



COMING HOME CARER SKILLS

Module 6: Communicating well

A short guide for family carers, with questions to write in

Coming Home Carer Skills. For England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

October 2026

About this course

Coming Home Carer Skills is our own free course for family carers. Its topics follow the 16 Care Certificate standards (2025) from Skills for Care, NHS England and Skills for Health. It is not the Care Certificate, it is not a qualification, and those organisations have not endorsed it.

This guide to Module 6, Communicating well, is correct at October 2026. We've written it in good faith as general information to help family carers. It isn't legal, financial or medical advice, and it can't teach practical skills such as moving someone or first aid. For those, ask the person's nurse or therapist, or find an in-person course. To the extent the law allows, we can't accept liability for any errors or omissions, or for decisions made on the strength of this guide. In a medical emergency call 999. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.

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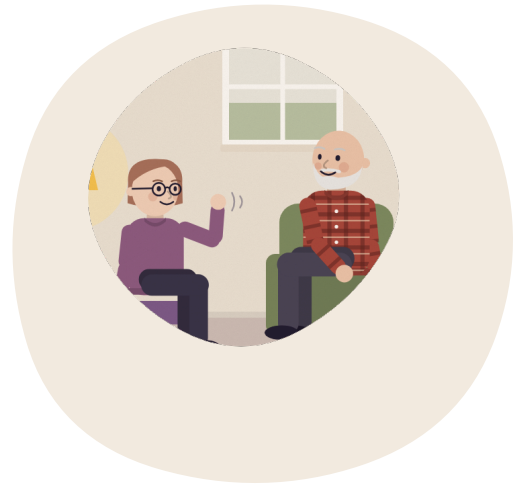
How to use this guide

This guide goes with the online module. Read one section at a time. There are questions near the end, with space to write, and example answers at the back.

If you are worried about someone's health, contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. In an emergency, call 999.

01

Good talking basics



Good talking is about more than words. Small changes can make a big difference, whoever you care for.



Tip

Ask what helps. Everyone is different. Ask the person how they like you to talk to them. Write it down, so other people can do the same.

Get ready to talk.

- Get the person's attention first. Say their name, wave, or touch their arm gently if they are happy with that.
- Face them, at the same level. Sit down if they are sitting.
- Make sure the light is on your face, not behind you.
- Turn off the TV or radio, or move somewhere quieter. Ask first.

While you talk.

- Speak clearly, at your usual pace or a little slower. Do not shout.
- Use short sentences, with one idea at a time.
- Give the person time to answer.
- If they do not understand, say it a different way.
- Talk to the person, not about them.

Listen too. Good talking goes both ways. Stop what you are doing, look at the person, and let them finish. Faces, hands and body language help you understand each other.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Communicating with someone with dementia",

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/living-with-dementia/communication/; RNID, lipreading tips, rnid.org.uk/2024/09/lipreading-awareness-week/; Alzheimer's Society, "How to communicate with a person with dementia", www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/tips-for-communicating-dementia

02

Hearing and sight loss



Hearing loss. Hearing loss is common as people get older. Signs can include having the TV very loud, asking people to repeat things, and finding it hard to follow a chat in a busy place.

- If the person has hearing aids, make sure they are in and switched on.
- Do not shout. It can be uncomfortable for a hearing aid user, and it can look angry.
- If they miss something, say it in a different way.
- Write things down if it helps.

If hearing seems to be getting worse, ask the GP about a hearing test. NHS hearing aids are free. Ask the NHS hearing aid service that fitted them about batteries and repairs. Do not try to mend a hearing aid yourself, beyond what its user guide says.



Get help

If hearing gets worse suddenly, see a GP straight away or call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.

Deaf people who sign. Some Deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. BSL is a full language, with its own grammar. It is different from English. Ask for a professional BSL interpreter at appointments. In an emergency, a BSL user can contact 999 through the free 999 BSL video service.

Sight loss.

- Say who you are when you come in, and say when you leave.
- Use the person's name, so they know you are talking to them.
- Say where things are. "Your tea is on your right" is better than pointing.
- Keep things where the person expects them. Ask before moving anything.

