MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

19 JUN 2017

Dear

On 24 April 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information relating to the Ministry's policies concerning the use of discretion by staff when making decisions about the outcome of applications.

- *All information the Ministry of Social Development holds regarding Work and Income's policy on staff using discretion in determining beneficiary applications for Work and Income assistance.*
- *What is discretion according to Work and Income?*
- *How is discretion applied?*
- *When should staff use discretion?*
- *Are staff assumed competent and simply trusted to use discretion in any way they want? If yes, why? If no, why?*
- *What training, education and/or knowledge is provided to relevant staff re when and how to use discretion?*

Staff are provided with the skills, knowledge and tools, and are supported to make the right decisions and use discretion appropriately.

New staff are provided with a comprehensive induction programme that extends up to two months, and covers the key functions of the role and capabilities to support the wide variety of client interactions and requirements. Significant training is provided in practice areas such as interviewing skills, listening or engagement, to ensure that the staff member fully understands the client's situation and needs, and can respond in the most effective manner.

As part of the induction, staff are trained in the use of Work and Income's Manuals and Procedures (MAP) that provides guidelines for many key decisions, such as how discretion is applied and how the legislation supports their decision. This training also includes a significant on-the-job component where staff members are provided with a buddy for advice, support and coaching. MAP is accessible at the following web-link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/index.html

Existing staff are provided with regular training and support. As new products and services are deployed, the use of discretion (where applicable) is incorporated within the training. Where there is feedback that staff need a refresher on areas such as discretion, either reminders, coaching or training is provided. The attached PowerPoint titled, *'Discretion Training'*, is available for staff to access should they require a refresher.

The Aurora Centre / 56-66 The Terrace / Wellington 6011
PO Box 1556 / Wellington 6140 / New Zealand
Phone: 64 4 916 3300 / **Fax**: 64 4 918 0099 / **www.msd.govt.nz**

Please find attached three documents that fall in scope of your request.

- Facilitators guide titled, *'Skill development training – Enhanced client engagement'*, undated.

- Facilitators guide titled, *'Skill development training – Hardship Assistance', undated.*

- PowerPoint titled, *'Discretion Training'*, undated.

The following web-link is to access information on Work and Income's policy regarding exercising discretion: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/definitions/Discretion.html

- *When an application is made for assistance and a beneficiary is eligible to be considered and it turns out that she has an entitlement or could readily, legally be granted assistance - on what grounds would a staff member use discretion to decline assistance to the beneficiary?*

A client applying for assistance must meet all other specified eligibility criteria to be able to receive the assistance they are applying for. For example, residency, income and/or asset test, course duration etc.

If the client does not meet the standard eligibility criteria for assistance, then the application is declined.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response concerning Ministry staff's use of discretion, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Skill development training Hardship Assistance

Facilitator Guide

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Contents

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Using this Guide

This guide gives you the information you need to facilitate the Hardship Assistance training programme.

This is a 2 hour 30 minute programme providing front line staff with practical knowledge and strategies to assess the validity of clients' applications for hardship assistance. It is designed to provide learners with an opportunity to revisit the criteria (legislation and policy) underpinning the approval of hardship assistance in addition to exploring staff's own values when administering discretion.

Audience

This workshop is targeted at staff and managers working in a client interactive role.

Resources

You'll use the following resources:

- Poster or flipchart paper and pens.
- Whiteboard and whiteboard markers.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide learners with knowledge and skills to:

- Identify one's own values and their role in decision-making when determining the validity of applications for hardship assistance.
- Reinforce knowledge of the criteria that underpins eligible hardship assistance applications.
- Recognise/consolidate situations that can be covered under discretionary powers.

Session Outline

	Course introduction	5 minutes
Module 1	What do we value – What are values? – What values do we hold? – How do our values impact on the decision-making related to hardship assistance?	35 minutes
Module 2	Where do you stand – Scenarios	1hr 40 minutes
	Wrap up – Evaluation	10 minutes

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Introduction

5 min

Learning objectives	• Identify one's own values and their role in decision-making when determining the validity of applications for hardship assistance. • Reinforce knowledge of the criteria that underpins eligible hardship assistance applications. • Recognise/consolidate situations that can be covered under discretionary powers.
Key Messages	• This workshop focuses on decision making and values. • Values are principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life. • It is important to be aware that other people will have their own unique set of values that may be different from our own. •

Welcome

- Welcome learners to the workshop session.
- Take learners through the module and outline the learning objectives.
- Work through housekeeping, timing, breaks, toilets, smoking, evacuation, mobile phones etc.
- Facilitate introductions if required.

Advise

This workshop is a refresher of what you all know but gives you the opportunity to discuss with your colleagues and manager a variety of scenarios both real life and fictional on how you apply your decision making process and values.

It is not about the process for granting or declining hardship. It's about understanding how your own values influence your determination of eligibility and applying discretion.

It is also about understanding a client's hardship needs and having discussions with them about their situation at the time of their application and how the legislation and policy fit around each situation.

The topics being discussed may prompt some passionate responses but its ok for people to have different opinions.

Explain

If you identify that you may have learning needs in this area after completing this training you can access support on the process or granting and declining hardship from the Special Needs Grants (SNG) and Advance of Benefit and Recoverable Assistance Payment procedure guides in the following myLearn links.

Special Needs Grant - https://elearn.ssi.govt.nz/course/view.php?id=2641

Advance of Benefit - https://elearn.ssi.govt.nz/course/view.php?id=3341

Recoverable Assistance Payment - https://elearn.ssi.govt.nz/course/view.php?id=3608

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Module 1 ~ What do we value?

35 min

Learning objectives	At the completion of this module learners will be able to: • Identify the meaning of values. • Describe how values influence thoughts, feelings and behaviour. • Define their own values in relation to other people's values.
Resources	• Pens and paper • Whiteboard • List of values from Appendix 1

Activity 1: What are values?

Ask learners to identify/define the meaning of values. Ask prompting questions such as - What are they? Why do we have them? What do they do?

Example definition:

- Values are principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life.

Step 1: Facilitate an agreed definition from the learners' responses on the whiteboard.

Step 2: Hand out a copy of the list of values (attached at the back of the training guide) to each learner and ask them to read through them. . Ask each individual to highlight their top 10, then their top 8, then again, narrow it to 5 then to 3.

Discussion

Discuss with learners:

- What it felt like to reduce their values from 10 to 3.
- Are they surprised by the variety of values in the group (not everyone's values will be the same).
- Why do they think that a group of people can hold different values as more significant than others? Explore with the group the origin of values (family, experience, culture, age etc).

Key messages/emphasise:

- People's values influence their behaviour and the way they live their lives.
- Values are the driving force behind why people get up in the morning, the choices they make and why they behave the way they do.
- We all hold values.
- People's values vary.
- Values aren't 'wrong' or 'right' – just different.

"Values are like fingerprints. Nobody's are the same but you leave them all over everything you do".

Activity 2: What do values do?

In pairs, think of a time when you were really excited, energised, motivated by something that was happening in your life.

Reflect on your list of values and tick the ones that were reflected in what was happening in your life that time.

Discussion

Discuss with learners how values influence our lives, shape the way we interpret and experience things in our lives.

Key messages/emphasise:

- Values guide the way we live our lives and the decisions we make.
- Our values shape what we feel is important.
- Values influence the way we make choices.
- Values influence our attitudes and behaviours.

It is important to be aware that other people will have their own unique set of values that may be different from our own.

Understanding values, when determining eligibility and applying discretion, makes us aware of:

- Our own influences.
- Not judging other people's behaviour and beliefs according to your own values.
- Not making assumptions and applying generalisations to individuals.
- Understanding the importance of professionalism and open communication.

"Different isn't wrong. Different is just different."

Module 2 ~ Where do you stand?

1hr 40 min

Learning objectives	At the completion of this module learners will be able to: • Demonstrate an awareness of the role our own values have when determining the validity of applications for hardship assistance. • Apply knowledge of the criteria that needs to be met for eligible applications to their day to day work • Identify situations that can be covered under discretionary powers
Resources	• Pens and paper • Flip Chart paper • Appendices SSSA Summaries

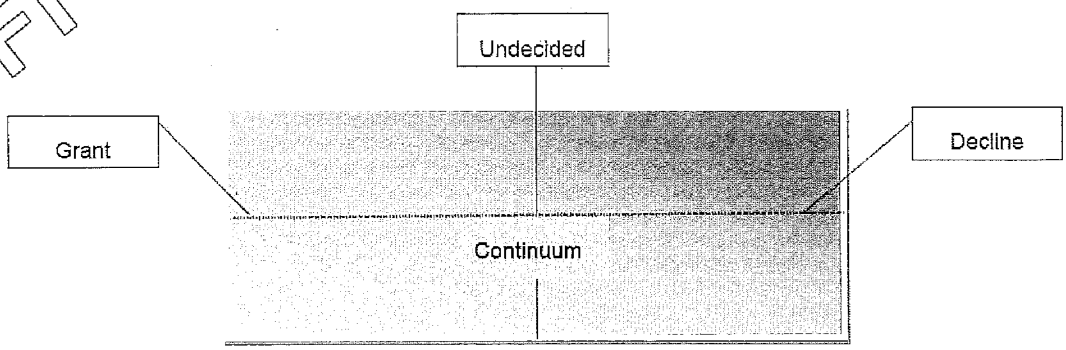
Instructions to learners

I'm going to read to you a number of scenarios that clients may present when applying for hardship assistance. At the end of each scenario you'll need to determine whether you would grant assistance to a client if they presented with the same circumstances. All of the scenarios apart from scenario one are real and went before The Social Security Appeal Authority (SSAA).

After listening to each scenario you will choose one of three responses:

- Grant
- Decline
- Undecided

After choosing your response you'll place yourself on an imaginary continuum across the room. Move to the right hand side of the room if your decision is to decline the application. Move to the left hand side of the room if your decision is to grant the application. Move to the middle if you are undecided.



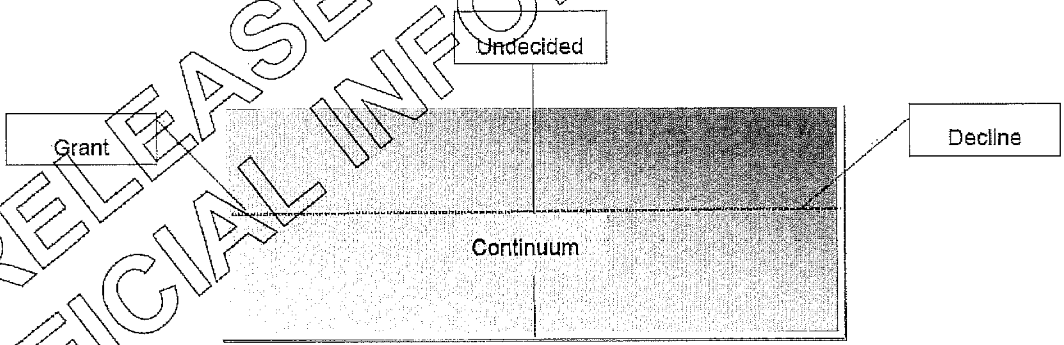
Scenario 1: Part 1

A client has an SNG appointment to apply for $400.00 to buy food and petrol for her car. The client is a sole parent and has two dependent children. This is her fourth SNG in the last 52 weeks and she has no entitlement to food left. Her next benefit is due in 3 days' time. She has a debt balance of $670.00 that is being repaid at $20.00 per week.

At her appointment the client advised that she has used her money to pay for her vet's bill. The bill occurred when the family pet, Sam the Labradoodle ran across the road to meet her eldest daughter and was hit by a car and seriously injured.

She is now unable to purchase groceries for her family or put petrol in her car which she needs to drop the children at school.

Ask your learners to reflect on the scenario and consider the decision they would make. What would they do? Ask them to make their decision by moving to the point on the continuum that identifies their choice – grant, decline or undecided.



Ask Group 1 (decline) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask Group 2 (grant) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask Group 3 (undecided) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask each group to share their discussion with the wider group then read out part 2 of the scenario.

Scenario 1: Part 2

After further discussion the client advised that her husband had died two years ago and she bought Sam as a puppy to help her two children cope with the grief of losing their father. The dog is an integral member of the family and she was worried about losing him as the children are still coming to terms with their dad's death.

She has also been paying for some grief counselling for her eldest daughter and won't be able to meet her costs and her daughter will have to stop going.

Ask your learners to reflect on the additional information provided and consider whether they would change their decision. Ask them to move to the point on the continuum that now represents their decision.

Ask those that have moved to explain why they've changed their decision.

Work with the whole group using the following questions to elicit their thinking and thought processes in this scenario:

Questions:

1. Is the client entitled to hardship assistance?
2. Does she require it for an essential and immediate need?
3. Was the situation unforeseen?
4. Does the client have any exceptional circumstances
5. If the need was not met – how would this impact the family?
6. Would you consider any other options that could meet this need?
7. What values did you use when making your decision?

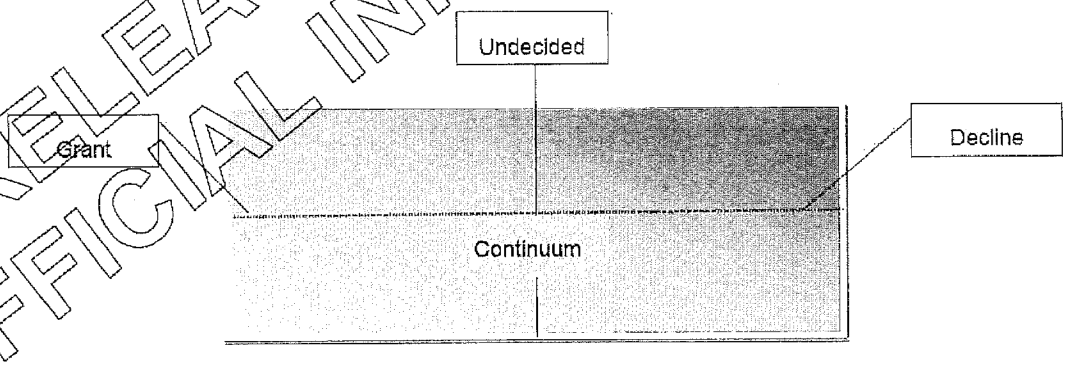
Record discussion points on the white board.

Scenario 2: Part 1

A client has an appointment for an advance totalling $2,478.60. These costs are to support her to move her family from Wanganui to Palmerston North to enable her son who is 17 to attend a full time 3D animation course at a Private Training Establishment (PTE). It includes three weeks rent in advance, bond and hire of a removal truck. The client has three dependent children living with her, has debt advances totalling $465.00 and is paying this off at $10.00 per week.

At her interview she advised that her son who is 17 attended a short taster course in 3D animation at a Private Training Establishment (PTE). He completed the course and was enthusiastic about pursuing animation as a vocation. Prior to this course, he had not been attending school regularly, and since completing the taster course, had not returned at all. The client was concerned that if he remained in Wanganui – he would get into trouble, following the footsteps of his elder brother who is 19 and currently serving Community Detention for stealing cars.

Ask your learners to reflect on the scenario and consider the decision they would make. What would they do? Ask them to make their decision by moving to the point on the continuum that identifies their choice – grant, decline or undecided.



Ask Group 1 (decline) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask Group 2 (grant) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask Group 3 (undecided) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask each group to share their discussion with the wider group then read out part 2 of the scenario.

