

Care Skillsbase

About communication and number skills

Summary

Safe, high quality care depends on effective communication and number skills.

To meet induction standards, staff must apply communication and number skills effectively. Managers need to feel confident staff have these skills before they sign off induction certificates.

Not applying these skills effectively undermines the safety and quality of services. Care Skillsbase provides guidance and support to address these issues.

Use the tools to help you address communication and number skills:

- at recruitment and selection
- at induction
- during supervision
- as part of coaching and mentoring
- at appraisal.

It is a government priority to help millions of adults in the UK to communicate and use number skills more effectively.

Communication and number skills are also called:

- English and maths Functional skills
- basic skills essential skills core skills
- Skills for Life key skills
- language, literacy, numeracy (LLN)
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

For more about communication and number skills in adult social care see the Developing Skills section of the Skills for Care website (www.skillsforcare.org.uk).

What are communication & number skills?

All staff working in social care need to communicate and use information effectively in English. To do this, they need communication and number skills, including:

- speaking and listening
- reading and writing
- ability to
 - make calculations
 - deal with weights and measures
 - deal with decimals, fractions, percentages

Why these skills matter

All care staff need to:

- understand the policies, procedures, standards and regulations that govern social care
- interact appropriately with people who use services, their families and friends
- interact appropriately with colleagues and other agencies
- deliver services, including direct care, administrative and ancillary services
- keep proper records and make accurate reports
- maintain up-to-date skills and knowledge.

To do these things, staff must apply communication and number skills. Applying these skills well enables safe, high quality care. Not applying these skills may lead to critical errors of care and breakdowns in communication within and beyond the care team, threatening safety and damaging quality.

Addressing skills at induction

Many social care staff may lack the ability and confidence to apply communication and number skills effectively in one or more areas of their job. It is important to recognise, and then manage, these skills issues. Induction offers an opportunity to do this.

Induction is the first learning a social care worker undertakes in a new role. It is regulated by Skills for Care's Common Induction Standards (CIS). The CIS describe the knowledge and competences a worker needs in order to be considered safe to leave alone with responsibility for people who use services. The CIS apply to any worker moving into a new job role, whether or not they are new to the sector.

The CIS cover eight areas:

- Role of the health and social care worker
- Personal development
- Communicate effectively
- Equality and inclusion
- Principles for implementing duty of care
- Principles of safeguarding in health and social care
- Person-centred support
- Health and safety in an adult social care setting

To comply with the induction standards, workers need the ability and confidence to apply communication and number skills effectively. Managers have a duty to ensure that newly inducted staff are 'safe to leave' and induction certificates should not be signed off lightly. Care Skillsbase provides guidance and support in addressing the communication and number skills issues raised by induction.

Ongoing skills management

Induction training to meet the Common Induction Standards is one of the systems available to managers to ensure staff have the right skills. Others include:

- recruitment and selection
- training to national occupational and other standards
- supervision (including coaching and mentoring)
- staff appraisal.

All of these systems offer opportunities to check, monitor and develop the communication and number skills that staff must apply to deliver safe, high quality care.

Use Care Skillsbase to help you with the ongoing management of communication and number skills in your organisation.

- Manage Skills resources help you address communication and number skills issues within your existing people management systems.
- The Compare Standards section helps you check how Health & Social Care standards and qualifications define safety and quality at work.
- Skills Checks help you address communication and number skills issues with staff.

We welcome suggestions to improve these guidance notes. Please use the contact form on our website at www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase