# Effective communication strategies in a diverse workforce




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# What is Migration Yorkshire?

A local-authority led partnership - partners include local authorities, the voluntary sector, Home Office, health and police.

**Key roles:**

- Strategic leadership and coordination
- Information, data and research
- Expert support for local integration
- Responding to change

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# Overview of workshop

**To explore the challenges and opportunities presented by cultural and linguistic diversity and learn practical strategies for promoting effective communication and understanding.**

- Learn strategies for adapting communication styles and techniques to ensure understanding. Using simple language, which is clear and easy to understand for your audience, and eliminating jargon, acronyms, and overly complicated words.
- Identify common barriers to communication in diverse workforces, including language differences, cultural norms, and misinterpretations.
- Improve active listening skills to better understand and empathise with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Explore possible ways of handling complaints at the peer and customer level.

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# Barriers to effective communication

**Written communication barriers:** When reading and writing proficiency differs.

**Verbal  communication barriers:** When people speak different languages or have different levels of fluency.

**Cultural language barriers:** When cultural differences affect the understanding of language.

**Non-verbal communication barriers**: Misinterpretations of body language, gestures, and facial expression.

**Emotional states**: Stress and anxiety can affect understanding.

**Environmental factors**: Noise, lack of privacy, poor lighting.

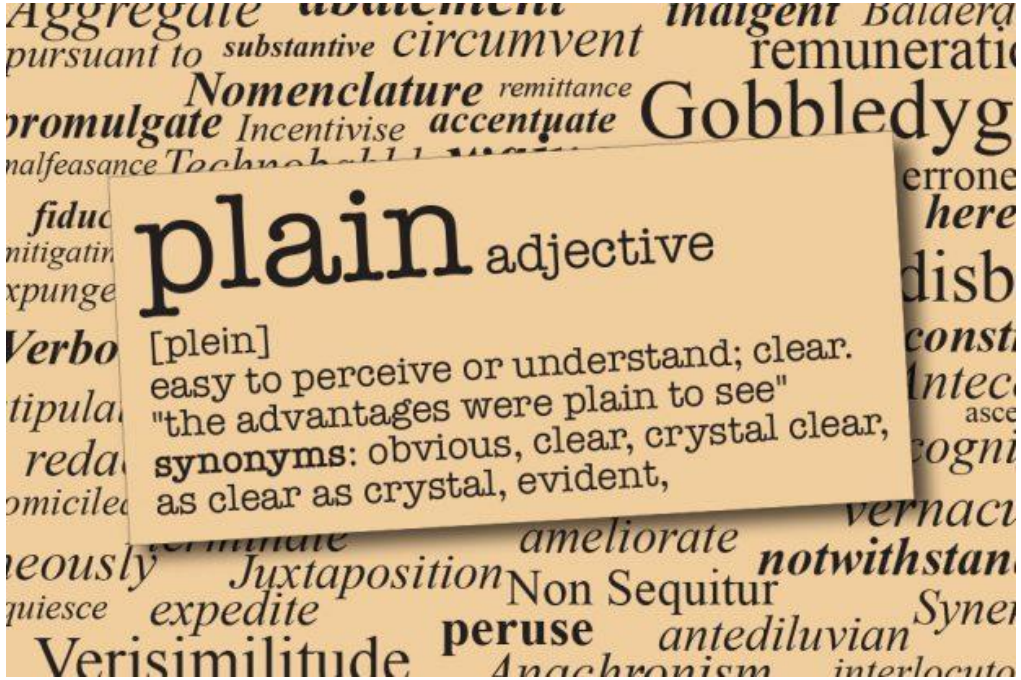
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# Environmental and emotional factors




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# What is plain English?




