



Some of the barriers to good communication

Poor verbal communication can be caused by accent, intonation, or just a lack of vocabulary. Even if a member of staff knows a reasonable amount of English, it is unlikely that he or she will know the correct language which would support, encourage or comfort someone adequately. Carers may also think their English is good because no one has told them otherwise!

This is not said to undermine their willingness and compassion but just to emphasize how important it is to train someone in the “language of care” as well as, say, manual handling or hygiene. All these skills enhance the quality of care and promote the needs of the individual.

Possible ways for management to improve language used in care

At present, in many situations, staff are afraid to show lack of understanding because they fear this will lose them their job. However, if managers indicate how important language is and make it part of “the skills for the job” which they need to learn, then they will be encouraged to improve. In appraisals, the area of language which needs improving could be discussed. Could it be?

Slower speech, longer vowels, or, use of “would you like/could you” instead of “do you want/can you”

Or, learning verbs such as lean forward/backwards, lift up, put down, swallow

Or, learn expressions such as “Don’t worry”, “I’ll fetch”, “I’m just going to”

Training course in work related vocabulary

Once the tutor has assessed the language needs of those taking part and had a meeting with the employer, then the training will be tailored specifically to the staff of that organisation. This could be for an individual or a group. CDs would be given to participants to reinforce pronunciation and expressions. Other colleagues could be informed as to the training content so they can provide further support to improve communication.

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