



Devon Prison Cluster  
**Buddy Support  
Worker Induction  
Programme**

Prisoners assisting other prisoners



## Communication and advocacy

Care Certificate: Standard 6: Communication  
Behaviours from the NHS 6 Cs

# To complete this module...

you will need to show that you understand the outcomes listed below. Please use this booklet as a guide but don't copy directly from this. When writing your answers in your workbook, please try to give your own examples.

## Outcomes

- The different ways that people communicate.
- List a range of communication methods and styles that could help meet an individual's communication needs, wishes and preferences.
- List barriers to effective communication
- Describe ways to reduce barriers to effective communication.
- Describe what confidentiality means, in relation to their role.
- Describe situations where information, normally considered being confidential, might need to be passed on.
- Describe who to ask for advice and support about confidentiality.
- Explain what Advocacy means, within their role.
- Describe the skills and attributes that you need to undertake Advocacy support.
- Describe, what would the individuals you support gain, from accessing Advocacy.
- Identify the activities that can be undertaken in Advocacy, to support inclusion.

**In addition to those outcomes listed above – you will also be observed in the workplace and will need to demonstrate the below outcomes:**

- You will need to show the use of appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication. (Verbal communication includes your tone of voice and your volume;(Non-verbal communication included your position/proximity, eye contact, body language, signs, symbols and pictures, writing, objects of reference)
- You will need to show that if any of the individuals you support, have a communication aid/technology, any concerns can be reported.
- You will need to demonstrate that you are able to use the skills and attributes required for Advocacy:
  - Active listening skills**
  - Communication skills**
  - Approachability**
  - Reliability**
  - Perseverance**
  - Non-judgmental**
- You will need to demonstrate that you are able to give the individual that you are supporting a voice and to support the individual to have choice.

# Effective communication

Effective communication is very important in the role of Buddy Support Worker. You will be working with people who may feel vulnerable and/or frightened and it is important that you can support them effectively. The Prison and Healthcare staff rely on good communication to help them deliver safe, coordinated and effective care. Your role forms part of this extended team in terms of working directly with prisoners who require support.

## **Good communication helps individuals feel more at ease.**

People who need to access health and social care services can feel anxious about their health, and if they need support they can feel more vulnerable within a Prison setting.

This can sometimes lead them to speak out of character, perhaps being a bit rude or aggressive. Having good communication with Buddy Support Workers can reduce their anxiety and build their confidence.

## **Good communication helps individuals to feel in control.**

It's easy for people to feel that they give up all control of their lives once they have a health condition or disability that makes them less independent. Even simple everyday things they would have normally been able to do, like getting their food, cleaning their cell, accessing services within the Prison is dictated by someone else.

Losing control can make people feel helpless and hopeless, which isn't good for boosting their chances of recovery from illness. But good communication can avoid these feelings – it can help people to see that they still have a say.

## **Good communication makes individuals feel valued.**

The most precious thing we can give to another person is our time. When we show we're prepared to lay aside all the other things we need to do to spend time with someone, to listen to them, get to know them and understand how they are feeling, we're showing that we really value that person. Being able to communicate well helps us achieve this with the prisoner(s) we are supporting.

# Communication methods

So let's look at some of the methods of communication we can use to help individuals in these important ways.

Communication is about much more than the words we say. The tone of our voice when we speak, the attention we give to what the other person is saying, the "messages" we give out by the way we move and position our bodies and the accuracy and clarity of what we write are also key elements of good communication.

We're going to look at five important communication aspects:

**Non-verbal**

**Verbal**

**Listening**

**Questioning**

**Written**

It's important to remember that your communication abilities will develop as you gain experience as a Buddy Support Worker. You'll be communicating with individuals on a daily basis and developing your skills as you do so, and you'll also get the chance to observe more experienced Buddy Support Workers and Wing Officers and learn from it.

## Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is often described as 'body language'.

Body language says a lot about our interest and engagement in the communication we're having. Even when we 'say the right things', the message can be lost if our body language suggests we're thinking something very different.

