse from some kids at her bus stop who also knocked over the cane she uses to walk.

Virginia is happy today, as being picked up from to go swimming is working well for her.

Marco wants to follow up the verbal abuse incident. He checks with Virginia. She nods.

'I know it made you feel bad, what they said and did. But you know that they were wrong? People have the right to have different opinions but no-one has the right to physically hurt you or to make you feel bad. Did you know that there are laws that say everyone is equal and has the right to be treated just the same?'

Virginia shakes her head. 'I know that they were being mean.'

'Yes, they were. And that's not okay. But they were doing more than that, they were acting illegally.'

Virginia looks brighter, 'Really! So they're in trouble?'

Marco nods. 'I'd like to talk to you and your mum about things we can do to ensure that it doesn't happen again, ok? First, I'm going to give you this – it tells you about these laws.' Marco hands Virginia a special pamphlet explaining the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in easy-to-read, illustrated format, suitable to her needs.



Practice task 5

1. Name one reason why people with disabilities need to understand their rights.

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2. Name two ways that you can help people with disabilities to understand their rights.

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3. Name two considerations involved in providing information about human rights to people in an individualised manner.

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Click to complete Practice task 5

2B Deliver services that ensure the rights and needs of the person are upheld

As a fundamental principle of providing quality care to people with disabilities, person-centredness underpins all aspects of service delivery. One of the ways that we keep the person at the centre of service delivery is by ensuring that their rights are upheld and that their individual needs are the basis of all the services we provide.



Strategies to ensure rights are upheld

All your work activities need to uphold people's rights. There are many strategies that you can employ, including following your workplace's policies and procedures. These are developed to ensure best practice service delivery that upholds people's rights. However, you can contribute to safeguarding people's rights and improve how they are upheld by ensuring that you work in an individualised manner, where each person's needs, choices and preferences are known, respected and facilitated.

Strategies to uphold people's rights

- ▶ Make sure you are fully informed about people's rights (that is, regularly research as part of your professional development).
- ▶ Make sure each person is properly informed and understands their rights.
- ▶ Communicate and provide information in a way that supports the person's individual needs; for example, language/cultural needs, communication/access needs, etc.
- ▶ Make sure the person knows that they have a right to complain and that they know how to complain and where to do so.
- ▶ Make sure the person has access to disability advocacy groups if they wish.
- ▶ Regularly self-reflect on each person's services to ensure they are upholding the person's rights.
- ▶ Take action where necessary to advocate for people's rights more widely; for example, join an advocacy group or contribute to best practice discussions in professional networks, etc.

Support that meets individualised needs

Working in a person-centred manner places each person's individual needs at the centre of the services you provide. It is each person's right to have their individual needs, choices and goals respected and facilitated. Each person has the right to be heard, to direct their own care and to make complaints. Each person's individual needs should be at the centre of your service delivery to ensure that you facilitate targeted, efficient, individual supports.

You can ensure that people's needs are upheld by following your workplace's policies and procedures, which are designed with best-practice, individualised care in mind. However, you can also utilise a number of strategies to ensure that your work practices are based on a good understanding of people's individual needs.

Here are some strategies you can use.

Strategies to uphold people's individual needs

- ▶ Ask questions and get to know each person as an individual.
- ▶ Check with the person regularly to see if their needs or goals have changed.
- ▶ Work collaboratively to ensure individual needs are met efficiently.
- ▶ Respect the person as the expert in their own lives.
- ▶ Ask for feedback from the person, their family/carers, supervisors etc. as appropriate.

Example

Deliver services that ensure the rights and needs of the person are upheld

Louise is following her workplace's policies and procedures for regularly reviewing each person's supports to ensure they are meeting their individual needs. She knows that it is each person's right to be at the centre of all decision-making about their care and that they are the experts in their own lives.

She makes an appointment to see each person and their close family member, carer or advocate as appropriate for each person. She arranges an interpreter, sees to people's individual access and communication needs and familiarises herself with each person's service plan before each meeting.

Although Louise has some ideas about future directions for each person's services, she knows that each individual needs to make choices and set their own goals. She looks forward to meeting with each person and getting to know how their needs and goals may have changed and how she can facilitate their needs and rights in the most efficient and targeted way.



Practice task 6

1. Name one way that person-centredness upholds people's rights and needs.

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2. Name one strategy you can use to uphold people's rights.

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3. Name one strategy you can use to uphold people's needs.

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[Click to complete Practice task 6](#)

2C Ensure the cultural needs of the person are identified, accepted and upheld

A fundamental respect for each person's culture as an expression of their individual experience and the richness of diversity underpins effective service provision. By actively ensuring that people's cultural needs are identified, accepted and upheld, you demonstrate respect, create rapport and uphold people's fundamental human rights. At times, upholding people's cultural needs requires you to adjust your work practices, drawing on your ability to innovate and create new approaches.



Cultural needs

Before you can support a person's cultural needs, you need to be able to identify them. Everyone has cultural behaviours, needs and expressions that deserve respect, but not everyone in a given culture is the same or has the same needs. All people need to be treated individually and respected for their own choices and needs.

Some people's cultural groups are easy to identify by the way they dress or the language they speak as a first language. However, never assume that you 'know' a person's culture – always ask the person if they would like to talk about their background and if they are comfortable communicating in English.

Identify cultural needs

Part of getting to know each person as an individual involves identifying their cultural needs, which you should always do by politely asking them about their culture and by expressing respect and interest.

Here are some important considerations when identifying cultural needs.

Know your community

- ▶ Get to know a little about each of the main cultural groups in your community so you have a basic level of awareness about people's cultural needs before meeting them. For example, learning basic greetings in community languages and understanding gender role differences in other cultures are good ways to express your understanding of and respect for other people's culture.

Ask and listen

- ▶ When appropriate, ask people about their culture and their cultural needs. Ask 'Is it ok if I ...' and 'Is there anything else I can do to make you more comfortable?' to identify people's needs. Listen to what people say and watch their body language.

Respect differences

- ▶ You do not have to agree with all aspects of a person's culture to respect them. Expressing respect is a vital way to establish rapport and ensure that people's needs are met. Also recognise that different people within the same cultural group may have different needs. For example, some people within a particular cultural may practice a certain religion, while others may not.

Be willing to learn

- ▶ Be open and willing to learn. You are not expected to be an expert on every possible culture, but to demonstrate an awareness that people may have different cultural needs (that is, different forms of address, food choices, dress choices, language differences, etc.) and be willing to learn more about them. Ask people to tell you how to say hello in their language, ask about their holidays; showing a genuine interest demonstrates respect.

Accept and uphold cultural needs

At times, you may encounter cultural needs and beliefs that are very different from your own. In our rich, multicultural society, these differences may be enlightening and fascinating, but you may find some confronting. However, everyone has the right to have their cultural needs respected and upheld, which does not mean that you necessarily have to agree with them. For example, in some cultures, there are very strict gender roles that affect how people act and communicate, which you may find very different. While you may not agree with them, you can still respect their differences and uphold their cultural needs as much as possible in the context of your work.

All people have more in common than differences, so look for common ground between people from cultures different from your own. Supporting people with disabilities to meet their goals and to feel respected, valued members of the community is a goal that everyone can share.

Here are some ways you can uphold people's cultural needs.

Upholding cultural needs

Language and forms of address – give people access to interpreters and use appropriate forms of address. Using a few words of greeting in someone's first language demonstrates respect

Food and dress – respect cultural food restrictions (for example, not eating pork, fasting during Ramadan, etc.) or specific forms of clothing (for example, head covering, etc.)

