

Introduction

How can you make sure you communicate with others of all ages and abilities effectively? Health and social care professionals need good communication skills to develop positive relationships and share information with people using services. Clear communication is important to enable service users to understand and agree to the care they are receiving. They also need to be able to communicate well with people's families and/or carers and their own colleagues and other professionals. Good communication between care professionals allows them to perform their roles effectively, work cooperatively with colleagues and build supportive relationships with service users. It is important therefore, if you are considering a career in health and social care, to gain the knowledge, understanding and practical skills needed to develop effective interpersonal skills.

There are several different forms of communication used in a health and social care environment. This unit looks at verbal and non-verbal communication methods and you will learn how they are used effectively in health and social care. You will also learn to recognise a range of factors which may create barriers to communication so preventing people accessing health and social care as effectively. You will then consider ways in which these barriers may be overcome, including the use of alternative forms of communication.

Learning aims

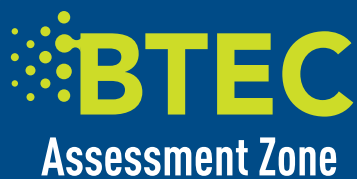
By completing this unit you will:

- a investigate different forms of communication
- b investigate barriers to communication in health and social care
- c communicate effectively in health and social care.



The way you talk to people is really important. When I went on placement to a residential care home for older people I was told to crouch down to the level at which they were sitting so I wouldn't tower over them and intimidate them. I was also told to speak clearly but not patronisingly.

Kirsten would-be care assistant, aged 16 years.



This table shows what you must do in order to achieve a **Pass**, **Merit** or **Distinction** grade, and where you can find activities in this book to help you.

Assessment and grading criteria

Learning aim A: Investigate different forms of communication

Assessment activity 3.1 page 11

1A.1 Identify different forms of verbal and non-verbal communication.	2A.P1 Describe different forms of verbal and non-verbal communication.	2A.M1 Explain the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of communication used, with reference to a one-to-one and a group interaction.	2A.D1 Assess the effectiveness of different forms of communication for service users with different needs.
1A.2 Identify different forms of alternative communication for different needs, using examples from health and social care.	2A.P2 Describe different forms of alternative communication for different needs, using examples from health and social care.		

Learning aim B: Investigate barriers to communication in health and social care

Assessment activity 3.2 page 17

1B.3 Outline the barriers to communication in health and social care.	2B.P3 Describe the barriers to communication in health and social care and their effects on service users.	2B.M2 Explain how measures have been implemented to overcome barriers to communication, with reference to a selected case.	2B.D2 Evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken to remove barriers to communication, with reference to a selected case.
1B.4 Identify ways in which barriers to communication may be overcome for individuals with sensory loss.	2B.P4 Using examples, explain ways in which barriers to communication may be overcome and the benefits to service users of overcoming these barriers.		

Learning aim C: Communicate effectively in health and social care

Assessment activity 3.3 page 22

1C.5 Demonstrate communication skills through one interaction in health and social care, identifying the forms of communication used.	2C.P5 Demonstrate communication skills through interactions in health and social care, describing their effects.	2C.M3 Select and demonstrate communication skills through interactions in health and social care, explaining their effectiveness.	2C.D3 Select and demonstrate communication skills through one-to-one and group interactions in health and social care, evaluating their effectiveness and making recommendations for improvement.
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Why do we communicate?

Link

The topics on this spread cover learning aim A



Discussion point



Who do you communicate with?

Think about a day at school or college. With a partner discuss all the different people you communicate with in a day. Which group of people can you communicate with most easily and why do you feel this is?

English

Key terms



Communication – the exchange of information between people.

Context – the circumstances and setting in which an event occurs.

Introduction

In this topic you will learn about why we communicate, why good **communication skills** are so important within a health and social care environment and the different **contexts** for communication. We communicate with others all the time, wherever we may be, often without even realising it and sometimes not intending to.

Communication skills

Interpersonal skills are those that enable us to interact with others, so allowing us to communicate successfully. Good communication skills are vital for those working in health and social care as they help them to:

- develop positive relationships with people using services and their families and friends so that they can understand and meet their needs
- develop positive relationships with work colleagues and other professionals
- share information with people using the services
- report on the work they do with people.

