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# Communication

in Health and Social Care

LCHS4009 – Component 1

# What is Communication?

## Definition:

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts and feelings between individuals through verbal, non-verbal, and written mediums.

In health and social care, effective communication is important for delivering safe, clear, and care that is centered around the patient/service user (NHS, 2022).

**Verbal**

**Non-Verbal**

**Written**

**Types of Communication**

# Why Communication is Important in HSC

## Safety of Patients

Clear communication reduces the risk of medical errors and ensures accurate care is provided for patients. NHS England views poor communication as a leading cause of patient safety incidents (NHS England, 2023).

## Care Centered Around Patients

Active listening and empathy enables healthcare providers to understand individual needs and preferences, this is an important principle that is outlined by the Care Quality Commission (CQC, 2023).

## Legal & Ethical Requirements

Accurate written communication is a legal requirement according to the Care Act 2014 and is monitored by Social Work England and the NMC (Gov.UK, 2014).

## Trust Building

Open, honest communication builds trusting relationships, encouraging service users to engage with their care, this is vital to the NHS Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019).

# Practical Example: Communication in a Care Setting

**Scenario: A scheduled morning visit with an elderly patient with mild dementia and limited verbal abilities.**

## Verbal Adaptation

1

Using short, clear sentences is necessary for respecting the needs outlined by NICE dementia guidelines (NICE, 2018).

## Non-Verbal Communication

2

Maintain strong eye contact and open body language to help reassure the patient and build trust, encouraging more openness and willingness to converse.

## Active Listening

3

Allows time for responses and validates feelings, without making the patient feel rushed or insignificant, promotes dignity as pointed out by (Skills for Care, 2023).

## Written Documentation

4

Records observations in the care plan accurately, ensuring effective and informative communication between the team, updating them on all existing conditions of the patient.

# Barriers to Communication & How to Overcome Them

| Barrier                                             | How to Overcome                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Language barriers                                   | Using interpreters, translated text, and visual based communication aids                                                                               |
| Sensory impairments (hearing/visual)                | (Hearing) Utilize correct sign language, recommend hearing loops<br>(Visual) Provide large print, or braille materials to bridge gaps in communication |
| Cognitive impairments (dementia)                    | Make sure to show patience and attempt to communicate at appropriate pace to ensure a full understanding                                               |
| Environmental factors (noise, privacy)              | Value the patient's privacy and existing conditions by discussing their private matters in a quiet and private room or space.                          |
| Emotional / psychological barriers (anxiety, shame) | Build rapport, with patients, demonstrate good levels of empathy, create a safe, nonjudgemental environment that encourages patients to open up        |

# Applying Communication in My Professional Practice

## Personal Strengths

- Active listening skills
- Strong levels of empathy and patience when supporting service users that may struggle with communication
- Clear and concise verbal communication abilities in team settings
- Ability to adapt communication style to different individuals effectively where necessary

## Areas for Development

- Improving written documentation skills
- Developing skills in alternative communication systems to equip myself for different struggles in communication
- Building confidence for when engaging in difficult conversations
- Seeking regular supervision and reflective practice to keep myself accountable for my own growth and development

# Conclusion

- Communication is a foundational skill in health and social care, necessary for ensuring information shared in a health and social care setting is effective and clear.
- It is a skill that must be actively trained and developed to make sure it can be adapted to individual needs and applied consistently across all interactions with patients.
- Vital components of communication in a professional environment, means overcoming barriers, building trust and rapport with patients, and being able to produce accurate and clear documentation to support those patients.
- With active reflection and considerate steps, this skill can continue to grow and be integral to achieving a healthy care environment.

*Thank you*

# References

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