The Care Certificate

STANDARD 6 COMMUNICATION

Communication is the giving and receiving of information, and is the foundation of what we do in everyday life. What we say, how we say it and what we do, communicates a multitude of messages. These messages are given and received both consciously and unconsciously.

6.1 Understand the importance of effective communication at work

6.1a Describe different ways that people communicate

People communicate for a variety of reasons for example:

- Because they feel happy or sad.
- They need to find their way
- To make feelings known
- To order a meal
- To find or give information
- Communication can take many forms such as:
- verbal tone or volume
- written word/documentation
- Body language within communication includes the following:
- behaviour pattern
- eyes
- face
- muscle tension
- gestures
- touch

6.1b Describe how communication affects relationships at work

Not everyone communicates in the same way and it is important that you make sure that you are able to communicate in the individual's preferred way. This may be speaking, writing, picture cards, signing, braille, easy read and emoticons.

Communication with colleagues is usually done verbally but written communication is essential for consistent quality care.

Effective communication enables everyone to feel valued and respected. It encourages information to be passed on and received. This promotes the individuality of the person and ensures a responsive service.

Poor communication leads to the individual becoming excluded, distressed and often frightened. It will lead to a breakdown in the relationship between you and the individual and it may lead to danger and harm.

It is also important to understand the use of communication methods which will vary depending on who you are talking with. When talking to colleagues you may use more technical language than if you were having the same conversation with service user.

Communicating with colleagues may also be different than communication with your manager.

Whenever you are communicating you need to ensure that it is respectful, clear, that it has been understood and that you also understand.

Individuals	Colleagues
Builds trust	No misunderstanding
Enables dialogue	Facilitates learning
Aids understanding	Assist's working together
Encourages exchange of views	Builds working relationships

6.1c Describe why it is important to observe and be receptive to an individual's reactions when communicating with them.

It is good practice to observe an individual when they are communicating as a lot of information can be picked up by their body language. For example the individual may be fidgety and look anxious or they may have their hands folded and look angry.

Whatever is being communicated and in whatever way, it is important that you effectively listen and communicate with the individual in a sensitive and empathic manner. If an individual feels that they are being disregarded they often become depressed and withdrawn.

6.2 Understand how to meet the communication and language needs, wishes and preferences of individuals.

6.2a Describe how to establish an individual's communication and language needs, wishes and preferences.

People have a wide range of communication needs that involve the consideration of many different factors such as:

* Sensory ability   * Level of learning abilities

* Cultural background   * Physical ability

* Language   * Self confidence

The best way to find out about what people want and need, of course is:

a. You can ask them
b. Ask the family
c. Talk to your colleagues
d. Ask your manager
e. Read the individual's plan of care.

6.2b List a range of communication methods and styles that could help meet an individual's communication needs, wishes and preferences.

Non – verbal communication which includes:

- Listening and observation
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Physical gestures
- Body language
- Behaviour

Verbal communication which includes:

- Tone of voice
- Pitch and volume
- Language used
- Appropriate words

Communication may also include signs and symbols, pictures, writing, objects of reference, human and technical aids and IT.

6.3 Understand how to promote effective communication

6.3a List barriers to effective communication

There are many barriers which can prevent effective communication; these can be either internal or external. It is important to understand and remove the barriers wherever possible to improve communication.

Examples of barriers are listed below:

Internal barriers

- Prejudice
- Assumptions
- Labelling
- Judging
- Having your own agenda

External barriers

- Noise
- Environmental
- Language
- Distraction
- Interruption

The best way to ensure that somebody is able to communicate to the best of their ability is to make the person feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible.

6.3b Describe ways to reduce barriers to effective communication

Open Questions: This type of questioning is generally used because it encourages a full answer. For instance 'How are you feeling today'?

Closed Questions: This type of questioning only requires a brief answer and is normally linked to factual questioning that requires a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. For instance 'Would you like to go for a walk?'

Body Language: Body language is a very powerful non-verbal communication. This is shown by the way we stand or sit, place our hands or arms, gestures, and facial expression. Be aware of how you use body language when communicating with an individual you are supporting.

There are times when we need to adapt our communication style to meet the needs of individuals and use of communication aids to help and enhance their understanding.

Hearing Loss: Hearing loss is an invisible disability, so it can become a big communication barrier. Hearing impaired people have to concentrate very hard to pick up information in stages and written information is often preferred. Aids that can help people are; hearing aids, sign language and lip reading.

Loss of Sight: This can make a person very disorientated especially if in a strange place. When supporting a person who is blind or visually impaired, verbal communication has an increased importance. It is important to check that people who wear spectacles have them with them and they are clean and in good repair.

Language barriers: It can be difficult to communicate with a person who speaks no English. You can use picture boards to communicate or work with an interpreter.

Gender Differences: A female may not want to communicate with a male staff member [vice versa].

Dementia/confusion: When caring for someone with dementia, be aware that even basic forms of communication may be difficult for them to understand/interpret. In these situations it is important to follow guidance on communication which will be documented in the care or support plan.

Dysphasic: [inability to speak] This often occurs after a stroke and the individual may get very frustrated when trying to communicate. A speech therapist will be involved with their care and will be able to suggest exercises that can make their communication easier. Written or pictorial communication can be used initially to support the individual.

Cultural Differences: Commonly used gestures can sometimes have different meanings in other cultures. Familiarise yourself with the cultures and practices of those you are supporting.

