Handout 1: What is Casework?

"Casework is a direct service, provided by community service workers for individuals who require skilled assistance in resolving issues of resources, social and emotional problems. It is a disciplined activity in which the needs of the client are assessed in the full social and relational context of the person. The case worker aims to strengthen the client's own capacities to deal with problems and to cope more effectively in their environment. The services delivered by a case worker range from simple issues of material assistance, to more complex issues of counselling."


How is Casework Different from Case Management?

This is not a simple question to answer. The lines between case management and casework are very blurred. Perhaps a better analogy is that of overlapping circles.

However for our purposes here, we have defined them in the following way:

- Both case management and case work are similar in that they are both viewed as approaches from the human services/welfare areas to working with complex individual or family cases.

- Where they differ is that case management provides a managed approach to linking services with the needs of the client; operating like a coordinating system in order to achieve outcomes for the client/s. Casework is essentially a problem solving approach, using specific strategies to provide services for the client. At the client level casework can be defined as client centred and goal orientated directly linked to the needs of the individual.

- To simplify: case management is the plan for providing services/support to the client/s; case work is the implementation or actual doing of that plan.

Concepts within the Casework Framework

Relationships

- Relationships is about the nature of different types of relationships, what it means for each individual in a relationship.

- Gaining knowledge about a range of theoretical approaches to understand the dynamics and complexities of relationships.

Interpersonal Communication

- Working with an individual using a code of ethics as a foundation for building and establishing a relationship.

- Engaging with clients and building positive relations to ensure that the goals established in the casework plan are achievable and client driven.
Managing Change

- Assisting clients to problem solve and take action. Supporting them and encouraging them to cope with and implement change in their lives. This forms the foundation for real empowerment for the client.