

Unit 3

Effective Communication in Health and Social Care

Learning aims

In this unit you will:

- ✓ investigate different forms of communication.
- ✓ investigate barriers to communication in health and social care.
- ✓ communicate effectively in health and social care.

Assessment criteria

Level 2 Pass	Level 2 Merit	Level 2 Distinction
Learning aim A: Investigate different forms of communication		
<p>2A.P1 Describe different forms of verbal and non-verbal communication.</p> <p>2A.P2 Describe different forms of alternative communication for different needs, using examples from health and social care.</p>	<p>2A.M1 Explain the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of communication used, with reference to a one-to-one and a group interaction.</p>	<p>2A.D1 Assess the effectiveness of different forms of communication for service users with different needs.</p>
Learning aim B: Investigate barriers to communication in health and social care		
<p>2B.P3 Describe the barriers to communication in health and social care and their effects on service users.</p> <p>2B.P4 Using examples, explain ways in which barriers to communication may be overcome and the benefits to service users of overcoming these barriers.</p>	<p>2B.M2 Explain how measures have been implemented to overcome barriers to communication, with reference to a selected case.</p>	<p>2B.D2 Evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken to remove barriers to communication, with reference to a selected case.</p>
Learning aim C: Communicate effectively in health and social care		
<p>2C.P5 Demonstrate communication skills through interactions in health and social care, describing their effects.</p>	<p>2C.M3 Select and demonstrate communication skills through interactions in health and social care, explaining their effectiveness.</p>	<p>2C.D3 Select and demonstrate communication skills through one-to-one and group interactions in health and social care, evaluating their effectiveness and making recommendations for improvement.</p>

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Learning Aim A

A.1 Effective communication

Communication is a two-way process, and the key elements needed are as follows:

- sender – the person starting the communication
- message – what the sender wishes to communicate
- medium – the method of communication: verbal, written, signed, electronic, telephone, etc.
- receiver – the person who receives the message and interprets it
- understanding – the message has to be correctly interpreted by the receiver
- feedback – the receiver needs to show the sender that he or she has received and understood the message.

We sometimes describe the steps that need to be taken for communication to be effective as the *communication cycle*.

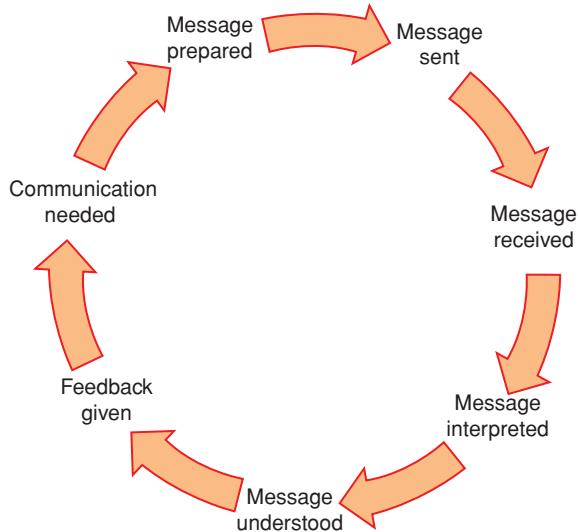


Figure 3.01 The communication cycle

Verbal communication

This is the main form of communication between people; it uses the spoken word.

Clear speech

Studied

Speaking clearly is essential, particularly when working with service users who may have difficulties when receiving or giving messages. Speaking clearly allows instructions to be absorbed and understood and if hearing or learning difficulties are involved then some service users can lip-read or use body language to gain further understanding.

Selection of appropriate language

Studied

Language can be classed as formal and informal and is used in various ways with different people. For example, making a complaint, having an interview or speaking to a teacher would require formal language, which contains the correct terminology. You may speak to someone by calling them Mr or Mrs. On the other hand, when arranging a night out with friends or chatting with your immediate family you may use shortened words, slang and relaxed terminology; for example, ‘what you up to love?’

Age-appropriate language

Studied



This means using language that can be understood by the person you are communicating with. Talking to a group of reception children about how and why they should clean their teeth would not be valuable if medical terminology and long sentences were used; they would understand the concept better if shorter words and pictures were used.

Non-discriminatory use of language

Studied



Conversation topics such as jokes can be a source of misunderstanding and tension. Humour differs between people and between cultures, and what might be funny to one person might not necessarily be funny to someone else. Jokes about religion, for example, might not be unusual but can be offensive to a person with strong religious beliefs.

