



CHCPRP003

Reflect on
and improve own
professional practice



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Release 1

Learner Guide

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CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice, Release 1

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Contents

Before you begin	v
Topic 1: Reflect on your own practice	1
1A Undertake self-evaluation with supervisors and/or peers	2
1B Reflect on and recognise the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour in practice	13
1C Share two-way, open and evaluative feedback with co-workers or peers	20
1D Actively seek and reflect on feedback	26
Summary	33
Learning Checkpoint 1	34
Topic 2: Enhance your own practice	39
2A Determine improvements needed based on your own evaluation and feedback from others	40
2B Identify potential support networks	45
2C Seek specialist advice or further training	50
2D Recognise requirements for self-care and additional support	56
2E Devise, document and implement a self-development plan	61
Summary	68
Learning Checkpoint 2	69
Topic 3: Facilitate ongoing professional development	75
3A Review current and emerging industry developments and use to improve practice	76
3B Confirm your own practice against ethical and legal requirements and opportunities	82
3C Engage with opportunities to extend and expand your own expertise	88
3D Participate in review processes as a commitment to upgrading skills and knowledge	92
Summary	98
Learning Checkpoint 3	99
Glossary	103

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



Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice*, Release 1.

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

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete.

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

Foundation skills

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

These skills are listed below:

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



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

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 Reflect on your own practice	1A Undertake self-evaluation with supervisors and/or peers	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Reflect on and recognise the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour in practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Share two-way, open and evaluative feedback with co-workers or peers	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Actively seek and reflect on feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



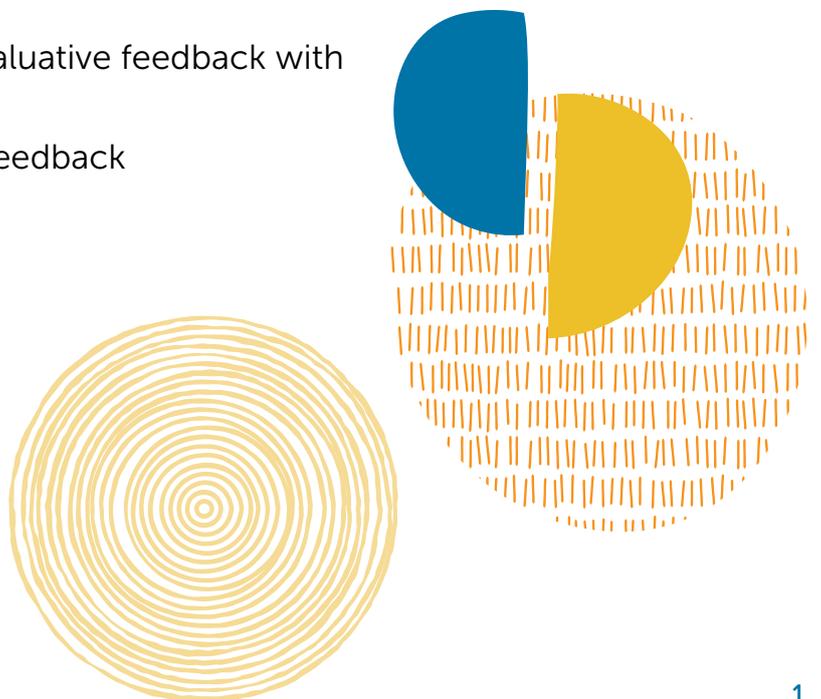
Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 2 Enhance your own practice	2A Determine improvements needed based on your own evaluation and feedback from others	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Identify potential support networks	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Seek specialist advice or further training	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Recognise requirements for self-care and additional support	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Devise, document and implement a self-development plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3 Facilitate ongoing professional development	3A Review current and emerging industry developments and use to improve practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Confirm your own practice against ethical and legal requirements and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Engage with opportunities to extend and expand your own expertise	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Participate in review processes as a commitment to upgrading skills and knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident





Topic 1: Reflect on your own practice

- 1A Undertake self-evaluation with supervisors and/or peers
- 1B Reflect on and recognise the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour in practice
- 1C Share two-way, open and evaluative feedback with co-workers or peers
- 1D Actively seek and reflect on feedback



1A

Undertake self-evaluation with supervisors and/or peers

Self-evaluation is a practice that helps improve your work performance.

Self-evaluation involves thinking critically about what you do, why you do it the way you do and how you can improve your practice.

Due to the sometimes challenging nature of your work in community services, engaging in regular self-evaluation is important and valuable.

Self-evaluation can be done as a private activity during periods of self-reflection or in a session with a supervisor, or group feedback exchanges with peers. You need to identify an approach that is a good fit with your own needs and also the requirements of your organisation.

Self-evaluation can be a challenging process, as you need to be objective to assess your own performance, skills and knowledge against the requirements and responsibilities of your job.

Self-evaluation involves a number of different activities such as:

- identifying your strengths and weaknesses in the work environment
- participating in a range of opportunities to evaluate and develop your work skills
- developing an understanding of your own traits, values, beliefs, and behaviours
- seeking feedback and/or mentoring from others
- analysing and implementing feedback to improve your own work performance
- establishing goals and personal development plans
- identifying personal and professional development opportunities
- undertaking regular periods of self-reflection.

Self-reflection

Self-reflection allows you to look at and evaluate your own thoughts, emotions and behaviours. It involves objectively examining your thoughts, actions and reactions, and seeking to understand the reasons that underlie them.

Self-reflection
The ability to observe and evaluate one's own thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Self-reflection allows you to:

- highlight areas for improvement
- highlight areas where you performed well
- revise past experiences and consider the skills and knowledge used
- identify areas for personal and professional development and growth.



Taking time to reflect on your own practice helps you to become more professionally **self-aware**, to identify any aspects of your job you find difficult or need to improve on and to identify areas where you can develop.

Being self-aware allows you to think about why and how you relate and react to people, handle stress and deal with difficult situations. It is a personal look at yourself, your biases, your personal weaknesses and strengths, and how these were formed. It provides an opportunity to understand yourself and areas for personal growth.

Self-awareness
Knowledge about your own character, behaviours and feelings.

Video: Self-awareness

Watch this video that introduces the concept of self-awareness and describes various influences on how we think we are perceived by others: aspirelr.link/yt-self-awareness.



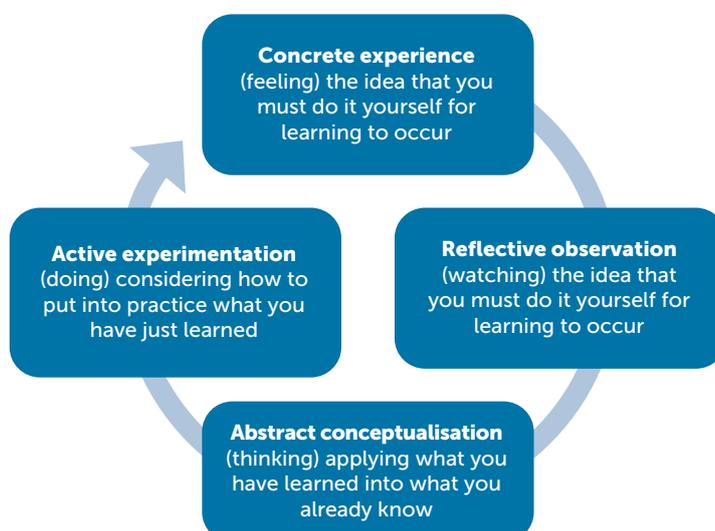
Models for professional reflection

Professional reflection can take place through self-evaluation written in a journal, with a peer or supervisor, from feedback received from clients, their families, peers or people from other community service organisations.

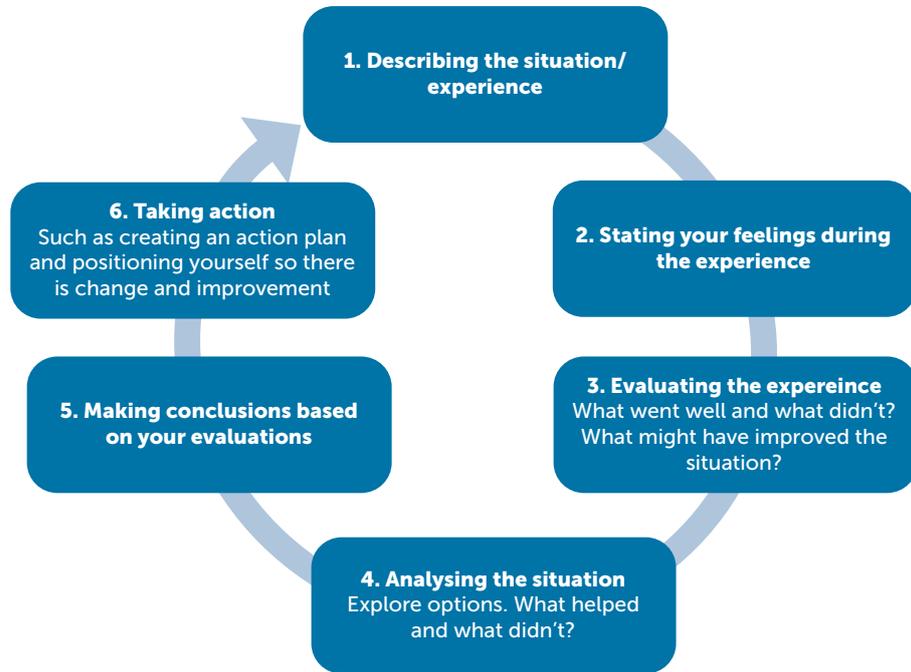
The area of study related to professional self-reflection has evolved over many years, resulting in the development of several theories and models that are used in professional development activities and as learning tools. Many models involve the use of reflection to inform future practice. Essentially, the process of reflection helps you to do your job better next time.

Two useful models for professional reflection are:

1. Kolb's four-stage Learning Cycle, also known as his theory of Experiential Learning – this links the elements of experiencing, observing/reflecting, developing ideas and testing ideas in practice. It is a four-step continuous process that explains how you learn through experience.



2. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) – a framework made up of six cyclic aspects that examine the process of reflecting on a situation to enable learning from experiences. The six steps are:



Both these models are cyclic. This implies that the process of learning never ends, and that professional development is ongoing and continuous.

Video: Self-reflection

Watch these videos that explain two models of self-reflection using narrated slides:

- Gibbs' Reflective Cycle explained – aspirelr.link/yt-gibbs-reflective-cycle
- Kolb's Learning Cycle explained – aspirelr.link/yt-kolb-learning-cycle

Think of a recent situation, issue or conflict you have experienced in the workplace and apply the six steps outlined in the Gibbs' cycle to this situation.



There are many benefits of self-reflection in both your personal life and work life. In your work life, it is an excellent way to improve your practice and ensure the support you provide to clients is best practice, client-centred and individualised to meet their needs. Self-reflection enables you to:

- challenge and question your values and beliefs
- scrutinise your assumptions and stereotypes
- understand your cultural behaviours, and those of others, and how these influence your work practice
- build your knowledge and experience
- identify 'triggers' that cause you stress and ways to manage these



- promote your learning by developing your understanding of how you can better respond to diversity, challenges and conflict
- learn from successes and mistakes
- recognise when 'life' is impacting your professionalism.

Example

The importance of self-reflection

Mary notices that Kai is not his usual self as he is moody with clients and the other staff and keeps forgetting basic instructions. Mary asks Kai to leave work early and to come back tomorrow when he feels he can perform in his usual professional, friendly manner. Kai is shocked by Mary's feedback and goes home.

When Kai comes back the next day, he apologises to Mary stating that, on reflection, he is not his usual self as he is worried about his two-year-old who is unwell. He states he is exhausted but didn't realise he was not performing well.

Example

Using self-reflection

Violet is worried about her job security; she has heard rumours of a merger with another organisation. When her manager confirms at a staff meeting that the rumours are true, Violet becomes visibly angry and raises her voice when asking questions.

By the next day, Violet has had time to reflect. She is embarrassed that she shouted at the meeting, reacting spontaneously without giving herself time to think. When she arrives at work, she apologises to her manager and asks if they can talk later that day, as she'd like to ask a few questions.

Before she sits down with her manager that afternoon, Violet reminds herself that if she starts to feel upset, she should pause, take a deep breath and physically relax her body. Though she is still worried about the future, she realises that an emotional outburst won't help her to find out what she needs to know.

Self-evaluation with a supervisor or colleague

Effective supervision encourages the development of self-awareness and reflection skills to build professional competence.

Supervision provides the opportunity to openly evaluate and explore your experiences at work and to receive guidance and support from someone who has had similar experiences and understands the responsibilities of your work role.

In community services organisations, a supervisor is often a person who is experienced in an area of work and often is a team leader or manager whose role it is to monitor the performance of staff.

Here are some examples of how a supervisor can help with self-evaluation:

<p>Education</p>	<p>Supervisors mentor members of their team to ensure they have access to professional development opportunities.</p> <p>They provide guidance about issues and problems that may prompt self-evaluation and encourage attempts to improve work practice as a result of an evaluation process.</p>
<p>Administration</p>	<p>Supervisors perform a range of administrative duties to ensure staff understand their roles and responsibilities and can access required resources.</p> <p>They offer support in accessing organisational policies and procedures required to perform their work role.</p> <p>They ensure professional development is undertaken and that time and space is available within the workplace for conducting self-evaluation processes.</p>
<p>Support</p>	<p>Supervisors provide support and encouragement to members of their team when they encounter difficulties or problems.</p> <p>They suggest a format and approach for self-evaluation, provide guidance in developing evaluation skills and model necessary skills if required.</p>

Discussions with a supervisor

Performance review

A periodic assessment of an employee's overall performance and their contribution to the organisation.

A positive professional relationship with a supervisor or senior colleague is important when advice is needed during daily work routines when you are unclear about something or need guidance on how to deal with a difficult situation. This may be informal, such as in conversation, or may take place in a more formal setting such as a performance review. A **performance review** provides the opportunity to openly evaluate and explore your experiences at work and to receive guidance and support in your professional development.



The desired outcome of self-evaluation with a more senior person is to identify individual strengths and weaknesses, share feedback and set future goals for improvements. A supervisor may set aside time during regular team meetings for team members to evaluate their actions and reactions to work situations. This provides the team with an opportunity to discuss problems and for team members to give and receive feedback from others, including their supervisor.

Peer supervision

Peer supervision is often carried out without a supervisor present, although someone can be chosen to act as the facilitator of the meeting. This person may be in an external supervisor role or be a professional practice supervisor.

