

COMMUNICATION

Work Manual

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Communication

Work through this manual and answer the questions at the end returning to your team leader as soon as possible discussing any issues arising

What is communication?

It is a 2 way process of sending messages

To communicate - information is transmitted, received and understood

How do we communicate?

Write as many ways as you can think of, on how we communicate both verbal and non-verbal

People communicate with each other on 2 levels One level is verbal and includes the spoken and written word; the other is non verbal which includes body language and gestures

What do you think the percentage is that we use of verbal and non-verbal?

In communication on average 30% is verbal and 70 % is non verbal

What would be the result if your verbal and non-verbal messages did not match to your clients?

Mixed messages and confusion - client will not trust you and will cause poor relationships - they will tend to believe the body language as generally this doesn't lie.

Therefore it is important if you have any conflicts to resolve them

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Nonverbal communication involves contact and body position. These are important because they often reveal people's feelings, for example a relative might say everything is fine but the twitching of the lips or nervous movements of their hands should convey to the observer that they may not be feeling as fine as they say they are. Identifying the mismatch may enable you as the carer to respond to the concerns the relatives express through body language rather than the words that are spoken. It is essential to acknowledge the importance of non-verbal communication which has some very useful functions. It can be used to replace speech in circumstances where a facial gesture a meaningful glance or a caring touch can convey messages of concern and support. It is also important to be aware of your own feelings if there are conflicts you must deal with because your body language will send mixed messages to clients and others. This can cause upset and confusion and lack of trust in what you are saying and therefore affect relationships

The carer should try to use both verbal and non-verbal communication skills as appropriate, which are consistent with the person's own expression and use

Communication used by care staff should be consistent with the plan of care

Personal space

The distance you maintain when sitting or standing near to others in conversation is known as the personal space. This is particularly significant because care assistants often enter into a client's personal space to carry out care procedures without asking permission. Research has shown that an invasion of clients personal space can cause considerable unease and insecurity. Personal space enables clients to maintain their personal dignity; respect and independence it also gives them a sense of security identity and control. Carers should convey understanding, concern and respect for clients by ensuring that their personal space is acknowledged and respected especially in carrying out personal procedures relating to hygiene.

Why do we communicate with our clients?

To find out information - to pass on information.

To encourage the client, to get to know the client, what their preferences are, their needs, and to understand them and therefore be able to provide the best possible care - refer to individuality.

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Can you think of any other reasons?

Communication is a 2 way process of sending messages. To communicate, information must be transmitted, received and understood.

What problems can arise with communication?

_____ Message _____
SENDER _____ **Reply** _____ **RECEIVER**

There are many points at which the transmission can be interrupted resulting in poor communication

Potential problem areas: -

Sender: -Unclear message

Content

Volume

Context

There could be distractions and other noise from the environment such as dogs barking TV; bath water running etc.; person not speaking clearly, or using jargon.

Receiver: - Poor reception

Hearing

Understanding

Vision

Client may have poor sight, hearing, hearing aid faulty, external noise; language, dialect, unfamiliar different words and expressions not known; brain dysfunction which affects understanding

Poor Reply: - Unclear response

Delayed response

Incomplete response

No response

Person could be in pain or uncomfortable, depressed, anxious, angry, frightened or perhaps on medication that is affecting their concentration all of which could affect response. Maybe the person did not hear clearly in the first place so is a little unsure.

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Communication Difficulties

As carers it is essential to make sure that basic care is carried out so that clients can make the most of their current ability to see, hear and speak. Those who need help with speaking should be encouraged to use their dentures, as they can improve the wearer's ability to speak clearly. This in turn improves their confidence and helps them to remain stimulated and alert. Spectacles are also important to the improvement of client's ability to communicate. If the spectacles are clean and reassessed regularly wearer's are able to use them to improve their familiarity with the surroundings. In this way they may become more independent and responsive because they are able to see and respond to non-verbal cues (such as body language e.g. a smile or worried frown).

In circumstances where hearing aids are used care should be taken to ensure that they are working well they should be equipped with the appropriate batteries and checked and cleaned regularly according to the manufacturers instruction.

It must be noted however that any aids to speech vision or hearing cannot be effective if they are neatly placed in a drawer and not used. Regular observations should be made to ensure that clients are able to use their aids to improve their level of communication

Some difficulties you may encounter and ways to change your communication approach are: -

- **People with no or partial sight** - do not surprise people, make sure they are aware you are close; tell your client who you are; you could use touch to let them know you are speaking if it is appropriate; do not shout but speak clearly; include your client in the conversation; describe objects and events; encourage your client to talk; explain when you or other people are leaving; check that the lighting is comfortable.
- **People with dementia** - make sure aids are working properly; e.g. dentures, hearing aid; use short sentences and speak slowly; tell clients what you are going to say, then say it; then tell them what you have said; talk about one thing at a time; find similar ways of saying things, repeat if necessary; objects and pictures can help those who are confused; it can be embarrassing for clients to be directly contradicted.
- **People who have had a stroke** - do not shout, speak slowly and clearly; do not say too much at once; give clients time to absorb what you have said and respond; do not talk to clients as if they were children; use a

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variety of methods of communication e.g. gestures, drawing, writing, pictures, keep pen and pencil close to your client.