Communication and Autism: People with autism have difficulties with both verbal and non-verbal language. Many have a very literal understanding of language and think people mean exactly what they say. For people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, body language can appear just as foreign as if people were speaking ancient Greek.

People with the autism often find it difficult to use or understand:

- Facial expressions
- Jokes and sarcasm
- Common phrases and sayings; an example might be the phrase 'it's cool', which people often say when they think something is good, but strictly speaking, means it's a bit cold

Some people with autism may not speak or have fairly limited speech. They will usually understand what other people say to them, but prefer to use alternative means of communication such as sign language or visible symbols.

Others have good language skills, but they may still find it hard to understand the give-and-take nature of conversations, perhaps repeating what other people have just said (known as Echolalia) or talking at length about their own interests.

It helps if people speak in a clear and consistent manner to give people with autism time to process what has been said to them.

6.3c Describe how to check whether you have been understood

Listening – It is important to listen carefully so that you are able to respond to what people are saying. This ensures that the individual feels that they have been heard and understood.

Active Listening

Observing: Careful, non-evaluative attention and eye contact whilst listening. This automatically helps the speaker to express what they want to say.

Reflective data: Repeating back phrases as you hear them – this increases clarity and lets the speaker know that you are hearing them accurately.

Summarising: When you feel you are grasping the ideas, thoughts, etc., summarising to the speaker helps both review and check clarity and mutual understanding of the message.

Reflective feelings: It is important to understand how a person is feeling in order that you can support them. For example, a service user may feel angry that their visitor has not arrived and you may need to help them understand why this has happened.

Interpreting: Sometimes it is appropriate to interpret what the speaker is saying and both parties can find this helpful. However, be aware of negative reactions from the speaker who might feel that you are deliberately distorting the message for reasons of your own.

Appropriate Silences: These are important so that the other person has time to respond.

Behaviour patterns: People's behaviour is a way of communicating how they are reacting to a situation or person. Challenging behaviour can occur because of lack of understanding by the individual and they can become either anxious or frightened and aggressive.

6.3d Describe where to find information and support or services, to help them communicate more effectively.

- Interpreters and translation services
- Advocates
- Speech and language therapists
- GPs or district nurses
- Workplace policies and procedures
- Care watch
- On-line information from relevant support or self-help groups e.g. RNIB, RNID, and Alzheimer's Society.

6.4 Understand the principles and practices relating to confidentiality.

Confidentiality means not sharing information about someone without their knowledge and agreement and ensuring that written and electronic information cannot be accessed or read by people who have no reason to see it.

6.4a Describe what confidentiality means in relation to your role.

Confidentiality is an important right for all individuals because:

- It is the law under the Data Protection Act 1998
- Individuals may not trust the care or support worker who does not keep information confidential
- Individuals may not feel valued and therefore have low self-esteem if their private details are share with everyone
- Individuals safety may be put at risk if details of their personal life or business are made public

It is always important to ask individuals if you can pass on information about them. For example it would be wrong to pass on the date of person's birthday without asking them first. Some people may not want others to celebrate their birthday or know how old they are e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in celebrating birthdays.

Whatever you know about an individual should not be shared unless you have specific permission from them.

There are however times when information can be shared without permission.

For example:

- Your colleagues will need information to enable them to continue the care or support of the individual
- Professionals visiting the individual need information relevant to their service
- Managers need to know information to help them make decisions about their health
- If the individual or others are at risk of harm

You will have many demands made on you. You will form working relationships with people you are supporting and also with colleagues and carers. People may tell you personal things about themselves and maybe issues of confidentiality which you will have to decide whether to keep to yourself or report to a senior manager. You may have to breach this confidentiality if you think it's in the interest of the service user but you must seek consent wherever possible.

6.4b List any legislation and agreed ways of working to maintain confidentiality in day-to-day communication.

- Data Protection Act 1998.
- Confidentiality Policy
- Record Keeping Policy
- Access to Records Policy
- Data Protection Policy

6.4c Describe situations where information normally considered to be confidential, might need to be passed on

- When there is significant risk of harm to the individual.
- Where an individual discloses to you or you discover they have been abused.
- When there is significant risk of harm to others
- There is a risk to your health or wellbeing.

6.4d Describe who to ask for advice and support about confidentiality.

Contact your senior colleagues or your manager if in doubt about any aspect of confidentiality.

6.5 Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication.

6.5a Demonstrate the use of appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication

See Observation Log.

Verbal:

- Tone
- Volume

Non-verbal:

- Position/proximity
- Eye contact
- Body language
- Touch
- Signs
- Symbols and pictures
- Writing
- Objects of reference
- Human and technical aids.

Communication may take place:

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

To achieve this outcome and assessment criteria you will be observed in the workplace as part of your normal work duties.

6.6 Support the use of appropriate communication aid/technologies.

See Observation Log.

6.6a Check that communication aids/technologies are:

- Clean
- Working properly
- In good repair.

6.6b Report any concerns about the communication aid/technology to the appropriate person.

See observation log.

This could include:

- Senior member of staff
- Carer
- Family member
- Maintenance contractor

To achieve both of these outcomes and assessment criteria, you will be observed in the workplace as part of your normal work duties. However the opportunity for you to demonstrate this during your induction period may not arise. Therefore the use of simulation/role play is permitted.