

## PART II

# INTERACTION SKILLS

Working with people inevitably involves interaction; the coming together of two or more people, sometimes with common aims, sometimes with conflicting ones. These interactions can be the focal point of people work; crucial determinants of success or failure. It is therefore important that we explore the range of processes and skills that have a bearing on interpersonal interactions in the context of people work.

We begin by considering human diversity; the variety of backgrounds that people bring with them to interactions. From this we move on to consider communication skills. These are divided into three categories: verbal, non-verbal and written. Although these are covered in separate chapters, they are, of course, closely related.

Communication is also a major theme in Chapter 11 where interviewing is the topic under consideration. This prepares the way for a discussion of the emotional dimension of people work, the ways in which feelings can affect interactions. Finally, we examine issues relating to handling conflict, including the skills involved in negotiation and handling aggression. These are essential skills in terms of both helping others and protecting ourselves from harm.

It is often through interpersonal interactions that change takes place, that problems are solved and quality of life improved. Interactions are therefore at the heart of people work, and so the skills and knowledge involved are well worth the investment of time and effort needed to develop them. This part of the book is designed to take you in the right direction, to help you move forward in a positive and constructive way through the range of challenges that characterise people work.