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The role of the
health and social
care worker

Standards

Understand working relationships in health and social care

Explain how a working relationship is different from a personal relationship

A relationship is defined as the connection between 2 people. Throughout our lives we build relationships with people: personal and working ones. Sometimes relationships last over long periods of your life; others for a short time. Whichever direction people's relationships take, they will all influence them in one way or another.

Personal relationships develop when individuals choose to get to know someone better: maybe because they like their personality or their view of the world, or maybe because they share the same interests. Whatever reason they give, the fact is, they like the person and want to spend more time with them. People laugh and cry with their friends and tell each other secrets that they wouldn't share with strangers; they let them know their personal wishes, thoughts and feelings. Friends sometimes see them in embarrassing situations, for example, when they have had one glass too many at a party and they still choose to stay friends the next day. Personal relationships are not bound by rules in the same way as working relationships, but are rooted in mutual liking, trust and respect.

Working relationships develop through the necessity of engaging with each other for a purpose as part of the work people do. Those relationships are not chosen, but defined by circumstances, roles and responsibilities, e.g. when working as part

of a team, and bound by rules, unspoken or clearly defined, like following agreed ways of working. They are also distinguished by hierarchy, e.g. management, supervisors, senior members of staff and other colleagues.



In a working relationship, it doesn't really matter how you feel about the other person. Obviously it does help if you like them, but it is about achieving aims and objectives together through shared practice. By signing your contract and getting paid for the work you do, you have taken on a duty to abide by the organisation's rules and regulations, policies, procedures, duty of care and the responsibility for any mistakes you make. There will be times when you have to work together with people you are not keen on, but you will need to adopt a positive attitude, an open-minded, non-judgemental and friendly approach and leave your personal opinions out of it. A working relationship is not defined by emotional attachments, but professionalism. You need to keep in mind the values of equality and diversity and the boundaries of your job role; you cannot just chit-chat with colleagues as you would do with friends as you have to respect confidentiality issues.

Working partners should share a vision and their relationship should be rooted in mutual respect, politeness and understanding. You may choose to share it but your colleague doesn't need to know about your home life, children, pets, personal problems or likes and dislikes; they are most interested in the skills, knowledge and understanding you are bringing into the relationship so that you can work together well.

Describe different working relationships in health and social care settings

Your role will involve you working with many people who have a variety of roles. This is known as 'partnership working'. Developing good relationships will help to improve the quality of care provided. The main working relationships in adult care can be categorised in 4 ways:

1. Individuals and their friends and family.
2. Your colleagues and managers.
3. People from other workplaces, including advocates. An advocate is someone who provides support by speaking for an individual on their behalf.
4. Volunteers and community groups.

For example, in providing care and support to an individual, their carer may provide support by visiting or providing food. You should be helpful and make sure that this is built into the care plan and routine, and is understood by other workers. You might also support the individual to share their wishes with the carer.

Other workers might also provide a service to someone you provide care and support for. For example, a dietician might advise the individual about their weight and help them agree a plan for their meals and snacks, taking into account any preferences or special dietary needs. As you are the worker likely to see the individual most regularly you could encourage them to keep to the diet and support them to feed back how the diet is working or if it needs to be changed. If the individual was not eating or unwell as a result you would arrange for the diet to be reviewed quickly. Very often healthcare support workers or adult social care support workers are in a position to play an important role in making observations and links with other workers because they are in regular contact. They are very important partners in the overall health or adult care provision to an individual.

All working relationships should involve mutual respect and should value other people's skills and knowledge with a focus on working together in the best interests of the individual receiving care and support. The importance of people working together should not be underestimated as serious case reviews, which are the reviews carried out when a vulnerable adult dies or comes to significant harm, often identify failings in partnership working as being a key factor in what went wrong.



The relationship with your colleagues is rooted in working towards agreed aims and objectives, embracing adult care values and supporting each other in fulfilling your duty of care in a person-centred way. Your colleagues are working alongside you; therefore, they can empathise with how you feel in certain situations and support you through encouragement, praise and constructive feedback. A positive working relationship between colleagues is characterised by loyalty, politeness, trust, support and good communication skills to ensure information is passed on effectively and correctly. The style of communication will generally be informal. This will help to create a constructive working environment where everyone feels valued and comfortable to ask for help and support when they need it.

The working relationship with your manager/supervisor is rooted in you fulfilling their expectations of your job role. To have a good working relationship with your manager, you need to ensure that you familiarise yourself with the organisation's aims and objectives, as well as their policies and procedures and codes of practice. You need to know the responsibilities and boundaries of your job role and regular supervision and appraisal meetings will establish your strengths and areas for improvement. It is the management's responsibility to enable you to improve your skills and knowledge, for you to provide the best quality of care, by establishing training opportunities, for example. A positive working relationship with the organisation's management is characterised by formality, respect, trust, reliability, and motivation.