- A message, written with the reader in mind and with the right tone of voice, that is clear and concise.
- Language suitable for a general audience that helps people to understand

**It is not:**

- 'Basic English', 'Newspeak' or 'Weblish'
- Oversimplified and patronising
- Changing the meaning of your message or reducing its length

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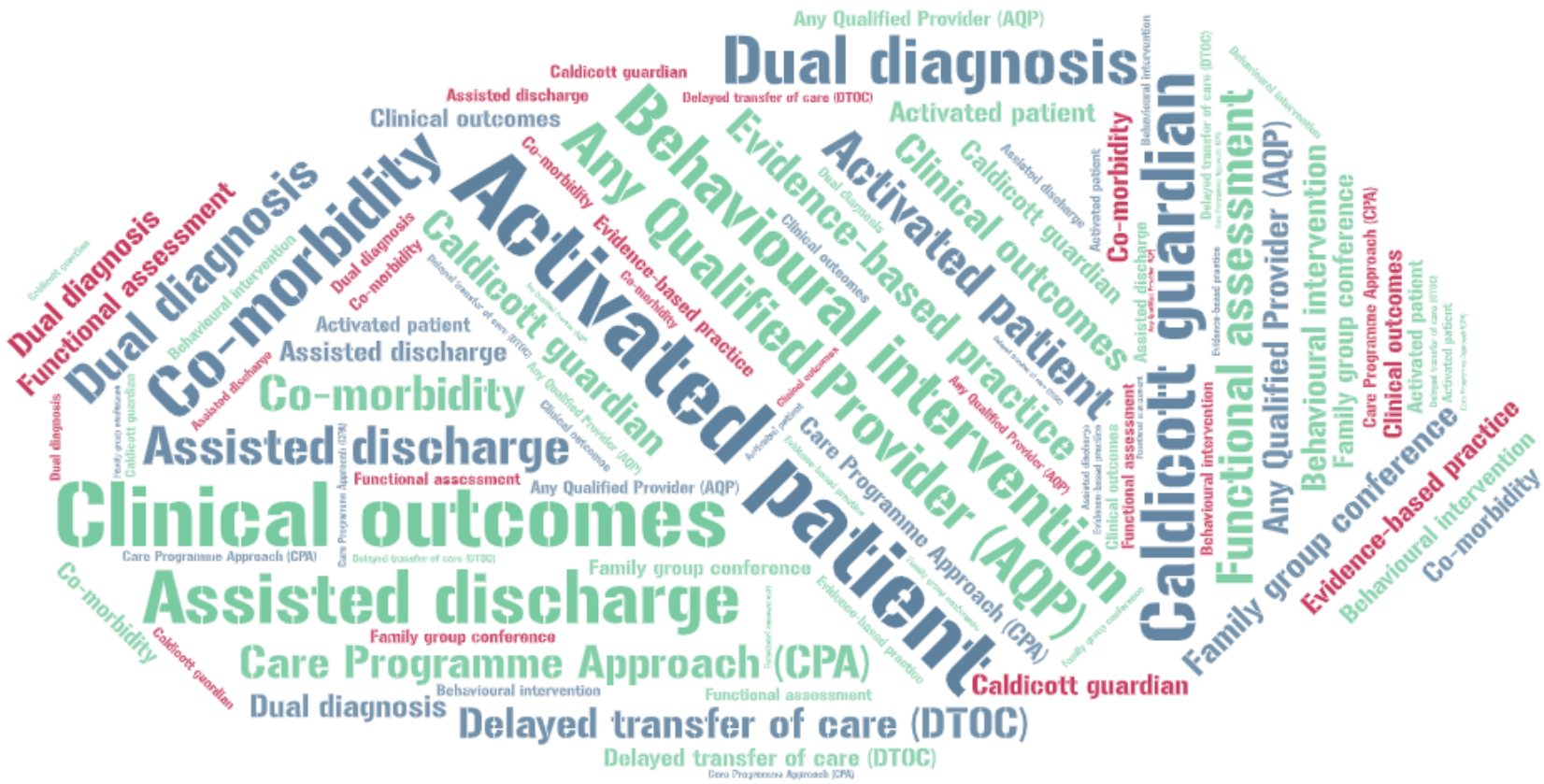
# Why use plain English?

In 2015, the OECD conducted its Survey of Adult Skills which found that 16.4% (or 1 in 6) of adults in England have literacy levels at or below Level 1, which is considered to be 'very poor literacy skills'.

- It is more inclusive.
- It is more accessible.
- It ensures understanding.
- It helps everyone, including experts.

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# Jargon-busting in the Health and Care Sector




Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) [Jargon Buster]

[NHS Acronym buster]

# Why use plain English?

‘Joan should participate in eating and drinking activities at her maximum potential through modification of mealtime environment and implementation of guidelines as outlined in the risk management plan.’