Pace, tone and pitch

Studied



To communicate effectively, you also need to pay careful attention to the way you speak. Tone of voice can convey different feelings. It is possible to say the same words in a different tone or pitch of voice, perhaps with a slight emphasis on some words rather than others, and yet convey a different meaning. Also don't rush, as information can be lost if you speak too quickly, especially if the person is hard of hearing, or has a language other than English as a first language, or if you are speaking to a child. In most cases, you will speak more slowly to ensure these people can understand you – they all have different barriers to communication.

Active listening skills

Studied



Active listening is about being involved, really listening and asking questions. If someone is leaning away from the other person, gazing around or looking bored, he or she is not listening. Active listeners check out what they have heard. They may ask a question to clarify a point or may nod to give encouragement to the speaker.

Key terms

Active listening skills: Showing that you are listening and using words to encourage the conversation.

Non-verbal communication

Posture

Studied

Posture is a part of body language and gives an indication of whether the person with you is interested, ill or cannot hear you. Individuals who are in a slouched position with their head in their hands can give us many signals as to their feelings.

Facial expressions

Studied

Facial expressions tell us what people are thinking even when they do not realise it. Sometimes what we say is contradicted by what our body language is saying; body language does not lie and gives a true reflection of what we are thinking and many people feel this instinctively.

Eye contact

Studied

Eye contact is essential when communicating as it lets the receiver know you are listening, showing an interest and understanding messages. Lack of eye contact could mean the receiver is not hearing you, so you may need to consider technologies to help with this.

Appropriate use of touch and personal space

Studied

Touch or contact can be very comforting, but you must be careful to use touch respectfully and appropriately. For example, a person may be clearly upset and you might feel like giving the individual a comforting hug as you would with a friend or relation. However, you may not know this person well and you may be breaching personal boundaries if you were to do this – in which case, the individual would be embarrassed and possibly offended. Sometimes touch can be misunderstood, especially if someone is from a different culture. In some cultures, men and women do not touch, even to shake hands. Always ask first what service users would like you to do and tell them how you will need to touch them before you do so.

Gestures

Studied

Gestures are signals used with our body to convey messages. Gestures can be seen a lot when heated discussions are taking place and the message is important. Some gestures such as hand signals are universally recognised, for example 'okay' (when the finger and thumb form a circle). Different gestures can be offensive from culture to culture and not all gestures are universally recognised.

Key terms

Gestures: These can include movement of the hands, face and body and can convey feelings of approval, hostility and dejection.

Non-threatening use of body language

Studied

Behaviour that is appropriate at home may not be appropriate at work. A family member may benefit from a hug, but a patient may be highly offended. Unwanted or inappropriate contact is unprofessional behaviour for care workers.

Check your understanding

Consider the words below and say which category they belong to in the table.

- Pronouncing words correctly
- Use of jargon
- Use of gestures
- Use of touch and personal space
- Eye contact
- Formal language
- Facial expressions

Verbal communication	Non verbal communication

A.2 Alternative forms of communication

Various forms of alternative communication are used for people with differing needs; for example:

- the visually impaired
- the hearing impaired
- people with learning disabilities.

Table 3.01 Alternative forms of communication

Alternative form of communication	Explanation of uses
Braille and Braille software	Braille is a writing system which enables blind and partially sighted people to read and write through touch. It was invented by Louis Braille (1809–1852), who was blind and became a teacher of the blind. It consists of patterns of raised dots arranged in cells of up to six dots in a 3 x 2 configuration. Each cell represents a letter, numeral or punctuation mark. Some frequently used words and letter combinations also have their own single cell patterns.
British Sign Language	British Sign Language is a method of non-verbal communication that uses movements of the hands, body, face and head, which make up a complete language system. It is the preferred first language of many deaf people and is used by hearing people to communicate with those who are deaf. Other deaf people rely on lip-reading to understand what is being said to them.
Fingerspelling	People who use British Sign Language use fingerspelling. Signers spell out the word with their fingers for words that do not have a sign, for example names and places.
Text messaging	Text messaging is the exchange of short written messages between mobile phones or other devices that may be fixed or portable. SMS means short message service. Some messages now can include pictures and photographs. Text messages can be used to interact with automated systems, for example when ordering products and services from mobile phones or participating in contests.
Interpreter	This is a person who changes the verbal messages into either sign language or another language so that messages can be understood.
Translation	This is changing written messages into a form that can be understood by those with sensory impairments or who use different languages, including Braille.
Objects of reference	Objects of reference are any objects that represent other things. Children may have a teddy bear or comfort blanket that represents home and safety. They will feel more secure if they have their blanket or favourite toy, especially if they are in a strange place, such as hospital. For a child, the smell of these familiar objects is associated with Mum and home.

