

Communication skills

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Communication Skills

This training session has been designed to enable you to develop your knowledge, skills and further understanding of communication while working within the health and social care sector.

LEARNING AIMS

- Look at the importance of effective communication at work
- Know how to meet individual communication and language needs
- How to overcome barriers to communication
- Support the use of communication technologies and aids.
- Understand the principles relating to confidentiality and GDPR

NUMBER OF MODULES

1. The importance of effective communication at work.
2. Meeting communication needs
3. Barriers to communication
4. Communication systems, aids, and technologies
5. Principles and practices relating to confidentiality.

Module 1 - The importance of effective communication

So, what is Communication?

Simply putCommunication is the act of giving, receiving, and sharing information.

Communication within health and social care settings can be divided into two types:

- Communication between health and social care workers.
- Communication between the client, family members and health and social care professionals.

Communication can only be effective when the receiver understands the message clearly.

What makes clear communication?

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition.

Why People Communicate....?

The reasons why people communicate include:

- For information

To give and receive information. In a care setting this may include information regarding care needs and wants, tasks, etc.

- To encourage

Support and encouragement to complete tasks for example, offering to support an individual with daily routines.

- For social purposes

To develop personal and professional relationships.

Why is effective communication needed in health and social care?

Effective communication in any setting is very important because it can have a direct, or indirect, impact on the care provided, the overall wellbeing of the client, and on the relationships with family members, or colleagues.

Many people may have difficulties in understanding information provided because of language barriers, limited literacy, physical conditions, or age. It's important to adapt to the situation to the individual we are supporting to best suit their communication needs.

Clients usually look to their healthcare worker to help them navigate through a complicated system and expect communication to be based on shared decision-making.

Knowing how to communicate effectively and learning the dynamics of interpersonal relationships is essential for health and social care workers to perform their work to the highest standard.

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The Department of Health and Social Care, together with National Health Service England, published in 2010 [Benchmarks for Communication](#) which focuses on the specific needs, wants and preferences of people and carers.

Why are effective communication skills so important?

- To make sure the exchange of information and instructions are clear.
- For the provision of direct (or indirect) emotional support to the client, family members and colleagues.
- The development of positive relationships.

Let's look at these skills in more detail

Written communication

Good written communication forms a connection between the reader and the writer. It should be clear and easy to understand

Nonverbal communication

include facial expressions, gestures, paralinguistics such as loudness or tone of voice, body language

Active listening

An active listener pays close attention to whoever is speaking.

Verbal communication

Verbal communication is any communication that uses language to convey meaning.

Compassion

To empathize with someone who is suffering and to feel compelled to reduce the suffering.

Personal connections

Personal connections are interactions with more depth and substance than surface-level greetings or small talk.

Cultural awareness

Being culturally aware enables us to communicate with people more effectively, beyond words and grammar, by understanding their culture.

Adaptable

Different styles of communication are required depending on the precise situation you are in.

Friendliness

In a friendship, it is important to be honest and trustworthy.

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Confidence

People are more likely to respond to ideas that are presented by a confident speaker.

Offering and taking feedback

It is also important to provide constructive input to others, by focusing on the problems and all potential solutions.

Volume and clarity

Make sure you are clear and audible whenever talking.

Empathy

Having empathy means that you can understand and share the emotions of others

Respect

Allowing others to speak without interruption is seen as important and a mark of respect to them.

Communication and Working Relationships

How does communication affect your relationship with your clients, colleagues, and other people you may encounter at work?

Let's face it, if we did not communicate at work then we would simply not be able to get the job done!

You would not know what the individual wanted, what your manager needed you to do, or what had been done on the previous shift... and that's just for starters!

Let's Recap

Effective communication enables you to:

- Exchange clear information and instructions.
- Maintain direct and indirect emotional support to the client, family members and colleagues.
- Develop positive relationships.