Holidays and sense of time – respect and accommodate people's holidays and recognise that some cultures have a different sense of time and may not value strict punctuality

Gender roles – respect people's beliefs about gender roles and accommodate them by seeking a same-sex care worker for personal care, etc.

Religious beliefs – respect everyone's religious beliefs and support people to participate in their religion if they choose to do so

Example

Identify, accept and uphold cultural needs

Fleur is working with Andrew, an Indigenous man who has strong ties to his Aboriginal community. She provides support and assistance, including driving Andrew to his various appointments. Andrew’s aunt has just passed away, and Fleur knows a little about Andrew’s cultural needs, including that his community has specific ways of grieving and ways of referring to deceased persons. To ensure she respects Andrew’s needs and avoids causing offence, Fleur undertakes some research to learn more about his culture. She researches online and contacts a local community Elder, who explains the funeral processes involved and explains that their community does not use the name of deceased person or show any photos of them.



Thanking the Elder for this information, Fleur contacts Andrew to find out what he needs at this time, without using his aunt’s name. Andrew tells her that he needs to attend several ceremonies and family gatherings, some of which would be inappropriate for her to attend, as they are for men only. Fleur arranges with a co-worker to assist in these instances and supports Andrew in his grief in a culturally appropriate way. She is grateful for what she’s learnt and uses this to adapt her work practices in other areas.

Practice task 7

1. Name one way to identify a person’s cultural needs.

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2. In adjusting your work approaches to uphold people’s cultural needs, what skills does this allow you to develop?

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3. Name one way to uphold a person’s cultural needs.

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Click to complete Practice task 7

2D Identify, respond to and report breaches of human rights

As a support worker, you work as an advocate for people with support needs to foster and uphold their human rights as equal, valued, respected citizens. People who have a disability are likely to have encountered a violation of their human rights at some stage during their life and national and international research finds them overrepresented as victims of abuse and neglect. As many people with a disability are vulnerable, you need to actively identify any breaches of these rights and respond to them appropriately, such as reporting them according to your organisation's specific policies and procedures.

Identify breaches of human rights

Everyone has the same legal, fundamental human rights, but many people in marginalised populations (such as people with disabilities) are disproportionately subject to these rights being violated or breached. People may experience breaches such as a lack of access to economic or social supports or resources; neglect and abuse and may be unable to access complaints procedures or may even be unaware of them. The lack of access to complaint mechanisms is itself a breach of human rights.

It is vital to identify any breaches of human rights (or even potential breaches) and act on them immediately to ensure that each person's rights are upheld and that they have the supports, resources and access they need to live and thrive. In many cases, people may not be aware of their rights and may not have access to advocacy groups, so you can help educate and connect people with disabilities.

You can learn more about human rights violations that people with a disability encounter at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/pwda-human-rights-violations>

Respond appropriately to breaches of human rights

Everyone is equal before the law and everyone is entitled to equal access to justice procedures, including complaints mechanisms, criminal and legal mechanisms and support services. While some breaches of human rights may legally require you to report them (such as mandatory reporting requirements for suspected child abuse), others are your ethical responsibility to respond to appropriately.

Your workplace's policies and procedures will guide you here, providing information about the appropriate responses to specific procedures, who to report to and which mechanisms to use. While all breaches need to be responded to, some are considered more serious and require a different level of response. For example, a case of suspected abuse of a person must be reported immediately to your supervisor verbally, as well as in a written report and may require immediate removal of the person from their environment and contact with the police and legal services. In contrast, if you identify that someone's right to participate in political life is being breached by lack of access to a voting booth, the appropriate response would be to educate the person about their rights, arrange suitable transport and contact the Electoral Commission to make a report.

A range of responses

Here are some of the ways you can respond to human rights breaches, according to specific circumstances and always following your workplace's policies and procedures.

Education

Some breaches arise from ignorance. Make sure you are educated about human rights, violations and response procedures. Facilitate the education of people with a disability regarding their rights. In some cases, family members, carers and community members may also need to be supported to learn about human rights.

Access

One of the main ways that human rights breaches continue is through the lack of access for people to make complaints or to seek appropriate legal redress. Support people's access needs, whether language, cultural, physical or other access needs, as appropriate.

Information

Accurate, timely, up-to-date information is vital to ensure that breaches are addressed appropriately and to ensure that people's rights are upheld. Make sure you have access to appropriate information through your workplace's policies and procedures and provide people with the information they need and in a format that supports them.

Resources

A lack of resources, whether economically, physically or socially contribute to breaches continuing. If a person needs transport to attend meetings or funding to access specialist legal services, make sure you facilitate their access to appropriate resources.

Support

Vulnerable people or people who have experienced a breach of their human rights may be confused, in shock or in need of emotional, psychological or medical support. Aside from helping people to gain any professional support they need, your personal support of their rights, choices and goals is vitally important to foster their self-esteem and wellbeing.

Connection

People with disabilities still remain marginalised in our society and more work needs to be done to facilitate the creation of a strong political voice for their needs. You can support this by fostering connections between people with disabilities by providing access and information about advocacy groups and by contributing yourself to expanding and upholding people's rights and political voice.

Report breaches of human rights

Any human rights breaches that you identify or that are reported to you by a person with a disability must be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. All relevant legislation, regulations and codes of conduct must be followed when identifying, responding to and reporting human rights breaches. Your organisation's policies and procedures will contain specific information about what to report, when, to whom and how to follow up. Make sure you are familiar with these policies and procedures and can access them easily.



Reporting breaches involves your ability to make appropriate decisions to uphold people's rights and manage complex contingencies and situations while the reporting is occurring. Your supervisor and colleagues are always available to support you, so make sure you ask for help when you need it.

Procedures for reporting breaches of human rights

While your workplace's reporting requirements and procedures will vary depending on the severity of the breach, there are several components in common, as outlined here.

Reporting breaches involves:

- ▶ following your workplace's specific policies and procedures
- ▶ informing your supervisor immediately
- ▶ making a formal report (in many cases, this will be required legally, so ensure that reports are accurate, complete and stored securely)
- ▶ recording accurate information; for example, when the breach occurred, who was involved etc.
- ▶ gaining appropriate assistance; for example, from legal experts, advocacy groups, government departments, etc.
- ▶ following up; don't just rely on your organisation's procedures, make sure you follow up and ensure appropriate action is taken
- ▶ taking action; make sure the report leads to concrete action for the person and make changes to organisational policy or your work practices if required
- ▶ supporting the person; your support, compassion and practical assistance is vital to fostering the person's rights and maintaining their wellbeing.

Example

Identify breaches of human rights and respond and report accordingly

Adya is working with Colleen, who has complex communication needs arising from visual and hearing impairments, as well as a physical disability. Colleen is very independent and enjoys getting out on her own using her electronic wheelchair. She uses community request cards when using public transport and meeting friends in her local community.

After arriving home very late one day, Colleen’s sister, who is her primary carer, contacts Adya to report that Colleen was refused entry into a new cafe and that she was understandably distressed.

Adya responds to the breach in a way that respects Colleen’s needs and rights and her organisation’s policies and procedures, as described below.

