

Communication Skills

Effective communication is an essential self-advocacy skill which ensures that you can get your point across in such a way that you are heard but also that you can hear and respond to what's being said.

What can get in the way of effective communication?

These are examples of barriers that can prevent us from getting our message across effectively and can stop us listening to the person we're speaking to:

- Our own state of mind – feeling too stressed, angry or upset to articulate our needs
- If we voice our concerns as a personal attack on the person we're speaking to this can lead to them turning off and not listening to what we're saying
- Speaking too quietly or shouting
- Not having the time or taking the time necessary to write the letter/email or make the call
- Environment (noisy or full of distractions) – find a quiet place to make/take a call
- Own experiences and opinions – guessing, presumptions, selective listening
- Feeling unprepared for a meeting or phone call

How can we avoid this?

- Take time to switch off and reschedule phone calls/meetings if necessary
- Set aside enough time and explain if time is limited
- Try to find a quiet space and avoid interruptions
- Be aware of your own thoughts and opinions and avoid making presumptions about what the other person is going to say
- Be clear about what has gone wrong in the past if that is something you want to get across but spend more time focusing on what needs to be different in the future
- Be well prepared for meetings and calls – use the tips and worksheets in this toolkit to help you

Top Tips

- Be assertive not aggressive
- Be respectful
- Try to stay calm!
- Is there room for compromise?