**Think about the following four elements of body language in your communication with individuals:**

- **Body posture (how we stand or sit):** we'll communicate much better when we bring our face to the same level as the other person and do not tower above them if in bed or a chair. We should be relaxed, not fidgety and impatient. And it's important that we adopt an 'open' stance, showing the person that we want to be there and are not desperate to rush away and do something else – standing well back from the person with your arms crossed and flicking your eyes constantly towards the door isn't exactly an encouragement to good communication!
- **Eye contact:** keep good eye contact with the person, but don't stare – and remember that for people from some cultures, making eye contact can seem a bit rude. This emphasises the importance of knowing about the individuals we're caring for and learning how to approach them in the right way.

So much of what we are thinking is given away by the expressions on our faces. We may not even realise we are rolling our eyes, grimacing or stifling a yawn, none of which will encourage patients/clients to keep talking to us. We need to be aware of our facial expressions and control them at all times.

- Touch: touch is a very powerful means of communication. Lightly touching a person's hand can convey your concern and affection for them. But as with eye contact, the touch has to be appropriate, and there are important cultural issues around touch that need to be understood. It's also important that individuals give permission for you to touch them, something we'll look at in more detail in the section called 'Consent'.

## Verbal communication

**We have to give clear attention to what we say to individuals.  
We need to ensure that what we say is:**

- clear
- accurate
- honest
- appropriate (to the person's age, language/culture and level of understanding).

**But just as important is how we say it. At all times we must be:**

- Courteous and respectful: we need to make sure we address individuals as they wish to be addressed. Some may prefer you to call them by their first names, while others might want a more formal address. The key thing is to find out what is right for each individual. Generally, 'pet' names – 'Mate', 'Pal', – shouldn't be used. (However you do have to judge the situation as sometimes these can help build your relationship with an individual if they are happy for them to be used).
- Encouraging: we should try to prompt individuals to communicate with us by saying encouraging things to them – 'yes, do go on', 'can you tell me a bit more about that?'

**Your tone of voice is also important.**

Individuals don't like to feel they're holding you back from other duties, but they can get that feeling if your tone of voice is irritated or impatient. Things can get very busy in Prison if you are supporting different individuals, and you might feel as if you're being rushed off your feet, but try not to let that seep into your voice – try to stay calm and focused on the individual in front of you. With practice, you'll be able to perfect this vital skill.

# Listening

Curiously, some people don't consider 'listening' as 'communication'. To them, it seems odd that part of communication involves being quiet. But listening is vital in good communication and is especially vital for you as a Buddy Support Worker.

You'll be working closely with individuals and they will often tell you important things. Indeed, some may prefer to speak to you rather than to professionals about how they are feeling or about things that worry them, because they have got to know you, like you and trust you.

**So really hearing what individuals are saying – really listening – is a key skill.**

It means paying attention to what the person is saying and working out what it really means.

**The best way to do this is to:**

- follow the advice in the sections 'Non-verbal communication' and 'Verbal communication'
- remain quiet, but encourage the individual to speak with gentle head nodding and, when appropriate, positive words ('yes', 'do continue') and simple questions ('and how did that make you feel?').

**As you listen, try to identify key words that might sum up how the person is feeling, words like:**

**frightened** or  
**scared** **lonely**  
**fed up** or 'a bit down'  
**pain** or **discomfort**  
**worried**

When the person has finished speaking, reflect back to him or her what you've understood. For instance, you might say something like this:

'It sounds from what you're saying, Mr Smith, that you've got some concerns about the test you're going for tomorrow, especially about whether it will cause you any discomfort. Would you like me to get nurse to speak to you about it?'

# Questioning

There are two kinds of questions we can use to help us understand what people want and need:

- closed questions
- open questions

## Closed questions

We use closed questions when we need a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer or confirmation of something. For instance:

- "Have you eaten your breakfast today?"
- "Have you got a Health Care appointment today?"

## Open questions

Open questions encourage the individual to speak in more depth about something. They are 'open' because they invite the person to 'open up'.