The relationship you are establishing with the individual and their family and friends is also of great importance.

In adult care person-centred values are the guiding principles on how to support and assist someone. The individual and their family are seen as equal partners in the planning, assessing and developing of the care provided so the individual's needs are met in the best possible way. Each individual that you care for will have different communication needs and you will need to respect each as a unique person to understand how to communicate with them. The communication style is likely to be informal, avoiding the use of jargon or complex terminology that might be confusing, to ensure the individual and their social networks understand all the aspects of the proposed care plan. It is important to take time to understand the factors that create a person's uniqueness as it will have many benefits for the working relationship.



The individual and adult care worker relationship is characterised by an imbalance of power and, therefore should be open-minded, respectful, trustworthy, friendly, empathic, not discriminatory and centred around the individual's needs. You need to be reliable and dependable to comply with your duty of care.

Your working relationship with other workers can be varied, as it could include police, doctors, psychologists, agency staff and social workers, as well as secretaries, cooks and cleaners. Different workplaces will have different multi-agency working relationships, e.g. in the community, a residential setting or nursing home. Depending on the relationship you have, your communication style would be more or less formal, e.g. more formal with the police and doctors, more informal with the social worker and cook. However, what all these relationships should have in common is mutual respect and a valuing of the other worker's input and expertise, with a focus on the best interests of the individual. Efficient communication skills are needed to ensure that every worker is up to date on the individual's plan for care and support.

As well as differing in their grade of formality, working relationships can also be characterised by the economic factor of being paid or voluntary. Charity workers and volunteers contribute significantly to the adult care workforce with many volunteers giving up their spare time to support and care for those who have care and support needs. Nevertheless, their relationships are bound by the same spoken and unspoken rules as 'paid workers'.



Be able to work in ways that are agreed with the employer

Describe why it is important to adhere to the agreed scope of the job role

Choosing a job in adult care means that you want to make a difference to other people's lives by providing care and support so that they can thrive and their quality of life is enhanced. To provide the best quality of care you need to know the duties, responsibilities and boundaries of your job role.

Your role will have a job description. This tells you what your main duties and responsibilities are and whom you report to. Ask your employer for a copy if you do not have it. You should know what is expected of you but also what is not included in your role. It will be almost

impossible for a job description to list every task you will do but it should largely reflect your role. The kinds of duties that might be in your job description are:

- providing care and support, working in a person-centred way, communicating well, building relationships and promoting equality and diversity.
- working as part of a team, being a supportive team member and developing your skills to improve your work.
- contributing to activities in a safe way, keeping and filing clear records, keeping to regulations, and following the agreed way of working. Regulations are rules that come from legislation or

laws. The legislation establishes the general 'laws of the land'. Regulations provide the specific ways in which those laws are interpreted and applied.

- respecting confidentiality by not discussing any personal information on individuals or staff with unauthorised people, and storing records securely.

The skills and knowledge you need to carry out your role competently and the ways in which you should work are set out nationally. You can find these in the following.

The Care Certificate. This is shared health and social care training in England. It is expected that new healthcare support workers and adult care workers will complete the 15 standards before they work without supervision in any workplace. In the Care Certificate there are 15 standards; they can be found here: www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/care-certificate

The Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England. This has the moral and ethical standards expected of all health and social care workers. The code can be found here: <http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/Standards-legislation/Code-of-Conduct/Code-of-Conduct.aspx> www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/code-of-conduct

Other countries in the UK have specific initial training requirements and codes of practice.

If there were no specifications in existence you wouldn't know what was expected of you and could only work to the best

of your knowledge. This could result in the individual's needs not being met due to your lack of understanding; they might not be looked after properly as you are lacking the skills needed to fulfil the job role. Additionally, you may work outside of the remit of your job role, potentially working in a way which could endanger the individual's, and your own, safety. Accidents could happen if you were acting beyond the boundaries of your responsibility and you could be held accountable for any injuries caused by this.

You will have additional responsibilities if you are a lead adult care worker to ensure that workers stay within the boundaries of their job role and the limitations of their training. You may be the first point of contact for any concerns or questions and will need to provide advice or know where to access further support.

There will also be times when you will need to take the initiative when working outside of your own responsibilities. This may include taking responsibility as the lead worker on shift or standing in for the manager in their absence, you will still need to make sure that you do not exceed your own boundaries and limitations and may need to seek further advice and support. If you are unsure about any of your responsibilities, you should always discuss your concerns with your manager.