Communication passport	Communication passports are a way of recording the important things about a child or adult, in a person-centered way, and of supporting an individual's transitions between services. A passport gives a clear focus for ongoing home/school liaison and partnership when working with families.
Bliss symbols	Bliss symbols are a system of meaning-based symbols, which can be used by people with severe difficulties in speaking to communicate without speech. It is useful for people with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities who may find reading and spelling difficult but who may still require a system of communication.
Makaton	Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols and pictures to help people to communicate. It is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech, in spoken word order.
Technological aids	There are many aids that can be used to support individuals who have sensory impairments. For example, the Minicom which can be used for individuals who have a hearing disability, or voice typing for those who have a sight problem.
Pictures	Pictures can be used to represent messages. A system called Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is an alternative form of communication. It is used as an aid in communication for children with autism and other special needs. The system has been used with a variety of ages including pre-school children, adolescents and adults who have a wide array of communication problems.
Advocate	This is a nominated person who will act or speak on behalf of other individuals who may not be able to put forward their opinions. This individual may speak on behalf of someone who has a learning difficulty, sensory difficulty or who may not speak the required language.

Check your understanding

Alternative forms of communication

Use the words in the list below to complete the sentences.

- Minicom
- children
- vulnerable
- advocate
- touch
- Makaton
- Braille
- settle
- symbols
- spoken
- translator

1. _____ is a writing system which enables blind and partially sighted people to read and write through _____.
2. An interpreter is someone who converts _____ language into signs.
3. _____ may have an object of reference like a toy to help them _____ into nursery.
4. Bliss _____ are a system of meaning-based symbols which can be used by people with severe difficulties in speaking.
5. _____ is a language programme using signs and symbols to help people to communicate.
6. A _____ changes the written word into other forms.
7. _____ is a device used for those who have a hearing problem.
8. An _____ is a person who will speak or act on behalf on a _____ person.

Key learning points

Verbal communication

Revised

This is sending messages to others using the spoken word; it can take place face to face or through the telephone or internet.

Non-verbal communication

Revised

This is sending messages to others without speaking, using body language and gestures. It can be used with service users who have sensory or learning difficulties.

Braille

Revised

An alternative form of communication used with individuals who have sight difficulties. It is an arrangement of raised dots on a page, which indicate letters, words and numbers.

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British Sign Language

Revised

A nationally recognised set of signs used to communicate with individuals who have learning and hearing difficulties. Hand signals represent words and phrases to convey messages.

Makaton

Revised

An alternative form of communication used mainly with individuals who have learning difficulties; it is a set of signs and symbols to support speech.

Assessment activity



Posters

Pass

Tested

In small groups you are going to formulate three descriptive posters for your classroom. Each poster should include pictures, examples and descriptions relating to communication in healthcare settings.

- Poster 1 – non-verbal communication
- Poster 2 – verbal communication
- Poster 3 – alternative forms of communication

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Model assignment

This assignment will assess the following learning aims::

- A investigate different forms of communication
- B investigate barriers to communication in health and social care
- C communicate effectively in health and social care

Scenario

As a student in a residential care home you have been asked to produce an information booklet for new members of staff about 'Effective Communication'.

Section 1

- A description of different forms of verbal, non-verbal and alternative forms of communication which are used in your care setting.
- An explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of communication that are used, for example one-to-one and group interactions.
- An assessment of how useful different forms of communication are to the service users in the home, for example those with sight and hearing problems.

Section 2

In the care home some barriers exist at present that are stopping effective communication; for example, for service users whose first language is not English and service users who have dementia.

- A description of the barriers which stop communication and their effects on the service users within the care home.
- Explain how these barriers can be overcome within the care home. Include examples of these barriers.
- An evaluation of how the removal of these barriers may benefit the service users at the care home.

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Practical demonstrations

To further inform new members of staff about effective communication, you have been asked to set up a role play situation where the new members of staff will observe and comment on your communication skills.

Role play 1

An elderly lady in your care setting who has hearing difficulties is looking forward to seeing her daughter on Sunday. Unfortunately, you take a telephone call from the daughter who says that she is unable to visit as her car has broken down.

You have to role play the telephone conversation with the resident's daughter and delivery of the message to the elderly lady. This is sensitive information and both people are obviously upset.

Role play 2

Once you have delivered this information you need to continue the role play situation where you tell the rest of the staff about the incident in handover.

Demonstrate how you feel you could have handled the situation better, or improved the way you interacted with each person.