Adya’s response was to:

- ▶ check with Colleen’s sister that Colleen is currently okay and home and does not require any immediate assistance
- ▶ express her support of Colleen and her sister, letting them know that they’ve done the right thing informing her
- ▶ ask if they would like to make a formal complaint
- ▶ suggest that the three of them meet in a few days to discuss their options for responses
- ▶ make a formal record of the call, including all the specific information that Colleen and her sister provided
- ▶ record the name of the cafe, time of the incident and the name and contact details of the friend who witnessed the incident
- ▶ take the information to her supervisor immediately and discuss options for Colleen to address the breach of her rights
- ▶ plan for both to meet Colleen and her sister to provide them with appropriate information
- ▶ make a formal report using their workplace policies and procedures.

Practice task 8

1. Name two breaches of human rights that you may identify when working with people with disabilities.

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2. What are two sources of information that you need to follow to respond and report human rights breaches appropriately?

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3. Name two skills you will need while reporting human rights breaches.

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Click to complete Practice task 8

2E Identify and report indications of possible abuse and/or neglect

As part of your duty of care towards the people you support, you have a responsibility to identify indications of possible abuse or neglect. Many people are vulnerable because of their disability or are unaware of their rights. As such, you need to be aware of the common indications that someone may be experiencing abuse or neglect and you need to know how to report these indications following your workplaces procedures.



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.

Here are further examples and indicators of neglect.

Examples of neglect

- ▶ Not providing enough food or drinks
- ▶ Not spending time with the person and/or leaving them alone for prolonged periods
- ▶ Inadequate provision of clothing or personal items
- ▶ Unwillingness to allow for adequate care e.g. dental
- ▶ Inappropriate use of medication e.g. 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 and poor skin quality
- ▶ Person appears unkempt; for example, same clothing worn every day of the week, loose or baggy clothing, clothing in poor state, hair unwashed, untrimmed nails or 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, stressed and resentful; not realising the impact their behaviour is having. This is still abuse and needs to be reported so the person and the carer can get the support they need.

Here are other causes of abuse.

Causes of abuse

- ▶ The primary carer may be stressed at home or at work.
- ▶ Someone may be in debt and steal from the person with a disability.
- ▶ There is conflict, arguments and fights within the family.
- ▶ The person is isolated and the abuser thinks no-one will discover the abuse.
- ▶ A carer may be using drugs or drinking too much alcohol to be able to care for the person properly.

Indicators of abuse

The importance of observation and getting to know the person you are supporting assists 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 a person is being abused.

If in doubt, speak to your supervisor and always report in accordance with your organisation's policies and procedures.

Here are some common indicators of abuse.

Behaviour changes

- ▶ A person may become withdrawn, depressed or anxious or display signs of being scared. They become quite ambivalent or non-responsive.
- ▶ You may find the person is becoming disorientated or making contradictory statements. This can also be a sign of a range of illnesses, so should be thoroughly assessed before making an assumption that the person is being abused.

Carer signs

- ▶ 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 support needs.

General indicators

- ▶ Changes in the person's health such as unexplained weight loss, bed sores, poor colouration, sunken eyes and cheeks.
- ▶ Unexplained or continual injuries.
- ▶ Personal care needs of the person 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.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person causes injury or trauma to another person. This can occur through physical acts of violence and indicators may include pain or injuries. Physical acts of violence include hitting, slapping, punching, pulling hair, spitting at the person, pinching, biting, twisting their arm or wrist, physical restraint such as being tied to a bed or chair, confinement to a room and using objects to hurt the person (throwing rocks, using a strap). Physical abuse needs to be reported immediately following your workplace's policies and procedures for reporting abuse.

Here are some of the common indicators of physical abuse.

Indicators of physical abuse can include:

- ▶ bruises, cuts, scabs and scars
- ▶ abrasions, welts, rashes
- ▶ swelling, burn blisters
- ▶ agitation, cowering
- ▶ tenderness, pain, restricted movement
- ▶ broken or healing bones
- ▶ drowsiness
- ▶ unexplained weight loss, unexplained hair loss.

Sexual abuse

Unwanted or uninvited sexual contact, language or exploitative behaviour by another person is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse includes sexual harassment, indecent assault and rape. This abuse needs to be reported immediately following your workplace's policies and procedures for reporting abuse.

Here are examples of indicators of sexual abuse.

Indicators of sexual abuse

- ▶ Withdrawal, disturbed sleep patterns, nightmares, agitation, fear
- ▶ Unexplained difficulty sitting or walking
- ▶ Bruising of genital areas or thighs
- ▶ Unexplained sexually transmitted diseases
- ▶ Unexplained bleeding from genital areas

Financial abuse

Financial abuse refers to when a person's money, property or assets are being mishandled or taken and used without their consent. It can also include situations where a person with impaired cognitive abilities is coerced to provide their consent without truly understanding what this means. This abuse needs to be reported immediately following your workplace's policies and procedures for reporting abuse.

Financial abuse includes:

- ▶ embezzlement, fraud, forgery and stealing
- ▶ withholding money from the person or not paying accounts or debt
- ▶ forcing a person to change their will
- ▶ the enduring power of attorney refusing to provide enough money for the person to live
- ▶ the enduring power of attorney refusing to provide money for the person to buy clothes or other necessary items
- ▶ forcing a person to hand over their money or assets.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Psychological/emotional abuse refers to ongoing intimidating behaviour that is designed to disempower a person. Psychological and emotional abuse can be both verbal and nonverbal. It can include belittling, threats and withdrawal of affection. This and any form of abuse can have prolonged effects on the health and wellbeing of a person. This abuse needs to be reported immediately according to your workplace's policies and procedures.

Here are some indicators of psychological and emotional abuse.

Sense of hopelessness

A sense of hopelessness is a general sense of fear or apathy about the future, and can present as fearfulness, helplessness, withdrawal, reluctance to make decisions, etc.

Behaviour swings

Someone who is being emotionally or psychologically abused experiences a huge amount of stress, which may present as anxiety, anger, moodiness, agitation, depression, passivity, low self-esteem, etc.

Tiredness

High stress levels may present as hypervigilance, sleep deprivation, insomnia, confusion, etc.

Unexplained weight loss or gain

A change in appetite, an increased intake of alcohol etc. can be an indicator of abuse.

Social abuse

Social abuse occurs when another person behaves in ways to reduce or restrict a person's social contact with others. It can include stopping a person from being involved in activities with others and/or preventing contact with friends and family, resulting in social isolation. Everyone has the right to connect with others and to seek and maintain social and community connections. This abuse needs to be reported immediately, following your workplace's policies and procedures for reporting abuse. A person experiencing social abuse may become passive, withdrawn or sad. This may be in combination with missing appointments or regularly not being available to take calls, etc.



Report abuse and neglect

Abuse is illegal and you have a duty of care to report any form of abuse as soon as you become aware of it. You should report situations of abuse directly to your supervisor. If your supervisor is not available, go directly to your manager.

When you suspect abuse has occurred or you have witnessed abuse, you must act quickly to ensure action is taken immediately to prevent further abuse from happening or escalating. When reporting, be guided by your organisation's policies and procedures. Besides verbally reporting to your supervisor, you will be required to document the incident in a report. This information may be recorded in case, continuation or file notes and in an incident report form.

An objective report includes:

- ▶ what you saw; for example, the size, location and type of bruising
- ▶ when you saw it; for example, the date, time and day
- ▶ what you did; for example, removed the person from the situation
- ▶ what you said; for example, explained to the person that you had to report the incident
- ▶ the person's response; for example, what they said or did
- ▶ follow-up action to be taken.

Example

Identify and report indications of possible abuse and/or neglect

Francine knocks on Matt's door. She is his support worker and is concerned that she has not been able to reach Matt or his carer by phone for several days. Matt is very reliant on his brother, who he lives with, for his basic needs and also for mobility, as he is unable to walk by himself.



