



Foundation Inclusive Communication Toolkit



Step-by-step guide - How individual staff can implement inclusive communication good practice



Emma

“Good communication is the difference between a good and a bad day.”

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Things you need to know](#)

[Step 1 – Find out what you can do](#)

[Step 2 – Assess your practice. Choose your development goals](#)

[Step 3 – Work on your goals](#)

[Step 4 – Reflect, review and update your goals](#)

[Quick inclusive communication good practice guide](#)

Requesting alternative formats

We are committed to providing adjustments. We will consider requests for alternative formats or translations for any materials from this publication.

Contact us at mainstreamingstrategy@gov.scot if you would like to request an adjustment or alternative format.



Disability
Equality
Scotland



Introduction

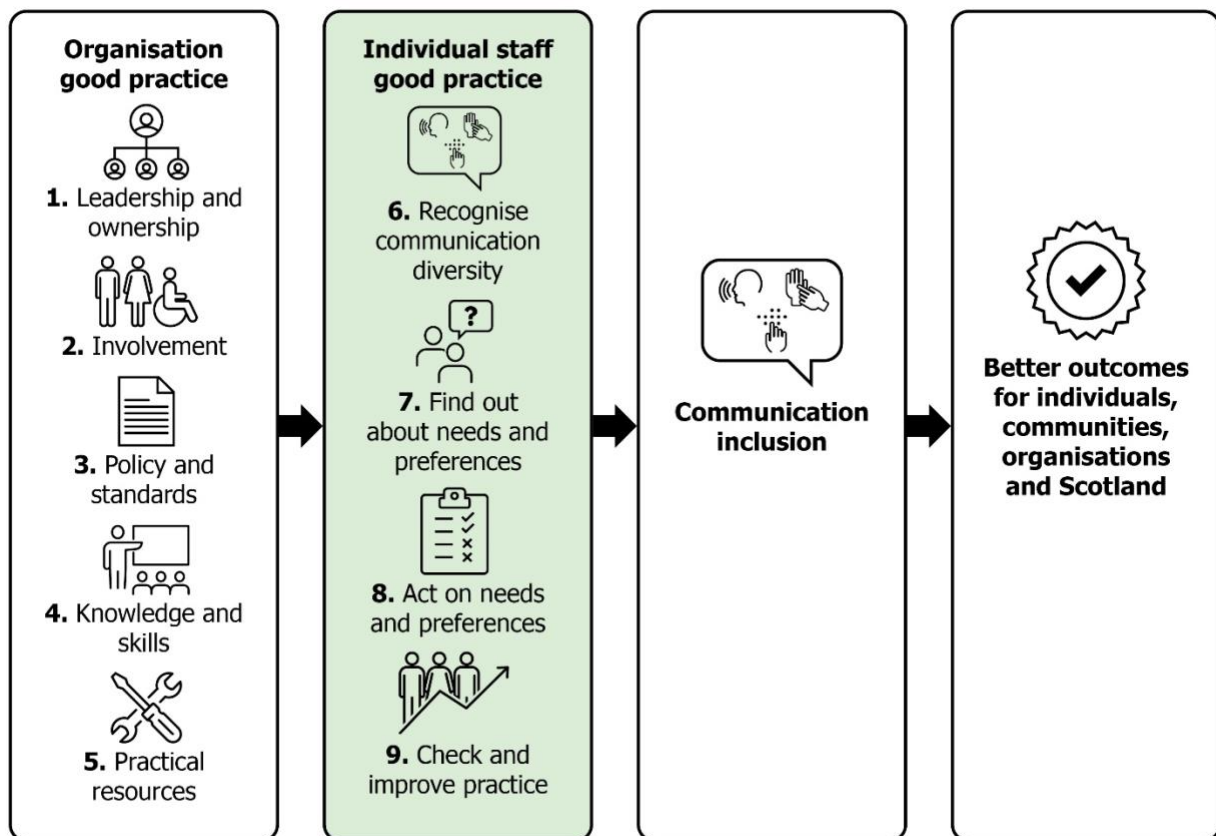
This step-by-step guide is for anyone working for a public body in Scotland who

- communicates at an individual level with service users, colleagues and others inside or outside the organisation and / or
- is involved in producing organisation level communications such as websites, social media, building signs, posters, leaflets and forms like booking forms.

The guide describes one approach to implementing inclusive communication good practice standards 6 to 9 - as highlighted in the flow diagram below. It is not legal advice.