The best example of an open question is: 'How do you feel?' The individual can respond briefly by saying 'fine', but if he or she says 'not great', or 'awful', it means we can begin to ask some more open questions to find out what is going on – 'what do you feel is wrong?' Asking one open question often leads to asking another.

Similarly, if the individual responds with 'well, funnily, I've had quite a bit on my mind recently', or some other indication that things aren't quite right, we can begin to ask more open questions to help us identify the problem.

# Written communication

**Prison services need to keep good written records of the support given to individuals for three main reasons:**

1. To make sure the support and treatment can continue to be given safely no matter which Buddy Support Workers are on duty, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
2. To record the care that has been given to the individual.
3. To make sure there is an accurate record to be used as 'evidence' when there is a complaint from an individual about the care they've received.

You'll be supporting professional staff to prepare and update records, so having a sound grasp of the principles of written communication is important. The actual level of your involvement in written records will vary – you need to find out what's expected of you and make sure you follow the rules.

**The principles of written communication are that you should:**

- Write as near as possible to the time you've delivered the support.
- Write simply and clearly.
- Write legibly (if hand-written) and as error-free as possible
- Insert dates and times as accurately as possible when specific events and circumstances occurred.
- Avoid giving personal opinions.
- Avoid writing anything judgemental or which may seem personally abusive or insulting.
- Report factually what you've observed

# Communication quiz

This quick quiz is designed to make you think about how you communicate and how you are communicated to.

Jot down the communication you've had so far today in column 1 – to you and from you.

<b>What was being communicated?</b> (News)	<b>How?</b> (Radio; talking)	<b>Purpose of communication</b> (To get informed; nice to hear a voice.)

# Why do we communicate?

Communication is a tool with which we exercise our influence on others, bring out changes in our and others' attitudes; motivate the people around us; establish and maintain relationships with them; give and receive information; and express emotions. Communication is a major part of our active life and is a social activity.

# How do we communicate?

We communicate verbally through speech, reading and writing (including electronically and symbols) or non-verbally through body language, including signing.

## Body Language

- how we position our bodies (e.g. leaning forward on a chair to show listening – then leaning back to give the person 'space' to speak; folding arms to make a barrier)
- our closeness, and the space between us and other people and how this changes (consider how close you like particular people to be to you and why)
- our facial expressions
- our eyes - e.g. where we look and for how long
- how we touch ourselves
- how our bodies connect with other non-bodily things, for instance, pens, cigarettes, spectacles and clothing
- our breathing, and other less noticeable physical effects, for example our heartbeat and perspiration
- Our reactions to other people's eyes - movement, focus, expression, etc. – and their reactions to our eyes – contribute greatly to mutual assessment and understanding, consciously and unconsciously.

# Activity

## Communicate a message using body language only.

Start by greeting the person on either side of you without words: How did you do this? What did you use? How could you tell them you were pleased to see them? Is there a difference between how you greeted someone you know and someone you don't know? What might the differences be?

You will be given a card with a word or phrase to communicate to your neighbour

- How did it feel to communicate without words?
- What was easy to communicate and why?
- What was more difficult and why?
- What helped?

If you are working with someone whose speech is limited or who doesn't have English as a fluent language (include the Deaf and people who are hard of hearing) what might you do to ensure you were understood and that you have understood the person?

# Mirroring

## Mirroring the other person's body language helps establish rapport and can help to ease tense situations. We often do this unconsciously.

Try this: Next time you are in a group situation – watch how people in conversation mirror each other. If one person sits forward, what do the others do? When one person sits back or sips their drink – what do the others do? Even tilting your head at the same angle can help. Subtle mirroring can help to relax people as well.

This works for pitch and volume of voice as well.

If someone is angry and talking at a fast pace and high pitch, you can mirror this in your reply making sure your voice is at a slightly lower pitch and volume than theirs – not too much or you sound patronising – this approach could help to calm the situation down a little, and show that you understand and respect their emotion.

# Paralinguistic

The pace, pitch, tone, volume, and variation pauses of our voice.

For people that find it hard to follow speech (for example people in later stages of dementia) you can help by using paralinguistic.

