Developing speaking and listening skills

LSIS

A support pack for staff working with offenders

Foreword

Education, training and skills can have a significant impact on positive life change and there are many examples of how education can rehabilitate and support those who have a history of offending.

Good communications skills are core to so much activity in society, at work and at home. With effective communication skills many more opportunities are available to the individual.

Addressing the challenge of re-offending is central to the Government's offender learning strategy. Good communications skills for offenders returning to the community are central to new and successful lives and new chances. Effective speaking and listening skills are essential to entering and sustaining work. Employers identify good communication skills as highly important to their operation. The opportunity to work offers opportunity for change. This not only supports the offender but their families and the community at large.

This support pack was developed for all staff working with offenders who have English as their first language. It has now been refreshed to incorporate changes since its original publication in 2006. The resource was trialled across a number of different programmes and quality assured by specialists. This quality assurance process has been repeated with specialists from the custodial, community and skills for life sectors reviewing the resource again.

I am sure this refreshed resource will continue to support staff working with offenders to develop their speaking and listening skills with all the positive impact this can have.

Rob Wye
Chief Executive
Learning and Skills Improvement Service.

Contents

Introduction

Purpose of this pack

This pack provides an extensive resource
to develop speaking and listening skills
and will support staff working with offenders
for whom English is a first language.

These materials are for staff working with offenders in all areas, including those where employment, rehabilitation and learning take place. The pack can be used by staff in custodial and community settings across the age range of both adults and young people, irrespective of their role and the context of their work. Staff may include caseworkers, offender managers, teachers, tutors, workshop supervisors, instructors as well as many other staff in prisons, young adult and young offender institutions, young people's establishments, community based services for young people and probation who are in contact with offenders.

The resource has been developed to provide staff with access to ideas, activities and information which will help to raise awareness of the importance of speaking and listening skills and to employ these skills effectively within their context. It will also provide strategies to support this important area of literacy skills development with offenders.

Although suggestions for using activities in the pack have been developed for offenders for whom English is a first language, they may provide ideas that can be adapted to develop speaking and listening skills with offenders for whom English is a second or other language (ESOL). Many of the ideas and activities in the pack could also be adapted for offenders with sensory and communication impairments.

The pack is divided into six modules:

- Module 1: Speaking and listening skills in context
- Module 2: Non-verbal communication
- Module 3: Questioning and checking understanding
- Module 4: Active listening
- Module 5: Managing group discussions
- Module 6: Using technical language

The approach is one of embedded (teaching) learning materials for speaking and listening, enhancing the skills of staff and providing ideas and activities that can be used with offenders to develop their speaking and listening skills. Research suggests that developing literacy and numeracy skills within the context of vocational learning is more valued and effective.[1] Adapting activities to reflect accredited programmes, work-based or vocational learning is more likely to be engaging and relevant to offenders in custody and community settings. There are activities in the pack that can be modified for individuals as well as groups.

This pack consists of:

- An Introduction and six modules (available as both Word and PDF files);
- video clips; and
- audio files.

[1] Hurry, J. et al, *Improving the literacy and numeracy of young people in custody and in the community,* NRDC, 2010

The video clips and audio files have been produced to support specific activities in some of the modules. Suggestions for use are given in the outline of the activity. The video and audio materials may also be used in other modules, where appropriate.

The video and audio files accompanying the modules in this speaking and listening pack are available to download from the Excellence Gateway (http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk)

The topics for the modules in this pack have been identified through research with practitioners and experts in the field.

The pack has been developed for all staff working with offenders, irrespective of their role. The use of 'tutor' or 'teacher' in the materials may suggest an involvement in the delivery of Accredited Programmes or Skills for Life learning respectively, but the content has a wider application to all staff working, or in contact, with offenders in any context.

ⓘ *Skills for Life:*
This pack focuses on the functional English skill of speaking and listening, however you are likely to come across colleagues and offenders with a breadth of experience including key skills and literacy, language and numeracy. Several terms are in current use for describing adult literacy, language and numeracy. These include basic skills (a term still used in some settings); adult literacy, language and numeracy – variously abbreviated to LLN, ALN, ALAN; and Skills for Life. The term 'English, mathematics and ESOL' will replace these terms, although reference is made in the pack to Skills for Life.

Using the pack
The six modules in the pack provide self-study opportunities for staff working with offenders, enabling them to work at their own pace and to select areas of speaking and listening skills of particular interest or need. Not all the modules or activities must be completed. Staff can select those most appropriate to their needs and role.

Icons are used throughout the modules to reference other relevant topics in the pack and to provide guidance in speech, language and communication matters that might be helpful.

Modules could be adapted for group delivery. This would depend on the identified training needs and staff development activities planned in any organisation. Many of the activities would lend themselves to a group setting.

To support staff to use ideas in the pack with the offenders with whom they work, the activities are adaptable so they can be altered to meet the needs of different programmes, classes, learners and situations, etc. Hints, tips and notes are identified throughout the modules providing advice on making activities and information accessible to a range of individuals. Further hints and tips on adapting activities are outlined in module 1.

The resources section in the appendix details further resources which could be used or adapted to develop speaking and listening skills. A resource sheet on body postures is also included in module 1.

An action plan is included at the end of each module so that staff can note down any further training needs or other modules they want to complete.

Reflective practice
'Reflective practice is important to the development of all professionals because it enables us to learn from experience. Although we all learn from experience, more and more experience does not guarantee more and more learning. Twenty years of teaching may not equate to twenty years of learning about teaching but may be only one year repeated twenty times.'[2]

Reflection and reflective practice give you the opportunity to learn from experience and to use that understanding in future tasks or activities.

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[2] Beaty, L., *Developing your teaching through reflective practice,* SEDA, Birmingham, 1997.

During your working day there may have been occasions when you thought *'that went well'* or there may have been times when you thought *'that could have gone better'*. Reflective practice enables you to look at what you did in your interaction with offenders, to think about why you did it, and to decide if it worked – a process of self-evaluation. This will help you to identify any changes you may need or want to make in your practice.

Reflecting on your interaction with offenders will help you to:

- stand back from the interaction and think about what you did;

- identify what was successful;

- consider any areas for development;

- identify any barriers to your own progress;

- decide how you will overcome them.

In each of the modules there is an opportunity to reflect on your use of a particular aspect of speaking and listening and record your thoughts in a reflective log.

'The development of speaking and listening skills is a vital part of the curriculum as they are not only skills in their own right but also "an essential aspect of improving reading and writing skills".'
Adult Literacy Core Curriculum (DfES, 2001)

Try it out!
Think about an activity that you have undertaken recently. It could be related to your work, e.g. planning and delivering training, or to your personal life, e.g. planning and going on holiday.

Think about:

- the differences between the experience you planned, or expected, and the experience you had;

- what you learned from the differences between the two;

- what you would do differently if you were to take part in this type of activity again.

From the thoughts you have noted, what key learning points are there?

Background

The ability to speak and listen effectively is one of the most fundamental of the literacy skills. With adults, it is often the least considered or identified when discussing 'literacy' issues, despite the fact that difficulties with speaking and listening have a profound effect on the way adults function in everyday life and in society as a whole.

Speaking and listening skills are being assessed in the national tests in Functional English.[3] This has significant implications for the delivery and assessment of speaking and listening skills. The emphasis on using these skills in practical, realistic situations suits the offender context and should provide added scope for interventions and rehabilitation programmes to embed speaking and listening skills development.

In any one month, around 85,000 people are in prison.[4] Annually, more than 200,000 are on probation.[5] In some settings, e.g. in the young people's estate, the aim is to screen all offenders for low literacy and numeracy levels on admission to custody, although the picture is more variable across the adult estate where provision is more voluntary or patchy. Offenders on community orders are screened for learning needs as part of pre-sentence activity and/or while on supervision. Statistics show that needs are very high. Two-thirds of offenders in custody have numeracy skills at or below the level expected of an 11-year-old. One half have a reading ability and 82% have a writing ability at or below this level.[6] Offenders who have speaking and language skills below this level may have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) such as dyslexia or autistic spectrum disorders, which make communication particularly challenging for them.

This lack of skills is a barrier to the offender getting a job and plays a significant role in the possibility of re-offending.[7] The inability to communicate adequately can result in aggression and frustration. A lack of awareness of their own and others' communication skills, such as poor body language, can mean that offenders may appear to others as aggressive when this is not the intention. A simple flowchart illustrating a possible chain of events when an offender's communication needs are not met can be found in Positive Practice, Positive Outcomes: A handbook for Professionals in the Criminal Justice System working with offenders with Learning Disabilities.[8]

An offender with skills at approximately Level 1 may only be able to use language at a practical level in day-to-day exchanges. An adult functioning at Level 1 for speaking and listening will be comfortable using these skills in a limited range of contexts, such as work and social roles, whereas an adult working at Level 2 will be comfortable in a wide range of formal and social exchanges.

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[3] Functional English is the replacement for the Communication Key Skill and *Skills for Life* Literacy (Functional English criteria can be downloaded from http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)

[4] *Prison population figures,* Ministry of Justice, 2012

[5] *Offender management statistics (quarterly) – October to December 2011,* Ministry of Justice, 2012

[6] *Prison Population Statistics,* House of Commons Library, February 2012

[7] *Breaking the Cycle,* Ministry of Justice Green Paper, 2010

[8] *Positive Practice, Positive Outcomes A handbook for Professionals in the Criminal Justice System working with offenders with Learning Disabilities,* Department of Health, 2011, p31.

A comparison of the skill levels is provided for each level of the National Standards for literacy in the following table:

National Standards	Skill Level
Entry 1	Survival level
Entry 2	Can only communicate in simple, straightforward language
Entry 3	Can use familiar, everyday language and understand a wider range of language types.
Level 1	Can use a wider range of language, body language and understand some academic/specialist language.
Level 2	Skills are secure and transferable. Access to wider education and training.

Research has clearly demonstrated the impact that this lack of skills can have on offenders. A project for the Home Office researched the literacy levels (reading, writing, speaking and listening) of 473 offenders on community supervision. They were referred to three Community General Offending Behaviour Programmes (GOBPs), and the literacy demands of those GOBPs were also analysed.[9] A speaking and listening checklist, developed from the ESOL diagnostic assessment materials and contextualised to the offender population, was used to assess offenders' speaking and listening levels.

The research concluded that, of the offenders assessed for speaking and listening, 35% were probably below Level 1 of the National Standards for speaking and listening. Those probably at Level 2 or above accounted for 25% of the sample. However, depending on the particular GOBP, 89% or more sessions had speaking and listening demands at Level 2, and over 45% of sessions had demands at Level 3 or beyond. Programme tutors were often required to mediate the speaking and listening demands of programmes across a range of ability levels, in order to respond to these needs and enable offenders to access content.

[9] Davies, K., Lewis, J., Byatt, J., Purvis, E. and Cole, B., *Finding 233: An Evaluation of the Literacy Demands of General Offending Behaviour Programmes,* Home Office, London, 2004.

If a high percentage of offenders cannot access the oral content of GOBPs, they cannot benefit fully from the programmes that have been designed to reduce re-offending. Furthermore, if programme tutors find it challenging to mediate the oral demands of programmes, guidance to help them do this would be useful. This may include support to enable tutors to meet these challenges and raise their awareness of speaking and listening, together with practical strategies to ensure that offenders understand oral information. If offenders have difficulty with speaking and listening, it is important to assess these skills so that it is clear which offenders need support, and at what level.

The criminal justice system uses a wide range of specific terminology. For example, specific terms are used for the sentencing process (e.g. standard delivery report, proposal, disposal, case adjourned) and the names of orders (e.g. community order, supervision, unpaid work and drug rehabilitation requirement). If offenders have poor speaking and listening skills and/or speech, language and communication needs, it will be difficult for them to understand and use the language of the criminal justice system appropriately.

If offenders are on supervision, they have to understand information about their order and be aware of, for instance, the place, date and time of appointments. This is challenging for offenders with poor literacy skills, including poor speaking and listening skills.

Offenders have to interact appropriately with a wide range of individuals in the criminal justice system (e.g. judges and magistrates, prison officers, probation staff, education staff and receptionists). If offenders have poor speaking and listening skills, it is not easy for them to understand what constitutes appropriate, context-specific interaction.

It is for all these reasons that speaking and listening skills development is essential if offenders are to address their offending behaviour during their sentence and to effectively reintegrate into society when they are released.

Employability skills

Improving communication skills may not rank highly on the offender's priority list. 'Selling' the idea of developing speaking and listening skills can be a hard task. However, communication skills are a vital part of resettlement and considerably improve job opportunities.

Offenders have a variety of social and economic problems such as a lack of or low qualifications, lack of employment, accommodation needs and drugs and/or alcohol misuse. These factors are also associated with higher rates of re-offending on release from prison. These problems need to be taken into account and tackled when developing and delivering strategies for reducing re-offending.[10] Supporting offenders to develop their speaking and listening skills can be a key factor in enabling offenders to seek work on release or completion of their sentence.

Generic employability skills are now part of the national agenda in education for secondary, further and higher education. Based on a review of some of the most influential definitions of employability skills, recent research by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills[11] suggests that employability skills are "the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job". The Commission suggests that the underpinning skills of numeracy, language and basic IT skills are fundamental to employability, although there are also additional skills associated with attitudes and behaviours (self-management, thinking and problem solving, working together and communicating and understanding the business) which they underpin.

The Blueprint for Careers[12] is an approach that builds upon international practice and has been developed by LSIS for the UK context. It offers individuals a framework for developing the employability and career management skills they need as they navigate their way through life, learning and work. The framework consists of eleven career learning competencies designed to guide an individual's personal development and decision making. The competencies are organised under three key headings, **understanding and developing myself, exploring life, learning and work, and developing and managing my career**. The Blueprint is useful for individuals, but it is also valuable for a range of learning organisations and workplaces by offering an approach to supporting the career development of learners and staff.

LSIS has also produced a range of CPD modules on topics related to career development that are available on the Excellence Gateway, http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1331.

The Employer Skills Survey 2011 Report[13] used employer surveys to identify the most needed skills in relation to skills shortage vacancies and, aside from job specific (60%), these were: technical or practical skills 46%, planning and organisation skills 41%, customer handling skills 40%, oral communication skills 38%, problem solving skills 37% and written communication skills 33%.

[10] *Green Paper Evidence Report; Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders,* Ministry of Justice, 2010
[11] *The Employability Challenge,* UK Commission for Employment and Skills , 2009
[12] Reports and documents relating to the Blueprint for Careers can be found in the Career Development section of the Excellence Gateway http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1332
[13] *UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey 2011: UK Results,* UKCES, 2012, p60

The National Employers Skills Survey for England[14] found that, of the employers who identified the need to upskill at least one employee in the next 12 months, 63% indicated that the skills most likely to be improved would be technical, practical and job-specific skills. However, communication skills were also quite frequently mentioned (by 32% of those employers identifying the need to upskill). The type of communication mentioned was more often oral than written communication (27% and 21% respectively).

The impact of these skills shortages can be severe and range from customer service difficulties and loss of business to increased operating costs and quality standard problems.

These key areas of skill shortage require effective speaking and listening skills and development of these skills can be important to an employer's business success, enabling employees to meet the demands of their job.

Improved communication for work
Staff need speaking and listening skills to express themselves, listen actively and react appropriately to what they are told. Without these skills it is easy to upset or lose customers and annoy fellow workers; team efforts can be wasted.

Speaking and listening skills
Staff are often asked to do more than understand verbal instructions and take simple messages. They may need to give presentations, conduct meetings, deal with customers, negotiate with suppliers or influence team members.

Some of the key speaking and listening skills needed in most places of work are:

- Respond to questions from colleagues and customers
- Follow verbal instructions
- Ask questions
- Greet colleagues and customers appropriately
- Talk to colleagues and customers, using appropriate and polite language
- Collaborate with colleagues on work-related activities
- Take verbal messages and pass them on to colleagues
- Use technical language
- Give verbal instructions or other information
- Contribute to meetings
- Contribute to training sessions
- Participate effectively in appraisals and reviews.

[14] *National Employers Skills Survey for England 2009: Key Findings,* UKCES, 2010, p.35.

Identifying speaking and listening skills development needs

The curriculum and the assessment tools, which are listed in the resources section in the appendix can be used to support the assessment of an offender's speaking and listening skills.

The two speaking and listening checklists that follow have been developed through other project work and may be helpful for staff signposting offenders to *Skills for Life* learning. Negative responses to several of the questions may indicate a speaking and listening need. The offender can then be referred by staff for further assessment, which would provide a more rigorous indicator of the offender's speaking and listening level. The checklists are not substitutes for screening, initial assessment or diagnostic assessment tools. *Skills for Life* assessments may be completed by trained staff, a *Skills for Life* provider or Education Department.

Checklist adapted from Speech and Language Therapy for Young Offenders, a research project led by the University of Surrey[15]

- Can you follow prison regimes and routines easily?
- Do other people understand what you say?
- Do you think your voice sounds okay?
- Do you get stuck on words? E.g. CCCCcan I. . .
- Do you always understand what is said to you?
- Can you tell people what you want or need?
- Can you talk to other people about how you feel?
- Do you feel on equal terms when you are talking to someone?

- Do you find it easy to talk to staff?
- Do you find it easy to talk to other offenders?
- Do you sometimes find it hard to think of the word you want to say?

Checklist adapted from Entry to Employment materials developed by the Standards Unit[16]

Personal and social skills: talking with others
Does the offender:

- Invite other people to make a contribution
- Wait for others to have their say
- Say most in the conversation
- Interrupt other people
- Use eye contact to encourage and support others
- Avoid eye contact
- Use body language and facial expression to acknowledge others and support the message being conveyed

Is the offender:

- Unaware of body language: for example, personal space
- Able to initiate a conversation with familiar and unfamiliar people

Personal and social skills: discussions and questions

Negotiating and compromising

Does the offender:

- Help others resolve differences of opinion
- Make attempts to resolve disputes with others
- Sometimes meet others halfway
- Rigidly sticks to own ideas, with no attempt to resolve differences

Asking questions

Does the offender:

- Ask questions at the right time for the right reasons
- Sometimes ask questions
- Not ask questions or seek clarification

Responding to questions

Does the offender:

- Respond to questions effectively
- Usually respond to questions
- Respond to some questions
- Not respond to questions

Making changes in the light of the views of others

Does the offender:

- Recognise the benefits of taking account of the ideas of others to improve or complete a task
- Sometimes incorporate the ideas of others
- Rarely take account of the views and ideas of others, even when they are the consensus

Identifying learners' skills – self-assessment sort cards[17]

This is an activity taken from *Teaching speaking and listening: a toolkit for practitioners.* The toolkit was produced as part of the Key Skills Support Programme and contains a wealth of resources to make teaching speaking and listening explicit, relevant and engaging for learners. Although the toolkit was developed primarily for teachers, tutors, instructors and work-based learning staff, it has many activities that could be adapted for staff working with offenders to use in their own staff development activities or with offenders.