Scenario 2: Part 2

After further discussion the client advised that she has been looking at other options for her 17 year old son and learnt that he would not be eligible for a Student Allowance or the Youth Payment, due to his age. This meant he could not independently move to Palmerston North and live in the hostel provided by the PTE even though he had been accepted for the full time course. In addition, the client was concerned that he would struggle to be an independent learner without her support and not cope well living in a hostel. She believed that there were benefits for the whole family to move to Palmerston North; her eldest son would have a fresh start and her daughter could start a new school where she wasn't bullied.

The client also has several personal debts totalling $6,543.65 and she is making a weekly payment of $140.50 towards these debts.

Ask your learners to reflect on the additional information provided and consider whether they would change their decision. Ask them to move to the point on the continuum that now represents their decision.

Work with the whole group using the following questions to elicit their thinking and thought processes in this scenario:

Questions:

1. Is the client entitled to hardship assistance?
2. Does she require it for an essential and immediate need?
3. Was the situation unforeseen?
4. Does the client have any exceptional circumstances
5. If the need was not met – how would this impact the family?
6. Would you consider any other options that could meet this need?
7. What values did you use when making your decision?

Record discussion points on the white board.

Go through the SSSA summary.

SSSA Summary

The interests of the appellant's children in this matter are significant and we have concluded that these were exceptional circumstances which would have justified the Chief Executive (CE) exceeding the limits in the Ministerial Directive on the advance payment of benefit.

Clause 6 of the directive sets out further matters to which the CE is to have regard in exercising discretion to make an advance payment of benefit:

a) The beneficiary's ability to pay the advance.

In this case the applicant's budget would have been tight but there was no reason to believe she would have been unable to repay the advance.

b) Whether the beneficiary could reasonably have been expected to make provision for the particular immediate need.

We accept that the appellant could not have made provision for the particular immediate need.

c) The extent to which not making an advance or an advance in access of the limit or requiring recovery at the rate set out in clause 5 would:

(i) Worsen the beneficiary's position.

There may have been an impact on the appellant's financial position however we note that ultimately she was required to assist with her son's finances in any event.

(ii) Increase or create any risk to the life or welfare of the beneficiary or any dependent child.

Failing to make an advance increased the risk to the welfare of the appellants dependent son and may also have increased the risk to her younger daughter.

(iii) Cause serious hardship to the beneficiary or any dependent child.

This is an unusual case. The appellant appears to have appreciated that sending her son away on his own to study was expensive and risky, and perhaps more risky than might be the case for an older child. She also saw that a move could provide a new start for her other children.

This was a finely balanced situation. Taking into account all the circumstances in this case we are satisfied the appellant had an immediate need for an essential service to meet that immediate need. With some hesitation we concluded that exceptional circumstances existed which would have justified the CE in making an advance outside the limits prescribed by the Ministerial Directive.

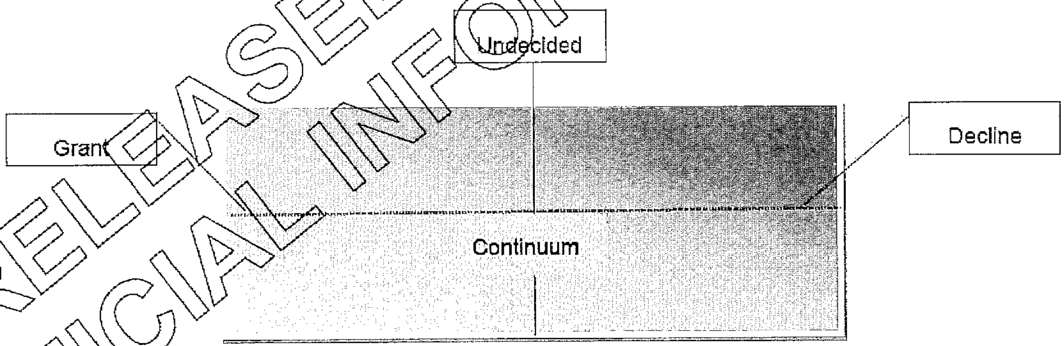
This Appeal is allowed.

Scenario 3: Part 1

A client has an appointment for an advance of $400.00 for travel to visit her 3 children who are in her sister's care. The client is currently receiving Sole Parent Support. She has one dependent child included in her benefit who is 14 months old and she has a debt balance of $1,050.00 that is being off at $20.00 per week.

At her appointment the client advised that the care arrangement was meant to be temporary but last year her sister was made an additional guardian of the children and a parenting order was made in her favour. The client advised that when the children went in to her sister's care they were both living in in the same city. The client has since moved to a different city because the situation between her and her sister became very hostile.

Ask your learners to reflect on the scenario and consider the decision they would make. What would they do? Ask them to make their decision by moving to the point on the continuum that identifies their choice – grant, decline or undecided.



Ask Group 1 (decline) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask Group 2 (grant) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask each group to share their discussion with the wider group then read out part 2 of the scenario.

Scenario 3: Part 2

After further discussion at the interview the client advised that six months ago she sought a lawyer to start proceedings so she could have contact with her children.

Two weeks ago consent orders were made in the Family Court that provided contact between the client and her children once a week for the next six weeks. This will take place at Family Focus where her sister lives. This is part of the process for her regaining full custody of her children. The client has 4 remaining visits to go.

She has also provided a letter from her budget advisor that shows she would have a deficit of $137 per week in her budget after payment of bus fares to travel to see her children.

Ask your learners to reflect on the additional information provided and consider whether they would change their decision. Ask them to move to the point on the continuum that now represents their decision.

Ask those that have moved to explain why they've changed their decision.

Work with the whole group using the following questions to elicit their thinking and thought processes in this scenario:

Questions:

1. Is the client entitled to hardship assistance?
2. Does she require it for an essential and immediate need?
3. Was the situation unforeseen?
4. Does the client have any exceptional circumstances
5. If the need was not met – how would this impact the family?
6. Would you consider any other options that could meet this need?
7. What values did you use when making your decision?

Record discussion points on the white board.

Go through the SSSA summary.

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SSSA Summary

The appellants request for assistance was originally considered as a request for an advance payment of benefit. Before the Authority it was argued that assistance could have been provided by way of a Special Needs Grant.

The issue for the Authority is whether it can be said that the appellant's need for assistance with travel was an emergency situation.

Turning to the submission that the application for assistance now be considered as a request for a Special Needs Grant we note that pursuant to s124 of the Social Security Act 1964 the Minister has established and approved a welfare programme known as the Special Needs Grant Programme.

The first issue to be considered is whether or not the need to travel to her sister for access visits was unforeseen.

The first phase of the access agreement required the appellant to travel to her sister every week. We are in no doubt the applicant would have had difficulty to meet the costs from her budget. Therefore she could not have been expected to make provision in advance to meet the need.

The second issue is the extent which not making the grant would worsen the applicants position; or cause hardship.

As a mother trying to re-establish contact with her young children in what appears to have been a relatively hostile situation we are in no doubt that failing to make a grant would worsen the applicant's position. To use some other part of her budget to pay for the travel costs would inevitably result in serious hardship to the applicant and the young dependent child in her care.

Taking into account all of the relevant matters we are prepared to accept that the need to undertake all of the first series of visits was an emergency situation. There were special circumstances that warranted a grant. The Chief Executive should have granted assistance by way of non-recoverable Special Needs Grant for all four visits.

We note in passing that when this application was made the Chief Executive could have given consideration to reducing the appellant's advance and debt repayments thereby increasing her ability to make provision for travel for access visits. We are concerned that more was not done to look at this option at the time the appellant sought assistance.

The Chief Executive is directed to pay a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant to the appellant of $240.

The appeal is allowed to the extent indicated.

Scenario 4 : Part 1

A client has an appointment for an advance payment of $867 to buy a load of firewood.

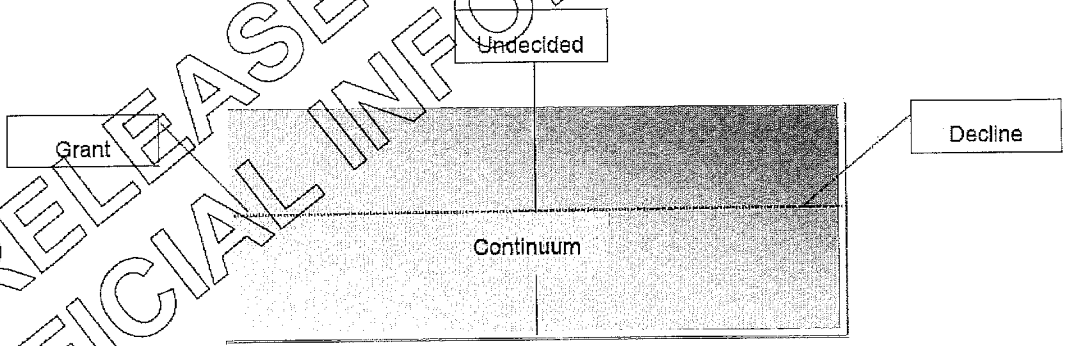
She has three children and is currently receiving Sole Parent Support, a Disability Allowance and Family Tax Credit totalling $541.77 per week. Payments offset from her benefit total $161.45 and include advance payments, debts, Meridian Energy and rent payment to Housing New Zealand leaving her with $380.12 paid into her bank account.

She has recently moved to a rental house where a log burner was installed.

She has also received a Special Needs Grant of $437.95 and her Disability Allowance increased to cover the cost of firewood for the log burner.

At the appointment the client advises that the firewood she purchased has now been used up and she has no funds to be able to pay for more firewood.

Ask your learners to reflect on the scenario and consider the decision they would make. What would they do? Ask them to make their decision by moving to the point on the continuum that identifies their choice – grant, decline or undecided.



Ask Group 1 (decline) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask Group 2 (grant) to identify the legislation/policies that support their decision and record on flip chart paper.

Ask each group to share their discussion with the wider group then read out part 2 of the scenario.

Scenario 4 : Part 2

After further discussion the client advised that because of her asthma she requires a warm home and the log burner is the only form of heating.

Ask your learners to reflect on the additional information provided and consider whether they would change their decision. Ask them to move to the point on the continuum that now represents their decision.

Ask those that have moved to explain why they've changed their decision.

Work with the whole group using the following questions to elicit their thinking and thought processes in this scenario:

Questions:

1. Is the client entitled to hardship assistance?
2. Does she require it for an essential and immediate need?
3. Was the situation unforeseen?
4. Does the client have any exceptional circumstances
5. If the need was not met – how would this impact the family?
6. Would you consider any other options that could meet this need?
7. What values did you use when making your decision?

Record discussion points on the white board.

Go through the SSSA summary.

SSSA Summary

Provision is made for the payment of benefits in advance by s 82(6) of the Social Security Act 1964 which reads:

"If it is satisfied that an advance payment of a benefit would best meet the immediate needs of a beneficiary, the (chief executive) may (in the chief executive's discretion)".

Clause 2 of that Direction states that to be considered for an advance a beneficiary must be able to identify a *"particular immediate need"* and at Clause 2.2 *"regard is to be had amongst other matters to the beneficiary's ability to meet the need from his or her own resources".*

Clause 3 of the Direction regard is also to be had to the beneficiary's existing level of debt which in the appellant's case amounted to $3,857.42 in respect of debt owed to the Ministry.

Clause 6 of the Direction however an advance may be paid despite the limit having been exceeded where a beneficiary has exceptional circumstances.

Whilst at first impression it may seem that the appellants circumstances were exceptional in facing a winter with no means of heating her cold house in the whole background in the Authority's opinion has to be considered.

The appellant had a history of requiring extra assistance for power costs which had led the Ministry to make advance payments of benefit for electricity/gas of $382.87. Further payment of $363.98 and $390.47 were also made. She had already had payment for one delivery of firewood and had received further grants for various purposes before making application for the advance for the firewood purchase.

More importantly her Disability Allowance had been increased to $8.46 a week to include the annual cost of firewood.

In theory this extra payment could have been set aside by the appellant to further firewood costs or paid to a firewood supplier on a weekly basis to establish a credit to meet the cost of subsequent deliveries.

As it turned out the annual cost to supply the log burner exceeded the initial payment and subsequent weekly amounts but this would be met by increasing the Disability Allowance.

For these reasons the appeal is dismissed.

Wrap up and close

10 min

Ask the group the following three questions:

1. How did your values influence the outcomes?
2. What did the scenarios mean for you, your practice and your approach?
3. What other learning have you gained from this workshop?

Evaluation

At the end of this training session refer learners to myLearn to complete the online evaluation of this programme.

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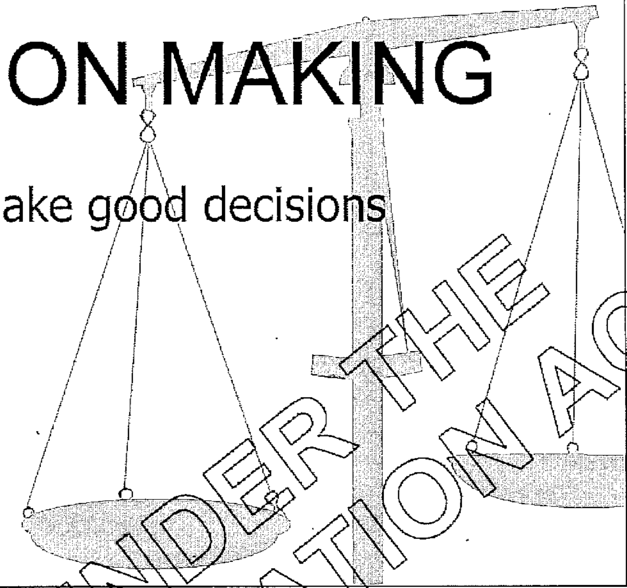
Appendix 1 ~ List of values

Accountability
Accuracy
Achievement
Adventurousness
Altruism
Ambition
Assertiveness
Balance
Being the best
Belonging
Boldness
Calmness
Carefulness
Clear-mindedness
Commitment
Community
Compassion
Competitiveness
Consistency
Contentment
Continuous Improvement
Contribution
Control
Cooperation
Correctness
Decisiveness
Dependability
Determination
Devoutness
Diligence
Discipline
Discretion
Diversity
Dynamism
Economy
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Elegance
Empathy
Enjoyment
Enthusiasm
Equality
Excellence
Excitement
Expertise
Exploration
Expressiveness
Fairness
Faith
Family-orientedness
Fidelity
Fitness
Fluency
Focus
Freedom
Fun
Generosity
Goodness
Grace
Growth
Happiness
Hard Work
Health
Helping Society
Holiness
Honesty
Honour
Humility
Independence
Ingenuity
Inner Harmony
Inquisitiveness
Intelligence
Intellectual Status
Intuition
Irreverence
Joy
Justice
Leadership
Legacy
Love
Loyalty
Making a difference
Mastery
Merit
Obedience
Openness
Order
Originality
Patriotism
Perfection
Piety
Positivity
Practicality
Preparedness
Professionalism
Prudence
Quality-orientation
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Restraint
Results-orientated
Rigor
Security
Self-actualisation
Self-control
Selflessness
Self-reliance
Sensitivity
Serenity
Service
Shrewdness
Simplicity
Soundness
Speed
Spontaneity
Stability
Strategic
Strength
Structure
Success
Support
Teamwork
Temperance
Thankfulness
Thoroughness
Thoughtfulness
Timeliness
Tolerance
Traditionalism
Trustworthiness
Truth-seeking
Understanding
Uniqueness
Unity
Usefulness

DECISION MAKING

How to make good decisions



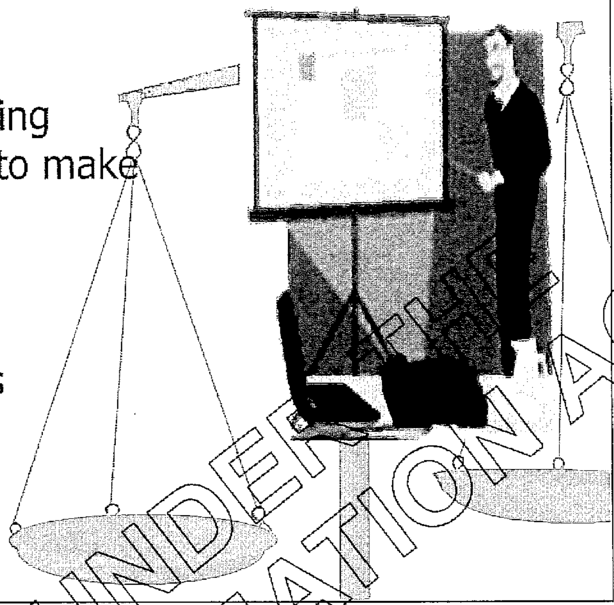
Your job is all about making decisions on benefit entitlement.

