

Nonverbal communication and service users

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Be able to meet the communication and language needs, wishes and preferences of individuals

1. Find out an individual's communication and language needs, wishes and preferences.
2. Demonstrate communication methods that meet an individual's communication needs, wishes and preferences.
3. Show how and when to seek advice about communication. It is always important to find out about each individual's particular communication and language needs, wishes and preferences.

Effective communication happens when the right method is used to send a message, so it can be received and understood. Health and social care practitioners need to know about a range of communication methods. They should also be skilled at identifying the communication and language needs, wishes and preferences of the people with whom they work and interact. Health and social care settings are used by people from a diverse range of backgrounds who will want to communicate in different ways.

Finding out about each individual's language needs, wishes and preferences is an important part of my role. I can do this by:

- asking people whether they or their relatives have particular language or communication needs
- reading reports and notes about service users that provide information on speech and language issues, learning difficulties, disabilities (e. g. hearing or visual impairment) or physical conditions (e. g. stroke, cleft palate) that may affect their ability to communicate
- being aware that an individual's culture, ethnicity and nationality may affect their language preferences and needs
- observing the people who use my setting to see how they use their communication and language skills
- asking my supervisor/mentor, senior staff and specialist professionals such as speech and language therapists,

occupational therapists and social workers for information, advice and support about how best to communicate with adults who have special communication needs.

Hearing impaired people Make sure that my face can be seen clearly, face the light and the person I am speaking to at all times, speak clearly and slowly - repeat and rephrase if necessary, minimise background noise, use my eyes, facial expressions and gestures to communicate, where appropriate, do not be tempted to shout into a person's ear or hearing aid.

Visually impaired people Speak in the same way as I would to a sighted person - not louder or more slowly! say who I am in my greeting as my voice won't necessarily be recognised even if I have met the person before, always introduce other people who are with me and explain what is going on if a visually impaired adult joins me in a group, let the visually impaired person know when I am about to do something that is likely to affect communication (such as leave the room or move away), end conversations clearly and let the person know that I am leaving - do not just walk away, ask the person if they need any particular help - to sit down or to move about, for example - but do not assume that this is always necessary or wanted.

Health and social care practitioners use two main types of communication as part of their work roles. These are verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is based on the use of words. Health and social care practitioners need effective verbal skills to: ? obtain information from colleagues, service users and others who use the setting ? respond to questions ? contribute to team meetings ? give feedback and report observations about service users ? provide support to service users, relatives

and colleagues ? deal with problems and complaints ? write notes and reports

Non-verbal communication occurs when a person uses their body, behaviour and appearance to communicate with others. For example, an individual's body language may tell a health or social care practitioner that they are uncomfortable or need to go to the toilet even when they say they're okay.

Non-verbal communication What does it involve? Examples Eye contact Looking another person directly in the eyes Short or broken eye contact can express nervousness, shyness or mistrust.

Long unbroken eye contact can express interest, attraction or hostility.

Touch Physically touching or holding a person Holding someone's hand

Placing a hand on a person's arm or shoulder to reassure them Physical

gestures Deliberate movements of the hands to express meaning Thumbs-up

gesture to show agreement or pleasure Shaking a fist to show anger or

aggression Body language Facial expression Movements of the face that

express a person's feelings Smiling Frowning

Proximity The physical closeness between people during interactions Being

very close may be reassuring and may be seen as accepting the person. It

might also make the person feel uncomfortable and threatened. People need

less personal space (increased proximity) when they have a close, trusting

relationship. To be an effective communicator in my work setting, I need to

be able to use methods of communication that meet each individual's needs,

wishes and preferences. My goal is always to ensure that the messages I

send can be received and understood.

Perhaps I will be aware that I am struggling to communicate effectively with

somebody. In situations like these, I should seek advice and obtain support. I

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can do this by: ? talking to my supervisor, mentor or line manager about the difficulty - ask for their advice about how to deal with the problem ? talking to communication or language support specialists (teachers, psychologists or speech and language therapists) who work at or spend time in my work setting.