Successful peer supervision allows workers to provide mutual support and constructive feedback to one another. Each participant has an opportunity to discuss their work by referring to experiences or issues and to receive constructive comments and feedback from the group who have had similar or shared experiences.

The benefits of reflecting with peers are that workers can feel less constrained and more able to talk freely than when a direct supervisor is present. Staff can be more likely to discuss and evaluate situations and performance without fear of being judged or having their comments considered as a poor reflection of their performance.

The process of collaborating and discussing problems, issues and potential solutions is a way of building a strong team culture within your organisation.

Example

Self-reflection and self-evaluation

Here are examples of self-reflection and self-evaluation in practice.

Example 1: Written self-reflection

Today I went blank when a client, S, became quite angry. It took me by surprise, when I should have picked up on the signs earlier – irritability and restlessness – that all was not well with her. At least there were not many other clients around and I was able to stay calm enough to usher S into another room. I am disappointed in myself that I could not seem to remember the right things to say to quickly calm S down. Thankfully B (a co-worker) came in and helped me. No harm done. S was her happy self again within half an hour. I need to work more on my skills in dealing with behaviours of concern and be better prepared. Think I will request more training. Observing B manage this situation was also really helpful as she just took charge and knew exactly what to do.

Example 2: Undertaking self-evaluation

Misbah has recently started work in an agency supporting refugees. She finds the work challenging and often confronting when she learns what some of her clients have endured. At the end of every workday, she writes in a journal to examine her feelings, reactions and emotions. She finds it a useful way to evaluate what she has done well and what she could have done better. Just writing things down helps her to think through issues and consider different options.

When Misbah attends her regular team supervision sessions, she takes her journal so she can describe the specific experiences she would like to discuss and obtain feedback about from her supervisor.

Ways to enhance personal development

Understanding your limitations can highlight areas for improvement.

We all have strengths and weaknesses. Understanding your limitations is about highlighting the areas you can improve on and, as a result, become more successful. Identifying areas for improvement can be a catalyst for prompting further training or professional learning. It can be an essential step towards your career development. For example, if you work frequently with people from a particular cultural group you may find you have limited understanding of their culture. This could be a prompt to seek training in cultural competence, to learn about the group so you can communicate more easily and safely. For example, you may find that sometimes you have difficulty developing rapport with some clients and decide you want to develop your skills and abilities in communication, relationship-building, and counselling techniques.

Effective self-evaluation takes some practice. For most people it is not an automatic or simple skill. The Kolb Learning Cycle is useful in helping to understand the concept of continuous improvement – where the elements of experiencing, reflecting, developing, and then finally testing ideas in a cycle that continues in a circular fashion – with each element informing the actions of the next.

The Australian Community Workers Association has produced a self-assessment tool for workers and a tool to use with a supervisor: *ACWA self-assessment tool practitioners* and *ACWA assessment tool supervisor supported*.

Both tools can be accessed here: aspirelr.link/self-assessment-tools.



Reflective writing

A reflective journal can be used to record and explore your working life. It involves reflecting on your professional practice.

Here are some suggestions on how to maintain a practice or reflective journal:

<p>Monitor your development</p>	<p>Keeping a written record helps you monitor your own development over time and identify areas of practice that you are confident in, as well as those you have difficulty with. The more you use your journal to reflect on and explore your role in the workplace, the better you will become at thinking in a critical way about your practice, solving problems, making decisions and being accountable for your actions.</p> <p>Your writing is about your professional experience so try to include personal issues only when it impacts your clinical experience.</p> <p>Do not use your reflective writing purely as an avenue to vent negativity or frustration – make it constructive and productive.</p>
<p>Develop your skills</p>	<p>You may find that regular periods of self-reflection and recording your thoughts in a reflective practice journal may enhance your ability to express yourself and use language appropriate to your occupation. By developing these thinking and use-of-terminology skills, you may improve your skills in providing and interpreting written and oral information about workplace requirements.</p>
<p>Use an appropriate space and format</p>	<p>A journal can be a book or electronic document with enough space to write reasonably lengthy daily entries. The format of the journal is not important as long as it can be used specifically to record your reflections. It is better not to combine it with a personal diary, as a journal is essentially a tool for self-evaluation and development. Keep all your reflective notes together so they can be easily referred to in the future.</p>
<p>Maintain security of information</p>	<p>Your reflective journal must always be kept secure, as it may contain notes about clients' personal details. Your entries will also describe client behaviours and how you have dealt with them. Ensure others cannot access your entries. Be careful to never identify any clients or colleagues by name, to ensure their privacy and confidentiality is maintained.</p>
<p>Make regular entries</p>	<p>Write in your journal as often as possible. Self-reflection is most beneficial when carried out on a regular basis, as this reinforces the habit and helps you become more skilled at self-analysis. Your reflective practice journal notes can also be used as a means of identifying professional development opportunities and for raising points of discussion in evaluation sessions with your supervisor and/or peers.</p>

<p>Reflect on your performance</p>	<p>A useful way to begin self-reflection is to have a series of questions that you ask yourself at the end of every day. These questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'What did I do well today?' • 'What could I have done better?' • 'What can I learn from the experience?' <p>When using a journal to reflect on your practice, acknowledge what you are doing well and where you are improving, as well as any difficulties you are having.</p>
<p>Go back and read your reflections</p>	<p>You need to go back and read your reflections on a regular basis so that you can monitor your professional/personal development and follow up on areas needing further development.</p> <p>When you read over your comments, you should expect to see development in your knowledge, skills and perspective.</p>

Video: Reflective practice

Watch this video about understanding reflective practice, and the difference between reflective thinking and reflective practice: [aspirelr.link/yt-reflective-practice](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aspirelr.link/yt-reflective-practice).



Example Reflective diaries

Jazmin is writing a reflective diary entry about a significant event in her workday. She uses the following template to guide her thinking and writing.

<p>What happened?</p>	<p>A team briefing went wrong and ended in a major argument among several team members, with me trying to continue chairing the meeting but eventually giving up and declaring the meeting closed.</p>
<p>Why did it happen?</p>	<p>There was a clash of personalities among team members and everyone trying to talk at once. No-one would listen to me as meeting chair.</p>
<p>How did I feel about it?</p>	<p>I felt frustrated and angry that I could not get control of the meeting. I was upset that my role was not respected.</p>
<p>What can I take away from this experience?</p>	<p>A realisation that sometimes different personalities can clash and that not everyone shares the same opinions or values in our team.</p>
<p>What could I do differently in the future?</p>	<p>I could learn to get control of meetings and be more authoritative and respond more quickly when things are getting out of hand.</p>



Do I need any help or support to guide my learning?	Yes. I need to build some skills in managing meetings and dealing with personality clashes in a work team.
What will future success in this area look and feel like?	I can picture myself running a meeting where people can share their opinions and be heard easily and where questions are asked and statements made in a respectful way. I think this will make me feel more confident as a leader and more in control rather than feeling nervous and stressed about chairing a meeting.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Match each personal/professional development term to its definition.

Performance review	Knowledge about your own character, behaviours and feelings
Self-evaluation	The ability to observe and evaluate one's own thoughts, emotions and behaviours
Self-reflection	A periodic assessment of an employee's overall performance and their contribution to the organisation
Self-awareness	Thinking critically about what you do, why you do it the way you do and how to improve your practice.



Question 2

Briefly outline two examples of the benefits of using a process for professional reflection of your work practice.

Question 3

Briefly describe at least two features of self-evaluation with a supervisor and two features of self-evaluation with peers.

1B

Reflect on and recognise the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour in practice

Community services work involves working with people who have different value systems, beliefs and life experiences to your own.

Working effectively with clients requires you to have a high level of self-awareness. This means understanding how your **values, beliefs** and behaviour may impact on your clients.

Each person's own values and beliefs shape their life and relationships with those around them. They influence how a person views and responds to situations, affects the decisions they make and their behaviour towards others.

Here are some more points on values, beliefs and behaviours:

Values	<p>We learn personal values from our families, social and cultural groups, religious beliefs, school and personal experiences. Values can vary between cultures and societies. For example, you may place high value on personal freedom and individuality; however, in some cultures it is more important, especially for women, to value conformity and duty to others.</p> <p>Examples of values could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• honesty• integrity• compassion• respect• desire for fairness and justice.
Beliefs	<p>Beliefs are based on what people believe to be true; for example, many people have religious beliefs that guide how they live their lives. Individual beliefs are not easily changed, as they provide a basis for a person's understanding of the world. One person's beliefs about what is right and logical can be very different to the beliefs of another person.</p>
Behaviours	<p>A person's behaviour is influenced by their values and beliefs. For example, if despite all their training and experience, a community worker believes that depression is not really a serious illness, they may intentionally or unintentionally say something or act in a way that is disrespectful, or may cause harm, to a person who has depression.</p>

Value

The degree of importance of an idea or principle to a person.

Belief

An idea that is accepted as true by somebody.

Video: Working out personal values

Watch this video that describes values: [aspirelr.link/yt-work-out-personal-values](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aspirelr.link/yt-work-out-personal-values).

How are values described in the video? Identify at least four examples of personal values that are important to you. Do the values you apply at work differ from your personal values?



Values in community services work

Community services work is based on a set of core values that underpins the support provided to clients regardless of their social or cultural background, abilities or disabilities. These include that every person has a right to:

- be treated with respect and dignity
- equal opportunities and social justice
- be as self-determining and independent as possible
- be involved in the decision-making that affects their lives.

Person-centred approach

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

These can be achieved by taking a **person-centred approach**. A person-centred approach means ensuring the individual is at the centre of decisions which relate to their life. A person-centred approach also ensures that the individual's strengths and competencies are central when planning daily activities, which consequently improves the individual's quality of life.

Organisations must ensure workers they employ work within their limitations and provide support that reflects the values, beliefs and behaviours expected from the organisation. Workers must reflect on the values of the organisation where they are employed to ensure their work reflects the values and practices required of their employer.

The ethical and legal expectations are documented so workers can refer to them as required. For example:

- a position description will outline the roles and responsibilities of each job role
- operational policies and procedures provide guidance on what to do and how tasks are to be performed
- information provided from a line manager or supervisor provides guidance about the way work needs to be conducted
- the organisation's code of conduct sets out the values and behaviours expected of staff when performing their work roles.



Codes of practice

A **code of practice** is a model for best practice about how to perform certain services and a guide for working with other community services agencies.

Most community service organisations have codes of practice and/or codes of ethics that state the expectations on behaviour. These codes reflect federal and state/territory laws, such as human rights, anti-discrimination legislation, workplace health and safety, and other related legal requirements.

Ethical guidelines and codes of practice impact on areas of work such as communication with your peers, clients, and their families/carers, confidentiality, and work role boundaries. They set out the specific rules to follow in daily work practice.

Code of practice

A document providing practical guidance on how to comply with duties in a workplace.

Ethical

Relating to moral principles.

You can access examples of Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) code of ethics, practice guidelines and tools, and code of practice for employers, here: aspirelr.link/acwa-ethics-standards

You can read an example of a code of conduct for care workers here: aspirelr.link/careworkers-code-of-conduct

Duty of care

Duty of care requires that individuals and organisations anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment or result from their actions.

A worker must do everything they can to remove or minimise the possible cause of harm to people they are supporting and to other workers. Injury, illness, or harm covers the physical aspects of the person, but psychological harm or injury must also be considered. For example, there is a duty of care to ensure interviews are held in a safe environment and that there is no unreasonable physical or emotional risk for the people or for workers conducting the session.

Upholding your duty of care involves the following:

- Identify physical, emotional or financial risks or potential for injury when these are foreseeable.
- Consider the risks associated with the environment and activities.
- Consider the impact of any illness, disability or other issues on the potential for risk or harm.
- Provide appropriate care and support.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality and privacy to prevent harm resulting from a breach.

Duty of care

A moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other persons.

- Follow your organisation's policies and procedures.
- Adhere to the standards, ethics and principles of your profession.
- Record information accurately.

Respecting different values

Your values can influence the expectations you have of the person you are supporting.

When providing support to clients, it is critical that the personal values, ideas and opinions of the worker are removed from the process. In your work you will deal with people from a range of cultures and social backgrounds who have life experiences that are very different from your own. It is important that you adopt a position of respect and acceptance and avoid judging others based on any perceived or actual difference. If you are unable to do this, you risk alienating clients and making them feel judged, devalued, misunderstood and reluctant to seek the services they require.

Each person needs to be considered as an individual with their own unique values, needs, and preferences. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and not to be judged according to another's beliefs or expectations arising from their values.

Being able to reflect on your own values helps you to understand the basis for your opinions and judgements.

Tips for keeping your own values aside

- Use curiosity in lieu of judgement.
- Ensure questions do not include assumptions, judgements, or your own values.
- Allow others to express their feelings without offering solutions or 'fix it' approaches.
- Shift your own ideas to take into account new information.
- Focus on empowering the individual.
- Make an active choice to keep your values, opinions and judgements out of the conversation.

Video: Cultural diversity

Watch this video from Western Sydney Health that provides information about the cultural diversity of this area of Sydney: aspirelr.link/yt-equitable-healthcare

It discusses the delivery of healthcare but the principles also apply to support in community services.





Work-role boundaries – responsibilities and limitations

Boundaries keep the worker, and the people they support, safe and within an ethical framework. Boundaries also help maintain respect and ensure that the person understands their role as a professional.

Here is some more information on work-role boundaries:

Maintain professional boundaries

Maintaining **professional boundaries** or work-role boundaries means keeping to the specifications of the job role and organisational policies and procedures.

Workers should not attempt to carry out work that:

- is not specified in their job description
- cannot be performed safely due to lack of training or practical experience
- is unethical, illegal or outside the policies and procedures of the organisation.

Professional boundaries

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

Maintain personal boundaries

If workers allow the people receiving support to think of them as a friend, they may confuse the person and risk the client disengaging in the service. People receiving services who consider themselves a friend of a worker may develop unrealistic expectations about what the worker can do for them and may become disappointed and disillusioned with the service when this does not occur.

This can be difficult for new workers, who can feel overwhelmed by the problems faced by the people they support. They can want to take on the role of rescuer or 'fixer'. This is not the role of a support worker.

Some ways to maintain a professional boundary with clients are listed below.

Ways to maintain professional boundaries

- Do not share personal information with other service users.
- Use friendly but polite language when setting boundaries.
- Maintain appropriate physical contact; do not touch people inappropriately.
- Do not share home phone numbers, addresses or personal details.
- Do not treat clients like they are your friends – be friendly but not too familiar
- Be friendly but do not over-share about your life with clients.
- Work according to the organisation's code of conduct and code of practice guidelines.
- Do not accept gifts from clients.
- Do not accept requests to connect on social media platforms.