Good decision making is all about getting the facts – all the facts – applying the law and the policy – and making a decision.

Sounds easy – but often its not because people's lives – and their financial affairs – are complicated.

Today We Will Talk About:

- The decision making processes – how to make a good decision
- What "exercising discretion" means



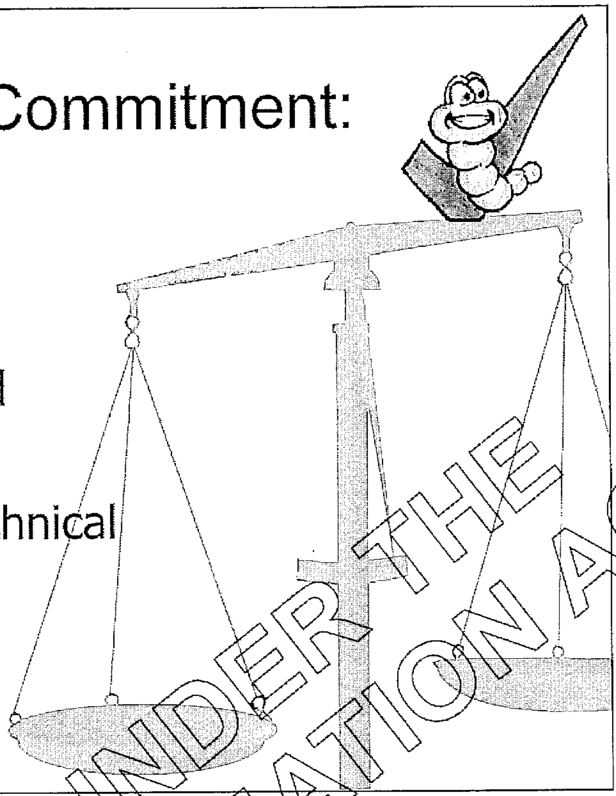
The aim of this presentation is first, to take you through the steps involved in good decision and second, to explain what exercising your discretion means and when and how you do this.

We'll start by talking about some basic principles, then move on to talk about when you need to use discretion.

Note: Applications for hardship assistance are completed in CMS. The system will make a recommendation of grant or decline based on the information you input however, in some cases we are able to use our discretion to change this. These decisions will need to be approved in the system by your SCM.

CE's Commitment:

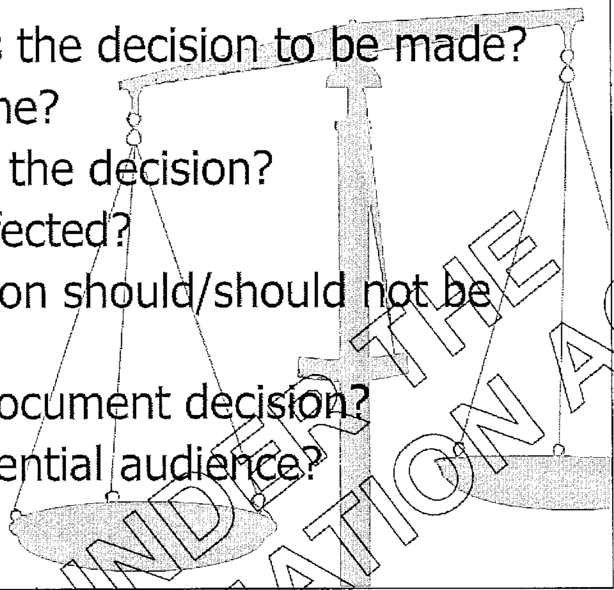
- Client focused
- Principle based
- Not unduly technical



CE wants us to be able to put ourselves in the client's shoes while also fairly and consistently applying Ministry policy

7 Principles of Decision Making

- What exactly is the decision to be made?
- What time frame?
- Who is making the decision?
- Who will be affected?
- What information should/should not be given out?
- How will you document decision?
- Who is the potential audience?



Principles of good decision making – think about the following

What exactly is the decision to be made?

What time frame are you working to – ROD, BRC, OIA or Privacy request?

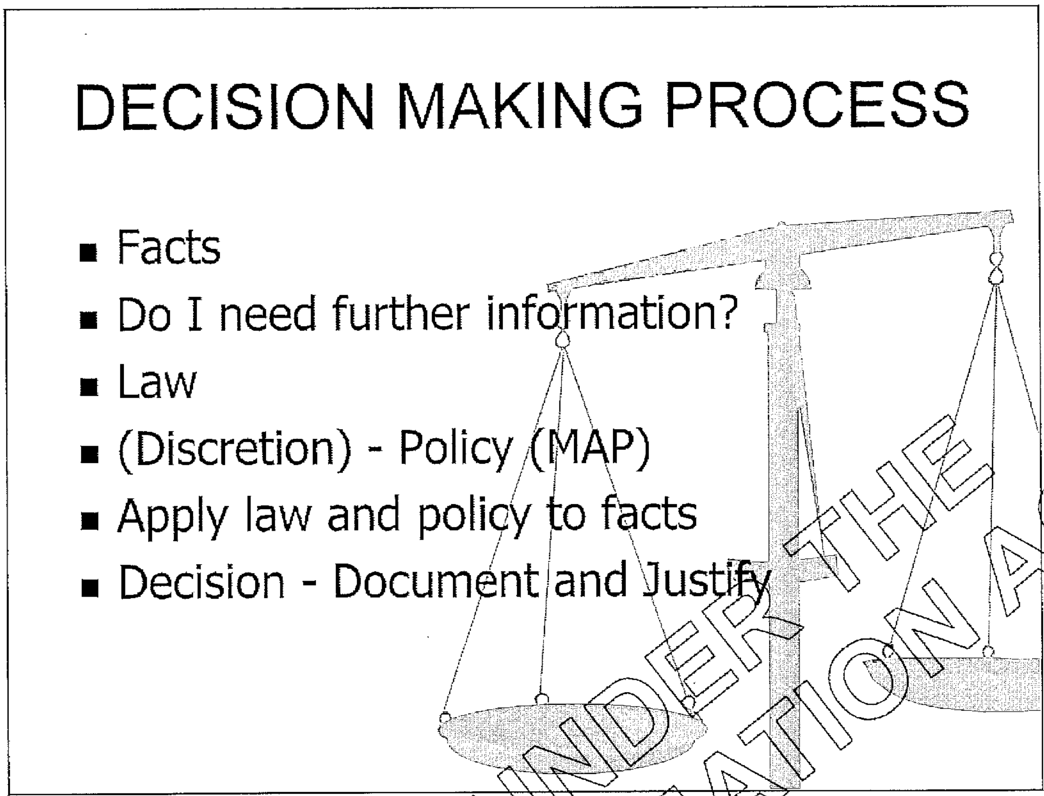
Who is making the decision?

Who will be affected – family members/other agencies

What information should/should not be given out

How will you document the decision-making?

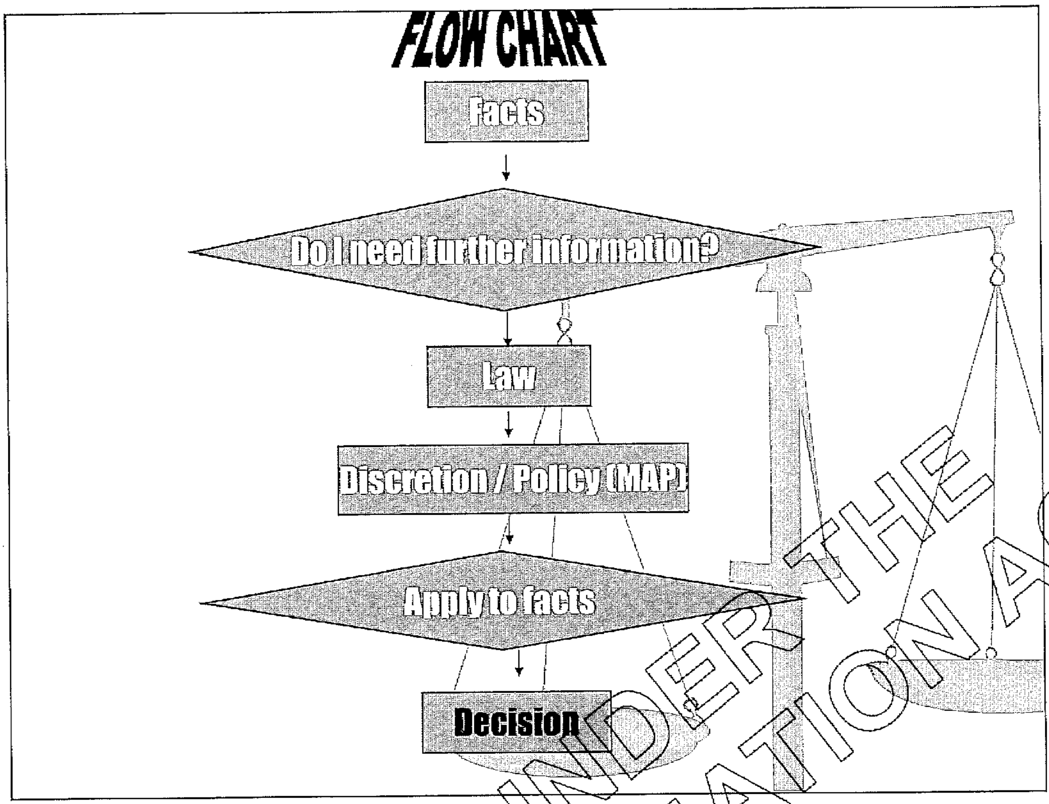
Who is the potential audience – client, media, MP, BRC, SSAA

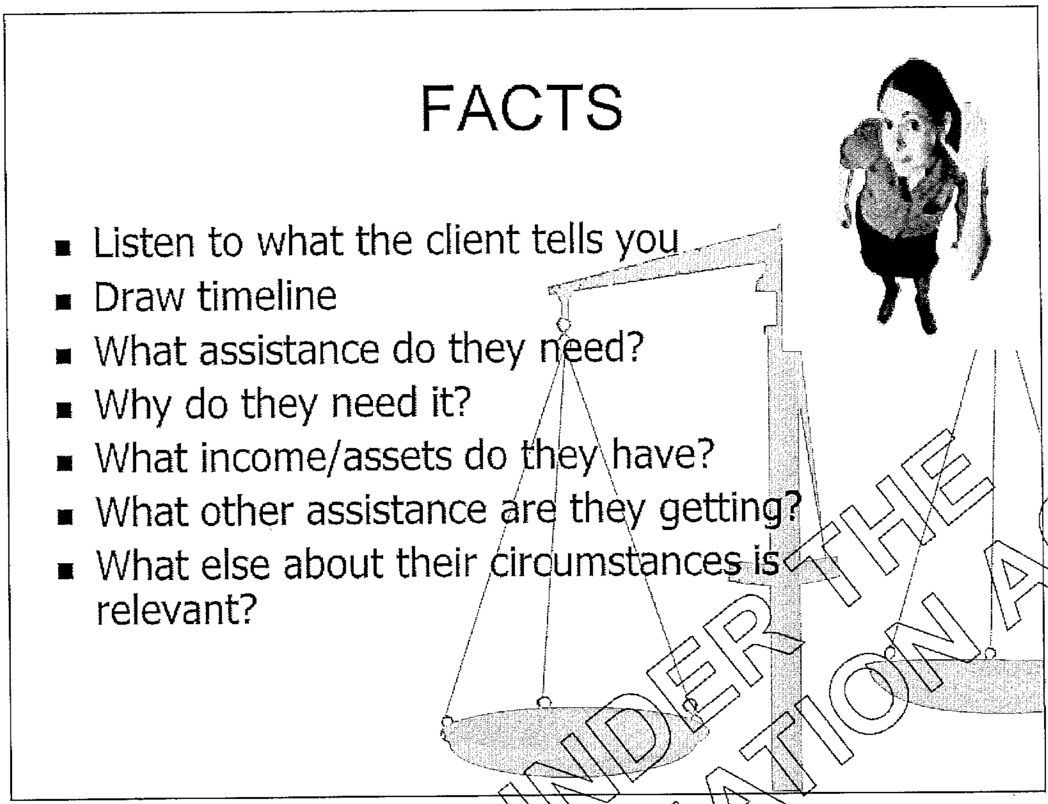


The next flow chart shows the process to follow for good decision making..

We're going to look at each element at a time, and we'll come back to this chart over and over again.

You'll note that "discretion" is in brackets. That is because some decisions require you – by law - to exercise discretion and we're particularly going to focus on these.


FLOW CHART
Facts
Do I need further information?
Law
Discretion / Policy (MAP)
Apply to facts
Decision



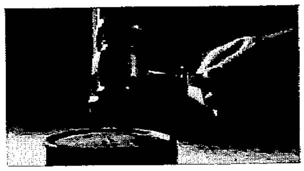
Facts – we can't stress enough the importance of getting all the facts, all the detail from a client. The client doesn't necessarily know what is relevant to their application.

They may not even know what benefit to apply for. They may ask for one type of benefit/assistance but may actually be eligible for another type.

Drawing up a timeline is useful in helping you get things in chronological order and can help with writing up how you made your decision.

Look at the relevant MAP pages to see what questions you need to ask.

LAW



- Legislation: Primary source of law for most of our decisions - eg Social Security Act
- Regulations – Subordinate legislation under Act – eg Social Security (TAS) Regulations 2005
- Ministerial directions/Welfare programmes – operational rules for assessing hardship and entitlement to extra help – eg SNG/Advances
- Case law – Decisions by SSAA and High Court

Law in general – most can be found on MAP.

The Social Security Act 1964 is the primary source of law for most of our decisions. For example, Sections of the Act set out criteria for entitlement for each benefit. It is an Act of Parliament or statute.

Then there are Regulations, for example, regulations set out rules about TAS and who can get it and what for.

Ministerial directions give guidelines on who is eligible for certain benefits such as Special Benefit.

