

Communication and professional relationships with children essay sample

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Establishing a respectful, professional relationship with children and young people In order to develop a positive relationship with children and young people the Teaching Assistant needs to show they are friendly, approachable and have an interest in talking to the children they are working with. This involves showing good body language, smiling, maintaining eye contact and displaying active listening, such as responding appropriately, asking additional relevant questions and showing empathy. Also children need time to speak without the adult been distracted. When speaking to children and young people the language and tone used needs to be age appropriate, and be clear and concise. The Teaching Assistant also needs to show politeness and courtesy.

This shows respect and also sets a good example to the child or young person as to how you'd expect them to speak to others. As the Teaching Assistant you need to remain professional by maintaining consistency and treating all children equally. Situations may arise where a child they know will be in the setting or the Teaching Assistant will have ' favourites'.

Conversely, there may be children with a reputation for displaying poor behaviour or who are more difficult to engage in conversation with. However, all children need to be given the opportunity to speak and also need to be spoken to in an appropriate manner.

How to behave appropriately for a child or young person's stage of development The child's stage of development effects how we need to behave and communicate with them. The vocabulary and tone of voice used will change as the child matures. For example the Teaching Assistant will

tend to use a softer, more gentle tone with younger children. This may be especially true when dealing with poor behaviour where a calm approach is required. In this situation regard also needs to be taken to whether the child is aware that what they are doing is wrong – young children may not be familiar with school rules, may not have the same standards to adhere to at home, or may not have the skills to show empathy and feeling to someone else.

When giving instructions to younger children they need to be simple, clear and concise. These instructions should be given individually as giving a lengthy list may overwhelm them and can result in important tasks being missed. Older children should be able to handle this information better and deal with more instructions in one go. Also, Burnham (2007) recognises that younger children, for example just starting school, may need more reassurance and may also need more physical contact as a result. However, with older children and young people their needs tend to revolve around requiring help to talk through issues and reflect on their thoughts.

Dealing with disagreements between children and young people When dealing with a disagreement between two children or young people it is important to remain calm and objective and not jump to any conclusions. The situation needs to be dealt with immediately rather than allowing the children to feel no action was taken. Firstly, all parties, including any eye witnesses, need to be given the opportunity to say what has happened and why. Then ask for the children's input into what they should have done and what would have been a more appropriate way to deal with the problem. If

necessary remind them of the relevant school rules and/or policies and encourage them to think how they would address a similar situation in the future. Once both parties have had their say, a fair resolution needs to be established, they need to say ' sorry' and then both children need to move on. It is important to be fair and consistent when dealing with disagreements and to avoid any confrontation or shouting at the pupils.

How our own behaviour can effect interaction with children and young people The way in which the Teaching Assistant behaves can impact on how the children feel and interact with them. A positive and happy demeanour will help the children feel settled and encourage them to communicate. Once a child is speaking to you it is important to maintain good communication and listening skills such as giving eye contact, using appropriate facial expression and body language and reacting and commenting on what they are saying. If you show you are interested in what they are saying it builds their confidence and makes them feel like they are important and shows them they are making a valued contribution. If what you're told relates to a forthcoming event, such as a birthday or holiday, remembering this for the next time you see them also reinforces the fact that you were interested and were listening to what they had to say. By being approachable and a good listener it gives the child confidence to speak to the individual should there be anything wrong where they need to confide in someone.

Conversely, if the Teaching Assistant is in a bad mood, possibly conveyed by poor body language, or if they are distracted when a child is talking, thereby giving mixed messages, it can have a negative impact on the child. If a child

is talking and the Teaching Assistants body language shows they are not fully listening, such as if they are looking away or talking over them, this passes on the message that they are not interested in what the child has to say and the child may not bother taking the time to speak to the Teaching Assistant again in the future. If the Teaching Assistants negative behaviour manifests itself as shouting and taking out their temper and frustration on the children, the children are unlikely to respond in the desired way as they will feel unfairly treated. The way in which a Teaching Assistant or any other member of staff behaves impacts on the children or young people as they tend to copy and learn from the behaviours they see. The way in which the Teaching Assistant acts can lead children to think that this is an acceptable way to behave regardless of whether this is positive or negative.

Establishing a respectful, professional relationship with adults Many of the skills used to establish a respectful relationship with children and young people are true for establishing a respectful relationship with adults. These include been friendly and approachable, showing good active listening skills and been polite and courteous. Teaching Assistant's will be in contact with a range of adults within the school setting such as other teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, health care professionals, volunteers, and school inspectors. A friendly yet professional relationship needs to be established. Knowing how a person likes to be addressed and been respectful of their views and opinions are very important to set a good grounding for any relationship. When dealing with the children's parents it is important to be

professional and co-operative whilst also maintaining the need for confidentiality.

