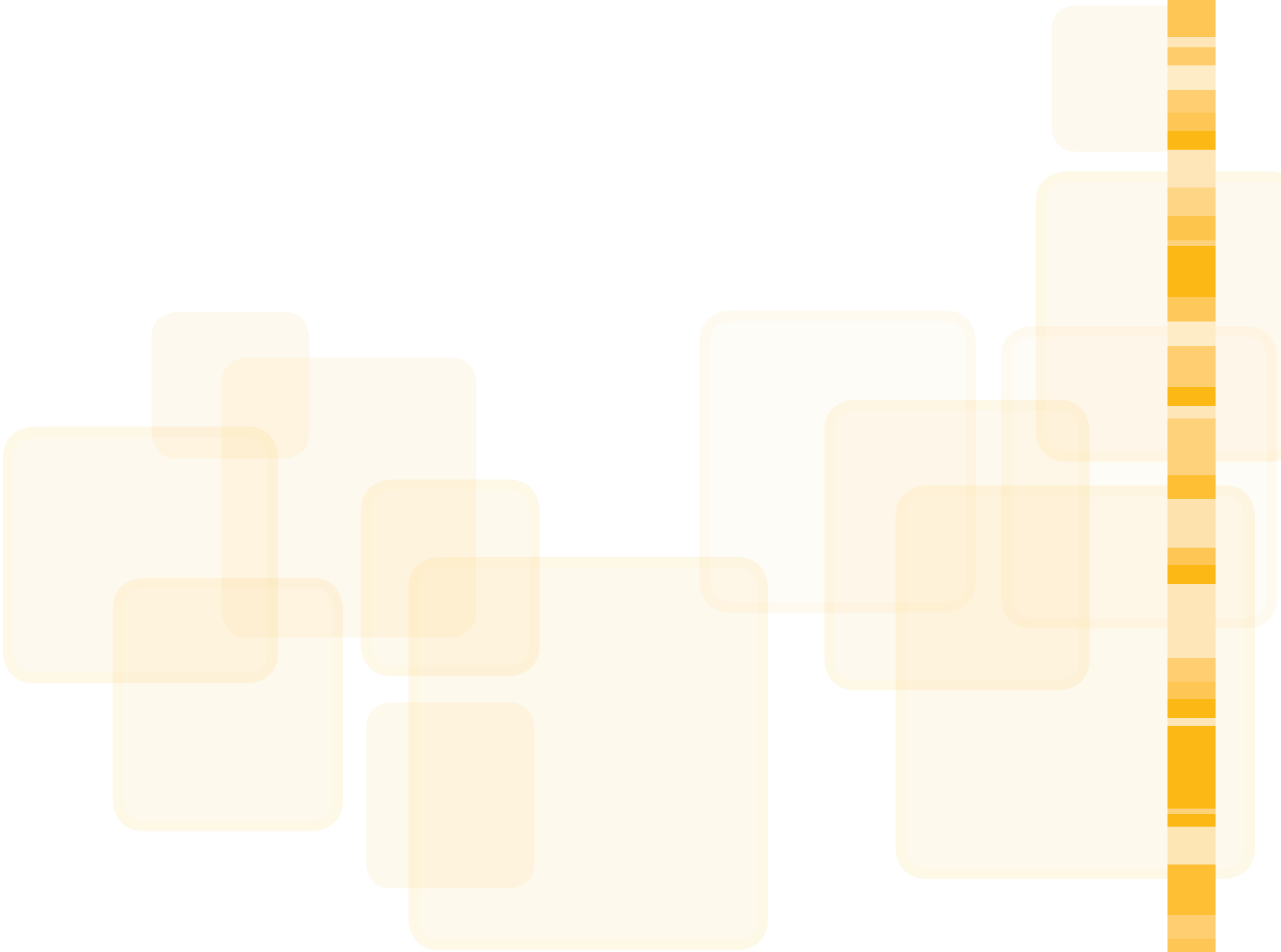


► **Implementation guide**

The Work Talk series



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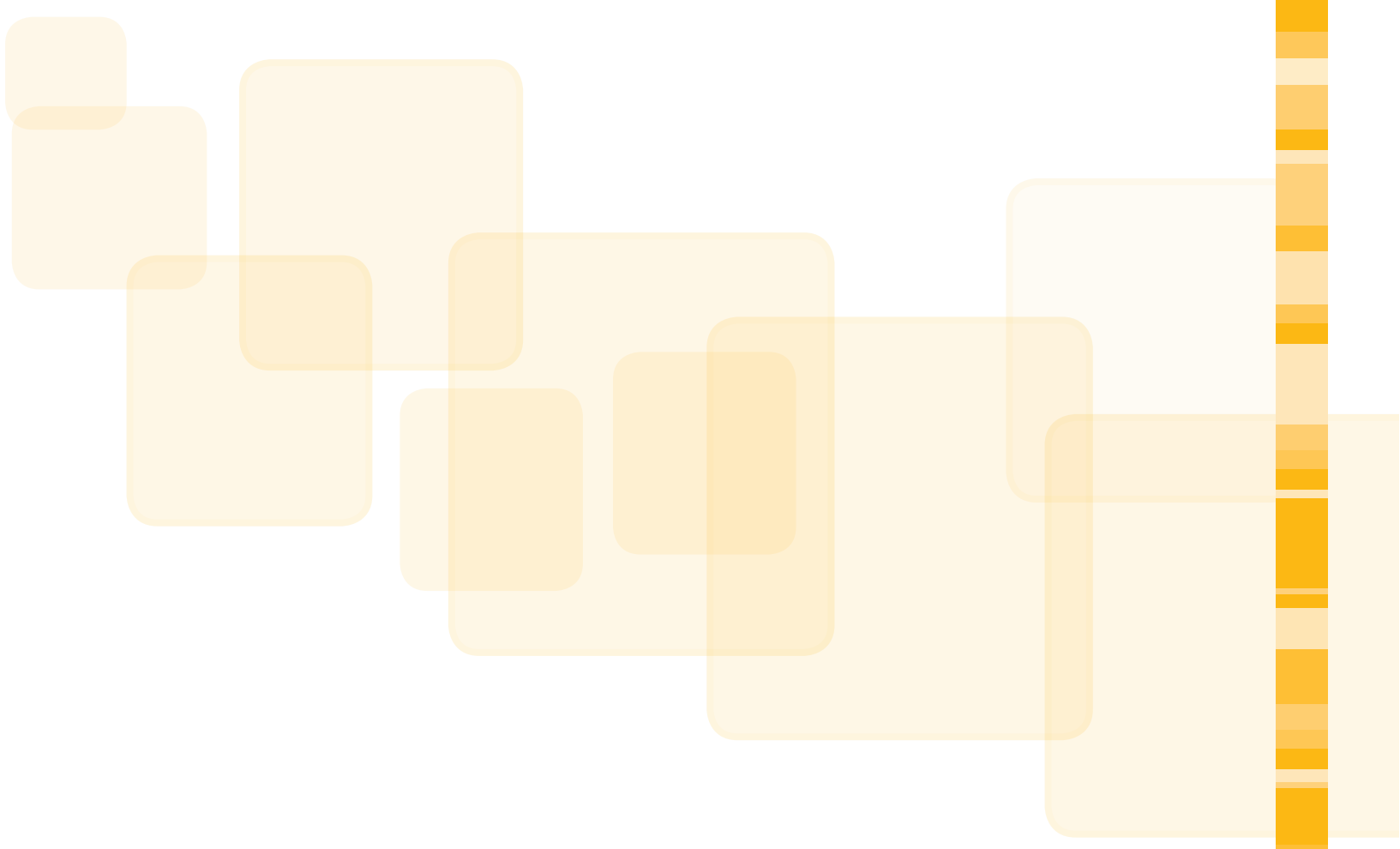
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Introduction