Welfare programmes give guidelines around assistance such as SNGs.

Then there is case law – this means cases that have been to the SSAA or High Court – who have made rulings on certain issues. EXAMPLE – Scoble, Taylor

This is background information. You don't need to go to the Act and the Regulation because the relevant law is set out for you on MAP.

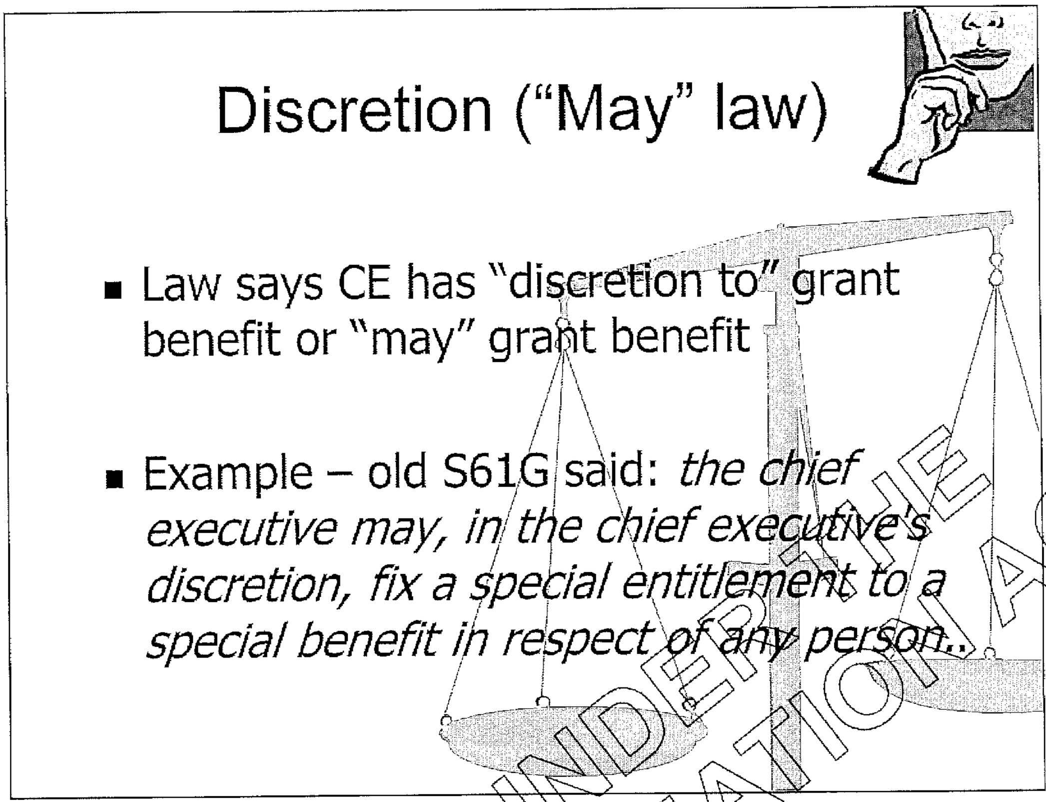
Must/Shall/Is law

- The law sets out conditions that must be met for benefit eligibility
- Examples – TAS : new s61G says..
  - "*An applicant **is** eligible..*"
  - "*TAS ... **must** be granted*"
  - "*TAS... **must not** be granted..*"

Generally, the law sets clear criteria for entitlement for benefit – related to age, residency, whether in work. Each element of the law must be met for benefit to be granted.

If each element is met, then you must grant benefit, - there is no discretion about who may – or may not – be eligible for a benefit.

TAS Regulations are an example of this sort of law.



If the law says "the chief executive has discretion" to grant benefit or "may" grant benefit, then that is a flag that you must use your discretion to make a decision.

Eg Special Benefit under the old s 61G said "the chief executive in his or her discretion..."

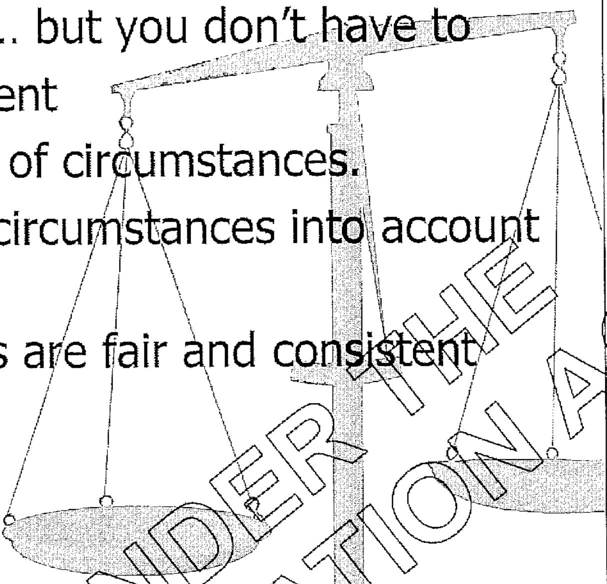
This means you may grant – but you don't have to.

How this differs from "is/shall/must" law – in those cases, you check that all the elements of law are met (ie, age, residency, work status) and if they are, you grant benefit.

Where there is a discretion, you need to looks at the rules/guidelines and do a balancing/weighing up exercise.

Discretion means

- You may grant ... but you don't have to
- Use your judgment
- Weigh up range of circumstances.
- Take individual circumstances into account but..
- Ensure decisions are fair and consistent



Put yourself in the client's shoes.

Then balance that against the ministry's position

Then justify your decision – in writing

Discretion –Policy

- Where discretion, look at policy (MAP) for..
- Guidelines for weighing up process
- Eg SNG – *PART 4 Emergency Needs – grants may only be made if CE satisfied that emergency situation exists.*
- *In deciding if emergency situation exists, must have regard to following matters..*
- Often further fact-finding required

MAP should be your first port of call. MAP sets out the law, whether there is discretion and rules for exercising this, under the relevant Ministerial Direction or Welfare Programme.

For eg, Welfare Programme for Special Needs Grants includes the following..

PART 4
EMERGENCY NEEDS
12 Requirement for emergency situation

12.1 Grants under this Part may be made only if the chief executive is satisfied that an emergency situation exists, which has given rise to an immediate need.

12.2 In deciding if an emergency situation exists, the chief executive must have regard to the following matters—

* whether the situation was unforeseen;

* if the situation could have been foreseen or predicted, whether the Applicant could reasonably have expected to have made provision in advance in order to meet the need;

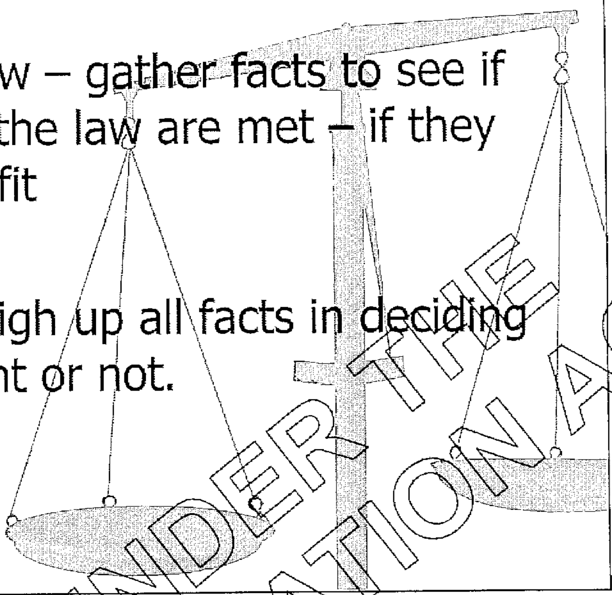
the extent to which not making a Grant would worsen the Applicant's position; or

increase or create any risk to the life or welfare of the Applicant or the Applicant's spouse or dependent children; or

cause serious hardship to the Applicant, or the Applicant's spouse or dependent children.

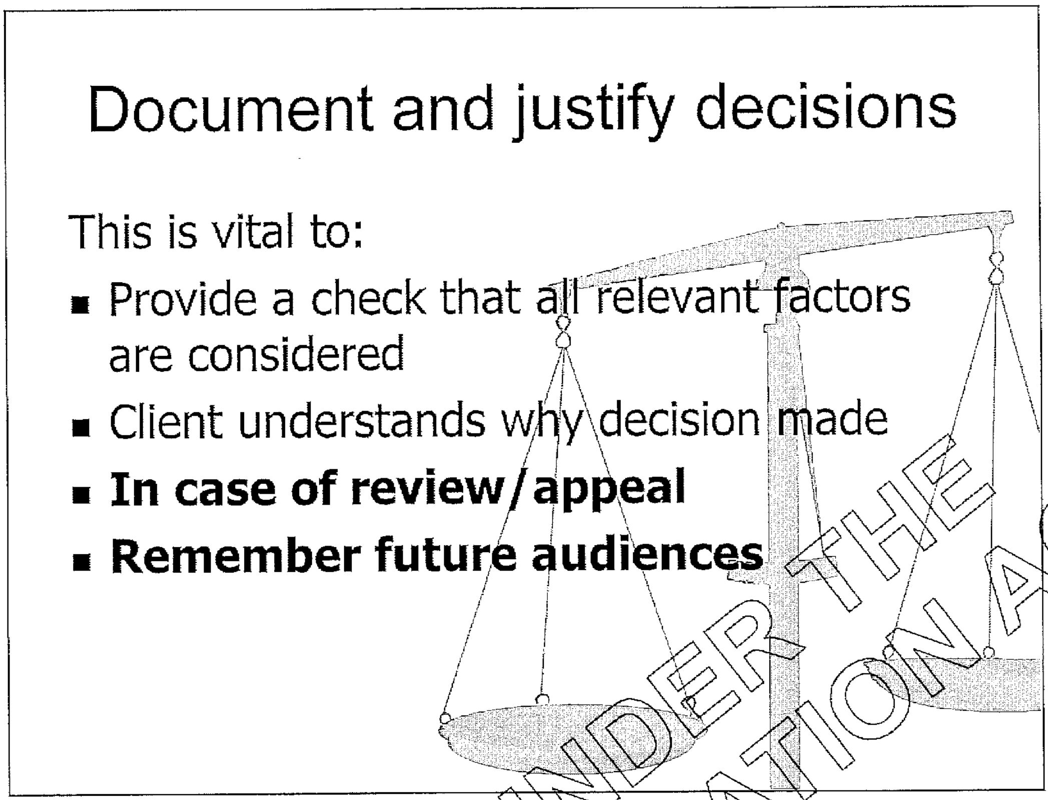
Exercising discretion

- Is/Shall/Must law – gather facts to see if all elements of the law are met – if they are, grant benefit
- Discretion – weigh up all facts in deciding whether to grant or not.



"is/shall/must" law – in those cases, you check that all the elements of law are met - these are the requirements or criteria for benefit entitlement (i.e. age, residency, work status, cash asset, income). If all elements are met, you grant benefit

Where there is a discretion, it is more complicated. Use the rules/guidelines (Ministerial Direction, Welfare Programme) set out in MAP – and do a balancing/weighing up exercise.
Put yourself in client's shoes, consider the Ministry's position – and make a decision.



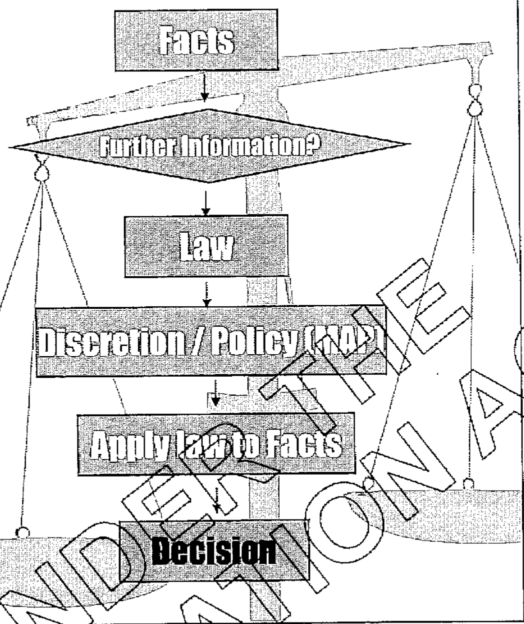
Whilst you are making a decision, document the steps you go through, the information you consider, how much weight you give it and why

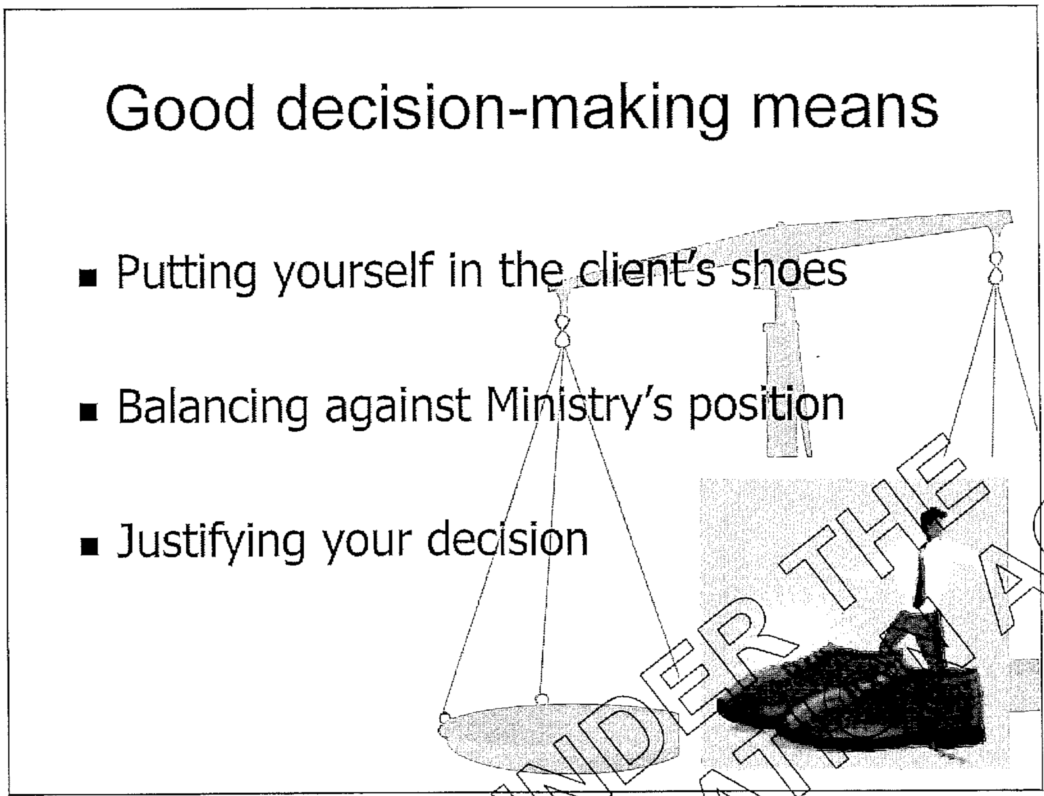
Document fully/make sure all information (including emails) could be viewed by anyone

Vital if case goes to SSAA or if our decision is subject to Judicial Review– they can see that all steps gone through, all relevant information considered and the process robust

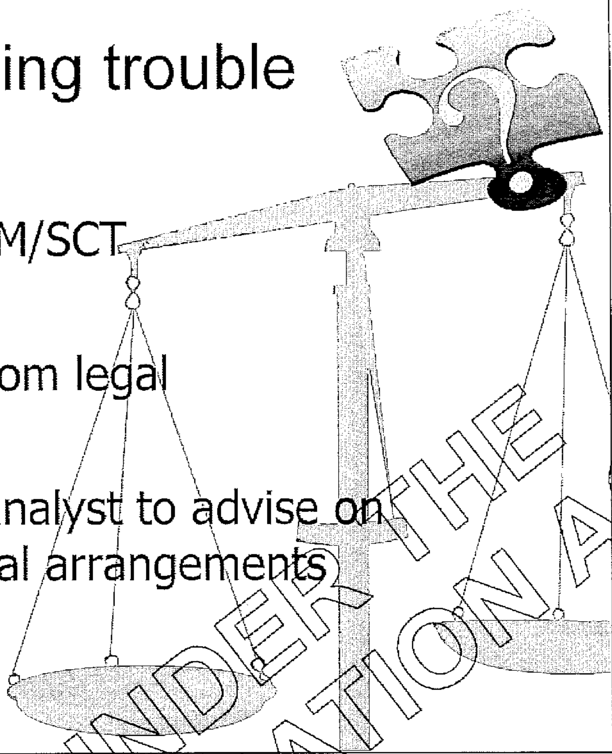
REMEMBER:

- FACTS
- LAW
- DISCRETION
- POLICY
- APPLY TO FACTS
- DECISION




Good decision-making means
▪ Putting yourself in the client's shoes
▪ Balancing against Ministry's position
▪ Justifying your decision

Having trouble



- Go to your SCM/SCT
- Seek advice from legal
- Ask financial analyst to advise on client's financial arrangements

Note: requests for advice from legal or financial analysts are made in writing and signed off by your SCM or SCT or delegated person in their absence.