Access full and up-to-date details of agreed ways of working

Development

As explored in the last section, it is vital for you to know what is expected of you in your role as an adult care worker. Part of your responsibility is acting within the organisation's, or employer's, agreed ways of working.

Your employer will tell you the safe and agreed ways in which you are expected to work. This may be shared with you as part of a policy or provided in person by your manager or another colleague. Agreed ways of working with each individual will be detailed in care plans. They ensure that you are working within the law and providing care and support that meet the needs of the individual. If you don't follow the agreed ways of working, you could harm yourself or others without meaning to. You are responsible for your own work and could face disciplinary procedures if people come to harm as a result of your actions.

This could lead to dismissal or even prosecution. You have responsibilities to the people that you provide care and support for. You must ensure that:

- **their safety and welfare is protected by ensuring that their care plan is followed and carried out in agreed, safe ways**
- **the care that they receive meets their needs by involving them and their carer or support network in the planning, review and delivery of their care**
- **they are treated fairly and that their rights are upheld by working in ways that promote equality and diversity and uphold their dignity and human rights**
- **if the individuals you support lack the confidence or are unable to speak out and their care is inadequate or they are treated in ways that do not uphold their rights, then you must support them to make a complaint, or raise concerns yourself**

Your employer's agreed ways of working are based on government guidelines, care values, their aims and objectives and a person-centred approach, and will outline how you should conduct yourself.



Examples of agreed ways of working in adult care:

- **reading through the individual's risk assessment and care plan to meet their unique needs**
- **complying with moving and assisting guidelines and gaining access to appropriate training to improve skills and knowledge in accordance with continuing professional development (CPD)**

- **following policies and procedures on confidentiality, record-keeping, equality and diversity, anti-discriminatory practice, safeguarding or health and safety, to name a few**
- **maintaining appropriate records on individuals so every adult care worker is kept up to date about their care needs**
- **attending appraisals and supervisions to work on strengths and identify development needs**
- **working as part of a team, using good communication skills to establish and maintain a mutual knowledge base**
- **working in a person-centred way, making the individual's wellbeing the first priority by focusing on their needs and protection**
- **ensuring the individual is empowered by giving them choice and control and always obtaining consent before any actions are taken**

If you are working for, so called, micro-employers with less than 5 employees, e.g. caring for someone privately in their own home, there might be no formal documents and policies and procedures in place. It is essential to establish agreed ways of working at the beginning of employment.

Implement agreed ways of working

Your employer's or organisation's agreed ways of working enable you to provide

a good quality service, which complies with the legal framework, and to keep the individuals safe from harm. These agreed ways are not only there to safeguard the individuals you support and care for, but also they benefit and protect you and your employer.

Legislation and regulations are constantly updated and amended; the same might be the case for an individual's risk assessment, care plan or guidance on their moving and assisting. Legislation and regulations in adult care are amended or changed quite often after research has shown a need for adaptation.

One example is the Care Act (2014) in England, which incorporates existing care and support legislation in a new updated set of laws, focusing on person-centred care and safeguarding.

Another example is that of changing first-aid techniques: every 5 years the Resuscitation Council UK conducts research into current practice and makes recommendations as to how CPR can be used more effectively. Needs of individuals might change, e.g. if their conditions are getting better or worse and care plans have to be amended accordingly. Therefore, it is essential that you know how to access the most up-to-date copies of documents relating to the individual's care, policies and procedures and other guidelines on agreed ways of working.

It is important that you familiarise yourself with the guidelines and policies and procedures relating to your job role as they

will affect the way you work. There is no need to learn these documents by heart, but it is essential that you know which policies exist and the gist of them so that you can refer to them in full, if and when necessary.

If you don't follow the agreed ways of working you could harm yourself or others inadvertently and, as you are responsible

for your own practice, you could be held accountable for the grievance you caused, or even face disciplinary procedures, which could lead to dismissal or indeed prosecution.

Be able to work in partnership with others

Explain why it is important to work in partnership with others

In adult care, person-centred values are guiding principles on how to support and assist in someone's life. As the term suggests, the person/individual is the focus of attention, i.e. what is important to them as an individual to increase self-determination and improve independence and quality of life. The individual and their social network are seen as equal partners in the planning, assessing and developing of their care so their individual needs can be met in the best possible way.

Working in partnership with people close to the individual, e.g. relatives, friends, advocates or carers, enables you to provide the best quality of care to enhance the individual's quality of life.