Each of the Work Talk resources has been specifically designed for staff of Disability Business Services to help them communicate effectively with people with disability. The resources bring together information about, and strategies for, good workplace communication between supported employees and support staff.

The Work Talk series comprises three manuals and three fact sheets.

The manuals

- ▶ Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with intellectual disability
- ▶ Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with acquired brain injury
- ▶ Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with psychiatric disability

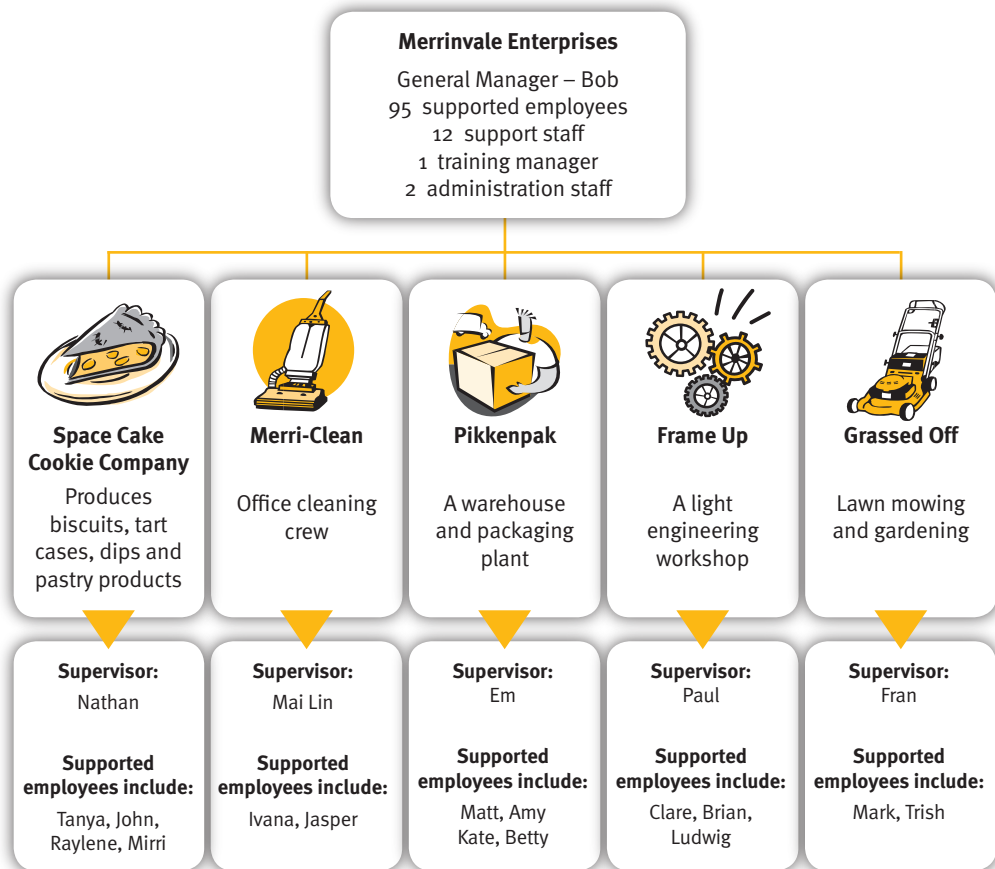
The fact sheets

- ▶ Communicating effectively with people who are blind or have vision impairment
- ▶ Communicating effectively with people who are deaf or have hearing impairment
- ▶ Communicating effectively with people with cerebral palsy

Aim and structure of the Work Talk series

The aim of the Work Talk series is to bring together information about and strategies for effective workplace communication in Disability Business Services. It focuses on the communication between supported employees and staff who work with them.

Scenarios and case studies illustrating communication situations that support staff may encounter in their work with people with disability, feature in the Work Talk series. These are set within a fictional business service, Merrinvale Enterprises.



Supporting effective communication – the role of support staff

Everyone communicates. Communication is the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, using speech, signals, writing, or behaviour. With very few exceptions, all people desire communication because it:

- ▶ allows their needs to be met
- ▶ fulfills an innate desire for social interaction
- ▶ forms a way for people to express themselves.

Communicating effectively with people with disability can present challenges for supervisors and support staff. One of your key tasks as a support worker in a Disability Business Service will be to assess the communication requirements of each supported employee. It is important that you understand what communication is, and what communication responsibilities you have to the people you support. There are a great many ways in which you can facilitate more effective communication in your workplace.

As a support worker, your most important responsibility will be to ensure that the people you work with have the information and skills they need to work to their utmost potential. Effective communication is the key to this, and you play a pivotal role in assisting supported employees to learn:

- ▶ what is required of them to do their work properly
- ▶ essential safety skills
- ▶ how they will know whether or not they are doing their job properly
- ▶ what is expected of them to work effectively as part of a team or work environment
- ▶ what to do if things go wrong or change
- ▶ how to make their needs known.

The Work Talk series is a unique resource in that it is specifically designed to help support staff improve their skills in this way.

Implementing the Work Talk series

Work Talk is not designed to gather dust on an office shelf until a staff training session occurs. It is best **used** by individual staff as a fundamental resource to their daily work. Bearing in mind that communication underpins all human interaction, a workplace resource focusing on communication has the potential to be a strong foundation for your day-to-day work activities especially if you are new to the job.

It is advisable that you have your own copy of the Work Talk resources, as well as a folder in which to store them and other relevant materials. In addition to printed copies of the resources, your workplace will have received electronic versions of them on CD. This makes it possible to print multiple copies of the resources so that each staff member has their own copy.