There is a form for this.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Skill development training
Enhanced client engagement

Facilitator guide

Contents

Using this guide

This guide gives you the information you need to facilitate the Enhanced client engagement training programme.

This is a one day programme that provides learners with practical knowledge, skills and strategies to work effectively with clients.

This course promotes communication and interpersonal skills that support the assessment of individual's circumstances, supporting people to achieve quality engagement and real outcomes for the clients they work with.

Audience

Any staff in client facing roles will benefit from completing this training course.

Resources

You'll use the following resources:

- learner guide
- copies of the Staff Secure Guidelines
- poster or flipchart paper and pens
- whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- parking space
- post-it note pads.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide learners with the information, skills and techniques to:

- establish and maintain rapport with clients
- identify the elements of effective conversations and how they allow us to develop a thorough and precise picture of our client's situation and needs
- utilise effective questioning techniques such as appropriate open, closed, clarifying and probing questions
- recognise anxiety, anger or hostility and use de-escalation strategies to defuse conflict early and appropriately
- use strategies to best manage the giving of bad news
- respond safely and professionally in a conflict situation.

Session outline

	Course introduction	10 minutes
Module one	Building client rapport – What is rapport? – Why is it important? – Five techniques to build rapport	120 minutes
Module two	Elements of effective conversation – Inviting conversation – Listening to the conversation – Summarising the conversation	90 minutes
Module three	Managing client conflict – Understanding conflict – De-escalation techniques	120 minutes
Module four	Delivering outcomes – How to deliver outcomes to clients – Avoiding getting hooked	60 minutes
	Wrap up and close	20 minutes

Total timing: seven hours

Introduction

10 minutes

Learning objectives	- The purpose of this training is to teach you some skills and techniques to support you working with clients. - These skills will support the conversations and engagement you have with your clients.
Key messages	- At The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) everything we do is about people - helping New Zealanders to help themselves to be safe, strong and independent. - The success of the work that you do relies on the conversations and engagement you have with clients.
- Resources	- Learner guide: – Inside this guide (includes session outline) – page four.

Welcome

- Welcome learners to training session and work through housekeeping, timing, breaks, toilets, smoking, evacuation, mobile phones and if any queries to see a member of the facilitation team.
- Take learners through an ice-breaker activity at the beginning of the training session – this could be incorporated with an introduction round if required.
- Take learners through the learning objectives, session outline and key messages.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Module one ~ Building client rapport 120 minutes

• Resources	• Learner guide: – Module one ~ Building client rapport – page five – Why is rapport important? – page six – Rapport building techniques – pages seven-16 – Using your body language – page eight – What do we want to communicate? – page nine – Types of body language – page 10 – Body language basics – page 11 – Match and mirror – page 12 – Listen actively – page 13 – 10 top hints for listening actively – page 14 – Ask inviting questions – page 15 – Make your client feel important – page 16

Explain

In this module we will look at:

- What is rapport?
- Why is rapport important?
- How do we establish rapport with clients?

Brainstorm

- Ask learners "What is rapport?"
- Record responses on the whiteboard or on flipchart paper.

Advise learners that there is space to record responses in the learner guide on page five.

Debrief

Discuss the group's ideas. Look for answers such as:

- a state of mutual trust and responsiveness
- being in sync
- being on the same wavelength
- having a sense of familiarity and comfort.

We use rapport to build an open and trusting relationship with our client and supports open and effective communication.

Discuss

Let's look at why rapport is important in the work that we do. Ask learners to:

- Think about this for a moment:
  - Imagine you have something happen in your life that is causing you a lot of worry ~ **who would you talk to about it?**
- Now think about the person that you chose to talk to ~ **do you have rapport with them?**

Most people turn to, seek help from, listen to and take advice from people in their lives that they have rapport with. This may include their friends, family, close work colleagues, and people in their life circle. Generally this is people they trust and feel comfortable with, someone who will listen to and understand them.

Brainstorm

Facilitate a discussion prompting learners to share the reasons why they believe rapport is important.

Advise learners that there is space to take notes in the learner guide on page six.

Debrief

Look for answers such as:

- rapport helps establish trust, promotes open communication
- if you have good rapport with someone, you can talk about any subject
- open conversation will result in more information being shared. That gives greater insight into how to support and help that client
- if rapport is established with a client at the beginning, subsequent discussions will be easier
- with rapport you can much more easily communicate, create a feeling of connection, convey trust, generate empathy
- rapport supports you to share information and support, establish a good working relationship, understand a client's needs and find a solution to their problem and be able to set a future direction with a client

Summarise

Rapport strengthens our ability to engage with our clients, assess their needs, consider alternatives and take on change.

Rapport building techniques

In this module we are going to look at five simple techniques that will help you build rapport with your clients. Refer learners to the space to record these five techniques in the learner guide on pages seven -16.

- Using your body language.
- Matching and mirroring.
- Listening actively.

- Asking inviting questions.
- Making your client feel important.

Using your body language

Highlight the importance of body language with learners.

Explain

- It takes just one-tenth of a second for us to judge someone based on our first impression of them.
- To your clients, you want your body language to communicate confidence and friendly openness. This will put them at ease and help establish rapport.
- We want our body language to send the right signals.

Activity ~ using your body language

Ask learners to study the pictures on page eight of the learner guide. Each of the three pictures shows two people communicating with each other.

Complete 'Picture one' together as a whole group.

Discuss the observable body language of Person A and Person B. Be specific in describing what they are doing with their body and the message that it portraits.

Note: Individuals may have different interpretations of these pictures. This is fine. What is important is the discussion and the opportunity to examine body language and explore how we interpret and react to the message it sends. These 'answers' are just suggested observations.

Complete and discuss 'Picture two and three' as a group, in pairs or individually (depending on the size and needs of the group).

Debrief

Picture one	
Person 'A'	**Person 'B'**
Observable body language	**Observable body language**
Hands under the table. Body facing forward, head turned towards person B. Eyebrows raised.	One hand raised touching her throat. Leaning forward slightly. Twisted away from person A.
Body language messages	**Body language messages**
Passive? Tense? Disinterested?	Guarded? Listening? Uncertain?

Picture two	
Person 'A' **Observable body language** Body facing person B. Head tilted. **Body language messages** Attentive? Listening?	**Person 'B'** **Observable body language** Tilting body to face person A. Leaning forward slightly. Smiling. **Body language messages** Open? Listening? Friendly?

Picture three	
Person 'A' **Observable body language** Leaning forward. Legs crossed. Holding pen in one hand. **Body language messages** Frustrated? Intent? Accusing?	**Person 'B'** **Observable body language** Leaning back. One leg crossed. Hands in lap. **Body language messages** Impassive? Defensive? Guarded?

Brainstorm

Ask learners to think about the relationships we have with our clients and the role we play to support them towards independence.

What do we want to communicate?

Learners can brainstorm words or sentences to describe what they want their body language to communicate when they are working with clients.

Tips for using open and attentive body language

Draw a stick figure on the whiteboard or flipchart.

Explain

- It takes just one-tenth of a second for us to judge someone and make our first impression.
- To your clients, you want your body language to communicate confidence and friendly openness. This will put them at ease and help establish rapport.
- We all know that we 'close off' in a lift to feel safer as our personal space is invaded. We look up or down and cross our arms. This is an obvious case of 'closed' body language. It might be appropriate in a lift but in most other situations it will 'close' the other person down. They will not respond to our advances.
- So learning to give 'open, positive' signals will literally 'open' people up, resulting in better communication and understanding.

Body

- An upright posture demonstrates confidence.
- Keep your back straight.
- Relax your shoulders.
- Breathe from your abdomen.

Face

- Have eye contact, but don't stare.
- Hold your head high.
- Head nodding means agreement and is a way of keeping the speaker talking.
- Smile.

Arms and legs

- Use your hands confidently.
- Contain your gestures.
- Open palms indicate an open attitude.
- Arms crossed over the chest sets up a barrier.
- Avoid nervous gestures – rubbing, bouncing, drumming, playing with jewellery, twirling hair, fidgeting.
- If standing, let your arms rest by your sides.
- When sitting, focus the direction of your arms and legs towards the person you are talking with.
- When sitting, lean slightly forward which conveys interest and attention.
- Be aware of cultural differences.

Refer learners to page 11 of the learner guide which describes commonly observed types of body language.

Discuss

Read the following:

In the 1960 TV debate between John F Kennedy and Richard Nixon, both candidates answered well. But on a poll conducted the next day, there were completely different results between TV and radio audiences – between those who had seen and heard and those who had only heard.

Listeners on radio were convinced Nixon had won the debate, his arguments were clear. And viewers on TV were convinced Kennedy had won, he came across as likeable and believable. This was despite the fact that Nixon's arguments were probably clearer. People believed Kennedy more – they bought into his body language and the signals he gave of. They didn't trust Nixon from the body language he was using.

Link for the debate video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QazmVHAO0os

- People believe what they see far more than what they hear.
- You can change your body language to show empathy and to influence someone by slowing down your movements and taking away any unintended closed body language of your own.
- You can learn to relax, calm and connect with other people purely by the way you hold yourself, the way you move and the way you interact.
- Learning about body language is not all hard work... it takes 42 muscles to frown but only 17 to smile!

Match and mirror

Explain

Mirroring and matching is a fundamental skill when establishing rapport.

- It can often be observed in conversation.
- To some extent people do it naturally. For example listeners will typically smile or frown along with the speaker.
- Since people usually accept their mirror image with ease, mirroring the person with whom one is speaking generally makes them feel more relaxed and encourages them to open up.

Ask: What do you think is the difference between mirroring and matching?

Here is an example: to mirror a person who has raised their right arm would be to raise your left arm (ie a mirror image). To match, you would do exactly the same as the other person; you would raise your right arm.

Review the notes on page 12 describing ways in which mirroring and matching can be used to build rapport.

Activity – matching/mirroring body language

Explain that this activity provides an opportunity to try out body language and mirroring/matching rapport building techniques.

Place learners with someone they haven't worked with before. In this activity they will each have a turn being a 'speaker' and a 'listener'.

Ask the 'speaker' to think about and share with their partner:

- A time when they were working with someone and were aware that you did not have rapport with them. How did you know? What did you do? What was the outcome? (Write this on a whiteboard or flipchart paper for easy reference.)

During this activity the 'listener' is to subtly incorporate mirroring and matching rapport building techniques into their body language and responses to their partner.

After five minutes stop the activity and ask pairs to swap roles. Repeat the activity.

After five minutes, stop the activity again. Ask pairs to debrief their experience.

- As a speaker, how did it feel having someone listen to you like that? How did the listener's response impact on what you shared?

- As a listener, practicing mirroring and matching rapport techniques what did you do? What impact do you think you had on the speaker and what they shared?

Record the key points raised by the group.

Debrief

Rapport has the ability to transform the communication, trust and engagement you have with your clients.

Listen actively

Activity

Ask learners write down on a piece of paper the names of three people they consider to be good listeners.

Then ask the group if anyone has written down the name of a person they don't like or don't trust, (they very rarely do).

Next, ask if the people they have named are people they like, trust or have rapport with, (the answer is usually yes).

Debrief

This activity shows the strong link between being a good listener and building rapport with people.

Active listening techniques

Active listening is a communication technique that increases understanding and rapport between speaker and listener.

Rather than passively listening to the speaker (or not listening at all), the active listener pays close attention to both verbal and body language, then repeats back the most important points of the speaker's message.

Have a pre-prepared poster with the following and advise learners that there is space to take notes in the learner guide on page 13.

L	Look interested, get interested (sit up, lean forward, act interested)
I	Involve yourself by responding: • Nod your head • Use appropriate facial expressions • Use minimal encourages, such as "Ok", "yes", "right", "Ah ha", "Mm hmm".
S	Stay on target (focus on what is being said, listen for the real meaning)

T	Test your understanding (Paraphrase, repeat key points)
E	Evaluate the message. • Think about what the person has shared with you • What are they communicating?
N	Navigate a way forward • Does the person want to talk more? • If so, ask open and inviting questions. How? When? What? Tell me…

It's important when building rapport and practicing active listening techniques that you check that you understand what has been said.

- Paraphrase, summarise, reflect or clarify back to the other person what you think they have said.

Activity ~ speaking and listening

Learners continue to work in their pairs for this activity, sharing the roles of 'speaker' and 'listener'.

Ask the 'speaker' to think about and talk with their partner for five minutes about:

- a best friend that you have had in your life and how you became friends
- the rapport you have/had with your friend and the impact the friendship has had on you/your life. (Write this on a whiteboard or flipchart paper for easy reference.)

During this activity the 'listener' is to subtly incorporate body language and active listening techniques to build rapport with their partner and encourage conversation and communication. Encourage listeners to be brave and try new and different responses that they might not use regularly yet.

After five minutes stop the activity and ask pairs to swap roles. Repeat the activity.

After five minutes, end the activity.

Debrief

Ask pairs to debrief their experience:

- As a speaker, how did it feel having someone listen to you like that? How did the listener's response impact on what you shared?
- As a listener, practicing rapport techniques, what did you do? What impact do you think you had on the speaker and what they shared?

Record key points that shared by learners on the whiteboard or flipchart paper.

Summarise

The key element to establishing, building and maintaining rapport is your ability to pay attention to the responses you receive.

Refer to page 14 in the learner guide which gives 10 top hints to listen actively. Treat this as a checklist.

Which ones do you do now? Which ones will you practice and after this training, use more?

Learners tick the listening skills they already use and highlight the ones they can develop further.

Ask inviting questions

Questions are one of your most powerful tools in building rapport. They are your tool to guide conversation, gain information, uncover underlying issues, clarify understanding and help your client explore options and alternatives for themselves.

