Core 1 – Communication

Status
Core – communication is a key aspect of all jobs in the NHS. This dimension underpins all the other dimensions in the KSF.

Levels
1 Communicate with a limited range of people on day-to-day matters
2 Communicate with a range of people on a range of matters
3 Develop and maintain communication with people about difficult matters and/or in difficult situations
4 Develop and maintain communication with people on complex matters, issues and ideas and/or in complex situations

Description
This dimension relates to effective communication in whatever form it take place. Effective communication is a two way process. It involves identifying what others are communicating (e.g. through listening) as well as communicating oneself, and the development of effective relationships.

Progression through the levels in this dimension is characterised by developments in:

- the subject matter of the communication
- the situation in which the communication takes place
- the purpose of the communication
- the numbers of people that are being communicated with, their diversity and the effect of these on the communication skills required.

Links to other KSF dimensions
This dimension is supported by:

- Core 6 Equality and Diversity

Level 1 – Communicate with a limited range of people on day-to-day matters

Indicators:

The worker:

a) communicates with a limited range of people on day-to-day matters in a form that is appropriate to them and the situation.
b) reduces barriers to effective communication
c) presents a positive image of her/himself and the service
d) accurately reports and/or records work activities according to organisational procedures
e) communicates information only to those people who have the right and need to know it consistent with legislation, policies and procedures.
Examples of application:

People with whom communicating:

- users of services (such as patients and clients)
- carers
- groups (including families)
- the public and their representatives
- colleagues and co-workers
- managers
- workers from other agencies
- visitors
- the media.

Day-to-day matters might include:

- asking questions
- giving straightforward information
- passing on simple messages
- providing answers
- taking simple messages.

Forms of communication:

- oral communication
- signing
- written communication
- electronic communication (e.g. email, databases, electronic results and reports)
- the use of third parties (such as interpreters and translators)
- the use of communication aids (e.g. charts, pictures, symbols, electronic output devices, specially adapted computers)
- the use of total communication systems.

Barriers to communication:

- environmental (e.g. noise, lack of privacy)
- personal (e.g. the health and wellbeing of the people involved)
- social (e.g. conflict, violent and abusive situations, ability to read and write in a particular language or style).

Reducing barriers might relate to:

- adapting communication
- changing the environment
- checking information received for accuracy and interpretation
- using communication aids

Legislation, policies and procedures:

- complaints and issue resolution
- confidentiality
- data protection (including the specific provisions relating to access to health records)
- disability
- diversity
- employment
- equality and good relations
- human rights (including those of children)
- information and related technology
- language.

**Level 2 – Communicate with a range of people on a range of matters**

**Indicators:**

**The worker:**

a) communicates with a range of people on a range of matters in a form that is appropriate to them and the situation

b) improves the effectiveness of communication through the use of communication skills

c) constructively manages barriers to effective communication

d) keeps accurate and complete records consistent with legislation, policies and procedures

e) communicates in a manner that is consistent with relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

**Examples of application:**

People with whom communicating:

- users of services (such as patients and clients)
- carers
- groups (including families)
- the public and their representatives
- colleagues and co-workers
- managers
- workers from other agencies
- visitors
- the media.

Matters might relate to:

- establishing and maintaining contact with different people
- explaining how to do something
- making arrangements
- reporting any changes that are needed
- sharing information and opinions.

**Forms of communication:**

- oral communication
- signing
- written communication
- electronic communication (e.g. email, databases, electronic results and reports)
- the use of third parties (such as interpreters and translators)
- the use of communication aids (e.g. charts, pictures, symbols, electronic output devices, specially adapted computers)
- the use of total communication systems.

Communication skills might include:

- listening skills
- non-verbal skills and body language
- questioning skills

Barriers to communication:

- environmental (e.g. noise, lack of privacy)
- personal (e.g. the health and wellbeing of the people involved)
- social (e.g. conflict, violent and abusive situations, ability to read and write in a particular language or style).

Managing barriers might include:

- changing the environment or context
- changing the form of communication
- helping others’ communication
- modifying the style and/or form of communication
- monitoring the effectiveness of own communication
- presenting a positive image of her/himself and the service
- simplifying the content
- using communication aids

Legislation, policies and procedures:

- complaints and issue resolution
- confidentiality
- data protection (including the specific provisions relating to access to health records)
- disability
- diversity
- employment
- equality and good relations
- human rights (including those of children)
- information and related technology
- language.

**Level 3** – Develop and maintain communication with people about difficult matters and/or in difficult situations

**Indicators:**

**The worker:**

a) Identifies the range of people likely to be involved in the communication, any potential communication differences and relevant contextual factors

b) Communicates with people in a form and manner that:
   - is consistent with their level of understanding, culture, background and preferred ways of communicating
- is appropriate to the **purpose of the communication** and the context in which it is taking place
- encourages the effective participation of all involved
c) recognises and reflects on **barriers** to effective communication and modifies communication in response
d) provides feedback to other workers on their communication at appropriate times
e) keeps accurate and complete records of activities and communications consistent with **legislation, policies and procedures**
f) communicates in a manner that is consistent with relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

**Examples of application:**

People with whom communicating:

- users of services (such as patients and clients)
- carers
- groups (including families)
- the public and their representatives
- colleagues and co-workers
- managers
- workers from other agencies
- visitors
- the media.

