

Communicating well

Communication is a two way street. At the most basic level it involves LISTENING and TALKING.

When you communicate in your workplace with colleagues and with residents it is vital that you listen well and talk well.

Many workplace problems arise because we misunderstand or simply do not listen carefully to what people say to us.

Most communication is non-verbal and facial expressions can be important in fully understanding what is being said to us. To listen well we must firstly make eye contact with the person who is speaking to us. Look at them.

Secondly, wait till the person is finished before replying. Don't interrupt.

Thirdly, give some sign that you have heard the person by nodding or making some sound such as "Hmm". This lets them know that they have your attention and are listening.

Finally, you may want to ask questions to clarify something or just to let them know that you were listening.

Talking is equally important. Speak to make yourself understood. Avoid speaking to express your anger. Deal with that some other way. Take the time to think through what you want to say before you say it, especially if you have had problems with someone misunderstanding you in the past.

Again look at the person, make eye contact and say what you want to say clearly and then wait for a reply.

When you speak do not make blaming statements like, "You always...". Stick to the facts and do not guess what people mean if you are unclear or think they may have misunderstood you. Ask questions to clarify rather than jumping in or 'flying off the handle' eg. "What did you mean when you said...?"

Taking the time to think and communicate well can save people becoming stressed and misunderstood. It builds trust, rapport and a happier environment.