Francine looks around and notices piled up mail sticking out of the letterbox. She knocks again and hears a faint voice coming from inside.

'Matt! Is that you? It's Francine! We have an appointment this afternoon, it's Friday. Are you ok, Matt? I'd really like to just say hello.'

'Nah, I'm okay', comes a faint reply, 'I really can't let you in – I don't have a key'.

Francine is now very concerned. 'What? Where's your brother?'

There's silence for a moment, then, 'Um. I don't know. He said he'd be back on Tuesday'.

Francine immediately gets out her phone. 'Matt, I'm calling the police to open the door and an ambulance to make sure that you're okay. Stay right where you are.'

She immediately calls 000 and requests a police car and an ambulance. She then calls her supervisor, quickly explaining the situation and requesting her to attend the incident and bring appropriate report forms.

'I'm so sorry this happened to you Matt, this is not okay! They police and ambulance are on their way and we will make sure this never happens again.'

Practice task 9

1. Name two common indicators of abuse.

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2. Name two types of abuse or neglect.

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3. What are two types of information that need to be included in any report of abuse or neglect?

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Click to complete Practice task 9

Summary

1. Everyone needs to understand the fundamental human rights that we all share. Discuss these rights with people and provide them with information in a format that meets their needs.
2. Upholding people's rights and individual needs forms part of best practice, person-centred service delivery. Follow your workplace's policies and procedures and use your own strategies to fulfil this goal.
3. Identifying, accepting and upholding people's cultural needs fosters their human rights.
4. Don't make assumptions about people's culture or needs and get to know each person individually. You can uphold people's cultural needs without necessarily agreeing with them.
5. You are required to identify any breaches of human rights that you encounter and respond appropriately, including reporting serious breaches and following your workplace's policies and procedures for reporting.
6. As an advocate, you can ensure people's rights are fostered and empower them to uphold their own rights through education and connection with advocacy groups.
7. Indications of abuse or neglect or possible abuse or neglect of any person with a disability is very serious and must be acted upon immediately, following your workplace's policies and procedures.
8. There are many different types of abuse, some of which can be difficult to identify. Any concerns that you have should be discussed with your supervisor immediately to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the person.

Learning checkpoint 2

Foster human rights

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in fostering human rights.

1. What are two ways that you can assist a person with disability to understand their rights?

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2. What is one way that person-centredness affects the way you deliver services to people with disabilities?

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3. What are two ways to identify, accept or uphold a person's cultural needs?

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4. What are two breaches of human rights that you need to respond to or report?

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5. In reporting indications of possible abuse or neglect, what are two types of reports that you may need to make?

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6. Some of the things we look out for as possible indicators of abuse or neglect may not always be caused by abuse or neglect. What is one of these possible indicators?

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7. What are two skills you may need to help foster people's human rights?

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Use a person-centred approach that acknowledges the person with disability as their own expert**

- 3B Facilitate and discuss person-centred options for action on relevant issues**

- 3C Provide assistance to facilitate the communication of personal goals**

- 3D Provide person-centred support to encourage and empower the person to make their own choices**

- 3E Assist with strategies to ensure the person is comfortable with decisions that are being made**

- 3F Assist with accessing advocacy services and other complaint mechanisms**

Facilitate choice and self-determination

As part of your commitment to fostering the human rights of people with disabilities, your work practice will be based on facilitating people to make choices and to direct their own care. Self-determination is a fundamental human right and your support and respect for people as the expert in their own lives empowers people to make healthy, informed and positive choices.

3A Use person-centred approach that acknowledges the person with disability as their own expert

Person-centred practice is a service model that places the person at the centre of their own care, and relies on person-centred planning. This is where the person, or in instances where the person cannot make sound judgments, their advocate, family and/or primary carer, state what they want their plans to focus on. The plans are driven by the person's goals and aspirations. For example, the person can choose what service they want, the time the service is provided and when and how long they receive the service.



These approaches acknowledge the person as the expert in their own lives and respects people's differences. People with different disabilities and experiences need the ability to make choices about the services they need to support their goals, whether physical supports, educational supports, advocacy supports or resource supports.

Conditions requiring support

Support workers provide assistance to a range of people with a wide variety of conditions that require different supports. At all times, each person is the expert in their own lives and should be provided with appropriate information about their rights and the range of supports available so they can make decisions about the services they want.

It is each person's right to self-determine their care and to make choices, which you can facilitate by having a basic understanding of different types of conditions and disabilities; by accessing and providing a wide range of support options from which people can choose; and by supporting people's individual decisions.

Some conditions people may have that require support are listed below.

Conditions that may require support:

- ▶ Genetic factors
- ▶ Physical trauma
- ▶ Psychological trauma
- ▶ Chronic lifestyle conditions
- ▶ Acquired brain injury

Genetic factors

A main contributing factor to many disabling conditions is a person's genetic inheritance. We all inherit information from our parents that is encoded in our genes – sometimes this information is faulty; combined information from both parents creates faults; or a combination of genetic factors and environmental factors (such as experiences and your physical environment) cause a gene to switch on or off and express as a disabling condition.

Our identification of genetic factors of disease and disability is increasing rapidly, and the options for treating on a genetic level are likely to widen in the future. Genetic factors do or may underlie many disabling conditions, and may contribute to physical, intellectual, psychological and mental health conditions.

Some of the conditions that are known to involve genetic factors include the following.

Genetic factors underlie:

- ▶ cystic fibrosis
- ▶ muscular dystrophy
- ▶ fragile X syndrome
- ▶ spina bifida
- ▶ Down syndrome
- ▶ diabetes
- ▶ multiple sclerosis (MS)
- ▶ Parkinson's disease
- ▶ depression
- ▶ autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- ▶ bipolar disorder
- ▶ cerebral palsy
- ▶ learning disabilities.

Support people who have a genetic condition

Many genetic factors underlie serious and debilitating conditions that currently have no cure, but require management to ensure the optimal health and wellbeing of the person. For example, for a person with a physical disability arising from MS, you can implement person-centred care to facilitate self-determination and choice regarding the person's access to physical supports, health professionals, aids and equipment, and information and training. For a person with depression, you can support them with information to gain professional counselling and treatment and to provide options that encourage physical exercise, social contact and capacity-building.



Physical trauma

Physical trauma can result in disabling conditions in either the short or long term. Physical trauma can occur from accidents (such as car accidents or being in a natural disaster) or arise from abuse or acts of violence (such as child abuse, domestic abuse or being in a war zone). People with physical trauma may have broken bones, brain damage, paralysis, amputation, sensory disability (such as impaired sight or hearing), and may also combine with psychological trauma and effects.

Here are some of the ways you can implement person-centred care to facilitate the self-determination and choices of people with physical trauma.

Provide information

- ▶ People need accurate, up-to-date and relevant information to make informed choices about their care. Information needs to be provided in formats that support people's needs. For example, if someone has a neurological impairment arising from physical trauma that affects their sight, you need to provide information verbally or in audio-enabled formats they can access.

Facilitate services

- ▶ People with physical trauma typically need access to medical professionals and other allied health professionals such as occupational therapists. You can assist people to locate appropriate professionals and to access additional funding or equipment that may be required. For example, if someone has been in a car accident and has broken a limb, you may be able to help them access an equipment bank to hire aids and equipment while they recuperate.

Support people's choices

- ▶ People have the right to make choices about their care and you need to support the choices they make, provided that those choices do not infringe their own human rights or another person's. Providing people with respect and support encourages people's self-determination and wellbeing.