The toolkit can be accessed from The Excellence Gateway Treasury at: **http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=224140**.

The activity referenced here can be used, with offenders, as a self-assessment activity that will enable them to think about their own speaking and listening skills.

The activity is based on a card sort exercise. There is a set of cards that can be used flexibly (added to or used in selection) on which there are statements that relate to the skills involved in speaking and listening. Offenders can decide whether they feel that the statement applies to them always, sometimes or hardly ever.

Discussion with the offenders is a vital aspect of this activity and it may be better used in one-to-one situations. It could provide an additional tool to work with an offender after other assessment tools, such as one of the checklists highlighted earlier, indicate further support may be needed.

[17] *Teaching speaking and listening: a toolkit for practitioners* (Crown copyright 2007)

Module 1
Speaking and listening skills in context

Part 1
Why develop speaking and listening skills?
Good speaking and listening skills are central to successful communication at work, at home and in the community.

Imagine a day at work without any speaking and listening – how much of your work and that of your colleagues would get done?

Try it out!
Agree with colleagues to complete a simple activity in your working day without using speaking and listening skills. It could be anything relevant to your working day e.g. making arrangements for lunch or planning the agenda for a forthcoming meeting. Did you and your colleagues manage to complete the activity? How much more difficult was the activity without using speaking and listening skills?

This module suggests some ways speaking and listening could be introduced into busy working schedules. Many of the activities in the other modules of this pack, as well as those in this module, could be used in staff meetings or training sessions or even in small groups focussing on specific issues in the offender regime where speaking and listening are critical e.g. adjudications (custody) or Programmes (community).

Activities in all modules can be tailored to time, audience and context. Adapting and tweaking the ideas and suggestions given will provide a range of tools that could be used to help you communicate with your colleagues as well as with the offenders you work with. Each **Try it out** activity should take only a short time, but the **Ideas check** that follows indicates how this might raise awareness of speaking and listening with colleagues.

Many people think of speaking and listening as separate skills, but they are interdependent and essential to comprehension. Speaking and listening skills can be used in public speaking to a large audience, in small groups or one-to-one. They are used in the whole range of settings which, in an offender context, can vary from one-to-many in a courtroom to one-to-one in a review meeting. Speaking and listening skills are needed to achieve a purpose, to problem solve, to persuade and to inform. They are the skills needed for everyday life e.g. understanding instructions, asking for information or checking understanding. Speaking and listening is an interactive process which requires an individual to alternate between being a listener and being a speaker. It's hard to be both a speaker and a listener when you are on your own!

Offenders will need to use their speaking and listening skills in many contexts and often under stress. Being able to communicate verbally and non-verbally is very important in these contexts. Having effective skills to question, listen and understand can help offenders to address their offending behaviour and look to change their future life on completion of their sentence.

Try it out!

To introduce colleagues to some of the speaking and listening skills that offenders will need to use, copy and cut out the following cards. Ask colleagues to discuss the skills on the cards and place them into a diamond shape (as shown across the page) from **Most important** to **Least important** for the offenders with whom they work.

When all the cards have been ordered, discuss the results.

- Are there some speaking and listening skills that are more important for offenders than others?

- If a few groups complete the activity, are there key differences in the ordering of the cards?

- Do any colleagues have accounts of difficulties offenders may have had in any of the skills?

Answering questions	Re-telling an account	Discussing their offence
Reading out an oath	Asking questions	Following verbal instructions
Contributing to a discussion	Giving consent	Using appropriate language

Speaking and listening skills in order

Most Important
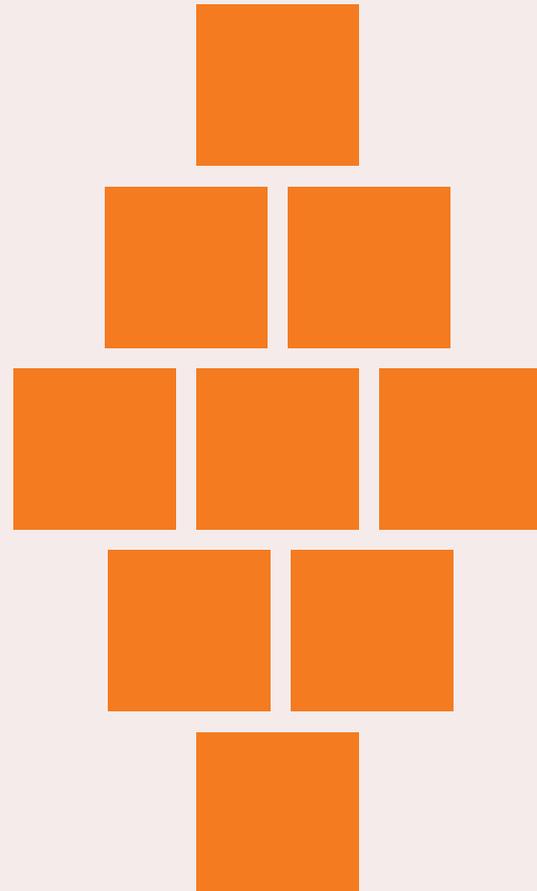
Least important

Ideas check

The speaking and listening skills on the cards are only a sample of the skills offenders will need to develop and use. This activity could be used to raise awareness of these different skills and to discuss when and where they may be used.

If blank cards are handed out, can colleagues come up with any other speaking and listening skills they feel are important? If so, ask them to give their reasons.

If colleagues were to repeat the activity but considering instead the skills and their importance in their own life and work, would they be placed in a different order?

Spoken and written language

We use language to communicate every day, both written and spoken, and we may well have forgotten how we learnt it in the first place! Certainly we are unlikely to remember the first words we spoke and they wouldn't have been taught to us in any formal way, unlike learning to read and write. Speaking and listening skills, although the first of the communication skills we acquire, are less likely to be taught with the same emphasis and rigour as reading and writing.

Although there are differences between spoken and written language, research[1] has shown that offenders with poor reading and writing skills will often have poor speaking and listening skills too.

Characteristics of spoken language

The key characteristics of spoken, as opposed to written, language are that spoken language:[2]

- takes place in real time and space

- usually involves face-to-face communication

- involves speakers and listeners adjusting to context – for example, who, when, where.

Speakers give shape and structure when they talk

- They explicitly signpost things for the listener using words such as 'now' and 'so' to indicate a change of topic.

- What is said can be meaningful even if it's half-finished or seems incomplete. Speakers often avoid over-elaborating and rely on mutual understanding of the context.

- Single words or phrases such as 'anyway', 'alright' or 'really' can be highly meaningful.

Speaking takes place in real time and place

- Spoken language is mostly unplanned because it usually happens with little opportunity for advance planning or editing.

- Because they are unplanned, spoken exchanges tend to be open and fluid. Speakers can change direction and topic, return to things they'd forgotten, insert anecdotes and so on.

- Spoken language is varied in style. Speakers can adapt and switch from one level of formality to another as the situation demands.

Communicating face to face

- Speaking is essentially a collaborative and interactive process. It is an exchange. We may finish each other's comments, interrupt, disagree with or extend what is said.

- Speakers get and give feedback as they talk and listen using comments like 'Exactly', 'Right', 'Good', 'Oh I see' and simple vocalisations such as 'Mmmm', 'Uh', 'Oh'.

- Speakers use more than words: pitch and tone of voice, volume, silence, eye contact, gestures and body movements all convey meaning. Listeners give non-verbal feedback such as nodding the head.

Research carried out by Professor Ron Carter of the University of Nottingham highlights just how different spoken English can be from written English.[3] He suggests that written language has provided the benchmark for what we have come to think of as 'standard' language. He argues that this has meant that spoken language hasn't been considered to have the same worth. However, with the advent of technological advances in the second half of the twentieth century, this view is now beginning to change. Extensive collections of examples of people speaking in formal and informal contexts have been made, including the 700-million-word Cambridge International Corpus (CIC), developed by Cambridge University Press, which contains several million words of spoken English.

From the work by Cambridge International Corpus, a table has been produced of the top forty spoken and written words. Many of the spoken words in the list are called discourse markers. These are used to mark when we change the subject we are talking about or to move onto a different part of business. They act like a kind of spoken punctuation in place of full stops and commas.

[1] Davies, K., Lewis, J., Byatt, J., Purvis, E. and Cole, B., *Finding 233: An Evaluation of the Literacy Demands of General Offending Behaviour Programmes,* Home Office, London, 2004.

[2] *Teaching speaking and listening: a toolkit for practitioners* (Crown copyright 2007), Adapted from Introducing the grammar of talk (QCA 2004)

[3] *The sound and the silence: key perspectives on speaking and listening and Skills for Life* (QIA, 2008)

Try it out!

Using the table that follows of the top 40 most used written and spoken words taken from the CIC, ask colleagues to compare each column and to reduce the list to those words that only appear in one column or the other, but not both.

When the final table has been agreed, discuss the result:

- Are there any words remaining that are surprising?
- What are the key differences between the remaining spoken and written words?
- What function do the words have?
- From the original list of spoken words, how might they be used in conversation to show agreement, to move on to a different topic, or to start or end a conversation?
- Are there spoken words that would be used with a different meaning in writing?

Top 40 spoken and written words (CIC)

Spoken words		Written words
the	1	the
I	2	to
and	3	and
you	4	of
it	5	a
to	6	in
a	7	was
yeah	8	it
that	9	I
of	10	he
in	11	that
was	12	she
it's	13	for
know	14	on
mm	15	her
is	16	you
er	17	is
but	18	with
so	19	his
they	20	had
on	21	as
oh	22	at
we	23	but
have	24	be
no	25	have
laughs	26	from
well	27	not
like	28	they
what	29	by
do	30	this
right	31	are
just	32	were
he	33	all
for	34	him
erm	35	up
be	36	an
this	37	there
all	38	said
there	39	one
got	40	been

Ideas check
The list of the top 40 spoken and written words shows how different speaking can be from writing. This activity could be used to raise awareness of these differences and of the importance of discourse markers in conversation. Offenders may not use these effectively in their oral skills, but they may also misinterpret these markers when your colleagues are speaking to them.

Let's start at the beginning…
Discussions we have usually have a starting point, a middle section where we keep the discussion going, and an end. Within the discussion we may want to continue with a topic or move on to another one. For each of these stages there are different words and phrases we use to signal that we intend to do something.

Words and phrases we may use to start a discussion could include:

- Hello, today we need to talk about…
- Welcome, let me start the discussion…
- First of all can I say…
- Let me begin by saying that…
- To introduce the subject I would like to say…

Words and phrases we may use to continue with a topic could include:

- Another thought I've had is.…
- I'd like to add that…
- And then there is also…
- I'd suggest that…as well
- As well as…

Words and phrases we may use to change to a different topic could include:

- But another thing.…
- And now I'd like to…
- Is there anything different you…
- The next item…
- I'm going to move on to…

Words and phrases we may use to close a discussion could include:

- And that concludes.…
- It just remains for me to…
- And finally…
- The next time we will…
- You will have noted that…

These signalling words or phrases may be challenging for offenders with poor speaking and listening skills to recognise and that may be when misunderstandings and difficulties could arise.

Try it out!
Ask colleagues to note down any signalling words or phrases they may hear used in discussions during a 24-hour period. These may be in meetings, or formal and informal work-related discussions, or they could be discussions outside work in leisure or watching the television/listening to the radio.

Share the words collected and discuss the results:

- Are there any words or phrases that are used more than others?
- Are some words or phrases less effective than others?
- How easily might any of the words or phrases be misunderstood or be misleading?
- What is the importance of context in understanding what is happening in the discussion?
- How might signalling in discussions be made clearer when talking to offenders?

Ideas check
The words and phrases used in discussions as signals can be open to misinterpretation. This activity could be used to raise awareness of how some misunderstandings or difficulties might occur. Offenders may not always recognise or interpret these signals correctly and the activity may help colleagues avoid any issues that might arise through a lack of understanding.

Some potential misunderstandings

Offenders will have different levels of speaking and listening skills. This difference between the speaking and listening skills that you and colleagues might use and those of the offenders with whom you work could lead to misunderstandings. These misunderstandings could eventually have serious consequences such as an offender in a community context failing to complete his order and returning to custody, or an offender in a custody failing to understand a spoken instruction and getting into serious trouble on the wings leading to an adjudication.

Being able to adapt speaking and listening on a daily basis is something all staff working with offenders do as a matter of routine, and often won't give it a second thought. Stopping for a moment and rephrasing or breaking down spoken information into smaller chunks may well enable the offender to grasp the whole meaning of what has been said and avoid problems in the future.

Try it out!

These are examples of exchanges between staff and offenders. The levels given are those detailed in the Skills for Life Curriculum. Ask colleagues to consider each example and the additional information about what an offender might be able to do at the level indicated. Also to think about the possible problem or misunderstanding that might arise.

Example 1: At Entry 1 an adult can:

- Follow simple details and instructions
- Respond to straightforward requests
- Ask simple questions
- Speak clearly in simple everyday exchanges

What might be the problem with this exchange between a Programmes Tutor and an offender at this level?

Tutor "Are you feeling better now?"

Offender "Yes"

"We all meet in the training room at 11 o'clock every morning"

"Ok"
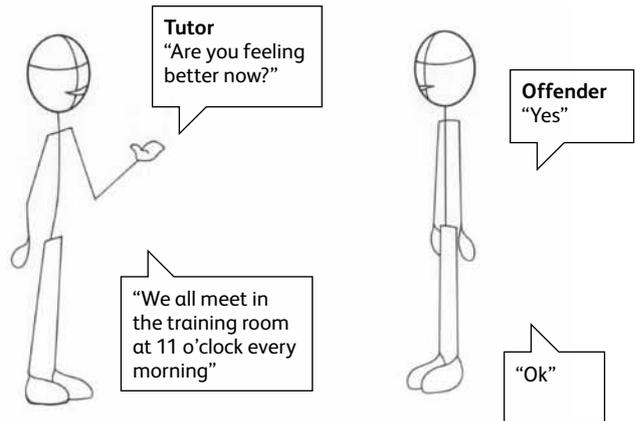
Example 2: At Entry 2 an adult should, in addition to the skills outlined at Entry 1, be able to:

- Ask simple questions to obtain information and to clarify understanding
- Identify feelings and express some opinions

Tutor "What do you think is the best way of doing that?"

Offender "Did you say the best way?"

"What would work best in that situation?"

" Umm…"
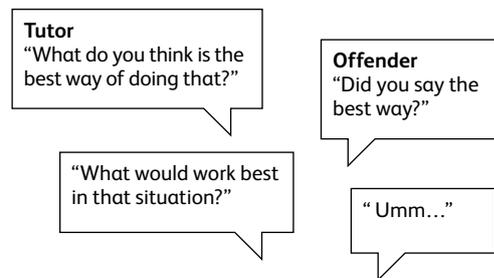
Example 3: At Entry 3 an adult should have roughly the attainment of a competent 8 – 10 year old. Language is still straightforward and familiar with no complexity, no hidden meaning and no inference.

Tutor "We have arranged for you to have an assessment this Friday morning at 10 o'clock. Do you know how to get here? Have you met Mr Jones, your offender manager, yet?"

Offender "Yes, he's the one with the grey hair and moustache"

Ideas check

The examples used demonstrate how easy it is for misunderstandings to arise in spoken language. This activity could be used to raise awareness of how important it is to be aware of your own language use and the possible speaking and listening level of the offender in exchanges of important information or requests.

- Example 1: the offender may forget room and/or time

- Example 2: Often at this level we repeat things in a different way because we want to help the listener to understand but if the adult is at Entry 1 or 2 then he can think you are asking a completely different question and can get even more confused! For example in this exchange, it might be better to repeat the words already used: "Yes, can you think of the best way?"

- Example 3: Although the offender has answered the tutor's question and appears to have understood, he didn't confirm that he knew how to get to the training room so may have difficulty finding it at the appointed time. At Entry 3, offenders may not be able to respond to multiple questions and remember everything that has been said.

More examples can be found in the booklet, Sentence Trouble, produced by The Communication Trust.[4]

This is an example when a tutor successfully adjusted the language used to the level suitable for the offender.

Tutor
"You must justify your reasons for saying that."
(Level 1)

"You must say why you think like that."
(Entry 3)

Offender
"What?"

"Oh, OK then."
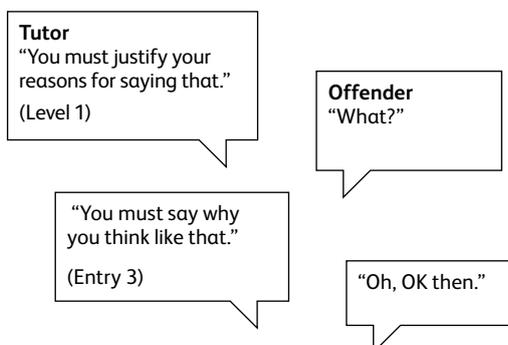
Ideas check

It may be interesting and helpful to record some short verbal exchanges with offenders and to review the transcripts of the conversation. These could be discussed and any opportunities identified where it would have been beneficial to moderate the language used.

ⓘ For further information on the Skills for Life levels, see the introduction and the appendix.

Speaking and listening in action

During a busy working day you and colleagues will speak and listen to a large number of different people for a variety of purpose. How speaking and listening skills are used at each of these exchanges will depend on many things, including:

- using technical words and phrases;

- using tone of voice;

- being formal or casual;

- using swear words or colloquialisms;

- using body language e.g. waving hands, facial expressions;

- observing confidentiality.

