National Healthcare
Communication
Programme

Guide to Implementation

Making conversations easier

HSE

National Healthcare Communication Programme Vision, Values and Goals

Vision

Healthcare workers take a skilled, sensitive and person-centred approach in all conversations with patients, their families and each other

Goals

The 6 goals of every healthcare conversation

Values

The programme is underpinned by the core values of:

CARE   COMPASSION   TRUST   LEARNING

1. Build the relationship

...using a warm greeting, introductions, and positive nonverbal behaviour. Recognise and respond to emotional cues, demonstrate empathy using G.I.V.E.

Get that it's emotion
Identify the emotion
Validate by acknowledging feelings
Explore to better understand the emotion

2. Initiate the conversation

...using open questions and screening until all of the person's concerns have been identified.

Then collaboratively set the agenda for the conversation.

3. Gather information

...using active and reflective listening skills to hear the person's story and find out what matters most to them. Explore the person's perspective using I.C.E. Summarise to check your understanding.

Ideas What can the patient tell you about their problem?
Concerns Sometimes the patient may have concerns that you have not considered…
Expectations What does the patient think might happen next?

4. Provide information

...in a way that supports the person to understand their issues. Frame your information in the context of what matters most to the person. Collaboratively develop a plan taking this information into account.

5. Close the conversation

...by confirming next steps, safety-netting (giving the patient clear and specific information about what to do if things get worse) and collaboration using a personal goodbye and positive nonverbal behaviours.

6. Provide structure

...by agreeing a shared agenda and using transitional statements to indicate that you are moving from one part of the conversation to the next, (e.g., an update, a decision to be made and so on).

Contents

Part 1
Introduction

When you see a true master of verbal communication, remember that these are learned behaviours, not something innate which you are either born with or not. Which means not only can we become more effective communicators if we choose but that we should not let those who do not employ them (the learned behaviours) off the hook when there is a better alternative.

Nihal Arthanayake

Working together to make conversations easier

EVIDENCE

Raising awareness or building knowledge is not sufficient - they do not translate directly into performance. To improve communication attention must be given to developing communication skills.

COMMUNICATION

Developing and improving the communication skills of healthcare staff was identified as a key priority.

SOLUTION

Staff participation in communication skills training. Role play with simulated patients to practice new skills in a safe environment.

CARE EXPERIENCE

The National Care Experience Programme has a suite of surveys that capture the experiences of people using our services.

IMPACT

Using core communication skills reduces distress and anxiety and facilitates the delivery of person-centred, compassionate care.

National Healthcare Communication Programme

They told me everything about my condition but didn't listen to me. I didn't feel heard.

They listened to my concerns and answered all of my questions, without ever dismissing me.

BEFORE

AFTER

1.1. Overview

1.1.1. The National Care Experience Programme

The National Care Experience Programme (NCEP) seeks to improve the quality of health and social care services in Ireland by asking people about their experiences of care and acting on their feedback.

The NCEP has a suite of surveys that capture the experiences of people using our services. The Programme implements the annual National Inpatient Experience Survey, the National Maternity Experience Survey, the National Nursing Home Experience Survey, the National Maternity Bereavement Experience Survey and the National End of Life Survey.

Developing and improving the communication and consultation skills of healthcare staff was identified as a key priority arising from the first National Patient Experience Survey in May 2017 and similar key themes have been identified in subsequent surveys. In the Survey feedback, patients and their families reported that while there were many examples of care and compassion in Irish healthcare services there were also some problems with the communication between staff and patients and their loved ones.

> " It made a huge difference. They knew my story and I wasn't repeating it over and over again.

> " It meant a lot to me that everybody called my baby by her name.

> " I knew and was told exactly what was happening and going to happen...

1.1.2. The need for communication skills training

In the HSE the need for communication skills training has been stated in inquiries, internal reviews, guidelines and strategies. This importance of communication for the care experience is consistently evidenced in the views of the people who use our services and those close to them submitted through thank you letters, compliments, complaints, surveys and audits and in inquiries and review findings.

Communication between patients, their caregivers, and healthcare staff is a critical component of high-quality, safe clinical care. Evidence shows that good communication leads to positive outcomes for patients, staff and the healthcare system and that poor communication often leads to complaints and adverse outcomes. Furthermore, staff who communicate well report greater job satisfaction. Communication skills are consequently core strands of healthcare professional training, postgraduate assessment, and on-going professional development.

Of note, the HSE's Better Together: The Health Services Patient Engagement Roadmap' (HSE, 2023) recognises the importance of communication and its influence on the quality of patient-healthcare worker interactions.

> "
> **Effective communication skills are important for both healthcare staff and patients to help build confidence to participate in engagement activities. The ability to establish meaningful interactions between healthcare staff and patients depends on:**
>
> - **the healthcare staff's ability to communicate effectively with the patient.**
> - **the patient's ability to communicate their lived experience and knowledge of their own health.**

> " The bereavement team was very supportive and helpful. Listened to our concerns and we felt heard. They were there to answer any questions myself and my partner had, and if I needed something they'd be straight in.

1.1.3. The National Healthcare Communication Programme

The National Healthcare Communication Programme (NHCP) has developed evidence-based communication skills training materials supporting staff to improve their communication skills and thus enhance trust, facilitate shared decision making and improve healthcare outcomes.

Programme Governance

Establishing clear governance with senior leadership support and responsibility is essential for the successful implementation of the National Healthcare Communication Programme. The governance structure to oversee the implementation of this programme includes clear leadership from the HSE Board, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Senior Leadership Team, and across the organisation.

Success relies on communication skills training (CST) being planned in a regional context with clear and enacted governance processes at regional and local level to monitor and assess impact. This includes:

- Agreed and implemented corporate, regional and local responsibilities for CST planning and delivery.
- Clear reporting pathways to allow information to flow, between local healthcare facilities and the regions/ corporate level.

NHCP Regional Coordinator	
Profile	A healthcare worker with an understanding of communication skills and ideally a broader experience of quality and safety; he/she should be well-respected and able to access high-level management staff at regional level.
Tasks	• Ensure that there is a sufficient pool of facilitators within the region (including taking account of projected facilitator attrition) • Put arrangements in place to enable facilitators to co-facilitate workshops outside of their local healthcare facility in a limited manner that does not burden them or their organisation • Support local healthcare facilities to recognise the facilitation of CST as an essential element within facilitator roles • Ensure there are a sufficient number of courses within the region to meet demand • Ensure that local facilitators are supported to travel outside of their organisation to access facilitator training • Ensure that regional processes are in place to use/act on local data at regional level • Create fora for the sharing of local experience and ensure that local activities are consolidated into a regional workplan.

Proposed NHCP Structure

Note:
Solid lines represent line management reporting relationships.

Dotted lines represent indirect reporting line relationships.
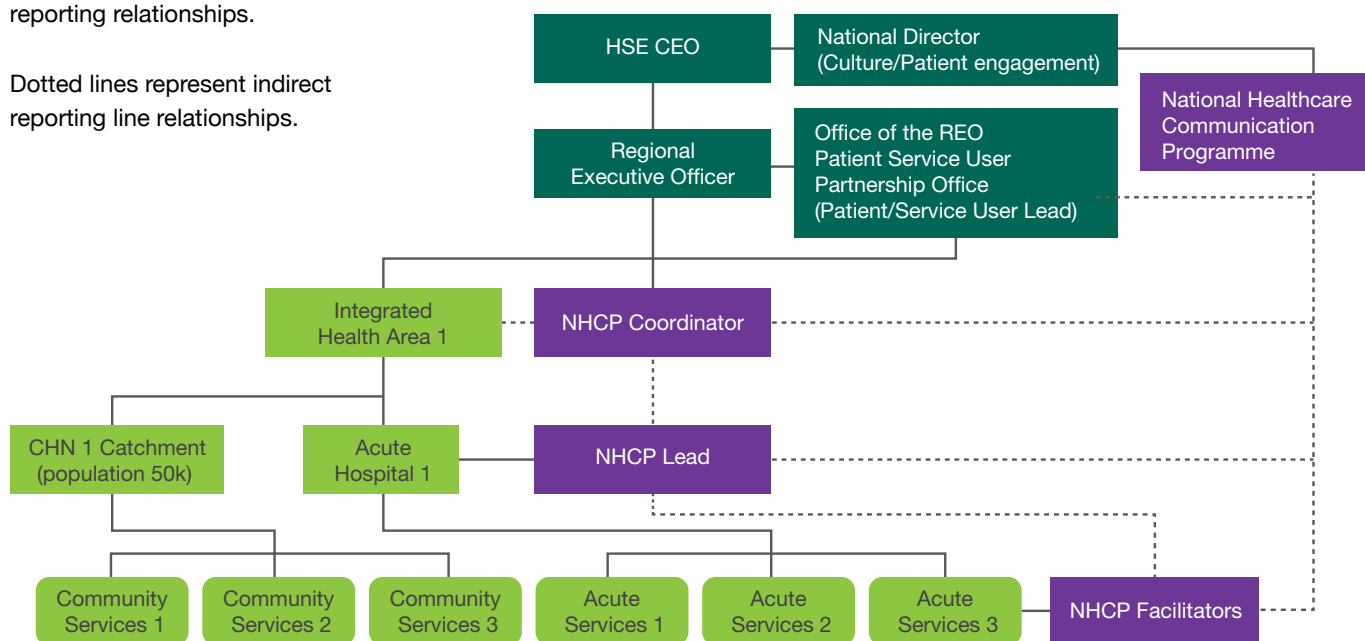
This is one of a number of management structure options being considered. This is being used for illustration purposes to identify how the NHCP might sit in the National and Regional structure.

The HSE's CEO and Senior Leadership Team will provide leadership and direction for the implementation of this plan. They will also support the development of key performance metrics and incorporate them into management performance reviews. Progress on this implementation will be included in Capability and Culture progress updates to the HSE Board and the Department of Health.

Transition to HSE Health Regions

The transition to the six HSE Health Regions is being rolled out in 2024. This NHCP Implementation Plan is cross divisional, and is the responsibility of all areas across the HSE. It is to be implemented in alignment with the transitioning arrangements and plans for HSE Health Regions. The patient experience teams in the HSE Health Regions will build on existing structures and resources, and, in collaboration with national and local senior management teams, will ensure the prioritisation of communication skills at local level. An initial objective of this plan will be for Community Healthcare Organisations and Hospitals to develop local implementation plans that align with the goals and objectives of this national plan. Each local implementation plan will need to include the current transitioning arrangements and move to HSE Health Regions during 2024.

1.2. About communication skills in healthcare

1.2.1. Rationale for a Guide to Implementation

This Guide to Implementation has been developed to assist healthcare facilities to implement improvements in communication in accordance with the National Healthcare Communication Programme.

The Programme described in this Guide to Implementation has been designed to be used by any healthcare facility, irrespective of the level of resources or whether the facility has already implemented any communication skills initiatives. The approach focuses primarily on improving communication by healthcare workers who work with patients. Details of all of the tools supplied to support successful implementation of a communication skills training programme at any healthcare facility are provided in this guide.

1.2.2. What is the evidence linking communication with quality, patient safety and care experience?

Communication is the foundation of partnerships between the patient, caregivers, and staff and affects the safety and quality of care received. Effective communication can improve:

Patient outcomes: engaging patients and their caregivers through effective communication has a positive effect on patient outcomes, specifically, emotional health, symptom resolution, pain control, and physiological outcomes, such as reduced blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

Patient safety: The INAES Study (2018) of the frequency and nature of adverse events in Irish hospitals found that more than 70 percent of adverse events are caused by breakdowns in communication among caregivers and between caregivers and patients. Studies show that patients who are informed and engaged can help improve safety through informed choices, safe medication use, reporting complications, and practicing self-management.