Eye tests. NHS sight tests are free for people aged 60 or over in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, NHS eye tests are free for everyone. If the person cannot leave home on their own because of illness or disability, they may be able to have an NHS eye test at home. Ask an optician.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Hearing loss", www.nhs.uk/conditions/hearing-loss/; NHS website, "Hearing aids and implants", www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/hearing-aids-and-implants/; RNID, communication tips, rnid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Communication-tips-speaking-to-HL-screen-res-LP-2018.pdf; nidirect, "Hearing aids" (Northern Ireland), www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/hearing-aids; NHS Swansea Bay (Wales), hearing services for adults, sbuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-services/audiology-new/hearing-services-for-adults/; NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Scotland), audiology, www.nhsggc.scot/hospitals-services/services-a-to-z/audiology/; British Sign Language Act 2022, section 1, www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/34/section/1; GOV.UK, BSL user experience of health and social care, glossary, www.gov.uk/government/publications/bsl-user-experience-of-health-and-social-care-in-uk/glossary; Ofcom, 999 BSL, www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/accessibility/new-999-video-call-service; RNIB, "Sight loss: helping you to help others", www.rnib.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/helping-you-help-others/; NHS website, "Free NHS eye tests and optical vouchers",

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03

When memory or speech changes



Memory problems, dementia or a stroke can change how someone talks and understands. About 1 in 3 people have aphasia after a stroke. Aphasia means problems with language. Talking, understanding, reading, writing or using numbers can be hard.

Tips that help.

- Keep sentences short. Ask one question at a time.
- Give simple choices. "Tea or coffee?" is easier than "What would you like?"
- Give the person time. Finding a word can take 30 seconds or more.
- Try not to finish their sentences or guess, unless they want you to.
- Use pictures, objects, gestures and writing. Point to things together.
- If you have not understood, say so kindly. Say back what you think they meant.
- Keep the person in the conversation. Do not talk as if they are not there.

Do not argue about facts. Someone with memory problems may say something you know is not right. Think about whether it matters. If it is not causing harm or worry, you may not need to correct them. Listen to the feeling behind the words.

Get expert help. A speech and language therapist can help the person, and show you ways to talk together. Ask the GP.



Remember

If it happens suddenly, get help straight away. Sudden problems speaking or understanding can be signs of a stroke: call 999. If someone suddenly becomes confused, call 999 or go to A&E. If changes come on slowly, over weeks or months, talk to the GP.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): Stroke Association, "Aphasia and communication", www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/effects/aphasia; Stroke Association, "Supporting someone with communication difficulties", www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/support/materials/stroke-news/supporting-someone-communication-difficulties; Stroke Association, "Tips for aiding communication", www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/effects/aphasia/communication-problems/tips; Alzheimer's Society, "How to communicate with a person with dementia", www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/tips-for-communicating-dementia; NHS website, "Symptoms of a stroke", www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/symptoms/; NHS website, "Sudden confusion", www.nhs.uk/symptoms/confusion/

04

Talking with professionals



Appointments can feel rushed. A little planning helps the person get the most from them.



Try this

Before the appointment.

- Write down your 2 or 3 most important questions.
- Write down what has changed, and when it started.
- Take a list of all the person's medicines.
- Ask for communication support when you book. For example, a BSL interpreter, a longer appointment or letters in large print.

During the appointment.

- Let the person speak for themselves as much as they can. The professional should talk to them, not just to you.
- Ask for plain words: "Can you say that another way?"

- Say it back to make sure: "So the new tablets start on Monday. Is that right?"
- Write down what is said, or ask for it in writing.

Before you leave, make sure you know what happens next, and who to contact with questions.

Communication support in each nation.

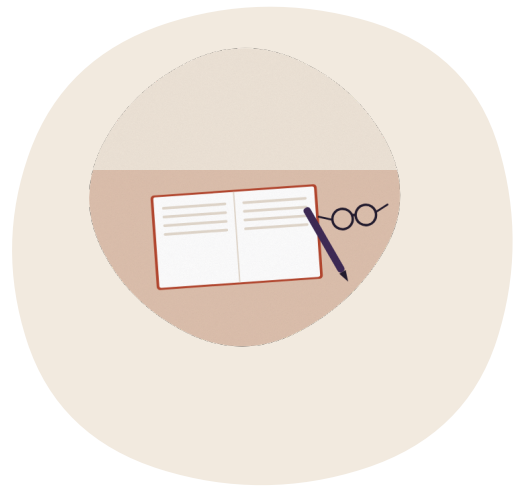
- **England:** NHS and publicly funded adult social care services must take account of the Accessible Information Standard. It is about making sure disabled people, and people with sensory loss, can understand information and get the communication support they need.
- **Wales:** NHS Wales has its own standards for accessible communication and information (2025). Welsh Government guidance says interpreting should be free, and family and friends should not usually be asked to interpret.
- **Scotland:** the "Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities" sets out your rights when you use the NHS in Scotland. They include communication support, such as an interpreter or a sign language interpreter. Tell staff beforehand and they can arrange it.
- **Northern Ireland:** the free Regional Communication Support Service gives sign language interpreters and other support for health and social care. Staff book it.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "What to ask your doctor", www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/what-to-ask-your-doctor/; NHS England, Accessible Information Standard, www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/patient-equalities-programme/equality-frameworks-and-information-standards/accessibleinfo/; GOV.WALES, accessible communication and information standards in healthcare, www.gov.wales/accessible-communication-and-information-standards-healthcare-html; Scottish Government, "Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities" (revised June 2022), www.gov.scot/publications/charter-patient-rights-responsibilities-revised-june-2022/pages/2/; Welsh Government, standard operating procedure for interpreting and translation in primary and emergency healthcare, www.gov.wales/standard-operating-proced