There are occasions, for example, where you might be speaking to the same person in a formal exchange and the tone, vocabulary and body language may be different to that you might use in an informal conversation. At an important staff meeting with your manager present, you would be unlikely to slouch in your chair, look bored and constantly interrupt with colloquial phrases. Offenders may find it challenging to sort out when to use certain aspects of tone, language and non-verbal communication, and this may appear disrespectful, ignorant and downright rude at times!

4 *Sentence Trouble,* The Communication Trust (2009)

Try it out!

Ask colleagues to draw a blank spider diagram on a sheet of paper. 'Who I talk to' should be entered into the centre circle. The different people with whom your colleagues talked during their working day should be entered into circles on different arms of the spidergram and detail added about what the interactions were e.g. review meeting, training session, ordering items, making appointments, having lunch in the staff room. For each of these, further information can be entered about the speaking and listening aspects with an initial focus on speaking, for example:

- whether technical language was used or if it was a casual exchange requiring less formal language;

- the tone of voice required e.g. quiet and calm or loud and hurried;

- the body language observed and how that might have been interpreted;

- the body language and non-verbal communication signals you might have been giving during the exchange;

- whether holding a confidential conversation was different to a casual exchange with a friend and why?

Discuss the resulting spider diagrams and then ask colleagues to repeat the activity but this time focussing on listening, with 'Who I listen to' in the centre circle. They could do this on the same spider diagram but in a different coloured pen.

- When this has been completed, compare and discuss the results.

- What key differences are there between the role of a speaker and that of a listener?

- Were there occasions when inappropriate language, etc. was used?

- How did a formal exchange vary the technicality of the language used?

- How much information did you gather from the non-verbal communication signals?

- How did the exchanges with colleagues vary to those with offenders?

Ideas check

We use different language, tone and non-verbal communication depending on the people to whom we talk and the setting or context within which we hold that conversation. This activity could be used to raise awareness of the importance of these factors and how easy it can be for misunderstandings or confusions to arise, and the need to check understanding as any conversation progresses.

Ideas check

It may be interesting and helpful to compare the minutes of a recent meeting or part of a meeting with a transcript of that meeting. This may demonstrate how discourse markers and signalling words are used, how reported speech differs from the actual language used and how tone, technical language and formality can vary according to topic or context.

And finally…

"I never thought that he may not be being difficult for the sake of it and just doesn't understand what I'm talking about. I'd always assumed he was just a bolshy type." (Probation pilot of the technical language module)

Part 2
Introducing speaking and listening

This section sets out where speaking and listening skills may be used by offenders in key contexts and the importance for them of communicating effectively.

You and colleagues may feel that you would like to encourage speaking and listening skills development in the offenders with whom you work. Many of the activities in the pack can be adapted to a range of settings and contexts, but introducing the ideas may need careful thought. This section also provides ideas for introductory activities that could be used at the start of a session, for example, or as an introduction to broader employment skills.

You may also need to convince offenders of the importance of good speaking and listening skills and collecting clips from newspapers, magazines or journals that highlight aspects of speaking and listening may be helpful. This may be particularly relevant if it relates to employment and employability skills e.g. job adverts or employer reports. However, it is important that offenders understand that speaking and listening matter:

- so they can relate well to others, including in custody or community as well as at home and work;

- in order that they can explain things to others and make themselves understood;

- as there is less risk of misunderstandings arising with possible conflict or aggression as a result;

- because they will need to obtain information to complete a range of activities e.g. as applying for housing or interviews for a job;

- because they are more likely to be successful in work and in their own lives and relationships.

Activities that introduce these ideas may help offenders to engage in speaking and listening skills development. These could be as simple as asking for suggestions or made more challenging by using pre-prepared resources matching speaking and listening activities with jobs. You could also use the body posture cards on the following pages in an introductory activity.

Resource sheet – body postures
These pictures of body postures on the next two pages can be used to support work in several of the modules, e.g. to provide further non-verbal communication posture recognition cards, as a group discussion starter on appropriate non-verbal communication.
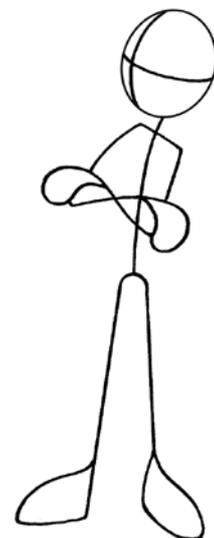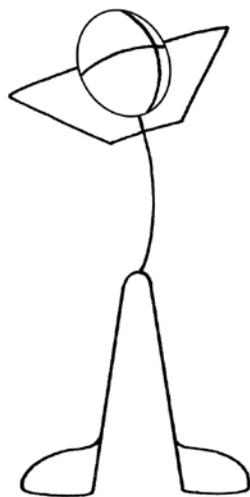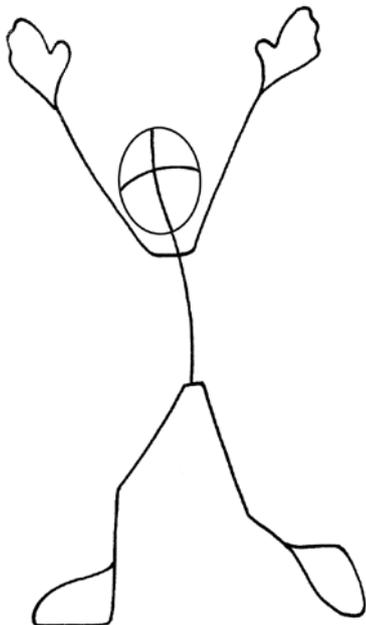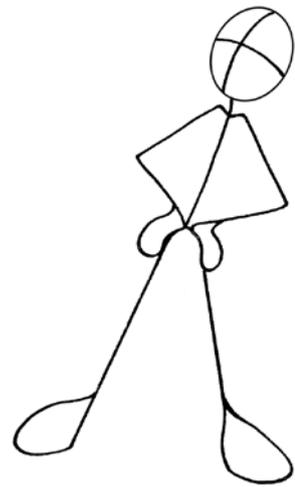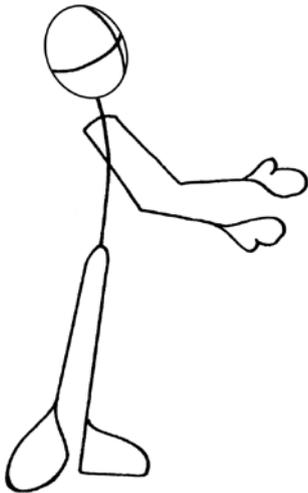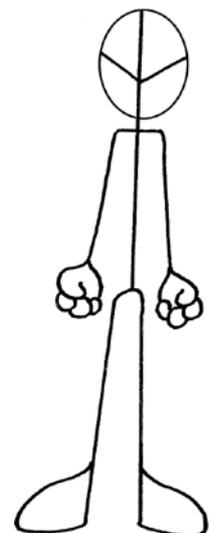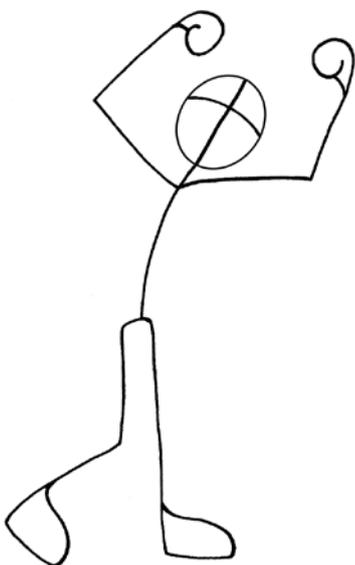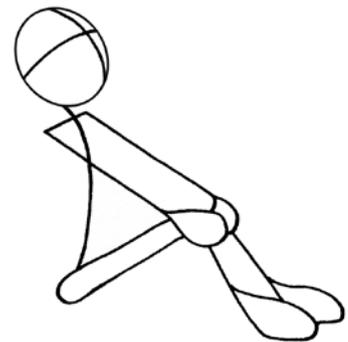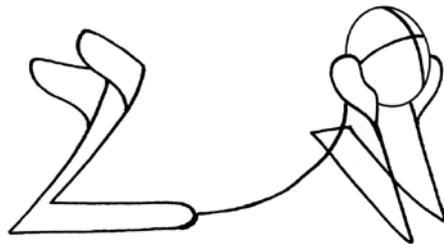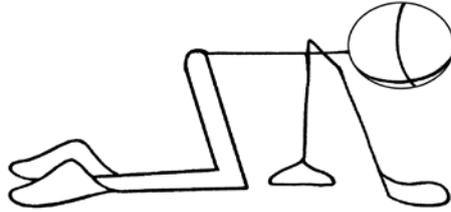
Planning speaking and listening sessions

There are many issues to consider when developing speaking and listening skills with an individual or a group of offenders. These issues and different contexts will be revisited throughout the pack.

During the action research phase of this project, practitioners working across the range of offender settings identified three key contexts where effective speaking and listening skills were important. These were:

Setting the Scene (STS): at the start of a session, interview, meeting, etc. by using appropriate speaking and listening skills. This will contribute to creating a comfortable environment for both staff and offenders engaged in the planned activity. Considerations at this stage could include:

- Creating a relaxed, safe environment which feels, so far as is possible within the constraints of the establishment, welcoming and purposeful, e.g. the appropriate use of non-verbal communication.

- Informing the offenders about the purpose of the meeting, interview, session, etc. and checking they understand.

- Paying attention to comfort, seating and housekeeping.

- Removing anxiety by explaining what is happening at appropriate stages throughout the session, meeting, interview, etc. Encouraging questions if the offender hasn't understood or isn't sure about what is being said or asked.

- Being aware of group dynamics so that interventions can be timely and supportive, but also may discourage escalation of any aggression or any misunderstandings, e.g. through an understanding of group roles and models of group formation.

- Using a friendly but professional approach to offenders to reassure them and encourage participation, e.g. using strategies to explain technical language appropriate to the levels of understanding of the offenders.

Working with Groups (WWG): in a variety of settings, including programmes, teaching and training, etc., using a range of speaking and listening skills. This will support group work and the development of offenders' speaking and listening skills in group tasks and discussions. Considerations in this context could include:

- Knowing the background of the group, e.g. their literacy levels, their aims and targets (both educational and sentence plan).

- Differentiating within questions, explanations, checking understanding, e.g. using open questions which give offenders the opportunity to respond in a range of ways according to their skill level.

- Ensuring that offenders understand the task or activity to be undertaken, e.g. explaining the task, using accessible language, paraphrasing, summarising.

- Allowing time for digression and understanding its value, e.g. providing opportunities for offenders to check their understanding of wider, but related issues.

- Making it acceptable for offenders to ask questions.

- Managing group dynamics, e.g. using strategies and activities to introduce the group members.

- Creating a relaxed, safe environment.

- Using appropriate non-verbal communication, e.g. to encourage, to show interest, to show approval.

Working with Individuals (WWI): in a one-to-one setting, including interviews, teaching and training, assessment, etc., using focused speaking and listening skills. This will provide staff with strategies to communicate effectively with offenders in contexts which may be unfamiliar and/or daunting. It will also support offenders to understand and develop speaking and listening skills which will transfer in the community. Considerations in this setting could include:

- Taking account of the educational level of the individual, any learning difficulty, and the personal history, e.g. lack of formal secondary education, social skills needs, etc.

- Creating a relaxed, safe environment.

- Tailoring the vocabulary used to suit the individual, e.g. explanations of unfamiliar terminology, adapting the explanations by repeating or rephrasing, checking understanding through open questioning.

- Using appropriate non-verbal communication, e.g. to reassure using appropriate tone of voice, to show interest using oral but non-verbal sounds such as 'mmm', 'ah-ah', 'er'.

- Allowing offenders time to think before responding, e.g. using pauses effectively rather than repeating questions too quickly.

- Take account of the offender's aspirations for the future. This can provide a realistic context and motivation for developing speaking and listening skills.

Speaking and listening introductory session

This is a framework for a session introducing speaking and listening development. Although you could use it as an introductory session with colleagues, it would be a good starting point to introduce the topic to offenders as part of a different but related session e.g. employability or programmes. Below are points to consider when planning and delivering the session.

Preparation for the session:
This could include:

- lighting;

- seating arrangements;

- board/flip chart position;

- temperature;

- distractions;

- educational background;

- learning difficulties and/or disabilities;

- resources;

- any sight or hearing impairments.

Introduction to the session:
You will need to consider elements from the contexts of Setting the Scene (STS), Working with Individuals (WWI) and Working with Groups (WWG), such as:

- a friendly approach to learners;

- your position in the room;

- differentiation within questions and tasks;

- explaining the activity/tasks clearly;

- explaining any technical language;

- allowing time for offenders' questions and their thought time for responses;

- making it acceptable for offenders to ask questions;

- managing the group dynamics.

Speaking and listening skills:
Groups and/or individuals may not see development of speaking and listening skills as appropriate for them. You may need to 'sell' the idea to them using some of the following points as examples, although you may have other examples relevant to your group's interests and concerns, such as:

- resettlement;

- getting and keeping a job;

- communicating in formal situations;

- understanding instructions.

Introductory activity: how we communicate

Activity 1
Introduce the activity by saying that the group will be talking about communication.

Draw a circle in the centre of the board or flip chart and write 'How we communicate' in the circle. Ask the group to define it (i.e. passing of information from one group/person to another). With each method of communicating identified by the group add a connecting circle or oval with the method written in the circle/oval. An example is shown below:

Note that your group may identify some areas of communication that overlap, for example 'non-verbal communication' and 'gestures'. Accept these as valid suggestions; they may be helpful later in the session.

- Circle or highlight what the group will be focusing on in the forthcoming session/s, e.g. non-verbal communication (NVC).

- Explore what NVC is by using a similar spider-type diagram, with NVC at the centre.

- Use any suitable visual aids to help recall and understanding, e.g. magazine pictures or drawings.

- Model some of the NVC identified by the group, e.g. demonstrate posture, fidgeting, etc., or suggest they could model it!

- Lead on to the group activity. You could use some of the activities in the NVC module at this stage.
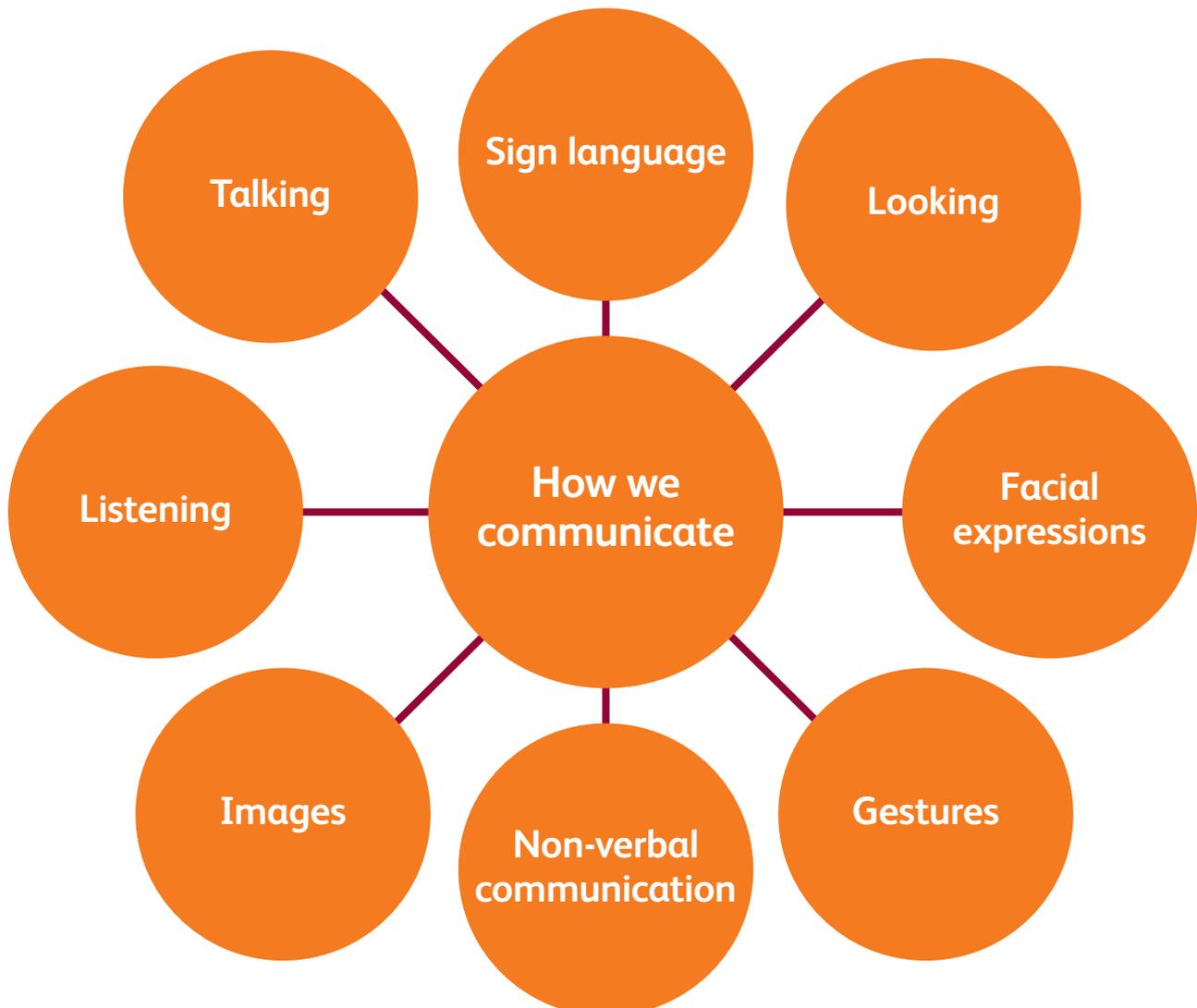
Activity 1: extension

You will need to plan your session to include a video clip for this activity.

- Record a short segment of a TV programme, such as a soap opera, which will highlight the area of communication that is the focus of the session.