Using the fact sheets

The fact sheets contain information about communicating effectively with people who are blind or have vision impairment, are deaf or having hearing impairment, or have cerebral palsy. The information contained is designed to provide foundation knowledge about features, causes and effects of the particular conditions of each disability category. Strategies for improving communication between staff and supported employees are also included.

Using the manuals

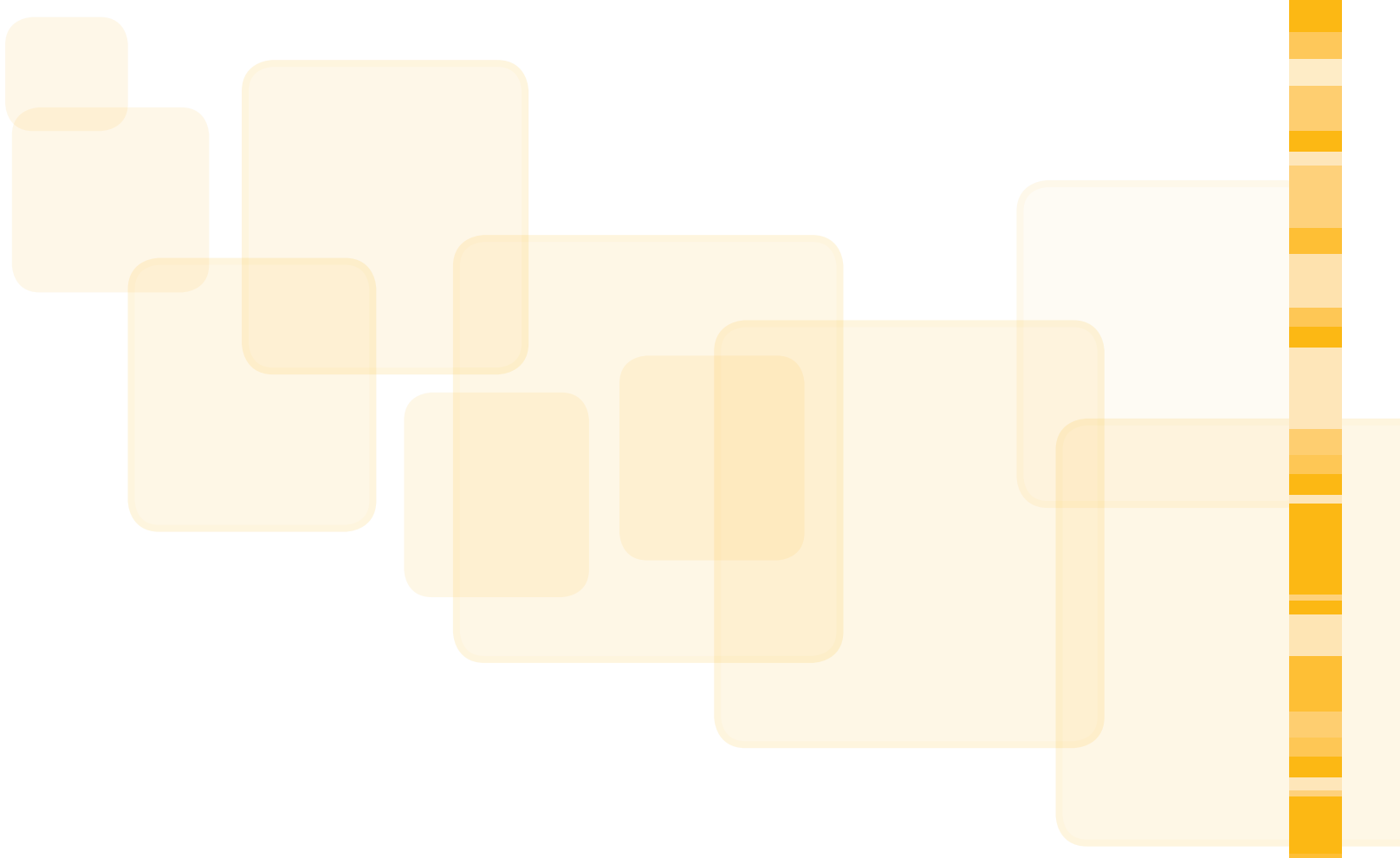
The guide will help you to make practical use of the Work Talk manuals. You will learn about the communication needs of the people you support and the best strategies to use when you are communicating with them.

The remainder of this guide is in three sections, focusing on the Work Talk manuals but making reference to the fact sheets where appropriate:

1. Using the Work Talk manuals as independent learning resources
2. Using the Work Talk manuals as a basis for group training sessions
3. Disability Business Service additions



Using the Work Talk manuals as independent learning resources



Your role as a learner

It is hard to imagine a job where it is unnecessary to continue learning. For someone in the role of supporting workers with disability, this is particularly true. Every day you will be learning something new, something that changes the way you see and do things. As a support worker, it automatically follows that you are a learner.

We are all motivated to learn because we are naturally curious and want to know more about things. We also have a desire to do better and improve ourselves. To do this, we must continue learning. Specifically, the Work Talk resources aim to improve your communication skills with people with disability.

Here is an activity to illustrate this point.

ACTIVITY: Learning goals

The following activity will help you to think about your current communication skill level, your goal for future improvement, and a strategy to make it happen.



Learning plan: Building skills for improved communication

Overall, what are my learning goals in terms of improving my communication skills with people with disability for the next two to five years?

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What are some specific things I will need to do to get there?

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How exactly will I go about doing this?

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Most of us receive some formal training to do our jobs. ‘Self-paced’ and ‘independent’ learning are highly effective ways for workers to advance their knowledge and skills in their job. These approaches to workplace learning are controlled by the worker. They can include reading (books, policy documents, resources like this one, articles), watching DVDs or using computer-based learning packages. The advantages of these approaches are that:

- ▶ the timeframes are highly flexible
- ▶ there is low pressure on the learner to ‘keep up’
- ▶ the organisation usually owns the learning resources.

The Work Talk manuals are very well suited to independent learning.

Getting started

Read through the manuals carefully. There is no correct sequence to follow. We suggest you begin with the resources that have the most relevance for your situation. For example, you might start with ‘Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with intellectual disability’ because a high number of supported employees in your workplace have intellectual disability. Alternatively, you may have three or four supported employees who have psychiatric disability and pose particular communication issues, prompting you to start with ‘Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with psychiatric disability’. It is up to you or your supervisor/manager to decide the starting point for your learning.

Each Work Talk manual follows the following format.

- ▶ There is a general **introduction** covering the aim and structure of the manual. It also provides details about how to use the manual, and describes its relationship to the Disability Services Standards.
- ▶ The next section is a specific **implementation** guide for the manual, designed to assist delivery or coordination of staff training to use those Work Talk resources most effectively, either in group training sessions or as an aid to individual, self-paced learning by individual staff members.

