



# **CHCCOM002**

## **Use communication to build relationships**

**Release 2**

**Learner Guide**

Aspire Version 1.1

## CHCCOM002 Use communication to build relationships, Release 2

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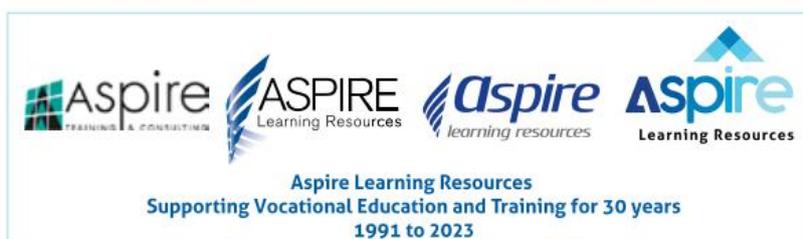
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# Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCCOM002 Use communication to build relationships*, Release 2.

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>



Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport</li> </ul>
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning your workload and commitments</li> <li>Implementing tasks</li> <li>Completing work on time</li> <li>Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks</li> </ul>
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 Communicate with clients and co-workers	1A Identify and use appropriate communication techniques	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Demonstrate respect and uphold rights while communicating	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Represent your organisation appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Provide information in accordance with policies and protocols	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



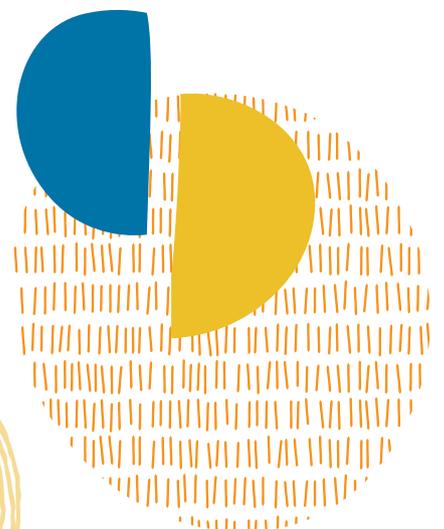
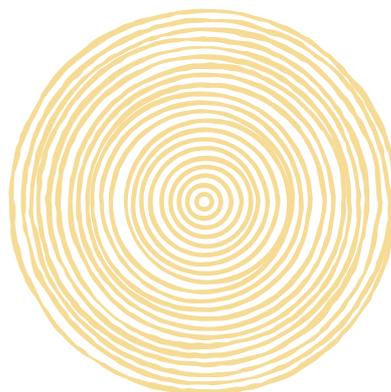
Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 2 Address communication needs	2A Recognise and support communication needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Access interpreter and translation services	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Identify and address problems and communication barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Defuse conflict and refer if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Respond to feedback on effectiveness of communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3 Facilitate meetings	3A Develop an agenda and communicate details of meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Follow meeting agenda and provide opportunities to explore all issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Implement strategies to encourage equal participation and address any communication needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Facilitate conflict resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3E Keep records in accordance with requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3F Evaluate and improve meeting processes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident





## Topic 1: Communicate with clients and co-workers

- 1A Identify and use appropriate communication techniques
- 1B Demonstrate respect and uphold rights while communicating
- 1C Represent your organisation appropriately
- 1D Provide information in accordance with policies and protocols



# 1A

## Identify and use appropriate communication techniques

**Communication requires an understanding of how to share information in a way that others can comprehend it.**

In order to communicate effectively you should seek to understand your own communication style. Once you have done this, you can assess the communication styles of those around you. There are many theories and definitions related to communication styles. These are the four commonly defined communication styles:

<b>Assertive communication</b>	This is the style of communication that everyone should aspire to. The assertive communicator is calm and respectful, but makes their intentions/instructions known clearly and firmly. Assertive communicators can express their own needs, desires, ideas and feelings while recognising and considering the needs of others.
<b>Passive communication</b>	Passive communicators tend not to assert themselves, and this can lead to stored-up grievances. They often let other people dominate conversations and can be poor at making eye contact, contributing to discussions and expressing their needs, desires, ideas and feelings.
<b>Aggressive communication</b>	Aggressive communicators tend to interrupt others in a discussion, appear dominating, exhibit a failure to listen and speak in a loud voice. Aggressive communicators can appear to be leaders; however, this type of communication can descend into abuse.
<b>Passive-aggressive communication</b>	Passive-aggressive communicators appear to be passive, but under the surface they are often angry or discontent. They might show this by being sarcastic or sulking and may attempt to subtly undermine others' opinions, character, role or importance to the discussion.

It might be difficult to change the way someone communicates just by recognising their communication style – but being aware of your own style, and that of others, can help you tailor your approach.

### Power dynamic

The way two or more people interact with each other, where one side has more power than the other.

People can also have different communication styles in different circumstances, especially when there is a change in perceived (or actual) **power dynamic**.

When people are stressed about their health or wellbeing, or they are feeling pain and/or lack of control over their circumstances, they may appear passive or aggressive when their communication style is usually assertive.



This can often occur in a support or community services setting as the perceived power dynamic between the worker and the person receiving services can cause the person receiving services to feel powerless, not understood, not believed, or that their opinions or beliefs are not relevant. Recognising this can assist in changing the communication style of a person receiving services to create a relationship that is more effective, thus encouraging autonomy and improving outcomes for the person receiving services.

There are many websites that offer quick tests you can use to analyse your communication style.

This website asks 10 simple questions: [aspirelr.link/communication-style-quiz](https://aspirelr.link/communication-style-quiz)

You need to draw on a range of communication techniques and apply the most appropriate technique to each situation. You must develop techniques and use them in your workplace interactions with people you support, colleagues and others. These techniques underpin every interaction you have and impact the decisions you, and potentially others, make.

Recommended techniques to ensure effective communication include:

- listening carefully and showing empathy
- facilitating agreement between others
- resolving conflicts using appropriate strategies
- interpreting situations correctly
- negotiating solutions
- using positive nonverbal communication skills.

## Effective communication

**When providing support, effective communication is about building a relationship, providing and sharing information, and sharing decision-making.**

There are six main factors that make up effective communication.

1	Sender	The person who intends to convey the message with the intention of passing information and ideas to others is known as the sender or communicator.
2	Message	This is the information that the sender wishes to get across. This may be an opinion, attitude, feelings, views, orders or suggestions...the sender may not even be aware they have sent a message.

3	Channel	<p>The person who is interested in communicating must decide how they will send information, ideas and so on. This information is transmitted to the receiver through channels (e.g. verbal, written and nonverbal communications), which may be either formal or informal.</p> <p>The channel used to communicate a message can affect how accurately the message will be received. The decision to communicate verbally or in written form can be vital.</p>
4	Receiver	<p>The person who receives the message – for whom the message is meant – is the receiver. It is the receiver who needs to understand the message in the best possible manner to achieve the desired objectives.</p>
5	Feedback	<p>This is the process of ensuring that the receiver has received the message and understood it as the sender meant it.</p> <p>Feedback is the only way to get the response or reaction of the receiver. From it, the sender knows how well their message is understood and how it will be used by the receiver. Feedback is the only way to assess the success of communication.</p>
6	Influences	<p>Language, culture, age, education, personal circumstances and physical barriers (hearing difficulties, pain, etc.) can influence how effective the communication process is.</p>



## Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication is the face-to-face process by which people exchange information, feelings and meaning through verbal and nonverbal messages.

Interpersonal communication is not just about what is actually verbalised and the language used, but how it is said and the nonverbal messages sent through tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and body language.



Interpersonal communication is used to:

- gather information
- influence the attitudes and behaviour of others
- form contacts and maintain relationships
- express personal needs and understand the needs of others
- give and receive emotional support
- make decisions and solve problems
- anticipate, predict and react to behaviour
- regulate power.

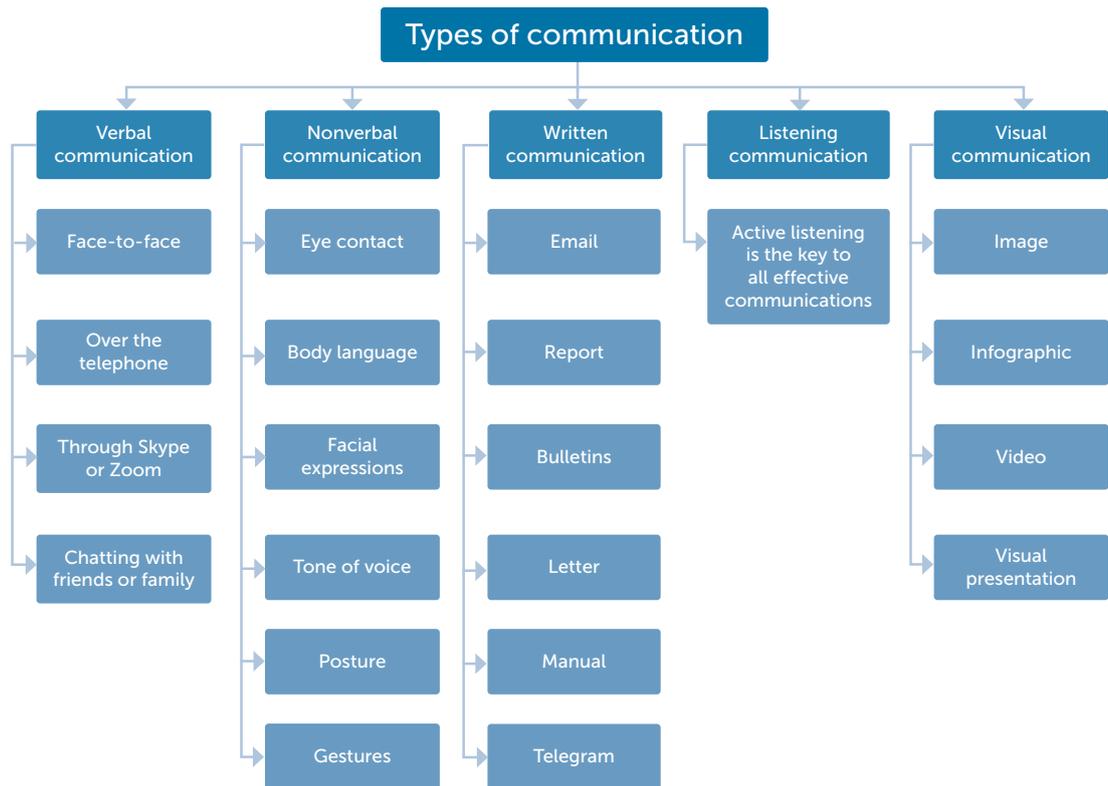
## Types of communication

**There are many ways to communicate with others, and more than one way can be used at any one time.**

For example, when you are talking face to face with a person, you are also communicating using body language (facial expressions, hand gestures, eye contact, etc.), but this is not the case when you are talking on the phone, although your tone may be more apparent.

In workplace written communications, you are expected to communicate professionally, possibly quite differently from when you are writing in a personal context. Your organisation will have policies and procedures that guide what is considered appropriate and inappropriate in your communication styles, and what, how and to whom information is communicated.

The following diagram illustrates the various types of communication and what each type entails.



Source: <https://resumeskillforjobs.com/what-are-the-types-of-communication-with-diagrams-and-examples>

## The five aspects of communication

**Communication can be summarised into five aspects.**

### Active listening and attending

A key skill in effective communication is listening and really hearing what is being said. It is just as important for you to be able to read nonverbal aspects of what is being communicated as it is to be aware of your own nonverbal behaviour.

When you are listening, it is important to:

- remain quiet and attentive
- not interrupt
- seek clarification if you feel you have not understood
- listen/look for key cues that will support your understanding of what is being said. Pay attention to body language, gestures and key phrases (e.g. worried, afraid, frightened, sad, blue, pain, lonely)
- repeat what has been said to ensure you have the correct meaning.



Sometimes when you are listening, you may need to take notes so that you do not forget anything, or you may have to fill in forms. Explain this to the person receiving services so that they understand that you are listening even if you are writing things down while you are listening.

#### Stages of active listening and attending

1. Attend or listen to what the person is saying.
2. Acknowledge that you have heard them.
3. Clarify information, where necessary.
4. Encourage and/or probe the person for more information.
5. Paraphrase the information.
6. Reflect the feelings expressed.
7. Summarise the full story.

### Listening blocks

Sometimes people do not listen properly. There are many reasons for this, including tiredness, pain, stress or distraction. These are called listening blocks.

Listening blocks prevent people from understanding what is being communicated to them. If you are aware of them, you can try to avoid them.

#### Common listening blocks

- Mind-reading: Thinking you know what someone is going to say, so not listening carefully to them
- Rehearsing: Being too busy practising how to answer instead of listening to what is being said
- Filtering: Hearing only what you want to hear and screening out everything else
- Judging: Ignoring the speaker and not paying much attention to what they are saying because you are thinking about who they are or what they look like
- Dreaming: Only half listening until the speaker says something that reminds you of something in your life; then you think about yourself and stop listening
- Identifying: As the speaker shares their experience, you relate it back to your own life instead of listening to what they are saying
- Advising: Listening to a little bit and then offering advice; often the speaker feels they were not understood and often they are not looking for advice but just want someone to listen
- Placating: Agreeing with everything the speaker says to avoid conflict



## Nonverbal communication

All aspects of your behaviour – your tone, gesture, posture, facial expression – is a form of communication. People will pick up your nonverbal messages just as quickly (if not more quickly) than the words you are saying. Asking a person accessing support “How are you feeling today?” while checking your phone messages indicates that you really do not want a long answer and a chat. They will mostly likely answer quickly, responding to your nonverbal message more attentively than your verbal message.

You need to be very aware of this as a support worker because to get a real assessment of a situation requires the ability to ‘read’ people when they respond to your questions.

Every subconscious and conscious act of nonverbal communication is done for a reason – whether we realise it or not.

Here are some of the most common types:

<p><b>Facial expressions</b></p>	<p>Responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication. The look on your face is often the first thing the person accessing support will see, even before they hear what you have to say. While nonverbal communication and behaviour can be interpreted very differently between cultures, the facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger and fear are similar throughout the world.</p>
<p><b>Gestures</b></p>	<p>Deliberate actions used as an important way to communicate meaning without words. Common gestures include waving, pointing and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Similar to facial expressions, some gestures can be related to an individual’s culture, and a seemingly innocent gesture can be misinterpreted as offensive.</p>
<p><b>Paralinguistics</b></p>	<p>Refers to vocal communication separate from actual language, e.g. tone of voice, loudness, emphasis, clarity and pitch.</p>

### Video: Hand gestures

- Watch this short video explaining different meanings of hand gestures around the world: [aspirelr.link/yt-hand-gestures-definitions](https://aspirelr.link/yt-hand-gestures-definitions)
- Draw some diagrams or practise some of the gestures shown in the video and explain their meaning to someone.





## Verbal communication

This is what we typically think of when we talk about communication – it is the use of words to share information with others. Consider the following.

### Volume, tone and intonation

If your supervisor asks you “Have you finished your paperwork yet?”, you will respond differently to the question depending on whether the question sounds friendly, supportive, angry, sarcastic or distrustful.

### Using interpreters

The person you support may have English as a second or third language or they may have a disability that requires you to access interpreter services.

### Language

Think about language ability, not only for people for whom English is a second language, but also for different age groups, education levels and cultures.

### Avoid using jargon or acronyms

People accessing support, as well as colleagues, may not understand what you are saying.

### Avoid using slang, overly simple language or talking at a slow pace

Not only may slang terms be offensive to some people accessing support, but speaking slowly or using ‘baby’ language can be insulting, especially if the person has a disability or English as a second language.

### Attitude

Always be friendly, courteous and professional.

## Questioning

There are two main types of questions you can use depending on the type of response you require:

- Closed questions require a short or yes/no type of answer. “On a scale of 1 to 10, how is your pain today?” will get a numerical answer and may be all you need to know.
- Open questions will give you more information because the way you ask the question cannot be answered with just a single word (like ‘yes’ or ‘no’). “Have you got any pain?” could get a yes/no answer, but with a more open question such as “How would you describe your pain today?”, you may have received the response “It’s much better than yesterday so I didn’t need to take any medication for pain today, which is good because it makes me sleepy”.



## Written communication

Written communication is used in many ways and the basic principles of written communication are no different from verbal communication:

- Be polite, respectful and professional.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality.
- Do not use complicated medical terminology when writing to/for a person accessing support.
- Do not use slang or too many acronyms.
- Be concise: be clear and keep it simple and structured.
- Adhere to organisational policies and procedures.

There are many types of written communication, but the main two types are:

Support	Interprofessional communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written communication can be used to support verbal communication with a person accessing support, especially if:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- there is a language issue</li> <li>- the information is complicated</li> <li>- the person accessing support is stressed and needs time to digest the information.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Most organisations have pamphlets/ information sheets for people accessing support to read after a verbal discussion. These can often be downloaded in different languages.</li> <li>• Using/drawing diagrams during a verbal conversation might assist the person accessing support to better understand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written communication between workers is a good way to ensure that the needs of the person accessing support are met consistently and to ensure the safest possible care.</li> <li>• Types of written information can be paper based but the use of electronic records is increasing and includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- care plans/case notes</li> <li>- progress notes</li> <li>- referrals</li> <li>- incident forms</li> <li>- meeting minutes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Not only are written records required to ensure consistency in care but they also document the care given and are legal documents recording that policies, procedures, duty of care and professional responsibilities have been followed.</li> </ul>

## Visual communication

Visual communication relies on visual elements such as signs, drawings or graphics to convey information. It can be a useful way to summarise a concept or get a message across as a replacement for words or in addition to an explanation. For example, if a person has a cognitive impairment, a drawing of a street map can be used to communicate the location of a building, or a family tree diagram can be used to ask the person about their siblings or parents.



## Communication context

**The communication techniques you use may vary depending on the context.**

There are similarities, such as always using clear, empathetic communication. But there are differences, such as using a more assertive tone in a conflict situation.

Following is a brief description of some of the communication techniques you could use in four different contexts.

Facilitate agreements	When you facilitate agreements, you mediate between different sides and perspectives. You need to remain neutral and objective, and ensure both sides are satisfied with the outcome. Encourage each person or group to listen to the other party. Ask open questions and allow each person or group enough time to answer the question. Summarise what has been said for the benefit of all parties. Ask both parties if they are satisfied with the agreements. Document the process.
Resolve conflicts	You may be involved in a conflict. You may also be mediating a conflict between others. When resolving a conflict, the goal is to find a win–win solution that satisfies both parties. To reach this outcome, help parties listen to each other's perspectives. Ask open-ended questions and encourage active listening. If parties become heated, you may need to ask them to separate momentarily, or use calming techniques such as a soft and low – yet assertive – voice. Resolving conflicts can often happen over several sessions.
Interpret situations	Having a clear perspective on a situation can be difficult if a situation is very emotional or complicated. People also have their own agenda, and it can be hard to see the perspective objectively and clearly. Interpret situations correctly by asking open-ended questions and practising active listening. Try to focus on what the other person is saying and remain as objective as possible.
Negotiate solutions	You may need to help others negotiate solutions or be involved in a negotiation yourself. When negotiating solutions, allow each person to speak clearly about their perspective, while the other person listens. Summarise what was said. Present the solutions to both or all parties and ask for feedback or comments. If conflict arises, practise conflict-management techniques such as being assertive and encouraging empathy.



## Example

### Using listening skills effectively

Diego is the supervisor of a planned activity group. He is busy welcoming participants when Mrs Dalazzi, a participant, asks to speak with him.

As Diego is balancing several tasks at once, he does not feel he can give Mrs Dalazzi his full attention. He makes a quick assessment to determine whether the matter is urgent and then tells Mrs Dalazzi he will definitely speak with her in half an hour when the activities are underway. Mrs Dalazzi agrees.

When Mrs Dalazzi comes to Diego's office at the designated time, he makes sure the area is free from distractions. He tells the office assistant to hold any phone calls for him and closes the door to his office. He sits facing Mrs Dalazzi, maintains eye contact and gives her his full attention. He apologises for not being able to speak with her earlier and explains he wanted to be able to give her his full attention.

Diego took the following steps.

1	Attend	Diego has arranged the situation so that he can give Mrs Dalazzi his full attention.
2	Acknowledge	As Mrs Dalazzi begins to speak and express her concerns, Diego does not interrupt. He sits forward in his seat and nods his head to show he is listening. He makes sounds like 'Uh huh' and says 'Yes' to acknowledge what Mrs Dalazzi is saying.
3	Clarify	Diego asks questions to clarify what she means: "I understand you are not happy at the centre. Can you tell me why?"  Mrs Dalazzi says she does not like the way one of the workers in the group speaks to her and the other participants. She says this staff member, Stephanie, is not respectful.
4	Encourage	Mrs Dalazzi does not want Stephanie to get into trouble. She is hesitant about fully explaining her concerns. Diego reassures Mrs Dalazzi she has a right to voice her concerns and reminds her that he will not repeat anything they discuss without her consent.