- Introduce the activity by saying that the group will be talking about ways in which we communicate through speaking and listening, e.g. body language, active listening, taking part in group discussions.

- Draw a circle in the centre of the board or flip chart and write 'How we communicate' in the circle. Ask the group to define it (i.e. passing of information from one group/person to another). With each method of communicating identified by the group add a connecting circle or oval with the method written in the circle/oval, as shown in the example previously.

- Circle or highlight what the group will be focusing on in the forthcoming session/s, e.g. non-verbal communication (NVC).

- Play the video clip of the TV programme you have taped and ask offenders to watch the programme with the sound turned off.

- Ask the group to talk about what they think was going on, e.g. topic of conversation, mood, etc.

- Ask them about the NVC that they noticed in the clip.

- Explore what NVC is by using a similar spider-type diagram to that used in the introduction, with NVC at the centre.

- Use any suitable visual aids to help recall and understanding, e.g. magazine pictures or drawings.

- Model some of the NVC identified by the group, e.g. demonstrate posture, fidgeting, etc., or suggest they could model it!

- Play the clip again with the sound on.

- Support a group discussion on the differences between having the sound and not having the sound. How much did the group understand without sound, for example? Did their interpretation of the NVC they identified match the spoken dialogue?

- Lead on to the group activity. You could use some of the activities in the NVC module at this stage.

If the group is willing, the clip can also be played while they have their backs to the screen. You can ask the offenders to imagine/guess what types of NVC are being used by listening to the dialogue, tone, etc.

ⓘ Note: this activity requires a baseline of skills e.g. to sit, listen, attend and concentrate. As an initial activity, this could place considerable demands on some group members. The group also need to have the skills required to work as a group. You could use shorter, more supported approaches and tasks to support offenders to participate e.g. providing ready-made cards with some of the methods of communication already completed and some additional cards with less relevant suggestions. The content of the cards could provide opportunities for discussion and offenders could then decide which ones to use on the board.

The video[5] produced by The Communication Trust, title 'Sentence Trouble' provides some ideas for using visual aids to support work with offenders as well as tips other staff have used.

5 The Communication Trust's Sentence Trouble website http://www.sentencetrouble.info

Adapting the activities for your group: hints and tips

You may find that individuals in the group have different levels of speaking and listening skills. There may be activities in the modules which could provide too great a challenge for some of them. Group members who do not speak English as their first language or offenders with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) may also find some of the activities difficult.

Throughout the modules are hints, tips and notes which provide advice on making activities and information accessible to a range of group members.

Some further hints and tips on adapting the activities to make them more accessible to individuals are outlined below:

- Allow plenty of thinking time between instructions or oral information as some group members may find it difficult to concentrate for long periods. If the group is required to listen to information and identify key points, read the information out at a slightly slower speed or add further emphasis on key words. You could also give out the information one sentence at a time to enable individuals to select the relevant information.

- If individuals seem to lack confidence in identifying what they are required to do to complete activities, especially in the language used, pair them up with more confident group members rather than working alone on tasks, e.g. in a listening activity one group member could listen out for the key information and the other could underline it on a hard copy.

- Explain any technical language used or new concepts to group members to reassure and encourage them to participate in activities.

- Group members who do not speak English as their first language or who have SLCN may have difficulty accessing oral information. A printed copy of the information may be helpful. This can be discussed and the language use explained before the task is attempted.

- Some group members might require more help with the verbal clues, such as key words, to listen out for in oral work. You may need to provide more guidance by saying how many points there are to identify. Introductory activities could be developed, using the same clue words, based on a familiar context. Further similar activities could also be used to provide more practice.

- Talk about the different language used in discussion and verbal exchanges; for instance, an opinion may start with 'I think . . .'

- Some group members (particularly those who are dyslexic) might find it hard to match written and spoken language, as some inference is required. Individuals should be encouraged to deal with the ones they can do first. Individuals may not be able to distinguish the register (type of language used in a particular situation) or infer meaning from what is said. Encourage group members to share ideas in pairs or teams.

- You may need to discuss tone of voice with group members who do not speak English as their first language or who have SLCN, as they may find this more difficult to pick up. This leads to the issue of what is considered polite and there may be cultural considerations here. You could model the speech using different tones of voice to distinguish between what is acceptable – e.g. in considering politeness you would have to model a range of greetings, some acceptable, some bordering on acceptability (e.g. a bit too informal), and some definitely not acceptable.

- Group members from other cultures may need support to understand body language/active listening norms of the UK. For example, give the group member the words for body postures to match with pictures.

- Some individuals may need help with interpreting the colloquial aspects of language, especially group members who do not speak English as their first language.

- Many individuals, including group members who do not speak English as their first language and dyslexic group members, may need to listen several times to oral information and answer one question or listen for one piece of information at a time.

- Group members with dyslexia may have particular difficulty with sequencing instructions. They may find listening tasks quite challenging and may need additional opportunities to practise.

- Use question and answer to elicit information required for completing a task (Is this something that needs to go in a job application form? Does this piece of information add anything important to the story being told?). This may help dyslexic individuals to distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant.

- When asking and answering questions, ask group members to think about the purpose of each question and the type of answer likely to be given. Make sure group members understand the difference between the types of question.

- When giving instructions, ask questions to help individuals think about key order words and the order of the instructions, e.g. 'What would the person need to do first?' Remind group members to keep the instructions short, e.g. 'First you open the door' rather than 'The first thing to do is to open the door.'

- Group members might need support with forming questions properly. This can be done in small groups where ideas can be shared. Group members who do not speak English as their first language will need to be given plenty of opportunities for practice using the correct intonation.

Part 3
Next steps
The final activity is a time to reflect on the thoughts, discussions and ideas you've had as you've worked through this module.

There are other modules in this pack which you may want to work through. These are:

- Non-verbal communication
- Questioning and checking understanding
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language

Many of the activities in the other modules will provide additional opportunities to focus on the different aspects of speaking and listening.

Some example activities from each module that could be used are below. Try these out and have a look at the particular modules to see if there are others you would like to try, either by yourself or with colleagues, but first, have a go at the activity below.

Try it out!
How important do you think speaking and listening skills are on a scale of 1 – 10, where 1 is not important at all, and 10 is one of the most important skills everyone needs.

Again on the scale of 1 - 10, rate how you think, overall, the speaking and listening skills of the offenders you work with are where 1 is very poor, and 10 is competent, fluent and able to function and progress in life and work.

Compare the two scores – does anything strike you about your marks? How important is developing everyone's speaking and listening skills!

Activities from other modules
Module 2: Non-verbal communication

Try it out!
Watch the first of the video clips which accompanies the pack, of a conversation between two offenders about their canteen (the weekly allowance of goods and items that offenders in a secure setting can order from their pay).

How many different forms of non-verbal communication can you identify?

The video and audio files accompanying the modules in this speaking and listening pack are available to download from the Excellence Gateway (http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk).

Module 3: Questioning and checking understanding

Try it out!
Think back to situations where you asked people questions. How much time did you give them to answer?

Then spend some time talking with people. Be aware of how much time you are giving them to respond to you.

Module 4: Active listening

Try it out!
What preparations can you make to ensure that you will be able to listen attentively? E.g. standing face to face with a colleague, phoning a number to get information (train times, opening times, etc.) or perhaps talking to a friend about what is happening in their life.

Module 5: Managing group discussions

Try it out!
Think about the factors for effective group discussion and list some points you feel should be included in the ground rules for all discussions in your context.

As you make your list, think about the reasons for each point you identify.

Module 6: Using technical language

Try it out!
The gritty realism of TV drama has put offender language into the mainstream. Watch a soap or crime drama and make a note of slang terms used to soften the impact of serious crime.

Think about the effect on the viewer and for the character.

Action plan
Use the action plan below to identify what you think you need to do next and to decide on your priority actions.

Speaking and listening action plan

What do I need to do?	What do I want to achieve?	What actions do I need to take?	When do I need to have completed them?	Who will I need to see?

Module 2
Non-verbal communication (including body language)

Part 1
What is non-verbal communication?
The absence of words does not mean
an absence of communication.

Non-verbal communication is the visual signals people make with their bodies (body language) and the oral, but non-verbal, signals they make with their voices.

The spoken word is only part of the way we communicate and of the 'message' received by the listener. Your tone of voice and your visual appearance, gestures and body language may be even more important.

Studies by psychologist Professor Albert Mehrabian[1] in the 1960s suggest that:

- Only 7% of communication is through words.
- The other 93% is non-verbal communication.

Of the 93% non-verbal communication:

- 38% is tone of voice.
- 55% is body language.
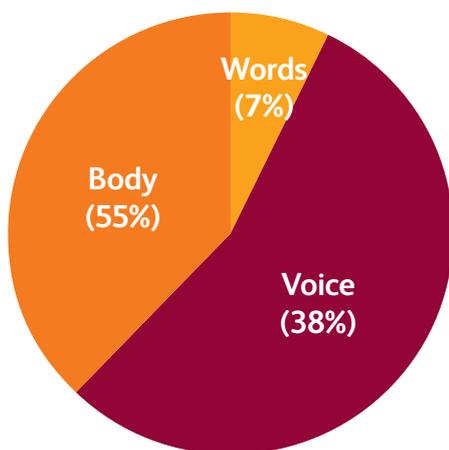
These figures should be viewed with some caution, as not everyone agrees with the scale of them. Even Mehrabian urges caution in using these findings, as they 'only apply to communications where the messages communicated via the three channels (words/vocal signals/body language) are not consistent with each other'. It is important, therefore, that we read non-verbal communication signals together with what we are hearing, and not in isolation.

Most agree that non-verbal communication does play an important role in how we communicate and the messages we send along with our spoken word.

However, we may be more aware of non-verbal communication in others than in ourselves! Getting in tune with what we are saying, other than in words, can be very helpful when working with individuals or a group. It is just as important to be able to read the non-verbal clues our group members are giving.

Try it out!
Watch the first of the video clips which accompanies the pack of a conversation between two offenders about their canteen (the weekly allowance of goods and items that offenders in a secure setting can order from their pay).

How many different forms of non-verbal communication can you identify?

[1] Information taken from website: http://www.bradburyac.mistral.co.uk/nlpfax17.htm For further information on the work of Professor Mehrabian see: Mehrabian, Albert and Wiener, Morton, 'Decoding of Inconsistent Communications', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Vol. 6, No. 1, May 1967, pp. 109–114. Mehrabian, Albert, *Silent Messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes,* Wadsworth Publishing Company, California, 1981.

Non-verbal communication can be conscious/ voluntary, or unconscious/involuntary.

Which of these do you think may be involuntary? Tick the appropriate boxes.

- To show embarrassment
- To attract attention
- To reinforce the spoken message
- To show shock
- To show fear
- To create an effect
- To show amusement
- To create amusement

Ask colleagues if they agree with you. Is there a common theme in the responses you get?

There are three main areas of non-verbal communication:

- **Kinesics** – facial expressions, gestures and movements, physical appearance.
- **Proxemics** – position, orientation, space, physical contact and posture.
- **Paralinguistics** – feedback sounds, tone of voice.

ⓘ Note: if you want to adapt the information in this module for offenders you may need to mediate the technical language

Try it out!
Write down the three headings: kinesics, proxemics and paralinguistics, and watch the video clip again. Note under each heading any examples of each type of non-verbal communication (NVC) you noticed from watching the video clip.

Read the information which follows about each type of NVC, and watch the clip again. Are there other NVC signals you missed the first time?

Kinesics
Kinesics are non-verbal communication cues from facial expressions, gestures, physical appearance and movement.

Facial expressions can be with the whole face, e.g. smiling, frowning, or with the eyes, eyebrows, mouth or nose, e.g. widening the eyes, pursing the lips, raising the eyebrows, wrinkling the nose.

Try it out!
Try each of the facial expressions mentioned in turn, and see what you feel when you do. Does it give you a 'feel' for what each might mean in non-verbal language?

You could try this in front of a mirror and see what impression you might be giving with each expression.

Gestures could be with the head, arms, hands and fingers, or legs and feet.

Physical appearance is the clothes you wear and physical presentation, i.e. hair, makeup, facial hair, level of cleanliness.

Try it out!
What might some of the following mean in non-verbal communication?

- Holding your head in your hands.
- Folding your arms across your chest.
- Drumming your fingers on the desk.
- Swinging your legs.
- Tapping your feet.

Can you think of occasions when you have had individuals in your group who have used these non-verbal gestures? What signals do you think they were sending?

Movements could be, for example, slow and fluent, static and stiff, or fast and jerky. How you walk into a room can give off clear signals of confidence or passivity.

Try it out!
Do you agree with the following? If not, why not?

Slow, fluent movements may suggest relaxation, ease, control.

Static and stiff movements might mean fear or discomfort.

Fast and jerky movements could signal aggression, boredom, excitement.

ⓘ Note: Some people may have a movement disorder, and this may affect the way they move. With non-verbal communication you need to take into account many of the small signals you are receiving, rather than just rely on one signal alone.

Proxemics

Proxemics are non-verbal communication cues from position, orientation, space, physical contact and posture.

Positioning and orientation is where we stand or sit in relation to others and how much space we feel we need around us – our personal space. This can change depending on the individual's situation, background and culture. Someone from a rural setting may feel they need more personal space than a city dweller, for example. If you travel on the tube, personal space is very small, and people tolerate proximity – although they do avoid eye contact!

Try it out!
Think about the personal space around you as you go through your day. Does the space you allow different people change? What is it that makes the difference?

ⓘ Note: People with hearing or visual impairment may reduce proximity to help them to hear or see what you are saying or showing.

Physical contact is shaking hands and the pat on the back or, perhaps, the prodding finger or the arm around the shoulder.

Try it out!
How do you feel about physical contact? Think about the examples given. Does a pat on the back make you feel pleased, as it might signal approval? How differently would you feel about a prodding finger from someone who is being aggressive?

ⓘ Note: People who have had a history of abuse could feel threatened by close proximity and physical contact. Physical contact in most settings when working with individuals and groups is inappropriate and could be open to misinterpretation.

Posture and stance is how we stand or sit, and what positions we adopt.

Try it out!
Look at the figures in the pictures that follow. What messages do you think the body postures could be giving?

A　　　　　　　　　B

C　　　　　　　　　D
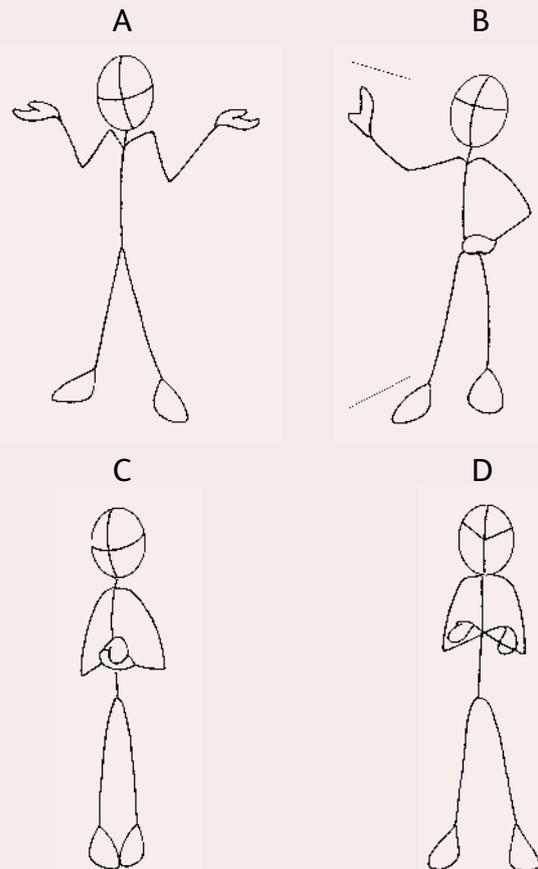
Some suggestions are given in activity 2 (part 4) 'Card matching'.

Paralingusitics

Paralinguistics are the vocal, but non-verbal, communication cues from feedback sounds and tone of voice.

Feedback sounds are the oral, but non-verbal, sounds we make in any interaction with others, e.g. 'mmm', 'ah-ah', 'er'.

Tone of voice is variations in intonation that can change the meaning of what is said. Intonation is made up of patterns of pitch and stress. Volume and pace also contribute to this change of meaning.

ⓘ Note: the use of 'fillers' such as erm, uhms, etc, either on their own or alongside other non-verbal communication behaviours such as avoiding eye contact or fidgeting, could be aspects of dysfluency (often regarded as stammering or stuttering, without any of the sound repetition we usually think of as a stammer or stutter). These 'behaviours' can also be positive strategies that someone has developed to cope with word retrieval difficulties or language processing difficulties to buy more time.

Try it out!
Look back at the list you made under each of the three headings and watch the video clip again.

Can you add more non-verbal signals to your list?

Try it out!
Some interpretations of non-verbal communication for you to think about

Read the statements that follow and decide whether the interpretation is right. You could ask colleagues or friends to give their opinions too. You may be surprised at the different interpretations other people may have, so always be aware that you need to 'read' several of the small non-verbal signals before making any judgements.
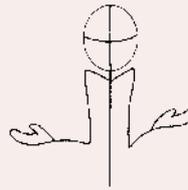
The shoulder shrug: a universal gesture used to show a person doesn't know or understand what you are talking about.
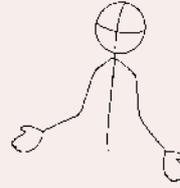
Open palms: often a gesture associated with openness and honesty.
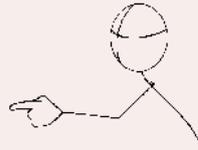
Pointing finger: this could be an aggressive signal – or perhaps a warning of danger?
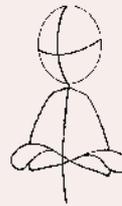
Arms folded across the chest: usually a defensive signal – or perhaps, just cold?

Crossed legs: may signal disagreement or self-protection.
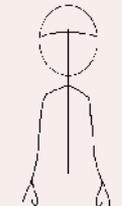
Head held up: usually signals confidence.
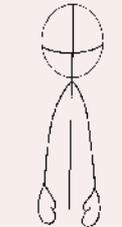
Head held down: may give a signal of weakness or lack of confidence.