Perceptions of quality: research demonstrates that patients' and caregivers' perceptions of the quality of care are largely determined by their perceptions of their interactions with staff. Staff who are perceived to be responsive, empathic, and attuned to patients' needs are judged to be of higher quality than staff who are perceived to be less responsive and empathic, even if the clinical care provided is the same.

Care experience: The available evidence indicates that the care experience is strongly associated with communication. Studies have outlined specific behaviors associated with a positive experience, grouping them into 2 categories: task-oriented behaviors (e.g. drawing out patients with active listening responses and providing detailed information), and affective behaviors, such as responding empathically and addressing the patient's main concerns. Tallman et al (2007)

1.2.3. Communication skills training

Therapeutic communication is a complex interaction reliant on a willingness to engage and the skills to do so. A skill is a learned ability to do something well. Raising awareness or building knowledge is not sufficient. To improve communication attention must be given to developing communication skills.

It is widely accepted that communicating in health and social care is different from how we communicate socially. This is not an innate talent, and effective skills and behaviours do not develop simply by being a 'caring' person or by observing others in the course of their work (Maguire, 2000; Kurtz & Cooke, 2017). There is, however, an established and growing evidence base that communication skills can be taught and that they result in measurable improvements in performance (Kurtz & Cooke, 2017).
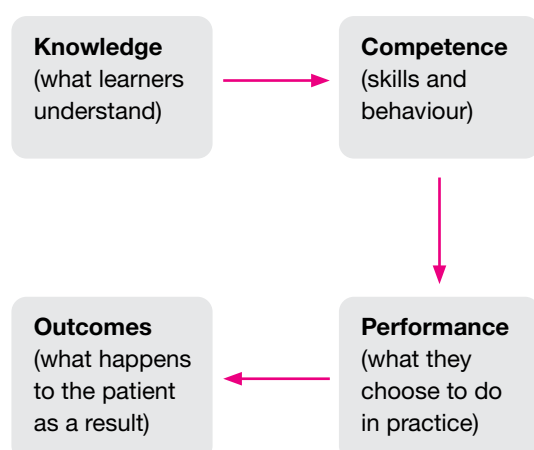
International medical graduates

A particular challenge for the Irish Health Service is that many clinicians have trained overseas and English may not be their first language. This makes communication skills training even more important in the healthcare services.

Improving professional communication competence relies on addressing 4 areas of communication skills training:

1. **Knowledge** (what learners understand);
2. **Competence** (skills and behaviours);
3. **Performance** (what they choose to do in practice); *and*
4. **Outcomes** (what happens to the patient as a result).

Given the skills orientation advocated here, the methods selected for teaching and learning in communication programs need to move learners beyond **knowledge** (do you know it?) to **competence** (can you do it?) and **performance** (do you choose to do it in practice?).

Improving professional communication competence relies on addressing 4 components:

```
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│ Knowledge        │─────▶│ Competence       │
│ (what learners   │      │ (skills and      │
│ understand)      │      │ behaviour)       │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│ Outcomes         │◀─────│ Performance      │
│ (what happens    │      │ (what they       │
│ to the patient   │      │ choose to do     │
│ as a result)     │      │ in practice)     │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
```

1.3. About the guide to implementation

As part of their ongoing commitment to improve communication skills in healthcare, the National Healthcare Communication Programme has developed this revised Guide to Implementation and a series of tools to support healthcare staff in establishing and sustaining excellence in communication skills and improving the care experience across the healthcare system. This Guide to Implementation and the related Implementation Toolkit will assist in the development of national, regional and local quality improvement plans to address communication skills improvement and sustainability, starting now.

1.3.1. Purpose of the Guide to Implementation

The Guide to Implementation:

- Is a manual to be used to facilitate implementation and evaluation of a programme to improve healthcare staff communication skills and thus improve care experience, patient safety, healthcare outcomes and quality of care.
- Assists healthcare facilities in preparing a comprehensive quality improvement plan to improve communication skills irrespective of their starting point.

The Guide will inform staff how to:

- prepare a quality improvement plan for communication skills improvement;
- evaluate the elements that exist in the healthcare facility for ensuring effective communication skills;
- identify what system changes are needed at a healthcare facility level to support implementation of the National Healthcare Communication Programme
- provide appropriate and effective education and reminders to health and social care workers irrespective of their starting point;
- undertake evaluation and feedback (e.g. observation/self-awareness of communication skills competence); *and*
- maintain momentum and motivation for continued communication skills improvement at facilities that have already achieved excellent standards.

The primary target audience for this Guide to Implementation is:

- staff charged with making service-wide improvements in staff communication skills and the care experience.

The Guide to Implementation may also be of value to the following:

- Senior managers/leaders
- Learning and development
- Quality and patient safety
- Clinical leadership
- Clinical skills facilitators
- Patient Advisory Liaison Services Staff

Implementation of the National Healthcare Communication Programme requires action in a number of areas. It is important that staff with the ability to make key decisions that will result in improvement are actively involved in the process of implementation from the outset.

The National Healthcare Communication Programme makes it clear that it should be relatively simple for healthcare providers in virtually every setting to immediately start and continue to evaluate and improve their communication skills in healthcare conversations.

1.4. National Healthcare Communication Programme

1.4.1. The Implementation Toolkit

Successful and sustained communication skills improvement is achieved by implementing multiple actions to tackle different obstacles and behavioural barriers. The Guide to Implementation has been proposed to translate into practice the National Healthcare Communication Programme and is accompanied by a wide range of practical tools (implementation toolkit) ready to use for implementation.

The 5 key elements of the implementation toolkit are:

1. **System change:** ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place to allow healthcare workers to learn and practice communication skills.

2. **Training/Education:** providing regular training on the communication skills to all healthcare workers.

3. **Evaluation and feedback:** monitoring communication skills practices and training, along with patient impact, while providing performance and results feedback to national, regional and local managers and staff.

4. **Reminders in the workplace:** prompting and reminding healthcare workers about the importance of using good communication skills.

5. **Creating a climate for excellence:** creating an environment and the perceptions that facilitate awareness-raising about communication in healthcare while guaranteeing consideration of communication skills improvement as a high priority at all levels, including:
   - active participation at both the healthcare facility and individual levels;
   - awareness of individual and healthcare facility capacity to change and improve (self-efficacy); *and*
   - partnership with patients and patient organisations.

Each of the 5 elements deserves equally important, specific and integrated efforts to achieve effective implementation and maintenance. However, healthcare facilities may have progressed to different levels as far as communication skills training is concerned. Therefore, while some elements might be identified as the central features to start with in some facilities, others may not be immediately relevant in others. At facilities with a very advanced level of communication skills training, some elements could nonetheless be considered for improvement and action to ensure long-term sustainability.

It is important to note that implementation, evaluation and feedback activities should be periodically rejuvenated and repeated and become part of the quality improvement actions that will ensure sustainability. Communication skills improvement is not a time-limited process: training, reminders and monitoring should continue once implemented.

The five elements, together with linked tools available for their implementation, are described in separate sections of this guide (Sections 2.1.–2.5., pages 14-54).

Acknowledging the different levels of awareness and the barriers to implementing communication skills training within different healthcare facilities, an implementation toolkit has been developed to support healthcare workers in improving communication skills at their facilities, irrespective of their starting point. The Guide to Implementation is central to the toolkit and together they aim to facilitate the process of translating the five elements of the implementation toolkit into action.

The aim is that the improvement in communication will be observed over time until at least 2029, when it is hoped that a culture of communication skills excellence will be embedded in all healthcare facilities. Each individual healthcare facility across the HSE must set its own realistic targets and quality improvement plans for improvement in order to reach this aim.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

National Healthcare Communication Programme

- System change
- Training/Education
- Evaluation and feedback
- Reminders in the workplace
- Creating a climate for excellence

TOOLS FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

1. National Standards for Safer, Better Healthcare
2. National Care Experience Survey Programme
3. Better Together: The Health Services Patient Engagement Roadmap
4. NHCP Guide to Implementation
5. Quality Improvement Plans

TOOLS FOR TRAINING/EDUCATION

Facilitator training

NHCP Facilitator Training (4 Modules)

Core modules

Module 1: Making Connections (workshop)
Module 2: Core Consultation Skills (workshop)
Module 3: Challenging Consultations (workshop)
Module 4: Communicating with Colleagues (workshop)

Deep dives

Module 5: Demonstrating Empathy (workshop)
Module 6: Shared Decision Making (workshop)
Module 7: Motivational Interviewing (workshop)
Module 8: Emergency Situations (workshop)
Module 9: Responding to Feedback (workshop)
Module 10: End-of-Life Conversations (workshop)
Module 11: Communications Skills for Healthcare Leaders (workshop)

Elearning programmes

Making conversations easier
Telephone consultations
Video consultations
Clinical handover

Communication skills coaching

Communication skills coaching

Videos, animations, podcasts and publications

Communication skills demonstration videos on webpage
Communication skills module workshop training videos
Animated case studies
Podcasts
Key NHCP Publications

TOOLS FOR EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Levels 1 and 2:
 - Pre and Post Training Evaluation
 - Evaluation by facilitators
 - Site visits
 - Observation Tool (Communication Competencies)

Level 3: Follow-up Training Evaluation

Level 4: Patient Impact

TOOLS FOR REMINDERS IN THE WORKPLACE

- Posters/Illustrations
- Top tips
- Skills cards

TOOLS FOR CREATING A CLIMATE FOR EXCELLENCE

1. Template letter to advocate/communicate NHCP to Managers
2. NHCP promotional PowerPoint/Video

1.4.2. The five steps to change

In each section dedicated to the five elements of the NHCP implementation toolkit, different approaches to implementation are suggested according to various potential situations of a healthcare facility. Overall, this guide proposes a five step approach as a model to gradually implement a comprehensive communication skills programme at the facility level. The approach represents a cycle that can be adapted locally and renewed periodically by any facility aiming to sustain communication skills improvement.

The approach includes five steps to be undertaken sequentially:	
Step 1: Prepare	readiness for action
Step 2: Evaluate baseline	establishing knowledge of the current situation
Step 3: Implement	introducing the improvement activities
Step 4: Evaluate impact	evaluating the implementation impact
Step 5: Continuous improvement	developing a plan for the next 5 years (minimum)

The overall aim is to embed excellence in communication skills as an integral part of the culture in the healthcare facility.

THE FIVE STEPS TO CHANGE

The main objectives to be achieved in each step are the following:

Step 1: Prepare

Ensuring the preparedness of the healthcare facility. This includes obtaining the necessary resources (both human and financial), putting infrastructure in place, identifying key leadership to head the programme including an NHCP Lead and his/her deputy.

Step 2: Evaluate baseline

Conducting/reviewing baseline evaluation of communication skills (review annual care experience survey results, complaints, incidents and so on).

Step 3: Implement

Implementing the improvement programme. Ensuring an adequate number of trained facilitators is vitally important, as is conducting staff education and training and displaying reminders in the workplace. Well-publicised events involving endorsement and/or signatures of commitment from leaders and individual healthcare workers will generate participation.

Step 4: Evaluate impact

Conducting follow-up evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

Step 5: Continuous improvement

Developing an ongoing quality improvement plan and review cycle, while ensuring long-term sustainability.

