

MODULE 1

Essential Skills for Inclusive Communication

Get Started



What we'll cover...

- 1 **Key terms for communication support**
- 2 **Practical skills to make healthcare more communication inclusive**

1

Key terms for communication support

This module introduces key terms and core practical skills that can help make healthcare communication clearer, safer, and inclusive for people with communication support needs.

What is a 'communication support need'?

A **'communication support need'** is any condition that affects someone's ability to send, receive, or comprehend verbal and non-verbal messages. Another word for this is **'communication disability'**.



What is a 'communication support need'?

People with communication support needs may have:



Intellectual disability



Brain damage (Neurological injury)



Autism



Communication disorders (such as aphasia)



Sensory disability

(such as blindness, low vision, hearing loss)



What is 'inclusive communication'?

'Inclusive communication' means that everyone, including people with communication support needs, can access information, get their messages across, be understood, and be included. Another word for this is **'communication accessibility'**.



What is 'inclusive communication'?

An inclusive communication environment can:

 Help people feel respected, heard and valued.



Build trust between people and their healthcare providers.



Reduce risks of communication-related errors.



What is a 'reasonable adjustment'?

A '**reasonable adjustment**' is when we make changes or provide aid to help overcome barriers to participation and access.



What is a 'reasonable adjustment'?

Reasonable adjustments for communication can include:



Use of a device or communication board.



Gestures or visuals.



Reducing background noise.



2

Practical skills to make healthcare more communication inclusive



Key skill 1: Asking about communication support needs

Checking if a person has communication support needs is the **first step** in providing safe and quality healthcare.

You can start a conversation about communication support needs by asking one of the questions below:

Do you have any communication support needs?

How do you communicate with other people?

How can I help you communicate?



Key skill 2: Teach-back strategy

Teach-back is a simple, yet powerful way to check that healthcare information has been explained clearly and received accurately.

Teach-back can help reduce misunderstandings and support people to feel more confident about their care.



HOW TO USE TEACHUBACK



Health
Western NSW
Local Health District



Health
South Western Sydney
Local Health District

Acquired Brain Injury Communication Lab |



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Key skill 2: Teach-back strategy

Follow the teach-back steps:

Step 1: Provide health information to the person.

Step 2: Ask the person to explain it back in their own words.

Step 3: Confirm (if understood) or re-teach any concepts (if not understood).



Tip 1: As this is not a test of the person, you might want to add: 'I want to check that I've told you what you need to know'.

Tip 2: Consider teaching in a different way (e.g. use visual aids).

Key skill 3: Easy-read

Easy Read helps make written information easier to understand. This is useful for many people, including people with intellectual disability, cognitive impairments, low literacy, or people who feel stressed or overwhelmed in healthcare settings.

Easy Read does not remove important information. Instead, it presents information in a clearer and more accessible way.



Key skill 3: Easy-read

Easy Read documents include:

Simple words and short sentences.

Clear headings and large text.

Images to support meaning.



Key skill 3: Easy-read

See an example of a document below in a standard and Easy-read format.

What do you notice about the Easy-read version?

Standard format

Executive summary

The Communication for Safe Care project (C4SC) aimed to make healthcare services easier to access for people with communication disabilities. C4SC used a co-design approach to bring together healthcare workers, people with lived experience of communication disability, and senior health leaders to work collaborating to design solutions that meet everyone's needs.

Approximately 1.2 million Australians have a communication disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2015). The rights of people with a disability, including access to inclusive healthcare services, are stated in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disability (United Nations, 2006). However, despite legal obligations to provide accessible and inclusive services, people with communication disabilities:

- are more likely to suffer from adverse events in hospital; and
- have poorer health outcomes than the general population. (O'Halloran, Worrall, & Hickson, 2008)
- Healthcare workers do not receive routine and comprehensive training in communication disabilities and report poor confidence in providing quality care (Wallace, Worrall, Rose, & Le Dorze, 2018).

There are legal obligations that mean all businesses, government agencies, organisations and service providers must be accessible for all people, including those with communication disabilities.

Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020

Easy Read format

What did the project do?



We talked to people with communication disabilities. They told us about problems they have talking at the dentist.



We also talked to healthcare workers like dentists and the reception staff. They told us about the problems they have talking to people with communication disabilities.



We listened to their problems. This helped us decide what problem to work on.



The problem we decided to work on was: Helping people to know more about disability so it is easier to share information. We wanted to fix this problem to help people communicate better in healthcare.

Key skill 4: Communication Partner skills 101

Communication is a shared responsibility.

As a communication partner you can change the way you communicate to help people with communication support needs.



Small changes can make a big difference. Giving someone more time to respond, checking understanding, and showing that you are listening can help people feel safer, respected, and included in their care.



Key skill 4: Communication Partner skills 101

Communication partners can support better communication by:



Being patient

and allowing extra time to communicate.



Speaking clearly

and using plain language.



Asking one question

at a time.



Trying different ways of communicating

such as gestures, writing things down, drawing, pointing to pictures or using visual supports.



Involving carers

or support people when the person agrees.



That's a wrap

You've completed Module 1:
Essential Skills for Inclusive Communication