Communication differences might be in relation to:

- contexts and cultures of the different parties
- degree of confusion or clarity
- first/preferred language
- levels of familiarity with the subject of the communication/context in which the communication is taking place
- level of knowledge and skills
- sense of reality.

**Forms of communication:**

- oral communication
- signing
- written communication
- electronic communication (e.g. email, databases, electronic results and reports)
- the use of third parties (such as interpreters and translators)
- the use of communication aids (e.g. charts, pictures, symbols, electronic output devices, specially adapted computers)
- the use of total communication systems.

**Purpose of communication might include:**

- asserting a particular position or view
- breaking bad news
- encouraging and supporting people
- explaining issues in formal situations (such as courts)
- explaining outcomes of activities/interventions
- exploring difficult issues
- facilitating meetings
- helping people make difficult decisions
- making scripted presentations
- presenting and discussing ideas
- providing technical advice to non-technical specialists
- representing views
- seeking consent
- sharing decision making with others including users of services
- sharing information
- supporting people in difficult circumstances.

Barriers to communication:
- environmental (e.g. noise, lack of privacy)
- personal (e.g. the health and wellbeing of the people involved)
- social (e.g. conflict, violent and abusive situations, ability to read and write in a particular language or style).

Modifies communication through, for example:
- deciding what information/advice to give/not give as the communication proceeds
- modifying the content and structure of communication
- modifying the environment
- modifying the methods of communicating
- using another language
- using different communication aids.

Legislation, policies and procedures:
- complaints and issue resolution
- confidentiality
- data protection (including the specific provisions relating to access to health records)
- disability
- diversity
- employment
- equality and good relations
- human rights (including those of children)
- information and related technology
- language.

**Level 4** – Develop and maintain communication with people on complex matters, issues and ideas and/or in complex situations

*Indicators:*

The worker:
  a) Identifies:
    - the range of people involved in the communication
    - potential communication differences
    - relevant contextual factors
b) communicates with people in a form and manner which:
   - is consistent with their level of understanding, culture, background and preferred ways of communicating
   - is appropriate to the purpose of the communication and its longer term importance
   - is appropriate to the complexity of the context
   - encourages effective communication between all involved
   - enables a constructive outcome to be achieved.

c) anticipates barriers to communication and takes action to improve communication

d) is proactive in seeking out different styles and methods of communicating to assist longer term needs and aims

e) takes a proactive role in producing accurate and complete records of the communication consistent with legislation, policies and procedures

f) communicates in a manner that is consistent with legislation, policies and procedures.

**Examples of application:**

People with whom communicating:

- users of services (such as patients and clients)
- carers
- groups (including families)
- the public and their representatives
- colleagues and co-workers
- managers
- workers from other agencies
- visitors
- the media.

Communication differences might be in relation to:

- contexts and cultures of the different parties
- degree of confusion or clarity
- first/preferred language
- levels of familiarity with the subject of the communication/context in which the communication is taking place
- level of knowledge and skills
- sense of reality.

Situational factors, issues and risks might include:

- changes affecting the people concerned which are outside their control
- history of poor communication and misunderstandings
- complexity of the issues and associated political issues and risks
- clashes in personal and/or organisational styles and approach that cause difficulties in ongoing communication.

**Forms of communication:**

- oral communication
- signing
- written communication
- electronic communication (e.g. email, databases, electronic results and reports)
- the use of third parties (such as interpreters and translators)
- the use of communication aids (e.g. charts, pictures, symbols, electronic output devices, specially adapted computers)
- the use of total communication systems.

Purpose of communication might include:

- advocating on behalf of others
- asserting a particular position or view and maintaining it in adversity
- breaking bad news and supporting those receiving it
- contributing to decision making balancing a number of different interests
- delivering presentations without a script actively encouraging participation from the audience
- explaining complex issues in formal situations (such as courts, expert witnesses)
- explaining strategy and organisational decisions to everyone in an organisation
- facilitating processes
- motivating people
- negotiating outcomes involving a number of different parties
- presenting and explaining complex concepts, ideas and issues to others who are unfamiliar with them
- providing advice on complex issues or in difficult situations
- representing and articulating different viewpoints testing out others’ understanding
- resolving complex issues
- seeking consent
- sharing decision making with others including users of services.

Barriers to communication:

- environmental (e.g. noise, lack of privacy)
- personal (e.g. the health and wellbeing of the people involved)
- social (e.g. conflict, violent and abusive situations, ability to read and write in a particular language or style).

Taking action to improve communication might include:

- assessing responses and acting in response
- changing the content and structure of communication
- changing the environment
- changing the methods of communicating
- deciding what information and advice to give and what to withhold
- using a range of skills to influence, inspire and champion people with issues
- using communication aids
- using another language.

Legislation, policies and procedures:

- complaints and issue resolution
- confidentiality
- data protection (including the specific provisions relating to access to health records)
- disability
- diversity
- employment
- equality and good relations
- human rights (including those of children)
- information and related technology
- language.