

NursingDirect

POLICY NUMBER: **77**

POLICY TITLE: **BASIC SKILLS TESTING & STRATEGY**

WHO MUST ABIDE BY THIS POLICY? **ALL AGENCY STAFF**



BASIC SKILLS TESTING & STRATEGY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

To inform staff of our Basic Skills Testing and Strategy Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Every job role in adult social care involves using and understanding information, and communicating effectively. This means that everyone working in the sector needs to have good language and number skills to do their job well and to guarantee high quality care services and Nursing Direct want to ensure our staff do this.

Research suggests many adult social care staff may lack the ability and confidence to apply skills for life effectively in one or more areas of their job. Although we might expect to find some literacy or numeracy needs amongst lower qualified staff, we must also recognise that significant skills for life needs are often found amongst those with higher-level qualifications.

This might be because an individual has changed job role, is taking on new tasks that require different skills, or it might be that well-qualified and competent staff from overseas have started a new job without a full command of English or a full understanding of UK culture.

Nursing Direct wants to attract people with the potential to become motivated, competent social care workers to us. The sector also wants to retain experienced care workers, enabling them to develop higher skills and work flexibly in a range of different roles. It is critical that skills for life issues are recognised and managed for either of these aims to be realised.

The expected benefits of improved communication, number and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are:

- Improved quality of care.
- Increased staff retention giving lower recruitment costs.
- Higher qualification achievement rates and general skills development.
- Improved health, safety and risk management.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SKILLS FOR LIFE?

Skills for life includes literacy, language, numeracy and basic ICT (information and communications technology).

Literacy refers to speaking, listening, responding, reading with understanding and writing to communicate. Although skills in languages other than English can be very useful in the workplace, it is important that everyone working in social care has good communication skills in English and develops a good understanding of the local culture.

Numeracy refers to understanding, using, calculating and manipulating mathematical information. It also involves interpreting results, analysing data and communicating mathematical information.

Basic ICT involves using everyday ICT equipment and applications such as mobile phones, simple word processing, email and any equipment used to support care work (this is often referred to as assistive technology).

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is used to describe the type of literacy teaching that is designed specifically for people whose first language is not English.

There are three main groups of people that might have ESOL needs:

- 1) People from settled communities (originating from places such as India, Pakistan or Hong Kong) who have not developed good English skills.
- 2) Refugees and asylum-seekers who may be well educated and have held professional jobs in another country.
- 3) Migrant workers mainly originating from countries in the European Union (such as Portugal and Poland) but also from non- EU countries (such as Bulgaria or Malaysia).

WHAT IS SKILLS FOR LIFE?

30-50% of those working in social care in England were born outside the UK – many will therefore have support needs relating to English.

Given their wide range of backgrounds and circumstances, it is likely that these groups will also have a wide range of very different learning and support needs. ESOL learners might:

- Have poor reading and writing skills in their own language
- Have had no formal education
- Be highly educated
- Speak several languages
- Have had a professional career unrelated to their current employment.

Understanding skills for life 'levels'

There are national standards for most subjects and national tests or qualifications that relate directly to these standards. Each qualification is categorised according to the level of skill that someone needs in order to achieve it. This means that we can compare different types of qualification with one another in terms of the level of difficulty involved.

The table on the next page shows how the skills for life levels relate to other qualifications and gives an idea of the particular literacy or numeracy skills involved. For example:

Adults with literacy and numeracy skills at entry level 3 will probably be able to:

- Write a short note or email for a colleague.
- Fill in an accident form correctly.
- Use the index in a catalogue or phone book.
- Talk to customers and colleagues using polite and appropriate language.
- Complete time-sheets or do a stock-check.
- Check the deductions on a wage slip.

Adults who develop their literacy and numeracy skills to level 2 would be able to:

- Read and understand health and safety notices and instructions.
- Read and understand reports and compare the benefits of different options.
- Punctuate sentences correctly in written work, including commas and apostrophes.
- Draw correct conclusions from graphical information.
- Make effective contributions in meetings, appraisals and training sessions.
- Calculate the percentage increase or decrease on the cost of supplies.

Level 2 is generally regarded as the 'benchmark' expected of everyone in work, with at least 90 percent of all jobs likely to demand level 2 skills.

SKILLS OF LIFE LEVEL	WHAT THIS MEANS	EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATION LEVEL
		postgraduate/masters/ doctorate/QCF 8 undergraduate/graduate/ QCF 4, 5 & 6 A-Levels QCF 3
Level 2	Skills are secure and transferable. Can access training and qualifications. Could compare products and services for best buy, work out a household budget, research information on web sites, and join in with interactive and complex discussions	GCSE A*-C QCF 2
Level 1	Can access straightforward, everyday material. Could read a bus or train timetable, take part in a group discussion, and check pay and deductions on a wage slip	GCSE D-G QCF 1
Entry 3	Can read familiar, basic everyday material. Could understand price labels on pre-packed foods, complete a form with basic personal information, and pay household bills	Entry 3 National school curriculum age 9-11
Entry 2	Can only read very basic material. Could use a cashpoint machine, understand a straightforward information leaflet, or describe a child's symptoms to a doctor.	Entry 2 National school curriculum age 7-9
Entry 1	May recognise numbers, letters and symbols and know a few key words. Could write a short, informal note, interpret straightforward health and safety signs, or select floor numbers in a lift.	Entry 1 National school curriculum age 7-9

WHY IS SKILLS FOR LIFE SO IMPORTANT TO US IN NURSING DIRECT?