Example

Work-role boundaries

Brett works in youth detention and has developed a strong rapport over several months with a young man named Garth. Garth is 14 years old and was caught stealing a car whilst under the influence of methamphetamines.

In a recent session, Garth presented Brett with a box he made in his woodwork class. Garth explained how much Brett was helping him and that he felt he had a friend in Brett. In response to Brett saying he couldn't accept the gift, Garth threw the box against the wall and started screaming angrily about wanting to hurt Brett.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Briefly outline why it is important to reflect on the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour in practice.



Question 2

Provide a brief definition of the legal and ethical term, duty of care.

Question 3

List at least four ways you can ensure you are adhering to professional work role boundaries.

Question 4

Explain the purpose of a code of practice.

1C

Share two-way, open and evaluative feedback with co-workers or peers

Exchanging constructive evaluative feedback with co-workers is a way to reflect on your own work practice.

One of the key purposes of feedback is that it enables the person to evaluate their performance and improve upon it. It can encourage open communication between workers and helps build a supportive workplace environment. Giving and receiving evaluative feedback allows workers to learn from their co-workers and helps others improve their work skills. Teams that share feedback effectively and with a common understanding of how and why it is used, are more likely to be able to deal with challenges and changes and to grow and develop.

For feedback to be constructive, everyone needs to understand some basic guidelines as to how it should be given and received. There needs to be a focus on evaluating performance and improving outcomes.

Here are three elements that should be present when sharing feedback within a team context:

Shared purpose	A shared and agreed purpose that identifies the reasons for which feedback is given and received within the team
Shared understanding	A shared understanding of the reasons for using feedback and how it aligns with the purpose and direction of the team and the relationship to the broader organisational goals and vision
Agreed approach	A shared and agreed knowledge and acceptance of the approach to be used, which identifies how feedback is applied within the team environment – when it is used, who offers it, what is said and why

Video: Effective teamwork

Watch this video about five reasons why effective teamwork is important: aspirelr.link/yt-effective-teamwork.





Guidelines for effective feedback

Evaluative feedback provides information about the ways a person can make improvements to their work practices. The person should be encouraged to reflect on what has been said, ask questions to clarify and then ideas for improvements can be discussed. Evaluative feedback does not mean criticising others or directly giving instructions for improvements.

Here are some guidelines on giving and receiving effective feedback:

<p>Be specific</p>	<p>Make sure feedback is specific.</p> <p>For example, saying, 'I appreciate that you always write your case notes promptly, but sometimes you don't explain what you mean. If you note "behavioural changes" in a client, I need details of the types of behaviour changes you have noticed'. This tells the person what they need to do and offers positive feedback at the same time.</p> <p>If a colleague gives you feedback and you are unsure what they are saying, ask them to clarify what they mean or to provide specific examples of the performance, actions or behaviour they are commenting on.</p>
<p>Be constructive</p>	<p>Try to make positive comments before providing feedback about what they need to improve. Avoid purely critical or negative comments and never give feedback as a way of humiliating or belittling others.</p> <p>Constructive feedback allows the person receiving the feedback to feel supported and respected. Always try to convey that you respect and value the person and are sensitive to their goals and needs. If a co-worker makes comments that are personal, you have the right to tell them that you will only accept feedback that focuses on your skills and performance and if it is given in a respectful manner.</p>
<p>Ensure feedback is timely</p>	<p>Try to give feedback as soon as possible following the time the behaviour or work practice you are discussing occurred. It is not helpful to say, 'Mrs Jones told me last month that you never follow up and get back to her about other services that she is eligible for. It's too late now because she has left'.</p> <p>It is always best to point out problems or oversights at the time they occur so the person receiving feedback can correct the issue themselves or make sure they do not repeat the same mistake.</p>
<p>Be clear and direct</p>	<p>Some people are uncomfortable giving feedback so they 'beat around the bush' and do not state exactly what they mean. This is very confusing for everyone. Work out what you want to say before you say it and give your feedback concisely so the person can easily understand what you mean.</p> <p>If you are not sure what someone means when they are giving you feedback, ask questions until you do understand. Seek clarification and examples of the behaviour or practice so you know what areas you need to improve.</p>



<p>Focus on behaviours and actions</p>	<p>Never make personal criticisms of a co-worker. If you need to provide feedback, focus on behaviours or actions rather than making personal remarks or attacking based on a personal characteristic.</p>
<p>Be fair</p>	<p>Always ensure you give feedback that is fair and balanced. For example, do not give feedback if you do not know all the facts of a situation, as you could blame someone for something that was beyond their control.</p> <p>Always ensure you take into consideration other factors that may have influenced work performance. For example, a worker may not have been able to do everything they were supposed to do on a particular day because a number of colleagues called in sick that day.</p>
<p>Encourage open, two-way communication</p>	<p>Communication is based on sending, receiving and interpreting messages. We have all been in situations where we have said something only to realise that the person we are speaking to has interpreted the message in a completely different way from what we intended.</p> <p>When giving feedback, choose your words carefully and give the person receiving feedback an opportunity to respond to what you have said. If the person does not have a chance to talk about or clarify feedback, they may become resentful and feel they have been unfairly criticised.</p>

Video: Understanding and receiving feedback

- Watch this video as an introduction to feedback: aspirelr.link/yt-understanding-feedback. Why does the author suggest that feedback be separate from a person's self-worth?
- Watch this video about getting the most out of feedback: aspirelr.link/yt-receiving-feedback-strategies. It is directed at university students but has some good tips for strategies to get the most from feedback.




Communication skills used with feedback

Constructive feedback is focused and non-judgmental, and its aim is to help others improve.

There are a number of strategies for giving constructive feedback. You can experiment and find which are best suited to your style of communication. You might also consider using a different technique for different people or situations.

The following information outlines some simple techniques to help you clearly deliver your feedback.



Reframing	<p>Step back from the situation and consider it from a different angle.</p> <p>For example, 'Yes, we do only have a week to finish the display. On the other hand, we have finished the program early, so we should have time.'</p> <p>Reframing can turn a problem into an opportunity, a weakness into a strength, a possibility into a certainty and an unkindness into an understanding.</p>
Facilitative questioning	<p>These open questions are designed to help the other person understand and think more widely about the topic. Here are some questions you may ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does that mean for us? • Could you give me an example? • What have you learnt from this?
Sandwich method	<p>Using the sandwich method means starting and ending with positive information, and including your constructive feedback in the middle. You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment on what is going well • comment on areas that need improvement • set goals based on positives.
Shared method	<p>Using the shared method, you may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ask the other person what went well • list the things you thought went well • ask the other person what could be improved • add any other things you think could be improved • end on a positive – set goals, congratulate the person on their progress or thank them for the contribution they make to the team.
Stop, start, continue	<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what they feel they should stop doing • what they feel they should start doing • what they wish to continue doing.

Some more suggestions for giving and receiving feedback are outlined below.

'I' statements	<p>When you use the word 'I', you are taking ownership of what you say and sending a clear message about personal responsibility. The use of 'I' helps you communicate in a direct and active way and allows you to clearly state what you feel or think about a situation.</p>
Active listening	<p>Active listening involves focusing all your attention on what another person is saying. Avoid interrupting until they have finished what they want to say. Ask questions or paraphrase what the speaker has said to clarify and check your understanding.</p>

Active listening

Concentrated listening and non-verbal encouragement indicating an understanding of what is being said.



Observe body language	Observing a person's body language should give you an indication of how they are feeling and their level of comfort. If their body language reflects that they are upset by what you are saying, you may need to pause or change the way you are giving the information.
Respect difference	Be aware of individual differences when providing feedback. For example, some people find it harder to give and receive feedback than others. There may also be cultural differences in the protocols of giving and receiving feedback.
Be supportive	Avoid focusing only on negative aspects of a person's behaviour or performance. Acknowledge what they do well and what they are good at, in addition to acknowledging areas where they can improve.
Choose words carefully	<p>Be careful of the words you choose when giving feedback. Do not use negative or critical words to describe a co-worker's performance. For example, avoid words such as 'hopeless', 'incompetent' or 'useless'.</p> <p>When providing feedback in writing or as part of a report, there is less opportunity to discuss and resolve misunderstandings. Written feedback can sound more harsh or abrupt than verbal feedback, so it is important to find an appropriate tone that is warm and contains relevant and specific feedback.</p>

Example

Share feedback

Gemma and Tristan have been working together on a project to review their program's service documents. The project has now finished and they are discussing and evaluating how the project ran with their supervisor, as well as discussing their performance. They provide each other with evaluative feedback, ensuring they focus on positive elements as well as areas for improvement. Gemma explains to Tristan that she appreciated his ability to manage time so effectively and that his use of timelines and charts to keep the various tasks on track was useful. She also tells him that she felt sometimes he lacked confidence when speaking to their senior management team about their ideas and that this may have affected the response they received to their proposals. Tristan agrees that he needs to work on his confidence and ability to speak in high-pressure situations.



Practice Task 3

Question 1

Which of the following statements, related to giving and receiving effective feedback, are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Do not give feedback if you do not know all the facts of a situation.	Yes / No
b. Personal comments about the person given as negative feedback is an effective way for workers to learn from their mistakes.	Yes / No
c. When giving feedback, choose your words carefully and give the person receiving the feedback opportunities to respond to what you have said.	Yes / No
d. When receiving feedback, take an active role in understanding the feedback you have been given. This may involve asking questions, taking notes and thinking about how the feedback applies to you.	Yes / No

Question 2

Provide at least three 'tips' for giving, receiving, and analysing feedback.

1D

Actively seek and reflect on feedback

Analysing and reflecting on feedback may provide maximum benefit to clients, workers and organisations.

There are many opportunities for obtaining feedback within your organisation, including supervision sessions, team meetings and when working with more experienced colleagues. You may also participate in processes such as 360-degree feedback, which invites feedback from colleagues, clients, supervisors, and others such as family members.

You may also ask appropriate people to give you feedback on an informal basis when the opportunity arises. These people may include your supervisor or manager, other workers you trust, or experienced workers who can help you learn.

When you ask for or are given feedback, make sure you reflect on and analyse the feedback they give so you can obtain maximum benefit.

Actively seek feedback

Seeking out feedback shows that you respect your co-workers' opinions and are willing to learn from them. Clients and staff from other organisations will be more open to giving feedback if you accept the feedback they give in a gracious and respectful manner.

When you can receive constructive feedback in an open and non-defensive way, this can help you to provide it in the same manner, as you will be more sensitive to the needs of the other person.

How to show you are willing to accept feedback:

- Listen carefully to what is said.
- Be courteous to the feedback provider.
- Listen to the feedback without interruptions or protests.
- Ask for clarification or examples if you are not sure what the feedback provider is saying.
- Think about how you can apply the feedback you have been given.



Feedback from clients

In many organisations, clients are encouraged to provide feedback by completing feedback or evaluation forms. Clients must also be provided with information about complaints procedures so they can provide feedback about situations or issues that concern them – these concerns may be related to an incident, worker, or service.

People you provide services for may prefer to provide feedback in an informal manner, by making verbal comments or suggestions about services you have provided. They may like to participate in formal feedback methods such as completing surveys or evaluation forms.

The communication preferences of clients must be considered and feedback provided in a way that suits their individual needs and abilities. This could include providing opportunities for feedback to be shared in another language, through an electronic communication device or via signing. Clients should not be limited in their ability to provide feedback because of their communication preferences or abilities.

Feedback from organisations

Organisations sometimes work in collaboration to combine their resources and skillsets more effectively. In these situations, you can seek feedback from other organisations when you work collaboratively on projects or tasks.

A project can sometimes have feedback and evaluation built into the stages of the project, such as:

Agree on goals and outcomes	Meet and discuss shared goals and outcomes as well as any specific activities or tasks, and who will be accountable for delivering against outcomes and tasks. This will ensure the evaluation and feedback sought is useful and relevant to specific people and tasks.
Agree on the evaluation method	Discuss and agree on an appropriate evaluation method to use that suits the needs of the organisations and people involved and the activities, time frame and human and physical resources available. This could include questionnaires, surveys, feedback forms, guided discussion sessions or other approaches.
Plan delivery approach	Plan the delivery approach to be used for the project or specific activities and who will work on various elements. This will ensure that when it comes time to seek feedback and evaluate performance against stated outcomes and goals, it will be relevant and useful.
Seek feedback	Seek feedback on performance and achievements towards stated goals and objectives and use this feedback to inform future collaborative activities and specific work within your organisation.

Feedback from other sources

Feedback can also come from other sources to inform and guide your professional practice. Some feedback may be formal, whereas other feedback may be informal or anecdotal. For example, a volunteer may comment that they enjoy working at your organisation because they are offered regular opportunities to participate in professional development activities. A trainee worker may complete an evaluation form at the end of a training session you run to provide feedback about the session. A carer may approach you and explain how resources have not been available to meet the needs of the person they are helping.

You should reflect on all the feedback you receive to review your own activities and performance and use the information to further develop your skills and knowledge.

Reflect on feedback

There is no point seeking feedback from others unless you are willing to listen and consider what they have said and be open to points of view that are different from your own. This applies regardless of who is providing the feedback.

Consider these statements about the benefits of reflecting on feedback (both positive and negative).

- Feedback can inform and guide the development of you/your team's professional practice.
- A professional organisation should seek feedback so they can continuously improve.
- Feedback allows points of view that are different from your organisation's or your own, offering a different perspective and areas for improvement.

At times you may receive feedback that is negative or leaves you feeling hurt. For example, a discussion might upset you, or you may identify that a practice you thought was of high quality must be improved.

Sometimes, feedback may be given by another person who is inexperienced or who has poor skills at providing feedback. When this occurs:

- turn the situation around and think about what the person is really trying to say
- think about the message and what you can gain from the information
- identify the most important parts of the discussion and pick out what you can take from it
- listen carefully at all times
- ask questions
- respond in a way that demonstrates you understand the feedback and are taking it in a positive way.