Ask what do you think are the two qualities of inviting questions?

Discuss suggestions and emphasise that inviting questions are **open questions** asked in an **inviting and caring manner**.

Activity ~ ask inviting questions

Ask participants to consider and record their answers to the five questions in the learner guide on page 15. You may choose for them to do this individually or in pairs.

As a whole group, discuss answers.

Note: some of these questions are designed to generate discussion and debate. You may not have consensus on what the correct answer is.

Debrief

1. **True or false:** Asking questions to build rapport is effective because most people like to talk about themselves.
True. Most people like talking about themselves. On average, people spend 60% of conversations talking about themselves.
2. If a client is upset, angry, depressed or bothered by a question it is best to... a). change the topic? b). ask the question in a different way? c). explore the reasons behind the client's feelings?
Any of these answers could be correct depending on the individual, the circumstances and the rapport you had with them.
3. **True or false:** It's not what you say but how you say it.
True. Research suggests that 33% of our message is communicated through tone compared to 7% communicated through words. How we say things is very important and the tones, volume, pitch and pace of our voice is an

important tool in building rapport.
4. Which is more important – the quality of questions or the quantity of information?
Which came first the chicken or the egg? Both questions and information are important, however without quality questions we are less likely to get quality information.
5. **True or false:** Rapport influences the responses clients give to questions.
True. Who are you more likely to open up to, explore problems with and take advice and support from? Someone that you trust, that you feel understands you? Absolutely.

Summarise

It is important to use inviting questions to build rapport.

Questions are one of your most powerful tools in gaining rapport.

The success of our conversations and client engagement relies on the rapport we have with our clients.

Make your client feel important

Share a quote from Maya Angelou, an American poet who said:

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Everyone wants to be made to feel important. When you make people you meet feel that they matter you instantly create an environment of trust and appreciation.

Activity – quote me

Ask participants to consider each quote and record the specific rapport building skills and techniques they describe.

Discuss answers.

Debrief

"All people smile in the same language"
• A smile is one of the most obvious and effective methods of universal non-verbal communication. It is one of the first things someone will notice about you. A smile both physically as well as subconsciously transmits the message "I'm glad you're here and I'm happy to meet you". • One of the easiest rapport building techniques is to smile.
"A person's name is to that person the sweetest sound"

- When we use someone's name in conversation we are sending the message that they and what they bring to the conversation are valuable and important.
- Using a person's name makes that encounter personal and professional.
- Attempting to say a difficult sounding name, even if we fail to say it correctly and are corrected, shows respect to the person.

"A compliment is verbal sunshine"

- Compliments are a form of feedback that is always positive and sincere. They communicate appreciation and recognition.
- Acknowledging a client's background, experience, expertise, strengths and accomplishments builds rapport and supports a strength based approach to helping your client.
- A compliment must be sincere. The rule is, "If you don't mean it, don't say it".

"There is no such thing as a small act of kindness, every act creates a ripple"

- Kindness can be shown in many ways:
  - meeting a client in reception and introducing yourself
  - walking side by side with the client to your desk
  - holding a door open
  - pulling up a chair for a client to sit on
- Simple acts of kindness say without words that the other person is valued, respected and appreciated.
- Practice random acts of kindness. It's good for the soul!

Summary of building client rapport

When you make the clients you work with feel important, you create a climate of trust and appreciation and establish rapport which strengthens your ability to provide the support and help your client needs.

End with this quote:

"Too often we underestimate the power of a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

(Leo F Buscaglia, author and motivational speaker)

Module two ~ Elements of effective conversation

90 minutes

• Resources	• Learner guide: – Module two ~ Elements of effective conversation – page 17. – Step one ~ Invite conversation – pages 18-22. – Spot the difference – page 23. – Step two ~ Listening to the conversation – page 24. – Step three ~ Summarising the conversation – pages 25-27.

Explain

In this module we will look at the three steps of effective conversation:

1. inviting conversation
2. listening to the conversation
3. summarising the conversation

Step one ~ Invite conversation

The first step in any conversation is to invite the client to talk.

- Questions invite the client to tell their story. They act as an invitation to talk.
- Questions encourage a person to share information we need to assess their situation and determine what help and support they require.

We have already talked about inviting questions which are open questions, asked in an inviting and caring way.

Now are going to look at questions in general.

Ask: What is a good question?

Look for answers like:

- invites participation
- is easily understood
- thought provoking
- enhances and extends understanding.

There are four types of questions that we will cover in this section today:

- open questions
- closed questions
- probing questions

- clarifying questions.

Ask learners to describe each question type to check their existing knowledge.

E.g: Tell me about open questions… / closed questions… / probing questions… / clarifying questions…

Debrief

Open questions

Open the person answering them up to provide a long response ~ encourages the sharing of more information.

Closed questions

Invite a short focused answer and can often be either right or wrong ~ can simply require a 'Yes' or 'No' answer.

As the choice of answer is limited closed questions are usually easy to answer and can be effectively used early in a conversation to encourage participation.

Probing questions

Dig deeper to find out more about a person or their situation ~ when a response to another question is vague you can ask probing questions to explore or find out more.

Clarifying questions

Are designed to clear up confusion ~ can ensure that the listener understands what they have been told.

Activity ~ spot the difference

There are two options for completing this activity:

1. One is for learners to complete the activity in the learner guide on page 23 and discuss answers.
2. Or you can use Appendix one at the back of this facilitator guide to cut out and provide a sorting activity for individuals or small groups to complete.

Encourage discussion around what defines a question as either Open, Closed, Probing or Clarifying.

Debrief

- There will be varying opinions as to what are the correct answers as there are similarities between different types of questions and, for example, a question can have both open and probing or clarifying qualities.
- What is most important is effectively using questions to invite the client to talk, opening up the doors to valuable details that we need to assess our client's situation and ensure they receive the information, support and help they require.

1. What has happened?	Open
2. What do you mean by …?	Probing / Clarifying

3. Can you give me an example?	Probing / Clarifying
4. In what way might it be good for you to…?	Probing
5. I'd like to hear about…	Open
6. Did you enjoy the …?	Closed
7. Describe your situation to me …	Open
8. I want to check I understand, can you...?	Clarifying
9. Why do you feel that way?	Probing
10. I've noticed… can you tell me …?	Open
11. Will you be able to attend…?	Closed
12. If… doesn't change what do you think will happen?	Probing
13. How does …fit into your picture?	Probing
14. Where would you like to be in … years?	Open
15. When is … going to take place?	Closed
16. Do you have a …?	Closed
17. When you say… do you mean…?	Clarifying
18. How did you feel when … happened?	Probing
19. I understand … are there any other aspects…?	Clarifying
20. Would you like to …?	Closed

Step two ~ Listen to the conversation

The second step to effective conversations is to listen attentively. This sounds simple but in a busy day with lots of tasks to complete and people to interact with this key part of interviewing can be overlooked.

Listening is not passive. It is an activity demanding concentration and effort.

We looked at the principles of effective listening in the module on rapport.

Let's see what you can remember…

Write L I S T E N vertically on a whiteboard or flipchart paper.

Ask participants to share what they remember from the rapport module. What listening skills and techniques did each of these letters stand for?

Activity ~ listening habits

Place two large posters on the wall – each with a large ear drawn on it. One poster has the heading 'Great listening habits' and the other has the heading 'Bad listening habits' on it.

- Ask learners: "Think of someone that you know who is a great listener. Picture them in your mind and think about what it is that they do when they listen to you. Write all the listening habits or skills that good and bad listeners use on individual post-it notes and place them on the corresponding poster."
- Refer to the learner's post-it notes on the bad listening habits or skills poster.
  - **Ask:** How do you feel when you talk with someone who is a bad listener?
- Discuss the feelings that come about from bad listening.
- Then follow the same process, identifying and discussing good listening habits and the effect these have on others and on an interview situation.
  - **Ask:** How do you feel when you talk with someone who is a great listener?

Debrief

Ask learners to reflect on their own listening habits and complete for themselves the same activity as above in the learner guide on page 24.

In pairs, discuss how to strengthen listening habits.

Discuss when our habits are at their best and worst. It will emerge that our bad habits are at their worst when we are bored, busy or stressed.

Step three ~ Summarise the conversation

Once information has been gathered, the next thing we do is summarise, to check we have it right and that there is nothing else missing.

Activity ~ fill in the gaps

Discuss the benefits of summarising using the answers to fill in the gap activity in the learner guide on page 25.

Share: By summing up the facts as you understand them you…

- **Confirm** that you understand
- Allow the client to correct any **misunderstandings**
- Open up opportunities for more **discussion**
- Share something that is therapeutic. The client feels heard and **understood**

Four principles of effective summarising

Discuss effective summarising and advise learners that they can make notes in the learner guide on page 25.

1. Use your own words to reflect back what you have heard.
2. Be tentative when you summarise. Check with the client that you've got it right.

3. Concentrate on the real gist of what the client is saying. It's best to talk about a couple of big things rather than attempt to reflect back all the little things the client has said.
4. Use summarising whenever appropriate in the interview process. Avoid over-summarising. It is best used after questioning and listening has resulted in a chunk of information being shared. Then it is time to summarise and check that you understand what has been shared and that both parties are on the same wavelength.

Examples of summarising:

- "I'd like to go over what we've covered."
- "To recap, what we've talked about is..."
- "Let's summarise at this point".
- "Let me see if I have got this right..."
- "Are you saying that...?"
- Then, when you have finished, check out if you have it right.
  - "Does that sound right?"

Quick summarising can be used by making a statement but framing it as a question to check in that you are on the right track.

Quick summarising examples:

- "It didn't work out?"
- "You really like it there?"
- "That kind of work didn't suit your skills?"

Activity ~ summarising conversation information

Refer learners to read through the scenarios in the learner guide on pages 26-27. Advise them to script what they would say next to summarise.

Discuss ideas and remind participants that:

- we summarise after a chunk of information has been shared
- summarising confirms that you understand, allows the client to correct any misunderstandings, opens up opportunities for more discussion, is therapeutic and makes the client feel heard and understood.

During the discussion, highlight the benefits of using this skill for both the conversation partners.

Summary of effective conversations

The essential thing is that both parties of a conversation agree with the summary. If a disparity is found it is important to re-summarise.

Share the principles of effective summarising:

- use your own words to reflect back what you have heard
- be tentative when you summarise - check with the client that you've got it right
- concentrate on the real gist of what the client is saying. It's best to talk about a couple of big things rather than attempt to reflect back all the little things the client has said

- use summarising whenever appropriate in the interview process. Avoid over-summarising. It is best used after questioning and listening has resulted in a chunk of information being shared. Then it is time to summarise and check that you understand what has been shared and that both parties are on the same wavelength.

Module three ~ Managing client conflict

• Resources	• Learner guide: **120 minutes** – Module three ~ Managing client conflict – pages 28-29. – The three stages of conflict – pages 30-38. – Susan's story – page 39. – Our policy and practices for Staff Safety – page 40.

Explain

In this module we will look at the three stages of conflict:

1. anxiety
2. verbal hostility
3. physical hostility

Ask learners to choose one of the frequencies below for the following question:

- Have you ever had to handle an agitated person?
  - Never?
  - Occasionally?
  - Frequently?

Ask for a show of hands for each frequency.

Share the following points:

- International research into workplace hostility shows that almost all people who work with other people in some way experience situations where they encounter anger, anxiety, agitation or hostility.
- Conflict is a given by-product of human interaction. As we all know, it can even be present in close family, friend or colleague interactions. In fact, we are all 'agitated individuals' at times.
- The Ministry places high priority on staff safety and has a wide range of safety and security policies and practices in place to maximise workplace safety.

What we are learning today are simple, practical techniques that are designed to give you added confidence when confronted with an angry or hostile person. These skills can be used in any occupation to de-escalate any type of hostile interaction.

Activity ~ personal space and body language

We are now going to do an activity that focuses on personal space.

This activity provides the participants with an experience that demonstrates how anxiety, non-verbal communication and personal space can influence a person's behaviour.

Activity instructions for part one:

1. Ask participants to choose a partner, preferably someone they do not know all that well.

2. Instruct participants to form two lines, approximately three metres apart, so that they are facing their partners.
3. Choose a participant for demonstration purposes. Explain to this person that you are going to walk directly toward them face to face, and instruct them to place their hand up and say 'stop' when they feel uncomfortable.
4. Walk toward the participant, stopping when they raise their hand and say 'stop'.
5. Following your demonstration, have the group in one line maintain their ground. On your cue, have the participants in the other line walk directly toward their partners. For maximum effectiveness, instruct participants to maintain eye contact and refrain from talking.
6. Repeat the exercise, reversing roles. Those in the group who stood their ground will now do the walking, and those who did the walking will now stand their ground.
7. Describe the anxious behaviours you observed and explain the concept of personal space.

Point out that each individual has their own personal space and any intrusion into that space increases anxiety and could be perceived as a threat.

Activity instructions for part two:

1. Ask participants to choose a different partner and maintain the same lines as described in the previous activity.
2. Choose a participant for demonstration. Ask them to simply hold their ground and maintain face-to-face, eye to eye contact during the exercise.
3. Walk directly toward the participant and stop about one leg length away, maintaining a face to face and squared shoulder stance.
4. Take a large step toward the participant, invading their personal space. Hold this position for five seconds while still maintaining eye contact.
5. Take one step closer and maintain this position for five seconds.
6. Finally take one step back and pivot to the side, forming an L-shape with your partner. This allows you to demonstrate the professional stance.
7. Following your demonstration, have the participants in one line hold their ground while you cue the other group to complete the above activity.
8. Reverse roles.
9. Ask participants to return to their seats for a brief follow up discussion.

As participants are performing the exercise, look for anxious behaviours. At the completion of the exercise discuss the behaviours' you observed such as blushing, nervous laughter, failure to maintain eye contact, increased breathing rates etc.

Discuss with participants that they are in a positive situation (the training environment) yet this activity still created discomfort and anxiety for some people. Imagine what the effect might be if someone was already upset or angry or anxious and another person inadvertently moved into their personal space. This could escalate the individual's behaviour to the point of physical hostility.

Discuss the effect of standing back and in an L-shape position (the professional stance). Highlight that this stance is less threatening, less confrontational, and more stable and provides greater options to move if necessary.

Debrief

- We have just experienced some activities that have highlighted two areas that we need to be aware of when working with someone who is upset or angry.
- Our knowledge and use of personal space and body language will support us when working with anxious or hostile people.

Personal space

- Varies depending on gender, ethnicity, size, relationship, culture, situation and past experiences.
- The average personal space is 90cm.
- Any invasion into someone else's personal space can be perceived as a threat. An invasion will increase a person's anxiety.

Body language

- Body language includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, movements and stance.
- A staff member's body language can serve to escalate or de-escalate a situation.
- Five easy ways to use body language
  - Be relaxed
  - Adopt an open posture
  - Lean towards the other person
  - Use eye contact
  - Face the other person squarely or at a minimal angle.

Professional stance

The professional stance refers to the body position demonstrated during the body language exercise. The staff member stands to the side of the hostile person and maintains a distance of at least one leg length from the person. The benefits of the professional stance are that it:

1. Communicates respect by honouring personal space.
2. Is non-threatening and non-challenging.
3. Maintains professionalism.

