Handout 1: The Skilled Communicator

Have you seen those signs on the backs of trucks? The ones that say: 'My conduct as a professional driver is on display'
The equivalent sign on the back of welfare worker would be: 'My conduct as a professional communicator is on display'. When you think about it, nearly all of what a welfare worker does is to do with exchanging information with other people. We drive, set up rooms, clean up messes and fix stuff, but most of our work that causes change in people and society as a whole is about communication. The communication skills we gain as welfare workers we can use in everyday life with our friends, families, and people we meet. In fact it's hard to a think of a job whose skills transfer so readily to life outside of work. So, what characteristics make a professional communicator the finest in the business..?

The skilled communicator:

- Is assertive - willing to make their own needs known, but not in a pushy or aggressive way; willing to make requests; willing to disagree; willing to go with others, rather than against or away from; able to make a reasoned response rather than an emotional one; able to stand up for their own rights, able to put integrity before alliances.
- Is sensitive - to cultural factors; to others' needs and emotional states; to the context and situation in which the interaction takes place.
- Is responsive - can communicate sensitivity to the needs of others; can communicate their own opinions and wishes in a way that does not arouse undue discomfort or hostility; can respond with acknowledgement to the feedback of others.
- Is versatile - can be flexible and adapt to the demands of the situation and context; possesses a range of communication strategies and is able to select one appropriate to the situation.
- Is willing to explore - all aspects of the situation/problem; all sides of the story; to the degree of depth required before becoming solution focused.
- Is able to convey - opinions, information, attitudes, goals - clearly and in the style appropriate to the situation.
- Is able to self-monitor and evaluate one's own communication competence.
- Is appreciated and perceived by others as possessing and using appropriately the skills outlined above.

More specifically, in this job (Job 2) you will learn techniques for:
- Engaging with clients
- Negotiating mutual priorities
- Giving feedback
- Presenting information
- Interviewing people
• Negotiating
• Maintaining networks, and friendships
• Responding to enquiries
• Running meetings
• Running groups
• Dealing with people who aren't such great communicators

Start noticing what works and what doesn't work with your own communications. Watch the techniques of good communicators and observe what skills they use to communicate with.