Psychological trauma

Psychological trauma can be disabling, either in the short term or as a chronic condition, and all people who have experienced psychological trauma need to be supported and respected. Psychological trauma occurs as a result of a severe, life-threatening or chronic stressful situation or event, which can contribute to conditions such as depression or cause others such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Psychological trauma may be caused or triggered by domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, acts of violence, accidents or being in a natural disaster, war zone or humanitarian crisis.

Psychological trauma can cause people to be withdrawn, suicidal, engage in self-defeating behaviours and can be life-threatening. Many people who have experienced psychological trauma face additional stigma, as some people still believe mental illness to be the result of weakness, or not a real medical condition. Your compassion and support for people with psychological trauma to seek appropriate treatment and to value themselves as survivors can have a profound impact on their lives.

Person-centred support for people who have experienced psychological trauma

You can facilitate people's self-determination and choice even in simple ways, such as the following.

People who have experienced psychological may need the following:

- ▶ Time to process information
- ▶ Encouragement to discover and try new options
- ▶ Patience, courtesy and respect
- ▶ The ability to withdraw or reschedule if they feel unsafe or are having a bad day
- ▶ The support of others, and to feel part of a community
- ▶ Their choices to be valued and respected, including their privacy and confidentiality
- ▶ More personal space than other people
- ▶ Counselling or medical services
- ▶ A new environment; for example, have a meeting in a park or cafe
- ▶ Not to be told to 'get over it' or 'it wasn't that bad'

Chronic lifestyle conditions

Other disabling conditions occur or are made worse by long-term or chronic lifestyle choices such as smoking, long-term and/or excessive alcohol consumption, drug dependency and obesity. A person's physical health may be affected, such as be the onset of diabetes or renal failure; or their psychological health may be affected, such as psychosis triggered by drug use.

Many chronic lifestyle conditions have other contributing factors. For example, while diabetes may be worsened by obesity or lack of physical activity, there may also be a genetic factor. People who engage in illegal drug-taking may have experienced psychological, physical or sexual abuse of which you may not be aware.

Care must be taken to treat people equally and to refrain from judgment; in reality, we never really know what another person has experienced and all people have the right to be respected.

Support self-determination and choice by:

- ▶ providing appropriate information
- ▶ facilitating access to treatment facilities, medical professionals and resources
- ▶ supporting the person's choice to seek or ignore treatment, even if you do not agree with them
- ▶ supporting family members, carers and friends to gain the support they need.

Acquired brain injury

Acquired brain injury (ABI) refers to any type of brain injury that occurs after birth. It can affect people physically, mentally and emotionally and can cause or contribute to many disabling conditions. People can acquire brain injuries from accidents such as tripping or falling; from car accidents; as a result of an act of violence, such as domestic or child abuse (known as ‘traumatic brain injuries’ or TBI); from medical causes such as lack of oxygen, strokes or tumours; or from prolonged drug or alcohol abuse.

People with an ABI present very differently and all need to be treated as individuals and respected for their differences and choices, as part of person-centred care. For example, one person with an ABI may have difficulty concentrating and require you to communicate in short, clear sentences and provide lots of time for them to respond. Another person with an ABI may have physical challenges and need assistance with transportation and rehabilitation options.

Example

Use a person-centred approach

Malee is supporting Ahok, a young woman who came to Australia as a refugee. Ahok has been previously diagnosed as having PTSD and experiences depression and agoraphobia (fearful of leaving the house). She refuses to see a psychiatrist or to take any form of psychiatric medication.

Respecting Ahok’s decision, Malee works with Ahok to determine what her goals are and to support her decisions. After their initial meeting, where Ahok clearly found it difficult to communicate clearly in English, Malee brings an interpreter to their next appointment. Ahok brightens visibly being able to speak her own language and together, they determine that she wants to improve her English skills and to connect with people from the local Sudanese community.

While Malee would have preferred that Ahok see a psychological professional to treat her PTSD, she respects Ahok’s choices and acknowledges her cultural needs and differences. She accesses an online English as a second-language (ESL) course for Ahok and connects her with several women from a similar background in the community. This connection with community and the sense of achievement that Ahok gains from her improving language skills heightens her self-esteem, which contributes to improving her overall wellbeing.



Practice task 10

1. Name one way to facilitate self-determination in people with disabilities.

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2. Name two types of conditions that may require support services.

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3. What is one reason why people need to be at the centre of decision-making regarding their care?

.....

[Click to complete Practice task 10](#)

3B Facilitate and discuss person-centred options for action on relevant issues

In supporting people's self-determination and choice, you need to be able to provide people with options for action that are relevant to their specific needs. Additionally, you need to be able to communicate these options appropriately according to each person's needs. In many cases, you will also be called upon to facilitate discussions and communication between the person and their family and/or carers as a way to work together to provide person-centred, best-practice services.



Facilitate discussion

Providing services for people with support needs is a collaborative endeavour where you, the person, their family, carers, other service providers and health professionals work together as a team. One of your main roles in this team is to facilitate discussions to provide people with person-centred options to consider. Whether facilitating discussions between you and the person, or those that include other members of the team, your ability to provide accurate, individualised information and to communicate effectively supports people's choice and self-determination.

Facilitating discussions about person-centred options for action involves the following elements.

Facilitating effective discussions for action

Identify relevant issues

1

To be able to provide relevant options for a person, you need to work together to identify the issues involved and to respect their decisions about their care. For example, if the person wants to increase their mobility, this decision should direct the options you provide.

Gather relevant information

2

Once an issue has been identified, gather all the relevant information about resources, aids, equipment, experts, services, etc. that could inform the possible actions the person could take.

Collaborate with relevant people

3

If relevant for the specific issue, collaborate with others on gathering appropriate information and resources, always respecting the person's privacy and confidentiality. Providing targeted services requires a collaborative approach.

4

Provide relevant options

Based on your information-gathering and collaboration, prepare a range of options (wherever possible) to communicate to the person. Every person has the right to make choices, so providing options (including the right not to participate) fosters self-determination.

5

Set the stage

To discuss the options you have identified with the person (and with relevant others), set the stage for effective communication. Set a time and place that suits the person's needs, provide communication aids, interpreters, etc. that support the person's needs. Make sure everyone is comfortable.

6

Good communication

A good discussion is formed by a safe, supportive environment where all members are encouraged to participate and to listen to others. Active listening, demonstrating respect and discussing options is encouraged. Your job is to guide the discussion, not to dominate it.

7

Foster choice

In providing options for action, you foster people's informed choice, which you need to respect, even when they make choices you may not agree with. Support a person's choice with good information and practical assistance.

8

Record and act upon decisions

Any decision that is made needs to be recorded appropriately in the person's service plan and documented. Once consent is given for an action, see that it is put in place in a timely way, so people's choices are seen to lead to concrete action, which fosters people's empowerment.

Example**Facilitate person-centred options**

Siobhan is preparing for a meeting with Tranh, his daughter and son-in-law, who are his primary carers. Tranh has a degenerative condition that affects his mobility and speech. His condition is progressing and Siobhan has been asked by Tranh to present realistic options for his continued care.

A meeting room at Siobhan's workplace has been booked, as she and Tranh agreed that meeting on neutral ground may be beneficial. Siobhan has contacted Tranh's doctors and healthcare team (with his consent) and she has discussed Tranh's options with them.