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Module 2 Meeting individual communication Needs

Finding out about an individual's communication and language needs, wishes and preferences should be one of the first things you do when you start working with a client.

For example,

- Does the individual speak your language?
- Do they have good hearing and eyesight?
- Do they communicate verbally?
- Are there any communication aids that they use?
- How do they like to be addressed?

Some of these communication needs will be documented in the care plan, however, some things you will learn by spending time with the individual and getting to know them better.

Depending on the circumstances, to ensure effective communication you may need to:

- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Use very short, simple words
- Give one message at a time.
- Empathise.
- Adapt to the client's style if needed to ensure understanding.
- Use an interpreter if there is a language barrier.

Communication in health and social care can take many forms:

- **Verbal communication** – is any communication that uses words to share information with others
- **Non-verbal communication** – is the use of body language and mannerisms to communicate
- **Written communication** – is any written messages that two or more people exchange.
- **Formal communication** – refers to the flow of official information in a professional capacity.

The best way to meet individual needs is ultimately about being able to adapt to each individual and work in a person centred way.

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Module 3 Barriers that can affect communication

Potential Barriers

Thinking about a person's background is important to consider when communicating as certain communication styles may vary from person to person.

For example:

Language differences

Physical health

Sensory impairment

Learning disabilities

Social and ethnic differences

Loss of speech

Poor communication can impact on successful communication with others and exists when the receiver assigns a different message to that which the sender wanted to convey.

This happens when the message is inaccurate, unclear, lacks transparency, and is inaccessible. These factors cause confusion and important information can be lost.

How can we overcome communication barriers?

We can:

- checking whether it is a good time and place to communicate with the person
- Being clear and using language that the person understands
- Respecting a person's desire to not communicate
- Communicating in a location that is free of distractions
- Acknowledging any emotional responses

When working with individuals and your unsure how is best to communicate its important to try to find out more about them as this will have a direct impact on the support you provide.

Remember If in doubt, Ask!

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Module 4 Communication aids

People with severe speech and or language impairment that impacts on their communication may be supported by using communication aids.

Types of communication aids

- charts with pictures, symbols, letters, or words
- simple single message voice output devices
- applications that run on tablets and mobile phones
- complex dedicated communication devices including a range of access options such as joystick, switch, and eye gaze

Where to get communication aids from?

For the right equipment a specialist assessment should be sought through a speech and language therapist (SALT) this generally in the form referral from the GP.

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs, and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression. <https://makaton.org/>

Did you know..... over 100,000 children and adults, use Makaton symbols and signs to communicate.

It's important that when an individual is using an aid, we need to make sure:

That they are in good working order.

They are clean and in good repair.

Any issues or problems with the aid should be reported and resolved urgently.

Regular reviews, eye tests, hearing tests etc.

Module 5 What is Confidentiality?

Confidentiality means respecting someone's privacy, and abstaining from sharing personal or potentially sensitive information about an individual, especially if that information has been shared in confidence.

Everybody deserves to have their privacy and personal details respected and protected.

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It may be necessary to override your duty of confidentiality, particularly if the person is at risk of harm or harming others.

Disclosed Abuse, even if an individual asks you not to tell - you MUST!

Under both the [GDPR](#) and [Data Protection](#), everybody who uses personal data in any way must follow the data protection principles.

This means they must ensure that any information kept is:

- Used in a fair, lawful and transparent way.
- Used for a clear, specific purpose.
- Used adequately in a limited way and only when relevant or necessary.
- Accurate and kept up to date
- Only kept for as long as is necessary.
- Processed securely including protection against unauthorised or unlawful use, access, damage, destruction, or loss.

Recap of learning aims for this training session

- Understand the importance of effective communication at work
- Know how to meet individual communication and language needs
- How to overcome barriers to communication
- Support the use of communication technologies and aids.
- Understand the principles relating to confidentiality and GDPR

**Congratulations you have successfully completed this course on
Communication Skills!**