It discusses the purpose and focus of the Work Talk manual, and includes hints for running facilitated sessions and using the manual effectively. The role of the trainer is also outlined.

- ▶ The third section provides an introduction to the specific disability covered by the particular manual, for example intellectual disability or acquired brain injury. This section is important reading because it contains theoretical or background information that aims to build your knowledge and assist your understanding of the range of conditions, impacts and effects that can result from a particular form of disability, and the ways in which these can affect communication and learning in the workplace.

- ▶ The fourth and major section of the manual is called the **workbook** and comprises the **communication and learning** topics. These topic titles are the same in each workbook and all focus on areas of communication that are vital in the workplace. All the topic titles are action statements, for example ‘Talking about the job’ and ‘Talking about teams and workmates’. Each learning topic is based around communication situations you are likely to encounter in your workplace.

Each of the learning topics comprises four parts.

- ▶ The first part provides some background information about effective workplace communication regarding the particular form of disability experienced by the individual.
- ▶ The second part provides a case study or example. All the case studies and examples are set in the fictional Disability Business Service called Merrinvale Enterprises (described in the general introduction to each workbook).
- ▶ The third part provides strategies for achieving effective communication and learning in the situation described.
- ▶ Lastly, there is a page for you to add your own thoughts or ideas.

Using the information section

The information section of each Work Talk manual aims to provide a broad overview of the most pertinent factors associated with the particular form of disability around which the manual is based. It aims to give you a core understanding of the most common conditions, causes and effects associated with that form of disability, and the impacts these might have on the individual experiencing them. In particular, common communication issues resulting from that disability are described.

The information sections are designed to provide theoretical or background knowledge. They are based on the most up-to-date information available from research, medical and scientific knowledge, made accessible in lay terms. It is always useful to have theoretical knowledge as it can underpin practical experience and decisions.

You may have studied or read this information already, however if not, it may seem quite ‘dense’, and reading through it may be quite heavy work. However, persevere and try to read through the information sections at least twice. Take it slowly and, above all, think about it as you go. It will be helpful if you talk about it with your colleagues and try to relate things you read in each information section to actual situations you have encountered in your experience.

It is important to remain ‘open-minded’ about what may be new and challenging information to you. You may find some of it differs from previous knowledge and ‘facts’.



ACTIVITY: Nathan, Em and Drew

Nathan and Em have worked as support staff at Merrinvale Enterprises for nearly 15 years.

Both have had a lot to do with Robyn, a new supported employee in the Pikkenpak warehouse and packaging plant. Robyn has intellectual disability and her verbal communication is limited to just a few single words.

Very recently Drew, a workplace trainer, has joined their team and has had 20 supported employees undertaking an accredited training course, Certificate 1 in Work Skills. Robyn was one of the supported employees chosen by Drew to participate.

At first, Nathan and Em were quite resistant to the idea of Robyn undertaking the course. They believed it was ‘setting her up to fail’, and expressed their concerns to Drew. ‘Robyn can’t learn. She can only do the simplest jobs. Even at home, her parents have to do everything for her. She will never be able to do the things you’ve got on this course – like measurement. She doesn’t know what numbers are.’

Drew persisted. He assessed Robyn’s ability to process information and found she understood a great deal of what was said to her, even though she could not give a verbal answer. He devised strategies for improving her communication abilities (a communication book, signs and so on), and tested her numeracy abilities.

Robyn successfully completed all units of the course. Nathan and Em were amazed and delighted to find what Robyn could do. ‘If we’d known she could learn to count and measure, we could have had her doing so many more things.’

Think about your job. Has there ever been a ‘Nathan and Em’ experience for you?

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ACTIVITY: What do you already know?

As you read through the information section of each workbook, ask yourself these questions.



Work Talk: Effective workplace communication for employees with intellectual disability

How much of this do I know already?

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What is new learning for me?

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Has anything I have read changed my thinking?

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In what way?

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What part or parts of this were difficult to understand?

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What other information could I learn more from?

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What else do I want to know now?

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Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with psychiatric disability

How much of this do I know already?

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What is new learning for me?

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Has anything I have read changed my thinking?

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In what way?

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What part or parts of this were difficult to understand?

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What other information could I learn more from?

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What else do I want to know now?

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Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with acquired brain injury

How much of this do I know already?

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What is new learning for me?

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Has anything I have read changed my thinking?

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In what way?

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What part or parts of this were difficult to understand?

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What other information could I learn more from?

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What else do I want to know now?

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ACTIVITY: Thinking about ...

Think about supported employees you know who experience the different forms of disability covered in the Work Talk manuals and fact sheets.



Based on your knowledge and observations of each person, think about the following and complete the table.

	Possible effects of this disability on learning	Possible effects of this disability on communication	Similarities described in the information section of Work Talk and/or on fact sheets
Employee with intellectual disability			
Employee with acquired brain injury			
Employee with psychiatric disability			
Employee with cerebral palsy			

	Possible effects of this disability on learning	Possible effects of this disability on communication	Similarities described in the information section of Work Talk and/or on fact sheets
Employee who is blind or has vision impairment			
Employee who is deaf or has hearing impairment			

Do you want to learn even more?

The material in the information sections of the Work Talk manuals is brief and general in its content.

You may be interested in learning more and want to know where to get more information. There are some excellent sources of information available online and we strongly encourage you to continue your interest and grow your knowledge by accessing some of this if you choose to do so.

References/resources for support staff

A sample of the large number of communication resources and references available is listed hereunder.

- The Queensland Government’s Disability Services website (www.disability.qld.gov.au/community/communication) has some useful readings, resources and links regarding effective communication with people with disability. You can download a copy of the 25-page booklet, *A way with words: Guidelines for the portrayal of people with a disability*. It takes a very new look at the use of language about disability and well worth reading. The illustrations and comments are superb, and it is a useful tool to reassess your own attitudes and current values.

- One of the best sources for information about communicating with people who have more complex communication needs can be found at the Scope Victoria website (www.scopevic.org.au). It is a good place to pick up ideas and start thinking about some of the real-life issues you face in your work. You can review and order resources from Scope Victoria's Communication Resource Centre (CRC) (www.scopevic.org.au/therapy_crc). Take a few moments to browse the *Triple C - Checklist of communication competencies* and browse to CARM (communication aids and resource materials) that has some excellent ideas for tools and aids.
- Headway organisations provide advocacy and support for people with an acquired brain injury. The UK Headway (www.headway.org.uk) lists communication resources and has an online shop where you can buy resources that may be useful to your Disability Business Service. Similarly, Headway organisations in Australia can be a valuable source of information about how to improve communication with employees with acquired brain injury (www.headwayvictoria.org.au).