Tranh currently lives with his daughter and son-in-law, but is concerned that his declining health will soon be too much for them to manage. He knows that his family want him to remain at home, but he would like to move into specialised aged care where he can get the nursing care he needs. Tranh has made this decision based on discussions with his medical team and he wants Siobhan to help him discuss this decision with his family.

Siobhan prepares the information she has collected and makes sure the room is well-lit and comfortable. As Tranh and his family arrive, Siobhan opens the meeting by acknowledging how everyone contributes to Tranh's care and commends his family for their support. At this point, she turns the discussion over to Tranh and facilitates the discussion by guiding and supporting him to communicate his decision.



Practice task 11

1. What are two characteristics of options for action that you should provide each person with support needs?

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2. Name two ways to facilitate effective discussions with people and others about options for action.

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.....

3. Name three members of a person's team who may assist in providing person-centred services.

.....

Click to complete Practice task 11

3C Provide assistance to facilitate the communication of personal goals

Good communication skills are vital for every work activity and your knowledge and expertise in this area can assist people with disabilities to communicate their personal goals effectively, as described below.

To assist communication, use:

- ▶ oral communication skills to maintain positive and respectful relationships with the person with a disability
- ▶ appropriate nonverbal communication strategies
- ▶ strategies that assist people with disabilities to exercise their rights and support independent action and thinking, including use of technology (such as laptops or tablets) to facilitate choice.

Facilitate communication

Many people with support needs have specific communication needs or may be in vulnerable situations and find it challenging to communicate effectively. Aside from providing physical, technological and language supports for communication, your good communication skills (including good oral skills) demonstrate respect and support the person to communicate their personal goals, choices and needs.

Here are some ways your good communication skills can facilitate people's communication.

Active listening

Listening is the most important communication skill. Your ability to listen actively, by acknowledging and rephrasing what you have heard, by demonstrating respect and by allowing people to communicate according to their preferences and needs, provides people with support. Importantly, it also provides people with a good model and valuable practice in good communication skills.

Clarify and reframe

Often, we all need another person's perspective to help us clarify and reframe what we are trying to communicate. As part of your active listening, you can facilitate people's self-determination by assisting them to clarify their needs, goals and choices. Thinking strategically and in an ordered, logical manner can be challenging when dealing with complex or personal issues, so your input and assistance can greatly assist people to identify clearly what they are trying to communicate and how to do so in the most effective manner.

Body language

While good verbal skills and active listening are vital, so is the way you communicate nonverbally. Your posture, lack or length of eye contact, tone of voice and gestures all communicate powerfully. Make sure your body language communicates respect and attention. Importantly, learn to read other people's body language, while being aware of any differences that may occur as a result of a specific disability (for example, a tremor or shaking could indicate indecision or cold, or it could be a symptom of Parkinson's disease). You can also support people to communicate effectively by changing their body language; for example, sitting or standing up straight helps to communicate and to feel confident. Remember, a genuine smile communicates a great deal.

Identify goals and actions

Wherever possible, assist people to identify their goals and appropriate actions to meet those goals. This can involve reading between the lines of what someone says and asking the right questions. For example, if someone is withdrawn and sad, you can help them to identify this feeling and to determine if there is a specific cause or any action they could take to improve their mood.

Meet the person's needs

Make sure you are aware of the person's communication needs. If they need language or cultural support, provide an interpreter or have written material translated. If the person needs technological aids or equipment, make sure they are readily available and working correctly. If the person has trouble hearing, don't arrange to meet in a noisy cafe full of people. Be sensitive and supportive and alert to the fact that people need to be comfortable and feel supported to communicate effectively.

Take your time

Good oral communication skills are vital in all interactions with people, which means speaking clearly, concisely and giving people plenty of time to respond. Match your language use with the needs of the person. For example, if someone has a neurological impairment, you may need to use short, clear sentences and speak slowly. Do not use jargon, acronyms or technical language unless you are absolutely sure the other person understands.

Document and record

Be sure to document and record any goals or decisions that are made in the person's records. Not only is this a workplace requirement, it also assists you to remember what was discussed so you can confirm with the person at a later date. People's needs and goals change over time, so make sure you regularly confirm with people and check if they have made new decisions or identified new goals.

Communication aids

Many people require or can benefit from physical or technological aids in communication. All communication aids need to be customised or individualised to each person's needs. For example, providing someone with a physical impairment with an aid designed for children's use may cause offence and does not build capacity or support their rights.

As part of your professional development, keep up to date with what types of communication aids are available and consider who they may benefit. Many technological aids are developing rapidly, specifically tablets with specialised software to aid communication. These aids are vital to empowering people with specific disabilities to make their own choices and to communicate them effectively.

For more information about communication aids, visit:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/communication-aid-types>

Here are two ways your work can involve communication aids.

Types of aids

Communication aids come in electronic (tablets, laptops etc.) and non-electronic forms such as communication boards, alphabet boards, community request cards, visual supports and cue cards. Make sure you know how to use and interpret each person's communication through their specific aids and ask for assistance if required. For example, a person's family or carer may be able to provide assistance with communication if the person has complex needs. Keep in mind confidentiality issues, and recognise that people may want to keep some communication private.

Allow time

Be patient, as some methods of communication take time. No-one can communicate effectively if they feel rushed or interrupted. Also be aware that it can be very frustrating for people to communicate using external aids and your patience and encouragement can provide much-needed support.

Example

Provide assistance to facilitate the communication of personal goals

During her meeting with Tranh and his family, Siobhan facilitates Tranh's communication by using her active listening skills. She listens carefully to what Tranh, his daughter and son-in-law all say and at natural intervals, repeats what she has heard to help them all clarify what has been said.

When Tranh's daughter becomes visibly distressed at the notion of her father entering residential care, Siobhan verbally acknowledges her distress and supports her communication.

As the meeting progresses, Tranh's speech becomes more slurred, which Siobhan knows is an indication that he is growing tired. She suggests that everyone takes a break and asks Tranh if he would like to use his tablet for communication. Tranh nods and Siobhan sets up the program to help Tranh communicate effectively using less physical effort.



Practice task 12

1. Name two ways you can assist a person with a disability to communicate their personal goals.

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2. Name two ways nonverbal communication can be used to assist people to communicate their personal goals.

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3. What are two aspects of good oral communication?

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[Click to complete Practice task 12](#)

3D Provide person-centred support to encourage and empower the person to make their own choices

As a professional in the community services sector, you will work using an empowerment approach to support people. Empowerment refers to a state that people arrive at, which sees them take control of their own lives. Everyone has the right to make their own choices, to change their minds, to make mistakes and to learn from them. Assume that the person has the capacity to make their own decisions and provide any specialised supports, assistance or collaboration they need to make decisions.



Using a person-centred approach to encourage and empower people to make choices is a fundamental aspect of your job role, which not only fosters people's human rights, but can also be very rewarding for you.

Empowerment

Fostering the empowerment of people with disabilities is a powerful way to support and care for people who are often vulnerable. As a result of discrimination and historical models that have disempowered people with disabilities, many people still do not (or are unable to) exercise the right to make choices about their own lives. Wherever possible, each person should be encouraged to make their own choices and to determine their needs, directions and goals for their care.

An empowered person is fully informed; confident in their ability to make decisions and to express themselves; and feels respected as a valued member of the community. Your work activities need to be centred on fostering this goal by providing individualised, person-centred supports.

Here are some examples of empowerment being demonstrated in a support service.