Standards 6 to 9 focus on what individual staff can do to communicate in an inclusive way.

A separate step-by-step [guide](#) focuses on organisation good practice standards 1 to 5.



A presentation with similar information and additional practical resources are available on Toolkit Module 5 [webpage](#).



Alan

“Good communication makes me feel happy and less isolated.”

Things you need to know

1. Inclusive communication allows more people to understand and express themselves easily -

- in the ways they need or prefer to,
- on channels of their choice,
- in situations that work for them,
- at every step of a communication journey.

See [Inclusive Communication Good Practice Standards and Indicators](#) for a more detailed definition.

2. Inclusive communication matters to you, your service users and your organisation.

- It is the right thing to do – it is kind, polite, ethical and professional.
- It is an essential element of person-centred and trauma-informed services.
- It benefits everyone. Research shows the public want it.
- An expert organisation estimates 250,000 people need it to access services¹.
- It helps service users to feel valued and respected. It improves trust. It enables better relationships with professionals, independence and social connection.
- It helps you communicate with more people. More people can communicate with you.
- You can achieve better outcomes.
- You and your service users can save time.

See [Toolkit Module 2 – Why inclusive communication matters](#) for more information.

3. Every member of staff is encouraged to communicate in an inclusive way.

¹ For example, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists - see [unc-rights-of-persons-disabilities-submission-1.pdf](#)



Disability
Equality
Scotland



All staff, in all roles and all teams are responsible for communicating effectively with service users, stakeholders and colleagues. Everyone, therefore, is encouraged to communicate in an inclusive way, as much as they can. Ideally, all communication should be inclusive.

4. Inclusive communication good practice may mean changing the way you do things. But do not be daunted.

Developing your practice may involve changing the way you do things. For example, it might mean offering people more ways to contact you, being flexible with the times you provide services, or changing letters you send out regularly. It takes time, planning and consistent effort. You may feel concerned about changing the way you do things. However, you should not feel daunted.

- You are likely to be doing some good practice already. This guide helps you to work out how you can build on your good practice.
- There may be help available from your organisation and expert organisations.
- Ideally, you can align your development with other inclusive communication initiatives happening in your organisation.
- This guide assumes you are just beginning to develop your good practice. You may not need to do all the steps. Start at the step that fits your current practice.
- You do not need to do everything at once. Do as much as you can. Start the steps at any time. Develop at a pace that works for you.



Disability
Equality
Scotland





Elliott

“Good communication makes me feel included. It makes me feel I matter.”



Step 1 - Find out what you can do

Completing this step will help you achieve -

Standard 6: Recognise that every group and community includes people with diverse communication needs and preferences.

1. Find out about the policy, training, guidance, support and practical resources that your organisation provides.
2. Read your organisation’s inclusive communication policy and development plans, if available.
3. Complete basic inclusive communication training. For example,
 - The modules in this toolkit -
 - [Module 2 - Why inclusive communication matters](#)
 - Module 3 - [Inclusive communication good practice](#) standards and indicators
 - Module 5 - [How individual staff can implement inclusive communication good practice](#)
 - Other inclusive communication training your organisation may provide.
4. If you cannot do the training, read the [“Quick inclusive communication good practice guide” in the appendix or on the Module 5 webpage.](#)



Disability
Equality
Scotland





Lisa

“If services were more inclusive, more people would reach whatever you are doing.”



Step 2 - Assess your practice. Choose your development goals

Completing this step will help you achieve -

- Standard 7: Find out about communication needs and preferences.
 - Standard 8: Act on needs and preferences.
 - Standard 9: Check and improve your communication.
1. Use the [Individual staff inclusive communication good practice - assessment checklist](#).
It will help you to compare your current practice with inclusive communication good practice standards 6 to 9. You may wish to assess one area of your work first, then progress to other areas as your practice develops. For example, start by assessing your practice when communicating with colleagues or during consultations with service users.
 2. Ask people about their experience when they communicate with you. For example -
 - a) How well do you meet their communication needs and preferences?
 - b) How easy is it for people to understand what you write and say?
 - c) How can you improve your communication?
 3. Look out for any indications of communication breakdown between you and the people you communicate with. For example -
 - People not turning up to or withdrawing from services, not responding to information or not responding in the way you expect.
 - Comments or complaints related to communication.



