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Working as a support worker for Dimensions

1.0 Introduction

Dimensions is a voluntary organisation which started in 1976 in the United Kingdom which supports people with “learning disabilities, complex needs and autism” to achieve the life they desire (Dimensions, 2019). People are supported in a Personal Centred Approach whereby they get involved in the way they would like to live their day to day lives in the community.

Support workers do an important job in looking after people with complex behaviours, learning disabilities and autism to live a life they would like. The support varies from person to person, but the most important aspect is learning to communicate with them and to build trust in order to help them achieve their personal goals (Mencap, 2020).

I have worked for Dimensions for over 5years, it has been rewarding even with its challenges; especially when dealing with people with minimal or no communication whatsoever.

2.0 Skills

Is defined as the ability to do something remarkably well, for example; a skill to read, having eye contact, to write, to exchange ideas or to talk

As a support worker, you must possess various kinds of skills in order to thrive in your role. Skills are categorised in two different forms which include personal skills and academic skills. I have gone through several trainings ranging from communication to first aid.

Role:

A support worker’s role is to provide support to individuals without prejudice and must respect their dignity. As a support worker you must have empathy in order to be able to give the care and support in a person-centred approach in all elements of their day to day life.

Supporting people with learning disability and autism, having a sense of humour is a credit as it elevates those who are having a bad day. Telling jokes, singing and laughing can really make a day pass by without noticing (Farrah, 2018).

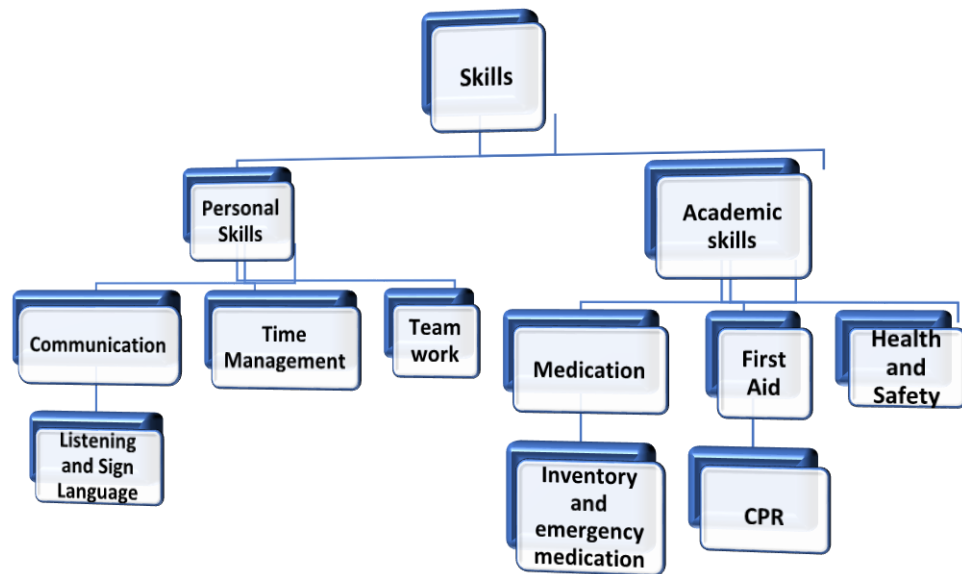


Figure 1: Skills required to be a support worker; adapted from Mencap 2020.

3.0 Academic skills

These are skills which are acquired through teachings and trainings for those who are ready to learn and develop them for future reference. “Examples of academic skills are; critical thinking, research ability, analytical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication.”

Having a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Health and Social care to enable us to perform our duties in a competent way. In addition, various trainings such as first aid, medication administration, health and safety are also required when supporting people with learning disabilities and autism.

4.0 Employability Skills

In 2014, a team from the University of Derby did a research with employers from local and national sectors concerning employability. These employers explained different skills which graduates should possess in order to land their dream job (University of Derby, 2014). They defined employability as exchangeable skills needed in your entire career; particularly at a workplace.