- **People with poor or hard of hearing** - try not to surprise people by approaching them from behind; make sure you have your clients attention; use the best ear and sit close; if you are in good light your client can lip read better; do not cover your mouth speak normally in sentences; give time to adjust to a hearing aid; do not rush have patience; use back up if necessary (writing, sign language) remember it can be tiring for your client.
- **People who are not fluent in English** - make sure you pronounce any unfamiliar names correctly; speak clearly without raising your voice; do not speak quickly; if you are not understood, repeat what you said using the same words, changing words can be confusing; try not to use expressions only used in English such as 'spend a penny'; keep sentences simple do not speak broken English (you..... drink...tea.) it isn't helpful and sounds as if you think the clients are stupid; use clear logical order; focus on one thing at a time; make sure your client understands before moving on; using pictures may be helpful.
- **People with learning difficulties** - work at creating an atmosphere where your client knows they, and what they say are valued; support clients in expressing themselves; do not rush, let clients take their time; support your verbal communication with gestures and touch; do not hurry to do things for clients before they have had a chance to say what they want.

Activity - ask a friend or colleague to help to complete this activity

- a) Sit opposite each other
- b) Your friend is to think of an animal
- c) You are to question your friend to find out what the animal is, as quickly as possible

However your friend can only answer YES or NO

If your friend asks a question that does not allow you to answer yes or no then ask him/her to ask another question

How long did it take?

Questions that only allow a YES or NO answer are called closed questions Very little information can be passed on and it takes much longer to find out information if you use 'closed' questions - such as: - do you? Would you? Can you?

What sort of questions would encourage a longer answer?

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Why? What? Where? How? - these are called **open questions**

What do you think multiple questions are? e.g. would you like tea coffee or a cold drink?

When would you use and why?

Generally open questions are the best way to find out and encourage conversation

Closed questions may be used when a yes or no answer would suffice perhaps when checking for accuracy

Multiple questions would be useful when someone is reluctant to converse or needs some encouragement to make choices or possibly some dementia clients who need help in making choices

E.g. to emphasize- Would you like a cup of tea?

What would you like to drink?

What help do you need to help you out of the chair?

I'll just hold your arm shall I?

Leading questions are to be avoided

Sometimes questions are phrased or asked in a manner that forces the client to give the answer the questioner wants to hear This situation might occur in circumstances where the person is asking the question is too busy to stop, listen and respond or when he/she is really not sure how to deal with the likely feedback

Example: if a person is faced with the question "Have you got any pain? No?" or "you're not hungry now are you shall we get something to eat later?" invariably the answer is influenced by the way the question is phrased and clients may feel obliged to say no when they may actually be experiencing pain and discomfort or may actually be hungry but don't want to be a nuisance

Activity - Ask a friend or colleague to help with this

Position chairs and sit down back to back and talk to your partner about what you did last night or a holiday etc for 3 minutes - use an egg timer
Share your feelings and what you found was difficult about this activity and note your observations below

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Remember this activity when you are talking with your client

Eye Contact: -

- Makes a relationship between sender and receiver
- Enables us to know the message is for us
- Tells us when the speaker is starting and stopping
- Keeps us interested in speaking/listening
- Reassures us of the attention of the other person

Listening Skills

- Relationships with clients and their relatives cannot be established or improved if they are not heard and understood.
- Listening is an important communication skill you can provide help and support by being an understanding listener
- Listening involves paying attention to what the other person is saying and actively trying to understand the verbal and non- verbal messages and responding appropriately

How does it make you feel if someone does not bother to listen to you?

Spend some time over the next week watching how others communicate

Watch their body language - gestures facial expressions etc did they listen to each other or did they interrupt and if so how did the other person respond? How do you know whether they have listened? Did they get distracted easily, look at their watch etc.? Or did they respond with encouraging gestures and noises or reflect back what the person said?

