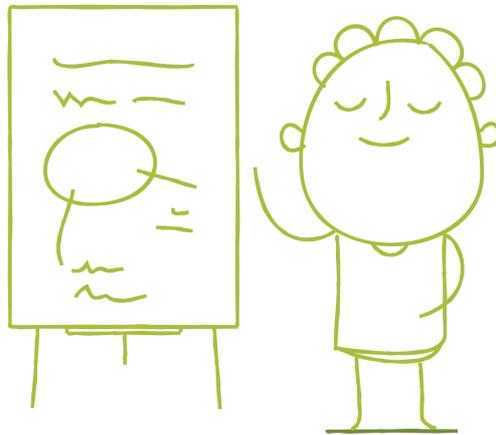


CARE CERTIFICATE

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

STANDARD 6 Communication



Effective communication

Communication is the giving and receiving of information. It is about making contact with others and being understood. What we say, how we say it and what we do sends a multitude of messages to other people.

At work you may need to communicate with many different people. These will include service users, relatives and carers, your colleagues and other professionals.

People need to communicate for a variety of reasons.

Making relationships – you need to communicate to make new relationships. These relationships may be with service users, carers or colleagues etc. Positive verbal and non-verbal communication skills, such as being friendly, smiling and shaking hands when greeting the person, are needed to make a good first impression.

Developing relationships – you will develop relationships with service users, carers or colleagues etc. by maintaining a friendly, supportive approach, and by being interested in what other people are doing and feeling. This enables others to feel comfortable and secure.

Obtaining and sharing information – you may need to obtain and share information about service users with colleagues and other professionals. You may also need to communicate with a service user or a family member about the support they receive, or about the kinds of services and facilities that are available.

Expressing thoughts and ideas – You may need to share thoughts about work issues with colleagues. Effective communication skills are needed to encourage service users to talk about what they are feeling, to say what they think or to express their needs, wishes or preferences.

Giving and receiving support – service users often seek reassurance as a way of developing their self-confidence. In response, you can give attention to a person's efforts and achievements. Supervisions and appraisals may provide support and reassurance for you.

Expressing feelings, wishes, needs and preferences – you will need to find ways of encouraging service users to express their feelings and to talk about how they wish to be supported, as well as to say what they like and dislike. People will communicate in this way if they trust you.

Methods of communication

We communicate all the time, sometimes without realising it. Something as simple as a smile, a frown, or raising an eyebrow can communicate a message from one person to another.

Good communication is vital. It enables us to build relationships and pass on information. Communication can take many forms. It can be verbal or non-verbal. It can take place:

- Face to face
- By telephone or text
- By email, internet or social networks
- By written reports or letters.

It is important that you use the best method of communication for the particular situation. Face-to-face conversations enable detailed discussions to clarify issues. Written communications provide clear statements which can be recorded and filed.

Verbal communication

Verbal communication means expressing ideas and views through speech. It involves varying tone, pace and volume to suit the person to whom you are speaking. Clarity of speech, being polite, remaining calm and focussed and following the rules of etiquette all contribute to effective verbal communication.

Another key aspect of verbal communication is active listening. This means giving your full attention by:

- **Paying attention** – looking at the person, putting other thoughts to one side, removing distractions
- **Showing that you are listening** – Nodding occasionally, using facial expressions, having open body language
- **Giving feedback** – Reflecting what has been said, asking questions
- **Not interrupting** – allowing the speaker to finish
- **Responding appropriately** – showing courtesy and respect, being open and honest in your responses

Non-verbal communication

Being able to read non-verbal communication is very important. When supporting some service users, this may be the only kind of response you receive from them. Some people are not confident enough or are too unwell to speak to you.

Non-verbal communication can include eye contact, body language, touch, gesture, facial expression, position / proximity, signs, symbols and pictures.

When you observe non-verbal communication, you should be able to assess:

- Whether the person has understood you
- The person's feelings about what you communicated to them
- The effectiveness of your method of communication
- The appropriateness of the method you used

You should also bear in mind that an individual's cultural background, disabilities, health status, religious beliefs, stage of development and personality may affect the way they react to you and use non-verbal methods of feedback.