Literacy

The impact of poorly developed literacy skills at work could mean that employees:

- Struggle to read and understand written information, including health and safety instructions, policy guidance, care plans and reports.
- Are unable to write clearly and accurately when writing in a day book, leaving messages, or when completing routine forms such as timesheets.
- Cannot produce case records or risk assessment logs to a professional standard even though such documents might be relied on as evidence at inspection or during a complaint process.
- Have difficulty following verbal instructions or communicating appropriately with colleagues, external organisations, people who use services and their relatives or friends.
- Find it very difficult to achieve vocational qualifications or to benefit from work-based training opportunities.
- Are unable to cope with change and development or new working practices taking place in the workplace.

Numeracy

- The impact of poorly developed numeracy skills at work could mean that employees:
- Are unable to estimate quantities, costs and timings.
- Cannot make quick mental calculations and lack the confidence to do routine calculations, even with the use of a calculator.
- Don't always take accurate measurements or readings and are unable to spot errors.
- Make mistakes when recording numerical data and have difficulty interpreting information displayed in the form of graphs or charts.
- Don't understand wage slips, tax deductions or options relating to pensions.
- Have difficulty reading the time or understanding timetables leading to poor time management.
- Find it very difficult to achieve vocational qualifications or to benefit from work-based training opportunities.
- Are unable to cope with change and development or new working practices taking place in the workplace.
- 90% of jobs require level 2 skills and figures from 2003 showed that 26 million people aged 16-65 do not meet level 2 standards in literacy and numeracy. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is used to describe the type of literacy teaching that is designed specifically for people whose first language is not English.

WHAT IS SKILLS FOR LIFE?

In the UK far more adults struggle with numeracy than with literacy. This is thought to be caused by a combination of factors including poor teaching in school and gradual fading of skills through lack of use. However, there is also a significant cultural factor in that we don't value maths skills as much as, for example, creative skills, and so it becomes easier for individuals to admit to or tolerate skills gaps.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

The impact of poorly developed English language skills at work could mean that employees:

- Don't have the vocabulary they need to understand what is being said or to ask the questions that will help them understand. They may also feel reluctant to ask for help.
- Are unable to fully understand health and safety instructions or procedures and may not therefore be able to recognise or respond to emergencies.
- Have particular difficulty understanding or being understood by people with complex communication needs.
- Cannot contribute to workplace discussions and avoid getting involved in team activity due to lack of confidence in speaking English.
- Have difficulty building relationships with colleagues and settling into the workplace because of cultural barriers, as well as language difficulties.
- Are more likely to take time off work through illness and stress.
- Are reluctant to take up work-based training or vocational qualifications due to a fear of being unable to keep up.

Numeracy

- People with poor numeracy are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as those with competent numeracy.
- 6.8 million adults in the UK workforce have difficulties in adding or subtracting three digit numbers.

Basic ICT skills (information and communications technology)

- The impact of poorly developed computer skills at work could mean that employees:
- Are unable to communicate in the ways that colleagues and external organisations expect.
- Cannot make best use of the information and resources available via the internet.
- Don't use technology to become more effective and more efficient.
- Are excluded from training and development opportunities that contain any element of e-learning.
- Poorly developed ICT skills can also create difficulty and disadvantage in employees' lives outside work, as technology is no longer just a specialist tool for the workplace, but rather an essential tool for modern life.

The communication and number skills required by Nursing Direct staff are at Level 2 and include:

- **Reading** – Understanding straightforward written and graphical information. For example, case notes, day book, letters, laundry labels, and safety signs.
- **Writing** – Completing simple forms and records, writing notes and messages. For example, case notes, day book, records of medication and letters and forms for clients.
- **Speaking & Listening** – Talking face-to-face and on the telephone to a small number of people. For example, clients and their families, colleagues and other professionals.
- **Numbers** – Writing numbers clearly and accurately. For example, telephone numbers, weights and sizes.
- **Extracting Information from Graphs.** For example, temperature, pulse or blood pressure
- **Measuring.** For example, dispensing medication under supervision, or weighing and measuring clients.