## Activity

**How many ways can you say these phrases? How have you changed the meaning by changing the way you say it? Try emphasising different words.**

- Hello John
- Have you had a drink today?
- I'd rather you didn't do that.

**To get you started, say the phrases in a way that shows you are:**

- Friendly
- Intimidating
- Can't be bothered

What use could you make of body language/facial expression to help get your meaning across?

## Written word

Including letters, notices, reports and notes etc.

- What written communication is used in the prison?
- What key points do you need to consider when writing about/for the people you will be supporting in the role as Buddy Support Worker?

**Consider:**

- What do you need to communicate?
- Who will read it?
- Who will use it and for what purpose?
- What barriers might there be to effective written communication?
- How might you get round these barriers

# Assertiveness

**Assertiveness is a way of thinking and behaving that allows a person to stand up for his or her rights while respecting the rights of others.**

This means not getting side tracked by being concerned with being liked or getting our own needs met. We need to establish a professional relationship – based on putting the person's needs at the centre of our work; being clear about our role in supporting this to happen; being non-judgemental in our attitude.

## Assertive listening

The goals of assertive listening are:

### **1. to let the other know that you want to understand his or her point of view.**

Try asking open questions (these are questions that get more than a yes/no answer)

- I'd like to hear your views/thoughts on...
- Tell me about/more about...
- That sounds interesting – tell me more

Leaning forward slightly communicates interest, while a relaxed, open posture communicates receptiveness to what the other party is saying. Saying “um hum” and nodding your head slightly will encourage the other to continue talking. Most people will discontinue talking without these mild encouragements.

### **2. To understand accurately what another is saying and let them know they have been understood – try summarising, then asking if that is correct.**

So let me just check if I understand this/you/what you have told me... Is that what you mean?

So, you're saying...

- When summarising, try to use the person's own words as much as possible or rephrase into another Plain English phrase. This values the person's choice of words.
- Use alternative words or phrases to check if you both have the same meaning.
- If you must use jargon or alternative words, ensure there is good reason to do so – otherwise you could come across as patronising or confusing.
- Remember that understanding is different from agreement. You can understand what another is saying but still disagree with them.
- Silence is very powerful – it can be interpreted as collusion (i.e. I agree, because I haven't challenged you) or as disagreement or disapproval – or maybe that you are not interested. Allow the person thinking time. If you come in too early and they haven't finished, just apologise and invite them to finish.

# Other assertiveness tips for speaking and listening:

- **Be OK to say 'I don't know'.**  
Do say how you will find out and when you might get back to the person
- **Be clear about what you want to say.**  
You might want to rehearse it if it is something new or is bad news.
- **Think before you speak**  
Why am I saying this? What am I hoping to achieve? This will help guard against gossip/stereotyping/negative comments or saying something that you can't do. For example saying 'I'm sure it will be fine' – are you sure it will be fine?
- **Steer clear of the guilt trap.**  
If the conversation feels as if it is heading towards blame ('it's your fault') – summarise and steer it back to the point.
- **Steer clear of ultimatums.**  
Don't paint yourself into a corner with 'take it or leave it' or start a sentence with 'if you don't...' Look for other solutions.
- **Don't feel you always have to say 'yes'.**  
If you are not comfortable, say so.  
For example – I need time to think about that; I'll need to check...
- **Ask for a break if you need it**  
If either of you are feeling emotional or you can see the person is tired.
- **Avoid jargon.**  
Avoid using it and pretending that you understand it!
- **Make sure your speech and body language say the same thing.**  
For example if you need to be firm – is your face serious? If you are listening – make sure your arms and legs are not folded.

## Spoken words: face to face

**Try this: talk to another person about something which isn't too emotional – like what you had for breakfast or your favourite TV programme.**

Your 'listener' will sit passively – no movement, no sound. They can look at you or look away. As a speaker – what effect does this have on you? How long did you continue talking? What did you think of the 'listener'?

