



# CHCDEV005

Analyse impacts of  
sociological factors  
on people in  
community  
work and  
services



# **CHCDEV005**

## **Analyse impacts of sociological factors on people in community work and services**

**Release 1**

**Learner Guide**

Aspire Version 1.1

## CHCDEV005 Analyse impacts of sociological factors on people in community work and services, Release 1

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Aspire acknowledges the homelands of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pays our respect to Country



# Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCDEV005 Analyse impacts of sociological factors on people in community work and services*, Release 1.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program.

## 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.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature	
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.	
Examples	These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.	
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.	
Callouts	Callouts reiterate key learning points to help students revise for their assessments.	
Weblinks	Weblinks provide learners with additional content to contextualise their learning and develop their understanding.	
Videos	Videos provide a visual reference of key concepts to aid comprehension and guide learner exploration. Each video is accessed by a QR code in the Learner Guide (or a button in the eBook version) for ease of access.	 
Glossary/margin definitions	Key terms are defined where they first appear to help consolidate understanding. A glossary of terms is provided at the end of the Learner Guide to assist learner revision of key concepts.	
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.	
Learning Checkpoints	There are Learning Checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.	
Case studies	Case studies are interspersed throughout the learning content to provide a workplace setting that contextualises key concepts.	

## 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.

These skills are listed below:

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



Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning your workload and commitments</li> <li>• Implementing tasks</li> <li>• Completing work on time</li> <li>• Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks</li> </ul>
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and applying decision-making processes</li> <li>• Reviewing your behaviour and the impact of your decisions</li> </ul>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely</li> <li>• Accessing, organising and presenting information</li> <li>• Using equipment correctly and safely</li> </ul>

Note: Not every unit of competency will contain all foundation skills.

## 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 outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Identify social and cultural issues impacting on people and society	1A Identify ways social and cultural issues can impact people	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Identify and examine possible consequences of inequality on clients	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2 Analyse impacts of social and cultural factors on people	2A Use available information to identify and analyse social and cultural factors	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Clarify current health, wellbeing and associated needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Make informed decisions about specific work to be undertaken	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3 Monitor impact of social and cultural factors on community work and services provided to people	3A Monitor the impact of work undertaken and services provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Review and revise programs and services	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

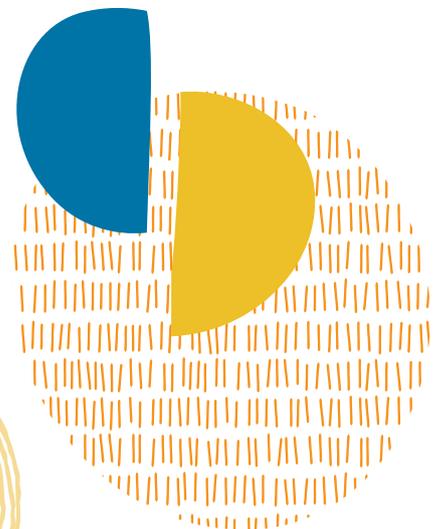
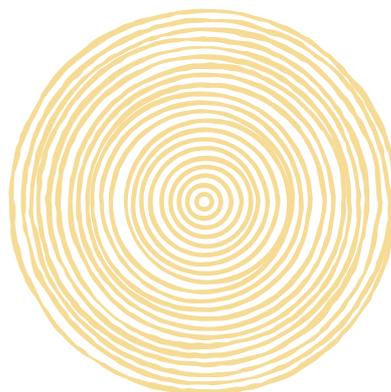






## Topic 1: Identify social and cultural issues impacting on people and society

- 1A Identify ways social and cultural issues can impact people
- 1B Identify and examine possible consequences of inequality on clients



# 1A

## Identify ways social and cultural issues can impact people

**As a community service worker, you need to understand both the positive and negative impacts that social and cultural issues can have on individuals, families and communities.**

One of the roles of community services organisations is to help people negotiate the impact of broader social forces on their lives. They do this by offering support and access to resources people need not only to survive but to live full, active and healthy lives.

The impact of institutions on social and cultural issues can be immediate and obvious; for example, the government implements a new policy that increases the amount a person receives from Centrelink every fortnight, making it easier for them to pay for essentials. The effects can also be more gradual, playing out over the course of an individual's entire life, and even the lives of subsequent generations. There is a clear and well-established connection between being disadvantaged in early childhood, receiving poor outcomes in education and an individual's physical health in later life.

Major social and cultural institutions in Australia			
	Family		Healthcare
	Government		Aged care
	Education		Law
	Work		Media
	Economy		Religion



## Family

In Australia, governments take on some of the responsibilities of families through the provision of education, income support and services such as aged care. However, for most people, family is still the primary institution.

The function of family is to:

- regulate relationships and reproduction
- nurture children
- support family members
- pass on cultural traditions.

Our families have a major influence on our values, beliefs and attitudes. From family, we derive a sense of our history and identity, of our place in the world. In contemporary Australia, a family could be:

- a single parent with a child
- two fathers or two mothers and a child
- a blended family
- a de facto opposite-sex or same-sex couple with no children
- a group of close friends who are not biologically related but consider themselves to be family
- another arrangement involving two or more people.

Multigenerational households, in which parents and their children live with grandparents, are also on the rise: one in five Australians now live in such an arrangement with extended family. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' understandings of family – whereby children are raised within a kinship system – are also better understood and respected in contemporary Australia than was the case in previous decades.

The structure of families varies across cultures. As a community worker, you need to be aware of the role of family in the communities you serve, so that you can understand the needs of people accessing support and respond to them effectively and appropriately.

### Video: Family and kinship

Watch this video to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship systems: [aspirelr.link/yt-family-kinship](https://aspirelr.link/yt-family-kinship)



## The impact of family

The family that a child grows up in has a profound impact on their development, health, wellbeing and long-term outcomes. Children who grow up with positive role models in a stable, loving and supportive environment have the best chance of doing well at school, finding secure, fulfilling work, enjoying good physical and mental health and participating fully in society. This is true whether children live with one parent or two, as part of a blended family or with extended family. It is also true whether their parents are de facto, married, separated or divorced, same-sex or opposite-sex.

### Socioeconomic status

A person's social standing based on their economic and social status, measured by their education, income and occupation.

A family's **socioeconomic status** is one of the strongest predictors of a child's educational achievement and health in adult life. The opportunities we are provided with as children depend on where our families live and the resources and connections our families can draw on.

Disparities in opportunity are apparent before children start school. If these disparities are not identified and addressed, they are compounded over the course of an individual's life and can be passed on to the next generation. The effects of intergenerational welfare dependency are of particular concern: they can severely limit an individual's choices in life and represent a serious barrier to a more equitable society.

Child abuse and neglect (which includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as exposure to family violence) can have wide range of negative effects on children. This includes:

- issues with attachment and interpersonal relationships
- learning and development problems
- mental health difficulties.

For more information about the impacts of child abuse and neglect visit: [aspirelr.link/aifs-child-abuse-neglect](https://aspirelr.link/aifs-child-abuse-neglect)

## Government

Governments are one of the most visible and influential institutions in Australian society. There are three levels of government in Australia:

1. Federal
2. State/territory
3. Local.



The federal government (also known as the Commonwealth or Australian Government) is the national government. Australia is a constitutional monarchy, which means the king or queen of the United Kingdom is Australia's head of state and their representative is the governor-general. The king or queen has limited powers in Australia, because Australia is also a representative democracy. This means that members of parliament are elected to represent the Australian people and make laws on their behalf.

The separation of powers means that different powers are held by different bodies so they can keep checks and balances on each other. The separation of powers in Australia's Constitution divides the institutions of government into three groups:

- the legislature – is the parliament, which debates and makes laws
- the executive government – recommends new laws and puts them to the parliament
- the judiciary – applies and interprets the law.

Each state and territory also have their Local Government Act, which sets out the rules for the structure and management of local government.

### Video: Three Levels Government

Watch this video to learn about the three levels of government in Australia:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-three-levels-government](https://aspirelr.link/yt-three-levels-government)



Australia has three levels of government					
Government		Responsibilities			
1	 Federal	Defence	Telecommunications	Postal Services	Immigration
2	 State	Police	Transport	Health	Education
3	 Local	Waste	Leisure centres	Parks and gardens	Pet registrations



The typical functions of government are to:

- preserve and protect society from external and internal threats
- promote support for a society’s values among its citizens
- regulate the economy
- oversee the negotiation and resolution of conflicts
- maintain order.

Community workers are employed at every level of government (federal, state/territory and local government), whereas others regularly come into contact with government agencies in the course of their work.

### The impact of government

Some laws and policies are clearly intended to benefit and protect everyone in the community, such as work health and safety legislation that is designed to protect workers from accident and injury.

However, sometimes new laws or policies benefit or protect one group in society while taking benefits or protections away from others. For example, laws banning smoking in public areas take away smokers’ rights so as to protect the health of the wider community.

#### Social policy

The area of policy that relates to the ways society meets human needs, such as education, work, health and wellbeing.

Here are some factors that underpin **social policy** decisions.

<b>Public opinions</b>	Public opinions about immigration can affect policy decisions relating to refugees and asylum seekers.
<b>Economic conditions</b>	A global financial crisis can affect policy decisions relating to taxation, such as tax benefits to encourage spending.
<b>New scientific discoveries</b>	The link between physical exercise and dementia can affect policy decisions relating to aged care.
<b>Sociological research</b>	Used to investigate and understand society and bring awareness to patterns and problems. It has been used to demonstrate the extent of discrimination against marginalised groups, such as women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities.
<b>Technological change</b>	Teleconferencing technology can affect policy decisions relating to health, such as providing Medicare rebates for general practitioner (GP) appointments that take place via teleconferencing.



Ideological beliefs and frameworks	<b>Neoliberalism, libertarianism, socialism and populism</b> can affect policy decisions around welfare and social security.
Significant events	For example, the Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania led to significant changes in policy relating to gun ownership in Australia.

**Neoliberalism**  
An ideology that promotes the benefits of the free market and seeks to limit public spending and government regulation.

**Libertarianism**  
An ideology that promotes individualism and individual rights, opposes government intervention and supports the free market.

**Socialism**  
An ideology that promotes public ownership over resources which is aimed at a more equitable distribution of wealth.

**Populism**  
An ideology that promotes the interests of so-called ordinary people who disapprove of elite establishments.

## Policy decisions and their impact on individuals and community work

Changes in policy or new policies can have far-reaching impacts on individuals, family groups and the community. Some examples of policy areas that affect individuals, as well as policy decisions that impact community work, are provided below.

	<p><b>Child protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new policy that provides additional supports to parents whose children are at risk of neglect could improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and reduce family stress.</li> <li>This policy decision could also reduce the burden on the community services sector by reducing the number of vulnerable children and families who need support.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Social security and welfare</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised policies relating to welfare payments could make it more difficult for some people with disability to access financial support.</li> <li>This policy decision could also increase the burden on the community services sector because more people with disability will experience financial difficulties.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies that lead to funding cuts in education might impact a school's ability to provide low-cost sporting equipment to students. This could then place financial pressure on some families and limit some children's opportunities to participate in sport.</li> <li>This policy decision could also mean that the community services sector needs to 'fill the gap' for children who cannot afford to participate in sporting activities at school.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A policy that limits opportunities to flexible working arrangements for some parents could impact the amount of time parents have to spend with their children and, subsequently, affect children's emotional wellbeing.</li> <li>This policy decision could mean the community services sector has additional work down the track when children experience negative outcomes because they have had less time to develop positive relationships with their parents.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A policy that makes dental services free for all primary school students could decrease financial stress for some families and improve the health of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.</li> <li>• This policy decision could also mean that the community services sector becomes involved in promoting free dental services to people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have primary school-aged children.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A policy that allows people to access their superannuation to pay for a house deposit could reduce housing insecurity for some families.</li> <li>• This policy decision could mean an increased burden for the community services sector down the track when those who used their superannuation to pay for a house deposit do not have enough money to fund their retirement.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Immigration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A policy that requires all families with children to be released from immigration detention could have positive impacts upon families who are seeking asylum in Australia.</li> <li>• This policy decision could also mean that the community services sector can redirect the funding they put aside to support families in immigration detention to families who are seeking asylum within the community.</li> </ul>

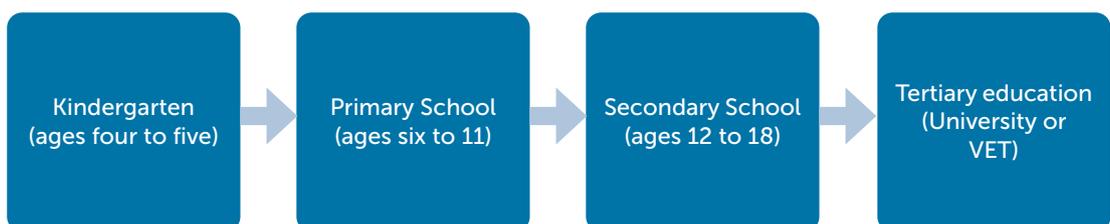
Policy changes can also have an indirect impact on individuals and families. For example, funding cuts to community services can impact the range of support services can offer, subsequently impacting the support available to people seeking support and their families.

## Education

The function of an education system is to transmit knowledge, skills and values within a formal structure.

Education prepares children for adult life, teaching them not just literacy and numeracy but other skills they will need to contribute to society. Educational institutions also have a powerful influence upon individuals' attitudes, beliefs and values.

Formal schooling is compulsory in Australia from the ages of six to sixteen.





## Primary and secondary education

Australia has a national foundation to year ten curriculum that sets out what students should learn. It is up to state authorities to determine how the curriculum is delivered in schools in their state.

Primary school (foundation/kindergarten/prep to year six) and secondary school (years seven to twelve) are free through the public school system; however, parents can choose to send their children to private schools that charge tuition fees.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, about 65 per cent of Australian students attend public schools, 20 per cent attend Catholic schools and most of the remaining 15 per cent attend independent schools. A small minority – around 20,000 students – are home-schooled.

Primary and secondary schools are jointly funded by the federal, state and territory governments. The states and territories provide the majority of public funding for government schools, while the federal government provides the majority of public funding for non-government schools.

Many community service workers are employed within primary and secondary schools as aides, helping to support both students and teachers. Others come into contact with the school system through their work in areas such as family services or child protection.

## Tertiary education

Tertiary education in Australia is optional and requires payment for the student's tuition. In some cases, loans are available from the federal government to cover the cost of tuition. These loans are repaid through regular deductions from an individual's pay when they enter the workforce and earn above the repayment threshold.

Technical and further education or TAFE institutions offer vocational courses funded by state governments. Vocational education and training (VET) is also available through private colleges. The TAFE system receives majority of its funding from state governments, while universities receive majority of their funding from the federal government.

Universities are funded by the federal government and traditionally offer academic courses, though the number of vocational courses they offer is increasing.

## The impact of education

There is a well-established relationship between an individual's educational attainment and positive outcomes in later life. Higher levels of education are associated with better physical and mental health and greater social engagement. An individual's educational attainment has a flow-on effect, benefitting their family, their community and society as a whole; for example, higher levels of education in a community are associated with better public health, lower crime and increased social cohesion.

Access to education impacts on levels of equality within society. For example, a country that provides high quality education to all children, regardless of family income, can make it easier for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to escape cycles of poverty. On the other hand, a country that makes it difficult for disadvantaged children to access high quality education reinforces existing power structures.

## Example

### Ways cultural issues can impact family groups

Kofi is a one-year-old refugee child from Ghana. As part of his family's integration into the community, he attends a community playgroup.

One of the support workers notices that Kofi's language development appears delayed. The support worker puts his mother, Efua, in contact with a community-based early childhood education centre designed for children with developmental delays.

At first, Efua is reluctant, but following a meeting with the centre staff, she enrolls her son. Efua finds that the other families attending the centre are a tremendous source of support for her and Kofi. Staff in the centre also help Efua access other support services in the community, such as occupational and speech therapists.

Kofi is now meeting his developmental milestones, and Efua feels as though she has a community to turn to when she needs help.

## Inequalities in the Australian education system

Government funding of private primary and secondary schools has been the subject of considerable controversy in Australia. Many people believe that it has created a two-tier system, one for the wealthy and one for the less well off. There is widespread perception that private schools outperform public schools academically, but data shows that public schools match or outperform private schools serving the same communities with significantly less funding per student. Despite this, private school students are more likely to attend university, and to experience lower levels of unemployment after graduation, even though former public school students outperform them academically at the tertiary level.

Government loans offered to university and TAFE students are designed to make it easier for all eligible students to participate in tertiary study, regardless of their personal and family circumstances. However, in reality, tuition fees still discourage low-socioeconomic status students and other groups such as mature-age and rural students from enrolling in further education.



Government loans for post-secondary education also amplify economic disparities between men and women. Women on average earn less and are more likely to take breaks from full-time paid work to raise children or care for family members. Their repayments then represent a higher proportion of their income, causing them to take longer to pay off their loan balance.

## Work

Individuals often take pride in their skills or the contribution they make to society through their work. Some find their job intellectually stimulating or emotionally satisfying. All of these improve an individual's quality of life and the lives of their family and community.

