# Session 2: The importance of good and effective communication

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| **Timings** | **Activity** | **Content** | **Resources** |
| 60 minutes | FacilitatorGroup discussionGroup discussionFacilitatorGroup discussionIndividual and group exerciseGroup discussion | **Session 2: The importance of good and effective communication**This session will explore what we mean by communication, different types of communication, common barriers to effective communication and how to overcome them.Start by defining what we mean by the word ‘communication’. At this stage don’t get confused with the different ‘methods’ of communication.Communication can be defined as:*Somebody has a message to ‘send’ (the sender), so therefore somebody has a message to ‘receive’ (the receiver), that will create an ‘action’ or ‘reaction’.* *For example a person carries out a task (action), a person appears to be unhappy or angry (reaction).***Group discussion**Discuss the different ways in which somebody can ‘send’ the message.*Facilitators note:*Write down examples from the group such as letters, email, text message, pictures, facial expression, body language, gestures, written reports, sign language and Skype. When recording the responses on the flip chart, create two lists (without headings) – ‘verbal’ and ‘non-verbal’ forms of communication.When the list is complete, ask what’s different about the two lists and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of verbal and non-verbal communication.**Group discussion**Think about the definition and different methods of communication, discuss ‘why does it sometimes go wrong.’Write down examples of common barriers to effective communication such as language used, tone of voice, wrong information, prejudices, lack of time, too much time, wrong method used, unconscious bias, accent, lack of understanding, demotivated, wrong time, wrong time of day, use of jargon, uninterested, bored, selective hearing, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, not listening and personality type. *Facilitators note:*Discuss ‘are there any common barries that you can DO NOTHING about?’ The answer is NO – you can always do something! **Listening skills**Explain that you’re now going to focus on one key area – listening skills.Discuss ‘why is listening an important skill when working with families?’Explain that there are three levels of listening:1. the listening is internal – we pretend to hear or focus on what the words mean to us
2. focused listening – we listen intently and our intension is to hear and understand the speaker
3. global range of listening – hearing that picks up on what’s not being said, the emotion, body language etc.

**Group discussion**What’s the difference between hearing and listening?**Listening skills exercise**Choose one of the ‘listening skills’ exercises (exercise 3a or 3b).After the exercise, discuss why active listening is important when working with and supporting families. * Limit distractions
* Listen with your eyes as well as your ears (global listening)
* Use your body language to demonstrate that you’re listening, for example nodding or eye contact
* Mirror the talker – reflect their posture and body language
* Be comfortable with silence if appropriate
* Use questions to be sure you have understood

Summarise or repeat back these statements to ensure delegates understand.  | Flip chartFlip chartFlip chartFlipchart[Exercise 3a: Active listening skills](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/familiesEx3adels)  [(Download facilitator notes here)](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/familiesEx3afac)Or [Exercise 3b: Active listening skills](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/familiesEx3b) |