5	Probe	Diego asks Mrs Dalazzi, "What exactly do you mean when you say 'disrespectful' and 'bossy'? Can you give me an example?"  Mrs Dalazzi says Stephanie often raises her voice when she gives instructions for activities. Stephanie speaks to her like she is a child and says things like, "Be a good girl".
6	Paraphrase	Diego paraphrases what Mrs Dalazzi has explained. He says to her, "Your main concern is with the way Stephanie speaks to you, in particular the volume of her voice and the words she uses". Mrs Dalazzi agrees.
7	Reflect feeling	Diego goes on to ask, "So you don't like Stephanie talking down to you and you are upset because you feel there is no respect?" Mrs Dalazzi agrees this is how she feels.
8	Summarise	Diego summarises the issues raised by Mrs Dalazzi. Then he asks, "What would you like to see happen now, Mrs Dalazzi?"

## Practice Task 1

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

### Case study

Mrs Jacobs has just returned from the doctor with her husband, and they both look very stressed and confused.

Tomas, their support worker, asks if everything is okay, and Mrs Jacobs starts crying and says that they have just been given bad news. Mr and Mrs Jacobs are from Serbia, and English is their second language. It is obvious that they believe that the doctor has told them Mr Jacobs has brain cancer, which is not the case.

Tomas asks if they received an information sheet about the condition and they say yes, but it is in English, and they are too distressed to read it.



**Question 1**

Mr and Mrs Jacobs are stressed and anxious about the doctor’s visit. Tomas understands that they need to better understand the information they have been given to relieve their anxiety.

List three ways Tomas can assist them to better understand the information they have been given.

**Question 2**

Briefly outline what active listening involves and why it is appropriate in this scenario.



**Question 3**

Provide three examples of different nonverbal communication techniques Tomas could use when conducting this conversation.

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

# 1B

## Demonstrate respect and uphold rights while communicating

**In community services, you will work with and support people from culturally diverse backgrounds – this includes people of different ages, genders, beliefs, abilities, preferences, needs and lived experiences.**

Effective workers are aware of these differences between individuals and develop communication strategies that respond to the individual needs of other workers and people receiving support. They respect people's rights and ensure their communication upholds the rights of people receiving support and of other workers.

The first step to being an effective communicator is assessing the other person's specific needs. Then you need to plan to respond to these needs. Individual profiles and care plans should detail important background information and the communication needs of people you support. Some people receiving support may benefit from a communication plan, or you may need to employ particular techniques or use communication aids. A communication specialist can help with this.

### Person-centred approach

**Support workers can promote empowerment by adopting a person-centred approach when they support individuals.**

#### Person-centred approach

Providing tailored support for each person and taking time to learn about their individual preferences, needs and goals.

A **person-centred approach** places the person at the centre of their own care. It embraces the person making decisions about their own needs, goals and desires. This is a tailored approach that places the person at the centre, where their opinions and preferences are considered, and the focus is on meeting their individual needs.

This means ensuring the service meets the specific needs of the person. People in receipt of support services have the authority and agency to make decisions about their own lives.

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an international document that states the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

The Universal Declaration begins by recognising that 'the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world'.



It declares that human rights are universal – to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live.

The Universal Declaration includes civil and political rights, such as the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to social security, health and education.

Support workers can uphold people's human rights by:

- ensuring all people are treated equally
- upholding a person's right to privacy, their family and home
- treating people with respect and dignity
- acknowledging and upholding a person's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- acknowledging and upholding a person's right to freedom of opinion and expression.

## Respecting individuality

Every human being is different and should be treated in a manner that recognises and respects their individuality.

When communicating with a person receiving support it is important that you do so with an open mind and without making assumptions.

Aspects of a person's individuality can be recognised through their identified culture and characteristics. Some of these aspects can be easily recognised (age, gender, language, etc.) and others need to be identified to truly understand every individual so that you don't make wrong assumptions or generalisations (country of birth, sexuality, sexual identity, religion, diet, etc.).

The following table provides a snapshot of Australian society.

### According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics:

- Approximately 773,000, or 4 per cent, of Australians described themselves as being gay, lesbian or bisexual in 2020.
- In 2020–21, 15 per cent of Australians aged 16–85 years experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress.
- In 2019, one in six (18 per cent) people in Australia – or about 4.4 million – had a disability. This is also known as 'disability prevalence'. Another 22 per cent of people in Australia had a long-term health condition but no disability, and the remaining 60 per cent had no disability or long-term health condition.
- In November 2019, 1.9 million people in Australia were recent migrants or temporary residents.
- For the year ending 30 June 2020, 29.8 per cent of Australia's population was born overseas.



Australia is a multicultural society. According to the 2016 census:

- collectively, Australians speak over 200 languages; of these, over 50 are actively spoken Australian Indigenous languages
- about 21 per cent of Australians reported speaking a language other than English at home. Australian Indigenous languages are spoken by less than 1 per cent of the total population
- the most common languages other than English are Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Italian and Greek. Collectively, Chinese languages (including Cantonese, Mandarin and other Chinese languages) have the greatest number of speakers after English, accounting for approximately 4 per cent of the total population
- 72.7 per cent of people only spoke English at home. Other languages spoken at home included Mandarin: 2.5 per cent, Arabic: 1.4 per cent, Cantonese: 1.2 per cent, Vietnamese: 1.2 per cent and Italian: 1.2 per cent.

## Demonstrating respect for cultures

Showing respect and being culturally sensitive helps you develop a trusting relationship with the other person and build rapport. For example, if you lower your gaze when talking to a First Nations person, you are demonstrating that you respect their cultural customs.

Tips for working effectively with diverse people
• Show cultural understanding and empathy. Do not make negative comments about another country. Do not talk about events that may be painful to someone.
• Assist people to complete forms if they have trouble writing in English.
• Show courtesy and respect; be polite. Know when it is appropriate to smile, make eye contact, touch, bow to a person or shake their hand.
• Do not call someone by their first name or pet names such as 'love' unless they want you to.
• Include everyone; do not leave someone out of a conversation because you have trouble understanding their accent. Never ignore people in a group.
• Talk to the person as an equal; speak in your usual voice. Do not shout or speak as if you are talking to a child.
• Use language everyone can understand. Speak to your supervisor if specific communication issues arise.
• Never make assumptions when considering specific communication needs based on a cultural background.



## Cross-cultural communication protocols

Cross-cultural communication protocols are the rules we should follow when communicating with people from diverse backgrounds.

### Video: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- Although this series of short videos is about cancer patients, it provides advice about caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: [aspirelr.link/yt-cancer-patients](https://aspirelr.link/yt-cancer-patients)  
Write down the points that had the biggest impact on you and your work.
- This is a short video about appropriate terminology for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: [aspirelr.link/yt-appropriate-terminology](https://aspirelr.link/yt-appropriate-terminology)



Although there are no specific written rules, cross-cultural communication protocols are rules that are agreed upon socially. They are underpinned by respect for other cultures and people. The protocols are intended to help us communicate more effectively and respectfully.

#### Cross-cultural communication protocols include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating respect</li> <li>• Being adaptable and flexible</li> <li>• Accommodating differences</li> <li>• Recognising and celebrating differences</li> <li>• Understanding that the meaning of 'yes' and 'no' may vary</li> <li>• Asking simple, clear questions</li> <li>• Understand different ways of speaking or preferred titles</li> <li>• Understanding codes of behaviour</li> <li>• Using the available physical space</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening respectfully</li> <li>• Feeding back answers to clarify understanding</li> <li>• Using appropriate body language</li> <li>• Using appropriate tone and volume of voice</li> <li>• Ensuring people have access to interpreters and translators or other aids</li> <li>• Male and female roles being clearly defined along cultural boundaries</li> <li>• Using different speech patterns/ language</li> <li>• Understanding gender-specific tasks to complete</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

There are most likely workplace guidelines for you to follow in your work in cross-cultural situations. You can refer to your supervisor or cultural services department (if available) if there are any problems arising for you from the person accessing support or co-workers' customs and spiritual beliefs that you feel you cannot deal with.



### Video: Communicating with people with diversity



- This video by Speech Pathology Australia introduces types of communication when interacting with people with disabilities: [aspirelr.link/yt-communication-disability](https://aspirelr.link/yt-communication-disability)  
What are the main takeaway points from this video?
- Watch the following video about Auslan: [aspirelr.link/yt-explaining-auslan](https://aspirelr.link/yt-explaining-auslan)  
Pay attention to what Auslan actually is and what it entails. How commonly are Auslan interpreters used in news reports? Why are they needed?

## Multicultural support services

Organisations may support individuals from different cultures by translating documents into a range of languages.

They may also provide language interpreters, who provide insight into cultural values.

Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) is an initiative funded by the Department of Health. There are PICAC-funded organisations in each state and territory. The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing in Victoria provides a lot of information on its website.

For more information about the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing and PICAC visit:

- [aspirelr.link/cultural-diversity](https://aspirelr.link/cultural-diversity)
- [aspirelr.link/picac](https://aspirelr.link/picac)

#### PICAC's primary outcomes are:

- more aged-care services delivering culturally appropriate care to older persons from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- older people from CALD communities having increased access to culturally appropriate residential and community-based aged-care services
- older people from CALD communities having greater capacity to make informed decisions about residential and community-based aged care.

## Legislation and organisational policies

### **Workers in the community services sector must be familiar with the legislation, national standards, and workplace policies and procedures relevant to their work role.**

This information should be provided when you first start work. It is your responsibility and the responsibility of the organisation to ensure people are working in accordance with legislative requirements and standards.

There are many laws that guide the development of workplace policies and procedures around communicating effectively, safely and appropriately. The following federal (Australia-wide) laws have formed the foundation for states and territories to develop their laws related to effective, safe, inclusive, honest and appropriate communication in the workplace:

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Racial Hatred Act 1995*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Health Records Act 2012.*

It is your responsibility to know the state/territory laws that apply to you in (and out of) the workplace.

In the workplace, these laws may be reflected in the following policies:

- privacy and confidentiality policy
- feedback and complaints policy
- customer service policies
- communication policies
- reporting guidelines
- grievances resolution policy
- referral policy.



## Practice Task 2

### Question 1

List three laws that underpin organisational policies and procedures for safe, respectful and effective communication in the workplace.

### Question 2

Provide three examples of cross-cultural communication protocols you can apply when communicating with people from diverse backgrounds.

### Question 3

Explain how a person-centred approach upholds the rights of the people you support and acknowledges their individuality.

# 1C

## Represent the organisation appropriately

**In today's world, communication is increasingly being carried out via technology such as the internet, social media, in newsletters and on the intranet.**

When you communicate with others in the workplace, either in person or using technology, you are representing your organisation. You need to be aware of workplace policies and procedures relevant to communication and adhere to these guidelines. For example, your organisation may have strict policies about social media use – what you can and cannot say on your own private accounts relating to your work, your colleagues and people accessing services. Policies may also specify when it is appropriate to upload, send or share documents with colleagues or other allied health professionals.

### Applying communication policies and procedures

**You need to know the range of documentation required in your work role, its purpose and the procedures for completing it.**

All communication must accurately reflect the organisation's perspective and requirements. This is important because your workplace will have legislative and regulatory requirements factored into its policies and procedures. This ensures that both you and the organisation, as a whole, are operating in a compliant way.

### Modes of communication

Internal communication may be by email, newsletter or intranet. External communication may be through social media, the organisation's website or newsletters.

The type of communication you use will depend on the context of the communication, as well as the purpose. Whatever mode of communication you use, remember you are always representing the workplace, so you need to follow workplace policies and procedures.



Following are examples of different people you may communicate with and how.

<b>Who you communicate with</b>	<b>How to communicate</b>
<b>Communicating with the team</b>	Communication that relates to staff and the team includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• staff meeting agendas and minutes</li><li>• announcements via newsletter, email or memo</li><li>• position descriptions</li><li>• recruitment and human resources documentation</li><li>• recording incidents and complaints</li><li>• documenting suggested changes and improvement.</li></ul>
<b>Communicating with management</b>	Communication that relates to management and the broader organisation includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reports of the activities of the program or department</li><li>• contributions to strategic plans</li><li>• financial records</li><li>• written communication that relates to external bodies</li><li>• written referrals</li><li>• responses to requests for service</li><li>• emails about older people who access several services</li><li>• minutes and actions of case conferences.</li></ul>
<b>Communicating to promote the organisation</b>	Communication that promotes the organisation includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• contributions to organisational publications such as brochures and websites</li><li>• contributions to annual reports</li><li>• contributions to social media posts, videos or podcasts.</li></ul>
<b>Communicating with people who receive support</b>	Communication that relates to people receiving support includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• letters to them or their family</li><li>• progress notes</li><li>• assessments</li><li>• care plans and reviews</li><li>• medication records</li><li>• incident reports</li><li>• communication books.</li></ul>



## Completing documentation

**Before you complete any documentation, find out if the organisation uses particular templates. These will vary from organisation to organisation.**

Write clearly and legibly in documents and forms such as incident reports, communication books, referral forms or checklists. Always re-read what you have written to ensure it makes sense and there are no spelling mistakes. It is easy to miss words if you are in a hurry. Only use abbreviations that are universally understood. If in doubt, use the whole word rather than an abbreviation. Have a dictionary nearby so you can refer to it if you are unsure about a word.

Following is a list of questions you should ask yourself before completing workplace documentation.

When completing documentation
• Is there a standard format for external communications?
• Does your organisation have a policy on email etiquette?
• Does your organisation have a process where a manager or person in the marketing department previews promotional material?
• Is there an agreed format for promotional material?
• Where are completed incident forms filed?
• Is there a list of standard abbreviations for use in client communication books?
• Who has authority to sign different types of documentation?

## Digital media

Digital media allows communication to reach people faster. It is also convenient for those relaying the message, as digital media allows one written document, such as a newsletter, to reach many people. This reduces the time taken to send communication. **Digital communication** reduces paper waste and is therefore more sustainable. It also gives the organisation a wider reach. Where, in the past, organisations focused on local stakeholders, now the information shared by organisations can reach people on the other side of the world.

**Digital communication**  
Communication made through digital devices such as computers, tablets, applications and the internet.



### Video: Social media policies



- Although this video was made for the Department of Justice and Community Safety, it has relevant information regarding using social media at work. It is important that you read your organisation's policies and procedures regarding using social media and other forms of communication at work.
- [aspirelr.link/yt-social-media-policy](https://aspirelr.link/yt-social-media-policy)

Examples of digital communication media used in the community services sector are provided in the following table.

<b>Web communication</b>	<p>Your organisation's website will display 'About' information, contact information, statement of policies, vision, mission and key outcomes, and may provide resource links.</p> <p>The website is like a business card for your organisation, so it should accurately reflect your organisation in full. Details should be up to date and relevant.</p>
<b>Email communication</b>	<p>Emails are an easy, efficient way to communicate with internal and external stakeholders. Email communication is generally a direct and simple form of communication and sometimes less formal than written documents. Emails representing the organisation will be more formal and should be written using formal, polite language.</p> <p>All forms of information can be sent by email, including written documentation, graphics, images and tables.</p> <p>Remember that you represent the organisation when sending a work email, so always be respectful and polite. Check your spelling and ensure all content is correct. You should also check to ensure you are sending to the correct email address and that only people privy to the information will see the content.</p>
<b>Social media</b>	<p>Social media is a good way for organisations to build an online community and reach a broad range of people. Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Social media is primarily about relationship building. Again, you need to ensure that all information shared on social media accurately reflects your organisation.</p> <p>Avoid sharing images of the people you support unless you have specifically asked for permission. Doing so without permission is a breach of privacy.</p>
<b>Podcasts and videos</b>	<p>Podcasts are audio recordings shared online. Videos can also be shared on social media such as YouTube. Podcasts and videos are useful ways to share training material or provide a comprehensive view of your organisation.</p> <p>Again, ensure that all people represented in the video or podcast have given permission, and that the videos and podcasts accurately reflect the organisation.</p>



<p><b>Tablets and applications</b></p>	<p>Tablets such as iPads are an easy mobile way to access the internet. Some organisations have intranet software or applications on the iPad, making it easier for workers to access information during their workday as the devices are portable.</p> <p>Applications are specific software created for the mobile device. They are usually linked to the internet. Your organisation may have an application for its intranet or its website. You may also use applications for other organisations, such as the ATO.</p>
<p><b>Newsletters and broadcasts</b></p>	<p>Newsletters used to be sent in the mail, which is more costly and uses more paper. These days, newsletters are commonly sent via email. Newsletters and broadcasts may be sent out if there is a particular news event, such as promoting the opening of a new service, or they may be sent out on a regular basis, like monthly newsletters, designed to keep stakeholders up to date.</p> <p>Information should be current and relevant. It should also be accurate, so make sure all content sent out is approved first.</p>
<p><b>Intranet</b></p>	<p>An intranet is an internal web server that all workers can access, or from home, using a password. It is password protected to ensure confidentiality of all information stored on the intranet.</p> <p>The intranet can be used for displaying staff rosters, staff information and training or sharing important work-related information.</p>

Workplace devices and digital media accounts should be password protected to ensure confidentiality. These passwords will need to be updated regularly. Be sure to keep your password private; do not let others log in with your password. If you have a work tablet, remember it may have private and confidential information on it, so it should not be shared with family or friends. Always log off after using a workplace device or application that contains private information about the person accessing services or the organisation.

## Example

### Completing documentation

Frank talks to his doctor about things he is finding difficult around the house. With Frank's consent, his doctor makes a referral to the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). The team spends time with Frank in his home and talks about his needs and requirements. They complete an in-depth assessment and record this on a form.

Frank is identified as being eligible for home care services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme. Greg, the local coordinator of the program, organises a home visit to find out more about Frank's needs and environment. During the home visit, Greg checks with Frank that the information on the ACAT assessment form is correct. He does this on his tablet by accessing his email and downloading the form in PDF. He then asks Frank's permission to record information about emergency contact details and significant people in his life, which he types into the form. He passes the tablet to Frank to confirm that the information is correct. He asks Frank to sign his name in a highlighted field on the form. Frank uses his finger to sign. The document is then saved and uploaded to the organisation's shared server.

## Practice Task 3

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

### Case study

Dave is distributing information about a new service provided by the council he is employed by as a support worker. The new service helps young people connect with various activities in their community, such as the local football club. Dave wants to tell stakeholders about the new service.

He writes in an email from his work email address:

*We are excited to announce 'Link', a new service that links young people to their community, which is now available. We had an official launch last Wednesday at the bowling club. Thirty people attended, including people receiving services and members of the community. There was a buzz about the new service.*



*“I am excited about being able to try new things,” said Hailey, one of the younger people we support.*

*Jeff is also excited. ‘I have always wanted to try hockey. Now I might give it a go.’*

*For more information on the service, contact me or other members of the team.*

*Kindly,*

*Dave*

**Question 1**

List three things Dave should check before sending this email using his work email.



**Question 2**

Draw lines to match each form of digital communication media that Dave could use to communicate this information with its definition.

Newsletters and broadcasts	Audio or visual recordings that can be shared on social media such as YouTube. These are useful ways to share training material or provide a comprehensive view of your organisation
Social media	A mobile device to access the internet. Some organisations have intranet software or specific software created for the mobile device, making it easier for workers to access information during their workday as the devices are portable
Podcasts and videos	Commonly sent via email to keep stakeholders up to date, promote an upcoming event or share news
Tablets and applications	Assist organisations to build an online community and reach a broad range of people by establishing new connections and growing relationships

**Question 3**

Explain the difference between using the intranet and using a website as a support worker.

# 1D

## Provide information in accordance with policies and protocols

**Information shared with people you support, and other providers, should be in accordance with organisational policies and protocols.**

These include privacy and anti-discrimination policies and protocols. Policies and protocols are in place to ensure that all who work in the service work legally and ethically and demonstrate best practice.

When sharing information, be aware of maintaining professional boundaries, both in the language you use and the content you share.

### Information flow

**Information in an organisation flows between management, supervisors, team members and people receiving support. Information may also flow out to other providers, such as other agencies.**

Your organisation will have a system for managing information. The organisation may use an electronic filing system for items such as meeting minutes and a paper-based system for major reports and procedure manuals.

Here are some examples of ways information may flow between particular people.

From management to supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New procedures</li><li>• Business goals</li><li>• Changes in legislation</li></ul>
From supervisor to management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updates of any achievements in the team</li><li>• Feedback regarding the impact of policy</li></ul>
From team members to supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suggested changes or improvements</li><li>• Requests for training</li></ul>
From supervisor to team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New procedures</li><li>• Shift rosters</li><li>• Information about people receiving services (e.g. behaviour, changed care plans)</li></ul>
From people receiving services to supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback about services</li><li>• Changes in needs or preferences</li></ul>



From supervisor to people receiving services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about services provided</li> <li>• Changes in services or new services available</li> <li>• Information about community options and events</li> </ul>
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## Effective use of communication channels

### **Information in community services environments must flow freely so that everyone receives information when they need it.**

The timely and accurate exchange of information is essential for staff and service users. Misinformation or late information may create mistrust and unease. Make sure team members know when you are available to meet with them. Sometimes a face-to-face meeting is better than discussing something over the phone or in an email.

Communication channels must meet the needs of the people accessing the information. For example, an agency might have access to the National Relay Service (NRS) so people with hearing or speech impairments can phone the organisation easily.

Some different methods of communication and examples for using them effectively are outlined in the following table.