Disability
Equality
Scotland



4. Use the information you gather from actions 1 to 3 above to help you list possible inclusive communication development goals. For example –
 - The checklist will show you which standards and indicators you only achieve sometimes or not at all. Your goal might be to work to achieve one of these all the time.
 - People might have asked you to improve certain aspects of your communication. A goal might be to work on one or a number of these improvements.
 - You might have noticed some people are not accessing an area of your service. A goal might be to find out if you are meeting their communication needs or not.

5. Choose your development goal or goals. You could use this approach.
 - a) Choose actions in the order they are set out in the [Individual staff inclusive communication good practice - assessment checklist](#). For example, if you are not achieving actions to do with Standard 6 – about recognising people communicate in different ways – work on these actions first. Next go on to work on actions to do with Standard 7. These actions are about finding out about needs and preferences.
 - b) Choose goals which -
 - Are achievable and, with practice, sustainable in your day-to-day work
 - Link up with any inclusive communication developments in your team or organisation. You and your colleagues can motivate each other if you work on the same development goals together.
 - Make good use of the training, information, guidance, support and practical resources your organisation provides. Also, see the resources listed in the [Practical resources list](#).

6. Discuss and agree your goals with your manager. You may want to put an action in your personal development plan. For example -
 - “I will find out about my service users’ communication needs and preferences”
 - “I will use inclusive writing in all letters, leaflets, and emails”
 - “I / we will put inclusive signs up outside and inside four public buildings”



7. Schedule time in your calendar to implement your plan. Some goals, such as writing in an inclusive way, can take time at first but get quicker with practice.



Elena

“It’s a human need to communicate. I need inclusive communication because I am deaf. I’m a human being and I don’t want to be ignored.”



Step 3 – Work on your goals

Completing this step will help you achieve –

- The inclusive communication good practice standards which your goals focus on.
- Standard 9: Check and improve your communication.

Changing the way you communicate takes time, planning and consistent effort. However, you are not on your own.

1. Use all the help available.

- Access and use the training, information, guidance, support and practical resources this toolkit provides. Your organisation may also provide additional support.
- Use the resources listed in the [Practical resources list](#).

2. Keep trying.

If you struggle to achieve your goals - reduce the scope of your goals. For example, the goals listed above might be changed to -

- “I will find out about the communication needs and preferences of 25 service users” (instead of all service users)
- “I will use inclusive writing in four letters I send out regularly” (instead of all regular letters)



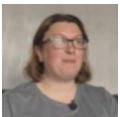
Disability
Equality
Scotland



- “I/we will put inclusive signs up outside and inside two public buildings” (instead of four buildings)

3. Recognise and celebrate your successes.

Keep notes on the progress you make towards your goals, and positive impacts. These might be small or large. You may feel more confident; you may sense a better connection with a service user or notice you are saving time. Tell colleagues about the difference your actions have made to you, your service users and your organisation. Talking about your achievements will motivate you and others.



Sarah

“I feel very lost, upset and othered when services don't communicate inclusively with me. I feel like a burden. I want to cancel everything and run away.”



Step 4 – Reflect, review and update your goals

Completing this step will help you achieve –

- The inclusive communication good practice standards which your goals focus on.
- Standard 9: Check and improve your communication.

Do this step at the end of the time you gave yourself to complete your goals. You may want to do this step as part of your personal development plan annual review.

1. Reflect on the differences your inclusive communication approach has made. These questions can help you reflect.

- Do you feel more confident about your communication?
- Do you feel you have a better connection with more people?
- Are people doing what you expect them to do more often?



Disability
Equality
Scotland



- Are you, service users or your service achieving better outcomes?

Remember to tell colleagues about positive differences you have noticed.

2. Review your goals. These questions can help you review your plan.

- What goals have you achieved?
- What goals need more work?
- What would make it easier to achieve the goals you have not met?

3. Update your goals. Revisit -

- Step 2 - Re-assess your practice. Choose new development goals. Or carry on working on earlier goals.
- Step 3 – Work on your new goals.
- Step 4 – Reflect, review and update your plan.