The functions of work are to:

- provide people with a sense of purpose and direction
- increase access to opportunities, such as housing and education
- promote social connection
- confer social status.

Paid work is done in exchange for a wage or salary. Unpaid work includes volunteering to do work in the community, raising children and doing tasks necessary to the functioning of a household, such as cooking and cleaning.

Both paid and unpaid work are vital to our economy, although the contribution of unpaid workers is often overlooked. In 2017, economic consultants at PricewaterhouseCoopers calculated that the Australian economy is actually a third bigger than official estimates when the contribution of unpaid workers is taken into account; they also found that unpaid childcare is Australia's largest industry.

In Australia, paid work confers status: we associate a person's ability to gain and maintain employment with qualities such as competence and productivity.

Paid work has many benefits which flow from earning a wage, such as increased opportunities to access stable, high-quality housing. It can also contribute to better health by making it easier for people to afford nutritious foods, preventative healthcare and participation in recreational activities.

Some jobs confer higher status and greater benefits than others. Though for some, especially those in low-status jobs, work may be significantly less rewarding. Low-status work tends to be poorly paid, which can limit access to housing, education and good medical care; it may also be boring, repetitive or unpleasant. Workers who do such jobs are much less likely to find satisfaction in their work.

## How work affects our health

Work can have a serious and damaging impact on our health and wellbeing. According to Safe Work Australia, more than 100,000 workers are seriously injured in Australian workplaces every year. The majority of workplace injuries involve musculoskeletal disorders caused by strain or overuse, but many are the result of accidents. Diseases caused by long-term exposure to dangerous materials are also a concern and thought to be under-represented in official figures.

Certain industries and occupations are more dangerous than others – machinery operators, technicians, tradespeople and labourers are much more likely to be killed at work than professionals and administrative workers.

Even well-paid, high-status professional jobs have health risks. High levels of stress and long working hours can lead to an unhealthy work–life balance, putting pressure on relationships. Stress, **discrimination** and bullying at work can also make us more susceptible to both physical and mental illnesses, including anxiety and depression, and to feelings of isolation or alienation.

### Discrimination

The act of excluding or treating a person differently based solely on an attribute such as disability, age, gender, race or sexual orientation.

## The labour market and employment rates

The labour market is what we call workers competing for jobs and employers competing for workers. Employment rates indicate the strength of this market. In Australia, employment rates vary between states, regions and local areas. The employment rate is higher in cities than it is in rural areas where there are fewer jobs. Even when work is available, regional and remote communities may have trouble attracting and retaining workers, due to the relative lack of amenities outside of major towns. This sometimes means employers in these areas have to offer better pay or conditions to find potential candidates with the necessary qualifications.

Unemployment is stigmatised in Australian society and assumed to be an individual failure or fault rather than the result of structural and economic factors. Unemployment can impact on a person's quality of life, especially if they are unemployed for a long period of time (people in these circumstances are often referred to as 'long-term unemployed').

Community workers can help people experiencing unemployment to secure the support they need, such as unemployment benefits and rent assistance, and to access training, apply for jobs and prepare to join or return to the paid workforce.



## Economy

The **economy** refers to the country's production and consumption of goods and services, as well as the supply of money.

The function of an economic system is to:

- balance supply and demand
- determine what and how many goods are to be produced
- to allocate resources and distribute products
- to determine the best methods for using resources.

There are three main economic systems.

Command economies	The production and pricing of goods and services is controlled by the government.
Market economies	The economy is driven by the law of supply and demand with no or little government intervention.
Mixed economies	The economy is partly run by the government and partly by the free market.

**Economy**  
The country's production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money.

In Australia, we have a mixed economy. The means of production and distribution are generally privately owned, and the government does not decide what Australian businesses should produce or dictate prices. However, the government does act as a regulator – for example, by setting minimum conditions for workers – and uses policy as a lever to maintain stability or encourage change.

A mixed economy provides:

- workers with employment and income
- consumers with goods and services
- businesses with profit
- government with revenue.

Government uses a portion of the revenue from the economy to provide a social safety net in the form of welfare for those whose needs are not supplied by the market. For example, the government provides public housing to people who are unable to participate in the private housing or rental markets.

## Economic policy and its social impact

In a capitalist society, those with capital (such as money or property) tend to do better than those without. The wealthy are more likely to safeguard their existing wealth and add to it, whereas those without capital need to sell their labour in exchange for wages. In a free market, this can lead to a growing gap between rich and poor, less favourable work conditions and the destruction of the natural environment.

Though Australia's market operates on capitalist principles, the government acts as a check against some of the free market's less desirable outcomes. The economy nevertheless has a direct impact on the lives of working people and society as a whole.

In times of prosperity, the labour market is strong and employment rates are high. Employers have to compete for workers, so wages and conditions are better. In less buoyant times, there are fewer jobs. Workers compete for employment and are not as likely to negotiate for higher pay and conditions. Higher unemployment also means less spending, which can lead to further job losses as businesses start to struggle. The slowing of the economy can eventually lead to an economic downturn or even a depression.

Many social and community services in Australia exist to mitigate the negative effects of poverty and financial stress. The role of these services is to redress imbalances and inequities by providing support and resources to individuals and communities who are excluded from or face barriers to full participation in the market.

## Healthcare

The healthcare system refers to the organisation of people and resources that deliver medical and health services to people in need. The functions of healthcare institutions are to:

- provide services that promote health
- prevent disease
- deliver services to individuals and groups within society.

A well-run and well-funded healthcare system helps a society function by keeping people healthy, so that they can look after themselves and their families and participate in the labour force.

Australia has a universal healthcare system, known as Medicare, which is subsidised by the federal government. Medicare makes free or heavily subsidised healthcare available to all Australian citizens and permanent residents. The federal government also subsidises certain medications via the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), making them more affordable.



State governments fund public hospitals, but Australia also has a private health sector and hospital system. The federal government encourages membership of private health funds through rebates that help to cover the cost of premiums.

Community service workers are often employed in the healthcare system or work closely with healthcare professionals to provide services to people accessing support.

## **The impact of healthcare**

Public health initiatives and access to healthcare have an impact not just on our day-to-day wellbeing but also on our life expectancy.

The average Australian woman lives to 85, and the average man to 81. This has risen over previous decades, largely because of better maternal and infant healthcare. They are also influenced by the provision of preventative care, which keeps us well, and access to high-quality medical treatment when we are sick or injured.

Public health initiatives have a positive impact on our individual wellbeing. For example, the Slip, Slop, Slap campaign has contributed to a reduction in the incidence of melanoma in younger Australians since the early 1980s.

Anti-smoking and anti-alcohol campaigns have also had a significant impact: the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported in 2016 that the overall volume of alcohol consumed by Australians aged 15 and over had fallen to its lowest level in 50 years. In the same year, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that daily smoking rates had halved over the past 25 years, from 24 per cent to 12 per cent.

## **Inequalities in Australian healthcare**

In principle, every Australian citizen has equal access to healthcare through Medicare; in practice, some have better access than others, and therefore, receive better care.

People who live in towns or cities have more immediate access than those in rural and remote areas – some health services are simply not available outside major centres. Australians living in rural and remote communities live shorter lives and experience higher levels of disease and injury than people in urban areas. This is partly due to their poorer access to medical care. These effects are especially evident in First Nations communities, in which both men and women have a nine-year shorter life expectancy than their non-First Nations counterparts.

People who can afford private health insurance also have easier access to some forms of healthcare than those relying on the public system. This includes psychological services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

One of the most notable shortfalls of the Medicare system is the fact that it does not cover dental care: more than 60,000 Australians are hospitalised every year due to preventable oral health conditions. Public dental services are available in certain circumstances to people receiving government benefits, but the rules vary from state to state, and public patients sometimes have to wait up to a year or more to see a dentist. Those who have private health insurance have easy access to dental care; they can also bypass waiting lists for elective procedures in public hospitals by using the private system.

## Aged care

The function of the aged care system in Australia is to ensure that older people have their basic needs met in a caring and supportive environment, whether in their own homes or in residential facilities.

Contemporary approaches to aged care focus on supporting older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, with residential care as a last resort. The Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) is available to people aged 65 and over and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 50 and over who wish to live independently at home but need support to do so. The level of support provided depends on the individual's need. Those requiring the highest levels of care may need the help of a support worker to do everyday activities, such as getting in and out of bed, moving about, going to the toilet, showering, getting dressed and preparing and eating meals.

Residential aged care facilities cater for older people who need respite care or can no longer live independently. Aged care services also include help with healthcare, transportation and the provision of equipment, such as walking frames, safety rails and ramps.

Some services are means tested, and people may be required to contribute financially towards the care they receive. Some argue that having private user-pays facilities for the affluent and publicly funded facilities for the less affluent creates a two-tier system, contributing to the increasing stratification of Australian society.

## The impact on aged care

Australia's population is ageing: the number of older people needing support is growing, but there are fewer young people to support them. Demand for aged care services already outstrips supply and is steadily increasing. As a society, we need to find a way to respond to this demand. As always, it is people accessing support and their needs that must be the focus of our response.

One possible consequence of the increasing demand for aged care services is that families may continue to care for ageing relatives in their own homes past the point where it is appropriate to do so or have them move in under the same roof. This would lead to a greater reliance on community services.



Most families are unlikely to have all the skills and resources needed to cope with the many issues older people face, such as limited mobility or the onset of dementia.

As a community service worker, you must understand and be sensitive to:

- many older people's reluctance to give up their independence and be cared for by others
- a person's cultural background, and how it shapes their relationship with their family
- conflict within families about the most appropriate way to provide care.

You must also understand the stress a family is put under by caring for older relatives; the burden can be physical, mental, emotional and financial, and coping with it can be extremely difficult.

## **Residential and respite care**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare stated that in 2021, more than one-third of a million Australians were using residential aged care (permanent or respite). These individuals were a minority – during 2020-2021 over 825,000 older people received home-based support through the Commonwealth Home Support Program – but those in residential care are still a significant group, and we need a system that can cater for them.

With more Australians now remaining at home for longer, those who enter residential facilities tend to require more intense care. This leaves some vulnerable to neglect and abuse.

## **Law**

The law is the set of rules developed and administered by institutions (such as the police and the court system) to regulate people's behaviour.

The functions of law are to:

- prevent undesirable behaviour and encourage desirable behaviour
- settle disputes
- provide facilities for legal arrangements.

Many community service jobs will bring you into contact with organisations and professionals that are connected to the law, so you need to know how they work. You also need to know about legal aid and community legal centres and what they offer so you can refer people to them when they need legal advice or support.

## Law enforcement

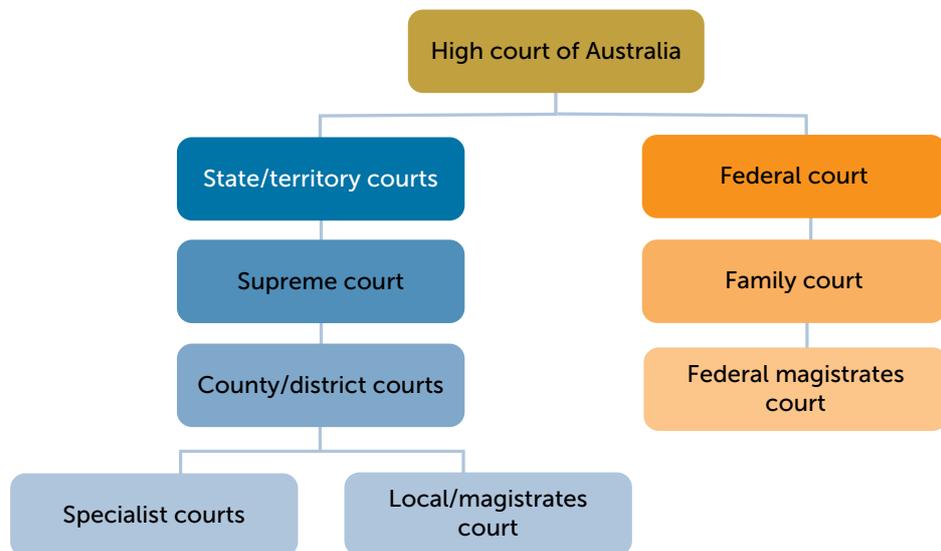
Law enforcement in Australia is the responsibility of police and certain government agencies. The role of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) is to investigate federal crimes and liaise with law enforcement agencies in other countries. State/territory police are responsible for investigating crime at the state/territory and local level, as well as general law and order.

Other agencies with responsibility for law enforcement – but limited jurisdiction and powers – include the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the Australian Border Force (ABF). For example, the ABF is responsible for enforcing customs and immigration law, and only has the power to arrest and detain people in specific circumstances.

Community service workers often interact with law enforcement agencies and sometimes work alongside them. For instance, community workers often liaise with police when dealing with situations involving family violence or child protection.

## The courts

Each state and territory have their own laws and court systems. These court systems may include a local or magistrates court, a district or county court, specialist courts, such as children’s or coroner’s courts, and a supreme court.



Particularly serious or complex cases are dealt with in a state’s supreme court or in a federal court, such as the Federal Circuit Court or the Family Court. The High Court of Australia is our highest court and is the final court of appeal in any civil or criminal matter.

Each state and territory have their own legal aid service funded by the government. These services are free. Anyone can go to legal aid for information, basic advice and referrals. Some legal aid services also have duty lawyers based at specific courts.



If a person cannot afford representation, they may be eligible for legal aid grants. These are available for family law, criminal law and some civil law cases, but are subject to certain conditions, including means testing.

Community legal centres offer free or low-cost legal assistance in cases where a person cannot afford representation and legal aid cannot help.

The services provided by community legal centres are often in high demand, and priority is given to people with the greatest needs. If community legal centres are unable to help a person, they may be able to refer them to someone who can.

Some community legal centres specialise in helping particular groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, older Australians, refugees and asylum seekers.

For more information about community legal centres, visit: [aspirelr.link/clcs-community-legal-centres](https://aspirelr.link/clcs-community-legal-centres)

For a directory of community legal centres in Australia, visit: [aspirelr.link/clcs-find-legal-help](https://aspirelr.link/clcs-find-legal-help)

## Policing and justice

Australia's legal system is a common law system; this means case decisions are made in the courts and legislation is determined by parliament.

The law theoretically treats everyone equally, but the reality is that some individuals are subject to much higher levels of policing than others.

The impact of law enforcement on an individual's life is determined to some extent by their personal characteristics: the police intervene far more frequently in First Nations communities than they do in other Australian communities. The same is true for homeless people and those with mental illnesses.

Members of social groups subject to over-policing are more likely to have dealings with the courts and, therefore, are fined or sentenced more than other Australians. As a result, they may feel very differently about the justice system than people who have limited contact with it.

Support workers need to learn about a community's relationship with law enforcement in order to provide people receiving their services with effective support in their dealings with the police, the courts and the corrections system.

Access to legal representation is another area where significant disparities exist. An individual's socioeconomic status often determines who will represent them if they face court. Legal aid services have limited resources, which means that representation by a legal aid lawyer tends to be reserved for criminal and family law cases.

## Media

The media's primary functions are to inform and entertain people.

Traditionally, media included television, radio and print publications, such as newspapers and magazines, but many Australians, particularly adolescents and younger adults, now get much of their information and entertainment online via the internet, streaming services and social media.

The media has the power to influence behaviour, raise awareness of issues, shape public opinion and promote or challenge social and cultural norms. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, can also provide a forum for social connection, communication and interaction.

Australia has a national broadcaster, the ABC, which is funded by the government. Other media channels are privately owned. In 2017, the Australian government passed a bill to amend national cross-media ownership restrictions. This made it possible for a single company to own newspaper, radio and television licences in the same city, and for television broadcasters to reach more than 75 per cent of the population, giving already powerful media companies an even more powerful voice.

### Media's influence on society

Young people today are exposed to norms, values, attitudes and beliefs from other societies and cultures that are often very different to their own. This can have benefits, but it can also have disadvantages. In some communities, such outside influences may be perceived negatively as disrupting existing cultural norms and practices.

The media has always played a part in raising awareness of social issues and driving public opinion. This role can be used to achieve positive outcomes, such as influencing policymakers to increase funding for education and healthcare. However, it can also be used to sow discord and divide the community by reinforcing inaccurate perceptions and stereotypes.

Since changes to media licensing laws, there is a growing concern in Australia about the lack of diverse views audiences are exposed to, particularly in the presentation of news and current affairs. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter pose similar concerns: their algorithms amplify some voices while silencing others, curating what we read so that different opinions rarely challenge our own. These platforms are not bound by traditional publishing norms that mandate practices such as rigorous fact-checking. Moreover, their global nature makes it difficult for national regulatory authorities to hold them accountable.

Finally, while the media has the power to entertain, inform and create genuine social connections, it can also expose us to inappropriate, frightening or violent content. Television and newspapers contain graphic photographs of murder scenes, car accidents and acts of terrorism. The internet offers access to hate sites and revenge pornography, while social media platforms host sites that promote unsafe and harmful behaviours, such as bullying.