Here is some guidance on ways to analyse and interpret feedback as a way of getting the most from it:

<p>Note reactions</p>	<p>It is important to note your reactions to any feedback you are given. If it is given in a constructive way, you should feel supported and encouraged rather than criticised. If you feel yourself reacting strongly to feedback, consider why this may be. For example, it could be because you know what is being said is true, or it could be because you feel the feedback you have been given is unfair. Remember that all feedback should be fair, objective and constructive.</p>
<p>Avoid destructive feedback</p>	<p>Destructive feedback or comments that seem more like a personal attack are not useful feedback. You can recognise unhelpful feedback because it feels like a 'put down' rather than being constructive. This type of personal and destructive feedback may say more about the person giving the feedback than you because some people use feedback as an opportunity to meet their own needs or vent their frustrations.</p>
<p>Listen carefully</p>	<p>In most cases, you will know immediately whether the feedback you have been given is accurate and helpful. Other feedback may come as a surprise, and you may need to reflect on and analyse it to see how it applies to you and consider how you can put it into practice. For example, a supervisor may advise you to take care in maintaining client confidentiality in all situations. You may think that you already adhere to it conscientiously, but then remember when you are having lunch with your co-workers you often start talking about clients.</p>
<p>Improve your performance</p>	<p>Even if you think there is only a grain of truth in the feedback you receive, you can still use it to improve your performance. Seek further clarification if you are unsure what the feedback provider means and ask for examples of how the feedback applies to you. Once you have analysed the feedback, you can decide what changes you can make. This usually involves self-reflection, continuing to seek feedback and undertaking training. You can also model your behaviour on that of an experienced and competent colleague.</p>

Video: Receiving negative feedback

Watch this video regarding receiving negative feedback and how we often react when given negative feedback: aspirelr.link/yt-receiving-negative-feedback.



Example

Feedback from volunteers for goal-setting

Jason runs a shared reading session for a group of older people at a community centre. The reading sessions provide a chance for people to share poetry and short stories together and to talk about what they have read. Several volunteers support the sessions and Jason is keen to evaluate his performance running the sessions with input from the volunteers. He knows his organisation highly values the work of volunteers and works hard to train and retain them, so it is important their opinions and ideas are sought and acted upon where appropriate. He asks the volunteers to fill out a short questionnaire about various aspects of the program and his own performance and encourages them to share positive comments as well as suggestions for things he could do better. He reflects on the feedback he receives and uses the suggestions to make changes for improvements to the program.

Practice Task 4

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Theo, Ling and Jas work as part of a team providing support for disadvantaged and disabled youth for the Rhubarb council. During a team meeting, the team supervisor, Raj, explains the results of a feedback survey given to users of the service and associated organisations. The number of completed surveys was very low, suggesting some improvements were needed.

Raj asked the team to find out why they had such a low response rate and bring suggestions to the next team meeting on how to improve on getting feedback from their clients. Theo, Ling and Jas volunteer to get feedback from the organisation's stakeholders.



Question 1

Suggest three things the team might discover about their methods for collecting feedback and the needs of service users.

Question 2

Identify what steps the team would take if feedback was part of the project or collaboration process with another service organisation.



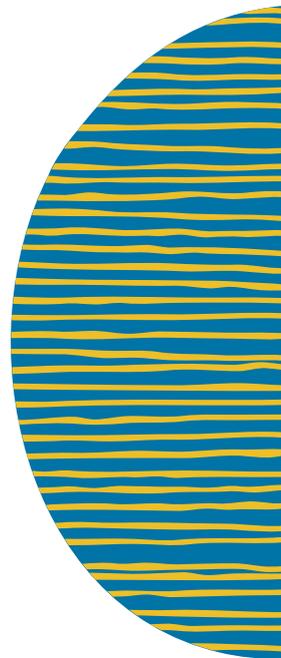
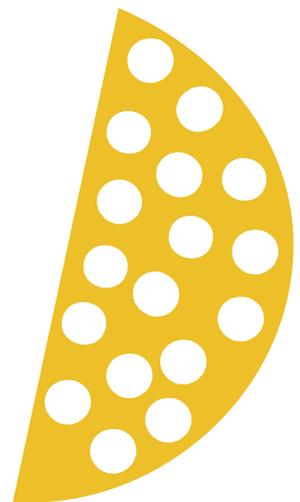
Question 3

Provide two benefits to the organisation for reflecting on the feedback they receive from all stakeholders associated with the organisation.



Summary

- Engaging in regular self-evaluation occurs through reflective practice or structured discussion and supervision with others.
- Being self-aware and understanding your weaknesses as well as your strengths will help you become a more effective worker.
- Reflecting upon your own values, beliefs, and behaviour is useful and can improve your work practice.
- Sharing two-way, evaluative, and constructive feedback with co-workers or peers is an important tool for improving personal performance.
- Feedback encourages open communication between workers and helps build a supportive work environment.
- Feedback is most effective when it is given in a respectful and courteous manner and according to clear guidelines.





Learning Checkpoint 1

Reflect on your own practice

Part A

1. List at least five ways regular self-evaluation can help facilitate professional and personal development.

2. List four benefits of using a self-reflection process or model.



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

a. Codes of practice act as a guide for legal and ethical practice.	Yes / No
b. Reflecting on the impact of personal values and beliefs means avoiding making judgements that can negatively impact clients.	Yes / No
c. Everyone has the right to values and beliefs that may cause conflict, it is just human behaviour and cannot be avoided.	Yes / No
d. Codes of practice that state the organisation's expectations on behaviour are legal requirements written as federal laws that every employee must follow.	Yes / No
e. Duty of care means respecting the human rights of clients and to remove or minimise the possible cause of harm to people.	Yes / No

4. Identify two possible impacts of a worker's values influencing the professional relationship with their client.

5. List three resources a worker can refer to that define/explain their work-role responsibilities and limitations.

6. Which of the following relates to two-way, open and effective feedback that will improve your practice? Tick all that apply.
- Prepare for feedback with arguments for your performance ahead of time.
 - Active listening means interrupting with questions to ensure you are understood.
 - A person's body language can indicate how the person is feeling and show their level of comfort.
 - Be courteous to the provider of the feedback whether you agree or disagree.
 - Present negative comments in a 'round about' way to protect the professional relationships with other organisations.
 - Ask for clarification or examples if you are not sure what the feedback provider is saying.
 - The communication preferences or abilities of clients should not limit their ability to provide feedback.

Part B

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

Case study

Rosequake Community Services is a service provider offering a range of services to the local area. The policies and procedures at Rosequake require all team members to undertake an annual performance review which asks the team, prior to their review, to ensure they have updated their personal reflection journal that evaluates and reflects on their performance in their role. They must discuss any feedback they received over the past six months and provide suggestions for their professional development. This should be submitted one week before the review to their manager, Sheila.

Before a meeting with one of her staff, Sheila receives an email from one of the team saying he has not completed any reflective writing in the past six months because he has been too busy.



- 1.** Suggest three reasons Sheila can give to the staff member on why reflection is beneficial to improve work practice.

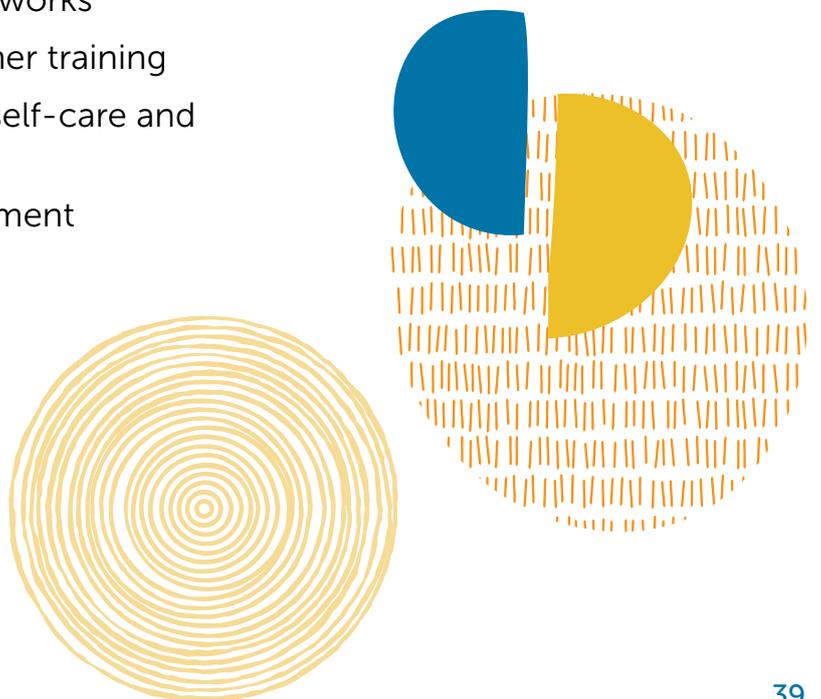
- 2.** One of Sheila's team has written in his journal that he received negative feedback from a client. He writes that it 'knocked his confidence' and made him doubt his ability to do his job.

What advice can Sheila give about making the most from negative feedback?



Topic 2: Enhance your own practice

- 2A Determine improvements needed based on your own evaluation and feedback from others
- 2B Identify potential support networks
- 2C Seek specialist advice or further training
- 2D Recognise requirements for self-care and additional support
- 2E Devise, document and implement a self-development plan



2A

Determine improvements needed based on your own evaluation and feedback from others

When additional or updated skills and knowledge have been identified, they need to be integrated into practice.

Once you have received feedback and completed a self-evaluation exercise, you can then examine areas where you need to improve. It can take some time and careful thought to work out what improvements are needed and what actions you are going to take to apply these improvements into your work practice.

Improvements based on own evaluation

A strong problem-solving approach can be helpful in working out exactly what improvements are needed within your existing skill and knowledge set.

When you are evaluating your own performance against specific competencies (skills and knowledge), think carefully about what you currently do well and how you think you may improve in the future.

Competency

The consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

Some areas of **competency** are skills that are relevant for all job roles, while others are specific to how you carry out the tasks required in your job role. Competencies will focus on your interactions with people and technical skills used to perform your responsibilities. For example, depending on your job role you may be required to conduct assessments, facilitate group activities, provide targeted support, intervene in challenging situations and carry out manual-handling tasks.

Here are some competency areas explained:

Problem-solving

Community services work presents many opportunities for using problem-solving. This includes resolving issues related to work tasks, dealing with situations, interactions with colleagues, and time and resource management.

Being skilled at problem-solving takes time and practice, and there are some specific skills such as clear thinking practices that can assist you in becoming a better problem solver.



Communication	In many areas of community service, communication with different groups of people is required across varied contexts. Sometimes you have time to plan and consider your communication in advance but in some situations, you need to respond rapidly and ensure your communication is precise, clear and well received. Good communication is a skill that can be taught and developed over time.
Technical skills	Your day-to-day tasks often depend on technical skills. Depending on your level of responsibility, technical skills may include keeping digital skills up to date for communicating with clients and to colleagues and online reporting requirements, applying safe manual handling techniques, applying first aid and emergency evacuation procedures. Technical skills need to stay current and sometimes require regular updates, particularly in first aid, mental health first aid and emergency situations.
People-focused skills	Having the skills to work directly with people is essential in community services fields. It takes skill and knowledge to apply community services principles at work including building rapport, collaborating with others, using a person-centred approach to support, respecting human rights, including privacy and confidentiality. Ongoing professional learning, reading, attendance at training sessions and conferences, mentoring and participating in networks all help build people-focused skills.

Suggestions for improvements from feedback

As discussed earlier in Topic 1, feedback can come from a variety of places and people and can be delivered in a formal or informal way.

Feedback from others can be used to improve areas of work. The following list includes prompts for your own self-evaluation or as part of a discussion during a performance review.

- Job role and responsibilities
- Meeting timelines for projects or completion of tasks and potential barriers
- Personal objectives or goals from any previous reviews
- Achievements of goals to meet organisational objectives
- Teamwork and collaboration with others
- Highlights and significant achievements since the last review
- Changes to work role and responsibilities since the last review
- Current capabilities and knowledge

Example Problem-solving

Here is a comparison of two workers – one is good at problem-solving and another requires some feedback and support to build their skills.

Jack	Eliza
Jack is quick to identify a problem early on. He is able to seek specific information and suggestions from others in the office to identify possible solutions. He then brings the problem and his recommendation to the group for approval before quickly moving the process forward and acting upon the best solution.	Eliza often does not seem to see a problem coming before it reaches crisis point. She tends to avoid addressing a problem in its early stages, preferring a 'wait and see' approach. This has led to major situations developing in the office several times, which have then required quick decision-making and intervention from senior management.

Example Analysing feedback and areas for improvement

Eliza is analysing some feedback she was given from her co-workers, prior to meeting with her manager for her six-monthly performance review. She thinks about some comments she has received:

- “I wish you had told me the room booking for the trade show had been cancelled earlier. We could have easily switched rooms if we had known in advance.”
- “Why am I only hearing about this now, Eliza?”
- “What are we going to do to support this family now that the discretionary budget has run out? I should have known there was no funding available before we met with them so we could have focused on other support options.”

Eliza decides to give herself a score out of 10 for several aspects of problem-solving. Later she asks her supervisor to give her scores on the same aspects of problem-solving. Eliza then compares the scores.



Aspects of problem-solving	Self-score	Supervisor's score
Identifying a problem	5	2
Identifying options to resolve a problem	4	6
Communicating problems and possible solutions with others	3	5
Selecting the best solution	7	5
Informing others of the chosen solution	6	4
Acting to avoid problems where possible	8	7

Practice Task 5

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

Case study

Raj and Enya are working in a community services agency which has just had the launch of their new website. Their manager has asked them to find out what clients think of the information provided on the website so they can identify how they can improve the information provided.

Raj thinks that a questionnaire is best and compiles 10 questions. He shows the draft questions to Enya who likes the questions but thinks that they do not reflect the diversity of people that use their service and thinks clients with English as a second language would be discouraged from completing the survey.

Enya speaks to the IT department to see if the questions can be placed on the organisation's website where respondents can download them in their own language.

After some work translating the questions, they send a text out to their clients asking them to go to the website and complete the survey.

After a week Raj and Enya are excited that they have got responses from 60% of service users and have identified some common areas where clients have experienced issues in their dealings with the service provider.



Question 1

Use each of the following problem-solving steps to show how Raj and Enya identified improvements in service delivery.

1. Define the problem
2. Brainstorm solutions
3. Make plans and evaluate
4. Implement the plan
5. Re-evaluate

Question 2

Provide an example of the type of improvements that service users may list as areas for improvement.

2B

Identify potential support networks

Community workers benefit from support and feedback from within their own team and from others outside their organisation.

Professional networks established through industry groups and professional associations ensure a wide range of expertise and resources to support you in your work.

Industry networks

Networks are individuals and groups working together to share information, ideas and resources to help meet common goals.

It takes time and practice to become comfortable building a sound network. The rewards are having a ready group of people and contacts who are able to offer support, guidance and opportunities to help you and your organisation.