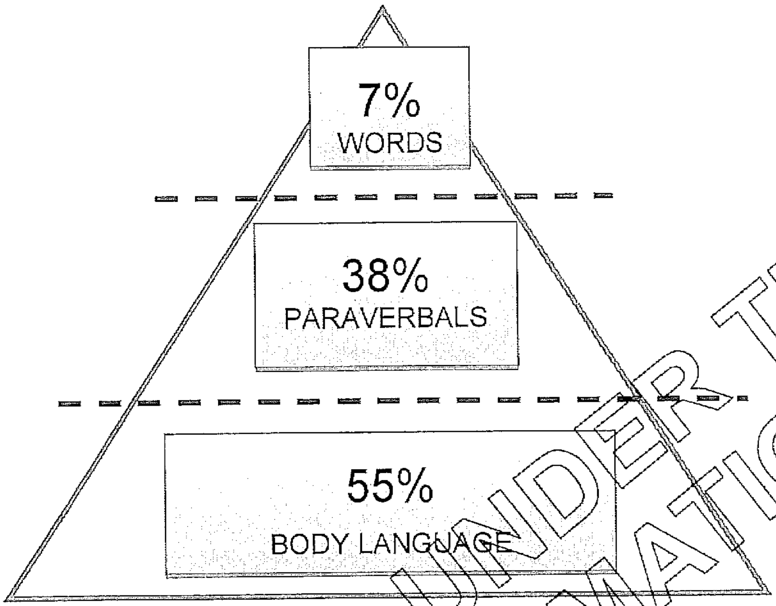
Using your voice

Let's look at how we can use our verbal communication to be supportive and de-escalate hostility.

- Only a small percentage of the message we deliver to a person is delivered through the words. Two sentences containing identical words can convey completely different meanings.
- How we speak to an upset or angry person is important.
- It's not what you say but how you say it.

Draw the pyramid below on the whiteboard and explain that in a study of communication, psychologist Albert Mehrabian discovered that:

- only 7% of a message is communicated by the words we use
- 38% is communicated by the tone of our voice (Para verbal communication)
- 55% of the message is communicated by our body language



- Paraverbal communication

When someone is upset, angry, anxious or hostile we don't want to communicate to that person in a way that may escalate their behaviour and place us in a dangerous situation.

Our paraverbal communication becomes very important.

These are three key things to remember...

Tone - Try and avoid inflections of impatience, condescension, inattention, frustration. Keep it neutral.

Volume - Keep the volume appropriate for the distance and situation.

Rhythm - Use an even rate and rhythm when speaking.

The three stages of conflict

Using flipchart or poster paper show learners the three stages of conflict and the corresponding appropriate response to each stage of conflict by drawing the diagrams below and talking through the notes and taking learners through the related activities below each as you do this. (You may have already prepared the posters.)

Highlight to participants that:

- Each stage describes the behaviour of the hostile person and the most appropriate response by a staff member.
- The aim of each response is to calm the hostile person so that they regain control of what they are doing and saying.
- By recognising signs of anxiety or hostility early and intervening appropriately, potentially threatening situations will be prevented from happening.

- Our actions can prevent crises from occurring.

Anxiety

Behaviour

Anxious

A noticeable change in behaviour

Pacing, fidgeting, drumming fingers, wringing hands, staring

Response

Be supportive

Show care, concern, a willingness to help, be empathetic, non-judgemental, reassuring.

Smile. Listen.

Brainstorm

Ask "What are some examples of behaviour that you may see in a person who is feeling anxious?"

List the responses provided by the group around the diagram on the poster.

Debrief

Look for answers like:

- shifting weight from one foot to another
- tapping fingers
- frowning
- flushed face
- clenched jaw
- rapid or abrupt speech
- rise in voice volume

- rise in voice pitch
- jumpy body movements

Remember that many of these signs can be related to other reasons (e.g. flushed face can signify embarrassment or hot or high blood pressure) so where possible you are looking for a combination of signs that indicate someone is anxious.

Discussion points:

- An overt expression of hostility is most often preceded by signs that an individual is anxious. This anxiety is usually demonstrated through a noticeable increase or change in nonverbal behaviour. This is a tip off that trouble is brewing.
- By recognising non-verbal signs of anxiety and intervening in a helpful, supportive way, many potentially threatening incidents will never happen. Sometimes all it takes is a word of reassurance, a smile, an offer to help or a willingness to listen without judgement.
- What is most important is showing care and concern for the person who is anxious.
- It is easy to overlook the anxious person because they are not causing a disruption or overtly asking for our assistance. By overlooking an anxious person, we miss an important opportunity to be proactive and prevent a potential crisis from developing further.

Defusing anxiety

To defuse anxiety we should be supportive. Let's get into the specifics of what this involves…

Ask "What are some of the skills and techniques that you use when working with clients to be supportive and defuse anxiety?"

Advise learners that there is space to take notes in the learner guide on page 31.

Debrief

Look for answers like:

- Show care and concern "How can I help you…"
- Offer to help "My name is Kelly and I'm here to help you with your application today…"
- Show a willingness to listen. Look and sound like you are listening. If the client is standing, arrange seating. If they are in reception, sit down next to them
- Give a word of reassurance "Raoul is going to be another 5 minutes. Can I help you with that application while you are waiting?"
- Smile
- Respect personal space
- Use the person's name. A person's name is one of the warmest sounds they hear. If says you have recognised them as an individual
- Use open and interested body language. Face towards the client, use eye contact and appropriate facial expressions
- Use a neutral tone, appropriate volume and even rhythm of speech
- Make sure the client knows your name and that you're there to help them
- Apologise if necessary "I'm sorry that you haven't received the information you need…"

- Deliver service excellence – remember the five star service principles – be consistent, prompt, professional, understanding and respectful

One of the keys to conflict management is prevention ~ if hostility can be avoided then that is good news for all!

Strategies for de-escalating anxiety

Discuss the following points:

- The key to de-escalating hostility is to identify the behaviour and match it with the right response to defuse the situation.
- Different types of behaviour need different responses.
- Over reacting and under reacting or doing nothing - are ineffective and dangerous.
- Identify the behaviour and respond appropriately. If the behaviour changes, change your response.
- A staff member's response to a conflict situation can influence the outcome of the situation. Some responses are likely to make a bad situation worse. Some are more likely to bring about positive results.

Summary

- If a person you are working with presents with worrying behaviour, they could have a mental health condition. If there is a noticeable increase in anxious behaviour, take steps to defuse the anxiety early and use communication skills to prevent an incident from occurring or getting worse. Actively listen, be supportive and avoid being judgemental in an attempt to find out what is distressing the person.

Verbal hostility

Next we are going to look at the second stage of conflict – verbal hostility and the techniques best suited to defusing an individual who has reached this level of hostility.

Behaviour

Verbally hostile

Individual is beginning to loose rationality.

Becomes belligerent and challenges authority.

↓

Response

Set limits

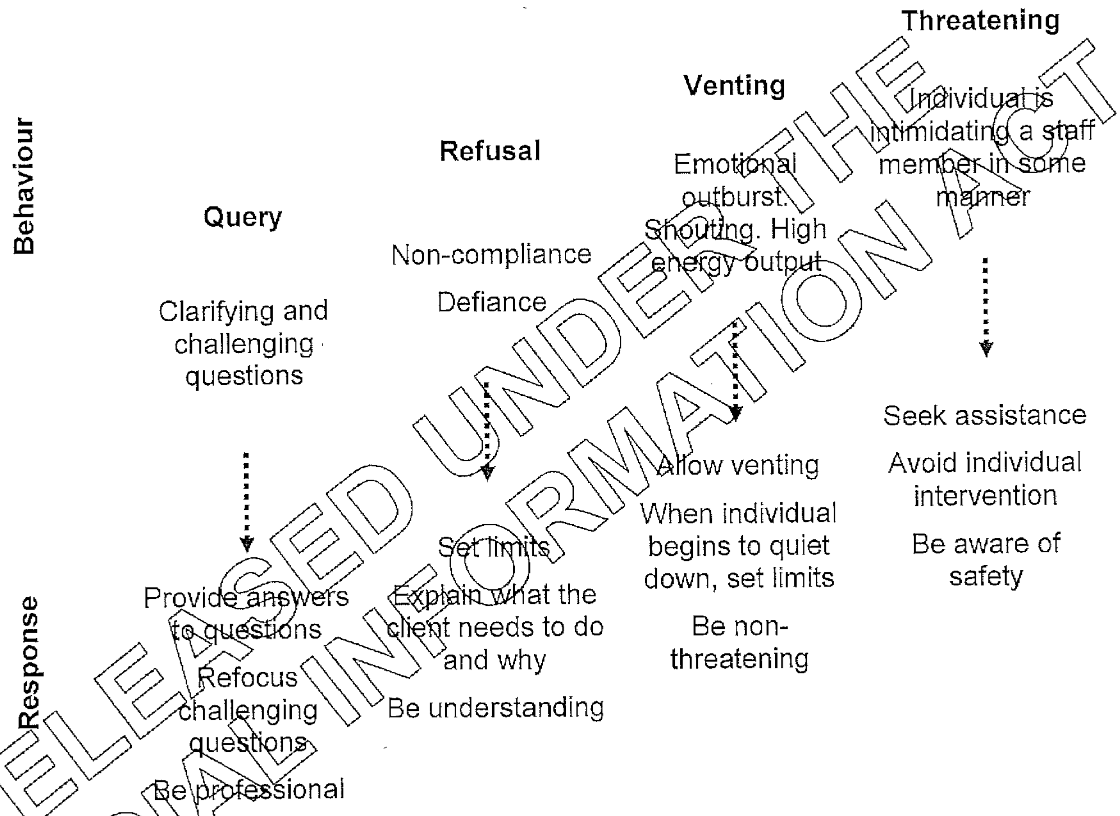
Take control by calmly and professionally explaining what the hostile person needs to do and why.

The four levels of verbal hostility

Using flipchart, describe each level of verbal hostility and the most effective response to de-escalate that behaviour.

Give examples and refer to experiences which highlight different levels of verbal hostility.

Remind participants of the importance of body language and paraverbals when responding to verbal hostility. A threatening stance or a challenging tone will escalate a situation even if it is unintentional.



Query

- Querying may be simply information seeking behaviour. Give a clear and informative answer.
- If the queries challenge authority, or are inappropriate and off the topic don't get into a power struggle.
- Don't respond to challenging questions. Refocus to the task. Think clearly and accurately.
- If necessary, set limits that are clear and concise. Make sure the person understands what you are asking them to do.
- Proactively look for ways to act early and appropriately to defuse hostility and avoid situations from escalating further.

Example:

"We are getting off the topic now. Let's focus on your application. We will then be able to see what else is needed and give you a clear idea of how much you will be receiving…"

Refusal

- If refusal comes into play, set limits.
- The limits should be clear and simple, reasonable and enforceable.
- When setting limits, offer a person choices as well as stating the consequences of those choices.
- Don't make threats.

Example:

"I want to find the best solution. To do this I need your help. If you can take a seat and see the next available case manager they will look at what may be available to help..."

Venting

- Venting involves high energy output and can't be sustained for long.
- An individual has lost rationalisation when they are venting.
- Allow a person to vent within reason.
- Listen to what they are saying.
- When the individual begins to quiet down, state directives that are non-threatening.
- Then set limits.
- Use an understanding, reasonable approach.
- Be prepared to enforce any limits that may be set.

Example:

"This behaviour is disruptive. If you calm down and stop shouting we can complete this interview. If you don't calm down the interview will end. What would you like to do?"

Threatening

- Threatening behaviour is not to be tolerated.
- Threatening behaviour involves intimidation.
- Take all threats seriously.
- End the interview by saying "This is threatening behaviour. This interview has ended. Please leave the office."
- Seek assistance. Don't be alone.
- Avoid individual intervention as this is more likely to jeopardise individual and team safety.
- Document all threats.
- Do not respond in any way to taunts or threats and avoid further argument or discussion.
- At this point it may be appropriate to step back and move away.

Example:

"This interview has now ended. Please leave the office".

Activity ~ level one ~ query

This activity provides participants with an experience that reinforces the different types of verbal hostility that can be encountered and how challenging it can be to know how to respond to verbal hostility.

Facilitator's notes:

- When conducting this group exercise tell people exactly what you would like them to do and give them examples.
- Stop the exercise if it should start to get out of control. Remind participants that this is a verbal, not physical, exercise. They are not to touch their partners.
- Be enthusiastic when giving instructions to participants. Encourage them to engage in hostile verbal behaviour which is realistic to their work environment.
- Reinforce to participants that you cannot make someone do something they don't want to do. What you can do is offer options and give individuals control over their own behaviour.

Activity instructions:

1. Explain to the group that they are going to experience the second stage of conflict – verbal hostility.
2. Have participants choose a partner and form two lines, facing each other. Indicate that one line is playing the role of a staff member and that the other line is playing the role of a client.
3. Ask the 'staff members' to each think of an everyday directive that they ask a client to do. Examples include filling out a form, attending an interview, providing some verification etc.
4. Take the 'client' group aside (preferably out of the training room). Explain that they are respond to the 'staff members' request by querying the request. Initially this may begin with simple clarifying queries, and then move into more challenging queries.
5. Reform the two lines and ask the staff members to approach their partners, ask their directives and try verbally to get their partners to comply with the request. Encourage staff to practise using appropriate body language, paraverbals and the professional stance.
6. After you have observed the behaviour of the group stop the activity and have everyone take a step back and return to their original lines.
7. Briefly explain that you have just experienced the first level of verbal hostility which is Query. Don't get too involved in the explanation. This comes after this activity.

Examples of query behaviour:

Clarifying queries

- "What is this form for?"
- "Where should I go to get that?"

- "When is it needed by?"

Challenging queries

- "Who are you to tell me to fill this form out?"
- "Why don't you fill out your own form?"
- "Why don't you try and make me leave?"

Activity ~ level two ~ refusal

Activity instructions:

1. Have participants change roles so that those who were staff members now become clients. It is best to actually have them change places so that they 'staff member' line is always in the same place. This helps people remember which role they are playing.
2. Ask the new 'staff members' to think of a directive to ask their client.
3. Take the new 'clients' aside. Explain that when the staff member asks them to do something they are to respond with queries and then escalate to the second level of verbal hostility which is refusal or non-compliance.
4. Form two lines again. Have the staff members approach their partners and ask their directive and try verbally to get their partners to comply.
5. After you have observed the behaviour of the group, stop the activity and have everyone take a step back and turn to their original lines.
6. Briefly explain that they have just experienced the second level of verbal hostility which is refusal.

Examples of refusal behaviour:

- "No I won't."
- "I am not going to do that."
- "Get stuffed."

Activity ~ level three ~ venting

Activity instructions:

1. Reversing roles one again, instruct staff to think of another directive.
2. Take the 'client' group aside. Explain that this time you want them to respond to the directive by initially querying, then refusal, then escalate to the third stage – venting. This is the level when individuals are verbally letting off steam – expressing hostility by yelling, screaming or swearing.
3. You may wish to cue the group in some way by clapping your hands so that everyone begins venting at the same time. This will add to the effectiveness of this exercise.
4. Follow the procedure as before. Staff approach their client, assume the professional stance, and ask their directive, trying to verbally get their client to comply.
5. After you have observed the behaviour of the group, stop the activity, have everyone take a step back and return to their lines.
6. Congratulate the participants on their acting skills during this activity and ask them to shake hands with their partners.