## Religion

Australia is a secular society: our constitution forbids the establishment of an official state religion and compulsory religious observance. However, the constitution also guarantees the right to freely exercise any religion, and the separation of government and religion is not absolute, as it is in some other countries. For example, the federal government provides funding to schools run by religious organisations and to community services administered by faith-based charities, such as Mission Australia and the Salvation Army.

The aims of religious institutions are to:

- give life meaning and purpose
- reinforce social cohesion and stability
- reinforce and encourage specific behaviours
- promote physical and emotional wellbeing
- encourage people to work for social change.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 14 million Australians, about two-thirds of the population, claimed a specific religious affiliation or spiritual belief in the 2016 government census. Around 12 million of those people identify as Christian, which nearly half of are Catholic and a quarter are Anglican. Other prominent religions include Islam (600,000 people), Buddhism (560,000), Hinduism (440,000), Sikhism (130,000) and Judaism (90,000). About 7 million people, or a third of all Australians, indicated that they had no religion or identified as atheists or agnostics.

Like most other social institutions, religion can have both positive and negative impacts on our lives. In some circumstances, religion can be a unifying force that brings a community together to worship, creating a sense of belonging and strengthening social connections. In other circumstances, it can cause conflict. Historically, divisions between Protestant and Catholic Christians were a source of tension in Australian society.

## Community work

In Australia, Christian churches are the largest provider of welfare after the governments. Christian organisations have long sought to influence social policy in Australia, particularly in areas of education, health and social welfare. They are often a driving force behind progressive social projects; for example, endorsing reconciliation and taking a prominent part in National Sorry Day. Many churches also run community programs such as food banks and soup vans.

Other religious organisations, such as Sikh temples and Hare Krishna centres, also play an important role in supporting vulnerable members of the community. This includes the homeless and others living below the poverty line.

## Historical abuse

Many community services and programs run by religious institutions have been implicated in the abuse of children and others in their care. The nature and scale of the crimes uncovered by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse irretrievably damaged the reputation of religious institutions in the eyes of many Australians.

The Royal Commission's final report, including a full list of the commissioners' recommendations, can be found at: [aspirelr.link/royal-commission-child-abuse](https://aspirelr.link/royal-commission-child-abuse).

### Example

#### Identify ways major institutions impact people

Deliah works in a local community centre. Mrs Jones has come in to ask for advice. Deliah listens and asks questions to find out more about Mrs Jones' situation so she can provide appropriate assistance.

Mrs Jones tells Deliah that she lives with her family in a rented four-bedroom house in a working-class suburb. They have five children, ranging in age from six months to ten years old. Neither she nor her husband completed high school. Mr Jones works as a builder's labourer, and until their youngest child was born, Mrs Jones had a part-time job in a local bakery, working from 3am to 9am, which allowed her to be home for most of the day. After Mr Jones left for work in the morning, the children were cared for by an older neighbour until Mrs Jones came home from the bakery.

Mrs Jones plans to return to her job when the baby is weaned in about six months' time. Her employer has promised to keep her job open for her, but small businesses in the area have been closing down.

Mr Jones sometimes works away from home, leaving Mrs Jones to care for the children alone for several weeks, sometimes months, at a time. A recent downturn in the building trade has left him worried about his job, so he cannot refuse these projects even though he would like to.

Mrs Jones has concerns about her health: her blood pressure is high, and she frequently becomes breathless and faint. She has also noticed a lump in her left breast recently but is yet to have it checked.



Their eldest child, Sam, is struggling at school. Teachers have advised Mrs and Mr Jones to have him assessed by an educational psychologist, but there is a two-year waiting list to see a public practitioner and the Joneses cannot afford a private one. Sam has recently begun skipping school, and he has been brought home twice by the police after being found with a group of older boys suspected of shoplifting.

Mr Jones has been finding his work and home life increasingly stressful, and last week he was arrested for public drunkenness and obscene language. He is on a personal bond to appear in the local magistrate's court next month. This is not his first offence, and the Joneses are worried that he may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment, which would have a devastating effect on the family's finances and functioning. They cannot afford a lawyer and have not been able to access legal aid. If Mr Jones loses his job, the family will not be able to pay their rent, and there is currently a three-year wait for public housing in their area – longer for larger families.

After listening to Mrs Jones, Deliah makes notes detailing the current and potential effects of each of these issues on the family.

<p><b>Work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The building trade is slowing down. If Mr Jones is laid off, the family may be unable to pay their rent. This may affect Mr Jones' self-esteem and strain family relationships.</li> <li>• If Mr Jones is unable to find a new job, the family may be evicted and have to stay with relatives or friends, which could disrupt the children's schooling if they have to move out of the area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sam's difficulties at school may be affecting his self-esteem – he is perhaps seeking acceptance and belonging by skipping school with older boys and may become involved in gang activity.</li> <li>• Sam's association with these boys suspected of shoplifting may bring him to the attention of local child welfare and child protection authorities. Intervention with Sam may be beneficial.</li> <li>• Checking the care arrangements for the younger children also may be beneficial, but it could upset Mrs Jones' working arrangements.</li> </ul>



Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Jones cannot afford a lawyer and because he works full-time, he may not be eligible for legal aid. He did not finish high school and is unlikely to have the knowledge or skill to represent himself effectively in court.</li> <li>A custodial sentence would have a devastating effect on the family. A fine would also be a severe financial burden, but compared to a custodial sentence, it is the better option.</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mrs Jones' symptoms may indicate potentially serious health issues. Assessment, diagnosis and treatment will be covered by Medicare, but she may need to cover some out-of-pocket expenses.</li> <li>If Mrs Jones' condition is serious – perhaps serious enough to warrant hospitalisation – this will place an extra burden on the family. Mr Jones may have to take time away from his work to care for the children, which could result in lost income.</li> </ul>

## Practice Task 1

### Question 1

Match the institution with its function in society.

Healthcare
Religion
Law
Work
Media
Education

Inform and entertain
Confer social status
Transmit knowledge
Encourage desirable behaviour
Encourage people to work for social change
Provide services that prevent disease

### Question 2

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. There are three levels of government in Australia.	Yes / No
b. One of the systems of government in Australia is a monarchy.	Yes / No
c. Australia has a capitalist market economy.	Yes / No
d. The Australian government plays a significant role in determining the cost of products sold by businesses.	Yes / No



**Question 3**

Explain the impact an over-burdened aged care system has on individuals, the family and community settings.

**Question 4**

Suggest two policy decisions that could impact on the community services sector and explain the potential impact of those decisions on the sector.



**Question 5**

Identify four factors that can influence social policy decisions.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their answer to the question.

# 1B

## Identify and examine possible consequences of inequality on clients

**While Australia has traditionally been recognised as an egalitarian society, disparities between the rich and the poor have been growing over the past half-century.**

Inequality is not just the result of disparities in wealth, it can also be the result of discrimination, both at the personal and systemic levels. An individual's race, gender, sexuality and other social determinants such as employment status, age and disability all influence how fully they are able to participate in society.

The term **intersectionality** is sometimes used when discussing inequality. For example, a person who identifies as a queer woman with a disability might face homophobia, sexism and ableism.

A person could be treated unequally for unfair personal reasons. Here are some examples.

A teacher gives Student A lower marks than Student B – even though both produced excellent work – because she dislikes Student A's personality.

A boss promotes Employee A but not Employee B – even though both are performing at a similar level – because he prefers Employee A's educational background.

A woman working in an ice cream van gives one child less ice cream than the other children – even though he ordered the same item – because he was rude to her.

In all these scenarios, someone has experienced unequal treatment. In contrast, **systemic inequality** is not about individual differences and conflicts based on personality. It is about a system whereby one group of people is consistently treated unfairly because of a shared characteristic, such as their gender, ethnicity or age.

Systemic inequality is embedded in the fabric of our institutions and societies. It is evident in the laws, regulations, policies and practices of government and institutions. Systemic inequality can also be evident in how individuals interact with each other. Here are some examples based on the previous descriptions.

A teacher gives Student A lower marks than Student B because Student A comes from China and the teacher has an **unconscious bias** towards people from Asia.

A boss promotes Employee A (a man) rather than Employee B (a woman) because he believes men perform better than women in management positions.

A woman working in an ice cream van gives one child less ice cream than the other children because his mother is wearing a hijab and the woman thinks that Muslims are ruining her neighbourhood.

### Egalitarian

Belief that everyone is equal and deserves equal opportunities and rights.

### Intersectionality

The ways in which multiple aspects of a person's identity can result in overlapping forms of discrimination.

### Systemic inequality

When organisations or institutions contain an embedded bias that results in certain groups being treated unfairly based on a shared characteristic.

### Unconscious bias

Subconsciously forming social stereotypes about certain people and expressing these.

## Social stratification

### Social stratification

The hierarchical categorisation of people based on socioeconomic factors, such as wealth, income, race, education and power.

Systemic inequality is based upon **social stratification**. The people at the top of the social structure have characteristics that are valued within their community. In most societies, stratification is based on wealth and in some, it is also based upon their age. For example, in many First Nations cultures older people are highly esteemed whereas in other cultures, youth is more highly valued than old age.

Cultural beliefs and attitudes reinforce social structures. For instance, the belief that wealthy people are wealthy because they work hard reinforces the idea that inequality is acceptable – those who work hard will benefit and those who do not will not.

Another perspective on wealth and poverty is that there are structural factors that make it easier for some people to become wealthy. For example, a person might become wealthy because of their educational opportunities, their family's resources and connections and the privileges they accrue based on their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and so on.

From this perspective, inequality is less acceptable. While some people become wealthy because they have greater access to resources that allow them to accrue wealth and others cannot become as wealthy regardless of how hard they work because they lack access to the same resources.

### Video: Speaking of poverty

Watch this video to better understand two different ways of understanding poverty: [aspirelr.link/yt-speaking-of-poverty](https://aspirelr.link/yt-speaking-of-poverty)



In Australia, people have different views about stratification: some people believe that wealthy people are wealthy because they work hard, and other people believe that structural factors make it easier for some people to succeed, resulting in fundamental social inequalities.

Beliefs about social stratification impact on individuals and broader society. If we believe that people who are wealthy have worked hard and people who are poor have not, we can blame the individual for their social conditions. People who are poor might also start to question their own worth in a society that equates financial wealth with success.

Beliefs about social stratification can influence social policy. For example, if people are poor because they have not worked hard enough, we might question the role of welfare payments. On the other hand, if we believe that structural factors make it easier for some people to succeed than others, we will be more likely to support strategies that aim to even out the playing field by providing resources (such as money, scholarships, job training) to people who are disadvantaged by those systemic inequalities.



## Affected groups

Because systemic inequality affects people who share common characteristics, some groups in society are more affected than others.

In Australia, these groups include:

- women
- older people
- people with disabilities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people from non-Anglo and/or non-English speaking backgrounds
- migrants
- refugees and asylum seekers
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people.

Although these groups are affected by systemic inequality, not every individual who belongs to those groups will be affected in the same way. For example, a young queer person who has homophobic parents, attends a religious school and lives in a conservative community is likely to have a different experience of inequality than a young queer person who has queer-friendly parents, attends a progressive school and lives in a progressive community.

Some people who belong to these groups might argue that they are not affected by systemic inequality at all. For instance, some women might argue that they have never experienced sexism. This does not mean that sexism does not exist. It simply means that some women are not affected by systematic inequality in the same way as others.

Some people believe that Australia is a level playing field with equal opportunities for all. Those that do might look at disadvantaged communities and blame them for the difficulties they experience, rather than seeing those difficulties as the product of broader social forces. These people may think that the privileges they enjoy are earned – entirely a result of their own efforts – and fail to understand that other people have not been given the same resources and opportunities that they have been given.

## Effects of inequality

Many community services organisations work with people experiencing systemic inequality to counter its effects on them as individuals and as part of their families and communities. For example, some not-for-profit organisations provide food, housing and/or education to people who are seeking asylum in Australia.

These organisations are also involved in advocating for social change to reduce inequality. For instance, organisations committed to gender equality might advocate for policies that reduce gender-based violence.

Some of the effects (that is, the results or outcomes) of inequality include the following.

For individuals	For families	For communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-esteem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting stress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced life expectancy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor educational outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family conflict, dysfunction and breakdown.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased levels of violence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loneliness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor overall physical and mental health.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health difficulties (e.g. anxiety, depression).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social isolation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced levels of trust.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor physical health.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of social cohesion.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor rates of overall economic growth.</li> </ul>

Source: [www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/inequality-income-social-problems-full.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/inequality-income-social-problems-full.pdf)

## Long-term unemployment

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines long-term unemployment as a period of unemployment that lasts for more than one year.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, causing a sudden spike in unemployment, around one in four Australians were classified as long-term unemployed.

The most common barriers to finding work included:

- sickness
- disability
- lack of skills or education
- too few job vacancies.

Long-term unemployment makes it harder for an individual to access housing, education, health and other vital services for themselves and their family. They may have less money to spend on daily expenses, such as food, accommodation and transport, as well as other essentials, such as medical and dental appointments. Relocating to cheaper housing often means moving away from social support networks. It may also make them more reliant on community services.



All of these difficulties are compounded by the negative stereotype that long-term unemployed people are *dole bludgers*. Unemployment is often assumed to be the result of weak character, and not the result of structural and economic forces beyond a person's control. The effect of such stereotypes on a person's sense of self-worth can be devastating.

Financial and psychological stress resulting from being long-term unemployed can lead to poor health or exacerbate existing health conditions. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, compared to the employed, long-term unemployed people are:

- twice as likely to smoke
- twice as likely to have back problems
- three times as likely to suffer from mental, emotional and behavioural disorders
- twice as likely to have a disability.

It also increases the risk of self-harm, suicide and premature death, and can put a strain on relationships, sometimes resulting in family breakdown.

Children with two unemployed parents are more likely to have poorer health and educational outcomes than children with at least one parent who is in paid employment.

The children of long-term unemployed parents are also more likely to experience long-term unemployment themselves when compared to their peers. This is partly because being exposed to the culture of work through their parents provides children with a role model for employment that they can follow when entering the job market.

For example, when a child has a parent who works, they are more likely to understand the need for punctuality and the importance of positive relationships with colleagues.

The social costs of long-term unemployment are also high. Industries suffer decreased productivity and the loss of skilled workers. The consequences of long-term unemployment, such as poverty, are also detrimental to society. For example, a significant gap between rich and poor can lead to increased social tension, which will have a negative impact on every member of society, including those who are relatively well-off.



All of these lead to greater spending on social welfare.

## Example

### Examine and identify possible effects and consequences of inequality

Once Amelia finished high school, she did a business degree and successfully completed it in three years. After graduating, she tried to find employment in the small town where she lived. She wanted to stay close to home so that she could provide some support for her mother, who was recovering from a serious car accident.

Amelia registered with multiple employment agencies and submitted many job applications, but she was always told that she lacked experience. To gain some workplace skills, she did volunteer work for a year. But even this did not help her get a job.

Amelia became depressed and despondent and found it difficult to get out of bed each day. She lost interest in her friends and spent most of her time at home, watching television or movies.



## Consequences of inequality

There are numerous consequences of inequality – that is, the circumstances produced by inequality. Here are some examples.

### Family breakdown

Socioeconomic inequality and other forms of disadvantage are significant causes of stress, not just on individuals but on families too, and the pressure can often be too much.

Many factors can contribute to family breakdown, including:

- financial stress
- domestic violence
- parental dysfunction
- unemployment
- substance abuse.

When dealing with family breakdown, it is important to minimise distress for both children and parents so that adjustment and recovery are easier for everyone. Adults will need advice about custody arrangements, housing, finances and mediation. The support you offer children will depend on their age and developmental stage.

Children experiencing parental separation may be confused, worried or sad and may need to grieve for the loss of their family unit. They may also be frightened or angry. Some may blame themselves or fear abandonment.

More than one in five Australian children will experience parental separation before they turn 18, and studies show that most eventually adjust well. The minority of children who experience long-term problems, such as serious mental illness, substance abuse and suicide attempts, tend to have witnessed severe conflict, such as frequent verbal or physical violence. These children are in need of extra support.

### Homelessness

The term homeless does not just describe people who live on the streets; it also covers those who do not have their own home and stay with family or friends or in temporary accommodation.

A 2016 census estimated that more than 116,000 people in Australia were homeless: around 21,000 of whom were living in supported accommodation and 8,200 were sleeping rough.

There are many reasons a person or family might become homeless, including

- family violence or breakdown
- economic hardship

- gambling addiction
- substance abuse
- mental illness.

It can be difficult to find employment or claim support payment when you are homeless. This is because you have no fixed address, and because attending job interviews is a challenge when you have so few resources. Homeless people are among the most vulnerable in our society. They may have difficulty securing shelter and food, as well as clean water for drinking, bathing and washing their clothes.

In some cases, affordable housing provided through social welfare programs is a solution to homelessness. However, homeless people often experience multiple forms of disadvantage and may require other forms of support too.

For more information about homelessness, you can find the most recent AIHW report at: [aspirelr.link/report-homelessness-services](https://aspirelr.link/report-homelessness-services)

## Social isolation

### Social isolation

A lack of social relationships or having few social interactions.

When people do not have the social, emotional or financial resources they need to engage with the world, it can lead to **social isolation**.