Using the communication and learning topics

Each Work Talk manual has 10 communication and learning topics that constitute the 'workbook'.

- Talking about talking and listening
- Talking about learning
- Talking about the job
- Talking about tools
- Talking about safety
- Talking about quality and quantity
- Talking about teams and workmates
- Talking about problems
- Talking about changes
- Talking about futures

The topics deal with vital areas of workplace function about which both support staff and supported employees must communicate on a daily basis.

Note: It should be noted that the fact sheets do not have communication and learning topics. However, it is very likely that you will find the information and strategies contained in the communication and learning topics of the workbooks useful when you are working with people with sensory and physical disabilities. The strategies are all about ways to improve workplace communication and many of the factors affecting communication in someone with, for example, an intellectual disability may be similar to someone who has a hearing impairment, or is blind. To further illustrate this, if you give an instruction to an employee with intellectual disability, you are more likely to

get your message across if you speak clearly and use short, direct sentences. The same strategy will most likely also work with someone who has a hearing impairment, or is blind. It is up to you to think about the strategies described in each communication and learning topic of the workbooks, and consider how some might work with the individuals you deal with.

The communication and learning topics reinforce the fact that communication is an interactive process. Communication is the means by which people can set and achieve a common goal. To enable this to happen, support staff in a Disability Business Service need to be sure that they have adequate systems for communication that suit their particular workplace, as well as the personal skills to communicate effectively with supported employees.

Communicating is a great deal more than just talking. The ‘Talking about talking and listening’ topic provides a summary of the elements that must be present in any interaction between people before we can say that **communication** has taken place.

The case studies documented in the communication and learning topics make it clear that some supported employees of Disability Business Services cannot communicate in an interactive sense. Some supported employees do not have the intellectual or physical abilities to relate objects and actions in the real world to a set of symbols, like spoken or written words. However, this does not mean that they do not communicate and that staff do not have a responsibility to communicate with them.

Some case studies in the communication and learning topics also demonstrate that supported employees can be verbally fluent but still have difficulty processing what others say to them. You may think they understand you and can follow your instructions but their disability may make it very hard for them to do this.

The communication and learning topics in Work Talk encourage you to see communication as a separate set of work skills that supported employees need to learn and practise. If you analyse communication skills into distinct subsets, for example like ‘paying attention’ and ‘asking questions’, support staff can develop individual plans focusing on supported employees developing these skill areas. You can work ‘communication activities’ into the daily routines of the workplace.

ACTIVITY: Nathan, Em and Drew



Robyn's progress through the Certificate 1 in Work Skills has astounded many of the support staff at Merrinvale. Nathan and Em, team leaders who have worked with Robyn, asked Drew, the workplace trainer, how he managed to get Robyn to understand what he was saying, and how she was able to show him she could do the required tasks. Nathan commented, 'We can't believe she could understand what you said to her, so how could she possibly do what you asked? She's never been able to understand what we say to her'. Patiently, Drew told them.

'Robyn can't talk as we can, but I knew there must be some way she could and wanted to communicate with us. I did some research on the Internet and I also rang an assistive communication resource agency for some information. I learned there were all sorts of systems and tools that might help Robyn's communication with us. Symbolic systems such as Compic and vocabulary stamps enable a person to select cards, stamps or computer images to communicate. Choice boards, communication boards, and books that contain pictures, photos and words to express communication needs are also available. I put together a communication book for Robyn and we kept adding to it all the time. The communication book not only gives Robyn the chance to show choices and make statements but it allows me to check her understanding of what I say.

'While doing this, I discovered that Robyn recognised a lot of vocabulary and numbers. She can read quite a bit and is really good with numbers. She is able to understand concepts.'

Drew has persuaded Nathan and Em to use the communication book with Robyn and put aside some individual time each day to work with her on her communication.

Think about your job. Is there any situation where it might be worth following Drew, Nathan and Em's example?

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There are a number of ways in which you can approach the communication and learning topics of Work Talk. One suggestion is to prioritise the topics in terms of the communication needs of individual supported employees.

Assess the communication needs of individual supported employees in terms of the topic areas and start working on those where the needs are most obvious. For example, if you have one or more employees who have difficulties following the safety rules, you might start with 'Talking about safety'. Where there is a problem with teamwork, read through and consider some of the strategies in 'Talking about teams and workmates'.

Sometimes, supported employees behave in ways that confuse, frustrate, distress or anger others. As you read through the communication and learning topics of the Work Talk workbooks, you will find several instances of such behaviours described in the case studies.

Usually, when such behaviours occur, they are a result of the need for the supported employee to communicate something. They may be distressed, in pain, anxious, or may need something. When the messages behind such behaviours are not understood by others, supported employees tend to be labelled as 'difficult', or 'challenging'.

No behaviour problem is ever fixed by simply labelling it a 'problem'. On the other hand, if we can start to perceive behaviour problems as communication problems, we are in a much better position to deal effectively with them. We must start to think about and try to improve the ways we communicate with our supported employees.

Please refer to the selection of references and resources for support staff, as previously documented.

The case studies and strategies in each communication and learning topic provide some realistic examples and ideas on how to improve communication techniques with your supported employees.

ACTIVITY: The case studies



The case studies comprise notes that provide some information about supported employees of Merrinvale Enterprises, and ‘diary notes’ from support staff (team leaders) who work with those employees in the fictional workplace. Read through the case studies in each workbook. You will note that many characters reappear in the case studies and the team leader notes.

It is very likely you will recognise features of the employees and team leaders you meet in the case studies. They are not real people but they probably bear some resemblance to people and situations you have encountered in your work. As you go through the case studies, make notes about the following questions.

Think about the situations given in the case studies. Then think about recent activities/situations you have found interesting or challenging at work. How do the situations in the case studies compare/contrast to the situations you have found yourself in at work?

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Refer back to some of the communication keystones in your Work Talk manual to analyse the issues in each hypothetical communication situation. What issues would these raise for you in your workplace? Would this be a priority issue for you?

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Think about the team leader’s response in each scenario. What do you think of it? Is it what you would do? If so, why? Based on information learned in the Work Talk manual, devise strategies of your own to deal with these situations.

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ACTIVITY: The strategies



The communication and learning topics in each Work Talk manual contain a page that outlines a series of strategies for assisting better workplace communication between support staff and supported employees. The strategies are not – and are not meant to be – ‘magic’ formulae or solutions. They are merely suggestions, based mostly on the underlying theory of how the particular form of disability described in the workbook impacts on an individual’s learning and communication. Many people will be using these or similar strategies already. Some strategies will work, some will not. All we suggest is that they may be worth trying. As you go work through the strategies, consider the following.

