# Unit 1: Developing Effective Communication in Health and Social Care

**Unit code:** R/600/8939

**QCF Level 3:** BTEC Nationals

**Credit value:** 10

**Guided learning hours:** 60

## Aim and purpose

This unit aims to enable learners to understand effective communication, the barriers that may exist and ways to overcome these. The unit will give learners the opportunity to gain the interpersonal skills needed to embark on a career within the health or social care sectors.

## Unit introduction

This is a core unit within the programme, recognising the fact that effective communication is central to all work in the health and social care sectors. Professionals within the sectors require good communication and interpersonal skills to perform their roles effectively, work cooperatively with colleagues and build supportive relationships with people using services. It is, therefore, important for all those embarking on a career in the health or social care sectors to gain knowledge, understanding and the skills associated with communication, so that they are able to develop effective interpersonal skills.

Initially, learners will investigate what is meant by effective communication and interpersonal skills and how these may affect the outcomes for people who use services. Learners will consider the factors that influence communication and interactions, analysing theories which may help to explain why there may be difficulties, possible breakdowns in communication and ways to overcome these. The benefits of effective communication for people who use services will be explored.

The unit will give learners opportunities to reflect on their performance, and that of others, consolidating their learning by demonstrating their skills in a one-to-one and a group interaction in a health and social care context.

The knowledge and skills gained from this unit will support achievement in all units within the BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Health and Social Care. There are particular links with *Unit 6: Personal and Professional Development in Health and Social Care* as a period of work experience provides opportunities for the development and assessment of communication skills.

## Learning outcomes

**On completion of this unit a learner should:**

1     Understand effective communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care

2     Understand factors that influence communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care environments

3     Understand ways to overcome barriers in a health and social care environment

4     Be able to communicate and interact effectively in a health and social care environment.

# Unit content

## 1 Understand effective communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care

*Contexts*: one-to-one; groups, eg formal, informal, between colleagues, between professional and people using services, communication with professionals, multi-agency working, multi-professional working

*Communication*: forms, eg text messaging, written, oral, signing, symbols, touch, music and drama, objects of reference, arts and crafts, technology

*Interpersonal interaction*: types, eg speech, language (first language, dialect, slang, jargon), non-verbal (posture, facial expression, touch, silence, proximity, reflective listening)

*Communication and language needs and preferences*: the individual's preferred method of communication, eg language, British Sign Language, Makaton, Braille, the use of signs, symbols, pictures and writing; objects of reference, finger spelling, communication passports, human and technological aids to communication, variation between cultures

## 2 Understand factors that influence communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care environments

*Theories of communication*: Argyle's stages of the communication cycle (ideas occur, message coded, message sent, message received, message decoded, message understood); Tuckman's stages of group interaction (forming, storming, norming, performing)

*Environment*: factors, eg setting, noise, seating, lighting, space, time

*Barriers*: factors, eg type of communication (difficult, complex, sensitive), language needs/preferences, sensory impairment, disability, personality, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, aggression, submissiveness, assumptions, value and belief systems, jargon, cultural variations, use and abuse of power, effects of alcohol/drugs

## 3 Understand ways to overcome barriers in a health and social care environment

*Communication and interpersonal interaction*: possible strategies, eg staff training, assessment of need, using preferred method, promoting rights, confidentiality, defusing aggression, assertiveness, appropriate verbal/ non-verbal communication, building relationships, appropriate environment, attitude, confidence

*Aids to communication*: human (advocates, interpreters, translators, signers, mentors, befrienders), technological aids (hearing aids, text phones, minicom, voice activated software, relay systems, loop systems)

## 4 Be able to communicate and interact effectively in a health and social care environment

*Contexts*: formal; one-to-one; group; with people using services; with professionals/colleagues

*Communication skills*: verbal and non-verbal, eg listening and responding, tone, pace, language, appropriate environment, proximity, clarifying or repeating, questioning, responding to difficult situations, defusing anger

*Effectiveness*: group and one-to one situations, eg awareness of needs and preferences, interpersonal skills, attitudes, overcoming barriers, adjusting interactions, assertiveness

# Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

| Assessment and grading criteria | | |
|---|---|---|
| To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to: | To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to: | To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to: |
| **P1** explain the role of effective communication and interpersonal interaction in a health and social care context [IE3] | **M1** assess the role of effective communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care with reference to theories of communication | |
| **P2** discuss theories of communication [IE4; CT3] | | **D1** evaluate strategies used in health and social care environments to overcome barriers to effective communication and interpersonal interactions |
| **P3** explain factors that may influence communication and interpersonal interactions in health and social care environments [IE2; IE5; IE6; CT1] | **M2** review strategies used in health and social care environments to overcome barriers to effective communication and interpersonal interactions | |
| **P4** explain strategies used in health and social care environments to overcome barriers to effective communication and interpersonal interactions [IE1; IE6; CT1] | | |
| **P5** participate in a one-to-one interaction in a health and social care context [CT5; RL6; SM3] | **M3** assess their communication and interpersonal skills in relation to each interaction. | **D2** evaluate factors that influenced the effectiveness of each interaction. |
| **P6** participate in a group interaction in a health and social care context. [CT5; RL6; SM3]. | | |

**PLTS**: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills which are embedded in the assessment of this unit. By achieving the criteria, learners will have demonstrated effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

| Key | IE – independent enquirers | RL – reflective learners | SM – self-managers |
|---|---|---|---|
| | CT – creative thinkers | TW – team workers | EP – effective participators |

# Essential guidance for tutors

## Delivery

This practical unit should be delivered using a mixture of tutor input and learner-led activity, such as role play and case studies. Initially, learners should explore communication and interpersonal skills used in the health and social care sectors. Learners could work in small groups to identify contexts, and consider the role of communication, for example between a professional and an individual when assessing needs and providing information, or between professionals when sharing information. Learners will need time within their workplace settings to observe interactions which may be used to illustrate effective communication.

When introducing theories and stages of communication it would help if learners are able to understand each stage in the context of a realistic interaction. One-to-one role plays could be used, with time to reflect on the stages of the communication cycle, and group interactions used to introduce Tuckman's stages of team interaction.

Learners should be introduced to a range of factors which affect communication and interpersonal interactions so that they are able to explain these. Examples could be taken from personal experience, television programmes, documentaries or current newspapers. These examples should include more difficult concepts, such as the imbalance in power inherent in the helping relationship, empowerment and learned helplessness. A guest speaker could provide an insight into cultural variations in verbal and non-verbal communication. Aids to communication should be explored in a practical way, exploring how technology works in practice, and the role of human aids for example 'playing' the part of an advocate in role play. A taster session for British Sign Language and or Makaton may encourage learners to develop these skills further.

When explaining factors that influence communication, learners find it relatively easy to identify certain factors such as body language and trust. However, they also need to recognise why empathy, responsiveness, attentiveness and respect are so important. Many of the skills in this unit for example using prompts, reflection, empathy or open-ended questions can be developed in a counselling skills training format. Others, such as assertiveness, can be developed through role play. When developing their assertiveness skills, learners will need to appreciate the difference between being assertive and being aggressive.

Learners need to understand what is involved in effective communication, considering the question of values to be able to explain, review and evaluate strategies. This could be covered by discussing what makes communication ineffective. Can learners identify times when someone did not listen to them, looked through them or patronised them? How did they feel when they were treated this way? How did they feel when they told a friend about a problem, only for the friend to off-load their own experiences? Selecting learners (without the rest of the group knowing) to play the 'role' of a disinterested care worker gives learners an insight into being on the receiving end of poor practice. It also helps them to see how self-esteem is inextricably linked with good communication practices.

Learners should be encouraged to reflect on their learning from learning outcomes 1-3 before taking part in and reviewing their own interactions. Learners should be given opportunities, and time, to develop and practise communication and personal interactive skills in preparation for their assessed interactions. Recording interactions (to enable the reviewing process), and receiving feedback from peers and the tutor, will support them to improve their skills in preparation for assessment. Arrangements for interactions within the workplace should be discussed and agreed with the tutor and supervisor.

## Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

| Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment |
| --- |
| Unit introduction. |
| **Learning outcome 1**<br><br>Buzz group: different forms of communication.<br><br>Buzz group: contexts for communication in health and social care.<br><br>Small-group discussion and feedback: the role of communication including impact on the outcome for individuals.<br><br>DVD: extracts of interpersonal interactions.<br><br>Work-related activity: observations/research – forms of communication. |
| **Assignment 1: The role of communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care [P1, M1]** |
| **Learning outcome 2**<br><br>Tutor input: introduction to communication cycle.<br><br>Role play/reflections: with reference to stages of communication.<br><br>Tutor input: introduction to theory/stages of group interaction.<br><br>Group interaction and reflection: with reference to stages. |
| Group research: on factors which may affect communication – positive and negative.<br><br>Presentations to group.<br><br>Guest speakers.<br><br>DVD: of practice and follow-up discussion.<br><br>Work-related activity: observations/research into good practice. |
| **Assignment 2: Understanding effective communication and interpersonal skills [P2, P3, P4, M2, D1]** |
| **Learning outcome 3**<br><br>Review learning: barriers/ways to overcome these and the skills required.<br><br>Tutor input: introduction to assertive/aggressive and submissive behaviour.<br><br>Tutor input: introduction to complex issues/coping skills.<br><br>Participate in classroom role play: recording, reflection and feedback.<br><br>Plan and agree role-play activity.<br><br>Tutor input: introduction to self-assessment/evaluation of skills. |
| **Learning outcome 4**<br><br>Discussion: contexts for group interaction.<br><br>Review learning.<br><br>Participate in different types of group interaction: recording, reflection and feedback.<br><br>Plan and agree role-play activity. |
| **Assignment 3: One-to-one interpersonal interaction and review [P5, Part M3]** |
| **Assignment 4: Group interaction and reflection [P6, Part M3, D2]** |
| Unit review and assessment. |