Make notes on things good and bad practices

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Spend a little time on looking at your own listening skills and go through each list below and evaluate whether you are an ineffective or effective listener. Note down the areas you feel you could improve

The effective listener -:

- Has body language which communicates they are listening e.g. maintaining appropriate eye contact
- Uses attending such as nods, smiles, culturally appropriate eye contact facial expression and attentive posture
- Listens to tone of voice not just what is being said
- Allows speaker to finish without interruptions or finishing their sentences,
- Gives positive feedback and uses open questions to give the speaker opportunity to speak further
- Is not distracted
- Is willing to compromise

The Ineffective Listener: -

- Has body language which communicates they are not listening e.g. Yawning, looking out the window
- Does not fully attend the speaker
- Thinks about something else - sees it as an opportunity to ‘switch off and rest’
- Allows personal feelings about the speaker to prejudice their judgement about what the speaker has to say e.g. distracted by accent, style
- Listens only to facts which although useful do not contain the whole message
- Gets emotionally involved in the issues - hears only what they want to
- Is impatient and takes over the speaking
- Wants to win as opposed to compromise
- Does not give feedback and uses closed questions - limits the conversation
- Switches off when faced with difficult or technical words etc

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- Closed to styles of communication they are not familiar with

Problems of communication can interfere with the provision of good quality care the following examples could be the result of poor communication

- Non-compliance with requests made by care staff
- Misunderstandings that lead to lack of trust
- Distress caused by not being able to communicate well
- Reduction in a person's self esteem
- Difficulty in assessing other problems

Listening for feelings

Whatever you are doing in caring you need to be a skilled listener, but to listen for feelings you need to be particularly skilled

Activity

Read the following interchange and in your own words say why you think the care assistant isn't giving her client an opportunity to express her feelings Then suggest the kind of thing she might have said to encourage her client to express her feelings

Client: 'I've been upset these last few days I've begun to wonder whether life is worth living'

Care assistant: " O I know everyone gets like that I remember when I was last pregnant I was on the verge of despair but it did get better in the end"

In effect the care assistant says 'Don't worry Your feelings are not as serious as you think they are and they are not worth discussing any further' or she might be saying ' your feelings now aren't as bad as mine were then so stop going on about them. But of course the clients feelings are a serious matter for her now and this kind of talk is not going to help her. A better response from the home care assistant would have been "Yes you are sounding very upset - is anything in particular worrying you?"

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Communication Questions

1. Give some examples of difficulties affecting communication?

2. Which do you think out of the following is the most powerful non-verbal communicator?
 - (a) touch
 - (b) posture
 - (c) facial expression
 - (d) distance

3. A person in your care is a little confused. She is to be discharged this afternoon. She needs to know about her medication that has been prescribed for her to take home. She needs to know about the place that has been organized for her at the day centre

What would you do?

- (a) Inform the lady about her discharge plan and hope that she understands and remembers the information
 - (b) Inform the lady then write it down on a sheet of paper to keep as a reminder
 - (c) Do not inform the lady. Inform the relative who will soon arrive to take her home
 - (d) Inform both the lady and the relative and provide them with the sheet of paper with all the details
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4. Which of the following is a barrier to communication?
 - (a) appearing bored or impatient
 - (b) using leading questions
 - (c) negating or devaluing a person
 - (d) unconditional positive regard

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5. When communicating with someone who has impaired hearing which of the following is not correct

- (a) Shout loudly enough so they can be heard
- (b) Maintain eye contact
- (c) Make sure the person is wearing their hearing aid
- (d) Face the person who reads lips

6. What sort of questions encourages people to talk more?

7 How can you help clients to discuss sensitive areas?

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Answers

1. Give some examples of difficulties affecting communication?
A. **Environmental** - noise; distractions from other people, TV
Physical - pain, poor hearing, poor sight, uncomfortable, poor speech
Emotional/psychological - anxious, frightened, angry, depressed
Social/Cultural - language, slang, jargon, dialect

2. Which of the following is the most powerful non-verbal communicator?
(a) touch
(b) posture
(c) facial expression
(d) distance
A. c.

3. A person in your care is a little confused. She is to be discharged this afternoon. She needs to know about her medication that has been prescribed for her to take home. She needs to know about the place that has been organized for her at the day centre
What would you do?
(a) Inform the lady about her discharge plan and hope that she understands and remembers the information
(b) Inform the lady then write it down on a sheet of paper to keep as a reminder
(c) Do not inform the lady Inform the relative who will soon arrive to take her home
(d) Inform both the lady and the relative and provide them with the sheet of paper with all the details
A. (d)

4. Which of the following is a barrier to communication?
(a) appearing bored or impatient
(b) using leading questions
(c) devaluing a person
(d) unconditional positive regard
A. (a) (b) and (c)

5. When communicating with someone who has impaired hearing which of the following is not correct
(a) Shout loudly enough so they can be heard

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- (b) Maintain eye contact
 - (c) Make sure the person is wearing their hearing aid
 - (d) Face the person who reads lips
- A. (a)

6. What sort of questions encourages people to talk more?

A. *Open questions e.g. How? What? Where? Why?*

7. How can you help clients to discuss sensitive areas?

A. *Be supportive, build trusting relationships, reassure the client about the boundary of confidentiality; be approachable and use good listening skills, use open questions and take a genuine interest in the client and what they have to say. Be encouraging but Don't push the client*