The networks you develop depend on the type of work you do and your own professional interests and needs. Over time you will build networks that relate to your own field of work as well as to interest areas you may have for future career directions. Ask people such as your supervisor or manager, mentor, or experienced workers about the networks they find useful.

Industry networking events such as conferences, networking meetings, social media interactions and trade shows can help you build a good network within and outside your organisation. Spending time interacting with others who work in your industry sector is the best way of learning to identify potential support networks.

The word 'networking' is often used to describe the process of making contacts with others to foster mutually beneficial and supportive relationships.

Support networks can help you:

- tap into expertise outside your own area of work or experience
- learn more about the work of colleagues in other areas of community services
- provide access to specialist advice
- work collaboratively with others
- provide personal and professional development opportunities.

Networks can be internal to an organisation or external to it and may be either formal or informal. Some networks are based on a cross-section of organisations within a particular community or exist to advocate for or represent causes or groups of people.

Here are a few examples of networks that represent groups:

- aspirelr.link/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-network
- aspirelr.link/vic-volunteering-networks
- aspirelr.link/community-managers-network
- aspirelr.link/justice-action
- aspirelr.link/fb-community-care-network
- aspirelr.link/australia-network-disability
- aspirelr.link/homelessness-network

When joining a network, consider:

- which networks best support you in your job role
- your career interests and goals
- your organisation's requirements
- what you can contribute to the network
- whether you have the time and level of commitment to be an effective participant.

You can read more about networking and what is required here: aspirelr.link/guide-to-networking

Formal networks

Formal networks include membership to professional associations and industry groups. Part of membership means access to webinars, conferences, latest research and studies on topics of interest to the group.

Often an industry area/sector has a peak body organisation representing a group within the community. They seek to maintain standards within a profession, provide ongoing professional development to members, and represent the interests of their members to the government and community. The members of the association may include representatives from government departments, health services, and other community services organisations. The Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) is an example of a professional association representing the needs of workers in the community services industry.

You can read more about the ACWA here:

- aspirelr.link/acwa-about

Some other examples of professional associations related to healthcare/community services can be found on the University of Sydney website:

- aspirelr.link/uos-professional-associations

You may need to meet eligibility criteria to be able to join a formal network such as a professional association, and show evidence of a qualification to be able to apply for membership. There is sometimes a fee to join networks, but these are tax deductible. If your organisation has a policy of encouraging workers to join professional networks, seek advice about which networks they consider most appropriate and whether they wish you to actively participate in network activities.

Informal networks

Developing informal networks can be a natural process that occurs when you make contacts through the course of your work or attending meetings. People who become part of your informal network may be part of your own organisation or external to it. They may include those who you have helped in some way and those who support you to carry out your work effectively.

Informal networks include relationships with individuals or groups you may make as part of your regular work or training that do not depend on a formal agreement or membership. They are based on sharing information and providing mutual support on topical events. This might include webinars, articles, websites or news stories that address specific topics relevant to the group such as social housing, working with volunteers or the carers role in disability. These groups often communicate and share information online and can have a moderator who manages the group. LinkedIn is a popular platform used by professional people sharing work-related information.

Examples of different informal networks can include:

- workers in your own area and other areas of community services work
- service user group representatives and advocates
- health professionals such as doctors and psychologists
- cultural liaison officers or workers from ethno-specific services
- teachers and trainers
- personal mentors
- online contacts and groups related to your industry or sector.

Example

Pete joins a group online

Pete is a new worker in the community services sector in a small rural office providing services to people who are geographically isolated. Pete himself often feels very isolated in his work, as his nearest colleague is located about a 30 minute drive away. Although they meet up once a week for a planning meeting and to discuss specific issues, Pete is really feeling the effects of his isolation.

Pete decides to build his own network of contacts within his industry so he can learn and develop his skills and gain an understanding of how specific issues are dealt with by other more experienced workers. He joins several LinkedIn discussion groups and begins participating in regular weekly chats on Twitter.

He is careful to avoid discussing specific cases because he knows his rural location would make it easy to identify particular people from his descriptions. He focuses on asking questions about how other people do their jobs, what they see as challenges and how they feel about particular issues in the sector.

Pete soon has a regular schedule of discussion groups and chats, and an informal network of people to exchange ideas with online. He finds this is an extremely useful way of building his knowledge and reducing the feelings of isolation.



Practice Task 6

Question 1

Provide three examples of how a professional association can contribute to professional development.

Question 2

Suggest three things to look for when searching for an appropriate industry network.

2C

Seek specialist advice or further training

Nobody can expect to know what to do in every situation or have answers to all questions.

Filling in gaps in knowledge and skills can be done through seeking advice from people with expertise and/or additional training. Advice and training can also help you identify and work towards your own career goals so you can plan how to get to where you want to be.

Professional development

Community services workers should be given access to ongoing education that promotes personal and professional development. A position description document and advice from a supervisor can provide information on workplace policies related to training and professional development.

You can suggest areas of practice that you wish to improve and request relevant training. Depending on the requirements of your employer, this can be discussed as part of a formal review process when you can identify professional development opportunities that align with your current skills and knowledge and with the objectives of the organisation.

Here are some examples of ways you can participate in professional development to enhance your skills and knowledge:

Opportunities for professional development

- Online training – this may include webinars, accredited and non-accredited training courses.
- Conferences – these can include lectures, panel discussions and workshops on a central theme.
- Attend workshops and formal training sessions.
- Undertake further study including short online courses or self-directed training programs online.
- Work with a mentor or experienced colleague.
- Volunteer with organisations that can provide opportunities to learn new skills.
- Research, read professional journals and texts and have discussions with experienced practitioners.



Informal and formal learning

Formal learning involves a structured approach to learning and may be conducted face-to-face, online or through a blended learning method. Instruction is guided by a teacher or facilitator and includes a variety of methods, including small and large group sessions and individual consultancy as required. At the end, a certificate or formal qualification such as a diploma is given.

Informal learning can be made up of a variety of activities and is undertaken according to individual preferences for learning and skill development. It can be completed in a flexible time frame and can be done in a very individualised way that doesn't rely on a formal curriculum. It can be used face-to-face or in online learning environments and is a method well suited to learning on the job, as it can be combined with regular work duties.

Examples include spending time observing a manager, working with a mentor to learn more about their work, reading research or journal articles related to practice, volunteering to assist with some managerial tasks such as rostering, visiting other facilities or programs and receiving feedback from colleagues.

Some people find it much more motivating and interesting to learn in a formal situation whereas others are more motivated by informal learning. Think about which approach works best for you and which is most suited to what you are hoping to learn.

Nationally accredited training

Relevant qualifications in community services include nationally accredited training and higher education courses.

Nationally accredited courses are available across Australia and the type of training required can vary according to the requirements of the organisation and the requirements of your job role.

Training is offered in a variety of different ways, as shown in the following table.

Traineeships	Working while you study – your workplace supports your training.
Funded/self-funded training	Studying independently and completing practical placement during your study.
Class-based learning	Attending face-to-face classes. This complements your work or practical placement.
Online learning	Learning through online materials. This includes webinars (online classes where you interact as you would in a face-to-face class).



Off-site campus learning	Receiving resources for learning in the mail, or through a trainer who comes to visit you.
Flexible or blended learning	Using a range of the methods previously mentioned.

For more information about VET courses, go to: aspirelr.link/vocational-education-training

Qualifications higher than an advanced diploma are delivered at university. For more information about this, contact your local university or search online.

Example

Accredited training

Igor is employed as a community services support worker and member of the Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA).

ACWA is offering online courses and Igor is particularly interested in the online course Understanding Domestic Violence. He has checked with his supervisor, Katka, and she agreed that it would be an excellent opportunity. Igor can enrol anytime, and participants can access the course for up to 12 months.

Igor plans to start the course immediately and hopes to have it finished by the time his annual review occurs in three months' time. He has two weeks leave during this period and feels that he can use this time to complete the course. He is also aware that there are four modules that he has access to for 12 months if for some reason he cannot complete the course in three months.

Seeking advice and support

Options for support include seeking advice from a supervisor, co-worker, or those with specialist knowledge, such as behaviour management specialists.

Confidentiality
The principle of keeping personal information private, unless the person consents to sharing the information with other parties.

You must always respect **confidentiality** requirements when seeking advice about your work with clients, particularly from people outside of your organisation. You must always protect the confidentiality of clients and staff and not disclose personal information to others without the person's permission.

For example, if you are working with a person who demonstrates behaviours of concern and you want to speak to someone who has more experience in this field, you have several options, as described here.



- Seek advice from your workplace supervisor or professional supervisor.
- Discuss the matter with co-workers with a shared support load or who have relevant experience.
- Network with contacts who may work in a similar area or have specialist knowledge (while maintaining confidentiality).
- Obtain advice from appropriate specialists and professionals such as psychologists or behaviour management specialists.
- Conduct private research and read professional journals to ensure you are aware of the latest developments in this area.
- Seek and attend relevant training sessions.

Mentoring

Mentors can provide specialised advice about specific issues and guide career development. They can help with achieving both short-term and long-term goals.

Mentoring can occur ‘naturally’ in a workplace when a new worker joins a team and more experienced workers support them through induction and for the first months of beginning work in a new job/position. It can also be part of an organisation’s formal policies and work practices to assign a mentor to new or less-experienced staff to promote personal and professional development.

A mentor may be a supervisor but may also be an experienced co-worker or someone outside the organisation who has relevant knowledge and experience. For example, if you work with people who live with mental illness, you may be allocated a mentor who is a clinical mental health professional, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist. Alternatively, if you work with youth who engage in behaviours of concern, you may choose a mentor who is a behaviour management specialist.

The mentoring role includes:

- providing support and encouragement
- fostering personal and professional development
- guiding workplace learning
- providing feedback and advice about clients and situations that arise.

When seeking out a mentor, make sure you choose someone you can trust and respect, and with whom you can build an honest relationship.

Mentoring

The sharing of knowledge and skills by an experienced person with a less-experienced person.

Professional supervision

Professional supervision is becoming an increasingly common practice in community services work. A professional supervisor's role is different from that of a workplace supervisor who carries out several roles such as administrative and line manager duties.

The focus and role of a professional supervisor is explained below.

Focus
<p>A professional supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses on practice issues and the personal and professional development of the person they are supervising • may work independently of the organisation and have undertaken additional training and accreditation processes. <p>Professional supervision can occur in a group setting; for example, a professional supervisor may facilitate peer group supervision. Organisations usually assign a professional supervisor and the worker meets with the supervisor on a regular basis such as weekly or monthly to discuss practice issues.</p>
Role
<p>A professional supervisor's main role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure workers have the level of practice supervision that workplace supervisors do not have time to provide • provide evaluative feedback • encourage self-evaluation and reflection • help workers become aware of and deal with limitations in their work • suggest personal and professional development opportunities • guide workers when dealing with complex practice issues.

Example

Seeking specialist advice and training

Marjorie has experience working with a variety of clients presenting with various issues and in need of complex supports. She has noticed recently that the profile of people seeking support has changed significantly and she is finding it more difficult to identify appropriate support that is meaningful and relevant.

She discusses the issue with her supervisor and they both agree that Marjorie would benefit from increasing her knowledge so she can better assist her clients. They discuss options for training and a mentorship program within their organisation. They agree that Marjorie can apply for time release from her job role to attend a training course. The training course will give Marjorie the information she currently lacks, and she can then share the information with other colleagues within the organisation.



Practice Task 7

Question 1

List four different types of training or learning opportunities that you could access to support your professional development.

Question 2

List four types of specialist advice that can be accessed to enhance your own practice.

2D

Recognise requirements for self-care and additional support

Working in community services can be challenging and stressful at times.

Acknowledging that self-care is important is the first step in monitoring your mental health and ensuring you will be working in the sector for many years to come. Failing to recognise the need for self-care can lead to stress, burnout and emotional fatigue as well as to high levels of absenteeism, staff turnover and claims for workers' compensation.

Self-care

Self-care is taking positive steps to look after yourself in the workplace.

It refers to areas related particularly to mental health and wellness; although it can also refer to physical health parameters such as avoiding infections, staying safe when interacting with others and avoiding injuries when performing manual handling or other tasks.

Anything that contributes to your emotional, spiritual, physical or social wellbeing is related to your **self-care**.

Self-care

Positive ways to cope with and reduce the effects of stress.

Taking responsibility for your self-care means maintaining your health and wellbeing. This includes taking actions to stay fit and healthy, meeting your social and mental health needs, preventing illness or accidents, looking after yourself, taking medicine when you are unwell, or taking time out to exercise, pray or meditate.

Self-care also means doing things that are important to you, such as gardening, shopping, exercising, playing sport, attending social functions, seeing friends and family, going on holiday or going to work. It involves looking at what you can do and want to do, rather than what you cannot do or have to do. Living a healthy lifestyle is part of self-care for everyone.

Self-care relates to the balance you have between:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| • sleep | • nutrition |
| • exercise | • social life |
| • interests | • mental health |
| • spirituality | • work life and/or study. |



Reactions to stress

It is important to understand what **stressors** cause you to react and how you react.

You can identify your own self-care requirements by being aware of your own personality, characteristics, and stressors that ‘trigger’ stress. This will guide you in knowing when you are showing signs of stress or burnout – significant areas of risk for community services workers.

Stressor

An event or situation that causes the person to exhibit a particular behaviour.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What causes you stress?
- What are the triggers to your stress response?
- How do you react physically?
- How do you react emotionally?
- What is your stress response?

Which of these do you experience when you are feeling stressed?

Signs and symptoms of stress	
• nail biting	• overwhelming sense of anxiety/negativity
• fatigue	• mood swings and becoming teary
• dry mouth	• overwhelming sense of failure/incompetence
• perspiration/clamminess	• feeling ambivalent
• increased/erratic pulse	• loss of humour and sociability
• shallow/rapid respirations	• loss of appetite
• nausea	• excessive use of alcohol/other drugs
• dizzy/unsteady	• impatience and irritability
• muscle tightness/achiness	

You can read more about work-related stress here: aspirelr.link/work-related-stress

Additional supports

If you feel you need additional support, it is vital that you identify your needs and know who you can approach for assistance.

Getting support from others is helpful in meeting your self-care needs early on, before a small problem becomes a major one. You should always ask for help if you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, or if personal problems are affecting your ability to do your work. By discussing, reflecting on and communicating with others you may:

- gain support
- learn how others have managed similar issues
- develop networks
- improve your practice
- increase your resilience.