Stroking the chin: usually a sign of thoughtfulness, contemplation.

Intent staring: often an aggressive signal.

Not maintaining eye contact: may indicate a person isn't comfortable with you or what you are saying – or perhaps it is a cultural response?

Eye movements: for example – looking up and to the left or right could indicate a person is remembering or deep in thought. If their eyes move to the right or left, they are often talking to themselves or listening very carefully.

Picking at clothes etc. could signal disagreement or disapproval – or simply not being engaged in what's going on!

Head tilted to one side: may signal interest.

Hands on hips: often a sign that the person is getting ready for action or aggression.

Leaning back in the chair, hands behind the head, legs crossed: could be a signal of superiority.

Mirroring (copying) and matching: usually implies agreement and may be a signal to gain acceptance.

Clearing the throat, using 'ums' and 'ahs' incessantly: could be a sign of nervousness.

Low-pitched voices are associated with strength, sexiness and maturity, while high-pitched voices can often signal tenseness, helplessness and nervousness.

Loud people are perceived as aggressive or overbearing, while soft voices are perceived as timid or polite.

ⓘ Note: Volume changes or abnormal ranges could be indicative of a hearing difficulty and should be investigated. In such a case, referral for assessment may be advised

Encouraging rapport

Mirroring and matching
Mirroring and matching is one person physically copying some of the behaviours of another person and, used with integrity, can encourage rapport. For example, you may cross your legs and/or arms in the same way as the other person does.

Used carefully and with subtlety, it can make the person you are with feel valued and appreciative of the interest you are showing. Used without sincerity and respect, it can seem like mimicry and make the person feel uncomfortable.

Mismatching
Mismatching can be used to break rapport by deliberately adopting different behaviours to the other person. For example, you can mismatch by breaking eye contact, turning or angling your body away from the other person, uncrossing your legs as he or she crosses theirs. This can often have the effect of stopping or interrupting a conversation as the other person begins to feel uncomfortable.

Hints and tips
Many aspects of communication are explored in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)[2], including both verbal and non-verbal communication. NLP studies the relationship between our thinking (neuro), our communication (linguistic) and our patterns of behaviour and emotion (programmes). Through modelling, NLP provides tools for decision-making about changes we can make to our thoughts and behaviours which can influence the way we communicate with others and the wider world.

Some thoughts and cautions!
It can be misleading to read a non-verbal signal in isolation. Usually it is a combination of these small signs that will give us a more accurate 'reading' of what our group members are thinking and feeling. Folding the arms across the chest may mean defensiveness, but it could also mean someone is just cold! Coupled with other signals, such as the head held down and crossed legs, you may be right to feel concerned that one of your group does feel threatened in some way. Just as with verbal communication, you need to 'listen' carefully to get the right meaning.

It is important to be aware of overanalysing non-verbal communication. You need to interpret what you are seeing alongside what you are hearing, and read the non-verbal cues in conjunction with what is said.

[2] The Internet provides a rich source of further information about NLP.

Some members of your group may have difficulties understanding the non-verbal communication used by others and difficulties expressing themselves non-verbally due to communication impairment – particularly if they have autistic spectrum disorders, language disorders and learning disabilities.

Be aware of cultural conventions – for example, some gestures used in one culture may mean something completely different in another, and you could cause offence! For instance, in Greece, you nod your head for 'no' and shake your head for 'yes'.

Some non-verbal communication may only be appropriate between peers – it's a generational thing. For example certain hand movements from pop culture, such as rapping, may be mainly used by young people.

Your non-verbal communication could give away your true thoughts to an expert reader! If you tune in to the non-verbal communication of your group, you may pick up non-verbal cues to indicate they are bored or confused, just as your group may pick up from your non-verbal communication if you feel confident and enthusiastic.

Mapping to your context

You will use non-verbal communication in all of the contexts in which you interact with your group.

Look back at module 1 to see how these might relate to the three areas: Setting the Scene (STS), Working with Individuals (WWI) and Working with Groups (WWG).

ⓘ Module 1 contains more detail about Setting the Scene, Working with Individuals and Working with Groups.

These are some examples:

- Interviews (STS)/(WWI)
- Induction (STS)/(WWI)
- Sentence planning meetings (STS)/(WWI)
- Case conferences/meetings (STS)/(WWI)
- Work or work experience (WWI)/(WWG)
- Delivering training or teaching (WWG)

Some ways you can use non-verbal communication in these contexts are:

- Build rapport using reassuring body language, e.g. adopt a relaxed posture and look interested and engaged.
- Avoid using physical contact.
- Reinforce verbal details with open gestures, e.g. using open-handed gestures, rather than closed fists.
- Use fluent movements to reassure, rather than jerky or sudden movements. Resist sweeping, fast gestures which may startle your group.
- Mirror body language to develop empathy, e.g. by copying some postures and gestures made by others.
- Use paralingusitics to encourage members of your group and to show you are listening, e.g. nodding and murmuring in agreement.
- Maintain eye contact to show interest.
- Ensure a comfortable personal space is maintained to reduce any feeling of threat.
- Be aware of the non-verbal signals you are sending to the group, e.g. your physical appearance, your body language.
- If sitting, lean slightly forward to show interest and attention.

Try it out!

Think about how you would build rapport with a member of your group during an interview.

- What facial expressions, gestures, movements, would you use?

- How close would you sit to him/her?

- Would physical contact be appropriate?

- What posture would you adopt?

- What kinds of feedback sounds would you make?

- What eye contact would be appropriate?

- How would your non-verbal communication change if your group member became agitated?

You will be able to think about how you use your non-verbal communication skills when you complete the reflective log in part 3 of this module. But it would be helpful to you to think about your own use of non-verbal communication in an interview with a group member and make some notes to check against your reflective log at a later stage.

Links with other modules

- Speaking and listening skills in context

- Questioning and checking understanding

- Active listening

- Managing group discussions

- Using technical language

Part 2
Why is non-verbal communication important – for you, for your group?
The activities that follow will give you the opportunity to explore non-verbal communication in a little more detail.

Throughout these activities, reflect on your own use of NVC, and think about the benefits for you in using these non-verbal signals appropriately and for your group in supporting them to be more aware of the signals they may be giving through NVC.

It is important to remember that, although NVC can give you clues to what is not being said and can sometimes contradict the spoken word, you will need to interpret these unspoken signals with care. However, if you develop an increased sensitivity to your own NVC, you will find that you are more able to read others' non-verbal clues.

By understanding some of your group's NVC signals, you will be better able to respond to their needs and encourage them to use positive NVC themselves.

Activity 1
Conflicting messages
During a recent session with your group, you have probably experienced an occasion when someone's verbal communication seemed to be 'at odds' with their non-verbal communication. Think back to that situation and consider the following questions:

- What did the person's verbal communication tell you?

- What did the person's non-verbal communication tell you?

- What reasons did you think of to explain these apparently contradictory messages?

- What were your verbal and non-verbal responses?

- Did the verbal or the non-verbal messages most influence your response? Can you explain why?

- Do you think your response was effective or would you respond differently in a similar situation? What might you do next time?

- What does this tell you about your own verbal and non-verbal communication?

- How might this be useful in your interaction with your group?

Activity 2
Reading the signs
Location – Programmes Unit, Probation

Characters:
Kat (The tutor)
Simon
Annie
Kelvin
Polly
Mark
Alan

Synopsis – During a substance misuse awareness training session, we observe the reactions of the six people attending the session.

The video clip starts towards the end of an interactive exercise where the tutor has asked the group members to stick named drugs on a board and the accompanying labels to show methods for taking them. When we join this activity, there are only three people left to do this.

Character backgrounds/information

Mark – is 26 years old and is attending these sessions to address his alcohol dependency. He was recently found guilty of driving under the influence of alcohol while banned from driving for a similar offence. Mark has a job as an accounts clerk and is well regarded by his employers.

Simon – is 25 years old and a resident in the hostel on a 2-year licence. He has been involved in the misuse of various substances (including speed, ecstasy, cocaine and crack cocaine) and still smokes cannabis. He injects speed. He lost his child in a car accident in his late teens, which he said led him into harder drugs.

Annie – is 24 years old and charged with shoplifting. She was brought up in care where it appeared that no one was interested in her. She began to take drugs at 14, and at 16 she left the care of the local authority and began to deal drugs to fund her habit, which in turn got her involved in other crime. She injects heroine.

Kelvin – is 22 years old. He spent most of his childhood in local authority care. Most of his friends are either 'inside' or have moved on and he has no contact with his parents. His lifestyle has been chaotic, so he 'dulls' his pain with alcohol, funding his all-night drinking sprees by theft. As part of his sentence, Kelvin has been set targets to address his alcohol addiction and improve his basic skills. He does not take any drugs.

Alan – is 38 years old. Persistent alcohol abuse has resulted in the loss of his driving licence. Having a job that needed a clean driving licence, he is now unemployed. He increasingly sought solace in further alcohol binge drinking. He has been ordered to attend the drug awareness sessions in the hope that it will help him to get his drinking under control.

Polly – is 29 years old and has used drugs, mainly speed and cannabis, since she was in her late teens. She has two young children at school, although she is separated from their father. She realises that the children may be placed in care if she can't sort out her substance misuse, and is attending the session as part of her order. She has managed to avoid a custodial sentence but knows this may be her last chance.

The seating plan is shown to identify the offenders.
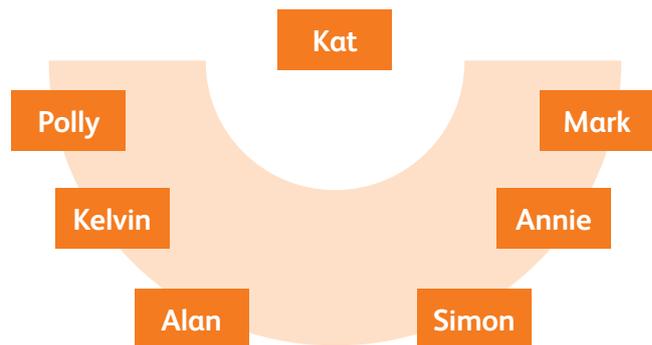
Activity

On the second of the two video clips, watch part 1 of the clip through to the end of the first part, while getting familiar with the scene and the characters involved.

Stop the video clip when directed and go back to the start. Now watch the clip again, and note down on the grid which follows what you think each member of the group is feeling about the session you are watching. Who is engaged in the activity, and who isn't? What are the non-verbal communication signals you are identifying to make the judgements?

Continue with part 2 of the video clip and review your notes. Are there any changes you would make to your notes after watching the second part of the clip? If so, what would you change and why?

From left to right	Polly	Kelvin	Alan	Simon	Annie	Mark
Notes of NVC clues and whether engaged in activity (wholly, partly, not at all)						

Activity 3
Mismatched?

Pair up with a colleague who is working on the same module as you – or find a willing friend who will do this exercise with you.

Choose one of you to be person A, the other to be person B. Carry on a conversation in your pair about something that interests you both.

During the conversation, person A subtly matches the behaviour of person B for a couple of minutes, and then very deliberately and obviously mismatches their behaviour for a further couple of minutes.

So A carefully emulates much of B's behaviour – such as B's eye contact pattern, how B uses his/her voice and B's overall posture. After a while A breaks eye contact and begins to look around the room, or speak in a very different voice pattern to B, or make some dramatic shift in posture – while continuing to carry on the conversation in the same way.

When the conversation ends, discuss how it felt to be person A and person B. Did the fact that each of you knew exactly what the other was doing make any difference to how you both felt? What conclusions can you draw from doing the activity?

Activity 4
What's really being said?

Listen to the audio clips, that accompany the pack, of an offender talking about a meeting with his key worker. From the varying intonations of his responses, what do you think the offender is really saying?

See the end of the module for suggested answers.

Part 3
What you need to think about
Read through the questions which follow.
You may want to change them – or add your
own. Keep these in mind when you reflect
on your use of non-verbal communication.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
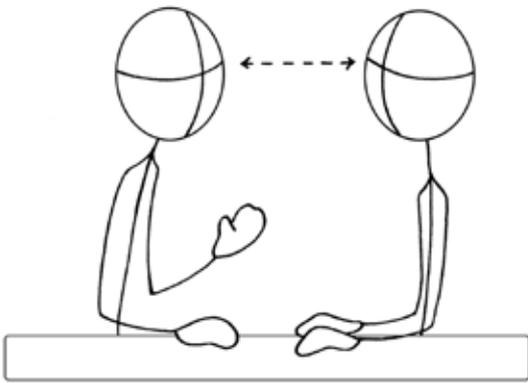
Why is maintaining eye contact important?
Keeping eye contact for just the right amount
of time is sometimes one of the most difficult
aspects of non-verbal communication, but it
can be one of the most important. In a two-
person conversation, if we are listening, we
tend to look at the speaker for 70% of the time,
but as a speaker, we tend to look at our listener
about 40% of the time.[3] However, it appears
that in a group discussion these figures are
almost reversed, and individuals appear to gaze
(looking at other group members) for over 70%
of their speaking time, but only 47% of their
listening time.[4]

This may be explained by the fact that a
speaker can't look at all the group members
at the same time during a group discussion,
so divides his/her visual attention between
group members.[5]

ⓘ Note: These figures can only be considered as
a general indicator, and represent the findings
of the researchers in the studies mentioned.
An individual's personality factors and
cultural differences may influence the periods
of eye contact.

Eye contact cues may also indicate when to
speak and when to listen.

Try it out!
Does a person tend to look away as they begin
to speak or do they make eye contact with
the listener? What happens as the person is
coming to the end of their speech? Does the
person look at the listener more or less?

Watch some conversations between colleagues,
friends or other groups. From your observations,
what seems to be the pattern of eye contact?

[3] Argyle, M. and Dean, J., 'Eye-Contact, Distance and Affiliation' in *Sociometry*, 28:289–304, 1965.
[4] Weisbrod, Rita R., *Looking Behavior in a Discussion Group*, Unpublished Paper, Department of Psychology, Cornell University, 1965.
[5] Reprinted from *Acta Psychologica*, 32, Kendon, A., 'Some Functions of Gaze Direction in Social Interaction', pp. 1–25, Copyright
1967 with permission from Elsevier.

If you keep good eye contact, this can show you are interested and are listening carefully. Take care, however, to recognise cultural differences as other cultures may find prolonged eye contact uncomfortable and even threatening. Sustained eye contact may not be always be sensible in some circumstances and the length of contact may depend on the mood of the individual, e.g. if someone is very aggressive, it may be unwise to keep continued eye contact.

Can my mouth give away non-verbal clues?

Your mouth can give away all sorts of clues to how you are feeling and it's hard to hide them when the speaker is probably looking at your face. You might tighten your lips to hold back a comment in disagreement and, although you never gave it voice, it will probably have been spotted by the speaker. Be aware of what your lips are saying without words!

Have you noticed that people tend to lean towards others when they seem interested?

We do tend to angle towards people we find attractive or who are interesting, and the converse is also true, so your body may well be giving out non-verbal clues to how you are feeling. Of course, you may lean towards someone to hear what they are saying if you are in a noisy environment, but, as with all non-verbal cues, you need to take in all the signals to get a feel for what the unspoken messages are likely to be.
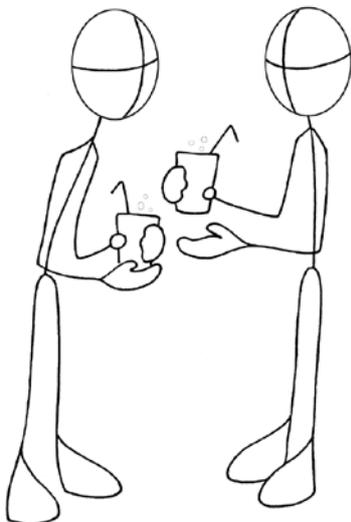
How do I know if my posture is giving the right non-verbal signals?

You will be able to feel for yourself if you have the right posture. If you find yourself slouching down in your chair with your shoulders hunched forward, you're less likely to look or feel confident and assured. Your head, too, should be held high – if you keep your head lowered, it may make you appear to be shy or lacking in confidence. Tilting your head to one side can show your speaker that you are listening closely and are interested in what they are saying.

Why does it often seem difficult to know what to do with hands, arms and legs?

The many gestures your hands will make during an exchange will almost certainly give out non-verbal signals – clenched fists might seem to indicate frustration or anger, for example. You might use them to seek understanding or acceptance of a point you are making by opening your hands, palms upwards. If you use open hands with palms downwards, though, it may be interpreted as a dominating gesture.

If you cross your arms in front of your chest, you're likely to appear defensive (although you may just be feeling cold!). Try not to make large, sweeping arm movements or keep them stiff by your side – aim for something midway between the two. This may depend, of course, on how outgoing you are, so can be difficult to control completely.

It's more difficult to control your legs and feet – they are furthest away from the brain, so perhaps give your feelings away more noticeably! When you are anxious or worried, it isn't easy to stop them moving. Crossing your legs or ankles could be interpreted as a defensive gesture – although it may also be a posture that feels comfortable.

What about personal space and proximity?

Giving people the right amount of personal space is very important if you want to be sending the right signals. Standing too close may be seen as 'pushy' or intimidating, while standing too far away could be interpreted as aloof and uninterested. You need to gauge a person's personal space, and if they step back from you, you're up 'too close and personal'! The personal space each of us finds comfortable varies, especially so in different cultures. The following gives a very rough guide to the 'space bubbles' people feel comfortable with in different situations, but always remember that it is particular to each person.

- Intimate space – less than 50cm

- Personal space – around 1m

- Social space – somewhere between 1m and 4m

- Public space – more than 4m[6]
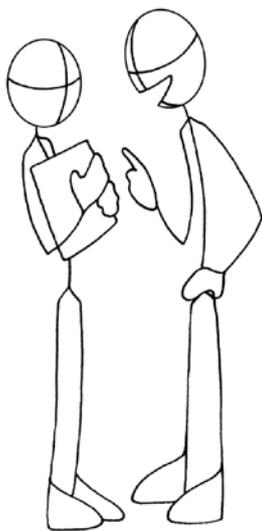
What paralinguistics may be appropriate?