Empowerment means:

- ▶ a person can refuse a service and provides informed consent for each support
- ▶ a person's appointments are made at a date and time that suits them
- ▶ each person has services provided that are individualised to their needs
- ▶ a person's choices are respected, even if the worker does not agree with them
- ▶ a person's capacity, skills, knowledge and value are supported and acknowledged
- ▶ no person is discriminated against due to their gender, race, culture or level of capacity
- ▶ people feel supported to extend their skills and to take appropriate risks
- ▶ each person feels welcomed, supported and respected for their individuality.

Strategies to foster empowerment

A person-centred approach to service delivery seeks to encourage and empower people to make choices about their own care. At all times, work in a way that supports self-directed, individualised supports and respects each person's right to choose.

Many common strategies that foster empowerment are built into best-practice approaches and your workplace's policies and procedures, but remember to actively keep the goal of people's empowerment in mind.

Here are some strategies that facilitate people's empowerment.

Provide information

- ▶ People need relevant, timely, accurate and up-to-date information about their options and goals. Make sure you provide each person with information that ensures they can make informed decisions about their care. For example, if a person's goal is to gain employment, provide information about relevant employment and training options and funding assistance, etc.

Promote inclusion

- ▶ The fundamental principle of respecting and valuing all people underlies policies of inclusion. At all times, seek to open up access for people with disabilities, challenge prejudice and discrimination and actively support the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of life.

Individualised support

- ▶ Targeted, individualised support is a fundamental requirement of person-centred services. Make sure you understand each person's needs, goals, choices and capabilities, and structure actions and services to those individual elements. Every person is different and a service that meets the needs of one person will not necessarily benefit another, even if they share a similar disability.

Focus on capacity and choice

- ▶ Focus your supports on people's capacities, capabilities and individual choices. Everyone has skills, knowledge and insights to share, and each person's contributions should be valued and respected. Working to extend people's skills and strengths through supporting their decisions fosters empowerment and self-esteem.

Compassion and encouragement

- ▶ Never underestimate the power of encouragement and genuine compassion. Compassion is different from pity (where you feel sorry for a person); compassion respects and values people's experiences, acknowledging their strength, capability and uniqueness. Many people with disabilities lead challenging lives and your simple encouragement can be very valuable and much appreciated.

Example

Provide person-centered support that encourages and empowers a person to make their own choices

Freya is hesitant about the future direction for her care services and is meeting Janelle, her support worker.

‘Freya, how lovely to see you. You’re walking so strongly now! You must have been working really hard with the OT’, Janelle smiles as Freya sits down.

Freya looks shy, but pleased with Janelle’s encouragement. ‘Um, yeah. Thanks Janelle. I have been working hard. That’s what I wanted to talk to you about.’

Freya continues, ‘You know how we talked about different options after the surgery? Well, it’s been two months, and I’m worried that I’ll never be able to hold down a job or get back to driving’. Freya looks visibly upset.

‘I hear you, Freya. You’ve worked incredibly hard and I’m so proud of you. But I hear that you’re worried about the long-term outcomes, is that right?’

Freya nods, ‘The OT and my doctor won’t tell me anything’.

‘Okay, well how about we schedule a meeting all together and get their input. I think we need more information. I know it must be scary, but I think we can start investigating some training options and even some driving aids that could be used to get you back out there. Whatever the case, you should be really proud of yourself and what you’ve achieved in such a short time. Any employer would be lucky to have you’.



Practice task 13

1. Name two ways that support workers can foster empowerment in people with disabilities.

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2. Name two strategies that promote empowerment.

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3. What are two rights that people have that support their empowerment?

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Click to complete Practice task 13

3E Assist with strategies to ensure the person is comfortable with decisions that are being made

Each person with a disability should be assumed to have the capacity to provide or refuse consent until that capacity is shown not to be present. Capacity to provide consent can change over time and many people have the capacity to consent to some things, but not others. For example, a person with a severe intellectual disability may be capable of consenting to everyday decisions about participating in activities or actions, but have a legal guardian to make decisions about financial or legal matters.



Even when someone is in a position where legal consent is decided by another (such as a family member, carer or legal guardian), you can empower the person by assisting them to understand what is occurring and to ensure they are comfortable with the decisions that are being made on their behalf. People are more likely to be comfortable with these decisions when they understand what is occurring, how it will affect them, what they are expected to do and when their feelings, thoughts and wishes are expressed and they feel heard.

Facilitate understanding

When a person with a disability is having decisions made on their behalf, you can support their self-determination and empowerment by assisting them to understand what is occurring and to help them communicate their wishes. For example, if someone with a neurological impairment has been deemed legally incompetent to give consent for an invasive medical procedure, a family member may provide consent. In such a case, the person has a right to be informed about what is occurring, when and why, in a manner they can understand. While they may not have the legal capacity to refuse the procedure, they must be allowed to communicate their wishes and feelings.

Strategies to ensure ease with decisions made

As a support worker, there are a number of strategies you can utilise to ensure that people are comfortable with the decisions being made on their behalf, many of which will be outlined in your workplace's policies and procedures. Here are some of these strategies.

Understand consent

- ▶ Make sure you have a full, complete and up-to-date understanding of consent legislation and procedures and how they are followed in your workplace. Additionally, each person's capacity to provide consent is individual to them and can change over time. Make sure you are fully informed about each person's individual case and know precisely who has consent to make what decisions and what procedures to follow if a person's capacity changes.

Provide appropriate information

- ▶ When a decision is being made on someone's behalf, they have the right to be informed appropriately. You can assist by providing them with information at a level and in a format that suits their needs. This may involve using interpreters (or translators); advocates to support their understanding and ensure their rights are being upheld; communication aids; and language levels or visual aids as appropriate. For example, to inform a person with an intellectual disability about a decision, you may need to simplify the information being provided, use clear, simple language and incorporate visual aids. People have a right to know what decision is being made, any actions that will affect them and when they will occur.

Facilitate self-expression

- ▶ Every person has the right to respond, ask questions and to express themselves, including when decisions are made on their behalf. Facilitate the use of whatever aids, technology, interpreters, etc. the individual needs to express themselves and ensure that the person understands what is occurring. Remember that people can indicate that they understand verbally or behaviourally (such as by actions, physical gestures, facial expressions, etc.). Make sure you get to know each person and their needs.

Alleviate distress and convey disagreement

- ▶ Know what to do if a person exhibits distress or disagreement, according to your workplace's policies and procedures, and the person's needs. Often, distress is caused by a lack of understanding, so try conveying information in another way and demonstrating your kindness and support. If a person disagrees with what is being decided on their behalf, this needs to be recorded and conveyed to appropriate people, include their guardian, to uphold the person's rights. If in any doubt, speak to your supervisor and/or a disability advocate. Often, distress or disagreement can indicate that the decision or its implementation needs to be altered to ensure the wellbeing of the person.

Record and document responses and actions

- ▶ Make sure you properly document and record all your actions and the person's responses, according to your workplace's policies and procedures. This information forms a legal record that the person has been informed and records strategies that have or have not worked to inform the person, and facilitates the provision of individualised supports in the future.

Example

Assist with strategies to ensure the person is comfortable with decisions being made on their behalf

Adeline is young woman with complex needs affecting her communication, mobility and intellectual capacity. While Adeline makes everyday decisions about her care, her elder sister Claire has been appointed her legal guardian to make decisions about Adeline’s finances and any legal matters.



Fran is Adeline’s support worker and is facilitating a meeting between Adeline, Claire and a representative from a local disability advocacy centre. Claire, who is Adeline’s primary carer, has to move out of the area for work and a decision has been made to relocate Adeline as well. Adeline has friends and connections in the local area but could only stay in the area if she moved into residential care.