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a work-based intervention program aimed to facilitate early detection, identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance and wellbeing.

You can read more about the services offered in an EAP program here: aspirelr.link/eapaa

Other resources

For further information about looking after your mental health and stress management go to the Beyond Blue 'Heads up' website that addresses subjects including:

- taking care of yourself
- mental health conditions
- bullying
- helping a workmate
- resources for individuals.

You can access the Heads up website here: aspirelr.link/headsup-for-employees

Here are some examples of contact information for immediate assistance for mental health concerns, for yourself, a family member, friend or workmate.

- Beyond Blue – aspirelr.link/beyondblue
- Lifeline – aspirelr.link/lifeline
- MensLine Australia – aspirelr.link/mensline
- SuicideLine – aspirelr.link/suicideline
- Kids Help Line – aspirelr.link/kids-help-line
- Better Health Channel – aspirelr.link/urgent-help-mental-illness

Note: some of these have a Victorian focus but there are equivalent services in all states/territories.

Example

Recognising the need for support

Pedro works long hours and travels frequently as part of his job. He visits many families completing support plans and attending meetings. He often does not have time for a lunch break and is known at work as the ‘go-to man’ whenever there is a problem. Lately Pedro has been feeling irritable and experiencing frequent headaches. Pedro has been reading a book about stress and burnout and realises he is showing many of the classic signs of someone who is experiencing stress.

He decides to take some action and seek support from his supervisor. They meet to discuss his workload and develop a plan to help him complete more of his paperwork from the office and to have a flexible start and finish time. This allows Pedro to adjust his weekly schedule and start later the next day after he has attended a family meeting the night before. They also agree to hire an administrative assistant to complete some of the basic tasks that are taking up so much of his work time at present.



Practice Task 8

Question 1

Explain the term 'self-care' and provide examples of your own strategies used for self-care.

Question 2

Briefly outline why it is recommended to seek support when you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed at work.

2E

Devise, document and implement a self-development plan

A self-development plan documents professional and personal goals and the actions the person will take to reach these goals.

Self-development is an ongoing process that requires planning how you want to develop your personal abilities, skills and knowledge. To create an effective personal development plan, you need to establish realistic goals and targets.

Personal development plans document the actions you will take to develop your skills and knowledge. The plan should clearly establish what you want to achieve and how you will achieve it within a specific time frame.

A self-development plan documents professional and personal goals and the actions the person will take to reach these goals. Goals can focus on a gap in skills or knowledge which will lead to improvements in performance. They may also be an enhancement of current skills and knowledge.

Goals need to be meaningful but also be within the objectives of the department or organisation. That is, the organisation needs to see some benefit to them, as well as to the person setting their goals. This could mean the staff member gaining some expertise that is also valuable to the team, or that aligns with the future directions of the organisation.

Setting aside time regularly to think about your goals and career direction reduces the work you need to do when it comes time to write your personal development plan.

What is a self-development plan?

A self-development plan is used as part of an ongoing cycle of performance reviews or appraisals and invites workers and their direct supervisors to collaborate and develop appropriate goals, usually 12-monthly.

There is no one specified document used as a plan, but your organisation will likely use a template and have a specific policy and procedure to guide you when writing a self-development plan.

Creating a self-development or personal development plan encourages you to think carefully about the goals you set and what you can do to achieve them. The plan focuses on expanding your skills and knowledge to achieve personal and professional growth.



Examples of the areas included in a plan:

- areas for personal development
- current or emerging trends that need investigation
- personal and professional strengths
- personal and professional weaknesses or limitations
- values, beliefs and behaviour
- feedback from others
- goal-setting:
 - what you want to achieve (goals)
 - when you want to achieve them by (time frame)
 - how you will know when you have achieved them (measurement)
 - what you will do to reach these goals (your actions)
- support mechanisms to reach these goals
- implementation.

A plan is often prepared in conjunction with your direct manager or supervisor; although you may be asked to write your draft goals first, before you meet. Then you can discuss your goals and consider their feedback and ideas before finalising your self-development plan for the next 12 months.

Setting SMART goals

Setting goals requires you to prioritise areas of self-development and maintain focus and direction. It also helps you find purpose and motivation and measure progress in your personal development program. When you are developing personal goals, the SMART acronym may be helpful – every goal should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (have a deadline).

The following describes the main attributes of SMART goals.

S	Specific: Target and clearly define a specific area that you want to improve.
M	Measurable: Suggest an indicator of progress; quantify if possible. Determine how you will know the goal has been achieved.
A	Attainable: Agree what the goals should be and keep them achievable in the time frame.



R	Realistic: Identify what results can realistically be achieved given the available resources, knowledge and time.
T	Time framed: Specify when the result can be achieved; make sure there is enough time to achieve the goal, but not too much time.

Video: setting SMART goals

Watch this video with guidance regarding setting goals and achieving them with the SMART method: aspirelr.link/yt-smart-goals-overview



When creating your self-development plan and the goals that you believe will get you advancement in your skills and knowledge ask yourself:

- What skills and knowledge do I need to advance?
- What do I want to learn?
- What goals do I have for my professional development?

Then, using SMART goals, plan:

- What do I need to do to achieve my learning needs and goals?
- How will I measure my success?
- Have I given myself a realistic time frame or do I need to reassess the time frame?

Regularly evaluate your progress and ask yourself:

- How, and how often, am I checking my progress?
- Did I define my goals appropriately?
- Do I need to expand/minimise my expectations regarding my goals?

Specific goals

Take your time when writing goals and ensure they are written in a way that states specifically what is going to be achieved. You may need to write a first draft of your goals then seek some input and advice from your supervisor or others and then discuss with your supervisor what should form the final version of your goals.

As you do this, reflect upon your own practice and consider what you have achieved already against existing performance competencies and role expectations and what you hope to achieve in the future.



Here are some ways you can make sure goals are specific:

- Use precise language.
- Use numerical terms if relevant.
- Avoid general, vague phrases.
- Consider who, what, where and how.
- Ask another person to read the goals.

Measurable goals

A measurable goal is one that allows you to record your progress towards its achievement by documenting what you have done and when the goal has been attained. Writing measurable goals takes some practice.

Your supervisor will be able to support you in writing measurable goals as you work through your first appraisal or review process together. For example, you could have a goal that states, 'I will be able to process documentation for all casual workers' time sheets and shift reports within three days of receiving them'. This is a measurable goal that states precisely what you will be able to do and can be measured simply by the fact that you will either be able to do this or you will not.

This checklist shows you some of the questions you can ask to determine if a goal is measurable.

Questions to determine if a goal is measurable
• What will success look like?
• Can I measure this goal in a numerical way?
• Can I collect data about this goal?
• Does this goal relate to specific outcomes?
• Does this goal include information about who, what, where and how?
• Can this goal be achieved independently?
• Do I need any special support or supervision?
• Have I used clear written expression?

Attainable goals

Your goals should be achievable. It is no use setting goals that are beyond your reach or that you do not have control over, as this will only serve to demotivate you and make you lose confidence in yourself.

Sometimes it is better to break your goals down into small achievable steps so you are not too daunted by bigger long-term goals that seem unattainable.



For example, instead of setting a goal of getting a job promotion within three months, start thinking about the steps that you need to take to obtain a promotion and establish these as goals.

Realistic goals

Unrealistic or unattainable goals may be impractical, show lack of purpose, be easily forgotten about or pushed aside.

If you are dreaming of grand things in your community services career, it is sometimes useful to break these ideas down so you can work towards some smaller, more realistic goals.

You can make goals realistic by thinking carefully about what you include now and what would be better left until you have developed some more skills and increased your knowledge. For example, it is realistic for a new worker in the sector to set a goal of being able to confidently access and work with an interpreter during a face-to-face meeting, whereas it is not realistic for the same worker to master a person's preferred language to speak with them directly.

Timely goals

Goals should be written in a way that describes when they are going to be achieved, so that progress towards or achievement of the goals can be documented. For example, a goal within the area of technical skills may state that the person will learn to lead a group of trainees in performing safe manual-handling tasks when working with people who require physical support at home for personal care tasks. The goal may state that they will achieve this goal by completing a training program and writing a training plan by the end of June.

Time frames to reach your goal give you a benchmark to aim for and allow you to reassess your progress. It is important to set realistic time frames, taking into consideration aspects like work and life demands, the amount of work involved to reach your goals, and financial considerations if you have chosen a course that involves fees. When setting a time frame consider these points:

- Give yourself a reasonable amount of time to accomplish your goal.
- A clear time frame is essential for checking your progress along the way to reaching your goal.
- If you do not reach your goal within the time frame, then it is time to reassess:
 - Was your goal achievable and realistic within the time frame you set?
 - Was your time frame too short? How much more time would you need to achieve your goal?
 - Did you get complacent and not seek to achieve your goal because you didn't prioritise achieving your goal?

There’s nothing wrong with re-setting your goals if you have clarity on why you didn’t meet them.

Example

Personal development plan

Here is an excerpt of a personal development plan where the person has used the SMART model to describe their specific goals.

Goal: To complete a leadership training course		
Goal details – SMART goal	<p>Specific <i>Provide a clear description of what you want to achieve</i></p>	The course run by UTS aligns with the organisation’s objectives to have a ‘pipeline’ of leaders able to step up when required, when staff are on leave or off work with COVID-19.
	<p>Measurable <i>How you will know when your goal is achieved</i></p>	Completing the course and obtaining a certificate of completion
	<p>Attainable and Realistic <i>How you know you can achieve this goal</i></p>	The course fees are being paid for by the organisation. My manager has arranged for other staff to take on my responsibilities so I can begin the online course from 3pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week.
	<p>Time framed <i>How long it will take you to achieve this goal</i></p>	The course runs for six weeks over two nights per week. I will then be writing a report on things I have learned and discussing this with my manager within a week after the course has been completed.



Practice Task 9

Question 1

Match each aspect of a personal development plan to its description.

Measuring progress and performance	Prioritising areas for self-development
Personal goal-setting	A schedule for assessing goals
Setting realistic time frames	A statement indicating how achievement will be measured

Question 2

Briefly outline how the SMART model ensures goals are realistic and targeted.



Summary

- A strong problem-solving approach can be helpful in working out exactly what improvements are needed within your existing skill and knowledge set.
- When evaluating your own performance against specific competencies consider what you currently do well and how you think you may improve in the future.
- Feedback from others as well as your own reflection helps you improve on your professional practice.
- Formal and informal networks located both within your organisation or external to it can help you build your skills and knowledge.
- Seek advice, support and additional specialised training if needed to meet your work and professional obligations.
- Self-care, stress management and meeting your own mental health needs are important when working within the community services sector.
- Review mechanisms are designed to evaluate staff performance and identify training needs. They also give workers an opportunity to consider their career goals and create self-development plans.
- To create an effective personal development plan, you need to establish realistic goals and targets.



Learning Checkpoint 2

Enhance your own practice

Part A

1. List four examples of types of improvements identified from feedback or self-evaluation that will enhance your own practice.

2. List three ways to develop and maintain an industry support network.



- 3.** Outline three features of professional associations and at least one example of the types of professional development opportunities they offer their members.

- 4.** Provide at least two examples of places or people you could get advice and support from when you want to advance and improve your professional practice.



- 5.** When you are writing your self-development plan, you will need to define your goals. Outline why applying the SMART acronym for the development of goals is useful.

- 6.** Briefly outline three ways you can ensure your goals are specific.



7. Suggest three questions that would assist you to understand why you have not met your goal within the set time frame.

Part B

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

Case study

Kim has been having difficulties at work. She hasn't been getting along with the two other staff who work in a small team. She feels the others are ganging up on her and speaking to her inappropriately. She has tried on several occasions to speak to them both to find out why they are treating her this way. On these occasions, both staff have ignored her, then sniggered and whispered behind her back.

1. Which of the following statements are signs that Kim's self-care needs are being neglected? Tick all that apply.
 - Kim cries every morning on her way to work.
 - Kim drinks three coffees per day instead of one.
 - Kim is grumpy with her supervisor.
 - Kim is making unusual mistakes and gets teary easily.
 - Kim books a range of appointments for beauty procedures.



Part C

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

Case study

John is the manager for a youth community centre. The focus of the centre is to provide the youth of the area with activities that will engage them, such as sports clubs, training and links with employment opportunities.

John has noticed that one of his team, Aleksey, has not been himself and has distanced himself from his colleagues and from John.

John invites Aleksey into his office to check in on his wellbeing. Aleksey looks tired and explains he has been feeling very stressed at work because of the complexity of the issues presented by the young people he works with. He explains that he feels overwhelmed by their issues and upset that he doesn't feel confident to help one of his clients who has been sharing his thoughts of suicide.

John asks if he is interested in doing some professional development to build his skills. John gives Aleksey a copy of the organisation's self-development plan. They discuss the purpose of the plan and agree to meet again in two weeks to give Aleksey time to prepare a draft document.

1. Briefly outline how John could explain the purpose of the self-development plan to Aleksey.



2. Why is it important that Aleksey think carefully when setting his goals to ensure they are realistic and achievable?

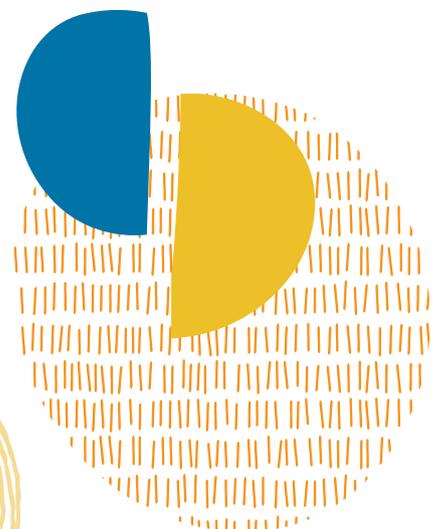
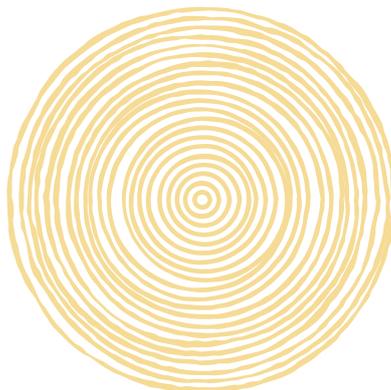
3. Why must John and Aleksey discuss ways to measure his progress towards his goals? Suggest one way to measure Aleksey's goal to upskill by completing a short course in dealing with youth who have suicidal ideation.

4. Provide one example of a formal training activity and an informal activity Aleksey could use to further his skills and knowledge.



