Knowledge management is a social phenomenon, where people come together to share their knowledge, learn from each other and work more effectively together to meet their business and personal objectives. (What is knowledge management? David Gurteen http://bit.ly/lnDWAY)

Effective knowledge management is key to improving practice. Your knowledge, whether explicit or implicit, could be invaluable to other people.

Knowledge sharing is about being more open in the way you work and in your relationships with other people.

Sharing is about:

- Getting feedback
- Asking questions
- Telling people what you plan to do before doing it
- Asking other people for help
- Asking someone to work with you in some way, no matter how small
- Telling people what you are doing and more importantly why you are doing it
- Asking people for advice
- Asking people what they would do differently.

Communities of Practice (CoPs)

Social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Communities of Practice for Local Government (IdeA) enable individuals and groups to form online communities to communicate and share information about their practice. Communities of practice (CoPs) are very useful for sharing both explicit and implicit (tacit) information.

Communicating knowledge

When sharing information with others, it is important to think about the most effective way to communicate it.

Points to consider include:

- Who will deliver the information or message? If it is a presentation, telephone call or email that needs to be delivered, who will be the most appropriate person to carry out the communication.
- How will the information be communicated? There are many formats, such as newsletters, e-bulletins, websites, conferences, presentations, reports and emails, so it's important to choose the most appropriate format.
- Who is your audience? Tailor your message to your audience and how they prefer to receive information.
- What do you want to say? Think and write clearly, considering the key points you are trying to communicate. Summarising key points can be a helpful way of communicating a clear message. Summaries should be concise, logical and written in plain English.

Tips for writing in plain English:

- Stop and think - make a note of the points you want to communicate in a logical order before writing.
- Use simple words and leave out any unnecessary words.
- Avoid jargon and legalistic words, and explain any technical terms you have to use, including acronyms - eg SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council).
- Keep your sentence length down to an average of 15 to 20 words.
- Try to stick to one main idea in a sentence using paragraphs to separate out thoughts.
- Use active verbs as much as possible. Say 'we will do it' rather than 'it will be done by us'.
- Be concise.
- Imagine you are talking to your reader. Write in a suitable style and with the right tone of voice.
- Check that your writing is clear, helpful, human and polite.

Applying knowledge

It is important to understand that the information literacy skills that you have developed so far will help you find research and evidence that can inform practice. What's the point of finding useful information, only to file it away and/or do nothing with it? The knowledge from this information should be shared and used.

Considerations when applying knowledge or research to practice:

- Who are your service users? Think about age, ethnicity, gender, family relationships.
- What are the issues involved? For example, learning disabilities, mental health problems.
- What interventions are involved?
- What were the outcomes?
- How does your practice compare to the context of the research you have found? Think about policy and legislative differences, environmental differences and range of professions involved.
- Can you act on the evidence? Is there a way to change practice in light of the research?

Using the information in this step to guide you, share some knowledge from the searches you've done and write a summary of how it went - What went well? What might you do differently? How will you apply the knowledge you gained ?