These steps are described in detail in Part 3, after an understanding of each of the five elements of the NHCP implementation toolkit has been gained.

Part 2
Implementation toolkit

National Healthcare
Communication
Programme

2.1. System Change

2.2. Training/Education

2.3. Evaluation and Feedback

2.4. Reminders in the Workplace

2.5. Creating a Climate for Excellence

2.1. System Change

2.1.1. Definitions and overview

System change refers here to ensuring that the healthcare facility has the necessary infrastructure in place to support healthcare workers to improve their communication skills.

Support and commitment from senior key managers is crucial to communication skills improvement. It is essential that a quality improvement plan to ensure system change is prepared and implemented, involving key senior leaders and managers who will be depended upon to make system change happen.

2.1.2. Articulate a vision

Healthcare facilities need a clear vision and commitment to improve the delivery of their services to patients. This vision will be informed by the results of the care experience surveys (and other feedback mechanisms) and can be addressed by implementation of the NHCP.

2.1.3. Leadership buy-in

Obtaining the full commitment and support of clinical leaders and managers is critical to putting the pieces into place for the successful implementation of the National Healthcare Communication Programme. This is the first step in changing the organisational culture to be more supportive of safe, effective, person-centred care, including developing and enhancing communication skills. The NHCP promotional presentation (see 2.5.2., page 54) can assist in providing relevant information for management and leadership buy-in to programme implementation in the facility.

In addition to leadership buy-in, it may also help to have champions on board—people who are widely respected by other staff members, committed to the value of person-centred care, perhaps have experience of dealing with patient complaints, good communication skills, and willing to engage others.

2.1.4. Resources for implementation

Resources needed for implementation will vary from service to service depending on the size, with each healthcare facility aiming to deliver the 4 core modules and any relevant deep dive modules to their staff on an annual basis.

Staffing: Staff involved include an identified NHCP Lead, a multidisciplinary team to develop the NHCP implementation plan, facilitators to prepare and carry out the training, staff champions for overall support and implementation and team members who will monitor the implementation plan.

Costs: Material costs include printing the NHCP posters, skills cards, patient prompts, participant workbooks and communication checklists. Non-financial costs include time away from work to facilitate and attend the NHCP workshops.

System change is a particularly important priority for healthcare facilities starting on their journey of communication skills improvement. However, it is also essential that healthcare facilities regularly revisit the necessary infrastructure to ensure that communication skills live up to a high standard on an ongoing basis.

2.1.5. Tools for system change – tool descriptions

The tools described in this section aim at directing and supporting healthcare facilities in making prompt and appropriate system changes.

All of these tools can be used at the start of the communication skills improvement journey but can also be utilised to improve communication skills where an improvement programme is already in place or to undertake routine or periodic monitoring.

The range of tools available to support the implementation of **system change** is represented in the following pages.

TOOLS FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare

What	An underpinning framework for continuous improvement in the quality and safety of healthcare services (excluding mental health services). The standards describe the principles of quality and safety for healthcare settings which can be understood and shared by the public, service users and service providers.
Why	The National Standards for Safer, Better Healthcare provide a basis for planning and managing services and measuring improvements as well as identifying and addressing gaps and deterioration in the quality and safety of the services provided
Where	Services provided or funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE)
When	Annual assessment programme
How	Quality Assessment and Improvement resources are available to support healthcare facilities in assessing their services against the National Standards. Healthcare facilities can use these resources to identify and prioritise areas that need greater emphasis or a faster rate of progression towards full and sustainable compliance – particularly when identifying areas of risk.
Who	Users: The standards will be used by senior managers, clinicians and staff working in quality and patient safety at the healthcare facility

National Care Experience Survey Programme

What	The National Care Experience Programme, is a joint initiative between the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health
Why	Care experience surveys are a useful way of identifying areas that need improvement in the delivery of health and social care. By listening and learning from the experiences of patients we can bring about effective and sustainable changes across the HSE.
Where	• Nursing Homes • Acute Hospitals (Inpatients) • Maternity Services (care and bereavement experience) • End of Life care services
When	Annual survey programme
How	Eligible participants periodically take part in the surveys. The findings are published and shared with service providers, policy makers, and the public.
Who	Users: HIQA/DoH/HSE Targets: People using these services and senior managers, clinicians and staff working in quality and patient safety at the healthcare facility

	Better Together: The Health Services Patient Engagement Roadmap
What	National guidance and tools for healthcare staff to create a strong culture of meaningful patient engagement
Why	To achieve a consistent, cohesive, considered approach to patient engagement. Patient Engagement is recognised as a fundamental cornerstone of healthcare and a critical component of a safe, people-centred service.
Where	• Individual health and healthcare level • Service design, delivery and evaluation level • Policy making level
When	• Every encounter every patient has with the healthcare service • When updating existing healthcare services and designing new and integrated healthcare services • When engaging with patients in updating and making policy, in writing governance and in writing strategy
How	The roadmap is designed so that the reader can make it their own, choosing the sections that are relevant to the healthcare level and the local context in which they wish to engage with patients
Who	The roadmap is for all healthcare staff (clinical and non-clinical) working at all levels of healthcare services. It is also for patients and their personal support network.

	NHCP Guide to Implementation
What	The NHCP Guide to Implementation gives an overview of and rationale for the National Healthcare Communication Programme (NHCP). It provides step-by-step guidance to help healthcare facilities to implement the programme.
Why	Implementation of the programme is essential to achieving an impact on patient safety, quality of care and the care experience and therefore the guide aims actively to support the use of the NHCP materials
Where	• Individual health and healthcare level • Service design, delivery and evaluation level • Policy making level
When	The tool should be used by senior managers and clinicians and the NHCP coordinator at the healthcare facility
How	The Guide is designed so that the reader can make it their own, choosing the sections that are relevant to their local context
Who	Users: The tool can be used by senior managers and staff charged with making service-wide improvements in staff communication skills and the care experience and the NHCP Lead at the healthcare facility

	Quality Improvement Plans
What	A Quality Improvement is an healthcare facility's framework for developing and improving areas for improvement identified in the care experience survey results. It includes the direction, timeline, activities, and assessment measures of quality and quality improvement within the healthcare facility.
Why	The HSE responds to the Care Experience Survey results by developing quality improvement plans at national, regional and local levels. The results also inform national policy and HIQA's monitoring programme
Where	• Nursing Homes • Acute Hospitals (Inpatients) • Maternity Services (care and bereavement experience) • End of Life care services
When	Annual quality improvement plans in response to the care experience surveys
How	• Healthcare teams, working across the HSE, use the findings of the National Care Experience Surveys to understand what matters to the people who use our services and to inform priorities for improving care experience across healthcare services • Priority areas are identified for improvement and included in the healthcare facility's QIP. Implementation of these QIP's is reported at National level in the HSE
Who	Users: HIQA/DoH/HSE Targets: Senior, accountable managers at healthcare facility, regional and national level Staff charged with making service-wide improvements in staff communication skills and the care experience

2.2. TRAINING/EDUCATION

2.2.1. Definitions and overview

Education is a critical success factor and represents one of the cornerstones for improvement of communication skills practices.

All healthcare workers require communication skills training. By disseminating clear messages about communication skills using a system-wide common language and approach (the Calgary-Cambridge Guide), such Training/Education aims to induce behavioural and cultural change and ensure that competence is deep-rooted and maintained among all staff in relation to communication skills in healthcare.

Staff education is a key element of the implementation phase (Step 3, see Section 3.2.3, page 58) of a communication skills improvement programme. As facilities move across the communication skills improvement continuum, it is expected that they will establish a robust programme of education on healthcare communication and provide regular training to all healthcare workers, including new starts as well as regular updates and competence checks of existing and previously-trained staff. At a minimum, basic training on the importance of good communication skills for building rapport and listening (NHCP Module 1: Making Connections) is essential to ensure a better care experience for patients and their family members.

In the context of a communication skills improvement programme, the targets for training at different levels are facilitators and healthcare workers. A top-down approach to training is recommended whereby the NHCP Lead, together with other key players at the facility (senior managers and a committee if one exists), will identify the individuals capable of fulfilling the role of facilitators.

The NHCP facilitator will be in charge of delivering Training/Education to healthcare workers. Ideally, they should be an influential and credible leader (e.g. clinical nurse manager/clinical director/senior clinician/head of another key department or discipline).

Note: Doctors are the primary profession leading the most complex discussions relating to disease occurrence and progression, individualised treatment plans which require consideration of risk and benefit, decision making and quality of life concerns. Personal experience of these communication encounters is considered important when facilitating the programme. Medical co-facilitation has also been strongly positively evaluated by co-facilitators and their presence is beneficial when responding to participants, most noticeably doctors who may sometimes be resistant to training on courses.

Facilitators will be briefed on the key messages to be spread and supported to become familiar with the tools available for training; formal training of the facilitators is organised by the NHCP regional coordinator in conjunction with the National Team.

The crucial role of facilitators should be clearly acknowledged by the healthcare facility by allocating protected time to these activities.

Plans for healthcare workers' training should be made during the **Prepare** phase (Step 1, Section 3.2.1., page 56) and should include decisions about how much time will be allocated to training as well as about the specific settings where Training/Education will be provided in the first instance (e.g. priority according to...).

Facilities could consider implementing a system of observing/reviewing the competence of all healthcare workers who have received communication skills training. Utilising the communication skills competence tool will also fulfil the purpose of checks on competence.

2.2.2. Programme design

Research suggests that while knowledge of communication skills is important, it does not translate directly into performance therefore, considerable effort has been dedicated to developing interactive communication skills teaching modules and support materials. The modules are delivered in a facilitated, group-learning model. Module design and instructional methods are based on adult-learning theory and create an experience that attends to the psychological safety of the participants. Through viewing and debriefing video scenarios, participants have the opportunity to increase self-awareness and develop their communication knowledge, skills and attitudes. Participants share individual experiences, perspectives, challenges and strategies and have the opportunity to engage in role-play simulations, followed by a facilitator-guided debriefing.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

Preparation

Each participant is encouraged to complete the online NHCP module prior to the commencement of the classroom based modules.

Each participant is encouraged to complete the NHCP self-awareness tool (pre-training evaluation on the NHCP App), prior to the commencement of each module of the programme.

Attendance and participation in classroom-based modules	To build a stepwise skills based programme it is delivered in modular format, with each module focusing on core skills for different types of healthcare conversation. The programme contains four core modules each lasting between 120 and 240 minutes depending on the module. The core modules are: **1. Making Connections** **2. Core Consultation Skills** **3. Challenging Consultations** **4. Communicating with Colleagues and Promoting Teamwork** There are seven deep dive modules into specific areas like communicating in emergency situations or end of life conversations.
Teaching model	The National Healthcare Communication Programme is based on the Calgary-Cambridge Guide. The Guide is widely used across the world to teach communication skills to healthcare workers. It provides a clear structure for learning, practice, and reflection and is used across the Programme for all types of healthcare conversation. The Calgary-Cambridge Guide summarises the healthcare conversation as a sequential 5 step process; initiating the conversation, gathering information, physical examination, providing information and planning and closing the conversation. Providing structure and Building the relationship are two steps that continue throughout the conversation. Within each step are key communication skills that can be used to achieve the best outcomes from each healthcare conversation. The **Module 1 workshop (Making Connections)** focuses the Building the relationship section of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide and the remaining sections of the Guide (Initiating the conversation, Gathering information, Providing information and planning, Closing the conversation and Providing structure) are covered in **Module 2 (Core Consultation Skills)**. Staff are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking any of the remaining workshops. All remaining programme modules use the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on particular skills for particular conversations (e.g., delivering bad news). Thus Programme modules provide consistent and cumulative learning.