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 communication-and-involving-you/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/communication-and-consent/communication-and-involving-you/); nidirect, "Communication support for deaf
 people", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/communication-support-deaf-people

05

Keeping notes



A simple notebook can help everyone. It helps you remember, and it helps professionals see what has changed.

What to write.

- The date, and anything you noticed. For example: "Dad seemed more muddled after tea."
- Appointments, and what was said.
- Questions to ask next time.
- Medicines, and any changes to them.
- What helps the person understand you best.

Keep it simple. A few words on the days something happens is enough. Take the notebook to appointments.

Write it with them. Where you can, write the notes together. The person may want to add their own words, or a drawing.



Remember

Respect their privacy. These notes are about another adult. Ask the person if they are happy for you to keep them, and what goes in. Keep the notebook somewhere safe. Module 7 says more about privacy.

Source (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "What to ask your doctor" (write down what you discussed and what happens next, and keep your notes), www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/what-to-ask-your-doctor/

06

Get help



- **The person's GP practice:** for hearing tests, eye problems, memory changes, and referrals, for example to speech and language therapy. Ask for communication support when you book.
- **An optician:** for eye tests. NHS sight tests are free for people aged 60 or over in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and for everyone in Scotland.
- **The NHS hearing aid service that fitted the hearing aids:** ask them about batteries and repairs.
- **RNID** (for people who are deaf or have hearing loss): 0808 808 0123, or text 07360 268 988. rnid.org.uk
- **RNIB** (for blind and partially sighted people): helpline 0303 123 9999. www.rnib.org.uk
- **Stroke Association** helpline, including help with aphasia: 0303 3033 100. www.stroke.org.uk
- **Alzheimer's Society** Dementia Support Line: 0333 150 3456. www.alzheimers.org.uk
- **Carers UK helpline:** 0808 808 7777 (free). Advice for carers in all four nations. www.carersuk.org

- **Northern Ireland:** communication support for deaf people in health and social care,
www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/communication-support-deaf-people
- **999 BSL** (free emergency video calls for BSL users, any time):
999bsl.co.uk



Get help

Worried about someone's health? Contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. Online: 111.nhs.uk.
Northern Ireland GP out of hours:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service. **Sudden problems speaking, understanding or seeing: call 999.**
Sudden confusion: call 999 or go to A&E.

07

Your questions



Write here

Write your answers in the boxes. Take your time, and come back to them whenever you like. There are example answers at the back of this guide to compare with your own.

1. What helps the person you care for understand you best?

2. Write three questions you would like to ask at the next appointment.

3. Think about the room where you talk most. What could make talking easier there?

4. Does the person use hearing aids, glasses or other aids? Who could you contact for help with them?

5. Write down an open question you often ask. How could you turn it into a simple choice?

6. What would you do if the person suddenly had problems speaking, understanding or seeing, or suddenly became confused?

7. What communication support could you ask for at appointments, for the person or for you?

8. What would you write in a simple notebook after today? Who would you agree it with?

08

Quick quiz



Tick one answer for each question. The answers, with the reasons, are at the back of this guide.

1. Ian is Deaf and watches faces and hands to follow what you say. Where is the best place to be when you talk to him?

- ☐ Behind him, so you do not get in the way
- ☐ In the next room, speaking loudly
- ☐ Facing him, with the light on your face
- ☐ With a bright window behind you

2. Your dad wears hearing aids but keeps missing what you say. What is a good first step?

- ☐ Shout
- ☐ Stop talking to him
- ☐ Make sure his hearing aids are in and switched on, and turn off the TV
- ☐ Talk to someone else instead

3. Your mum is partly sighted. You bring her a cup of tea. What helps her most?

- ☐ Put it down and point at it
- ☐ Put it somewhere new each time
- ☐ Say nothing so you do not fuss
- ☐ Tell her where it is, for example "Your tea is on your right"

4. Your mum has memory problems. Which question is easiest for her to answer?

- ☐ "What would you like to do today, and when?"
- ☐ "Do you remember what we did last Tuesday?"
- ☐ "What do you want for lunch, dinner and tea this week?"
- ☐ "Would you like tea or coffee?"