Channel	Examples	When this method is used
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handshake</li> <li>• Placing hand on shoulder</li> </ul>	This communication method is used to build trust. Support workers must consider the appropriateness of this action and seek permission from the person before they use touch.
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading aloud to an older person</li> <li>• Reading workplace policies and procedures</li> </ul>	This communication method may be required if the person receiving support has a vision impairment. Support workers must read their workplace policies and procedures to make sure they are performing their tasks correctly and according to all legal requirements.
Telephone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking messages</li> <li>• Contacting family and advocates or other support workers</li> </ul>	Support workers must make sure they include the following information when taking a message: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the time of the call and the name of the caller</li> <li>• who the message is for</li> <li>• the message</li> <li>• the telephone number of the caller.</li> </ul>



Channel	Examples	When this method is used
Sign language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using hand gestures</li> <li>Using sign language</li> </ul>	Auslan is a sign language used in Australia for communicating with people who are deaf. There are many different sign languages used across the world.
Communication boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A board with letters, words or symbols on it</li> </ul>	This communication method is used if the person receiving support is unable to speak. They point to the letters or symbols on the board to create a message.
Lip-reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face the person, stand in the light and speak clearly but not too slowly, to allow the person to read your lips</li> </ul>	This communication method is used with people who have a severe hearing impairment.

## Providing information in response to inquiries

Responding to inquiries is an important part of representing the organisation and yourself to staff, service users, agencies, government departments and the broader community. All inquiries must be responded to promptly. People may be waiting for your information before they can make a decision or complete a task.

### Possible sources of inquiries

- Potential service users and other professionals: about service provision
- Service users and their families: about current services, their rights, changes to programs, concerns or organisational processes
- Staff: about organisational processes such as rosters, pay or leave
- Staff: about policies and procedures
- Staff: seeking advice on how to manage situations, make referrals or improve their performance

## Selecting the appropriate mode of communication

Sometimes it is better to speak face to face than send an email, particularly when a person needs emotional support and time to make a decision. Assess the situation and use the most appropriate method of sending information. For example, if a supervisor comes to you with strictly confidential information about a person you support, you should only speak directly to relevant staff about the information, and not address all staff in a group email about the situation.



There are many different ways you can share information. Information can be shared by:

- talking directly to a person
- addressing the team in a meeting
- writing an email
- writing a group email
- writing a formal letter
- sharing information on the organisation's website or intranet
- telephoning a person directly.

## Managing inquiries

Service users or their families may contact you for information. Other providers may also contact you for information such as details about a person's whereabouts.

You may be able to handle some inquiries very quickly and easily. Others may require some research or you may need to contact other people for advice. Always ensure you practise confidentiality when sharing information, and only share information you have permission to share.

To manage inquiries:

- Allocate time at the beginning and end of your shift for responding to phone calls and emails. Put this in your calendar as a regular appointment.
- When you tell someone you will get back to them, allow a little extra time in case your plans are disrupted. Always get back to them.
- If you are unable to get information to someone by the time you indicated, give them an update on the situation. People appreciate being kept informed.
- Try to clean out your email inbox weekly.
- Use functions of your email system, such as flags and reminders, to assist you to manage inquiries.
- Have a system to manage your phone messages.
- Create templates of the letters or emails you send regularly.
- Remember to maintain confidentiality and always follow organisational policies.



## Providing information to family members

Support the individual's family, while respecting their right to privacy.

Never assume the relationship between family members is positive. All people accessing support have their various relationships, whether functional and positive or not, as with any population. Assuming that a mother, husband, daughter, son or caregiver automatically ought to have information and the best interests in mind for the person accessing support/their relative is not taking into consideration that the person accessing support may not want their relative to know about their health and wellbeing. There may have been abuse, mistrust and/or conflict that you are not aware of.

Check the identity of the family member first. Always check the file of the person accessing support to see if they have given their consent. If you are unable to respond immediately, inform the person you will contact them. Confirm with them to see if they are happy for you to speak with the family member.

Use objective language and facts when speaking about a person with support needs. Avoid opinions or any subjective information. If the person has not given consent for you to disclose information, encourage the family member to contact the person directly. Tell them a good time to make contact. If you are unable to pass on details, use assertive communication. Record the details of the communication. Seek support from your manager if in doubt.

## Providing information to service providers

As well as providing information to the person accessing support and their families, you may need to provide information to service providers.

These may be other agencies who also support a person you work with, affiliate organisations or other organisations in your professional network.

If you are making a referral, you may be sharing information about the person being referred. You may need to share information about your organisation's policies and procedures with colleagues. You may need to share information, such as data about the industry, with online networks.

When sharing information with service providers, you may use:

- letters
- emails
- reports
- case notes.

## Letters

Letters are formal methods used to communicate with other service providers. Letters may be sent when making a referral, or when seeking advice about a person you support.

The letter should contain a date, a return email and postal address, and your name and phone number. Depending on the policies and procedures of your organisation, you may or may not be allowed to include the organisation's logo and address. Ensure the tone of your letter is in accordance with organisational policies and protocols. Consult your organisation's style guide for guidance in grammar and formatting if necessary.

Most letters begin with 'Dear [name]'. Ensure you have spelt the person's name correctly. Use clear, simple language. Keep paragraphs short and concise. Each paragraph should only contain one idea; for example, the reason for writing the letter is often explained in the first paragraph.

Try to maintain the flow of the letter, and link paragraphs using a linking sentence such as, 'Although we are happy with the services, we have a few questions, including..'

Sign the letter and send it to the correct recipient.

An example letter follows.

### Letter to family member

Email: [sinclair@community.org.au](mailto:sinclair@community.org.au)

52 Warren Street, Sinclair 6322

Ph: 8309 1724

Fax: 8309 1726

25 January 2023

Dear Mrs Fletcher,

I am writing to thank you for participating in our recent discussion regarding the services we currently provide to Mr Fletcher.

To ensure we are meeting Mr Fletcher's needs, it would be useful if we could schedule another meeting to confirm our plans and set some follow-up actions.

Could you please contact me on 8309 1724 to arrange a suitable date and time. I will be out of the office on 31 January.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Jude Lockwood



## Emails

Most organisations have policies or guidelines regarding the type of language they expect you to use when sending correspondence on behalf of the organisation. The same rules that apply to printed correspondence also apply to email correspondence. You need to know what is expected in your workplace. As with sending printed letters, emails should contain your contact details, your name and the name of the person you are writing to.

Consider the following when using email:

- Emails should be written in clear, plain English using professional language.
- If you do not know the person you are writing to, then use the conventional 'Dear Mr/Ms...'
- Ensure that you are emailing the right person/s. If you are forwarding an email, make sure that you are careful with using *CC* and *BCC* appropriately.
- Be careful of being too informal and friendly. You do not know who else might read your email.
- Emails should be brief and straightforward. Use short sentences and simple language.
- Do not overuse capital letters or bold font to emphasise points in your message.
- Never send aggressive messages or criticise other people in emails, even if you are justifiably angry about something.
- Remember to respect people's privacy. Never forward someone's email on to another person or give out someone's email address without permission.

## Reports

Writing reports is an important part of communicating with people inside and external to the organisation. Reports let other people know what is going on in the workplace.

Reports are important for accountability. They are a formal record of an event or a person's status. Reports may be used in legal cases, if needed. For this reason, the information you write in reports must be objective, accurate and very clear.

The format your report takes will be specified by your organisation's requirements. There will be report templates for different contexts. For example, you may have a template for reporting work health and safety (WHS) incidents. You may also have a report for recording a service user's daily activities.

Reports will generally be signed and dated. Often, reports require authorisation from a supervisor or manager. Check with your organisation's report procedures and protocols.

## Progress/case notes

Progress/case notes are used to record a person's progress in the service. They are used by support workers and may also be used by the person's case manager, legal advocate or doctor.

The format you use to complete case notes will depend on your organisation's requirements. Your organisation may provide a specific progress/case note template or book and will specify when case notes should be completed. In general, case notes are continually updated, such as at the end of every day.

Progress/case notes must be objective and factual. They are necessary for the accountability of the organisation and may be used during an audit or in legal cases. For example, if a person passes away in your care, the case notes will detail the events leading up to the death. That is why it is important that the information you include is accurate. Be as specific as possible when sharing details about an event. Sign and date all case notes and seek appropriate authorisation.

The following example is a case note for Mr Singh.

Progress note
<p>Date: 16/11/2022</p> <p>Person's name: Mr Singh</p> <p>Comments: Mr Singh went to X-ray at 10am. When he returned, he looked blue around the lips and was having trouble breathing. Mr Singh said that his chest was still hurting. Referred matter to the supervisor.</p> <p>Worker's name: Rose Strauss</p> <p>Signature: <i>Rose Strauss</i></p> <p>Actions: Arranged for Mr Singh's GP, Dr James, to visit. Dr James ordered some antibiotics for Mr Singh. Arranged for prescription to be filled at the pharmacy urgently and Mr Singh administered his medication. He showed signs of improvement. Arranged for a follow-up appointment with his doctor for the following day.</p> <p>Supervisor: Judith Hopper</p> <p>Signature: <i>Judith Hopper</i></p>

## Maintaining professional boundaries

### You may find yourself sharing personal information with people you support.

However, when communicating with people you support and other service providers, you need to maintain professional boundaries.

**Professional boundaries** are intended to keep you and the people you work with safe. They also help to maintain respect and ensure that the people you work with understand your role as a service provider.

#### Professional boundaries

Guidelines, rules or limits between professionals and the people being supported.



To maintain professional boundaries:

- do not share personal information about yourself or other service users
- use friendly but polite language
- maintain appropriate physical contact; do not touch people inappropriately
- have an open-door policy but specify times when you are available
- do not share your home phone number or address with people you support.

## Protecting a person's privacy

Information collected and distributed about the provision of care or support services to a person is governed by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), which protects all personal information handled by businesses. Attached to this legislation are the 13 Australian Privacy Principles, which set the standard for handling personal information. The Australian Privacy Principles relate to the collection, use, storage, access and disclosure of personal information.

You can read more about the Australian Privacy Principles at: [aspirelr.link/oaic-privacy-principles-quick-reference](https://aspirelr.link/oaic-privacy-principles-quick-reference)

There is also state-based legislation that ensures confidentiality. For example, the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic.) protects the privacy of health records in Victoria. Support workers are ethically and legally obliged to not disclose personal information about the people they are caring for to unauthorised people. For more information, refer to your workplace policies and procedures or speak with your supervisor or team leader.

### Example

#### Provide information to service users in accordance with communication policies and protocols

Jake works for a disability service. He receives a phone call one afternoon from Grace, who says she is Tim's mother. Tim is one of the people Jake supports. Jake has never met Grace as Tim's father has sole custody.

Jake listens as Grace asks for Tim's phone number. She says she is trying to contact him as it is his birthday.



Jake understands that it is Tim's birthday, but he knows he is unable to share this personal contact information without Tim's consent. He suggests that he can pass Grace's phone number on to Tim for him to call her.

Grace is happy with that outcome. Tim writes down her phone number and thanks her for the call.

## Practice Task 4

### Question 1

List at least four guidelines to follow when writing emails to other service providers.



**Question 2**

Briefly outline why professional boundaries are important and two ways you can maintain professional boundaries in your communications.

**Question 3**

List four written correspondence protocols you should follow when writing reports, case notes or letters on behalf of your employer.



**Question 4**

Which of the following modes of communication do you need consent for before sharing personal information or images? Tick all that apply.

- Website
- Social media
- Case notes
- Podcasts and videos
- Reports

**Question 5**

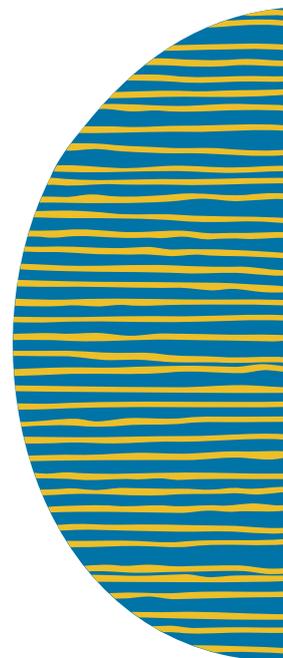
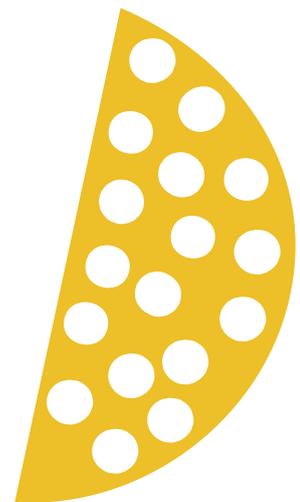
Sally is writing the end-of-year newsletter for the organisation’s website and tells you that she plans to include photos of the team from the Christmas party. She thinks it is funny that there are pictures of team members who had obviously had too much champagne to drink.

Explain why you should tell Sally that this is inappropriate.



## Summary

- Workers in the community services sector need to use effective communication strategies to build rapport, share information, resolve issues and defuse difficult situations.
- To communicate effectively you must listen carefully and show empathy, give timely feedback, respect other cultures and negotiate positive outcomes.
- Your communication should reflect a person-centred approach.
- Being an effective communicator means assessing people's specific needs and making a plan that responds to these needs.
- Workers are seen to represent their organisation. The way they communicate should reflect workplace protocols and requirements.
- You need to manage inquiries and respond in a timely and appropriate way.
- Adhere to organisational guidelines regarding confidentiality and privacy to work legally and respectfully.
- Workers need to communicate for a variety of reasons. The type of communication you use will depend on the context and purpose of the communication.
- Workers must follow protocols for written communication and make use of organisational style guides when drafting correspondence or completing documentation.





# Learning Checkpoint 1

## Communicate with clients and co-workers

### Part A

1. Draw lines to match each communication style to its description.

Passive-aggressive communication	These communicators are calm and respectful, but make their intentions/instructions known clearly and firmly. They can express their own needs and feelings while recognising and considering the needs of others.
Aggressive communication	These communicators often let other people dominate conversations and can be poor at making eye contact, contributing to discussions and expressing their needs, desires, ideas and feelings.
Assertive communication	These communicators tend to interrupt others in a discussion, appear dominating, exhibit a failure to listen and speak in a loud voice.
Passive communication	These communicators appear to be non-assertive, but under the surface, they're often angry or discontent. They might show this by being sarcastic or sulking and may attempt to subtly undermine others' opinions, character, role or importance to the discussion.

2. List at least four examples of cross-cultural communication protocols that demonstrate respect for another person's culture.



- 3.** Briefly explain person-centred care and a rights-based approach to support. Then, list three examples of organisational policies and protocols that would reflect these approaches.

- 4.** List three different types of nonverbal communication and explain how each can be used to communicate more effectively with people receiving support.



**5.** A person receiving support comes from a diverse cultural background where male and female roles are clearly defined. This person is the opposite gender from you.

List three nonverbal communication strategies you would use to demonstrate respect, accept individual differences and uphold their rights.

**6.** Briefly outline the strategies that can be used when resolving conflict.

**7.** Which of the following statements are correct regarding professional boundaries? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Personal information about other service users should not be shared with people receiving support.	Yes / No
b. Use friendly language, including pet names such as 'possum', 'darling' and 'love'.	Yes / No
c. Do not touch people without first seeking their consent.	Yes / No
d. Providing your private phone number and address to people receiving support is okay once you get to know them.	Yes / No



- 8.** Connie uses her work email to pass on her private contact number to people she supports. Explain why this is or is not appropriate.

- 9.** Ciara has just had a birthday party at the residential home where she works and goes home to post the photos on her Facebook page.

Which of the following must she do before posting the images on social media?  
Tick all that apply.

- Ask the people in the photo for their permission to have their images shared
- Check organisational policies and procedures to see if she is allowed to do this.
- Change her privacy settings.
- State that the post is personal and not representative of the organisation.
- The people in the photo are all happy, so it is fine to post the images.

- 10.** Provide examples of three types of information you can communicate to colleagues via your organisation's intranet.



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

a. A podcast is a video shared on social media.	Yes / No
b. A tablet is a portable device provided by organisations that makes it easier for workers to access information during their workday.	Yes / No
c. Anyone can write a newsletter for a community care provider and post it online.	Yes / No
d. Written style guides for organisational correspondence are more suggestions than requirements.	Yes / No

**12.** Betsy’s 12-year-old son is waiting in the office for Betsy to finish work at the residential care facility. He asks Betsy if he can play games on her work tablet. Explain why this is or is not appropriate.

**13.** Videos can be made and uploaded to an organisation’s website and other social media platforms as a marketing/advertising tool. List one other reason why an organisation would upload a video online.



14. The website for an organisation is a great place to ask for feedback from people receiving support, staff and other organisations. List three things it can also be used for.

## Part B

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

### Case study

Mohamad is working for a community centre that offers home help to older people and people with disabilities in the area.

Farad is Mohamad's supervisor, and he has been getting complaints in the past two weeks that Mohamad has been late to his appointments, lethargic and not particularly friendly to people he supports.

Farad understands that Mohamad is Muslim and that it is Ramadan, so he is fasting during the day as his religion requires.

Farad sends Mohamad an email on the intranet asking for a meeting regarding the complaints but accidentally sends the email to another colleague. Mohamad is angry and embarrassed that one of his colleagues knows he has received complaints and is being called in to a meeting.



- 1.** At the beginning of the meeting with Mohamad, Farad apologises for the mistake and any embarrassment that may have been caused.

List three techniques Farad can use to ensure effective communication.

- 2.** After Mohamed accepts Farad's apology, Farad asks Mohamad to explain his side of the story regarding the complaints. List the seven stages of active listening and attending that would ensure effective communication.



- 3.** Describe two cross-cultural communication protocols Farad could follow during this meeting.

- 4.** Farad wants to find a resolution to the problem of the complaints as Mohamad is a valued team member. Explain how Farad can use negotiation in this context.



5. Farad needs to respond to the people receiving support who have complained about Mohamad to follow up on their issues. He writes the following email:

*Dear Mr/Mrs XX*

*Thank you for your phone call regarding your concern about the work of one of the home help team. I have addressed the issue with the team member and feel that we have reached a resolution that will benefit all.*

*Please let me know if you have any other concerns.*

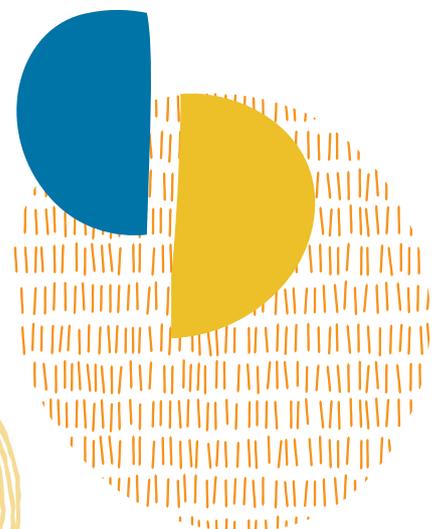
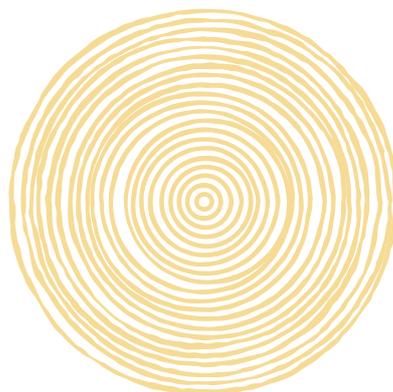
*Sincerely, Farad*

Explain confidentiality and how Farad has complied with the organisation's confidentiality policy in this email.



## Topic 2: Address communication needs

- 2A Recognise and support communication needs
- 2B Access interpreter and translation services
- 2C Identify and address problems and communication barriers
- 2D Defuse conflict and refer if necessary
- 2E Respond to feedback on effectiveness of communication



# 2A

## Recognise and support communication needs

**The people you work with and the people you support have specific communication needs. These may be related to their abilities, such as the ability to hear.**

They may be related to language needs. If disagreements occur in the workplace, it is possible that there is a specific communication need that has not been addressed.

Being able to recognise specific communication needs and know how to support them is an important skill to learn. Building trust and maintaining relationships is essential to providing support.

People's communication needs may be particular to their physical and mental abilities.

For example, if a person has a hearing impairment, they may require hearing aids to be able to communicate fully. You may be required to speak more clearly and face the person directly.

People from diverse cultural backgrounds may have language needs. You may need to engage an interpreting or translating service to aid communication with them.

There may be people you support who are inhibited by their environment and have difficulty asking questions or seeking support. By paying close attention to their nonverbal cues, you may be able to detect if the person requires additional support in a given environment.

### Building trust

**The key to supporting a person receiving support is good communication.**

You need to give and receive information clearly, build rapport or trust with the person receiving support, and encourage them to do things for themselves as much as possible. It is not easy for someone to receive support and care from a stranger and it can sometimes make them embarrassed, scared, anxious or even angry. It is very important that you are aware of this and do what you can to gain the trust of the person receiving support to make them feel comfortable.

You should observe and talk with people receiving support to confirm their personal care needs. Reassure them that you can provide the care and support they require and that you have read their individualised plan and know what kind of assistance they require.

Recognising and clarifying communication needs is easier if your relationship with the other person is built on trust. If a person trusts you, they are more likely to express the need for support.

Trust is also important among work colleagues. The ability to build and maintain relationships with team members and establish trust with them is important. Communication is more effective when trust has been established among all parties.

Trust is different from friendliness. It is a professional way of communicating respect for others and puts them at ease. Simple measures include trying to understand the other person's point of view by listening to them and being interested in what they are saying. To build trust with someone, it is important to treat them with respect.