Barriers to communication

There are many barriers which can prevent effective communication. It is important to understand and remove the barriers wherever possible to improve communication.

The barriers can be either internal or external:

- Internal – our own prejudices, assumptions we make about others, how we label others, our physical state (if we are hungry, tired or unwell), our emotional state and mood
- External – noise, temperature (too hot, too cold), lots of people around, distraction (e.g. TV), interruption

Examples of barriers to communicate include:

- Cultural differences
- Language barriers e.g. English may be a person's second or third language
- Use of dialect / localised version of language
- Use of slang
- Use of jargon e.g. complex medical terms
- Use of acronyms e.g. CPN, OT
- Hearing, speech or visual impairment
- Learning disability
- Autism
- Our prejudices
- Our physical state and mood
- Noise e.g. too hot, too cold
- Lots of people around
- Distraction e.g. TV
- Interruption
- No privacy
- Poor lighting (person can't see body language, can't see to lip read)

There may be times when you are struggling to communicate with a service user. Ask your manager for guidance.

Effective communication with service users

It is important that you listen to and communicate with the service users you are supporting. If a service user feels you are not listening, they may withdraw from you.

Some of us may use touch as a way of communication with others. However, when supporting some service users, touch may not be appropriate. You may intend to show that you care, but for some service users this may be an invasion of their privacy. It may also be culturally inappropriate. You should check their support plans and discuss this with your manager.

For example, in some cultures, it would not be appropriate for a woman to shake hands with a man she did not know. For other service users, no physical contact during certain communication may seem cold or uncaring. As you get to know service users, you should be able to learn what the appropriate level of touch is for each individual.

Some tips:

- Get the individual's attention before you start talking, making eye contact at the person's own level
- Use simple language, short sentences and a friendly tone of voice
- Give the person time to understand what you are saying and enough time to respond to you
- Be patient and attentive when an individual is talking to you and don't rush them or interrupt to speed things up
- Listen carefully and use simple questions to clarify what the person is telling you if you are not sure
- Be aware of your own body language and what the other person's body language is communicating to you
- Use positive facial expression e.g. smile to support what you are saying and to respond to what the person communicates to you
- Use pictures, diagrams etc. to express information in easy to understand ways. Information leaflets may need to be translated into other languages
- Summarise what the other person has said as a way of checking and confirming that you understand

You will be supporting service users from a **diverse range of backgrounds** who will want to communicate in different ways. Finding out about each individual's language needs, wishes and preferences is an important part of your role. Do this by:

- Asking people whether they or their relatives have particular language or communication needs

- Reading the support plan for information on speech and language issues, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairment or physical conditions such as a stroke or cleft palate that may affect their ability to communicate.
- Being aware that an individual's culture, ethnicity and nationality may affect their language preferences and needs.
- Observing service users to see how they communicate
- Asking your line manager and specialist professionals such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and social workers for information, advice and support about how best to communicate with people who have specific communication needs.

Confidentiality

The Code of Conduct for Healthcare Workers and Adult Social Care Workers (this can be found in the staff section of the JRH Support website) requires that you respect a person's rights to confidentiality. This means you must:

- Treat all information about people who use health and care services and their carers as confidential
- Only discuss or disclose information about people who use health and care services and their carers in accordance with legislation and agreed ways of working.
- Always seek guidance from a senior member of staff regarding any information or issues that you are concerned about.
- Always discuss issues of disclosure (the action of making new or secret information known) with a senior member of staff.

The Data Protection Act 1998 states that information should be:

- Used fairly and lawfully
- Used for limited, specifically stated purposes
- Used in a way that is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate
- Kept for no longer than is absolutely necessary
- Handled according to people's data protection rights
- Kept safe and secure
- Not transferred outside of the UK without adequate protection

If you need guidance or additional information about how to handle information or in what situations you might need to pass on information regarding service users, you should discuss this with your manager.

Further information

When answering the questions about this standard, the following sources of information will be useful:

- JRH Support Data Protection Policy
- JRH Support Faith & Culture Guidance
- JRH Support Confidentiality Policy
- Support plans
- Risk assessments