Core communication skills training components	**Small group learning** Most of the teaching occurs in small groups; evidence shows that this promotes psychological safety and promotes skills acquisition. **Minimal didactic content** Each module begins with an introduction outlining some of the theory followed by experiential learning. This approach draws on participant's experience and prioritises high levels of participant engagement to maximise potential for skills confidence and behavior change. **Role play (preferably with simulated patients)** Each group of four to six participants works with a facilitator (using a peer-to-peer approach), with the simulated patients taking the roles of patients during the sessions. Trained simulated patients are able to take on more complex roles and can give feedback from the patient's perspective. This allows staff to practice new skills in a 'safe' environment.
Reflective practice and follow-up	Participants will be asked to identify learning that they are taking from the module(s) which they would like to put into practice. Each service will link with participants at regular intervals to remind them of this commitment to on-going learning and development of communication skills in healthcare. Skills cards summarising key skills from each session will be distributed at the end of the session as an easy reference for participants – these will also be made available electronically. Participants will be encouraged and supported to consider further learning. Communication skills coaching will be offered to clinicians who require additional support.
Reading	Participants will be issued with a reading list for the programme. Additional reading will be recommended to participants throughout the programme.
Web-based resources	There is an easy-to-access section on the HSE website which is used to store electronic links, as well as PDF versions of articles and recommended readings for use as a resource by staff to enable communication skills development. These links will be maintained to provide a continually updated and improved resource.
Facilitators	**Skilled facilitation** The programme is designed to be facilitated by team leaders or clinical educators working with small groups of staff in their department or service. This helps to maintain individual and group psychological safety, creating an environment for optimal learning. The National Healthcare Communication Programme (NHCP) is implemented using a cascade (Train the Trainer) approach and is designed to be facilitated by team leaders or facilitators working with small groups of staff in their department or service. It is preferable to use two facilitators as a minimum for each workshop – one being a competent facilitator with at least two years' experience. If more facilitators are available they can take the role of generally observing and supporting the lead facilitators and providing feedback at the end of the session. Facilitators conducting each Module Workshop will have attended the learning and development preparatory workshops (NHCP Module Part 1 and Part 2) for this purpose.
Mentoring for Facilitators	Facilitating communication skills requires particular skills that (like communication skills) need to be learned and practised. Following NHCP training, facilitators will be supported to attend regular refresher sessions.
Individual coaching	Tailored for individual clinicians, expert advice, guidance and coaching is available. The coaching process can involve a series of scheduled sessions. These can be done in person, over the phone, via video-conference or by using a combination of all three.

2.2.3. Tools for Training/Education – tool descriptions

The range of tools available to support training/education is outlined in the following pages.

TOOLS FOR TRAINING/EDUCATION	
FACILITATOR TRAINING	
	NHCP Facilitator Training
What	The focus of these 4 workshops is to encourage facilitators to appreciate the perspective of the learner, the generic structure and principles of a teaching session, the principles of adult learning and development, the skills based approach used by the NHCP and to reflect on how they can apply all of these to their own facilitation style.
Why	**Module 1 (Part 2)** • Discuss the principles of adult learning and development • Describe a skills based approach to communication skills teaching • Describe the principles for each of the following sections of a teaching workshop (prepare/start/structure/close) • Reflect on how they might adapt and apply this to their own facilitation style **Module 2 (Part 2)** • Discuss top tips for dealing with nerves, answering questions and dealing with challenging situations during their workshops • Discuss why learner safety is important, who might be at risk and the strategies that might help to establish learner safety • Consider facilitator tips for using videos for communication skills teaching • Reflect on how they might adapt and apply this to their own facilitation style **Module 3 (Part 2)** • Discuss feedback and how it should be offered • Practice giving feedback using a Module 3 scenario • Reflect on how they might adapt and apply this to their own facilitation style **Module 4 (Part 2)** • Discuss their role as facilitator for Module 4 and the skills that they will need to facilitate this module • Practice discussing and debriefing a Module 4 video under each of the elements of team-based working • Reflect on how they might adapt and apply this to their own facilitation style
Where	During Module Facilitator workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During training sessions for all potential NHCP Facilitators including training for new facilitators and regular updates for previously trained facilitators
How	These are virtual training workshops. The duration of each workshop is 3 hours. The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play.
Who	Users: NHCP National Team Targets: NHCP Facilitators Note: Staff attending these Module part 2 workshops are required to complete the relevant Module Part 1 in advance of taking these workshops

TRAIN THE TRAINER APPROACH

NHCP National Team	**NHCP Coordinator (Regional)**	**NHCP Lead**	**NHCP Facilitators**	**Workshop participants**

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS: CORE MODULES

Module 1: Making Connections

What	The focus of this workshop is to enable healthcare workers to quickly establish supportive and caring relationships with patients and their loved ones. The workshop content is based on the Building the Relationship stage of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide.
Why	• Understand that patient-centred communication requires a skills based approach • Recognise the impact of non-verbal and verbal behaviour in building a relationship with the patient and on the patient experience • Describe and demonstrate skills in building rapport • Recognise the consequences of active listening on the patient experience • Describe and demonstrate skills in active listening
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training workshops for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 2 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

Module 2: Core Consultation Skills

What	The focus of this workshop is to enable clinicians to deliver compassionate person-centred care in all consultations and conversations with patients and their loved ones. The workshop content is based on the Initiating the conversation, Gathering information, Providing information and planning, Closing the conversation and Providing structure stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide.
Why	• Describe a structure for the generic consultation and identify the preferred model • Describe and demonstrate the skills required for getting the consultation off to a good start, gathering information from and providing information to patients and their families • Reflect on and identify key skills learners wish to practice to enhance their core consultation skills
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 4 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff who consult with patients and their families Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Module 1 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 3: Challenging Consultations

What	The focus of this workshop is to enable clinicians to deliver compassionate, person-centred care in more challenging consultations, for example Delivering Bad News and Disclosing Errors. It builds on the skills learned in Modules 1 and 2 enabling the learner to use the same skills more deliberately when faced with strong emotions.
Why	• Review core consultation skills using the Calgary-Cambridge Guide • Consider how these skills need to be applied with greater depth and intensity in challenging consultations • Describe and demonstrate key skills needed for challenging consultations in a safe setting • Reflect on and identify key skills learners wish to practice to enhance their skills for challenging consultations
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 4 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff who consult with patients and their families Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 4: Communicating with each other and promoting teamwork

What	Team working in healthcare is taken for granted because teams of people and groups of teams must work interdependently to provide high quality care for patients. The evidence, however shows that the quality of team and inter-team working in healthcare is often poor. Such poor team working leads to errors that harm both staff and patients; injuries to staff; poor staff well-being; lower levels of patient experience; poorer quality of care; and higher patient mortality. This skill-building workshop is based on international good practice in the delivery of team-based healthcare. It is designed to enhance the ability of learners to communicate effectively with other members of a multidisciplinary healthcare team.
Why	• Identify their preferred communication style and consider the styles of their colleagues • Identify and discuss the core components of collaborative team-based healthcare • Describe the key principles and skills of Handover • Demonstrate these skills utilising the $ISBAR_3$ tool
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 4 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 5: Demonstrating Empathy

What	The focus of this workshop is to enable staff to provide compassionate care during all conversations and consultations with patients and their families. Participants review core communication skills using the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on the skills for demonstrating empathy.
Why	• Define empathy • Consider and identify the communication skills for demonstrating empathy • Describe and demonstrate the skills required for demonstrating empathy • Reflect on and identify key skills learners wish to practice to enhance their communication skills for demonstrating empathy
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 2 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All healthcare staff Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 6: Shared Decision Making

What	The focus of this workshop is to teach the skills for shared decision making thus enabling clinicians and patients to reach important healthcare decisions together. Core communication skills from the Calgary Cambridge guide are reviewed with particular emphasis on those needed for shared decision making.
Why	• Define shared decision making • Understand why shared decision making is important • Consider and identify the communication skills for shared decision making • Demonstrate the skills required for shared decision making • Reflect on and identify key skills learners wish to practice to enhance their communication skills for shared decision making
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 2 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff who consult with patients and their families Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 7: Motivational Interviewing

What	The focus of this workshop is to teach the core skills for Motivational Interviewing and Behaviour Change thus enabling clinicians to support patients in changing behaviours (for example smoking, exercise) which are affecting their health. Core communication skills from the Calgary-Cambridge Guide are reviewed with particular emphasis on those needed for Behaviour Change.
Why	• Understand what motivational interviewing is • Understand the principles of motivational interviewing • Consider, identify and demonstrate the communication skills for motivational interviewing • Reflect on and identify key skills learners wish to practice to enhance their communication skills for motivational interviewing
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 3 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff who have healthcare conversations about changing healthcare behaviours Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 8: Emergency Situations

What	Healthcare emergencies require healthcare workers to communicate clearly and concisely with patients and colleagues. This workshop builds upon the skills learned from the Calgary Cambridge Guide in Modules 1 to 4 and introduces the learner to additional skills from Hostage and Crisis Negotiation.
Why	• Describe the law of approach and avoid • Understand the importance of emotion • Identify the impact of emotion on communication • Name the five core emotional concerns • Consider the skills and tactics required to communicate in emergency situations • Reflect on and identify key skills and tactics learners wish to practice to enhance their ability to communicate in emergency situations
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 3 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All healthcare staff working in emergency situations Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 9: Responding to Patient Feedback

What	Patient feedback is increasingly being sought to help improve the delivery of healthcare services. Healthcare workers need support to attend and respond to patient feedback in a person-centered, empathic way. This workshop reviews core communication skills using the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on skills for responding to patient feedback. Learners are encouraged to consider how these skills can be used and adapted for conversations with people who may have varying degrees of distress relating to their complaint. The conversations may take place over the phone or face to face with the person making the complaint.
Why	• Consider and identify the communication skills for responding to patient feedback • Name the five core emotional concerns • Demonstrate the skills required for responding to patient feedback • Reflect on and identify key skills learners wish to practice to enhance their communication skills for responding to patient feedback
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 4 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff with responsibility for having conversations with patients and their families regarding their feedback on their experience of care Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop

Module 10: End-of-Life Conversations

What	End of life care requires staff to have caring and sensitive conversations with patients and their loved ones. This workshop reviews core communication skills using the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on skills for sensitive and difficult conversations. Learners are encouraged to consider how these skills can be used and adapted for conversations with patients/family members where a patient is likely in their last weeks, days, or hours of their life, and also where family members have been recently bereaved.
Why	• Review core communication skills using the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on skills for sensitive and difficult conversations • Learn how these skills can be used and adapted for conversations with patients/family members where a patient is likely in their last weeks, days, or hours of their life, and also where family members have been recently bereaved • Practice key skills for these conversations so learners gain a better understanding of their own communication, through reflection and facilitated feedback • Learners set themselves up to three realistic goals for using their learning in their own work
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 4 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff who has personal contact with people who are dying (whether suddenly or over a long period) and who has personal contact with dying people's close ones (partners, relatives). The large majority of people who work in health (and social care) services will have contact with patients and family members who are in this situation. Note: Staff attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop.