In specialist and supervisory roles, the additional skills needed might go higher than Level 2 and include:

- **Reading** – Understanding complex written and graphical information. For example, government policy papers, tender documents or regulatory guidance.
- **Writing** – Completing return forms, writing reports and other documents. For example, supervision and appraisal notes, funding bids and guidance manuals.
- **Speaking & Listening** – Talking face-to-face and on the telephone to a range of individuals and groups. For example, negotiating on sensitive or complex issues, or participating in meetings, presentations and training.
- **Numbers** – Maintaining accurate records and manipulating and analysing data. For example, budget management and statistical returns.
- **Extracting & Understanding Information Found in Graphs, Databases and Statistical Reports.** For example, technical equipment, finance spreadsheets and budget reports.
- **Measuring.** For example, monitoring the use of medication, or managing stocks and supplies.

EVERYBODY BENEFITS

Skills for life are the basic building blocks, or foundations, that all other skills are built on. We know that people who have difficulty with any of these skills can be incredibly resourceful, finding ways to cope with and maybe also disguise their skills gaps. However, without these basic building blocks, they will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible to develop other higher level skills and respond to the everchanging demands of the world around them.

Skills for life also includes basic level information and communications technology (ICT) skills.

Although once considered essential only for those in hi-tech jobs, these skills are rapidly becoming an essential for everyday life.

The evidence from organisations that have already begun to invest in skills for life development in the workplace is that everybody benefits. It is a win-win situation for employers, employees and customers.

Benefits for the Learner:

- Increased confidence at work and at home.
- Able to do their job better.
- Able to join in more and get more involved at work.
- Learn new skills.
- Encouraged to take on more training and qualifications.
- Increased motivation and job satisfaction.

Benefits for the Employer:

- Excellent return on investment, with long-term reduction in costs for recruitment, sickness and training.
- Improved learning rates and qualification levels.
- Better compliance with health and safety and regulatory requirements.

- Increased staff loyalty, commitment and flexibility.
- Improved quality of work.
- Reduced sickness absence and turnover rates.

SUPPORT FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS STAFF

With increasing numbers of migrant workers being recruited into the social care sector, it is more important than ever that employers offer the right kind of support from induction onwards. Here are The Galago Group tips for supporting staff from other countries:

- Assess language skills carefully at the recruitment stage,
- Compile information about the organisation and policy/ procedures handbook. Ensure that any documentation is written in plain English and is clear to follow. Be particularly careful to avoid euphemisms and other expressions that don't translate well to people whose first language isn't English. Use photographs and maybe some translated materials to aid understanding.
- Offer support and guidance at every step. Be patient, it may take some time for overseas staff to get used to the different working practices. Monitor how they are picking things up and go back over anything they are unsure about.

If a worker does not meet our required level some other resources that might help us to help them to reach the required levels for those who's first language isn't English: British Council Learn English – the Learn English site of the British Council. www.learnenglish.org.uk

BBC English as a Foreign Language – the BBC site for learning English.

www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish

Health and Safety Executive – Site is available in various languages and it also provides translated information on health and safety in various languages that can be downloaded. There is also a telephone interpreting service that offers health and safety information in foreign languages.

0845 345 0055 www.hse.gov.uk

BBC Foreign Language Pages – contains phrases and general language resources and includes games to improve learning and listening skills.

www.bbc.co.uk/languages

Website offering free downloads in 41 languages – vocabulary, phrases and pronunciation guide.

www.byki.com

The Careers Advice Service has language lines that offer foreign nationals learning advice in their own language so they can get the skills they need to get the work they want. The service offers advice in the following languages:

- Farsi 0800 093 1116.
- French 0800 093 1115.
- Gujarati 0800 093 1119.
- Polish 0800 093 1114.
- Punjabi 0800 093 1333.
- Somali 0800 093 1555.
- Sylheti and Bengali 0800 093 1444.
- Urdu 0800 093 1118.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Please write 250 words on why you would like to work for Nursing Direct

And now discuss why with you interviewer.

Name _____ Signature _____ Date / /

PLEASE COMPLETE THE MEDICATION RECORD WITH THE FOLLOWING MEDICATIONS

MEDICATION	DOSE	ADMINISTERED	WHEN
Haloperidol (tablets)	2 milligrams	Orally	Every night
Enoxaparin Sodium (Injection)	65 milligrams	Subcutaneous Injection	Every evening
Sertraline (tablets)	100 milligrams	Orally	Every morning
Levothyroxine Sodium (tablets)	125 micrograms	Orally	Every morning
Lansoprazole (capsules 30)	30 milligrams	Orally	Every morning
Megestrol Acetate	160 milligrams	Orally	At night
Docusate Sodium (Capsules)	200 milligrams	Orally	Twice a day
Senna (7.5 Tablets)	2 tablets	Orally	At night as required
Nystatin (oral suspension)	4 millilitres	Orally	X 4 a day (under review)

FEEDBACK FORM

ASSESSMENTS	YES	NO	IF YES TO WHAT STANDARD?	IF NO WHY NOT?
Did the Candidate complete the written test?				
What there written English clear and legible?				
Does the candidate speak good English was it clear when discussing the reasons for working for Nursing Direct with you?				
Did the candidate record the medication correctly?				
Are you happy the candidate can read, write, record and speak well in English?				

Name _____ Signature _____ Date / /

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