5. Someone is taking a long time to find a word. What should you do?

- ☐ Wait patiently and give them time
- ☐ Finish the sentence for them straight away
- ☐ Change the subject
- ☐ Walk away and come back later

6. Your husband suddenly cannot get his words out, and one side of his face looks droopy. What should you do?

- ☐ Wait and see how he is tomorrow
- ☐ Book a GP appointment for next week
- ☐ Call 999 straight away
- ☐ Give him a drink and let him rest

7. What can help you and the person get the most from a GP appointment?

- ☐ Writing down your 2 or 3 most important questions before you go
- ☐ Arriving without any notes
- ☐ Letting the GP decide everything
- ☐ Answering for the person every time

8. You keep a simple notebook for appointments. Which is most useful to write in it?

- ☐ Only the weather
- ☐ The date, what has changed, and questions for next time
- ☐ Long stories about the neighbours
- ☐ Nothing until there is an emergency

09

Answers



Your questions

There are no wrong answers to most of these questions. These are examples to compare with your own.

1. There is no single right answer. You might write: facing them in good light, getting their attention first, turning the TV off, short sentences, writing things down, signing, or giving more time. Ask the person what helps, and share it with others who help them.
2. For example: "What is this new medicine for?", "What should we do if things get worse?" and "Who do we contact if we have questions?" Put the most important question first, in case time runs short.
3. For example: sitting face to face at the same level, a lamp so your face is well lit, no bright window behind you, the radio or TV off, and fewer people talking at once.
4. For hearing aids, the NHS hearing aid service that fitted them can help with batteries and repairs. For eyes, an optician. For new or worse problems, the GP. RNID and RNIB give free information and support.
5. For example: "What do you want to wear?" could become "The blue jumper or the green one?" Holding up the two things can help too.

6. Sudden problems speaking, understanding or seeing can be signs of a stroke: call 999 straight away. If someone suddenly becomes confused, call 999 or go to A&E. For anything less serious, contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.

7. For example: a professional interpreter (including BSL), a longer appointment, a quiet room, letters in large print or easy read, or information by email or text. In England, services must take account of the Accessible Information Standard. Wales has its own NHS standards. In Scotland, NHS staff can arrange an interpreter if told beforehand. In Northern Ireland, staff can book the free Regional Communication Support Service.

8. For example: the date, anything that changed, what a professional said, and questions for next time. Agree with the person what goes in, write it together where you can, and keep it somewhere safe.

Quick quiz

1. Facing him, with the light on your face. Face the person, with the light on your face, so they can see your face and hands clearly.

2. Make sure his hearing aids are in and switched on, and turn off the TV. Make sure hearing aids are in and switched on, and cut background noise. Shouting does not help.

3. Tell her where it is, for example "Your tea is on your right". Say where things are. Pointing means little to someone who cannot see where you are pointing.

4. "Would you like tea or coffee?" A simple choice is easier than an open question or a memory test.

5. Wait patiently and give them time. Give the person time. Finding a word can take 30 seconds or more. Try not to finish their sentences.

6. Call 999 straight away. Sudden problems speaking, or a droopy face, can be signs of a stroke. Call 999 straight away.

7. Writing down your 2 or 3 most important questions before you go.

Write down your most important questions, what has changed, and the person's medicines.

8. The date, what has changed, and questions for next time. Write the date, any changes you notice, what professionals said, and questions to ask next time.

10

Sources

Every source was read on 8 October 2026. Each section also lists its own sources at the end.

- Section 1. Good talking basics.** NHS website, "Communicating with someone with dementia", www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/living-with-dementia/communication/; RNID, lipreading tips, rnid.org.uk/2024/09/lipreading-awareness-week/; Alzheimer's Society, "How to communicate with a person with dementia", www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/tips-for-communicating-dementia
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- Section 4. Talking with professionals.** NHS website, "What to ask your doctor", www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/what-to-ask-your-doctor/; NHS England, Accessible Information Standard, www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/patient-equalities-programme/equality-frameworks-and-information-standards/accessibleinfo/; GOV.WALES, accessible communication and information standards in healthcare, www.gov.wales/accessible-communication-and-information-standards-healthcare-html; Scottish Government, "Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities" (revised June 2022), www.gov.scot/publications/charter-patient-rights-responsibilities-revised-june-2022/pages/2/; Welsh Government, standard operating procedure for interpreting and translation in primary and emergency healthcare, www.gov.wales/standard-operating-procedure-commissioning-interpretation-and-translation-services-primary-and-html; NHS inform, communication and involving you, www.nhsinform.scot/

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www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/communication-support-deaf-people

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Coming Home

Less to hold in your head.

www.cominghomecare.app