The individual's family and friends are an invaluable source of information when it comes to planning their support and care. They are more likely to understand the individual's likes and dislikes, dreams and ideas and preferred ways of communication. They also have an established trusting relationship with the individual and will be able to provide more in-depth and contextual information than

any adult care worker. They may know the individual's history, their medical needs and their preferences, though it is important not to discuss these with family members and friends without the individual giving consent.

Advocacy enables the individual to appoint a person to speak on their behalf and make sure that their wishes and needs are being heard, if they are lacking the confidence, mental capacity or communication skills to speak for themselves. An advocate is the voice of the individual; they express the individual's views and fight for their rights, if necessary, when composing a complaint, making informed choices or reporting incidents of abuse. They explore other choices and options for the individual by sourcing information and accessing services. Advocates work in partnership with the individual and are unrelated to the service provider; they can therefore concentrate on the best interests of the individual in a non-biased way.

The individual's adult care workers should be involved in the planning of their care as they have agreed ways of working and



know what is successful and what isn't in day-to-day support and care. They can gauge how to adapt their working routines to the individual's unique needs and wishes. Adult care workers are able to structure and organise support and care needs into a care plan.

Working in partnership with others might also mean working with other adult care workers or health professionals as a multi-agency team. It is important that all professionals involved in an individual's care are working together as a panel, sharing a common knowledge base. In 2010 the Department of Health published the document 'Capable Communities and Active Citizens' focusing, not only on the personalisation of care, but also noting the importance of different caregivers and service providers working together, sharing knowledge and skill to provide the best service for the individual. The sector-wide agreement 'Think Local, Act Personal' (2011) is a joint commitment of health and social care services to drive forward the personalisation of care. It provides a general framework for how to implement most effectively the government's vision for service delivery in adult care.

Teams need to have shared goals and values, need to understand and respect the competencies of other team members, need to learn from other disciplines and need to respect different views and perspectives. Performing as a multi-agency team has the benefits of access to a range of different skills and expertise, as well as providing continuity in care and support. Working together will enable all involved to take a holistic, comprehensive view of

the individual's complex needs. Therefore, multi-agency teamwork not only provides a wide range of services and resources for the individual, but also offers easy accessibility and a seamless provision.

Demonstrate ways of working that can help improve partnership working

Working partnerships can encounter similar problems to personal partnerships, if communication skills and methods are poor. If partners don't communicate with each other effectively, their dealings with each other could be left to assumptions and guess work, which could lead to conflict at one point or another. To have a good partnership with someone it is essential to communicate in an accurate, open and straightforward way.

Trust is another central feature of any interpersonal relationship. Only if people trust each other can they have an open and productive partnership. In adult care a trusting relationship between the adult care worker and the individual is even more important as there is potential for the partnership to be distinguished by dependence and an imbalance of power. Without trust, individuals might not access services, let alone disclose any personal information.

When working with individuals, you have to ensure that you are using the right communication methods to convey information so they understand what you are suggesting and they are able to give informed consent. If you can use verbal communication, you need to ensure you adapt the style to the abilities of the



recipient. A common mistake is when adult care workers and other professionals talk to the individual or their friends and family using jargon or specialised terminology, which is unfamiliar. This causes confusion and can create a communication barrier with people unwilling to participate in conversations as it is like a foreign language to them and could make them feel belittled. Similarly, this could happen if you were too informal, using slang when communicating with other workers. They might also feel devalued and disrespected and would probably not value what you had to say if you were being over familiar with them.

Therefore, your communication approach needs to respect the other person's status, needs and abilities to be positive and effective.

Working in adult care should embrace the person-centred approach. The person-centred approach was developed from the theory and workings of the American psychologist, Dr. Carl Rogers (1902-1987). He revolutionised psychotherapy in the 1940s by moving away from the previously accepted assumptions that the worker is the expert who knows what is best for the individual, to the understanding that every person has an innate drive to fulfil their personal potential. In a safe, accepting, empathic and compassionate environment the client would be able to activate self-healing properties.

The person-centred approach entails a holistic view: you are looking at the person as a whole not just at one aspect of their care. The person is respected as an individual and listened to, to meet their

needs. The relationship between caregiver and individual is a working partnership; the individual is treated with dignity and respect and supported in making informed choices about their care and life.