## Building strong relationships

### **The strength of your relationship with a person is of significance when identifying communication issues.**

Part of building relationships is giving a person time. When communicating with someone, allow time to listen. If a person feels you have time for them, it can be easier to develop trust and rapport. Giving someone your attention shows them that you value and respect their opinions. There are many factors that influence the amount of time a person needs to share an experience or issue.

For detailed information on communication strategies for people with disabilities, visit: [aspirelr.link/communication-behaviour-support](https://aspirelr.link/communication-behaviour-support)

Although this has been written for nurses, many of the aspects of communicating with people with disabilities discussed is applicable to all care workers.

## Communicating with people with developmental/intellectual disabilities

The Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria has published a fact sheet that outlines and explains communication with people receiving support who have mild, moderate and severe disabilities.

You can access the fact sheet here: [aspirelr.link/cddh-fact-sheet](https://aspirelr.link/cddh-fact-sheet)



The fact sheet concludes with the following tips (which could be used for any person receiving support, with or without an intellectual disability).

1	Ensure you have the person's attention	Address the person by name; use eye contact and/or touch where appropriate.
2	Be aware of known communication difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receptive (e.g. deafness, cognitive impairment, autism spectrum disorder) and/or</li> <li>• Expressive (e.g. cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder)</li> </ul>
3	If you are unsure of their ability to understand, assume competence and adjust accordingly	It is more appropriate and respectful to assume competence than assume a lack of understanding.
4	If you are uncertain, ask about communication preferences/style/techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do they say yes/no?</li> <li>• Do they use a communication device or aid?</li> </ul>
5	Use appropriate and respectful language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language: simple, clear words and short, uncomplicated sentences</li> <li>• Visual information: pictures, diagrams, signs, gestures</li> <li>• Tone and volume: a respectful approach reflects your degree of familiarity with the person, their age and the context of your interaction</li> <li>• Use an interpreter if required</li> </ul>
6	Wait for a response	Allow the person time to listen, process what you say and respond. <i>Do not rush!</i>
7	Check understanding in the person's own words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not simply ask "Do you understand?" (Most people say "yes"!)</li> <li>• Remember: receptive language may be better than expressive language (or vice versa).</li> </ul>
8	Be honest and take responsibility for communication breakdowns	For example, "I'm sorry; I'm not understanding". <i>Never pretend to understand!</i>
9	If they do not understand, <i>keep trying</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat.</li> <li>• Use clear, simple words and concepts.</li> <li>• Say it in a different way.</li> <li>• Use different words.</li> <li>• Use pictures.</li> </ul>



10	If you do not understand, <i>keep trying</i> .	<p>Try alternative strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you say that again please?</li> <li>• Is there another way you can think of saying it? Could you use another word? Could you show me?</li> <li>• Is there someone who could help us? Involve family member/carer/support worker if appropriate – remember to <i>ask first!</i></li> </ul>
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Source: <https://cddh.monashhealth.org/index.php/resources>

## Communicating with people who are visually impaired

Vision Australia has created a list for communicating with visually impaired people receiving support called ‘Communicating effectively’.

The following tips are outlined in the guide.

### Tips for communicating with a person who is blind or has low vision

- Identify yourself: do not assume the person will recognise you by your voice.
- Speak naturally and clearly. Loss of eyesight does not mean loss of hearing.
- Continue to use body language. This will affect the tone of your voice and give a lot of extra information to the person who is vision impaired.
- Use everyday language. Do not avoid words like ‘see’ or ‘look’ or talking about everyday activities such as watching TV or videos.
- Name the person when introducing yourself or when directing conversation to them in a group situation.
- Never channel conversation through a third person.
- In a group situation, introduce the other people present.
- Never leave a conversation with a person without saying so.
- Use accurate and specific language when giving directions. For example, “The door is on your left”, rather than “The door is over there”.
- Avoid situations where there is competing noise.
- Always ask first to check if help is needed.
- Relax and be yourself.

Source: [www.visionaustralia.org/information/family-friends-carers/communicating-effectively#:~:text=Continue%20to%20use%20body%20language,as%20watching%20TV%20or%20videos.](http://www.visionaustralia.org/information/family-friends-carers/communicating-effectively#:~:text=Continue%20to%20use%20body%20language,as%20watching%20TV%20or%20videos.)

## Communicating with people who are hearing impaired

The Queensland Government has published a fact sheet with tips on communicating with hearing-impaired people receiving support. The fact sheet contains the following:

### Good communication strategies for communicating with people who are hearing impaired

#### Gain attention

- Call the person by name and/or gently touch their arm or shoulder.
- If the person is Deaf, it is okay to flick the lights 'on' and 'off', to tap on a table or to wave to gain their attention.

#### Face each other

- Hearing impaired and Deaf people need to see your face clearly to gain help from facial expressions and to lip-read.
- Maintain the same eye level; e.g. sit if the person is sitting and use eye contact.
- Avoid shadows on your face and habits such as pencil chewing and putting your hands in front of your face.

#### Avoid background noise

- If possible, move to a quiet area or reduce noise. Televisions, radios, people talking in the background and air conditioning may interfere with the person's ability to understand.

#### Reduce the distance

- The level of voice decreases over distance. Standing within one metre of the person is recommended.

#### Optimise lighting

- Good lighting helps with lip-reading ability.
- Avoid backlighting or silhouette effects.

#### Speak clearly

- Speak at a normal or slightly slower pace and keep your volume up but natural. If appropriate, direct your voice to the better ear, but make sure your face is clearly visible.
- Do not shout or exaggerate words as speech and lip movements are distorted. Be aware that an unfamiliar accent, beards and moustaches may impede lip-reading.

#### State the subject

- Let the person know the subject of the conversation and cue in to any change of topic (let people know if there will be any change to the topic being discussed).

#### Check for understanding

- Ask for feedback to check for understanding of what has been said.
- Use open-ended questions rather than yes or no questions. Remember that smiling and nodding does not always confirm understanding.



### Good communication strategies for communicating with people who are hearing impaired

#### Repeat, rephrase or write down

- Especially key messages to help with communication; for example, names, dates, times and medication dosages.
- Make use of diagrams and handouts.

#### Use facial and body expression

- It is okay to point.
- Do not use exaggerated mime or facial expressions.

#### Check hearing aids are working

- If you are not sure, contact an audiologist for help.
- If the person wears glasses, check if they are worn to help with lip-reading.

Use a qualified Auslan sign language interpreter to improve communication with a Deaf person.

## Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Deaf people receiving support

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Deaf people receiving support may require the use of an Indigenous Deaf Relay Interpreter (IDRI) in addition to an Auslan interpreter.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Deaf people are multilingual and multicultural; some are still acquiring an understanding of non-Indigenous culture and particularly government processes.

Some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Deaf people receiving support may have minimal language competency (MLC), which denotes only minimal skills across all languages. It is for this reason that people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander may require the additional services of an IDRI who can factor in cross-cultural explanations and cater to the linguistic needs of the person receiving support (i.e. those who use an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander dialect of Auslan). Auslan interpreters are simply not able to match this cultural and linguistic level.

## Communicating with CALD people

The Queensland Government has developed a guide called 'Working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds'.

The following tips are outlined in the guide.

### Practical guidelines for communicating with CALD people receiving support

- Use an accredited professional interpreter when a person is unable to communicate effectively in English.
- Check and use correct pronunciation of names and the correct or preferred way of addressing a person (e.g. formally or informally).
- Use plain English and clear enunciation.
- Use concrete instead of abstract language and avoid the use of idioms, irony, sarcasm, slang and jargon.
- Be patient, receptive and listen carefully to everything that is said.
- Avoid any tendency to equate the person's level of language skill or accent with their level of intelligence or credibility.
- Ask open-ended questions and be aware that repeated 'yes' answers may mean different things in different cultural contexts.
- Make sure that the other person understands what you have said and that you understand what they have said. This can be done by asking the person to tell you their understanding of what you have said and paraphrasing back to them your understanding of what they have said.

Source: [www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-working-cald.pdf](http://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-working-cald.pdf)

## Recognising and supporting effective team communication

**Each care team is unique, with its own purpose, size, setting, set of core members and methods of communication.**

To effectively communicate with team members, communication must be two-way (or multi-way if between teams), structured and continuous and it must result in the timely, accurate and appropriate transfer of information. Communication must be tailored, open, honest and respectful, and there must be opportunity for clarification and feedback.

The following core principles relating to teamwork must also be in place:

- A shared understanding of who is part of the team
- Shared goals of care
- Clear roles and responsibilities of team members
- Mutual trust and respect
- Measurable processes and outcomes.



To improve effective communication, workers may use specific, structured techniques to share information with each other. Examples of strategies and techniques include:

<b>Briefings</b>	Short, structured meetings where the team comes together to talk about a person receiving support, a procedure or a situation. Good briefings set the tone for team interaction and ensure that every member of the team has a shared mental model of what is going to happen during the process, identifies any risk points and avoids surprises. Successful briefings are concise, involve everyone on the care team and demonstrate two-way (or multi-way) conversation.
<b>Debriefings</b>	A concise exchange that occurs after an event, process or procedure to identify what happened, what was learnt, what went well and what can be done better next time. Effectiveness of a debriefing will depend on the effectiveness of the briefing. A debriefing conversation should focus on the common goal and have a positive tone.
<b>Critical language</b>	An agreed set of terms or common language that indicates to all members of a care team that there is a problem or concern. This could include phrases like 'I need some clarity' or 'I am worried about'. Teams that respond to critical language know that when this type of phrase is spoken they need to stop, take a moment and ensure that everyone on the team is on the same page.
<b>Common language</b>	Avoiding the use of acronyms and jargon that may exclude members of the care team who are not in the same profession and using plain language to ensure a shared understanding.
<b>Situational awareness</b>	The care team maintaining an awareness of the 'big picture' and thinking ahead to plan and discuss contingencies. There is an ongoing dialogue that keeps members of the team up to date with what is happening and how they will respond if a situation changes.
<b>Check-back or closed-loop communication</b>	A strategy that ensures messages and information are received. A closed-loop strategy is used to verify and validate information exchange between two people. The sender initiates a message; the receiver accepts the message and confirms what is communicated, and then verifies that the correct message was received.

Source: <https://c4sportal.safetyandquality.gov.au/communicating-with-patients-and-colleagues>

Communication flow in the organisation is important for effective provision of care. Workers need to understand what is happening and have a clear idea of the protocols and procedures to operate within. Supervisors and managers should have



a clearly developed communication channel, through which important information can be shared between management and workers. Your colleagues are an important source of information regarding the wellbeing of the people you support and the events in the organisation.

Conflict in the organisation may relate to a communication need that is not being met. For example, a person may have trouble understanding the organisational procedures, and so is not following them correctly. Supervisors and colleagues can help support this person by providing an interpretation and a clear explanation of procedures.

Always be patient and respectful of the communication needs of others you work with.

## Accessing external networks

**It is often difficult for one agency to meet all the needs of a person.**

Being well connected with other organisations and the wider community gives workers access to resources that assist in meeting different people's needs. The more information you have, the better you can meet the objectives of a program or the organisation's goals.

Being part of strong informal and formal networks allows the community to become aware of the services your agency offers. Every relationship you develop has the potential to be a resource for people you support.

Learn to recognise and support the communication needs of external networks you work with. Some examples are discussed below.

<b>Formal networks</b>	<p>Formal networks, such as other community services organisations or agencies that represent the needs of people you support, may have particular communication needs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• specific, concrete details about a person, such as specific details of their medical history</li><li>• clear, polite and friendly communication</li><li>• both written and verbal information, to ensure no errors or omissions are made</li><li>• receiving up-to-date and relevant information.</li></ul> <p>Support formal networks to meet communication needs by checking in, asking for feedback and responding by making improvements.</p>
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**Informal networks**

Informal networks, conference delegates, people you meet when training, and social media networks may have particular communication needs, including:

- up-to-date information about current events and news related to your organisation
- feeling connected and informed.

Check in with your informal networks to clarify communication needs. Ask for feedback and make improvements.

## Example

### Recognise and support communication needs

Joseph has a hearing impairment and uses sign language. Joseph's mother, Ming, emigrated from China and speaks Cantonese. Both Ming and Joseph use limited English, and meaningful communication can be difficult. Several significant conflicts have developed between Ming and Joseph and there is confusion and resentment about the aged care options for Ming.

Danielle is a case manager who is working with Joseph and his family.

Ming and Joseph agree to have a meeting to resolve some of their difficulties. Danielle books an Auslan interpreter and a Cantonese interpreter. Danielle allows extra time for the meeting as using two interpreters may mean the meeting will take longer. It will be a complex discussion. There must be enough time for Ming and Joseph to express their views without feeling pressured.

Danielle allows for two and a half hours. The meeting is very successful. Ming says she has never had an opportunity to talk like this before. Both Ming and Joseph express their concerns and fears as well as their needs. The issues are not resolved in this one meeting but good progress has been made. Some actions are decided on regarding what to do next. Ming and Joseph agree it would be useful to hold another similar meeting. They set a date for the next meeting.



## Practice Task 5

### Question 1

Explain how building trust and maintaining relationships helps support the communication needs of others.

### Question 2

Which of the following communication techniques should be used when communicating with people receiving support? Tick all that apply.

- Treat the person with respect by listening carefully.
- If they do not understand you the first time, speak loudly and very slowly.
- Check for understanding by summarising what the person said.
- Repeat, rephrase or write what you said if the person does not understand what you are saying.
- Use positive facial and body expressions such as a head nod.

### Question 3

List three strategies that will ensure effective communication with your colleagues.

# 2B

## Access interpreter and translation services

**Many communication needs can be addressed by working with a translation or interpreting service.**

An interpreter or translator may be very useful when a person speaks or reads little or no English. Using an interpreter or translator may help to make the person feel comfortable as they are communicating with them in a language they understand very well. It also ensures they have access to accurate information and can provide accurate information.

Translators and interpreters serve slightly different functions when addressing communication needs.

Translators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Translators convert the written word from one language to another.</li><li>• Use a translator to provide information to someone who cannot read English.</li></ul>
Interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpreters convert what someone says into another language.</li><li>• Use an interpreter to converse with someone who does not speak English.</li></ul>

### The role of interpreters and translators

**Interpreters must understand exactly what the worker wants to communicate to the person they support.**

They listen to one person speaking a language and then interpret the words into the other person's language so both people understand each other. It is often necessary to get an interpreter when a person who does not speak English enters a new service.

By using an interpreter or translator, people you support should be able to direct their own care; self-advocate; make a complaint, request or suggestion; or make their own legal, medical and financial decisions more appropriately and effectively.

The following groups of people may benefit from the services of a translator or interpreter.

Workers	Workers who provide support to people may need to use an interpreter to ensure the organisation has the correct information about each person. Workers can then develop a care plan and provide the appropriate service. For example, workers must know each person's health issues, food preferences, ability to self-direct their own care, mobility needs and any special requirements.
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<b>Service users</b>	The people you provide support to may benefit from using an interpreter or translating service so they fully understand the service provided to them. All people must understand the nature of any documents they need to sign in relation to their care.
<b>Family</b>	Service users' family members and/or carers also need to understand the nature of the service provided to the person, particularly with regard to specific care and/or medication.
<b>Hearing impaired</b>	People who are hearing impaired may use an interpreter to help them communicate with others. Some people may use signed English as an alternative to Auslan or may have learnt another signing method.

## Choosing an interpreter or translator

An interpreter or translator should be used in all situations if there is a communication barrier and decisions about care need to be made, including changes to existing care. Interpreters can be used in different ways, including face to face, video conferencing and through telephone conversations.

Consider the following when choosing an interpreter.

<b>Interpreters from the same culture</b>	Workplaces that provide care to people from more than one culture often have a register of interpreters that includes names, contact details and the language/s they speak. An interpreter from the same culture can make a person feel comfortable.
<b>Interpreters of the same gender</b>	Workplaces usually try to use an interpreter of the same gender as the person they support. This may help the person relax when personal questions are being asked. For example, an older woman who has a urinary tract infection may not want to talk about this with a male interpreter.
<b>Professional interpreters and translators</b>	Always ensure the interpreter or translator you engage is fully accredited. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) can provide information on accredited translators and interpreters</li> <li>• the Department of Home Affairs</li> <li>• the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) has more than 750 interpreters who speak over 30 languages</li> <li>• the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service provides bookings to sign-language users.</li> </ul>

## Alternative interpreters

Consider the authenticity of the interpreters or translators you use. You should also consider any privacy or confidentiality breaches that may arise from using non-professional interpreters.

The following are other people who may be used if a professional interpreter is not available:

- staff members
- volunteers
- family members
- friends.

Do not make assumptions about family members regarding using them as interpreters. It may be inappropriate to ask a family member to translate, for example, information about personal health matters, or there may be some tension in the relationship that means information might not be accurately provided.

## Auslan interpreters

Auslan is the official language of the Deaf community in Australia. It is signed communication, using hand gestures.

Auslan interpreters can be booked by phone or the internet. NABS is the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service, which is funded by the Australian Government. People can use the service if they require sign language to communicate and would like an interpreter to book healthcare providers. The service also provides resources for service providers.

- For video demonstrations of important words, Auslan provides an online video dictionary at [aspirelr.link/auslan-dictionary](https://aspirelr.link/auslan-dictionary)
- To book an Auslan interpreting service, do so at: [aspirelr.link/accesshub](https://aspirelr.link/accesshub)

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a very important issue when using interpreters and translators. The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) contains information about specific laws and requirements for privacy and confidentiality in workplaces.

Some people will not want to use family members as interpreters, so their information and conditions remain private. Similarly, some people may not want an interpreter from a local community group. Be mindful of who is engaged to offer translating and interpreting services. Always involve the person being supported in the decision.

The person and the interpreter need to understand the importance of privacy. All people have a right to keep their details private. Assure the person that a professional interpreter will maintain the confidentiality of their information.

## Using an interpreter

**When using an interpreter, you must ensure they speak the same language and dialect as the person being supported.**

Sensitivity to culture also needs to be considered. For example, if you are providing support to a person who is from Bosnia, you would not use a Serbian interpreter because these two countries were at war, and it may cause cultural conflict.

Interviews and conversations may take longer when you are using an interpreter, as everything needs to be said twice: once by the support worker and then by the interpreter. Using a professional interpreter from a professional agency may also cost money.

A professional interpreter ensures that a person understands everything discussed and can explain the contents of any documents that have to be signed. Below are some ideas for using an interpreter.

### Suggested guidelines for staff when working with interpreters include:

- briefing the interpreter beforehand wherever possible, explaining the purpose of the interview or meeting
- allowing for the extra time that is likely to be needed when using an interpreter
- introducing yourself and the interpreter to the person receiving support and explaining clearly who you are and what your role is
- speaking directly to the person receiving support rather than addressing them through the interpreter and looking at them when speaking and listening to them
- maintaining control of the interview
- pausing often to allow the interpreter to speak
- speaking clearly and somewhat more slowly but not loudly
- avoiding using slang or technical jargon
- making sure that the interpreter understands any difficult concepts that you are trying to convey
- periodically checking on the person's understanding of what has been said by asking them, through the interpreter, to repeat in their own words what has been communicated
- summarising what has been agreed to during the meeting and checking if the person receiving support has any questions
- debriefing the interpreter, if necessary, after the interview once the person receiving support has left.

Source: [www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-working-cald.pdf](http://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-working-cald.pdf)



## Interpreter services

**Be aware that interpreter services are not free (or inexpensive). Some directly charge the people receiving support, where others charge the care service.**

Check with your supervisor/manager before booking an interpreter as the organisation may have a service that they are connected to.

It is also highly preferable to use a health interpreter to discuss health issues.

### TIS National

TIS National is an Australian Government interpreting service for people who do not speak English and for organisations (including medical and health practitioners and emergency services) that need to communicate with their non-English-speaking people receiving services or service users. TIS National has access to interpreters across Australia who speak more than 160 different languages and dialects.

Services provided include:

- immediate phone interpreting for non-English speakers
- an automated voice-prompted immediate phone interpreting service
- a pre-booked phone or onsite interpreter
- Irregular Maritime Arrival (IMA) interpreting.

This service is available to anyone in Australia.

Contact information is as follows:

- Call 131 450.
- Visit [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au).

### Other interpreter services

The following are other interpreter services that people receiving services may access.

Service	Contact information
NRS Speak and Listen service is available to help callers with a hearing or speech impairment	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/accesshub">aspirelr.link/accesshub</a>
NABS	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/nabs">aspirelr.link/nabs</a>
Sign Language Australia	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/sign-language-australia">aspirelr.link/sign-language-australia</a>
2M Language Services (includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages)	<a href="http://aspirelr.link/2m-lanugage-services">aspirelr.link/2m-lanugage-services</a>

State-wide interpreter services for First Nations people include:

- Northern Territory Government Aboriginal Interpreter Service: [aspirelr.link/nt-aboriginal-interpreter-service](https://aspirelr.link/nt-aboriginal-interpreter-service)
- Aboriginal Interpreting WA: [aspirelr.link/wa-aboriginal-interpreting](https://aspirelr.link/wa-aboriginal-interpreting)
- South Australian Aboriginal Languages Interpreters and Translators: [aspirelr.link/sa-aboriginal-interpreter-guide](https://aspirelr.link/sa-aboriginal-interpreter-guide)

## Practice Task 6

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

### Case study

Jerry is assisting Yindi, a 79-year-old Aboriginal woman, with her admission to a residential facility. Jerry asks Yindi her name, which she spells for him. He asks for her date of birth. She looks at him blankly. He asks for medical details and history. Again, Yindi does not answer. Jerry looks at the referral to check if Yindi has listed next of kin he can contact to help translate.

