

# Understanding the people you are caring for

A COMMUNITY RESEARCH PROJECT



**During the summer of 2023, Staffordshire University Service User and Carer Team was awarded funding to complete a community research project. The team decided to create an educational resource to help health and social care students to understand the diverse needs of service users and carers. We found that these needs fitted into four categories...**

**Communication**

**Holistic Care**

**Equality**

**Carers' Experience**

**All the words in speech bubbles were spoken by members of the public, when asked what was most important to them when receiving care.**



# Communication

Hear, not just listen.  
Repeat key words.  
Be person-centred.

Do not use jargon.  
Think about body language –  
open not closed.  
Stop making me feel rushed.

I found it difficult to understand  
what they meant.  
There's an assumption we won't  
always understand, which quite  
often isn't the case.

Initial contact can make or  
break trust.  
**Actually look at me.**

No decision made  
about me  
without me.

Communication is  
the fundamental key  
to a positive journey  
and outcome.

Some discussions where it may be routine to a medic  
are very personal to a patient.  
Maintain dignity – patients can be vulnerable.

Polite, patient, respectful.  
**Be clear.**  
Discuss options with the patient.

Explain each aspect of my care.  
Ask for advice – understand  
your limitations.  
Understanding – not sympathy

It can be quite uncomfortable  
hearing others discuss your  
medical conditions openly on  
a ward or in a waiting area.



# Holistic Care

See the person, not just the illness, symptoms or process.

Be present.  
Use a whole-person approach.

I'm not a problem to be solved

Treat each service user as an individual not as a condition.

I am not 'the gall bladder in bed 8'.

Helping is collaborative.

Try to understand both – the patient and the illness.

Don't assume  
Add value to a patient's life.

I am unique.

Use my name.

Protect yourself as well as the patient

The person you see in front of you has not always been the person you now see... they were not always vulnerable and dependent on others.



# Equality

Treat each person  
as an individual

Start by reflective practice –  
it can really make a  
difference to you and to  
patients.

Having empathy to be able to  
connect with the service user  
or carer and the situation  
they are in.

Empathy is one of the best  
qualities of a healthcare  
professional.

It's not the condition  
that defines them.  
Who are they?

Create a safe, non-  
judgmental environment

Culture, beliefs,  
values, biases and  
prejudices need to  
be understood.

Feeling respected  
enables  
relationships to  
develop.

Imagine how you  
would wish your  
loved ones to be  
spoken to.



# Carers' Experience

Communication is paramount, with the patient, families and with colleagues.

Focus on the service user but also communicate effectively with the carer.

Treat them as you and your nearest would like to be treated, with care, kindness, dignity, understanding and compassion, but above all with your time and respect.

Ill-health impacts that of their full-time carers/partners/supporters - this is not always considered.

Understand the role of the carer and always include them.

Making sure that patients and families are fully informed about what is going on.

Including family carers in information sharing leads to improved health care and wellbeing.

Not only are your patients nervous, frightened, suffering and vulnerable, so are their family and carers.



# Thank You



**Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project by giving us their time and honest opinions.**

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**Particular thanks to the community researchers, Tricia Fullwood, Janet Holdcroft and Robert Lafferty.**

**Please share this resource with anyone who may find it useful. We hope that this resource reminds us all to keep care person-centred.**

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