Examples of person-centred values are:

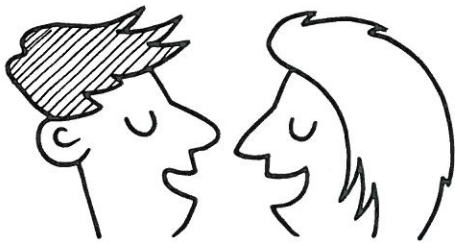
- **individuality**
- **rights**
- **choice**
- **privacy**
- **independence**
- **dignity**
- **respect**
- **partnership**

Having these care values in mind will help to provide a good quality of care, geared to the individual's specific needs. Working in a person-centred way in adult care means working in partnership with the individual. Only when you involve them in any decision-making can you truly support them in a way that is addressing their individual needs, wants and wishes. But working in partnership doesn't end there; the individual's family is an important source of guidance and information as they are often the people who know them best. Families are easily overlooked, as a caregiver might feel that they are interfering with their planning, but they need to be listened to if the care is to be person-centred.

When working in adult care you will also have working partnerships with other workers such as doctors, therapists, psychologists and social workers. To keep everyone updated on the individual's care,

it is essential to use accurate ongoing reporting procedures, so that, in the event of incidents occurring, information can be shared efficiently and safely.

The key to a successful partnership is effective communication between all parties, in a trusting relationship, with everyone valuing the input of others and their ability to formulate and agree on goals and objectives. It has to be an atmosphere in which everyone feels equally respected and valued, where joint working is considered the best way to gather as much information and as many viewpoints as possible



Identify skills and approaches needed for resolving conflicts.

IDENTIFY skills

If someone has made a decision concerning an individual's life, support or care that they feel unhappy with, you should be open to them wanting to question and challenge these decisions and offer them support. First you will need to make sure you understand all the facts and reasons behind the decision so you can check that the individual understands fully why it has been made.

Take the individual to a quiet place, encourage comments and questions and listen carefully to what is being said, using your communication and active listening skills effectively. You could suggest that they might want to get a second opinion or talk to the manager or supervisor. An open and constructive discussion with the individual, where they are treated with respect and dignity, might help to clarify problems and find acceptable solutions. 'Win-win' solutions are the most attractive ways of resolving conflicts, as both parties believe that they have gained from the outcome and neither feels disadvantaged. Find such a solution, both parties have to keep out their negative emotions, focus on the solution and explore the situation fully as well as all the possible options. Many workable solutions might stay unexplored because people are not able to step back and take an objective approach or they don't care for putting in the time and effort to find a constructive answer. Patience is paramount in resolving conflicts.

Sometimes mediation might be needed if a conflict is stagnant and moving forward seems impossible. A mediator is an independent third party who helps to resolve conflicts and find results by facilitating solutions. Mediation uses a variety of techniques to open up and improve the communication between the 2 parties to help them come to an agreement.

If the individual is still not happy about the service they are receiving, it is your duty of care to enable them to take their complaint further, by advising them about the complaints procedures and supporting them in filing a complaint, if necessary. Ensure that you familiarise yourself with the complaints procedures of your workplace so you know how your organisation expects you to respond and support individuals.

Demonstrate how and when to access support and advice about:

- **partnership working**
- **resolving conflicts**



There may be times when there is disagreement between workers from different agencies or between the individual receiving care and support and those who support them. Conflict that is not resolved can affect the quality of care. You should ask for advice about partnership working and resolving conflict whenever you face any problem. You can ask your manager or other workers who are familiar with your workplace and have the skills and experience to advise you.

Your work colleagues are an invaluable source of advice and support. They work alongside you so are familiar with your working environment and they will have skills and experience to advise you in very specific situations that you may not have come across before. Your manager or supervisor can mentor you and offer guidance about what is expected of you in your work role with regards to handling conflict situations and explaining policies and procedures on resolving conflict. If you need legal advice your manager and supervisor can guide and support you in contacting the appropriate services. They may also organise team-building days or use team meetings to focus on establishing good working relationships and improving listening and communication skills.

Sources of support and advice aren't limited to within the organisation. There are various external sources for guidance on best practice. Here are some examples but your workplace will know of many more:

The independent regulator in your country, e.g. Care Quality Commission (CQC) in England, will provide guidance on how to integrate the government's policies into organisational policies and procedures to meet the accepted standards of care and comply with the adult care ethos of person-centred care.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

SCIE aims to improve care by researching and analysing care practice to find out and share which strategies work best. It has designed resources to help front-line staff improve their practice to provide the best quality of care.

A union

It will have a member hotline which can provide support and advice on different topics related to your role. It might also provide training on different topics, e.g. crisis management.

Carers Direct Helpline

This service offers telephone support which carers can access 7 days a week to ask for advice on their own problems or on support for the needs of the individual they provide care for. The helpline advisers will signpost specialist sources of help and guidance, for example on how to deal with a crisis. Carers Direct Helpline offers support in an array of different languages to ensure equal opportunities.