'Joan needs help at mealtimes.'



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# Plain English quick checklist.

1. **Sentence length**

- Break longer sentences in shorter ones, usually no more than 20 words.
- Try to have one message per sentence.
- Delete words and phrases that add nothing to the meaning, e.g.: 'indeed', 'last but not least', 'basically', 'a total of.'

**2. Confusing words / phrases**

- Many words and phrases have synonyms that are easier to use.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms and slang.

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# Plain English quick checklist.

**3. Sentence construction**

- Use active instead of passive voice.
- Avoid nominalisations, which are nouns formed from verbs.
- Use 'you' and 'we'.
- Use lists where appropriate.

**4. Meaning**

- Write in such a way that a reader not familiar with the topic would be able to understand you.
- Don't be afraid to give direct instructions.

https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html

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# Exercise 1

Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in the NHS
Safeguarding accountability and assurance framework

(A - H)
The safeguarding of children, young people and adults who are at risk is a fundamental obligation for everyone who works in the NHS and its partner agencies. Safeguarding children and adults at risk of abuse or neglect must be kept constantly under review.

(I – P)
Responsibilities for safeguarding are enshrined in international and national legislation. Safeguarding for both children and adults has transformed in recent years with the introduction of new legislation, creating duties and responsibilities which need to be incorporated into the widening scope of NHS safeguarding practice.

(Q – Z)
It remains the responsibility of every NHS funded organisation, and each individual healthcare professional working in the NHS, to ensure that the principles and duties of safeguarding children and adults are holistically, consistently and conscientiously applied. The wellbeing of those children and adults is at the heart of what we do.

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# Inclusive communication in the workplace

- Ensures that **every member of staff** feels equally valued and respected.
- Organisations that promote inclusive communication attract and maintain a diverse workforce.
- It is a legal requirement for workplaces to avoid discrimination and promote inclusion.
- Be aware of different cultural communication styles and needs.
- Provide reasonable adjustments
- Use respectful, non-discriminatory language.
- Actively listen to and encourage two-way dialogue.
- Be open to different perspectives and ideas.
- Don't make assumptions.

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# Recognising cultural differences in communication

Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people.

All aspects of communication are influenced by culture - from the choice of words, to how one communicates, to acknowledging and understanding.

Cultural identities can stem from the following differences: race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, country of origin, and geographic region.



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| WHAT THE BRITISH SAY | WHAT THE BRITISH MEAN | WHAT FOREIGNERS UNDERSTAND |
|---|---|---|
| I hear what you say | I disagree and do not want to discuss it further | He accepts my point of view |
| With the greatest respect | You are an idiot | He is listening to me |
| That's not bad | That's good | That's poor |
| That is a very brave proposal | You are insane | He thinks I have courage |
| Quite good | A bit disappointing | Quite good |
| I would suggest | Do it or be prepared to justify yourself | Think about the idea, but do what you like |
| Oh, incidentally/ by the way | The primary purpose of our discussion is | That is not very important |
| I was a bit disappointed that | I am annoyed that | It doesn't really matter |
| Very interesting | That is clearly nonsense | They are impressed |
| I'll bear it in mind | I've forgotten it already | They will probably do it |
| I'm sure it's my fault | It's your fault | Why do they think it was their fault? |
| You must come for dinner | It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite | I will get an invitation soon |




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# Jargon, acronyms, metaphors, similes, slang and dialect

- **Jargon** - Special words or expressions used by a professional group that are difficult for others to understand.
- **Acronyms** - abbreviation consisting of the first letters of each word in the name of something.
- **Metaphors** – a word or phrase that describes something but isn't literally true.
- **Similes** – a description that uses "as" or "as" to make a comparison.
- **Slang** – informal language used in everyday conversation.  e.g.. Non-medical terms for body parts!
- **Dialect** – a form of language found in a specific region or social group.

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# Body language

Some aspects of nonverbal communication are universal, like basic facial expressions. For instance, a smile can work wonders pretty much anywhere!

However, others vary culturally. Different cultures have their own set of norms, values, and social expectations, which influence how people express themselves nonverbally.