Social isolation can be harmful: it is associated with poor sleep, cognitive decline, a weaker immune system, potential heart problems and even early death.

There are many risk factors for social isolation, including:

- living alone
- old age
- disability
- limited English-language skills
- social phobias
- homelessness.

People who have a mental illness, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or eating disorders, are at a particularly high risk of social isolation. Stigma and feelings of unease or discomfort often cause other people to shun or avoid people with mental illnesses, exacerbating the other difficulties they experience.

Older people are also at a much higher risk than younger people and may experience acute feelings of isolation after the death of a spouse.



## Factors contributing to experiences of inequality

A range of factors can contribute to a person's experiences of inequality, including discrimination and prejudice. Here are some examples.

### Racism

**Racism** can limit an individual's or community's engagement with the education system. This can put them at a disadvantage both socially and economically by limiting their later access to employment. Cultural and language differences – including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – can be a barrier to participating in education and employment and accessing healthcare and other essential services.

Australian society was founded on the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and our social and cultural institutions reflect that history by privileging non-First Nations culture over First Nations ones. The promotion of a white Australia was a long-term official policy. The goal of which was to assimilate First Nations people into white society and prevent immigration from non-European countries. Though the white Australia policy was formally renounced in 1973 in favour of multiculturalism, the inequities built into our system from the outset persist and are being dismantled very slowly and gradually.

As a community worker, you need to:

- Understand the different forms of racism and their effects on marginalised groups, including First Nations people, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- Learn about the cultures of the communities you serve, so you can provide appropriate support.
- Recognise and be sensitive to the effects of trauma, isolation and social rejection on individuals, families and communities.

### Sexism and gender inequality

Thanks in large part to the efforts of the feminist movement, we now take for granted a woman's right to vote, to own property and to continue in paid employment after marriage. Yet, though overtly sexist language and behaviour are increasingly considered unacceptable in mainstream society, the powerful effects of systemic gender inequality persist.

Though women's participation in paid work has increased, women in heterosexual couples still do significantly more domestic work than men – regardless of the number of paid hours they do. This disparity becomes even more pronounced when heterosexual couples have children: in most families, the mother's hours in the paid workforce decrease, while the father's hours remain the same. For many women, time spent out of the workforce can result in a loss of confidence, professional connections and skill development. It also means less time to contribute to superannuation, which results in women retiring with less money than men.

#### Racism

Prejudice, discrimination or hatred towards someone because they are part of a racial or ethnic group, typically one that is marginalised.

Systemic racism is racism that underpins social and cultural institutions, privileging some groups while disadvantaging others.

Inequalities in the workplace persist too, despite the passage of legislation such as the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) and the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth). The Workplace Gender Equality Agency reported in February 2020 that, on average, Australian women earned \$242.90 less than men per week. The glass ceiling – the invisible barrier that stops women rising to management positions, regardless of their qualifications or achievements – is still firmly in place as well. If current trends continue, women are still 20 years away from equal representation in full-time management positions and 80 years away from having an equal chance of being promoted to CEO.

These sorts of systemic inequalities can be seen in other social institutions too, including education and healthcare. For example, the reproductive health needs of women in rural communities are often accorded low priority, forcing them to travel long distances for prenatal care and to give birth.

Some of the main objectives of feminist social policy are to ensure that:

- women and men have equal status, opportunity and access to resources and services
- families have access to affordable, high-quality childcare
- the social roles that women play are recognised and their contribution is valued.

#### Sexism

Prejudice, discrimination or stereotyping based on someone's sex or gender.

Feminism as a social movement has often been criticised for prioritising the voices and experiences of privileged white women. Community service workers need to be aware of this; if you are a woman, you cannot assume that other women's experience of **sexism** and gender inequality is the same as yours. You need to be ready to listen and respond to the voices of women whose experiences are different to yours.

## Homophobia and transphobia

#### Homophobia

Negative feelings and attitudes towards people who identify as or are perceived to be LGBTQI+.

Historically, being homosexual or transgender was regarded as deviant behaviour in Australian society because of **homophobia**. Some LGBTQI+ people sought treatment for their same sex attraction and/or gender identity. Others were forced to undergo treatment against their will. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) did not remove homosexuality from its official list of illnesses and disorders until 1984.

LGBTQI+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning) and intersex, with the '+' representing other minority gender identities and sexual orientations.

The LGBTQI+ community has been denied many of the rights taken for granted by other Australians. For example, sex between consenting adult men was illegal in every state until 1975. South Australia was the first state to change these laws, but homosexuality remained illegal in Tasmania until 1997. Until recently, many LGBTQI+ people in Australia kept their sexuality and/or gender identity a secret in the workplace and/or among their family.

In 1994, the federal government passed the *Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act*. Since then other laws have been passed, both at the federal and state level, granting LGBTQI+ people and same-sex couples various rights that other Australians already enjoyed, such as the right to adopt, to access family benefits and to access IVF in order to conceive a child.



The passage of marriage equality legislation in federal parliament in 2017 is often seen as the culmination of the LGBTQI+ community's fight for equal rights, but there are many other forms of legal inequality yet to be addressed. For example, religious schools are still permitted to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and staff and there is no federal law prohibiting vilification on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

Conversion therapy – which includes a range of different treatments such as aversion therapy, psychotherapy and hypnotherapy – is still legal in some states and territories in Australia. However, as of February 2021, it is banned in the ACT, Queensland and Victoria.

LGBTQI+ people in Australia still experience discrimination in many parts of everyday life, including education and employment, and when accessing healthcare and other services.

Community workers need to be aware of issues facing the LGBTQI+ community, especially among young LGBTQI+ people, including higher than average rates of substance misuse, mental illness, self-harm and suicide.

## Age and ageism

**Ageism** can occur in any setting, including the workplace. For example, some employers prefer to hire younger workers because they have false or skewed perceptions of older people, such as older people are harder to train or not innovative. Some employees have negative perceptions of younger workers. For example, they might view younger people as lazy and irresponsible. This is also a form of ageism.

### Ageism

A set of negative attitudes, stereotypes and assumptions commonly held about older people.

Just like other forms of discrimination, ageism can have a negative impact on an individual's self-esteem and self-worth and have flow-on effects such as social isolation and mental health difficulties.

While stereotypes may sometimes stem from real-life behaviours and characteristics, they are usually false, or at least exaggerated, and no individual ever fits a stereotype exactly. Stereotypes based on age are especially inaccurate: while an entire generation of people may share some characteristics, they are all individuals.

In many cultures, older people are valued and respected as the holders of wisdom and cultural knowledge. In Australian society, the emphasis on paid work as a measure of social status tends to devalue old age and reinforce negative stereotypes around ageing. This can lead older people to feel worthless and impact their mental wellbeing. Ageism can affect a person's role in their family and community: an older person in a family might be patronised or overlooked by other family members, neighbours and community groups who believe they have little to offer because they are older.

In Australia, issues relating to age are not limited to ageism. Social structures and policies can pose difficulties for specific age groups. For example, policies relating to childcare can make it difficult for some young children to access early childhood education and care.

This is not the result of ageism but of a system, meaning there are two streams of education. One stream (early childhood education and care) is primarily funded by individual families and run by for-profit organisations; the other stream (primary and secondary school education) is primarily funded and run by government.

These issues relating to age impact on individuals and families. For instance, finding and paying for a childcare place can be difficult for some families, leading to stress and financial difficulties.

Other examples of structures and policies that pose difficulties for specific age groups include:

- local planning decisions that limit the amount of safe play areas for children
- limited public transport services, which do not cater to the needs of young people who want to go out late at night.

As a community worker, you need to be aware of the stereotypes associated with the age groups you work with, as well as the unique barriers they and members of their family face because of their age.

## Example

### Possible effects and consequences of inequality

Belinda has been working in middle management at her organisation for eight years. When an opportunity arises to be promoted, she applies. But a younger male member of her current team is appointed to the position, despite having less experience, qualifications and skills. He came to the company two years ago, on the recommendation of a senior member of staff who was a personal friend and a member of the recent interview panel.

Belinda enquires into why she was overlooked in favour of someone with less experience. She is told that she did not address the application criteria in sufficient depth. She knows that she prepared an excellent application and is not satisfied with this response.



Belinda realises that it is not likely that she will ever be promoted within the company. She starts to look outside the organisation for other opportunities. After months of submitting applications with no success, she realises that her age (57) is a significant barrier to finding a more senior position in a new firm.

Meanwhile, her new manager has proven to be incapable of doing his new job and is relying more and more on Belinda's skills to make up for his shortcomings. This is frustrating and demoralising for Belinda, and she becomes depressed and withdrawn.

## Stereotypes

When we apply a **stereotype** to an individual, we assume they have characteristics that we believe are common to a specific group of people. Here are some examples:

- “Tom has a lot of tattoos – he must have been in prison.”
- “Ronit is American, so she'll be obnoxious.”
- “Neil is Muslim, so he's probably pretty conservative.”
- “Sam came to Australia as a refugee, so he probably grew up in poverty.”
- “Flossy has a disability, so she probably doesn't have many friends.”

There are a range of theories about how stereotypes develop. One theory is that when we see people over-represented in certain roles, we make assumptions about the traits associated with those roles and apply them to the entire group.

For example, we might see men over-represented in leadership roles and make assumptions that leadership roles require strength and decisiveness and then see all men as having those qualities.

Another theory about how stereotypes develop is based on human needs and behaviours. This theory suggests that human beings are predisposed to believing stereotypes because they fulfil our need to belong to a particular group. By stereotyping a person, we reiterate other people's difference from us. This clarifies that we belong to a specific group and other people do not.

For example, if you are Australian and you believe that Americans are obnoxious, you reinforce your belief that Australians are not like Americans. Therefore, Australians are not obnoxious and you belong to a better group of people (that is, non-obnoxious Australians).

### Stereotype

A fixed, over-generalised belief about a particular group or class of people.



Stereotypes can impact on how people behave and feel about themselves. For example, the stereotype that “boys are better at maths than girls” could create self-doubt for girls when it comes to doing maths and even affect their performance on maths tasks and tests. Poor performance can then lead to confirmation of the stereotype for both the individual and others, such as classmates, teachers and parents.

Stereotypes can be applied to and impact anyone, not just people from marginalised groups. For instance, stereotypes about girls being more emotionally attuned than boys can make boys question their emotional intelligence. You can probably think of other stereotypes that apply to people who are not in marginalised positions such as white people, heterosexual men and people who live in very wealthy suburbs.

Although we are predisposed to believing stereotypes, that does not mean that stereotypes cannot change. We know this because many stereotypes that existed in the past are no longer used as our understanding of the people they were applied to have changed.

## Practice Task 2

### Question 1

Which of the following factors can contribute to a person’s experiences of inequality? Select all that apply.

- Having a disability
- Identifying as heterosexual
- Being over 65 years of age
- Identifying as female
- Coming from a non-English speaking background

### Question 2

List three effects of inequality on individuals.



**Question 3**

Briefly describe the effects of inequality on families and communities.

**Question 4**

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Long-term unemployed people are less likely to smoke than people who are employed in paid work.	Yes / No
b. Children of parents who are long-term unemployed are more likely to experience long-term unemployment as adults compared to children who have at least one parents who is in paid employment.	Yes / No
c. Ageism has similar impacts as other forms of discrimination, such as racism and homophobia.	Yes / No
d. Issues relating to age in Australia primarily relate to ageism.	Yes / No
e. Stereotypes only affect people from marginalised groups.	Yes / No
f. There are multiple theories about how stereotypes develop.	Yes / No

**Question 5**

Describe why the belief that Australia is a level playing field (with equal opportunities for all) is viewed by some people as problematic.



## Summary

- Major institutions in Australian society include family, government, education, work, healthcare, aged care, the economy, law, media and religion.
- Community service workers need to understand the impact of these institutions on people's lives.
- An individual's ability to participate in society is determined by factors such as gender, race, cultural background, age, education, employment, health, socioeconomic status and where they live.
- In Australia, long-term unemployment refers to a period of unemployment lasting for more than a year.
- Long-term unemployment can have a profound effect on an individual's health, on their family and on the community they live in.
- Community service workers must understand how ageism and negative stereotypes affect different age groups.



# Learning Checkpoint 1

## Identify social and cultural issues impacting on people and society

### Part A

1. Identify five major social and cultural institutions in Australia and briefly describe the functions of each.



2. Which of the following systems of government are used in Australia? Tick all that apply.

- Communism
- Republic
- Representative democracy
- Dictatorship
- Constitutional monarchy

3. Briefly describe the principle of a separation of powers.

4. Match each economic system to its description.

A market economy	The government controls the production and pricing of goods and services.
A mixed economy	The government does not intervene in the economy or intervenes to a minimal extent.
A command economy	The government is partly involved in running the economy, along with the free market.

5. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. It is widely agreed in Australia that people are wealthy because they work hard.	Yes / No
b. In Australia, long-term unemployment is defined as a period of unemployment that lasts for more than two years.	Yes / No
c. The gap between rich and poor can have a negative impact on people who are wealthy because they need to pay more taxes.	Yes / No
d. The belief that people are rich because they work hard reinforces unequal social structures.	Yes / No
e. Humans being are predisposed to believing stereotypes.	Yes / No



**6. Identify three impacts that long-term unemployment can have on individuals.**

**7. Explain two impacts that long-term unemployment can have on families.**

**8. Identify an issue related to age in Australian society and describe its impact on individuals and their role within their family and community.**



**9.** Briefly outline an ideological belief or framework and its influence on social and sociological policy in Australia.

**10.** A local government decides to decrease funding for playgroups (social and educational support groups for young children and their parents) provided in a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Describe the potential impact of this policy decision upon the community services that operate in that community.



## Part B

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

### Case study

The Canetti family lives in a suburban house that they own. Mr and Mrs Canetti migrated to Australia from Italy in their early twenties. Mr Cannetti is now 54 and Mrs Canetti is 52. They have three children – Julia, aged 23, Alessandro, aged 17 and Angela, aged 15.

Mr Canetti owns and runs a small business. Mrs Canetti is a bookkeeper and does the accounts for the family business. When they first arrived to Australia, Mr Cannetti wanted to retrain as an engineer, but government policy at the time did not permit recently arrived migrants to study at university. The family business is struggling, and Mr Canetti has recently taken out a second mortgage on the house.

Julia lives in a nearby suburb with her husband, Carlo, and their three small children. Carlo often works away from home as a truck driver for a mining company. With the downturn in the mining sector, Carlo's job is not secure, so he has been taking more work away from home. Julia has a part-time job as a teacher's assistant. Mrs Canetti minds the children while Julia is at work, as they cannot afford to pay for childcare.

Alessandro is in his final year of high school. He has yet to tell his parents that he is gay, but most people at school know that he is. His parents would like him to continue to university; however, Alessandro is more interested in music. He loves heavy metal and wants to play in a heavy metal band. But when he tried to join a heavy metal band with some other students, they told him that having a gay guy in their band would ruin their tough image.

Alessandro has also been using marijuana and has recently been charged with possession of an illegal drug. He has not yet told his parents about this.

Angela attends a local all-girls Catholic high school. She loves cars and would like to leave school to become a mechanic, but her parents told her that being a mechanic is too “messy and dangerous” for a girl. Her school also does not offer electives that might help her achieve her goal to be a mechanic because the school administration assumes girls are not interested in those subjects.

Angela has recently met an Iranian boy, Hassan. Hassan's family is Muslim and neither family would approve of their relationship, so they are dating secretly. Angela has started skipping school and her grades are falling.



- 1. Identify one major institution that is affecting one person in the Cannetti family and describe how that institution is impacting them as an individual.**

- 2. Describe how the institutions impacting the individual members of the Cannetti family could impact the family as a whole.**

- 3. Explain how the institutions that are impacting on the individual members of the Cannetti family could also impact their community.**



**4.** Identify one person in the Cannetti family who has experienced systemic inequality. Describe what factors contributed to that inequality and the potential effects of that inequality on:

- the individual
- the family
- their community.

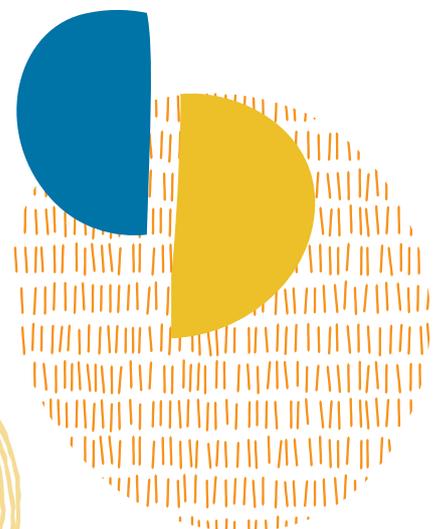
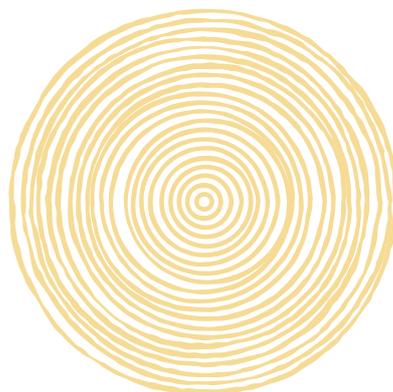
**5.** Identify one person in the Cannetti family who has been subjected to a stereotype and describe the potential impacts of this on them as an individual.