## Putting spoken word and body language together

**Try the same activity again – this time the listener will use ways to encourage the speaker to continue: what helped?**

## Communicating with people who have dementia

Basic guidance from Common Core Competencies for supporting people with dementia:

### Communicate sensitively to support meaningful interaction

#### Context

Dementia may affect a person's ability to understand and use language accurately and appropriately. This is often seen as difficulty with remembering words or using them accurately, repetition of thoughts and lack of coherence. As the condition progresses communication can become increasingly difficult.

This is likely to vary from day to day and requires people to respond and adapt their communication with the person. It is important to remember that other conditions and disabilities may also affect people's ability to communicate (e.g. learning disability).

## What you need to do

- Always make time for people who have dementia and remain patient in every situation.
- Try to make use of the person's past experiences and life story to support communicating with them.
- Take into account a person's usual communication skills and background culture.
- Try to keep the environment calm and as quiet as possible when communicating, allowing plenty of time to have conversations.
- Always face the person in conversation and be reassuring in your expressions, tone of voice and words, to reduce frustration

### When speaking:

- Speak clearly using short sentences — don't give too much information or ask too many questions
- Use simple vocabulary and avoid jargon
- Remember that it takes time for people with dementia to take in a question, find the right words and frame the reply; don't use more explanations as this will cause more confusion — just wait
- Try not to finish a person's sentence unless you are asked to do so
- Try to avoid negative statements such as "Don't...", instead try to reinforce positive behaviour
- Remember to monitor your tone of voice carefully
- Enjoy interacting together and use humour to communicate this pleasure.
- Repetitive questions from people with dementia can be challenging — try to respond as though it is the first time you have heard the question.
- Whatever is said to you, it is best to accept this and not argue.
- You may need to frame any questions so the person can answer 'yes' or 'no' in specific situations, but avoid using this technique extensively.
- Listen carefully to grasp the meaning and tone of the person's conversation.
- Use non-verbal communication such as gesture, facial expression and written communication.
- Take account of any hearing or visual problems or second language difficulties.
- You can use images, pictures, symbols or music to enhance communication and facilitate understanding.
- If the person is already receiving other services, communication should be undertaken according to any communication guidelines that have been already developed to support the person (e.g. in their support plan).

# Advocacy skills

## What can advocates do?

The Buddy Support Worker role includes advocacy support – so that you can be there to listen to the individuals you support. You can also help other people listen to their opinions.

You may be asked to offer support and representations at meetings. These can be when the individuals need to talk to your nurse, doctor or social worker and Wing Officers, or at official prison meetings.

You must remember that the meetings are confidential – you must not share information about individuals without permission unless you or other people are at risk, do not chat to other Prisoners about what you are doing.

## Principles of advocacy

These are outlined within the Advocacy Charter and include independence, inclusion, client focused, empowerment, and choice.

### Advocacy can be described as having two main themes:

- Safeguarding individuals who are in situations where they are vulnerable, and
- Speaking up for and with people who are not being heard, helping them to express their own views and make their own decisions.

(‘Independent Advocacy: A Guide for Commissioners’)

Your role will be to support the individual to have a voice, supporting an individual to make choices, safeguarding, challenging discrimination, information provider, representation.

Advocacy is not about encouraging someone to take certain actions or make certain decisions. It’s not about you taking those actions or making those decisions without the individuals consent. Remember you are in a trusted position and must not use advocacy as a means to have power over someone else.

There are lots of different circumstances in someone’s life as to why they might need advocacy support; these include oppression, communication issues, lack of information, discrimination, social exclusion, and mental health needs.

## The Skills and attributes of an advocate

- Active listening skills
- Communication skills
- Approachability
- Reliability
- Perseverance
- Non-judgmental and empowering – do not make judgements about the individuals choices. Help them to understand their options and help them say what they want to service providers.

## What would an individual gain from having an advocate?

Having a voice, being listened to, gaining confidence, understanding rights, having the support of someone who is not judging or assessing them.

### Advocacy doesn't always solve problems

You can't guarantee an outcome that the individual will be happy with. You must make sure that the individual you are supporting is aware of this and understands that you will do your best to support them to have a voice and you will work with them to make sure that their views are taken account of.

You can also act as a witness – this is often very useful in making sure that people treat individuals properly and get the treatment they deserve.