Care Skillsbase: Manage Skills

Follow up a Skills Check

Five steps

Step 1 Review the Skills Check documentation

Review the Skills Check feedback form and Personal development form. (If you did not administer the Skills Check, do this with the colleague who did.) Do the documents record any causes for concern regarding the member of staff's ability to deal with information and/or communicate? Identify any concerns not already recorded in the Skills Check documents as precisely as you can (e.g. this member of staff has an accent that makes them difficult to understand).

Step 2 Compare the Skills Check results with the skills required for the job

Use the results to decide whether the person has the communication and number skills necessary to work safely and meet quality standards.

The simplest way to do this is to compare the Skills Check results with a communication and number skills specification for the job.

> If your organisation has a document that specifies the communication and number skills required by the post, use that. If not, **either** use the Care Skillsbase template to create a simple job role specification (see Manage Skills > Meet your organisation's needs at www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase) **or** use the instructions at the end of these notes to create a specification now.

Compare the person's Skills Check results with whatever communication and number skills specification you are using. Does the Skills Check raise any concerns regarding the person's ability to communicate and deal with information in critical areas of the job?

If the Skills Check does give cause for concern, go to step 3.

If the Skills Check gives no cause for concern, go directly to step 4.

> **Tip** If you have access to the person's CV and/or application form, compare what they say with the results of the Skills Check. Do the results of the Skills Check tally with the information in the person's CV and/or application form? If not, you may wish to re-evaluate any decisions made.

Step 3 Assess the risk posed by limited communication and number skills

Identify the elements of the job that are **critical** to achieving the job's overall purpose.

What consequences might follow if the person does not communicate and deal with information effectively at those points? How serious would the consequences be?

Then consider how likely it is that the person will not communicate and deal with information effectively at those points. Is it just a remote possibility, or quite likely?

The more serious and likely, the greater the risk.

How serious?	How likely?				
	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Near certain?
Insignificant					
Minor					Be careful
Moderate				Be careful	Watch out!
Severe			Be careful	Watch out!	Danger!
Disastrous?		Be careful	Watch out!	Danger!	Disaster!

Finally, consider how often the task or activity is undertaken and how critical the task or activity is to overall service delivery.

The more **frequent** and **critical** the task or activity, the greater the **risk** posed by the limited ability of the person to communicate and deal with information effectively.

If you have serious concerns about allocating certain duties to the person, either make sure you can support them adequately or allocate those duties to someone else.

Step 4 Monitor work performance

Whatever the results of the Skills Check, be sure to monitor how the person actually does communicate and deal with information in the job.

If monitoring reveals that the member of staff communicates and deals with information effectively, note this. Continue monitoring, but there is no reason to take further action.

Step 5 Respond quickly to any problems

If monitoring shows that the person is not communicating and dealing with information effectively (i.e. as required to work safely and meet quality standards), take action at once.

First, make sure the member of staff knows how they should be communicating and dealing with information. Do this by modelling (i.e. demonstrate the task to them).

If this resolves the problem, note this. Continue monitoring, but there is no reason to take further action at this point.

If monitoring and modelling do not work, speak to the person. Confirm that the person knows what is expected of them and is:
- committed to achieving the required outcomes
- prepared to follow the agreed procedure in order to achieve the outcomes
- willing to apply communication and number skills to the best of their ability.

Explain the ways in which you consider:

- their current performance does not meet those expectations
- they are not dealing with information and communicating effectively
- failure to apply communication and number skills effectively stops them achieving the outcomes required.

Ask whether the person feels that this assessment of their performance is fair and accurate.

Note their response and, if appropriate, tell them that you will reflect on what they have said.

Meanwhile, ask the person to reflect on what you have said for a day or two and to consider whether:

- they can think of another way to achieve the outcomes you require
- they would find any on-the-job or off-the-job support useful.

Schedule a follow-up meeting.

At the follow-up meeting, agree how to resolve the situation (i.e. enable the person to achieve the desired outcomes). Options may include one or more of the following:

- redesigning the work process
- organising on-the-job skills development/training (see Care Skillsbase > Manage Skills at www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase)
- organising off-the-job skills development/training (see Care Skillsbase > Manage Skills at www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase).

Whatever you agree, monitor and review the agreed solution regularly and be sure to involve the person as fully as possible in the reviewing.

Quick communication and number skills specification

If you are working **without** a communication and number skills specification, use the instructions below to create a makeshift specification. You may find it helpful to refer to:

- the official job description and person specification for the role
- quality standards and risk assessments related to key tasks within the role
- any record-keeping and report forms the post-holder completes as part of their work
- quality records associated with the work (e.g. records of previous complaints and/or incidents that indicate the sort of problems post-holders typically have to deal with).

First, briefly review the person's job, including:

- overall purpose
- principal tasks involved
- other main requirements (e.g. participation in training, team meetings, appraisal)
- vocational skill level (e.g. Health & Social Care qualification level).

Identify the elements of the job that are critical to achieving the job's overall purpose. Concentrate on these critical elements. First, note where the post-holder has to deal with important information. Consider:

- record-keeping and reporting
- risk management
- quality assurance.

Again, concentrating only on the critical elements of the job, note where success depends on effective communication. Bear in mind the needs of people who use services, colleagues and outside agencies.

What communication and number skills should a post-holder bring to the role? Consider other post-holders. What skills do effective post-holders demonstrate? What skills do ineffective post-holders lack?

Now draw up a short list of what you consider to be the key communication and number skill competencies (five is enough). To help you formulate your list, complete this sentence: 'To be effective in this role, a person must be able to...' (e.g. make appropriate written entries in care plans or accurately monitor and record fluid intake).

Use your list as a makeshift communication and number skills specification.