Most employers are interested in hiring individuals with experience who can demonstrate their competences with a range of skills which are transferable in the workplace, and some organisation have schemes for graduates or apprenticeships that do not require any work experience. In this case, employers provide training for a given period to these individuals for them to achieve the work experience required for the job. In my workplace, support workers who would like to become managers, enrol onto the Dimension Aspire programme where they receive leadership and management skills that will enable them to lead others in a proper way.



Figure 2: Adapted from SkillScan (2012)

Individual must be able to adapt to the working environment, have a good and positive attitude towards work for the employer to get the best out of them. Having good communication skills, digital skills, problem solving, team-working skills, analytical and critical thinking skills plus leadership is a bonus.

4.1 Hard Skills

These are skills required by employers which are acquired through training individuals academically. When you earn a degree or learn digital skills, operating of machinery and being linguistic all these sets you in good position for improvement and progress for your future. (Ling, M, 2018)

As a support worker, you are required to have some digital skills as you must do your trainings on computer and recording of documents on iplanit.

4.2 Soft Skills

These are recognised as interpersonal or relational skills. Such abilities are not taught, even when you possess hard skills you need soft skills to keep your job. They are exchangeable skills which one must possess such as; trustworthiness, determination, good communication, good management, accountability, being a good listener, humour, empathy, flexibility and many more to make life easy (Smith, J, 2019).

As a support worker, you are expected to have a variety of soft skills to enable you to perform better while supporting people with learning disability. The people we support need people who they can trust as most of them are vulnerable. Support workers must be good active listeners and should able to communicate to the people we support as some may discriminated if they cannot be heard which can lead to self-loathing.

4.2.1 Communication

The trade and sharing of information to form a meaning is what defines communication (Kanu, 2014). Individuals get to work with each other and create codes which translate a meaning. Communication is an important skill to possess as it is needed in both hard and soft skills.

4.2.2 Working with a team

Being part of a team working in an organisation is one of the skills every individual should possess as it helps to excel and improve on communication skills. In my organisation working as a team is mandatory as we support people with learning difficulties. For example, transferring an individual from a wheelchair on to using a hoist bed requires more than one person as per the manual handling operation regulations, 1992.

5.0 SWOT Analysis

SWOT stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (UK Social Work, 2020). Adapting a SWOT Analysis approach in a workplace can help you to minimise the possibilities of failing when performing tasks, through knowing important skills you are lacking that can be useful and working hard to eliminate them. As a support worker dealing with people with challenging behaviours, adapting the SWOT Analysis approach while supporting people is very important. You must use more of your strengths such as patience, resilience and good communication to shelter your weaknesses utmost.

Swot analysis is defined as the approach taken by an individual or a body to categorise its inner strengths and weaknesses plus the exterior opportunities and threats (Lexico, 2020).

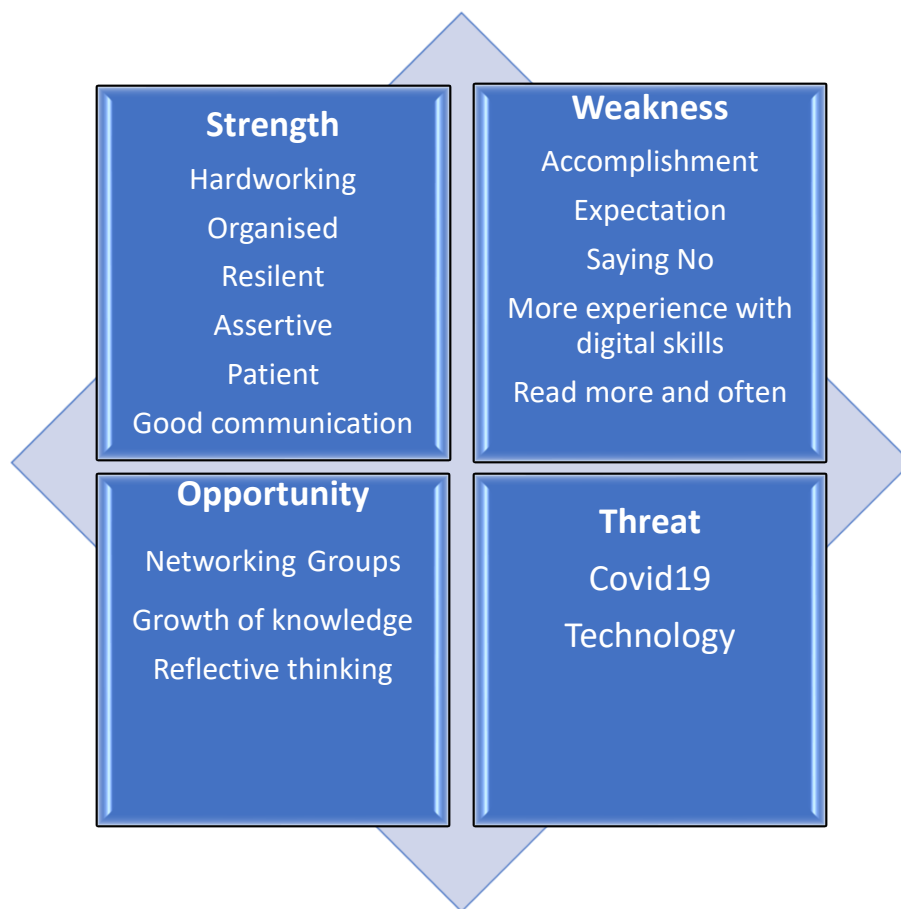


Figure 3: Chart showing Swot Analysis

6.0 Academic skills (Explanation)

Having excellent academic skills when applying for a job can make you stand out in a big crowd. As a support worker, I had to have certain academic skills to enable me to perform. Academic skills such as critical thinking, note taking and plagiarism are very important to an individual's academic and career progression. Critical thinking is one of the most important academic skills I required as a support worker to deal with people with challenging behaviour. Morgan 2017 defines critical thinking as "the development and use of information beyond memory and repetition". It might involve identifying inaccuracies and disparities in another person's work and then find ways of rectifying the mistakes identified (Morgan,2017).

7.0 Personal Development Plan

Is a personal formation which documents an individual plan consisting of one's strengths, weaknesses including opportunities and threats to cave another embryonic plan (Egielewa, 2017). This plan must be evolving towards strengths as weaknesses and threats can be myopic making one to live in fear.

What you would like to improve to?	Why you want to improve them? (Please provide reasons)	How you planned to improve? (Please provide ways you want to improve)	By when you want to improve? (Please provide specific dates)	Any further comments
Expectation	I tend to have high expectations from my fellow colleagues and tend to push them to carry out tasks which bring tensions sometimes.	I must learn to let people to carry out their tasks because we all work differently.	Ongoing process.	Feedback from people close to me or my superiors at work.
Accomplishment	I started my theory and driving lessons a while ago of which have not accomplished.	I need to redo my theory test and hopefully pass it so that I can have a driving license	Before the end of this year 2020.	If I do not accomplish them I have myself to blame.
Saying No	I am a caring person, so at times I find it hard to say no when friends ask for help	Learn to say no.	When I need to say No	
Reading books	I buy books but do not read them as I should do.	Read more and often	A book at least every three months	Set a reminder on my phone.
Covid-19	The uncertainty which this pandemic has caused to people all over the world is saddening.	Must follow the guidelines required by the government	We all must be cautious because this a virus is a killer.	We all must have empathy for people who have put their lives at risk to help those in need.

8.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is that the academic and employability skills are in partial with all aspect of my working experience in Dimensions and my day to day life. As individuals working as support workers, we must possess both hard and soft skills to be successful, henceforward jolting away threats and weaknesses to strengths so that opportunities could be ceased in the future.

As most employers are interested in employing individuals with transferable skills and as more academic skills are acquired, demonstration of competence is important. This is a steppingstone to transition to another career in the foreseeable future.

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