Activity 3.1

Sit in a circle in a group. Discuss the statement 'TV programmes, such as *Casualty* or *Holby City* create the wrong impression of working life in a large hospital'. One person starts the discussion holding a ball or bean bag. When they have made their point they throw the ball to someone else in the group and that person responds to what they have said. The ball has to go to each person in the group before anyone who has already spoken can speak again. When the discussion has finished discuss the following points in your group:

- 1 Did everyone join in properly? If not, why not?
- 2 How did sitting in a circle help?
- 3 How could you tell that someone was about to finish talking?
- 4 Did you find the task easier or harder with the ball? Why?
- 5 How did the ball help the discussion?
- 6 Look at Figure 3.1. Who in the group used these skills best? How could you tell?

Contexts

One-to-one communication

One-to-one means one person communicating with another person with no other people joining in. The conversation needs a start, for instance a greeting, such as 'Hi', a middle section when you both discuss what you need to talk about, and an ending, such as 'See you later'.

Workspace

Emily Burgess – Nursery nurse

I am a nursery nurse in a busy small town nursery. I work in a team that includes six other nursery nurses, a manager and a cleaner. We have three separate rooms so children of different age groups can have their own room, although they do mix together for certain activities. There is also a room where staff can keep their personal belongings.

My main task is to help to look after the eight children aged between one and three.

I love this age group, as they change so quickly. I organise activities for them, such as big-book reading, playing in the dressing-up corner and creative activities, such as finger painting and making cards for special occasions like Mother's Day. We also sing songs everyday and play simple musical instruments once a week. Each day the children play in the small enclosed area outside for a short time if the weather is good enough. Although the emphasis is on fun, all the activities are designed to deliver the early learning goals so helping the children develop their skills and knowledge.

I also have to make sure the children are fed and changed. Another task is to keep records of what we do each day, the progress made by individual children and details of any concerns I may have about any of them, which I then discuss with the manager.

I speak to the parents on a daily basis when they drop off and collect their children. I enjoy the fact that I am helping both the children and their parents. I love my job because I enjoy meeting lots of different people and feeling that I am making a difference to them.



Think about it

- 1 Why are communication skills so important to Emily's job?
- 2 What are your strengths when it comes to communication? What are the areas that you would like to improve?
- 3 How can you make sure you communicate with others of all ages and abilities effectively?

Barriers to communication

Link

The topics on this spread cover learning aim B



How would being isolated from civilisation affect how well you communicate?

Woman found in jungle after 20 years

Rochom P'ngieng was found alive in the Cambodian jungle where it is believed she has been living for 20 years after getting lost at the age of eight. She is unable to communicate except by using animal noises, hates to wear clothes and crawls rather than walks.

What other forms of isolation could make it difficult to communicate?



Introduction

In this topic, which covers the next two pages you will learn about factors that affect communication, called barriers to communication, and their effects, starting with environmental, physical and language barriers.

Factors that affect communication

It is important to be able to communicate effectively in a health or social care setting because a service user will not be able to take part in a discussion about their care or planning their future if they do not understand what is being said.

There are many barriers to communication.

Environmental barriers e.g.

- **Lighting** – someone who doesn't see very well will struggle to read written information in a dimly lit room.
- **Seating** – a person in a wheelchair or with dwarfism will be unable to communicate with a receptionist in a health and social care setting if the desk is too high for them to see over.
- **External noise** – someone with a hearing or speech impairment will not be able to communicate if they cannot receive or pass on information because there is too much noise.
- **Lack of space** – a person in a wheelchair will find it impossible to access a service if they cannot get into a room or across a room to a reception desk to communicate with a service provider.
- **Uneven surface or stairs** – wheelchair users or people with impaired mobility may not be able to access areas that have an uneven surface or stairs.

Physical barriers e.g.

- **Sensory deprivation** – when someone cannot receive or pass on information because they have an impairment to one or more of their senses, most commonly a visual or a hearing disability.
- **Physical and mental illness** – when someone is ill they may not be able to communicate as effectively as when they are well. Some long-term (chronic) illnesses such as Parkinson's disease or mental illness also affect an individual's ability to communicate.

Activity

Environmental and physical barriers

Think about your own experience of health and social care settings, such as visits to the doctor, dentist or optician. Can you identify any barriers to communication? Discuss these with a partner and think about how they would make you feel if you were unwell or had a disability.