## Topic 2: Analyse impacts of social and cultural factors on people

- 2A Use available information to identify and analyse social and cultural factors
- 2B Clarify current health, wellbeing and associated needs
- 2C Make informed decisions about specific work to be undertaken



# 2A

## Use available information to identify and analyse social and cultural factors

**Good information will help you formulate programs and services specifically suited to people's needs.**

In the past, poor health and socioeconomic disadvantage were often seen as an individual's fault, rather than the result of a complex combination of social and cultural factors.

For example, addiction was seen as a failing of character, rather than a condition requiring treatment. The policy response to addiction was campaigns with the message 'just say no', as if people with alcoholism or drug addiction could simply decide not to drink or take drugs and only lacked the necessary willpower.

Similarly, poverty was often thought to be caused by laziness, not by social and economic inequality, and the unemployed were simply told to 'get a job'. Victim-blaming and negative stereotyping are still widespread, and people experiencing disadvantage are often stigmatised by others in society.

As a community service worker, you should not make assumptions based on stereotypes. You need to develop your research and observation skills, so you can collect and analyse information about the people and communities you work with, the social determinants that shape their lives and how they are affected by social institutions and social policy.

### Collecting information

To collect information about the social and cultural factors impacting a person, you first need to know exactly what information you are looking for.

The information you might need includes:

- the number of people affected by a situation or issue
- the age, gender or health status of the people affected
- the socioeconomic or employment status of the people affected
- the areas in which an issue is prevalent
- the availability of support services
- social factors affecting marginalised communities in the area
- cultural practices particular to marginalised communities in the area.



## Listening to the person

Active listening helps to develop a positive rapport and is a useful technique for eliciting information. Active listening involves five key strategies, each of which can be demonstrated through various means of verbal and non-verbal communication.

Active listening involves making a conscious effort to hear what another person is saying. When someone is actively listening, they are not distracted by what is going on around them.

Strategy	How to demonstrate this when asking questions
1. Pay attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face the person who you are asking questions to.</li> <li>• Give the person your undivided attention.</li> <li>• Do not look at your phone or watch other people in the room.</li> </ul>
2. Show you are listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of your body language – crossed arms can be read as judgement.</li> <li>• Use brief verbal comments to encourage the person (e.g. "Okay", "I see", "Yes, I understand what you're saying").</li> <li>• Use facial expressions to encourage the person, such as nodding and smiling.</li> </ul>
3. Provide feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on what the person has said by paraphrasing.</li> <li>• Summarise the person's comments.</li> <li>• Ask related and relevant questions.</li> </ul>
4. Respond appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try not to interrupt the person unnecessarily.</li> <li>• Respond openly and honestly.</li> <li>• Treat the other person respectfully.</li> </ul>
5. Defer judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate empathy and a non-judgemental attitude.</li> <li>• Avoid making assumptions.</li> <li>• Listen to the entire answer to your question before commenting.</li> </ul>

Adapted from: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/sites/default/files/docs/learningguide-activelistingening.pdf>

Some people will have had negative experiences of authority in the past and may not feel comfortable opening up. It is important to show through your language and behaviour that you view them as experts on their own lives and experience.

If you are developing a new program, for example, you need to find out what the person actually wants from such a program and might hope to gain by participating in it. Other factors you need to take into account include the person's:

- cultural background
- spoken languages
- literacy levels
- prior education, employment and skills.

The person’s history is important too, especially if they have experienced trauma. For example, a refugee who has fled persecution might be reluctant to deal with authorities, making it hard to connect them with the services they need. A person who has experienced trauma may need higher levels of support.

**Video: Active listening technique**

Watch this video to learn about a specific active listening model that can help you listen more effectively: [aspirelr.link/yt-active-listening](https://aspirelr.link/yt-active-listening)



**Additional sources of information**

In addition to speaking directly to the person, you may also benefit from other information that can provide you with an insight into the person’s situation. These sources of information include the following.

	Observing the community your service operates in.
	Observing how services and programs operate, and how people respond to them.
	Talking to your co-workers, your supervisor and other service providers.
	Consulting specialists, such as legal advisers and medical professionals.
	Consulting official sources, such as the Department of Social Services or the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
	Reading articles about an issue, situation or specific population group in the media and professional journals.

One example of an official source is the National Drug Strategy Household Survey. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare conducts this comprehensive survey every three years. The purpose of this survey is to:

- provide data about the use of tobacco, alcohol and other substances, including current levels of use and patterns and trends
- identify groups at high risk of drug abuse



- measure community awareness of legal and illegal drugs
- measure community support for various drug-related policies.

The data from this survey could be used to identify which groups within a community are at risk of drug abuse, for example.

## Evaluating sources

When doing your research, you should always evaluate sources to be sure they are legitimate, and that what they offer is relevant to the person and their needs.

If you are searching for information online, you should always make sure that the websites you consult and the information they provide is:

- accurate
- authoritative
- current
- objective
- relevant.

Here are some criteria you can use for this purpose.

<p><b>Accuracy</b></p>	<p>Authors can sometimes make mistakes or skew information to support their viewpoint. You need accurate information that is correct and precise.</p> <p>To determine whether online information is accurate, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• check its claims against an independent source</li> <li>• compare statistics and citations to their original source</li> <li>• check that the author's calculations are correct.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Authority</b></p>	<p>Authoritative information is written by a reputable individual with the appropriate credentials and/or published by a reputable organisation.</p> <p>To determine whether online information is authoritative, you can ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the page you are reading link back to the home page of a reputable organisation, such as a government department, university or well-regarded research institute?</li> <li>• Is the author credited?</li> <li>• What are the author's credentials?</li> <li>• Are the author's or organisation's contact details provided?</li> <li>• Does the author cite their sources?</li> <li>• Does the author's position reflect the current consensus in the field? If not, do they acknowledge that fact?</li> </ul>



<b>Currency</b>	<p>Current information is recent, and up to date with the latest research. To determine whether online information is current, you can ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How recent is the information you are looking at?</li><li>• Does the page you are looking at have a date on it?</li><li>• When was the page you are looking at last updated?</li><li>• When was the website last updated?</li><li>• When was the website originally created?</li></ul> <p>A website's longevity often adds to its credibility as a source, but remember, old information is not always taken down, so you could be looking at out-of-date material.</p>
<b>Objectivity</b>	<p>Objective information is based on fact, not opinion. It is collected carefully, avoiding assumption and bias. You should always look at a website's URL (web address), which tells you more about the purpose of the information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commercial domains end in .com – the information may promote a particular product or service.</li><li>• Educational domains end in .edu – the information is likely to be reliable, but the institution that produced it may have religious affiliations; for example, a Catholic-run university.</li><li>• Government domains end in .gov – the information is likely to be reliable.</li><li>• Not-for-profit organisations' domains end in .org – the information may promote the organisation's agenda.</li></ul> <p>You should ask questions about the aim or purpose of the website you are looking at, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the aim of this website?</li><li>• Why has the author or organisation published this information?</li><li>• Is the purpose of this information to market something or promote an agenda?</li></ul>
<b>Relevance</b>	<p>Relevant information is information you can use. It has a clear connection to the subject you are interested in. To determine whether online information is relevant, you can ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does this information relate to the subject I am researching?</li><li>• Does it relate to the right social groups?</li><li>• Is this information useful in an Australian context?</li><li>• Are the author's sources current?</li></ul>



## Evaluating providers

If you are considering referring an individual to another service or a program provided by another organisation, you need to check that they are reputable and that the services they provide are appropriate. To do this, you need to ask questions. For example, what are the other organisation's values? Do they align with your organisation's values?

Other questions might include:

- Is the organisation registered or associated with relevant professional bodies, such as the Australian Multicultural Council?
- Is the program endorsed and/or supported by government?
- Have other organisations within your sector heard of and/or used the program? What do they think of it?
- Does the program have clear, measurable outcomes? Is it run by reputable trainers? What are their qualifications?
- Is funding available to cover any associated costs?

### Example

#### Use available information to evaluate providers

Tuan is a community service worker with an organisation that helps immigrants settle into the local community. He recently read an article in the local newspaper about a program teaching new immigrants about Australian culture that has apparently been used very successfully in a nearby area. He wants to find out more.

The article includes contact details for the company that runs the program. Tuan calls and speaks to a woman who is very persuasive about the benefits of the program and what she can offer Tuan's organisation and the people it supports. She sends Tuan a link to the program's website. It looks professional and includes many testimonials from community organisations and program participants. It also has information about the fees the company charges to run the program.

Tuan does not need permission to purchase the program, but it is expensive, so he wants to make sure it is worth the money. He asks his supervisor about the program, but she has not heard of it. Tuan searches for more information online and finds a warning notice on a government website identifying the program as a scam.

## Analysing information

Analysing information means looking at it from different angles or perspectives to break it down, identify patterns and explore relationships.

Analysis is an important skill for community service workers. For example, you may know that a person has a mental illness and that they are socially isolated because of this. But you also need to identify other factors that may be contributing to their situation and look at different approaches you could take to support them.

Analysis may include looking at:

- current research on a person's condition (such as a mental illness) or situation (such as homelessness)
- social and cultural factors contributing to a situation
- relevant legislation
- available support services.

### Steps in conducting an analysis

1. Listen to the person, ask questions and note the issues they raise.
2. Observe the community your service operates in and note any relevant information.
3. Talk to your co-workers and other service providers and note any insights they offer.
4. Check reliable sources and note any relevant information you find.
5. Consider other factors that may be contributing to the situation.
6. Collect all of this information together, break it down and look for patterns and relationships.
7. Identify the most important issues or factors.
8. Use the insights you have gained from this analysis as a basis for action.

## Keeping up to date

The social and cultural factors affecting a person's life are constantly changing, so you need to keep up to date with current and ongoing research. For instance, the most recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey was conducted in 2022, so data from the 2016 survey is no longer up to date. If you offer a program that was developed using findings from the 2016 survey, you may need to update it to ensure the program is still relevant.

You should always take advantage of any courses or professional development your organisation offers – even if you attended a seminar on a particular topic in the past, the information may no longer be current.



## Practice Task 3

### Question 1

List four sources of information that a worker could use to identify social or cultural factors impacting upon a community.

### Question 2

Which of the following is the first step when conducting an analysis of social and cultural factors? Tick the correct response.

- Observing the community your service operates in.
- Listening to the person and asking them questions.
- Obtaining written information.
- Considering factors that might be contributing to the situation.
- Reading relevant materials.

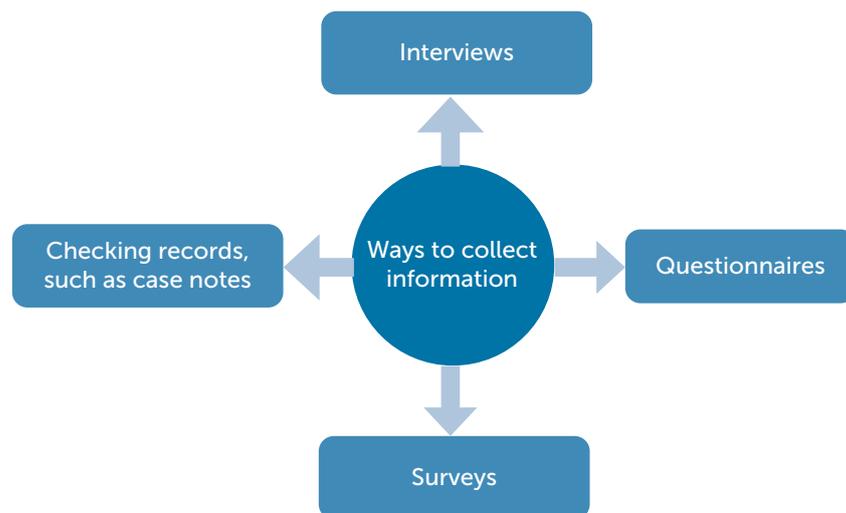
# 2B

## Clarify current health, wellbeing and associated needs

**A range of institutions play a role in maintaining and promoting the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.**

As a community service worker, you may or may not be directly involved in promoting public health, which can include educating individuals about exercise and nutrition or helping them to develop the skills they need to care for themselves. No matter what your role is, you will often need to coordinate your efforts with healthcare providers and other organisations and services to maximise the person's health and wellbeing. In addition to healthcare, an individual may also need access to housing, transport or other resources and supports.

You should start by establishing the person's current level of health and wellbeing and any associated needs.



You may need to collect information using several different strategies. It is important to take into account all of a person's needs before you start looking for solutions.

### Conducting interviews

To establish a person's current health and wellbeing, you can interview them directly.

A person's health and medical history are sensitive subjects, so you need to be careful when asking them questions about these issues. Show respect through your behaviour, language and tone.



When you speak to a person directly, you should note their:

- posture
- gait
- speech
- appearance
- personal hygiene
- ability to converse.

You should also ask them about:

- their general health
- their medical history
- any treatments they are receiving
- any medications they are taking.

You may need to also ask them about the type of housing they live in, the suburb/area they live in, the social activities they engage in and so on. All of this information is relevant and will help you to establish the person's needs. For example, if a person has just moved to a new community and does not know anyone, this information may explain why they are not eating well and have been feeling depressed.

You could also ask other people involved in the person's life and care about their health and wellbeing, such as family members and carers. But before you do, it is good practice to get the person's consent. In some circumstances, this may be a legal requirement. Your organisation will have policies and procedures relating to how you should obtain consent from the people you support.

The information you gather from the person and others should help you identify the person's specific needs, such as personal care support, a social activities program or advocacy for improved housing conditions. After interviewing, you can prepare a full observational record.

## **Questionnaires and surveys**

A questionnaire or survey can help you to identify an individual's or community's current levels of health and wellbeing and identify issues needing attention.

For example, you might do a questionnaire or survey if you are trying to understand issues with nutrition in a specific community. In this situation, you could conduct a survey at a local community centre to find out about the challenges that local people face in accessing fresh food or preparing meals. The answers will help you to identify what lies behind the problem and identify solutions to address them.

When you ask people to fill in a questionnaire or survey, explain as clearly and simply as you can why you are asking these questions and what you intend to do with the information. If they understand your purpose in asking for this information, they are more likely to participate and to be honest in their responses.

## Example

### Clarifying current health, wellbeing and associated needs

Anya works in the library at an aged care centre. She is responsible for managing the library resources and she also provides assistance to the many patrons who visit the facility each day.

She has noticed that many patrons stop and chat about their books while they are in the library. This blocks the aisles and disrupts those who want to have quiet time to read.

She decides to survey the library users to see if there is a need for a formal reader group and/or an informal reader cafe where patrons can relax and enjoy their discussions. She distributes a brief survey to library users and asks them to respond with their thoughts.

The results of her survey indicate overwhelming interest in the idea of a cafe for readers. So, Anya checks the relevant by-laws and makes enquiries to see if any local cafe owners would be interested in setting up a branch in a suitable space in the building, just adjacent to the library. With this information in hand, she is in a good position to approach the building manager to see if a lease can be negotiated.

The survey also reveals that a small number of library users are interested in a formal discussion group. With their permission, Anya puts them in touch with each other, and they decide to meet at each other's homes once a week to discuss what they are reading.

## Checking records

Another way to learn more about a person's health and wellbeing is to check any records or case notes that you have permission to view. Remember, a person's records may be confidential; if you are not sure what information you are permitted access to, ask your supervisor.

Case notes written by your co-workers and other professionals can be a useful source of additional information, as they may have noted something you are unaware of or have missed. For instance, a person who seems uncharacteristically lethargic and uncooperative may be grieving for a friend who has died. If they do not mention this to you, you have no way of knowing what has brought about this change, but a co-worker's notes may fill in the missing detail.



## Reviewing data

A range of organisations publish data relating to the health and wellbeing of specific population groups and communities. Most of this data is available online. Here are some examples:

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:
  - Reports and Data – [aspirelr.link/aihw-reports-data](https://aspirelr.link/aihw-reports-data)
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics – [aspirelr.link/abs-statistics](https://aspirelr.link/abs-statistics)
- The Department of Social Services – [aspirelr.link/department-social-services](https://aspirelr.link/department-social-services)
- Professional associations, such as the Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) – [aspirelr.link/aus-community-workers-association](https://aspirelr.link/aus-community-workers-association).

Reports and journal articles can also be a good way to access data, but it is important to establish that the author (or authors) and source are reputable; follow the aforementioned guidelines around establishing accuracy, authoritativeness, currency, objectivity and relevance of information.

Example of journals that may be relevant to the health and wellbeing of groups and communities in Australia include the following:

- Australian Journal of Social Issues – [aspirelr.link/aus-journal-social-issues](https://aspirelr.link/aus-journal-social-issues)
- Australian Journal of Primary Health – [aspirelr.link/aus-journal-primary-health](https://aspirelr.link/aus-journal-primary-health)
- Health Promotion Journal of Australia – [aspirelr.link/health-promotion-journal](https://aspirelr.link/health-promotion-journal)

Note that some of these journals are only accessible via an institutional subscription. However, some articles may be available via **open access** arrangements. Journals and articles that are open access are freely available to everyone, rather than just those people who have access to an institutional subscription.