There are no family names listed. He asks Yindi as simply and as clearly as possible if she knows someone who can translate. She just shakes her head. Jerry is not sure if that means no or if Yindi does not understand him. Jerry has not noticed that his voice has become louder as the conversation continues and that he has his hands on his hips in frustration.

Yindi is obviously getting agitated and yells, “Out...get out!”

One of the nurses, Chen, comes into the room, sits down next to Yindi, takes her hand and gently speaks to Yindi. Yindi responds, calms down and starts answering Chen’s questions.

After a short conversation, Chen explains to Jerry that Yindi speaks very little English, and her mob are Wiradjuri people. Yindi is feeling abandoned by her son and daughter, being locked away in a home, and she does not want to answer personal questions to a strange man. Chen says she will arrange for a Wiradjuri telephone interpreter for her admission.



**Question 1**

Explain two communication barriers that Jerry experienced with his conversation with Yindi and what he might have done to resolve these.

**Question 2**

Suggest two interpreter services that Chen could contact to assist with supporting Yindi's care.

# 2C

## Identify and address problems and communication barriers

**Barriers may exist because of language or physical communication issues.**

Communication barriers can lead to conflict, misunderstandings and errors. Part of communicating effectively in the workplace is the need to correctly identify, evaluate and investigate the communication issue. Step back from a situation and identify the issue before responding.

### Identifying and evaluating the situation

There are many potential causes of communication barriers. These may be language based or due to a person's disability, condition or illness.

Identifying the cause of a communication barrier before it causes further barriers can help you move forward and provide the best support you can to service users.

Similarly, earlier identification of communication barriers can help reduce conflict in the workplace and ensure that workplace practices can be carried out more effectively.

When identifying and evaluating a situation:

- Listen carefully to all parties involved in the situation.
- Ask further questions. Ask the parties to repeat their story to ensure you understand.
- Take time to evaluate the situation. Do not feel pressured to make immediate decisions. Reschedule conversations to give yourself extra time to respond appropriately.
- Develop your own strategies for remaining calm and practise these.
- Keep a written record of conversations to refer to if needed.

### Identifying communication barriers

**For people to understand each other, they must also share an understanding of the meanings inherent in all verbal and nonverbal communication.**

If this understanding is not shared, the true intent of the message may be distorted by the receiver. There are many physical and psychological barriers to effective communication.



These include:

- background: age, education, gender, economic status, culture, religious beliefs and political ideology all affect how we receive messages
- perception: we all see the world differently; our world is shaped by our background and life experiences
- environmental factors such as noise, distractions and heat may make communication difficult
- emotional or psychological issues: someone with a personal problem may not be responsive to communication
- poor communication and listening skills
- a disability; for example, a hearing impairment may mean the person needs aids or assistance with communication
- overly complicated messages or messages with a lot of jargon.

The following table explains how these physical and psychological barriers impact communication.

<b>Emotional state</b>	How a person is feeling will affect how they communicate. If a person you support or work with is upset because a family member is very sick, they may not want to talk. They may focus on the sadness they are feeling and not be able to understand clearly what you are saying to them. Communication difficulties can also arise if someone is afraid, angry or frustrated about a potential outcome. For example, someone may be angry because they believe if team productivity is improved, they will be out of a job. Or a person may be fearful that if they tell someone their condition has deteriorated, they may be removed from their home and placed in residential care.
<b>Mistrust</b>	Mistrust of people, organisations, systems and/or processes is common in some cultures and workplaces. If a person does not trust another person, they might not communicate openly with them. For example, a person may withhold information about their pain because they are worried you will not provide the care they need. Similarly, a colleague may not share their ideas for fear that someone else will use them as their own when speaking with management.  You can prevent mistrust by communicating in a clear and concise way to people you support and work with and by spending time building and maintaining relationships.



<b>Misunderstanding</b>	<p>Misunderstandings easily occur in the workplace. They may be related to information not being relayed correctly or in full. Misunderstandings may also occur because of misinterpreted body language. If a person does not receive a quick response to an email, they may misunderstand the reasons why.</p> <p>To minimise misunderstandings in the workplace, be clear in your communication. Monitor your body language so it matches the words you say. Check in with people you work with, and ensure you understand each other.</p>
<b>Physical condition</b>	<p>Many people you support may have physical problems or a disability. They may need a hearing aid or need to use sign language. They may not be able to access speech for a variety of reasons. Individuals may have a physical, sensory or intellectual disability or may experience cognitive impairment due to a disease or condition. These people may need to communicate without speech. Alternatively, they may need to enhance their speech with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies. For example, they may use pictures to represent words or sentences, a machine that works with symbols or an electronic device that speaks for them.</p> <p>You must respect and respond to AAC communication in the same way you would respond to spoken communication.</p>
<b>Listening skills</b>	<p>Older people often have conditions that make it difficult for them to speak clearly or hear clearly. These conditions will be recorded in their care plans.</p> <p>If a person you are caring for has difficulty speaking, you need to be very patient with them and concentrate when they are speaking. The care plan should also have hints on how best to communicate with them.</p> <p>People with good listening skills find it easier to communicate. Listening skills can be learnt.</p>
<b>Age</b>	<p>Many older people have problems with communication related to the ageing process. The most common age-related communication problems are hearing impairment, vision impairment, aphasia and dementia. Some of the signs of dementia are loss of memory, intellect, reason, social skills and normal emotion. Someone who is experiencing dementia changes may have difficulty with understanding and reasoning and trouble making simple choices.</p> <p>The main signs of aphasia are difficulty in finding the right words, trouble understanding speech and difficulty with reading and writing.</p> <p>You need to be patient and take time to communicate with people experiencing age-related communication problems. Always ensure they have understood what you have said before ending the communication.</p>



### Religious and spiritual needs

You must also be aware of people's spiritual and religious needs and respect them. The best way to find out about religious and spiritual needs is to read the care plan or ask the person.

You are respecting the person's religious and spiritual needs when you are aware of when and how they like to practise their religion or spirituality. You may need to consider this when you are communicating with people. For example, Muslim people pray several times a day. If you are unaware of their prayer times, you might ask them to have a shower at this time and they may become upset with you for not respecting their needs.

## Addressing specific communication barriers

**All people are different. To communicate well with people you support and co-workers, you need to know and understand these differences.**

You also need to understand the way people communicate. You need to bear in mind the many barriers to effective communication. Past experiences and cultural backgrounds may have an impact on individual differences.

Here are two examples.

### Past experience

What has happened in people's lives may affect how they communicate. Some people have lived a long time and have had many changes and experiences in their lifetime. You need to realise the people you work with will have different backgrounds and life experiences; for example, you may care for a person who has come from a large family. They may be used to lots of family gatherings and feel isolated in the aged-care facility. If you know about this experience, you can try to spend extra time with them. You could make sure they are introduced to other people and are included in social functions.

### Cultural background

Australia has people from many different cultures and countries. These different cultures make Australia an interesting place to live. The differences also make the workplace interesting. It is important to know about the culture of the people you support and of co-workers. The cultural differences might mean there are different languages or ways of behaving that affect communication. You need to know how to alter your communication to suit the culture of the people you are working with.

## Overcoming communication barriers

Being sensitive and empathetic to another person helps you address barriers. Here are some ways to overcome barriers to effective communication:

- Understand that we are all different and have different communication needs.



- Be sensitive to and informed about any cultural differences.
- Repeat information in different ways to ensure understanding.
- Ask questions to clarify understanding.
- Make sure your communication is clear and concise.
- Choose an appropriate environment for the communication.
- Use aids and/or communication equipment as required.
- Use positive language.

## Negotiating communication barriers

Anything that obstructs the actual meaning of a message is a barrier to communication. There are several strategies to use when negotiating communication barriers. It is much easier to work through problems if you have already established a trusting relationship.

Be consistent	Check your workplace policies to ensure you are responding within organisational frameworks. Respond to similar issues in similar ways.
Be neutral and objective	Your role is to facilitate communication between two or more parties. Do not make assumptions. If there is a conflict, encourage people to describe behaviours rather than personality traits. For example, "Jason punches me when I walk by", rather than "Jason is such a bully".
Be even-handed	Use practical strategies to ensure all parties are heard. For example, allow a set time frame for each party to communicate their experience or issue uninterrupted.

## Identifying areas of mistrust or conflict

**Communication is the key to building good relationships with your colleagues, people you support, their family members and other professionals with whom you liaise.**

However, every time you communicate there is always the potential you might confuse people or have them misinterpret what you say. This may lead to conflict or mistrust.

Here are some common causes of mistrust and conflict.

Lack of clarity	Information is not clear. For example, a person does not speak English well and does not understand what they are being asked to do.
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<b>Lack of training</b>	A new staff member has not been trained in a specific communication need. For example, a person being supported becomes frustrated.
<b>Understaffing</b>	A program is understaffed and there is not enough time to focus on setting priorities and following processes. This may mean staff members are too busy to communicate with each other about activities for people being supported.
<b>Authority problems</b>	There is a problem with the levels of authority. For example, a staff member may not feel able to speak up against a manager or a person may not feel able to speak up against a staff member.
<b>Lack of leadership</b>	There is a lack of leadership in setting effective communication strategies. For example, a coordinator has not set a good example of using active listening and positive communication due to their aggressive interpersonal communication style.
<b>Lack of resolution</b>	There are no staff conflict-resolution strategies in place. For example, a supervisor ignores a conflict between two staff members and allows one to bully the other without intervening.
<b>Intolerance</b>	There are no procedures for dealing with intolerance or racism. For example, a person makes a rude remark about another person from a different culture.
<b>Different goals and needs</b>	Different needs and/or goals are not fully reconciled. For example, a staff member needs to know their complaint is listened to, but the supervisor's goal is proving that a mistake has not been made.

## Using communication strategies to address mistrust

When you identify an area that may lead to mistrust or conflict, use your communication strategies and leadership skills to resolve the situation quickly. This may mean talking informally with the people affected or following the organisation's conflict-resolution procedures.

Mistrust or conflict can affect all activities in a service and can have far-reaching consequences for staff and service users. Conflict between staff can make communication ineffective. Poor communication will have an impact on the ability of staff to work as a team to meet people's needs. Mistrust may mean people are unable to believe what they are being told. This may promote anxiety, so it is essential for the supervisor to respond appropriately.

These are some communication strategies you can use to address mistrust:

- The supervisor, coordinator or team leader should provide direction and leadership for the team.
- Know the people you care for to better understand the communication strategies that work best for them.
- The more you understand people's communication needs, the better you can support them and prepare for potential difficulties.
- You should use a range of communication tools to assist people who are finding it difficult to express themselves.
- Do not wait for the situation to worsen. Act immediately.

### Video: Barriers to communication

Watch this video to learn how you can identify communication barriers and the actions you can take to improve a situation. Make a list of those actions.

- [aspirelr.link/yt-communication-barriers](https://aspirelr.link/yt-communication-barriers)





## Example

### Identify and address communication barriers

Gary is facilitating an important meeting about team productivity. He observes that Piper, a support worker, always says something negative after team members contribute an idea, such as “That won’t work”. Gary can see this is causing the group to start to get cynical about the whole process.

After the meeting, Piper agrees to catch up with Gary to talk about some of the concerns she raised in the meeting.

“I’ve worked here a long time, Gary, and I do actually know some things,” says Piper.

“Are you saying that you sometimes feel you are not listened to?” asks Gary.

“Yeah, sometimes,” says Piper.

“I’m sorry if you feel that way, Piper. I wonder if you would be interested in giving me some of your ideas on how to resolve your concerns. Maybe that way we can move forward.”

“Okay!” says Piper.

The next week, Gary receives an email from Piper. Piper has suggested some good strategies for resolving some of the team’s productivity issues. Gary asks Piper to present her ideas at the next team meeting.

By listening to Piper, trying to understand her point of view and getting her involved in developing a solution, Gary has refocused her mind on a positive resolution. Rather than constantly focusing on what will not work, Piper is given the task of finding what might work.



## Practice Task 7

### Question 1

Briefly explain why mistrust and misunderstandings can create communication barriers.

### Question 2

Which of the following are strategies used to address communication barriers? Tick all that apply.

- Ignoring the barrier and continuing the communication
- Being objective and neutral
- Being consistent
- Being even-handed and fair
- Speaking slowly and loudly to ensure you are understood

### Question 3

Provide one example of how a person's emotions can cause communication barriers.

# 2D

## Defuse conflict and refer if necessary

**Conflict in the workplace may occur because of a communication barrier or a misunderstanding. It may be caused intentionally or unintentionally.**

Conflict may occur between you and other workers or it may occur between your colleagues. Conflict may also occur between people you support, or between you and people you support.

Recognising the cause of the conflict and taking early action will help prevent the conflict from escalating. Referrals may be necessary. Respond to conflict in accordance with organisational requirements.

### Facilitating the resolution of issues

**To resolve day-to-day and other significant issues, you need effective communication.**

People may have a personal involvement in an issue that needs to be acknowledged. When helping to resolve issues, you must try to be as objective as possible. Use clear and assertive communication that defines and focuses on the issue, not on the people involved. An effective communicator supports others to break down the factors that contribute to the issue and develop clear and agreed methods to achieve appropriate outcomes.

### Defusing potentially difficult situations

Difficult situations can arise in stressful environments when communication is misunderstood or emotions are heightened. For example, if a person you support has a behaviour of concern, your response may be to yell at the person. Yelling exacerbates the situation, and conflict can escalate.

If a difficult situation occurs, provide a safe space for the situation to be dealt with. Calmly and objectively listen to each party. Be empathetic, polite and professional. If necessary, you may need to involve an external person such as a mediator, a counsellor or your supervisor.

### Using communication skills to defuse conflict

In general, aim for open communication in the workplace. This involves sharing appropriate information with your colleagues and supervisor, listening attentively and communicating openly and effectively with the people you support. When supporting or responding to a conflict, maintain a safe space to address the conflict. Encourage parties to listen to each other. Be empathetic and sensitive.



Here are some key communication skills you will need to develop and use effectively to diffuse conflict.

<b>Be assertive</b>	<p>Assertiveness is different from aggression. Being assertive is being self-assured and confident. If you are assertive, you are more in control of the situation. Use positive, clear language. Maintain positive, open body language. Avoid raising your voice, but speak audibly and clearly. Be clear about your own position.</p> <p>For example, if defusing a conflict, you may say, "Okay, let's step back for a minute and think about this situation calmly. Then we can talk".</p>
<b>Listen attentively</b>	<p>Listening is a central part of communication. Listen to the other people involved in the conflict. Each person should be given time to share their perspective. Other people present should listen and pay attention to what is being said. Try not to interrupt. Wait for the person to finish speaking. Paraphrase and summarise what you have heard to demonstrate you were listening. For example, you may say, "What I hear you saying is that you are frustrated with the service". Wait for the person to clarify that this is what they intended to say.</p>
<b>Be empathetic</b>	<p>Empathy is the ability to see a situation from another person's perspective. Being empathetic can be hard if you are caught up in the emotion of a situation. Take a moment to breathe, and then try to focus on what the other person is saying.</p> <p>For example, if a person appears angry, you may use empathy to try to understand why they may be feeling angry, rather than focusing on the fact that they are angry with you.</p>
<b>Allow time</b>	<p>The cause of the conflict may not be immediately apparent, especially if the situation is emotionally heightened. Allow parties, or yourself, time to cool down and think before trying to verbally resolve a situation. This could involve stepping into another room for a moment, or taking a day to think about what happened before addressing the conflict directly.</p>
<b>Take ownership</b>	<p>If you are involved in a conflict, one of the most powerful things you can do is take ownership of your part of the conflict. This can be extremely difficult, particularly if the conflict is very recent and emotions are high. But when you take ownership, the situation is likely to defuse or at least change quite quickly. When you take ownership, you encourage the other party to take ownership too.</p> <p>For example, if the conflict is about a misunderstanding, accept that you may have miscommunicated the information, and ask if there is any way you can improve the situation.</p>



### Encourage a win-win solution

A win-win solution is when all parties are satisfied with the outcome. Help parties identify what they hope to achieve from the situation. Identify where overlaps occur. Both parties should be involved in identifying possible solutions. Both parties should agree on the solutions before proceeding.

For example, if a person is complaining about too much overtime, help the person identify their desired outcome, and see how this meets the organisation's needs. Check with the person that they are satisfied with the outcome.

## Motivational interviewing

**Motivational interviewing is used to help the person you support to develop their own intrinsic motivation.**

If motivation comes from within them, a person is more likely to reach a goal or change their behaviour. **Motivational interviewing** is person centred, which means it focuses on the individual needs of the person.

Motivational interviewing asks open-ended questions that help the individual identify why they want to change their own behaviour. They are more likely to succeed in changing their behaviour if they identify reasons for changing it.

### Motivational interviewing

A method that encourages a person to identify their own motivations for change and strengthen their commitment to a specific goal.

## Principles of motivational interviewing

- The interviewer asks open-ended questions to encourage the individual to think for themselves.
- The interviewer provides positive affirmations.
- The interviewer uses reflective listening and provides summarising statements for the individual.
- The process promotes using empathy, warmth and acceptance.
- The main goal is to engage the individual and encourage 'change talk', which helps the individual motivate themselves.
- Goals set should be small, genuinely important, specific and realistic for the individual.



## Motivational interviewing versus a coercive approach

### Coercive approach

Strategy to encourage change that relies upon external motivations, including the communication of adverse consequences.

Motivational interviewing is preferred to using a **coercive approach**.

A coercive approach is less effective because the motivation is external. The person being interviewed will find it hard to motivate themselves in the future because they rely on external sources of motivation such as being told what to do.

The motivational approach is also preferred to a coercive approach because it is more person centred and empathetic. The individual is central to the process and therefore more likely to succeed with behavioural change.

## Following organisational conflict-resolution policies and procedures

### **Your organisation will have specific requirements for managing conflict and dealing with difficult situations.**

Your organisation may have formal dispute-resolution policies and procedures. These will indicate the steps to follow if a dispute occurs.

Usually, difficult situations and disputes are resolved in-house, if possible. If a solution or agreement cannot be made, an external mediator or counsellor may become involved. If a referral to an external party is required, follow organisational requirements for making the referral.

In general, observe and respect the other person's right to confidentiality. Treat people fairly and respect the person's right to express an opinion. Do not discriminate based on disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or age.

Talk with your supervisor to understand your organisation's specific requirements for managing difficulties.

For details of the Fair Work Ombudsman dispute-resolution policy, visit the following website: [aspirelr.link/fairwork-dispute-resolution](https://www.aspirelr.link/fairwork-dispute-resolution)

## Making referrals to resolve conflicts

### **Sometimes you will not be able to resolve all the issues that arise in the workplace.**

You may need to refer issues or conflicts to your manager or use an external mediator. Make sure you follow your workplace policies and procedures in these cases. This may involve completing documentation, contacting specific people and informing your supervisor if referrals are made.

You should refer someone to an external mediator when:

- you are not impartial or not perceived as impartial
- you are involved in the dispute
- the dispute is complex and involves several people
- you feel the conflict is beyond the scope of your role or skills
- conflict resolution impacts on you completing other parts of your job.

## Engaging a mediator

If you are engaging mediators for conflict resolution, you need to ensure they are skilled and experienced professionals.

### Tips for engaging a mediator:

- Check if your organisation has an employee assistance program (EAP) and if mediation is available as part of this service.
- Ask your manager if your organisation has a list of mediators who have been used before.
- Find out if there is a reputable counselling service in your existing network that offers a mediation service.
- Find out if you are funded by, or affiliated with, a government department that provides mediation or can link you to a government mediation service.
- Ask other trusted professionals for a recommendation.
- Ask incorporated mediation associations for recommendations. However, be aware that such associations may receive a fee for the referrals they make.
- Familiarise yourself with the Law Council of Australia's statement about the ethics in the practice of alternative disputes resolution.
- Consider interviewing a mediator prior to engaging their services.

## Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Many organisations use an EAP to support their staff. An EAP is a service that provides emotional, mental and general psychological support to staff and includes services for immediate family members.

The aim of EAPs is to provide advice and support to prevent and/or resolve work and personal problems that may adversely affect the performance and wellbeing of staff. According to the Employee Assistance Programs in Australasia website, problems and issues that can be discussed include relationships, health, trauma, substance abuse, gambling and other addictions, financial problems, depression, anxiety disorders, psychiatric disorders, communication problems, legal issues and coping with change.

Read more about the services provided by EAPs here: [aspirelr.link/eapaa](https://aspirelr.link/eapaa)



## Example

### Defusing conflict according to organisational requirements

Andrea is the daughter of a person Tammy has recently been supporting. Andrea meets Tammy to learn more about the agency. After greeting her warmly, Tammy discusses the services her organisation provides. Andrea asks questions about finance. Her friends have told her service providers are only in it for the money and that standards are not high, and she is concerned her mother will be 'ripped off'.

Tammy gives Andrea her full attention and does not interrupt while she is speaking. Without agreeing with her, Tammy shows that she respects Andrea's views and shows concern that she is upset. Tammy repeats some of the things Andrea has said to check that she understands the points Andrea is making and to show she is listening. When Andrea expresses her concerns, Tammy asks her what might help her in this situation. Together, Tammy and Andrea decide on the following actions:

- Andrea will bring her mother to a music night in the facility and stay for the duration so both can learn more about the environment.
- Tammy will give Andrea a copy of the organisation's most recent annual report and will make herself available if Andrea or her mother have any questions about it.
- Tammy will also make an appointment for her to meet the Operations Manager so she can learn more about how the organisation is managed.



## Practice Task 8

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

### Case study

Mercy and Doug work at a community centre together and have a meeting to review the current care plan of Gerald, a new attendee of the centre.

Doug is tired. He worked a late shift yesterday, and his newborn baby kept him up all night because she was sick. When Mercy starts talking, Doug's responses are brief; he is looking at his phone and yawning constantly and he interrupts Mercy mid-sentence. Mercy becomes irritated and starts speaking loudly and Doug becomes defensive. An argument starts and is so loud that their manager, Theo, comes in and tells them both to go and take some time, get a coffee, then meet in his office in 20 minutes.

### Question 1

Name three communication strategies Theo could use to defuse this situation in the meeting.



**Question 2**

Theo feels that the conflict can be resolved easily as Mercy and Doug have worked well with each other for years. If this was not the case, what two circumstances might drive Theo to engage an external mediator?

**Question 3**

Explain why a motivational interview with Mercy and Doug would be more beneficial than a coercive approach.

# 2E

## Respond to feedback on effectiveness of communication

**Regularly review your own communication performance to ensure you are using appropriate skills.**

Check that your communication skills are helping you to build trusting relationships with people receiving support, colleagues and external networks. Ensure that you are using culturally appropriate communication and interpreting situations correctly. With experience, these skills come naturally, but seeking and then responding to feedback will help you develop these skills.

### Reviewing the effectiveness of communication

Self-reflection and review are important when monitoring your ability to communicate. Monitoring communication allows you to see where issues may be occurring and helps you to develop an improvement plan.

Following are seven ways you could review the effectiveness of your communication with other workers.

How effective is your communication? Do you:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your decisions?	Check whether the decisions you have made and communicated to others have been carried out.
<input type="checkbox"/> Check the care plan?	Check whether a care plan you helped prepare has correctly identified the person's needs.
<input type="checkbox"/> Follow up?	Follow up feedback you gave to see whether it has been acted upon.
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your reflective listening?	Check whether points you picked up in reflective listening have been carried out.
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your outcomes?	Check whether there has been a reduced number of incidents following counselling sessions you have conducted.
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your understanding?	Ask colleagues if they have difficulty understanding the directions or explanations you give or if they have difficulty understanding you.
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your cultural awareness?	Think about requests or comments made by others to see whether you are being inclusive and culturally aware.



## Methods of obtaining feedback regarding your effectiveness

### Formal feedback

The planned or intentional process of providing a person with feedback.

Feedback can come in several forms. It can be **formal feedback** from a supervisor as part of an appraisal.

It can be **informal feedback** from people you work with. Be attentive to the feedback you get and think about how you can make improvements based on this feedback.

The following are possible methods of obtaining information about your communication.

### Informal feedback

Feedback that is given in real time and provided spontaneously, occurring at any time or location.

Sources of feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor</li> <li>• Colleagues</li> <li>• People you support</li> <li>• Service users' family members and carers</li> <li>• Professional networks</li> <li>• Informal networks</li> </ul>
Formal methods of obtaining feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal staff appraisal</li> <li>• Team meetings</li> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>
Informal methods of obtaining feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations with supervisor and colleagues</li> <li>• Checking whether others understand you</li> <li>• Observing your effect on others</li> <li>• Checking if your instructions were carried out</li> </ul>

## Responding to feedback on the effectiveness of your communication

If a person provides you with formal or informal feedback, reflect on the feedback given and try to make improvements where you can. Self-development is an organisational requirement. All people working in community services should do their best to make improvements where they can.

Talk to the person who provided the feedback about possible solutions. You may work with a supervisor to develop a self-improvement plan that outlines goals and objectives for improving your communication skills.

If the feedback came from someone you support, talk with them about ways you could improve communication.

Avoid being defensive when you receive feedback. Think of feedback as a positive way for you to grow and develop.



## Effectiveness of communication with external networks

### Monitor how effective your communication is with external networks.

If feedback is negative, talk to a representative from that network about ways to make improvements.

Examples of ways to monitor communication with external networks:

- Where possible, conduct surveys or polls of the organisation's website or social media users.
- Ask external stakeholders for feedback.
- Observe your, and the organisation's, effect on other individuals and agencies.
- Collect data about the success of the organisation.
- Monitor the success of relationships with other organisations and individuals.

### Example

#### Seek feedback on the effectiveness of communication

Here are examples of situations in which supervisors followed up decisions that had been made to address issues. Follow-up is one way of checking whether there have been any unforeseen problems and it provides information on how effective communication was at the time the decision was made.

Follow up agreed actions	A supervisor recently met with an older person about a complaint. At the meeting, actions were agreed on. Two weeks after this meeting, the supervisor checks if the decisions have been acted on and also makes a follow-up appointment with the older person to see if their issue has been resolved.
Collect data	Team leaders express concern about how much of their time with staff is spent supporting their personal issues. Their supervisor organises a trial to provide staff with access to an EAP. When the EAP has been running for three months, the manager collates data on how many staff have accessed the service and asks team leaders to note if they are spending the same amount of time counselling staff.



## Practice Task 9

### Question 1

List three review strategies you could use to assess the effectiveness of your communication.

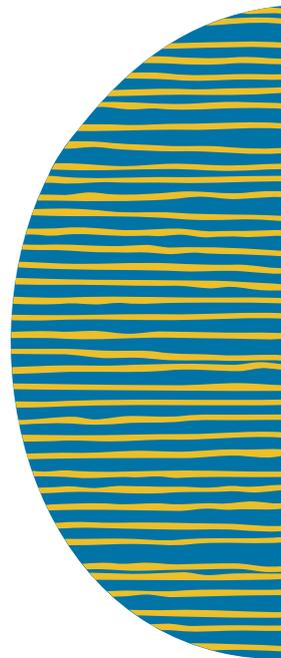
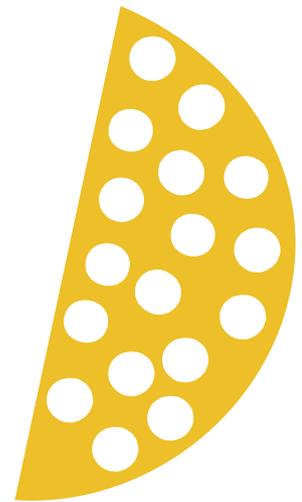
### Question 2

Data is collected before and after bullying, and harassment training has been offered to measure the number of reported bullying incidents in an agency. Explain two benefits of doing this.



## Summary

- Communication needs may relate to physical abilities, cultural needs or emotional needs. Observe the person, and their role in the interaction, and provide support where required.
- If there are language or communication needs, you may engage a translation or interpreting service. Engage a translator or interpreter appropriate for the person. Ensure they are accredited.
- Communication barriers may relate to communication breakdown, conflict, language barriers, heightened emotion or physical ability.
- Identify and address communication breakdowns. Early intervention will ensure the best result.
- Conflict can occur as a result of a communication barrier. Defuse conflict in accordance with organisational requirements. Make a referral to a mediator or counsellor if required.
- Feedback helps you grow. Seek and respond to feedback about your communication using formal and informal methods.





# Learning Checkpoint 2

## Address communication needs

### Part A

1. Identify three communication barriers you may come across when communicating with people receiving support and colleagues in your workplace and explain how you could address each barrier.

2. Identify three communication strategies that you could use to build and maintain relationships and trust with a person receiving support or a colleague.



- 3.** Identify two interpreting and translation services specific to assisting people receiving support with hearing impairments, and how to access them.

- 4.** A supervisor wants to resolve a conflict between two co-workers by holding a meeting. List three strategies the supervisor can use to work towards a positive outcome.

- 5.** Which of the following methods use effective communication techniques? Tick all that apply.

- Ask for feedback from colleagues, people you support and their family members
- Participate in formal staff appraisals
- Ask for feedback at team meetings
- Collect data about the number of workplace incidents or accidents
- Check if your instructions were carried out



- 6.** List at least five actions you would take to ensure communication is effective when engaging an interpreter to communicate with people receiving support.

- 7.** List three actions a manager can take to facilitate a motivational interview.



## Part B

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

### Case study

Hassen has recently been appointed team leader to the community services department in a local council. The department supports people who are ageing and people with disabilities.

The team Hassen manages has extensive experience and several staff members have worked in the department for many years. Hassen has worked in the department for 18 months.

A couple of staff members in Hassen's team are a little uneasy about his appointment. One staff member, Judy, shows her discontent in small ways, such as being sarcastic, coming late to staff meetings or not responding to Hassen's requests.

This problem has now escalated because Judy has ignored an instruction that could have significant consequences. Hassen calls a meeting to ask Judy why she did not follow his instructions. To this, she raises her voice and tells Hassen how qualified she is and how he does not value her skills. She finishes by saying, "What would you know anyway? I've been working in this field since before you were born".

Hassen later finds out that Judy's daughter has recently been diagnosed with cancer and she has been looking after her three grandchildren for the past month and is exhausted.

1. Explain three factors that could be contributing to the conflict and communication breakdown between Judy and Hassen.



- 2.** During the meeting, Judy acknowledges that she is having personal issues that may have affected her at work and apologises for yelling at Hassen.

Explain two ways Hassen could defuse the conflict with Judy and identify one referral he could make to resolve the conflict, if necessary.

- 3.** Outline how Hassen could seek and respond to feedback on the effectiveness of his communication with Judy.



- 4.** If the meeting did not resolve the conflict, suggest how organisational policies and procedures may help to resolve the conflict.

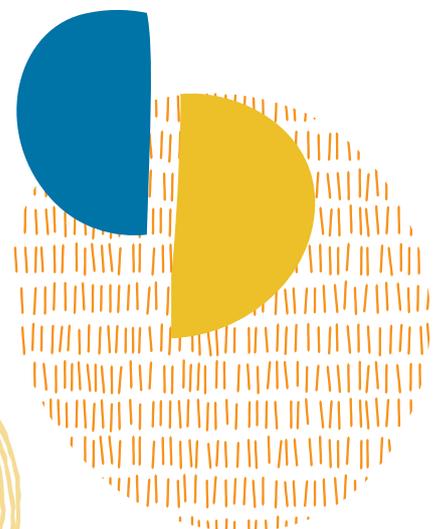
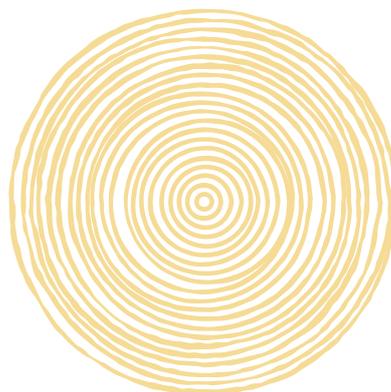
- 5.** Explain why Hassen's approach to conflict resolution was preferable to a coercive approach.





## Topic 3: Facilitate meetings

- 3A Develop an agenda and communicate details of meeting
- 3B Follow meeting agenda and provide opportunities to explore all issues
- 3C Implement strategies to encourage equal participation and address any communication needs
- 3D Facilitate conflict resolution
- 3E Keep records in accordance with requirements
- 3F Evaluate and improve meeting processes



# 3A

## Develop an agenda and communicate details of meeting

**Meetings are an efficient and effective way to communicate with others.**

The key to a successful meeting is effective preparation and organisation. Having a clear meeting objective and structure will help the meeting run smoothly.

### Developing a meeting agenda

**An agenda outlines the structure and intended outcomes of a meeting.**

The agenda is circulated to meeting attendees before the meeting to allow them time to prepare.

Developing an agenda helps ensure meetings run smoothly. It helps guide you in presenting and receiving information in an appropriate sequence and time frame. An agenda should be short and simple. Items are generally numbered. Agendas may have the name of each speaker and a time limit for each item.

An effective agenda:

- ensures all participants are adequately prepared for the meeting
- saves time during the meeting
- provides a focus for the meeting
- ensures each agenda item achieves the desired outcome.

### Agenda format

Keep the agenda to one page if you can. Use agenda templates provided by your organisation. Alternatively, create your own. Keep headings clear and concise. You may use a table format, so sections are clearly visible.

Circulate the agenda to all people attending the meeting. Allow participants enough time to review the agenda and prepare any documents they need.

Items in an agenda include:

- Objective of agenda – for example, 'Addressing WHS protocols'
- Date and time of meeting
- Location of meeting



- List of attendees
- Name of facilitator
- Agenda items, such as minutes, previous business, apologies, discussion and actions
- RSVP date and contact details.

## Consulting with the appropriate people

Once the agenda has been developed, you should seek approval from your supervisor. Your supervisor may give you feedback about the nature of the meeting or the suitability of time and location.

Once the final agenda is approved, circulate it to the appropriate people – for example, meeting participants. You may send the agenda by email or place it in staff pigeonholes. Ensure you have included an RSVP date and contact details so attendees can let you know if they can or cannot attend the meeting.

If attendees have feedback about the agenda, such as questions or suggestions, consult them and make changes as required. You may also need to consult attendees about communication needs, such as any visual aids they require.

## Preparing to facilitate meetings

**Facilitating meetings is more effective and easier if you are well organised.**

As well as preparing a clear agenda, ensure you have all the documents you need to run a meeting. Also ensure you have enough copies of each document if you are planning to distribute documents in the meeting.

If you are using visual material in your meeting, such as a slide projector, make sure you have spoken to an IT consultant or appropriate person about using the equipment. It is often worth arriving 30 minutes early to a meeting to make sure you have time to prepare.

Ensure that the location is suitable. There should be enough light and ventilation. If attendees have special needs, such as requiring wheelchair access, ensure these needs are met.

Here is a list of things you may need to do to prepare for a meeting.

Distribute agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that everyone who has been invited to the meeting has received their agenda and responded indicating whether they are able to attend or not.</li> </ul>
Prepare documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the documents you want prepared printed/bound?</li> <li>• Have you printed enough documents for each person who is attending?</li> </ul>



<b>Prepare room</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider aspects such as air-conditioning/heating, appropriate size of the room and appropriate number of seats.</li> </ul>
<b>Prepare and test the equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are using audiovisual equipment in a presentation, make sure it is available for use.</li> <li>Arrive early and turn the audiovisual equipment on to check that it is functioning and you know how to use it.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure refreshments are available</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you have arranged for refreshments, have they arrived/ been picked up?</li> <li>Are there enough refreshments for everyone attending?</li> <li>Are there enough napkins, cups, etc.?</li> <li>If you cannot arrange refreshments, you may direct the team to bring a drink with them.</li> </ul>

## Example

### A formal agenda

Warren Avenue Advocacy Group committee meeting
7 February 2023
7–9pm
Warren Avenue head office
<b>Meeting objective:</b> Monthly update of program and planning for upcoming months
<b>Attendance:</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>
<b>Approval of previous meeting’s minutes:</b>
<b>Matters arising:</b>
Funding for staff training Council response to letter
<b>New business:</b>
Planning for annual general meeting Profile of potential service users to access service Use of agency car
<b>Next meeting:</b> 13 March 2023 at 7pm



## Communicating details of a meeting in accordance with protocol

### **Communication is an essential element of running a successful meeting.**

Before, during and after, communicate with all participants and other stakeholders, such as those affected by outcomes in the meeting.

Communication may be done by email, phone, online or face to face. Invite others to ask questions, clarify and provide feedback. If people are involved in the process, they are more likely to engage with the objectives of the meeting.

Follow your organisation's style guides and communication protocols when preparing reports before and after the meeting.

### **Organising communication protocols and style guides**

Your organisation may provide a specific template to use for taking minutes and collating a report about meeting outcomes. These templates should be used as they ensure consistency and quality and that ethical and quality standards and practices are maintained. Your organisation will have specific guides for preparing written communication and documentation. A large organisation is likely to have developed its own style guide.

Style guides may specify:

- the type of language to use (formal, informal)
- key information to include (date, time, location, name of facilitator)
- text formatting (size, font type, layout, tables)
- use of organisation logo
- use of organisation vision and mission statements
- Acknowledgment of Country to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land
- whether documentation should be digital or printed
- anti-discrimination, equality and privacy standards and procedures.

## Documenting all information

An important part of distributing information and maintaining communication flow is to ensure agendas, minutes and any information discussed in a meeting are available as documents soon after the meeting or discussion. Make sure this information is in a form that is accessible to all participants.

Be aware of each participant's needs so everyone is treated equally. Remember to apply the full range of communication skills.

For example, an attendee with a vision impairment may require the document to be sent electronically so they can translate it with computer software applications into a format that is easy for them to comprehend.

## Reports/minutes

Reports may be presented at meetings. They may also be used to summarise the outcomes of a meeting and are referred to as 'minutes of the meeting'.

Reports/minutes are clear, concise, formal methods of communication. They are necessary for the accountability of an organisation, therefore must be accurate and succinct.

Reports may be used in a meeting to collate and present information about a case, present statistics, outline key organisational objectives, review progress, review spending and summarise feedback.

Follow organisational procedures and style guides for developing reports for meetings. This will ensure you meet professional and organisational standards. The reasons for having organisational procedures and style guides are:

- for consistency and compliance across the organisation
- it sets the tone for the organisation and helps all employees understand what is expected
- it prevents possible offence, exclusion or misunderstandings
- it ensures professionalism.

Reports/minutes should:

- be clear and concise
- be in line with organisational protocols and style guides
- be organised into clear sections
- contain any relevant graphics, such as tables and graphs
- be objective and factual
- be referenced correctly
- be dated
- be authorised.



Agendas and minutes can be sent out in different ways. If the team all have access to company computers or tablets, they may not need to be printed, just sent to the recipients via email, the intranet or a calendar app. Benefits of this include:

- it is more ecologically responsible
- it allows people with English as a second language to translate the information before the meeting
- it is more accessible: if a paper version is sent it may or may not get to the recipient
- that responses can be monitored frequently
- that changes can be made quickly and efficiently.

The facilitator of the meeting may print one copy to make it easier for the note/minute taker to write what is being discussed if that person finds it easier than typing on a tablet.

To be inclusive, the facilitator may ask in the invitation whether a paper version of the minutes is preferred. This can save paper and also caters to individual preferences.

## Example

### Using reports/minutes to communicate meeting details

Here is an example of minutes prepared in accordance with an organisation's communication protocols. The minutes have been written with a minimalist approach. They are a clear report of the purpose, outline and result of the meeting, but do not go into detail about the course of the discussion

Meeting report
<b>Present:</b> Katie Jacobs, Layla Blue, Ronnie Dixon and Yu Chen
<b>Absent:</b> Sue Lamond
<b>From:</b> Rani Simon, Supervisor
<b>Date:</b> 16/03/2023
<b>Subject:</b> Sustainability practices in the workplace
<b>Ref:</b> Meeting minutes 00611



<b>Details:</b>
Meeting began at 09:00 16/03/2023 as planned in the meeting room and George Street offices, Maryland. The following agenda was agreed to at the start of meeting:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Previous minutes</li><li>• Apologies</li><li>• Meeting outline</li><li>• Key sustainability issues and practices</li><li>• Required actions</li><li>• Follow-up</li></ul>
<b>Key sustainability issues:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor recycling management</li><li>• Excess food wastage</li><li>• Paper wastage in office</li><li>• Excess travel expenses</li></ul>
<b>Key sustainability practices and actions:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement new recycling management system.</li><li>• Address food wastage by developing meal plans.</li><li>• Collect data about office paper usage and brainstorm more effective methods.</li><li>• Collect travel data and brainstorm alternative transport options.</li></ul>
<b>Follow-up:</b>
Yu Chen and Ronnie Dixon will meet in a fortnight to present their data collection. Meeting scheduled for 30/03/2023



## Practice Task 10

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

### Case study

The following agenda is sent to the whole team at Mamiku Community Centre attached to a calendar request.

Mamiku Community Centre team meeting	
Date: 7 March 2023	Time: 3–4pm
Location: Mamiku Community Centre Meeting Room	RSVP: 5pm, 3 March 2023
Meeting objective: Monthly team update and feedback.	
Attendance:	Apologies:
Minute taker: TBA	
Approval of previous meeting's minutes:	
Matters arising:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with current clients</li> <li>• Issues with staffing and sick leave</li> </ul>	
New business:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing new team members joining the centre</li> <li>• New webpage launch</li> </ul>	
Reports:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator's monthly report</li> </ul>	
Next meeting: 11 April 2023 at 7pm	



**Question 1**

Which of the following information is included in the agenda? Tick all that apply.

- Date and time of meeting
- Location of meeting
- Name of facilitator
- Agenda items, such as minutes, previous business, apologies, discussion and actions
- RSVP date

**Question 2**

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

a. An RSVP date tells the facilitator how many people will be attending.	Yes / No
b. Meetings should be held at the same time.	Yes / No
c. A client's personal information should not be discussed at a meeting.	Yes / No
d. 'Attendance and apologies' is left blank until the meeting has occurred.	Yes / No

**Question 3**

Suggest two reasons why meeting documentation should align with organisational protocols and style guides.