During the meeting, Fran records what occurs and uses Adeline’s communication board and tablet to ensure she understands what it happening. Using her tablet, Adeline expresses that she’ll miss her friends, but is happy that she is staying with her sister. Fran communicates that she will set up a network of support providers in the new location to assist with the transition. All parties end the meeting by sharing what they have heard during the meeting and all decisions and proposed actions are documented and recorded.

The disability advocate checks in with Fran and with Adeline in a week to ensure that Adeline has retained her understanding of what is occurring and agrees that Adeline’s rights are being upheld.

Practice task 14

1. Name one way you can ensure that a person understands a decision that is being made on their behalf.

2. Name one way you can assist people to be more comfortable with decisions made on their behalf.

3. What is one reason why you need to document the person’s responses when assisting them to feel comfortable about decisions made on their behalf?

Click to complete Practice task 14

3F Assist with accessing advocacy services and other complaint mechanisms

Everyone has the right to request changes to their services, to make complaints if they feel their needs are not being met or their rights are not being upheld. At the beginning of every workplace relationship, you are required to provide people with information about your workplace's complaint mechanisms, including how to access them according to their needs.



Making complaints is not necessarily a negative activity; often, a complaint can highlight where a process, procedure or service can be improved. People should be encouraged to make complaints, as this will feed into your workplace's reviewing and feedback procedures. Additionally, you can uphold people's rights by assisting them to access external advocacy services, formed to assist individuals and to campaign for widespread changes to empower people with disabilities.

Access advocacy services

Many people with disabilities feel marginalised and isolated. One way to foster their empowerment is to help them connect with others and to offer them information and opportunities to participate in wider actions to promote their rights, by working with advocacy services. Disability advocacy services in the community assist individuals to address breaches of their rights; to access networks of people with similar experiences; and to engage with government, industry and society to foster and uphold inclusion and fundamental human rights.

You can facilitate people's self-determination and ability to make choices by providing them with appropriate information about advocacy services that could benefit their individual needs and by helping people access advocacy services as required. Often, these services can benefit your work activities by providing professional contacts, expert information and by connecting people to ways they can directly contribute to upholding people's rights.

Make sure you are aware of the advocacy services available in your area, who they represent, how to access them and what services they provide. Wherever possible, offer people appropriate information about advocacy services and facilitate their access to them, if they wish.

You can learn more about the many disability advocacy services available at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/pwda-advocacy>

Complaint mechanisms

Everyone has the right to make choices and you can foster this self-determination by facilitating people's right to make a complaint. While external complaints can often be assisted by an advocacy service, internal complaints (those within your organisation, about specific services, etc.) should be taken as part of your workplace's commitment to best-practice, individualised care. A person may feel unhappy about the length of time a process has taken, an error that has a negative impact on them, unprofessional behaviour from staff or another situation where the service they access has been poor quality.

When you begin working with a person, you must provide them with information about your workplace's complaint mechanisms in a format that suits their needs and understanding, as described below.

Each person needs to know:

- ▶ the mechanisms that are in place to receive and resolve complaints
- ▶ who to complain to
- ▶ what they have a right to complain about
- ▶ how their feedback will be used
- ▶ the process that is followed to resolve the complaint (usually including a time frame)
- ▶ who to contact if they feel their complaint has not been resolved
- ▶ that their complaint will remain private and confidential.

Assist people to make complaints

Assisting people to make complaints, whether externally or internal to your organisation, helps the person to access the individualised, person-centred care that they are entitled to and upholds their rights to self-determination and to be free from abuse, neglect and discrimination.

You can assist people to make complaints in many ways, including the following.

You can help people make a complaint by:

- ▶ understanding, providing access to and following your workplace's complaints mechanisms and reporting procedures
- ▶ documenting and following up all requests, choices and changes needed in a person's services
- ▶ assisting people to understand their rights and clarify their needs and choices (for example, define the issues involved)
- ▶ providing physical, technological or language supports to use, and access advocacy services and complaint mechanisms
- ▶ taking responsibility to ensure that complaints are followed up and resolved
- ▶ respecting people's choices and changing needs
- ▶ assisting people to plan and organise their complaint
- ▶ assisting people and your organisation to problem-solve and improve services by resolving complaints quickly and efficiently.

Example

Assist with advocacy services and complaints mechanisms as required

Tom recently experienced discrimination when applying to attend a local training facility, so he told his support worker Margo. She assisted Tom to record a complaint using her workplace’s complaint mechanisms so the workplace’s preferred relationship with the training institution can be reviewed.



In addition, Margot informed Tom that his rights were infringed upon and that she would like to take legal advice about his options with a local disability advocacy legal service. He consents to Margot making a call to establish a first point of contact and to her providing limited details of the incident and his needs to the service

Margot makes the call:

‘Hi, my name’s Margot and I work for XYZ Services. We provide support services to people in the local community. I’m working with a person who believes he was discriminated against by a training organisation because of his disability. I agree and would like more information about legal options to pursue.’ She pauses, listening.

‘Oh great! Can you spell that name?’ Margot takes notes of the person’s name and number. ‘And she’s a lawyer specialising in discrimination? Great. And she provides legal information free through your service? Wonderful. I’ll inform the person and get back to you about an appointment time that suits him. Thanks very much!’

Happily, Margot calls Tom and informs him of what she’s learnt. With his consent, she makes an appointment for Tom and herself to meet the lawyer through the advocacy service to discuss Tom’s options.

Practice task 15

1. Name two ways you can assist people to access an advocacy service.

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2. Name two ways to assist people to access internal complaint mechanisms in your organisation.

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3. What are two rights that are upheld by assisting people to make complaints?

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Click to complete Practice task 15

Summary

1. A person-centred approach acknowledges the person as the expert in their own lives, whatever the disability or condition they experience. All people need to be supported to make decisions and to self-determine their care needs.
2. People need to be provided with specific, targeted options for action from which they can choose. Your role is to facilitate their choice and to support all team members to communicate well and to discuss all options productively.
3. Make sure each person has the individualised physical or technological supports or aids that they need to communicate. Model and use your good communication skills to assist people to communicate their personal goals, needs and choices.
4. The empowerment of people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of all work activities. Use appropriate strategies to foster self-determination and independent decision-making.
5. When legally appointed to do so in certain situations, a family member, carer or guardian may make some decisions on behalf of a person with a disability. However, the person must be informed about what is happening, and you need to facilitate their understanding by providing appropriate information and supports according to their individual needs.
6. Everyone has the right to make complaints and to receive an adequate response. You can assist people to make complaints and access external advocacy services and to use your workplace's reporting and complaints mechanisms to improve their services.

Learning checkpoint 3

Facilitate choice and self-determination

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in facilitating choice and self-determination.

1. When we provide person-centred services, what are two choices people can make that acknowledge the person as their own expert?

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2. What is one reason why you may be asked to facilitate discussions about options for action with the person, their family, carer or other relevant individuals?

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3. What are two ways you can provide assistance to a person with a disability to facilitate communication of their person goals?

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4. In what areas of your job role are you required to provide person-centred support in a manner that encourages and empowers the person with a disability to make their own choices?

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5. What are two ways you can assist with strategies to ensure that the person is comfortable with any decisions that are being made on their behalf?

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6. What are two ways you can assist people to access advocacy services and other complaint mechanisms, as required?

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7. In supporting people with disabilities, what are three conditions you are likely to encounter?

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8. What is one strategy you can use to assist people with communication challenges to make choices and exercise their rights?

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