Use oral, but non-verbal, signals to show you are listening and interested, e.g. 'mmm' or 'ah-ah', but be aware of how often you do so, or it could get irritating. Other non-verbal signals can be used to reinforce these, for example accompanying nods of the head will also show acceptance of the comments, or raising your eyebrows in tune with these signals could show surprise and interest. Also, be aware of your voice tone and pitch – it's not easy to give positive sounding feedback through gritted teeth!

What is micro-messaging? Does it have any relevance?

Micro-messages are the small, but noticeable, non-verbal signals we use when we are in a group situation. These may be looks, gestures or tones and can sometimes be used to exclude another group member, for example by raising the eyes or an eyebrow to indicate that whatever is being said isn't interesting/appropriate/accurate, or is downright rubbish! Sometimes we don't even realise we're doing it, but all group members need to be made aware that these signals are highly inappropriate.

One word of caution: When reading others' NVC, taking one non-verbal signal in isolation may give you the wrong interpretation. You need to watch all the little clues to confirm your impressions.

6 Hall, Edward, T., *The Hidden Dimension*, Anchor, New York, 1966, pp. 116–125.

Try it out!

- People-watching can be very instructive. Try to gauge from the NVC what might be going on. Look at how groups of people interact. Are they mirroring and matching, for example? Do they cross their legs towards or away from each other? What are their eyes doing?

- Watch the television with the sound off. Programmes of debates and interviews with political figures may provide an opportunity to guess what they are not saying – verbally, at least!

- Use a mirror to check your own body posture. You may find that you need to consciously adopt a confident, but relaxed, posture and then keep practising until you can maintain it.

- Watch your group members, especially when they are interacting with their peers. Listen carefully to see if what they are saying and how they say it matches what their NVC signals are telling you. This will help you to identify what is habit and natural to them and what might be a signal for you to intervene, for example.

- It isn't easy to concentrate on all aspects of NVC at once, especially if you are thinking about your own NVC as well as that of your group. Try to focus on one aspect at a time and use the reflective log to record your thoughts.

Reflective log

A reflective log is a useful tool to enable you to think about what has occurred during your interaction with your group. If you complete it after a session with your group, it will give you an opportunity to reflect on how well the group worked together and how well you managed them.

ℹ️ Look back at the Introduction to see more about reflective practice.

Reflecting on your session will help you to:

- stand back from the session and think about what you did;
- identify what was successful;
- consider any areas for development;
- identify any barriers to your own progress;
- decide how you will overcome them.

Use the reflective log on the following page to think about your own NVC and that of your group. The following questions may guide you:

- What did you do?
- How effective was it
- What did your group members do?
- How effective was it?
- Do you feel you gave the right NVC signals? If not, why not?
- Do you feel you 'read' the NVC signals correctly from your group members? If so, why?
- What worked well? What would you do differently another time?

Reflective log

- Focus on the aspects of non-verbal communication which were most relevant to the session.
- Record what you can. There is no need to complete all the boxes.

Group focus: circle as appropriate

Adult/Young People/Young Offender

Male/female

Group/one to one

Session focus:

Aspect of speaking and listening	What you said/did/thought	What worked well	Points to think about
Listening, including reflective listening and using pauses (How do you make sure you have heard what an offender has said? How do you show that you are listening to him/her? Use of language? Use of pauses? Use of questions? Use of body language?)			
Use of non-verbal communication etc., in combination with speaking and listening (Eye contact? Body position and gestures? Facial expression? Are non-verbal communication messages the same as those expressed in speaking and listening?)			
Links between your thinking and your speaking and listening (What kinds of things are you saying to yourself during the session? To what extent is this conversation the same as your conversation with the offender?)			
Other			

Part 4
How you could develop non-verbal communication skills with your group

There are many activities which can be used with groups and individuals to raise awareness of the importance of non-verbal communication, including some of the 'Try it out!' activities throughout this pack.

You will need to introduce the sessions carefully and make sure that you are preparing your group. Often they may lack knowledge of appropriate non-verbal communication, and you will need to start with the basics. Some of the work you have already completed in parts 1 and 2 of this module could be adapted to introduce the topic to your group.

Non-verbal communication is just one aspect of the speaking and listening skills modules in this pack. It would be useful to start the topic of communication skills as a whole with an appropriate introduction. A suggested introductory session is outlined module 1.

The activities which follow could be used as part of a whole series of sessions with your group and can be used after the introductory session. These will help group members to develop and practise some of the non-verbal skills they could employ in many contexts.

For example, offenders in all settings have to attend interviews and meetings of one type or another. These could be:

- at induction;
- at adjudications;
- case conferences;
- key worker interviews;
- work/work placement interviews;
- sentence planning;
- individual learning planning and review;
- personal adviser interviews.

In these situations non-verbal communication may influence the message an offender wishes to give. Learning to give positive non-verbal signals in these situations can be helpful to the offender.

🛈 Note: Your group may have different levels of competence in their use of speaking and listening skills, and you may need to differentiate some of these activities to make them more accessible, e.g. ensuring that any technical vocabulary used is clearly explained or putting group members into pairs where more confident individuals can support their less confident peers.

🛈 There are more hints and tips on adapting activities for a range of individuals in module 1.

Answers to some of these activities are given at the end of the module.

Activity 1
Positive messages
This is an introductory activity to raise awareness that some non-verbal signals can give positive messages, while others can leave a negative impression.

Try it out with your group!

Introduce the activity by explaining that you want the group to think about each type of body language in turn, and then decide how it can be used to pass a message on in a good way and also in a less positive way.

Write the following headings on the board or flip chart:

Type of body language

Used to pass on positive messages

Used to pass on less positive messages

Under the 'Type of body language' heading write:

- Facial expressions
- Hands/arms
- Legs/feet
- Posture/body

In pairs or small groups, ask the group members to list under the 'positive' and 'less positive' headings an example for each body language type, e.g. for facial expressions: positive – smiling; negative – tight lipped.

It may be helpful to prepare a worksheet with the headings entered into a table and each pair or group given a copy to complete.

ⓘ Link with Using technical language module – you may need to explain the terms you have used before asking groups to complete the task.

Discuss the answers with the group and identify common themes that emerge.

Ask each pair or group to think about the implications this may have for them when they attend interviews and/or meetings.

Activity 2
Card matching

This activity will enable your group to identify non-verbal communication signals in a card matching game.

Print out the cards onto coloured paper or thin card and cut up. Shuffle pictures and the body language descriptors and ask the group, in pairs or small groups, to match the picture to the descriptor. There are four blank cards – ask each pair or small group to think up two appropriate images and the associated descriptors.

If some of your group are not very confident in their drawing skills, you could have a supply of magazines available and suggest they use appropriate pictures instead.

You may refer to the technical words in brackets to introduce some of the words to the group. Depending on your group, it may be helpful to explain the meanings on the descriptor cards before starting the activity. Reassure the group that this is a fun activity and it isn't critical to get all the cards matched.

At the end of the matching activity, discuss the outcome, and encourage the group to identify where and when the postures may be appropriate.

ⓘ Note: People with speech, language and communication needs may find some of the drawings difficult to interpret.

ⓘ There are more body posture images in module 1.

	OK! I accept what you say
(resigned)	
	I'm in charge
(dominating)	
	I'm feeling unsure of myself
(self-conscious)	
	I'm feeling angry or threatened
(angry or defensive)	
	I'm waiting for something good
(expecting or anticipating)	
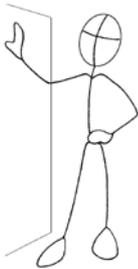
	I'm a little worried
(worried/defensive)	
	I'm not sure about this
(lacking confidence)	
	I'm making a point
(aggressive)	
Own suggestion	Descriptor
Own suggestion	Descriptor
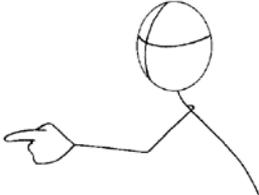
Activity 3
Dos and don'ts

This is a small group activity to enable group members to develop a checklist of dos and don'ts in an interview situation with reference to non-verbal communication.

Ask each small group to think about the dos and don'ts of non-verbal communication when in an interview or meeting setting. Suggest they think about what would give a poor impression in this situation and what would give a much more positive message.

Explain that, in these situations, how you present yourself, including your non-verbal communication, can be as important as what you say. The impression you create in the first 60 seconds can be important in creating the right rapport between you and the interviewer or those attending the meeting. Our clothing, fashion accessories and general grooming all contribute to that first impression someone else receives. The saying, 'You only have one chance to make a first impression' is probably very near the truth!

Some examples that you could use with appropriate explanations to start the activity rolling:

Do:
- Smile
- Sit upright in the chair
- Maintain eye contact with those speaking
- Use open gestures
- Use an even tone of voice

Don't:
- Frown or scowl
- Slouch in the chair
- Fold your arms across your chest
- Gaze around the room
- Look down at the floor
- Tap your feet/drum your fingers
- Shout or mumble

Flip chart the responses from the groups under 'Do' and 'Don't' headings, and develop a checklist that could be typed up for future reference.

Activity 4
Role playing

This is an activity that uses role-play to encourage group members to analyse and discuss non-verbal communication in a group discussion or interview situation.

Video an interview between two group members on a topic relevant to the course content – or role-play cards could be used to generate an interview situation providing an opportunity to video the exchange.

Play back the video and ask the group to identify appropriate and inappropriate non-verbal communication. Generate a discussion on the outcomes of the activity. You could use the checklist of dos and don'ts from the previous activity as a guide for the group to use.

ⓘ Note: Role plays, especially when videoed and open to discussion, need to be handled sensitively. It may be useful to engage the group in setting ground rules for feedback before the start of the activity.

Using a video to record a group in a secure setting may not be possible. You could use video-taped material from the television if this would be a more appropriate source of suitable material. Current affairs programmes may provide a good source of material to analyse, or any television drama or soap.

Activity 5
Summary quiz
This activity will enable the group to summarise briefly their understanding of the topic.

Quiz
Ask the group to complete the following quiz and discuss the answers:

'Reading body language' means:

- Your latest library book is about body language.

- You can get an indication of how people are feeling because small movements and expressions can have a meaning.

- You can only tell what people may be feeling by the way they speak.

- You are studying for an exam in body language.

Which of the following statements are true?

In an interview:

- People take notice of your body language.

- It doesn't matter what impression your body language might give; it's what you say that's important.

- It's important how you sit or stand.

- Body language isn't important when you meet people for the first time.

Which of these would create a positive impression?

- Picking bits off your clothes.

- Slouching back in a chair.

- Not making eye contact.

- Sitting forward in your chair.

Part 5
Next steps

The final activity is a time to reflect on the thoughts, discussions and ideas you've had as you've worked through this module.

Use the action plan on the below to identify what you think you need to do next and to decide on your priority actions.

There are other modules in this pack which you may want to work through. These are:

- Speaking and listening skills in context
- Questioning and checking understanding
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language

Speaking and listening action plan

What do I need to do?	What do I want to achieve?	What actions do I need to take?	When do I need to have completed them?	Who will I need to see?

Answers

Part 2, Activity 4: What's really being said?

Gauging meaning and intent from audio clips can be complex and challenging for group members. Discussion on the differences between those examples where stress and intonation signal meaning and those where there is emotional information would provide support for group members.

The first three examples have an element of meaning that is established via intonation/ stress on the words.

'I didn't meet my **key worker** at the hostel.' [This would suggest that I met someone else, not my key worker.]

'**I** didn't meet my key worker at the hostel.' [This would suggest that I didn't meet my key worker, but someone else did.]

'I didn't meet my key worker at the **hostel**.' [This would suggest that I met my key worker somewhere else other than the hostel.]

The second three examples have emotional intent, i.e. where a particular emotion is conveyed such as annoyance, amusement. These are slightly different to the examples above where an element of meaning is established via intonation/stress on the words.

'I_didn't_meet_my_key_worker_at_the_ hostel.' [This would suggest that I'm repeating the denial again through gritted teeth and am getting annoyed.]

'I didn't meet my key worker at the hostel ☺' [This would suggest that I am repeating what has just been said but finding it amusing.]

'I didn't meet my key worker at the hostel?' [This would suggest that I'm confused and uncertain.]

This example has an element of both meaning and emotional intent.

'I **didn't** meet my key worker at the hostel.' [This would suggest that I'm denying I met my key worker – in response to an accusatory suggestion that I did.]

Part 4, Activity 1: Positive messages

Some suggestions:

Type of body language	Used to pass on positive messages	Used to pass on less positive messages
Facial expressions	Eye contact Smiling Nodding	Looking away instead of listening Tight lipped
Hands/arms Legs/feet	Open movements Uncrossed legs	Arms folded Legs tightly crossed Foot tapping
Posture/body	Sitting forward On edge of seat, but relaxed Head high Upright	Shuffling in the seat Slouching in the seat Head held low On edge of seat, but clearly nervous

Part 4, Activity 5: Summary quiz

'Reading body language' means:

- You can get an indication of how people are feeling because small movements and expressions can have a meaning.

Which of these statements is correct?

- People take notice of your body language.
- It's important how you sit or stand.

Which of these would create a positive impression?

- Sitting forward in your chair.

Module 3
Questioning and checking understanding

Part 1
What are questioning and checking understanding skills?

"It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question."

Eugene Ionesco, d. 1994, Decouvertes, 1969

The types of questions covered in this module are those which:

- check understanding;
- clarify or seek information; and
- move the conversation along.

This module looks at questions that have a positive impact on the conversation, helping it to flow and move forward. It will explore types of questions which encourage the other person to speak and give you more information.

There are some types of questions that are not always helpful for 'flowing' conversations.

> **Try it out!**
> Watch good interviewers on television. Observe the types of questions they ask and the information that they receive from the interviewee. What makes these interviewers so effective?

Rhetorical questions are questions that either don't require an answer or to which the questioner intends to provide his or her own answer. This type of question can be unhelpful, as it does not always ask for information but rather makes a statement.

- 'Are we going to let them do this to us?' (i.e. We aren't…)
- 'Do you know what time it is?' (i.e. You're late!)
- 'What's the use of asking her?' (i.e. It's no use asking her.)
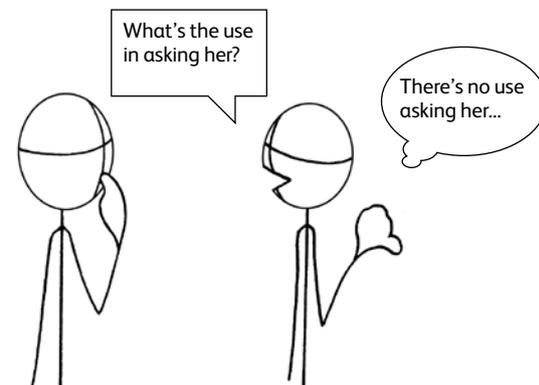
Some 'questions' are not really genuine questions – for example, 'why/how should …?' questions may be used quite aggressively to reject ideas or suggestions and may not help people in coming to a joint understanding.

- She's really unhappy. 'Why should I care?'
- What time does the programme start? 'How should I know?'

A good way to help other people think about something is to ask them a question about it. Being asked a question can really help us to put information together, think about our ideas and perhaps form new opinions.

Asking questions can show someone that we are listening to them and make them feel valued.

Asking questions can encourage the speaker to keep talking about their subject.

Try it out!
Think about a recent situation where you were having a conversation and trying to find out information about something. Make a list of different types of questions that you or the other person asked.

Ideas check
These are just some types of questions that you use in day-to-day situations. They will be described in more detail later on in this module.

- Open questions
- Reflective questions
- Closed questions
- Leading questions
- Echo questions

Try it out!
Watch an extract from a television programme, such as a soap opera where there are lots of characters and dialogue. Keep the sound turned off and watch how the characters talk to each other.

Can you tell when they are asking each other questions? How?

In the extract you watched, people may have done the following to show their understanding:

- nodded their head;
- nodded and tilted their head towards the speaker;
- leaned in toward the speaker to show their interest;
- maintained eye contact to show their interest;
- used an open hand gesture directed at the speaker to encourage them to give more information.

In the extract you watched, people may have done the following to ask questions:

- raised their eyebrows at something that was said; or
- changed their facial expression to show that they were unsure of something that the speaker said.

Ideas check
When asking questions you can:

- maintain eye contact with the speaker. Looking away while asking a question will make you seem completely uninterested.
- tilt your head towards the speaker;
- use an open hand gesture to ask the other person to speak – this is particularly useful in groups when you just want one person to answer.

For further information on non-verbal communication, see module 2.

Question words
Many of the questions we ask start with question words such as:

- How
- What
- Who
- Where
- When
- Why

For example: 'What time is it?' 'When will you get here?'

These types of questions are direct and may only require a short response or yes/no answer. It is important to note that there is a hierarchy when it comes to understanding the types of question words that are used. The question words below are listed in the order in which they are easiest to understand:

- What
- Who and where
- When
- How
- Why

'What', 'Who' and 'Where' can often refer to something quite concrete in response, and are readily understood. 'When' is more complex as the person responding has to have an understanding of time in order to respond. 'How' follows next, then 'why'. These are the most difficult question words to understand as you have to rely on good expressive language skills as well as the thinking and verbal aspects of reasoning skills to respond. You need to ensure that your group understands the question words you are going to use.

Some other questions starters we often use begin with words such as: 'can', 'do', 'will', 'are'. These also give limited scope for answering e.g. 'Can you reach the teapot?' 'Will you buy me the newspaper when you go to the shop?'

ⓘ Note: You also need to be aware of the need for explicit questioning to avoid literal interpretation of language, which is common in individuals with language impairment particularly associated with autistic spectrum disorders.

For example, if you asked your group members 'Can you tell me what date it is?', an individual who interprets language literally would say 'yes' and nothing more, as they have given the information requested in accordance with the language used.

However, some group members may not have understood from the social context that you want them to tell you the actual date. Therefore, you must ask 'What date is it today?', to get the response you require.

Using your voice
The meaning and 'feel' of these questions can be altered by changing the tone of your voice.

Notice how the tone can alter the way in which you might respond to the question.