7. Briefly explain that they have just experienced the third level of verbal hostility which is venting.
8. Explain that there is a fourth level of verbal hostility which his threatening but we won't be practising this.
9. Ask participants to return to their seats.

Example of venting behaviour:

- "I AM SICK AND TIRED OF BEING DRAGGED DOWN HERE TO FILL IN ONE OF YOUR STUPID FORMS WHEN ALL I NEED IS SOME HELP WITH MY RENT... BLAH, BLAH, BLAH..."

Discussion points:

- At the verbally hostile stage a person begins to loose rational control. Behaviour includes refusing to comply, yelling, name calling and making threats. The person is losing control and needs help to regain control.
- The best way to help a person regain control is to give direction by setting limits. Use simple, clear instructions. What do we want the verbally hostile person to do? We need to give this information clearly keeping in mind that the individual is not processing information as well as they would under normal circumstances.
- We also need to remain calm, polite and professional.

Setting limits

Setting limits is the recommended response used in several levels of verbal hostility including challenging questions, when there is refusal and after venting.

It is an extremely valuable and effective communication technique and one that is used in negotiation, assertiveness, de-escalation and even parenting!

Let's look at the process of setting effective limits through the following activity.

Activity – setting limits scenarios

Participants read the first scenario described in the learner guides on page 36 and script what they could say to set limits with a client in these situations. Discuss answers then complete the other two scenarios.

Reinforce with participants that:

- Every situation has different circumstances and will warrant a different response. There are no right or wrong answers to these scenarios.
- Challenging language, unenforceable consequences or ultimatums will escalate behaviour.
- Neutral tone of voice, open body language, polite and supportive communication is very important.

Setting limits - scenario one:

You have just walked into the office after taking your lunch break. As you walk through the reception area a client who has been waiting comes up to you and tells you that they want to see a case manager immediately.

They say "No one here will help me and I am sick and tired of being mucked around!"

Possible response: *"Take a seat in reception and I will see what's happening with your appointment. It's obviously important to you that you see someone as soon as you can. Let's see what is being arranged".*
Setting limits - scenario two: You are on reception. A client who you have seen to be very agitated in the reception area comes up to the reception desk. They tell you that they want you to sort out their money now. They tell you that they are not moving until you fix it. There is a queue of other clients forming in the reception area. **Possible response:** *"Ok, give me your name and date of birth and I'll see what has happened. It may take a few minutes so take a seat. I'll clear this queue, have a look and let you know what I find out".*
Setting limits scenario three: You are having dinner in a restaurant with your family. A client who looks vaguely familiar approaches and says: "I haven't heard about that money you said I'd be getting." **Possible response:** *"I need you to call me tomorrow morning at work. I'll have the information there and will be able to let you know what's happened. I can't help you now as I am away from the office and don't have any of the information I need."*

Summary

We want to work with our clients in a way that prevents hostility occurring.

Proactively look for ways to act early and appropriately to defuse hostility and avoid situations from escalating further

Physical hostility

Behaviour

Physically hostile

A person becomes a danger to themselves or others.

Response

Initiate safety steps

Take steps to ensure personal and team safety once a person becomes physically threatening.

De-escalation skills for physical hostility

Despite our best efforts there are times when a person moves beyond verbal hostility and experiences a total loss of control, rationally, emotionally and physically. At this point, physical hostility can occur and the person becomes a danger to themselves or to others as they are no longer in control of what they are saying or doing.

With physical hostility it is necessary to use the appropriate response which is to initiate safety steps.

First five priority response

1. **Keep yourself safe**
   - Every individual is responsible for keeping themselves safe (like on an aeroplane when you place your own oxygen mask on before helping others). Take steps to keep yourself safe before helping others.
   - In most situations this involves moving away from the hostile person.
   - It may involve using the professional stance and getting help. The professional stance has the benefit of communicating respect and professionalism and also gives you increased balance and options for movement.
   - Every situation is different but your first priority is always to keep yourself safe.

2. **Assess the situation**
   - Take a moment to assess the situation. Consider who is involved. How many people are there? In what environment? Are there any weapons? Any possible weapons? Onlookers?
   - You need information to determine what are the safest options for you and your team.
3. **Summon assistance**
   - The assistance you summon may be different for different situations. Ultimately, where physical hostility is threatened or encountered the police need to be summoned. Assistance may also be from the Security Guard or from a colleague.
4. **Make your environment as safe as possible**
   - Again, this will depend on the situation. Ultimately you want to minimise threat to yourself, our team and any other people in your place of work.
5. **Avoid escalating the situation further**
   - Keep calm. Pay attention. Stay very alert but appear to be relaxed.
   - Keep a safe distance and don't encroach on the other person's personal space. Don't block exits.
   - If the situation escalates and has the potential to lead to physical aggression, do not expose yourself to unnecessary risk such as letting yourself get trapped in a corner. Continue to talk calmly and stay in control of your feelings while you find the best way to exit from the situation. If necessary, call 111.

Summary of physical hostility

- As frightening as it is to think about an incident involving physical hostility, it is important to think about such incidents ahead of time and visualise how you might respond.
- In saying this, it is also important to keep physical hostility in perspective.

Discussion points:

- Violence is a reality in our society however; people rarely become violent without some prior warning or behaviour that indicates they are losing control.
- Even complete strangers give valuable signs that can give you time to prepare or flee.
- Be aware of and look for feelings, signs and cues that someone is losing control and may become physically violent. When you see them, try and calm that person down, get help or create a safe distance between yourself and that person.
- Hundreds of thousands of people attend work every day and never experience any situation where personal safety is threatened. The reality is that we have a greater risk of being assaulted in our own homes that we have at work.
- We will not tolerate behaviours that put the safety and security of staff, contractors, clients and the public at risk. We will meet our responsibilities to deliver services. Where we can eliminate the identified risk we will do so, and where we cannot, we will take steps to isolate or minimise.
- We want to work with our clients in a way that prevents hostility occurring.

- The safest and most appropriate response to physical hostility and to take steps to assess and manage the situation with the emphasis on safety for all involved.
- The first priority is to keep yourself safe. Move away from the hostile person and maintain safety. Then assess the situation, summon assistance, make the environment as safe as possible and avoid escalating the situation further.
- Maintain a professional level of engagement – remind the client that we are here to help them. Genuinely seek to understand the client's frustrations.
- Following that, it is vital that staff follow the Staff Secure Guidelines which detail ways in which staff should respond to hostile and threatening situations in the workplace.

Brainstorm

After discussing each stage of conflict **ask** learners to think about what kinds of things may be happening in a client's life that may be influencing how they are feeling and behaving.

Debrief

Look for answers like:

- financial worries
- housing issues
- relationships
- children/custody issues
- family issues
- drugs/alcohol
- low self-esteem
- health/disability/mental illness
- grief
- loss of employment
- exhausted/tired/stressed

Discuss

Discuss with the group the importance of:

- being aware of what may be the causes of a person's anxiety or hostility
- often we have little or no control over these things

Understanding this can help us:

- **prevent hostility** by being proactive
- **depersonalise a situation** by recognising that there are other causes to the person's hostility
- **avoid ourselves** from becoming a factor **adding to the hostility.**

Susan's story

Read Susan's story to the group.

'Imagine this…

Susan is waiting for her interview with a case manager. The receptionist has suggested that she take a seat as the case manager will be five minutes, however Susan is pacing in reception, walking backwards and forwards, checking her watch, looking out the window then looking down towards where the case manager is sitting. This continues for several minutes before Susan leaves the Service Centre, banging the door loudly before returning a minute later. She resumes her pacing.

Susan's case manager approaches and asks her to join her at her desk. Susan says 'About time…" and begins to speak very quickly explaining her need to apply for extra help now that one of her children has left her care and her benefit has been reduced. Susan is leaning forward on her chair, speaking quickly but quietly. Her eye contact is constant; she has reddened cheeks and is breathing rapidly.

Susan's case manager begins to explain the application process for one of the options available. Susan shakes her head and says loudly:

"You can get stuffed. I'm not dicking around filling in forms all day – I've told you what I need. Everything is there on your computer. Why do I need to fill out forms? You can cut my benefit without any damned forms… I'm sick of all this stupid waiting and crap. You're useless. I want to see someone else."

The case manager goes to reception and returns with some forms and pamphlets for Susan.

Susan grabs them and throws them across the room then stands and pushes her chair hard against the case manager's desk. She leans over and bangs the desk with her first, pointing her finger in the case managers face and says "What are you going to do now?"

Ask: "What does this story highlight?"

Look for answers like:

- situations can escalate quickly.
- doing nothing is not effective.
- there are often early signals that someone is anxious or upset.
- sometimes conflict can seem to come from nowhere.

There are lots of ways that an individual can express hostility. This module helps us to categorise hostility into three distinct and identifiable levels of behaviour and describes the most appropriate response to defuse or de-escalate that hostile behaviour.

Activity ~ Susan's stages of conflict ~ part one

Give learners three cards each showing a stage of conflict (anxiety, verbal hostility, physical hostility).

Advise learners to hold up the card/s that describe Susan's behaviour while you **re-read Susan's story.**

Once you have finished reading **ask** "What types of client behaviour was described in Susan's story?"

Debrief

Look for answers like:

- Susan begins by showing anxious behaviour – pacing, restless, reddened face, rapid breathing, as well as some more outward hostile behaviour such as banging the door.
- Susan's behaviour escalated to become verbally hostile – speaking quickly, refusal, challenging questions, offensive language.
- Finally Susan became physically hostile – becoming physically threatening by standing, leaning towards the case manager, banging the desk, pushing the chair and verbally threatening the case manager.

Activity ~ Susan's stages of conflict ~ part two

Ask: "What responses did the case manager use to de-escalate Susan's behaviour?"

Debrief

There is little detail of the case manager's response to Susan's behaviour. It would appear the case manager did little to use appropriate de-escalating responses to Susan's behaviour.

Our policies and practices for Staff Safety

Ask "What policies and practices do MSD have in place to maximise staff security and safety?"

Brainstorm participant's ideas.

Look for answers like:

- Staff secure guidelines
- Site Security Action Plans
- SOSHI2
- Security guards
- Close circuit TV
- Central point for business security
- Flat screen monitors
- Environmental design of sites
- Security/OSH committees
- Disaster recovery plans
- Training.

Ensure participants understand SOSHI, the role and responsibility of security guards (available on Doogle) and have a working knowledge of their site security plans. Mention extra support available such as EAP, peer support, talking with manager / buddy / trainer, etc.

Facilitator's note:

Advise the service centre trainers/managers of participants if follow up is required on any of these policies/practices.

Staff Secure Guidelines

Give each participant a copy of the Staff Secure Guidelines.

- MSD places high priority on staff safety.
- It is vital that everyone knows the information provided in the Staff Secure Guidelines.

Advise learners to read through the Staff Secure Guidelines in their own time and to raise any points from these with their manager or Service Centre Trainer.

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Module four ~ Delivering outcomes

60 min

• Resources	• Learner guide: – Module four – Delivering outcomes – page 41. – Don't get hooked! – page 42.

Explain

In this module we will look at:

1. How to deliver outcomes to clients.
2. Avoiding getting hooked.

When it is not what the client wants to hear...

Often verbal hostility is encountered when we deliver outcomes that aren't the outcomes that the client wants.

You can't always give the client what they want. But you can use some strategies and techniques that allow you to give bad news and minimise the individual's negative reaction.

Brainstorm

Write the following questions on the whiteboard and ask learners for their thoughts:

- "What situations are there where a client might be given news that isn't what they wanted to hear?"
- "Is there a good way to give unwanted news?"
- "What techniques support you to deliver unwanted news?"

Encourage sharing of ideas and best practices.

Debrief

1. **Be prepared**
   - Prepare yourself and your environment. Don't be caught off guard.
   - Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally. Make sure you know your facts.
   - If you anticipate hostility have assistance nearby. Talk with your colleagues. Arrange to have someone with you during the interview.
   - Stay in control of what you say and do. Do not take the other person's behaviour personally.
2. **Communicate clearly**
   - Deliver outcomes politely and respectfully.
   - Be straightforward but tactful.
   - Use easy to understand language.
   - Don't beat around the bush.

3. **Listen with empathy**
   - Try and understand how you would feel if the situation was reversed.
   - Listen to how the client feels.
   - "I understand how you could feel that way..."
   - "This is obviously a difficult situation however..."
   - "I can understand why you can't... however..."
   - "I'm sorry I can't do that" (can be repeated).
4. **Offer something**
   - Even if you cannot give the person what they want, try to offer something. It may not be what they want but it may offer a solution once they calm down.
   - Avoid dwelling on what you can't do.
   - Offer information, a referral to another agency, your business card, the option to ring if they have any further questions etc.
   - People remember the first and the last things so if the last thing you do is offer something it goes a little way towards preserving the relationship you have with the client.
   - Clients can become instantly accepting of a decision when you have made the offer to run it by a more senior staff member (ie SCT, ASCM or SCM). Their perception changes if you head away to discuss their case with someone senior and then come back and advise them that they have agreed with the decision made. This can also offer you some time away from the client to calm you and clear your head.

Don't get hooked

- Verbal hostility can be upsetting. It can be frightening, it can be personal, it can be challenging, and it can be very hard to think clearly when someone is directing verbal hostility at you.
- Don't get hooked.
  - If you take the bait then you are allowing the other person to control your behaviour. This can escalate things further.
  - You have a choice as to whether you get hooked or stay calm, professional and in control.

Brainstorm

Ask: "What can you do to stop yourself from getting hooked?"

Advise learners that there is space to take notes on page 42 of the learner guide.

Debrief

Look for answers like:

- Breathe.
- See things from the other person's point of view.

- Write down notes.
- Move away – check with a colleague or photocopy something – do something to give you some space to think and plan what you are going to do next.
- Don't interrupt.
- Don't argue.
- Get help.

Remember everyone gets a little mad and from time to time you won't always be able to placate everyone. There is no magic formula.

However the majority of people in this world are reasonable and if you treat them as such, then they are more likely to respond in a positive manner.

Remain professional and do not take any action that could bring your conduct into question.

Wrap up and close

20 min

• Resources	• Learner guide: – Relating it all back to practice – page 43.

Wrap up activity

Refer learners to page 43 of the learner guide and ask each person to reflect on what they have learned today and whether anything that they have learned would result in them looking at the scenarios from today's training differently.

Once this is done ask each person to quickly share one thing they have learnt from today that they will do differently back in their workplace.

Evaluation

At the end of this training session refer learners to myLearn to complete the online evaluation of this programme 'Enhanced client engagement'.

Appendix one ~ Spot the difference

This resource provides the option of cutting up the 20 questions and individuals or groups sorting them into the four question categories of Open, Closed, Clarifying and Probing. This is an alternative to completing this activity in the learner guide.

What has happened?
What do you mean by that?
Can you give me an example?
In what way might it be good for you to...?
I'd like to hear about...
Did you enjoy the...?
Describe your situation to me...
I want to check my understanding, can you...?
Why do you feel that way?
I've noticed... can you tell me...?

Will you be able to attend…?
If… doesn't change what do you think will happen?
How does… fit into your picture?
Where would you like to be in … years?
When is … going to take place?
Do you have a …?
When you say … do you mean…?
How did you feel when … happened?
I understand … Are there any other aspects…?
Would you like to …?

Open	**Closed**
Clarifying	**Probing**