Module 11: Communications Skills for Healthcare Leaders

What	Emotional Intelligence is the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. This Module supports participants to learn and develop their communication competence for the four domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. As with all competencies, people can learn ways to improve, change, and develop their competence with deliberate practice and training. The results include improved quality of working relationships, creative solutions, and lasting agreements for addressing challenges and opportunities in the future.
Why	• Review the four domains of emotional intelligence (EI) and it's competencies; • Review the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on the communication skills for each EI competency; • Learn how these skills can be used and adapted to expand your own leadership style repertoire; • Practice key skills for conversations for healthcare leaders and gain a better understanding of your own communication, through reflection and facilitated feedback; • Set yourself up to three realistic goals for using your learning in your own work.
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers, including training for new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	• This is a face-to-face training workshop • The duration of this workshop is 6 hours • The workshop uses both theoretical and practical/interactive approaches, including PowerPoint slides, small group and large group activities/discussion, media, case studies and role-play
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff in leadership positions regarding their feedback on their experience of care

E-LEARNING PROGRAMMES

Making conversations easier (online module - introduction to the programme)

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What	This video-based module introduces learners to the communication skills they can use to improve their conversations with people who use our services, with carers and with colleagues. It contains a series of video scenarios following one patient's journey through the hospital system and back to primary healthcare, all the while showcasing good communication skills in practice.
Why	• Patients and their caregivers report that while there are many examples of care and compassion in our Healthcare Services, there are also many problems with the communication between staff and patients and their loved ones • Good communication has a positive impact on the therapeutic relationship between patients and staff and has also been shown to positively affect healthcare outcomes
Where	Online module available at www.hseland.ie
When	For new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	Online module demonstrates, via video, how to: 1. Build a relationship 2. Communicate with colleagues at handover 3. Listen to people and enable them to feel understood 4. Communicate with family members and carers 5. Provide information and plan with people 6. Have challenging conversations 7. Communicate with colleagues at discharge
Who	Targets: All health and social care staff

Telephone consultations (online module)

What	This module introduces learners to the communication skills they can use to improve their telephone conversations with people who use our services. It contains a poor and good version of a telephone conversation between a patient and their clinician. Applying the Calgary-Cambridge Guide to video calls provides a structured and safe approach to this virtual format.
Why	Many healthcare staff are now carrying out consultations on the telephone. This is often a type of consultation that staff have not encountered prior to COVID19 and needs the use of particular communication skills to ensure safe and efficient calls that address the needs of patients and their relatives.
Where	Online module available at www.hseland.ie and on webpage
When	For new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	Online module demonstrates, via videos and accompanying debrief, how to apply the core skills of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide to telephone conversations in healthcare
Who	Targets: All health and social care staff having healthcare conversations on the telephone

Video consultations (online module)

What	This module introduces learners to the communication skills they can use to improve their video conversations with people who use our services. It contains a poor and good version of a video conversation between a patient and their clinician. Applying the Calgary-Cambridge Guide to video calls provides a structured and safe approach to this virtual format.
Why	Video consultations in healthcare are not new, but the COVID19 pandemic forced many clinicians to rapidly take up video consultations as a feasible alternative to face to face consultations. This is often a type of consultation that staff have not encountered before.
Where	Online module available at www.hseland.ie and on webpage
When	For new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	Online module demonstrates, via videos and accompanying debrief, how to apply the core skills of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide to video conversations in healthcare
Who	Targets: All health and social care staff having healthcare conversations using a virtual video platform
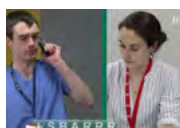
Clinical handover (online module)

What	This module introduces learners to $ISBAR_3$ and the communication skills they can use to improve clinical handover with their colleagues. It contains a poor and good version of a clinical handover conversation between two clinicians.
Why	Ineffective communication between team members is a well-recognised contributor to patient harm. Research indicates that clinical handover is one of the most important contributing factors in serious adverse events and is a major preventable cause of patient harm.
Where	Online module available on webpage
When	For new staff and regular updates for previously trained healthcare workers
How	Online module demonstrates, via videos and accompanying debrief, how to apply $ISBAR_3$ and the core skills of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide to clinical handover conversations
Who	Targets: All health and social care staff involved in handover conversations

COMMUNICATION SKILLS COACHING

Communication skills coaching

What	The core modules of this programme give an overview of core consultation skills. However some clinicians may need more focused learning to improve their skills. Communication skills coaching is a practical, structured process in which a trained coach helps staff on a one to one basis to develop or enhance their skills to communicate more effectively with patients, families and colleagues in the workplace.
Why	• To help staff examine their communication skills and identify which skills they would like to improve on • To assist staff to gain more insight into how their communication skills impact on them and on others • To encourage and support staff develop and enhance their communication skills
Where	At a mutually agreed venue
When	Following self-referral to the communication skills coaching service or if a staff member is referred by a line manager
How	A communication skills coach will meet with the individual over a number of sessions, usually four to six, one and a half hour sessions and will go through the Calgary-Cambridge Model of communication skills with the individual, allowing them to work through their communication skills in a structured way
Who	Users: Specialist trained facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

COMMUNICATION SKILLS VIDEOS AND ANIMATIONS

Communication skills demonstration videos (available on App and webpage):

	• 29 demonstration videos spread across 11 Modules • Accompanying skills debriefs to explain the content and communication skills for the different scenarios
What	A series of videos to demonstrate the key communication skills for healthcare conversations. Aims to show staff how to apply a common framework (the Calgary-Cambridge Guide) for different types of conversation, by different healthcare workers in a variety of settings (acute/maternity/community and so on).
Why	To provide additional opportunities for staff/NHCP facilitators to review and consider communication skills discussed during relevant workshops
Where	Available on webpage and in NHCP App
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to provide staff with additional opportunities to review and consider skills discussed during NHCP workshops
How	• By discussing the relevant videos during training workshops • By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website/NHCP App where the videos are featured. This can be done by giving the web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

	Staff piece to camera videos (available in App and webpage):
	37 piece to camera videos spread across 11 Modules
What	A series of short piece to camera (or talking head) videos. NHCP talking head videos are filmed with a variety of healthcare workers speaking to the camera (learner) about particular communication skills and their experience of using them in healthcare conversations. Talking head videos are designed to engender an emotional response in the learner. This is important as an emotional response is memorable and encourages the learner to take the desired action from this video (remember and use the skills in their conversations with the people who use our services).
Why	To provide additional opportunities for staff/NHCP facilitators to review and consider communication skills discussed during relevant workshops
Where	Available on webpage and in NHCP App
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to provide staff with additional opportunities to review and consider skills discussed during NHCP workshops
How	• By discussing the relevant videos during training workshops • By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website/NHCP App where the videos are featured. This can be done by giving the web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

	Patient experience videos (available in App and webpage):
	20 patient experience videos spread across 11 Modules
What	The series of animated videos capturing the voices of the people who use our services talking about their experience of care. Each care experience story is selected to depict relevant communication skills for each training Module.
Why	Stories of patient experiences can have great impact on healthcare workers. These videos provide additional opportunities for staff/NHCP facilitators to understand the impact of particular communication skills on the care experience (positive examples and opportunities for improvement).
Where	Available on webpage and in NHCP App
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to provide staff with additional opportunities to review and consider skills discussed during NHCP workshops
How	By discussing the relevant videos during training workshops. By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website/NHCP App where the videos are featured. This can be done by giving the web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops.
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

	Communication skills module workshop training videos (used in workshops):
	• 36 training videos spread across 11 Modules • Accompanying skills debriefs to explain the content and communication skills for the different scenarios
What	A series of videos to demonstrate the key communication for healthcare conversations for each Module. Aims to show staff how to apply a common framework (the Calgary-Cambridge Guide) for different types of conversation, by different healthcare workers in a variety of settings (Modules 1 to 4 contain videos for acute/maternity/paediatric settings).
Why	To provide additional opportunities for staff/NHCP facilitators to review and consider communication skills discussed during relevant workshops
Where	• During Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • During Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to provide staff with additional opportunities to review and consider skills discussed during NHCP workshops
How	By discussing the relevant videos during training workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

	Animated case studies
	18 case studies (available on App and webpage)
What	A series of animated case studies to demonstrate the key communication skills for healthcare conversations. Aims to show staff how to apply a common framework (the Calgary-Cambridge Guide) for different types of conversation, by different healthcare workers in a variety of settings (acute/maternity/community and so on).
Why	To provide additional opportunities for staff/NHCP facilitators to review and consider communication skills discussed during relevant workshops
Where	Available at www.hseland.ie, on webpage and in NHCP App
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to provide staff with additional opportunities to review and consider skills discussed during NHCP workshops
How	• By discussing the relevant case studies during training workshops • By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website/NHCP App where the videos are featured. This can be done by web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

PODCASTS

Podcasts: 4 podcasts (available on App and webpage)	
What	A series of podcasts featuring interviews and discussions with people across healthcare about their communication experiences, talks by international leaders, and highlights from NHCP events
Why	To provide additional opportunities for staff/NHCP facilitators to review and consider communication skills discussed during relevant workshops
Where	Available on webpage and on a number of podcast platforms
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to provide staff with additional opportunities to review and consider skills discussed during NHCP workshops
How	• By discussing the relevant podcasts during training workshops • By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website/NHCP App where the podcasts are featured. This can be done by web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff

PUBLICATIONS

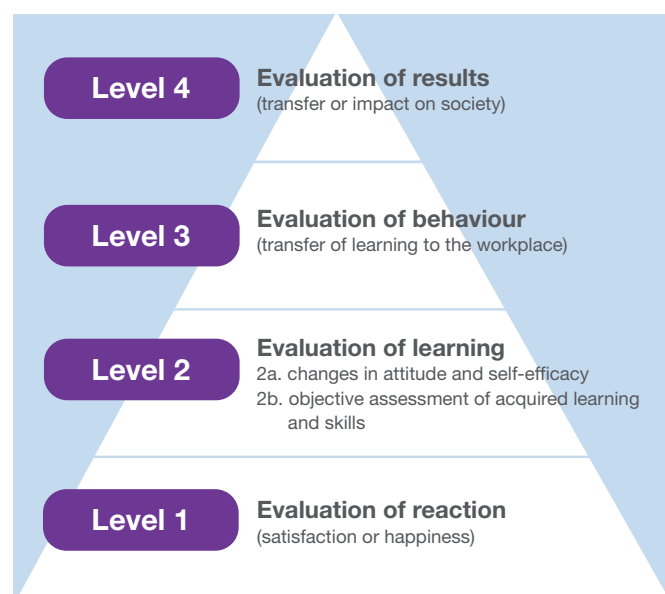| **Key NHCP Publications**	
What	A list of publications to direct interested parties to information and commentary regarding communication skills in healthcare
Why	To provide additional sources of information on communication skills that may be of interest or use to staff and NHCP facilitators
Where	During training sessions/within a healthcare facilities' library
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to alert healthcare workers to the background scientific information on communication skills as required when questions around the evidence base arise
How	• By presenting the list of key publications during training workshops • By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website/NHCP App where the publications are featured. This can be done by web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff interested in learning more about communication skills

2.3. Evaluation and feedback

2.3.1. Definitions and overview

Evaluation and repeated monitoring of a range of indicators reflecting communication skills practices and the importance of communication skills at the healthcare facility is a vital component of the National Healthcare Communication Programme. Evaluation should not be seen as a component separated from implementation, but rather as an essential step in identifying areas deserving major efforts. Evaluation also feeds crucial information into the quality improvement plan for local implementation of the most appropriate interventions. Continuous monitoring is very helpful in measuring the changes induced by implementation and to ascertain whether the interventions have been effective in improving knowledge, competence and performance in relation to communication among healthcare workers and in improving healthcare outcomes. Kirkpatrick's (1967) hierarchy of levels of evaluation provides a useful framework to consider how impact might be assessed (see below).