## Assessment

Assessment of this unit could be in two parts. The first can focus on learners' understanding of communication in practice, and the second on outlining the interactions which must be carried out to demonstrate and evaluate personal skills. Because of the nature of this unit it is important that learners demonstrate that they are able to observe confidentiality. Photographs/DVD recordings of individuals or staff in health and social care environments should not be used. Learners may record their interactions during role play for assessment purposes.

Examples and evidence of understanding to enable learners to explain communication in practice for P1, P2, P3 and P4 should, preferably, be from their work placements, but could also be from their personal observations, when using services, or from 'real life' documentaries, case study or DVD extracts. Different types of interpersonal interaction should be included and explored; one-to-one and group interactions between professionals and people using services and between professionals. Examples should be selected carefully to illustrate communication and link to theories (P1 and P2). Examples should focus on the positive aspects of interactions and demonstrate learners' understanding of the central role of communication in building trusting relationships, building self-esteem and providing appropriate support to meet the needs of individuals using services. Examples of how professionals use communication to assess, plan, reflect and share information should also be included. One-to-one role play could be reflected on and used to explain Argyle's communication cycle and group role play could be used for Tuckman's stages of group interaction.

To achieve P3 and P4, learners must include positive and negative factors which influence communication. There should be a clear explanation of how each factor, including environmental and personal factors, may influence the outcome of the interaction for each party. They will go onto review the strategies which may be used to overcome the effects of these factors, including the use of alternative methods of communication; both human and with technological aids. To achieve P5 and P6, learners must draw on their knowledge and understanding to demonstrate their own skills in different contexts. The one-to-one and group interactions should involve people using services. These could be evidenced through role play or during work experience. Evidence must be of effective interaction, and may be addressed through witness testimony and learners' own reflection.

At merit grade learners will assess the role of communication in more depth. They may use the same examples from P1, but will develop their evidence to explain why communication is so important and how this may impact on the services provided (M1). To achieve M2, learners should review a wide range of strategies assessing the potential for each to overcome barriers to communication. Learners will use examples from their interactions, bringing together different aspects to form a realistic assessment of their own skills (M3).

To achieve D1, learners must evaluate the strategies used to overcome barriers to communication. They should include those which are used to break down more common barriers but also those caused by more challenging and complex situations professionals working in health and social care environments face, for example communication affected by mental health problems, drugs or alcohol, or dementia. Learners will evaluate a range of positive and negative factors that influenced the outcomes of their two interactions for D2.

## Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

| Criteria covered | Assignment title | Scenario | Assessment method |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1, M1 | The role of communication and interpersonal interaction in health and social care | Preparation for working in a health and social care environment. | Log with examples of communication and interpersonal interactions. |
| P2, P3, P4, M2, D1 | Understanding effective communication and interpersonal skills | | Assignment on theories of one-to-one and group communication and interpersonal interaction. Including the factors at play and strategies used to assist effective interactions. |
| P5 (Part M3) | One-to-one interpersonal interaction and review | | Evidence of an interaction with an individual in a health and social care context. |
| P6, (Part M3), D2 | Group interaction and reflection | | Evidence of an interaction within a group in a health and social care context. A review of skills. |

## Links to National Occupational Standards (NOS), other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Health and Social Care sector suite (see *Appendix A*) and has links with units from other qualifications in that suite. See *Appendix E* for NOS links and *Appendix G* for a mapping of the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework against particular units in this qualification.

## Essential resources

The following resources are essential for delivering this unit:

- a suitably qualified tutor
- library resources – relevant texts, journals
- DVD: interpersonal interactions in a health or social care environment
- recording equipment.

## Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Delivery of this unit would be enhanced by guest speakers or visits to health and social care work settings. Work experience placements in a health and social care environment would benefit all learners.

# Indicative reading for learners

**Textbooks**

Barett S (editor) – *Communication Relationships and Care* (Routledge, 2004) ISBN 9781412922852

Collins S – *Effective Communication* (Jessica Kingsley, 2009) ISBN 9781843109273

Langridge E, Bossons L, Boys D, Mitchie V, Roe J – *BTEC National Health and Social Care Book 1* (Nelson Thornes, 2007) ISBN 9780748784042

Nolan Y – *NVQ/SVQ Level 3 Health and Social Care Candidate Handbook, 2nd Edition* (Heinemann, 2008) ISBN 9780435466992

Mamen M – *Understanding Non-Verbal Learning Disability* (Jessica Kingsley, 2007) ISBN 9781843105930

Moss B – *Communication Skills for Health and Social Care* (Sage Ltd, 2007) ISBN 9781412922852

Poutney J – *Your Role as a Disability Support Worker* (Heinemann, 2007) ISBN 9780435500009

Stretch B, Whitehouse M – *BTEC National Health and Social Care Book 1* (Heinemann, 2007) ISBN 9780435499150

Stretch B (editor) – *Core Themes in Health and Social Care* (series) (Heinemann, 2007) ISBN 9780435464257

Stretch B and Whitehouse M – *BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Health and Social Care Student Book 1* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 9781846907663

Stretch B and Whitehouse M – *BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Health and Social Care Student Book 2* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 9781846907470

Thompson N – *People Skills* (Palgrave McMillan, 2009) ISBN 9780230221123

**Audio/visual**

*Creative Conversations* (a video aimed at supporting people with profound learning disabilities) www.pavpub.com

*WOW, World of Work, Health and Social Care* – DVD and Learning Resource File (Heinemann, 2008) ISBN 9780435402396

**Journals and magazines**

*Care and Health Magazine*

*Community Care Magazine*

*Disability Now*

*Nursing Times*

**Websites**

| | |
|---|---|
| www.bcodp.org.uk | British Council for Disabled People |
| www.britishsignlanguage.com | British Sign Language – basic signs |
| www.ccwales.org.uk | Care Council for Wales |
| www.dh.gov.uk | Department of Health |
| www.makaton.org.uk | The Makaton Charity |
| www.mencap.org.uk | Mencap (for people with learning disabilities) |
| www.nhs.uk | National Health Service |
| www.niscc.info | Northern Ireland Social Care Council |
| www.rnib.org.uk | Royal National Institute of Blind People |
| www.rnid.org.uk | The Royal National Institute for Deaf People |
| www.skillsforcare.org.uk | Sector Skills Council for Care and Development |
| www.skillsforhealth.org.uk | Sector Skills Council for the UK Health Sector |
| www.socialworkandcare.co.uk | Social care careers information |

## Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

| Skill | When learners are ... |
|---|---|
| **Independent enquirers** | [IE1] exploring ways to overcome barriers when assisting with communication |
| | [IE2] researching barriers to communication which may exist in different contexts |
| | [IE3] exploring forms and roles of communication used in a variety of contexts in health and social care settings |
| | [IE4] analysing examples of interaction and considering their relevance to theories |
| | [IE5] considering individual circumstances and beliefs and how these may affect communication and interpersonal skills |
| | [IE6] supporting ideas about possible barriers to communication and ways to overcome these, using reasoned arguments to review their own interactions |
| **Creative thinkers** | [CT1] asking questions about possible barriers and ways that these can be overcome |
| | [CT3] connecting theories of learning with examples from own observations |
| | [CT5] adapting own communication and interaction skills to meet the needs of others |
| **Reflective learners** | [RL6] communicating understanding and skills by taking part in real contexts |
| **Self-managers** | [SM3] managing own time when negotiating and taking part in interactions. |

## Functional Skills – Level 2

| Skill | When learners are ... |
|---|---|
| **ICT – Develop, present and communicate information** | |
| Bring together information to suit content and purpose | using IT programmes to produce information about forms of communication, barriers and ways to overcome these |
| Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience | using ICT to present information in the format of presentations, reports, leaflets or guidelines |
| Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information | selecting and using ICT facilities to record one-to-one and group interactions |
| **English** | |
| Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts | taking part in a one-to-one interaction<br><br>taking part in a group interaction |
| Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions | researching forms of communication, barriers and ways to overcome them |
| Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively | producing extended written documents as evidence of learning<br><br>reflecting on skills including strengths and weaknesses. |