'When will you get here?' (Polite tone)

'When will you get here?' (Demanding tone)

ⓘ Note: Abnormal voice patterns could be indicative of or associated with conditions such as ASD.
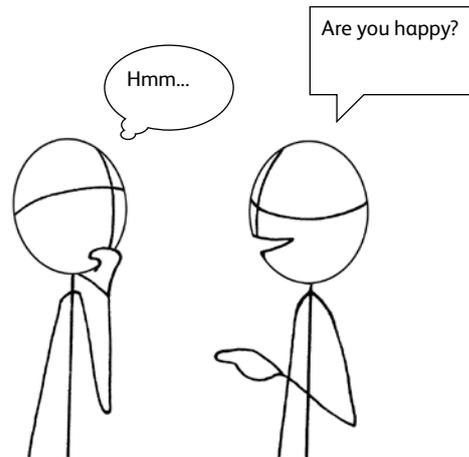
Try it out!
'Are you happy?' Practise asking this question in as many different ways as possible by changing your tone and body language.

The question 'Are you happy?' can imply that the other person is unhappy by asking it in quite a depressed tone and with a sympathetic facial expression. The effect can be completely reversed and imply that the other person is happy by appearing to be happy yourself. Imagine that a close friend has told you some good news and then try asking the question.

If this question were asked in a group context, you could emphasise the word 'you' to see if a particular person was OK.

Try it out!
Think of some situations such as going shopping, buying tickets or asking a colleague about their work. Make a list of some questions you might use, e.g. 'Can you help me?'; 'How much is this?'

Practise saying the questions in different tones such as demanding or polite.

Top tip!

You can make your group aware of which words are stressed by drawing a large circle under the stressed word or phrase.

You can also draw arrows to show how the tone rises in polite questions.

Could you help me?

Try it out!

What makes a good question?

Make a list of what you think the characteristics of a good question are.

Ideas check

Good questions are:

- purposeful – asked to achieve a specific purpose;

- clear – group members understand what they mean;

- brief – stated in as few words as possible;

- natural – stated simply;

- thought provoking – they stimulate thought and response;

- adapted to the level of the group – tailored to the individuals in the group.

Try it out!

What types of questions may be better avoided if you want to get as much information as possible from someone, e.g. yes or no questions?

As mentioned at the start of this module, rhetorical questions may be useful to avoid.

Others are:

- Negative yes/no questions, e.g. 'Haven't I done enough for you?' These can be confusing as the implication is positive, i.e. 'I have done enough for you', but the question makes it seem negative and quite aggressive.

- Elliptical – these are vague, e.g. 'What about that programme the other day?'

- Guessing – these can encourage speculation rather than extending the thinking skills of your group members, e.g. 'How long do you think he waited for?' However, in some circumstances, guessing and estimation can be a useful skill when used as a precursor to other activities.

- Leading – these tend to give away answers, e.g. 'Surely you don't like this TV programme?'

- Rapid fire – these give the impression of an aggressive interrogation and are a series of fast-paced, short questions.

- Multiple – these are difficult for the other person to answer, e.g. 'How and why do you do this?'
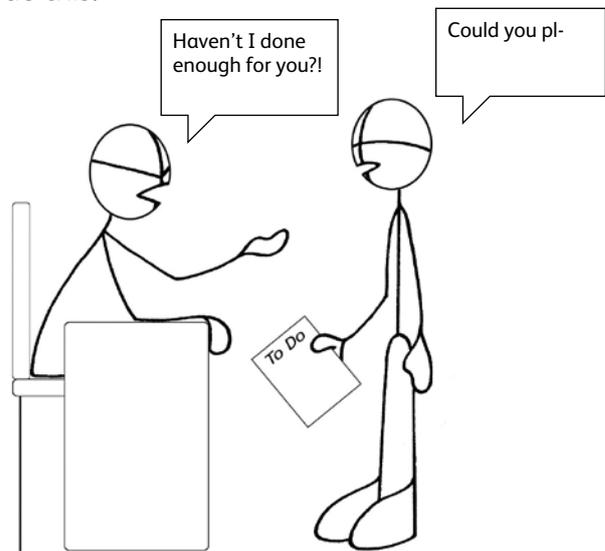
ⓘ Note: Negatives are particularly difficult for some people with speech, communication and language needs to understand, especially those with a learning disability.
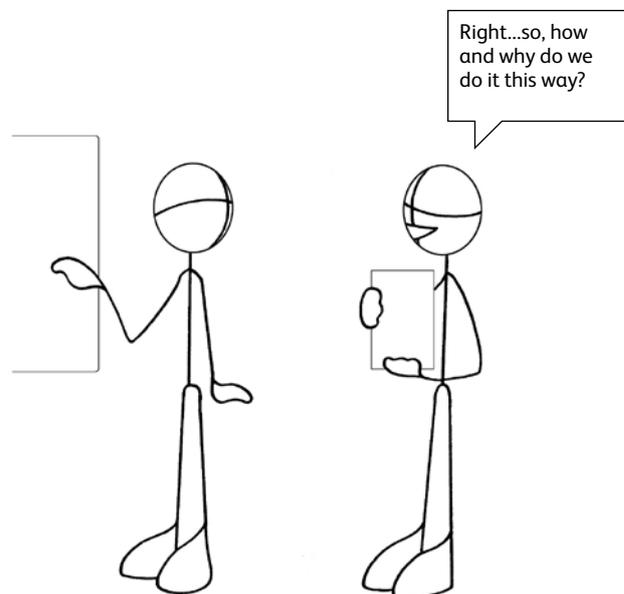
Open questions

In groups or one-to-one it is often best to avoid yes/no questions as they usually result in one word or very short answers. It can often be more helpful to use open-ended questions which may:

- invite opinions, thoughts and feelings;
- encourage participation;
- establish rapport;
- stimulate discussion.

Try it out!

Try playing this question game with your colleagues. To start, two people decide on a topic. One person starts with an open-ended question and the other person then responds with a related open-ended question.

This continues as long as they can keep going without making a statement or repeating a previous question. For example, the topic might be an object in the room, such as a bottle of water:

A: 'Why is it important to drink water?'

B: 'How does water keep us healthy?'

Open-ended questions can be used when you want to open up the conversation and encourage the person to relax and talk. Yes/no questions are useful if you wish to gain a specific piece of information. It is important to think carefully about the situation and select the most appropriate types of questions.

Open-ended questions may help you uncover issues or problems and may help you to understand a person's feelings or opinions about an issue or topic.

Differences between open and closed questions

These questions . . .	
Closed questions	Uncover specific facts
	Can reduce tension because they may be easier to answer
	Can help you to maintain control by directing the flow of the conversation
Open questions	Can allow the other person to move in different directions with their conversation and explore their answers in more detail
	Can't be answered with a yes or no
	May begin with who, what, where, when, why or how
	Can stimulate the other person's thinking and increase conversation
	May reveal more about the other person

Reflective questions

It is important to ask reflective questions from time to time. This may involve rephrasing what someone has said, to encourage them to elaborate on what they are talking about or think more deeply about what they are telling you.

For example:

- 'You said that you weren't sure that what you were doing was right…?'
- 'You said you didn't have problems with this?'

Reflective questions show the other person that you have been listening and make them feel valued. They also require a thinking response.

Reflective questions:

- are usually open and require more than a yes or no answer;
- can help people learn through the process of thinking;
- can help people to ask questions of themselves;
- often start with 'what' or 'how'.

Another way of encouraging someone to tell you more is to ask echo questions. These not only encourage the other person to continue speaking but also show that you are actively listening. Echo questions are a repetition of what has been said and are often used with a rising intonation.

- 'I'm getting married.' – 'You're getting married?'
- 'I've started drinking again.' – 'So you started drinking again?'

Echo questions can be used to help the conversation along by providing a short reminder of what has been said. The other person may sometimes get lost in their own thoughts and you can restart the conversation by repeating what they said in a question form.

Leading questions

Leading questions should be used with care as they can indicate to the other person what the answer is expected to be. They are really statements that show a judgement has already been made about a situation.

For example:

- 'You don't have any problems with this, do you?'
- 'That's going pretty well then?'
- 'I imagine that finding the place was pretty easy?'

Short questions

Conversations are peppered with short questions. A statement is often answered by a request for more information with a short phrase which includes a question word.

- 'Your teacher wants to see you.' 'What for?'
- 'The trains aren't running.' 'Why not?'

Short questions can be used to ask for clarification, although they may also appear as aggressive responses to statements.

Try it out!

Consider the two statements and the responses above. What might make the responses appear aggressive? What difference would there be if you were seeking clarification?

Questions of clarification

Questions of clarification will allow you to check what the person has said and can enable you to probe more deeply into the conversation.

- What do you mean when you say…?
- What is your main point?
- Could you put that another way?
- Could you give me an example?
- Would… be a good example of that?

Waiting time

It is essential that people are given enough time to think when asked questions. People often feel uncomfortable with a long pause, but that's because silence in social conversation can mean that the communication isn't being very effective. If you were to tape your session with your group, you'd find that these pauses last much less than five seconds, although they can seem to last forever at the time.

Pausing gives your group members time to think about what their answers may be and to consider what they want to say. If individuals in your group aren't confident in their speaking and listening skills, they may need quite a few seconds' thinking time to give them an opportunity to absorb the question and then formulate their answer. You can also use your non-verbal communication to indicate to your group that you are waiting with anticipation and expectation for a response.

If you don't allow your group thinking time to answer your questions, they will quickly learn that you ask questions without really expecting them to answer and eventually will, in fact, answer them yourself! Group members may be quite happy for you to do all the work, so you need to establish fairly early on that you are prepared to wait for them to respond.

ⓘ For further information on active listening, see module 4.

If a pause seems to be lasting too long, you could confirm to the group that the question isn't necessarily an easy one and requires some thought. This may reassure less confident group members that you are willing to wait for their answers.

Try it out!
Think back to situations where you asked people questions. How much time did you give them to answer?

Then spend some time talking with people. Be aware of how much time you are giving them to respond to you.

If you can increase your 'wait time' to five seconds or longer, you may notice that people respond to you for longer. When wait time is very short, people tend to give very short answers or they are prone to say 'I don't know.'

Try it out!
What are the other advantages of increasing your wait time?

Ideas check
Other advantages of increasing your wait time are:

- People may be inclined to give more thought to what you are saying and speculate, e.g. 'It might be your relationship, but then again…'

- People may be encouraged to ask more questions themselves.

- Giving yourself an opportunity to hear and think.

- Everyone has an opportunity to answer, regardless of their level of language and thinking, as they have more time to interpret what the question means and think about their answer.

Top tip!
- Increase your wait time to five seconds or longer.

- Become aware of how long you wait for particular group members to respond after you have asked your question. Make sure you increase your wait time for shy group members or individuals with a lower level of language skills.

- Avoid asking questions at such a rapid rate that you feel you need to answer them yourself to move things along.

Planning time

Try it out!
Think about times when you talk to someone on the phone. How often do you not get the information you need?

Do you forget to ask questions or do you forget the information that is given to you?

It can be important for you and your group members to prepare before conversations.

You can:

- Prepare your questions in advance by writing them or key words down.

- Have a piece of paper and a pen handy to make a note of useful information.

- Make sure that you are not going to be distracted.

Checking understanding

What are the most popular questions that are used to check that someone has understood?

- Do you understand?
- Have you understood?
- Is that clear?

Whether this question is used while teaching, delivering programmes or just talking with others, the answer is likely to be the same – 'Yes.' It is best to avoid checking understanding using this method as the individual who hasn't understood knows they've got a 50% chance of getting it right as the response was either 'yes' or 'no'.

The best way to check understanding is by getting group members to tell you in their own words what you have been doing with them. You can elicit this information by using 'what' question formats or by using the phrase 'tell me…'.

Try it out!
Why is the answer to these questions most likely to be 'Yes'?

- Do you understand?
- Have you understood?
- Is that clear?

Ideas check
- The other person may not wish to hurt your feelings by implying that your explanation wasn't clear.
- In a class, the other person may not want to look silly in front of others.
- The other person may think that saying 'Yes' will be the quickest way to move on with the conversation.

Another way of checking understanding can be to paraphrase what the other person has said. Paraphrasing is when you listen to another person and then retell the information you've received in your own words.

Paraphrasing has several purposes:

- It shows the other person that you are listening.
- It crystallises what the person has said by making it more concise.
- It confirms understanding.

It is important that a paraphrase gives a 'translation' of the essence of what is said rather than a simple mirroring of words.

Person A: 'She told me she was going to help me out with the preparation, but she arrived late and had other things to do.'

Person B: 'So she didn't give you enough support with the preparation?'

Literally repeating the words of the other person can sound ridiculous and they may feel they are talking to a parrot!

Encouraging group members to ask questions

Encouraging group members to ask questions is a must. They should feel comfortable enough to know they can ask questions and will not be made to feel stupid or embarrassed. You can create both an atmosphere where group members are not afraid to ask questions and an understanding that all relevant questions are valuable and not to be sniggered at or ridiculed, by building this into the group rules agreed at the start of the session.

If you want your group to ask questions, you can set an example by answering their questions and not postponing answering or ignoring the question altogether. Anyone who has worked with a group will know that there are usually one or two dominant group members who seem to ask all the questions and take over the session. This requires careful handling, and it may then be appropriate to ask for comments/questions from other group members while confirming to the 'question hogger' that they have had several questions answered already and that you want to hear from other group members, although their contribution has been valued.

ⓘ For more information on managing group discussions, see module 5.

ⓘ Note: This 'domination' of conversations sometimes occurs with learners with delayed auditory memory, poor attention and/or turn taking skills.

Mapping to your context

You will use questioning and checking understanding skills in all of the contexts in which you interact with your group.

Look back at module 1 to see how these might relate to the three areas: Setting the Scene (STS), Working with Individuals (WWI) and Working with Groups (WWG).

ⓘ Module 1 contains more detail about Setting the Scene, Working with Individuals and Working with Groups.

These are some examples:

- Interviews (STS)/(WWI)
- Induction (STS)/(WWI)
- Sentence planning meetings (STS)/(WWI)
- Case conferences/meetings (STS)/(WWI)
- Work or work experience (WWI)/(WWG)
- Delivering training or teaching (WWG)
- Delivering Offending Behaviour Programmes (STS)/(WWG)/(WWI)

Some ways you can use questioning and checking understanding skills in these contexts are:

- Ask a variety of questions to encourage the other person to give you information.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage someone to talk.
- Use 'wait time' to give the other person (and yourself) a chance to think.
- Paraphrase what someone has said to make them feel more comfortable.
- Use your tone of voice to make your questions 'stand out' from the rest of the conversation.

- Use your body language to encourage another person to talk.
- Promote an atmosphere where group members feel confident to answer questions.
- Get group members to tell you in their own words what you have just told them.

Try it out!

Think about how you would use questioning and checking understanding in an induction session.

- How would you make sure the group members had understood what you had said?
- How would you show them that you are listening?
- How long would your wait time be?
- What non-verbal signals might you look for to see if they had understood you?
- What type of questions might you ask to check understanding?
- How would you encourage them to feel comfortable to ask questions?
- What non-verbal communication signals might you use to reassure?
- How would you respond if the answer you received to a question was not what you required/wanted?

Links with other modules

- Speaking and listening skills in context
- Non-verbal communication
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language

Part 2
Why are questioning and checking understanding skills important – for you, for your group?

We all have moments where we wish we had asked certain questions. You might be on the phone to someone and have so many questions to ask that you forget the most important one, or you might get so carried away with the conversation that you don't ask important questions.

Try it out!

Think of situations where you haven't asked questions. What were the reasons?

Ideas check

There may be many varied reasons for not asking questions:

- You have too many things on your mind and forget.

- You may think you understand everything and feel that questions aren't necessary.

- You are so lost that you don't know where to start with asking questions.

- You don't want to embarrass yourself by showing that you don't know or that you haven't understood what has been discussed.

- You don't want to interrupt the other person.

- You are bored and not interested in the conversation.

- You may think that if you don't ask questions the other person will eventually stop talking.

- You may not know how to ask questions.

The activities that follow will give you the opportunity to explore questioning skills and checking understanding in a little more detail. Throughout these activities, reflect on your own use of questioning skills, and think about the benefits for you in appropriate use of the non-verbal signals as well as verbal feedback. Also reflect on how you can support your group to be more aware of the signals they may be giving to speakers through non-verbal communication and how they can become better questioners.

Firstly you need to look at the situations in which you will be using questioning skills with your group, i.e. one to one or groups.

The following strategies for building up confidence in asking questions are taken from Access for All, which provides guidance on making the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Core Curricula accessible.[1]

- Build in regular opportunities for group members to ask questions to enable them to become more confident in doing so.

- Be explicit in the questions you ask.

- Create an environment where discussion is structured, so that group members asking questions is a key part of the session.

- Always value and affirm group members' questions.

- Make sure examples you use are visual where appropriate and real to the individuals.

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[1] *Access for All,* DfES Publications, available to download from the archive section of the LSIS Excellence Gateway or accessible through the interactive *Skills for Life* core curricula at http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum

You may also find the suite of *Learning for Living* documents will provide additional guidance for staff working with offenders with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The series contains Developing access to *Skills for Life for Offender Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.*[2]

When working in groups you can encourage group members to comment on the answers of other individuals:

- Set the ground rules by negotiation before the start of the session and reaffirm at the beginning of each session that follows, to include an agreement that all questions have value and there shouldn't be any comment/sniggering/abuse directed at any group member who asks a question.

- Start the conversational 'crossfire' by asking 'What do you think about that answer?'

- Follow up promising leads, building on the contributions that group members make.

- Tactfully curb aggressive individuals.

- If a group member is unable to respond, try prompting or perhaps rewording the question.

- Never interrupt a group member who is trying to answer.

ⓘ For further information on managing group discussions, see module 5.

ⓘ Note: Be aware that partially-sighted group members may be unable to see non-verbal signals. Some individuals with autistic spectrum disorders, mental health problems, substance misuse or some specific communication disorders may find non-verbal communication and eye contact particularly difficult.

Be aware that some group members with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may be insensitive or hypersensitive to tone of voice.

You may need to be aware of any cultural issues such as eye contact in non-verbal communication.

Activity 1
Famous or not?
This is an icebreaker activity and one that you may well have played before. You need a small group of people to play.

