Handout 3: Information Dissemination

To 'disseminate' means to spread around as if you were sowing seed. It's an analogy that works quite well when we consider the consequences of chucking around various bits of information. 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap'. Anyway, let us assume that you have a fine packet of precious information seeds, no destructive weeds, just useful, relevant, timely stuff that needs to reach everyone in the workplace. How do you get it out there? If you've ever played Chinese Whispers, you will know that telling somebody something and asking them to pass it on results in a very mangled, mutating message doing the rounds. With technology though (and we have the Chinese to thank for the invention of paper), there are an increasing number of much more reliable ways to transmit information around the workplace. Some involve 'publishing' information from a central source (newsletter, presentation), others involve the facilitation of communication between two or more people (mediation, forum).

Here are a few ideas:

Verbal:

- Phone, recorded message, voicemail
- Informal discussion
- Meeting
- Workshop, activity, class, seminar, presentation, speech, tutorial, group
- Consulting and advising
- Advocacy
- Coaching, mentoring
- Conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation
- Interviewing - unstructured, semi structured, structured
- In-house training (like some others, this mechanism may have written and spoken components)

Written:

- Notices and posters
- Newsletters
- Pamphlets and brochures
- Communication book, diary
- Articles, press releases, advertisements
- A pop-up message when the computer is turned on
- Agenda items at meetings, minutes of meetings
- Emails, SMS, letters, memos and circulars
- Submissions, tenders
- Spreadsheets, database generated reports, charts
- HTML (webpage) documents
- Instructions, regulations, policies and procedures
- Discussion papers, proposals, draft documents
• Reports - research, case management, inspection/audit/evaluative, annual, management

Part of the dissemination process may be about involving people in the development of the information (such as consulting them about policy formation) and monitoring their knowledge (are people getting the message - what does their behaviour indicate?) Involving people in the process may be in the form of focus groups, questionnaires, meetings, asking for feedback on draft documents, interviews, and participation in research. The more that people can be engaged in the process the more they are likely to feel some ownership and commitment to the outcome. This is less likely to incite resistance than a top-down, directive approach.