Topic 3: Facilitate ongoing professional development

- 3A Review current and emerging industry developments and use to improve practice
- 3B Confirm your own practice against ethical and legal requirements and opportunities
- 3C Engage with opportunities to extend and expand your own expertise
- 3D Participate in review processes as a commitment to upgrading skills and knowledge



3A Review current and emerging industry developments and use to improve practice

As your industry evolves, you need to develop strategies for keeping up to date and finding out new information.

The community services sector is constantly undergoing change and development. Workers need to keep up to date with these developments and evaluate how you can apply them to improve your own practice.

The sector has seen changes to best practice such as a movement to person-centred practice, an extension of home-based support as a move away from residential care, positive ageing, and the development of assistive and communication technologies. Changes have also occurred in staffing practices, with an increased focus on formalising the role of volunteers, setting up mentoring for staff and shared decision-making and planning as a way to build resilience within a team.

Being aware of and understanding changes that are occurring in the industry gives you time to think about what is happening, plan responses and work confidently with others to communicate best practices.

You can find information as it is released through:

- internal and external networks within your own organisation and external to it
- professional development activities
- conferences and training sessions
- professional discussions with colleagues
- news reports
- being an active member of a professional association
- subscriptions to associations and journals
- conducting research and visiting websites that report on the latest developments in community and social services
- visiting government websites to check policy developments
- using social media, blogs and other online forums to learn about new developments and trends in Australia and overseas.

Adapting to new practices

Industry trends that affect your work should always



be of interest, as these are the foundation of your role.

While having general knowledge of the industry is essential, you must also keep up to date with specific information that relates to your current responsibilities. For instance, if you work with crisis housing, you will need to be aware of changes to funding arrangements or government programs that provide funding for new resources, for example.

Trends can also impact on future career opportunities, as required qualifications change, new roles are introduced or existing ones are adapted.

Trends can influence your future needs by affecting:

- the way you work with clients, families, carers and children
- what role/s you play
- your qualifications and responsibilities
- your career aspirations.

Researching trends

It is important to consider how well researched and widely accepted practices are in Australia and internationally. Sometimes changes to practice may seem innovative and creative, but lack in-depth, large-scale peer-reviewed research evidence that they should be adopted without question.

You must always remember that there are many ways to do any one thing. Some are right (safe and appropriate) and some are wrong (not evidence-based, unsafe, outdated, conspiracy-based). Some are right but just different to how you are used to doing things.

The internet provides a range of resources that can help you stay current with new developments in every area of community services. However, you should only use websites that are professionally endorsed or otherwise known to be reputable and accurate to ensure all information is up to date.

Take the time to read widely and bookmark sites that you find particularly useful. An RSS feed (Really Simple Syndication) can alert you to new information on a website that you visit frequently, so you know when there is something new to read.

When using the internet to research topics regarding evidence-based research, it is widely considered inappropriate to use sites like Wikipedia as it is an open forum that can be contributed to/edited by anyone, not necessarily by community services professionals.

You can search a peak body website or other source and enter search terms on the topic you are interested in, such as 'social inclusion' or 'abuse and neglect in teenagers'. You might also use your online networks to discover resources that others

Evidence-based practice is using the best available evidence and critically applying it to the individual client's care in clinical practice.



have found useful or informative.

You can store this information on your computer by creating a database or set up a favourites folder that contains useful internet sites and links to professional sources of information. This will help you to keep up to date and alert you to new trends.

Remember that you must not trust everything you read online. Use your critical reflection skills to access other opinions, and use your networks to find out more about trends, gain opinions and clarify currency. The most reliable sources are government or reputable organisations.

Here are some areas and sites for you to explore:

Government and independent publications

In the aged care sector, for example, the Australian Government provides comprehensive information about the industry. Access this information from the Department of Health. There are also independent online publications that focus on current issues in the sector.

Three examples are:

- Community Care Review – aspirelr.link/community-care-review
- Australian Ageing Agenda – aspirelr.link/australian-ageing-agenda
- Aged Care Insite – aspirelr.link/aged-care-insite

Community services bodies

Each state and territory has a community services industry body that reports on developments in all areas of social services. Websites contain a range of state, territory and national information on community services and social issues for industry workers and the people who use the services.

Here are some examples:

- The national industry association – Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) – aspirelr.link/acoss
- State and territory bodies are similarly named; for example, WACOSS (for Western Australian), and QCOSS (for Queensland).



Example

Research trends

Ada loves researching. She often spends hours at home on the internet, reading and researching the latest trends for ideas to use in her role as a volunteer co-ordinator. She often arrives at work and informs others of something she has read about, telling them that the organisation 'has' to adopt these new practices.

Ada believes everything she reads and thinks that she, and those she works with, should be doing what she has read about. This is causing lots of arguments and confusion among staff, as they were not aware of many trends Ada is telling them about.

Appraising and applying current developments

Innovative and creative developments do not often happen overnight in the community services sector. Most are the result of careful research to determine the benefits and potential risks associated with a change in practice, followed by consideration of how best to implement changes on a practical level.

Within your organisation you may need to work with others to consider and evaluate innovative practices. You could visit other workplaces, join in network meetings or be a part of forums and discussion panels to find out more. You will need to consider how any changes will affect the people who use your services and whether the changes will have a positive, negative, or neutral impact. You need to weigh this up against human, physical, and financial resource limitations and decide whether a change should be implemented.

Identify developments

Your supervisor will update you regarding industry developments, but it is important that you have the skills to research and monitor relevant industry trends yourself. Industry developments may include:

- changes to legislation and regulations
- changes to government policy
- changes to standards, accreditation and ethical practices
- evidence-based research that suggests new approaches to professional practice.



Assess impact	To assess the impact of changes, you should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss issues with colleagues and supervisors• ask your supervisor, or research yourself, if there are any training sessions you could attend• check information on community sector or professional association websites for new developments and how they impact on work practices.
Adapt practice	Never attempt to implement changes without consulting others and fully appraising the value of any new practice. Your supervisor and team members must discuss and decide whether the practice is relevant and how it can be used to benefit people receiving support services.

Example

Appraising industry developments and apply them

Tristan has always encouraged his community service team to keep updated with current, evidenced practice by sending out new policies and procedures reflective of current practice.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about extensive changes in the infection control policies and procedures, use of PPE and testing expectations required for the team. Tristan monitored the changes and requirements for staff over this period that reflected the Department of Health advisory aimed at keeping his team and clients safe. He communicated information to them via email and the organisation's intranet.



Practice Task 10

Question 1

Provide three tips to follow to ensure you access reliable and current information when searching online for new industry developments new.

Question 2

List four things that should be done before a new practice is adopted by a team or organisation.

3 B

Confirm your own practice against ethical and legal requirements and opportunities

Understanding how your own practice aligns with ethical and legal requirements and opportunities is an important part of your responsibilities.

You need to stay up to date on changes to legislation and frameworks that relate to ethical requirements of your work. For example, you need to be aware of changes to your responsibilities under work health and safety, mandatory reporting requirements, funding arrangements under the NDIS, changes to codes of conduct and position statements from peak bodies in your industry sector.

Laws and standards that guide practice

Regulations and standards have been developed to establish quality control over the operation of programs and services.

Some of these are industry-specific, such as duty of care and codes of practice, while others apply to specific organisational requirements such as policies and procedures that guide staff in their work practices.

Being familiar with standards and laws enables you to provide effective, safe, inclusive, honest, and appropriate communication in the workplace. You must understand the requirements relevant to you in your day-to-day practice so you act legally and ethically at all times.

Legislative requirements include those related to:	
• criminal acts	• disability and aged care standards
• discrimination	• equal employment opportunities
• freedom of information	• health records legislation
• work health and safety (WHS)	• privacy legislation
• child protection and guardianship legislation such as mandatory reporting	• human rights
• bullying and harassment	• whistleblowers' legislation



Example

Observe legal parameters

Aaron works in an aged care residential service. One of his jobs involves organising recreational activities and excursions for the residents. He takes this role very seriously, as he likes to see residents enjoying themselves and trying different activities.

One of his primary concerns is to ensure that residents are not put at risk in any way. This means he must plan carefully to ensure he addresses all his duty of care and WHS obligations. Before conducting any new activity or excursion, Aaron carries out a full risk assessment. He also provides guidelines to make sure everyone is fully informed about any possible risks and are prepared for them. For example, when going on a picnic, to avoid sunburn, sunstroke, or heat exhaustion he always makes sure there is easy access to plenty of shelter, fresh water, hats and sunscreen.

Rights and responsibilities

The rights and responsibilities of workers to their employers and the rights and responsibilities of employers to their workers will be documented in service standards and organisational policies and procedures.

The rights of employers and workers are often the same; however, there are also role-specific rights and responsibilities that apply individually to employers and others to workers.

Here are some examples of employer rights and responsibilities and the ethical and legal expectations they have of their staff:

<p>Rights of staff to their employers</p>	<p>Worker responsibilities towards and expectations of organisations they work for can include the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect that their information is kept confidential • expect workers to meet all reasonable and legal requests • expect workers to safely carry out their job functions within the scope of their role and work boundaries • work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment • expect that workers will follow their policies and procedures. This can include organisation codes of practice, codes of ethics and conduct • expect that workers will attend staff meetings and compulsory staff training so they can perform their roles at an acceptable level.
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Responsibilities of employers to their staff	Employer responsibilities towards workers include the responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide a safe and healthy workplace. This includes providing workers with the correct PPE, and access to working and safe equipment• not discriminate against workers and promote freedom from discrimination and harassment• conduct operations and manage staff in accordance with legislation• provide clear and accessible policies and procedures to workers so all staff understand their obligations• provide clear information about employment conditions and regular payment advice to staff• provide access to training and staff meetings to inform workers about new working practices/standards, emerging trends and OHS.
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Confirming your own practice against policies and procedures

Service policies are often based on legislation and are used to guide and determine present and future decisions.

To meet organisational objectives you must respect the rights of other workers and your employer and follow policies and procedures. Employees can be asked to participate in processes that review changes to legal and ethical requirements and this can require **policy** and procedure changes.

Policy

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

These documents outline how an organisation's actions are linked to legal, ethical and professional requirements and standards that govern the operation of an organisation. Policies provide information about how an organisation addresses specific issues related to privacy, complaints management, access and equity, staff development and work health and safety. As an employee, you should be able to demonstrate how you follow your organisation's policies and to clearly explain them to anyone who asks.

Procedure

An established or official way of doing something.

A **procedure** describes the actions that need to be executed as a sequence of activities, tasks, steps and processes, which, when undertaken, produce the desired result or outcome.

Procedures consist of practical and clear step-by-step instructions of how a policy is to be implemented. Organisational procedures may include:

- work health and safety procedures, such as those for manual handling and conducting risk assessments



- privacy procedures – private information must be maintained according to privacy guidelines; for example, after use, files must be secured in a locked filing cabinet or password-protected database
- reporting procedures, including writing case notes and making incident reports
- meeting procedures
- grievance or complaint procedures – all people using a service should be given verbal and written information about the complaints process, and assisted to lodge complaints if required.

The Australian Community Workers Association self-assessment tool for practitioners listed in Topic 1 provides a list of questions that can confirm your own practice to legal and ethical requirements of an organisation.

Ethical requirements that guide practice

Every workplace requires their staff to work ethically and comply with ethical requirements.

An **ethical dilemma** often has no clear-cut solution or obvious course of action. Ethical dilemmas can occur when ideas or actions conflict with what you believe to be ethically correct. Ethical dilemmas often make you consider your own values, so it is possible that co-workers, clients, carers or family members may see the resolution of the situation differently.

In your work, you may often face situations where you must consider the ethical considerations of the decision you are making. Sometimes it is necessary to seek advice and support from others when you are managing an ethical dilemma. Take time to understand the ethical principles involved, treat each situation as unique and seek advice when required.

To ensure all decisions made are ethical you can:

- be clear in your mind on the ethical guidelines and obligations of your role and profession
- be familiar with and guided by all relevant legislation and standards, and ethical codes of practice which define how the legislation is applied
- use ethical decision-making strategies
- demonstrate a commitment to uphold a moral standard reflecting ethical professional behaviour
- discuss ethical issues with experienced colleagues and co-workers
- ask for advice from a person who has specialist knowledge in the area
- seek advice from your workplace or professional supervisor.

Ethical dilemma

A situation in which the decision maker stands under two conflicting moral obligations.



One example of the steps involved in the process of ethical decision-making is listed below.

The decision-making process	
1	Reflect on and assess the situation to determine the circumstances and facts.
2	Refer to a code of ethics, establish the ethical principles relevant to the situation and consider the potential harm the situation may cause if not resolved.
3	Examine options for responding to the situation.
4	Consult with others who can provide guidance or specialist advice.
5	Choose a course of action based on the information you have gathered and advice you have received.
6	Make sure you can justify your decision based on standards of practice or ethical principles.

Example

Ethical requirements

A community services worker has the primary duty of care to safeguard the rights of clients, but the level of risk people are prepared to take can potentially cause conflict.

A family member of a young man you work with is protective of their son and reluctant about the son attending activities in the community where he may be at risk of hurting himself. While you understand the need for safety, you feel you should support the young man because he wants to attend a music concert. You know that dignity of risk involves supporting a person's right to dignity and choice, and to ensure that duty of care or safety is not used as a reason to limit a person's freedom of personal choice.

The young man is old enough to make his own decisions, so the decision to attend does not rely on the permission of the family. You try to reassure the family about the steps you have taken to assess the risk and determine that it is a low risk activity. At the same time you have been encouraging and supporting the young man by making arrangements for him to attend the concert.



Practice Task 11

Question 1

Suggest three legal requirements that underpin the work in community services.

Question 2

Identify three rights and responsibilities that underpin the work of a community services worker to their employer.

Question 3

Explain three things you can do when considering the solution to an ethical problem.

3C

Engage with opportunities to extend and expand your own expertise

Opportunities to build expertise and skills is a part of lifelong learning and is part of your continuing development in community services.

Community services organisations must provide training and professional development opportunities to staff. Professional development should be targeted and deliberate to fit within the requirements of the organisation's vision, mission, and values. Professional development can be costly, so most organisations require that it is only used to help workers achieve goals that are clearly identified, planned, and documented, such as in a self-development plan.

Some professional opportunities may come from your own organisation and others may be activities that you seek out independently. It is useful to always be on the lookout for new experiences that can help you learn more, either through formal learning or in a less formal situation.