Think about a similar situation you have dealt with. How do you think this strategy would work in that situation?

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Work out a ‘script’ for what you would say to an employee who is demonstrating a communication issue that is similar to one you read about in the Work Talk workbook.

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Devise a strategy of your own to deal with a communication issue involving one of the communication and learning topics in Work Talk. What will you do? Why do you think this strategy might be helpful?

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Conclusion

It is useful to remember that the Work Talk series is designed as an ongoing resource for staff of Disability Business Services, not just a 'one-off' read. We hope you will see the manuals and fact sheets as something to go back to from time to time:

- to refresh information and learning
- to consider a strategy for a particular situation
- to assess your own progress.

One of the most common mistakes we all make in communicating is to assume that just because we have said something to someone ('I told him about it'), we have communicated our message and the person will do what we aimed for them to do. This, of course, is rarely the case. We have to constantly check our own communication to see if the message is getting across as we intended it.

Self-assessment

This section is for you to analyse your knowledge and skills in communicating with the employees you support.

I think I can ...	Yes/No
recognise and use the best method for communicating with each employee	
articulate my main communication responsibilities with supported employees	
support employees to communicate effectively in the workplace	
use culturally appropriate methods of communication	
use augmentative/assistive communication techniques, where necessary	

Skills I need to improve are

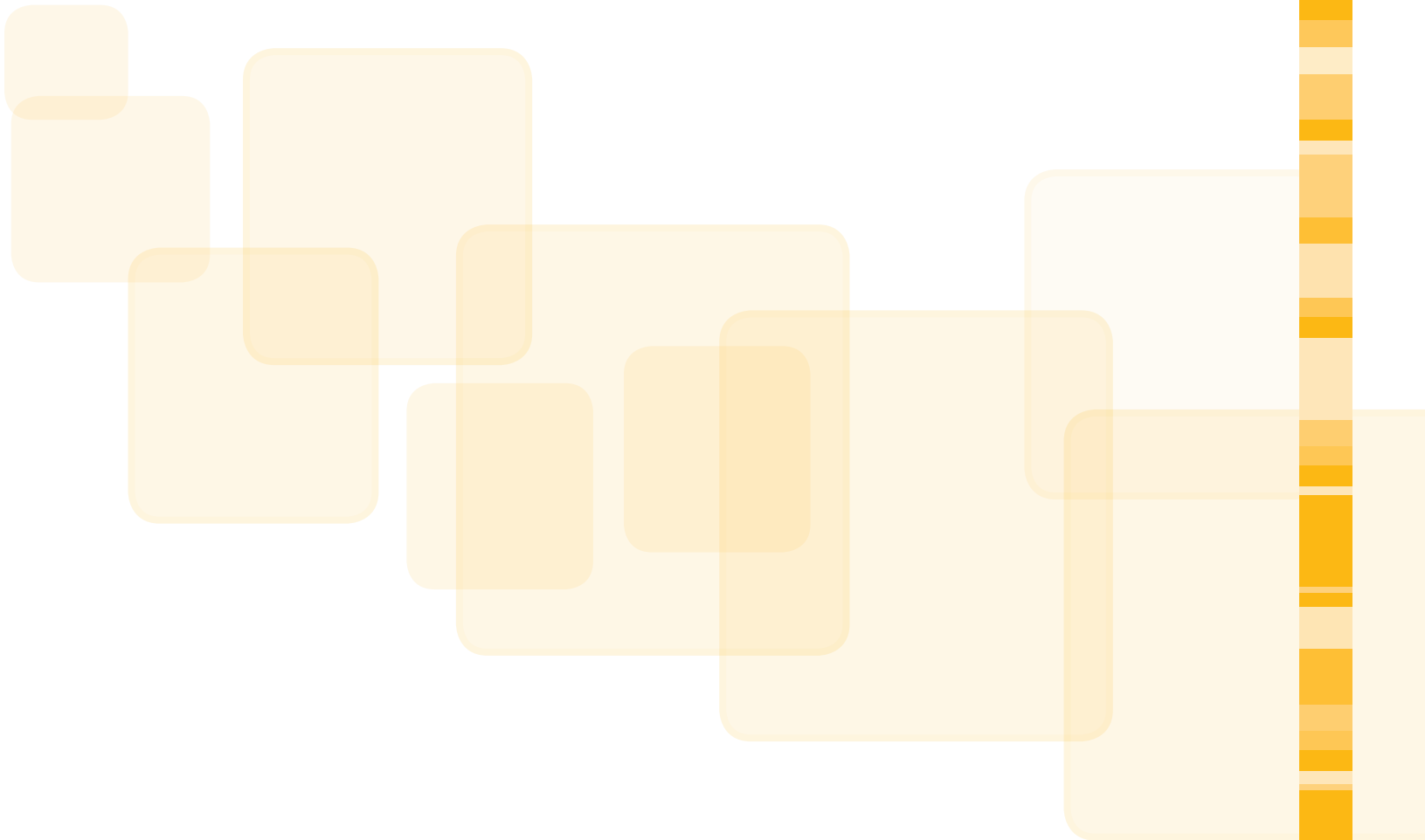
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Using the Work Talk manuals for group training sessions



Getting organised for training

Managers and others who train staff in Disability Business Services have a key role in assisting the development of effective communication between support staff and supported employees. Managers and other trainers need to be fully aware of the communication responsibilities of support staff and supported employees.

Support staff in Disability Business Services have specific communication responsibilities including:

- reporting work performance
- reporting problems and/or incidents
- assisting supported employees to identify personal needs and goals
- participating in organisational planning
- fostering team work
- developing positive, productive work relationships
- providing constructive feedback.

Supported employees have specific communication responsibilities including:

- indicating personal goals and needs
- recognising their responsibilities as workers and team members
- recognising their own roles in meeting targets and goals of their work team
- indicating their level of satisfaction with the service they receive
- understanding the Disability Business Service Quality Assurance (DESQA) environment
- providing constructive feedback.

Managers of Disability Business Services can use these (and other) specific communication responsibilities as a guide to designing systems and planning training to ensure they have a happy, productive team that meets defined goals.

The Work Talk resources are well suited as the basis for short training sessions as well as for more comprehensive training programs aimed at developing the communications skills of support staff in Disability Business Services.

In addition to a printed copy of each manual and fact sheet in the Work Talk series, your workplace will have received an accompanying CD containing a set of pdf files. The files comprise each fact sheet and Work Talk manual, including the:

- information section of each manual
- communication and learning topics of each manual
- general implementation guide of each manual.