Disability
Equality
Scotland





Foundation Inclusive Communication Toolkit

Quick inclusive communication good practice guide

Inclusive communication benefits everyone. It is the kind and right thing to do. It enables more people to understand others and express themselves easily. An expert organisation estimates 250,000 people in Scotland need it to access services². Every member of staff is encouraged to communicate in an inclusive way as often as they can. You can -



1. Recognise people need or prefer to communicate in different ways

- Show a positive attitude towards people who communicate in different ways. For example, people who use sign language, an electronic aid or who speak in a language other than English.
- Do not assume everyone can understand others, express themselves or use a computer or phone easily. Communication difficulties can be hidden.
- Take different communication needs seriously. Do not wait to be asked to adapt your communication. Set your service up so it caters for different needs as a matter of course. See point 3 “Act” below.



2. Find out how people need or prefer to communicate

- Ask people two questions -
 1. “How do you need or prefer to communicate?”
 2. “What can I do to support your communication?”

² For example, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists – see [unc-rights-of-persons-disabilities-submission-1.pdf](#)





3. Act on people's communication needs and preferences

- Help people to understand you. Use inclusive speaking and writing as much as you can. See the quick guides below. Use pictures, gestures and demonstration to show people what you mean.
- Help people to express themselves in ways they prefer. For example, using speech, writing, signing, pictures, body language, a “talking aid” or through a personal helper.
- Give people the time they need to understand you and express themselves.
- Respond to what people communicate, regardless of the way they communicate.
- Offer specialist communication supports. Arrange supports if people ask you to. For example, translations, interpreting, large print, Braille or Easy Read.
- Offer people a choice of communicating with you in person, by video call, phone, text, email or letter. Offer more than one choice. Offer choices at every step of your service.
- Give people a choice of days and times to communicate with you.
- Provide services in places people can travel to easily, with wheelchair access, inclusive signs, good lighting, working hearing loops and quiet spaces.
- Provide inclusive information before, during and after face-to-face meetings. Let people know what you will do and what you expect them to do.
- Look out for communication breakdown. For example, people not turning up, or not responding to information. Adapt your communication to overcome breakdowns.



4. Keep checking and trying to improve your communication

- Ask people about their communication experience when they use your service. Be open to feedback. Improve your communication if people ask you to.



Find more information and practical resources in the Foundation Inclusive Communication Toolkit



Disability
Equality
Scotland





Short inclusive speaking guide

Speak in an inclusive way as often as you can when -

- you speak to service users, colleagues and people outside your organisation,
- you have face to face in person or video call interactions,
- you leave phone messages and conversations.

It will get easier with practice.

1. Work out your key points.
2. Work out a logical order to say your key points.
3. Make sure people can easily see and hear you. Do not shout.
4. Use short, simple sentences for each key point.
 - Avoid lots of ifs, buts, and maybes.
 - Use “active” sentences. For example, say “We do this” not “This is done by us.”
 - Use simple language whenever you can. No jargon. No abbreviations.
5. Back up what you are saying by showing people what you mean with pictures, gestures and demonstration.
6. Give people time to understand what you say. Let them respond at their own pace in the way they prefer.
7. Offer people a note or recording of important information to use as a reminder after your conversation.





Short inclusive writing guide

Write in an inclusive way as often as you can -

- when you write to service users, colleagues and people outside your organisation,
- for emails, letters, text messages, meeting agendas, notes, forms, websites etc.

It will get easier with practice.

1. Work out your key points.
2. Group key points in sections. Add a heading to each section.
3. Organise sections in a logical order. For example, in the order you want people to act.
4. Within each section write short, simple sentences for each key point.
 - Be politely direct. Avoid lots of ifs, buts, and maybes.
 - Use “active” sentences. For example, “We help you” not “You are helped by us”.
 - Use local, everyday words whenever you can. No jargon. No abbreviations.
5. Follow any rules your organisation has about how written documents should look. If they do not have rules, do the following.
6. Use simple lettering “without tails” such as Arial. Use at least size 12 font. Space text out with at least 1.5 spacing.
7. Add pictures to the left of writing to highlight information like a phone number or address. Add pictures to show what your writing means. Never put text over pictures.
8. Contrast the text and the background or paper colour. Black text on a white or a light cream background can work well.
9. Use the “Check Accessibility” function on your computer to check the reading order. This also helps you to add “Alt Text” which describes images to people with sight loss. Use the “Read Aloud” function to review and check screen readability.
10. Offer written information in alternative formats such as Easy Read, large print or Braille.
11. When you ask a service user to write anything, such as filling in a form –
 - Minimise the amount people need to write.
 - Provide plenty of space to write by hand.
 - Give people a choice. Offer a phone call or a face-to-face conversation instead.



Disability
Equality
Scotland