Any issues which are beyond the scope of the Teaching Assistant need to be passed on to the appropriate person to help, for example the class teacher, with a brief explanation to the parent as to why you have referred them.

Examples of this may be a request to find out how their child is progressing or to inform the school of a medical condition. Failure to explain this referral may make the parent feel you are not interested or willing to help, possibly leading to future communication problems. Teaching Assistants can be put in the situation where they are asked to divulge information about things which are going on in the school, for example parents may ask questions about the general classroom behaviour, and it is important to politely explain that you can't discuss these issues and if applicable refer them to someone who can speak to them.

The importance of adult relationships as role models for children and young people Burnham (2007) states that “ as adults, we need to show children how to get along with one another and we should model the kind of behaviour we expect from them. If we are able to show them that we value and respect others they are much more likely to learn to do the same”. As adults are the primary role models for children and they learn from how they see them behave, it will have a positive impact if they see adults been well-mannered, considerate and courteous towards each other. Also, the way in which adults behave during times of disagreement will set the standard for how children feel they can react. By dealing with disagreements in a calm

and amicable way and discussing problems, children will pick up on this and learn to talk through their disagreements. Conversely, if children see adults shouting at each other the message is given that this is an acceptable way to behave and deal with a problem.

How communication with children and young people differs across different age ranges and stages of development As our class notes (20/11/12) state “ it is important to remember that children are still learning and developing so being able to communicate with them on their own level is important”. When dealing with young children it is essential to use terminology that they will understand and be clear and unambiguous. Also, it is necessary to use a calm, respectful tone of voice and body language that supports what is been said, as not to give mixed messages. It can also be helpful to get down to their level and maintain eye contact. This will provide greater reassurance and confirm you are listening and interested in what they are saying. It is also important with younger children to give short, simple instructions and to confirm that the child has understood what has been said before moving on. If not the instructions will need repeating in a way more appropriate for the child.

Young children can have lots of questions which help them make sense of any information given, therefore opportunities need to exist for them to put across these questions. As a child matures their vocabulary expands and they can deal with more complex instructions and concepts. They can be given multiple instructions and be asked to deal with more abstract theories beyond the here and now. Speaking to an older child as you would a younger

child, such as getting down to their level when talking to them, could come across as patronising. Humour and sarcasm can be brought into the conversations, as they will increasingly understand it and its use in everyday language. However, the vocabulary and tone used still needs to be age appropriate and it is still important to establish that the child or young person has fully understood what has been said.

The main differences between communicating with adults and communicating with children and young people. There are many similarities between communicating with children and young people and communicating with adults. Namely maintaining eye contact, appropriate body language, interest, through responding to what they are saying, and treating them with courtesy and respect. When communicating with adults it is important to maintain the right level of professionalism and find out and use the correct address for that person. As with children there is a need to use vocabulary and terminology which will be understood by the other party, and the use of abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided unless you know the other party is familiar with them.

However, less attention tends to be put on clarifying words and sentences when communicating with adults, as the assumption is often made that they will ask if something is not clear or understood. Communicating with adults is often more of a two-way process where both parties are giving and receiving information and would both have to check each other's understanding, often through summarising the key points at the end of the conversation.

Depending on the subject, consideration may also need to be taken to the need for confidentiality and data protection.

Examples of communication difficulties that may exist

There are many situations when communication difficulties arise, such as if a person has

- Physical disabilities; hearing impairment, cleft palate
 - Speech impairment; stammer
 - Poor speech development; limited opportunities to develop language skills
 - Special Educational Needs; ADHD, autism, Asperger's, learning disability
 - Lack of confidence; shyness, out of comfort zone

 - Personality Clash; differences of opinion, lack of respect, rude or patronising speech
 - Increased stress levels; tiredness, attention on something else
- Difficulties can also exist if there's:
- Misunderstanding; English as a second language, use of unfamiliar terminology, regional accents, misinterpretation of written communication i. e. texting
 - Poor environment; distractions, lack of privacy
 - Lack of time; children may see this as you are not interested
 - Cultural differences

Adapting communication to meet different communication needs As with all communication the best practice is to have a friendly, approachable demeanour, speak clearly and use good eye contact and body language.

When working with others with communication difficulties it is important to seek out the best type of communication and environment for that person, as this may be different, even for those with similar impairments. For example if working with a child with a hearing impairment it may be necessary to position them in the class where they can see you clearly and to make sure you are facing them when speaking directly to them.