Level 4 — **Evaluation of results**
(transfer or impact on society)

Level 3 — **Evaluation of behaviour**
(transfer of learning to the workplace)

Level 2 — **Evaluation of learning**
2a. changes in attitude and self-efficacy
2b. objective assessment of acquired learning and skills

Level 1 — **Evaluation of reaction**
(satisfaction or happiness)

Conducting a baseline evaluation (see Step 2, Section 3.2.2., page 57) is important across all levels of the communication skills improvement continuum, but it is particularly crucial for a facility where a communication skills improvement programme is being implemented for the first time. It is needed in order to collect information that realistically reflects current communication skills knowledge, competence and performance. Following the baseline evaluation, the surveys carried out using the tools described below should be repeated post implementation (see Step 4, Section 3.2.4, page 58) to follow-up progress and confirm that implementation of the quality improvement initiatives translate into improvements in communication skills and improvement in the patient experience. Repeating the surveys will ensure consistency, comparison of results and measurement of progress.

2.3.2. Tools for evaluation and feedback – tool descriptions

The range of tools available to support **evaluation and feedback** is represented in the following pages.

Communication skills improvement at healthcare facility level requires at least annual cycles of evaluation in order to achieve sustainability. Monitoring and evaluation with feedback therefore continues over a period of years, with the frequency determined by the NHCP Lead and key staff involved in the quality improvement initiative.

Data entry and analysis are an important part of the overall evaluation. If the facility does not have an epidemiology/statistics unit where the data can be managed, it will be necessary to identify a person to whom this task can be allocated. The appointed person should be able to use basic computer programmes (e.g. Microsoft Office) and ideally have some basic statistical analysis/epidemiology skills.

Feedback of the results of these investigations is an integral part of evaluation and makes the evaluation meaningful. After the baseline evaluation (see Step 2, Section 3.2.2., page 57) in a facility where the communication skills improvement programme is being implemented for the first time, data indicating gaps in good practices and knowledge, or a poor perception of the problem, can be used to raise awareness and convince healthcare workers that there is a need for improvement. On the other hand, after implementation (see Step 4, Section 3.2.4., page 58), follow-up data is crucial in order to demonstrate improvement and thereby sustain the motivation to use good communication skills and to make continuous individual and healthcare facility efforts. This data is also very useful for identifying areas where further efforts are needed (e.g. certain professional categories that demonstrated limited or no improvement in communication skills competence).

The results of the surveys can be either disseminated in written reports or other means of internal communication or shown during educational and data feedback sessions.

Other means of feedback also exist, and each facility should decide how best to communicate the results of the data analysis.

A successful strategy would see improvements across all measured activities, behaviours and also healthcare worker perception.

Key success indicators
- improved knowledge of communication skills
- improved competence in communication skills
- improved performance in communication skills
- improved outcomes for patients (e.g. care experience)

TOOLS FOR EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

EVALUATION LEVELS 1 AND 2

Pre and Post Training Evaluation

What	Before and after (immediately and 2 months after) the training workshops all participants are asked to complete questionnaires based on their use of core communication skills. The post-training questionnaire includes the same set of questions as the pre-test questionnaire to measure the desired change in knowledge and skills relating to healthcare communication. In addition the post-training questionnaire contains questions measuring the overall satisfaction with the training, also with the training organisation and logistics.
Why	To assess effectiveness of the communication skills training and benefits for participants. This information will be used to evaluate and improve future content
Where	• Before and after Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • Before and after Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	• Pre-training evaluation (immediately preceding training) • Post-training evaluation (Immediately after completion of training) • Follow-up evaluation (2 months after training)
How	Available digitally in the NHCP App • What they found useful • What learning they have used in practice • Training impact on self
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff attending NHCP workshops

Evaluation by Facilitators

What	The aim of this approach is to collect the reflections of the facilitators after each workshop. Both co-facilitators should jointly complete one form per training, having discussed their opinions.
Why	Evaluation by facilitators is aimed at providing input for possible further implementation. Having completed a training workshop, the facilitators are in a position to identify strengths and areas for improvement which may impact on a wider roll-out of the training workshop in their local context.
Where	Immediately after Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators. This evaluation form is meant to collect the facilitators' critical opinions based on their knowledge of the local context and the experience of the training that they have conducted. The facilitators should not rely exclusively on the opinions given by the learners during the workshop. Rather they should present their critical judgment taking into consideration the feedback from the learners.
When	Recommend that both facilitators complete the evaluation together, as soon as feasible, preferably immediately after the training workshop
How	Available digitally in the NHCP App
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators

Site visit	
What	The external evaluation (site visits) was included as a step in the training development when piloting the training modules in the 6 pilot acute hospital sites
Why	An external evaluator present during the training session will provide and independent view on the training implementation. A form to facilitate note-taking during such a site visit, as well as providing a structured feedback is provided (facilitator's self-awareness tool).
Where	Individual sites where NHCP training is being delivered
When	As required
How	Available digitally www.hse.ie, on webpage and in the NHCP App
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators

OBSERVATION TOOLS

Observation Tool (Communication Competencies)	
What	A self-awareness tool outlining a set of communication skills competencies based on the stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide
Why	• The tool can be used to asses current level of confidence and competence in relation to communication skills outlined in the Calgary-Cambridge Guide • The assessment is designed to help staff to identify the areas they might need to focus on to improve or maintain their communication competency
Where	Available at www.hseland.ie, on webpage and in the NHCP App
When	During regular training sessions for all healthcare workers and coaching sessions
How	Describe and distribute the tool during training sessions
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff where the NHCP communication skills training programme

EVALUATION LEVEL 3

Follow-up Training Evaluation	
What	2 months after the training workshops, all participants are asked to complete the follow-up questionnaire. The follow-up questionnaire includes the same set of questions as the post-test questionnaire to measure the desired change in knowledge and skills relating to communication skills.
Why	To assess effectiveness of the communication skills training and benefits for participants. This information will be used to evaluate and improve future content.
Where	• After Module workshops organised by the healthcare facility for all healthcare workers • After Module workshops organised by the NHCP for Programme Facilitators
When	Follow-up evaluation (2 months after training)
How	Available digitally in the NHCP App • What they found useful • What learning they have used in practice • Training impact on self
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care staff attending NHCP workshops

EVALUATION LEVEL 4	
Patient Impact	
What	• This level is associated with evaluating change in patient outcomes • Sources of patient feedback including complaints and compliments may provide useful information as well as data from the yearly • National Care Experience Survey Programme • Internationally, a brief point of care scale' collaboRATE' (Elwyn et al., 2013) has been used to assess patient's perceptions of clinician's communication directly after a consultation
Why	Focusing on overall shifts in patient communication experience is preferable to trying to determine the specific impact of communication skills training as this is difficult to isolate in practice. It will likely take time to demonstrate such change.
Where	Healthcare facilities providing health and social care services
When	Annual care experience surveys (frequency determined by the National Care Experience Programme)
How	Analysis of patient feedback including complaints, surveys and compliments with a particular focus on feedback regarding our communication skills
Who	All staff with responsibility for analysing patient feedback

2.4. Reminders in the workplace

2.4.1. Definitions and overview

Reminders in the workplace are key tools to prompt and remind health and social care workers about the importance of communication skills and about the appropriate skills and suggested phrases to use for particular healthcare conversations. They are also means of informing the people who use our services of the standard of communication that they should expect from their health and social care workers with respect to communication skills.
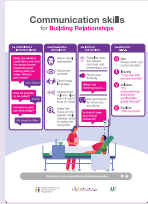
Posters are the most common type of reminder. The implementation toolkit includes six standard posters to visualise the 6 stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide and the associated objectives and skills for each stage of the healthcare conversation.
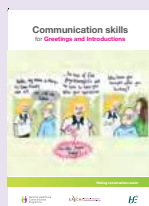
Other types of reminders are skills cards that individual healthcare workers can carry in their pockets or view in the NHCP App, illustrations posted at the point of care and top tips available digitally in the NHCP App.

Reminders in the workplace should be a feature of the quality improvement plans for facilities implementing communication skills improvement programmes at all levels. Reminders should be used and displayed in all clinical settings of the healthcare facility during the implementation phase and should be updated or refreshed regularly. Reminders can be directed at health and social care workers, patients and visitors.

2.4.2. Tools for Reminders in the Workplace – tool descriptions

The range of tools that can be used as **reminders in the workplace** is represented in the following pages.

TOOLS FOR REMINDERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Module 1: Making Connections

Building the Relationship poster

| What	Poster visualising the four objectives and associated communication skills of the Building the relationship stage of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide
Why	To support healthcare workers to visualise and use the key communication skills for Building the relationship in conversations with the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of excellence in communication skills practices

Greetings and Introductions illustration

What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for greetings and introductions
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for greetings and introductions into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills for healthcare workers to use when greeting and introducing themselves to the people who use our services.
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings. Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices.

Skills cards for:
Building the Relationship
Listening
Non-verbal Communication

What	3 pocket at-a-glance reference cards summarising the key communication skills for building the relationship, nonverbal communication and listening
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support excellence in healthcare communication
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services
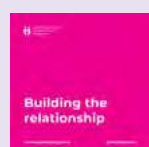
Top tips for Building the relationship (available on App)

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for building the relationship
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for building the relationship when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for building the relationship
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 2: Core Consultation Skills

Calgary-Cambridge Guide posters (5)

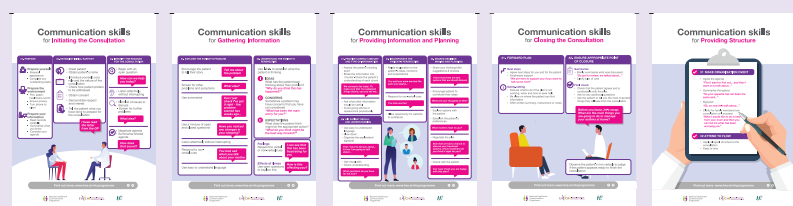|	
What	5 Posters visualising the objectives and associated communication skills for the Initiating the conversation, Gathering information, Providing information, Closing the conversation and Providing structure stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide
Why	To support healthcare workers to visualise and use key communication skills for Initiating the conversation, Gathering information, Providing information, Closing the conversation and Providing structure with the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Gathering Information illustration

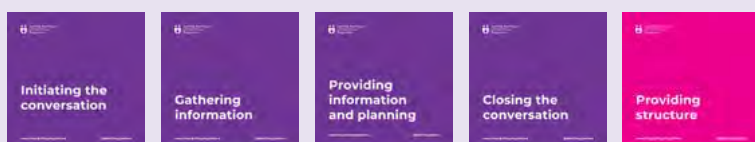|	
What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for gathering information
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for gathering information into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills for healthcare workers to use when gathering information during healthcare conversations with the people who use our services.
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Skills cards for
Initiating the Conversation/Gathering Information/
Providing Information/Closing the Conversation/
Providing Structure

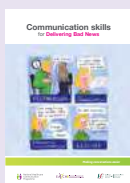|	
What	5 pocket at-a-glance reference cards summarising the key communication skills for initiating the conversation, gathering information, providing information, closing the conversation and providing structure
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for initiating the conversation, gathering information, providing information, closing the conversation and providing structure in healthcare conversations with the people who use our services
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Top Tips for
Initiating the conversation
Gathering information
Providing information and planning
Closing the Conversation
Providing Structure (available on App)

