

Care Skillsbase: Manage Skills

Help staff to develop their skills

On the job

To organise an effective programme of on-the-job learning for a member of staff, start by setting clear objectives. Useful questions include:

- What aspect of the person's job performance do you want to improve?
- What must the programme enable them to do that they cannot do now?
- Which skill(s) must the programme develop for this to happen:
 - > spoken communication
 - > reading skills
 - > writing skills
 - > number skills?
- How will the programme develop the relevant skill(s)?

On-the-job learning opportunities arise wherever work activity requires the person to apply the skill/s that need to be developed. By using those activities to consciously practise the skill/s, the person can develop the skill/s – with the right support.

Review the person's job role, including activities related to training, team work, supervision and appraisal.

List the tasks and activities that require the member of staff to apply the target skills (i.e. the skills you want to support). At the top of your list, put the task that suggested the person has a learning need and prompted the programme.

Investigate what support is already in place to help the person to apply the skill(s) in these tasks and activities.

Start by checking that the requirement to apply communication and number skills in these tasks and activities is:

- clearly specified
- clearly communicated to staff
- modelled (i.e. demonstrated) to staff
- supervised
- monitored and feedback given
- supported by occupational training where appropriate.

By ensuring these things are in place, you create an effective framework of support for the person to develop their skills on the job. For more on this, see [Care Skillsbase > Manage Skills > Meet your organisation's needs > Create a learning environment at \[www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase\]\(http://www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase\)](#)

Other ways to help the person develop their skills through their work may include:

- coaching from a manager, supervisor or expert colleague
- support from a designated colleague (mentoring/buddying)
- working with others (team work)
- shadowing a more experienced colleague
- training and assessment for Health & Social Care qualifications
- appraisal meetings
- briefings, demonstrations
- instructions and guidance notes.

To select the best options, consider what will be most:

- likely to help the member of staff develop their skills
- practical to implement
- cost-effective.

Set measurable outcomes based on what the person will be able to do as a result of the programme.

Agree a realistic timeframe and dates for review.

Ensure that all those involved have a clear understanding of:

- what they are expected to do, and why
- how long the programme is scheduled to last
- what the intended outcomes are.

During the programme, monitor and feed back on progress regularly to all those involved. At the end of the programme, measure progress against the intended outcomes and ask all involved to evaluate what they have learned.

On-the-job learning resource from Skills for Care

Skills for Care (www.skillsforcare.org.uk) has developed **Learning through Work**, a set of bite-size learning materials that help staff develop their communication and number skills on the job, taking advantage of the natural learning opportunities that arise as part of day-to-day care work. See the Skills for Care website for more details.

Off the job

Off-the-job learning (i.e. classroom training) can be an effective way to help staff develop their communication and number skills, particularly if you organise it properly.

Start by defining your training objective. Useful questions include:

- What aspect of the person's job performance do we want to improve?
- How will training in communication and number skills help to achieve this?
- How will the person's behaviour change as a result of the training programme?

An example of an answer to the last question might be: 'The person will record weight gain/loss accurately.'

Once you know what you want to achieve, identify the most appropriate form of off-the-job learning. Start by considering the learning objective you have defined. Are you already offering a type of learning that could be adapted to meet this new need? If not, consider what other kind of learning, and how much, is required. Ask yourself:

- Who is best placed to deliver this learning?
- Can the learning be delivered in-house?
- Do we need help from a specialist external training provider?

Browse the 'developing skills' and 'qualifications & training' sections of the Skills for Care website (www.skillsforcare.org.uk) for a wide range of resources that could help you to develop the communication and number skills of your staff.

Learning options typically include:

- classroom training delivered on-site
- classroom training delivered off-site (e.g. at a local college)
- computer-based training, including:
 - > programmes on CD ROMs and DVDs
 - > internet-based learning.

Criteria to evaluate each option include:

- how likely it is to help the member of staff to communicate and deal with information more effectively in their job
- how practical it is to implement
- how cost-effective it is (bear in mind costs such as staff release, agency fees and/or overtime for cover, as well as provision of training and training facilities).

For more on how to select a learning provider, see Care Skillsbase > Manage Skills > Work with individuals > Select a learning provider at www.scie.org.uk/careskillsbase

Finally, bear in mind that learning something in a classroom is one thing. Applying what you have learned at work is another thing. Consider how you will support the person to apply the training to their work.