**Question 4**

List two benefits of sending agendas, reports and minutes out electronically via the intranet or email.

# 3 B

## Follow meeting agenda and provide opportunities to explore all issues

**Having an agenda helps all participants to have a clear understanding of the meeting objectives prior to the meeting.**

The meeting is more likely to stay on track and on time with only one or two clear objectives. If more objectives arise during a meeting, use strategies to clarify what those objectives are and suggest they be addressed in another meeting.

Objectives should be specific. It may be tempting to address broad topics such as 'Improve care practices'. However, meetings are more effective if the objective is specific and focused. Focus on one aspect of a broad topic, such as 'Improve documentation of care plans'. This is more achievable and realistic.

### Presentation strategies

Effective and careful planning is a key component of a meeting's success.

You must first identify what you want to achieve in the meeting so that you can select the right content and the most appropriate method for presenting that content.

All meetings have a purpose, whether it is to provide information or to persuade people to take a particular course of action or decide on a particular matter. The intended outcomes of the meeting are your focus in the planning stage. Selecting presentation strategies that will support the achievement of identified outcomes requires consideration and an understanding of your audience.

Various presentation strategies are suggested in the following table. Any combination of these strategies can be used.

PowerPoint	Used to present visual material such as brief summaries of meeting content, graphs, figures and images
Verbal	Clear, organised verbal strategies can be used to discuss meeting objectives
Nonverbal	Use appropriate and friendly facial expressions and body language to emphasise what you are saying and build rapport. Dress appropriately
Documentation	Use documentation in conjunction with verbal strategies to emphasise material or present data
Demonstration	Demonstrate certain skills in conjunction with providing information
Discussion	Encourage participants to discuss key points and ask for feedback



## Communication strategies to use in presentation

To be a successful facilitator, clear communication is integral to delivering presentations and leading the session.

Communication strategies to use in your presentation include:

- presenting clear, simple points that closely follow the meeting objectives
- following a meeting structure so your presentation is organised and easy to follow
- introducing the key points you will be presenting, presenting evidence in the presentation, and concluding with a summary
- delivering your presentation assertively and confidently
- speaking clearly and audibly
- avoiding using jargon and technical terms without explanation.

## Contributing to and following meeting objectives

An important part of facilitating meetings is to keep them on track. Have a clear agenda and a clear understanding of the objectives before the meeting begins. A clear agenda and clear objectives help ensure the meeting is organised and runs on time.

Keep an eye on the time throughout the meeting and track the progress of the meeting against the agenda and the objectives.

Some topics may generate more discussion than others. If you find one section of the meeting is consuming too much time, you may suggest postponing the discussion for another meeting.

If participants go off-topic, use communication strategies to guide them back to the meeting objectives.

Communication strategies you can use when following meeting objectives include:

- simply and clearly communicating objectives throughout the meeting
- asking participants if they understand what the objectives of the meeting are
- being assertive, and using positive, confident language and tone of voice to keep the meeting on track
- ensuring that all participants have the opportunity to speak about the objectives
- clarifying the objectives if participants become confused.

## Example

### Follow meeting objectives

Narelle has been asked to facilitate a meeting about sexual harassment in the workplace. She has distributed the agenda to the participants, who are all female. She has asked participants to bring any key evidence and anecdotes of sexual harassment in the workplace to the meeting. She has also pre-warned participants that the meeting may elicit strong emotional responses, and she has allocated a half-day of leave to all participants following the meeting.

Narelle starts by introducing the objective of the meeting, which is 'addressing sexual harassment in the workplace'. She asks participants if they are clear about what this means, and they all agree they are.

Narelle follows the agenda she sent to all participants. When it comes to sharing personal anecdotes, several of the participants are very engaged with their story. Some of the stories go off track, and participants start talking about personal issues relating to the perpetrators of sexual harassment.

Narelle realises it is a sensitive topic, but she needs the meeting to stay on track and meet its objective, which is to develop actions to address sexual harassment.

"If we could all stay on topic, please, and focus on delving into our experiences at work," says Narelle.

## Providing opportunities to explore issues

### **To reach meeting objectives, you need to explore the issues in depth during the meeting.**

Encourage participants to contribute to the discussion and share their valued insights.

You may not have time to explore the breadth of some issues in the meeting. Some issues will require further discussion. The meeting may initiate new discussion points. Talk with your team about suitable opportunities to explore issues further. These opportunities may be further face-to-face team meetings, individual meetings, online forums, group email circulation or letters.

You may need to use negotiation strategies to achieve optimal outcomes during or after the meeting.



## Exploring the issues during the meeting

All participants who want to contribute to the discussion should have the opportunity to do so. This means allowing the right amount of time for the discussion, based on the issue and the number of people present.

Be aware that some people in the group will be more reserved than others. Allow enough time for each participant to contribute to the discussion. If you have numerous participants, ensure the meeting objectives are very specific, and do not try to address too many issues in one meeting.

Ensure that participants with specific communication needs are supported, so they too have the opportunity to express themselves in the meeting.

As a facilitator, you need to:

- identify how long the meeting will last
- allocate enough time for participants to speak
- monitor each person as they speak to ensure no-one goes over their allotted time
- ensure that relevant information has been adequately presented
- encourage reluctant speakers to express themselves
- ensure communication and assistive devices are available for those who need them.

For more information on assistive devices, visit: [aspirelr.link/nidcd-assistive-devices](https://aspirelr.link/nidcd-assistive-devices)

## Validating participants' issues

Someone may be hesitant to contribute if they suspect they are not believed or that others think they have nothing of value to offer. You do not have to agree with what someone says, but you must respect their right to say it.

Consider the following issues when **validating** participants:

- People have different perspectives about issues.
- Incorporate all perspectives into the meeting.
- Address gaps in information by asking for input from others.
- Encourage people to contribute by stating at the beginning of the meeting that all ideas are valued.
- Active listening is a useful tool in validating people's issues and experiences.
- Show people you are listening by asking questions and using body language such as nodding and leaning forward.

### Validation

Accepting and acknowledging what a person believes to be real and responding accordingly.

## Exploring issues safely

As a facilitator, it is your job to lead the meeting. You need to be assertive and direct the progress of the meeting. You need to give all participants the chance to express themselves. You need to provide a safe environment for issues to be explored and guide participants to explore issues safely. To do this:

- establish guidelines for communication and the process
- clarify and summarise
- facilitate effective communication
- assist parties to clearly describe the issue from their perspective
- intervene if communication is inappropriate; for example, to ensure parties do not interrupt one another
- test and challenge proposed agreements or actions; for example, by asking how a particular solution will work and if it is a realistic solution
- assist two or more parties in effective decision-making.

When working with others to address issues, you must:

- ensure the confidentiality of information shared by the parties involved
- ensure the information discussed is offered voluntarily
- ensure each party is willingly involved
- set appropriate rules and boundaries for the discussion
- ensure all parties agree with the proposed actions
- be impartial
- not contribute to negative actions.

## Exploring the issues further

Participants may not reach a consensus on a point, for instance, and so negotiation is needed. You may need to engage an expert or your supervisor for additional input. Some issues may be too big for the length of the meeting, and so a second meeting may be called to follow up discussions.

Tips for exploring issues further include:

- being realistic about how much information can be dealt with in one session. Hold another meeting if necessary
- when working in groups, overestimating how much time it will take to discuss a particular issue
- reassuring all participants that you are keen to hear all their ideas. Have a contingency plan if the discussion creates some interesting and valuable ideas



- avoiding addressing complex issues in regular staff meetings. Set up specific meetings or working groups to deal with complex issues
- keeping the discussions productive. If someone is getting stuck on one point, find ways to move them on.

## Using communication strategies to negotiate for optimal outcomes

**Negotiation is a structured discussion that aims to reach an agreement.**

Meetings may raise contentious issues that require you to use effective communication and negotiation skills. For instance, if you are meeting with a service user and their carer to discuss a person's individualised plan and the carer and the service user disagree on one aspect of the plan, you will need to use negotiation skills to reach a consensus.

Negotiation may occur between you and one or more participants. It may also occur between other participants, and you are required to facilitate the negotiation to achieve optimal outcomes.

The following are some reasons you may need to facilitate negotiations in a meeting and communication strategies you can use to facilitate negotiations. Optimal outcomes are also listed.

<p><b>Reasons for negotiation</b></p>	<p>Reasons you may need to facilitate negotiation in meetings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two or more participants disagreeing about one of the issues raised</li> <li>• two or more participants having difficulty communicating effectively</li> <li>• a person feeling they need further support</li> <li>• a worker negotiating for more flexible working hours.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication strategies to use in negotiations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain impartial and objective.</li> <li>• Avoiding making a pre-judgment about a person or situation.</li> <li>• Allow each party time to express themselves.</li> <li>• Actively listen to participants and encourage other participants to listen to each other.</li> <li>• Identify the specific issue being negotiated.</li> <li>• Identify the options.</li> <li>• Identify common ground.</li> <li>• Clarify and review options.</li> <li>• Reach an agreement.</li> <li>• Follow up with all parties to ensure all parties are satisfied with the outcome.</li> </ul>



<b>Optimal outcomes</b>	It may be challenging to reach a solution that everyone is happy with. An optimal outcome is the best possible outcome that can be achieved from the negotiation. The following are optimal outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Both parties are satisfied.</li><li>• Both parties feel they have been heard and understood.</li><li>• Conflict is reduced.</li><li>• An opportunity for further negotiation has been planned.</li></ul>
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## Reaching consensus

**Reaching consensus on agenda items or objectives in a meeting ensures that everyone is on board with the decisions being made.**

**Consensus**  
A general agreement.

If **consensus** is reached in a meeting, all participants agree on the outcomes and are satisfied.

For example, one of the objectives of your meeting may be deciding/planning sustainability practices in the workplace. You may organise for participants to vote. This could be done as a ballot, where participants anonymously write their preferred decision on a piece of paper. The votes are then counted. Voting can also be done using a show of hands.

Fair and equitable practices should be used to reach a consensus. Ensure that all participants have the adequate information to make a decision and have the ability to contribute to the decision.

If a final decision is not reached, you may allocate time to discussing how to address differences, and possibly develop new solutions.

For more information on consensus meetings, visit: [aspirelr.link/decision-making-consensus-meeting](https://aspirelr.link/decision-making-consensus-meeting)



## Example

### Provide opportunities to explore issues

Management at Westaway Community Care activity group have just received information from their funding body that all staff and volunteers must have a national police clearance within six months.

John, the team leader, has included this announcement as an agenda item at his team's regular staff meeting. The meeting is an hour long and there are five other agenda items.

At the meeting, staff raise their concerns about how this will be implemented. People want to know why it is necessary and what will happen to staff members who have committed minor traffic offences.

John wants to provide an opportunity for staff to fully explore the issues but is also conscious that other agenda items need to be addressed in this meeting.

John tells the team that he values their thoughtful questions. He states he does not want to interfere with this issue being fully explored but he is conscious that there are other important agenda items to address.

John, in consultation with his team, appoints a group of four staff members to meet as a working group to explore the issues and report back to the team at a planning day in two months' time. John ensures that the staff members in the working group are those with a significant interest in the matter. He organises for other team members to cover parts of their shift so the group can meet without the pressure of time.



## Practice Task 11

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

### Case study

Jinny has called a meeting to discuss the company moving towards paperless meetings and reporting. She is introducing the team to the use of tablets and applications that replace the need for paper-based reporting. Jinny has created a PowerPoint and sent it out with the invitation as a preview of the meeting's objectives.

There are a couple of team members who consider themselves 'not technically minded' and are apprehensive about the change. As soon as the meeting starts, these staff members begin to ask lots of questions about the devices and the move away from paper-based reporting.

Jinny pauses the meeting and asks if questions could be asked at the end of the presentation. She believes most questions that are relevant to the objectives of the meeting will be answered in the presentation.

### Question 1

Identify one benefit of setting and following the objectives and agenda for the meeting.



**Question 2**

Suggest at least two communication strategies you could use to deliver effective presentations.

**Question 3**

List two things you can do as a facilitator to ensure meeting participants fully explore relevant issues and provide relevant information.

**Question 4**

List three strategies that will help negotiate optimal outcomes in meetings.

# 3C

## Implement strategies to encourage equal participation and address any communication needs

**Individuals have different communication preferences and skills that may influence their participation in a meeting.**

Group dynamics and processes may also influence participation in a team meeting. Each person should have the opportunity to contribute their perspective without making others feel pressured to participate.

Be aware of group dynamics and different communication styles and techniques and learn to manage issues to achieve optimal outcomes.

### Communication styles and techniques

**The way a person contributes to a meeting may depend on their individual communication style.**

Communication styles may be related to personality or to how the individual has learnt to respond in a group. They may be related to the group dynamics of that particular group. For example, a more introverted person may find it easy to express their opinion in a small, structured group. However, in a large group, with many vocal participants, that person may struggle to express themselves.

A person's personality, the group dynamics and a person's communication style may influence the communication techniques they use.

Four common communication styles and techniques are discussed in Topic 1. They are:

- assertive
- aggressive
- passive
- passive-aggressive.



## Group dynamics and processes

**When facilitating meetings, it helps to be aware of how individuals in a group or meeting interact and the effects this interaction can have on other participants.**

This interaction is often referred to as **group dynamics**.

Dynamics are created by the nature of the work, personalities in the team, their working relationships with others and the team's work environment. Group dynamics can support team performance through positive behaviours or hinder it through negative behaviours that result in unproductive conflict, mistrust and demotivation, for example.

### Group dynamics

Psychological forces, or undercurrents, that influence behaviour and performance. Often people in groups adopt distinct roles and behaviours.

### Video: Group dynamics

- Watch the following TEDx Talk on group dynamics: [aspirelr.link/yt-rethinking-group-dynamics](https://aspirelr.link/yt-rethinking-group-dynamics)
- Pay attention to how one person in a group can influence the interactions of the entire group.



## Working with groups

Understand the personalities in the group. This helps you encourage participation from all members. For example, some people are eager to participate in group processes; others need support and encouragement to assist them to participate. There will be various personality types present in each group.

Researchers have identified several personality types, as described here.

<b>The talker</b>	<p>Talkers have something to say about everything. If allowed, they will dominate the discussion, and other members will not get to participate. The supervisor should aim to slow talkers down, not silence them. The rotation technique is effective with talkers. This means they have to wait their turn. You can also try gently interrupting and presenting your own ideas or calling on other members to present theirs. Start questions with statements such as "Let's give those who haven't answered yet a chance".</p>
<b>The silent one</b>	<p>For group discussions to be effective, all members of the group should participate. If members are silent, the group does not get the benefit of their input. It is the supervisor's responsibility to encourage silent members to participate without being obvious or overdoing it. To build up silent members' confidence, supervisors should call on them with questions they can easily answer or use a rotation method to get input by asking each team member in turn.</p>



<b>The wanderer</b>	Wanderers distract the group from the agenda items and often like to complain. The supervisor needs to keep everyone on track. If the wanderer wants to socialise, regain their focus. Be kind, thank the member for their contribution, then ask others in the group a question to get discussions back on track. However, if the wanderer has a complaint that is legitimate and solvable, allow the group to discuss it and come up with a way forward. If the wanderer complains about irresolvable issues, the supervisor should make statements such as, "You've got a point there but it's not something we can solve. Can we get back to the issue at hand?"
<b>The bored one</b>	There may be one or more group members who are uninterested in the task. They may be preoccupied, inattentive or fail to turn up for the meeting. They may feel superior and wonder why the group is spending so much time on the obvious. To keep people motivated, the supervisor can assign the bored member a task such as collating information, recording ideas on the board or recording the minutes. Bring them into the group. If you allow them to sit back, things may get worse and others may decide not to participate either. Negative feelings can transfer to other group members.
<b>The arguer</b>	The arguer likes to be the centre of attention and enjoys arguing for the sake of it. The supervisor should resolve conflict but should not get into an argument with the arguer. Bring others into the discussion. If the conflict is personal, cut it off. Try to keep the discussion moving and minimise the opportunity for confrontation.
<b>The shy one</b>	Some people would like to participate but are too shy to speak up. They prefer to speak to one person rather than a group. They need to be encouraged and given positive signs that what they say is valued.

## Strategies to improve group dynamics

Teams or groups with positive dynamics trust one another, make decisions collectively, take responsibility for their individual and team performance and hold one another accountable.

People's behaviours in groups with poor dynamics can disrupt work, impede decision-making and lead to poor choices.

Strategies for improving group dynamics include:

- dealing with problems quickly and fairly and providing constructive feedback
- ensuring that team roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- keeping communication channels open and clear
- watching for signs of poor group dynamics and responding with corrective action.



## Strategies to encourage contributions

Use different strategies to encourage contributions, depending on the dynamics and communication styles of participants.

Strategies for encouraging participation include:

- asking questions of specific group members who are less active
- passing a pen around the group; only the person holding the pen can talk
- splitting larger groups into smaller working groups
- giving participants the opportunity to come to you before or after the meeting if they do not feel confident enough to share in the meeting.

## Brainstorming

**Brainstorming** is a useful technique to encourage people to contribute. It gives them the opportunity to suggest as many ideas as they can without feeling they are being judged. Everything that anyone says is accepted and recorded. Sometimes you might need to pose a question to stimulate people if you find they have stopped contributing.

The following is a list of rules for brainstorming sessions, followed by a list of ideas for running them.

**Brainstorming**  
An unstructured method of generating ideas used by a group of people to solve a problem.

### Brainstorming rules

- People are told what the problem or topic is before the session.
- A leader is nominated to guide the session.
- All ideas are recorded, no matter how negative or ridiculous they might seem at first.
- No comments, discussion or criticism should be made about the ideas until the session is over.
- Respond quickly to any breaches of the guidelines.
- If you want everyone's feedback on an issue, give people time to prepare and ask each person to present for two minutes in the group forum.
- There must be time to review and evaluate the session.

### Brainstorming ideas

- Divide a large group into smaller groups that report back to the large group.
- Use a round-robin approach: everyone takes a turn contributing an idea.
- Have a pen or object that is held by each person as they are speaking.
- Meet with people individually prior to group meetings to get their ideas.
- Allow anonymous contributions.
- Have a rotating chairperson.

## Encouraging others to contribute by respecting different views

It is essential that everyone is encouraged to contribute to all aspects of the meeting so the participants can explore different ways of solving problems, suggest improvements to work practices and enjoy working together. A group, team or organisation that reflects a single view or perspective and is not encouraged to contribute may not develop or improve their performance. Opportunities for innovation may be lost.

## Developing a culture that embraces diversity

If you are working in a supervisory role, you should try to develop a culture that embraces diversity and sees it as an opportunity to explore new ways of seeing and doing things. This involves encouraging everyone to contribute and share ideas.

You can encourage individual contributions and perspectives by:

- modelling acceptance and exploring a wide range of views when discussing objectives and issues
- providing participants with the opportunity to express their views in meetings
- engaging people in brainstorming and planning
- obtaining feedback
- inviting people to present information at meetings
- encouraging people you support to have representatives on the committee
- encouraging advocates or family members of the people you support to speak on their behalf if the individual cannot.

## Acknowledging contributions

Although you may not agree with the content, it is important to validate all contributions equally in the interest of fairness and equality.

Acknowledging a person's contributions demonstrates that you have heard what they have said. It may give them the confidence to share more in the future. The participant feels part of the process.

Ways to acknowledge contributions include:

- verbally acknowledging what a person has said
- thanking a person after they have finished talking
- summarising or paraphrasing what was said
- responding to what was said



- asking questions and asking others to ask questions
- providing follow up and recording what was said in the minutes
- thanking all participants for contributing at the end of the session.

## Example

### Encourage equal participation in meetings

Grace is facilitating a meeting with Susan and her daughter, Joan. Susan is 80 and is interested in using the service. The objective of the meeting is to introduce Susan and Joan to the service, present the organisation's procedures and expected outcomes, and answer any questions.

Although Susan can communicate for herself, Joan does most of the talking. She asks Grace questions and interrupts Grace while she is talking. Joan is worried that the service is too small, and she feels her mother will be too isolated. Rather than listening to Grace's point of view, Joan continues aggressively.

Grace tries to stay calm and keep the meeting focused. Her main interest is meeting Susan's needs and providing suitable information about the organisation so Susan and Joan can make a decision.

"Thank you for your enthusiasm, Joan," says Grace. "I can see you care a lot about your mother and have a lot of questions. I just want to hear from Susan directly for a minute. Susan, do you have any questions about your own needs?"

Susan is pleased to be asked. She does have a few questions. The meeting runs smoothly after this.

## Identifying and addressing communication needs of meeting participants

### **People attending a meeting may have specific needs.**

It is important that you recognise and address specific communication needs, such as providing additional visual material, documents in larger text or audio explanations of diagrams for those who are vision impaired.

Communication needs may include:

- visual aids, such as larger text, for those with vision impairments
- visual aids, such as written documents or images, for people with hearing impairments



- a translator for language barriers
- an Auslan interpreter for people with hearing impairments
- an interpreter for people with intellectual and learning disabilities.

## Identifying communication needs

If participants are people who you have not communicated with before, you may need to ask if there are specific needs. You can ask this when you circulate the agenda.

At the beginning of a meeting, make sure all participants have their needs met. Again, you may need to ask. Some people may not tell you about specific needs. You will need to rely on your own observations.