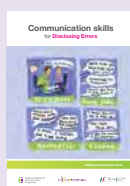|	
What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for initiating the conversation, gathering information, providing information/closing the conversation and providing structure
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for initiating the conversation/ gathering information/providing information/closing the conversation and providing structure when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for initiating the conversation/gathering information/providing information/closing the conversation and providing structure
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 3: Challenging Consultations

Delivering Bad News illustration

What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for delivering bad news
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for delivering bad news into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills for healthcare workers to use to deliver bad news to the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Disclosing Errors illustration

What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for disclosing an error
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for disclosing an error into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills for healthcare workers to use to disclose errors to the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Responding to Strong Emotions
illustration

What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for responding to strong emotions
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for responding to strong emotions into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills for healthcare workers to use to respond to strong emotions when talking to the people who use our services.
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Emotions
illustration

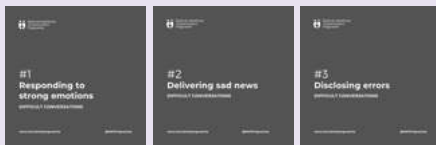| What	Poster visualising the six basic emotions (Paul Eckman, 1972)
Why	To support healthcare workers to read and respond to emotional expressions when having conversations with the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Skills cards for
Delivering Bad News
Disclosing Errors
Responding to strong emotions

What	3 pocket at-a-glance reference cards summarising the key communication skills for responding to strong emotions/ delivering bad news and disclosing errors
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for responding to strong emotions/delivering bad news and disclosing errors in healthcare conversations with the people who use our services.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference. Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets.
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services having these types of conversation.

Top tips for
Responding to strong emotions
Delivering bad news
Disclosing errors (available on App)

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for responding to strong emotions/delivering bad news and disclosing errors
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for responding to strong emotions/delivering bad news and disclosing errors when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for responding to strong emotions delivering bad news and disclosing errors
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 4: Communicating with each other and promoting teamwork

ISBAR$_3$ illustration

What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$ into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills and structure for healthcare workers to use during clinical handover.
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Situational Awareness illustration

What	Illustration visualising the elements of situational awareness
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on the elements of situational awareness into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the elements of situational awareness to assist healthcare workers in gaining and maintaining an understanding of what is going on around them.
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

**Skills cards for
Team-based working
Safer care with ISBAR$_3$**

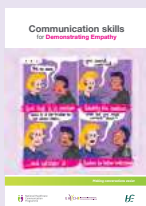|	
What	2 pocket at-a-glance reference cards summarising the key communication skills for team-based working and clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for team-based working and clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

**Top tips for
Conversations with colleagues (available on App)**

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for team-based working and clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for team-based working and clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$ when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for team-based working and clinical handover with ISBAR$_3$
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 5: Demonstrating Empathy

Demonstrating Empathy illustration

What	Illustration visualising a conversation where the healthcare worker is using good communication skills for demonstrating empathy
Why	Illustrations assist healthcare workers in understanding concepts. This illustration translates the written word on communication skills for demonstrating empathy into a visual that is easy to understand and can be used as a reminder of the skills for healthcare workers to use to demonstrate empathy when talking to the people who use our services.
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the illustration at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying posters/illustrations in all health and social care settings
Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Skills card for Demonstrating empathy

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card summarising the key communication skills for demonstrating empathy
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for demonstrating empathy in healthcare conversations with the people who use our services.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference
• Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings
Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 6: Shared Decision Making

Skills card for Shared Decision Making

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card summarising the key communication skills for shared decision making
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for shared decision making in healthcare conversations with the people who use our services.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to healthcare workers computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference. Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets.
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services having these types of conversations

Ask 3 questions (for patients)

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card to prompt people (patients) to ask questions about decisions relating to their care
Why	Reference cards serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support the people who use our services to engage in shared decision making with healthcare workers
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to the phones of the people who use our services.
When	To be used by people (patients) as necessary during their healthcare conversations with staff
How	• Display the reference card at the point of care and refresh when necessary • Encourage people who use our services to digitally download the reference card to their phone
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of implementing the NHCP communication skills improvement programme in all health and social care settings Targets: People who use our services

Stages of change poster

What	Poster visualising the Stages of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982)
Why	To support healthcare workers to visualise and use the stages of change model when having conversations about changing healthcare behaviours with the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Readiness to change poster

| What	Poster visualising the Importance and confidence ruler
Why	To support healthcare workers to visualise and use the importance and confidence ruler when having conversations about changing healthcare behaviours with the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Skills card for Conversations about change An Introduction to Motivational Interviewing

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card summarising the key communication skills for motivational interviewing
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for motivational interviewing in healthcare conversations about changing healthcare behaviours.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference. • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services having conversations about changing healthcare behaviours
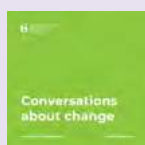
Top tips for
Conversations about change (available on App)

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for motivational interviewing
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for motivational interviewing when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for motivational interviewing
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 8: Emergency Situations

Skills card for
Emergency Situations

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card summarising the key communication skills for emergency situations
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for emergency situations in healthcare.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers involved in emergency situations

Top tips for
Emergency situations (available on App)

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for emergency situations
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for emergency situations when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for emergency situations
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 9: Responding to Patient Feedback

Skills card for
Responding to Patient Feedback (including complaints)

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card summarising the key communication skills for responding to patient feedback
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for responding to feedback from the people who use our services.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services having these types of conversations

Top tips for
Responding to Patient Feedback (available on App)

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for responding to patient feedback
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for responding to patient feedback when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for responding to patient feedback
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Responding to Patient Feedback poster

What	Poster visualising the objectives and associated communication skills of the stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide for conversations about responding to patient feedback
Why	To support healthcare workers to visualise and use the key communication skills for responding to feedback from the people who use our services
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with patients; the patients and their visitors to be aware of best communication skills practices

Module 10: End-of-Life Conversations

Communication Guide for: End-of-Life Conversations

What	The focus of this Guide is to review core communication skills using the Calgary-Cambridge Guide, focusing especially on skills for sensitive and difficult conversations
Why	An additional source of information on communication skills for end-of-life conversations that may be of interest or use to healthcare workers and NHCP facilitators
Where	During training sessions/within a healthcare facilities' library
When	At any time, both proactively to support facilitators in their task and to alert healthcare workers to the background scientific information on communication skills as required when questions around the evidence base arise
How	• By presenting the list of key publications during training workshops • By referring all healthcare workers with access to the internet to the website where the Key Publication's list is featured. This can be done by web address/asking staff to download the App during training/workshops
Who	Users: NHCP Facilitators Targets: All health and social care workers who has personal contact with people who are dying (whether suddenly or over a long period) and who has personal contact with dying people's close ones (partners, relatives). The large majority of people who work in health (and social care) services will have contact with patients and family members who are in this situation. Workers attending this module are encouraged to complete Modules 1 and 2 in advance of taking this workshop.

Skills card for: End-of-Life Conversations
Diagnosis of a life limiting illness
Conversations when a person is dying imminently
Giving sad news of a death over the phone

What	3 pocket at-a-glance reference cards summarising the key communication skills for diagnosis of a life-limiting illness/conversations when a person is dying imminently/giving sad news of a death on the phone
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support healthcare workers to use good communication skills for diagnosis of a life-limiting illness/conversations when a person is dying imminently/giving sad news of a death on the phone.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare workers to keep as a personal tool and reference • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services having these types of conversations

Top tips for End-of-Life Conversations (available on App)

What	A brief summary and quick reminder of the communication skills and suggested phrases for diagnosis of a life-limiting illness/conversations when a person is dying imminently/giving sad news of a death on the phone
Why	To support healthcare workers to easily find specific information on communication skills for diagnosis of a life-limiting illness/conversations when a person is dying imminently/giving sad news of a death on the phone when they need it
Where	Available digitally in the NHCP App
When	To be used after NHCP training workshops
How	Encourage healthcare workers to download the NHCP App to access the Top Tips for diagnosis of a life-limiting illness conversations when a person is dying imminently/giving sad news of a death on the phone
Who	Targets: All health and social care workers having direct contact with people who use our services

Module 11: Communications Skills for Healthcare Leaders

Skills card for:
Communications Skills for Healthcare Leaders

What	A pocket at-a-glance reference card summarising the key communication skills for the four domains of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness and relationship management)
Why	Communication skills cards provide a concise way to organise information in a small space that is easy to use and read. They serve as a cognitive aid and an effective way to support leaders to use good communication skills for conversations with the people that they work with.
Where	To be distributed in healthcare settings where the NHCP communication skills improvement programme is being implemented. Also available digitally to download to work computers/tablets and in the NHCP App.
When	To be used during and after NHCP training workshops
How	• Distribute the skills cards during training workshops for healthcare leaders to keep as a personal tool and reference • Encourage healthcare workers to download to NHCP App and/or digitally download the skills cards to their computers tablets
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or facilitator(s) in charge of organising NHCP workshops in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers in leadership positions

5 step guide to managing conflict
poster

What	Poster visualising the 5 steps and associated communication skills of the stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide for conversations relating to managing conflict. The guide is based on the Harvard Method for conflict negotiation
Why	To support leaders to visualise and use the key communication skills for managing conflict between healthcare staff
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care workers in leadership positions

Giving Feedback poster

What	Poster visualising the objectives and associated communication skills of the stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide as applied to conversations relating to giving feedback to staff. Structures include CUSS, DESC-it, SBI and the coffee-cup conversation (Vanderbilt Intervention)
Why	To support healthcare leaders to visualise and use the key communication skills for giving feedback to healthcare staff
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care leaders

Influence and motivation poster

What	Poster visualising the objectives and associated communication skills of the stages of the Calgary-Cambridge Guide as applied to conversations relating to influencing and motivating staff. Structures include the MI (motivational interviewing) model, GROW and OARS
Why	To support healthcare leaders to visualise and use the key communication skills for influencing and motivating healthcare staff
Where	To be displayed at the point of care and prominent areas throughout the healthcare facility
When	To be displayed at all times and replaced/refreshed as necessary
How	Display the posters at the point of care and refresh when necessary
Who	Users: NHCP Lead or any person in charge of displaying the posters in all health and social care settings Targets: All health and social care leaders

2.5. Creating a climate for excellence

2.5.1. Definitions and overview

Creating a climate for excellence refers to creating an environment and the perceptions that facilitate awareness-raising about excellence in communication while guaranteeing consideration of communication skills improvement as a high priority at all levels, including:

- active participation at both the healthcare facility and individual levels;
- awareness of individual and healthcare facility capacity to change and improve (self-efficacy); and
- partnership with patients and patient organisations.

At the healthcare facility level, this component of the communication skills improvement programme represents the foundation for implementing and sustaining the communication skills improvement programme which must be embedded in a climate that understands and prioritises excellence in communication.

At the individual level, this component of the strategy is important with respect to advocacy of communication skills by all healthcare workers as a priority and for their motivation to practice optimal communication skills as an act showing their commitment to improve the care experience and quality and safety of care for the people who use our services. Through the creation of an healthcare facility communication skills excellence climate, both the healthcare facility and each health and social care worker become aware of their capacity to make a change and catalyse improvement across all indicators.