## Factors impacting upon health and wellbeing

Non-medical factors that impact our health and wellbeing are known as **social determinants of health**. For example, if you live next to a busy highway, it can impact your respiratory health and increase your stress levels.

Genetic conditions are an example of a medical factor that influences health outcomes. They are not social determinants of health. For example, some people are born with a genetic predisposition to high cholesterol which, if not properly managed, can lead to heart disease.

However, if it is difficult for a person to access healthy food because they cannot afford it, this might cause them to have high cholesterol. In this case, a non-medical factor (that is, difficulty accessing healthy food) is influencing health outcomes.

### Open access

Free access to information and unrestricted use of electronic resources such as text, data, software and multi-media.

### Social determinants of health

Non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, such as income, inequality, food insecurity and housing.

**Video: Social determinants of health**

Watch this video to understand the concept of social determinants and how they can be addressed by practitioners in a health setting: [aspirelr.link/yt-social-determinants-of-health](https://aspirelr.link/yt-social-determinants-of-health)



**Housing**

Ideally, a person’s housing should be close to transport and services, employment opportunities and social and leisure activities. It should also be affordable: households that spend more than 50 per cent of their gross income on rent or mortgage payments are likely to suffer financial stress. For low-income households that figure drops to 30 per cent.

Home ownership is associated with better health outcomes for individuals, families and communities, but the high cost of housing means that it is out of reach for many Australians.

Housing that is poorly designed, planned or inadequately managed can have serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of residents and the entire community. For example, new developments on the outer edges of cities can lack essential amenities, such as early childhood education and care services, schools and public transport.

People have different housing needs at different stages of their lives. You should be aware of the types of housing available, so you can help individuals find affordable accommodation that best supports their health and wellbeing.

<p><b>Rental properties</b></p>	<p>Renting offers tenants flexibility; they do not need to stay on at the end of a lease if they decide they do not like the area or the property. If tenants are looking for security, this flexibility is not helpful. A landlord can put up the rent or ask them to move out at the end of the lease, even if the tenants would prefer to stay. The quality of rental housing can also be a problem, and many tenants report difficulties in arranging essential repairs and basic maintenance. In poor-quality rental properties, pest control and insufficient protection against heat, cold, draughts and noise may also be an issue.</p>
<p><b>Public or social housing</b></p>	<p>Public or social housing is rental housing owned and managed by government or non-government organisations. Rents are generally set below market levels and are determined by the income of the household. Since the 1990s, public housing has increasingly been targeted at only those in greatest need, including the homeless, people with disabilities and those on very low incomes. Access is managed using waiting lists; high-priority applicants may wait less than three months, while others may wait more than two years.</p>



<b>Boarding houses</b>	<p>Boarding houses are privately owned and run for a profit. They are an important source of low-cost accommodation and in many cases are a last resort, or only resort, for disadvantaged people on low incomes. A large number of people with disabilities, many of whom have been deinstitutionalised, live in boarding houses. The number of boarding houses is currently in decline due to a range of external factors, including the growing value of land in urban centres and stricter government regulations that make running a boarding house no longer as profitable.</p>
<b>Residential aged care</b>	<p>The majority of people living in residential aged care in Australia are over 65. People who live in residential care often have more acute needs than those who remain in their own homes, making access to healthcare particularly important. Living in residential aged care is a recognised risk factor for social isolation and disconnection from community. A community service worker can seek to increase residents' social contact, support the maintenance or development of social connections and create opportunities for engagement.</p>
<b>Supported independent living/specialist disability accommodation</b>	<p>Supported independent living (SIL) and specialist disability accommodation (SDA) are funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme. SIL provides help with daily tasks in a shared living arrangement. It is the role of community service workers to assist people as they develop the skills they need to live as independently as possible. SDA funding is provided to people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs to access accommodation designed or modified to meet their needs. The eligibility criteria for SDA are strict and the number of eligible people is small.</p>

## Transport

If people live in communities without public transport or if they are not within walking distance of buses, trains or trams, they may have difficulty accessing fresh food, recreational facilities, healthcare and support services. This is a particular problem for people in rural and remote communities. It also affects those who cannot drive or cannot afford to and those who have limited mobility, including some people with disabilities and older people who no longer have a driver's licence.

Sometimes it is not enough to put a person accessing support in touch with an organisation or to make an appointment for them. You may need to arrange transport for them too. Most areas have community transport services that can take individuals or groups to and from shopping centres, medical appointments and social and recreational activities as required. There are also programs subsidising taxis or other forms of private transport.

## Social support

A lack of social support can have a negative impact on people's physical and mental health. Poor physical and mental health can also lead to social isolation and chronic illness, stress and isolation can lead to substance abuse.

People dealing with illness may have to leave their jobs, which leads to a loss of social connections. They may also experience stigma: people receiving sickness benefits or workers compensation are sometimes viewed as bludgers, cheats or malingerers in Australian society.

Some people may not have a social network to draw on, while others may be cut off from their social support system. Some people withdraw from family or friends due to feeling hopeless or alienated.

### Example

#### Establishing current health, wellbeing and associated needs

Hilltown is in a low-socioeconomic status area with a large refugee community, high levels of unemployment and low levels of self-reported health and wellbeing. The community is often portrayed negatively in the media.

The workers at the Hilltown community service centre want to do more to support their community and improve general levels of health and wellbeing. They begin by talking to residents about the issues they face and the kind of support they need. They then research programs run by other community centres in similar areas.

After brainstorming possible options with the residents and workers from other agencies in the community, they come up with a concept they call 'The doors are always open'.

The idea is to make the centre a kind of hub – not only will it run its own programs, but it will also act as an access point, helping to connect residents with other organisations in the area so they can access those services.

The hub will be staffed by workers who speak community languages. One worker will be responsible for regularly updating a database that all staff can access. This database will contain details of the services offered by other organisations in the area, including healthcare, English-language and literacy programs, and education and training.



## Practice Task 4

### Question 1

Identify three methods that can be used to clarify the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups or communities.

### Question 2

Which of the following should be explained when you are conducting a survey? Tick all that apply.

- Why you are asking them questions
- How the questions were developed
- What you intend to do with the information
- Who else will be involved in the survey
- How the data from the survey will be analysed

# 2C

## Make informed decisions about specific work to be undertaken

**Over the course of their career, community service workers will need to make decisions about the work they undertake.**

Some examples of the type of decisions community service workers might need to make include deciding:

- if a person needs emergency accommodation
- what type of strategy to use to improve a person's engagement in a program
- deciding which initiative is likely to bring about the best outcome for a community.

The decisions you make should be informed by:

- the needs and preferences of the person
- an analysis of their situation
- the social and cultural factors impacting them
- your co-workers
- relevant legislation
- your organisation's values, policies and procedures.

You may also take into consideration the input of specialists and information from current research.

Solutions that are not based on careful consultation and up-to-date information from reliable sources are likely to fail. When you make an informed decision, you typically consider potential outcomes alongside the benefits and risks of different options.

Here is an example of an informed versus an uninformed decision.

An informed decision is a choice that is based upon information that is relevant to the issue at hand.

**The issue:** Omar is a chef and after a recent job search, he has been offered two positions – one is at a hotel and the other is at a restaurant. Omar needs to decide which job to take.

### An informed decision

Omar talks to a friend who has worked in a hotel and a friend who has worked in a restaurant. He reviews each position's salaries and conditions as well as the information on both company's websites. He reviews the salaries and conditions for each position. He considers which role aligns most closely with his lifestyle and goals. He discusses his options with his friends and then decides to take the job at the hotel based upon the salary, working conditions and location.



<p><b>An uninformed decision</b></p>	<p>Omar stresses about which choice to make. He speaks to a friend who has no experience in the industry. His friend tells him to flip a coin. Heads he takes the job at the restaurant. Tails he takes the job at the hotel. Omar flips a coin. Its heads. Omar contacts the restaurant manager and tells him he will take the job.</p>
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When you are deciding what work needs to be undertaken or what services need to be provided, your decision should be informed by the information you have gathered. This includes:

- information about the social and cultural factors impacting upon the person, groups or communities
- the current health, wellbeing and needs of the person, groups or communities.

Time management is important when making informed decisions. You want to make sure that you have a reasonable amount of time to make a decision without too much pressure. This means you might need to plan how much time you have to identify and analyse information and how much time you need to make an informed decision.

It is also useful to involve other people in the decision-making process. When making an informed decision, it is important to involve people who have an understanding of the issue and context, such as:

- a person you support or a group of people receiving support
- the person's family members and carers
- your co-workers
- other service providers in the community.

When weighing up the pros and cons of each option, some factors you might need to consider include the following.

<p><b>Cost</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A service might be unfeasible because a person cannot afford it.</li> <li>• Implementing a program or activity in a community might be unfeasible because it is outside your available budget.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ease of implementation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A service may be too difficult for a person to get to because they have mobility issues.</li> <li>• An activity within a neighbourhood might require trained facilitators who are not available in the local community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Risks</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An activity may be too confronting for a person who has a history of trauma.</li> <li>• A program may be inappropriate for a group of children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A service may not be culturally safe for a First Nations person.</li> <li>• An activity may not be appropriate for a group of people from a specific cultural background.</li> </ul>

A range of techniques can be used to assist you in the decision-making process. Here are some examples.

Brainstorming
You can brainstorm alone or in a group. You begin by identifying the issue or problem and then generating and sharing ideas. It is important to be open-minded and daring when coming up with and responding to ideas. Once you have a list of ideas, narrow down the options and make a decision.
Mind mapping
Mind mapping can be done alone or in a group. This technique involves creating a visual representation of the issue's different elements and how they relate to each other. The process of mind mapping can generate new ideas and help you determine the most feasible options.
SWOT analysis
A SWOT analysis involves identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to an issue. You could use this framework to assess different options. Get a piece of paper and divide it into four squares marked S, W, O and T. Now consider: what are the strengths of this option, what are the weaknesses, what opportunities does it offer and what are the potential threats or risks?

Regardless of the method you use to make informed decisions, the individual or community should always be a part of finding solutions and making decisions.

### Involving individuals and communities

Consulting the people affected by an issue has a positive effect on their self-esteem and their engagement with community services. It will also give you an 'on the ground' understanding of what approaches are most likely to work.

It is important to note, however, that you should never force individuals or community members to be part of an activity. It is up to them to decide whether they want to participate in a discussion or brainstorming session, for example. It may take time to build up trust with individuals and community members so they are willing to participate in these processes.

### Standards, policies and procedures

Standards, policies and procedures are used as benchmarks to measure the effectiveness of services and whether they are achieving their intended outcomes.

In many sectors, providers must meet legislated service standards to qualify for government funding. These standards are used to monitor service provision and outcomes. You should be familiar with the relevant legislation, as the work you do and any decisions you make must comply with it.

Organisations also have their own standards that their employees are expected to meet. These are often based on wider industry or sector standards. The organisation you work for will require you to make decisions in line with its values and to comply with its standards, policies and procedures.



Here are some examples of policies and procedures you may need to follow when making decisions about what work to undertake or what services to provide.

Privacy policies	May mean you cannot share information about an individual with your co-workers or with other service providers without their consent.
The person's rights and responsibilities policies	Might mean that individuals have a right to be involved in identifying which services and activities will best meet their needs.
Work health and safety policies	May mean that a risk assessment needs to be undertaken prior to implementing a new activity for individuals.

## Example

### Make informed decisions about specific work to be undertaken

Katie works with the schools in her local community to help students who are at risk of dropping out receive the support they need to ensure their ongoing attendance and engagement. Some of the students she works with come from minority religious groups.

Katie is a member of several professional organisations and reads their newsletters to keep up with research about barriers to education for young people at risk. One day she finds an article describing recent research into adapting the curriculum for students from minority backgrounds. Using the details from the article, she tracks down the original research and discovers some interesting statistics about positive outcomes from tailoring learning materials to suit students' individual needs.

After analysing this information, Katie decides to talk to teachers at the schools she works with. Together, they brainstorm ways to adapt classroom materials for students from minority religious groups. Katie asks the students to contribute their ideas too, to be sure the new materials will meet their needs.



## Practice Task 5

### Question 1

Match each decision-making technique to its description.

Mind mapping	Generating and sharing ideas with an open mind.
SWOT analysis	Creating a visual representation of different aspects of an issue.
Brainstorming	Using a piece of paper divided into four squares to analyse the feasibility of different options.

### Question 2

Describe the possible effects on the person when you include them in finding solutions to the issues affecting them and their communities.

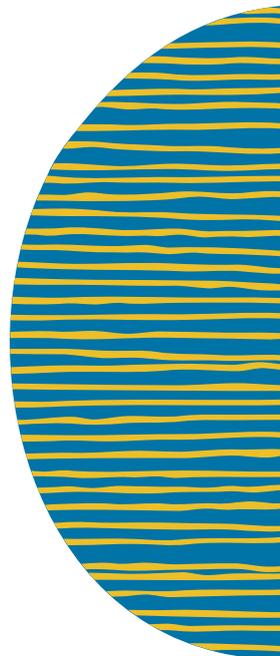
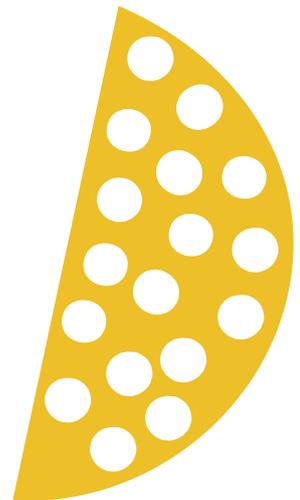
### Question 3

List two examples of information you need to collect in order to make informed decisions about specific services that will be provided to people.



## Summary

- To provide appropriate support, you need to understand the impact of social and cultural factors on the person accessing support and their wellbeing, their families and communities.
- As a community services worker, you need to develop your research and observation skills so you can find accurate, relevant information.
- Your first source of information is the person: you should listen to them and ask questions.
  - You can gain a broader perspective through observing and consulting other sources.
- Always evaluate sources to be sure their information is accurate, authoritative, current and objective, and that it is relevant to the person accessing support and their needs.
- The health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities is not just the responsibility of the healthcare system – social and community services also play a big part.
- A person's health and wellbeing are affected by social and cultural factors, such as access to housing, transport and social support.
- The person or community you are working with should always be a part of the discussion when you are looking for solutions and making decisions.
  - Colleagues and other professionals can also contribute useful ideas.
- Consulting the people affected by an issue has a positive effect on their self-esteem and their engagement with community services.
- Any decisions you make should also be informed by and comply with the relevant legislation and your organisation's values, standards, policies and procedures.





## Learning Checkpoint 2

### Analyse impacts of social and cultural factors on people

#### Part A

1. When using information gathered online, list the five criteria you should use to assess its reliability.

2. Number each step from 1 to 7 in the order you would follow to analyse information to identify the social and cultural factors impacting on a person, group or community.

	Talk to your co-workers and other service providers.
	Consider other factors that might be contributing to the situation.
	Observe the community.
	Identify the most important issues or factors.
	Check reliable sources.
	Listen to and ask the person questions.
	Collect the information, break it down and look for patterns and relationships.



3. Identify two sources of data that can be used to clarify the health and wellbeing of groups and communities.

4. Which of the following factors need to be considered when using a SWOT analysis to make an informed decision? Select all that apply.

- Supports
- Options
- Time
- Weaknesses
- Threats

## Part B

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

### Case study

Alma grew up in a small country town with her parents. Alma was diagnosed with schizophrenia when she was 19 and spent the following 15 years as an in-patient in a large psychiatric hospital in the city. While she was in hospital, all her teeth were extracted, and she has worn dentures since she was in her early twenties.

When Alma was discharged from the institution, she lived in a nearby boarding house for several years. It was overcrowded and in poor repair. While there, Alma received regular visits from a community psychiatric nurse who assisted with her medication. During this time, her only income was a disability pension from Centrelink.

Alma formed a relationship with Dave, one of the male boarders. During the day, Alma and Dave spent most of their time in hotels and bars. He was a heavy drinker and sometimes became abusive and violent towards Alma. Alma became pregnant but miscarried at four months. While she was in hospital, the boarding house was closed down and Dave left town. Alma was assisted by a social worker to find public housing and she moved into a one-bedroom unit in an inner-city area.

Now at age 68, Alma is registered with a local medical practice where her medication is prescribed by one of their GPs. There is a high staff turnover, and she is not always able to see the same GP. Alma has become overweight and has recently been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. She smokes heavily and has frequent respiratory infections. She also experiences occasional episodes when she hallucinates and hears voices.

Alma spends most of her time watching her favourite soap operas on TV. Although she has been living in her unit for many years, she does not know any of her neighbours and has no close friends. Her parents died many years ago.

1. Identify three social and cultural factors that may have had a negative effect on Alma's health and wellbeing over her lifetime.

- 2.** If you were working with Alma to clarify her current health, wellbeing and needs, list two other people (apart from Alma herself) who it might be beneficial for you to speak to.

- 3.** Explain why it would be important to involve Alma in any decisions regarding the services provided to her.