Identify communication needs by paying attention to the following:

- If a person does not respond when you ask them a question, they may not have understood the question because of a language barrier.
- If a person is not participating, they may not be able to hear the other participants.
- If a person is not participating, they may not be able to read the documents.
- If two attendees are in conflict, there may be misunderstanding due to a communication need.
- If a person is having trouble reading a document, they may have learning difficulties, such as dyslexia.

## Addressing specific communication needs

Once a need has been identified, find out from the person, or your supervisor, how to meet the need. You may have to engage a translating or interpreting service or use visual or audio equipment during your presentation. In general, provide visual and auditory material in your presentation to accommodate for a range of needs.

The meeting is most effective if all participants have the opportunity to contribute.

Here are some examples of specific communication adjustments to make for individuals and groups.

### Individuals

- Use aids and techniques for people who use alternative communication to speech.
- Make use of sign language and spoken language interpreters.
- Ensure written information is accessible and translated when required.
- Use specialists if you are unable to meet an individual's communication needs in a group setting.



## Groups

- Plan group discussions in accordance with people's rosters and availability.
- Rotate group meetings so the same people are not always missing out.
- Allow people who are unable to attend to contribute to group processes.
- Ensure all participants can access the information or presentation method.
- Write documents in plain English to make them easy to understand.
- Consider the physical needs of participants.

### Example

#### Identify and address communication needs of participants

A local advocacy group is holding a planning day. Participants in the planning day include staff, volunteer advocates, board members and people who receive advocacy assistance from the program. The planning day is to be facilitated by a recognised activist in the area of advocacy for the rights of older people and people with disabilities.

One of the participants, Antoinette, uses an electronic communication device to communicate. She types in what she wants to say and, on command, the machine repeats out loud what Antoinette has typed. It takes Antoinette longer to articulate her responses than it does other participants. Antoinette begins to formulate her response to a topic that is being discussed. It is taking her a little while to do so. The facilitator says, "Let's just skip you for the moment and come back to you when you are ready".

Other members of the group cannot believe this. The facilitator is taking away Antoinette's right to communicate. Although she says she would come back to Antoinette's point, her actions imply that anything Antoinette wants to contribute is not significant enough to immediately impact the course of the discussion.

One of the supervisors of the program intervenes on Antoinette's behalf and says it is not appropriate to skip Antoinette, as what she has to say might be a pertinent issue about the topic. Antoinette must be given the same respect as others.



## Practice Task 12

### Question 1

Briefly explain how an understanding of group dynamics can help facilitate meetings.

### Question 2

Describe two ways a facilitator can improve group dynamics in a meeting.

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

### Case study

Franco has been at Edgewood Aged Care for a year, and a review of his care plan has been completed by the team. There has been a steady deterioration in Franco's mobility, mood and socialisation.

A meeting has been called between Franco, the team leader, his primary carer and Franco's daughter, Aurora, to discuss the changes recommended to his care plan and support needs. The team leader responsible for Franco's supports, Yin, arranges for an Auslan interpreter to be present for Aurora and allows for extra time for the meeting.

**Question 3**

List two other things Yin can do to ensure that the meeting is successful and to ensure that Franco's and Aurora's individual needs are catered for.

**Question 4**

At the beginning of the meeting Yin asks if everyone is comfortable, and Aurora signs that she needs the interpreter to sit away from direct sunlight as she is having trouble with the sun glare.

List two additional ways Yin could prepare for the meeting to ensure that everyone can contribute.

# 3 D Facilitate conflict resolution

**Conflict may arise in a meeting because of differences of opinion, different perspectives, communication barriers and personality differences.**

Where possible, defuse and respond to conflict straightaway to minimise the blowout.

Be clear about the limits of your role and skills in managing issues. If an issue is outside the scope of your role or experience, you must refer the matter to your manager or to an external mediator.

## Developing negotiation skills

**Negotiation is a skill that is learnt and practised over time.**

Using communication that is inclusive when dealing with issues that arise in the workplace is essential to establishing an environment aimed at hearing and acknowledging different perspectives.

You should seek agreement from all parties involved to ensure ownership of any proposed solutions. For example, if the parties do not participate in and agree with actions proposed to resolve an issue, it is unlikely these actions will be successful.

Consider the following points about developing your negotiation skills:

- Watch experienced people in action to improve your own negotiation skills.
- Ask questions, apply the new skills you have learnt and practise these skills.
- Find out about appropriate courses or training programs.
- Make sure you know your organisation's procedures for professional development.

## Negotiation strategies for facilitating conflict resolution

When used effectively, communication can be used to explore and potentially resolve issues.

Following are some ideas for communicating effectively to resolve issues, and considerations about the aims that you should consider when facilitating conflict resolution.



### Effective communication

- Ensure the confidentiality of information shared by the parties.
- Ensure the information discussed is offered voluntarily.
- Ensure each party is willingly involved.
- Set appropriate rules and boundaries for the discussion.
- Ensure all parties agree with the proposed actions.
- Be impartial.
- Do not contribute to the actions.

### Communication aims

- Establish the guidelines and the process for communication.
- Clarify and summarise.
- Facilitate effective communication.
- Assist parties to clearly describe the situation and the behaviours.
- Intervene if communication is inappropriate.
- Test and challenge proposed agreements or actions.
- Assist two or more parties in effective decision-making.

## Collaboration versus confrontation

**Collaboration is working with others to achieve mutually agreed goals.**

Meetings are more effective when they are collaborative. Participants feel at ease and comfortable in the space. They are happy to contribute to outcomes. Outcomes are more achievable because people are working together and sharing ideas.

**Confrontation** can inhibit productivity in a meeting. If people come into conflict, it can be difficult to resolve issues addressed in the meeting.

Confrontation may occur if there are opposing personality and communication styles in the group, or if people have differing views.

Encourage participants to work collaboratively by:

- encouraging empathy
- modelling respect and tolerance
- encouraging participants to work in small groups to brainstorm ideas
- encouraging participants to ask each other questions
- providing a safe, calm space with ample time.

**Confrontation**  
Bringing people together face to face to address a conflict.



## Example

### Facilitate conflict resolution

Laura is the Residential Manager at an aged care home. Laura has had significant involvement in supporting staff, older people and their families to deal with issues.

She says that when family members are concerned about the person in their family who is receiving care, it can be a very stressful and emotional time for everyone.

Laura has some techniques for supporting staff members to come to their own solutions when issues arise with a family member. Her first response is to offer them some time out in a private space to talk about their issues. She does this at a quiet time or when there are other staff to cover the workload for a short period of time.

If this does not work, Laura invites the staff members to a staff-only meeting she facilitates. Each person talks for five minutes at the beginning of this meeting, ensuring that staff are heard and have equal voice in the process. From there, Laura asks questions to clarify the experience of people and supports them to come up with agreed actions to resolve the situation. Conflict is avoided because there is no perceived support for one party over another.

Occasionally, Laura has worked with staff who are unwilling to engage in the process of mediation or who do not follow up on the agreed actions of the meeting. In these situations, Laura seeks the involvement of her manager and implements the formal processes of the relevant grievance or disciplinary processes.



## Practice Task 13

### Question 1

Briefly outline why 'collaboration' is preferred to 'confrontation' in a discussion.

### Question 2

List three ways you could facilitate a resolution if two participants in a meeting become confrontational.

# 3 E Keep records in accordance with requirements

**An important part of distributing information and maintaining communication flow is to ensure agendas, minutes and any information discussed in a group setting is available as a document soon after the meeting or discussion.**

Having accurate written documentation of a meeting is important because:

- if someone cannot attend the meeting, it provides them with a written record
- it can be used as a reference in future meetings
- it provides accountability for the organisation and the participants involved
- it is evidence of intended action and the nominated person responsible to follow up with actions.

Records and documentation must be in a format that is accessible to all participants.

## Meeting minutes

**Minutes are written records of a meeting.**

Minutes are taken at the time of the meeting and must be made in accordance with organisational requirements, such as the style guidelines.

Informing people of the outcomes and actions of a meeting is an important part of communication flow. You must make sure minutes are brief, accurate, unbiased and clear and summarise the most important points.

Here are four steps to follow when taking meeting minutes:

1. Record all essential elements such as the type of meeting, the organisation, date, time, venue, the chairperson or facilitator, main topics and when the meeting finished.
2. Follow the sequence of items from the agenda.
3. Record the names of people who made suggestions and offered to take responsibility on proposed actions.
4. Do not try to record every single comment. Concentrate on getting the main points of the discussion. Think in terms of issues discussed, major points raised and decisions made.

It is too difficult to lead a meeting effectively and take minutes. Ask at the beginning



of the meeting if someone is prepared to take the minutes. If not, then delegate, remembering not to delegate to the same person every time.

## Action notes

Action notes are commonly used instead of minutes. They are a more informal way of recording what happened at a meeting or discussion. Action notes are used to highlight future actions. They do not record the detail of who said things, but they accurately record what was decided. They provide a list of people's responsibilities in following up items.

## Organisational requirements

**As with all workplace documents, minutes must follow organisational requirements.**

This includes ensuring the minutes are recorded in the style required by the organisation, using the appropriate communication and following confidentiality principles.

The information shared in meetings is subject to confidentiality. You cannot share details of your discussion with that person after the meeting if the information is personal or sensitive – unless you have that person's permission.

Organisational requirements to consider when keeping minutes are:

- using the appropriate style
- using an appropriate template
- ensuring language is formal and objective
- checking spelling is accurate
- writing clearly
- maintaining confidentiality
- storing, distributing and maintaining minutes according to requirements.

Do not wait too long to type up the minutes. It is a good idea to do this while your memory is fresh. It also means that you can send them to the attendees to remind them if there are follow-up tasks they need to attend to so they can commence doing them sooner rather than later.



## Example

### Meeting minutes

These minutes record details of decisions taken at a meeting and give details of issues raised.

Minutes
<p><b>Time:</b> 09:00 <b>Date:</b> 12/02/2023 <b>Location:</b> Room 101, Level 2, George Street <b>Attendees:</b> Blake Brown, Suellen Partridge, Eddison Ho, Carrie Gills <b>Facilitator:</b> Kate Hill, supervisor <b>Apologies:</b> Zoe Smith <b>Meeting objectives:</b> Regular team meeting to discuss team progress and address issues</p>
<p><b>Introductions and apologies:</b> Apology from Zoe Smith, who is unwell</p>
<p><b>Review last week's business:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suellen received more salary than she was due</li><li>• Eddison spoke to supervisor about getting literacy support</li></ul>
<p><b>Hand-washing procedures:</b></p> <p>Issues raised about hand-washing procedures. Kate has complained that staff are not washing hands correctly before serving food.</p> <p>Participants reached consensus that hand-washing procedures have not been well communicated.</p> <p>Participants agree that hand-washing procedures should be demonstrated by staff at the beginning of next week's training date.</p>
<p><b>Document handling:</b></p> <p>Eddison reported that he received an incorrect document this week. Kate is concerned about confidentiality breach.</p> <p>Kate has suggested training be provided. The team agrees that training would be useful.</p> <p>Suellen suggested that procedures should be taped to office wall. Team agrees this is a good idea.</p>
<p><b>Medication review:</b></p> <p>Kate reported that three medication errors were made last week. She is concerned about safety.</p> <p>Kate explained the importance of medication administration.</p> <p>A training date has been set for 10/3/2023.</p>

**Questions:**

Eddison asked Kate whether a second training date for medication could be made as he is on leave in March. Kate will check.

**Actions:**

- Kate will check to see if there is another date for medication review available.
- Suellen will organise procedures for handling documents to be taped to wall.
- Kate will look into training dates for document handling and will advise.
- Staff will undertake hand-washing training at next training day.

**Follow-up:** Meeting scheduled for 19/04/2023. Time TBC.

**Signed:** *Carrie Gills*

## Practice Task 14

### Question 1

List three requirements for creating meeting minutes according to organisational style guides.

### Question 2

Explain why it is best to prepare the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting.

# 3 F

## Evaluate and improve meeting processes

### **Evaluation is important for continuous improvement and development.**

It helps you identify what is working and what is not and identifies what changes need to be made. All aspects of communication, including team meeting processes, need to be considered and evaluated.

Evaluation can be formal or informal and needs to be an ongoing process as things can change. Any formal presentation or group discussion should be evaluated to see whether it met the needs of participants. You must also review the methods of presentation, such as the presentation technology used, to determine its effectiveness.

### Reviewing your role as facilitator and meeting communication processes

#### **Review your own skills as a facilitator.**

Self-evaluation will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses as well as areas for improvement. Consider how well you prepare for a meeting, whether you give everyone a chance to contribute and whether the meeting goals are achieved.

Reviewing the meeting in general will help you identify how to run meetings more effectively, so meeting objectives are met. It may help meeting participants make improvements for future meetings. Consider whether meetings generally start and finish on time, stay on topic and whether all attendees participate.

To review meeting communication processes:

- distribute formal evaluation forms at the conclusion of presentations
- facilitate **360-degree feedback**
- regularly survey or get feedback from clients and their families
- get anecdotal feedback
- review participation, attendance and motivation of group participants
- meet with people one on one to ask for their feedback and evaluation
- independently review using an external facilitator
- monitor follow-up.

#### **360-degree feedback**

A system where anonymous feedback about an individual is gathered from various people they work with in order to provide a well-rounded view of the person.



## Collating and reporting evaluation results

Collate the information you obtain when conducting an evaluation. This may involve summarising evaluation forms and noting key improvements to be made in an evaluation report.

Reflect on areas of your own development. Make a list of personal and professional development you could undergo, such as attending an interpersonal and leadership training course.

Identify areas where the team can make improvements.

## Communicating lessons learnt and opportunities for improvement

**Evaluation is most beneficial if you and others can learn from previous experience and make improvements.**

Sensitively inform others about evaluation outcomes. Be objective and specific. For example, if meeting objectives were not achieved because of communication difficulties, address the specific difficulties that occurred and discuss options for improvements.

Provide **sandwich feedback** to others in a positive way.

If feedback is delivered negatively, the person may become confrontational and defensive.

Ways to communicate feedback include:

- team meetings
- emails
- one-on-one meetings
- informal conversations
- feedback report.

Opportunities for improvement include:

- face-to-face training
- online training
- individual supervision
- attending conferences
- journals and articles
- role-plays and simulated exercises.

### Sandwich feedback

Involves giving a person positive feedback about their performance, then constructive feedback and then ending with positive feedback.



### Video: Giving great feedback

- Watch this video about the secret to giving great feedback: [aspirelr.link/yt-giving-great-feedback](https://aspirelr.link/yt-giving-great-feedback)
- Pay attention to the four parts involved in giving great feedback.



## Practice Task 15

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

### Case study

Ruby has just facilitated the annual general meeting. It is the first time she has facilitated the AGM. She was quite nervous about receiving feedback as she felt a bit nervous during her presentation and during the meeting.

Ruby handed out feedback forms at the end of the meeting and asked her colleagues to give her objective, constructive feedback.

Most attendees were very positive, saying the Ruby was warm and understanding, had a clear agenda and led the meeting well. One person, Tom, said that he had trouble hearing Ruby sometimes because he has a hearing impairment. He also could not see all the slides because he was sitting behind someone tall.

### Question 1

Suggest two ways Ruby could use this feedback from Tom as an opportunity for improvement.



**Question 2**

List two other ways Ruby could obtain feedback about her presentation.

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



## Summary

- An agenda is important for informing participants about the purpose, time and date of a meeting and for helping people prepare.
- It is important to communicate details of the meeting to people who will be attending.
- Develop clear meeting objectives so that the flow of the meeting is smooth. Objectives help the meeting stay focused.
- Support all participants to explore issues addressed in the meeting. Be aware of group dynamics and different communication styles and how they affect participation.
- Identify and manage communication needs. Needs may relate to visual, hearing and comprehension requirements.
- If conflict occurs, you need to manage it using effective communication techniques. Try to remain impartial and objective, and encourage people to see the other person's perspective.
- Keep records such as meeting minutes in accordance with organisational requirements.
- Evaluate meeting processes to identify where improvements can be made.



# Learning Checkpoint 3

## Facilitate meetings

### Part A

1. Which of the following requirements must be followed when recording meeting minutes? Tick all that apply.

- Using an appropriate template
- Ensuring language is casual and subjective
- Using the appropriate style
- Checking spelling is accurate
- Writing clearly
- Sending a copy to participants to check for spelling mistakes

2. List three ways to acknowledge team members' contributions to meeting discussions.

3. After facilitating a meeting, feedback from participants identifies two key areas for improvement. List three opportunities you could take up to improve in these areas.



**4.** Which of the following are actions to improve group dynamics in a meeting?  
Tick all that apply.

- Deal with problems quickly and fairly and provide constructive feedback
- Clearly define and communicate team roles and responsibilities
- Allow group members to sit back and not participate
- Assign every group member the same role and responsibilities to avoid power struggles
- Identify poor group communication or interactions and respond with corrective action

**5.** Why is it important to understand group dynamics in meetings you facilitate?

**6.** Number the steps from 1 to 5 in the order you would follow to negotiate for optimal outcomes.

	Reach an agreement
	Identify common ground
	Identify the specific issue being negotiated
	Identify options
	Clarify and review options



## Part B

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

### Case study

The agency Candice works for is reviewing its policy and procedures for service user transport. Candice is planning to facilitate a meeting to review the draft procedures with the team.

The review is to focus on:

1. The resource implications for the implementation of the new procedures
2. Additional training requirements for the team
3. Ideas on how the procedures can be implemented successfully
4. A working party to assist with finalising policy and procedures.

Candice has allocated one hour to a meeting with her team of co-workers.

The meeting will be held in the boardroom at the agency at 4pm on 5 August 2023.

The team has been asked to RSVP by 29 July.

1. Using the template provided, prepare the agenda for the meeting.

Mamiku Community Centre team meeting	
Date:	Time:
Location:	RSVP:
Meeting objective:	
Attendance:	Apologies:
Minute taker:	
Approval of previous meeting's minutes:	
Next meeting:	



- 2.** List three ways Candice can prepare participants for the meeting in accordance with organisational protocols, style guides and policies.

- 3.** After creating the agenda, number the steps from 1 to 5 in the order Candice would follow to prepare for the meeting.

	Prepare and test the equipment
	Disseminate the agenda
	Arrange for refreshments to be delivered
	Prepare the room
	Prepare the documents

- 4.** Describe three strategies Candice could use to encourage everyone to participate in the meeting.



**5.** Describe two opportunities Candice could create to ensure all issues are fully explored.

**6.** Two people attending the meeting have specific communication needs. Describe how Candice could facilitate the meeting to accommodate the individual needs of these participants.

**7.** Explain why it is important for Candice to follow meeting objectives and keep time at the meeting.



- 8.** Explain why it is important for Candice to ensure the meeting remains collaborative.

- 9.** Candice notices that two of the participants are getting hostile towards each other and their voices are getting louder when they are responding to each other's ideas, which is making the others exhibit body language that communicates discomfort. Candice reminds everyone of the company's policies of treating everyone with respect and in a safe manner.

List five ways Candice can encourage the participants to contribute positively to the meeting and avoid conflict.



**10.** At the end of the meeting, Candice thanks the minute taker, asking that the minutes be completed and sent to her by the end of the week in the appropriate format.

Candice then thanks everyone for their time and contributions and hands out feedback forms. List two other ways Candice could get feedback from the participants and the minutes distributed.





# Glossary

## **360-degree feedback**

A system where anonymous feedback about an individual is gathered from various people they work with in order to provide a well-rounded view of the person.

## **Brainstorming**

An unstructured method of generating ideas used by a group of people to solve a problem.

## **Coercive approach**

Strategy to encourage change that relies upon external motivations, including the communication of adverse consequences.

## **Confrontation**

Bringing people together face to face to address a conflict.

## **Consensus**

A general agreement.

## **Digital communication**

Communication made through digital devices such as computers, tablets, applications and the internet.

## **Formal feedback**

The planned or intentional process of providing a person with feedback.

## **Group dynamics**

Psychological forces, or undercurrents, that influence behaviour and performance. Often people in groups adopt distinct roles and behaviours.

## **Informal feedback**

Feedback that is given in real time and provided spontaneously, occurring at any time or location.

## **Motivational interviewing**

A method that encourages a person to identify their own motivations for change and strengthen their commitment to a specific goal.

## **Person-centred approach**

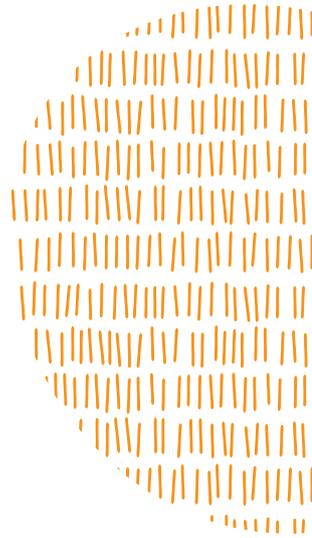
Providing tailored support for each person and taking time to learn about their individual preferences, needs and goals.

## **Power dynamic**

The way two or more people interact with each other, where one side has more power than the other.

## **Professional boundaries**

Guidelines, rules or limits between professionals and the people being supported.





**Sandwich feedback**

Involves giving a person positive feedback about their performance, then constructive feedback and then ending with positive feedback.

**Validation**

Accepting and acknowledging what a person believes to be real and responding accordingly.