The CD enables you to print multiple copies of all or parts of the workbook for use by staff. We recommend if you are planning to use the resources in a comprehensive way, you provide each staff member with a folder to which they can add materials as you use them.

Using the PowerPoint™ presentations

Accompanying this implementation guide are two PowerPoint™ presentations. The first one, entitled 'Talking about Work Talk' outlines the resources available, their purpose and aim, and reinforces the vital communication responsibilities of support staff in Disability Business Services. We recommend that you use this presentation when you distribute the manuals to your staff. It is designed to give them an overview of the Work Talk series and can also be used to set the learning objectives for training and staff development, based on the resources.

The second presentation, entitled 'Talking about teams and workmates', uses one of the communication and learning topics as its framework. You may want to use it as a template to develop a short PowerPoint™ presentation for each communication and learning topic if you are delivering training to a group.

Using the 'Training & Assessing' resource

When you are designing and developing your training, we suggest that you use the 'Training & Assessing' resource (manual, toolkit and implementation guide) developed to assist staff with responsibility for training people with disability to work safely and effectively in the workplace. The resource provides practical information about the background to learning and training, identifying training needs, designing good training, delivering training, assessing and evaluating.

The 'Training & Assessing' implementation guide includes ideas about training delivery and recognises that trainers each have their own styles and ideas. It includes session plans for a range of workshops.

Using the information section

We suggest that you ask your group to read the information section of each Work Talk manual at least twice before your training session. It is usually best to start with the 'disability group' your staff knows best, for example this might be people with acquired brain injury. In this case, you might plan a session based on 'Work Talk: Effective workplace communication with employees with acquired brain injury'.

In the long-term, you would aim to run training sessions that look at and compare communication factors between people with intellectual, psychiatric, physical and sensory disabilities as well.

When working with the Work Talk resources it is important to stress the need for support staff to adjust their communication to fit the needs of the individual, and that these needs will often vary as a result of the different forms of disability. It is quite common for people to assume, because they work with people with disability, that all people with disability are alike. For example, the 'Nathan, Em and Drew' scenarios in this guide show two support workers underestimating the communication and learning abilities of a person with intellectual disability.

Another example of this comes from a workplace where the workshop supervisors filled in all the paperwork for the 25 supported employees working on the production line because they genuinely believed that none of them were able to write. In fact, more than half the supported employees had good levels of literacy but nobody had actually found out about what people could and could not do.

As your group works through the Work Talk manuals, discuss with them the different conditions, causes and effects of the various disability categories. In particular, encourage them to share their own observations and questions about these.

In group training sessions and group discussions, these differences can often be best illustrated through activities like the following.



ACTIVITY: Diagnostic activity

The assessment areas in this activity are related to items assessed in the DMI domains, and to task and communication competencies defined in national workplace competencies.

Think of three employees (each with a different form of disability) and answer the following questions based on your observation and analysis of each. Add or replace disability categories to the table as appropriate.

Area of function	Employee with intellectual disability	Employee with acquired brain injury	Employee with psychiatric disability
Memory How well does the employee remember instructions from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• hour to hour• day to day• one task to another similar task?			
Planning How well can this employee independently plan the steps in a: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• simple (one or two steps) and familiar task• more complex (three or more steps) but familiar task• task that is not familiar to him/her?			

Area of function	Employee with intellectual disability	Employee with acquired brain injury	Employee with psychiatric disability
<p>Follow instructions</p> <p>How accurately can this employee carry out oral instructions that you give?</p> <p>How many oral instructions can she/he retain?</p>			
<p>Literacy and numeracy</p> <p>How well can this employee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read • match words that are the same • count • do simple calculations • measure (length or volume) • estimate quantities or numbers? 			
<p>Other adaptive functions</p> <p>How well does this employee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate in a work environment • present him or herself to others • work co-operatively with other people • take responsibility when required • understand workplace standards (eg safety, productivity, quality)? 			

Encourage support staff to learn more about the people they support in the workplace through communication, observation and training, and to continually try to build on their knowledge and understanding of each individual and their needs.

Using the communication and learning topics

The communication and learning topics in each of the Work Talk manuals are well suited to small group sessions, each lasting approximately an hour.

Prior to any structured training sessions you provide on the topics, it would be useful to assess support staff's current knowledge of employee needs in the communication areas covered by these topics. One way to do this is to ask staff to assess supported employees' current communication skills in these areas. This will encourage them to think about the needs of supported employees in concrete and specific ways.

The following example puts three of the communication and learning topics into this context.

Assessing workplace communication skills of supported employees

Communication area	Required skills*	Rating
Talking about quality and quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee can describe the production target he/she has to meet • When asked, employee can demonstrate what the correct standard of quality on the task is 	
Talking about safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee can indicate the correct walkways • Employee can explain safety signs • Employee can communicate the correct way to handle tools and equipment • Employee can explain the safety rules for any machinery used • Employee can describe the correct protective clothing 	

Communication area	Required skills*	Rating
Talking about teams and workmates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee can communicate how to respect the rights of other people • Employee can demonstrate effective listening skills • Employee can communicate steps to take if conflict occurs and how to best to resolve it in a positive way • Employee can communicate knowledge of what is expected of her/him as a member of the work team (in terms of effort, production etc) • Employee follows instructions from team leader and supports him/her to meet targets of area 	

*Required skills are derived from *Employee performance appraisal format* (Aware Industries 2005).

Before you start the training session, ask your learners to thoroughly read the communication and learning topics and reflect on them. For example, in ‘Talking about learning’, ask them to think about:

- why it is important for supported employees to know that support staff are continuously learning/improving their communication skills
- their experiences in assisting supported employees acknowledge their role as learners
- their thoughts on the key processes involved in learning
- their ideas on how to enhance the learning process for individual employees.

Running a small group session on the topics

There are a number of hints for running facilitated sessions included in the opening pages of each Work Talk manual. You will also find it very useful to refer to the ‘Training & Assessing’ resource when you are putting together a short training session on the communication and learning topics.

A PowerPoint™ presentation about ‘Talking about teams and workmates’ is included with this implementation guide. This is an example of how to use one of the communication and learning topics in a small group training session. It can also be used as a ‘template’ for the other communication and learning topics. Hint: You may want to develop a short PowerPoint™ presentation for each communication and learning topic.

The major aims of any group training session should be to:

- provide learners with an opportunity to discuss background information to each topic
- stimulate questions and discussion
- encourage the sharing of experiences
- motivate further action for improving communication strategies in the workplace.

Using the case studies and strategies

To prepare for the group session, you should ask learners to:

- read through the case studies for the topic
- prepare some brief notes on similarities/differences they may have observed in any situation they have encountered with a supported employee.

In the group session, work through the case study provided, including the responses from support staff as described in the diary notes.