This may allow them to adopt lip reading techniques. If the person has speech difficulties, as Burnham (2007) stresses “ care and sensitivity should be taken. The child [or person] needs time and needs to feel unpressured when they are speaking”. This is especially true if they have speech impairment, such as a stammer, where it is important that they can finish what they are saying without others filling in words or guessing what they are going to say. Similarly for a shy child time and encouragement needs to be given so they can put across their point of view. Being sympathetic and by finding out how best to communicate with individuals with communication difficulties allows for the most effective practices to be put in place.

Dealing with disagreements between the practitioner and children and young people The class notes (20/11/12) list the way to deal with a disagreement between the practitioner and a child is to:

- Remain calm

- Don't engage in confrontation
- Call for support from colleagues
- Take time out

By remaining calm the practitioner can establish the reasons for the

disagreement without further inflaming the situation, this may be that a misunderstanding has taken place or the child wasn't aware of what was expected of them. If the practitioner engaged in further confrontation, such as shouting, the child would then respond negatively, whereas if they are given the opportunity to discuss the situation it should be possible to talk about a better way to deal with it next time round. Sometimes as a practitioner you may not be effectively able to deal with a situation. In which case a colleague should be called upon and the practitioner can take a 'time out' to calm down and reflect themselves on what has just happened.

Dealing with disagreements between the practitioner and other adults When dealing with a disagreement between the practitioner and another adult, the following points should be addressed: •Stay calm; remain assertive but not aggressive

- Remain objective and fair
- Resolve the situation in a timely manner
- Once resolved, move on
- Follow school grievance policy if between colleagues and remains

unresolved As with the disagreement with a child it is important to remain calm as not to further inflame the situation. However, you need to stand up for your own view point whilst remaining fair and objective. Failure to do so may leave unresolved issues which impact on future relationships between the two adults. Dealing with matters as soon as possible is paramount to maintain a positive relationship, however not all disagreements will end

amicably which is why there is a grievance procedure in place should it be required.

Relevant legal requirements and procedures covering confidentiality, data protection and the disclosure of information •The Data Protection Act (1998) is in place to ensure that any information collected from individuals remains confidential and is dealt with in an appropriate manner. Any establishment collecting data needs to be registered with the Data Protection Commission. The Department for Education website explains that under this Act all schools processing personal data must comply with the eight enforceable principles of good practice. Data must be:

- ☞fairly and lawfully processed
- ☞processed for limited purposes
- ☞adequate, relevant and not excessive
- ☞accurate
- ☞not kept longer than necessary
- ☞processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
- ☞secure
- ☞not transferred to other countries without adequate protection.

•The Human Rights Act (1998) and the United Nations on the Rights of the Child (1989) both highlight privacy as a human right for all

•The Freedom of Information Act (2000) states that an individual has the right to access the information that is held about them

- Although confidentiality is paramount, occasions may occur when information needs to be shared between relevant professional bodies. Every Child Matters (2005) and the Children's Act (2004) stress the "importance of sharing information, which highlights concern for the child, between different Government agencies" (Department of Education website)
- Each school will have its own School Policy and Guidelines in place to cover confidentiality and data sharing. These policies must then be adhered to by the staff working within that school

The importance of reassuring children, young people and adults of the confidentiality of shared information and the limits of this Children and young people need to feel confident that they can talk to an adult about their personal concerns or worries, and that this information will remain confidential. Although no promises can be made that any information shared will not go any further, reassurances can be given that it will only be passed on if it is in the best interests of the child or young person, for example if further help or support for the child is required. It is also important to stress to them that any sensitive information shared will not become common knowledge within the school and won't put them at risk of ridicule, teasing or bullying from anyone else in the school.

Similarly, adults need to feel confident that any sensitive information discussed does not become general gossip, or the talk of the staff room or playground. If any information given needs to be shared between other relevant parties it is important that consent is obtained before doing so.

Schools need to show they respect privacy and personal information as it shows they conform to the legal guidelines, they develop a sense of trust amongst the parents and the school retains a good reputation. It is sometimes necessary that information will need to be passed on to other staff members who work with the pupil, for example if a medical condition exists or if there are worries over the child's wellbeing. In these scenarios the parent and child needs to be aware that this information will be passed on ' on a need-to-know basis'.

Situations when confidentiality protocols must be breached

The Learning Trust website summarises that although respect for confidentiality is essential, schools cannot grant an absolute right to complete confidentiality in all circumstances and that schools have a right to protect children. Confidentiality should be breached if the child is: •being harmed by other people – for example abuse (physical, sexual, mental), neglect, bullying, •deliberately harming themselves – including self-harm, drink or drug addiction •harming other people – or expresses significant threats to do so In these cases the information needs to be passed on to the next level of seniority within the school, for example the class or head teacher.