

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Translating the Five Good Communication Standards into Practice

Reasonable adjustments to communication that individuals with a learning disability and/or autism should expect in specialist hospital and residential settings

Facilitator: Dr Jill Bradshaw

Outcomes from the session:

- Provided an overview of each of the five Good Communication Standards in terms of
 - What 'good looks like'
 - How service will know that they have achieved each standard
- Explored how these standards might be used in practice

Background:

In producing the standards, The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) (2013) state that

'Most people with learning disabilities have some speech, language and communication difficulties. These can be hidden or overlooked. Everyone needs to know what good communication support 'looks like' and what reasonable adjustments they can expect.

'Failure to make reasonable adjustments to meet communication needs will mean people with learning disabilities will continue to be vulnerable to a range of risks. These risks include the continuing failure to design, commission and provide best practice services'.

To help providers of specialist hospital and residential services, the RCSLT recommends five good practice standards around speech, language and communication.

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. (2013). Five good communication standards. London: RCSLT

Issues raised in Discussion

Standard 1 – Detailed description of how best to communicate with individuals

Additional areas we would like the standard to cover:

- Recognition of change over time
- Development of new communication skills
- Recognition of variability in forms of communication used
- Commitment and endeavour of staff to communicate effectively with an individual
- Trying different approaches (eg talking mats)
- Knowing a person well/consulting those who know a person well

Standard 2 – Involvement in decisions

Additional areas we would like the standard to cover:

- Evidence of being supported to make everyday decisions
- People are offered choices which are acted upon/respected
- Use of communication boards
- Use of schedules to plan the day
- Use of booklets with pictures
- Care plan used as a working document/information shared between staff
- Staff actively observing what is going on for an individual
- Observation of how staff and individuals are together – staff want to be with individuals
- Staff are fine with people saying “no” – there are other options
- Mood on display by staff – smiles/body language
- Proactive environment – ready to respond.

Standard 3 – Staff value and use the best approaches to communication

Additional areas we would like the standard to cover:

- Ensure all 5/6 common functions of challenging behaviour as communication are covered in the standard – this should be made more explicit

Standard 4 – opportunities, relationships and environments

- Describing and understanding the impact on individuals

Standard 5 – individuals are supported to understand and express their needs in relation to their health and wellbeing.

This final standard was not covered in the workshop due to time constraints

Actions to translate the standards into practice

Those providing care and support should:

- Use goals that focus on the individual/s being supported, not just on the staff skills (so the judgement is whether the staff use their skills to achieve an outcome for the individual)
- Translate the standards into job descriptions
- Provide regular supervision to ensure standards are being upheld

The RCSLT should:

- Use the standards to develop scenarios for learning
- Develop training programmes to embed the 5 standards
- Develop a similar set of communication standards for children's services (especially schools)
- Develop a more detailed competency framework filling in the gaps outlined above. Implementation should be assessed on three levels:
 - Reporting (e.g. staff can explain how to...)
 - Observable behaviour (e.g. Observe how people are supported to make choices using visual approaches)
 - Outcomes for the individual (e.g. individuals are able to communicate their decisions to staff)

Actions:

- Jill to take outcomes of workshop back to RCSLT
- Jill to make recommendations to the RCSLT around how the implementations of the 5 good communication standards could be reviewed e.g. By building them into job descriptions