Facilitate discussion of the:

- supported employee at Merrinvale as described in the case study - what are the key learning/communication issues in this situation? Have you met a similar situation in your work? In what ways do the fictional characters differ?
- possible impacts/effects of the fictional employee's disability in the situation
- response of the team leader in each scenario - what do learners think of it? Is it what they would do? If so, why? If not, what would be their response to the situation? Why?

Conclusion

The Work Talk resources are designed to provide ongoing assistance and reference for support staff. At the end of any formal training session, reinforce the advantages of staff using the resources for self-paced learning.

This will also be another opportunity for you to stress the role of support staff in assisting supported employees build their communication skills, and to remind your staff of their responsibilities to keep on improving their own communication skills.

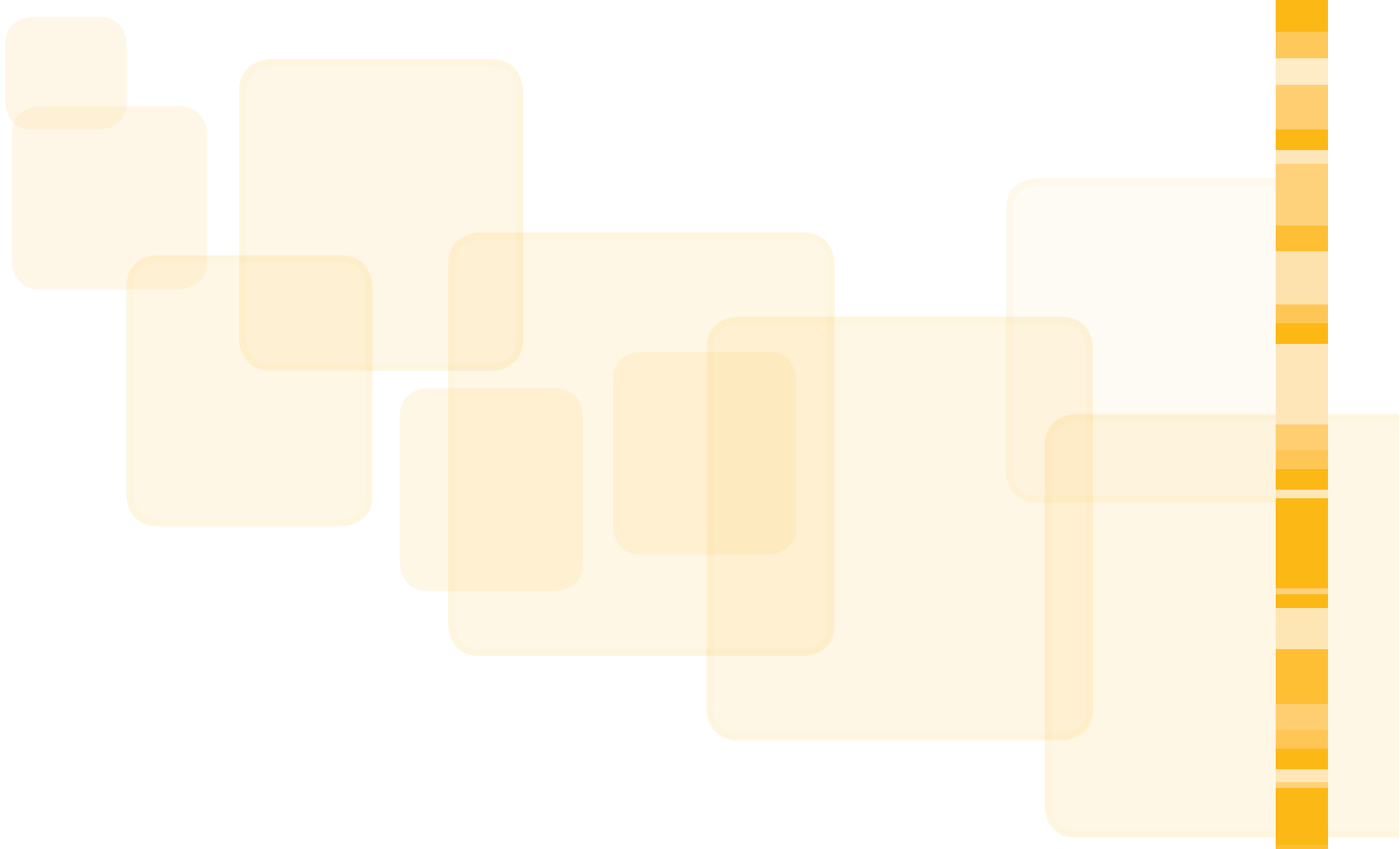
Many workplaces have regular staff performance appraisal systems in place. An example of an assessment format for communication skills follows.

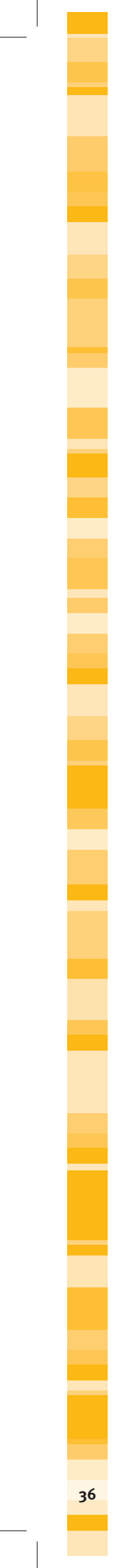
Communication skills assessment

An example of an assessment format for communication is provided below.

Key performance indicators: Communication with supported employees	Rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular skills assessments of supported employees are effectively conducted for planning and training purposes.• Supported employees are assisted to participate in establishing clear goals and choices for outcomes in their workplace.• The training and support required to assist supported employees achieve their stated goals are identified.• Communication is continuously assessed, modified and adapted to support individual clients.• Flexible and creative approaches are provided in planning and carrying out support tasks on an individual basis.• Clients are assisted to maintain understanding of their workplace roles and responsibilities.• The informed consent of clients and families (where appropriate) is gained regarding any action or decision that affects them.	

Disability Business Service additions





In this section, your Disability Business Service can add any specific documents that are essential or helpful to your support staff in the area of specific communication techniques, for example:

- agency policies and procedures, especially those relating to communication with supported employees
- key performance indicators relevant to communication with clients of the service
- the agency's code of staff conduct
- copies of instructions for assistive and augmentative communication systems used by your supported employees
- agency publications and resources dealing with communication and so on
- clippings from media sources relating to issues relevant to this topic and your agency's operations
- up-to-date agency memos or letters dealing with these issues
- an ongoing list of external resources, including websites, printed and electronic products, related agencies, networks, conferences, workshops, training sessions and educational courses.