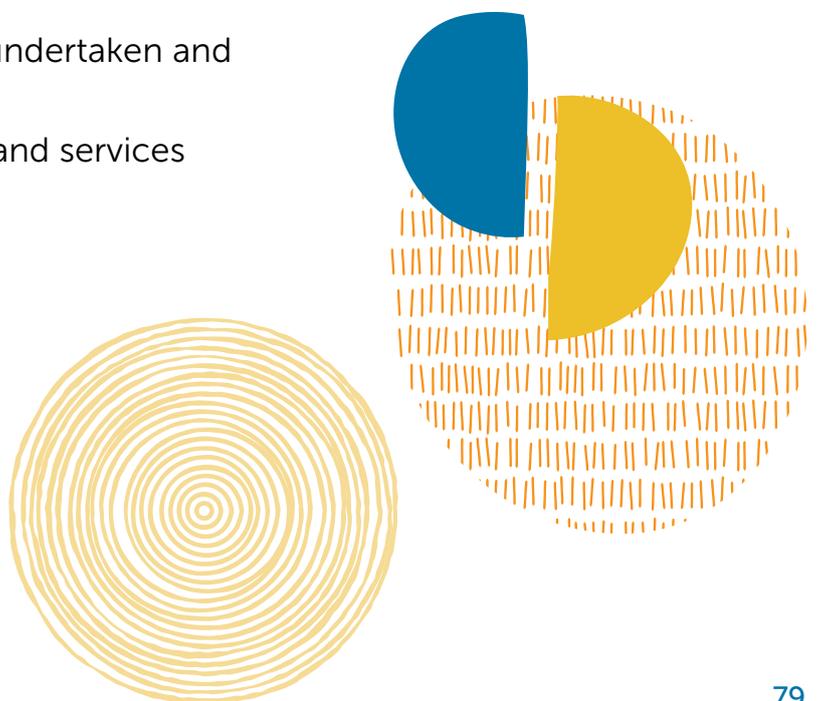
- 4.** Suggest two services for Alma based upon the sociocultural information provided and explain why you would suggest them.





## **Topic 3: Monitor impact of social and cultural factors on community work and services provided to people**

- 3A Monitor the impact of work undertaken and services provided
- 3B Review and revise programs and services



# 3A

## Monitor the impact of work undertaken and services provided

**Evaluating the impact of the work you undertake – and the services your organisation provides – is an essential part of the cycle of service planning and delivery.**

Programs and services must be monitored to ensure they are achieving their intended outcomes. The evaluation process allows individuals and organisations to reflect on what they have achieved. They can then use this information to improve the programs and services they provide. It also helps to ensure that programs and services can demonstrate accountability to funding bodies and alignment with organisational policies and relevant legislation.

Monitoring impact from the outset helps organisations and workers identify and address issues early on. For example, monitoring initial attendance rates at an activity can help gauge whether it is attracting the intended target group. For example, if most attendees at an activity are men, but the program is targeting both men and women, there may be specific social or cultural factors that are preventing women from attending. Investigating those factors and adjusting the program to minimise their impact may help resolve the issue.

### The evaluation process

Your role in monitoring the impact of the work you undertake – and the services your organisation provides – will depend upon your position within your organisation and your organisation's policies and procedures. However, regardless of your role, it is useful to understand the four steps of the evaluation process.

#### 1. Planning

Before providing a service, whether it is for an individual or for a group or community, it is important to decide on how it will be evaluated.

During the planning phase, it is important to clarify the following:

- the intended outcomes of the activity or program
- what measures will be used to determine whether the outcomes are met (e.g. person's satisfaction, their wellbeing)
- what methods will be used to collect data (e.g. surveys, interviews, observation)
- stakeholders involved in the evaluation (e.g. the person, staff, funding bodies)
- how evaluation findings will be shared.



<p><b>2. Implementation</b></p>	<p>Typically, the implementation of an evaluation begins as soon as a program or activity starts and continues until it is completed.</p> <p>During the implementation phase, data will be collected, recorded and analysed, which might then be used to revise the program or activity while it is being delivered.</p> <p>The data that is collected might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective data – captures a person’s experience of a program or service by asking them to describe their thoughts, feelings and opinions about it.</li> <li>• Objective data – measurements of things that can be counted or quantified, such as how many people participate in a program or how frequently people interact with a service.</li> </ul> <p>Both subjective and objective data are useful in monitoring the impact of your work.</p>
<p><b>3. Completion</b></p>	<p>After the program is completed, an overall evaluation is typically undertaken, examining the short- and long-term outcomes and its overall effectiveness.</p>
<p><b>4. Reporting</b></p>	<p>The results of the evaluation are disseminated and reported. This could be done in a written report, a brief summary or an oral presentation. In some cases, funding bodies require reports to be submitted in a specific format or template.</p> <p>The evaluation results should be reported on in a balanced and objective way. Full disclosure of both the strengths and weaknesses of the activity or program is critical to ensure ongoing improvements are made to meet people’s needs.</p>

Source: [https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce\\_program\\_phases.html](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_program_phases.html) <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/expert-panel-project/planning-evaluation>

The steps involved in the evaluation process do not always take place in a linear way. For example, an organisation might report the findings of evaluation to a funding body on an ongoing basis, not just when a program is completed.

Even if you are only monitoring the impact of the work you have done with an individual person, the same process applies. For instance, you will need to clarify the intended outcome of the work you are undertaking with that person and what measures you will use to determine whether the outcomes for the person are met. You will need to implement the action, complete the work and, most likely, report the outcome to your manager via your organisation’s internal reporting process.

For more information about how to undertake an evaluation of an activity or program see [aspirelr.link/aifs-plan-eval](https://aspirelr.link/aifs-plan-eval)



## Key terms

It is useful to also understand some of the common terms and phrases associated with the evaluation process. Here are some examples.

### Outcomes

Changes that occur due to an activity or program.

### Outputs

The activities that are delivered to achieve an outcome.

### Performance indicators

The things that are measured or observed to determine whether an outcome has been achieved.

### Sustainability

The extent to which an activity or program can be maintained in the long-term.

### Target Groups

The group you want to target with the activity or program and among whom you expect changes to occur.

<b>Outcomes</b>	Changes that occur for a person, group or community as a result of an activity or program.
<b>Outputs</b>	The activities that are delivered to achieve an outcome.
<b>Performance indicators</b>	<p>The things that are measured or observed to determine whether an outcome has been achieved.</p> <p>Examples of performance indicators include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attendance rates</li> <li>• person’s attitude</li> <li>• person’s wellbeing (e.g. self-esteem)</li> <li>• person’s health outcomes (e.g. physical fitness)</li> <li>• person’s educational outcomes (e.g. engagement in school).</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	The extent to which an activity or program can be maintained in the long-term. Factors that may need to be considered include the cost of the activity or program and the availability of staff.
<b>Target group</b>	The group you want to target with the activity or program and among whom you expect changes to occur.

## Being clear about intended outcomes

When planning, implementing and reporting on an evaluation, a key point to remember is the importance of being clear about the intended outcomes of a program or activity.

For example, you have decided to provide a type of activity to a community based on the social and cultural factors impacting them and their needs. So, in your evaluation, you need to assess whether:

- the social and cultural factors have been addressed in the way that was intended
- the needs of the community have been met.

You need to be clear about this during the planning phase when you are deciding what you are going to measure, during the implementation phase when you are analysing the data, and during the reporting phase when you are reporting on the evaluation findings.



## Role scope

To understand the scope of your role, you can check the duties described in your position description. Make sure you are aware of the limits of your responsibilities, which are determined by your role within the organisation, your qualifications and experience.

There may also be an evaluation plan associated with an activity or program, which outlines who has responsibility for which task. This should provide you with additional information about the scope of your role.

People involved in evaluation		What processes they might be involved in
	<p>People accessing support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing data in the form of completed surveys or participation in focus groups or interviews.</li> <li>• Assisting with the collection of data.</li> <li>• Interpreting and analysing data.</li> </ul>
	<p>Frontline workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collecting and recording data.</li> <li>• Reporting on challenges that relate to collecting or recording data.</li> <li>• Collating, interpreting and analysing data.</li> </ul>
	<p>IT/operational staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing data collection methods and processes (e.g. online survey).</li> <li>• Keeping track of what data is being collected and where it is being stored.</li> <li>• Collating and presenting data.</li> </ul>
	<p>Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating the data collection process.</li> <li>• Responding to challenges associated with data collection and recording.</li> <li>• Advising on or approving changes to programs and services based on evaluation findings.</li> </ul>

Check with your manager or supervisor if you are uncertain about the scope of your role or your responsibilities when monitoring the impact of the work you undertake. Some of your responsibilities might include:

- collecting data from people you support via methods such as surveys and interviews
- undertaking observations of activities, programs and services
- recording and submitting data (e.g. attendance rates)
- analysing data
- reporting (or assisting with reports) on findings
- contributing to evaluation activities (e.g. focus groups, interviews)
- providing feedback on evaluation processes.

If you work outside the scope of your role when it comes to monitoring the impact of your work and your organisation, you may breach your organisation's ethical and/or legal responsibilities towards the people you support. For example, if you collect personal information from the person without approval, you could breach laws regarding privacy and confidentiality.

## Example

### Monitoring the impact of work and services

Angela is a case worker at a non-government agency that supports young people from low-socioeconomic status and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Angela is studying part-time for a diploma of community services. As part of her studies, Angela is helping to develop and implement a program to support young refugees in the area, whose school attendance and completion rates are low. The program is based on research that identifies risk factors for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Angela and her colleagues work together to develop a program to encourage teachers to value their students' cultural diversity and provide learning experiences that promote biculturalism. The program also involves educating the students' parents so that they will support and encourage the bicultural approach.



The team must decide on performance indicators, monitor the program, review it and report on its outcomes. They decide that the program will have succeeded if the students have:

- a sense of hope for the future
- a feeling of connection to the school community
- support from their families both to maintain connections to their heritage culture and to develop connections to Australian culture
- improved school attendance rates (as a measure of the students' engagement).

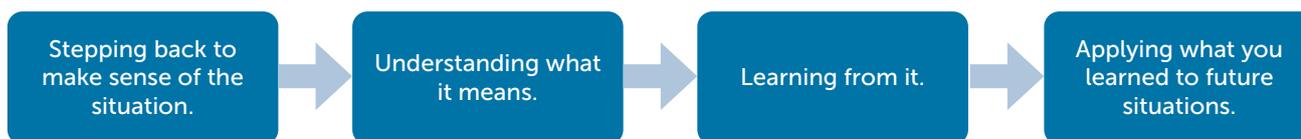
Over a six-month period, Angela helps to conduct interviews with the students before the program starts and after it has ended.

At the end of the program, the students report greater optimism about the future and a stronger feeling of connection to the school community. Their attendance rates have improved, and they say that their families are now more supportive of their efforts to negotiate their two cultures.

## Monitoring your own work

The process of monitoring and reflecting on your work should be a routine part of your practice.

Take some time out to reflect on your interactions with the people you support and colleagues. Reflective practices involve the following steps.



For example, after meeting with a person, reflect on how the interaction went.

Try asking:

- Was there anything you would do differently if you could?
- Did you respect the person's right to make decisions about their life?
- Did you respect the values and beliefs of the person, even if they differ from yours?
- Did you follow organisational policies and procedures?
- Did you work within the boundaries of your role?
- Keep notes recording your reflections; this is data that may come in handy later when you are reviewing the impact of the work you have undertaken.

Monitoring your own work through self-reflection can help you to do a better job and provide more effective support to a person.

You could take a similar approach when working with your colleagues. For example, after a planning meeting with colleagues, take a moment to reflect on your role and contributions:

- Did you demonstrate a collaborative approach?
- Did you demonstrate a willingness to listen to others?
- Were you open to new ideas and willing to share your concerns?

Again, keep notes on your reflections.

The self-reflection process	
1	Select a workplace experience, situation or event to reflect on.
2	Describe and unpack the experience.
3	Analyse your experience by examining the emotions and behaviours you associated with it.
4	Interpret your response or reaction to the experience.
5	Explore the alternatives and rethink how you will respond in the future.
6	Take action with new intent and information.

### Video: The art of reflection

Watch this video to learn more about how to undertake reflection: [aspirelr.link/yt-art-of-reflection](https://www.aspirelr.link/yt-art-of-reflection)

Pay particular attention to the six stages of the reflective cycle and what each stage entails



## Asking for feedback

Your co-workers, supervisor and other professionals are also a useful resource when monitoring your work.

Choose the right time to ask your supervisor how they think you are going and make sure you use your active listening skills when they provide feedback. Ask a trusted colleague out for a coffee and ask if they would be willing to share their observations of your strengths and any areas for improvement.

Here are some tips that can help make the feedback process positive and productive for both you and your colleagues.

- Be specific about what you want feedback on (e.g. "I was wondering if I can get some feedback on my interaction with people accessing support").
- Prepare a set of questions to ask the person you want feedback from and, where feasible and appropriate, give them the opportunity to read the questions before you meet with them.



- Ask open questions when seeking feedback. Open questions cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' and often begin with the word 'why' or 'how'. Answers to open questions will provide you with a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of your performance.
- Be aware of how you are feeling when you listen to the feedback and manage your emotional responses appropriately.
- Ask for specific examples if you need help understanding the feedback, e.g. "What would have been a better way of asking that question?", "What do you think I should do differently next time?".
- Thank the person for giving you feedback, even if you do not agree with it.

Source: [https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/463728/art\\_feedback.pdf](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/463728/art_feedback.pdf)

Make sure you apply what you learn during the process of reflection and feedback. You may need to revise your practice to better meet the needs of the person you support, as well as the groups and communities that you work with.

## Organisational policies and procedures

When monitoring the impact of the work you undertake – or the services your organisation provides – you need to make sure you follow your organisation's **policies** and **procedures**.

Your organisation's policies and procedures help to ensure that it is operating ethically and in alignment with relevant legislation. For example, every organisation that collects personal information from people will have policies relating to data collection. This ensures that the organisation is meeting their legislative requirements relating to privacy and confidentiality and that each person is being treated in a respectful and ethical way.

Here are some examples of policies and procedures for data collection.

Collecting data at a specific time	To avoid overwhelming the person, you may only be allowed to survey them once every month.
Following specific procedures for storing the person's data	Written surveys typically need to be stored in a secure location for privacy reasons. Data that is stored electronically should be password protected so it is only accessible to authorised personnel.
De-identifying data	Any information that could identify the person – such as their name, occupation or address – needs to be removed; for example, you may need to remove identifying information from an interview transcript.

**Policy**  
A course of action proposed by an organisation as a basis for making decisions..

**Procedures**  
An established or official way of doing something.

You should also be familiar with any other codes of conduct or ethics used in your organisation. For instance, your organisation may have ethical guidelines around rewarding a person for participating in evaluation activities (e.g. providing people with vouchers for participating in a focus group).



Not all organisations have a code of ethics; however, there are steps that every worker can take to ensure they are working in an ethical way. These include:

- following your organisation’s policies and procedures
- complying with the relevant code of ethics, professional standards and relevant legislation
- ensuring you work within the boundaries of your role.

For more information on workers’ ethical responsibilities towards the person accessing services, colleagues and employers, visit the Australian Community Workers Association’s code of ethics at: [aspirelr.link/acwa-code-of-ethics](https://aspirelr.link/acwa-code-of-ethics)

## Practice Task 6

### Question 1

Number each step in the evaluation process from 1 to 4.

	Implementation
	Completion
	Reporting
	Planning

### Question 2

List three actions a worker can take to monitor and review the effectiveness of work undertaken or services provided to people that is within the scope of their job role.



**Question 3**

Identify two policies or procedures that a worker might need to follow when monitoring the impact of their work.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their answer to the question.

# 3 B

## Review and revise programs and services

**Reviewing your policies, procedures and outcomes will help you understand what works and what does not and why this is so.**

How often you review your work depends on the service you are providing, the internal policies of your organisation and the legislative or funding requirements. Many organisations conduct a progress review about halfway through a program or service's delivery cycle; nearly all conduct a final review at the end.

If a program is successful, it is useful to have evidence you can present to funding bodies and managers to justify its continuation. If it needs improvement, analysing and evaluating your data will help you identify the changes you should make. For example, steps you can take to reduce or eliminate the negative effects of social and cultural factors on outcomes for people accessing services. The final step in a review is often to write a report, making a list of recommendations for future improvements.

### Collating and analysing data

Collation involves collecting all the data you have gathered and organising it in a way that makes it easier to analyse. For example, you might need to print out all your notes from your interactions with people accessing support and place them in a folder, so you can work through them methodically.

After collating your data, the next step is to analyse it. When you analyse data, you seek to make sense of it. The process of analysis involves determining the significance and implications of the data collected.

Some of the questions you might consider when undertaking an analysis of data include the following.

- Were the intended outcomes of the strategy, program or activity achieved?
- Which of the intended outcomes were achieved? Which intended outcomes were not achieved?
- Which activities or strategies worked well? Which did not work well? Why?
- Were the intended outcomes achieved for the target group?
- Were the intended outcomes only achieved for some members of the target group? Who and why?