To get the most out of further learning opportunities, reflect upon how you learn best. Most people can plan approaches that will help them take in new information and learn to apply it to their work practices. Knowing how you prefer to learn and understanding how to access extra support when it is needed are important skills to master in lifelong learning.

Sometimes, if you have not studied for a while or you are not used to formal learning situations, it can feel quite daunting to have to try and remember, plan, write clearly and discuss your ideas with others.

Learning styles

People have different learning styles that influence the way they process and make sense of information and communication.

If you wish to gain the most from shared feedback, it is important to understand these learning styles.

The three main learning styles you will encounter are presented in the following table.



Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who prefers a visual learning style learns more effectively with pictures, images, reading, demonstrations, seeing and looking. • A visual person likes to take notes rather than get involved in discussion, and will sit at the front so they can see easily. • Types of feedback most suited to visual learners includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - face-to-face - online - demonstrations - video.
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who prefers an auditory learning style learns more effectively by listening to verbal instructions and through discussions, role-play and talking out problems. • An auditory person may also like to use recorded material and read out loud. • Types of feedback most suited to auditory learners includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - face-to-face - webinars - podcasts - learning circles.
Kinaesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who prefers a kinaesthetic learning style learns more effectively by hands-on experiences, touch, gestures and observing actions. • A kinaesthetic person may need regular breaks. • Types of feedback most suited to kinaesthetic learners includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrations - simulated experiences - face-to-face - video.

However you decide to advance your professional development, you need to understand your own learning styles so that you take the most benefit from, and hopefully enjoy, your learning experiences.

A common theory of learning styles is the VARK model which explains that people are either visual learners, auditory, kinaesthetic, reading/writing or a combination of these. In questions, the questionnaire will offer what style you are and strategies on how to optimise your learning.

You can take a quick questionnaire by going to the website: aspirelr.link/vark-questionnaire.

Video: Different learning styles

In this video, the presenter takes you through different learning styles and then asks you to respond to a range of questions to help you identify your learning style: aspirelr.link/yt-different-learning-styles

**Widening your experiences**

Widening your experiences in community services helps to build skills and expertise.

Where possible, try to spend time observing or working with others who may be able to provide you with a different insight or approach that you can apply to your own work. For example, you may choose to spend an afternoon visiting a service that supports people who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This could help you understand strategies and approaches used to meet specific outcomes with this group of people. You could then analyse and interpret what you have observed and apply it to your own practices.

Some organisations actively encourage workers to collaborate across workplaces to learn about each others' jobs. They can find out about how to perform effectively in different environments with people who have different support needs. Widening experience in this way helps create a wider set of skills across the organisation, assists in covering staff absences or job changes and promotes a deeper understanding of roles within the organisation.

Example**Return to study**

It has been many years since Jason has set foot in a classroom, and he is nervous. School was not a happy time for him, and he is worried that studying to upgrade his qualifications will be similar. Fortunately, before he begins classes he meets Jing, a learning skills adviser. Jing talks to Jason about his previous difficulties with studying and finds out that Jason has dyslexia, which makes it harder for him to read, write and spell, particularly when he is under pressure or feeling rushed.

Jing organises a meeting with Jason's class teacher and Jason, and together they plan what can be done to help Jason's learning experience be a positive one. Jason begins using some new assistive technology tools to help with note-taking and writing, he is given extra time to sit tests and he is encouraged to complete his assessment tasks verbally rather than in writing. These strategies all help Jason complete his course and gain new and valuable skills that he can apply in his job.



Practice Task 12

Question 1

Match each learning style to its description.

Kinaesthetic learning style	Learn by watching a demonstration of how to place a bandage on a broken arm.
Reading/writing style	Learn by listening to a set of instructions for how to place a bandage on a broken arm.
Visual learning style	Learn by copying down the instructions for how to place a bandage on a broken arm.
Auditory learning style	Learn by practising how to place a bandage on a broken arm.

Question 2

Suggest three different ways you could extend or expand your expertise from people who work in community services, and outline the benefits that can arise from these experiences.

3 D

Participate in review processes as a commitment to upgrading skills and knowledge

Review mechanisms help to evaluate staff performance and identify training needs.

Review processes create opportunities for workers to think about career goals and create or update their self-development plans. Review mechanisms occur on a regular cycle, such as once or twice per year, and participation in the process is typically a requirement of your job. During a review you can identify areas where you would like to upgrade your skills and knowledge and work towards future career goals.

The review process involves checking on the progress of set goals in the self-development plan, setting new goals, comparing performance against indicators and identifying opportunities for skills development. Reviews are based on the principle of shared responsibility for career development. The person conducting the appraisal, usually your supervisor, gives feedback on your performance. This feedback should not only focus on areas for improvement, but also on what you do well.

During the performance appraisal you may discuss the following points with your supervisor:

- your job role and organisation requirements
- your performance in relation to the key criteria in your position description
- areas that need improvement and professional development
- training and professional development activities and opportunities
- your career goals and pathways.

At the end of the review, both you and your supervisor should have a clear understanding of what you will be doing over the next 6 to 12 months and how you will be working to develop your skills and knowledge.

Measuring performance

When an appraisal is carried out in a structured and supportive manner, it should be a positive and constructive experience. Make sure you are well prepared and willing to accept the feedback you are given. It will also help your supervisor if you have already identified your strengths, weaknesses, and professional goals.



When preparing for a review of your performance read over your position description and assess your strengths and weaknesses against the key responsibilities to look for areas that you believe you excel in and those that you need to improve. By doing this you can create goals for improvement and potential learning activities.

One of the key elements of performance appraisal is evaluating your performance against industry standards and organisation criteria such as your position description. Key criteria usually include specific job-related tasks in your work role as well as more general skills such as the ability to work as part of a team and high-level written and verbal communication skills.

You should be able to accurately assess your own performance against these key criteria and accept feedback. When preparing for a performance appraisal, consider how you perform on each criterion and think of specific examples that demonstrate how you meet each criterion in your work.

Here is an example of an extract from a position description from Able Australia for a Disability and Community Support Worker: aspirelr.link/able-aus-com-sup-work-pos-desc.

The key responsibilities, capability requirements and key performance measures outline the measurable aspects of the person’s performance. They have identified three key responsibilities:

Key responsibilities	Capability requirements	Key performance measures
Duty of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate commitment to high quality service for people with disabilities • Support the rights, interests and needs of people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of personal outcome measures achieved for the people we support • Number of incident reports relating to breaches of duty of care
Continuous professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory training • Professional development • Planned development activities • Supervision and performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes within defined time scales • Identifies appropriate opportunities • Attends and participates as required • Actively participates in development
Organisation citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive working relationships • Shared goals and targets • Represents Able Australia • Codes of conduct and dress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and maintains with colleagues and clients • Works collaboratively in a positive and professional manner • Adheres to organisational policies and procedures

Evaluating your self-development plan

The review process can take many forms, but it is important that you reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of your plan.

Your self-development plan should contain an action plan of how you will work to develop skills, knowledge and personal attributes. The plan can also consider the personal qualities that would help you carry out your work more effectively. For example, if your lack of assertiveness is a problem when dealing with co-workers and people in your service, you may decide to undertake assertiveness training to develop your skills in this area.

A review can involve a discussion with your supervisor about your goals and how you have achieved past goals. For example, if one of your goals last year was to become more comfortable using negotiation and conflict resolution strategies, you can outline how you have achieved this. Your explanation may include training and other personal development strategies you have undertaken, and examples of how you have applied professional development to your work and how your confidence and skills have improved in this area.

Here are some questions you can ask as part of the review of your self-development needs. Use the information gained from your answers to update or modify your plan.

- Did you achieve your personal development plan goal? Why or why not?
- Did you meet the time frames you set?
- Have people supported you to implement your plan, and how effective was this?
- Have you compiled a list of the training, networking, associations or learning you have accessed for support and information during the implementation of your plan, and how effective was this?

Being willing and prepared to participate in review mechanisms shows your commitment to improving your skills and knowledge. To carry out your role effectively and make the most of a review mechanism, it is important that you can demonstrate competence in the areas below.

Committing to upgrading skills and knowledge

Careers grow and change, and new opportunities arise.

Show a commitment to upgrading your skills and knowledge to develop your future career direction. For many people, the job where they begin their career is unlikely to be the one in which they finish. If you make sure your skills and knowledge remain up to date, you are in a better position to take advantage of changes when they occur.

Here are some ways you can demonstrate your commitment to upgrading skills and knowledge.



Initiative	Show initiative in finding out about training activities or undertaking professional reading or learning tasks. Ask questions of others and try to remember what you learn.
Enthusiasm	Having an enthusiastic approach to learning and skills development indicates that you are someone who is committed to improving and building their career.
Attitude	Look for chances to say 'I can' or 'I will try' rather than responding negatively to problems or issues at work. A positive attitude to learning is a useful attribute.
Positive association	Associate with others who have a positive attitude to learning. Look for people who you think are going places in your organisation and associate with them.
Opportunities	Opportunities do not just happen – you make them happen. Find out what opportunities exist to build your skills and show you are a person who wants to achieve and learn.

Example

Participating to increase skills and knowledge

Max is looking forward to meeting with his manager to reflect on his first year of work. He loves his job and is excited to share some of his successes and talk about what challenges may come up next. He has already completed a review document to give examples of how he believes he has performed against the performance indicators of his role and against the values statement of the organisation.

When he meets with his manager and they compare their evaluations, Max is pleased to discover that his manager has given him a very similar evaluation for most areas of competency. Together they discuss what Max has achieved and talk about some professional development opportunities that may be useful. His manager suggests that he may like to consider doing some business writing training to help develop his ability to write reports. This is one area where they both agree that Max needs some more skills.

His manager compliments Max on his realistic approach to his review and the development of his new goals for the upcoming six months. She says that with his commitment to increasing his skills and knowledge she is sure he has a long and positive career ahead of him.



Practice Task 13

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

Case study

Silvanna has worked in her current role for several years and she is keen to move into a more senior position in her own organisation or in a new workplace. Silvanna is a hard-working team member and frequently encourages others and shares her ideas and information with new team members. Her manager, Reba, encourages her to think about her goals when she prepares for her next performance review, as she believes Silvanna could be an asset to the management team in the future. She wants to encourage her to achieve and continue to extend her skills within the organisation.

Question 1

Briefly outline three benefits to Silvanna of participating in a review process with her supervisor Reba.

**Question 2**

How is measuring Silvana's performance an important part of the review process?

Question 3

Which of the following statements indicates Silvana's commitment to upgrading her skills and knowledge? Tick all that apply.

- Keep asking to attend a conference until your supervisor agrees.
- Show enthusiasm about sharing and discussing new ideas.
- Let others be the first to offer to solve a workplace issue and then offer advice.
- Associate with people who have a positive approach to work and are keen to collaborate.
- Be known as the person who wants to achieve and learn.



Summary

- Community services work is an industry that is rapidly expanding and evolving. Workers need to keep up to date with developments in the industry and develop the skills and knowledge to apply to work.
- Most innovations are the result of careful research to determine the benefits and potential risks associated with a change in practice and then consideration as to how to implement them on a practical level.
- An appraisal is carried out in a structured and supportive manner. It should be a positive and constructive experience.
- Prepare for a review of your performance by reading over your position description and assess your strengths and weaknesses.
- One of the key elements of performance appraisal is evaluating your performance against industry standards and organisation criteria such as your position description.
- Take time to understand the ethical principles involved in every situation, treat each situation as unique and seek advice when required.
- It is useful to think carefully about how you learn best and what sort of learning activities or approach suits your own needs and the needs of your organisation.
- Being willing and prepared to participate in review mechanisms shows your commitment to improving your skills and knowledge.



Learning Checkpoint 3

Facilitate ongoing professional development

Part A

1. Identify three benefits for spending time observing or working with others as a way to extend and expand your own expertise.

2. Briefly outline how a review process becomes a commitment to upgrading skills and knowledge.



3. Briefly outline how different learning styles affect how different individuals process and make sense of information.

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Felicity works with young people as a support worker for NDIS. She is aware that many things have changed since the pandemic of a respiratory infection has emerged as a major health concern. Aroha, Felicity's supervisor, wants to update the policies and procedures regarding Workplace Health and Safety (WHS). Aroha asks Felicity if she could do some research regarding the current recommended best practice related to infection control so that the organisation can update their policies and procedures.



- 1. List three ways that Felicity can access the latest developments regarding infection control.**

- 2. Through Felicity's research she has discovered that there have been changes that the organisation will need to add to the policies and procedures for staff.**

Suggest two things that will occur in her organisation before the policy and procedures are updated/changed.



- 3.** Felicity and the team must confirm that any new practice meets the legal and ethical requirements of the organisation and community service industry.

Provide three examples of legal requirements that they should access and check before agreeing on a change.

- 4.** Provide two examples of the rights and responsibilities of workers and the rights and responsibilities of the organisation that should be considered as part of the review process.



Glossary

Active listening

Concentrated listening and non-verbal encouragement indicating an understanding of what is being said.

Belief

An idea that is accepted as true by somebody.

Code of practice

A document providing practical guidance on how to comply with duties in a workplace.

Competency

The consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

Confidentiality

The principle of keeping personal information private, unless the person consents to sharing the information with other parties.

Duty of care

A moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other persons.

Ethical

Relating to moral principles.

Ethical dilemma

A situation in which the decision maker stands under two conflicting moral obligations.

Mentoring

The sharing of knowledge and skills by an experienced person with a less-experienced person.

Performance review

A periodic assessment of an employee's overall performance and their contribution to the organisation.

Person-centred approach

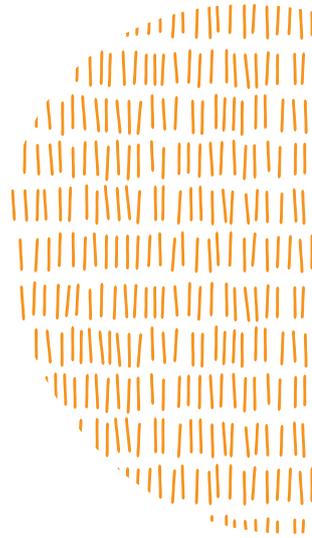
Providing tailored support for each person and taking time to learn about their individual preferences, needs and goals.

Policy

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

Procedure

An established or official way of doing something.





Professional boundaries

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

Self-awareness

Knowledge about your own character, behaviours and feelings.

Self-care

Positive ways to cope with and reduce the effects of stress.

Self-reflection

The ability to observe and evaluate one's own thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Stressor

An event or situation that causes the person to exhibit a particular behaviour.

Value

The degree of importance of an idea or principle to a person.