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# Direct vs. Indirect Communication

**Direct cultures** prefer communication to be simple and precise. Yes means yes. Words are used explicitly to carry the exact meaning in order to avoid misunderstanding. For those from indirect cultures, this may appear rude.

**Indirect cultures** prefer a more nuanced communication style. Messages are implied. Yes may mean yes, no or maybe. Information is embedded into the style and context of their communication and not in the specific words. To someone from a direct culture, they may appear untrustworthy or inefficient.

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# Individual vs. Group Cultures

**Individualistic cultures** tend to look out for themselves and emphasize “I” versus “We.” These cultures take responsibility for individual successes and failures and reward individual initiative and achievement.

**Group-oriented cultures** are more consensus driven and emphasize “we” versus “I.” They put the needs of the group ahead of the individual and reward group work and team collaboration.

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# Hierarchical vs. Flat-Structure

**Hierarchical cultures** value status and rank over competencies. Titles are important, as is respect for authority. Organisational structures are multi-layered, and people are more formal.

**Flat-structured cultures** value competencies over status and rank. These cultures are less formal, so first names are often used. Organizational structures tend to be flat, and it's acceptable to challenge higher-ups.

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# Task vs. Relationship

**In task-oriented cultures**, relationships don't need to be strong in order to complete projects successfully; the relationship will come later, once the task has begun or is completed. Decision-making can happen quickly.

**In relationship-oriented cultures**, trust needs to be earned. Relationships build up slowly over time and are required in order to successfully complete tasks.

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# Tips for handling conflict and complaints

- The best way to manage conflict is to try to prevent it or reduce its frequency or intensity.
- It is important to de-escalate the situation and reach a calm resolve.
- Speak to all parties involved in a neutral, safe space.
- Use effective communication, **empathy and active listening**.
- Identify the issues and seek clarification if necessary. Focus on the problem. not the person.
- Work together to tackle the problem.
- Seek advice/escalate if unable to come to a mutually acceptable solution.

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# Exercise 2 – Case study 1

Faith is from Zimbabwe. She joined your team 6 months ago and she seems to be settling in nicely. However, a member of staff tells you that Faith didn't show up at an appointment and the client says he is unhappy with the quality of her care. You invite Faith for a chat the next day. When you mention the complaint and ask for her side of the story, she bursts into tears. It seems that Faith has been struggling the last couple of months with the client who has made few racist comments about her country.  She explains that back home it is considered rude to challenge elderly people. She has also been feeling very lonely and misses her family back in Zimbabwe.

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# Exercise 2 – Case study 2

Anushka is from India and initially seemed to get on well with her colleagues. However, over time she has withdrawn and has avoided the staff canteen. When you talk to her about it, she tells you that she has been bringing her favourite food to work and another member of staff complained about the smell. Since then, Anushka has been less confident making conversation with colleagues, especially when they make cultural references that she doesn't recognise.

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# Exercise 2 – Case study 3

Krishnan is from Indonesia. He arrives on shift and her supervisor, Kelly, tells her during the handover that “Mr. Robson has been a nightmare today” and still requires his medication. Kelly tells Krishnan that Mr. Robson’s dose is 2mg but she speaks too quickly for Krishnan to understand. He asks for clarification but still isn’t sure he has understood correctly. He asks a third time and Kelly reacts angrily. Krishnan administers the medicine. He gives Mr. Robson 20mg.

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# Exercise 2 – Case study 4

Ashante is from Ghana. She has been providing palliative care for Mrs. Smith for several months. During this time she has expressed concerns that her family does not visit, however her daughter telephones on a daily basis. Sadly, Mrs. Smith died and her daughter has made a complaint. She claims that Ashante told her she is responsible for her mother's death because she did not visit her every day. Ashante says that she did not mean to cause offence but family ties are important and that death and grief is managed differently in her country.

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# Feedback

1. Faith
2. Anushka
3. Krishnan
4. Ashante

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# Ten tips for better cross-cultural communication

1. Maintain etiquette
2. Avoid slang
3. Speak slowly and clearly
4. Keep it simple
5. Practice active listening
6. Take turns to talk
7. Write things down
8. Avoid closed questions
9. Be careful with humour
10. Be supportive

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# Thank you for attending this session.

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