When undertaking your analysis, keep in mind two things:

1. The social and cultural factors you identified that impact on the person, group or community
2. The person's, group or community's current health and wellbeing needs.

These two issues formed the basis of your decision about what work to undertake or what service to provide. Therefore, they should also have informed how the activity or program was evaluated.

For example, perhaps you and your colleagues delivered a program to a group of young people from refugee backgrounds who are significantly impacted by racism and unemployment. Based on your research and conversations with these young people, you and your colleagues sought to meet their needs for:

- activities to enhance self-esteem and self-worth
- activities to build cultural pride
- culturally appropriate job training opportunities.

When analysing data to determine the effectiveness of this program, more specific questions you might ask include the following.

- Was there an improvement in participants' self-esteem?
- Was there a reduction in participants' sense of powerlessness?
- Did participants demonstrate an increased willingness to pursue employment opportunities that matched their interests?
- Was there an increase in participants' engagement in the job market?

Of course, you can only answer these questions if the right data was collected. This is why the planning phase of the evaluation is so important: you need to make sure you are clear about the intended objectives of the activity or program that is being delivered and make sure that the data you collect will allow you to determine whether those objectives have been met.

## Identifying additional issues

When analysing the data, you might also identify additional issues relating to social or cultural factors impacting on a person, group or community.

For example, perhaps when analysing the program for young people from refugee backgrounds, you find that there was an increase in female participants' willingness to pursue employment opportunities but no increase among male participants. This suggests that gender is a social factor that is impacting on participants' experiences of the program.

Other social and cultural factors include the following. Examples have been provided to illustrate the impact of each factor.

<b>Age</b>	The activity is not inclusive or appropriate for older people, even though they are one of the target groups.
<b>Cultural beliefs and values</b>	The activity does not align with the cultural beliefs of the target group.
<b>Disability</b>	The activity is not accessible to individuals with a disability.
<b>Education levels</b>	The program relies on high levels of literacy, but many participants have not completed high school.
<b>Financial hardship</b>	The service increased its fees and is now too expensive for the person.
<b>Geographic location</b>	The service is in a location that is a long way from the person's home.
<b>Homophobia and transphobia</b>	The activity relies on written materials that are outdated and potentially offensive to people who are same-sex attracted or gender diverse.

## Revising organisational policies and procedures

Revising your organisation's policies and procedures is critical to the ongoing success and potential longevity of programs and services.

Often, workers and managers think of policies and procedures as inflexible, and once developed, they are there to stay. This is flawed thinking – policies and procedures should be treated as living documents that adapt and change as the organisation, programs and services change. While the core elements of policy may remain the same, the details should reflect current circumstances and industry.

Policy and procedure reviews may be conducted at scheduled times throughout the year or annually or may be conducted as the organisation experiences change. Organisational change can be brought about by changes to legislation, funding or from feedback and complaints. Although these changes may not affect every policy, it does allow you to focus on key policies that are impacted by the changes at hand. For example, if feedback collected about a program indicates that certain groups within the community have been excluded from participation due to the gender of facilitators, reviewing policies and procedures related to recruitment and participant engagement and enrolment would be warranted.

Once policies needing updating have been identified, policy revisions are required. The following lists the best practice for updating policies and procedures:

### Identify the people required to update the policy

- This could include managers, the HR department or executives.

### Explain why the change is needed and what needs to occur

- Be sure to focus on the key policies that are impacted by the changes at hand.



#### **Undertake the review**

- Is the policy or procedure having the desired effect; for example, is it reaching its objective or goal?
- Is the policy current and relevant?

#### **Document all comments and changes from every person involved in the review**

- No essential feedback should be missed.

#### **Develop a final policy draft**

- The update may go through multiple drafts before reaching this final stage.

#### **Get approval for the policy change**

- You may need to provide background information and reasoning for the change if the person authorising the change has not been involved in the revision.

#### **Finally, distribute the new policy and procedures to colleagues**

- Ensure they are educated on what the change requires.
- Ask colleagues to sign-off to acknowledge they have read and understood the document.

#### **Depending on the policy change, training on new processes or requirements may be necessary**

- This ensures that the policy will be properly implemented by all employees.

Revising policies and procedures is essential to address any social and cultural issues that have been identified, as this will enhance outcomes for persons, groups or communities. For example, changing enrolment procedures to include a pre-enrolment interview, can help identify and clarify a person's cultural and language needs. This can ensure the right facilitators are employed and any additional resources are acquired, such as interpreters or communication aids.

## **Revising programs and services**

It could be argued that there is no point evaluating a program or service if the findings of the evaluation are never applied or acted on. You cannot ignore the signs that a program is not working or try to persevere with a program that is not achieving the desired outcomes. However, this does not mean you have to cancel the program.

When you evaluate a program or service, you want to make sure it is working in the way it was initially intended. If it is not working or is only working for some people or in some ways but not others, it needs to be revised. Making revisions and adjustments helps ensure the service you provide has the best chance of success for the target group.

There could be numerous reasons why a program is not achieving the desired outcomes. For example, a support group aimed at young single mothers is unlikely to do well if no childcare is provided, but there could be other reasons too, such as a lack of public transport in the area. Providing childcare might not be enough to improve attendance; you might also need to provide a transport service to pick participants up from their homes or give them cab vouchers.

## Example

### Reviewing and revising programs and services

Ron is a Team Leader at a service that provides supports for people experiencing long-term unemployment. He and his team have recently implemented a program for people they support, which included:

- guest speakers from local businesses and industries
- training for participants in interview skills, literacy, numeracy and the use of technology
- volunteer work placements.

Ron and his team have completed the monitoring and review phases of the program. As he writes his final report, Ron thinks about how to improve the program.

The program worked well for some participants, but social and cultural factors limited its effectiveness for others. These factors included:

- an inability to concentrate in a formal learning environment
- a lack of social skills while undertaking the volunteer work placement
- frequent absences due to childcare issues.

To ensure that the program continues to receive funding, Ron decides he needs to make adjustments to ensure all participants can benefit from it in the future. He makes a list of potential adjustments that could be made:

- do intake interviews and/or a pre-program assessment with all participants to identify individual goals and needs
- do exit interviews and/or a post-program assessment to collect information from the participants about their experiences, what they have achieved and any changes they can suggest
- collect feedback from volunteer workers to identify issues with social skills.



## The process of revision

Revising a program means making corrections or amendments to it based on further evidence or situational changes. The process you undertake to revise a program or service will depend upon:

- your role and responsibilities
- your organisational policies and procedures
- the nature of the program or service (e.g., is it for one person or for a group)
- the resources available to you and/or your organisation.

The process and questions outlined below can be used when reviewing a service or program.

1. Identify any aspects of the program or service that are not being achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is not working and for whom?</li> <li>• What needs to be changed?</li> </ul>
2. Analyse the impact of any social or cultural factors relevant to the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the program successfully addressing the social and cultural factors it was intended to address? If not, why?</li> <li>• Are there additional social and cultural factors that are impacting on the effectiveness of the program? What are they?</li> </ul>
3. Identify the program's strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working well?</li> <li>• What outcomes have been achieved?</li> </ul>
4. Identify potential improvements, adjustments or alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What things need to be changed or done differently to make the program more effective?</li> <li>• What options are available to us when it comes to revising the program? Which options are feasible?</li> <li>• Who needs to be involved in the process of revising the program? What approval processes (if any) are required to make these changes?</li> </ul>

## Consulting with others

In the vast majority of cases, you will need to consult with others before you make significant changes to a program or service.

For example, if an evaluation indicates that an activity needs to be run twice a week rather than once a week, you will most likely need to consult with your manager or another senior member of staff to determine whether this is feasible.

You may need to work with a team of people to explore different options for revising a program to determine which is the most feasible.



For example, perhaps an evaluation demonstrates that a parenting program is not effective for female participants under the age of 25. Interviews with participants indicate that young mothers attending the program feel excluded from the group and find it difficult to relate to the other mothers.

A team of people then come together – including you, three of your colleagues, your manager and two participants – to determine how to improve the program for young mothers. The team comes up with three different ideas:

- set up a separate session for parents under the age of 25
- implement a buddy system where younger mothers are matched with older mothers to encourage a more inclusive environment
- employ an extra facilitator who has experience working with young people who can work in partnership with the other facilitators to encourage a more inclusive environment for young mothers.

The team could then use the decision-making process described in Topic 2 to determine which of these options is most feasible.

Even if you are only making changes to your own individual practice, it is useful to consult with others before you make those adjustments. For example, perhaps you have worked with a person to meet their needs for long-term housing. After monitoring the impact of the work you have undertaken, you have identified that you need to be clearer with the people you support about professional boundaries. By consulting with your supervisor and colleagues, you could learn more about the most effective ways to maintain professional boundaries with people receiving services.

## Practice Task 7

### Question 1

Provide four questions a worker could ask when analysing data to review the effectiveness of a program.



### Question 2

Which of the following are social or cultural factors that might impact on the effectiveness of a program? Tick all that apply.

- Cultural beliefs and values.
- Access to sporting facilities.
- Financial hardship.
- Geographic location.
- Homophobia and transphobia.

### Question 3

Provide three examples of how changing a program to address a social or cultural issue could improve outcomes for a specific group of people.

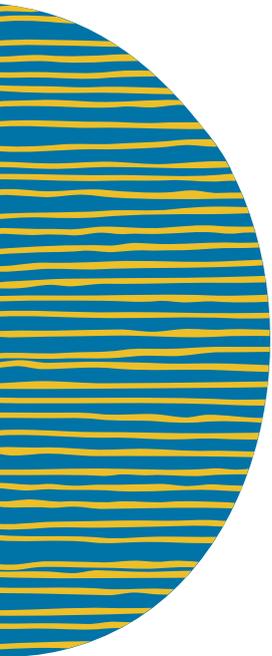
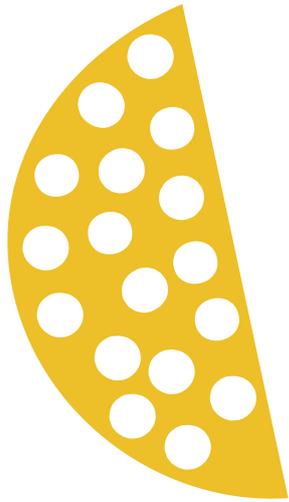
### Question 4

Explain four actions you can take to revise organisational policies and procedures when looking to enhance outcomes for program participants.



## Summary

- The evaluation processes reviews planning, implementation, completion and reporting.
- When monitoring the impact of the work you undertake, you need to ensure you work within the boundaries of your role.
- As a community service worker, you need to be familiar with organisational policies and procedures, so you work in a way that meets your organisation's policies, procedures and legal obligations.
- Most programs delivered by community services organisations are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.
- If a program or service does not meet its outcomes, you need to find out why and make appropriate adjustments.





## Learning Checkpoint 3

### Monitor impact of social and cultural factors on community work and services provided to people

#### Part A

1. Which of the following resources can help you monitor the impact of your work role when providing services to people accessing support? Tick all that apply.
  - The position description.
  - The evaluation plan.
  - The organisation's privacy policy.
  - Their supervisor/manager.
  - The organisation's code of ethics.
2. Explain the evaluation process involved in monitoring the impact of work undertaken and services provided to people.



**3.** Briefly explain what might happen if a worker does not follow organisational policies and procedures when monitoring the impact of a program for people accessing support.

**4.** Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow when reflecting on your own work and impact when delivering services.

	Analyse your experience by examining the emotions and behaviours you associated with it.
	Take action based on what you have learned.
	Describe and unpack the experience.
	Select a workplace experience to reflect on.
	Interpret your response or reaction to the experience.
	Explore the alternatives and rethink how you will respond in the future.

**5.** Explain what ‘collating’ and ‘analysing’ data involves when reviewing the effectiveness of work undertaken and services provided.



6. Explain how a worker would know if a group activity provided within a community is addressing the social and cultural issues impacting that community.

## Part B

### Case study

Nour is a Community Engagement Officer at a not-for-profit organisation that provides a range of services to children, families, young people, adults and seniors. She works in a disadvantaged outer-suburban area with high rates of unemployment, low levels of education and consistently higher than average rates of child protection reports.

Nour and her colleagues worked with a group of community members to develop a program for long-term unemployed parents in the area. Data from multiple sources, in addition to feedback from the local community, indicated that long-term unemployed parents in the community often lack confidence in their parenting role and do not know where to go for parenting support. Local service providers have suggested that this phenomenon may explain the higher-than-average rates of child protection reports in the area.



The program involves 12 sessions of 1 hour, each led by a trained facilitator. The first half of each session is devoted to a group discussion about parenting challenges. The second half of the session is devoted to educating parents about child development and parenting difficulties. Participants are provided with written materials for the purpose of education.

The objectives of the program Nour and her colleagues are implementing include:

- participants are confident in their parenting role
- participants know how to support the positive development of their children
- parents know when and how to seek support for parenting difficulties.

Nour is one of the workers who will be collecting data from the people attending the program, in the form of surveys.

1. When collecting data from participants, identify two organisational policies or procedures that Nour might need to follow.



In the community that Nour works, there are few jobs available because of a downturn in the industries that once dominated the area; however, community members also report that when they go for jobs outside of the area, they are often 'looked down upon' by others because of the reputation of the area where they live.

Up until recently, the area was not culturally diverse; however, in the last few years a small community of refugees from the Middle East have moved to the area. There are some tensions between young people whose families have lived in the area for generations and young people from refugee backgrounds. Young people from refugee backgrounds report that they are often told to 'go back to where they came from' by long-term residents in the community.

**2.** Identify two social or cultural factors impacting upon this community.

Four weeks into the program, the parents who are participating report a high level of satisfaction with the program. However, the data indicates that very few parents from non-English speaking backgrounds are attending. Moreover, although the region has a higher-than-average rate of teenage pregnancies, very few parents under the age of 20 are attending the program. The team meets to decide how the program could be revised.

**3.** Identify one social factor or cultural factor that impacts upon the effectiveness of the program.



- 4.** Suggest two ways that Nour and her team could revise the program, so it better addresses the social and cultural factors impacting on the community.

- 5.** List two organisational policies or procedures that Nour might need to revise to better address social and cultural issues and enhance outcomes for the group and community.



# Glossary

## Ageism

A set of negative attitudes, stereotypes and assumptions commonly held about older people.

## Discrimination

The act of excluding or treating a person differently based solely on an attribute such as disability, age, race or sexual orientation.

## Economy

The country's production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money.

## Egalitarian

Belief that everyone is equal and deserves equal opportunities and rights.

## Homophobia

Negative feelings and attitudes towards people who identify as or are perceived to be LGBTQI+.

## Intersectionality

The ways in which multiple aspects of a person's identity can result in overlapping forms of discrimination.

## Libertarianism

An ideology that promotes individualism and individual rights, opposes government intervention and supports the free market.

## Neoliberalism

An ideology that promotes the benefits of the free market and seeks to limit public spending and government regulation.

## Open access

Free access to information and unrestricted use of electronic resources such as text, data, software and multi-media.

## Outcomes

Changes that occur due to an activity or program.

## Outputs

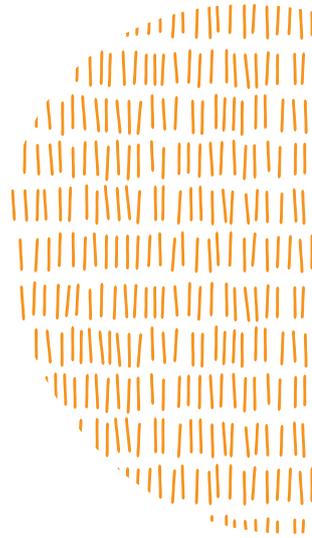
The activities that are delivered to achieve an outcome.

## Performance indicators

The things that are measured or observed to determine whether an outcome has been achieved.

## Policy

A course of action proposed by an organisation as a basis for making decisions.



### **Populism**

An ideology that promotes the interests of so-called ordinary people who disapprove of elite establishments.

### **Procedure**

An established or official way of doing something.

### **Racism**

Prejudice, discrimination or hatred towards someone because they are part of a racial or ethnic group, typically one that is marginalised.

### **Sexism**

Prejudice, discrimination or stereotyping based on someone's sex or gender.

### **Social determinants of health**

Non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, such as income, inequality, food insecurity and housing.

### **Social isolation**

A lack of social relationships or having few social interactions.

### **Social policy**

The area of policy that relates to the ways society meets human needs, such as education, work, health and wellbeing.

### **Social stratification**

The hierarchical categorisation of people based on socioeconomic factors, such as wealth, income, race, education and power.

### **Socialism**

An ideology that promotes public ownership over resources which is aimed at a more equitable distribution of wealth.

### **Socioeconomic status**

A person's social standing based on their economic and social status, measured by their education, income and occupation.

### **Stereotype**

A fixed, over-generalised belief about a particular group or class of people.

### **Sustainability**

The extent to which an activity or program can be maintained in the long-term.

### **Systemic inequality**

When organisations or institutions contain an embedded bias that results in certain groups being treated unfairly based on a shared characteristic.

### **Target Group**

The group you want to target with the activity or program and among whom you expect changes to occur.

### **Unconscious bias**

Subconsciously forming social stereotypes about certain people and expressing these.