The creation of a climate for excellence must be a priority for all communication skills promotion, regardless of the level of progress in communication skills improvement at the facility, and is essential during any implementation phase of the programme. Much effort must be made at the beginning to create the motivation for embarking on communication skills promotion (Step 1, facility preparedness phase, Section 3.2.1., page 56).

It is important that decision-makers and influential people are engaged in the planning process at the earliest possible stage and that this engagement continues during implementation and beyond.

On a continuum of progress communication skills excellence must become deeply-rooted in the healthcare facility tradition and approach.

Influential healthcare workers and individuals can contribute greatly to the successful development of a climate for communication skills excellence. In addition to professionals working at the healthcare facility, these influential people may come from external organisations and professional bodies that can give advice on effective strategies to improve communication skills.

In settings where communication skills promotion is very advanced, senior managers and leaders will have repeatedly demonstrated commitment to communication skills by long-term allocation of resources and will be proud of the excellent standards achieved at their facility. Communication skills will be used as a quality indicator on a regular basis. Particularly but not only in these settings, patients will be involved in the creation of a climate for excellence in communication. Patient awareness and understanding of communication skills are important aspects to be considered in the quality improvement plans of a multimodal communication skills improvement programme. Positive encouragement by patients of health and social care workers to motivate them to implement good communication skills can improve use of good communication skills. Using good communication skills with the patient can promote patient confidence and partnership between patients and health and social workers. Good skills will also help to improve the care experience and quality and safety of care.

2.5.2. Tools for creating a climate for excellence – tool descriptions

The range of tools that can be used for **creating a climate for excellence** is represented in the following pages:

TOOLS FOR CREATING A CLIMATE OF EXCELLENCE	
Template letter to advocate/communicate NHCP Communication Skills Improvement Programme to Managers	
What	A template letter for use and adaptation by a local NHCP Lead to communicate with key decision makers concerning investment in/actions relating to communication skills improvement
Why	To help a local NHCP Lead or person(s) interested in introducing or reinvigorating communication skills improvement initiatives within a healthcare facility, to communicate important messages concerning the improvement initiatives to key senior managers/leaders
Where	Management unit of the healthcare facility
When	At the initial stages of a communication skills improvement programme
How	The user can insert local information or modify the text of the template letter to reflect local style
Who	Users: Local NHCP Lead or person(s) interested in introducing or reinvigorating communication skills improvement initiatives within a healthcare facility Targets: Senior managers/clinicians at the healthcare facility

Use this link to access this letter
https://bit.ly/4bAOzrd

NHCP promotional PowerPoint/Video	
What	A short presentation/video to promote communication skills and National Healthcare Communication Programme
Why	To inspire healthcare workers to use good communication skills during healthcare delivery and motivate patients to participate in communication skills improvement initiatives
Where	To be shown at meetings, awareness sessions and public areas in a facility where patient empowerment is promoted, as an impactful way to inspire and advocate communication skills
When	At the initial stages of a communication skills improvement programme
How	Show the short presentation to healthcare workers or the public before providing more details on communication skills initiatives to provide context and a powerful message about communication skills in healthcare
Who	Users: Local NHCP Lead, senior managers, facilitators Targets: All healthcare workers and people who use our services

Use this link to access The NHCP promotional presentation
https://bit.ly/3wY61Ha

Part 3
The five steps to change

5. Continuous improvement

4. Evaluate impact

3. Implement

2. Evaluate baseline

1. Prepare

Part 3 of the Guide to Implementation provides the following additional elements to help the implementation of the NHCP implementation toolkit:

- a template quality improvement plan listing the actions that could be undertaken in order to achieve the implementation of each component of the toolkit in facilities at both basic and advanced level of progress in communication skills promotion; *and*
- the five steps to change approach as a model for implementation in healthcare facilities newly committing to communication skills improvement.

Quality Improvement Plan template

Use this link to access an interactive document with Quality Improvement Plan templates
https://bit.ly/4aWMR2p

3.1. Preparing a Quality Improvement Plan

The template Quality Improvement Plan is proposed to help prepare the local quality improvement plan. It is very comprehensive but it does not take into account local issues. Therefore, healthcare facilities should identify elements that apply to their local situation and amend the template by adding further activities to reflect local needs. The template is not intended to indicate a chronological order for undertaking the actions proposed but to give an overview of all actions necessary to secure the implementation of each element of the NHCP implementation toolkit, according to the details given in Part 2 of the guide.

Overall template Quality Improvement Plan
It covers a wide range of actions as regards progress of communication skills at facility level: from basic actions to be undertaken to inaugurate a communication skills programme to advanced activities indicated in facilities where communication skills promotion is very advanced. The template also helps to identify roles and responsibilities, to establish a time line for action execution and budget implications and to track progress.

3.2. Five steps to change

The five steps to change help to develop and plan the communication skills improvement programme over time and according to a rational sequence of activities.

This approach is proposed for consideration especially by facilities newly implementing a communication skills improvement programme based on the NHCP. In a defined sequential order, it walks the reader through the path to be followed to implement the programme with a wide range of activities and the support of all tools of the NHCP implementation toolkit.

3.2.1. Step 1: Prepare

Step 1 is meant to ensure the overall preparedness of the facility to put in place a communication skills improvement programme. This includes getting the necessary resources (both human and financial) and infrastructure in place along with the key leadership for the communication skills improvement programme, including the NHCP Lead and his/her deputy.

Facilities are recommended to consider implementing initially in teams/departments where motivation and interest are high and the gain (patient safety/quality/care experience) is likely to be substantial and subsequently have an impact on others.

Consider the feasibility of matching required activities to available human and financial resources. In order to demonstrate the economic benefit of the intervention and to ascertain what funding will be required to implement the quality improvement plan to improve communication skills, it may be necessary to formalise a financial plan at this early stage in establishing the scope and extent of the intervention.

NHCP Lead	
Profile	A healthcare worker with an understanding of communication skills and ideally a broader experience on quality and safety; he/she should be well-respected and able to access high-level management staff within the facility.
Tasks	To propose a consistent quality improvement plan to implement the communication skills improvement strategy according to the NHCP and in line with the current progress of communication skills promotion at the facility level; to discuss it with senior managers and to coordinate its implementation at all stages; in addition, to lead the training of facilitators. To provide feedback to senior managers and relevant committees involved in the implementation of the NHCP/improving the care experience at the healthcare facility.

NHCP Team/Committee	
Profile	A group of key internal stakeholders and in particular influential leaders (nurse managers, clinical directors, leads from other disciplines, senior managers) along with those involved in learning and development.
Tasks	To support the NHCP Lead and share decision making; to meet regularly (at least monthly at the beginning of the programme; then less frequently) to oversee progress, to highlight any issues or concerns, propose solutions, and review the emerging data.

NHCP Facilitators	
Profile	A professional preferably with experience of education and of delivering healthcare. Evidence indicates that facilitators do not need to be in clinical practice but the experiential, learner-centred methods require them to have, as a minimum, prior working experience of the communication encounters covered in the NHCP workshops.
Tasks	To facilitate NHCP workshops and support staff to improve their communication skills. To review the workshop evaluations and provide feedback to the NHCP Local Lead.

Possible methods of communication

 Word of mouth

 Electronic (email) if available

 Newsletter or similar bulletin

 Formal and informal training

 Posters/reminders

 Presentations in medical and nursing staff meetings

 CEO address to healthcare staff

Key players involved in Step 1:

- NHCP Lead
- Deputy Lead
- NHCP Facilitators/Clinical skills facilitators/Practice development coordinators/CNME representatives
- Senior managers/healthcare facility administrators
- Learning and development professionals
- Patient advisory liaison managers
- Senior clinicians (nurse managers/clinical directors/ leads from other disciplines)
- NHCP committee/team
- Patient representatives (at least two)

3.2.2. Step 2: Evaluate baseline

Step 2 is meant to be focused mainly on conducting baseline evaluation of communication skills knowledge, competence and performance. It is vital to assess the current situation at the healthcare facility level in order to tailor and refine quality improvement plans for implementation. Activities taking place in step 2 are vital also because they will provide reference information for any comparison and assessment of progress as the NHCP is being implemented.

Key players involved in Step 2:

- NHCP Lead
- Deputy Lead
- Facilitators
- Data managers
- NHCP committee/team

3.2.3. Step 3: Implement

Step 3 (Implement) is the key phase to achieve improvement and it consists of implementing all the interventions planned in Step 1 (Prepare) and using the core findings from Step 2 (Evaluate baseline) to motivate improvement. It is vital for raising awareness of the importance of communication skills knowledge, performance and competence, to improve knowledge and skills, to put in place elements of system change and eventually to catalyse behavioural change.

Key players involved in Step 3:

- NHCP Lead
- Deputy Lead
- NHCP Facilitators/Clinical skills facilitators/Practice development coordinators/CNME representatives
- Senior managers/healthcare facility administrators
- Learning and development professionals
- Patient advisory liaison managers
- Senior clinicians (nurse managers/clinical directors/leads from other disciplines)
- NHCP committee/team
- Patient representatives (at least two)

3.2.4. Step 4: Evaluate impact

Step 4 has very important aims: to follow-up progress and confirm that implementation translates into improvements in communication skills knowledge, performance and competence. The surveys carried out for baseline evaluation during step 2 should be repeated to obtain follow-up data adequate to compare the periods pre- and post-implementation. It is, however, important to understand that since it will be carried out shortly after implementation, this evaluation will provide information only about the immediate impact of the programme. To gather long-term impact data it is necessary to undertake further evaluation on the basis of a longer follow-up and to invest in continuous monitoring of key indicators. Short-term impact information is, however, crucial to aiding future decisions and actions (step 5). It is also important to acknowledge that during this step, communication skills improvement activities should continue according to the local quality improvement plan.

Key players involved in Step 4:

- NHCP Lead
- Deputy Lead
- NHCP committee/team

3.2.5. Step 5: Continuous improvement

Step 5 is a crucial step for reviewing the entire cycle of implementation put in place during the previous steps and for developing long-term plans to ensure that improvement is sustained and progresses. Developing and implementing quality improvement plans while ensuring that there is a constant review cycle is essential if the overall aim to embed communication skills as an integral part of the healthcare facility culture is to be achieved long-term. Implementation plans must be designed with the aim of achieving sustainable communication skills improvement kept in mind at all times.

Communication skills improvement is not a time-limited process: communication skills promotion and monitoring should continue once implemented.

Planning and reviewing are crucial to the success of any programme of work. Key actions throughout can be helpful in ensuring that progress with plans is maintained and changes to plans are adopted when necessary to ensure the best outcome for communication skills improvement. A communication skills improvement plan cannot remain static and must be rejuvenated at set intervals, with plans to ensure this built in from the outset. With the appropriate changes according to the long-term quality improvement plan, the entire cycle using the five steps to change approach should be repeated over a minimum of five years.

Most improvement programmes are reviewed at some point to ensure that they are likely to be delivered on time and that they meet the objectives set within the budget allocation. Therefore, by adopting the quality improvement planning and review cycle approach from the outset, the communication skills programme can take the lead in providing such information rather than being asked for it.

Key players involved in Step 5:

- NHCP Lead
- Deputy Lead
- NHCP Facilitators/Clinical skills facilitators/Practice development coordinators/CNME representatives
- Senior managers/healthcare facility administrators
- Learning and development professionals
- Patient advisory liaison managers
- Senior clinicians (nurse managers/clinical directors/leads from other disciplines)
- NHCP committee/team
- Patient representatives (at least two)

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