Choose a famous person, write the person's name on a piece of paper and turn it face side down. The people in the group must then ask a series of yes/no questions to discover the identity of the famous person.

Players take turns. As soon as a question is answered with a 'no', it is the next player's turn.

When using this activity with learners, you may wish to write the key words related to the questions on a board for the others to see. This will support those with impaired auditory memory skills.

Activity 2
People watching
If you are in a staff room, café or restaurant or watching a television programme, indulge in some people watching. Watch people talking together and observe the ways in which they ask questions and check understanding.

- Look out for non-verbal communication such as hand gestures, eye contact, etc.

- Look at how they are sitting. Are they tilting their heads towards the speaker?

- Can you tell when they are asking questions? How?

[2] The Excellence Gateway Archive: http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=DAFOL

Activity 3
Speaker, questioner and observer

You will need two willing colleagues for this activity.

There will be three roles: speaker, questioner and observer. Everyone will take each role once, so you need to decide who will take which role first.

Speaker
Your task is to talk about something that is important to you. The practice will be more helpful if you talk about something you really care about, although you could role play.

Questioner
Your task is to practise non-verbal communication to encourage the speaker. Also ask a variety of questions to make the speaker feel more comfortable and find out more information about their chosen topic.

Observer
Your task is to observe the questioner's non-verbal skills and questioning techniques.

Task
The first speaker will talk with the questioner for three or four minutes. The questioner will then talk about why the types of questions that were used were selected and how much more information was gained from the speaker. The speaker will then share his or her feelings about how he or she was encouraged to give more information and if the speaker felt that the questioner really understood what the speaker was saying. The observer will then share any observations made. The roles are then swapped.

Activity 4
What's my topic?

You will need a small group of people for this activity.

Each person in the group has five blank cards. Each person writes a random, interesting or humorous topic on the card, e.g. favourite television programme, most embarrassing moment.

The cards are placed on a pile, face side down.

The first person takes a card. This person is the questioner and must question the person sitting next to them. The questioner cannot use any of the words that are written on the card but they must gain this information written on the card (e.g. favourite television programme) from the other person. The questioner will need to ask a series of different types of questions to get the required information.

If the questioner has not discovered the required information after two minutes, the other players can try to guess what the topic was.

The next person then takes a card and questions while the others listen.

Part 3
What you need to think about

Some thoughts and cautions!

Be aware of cultural differences. For some cultures direct eye contact may be considered offensive or aggressive. Be led by the speaker's comfort with eye contact. Effective eye contact can often consist of 'bursts' of eye contact with movement to other parts of the person's face or hands and looking away.

Group dynamics are important and may change each time you meet your group. Be aware of body language when your group arrives to see if people aren't getting on. You can then seat them accordingly.

Some individuals may feel intimidated by asking questions. We need to bear these types of barriers in mind when getting ready to ask questions with groups and individuals.

Barriers to asking questions can include the following:

- previous educational experience;
- fear of looking 'stupid' in front of others;
- worry, fear, anger, depression;
- individual bias and prejudice;
- language and cultural differences;
- noise and verbal clutter such as a radio or TV in the background;
- low attention spans;
- not knowing how to structure questions due to difficulties with speech, language and communication;
- not understanding a discussion during which questions are expected to be generated.

What type of questioner are you?

The following table will help you to reflect on the types of questions you ask and whether you tend to ask a certain type more often than others. You can also use the table to record the type of information you received from asking certain questions.

If possible, it would be useful to video or tape yourself during a conversation or learning session to enable more accurate reflection. You could then review this to complete the table. The reflective log that follows will also provide a useful aid to thinking about your approach to questioning and checking understanding.

Type of question	Situation	Example	Information
Open			
Reflective			
Leading			
Clarification			

Top tip!

To become a better questioner you may need to think about the following:

- Increase your range of question types.

- Don't 'rapid fire' questions, i.e. asking the same question three times but in different ways and not giving the other person time to answer.

- Adapt your body language.

- Make your questions more obvious through using your tone of voice and stressing key words.

- Increase your 'wait time'.

- Ask a series of carefully structured follow-up questions, after an initial question.

- Ensure your questions are relevant.

- Ensure your questions are explicit.

- Be aware of your use of 'why' and 'how' questions due to the level of reasoning required to answer.

Reflective log

A reflective log is a useful tool to enable you to think about what has occurred during your interaction with your group. If you complete it after a session with your group, it will give you an opportunity to reflect on the questioning and checking skills you may have demonstrated and the skills used by them.

ⓘ Look back at the introduction to see more about reflective practice.

Reflecting on your session will help you to:

- stand back from the session and think about what you did;

- identify what was successful;

- consider any areas for development;

- identify any barriers to your own progress;

- decide how you will overcome them.

Using the reflective log, think about your own questioning and checking skills and those of your group. The following questions may guide you:

- What did you do?

- How effective was this and why?

- What did your group members do?

- Were you clear about the purpose of your questions?

- Were the answers to your questions what you expected? If not, why not?

- Would you do it differently another time?

Reflective log

- Focus on the aspects of questioning and checking understanding which were most relevant to the session.

- Record what you can. There is no need to complete all the boxes.

Group focus: circle as appropriate

Adult/Young People/Young Offender

Male/female

Group/one to one

Session focus:

Aspect of speaking and listening	What you said/ did/thought	What worked well	Points to think about
Asking questions, including checking understanding and using pauses (How do you make sure you have understood what an offender has said? How do you show that you are listening to him/her? Use of pauses? Use of questions? Use of body language?)			
Use of body language etc., in combination with speaking and listening (Eye contact? Body position and gestures? Facial expression? Are body language messages the same as those expressed in speaking and listening?)			
Links between your thinking and your speaking and listening (What kinds of things are you saying to yourself during the session? To what extent is this conversation the same as your conversation with the offender?)			
Other			

Part 4
How you could use this with your group

There are many activities which can be used with groups and individuals to raise awareness of the importance of questioning and checking skills, including some of the 'Try it out!' activities throughout this pack.

You will need to introduce the sessions carefully and make sure that you are preparing your group. Often they may lack the knowledge and experience of appropriate communication skills, and you will need to start with the basics. Some of the work you have already completed in parts 1 and 2 of this module could be adapted to introduce the topic to your group.

Questioning and checking skills are just one aspect of the speaking and listening skills modules in this pack. It would be useful to start the topic of communication skills as a whole with an appropriate introduction. A suggested introductory session is outlined in module 1.

The activities which follow could be used as part of a whole series of sessions with your group and can be used after the introductory session. These will help group members to develop and practise some of the questioning and checking understanding skills they could employ in many contexts, but the focus for these are in an interview/meeting situation.

Offenders in all settings have to attend interviews and meetings of one type or another. These could be:

- at induction;
- at adjudications;
- case conferences;
- key worker interviews;
- work/work placement interviews;
- sentence planning;
- individual learning planning and review;
- personal adviser interviews.

ⓘ Note: Your group may have different levels of competence in their use of speaking and listening skills, and you may need to differentiate some of these activities to make them more accessible, e.g. ensuring that any technical vocabulary used is clearly explained or putting group members into pairs where more confident individuals can support their less confident peers.

ⓘ There are more hints and tips on adapting activities for a range of individuals in module 1.

Activity 1
Question patterns
This activity is taken from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum at Entry 2[3] but can be adapted for a wide range of groups. The aim is to help individuals to recognise when questions are being asked and the type of response they invite.

Group members can work in pairs or in a group and listen to a tape of questions with different structures and intonations, e.g. when, where, why, who, what questions. You will have to produce a suitable tape of questions or record some questions from an appropriate source e.g. television programme, radio show.

[3] *Adult Literacy Core Curriculum,* DfES, 2001, accessible through the interactive *Skills for Life* core curricula at http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum

Encourage the group members to identify some patterns and see which invite open and closed responses. They can then start to recognise the sorts of questions that are more likely to occur in certain situations.

ⓘ Note: You may need to explain that open questions are when more information is included in the answer, and closed questions are those requiring one word or very short answers, e.g. yes, no, I don't know.

Activity 2
The golden rules

This activity is taken from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum at Entry 3 but can be adapted for a wide range of groups.

The aim of this activity is to encourage group members to consider how they can prepare for a telephone conversation, including any questions they may need to ask, before making phone calls.

Identify situations where individuals use the phone to ask questions and get information and share any problems that they might have encountered, e.g. speaking, listening and concentrating or writing at the same time, hanging up and then realising they have forgotten to ask a crucial question. Ask group members to work in pairs or small groups to compile a list of top tips on how to prepare for these types of situations.

Discuss their responses as a whole group. The group can then develop their own set of golden rules for preparing for and having telephone conversations.

The golden rules (example adapted from e2e embedded Skills for Life materials):

Do:
- Speak politely
- Speak clearly
- Have a list of questions ready
- Ask questions politely and wait for the answer
- Have a notebook and pencil to hand

Don't:
- Rush the call
- Use swear words
- Get annoyed with the caller
- Blame the caller for not speaking clearly

It is important to place emphasis on writing down target questions prior to making phone calls to support the memory. You can also encourage group members to make the person at the other end of the phone wait for them to write down each bit of information given. The caller can then read the information back to the person to check it is right.

Activity 3
If this is the answer – what's the question?

The aim of this activity is to enable group members to think about how answers fit the questions that could be asked.

Explain to the group that you will be giving an answer to a question, e.g. 'tuna salad', and they must try to come up with appropriate questions that would fit the answer, e.g. 'What type of sandwich did you have for lunch?' or 'What is your favourite sandwich filling?'

You could use answers to number problems, e.g. if the answer is 25, what could the question be? ('What is 5 times 5?')

You could use headline news of the day, e.g. if the answer is 'Manchester United, two – nil', what's the question? ('Who won the local derby match last night?')

In fact, you could use just about anything your group may be interested in, e.g. sport, current affairs, course information, places of interest, even questions that have a yes/no answer to see how different questions can elicit the same answer.

You could divide the group into smaller groups and let group members try the activity out on each other.

Following the activity, draw the group together and discuss what clues in the answers helped them to formulate the questions.

Activity 4
Find someone who . . .

The aim of this activity is to get group members thinking about and preparing the questions they ask. They are each given a short questionnaire. The following can be used and adapted.

For the first part of the activity, group members are told that they are only allowed to ask yes/no questions. They are given some time to work individually or in pairs to prepare or think about their questions, then they work their way round the group asking questions. (Activity 1 may be a useful starting point for this activity to establish the difference between the different types of questions.)

For the second part of the activity, group members are asked to find out more information, e.g. if John likes watching soaps, which ones does he like and how often does he watch them? This will encourage individuals to expand their range of questions.

Find someone who. . .	Name
Likes watching soaps	
Plays a sport	
Has lived in more than one country	
Can cook something really well	
Doesn't like watching sport	

Activity 5
Spinner

The aim of this activity is to get group members to use different question words.

You will need several spinners, which you could get your group to make before the start of the activity. These are hexagonal pieces of card with six segments and a matchstick or toothpick through the middle of the card. A template is shown below.

On each segment write a question word/phrase, e.g. How many? What? When? Where?
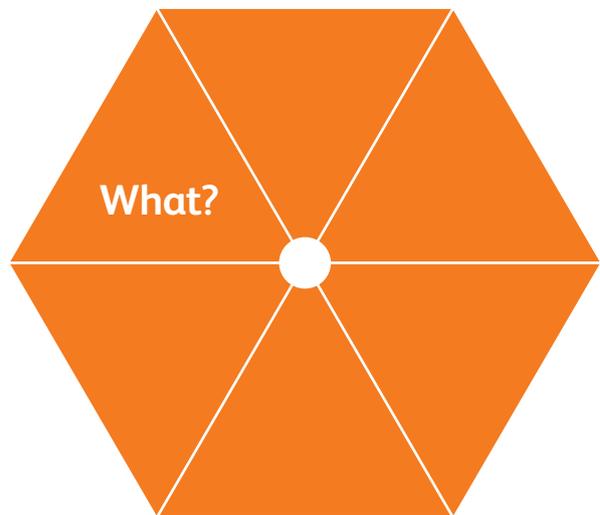
In small groups (pairs or threes), one group member spins the spinner and whichever question the spinner lands on, i.e. the segment which lies on the table, that person asks each of the other group members a question starting with that question word/phrase, e.g. a 'what?' question – 'What did you have for breakfast?'

Each group member takes it in turn to use the spinner and ask the questions.

You may need to demonstrate the activity to the whole group as a starter and use your checking skills to make sure everyone understands what they have to do.

You could adapt this for less confident group members by using a picture as a starter, so each question is about the picture.

Part 5
Next steps

The final activity is a time to reflect on the thoughts, discussions and ideas you've had as you've worked through this module.

Use the action plan on the below to identify what you think you need to do next and to decide on your priority actions.

There are other modules in this pack which you may want to work through. These are:

- Speaking and listening skills in context
- Non-verbal communication
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language

Speaking and listening action plan

What do I need to do?	What do I want to achieve?	What actions do I need to take?	When do I need to have completed them?	Who will I need to see?

Module 4
Active listening

Part 1
What are active listening skills?
Listening to what people tell you is far more than simply hearing the words.

Did you know?
People speak at an average of 130 words per minute (WPM), but they can listen intelligently at about 500 WPM.[1]

We spend much of our youth learning how to speak but are rarely given any guidance on how to listen. Listening is a skill which is often taken for granted because it's almost impossible to 'not listen', i.e. it isn't easy to turn ears off like a radio. When someone speaks we have to hear them, even if we might not be working actively to understand them.

People listen in all sorts of ways in different situations. Some listeners doodle while they are listening, others constantly move their hands as if they are waiting for the speaker to skip to the end, and when some people listen they appear serious and intent on the speaker. You may concentrate if the subject matter is of interest, but find it difficult to focus on the speaker if you are not engaged.

Try it out!
Think of situations where you have listened to other people. What did you do while you were listening?

Think of other 'types' of listeners. What do they do while they are listening? Do you think they have good listening skills?

Look at the different listening styles that follow. Think about your own listening style and whether any of these might describe you or someone you know! You might feel that you have one or more of these listening styles depending on the situation and speaker. Perhaps there are other listening styles you can add to the list?

- Are you a deliberate listener who likes to chew things over? Do you nod your head vigorously while listening, or murmur in agreement quite frequently?

- Do you listen with every good intention of paying attention, but suddenly something that is said sparks off an idea in your head and you find your thoughts go off on a tangent? As a daydreamer, do you ask questions that might appear to the speaker completely random and irrelevant, but which are very relevant to your own thoughts?

- Could you be a selective listener, only hearing what you want to hear and focusing on listening for information that backs up your argument or point of view?

- Do you ever pretend to listen – but use a variety of ways to look as though you're listening; in fact, you have it down to a fine art? Perhaps, as a faker, you tilt your head to one side and nod at regular intervals as if agreeing with the speaker, or maybe you write a lot of notes while the speaker is talking?

[1] Swanson, C. H., *Their Success is your Success: Teach Them to Listen,* West Virginia Community College, West Virginia, 1984.

- Are you an interrupter who is unable to focus on the speaker for prolonged periods of time? If you have an idea or an opinion to share, are you keen to stop the speaking 'flow'?

- Perhaps you're an arguer and feel the need to argue with opinions before the speaker has had an opportunity to finish? Do you make your mind up before the speaker has even started and 'tune' the speaker out rather than listening, just waiting for a pause in which to argue your case?

- Maybe you're an advice giver, relating everything that is said back to yourself and always looking for a chance to share your own similar experiences? Do you often find yourself beginning sentences with 'If I were you …'?

Try it out!
Can you think of some of the disadvantages of having any of these listening styles? What might they be for you and for the speaker?

ⓘ Note: Some of your group members may seem to have one of the styles listed, but you need to be aware that some people may be masking their own difficulties in accessing the content of what is being said, and so appear to be faking listening. The daydreamer may have social communication difficulties, i.e. difficulties with topic relevance. An individual who interrupts frequently may have auditory memory, hearing impairments or word retrieval difficulties, i.e. the person has to say what they think there and then before the idea is gone.

Passive and active listening

Try it out!
What do you think are the differences between passive and active listening?

Passive listening
This is the kind of listening we do when we 'listen' to music when we are doing jobs around the house or driving to work. When we listen like this we move in and out of comprehension by tuning into the music or the chat for a few minutes and then drift back to what we are doing.

Passive listening occurs when a listener may not verbally respond to the speaker. The listener may deliberately or unintentionally send non-verbal messages through eye contact, smiles, yawns, or nods. However, there is often no verbal response to show how the speaker's message is being received.

Passive listening may be appropriate if the speaker wants a 'sounding board', i.e. someone to listen to their particular problem but not give any feedback or advice.

Passive listening means:

- A verbal response may not be needed or intended.

Examples are listening to the radio, watching TV or being immersed in a novel or newspaper; in other words, situations where you may want to relax and be entertained.

Active listening
Active listening involves listening with a purpose. It may be to gain information, obtain directions, understand others, solve problems, share interest, see how another person feels, show support, etc.

Active listening intentionally focuses on who you are listening to, whether in a group or one-on-one, in order to understand what the speaker is saying. As the listener, you should then be able to repeat back in your own words what the other person has said to their satisfaction. This doesn't mean you necessarily agree with, but rather understand, what the speaker is saying.

Active listening is not just the opposite of passive listening. Active listening involves giving the speaker your full attention and concentration and can take practice and preparation to get right.

A person who incorporates listening with concentration is actively listening. Active listening is a method of responding to someone in a way that encourages communication.

Active listening involves verbal feedback through questioning or paraphrasing, as well as appropriate non-verbal communication such as nods and eye contact.

Active listening means:

- The listener listens with a purpose.
- Verbal feedback is given to the speaker which shows the speaker that you understand what is being said.

Examples are listening to gain information, solve a problem or share an interest with someone.

Acceptance responses

Active listening can involve giving the speaker acceptance responses such as:

- 'I see.'
- 'Uh huh.'
- 'OK.'

These responses show the speaker that you are listening but don't interrupt the flow of information. They also help you to follow the information that is being given, i.e. using acceptance responses after hearing main points of information may help to reinforce them.
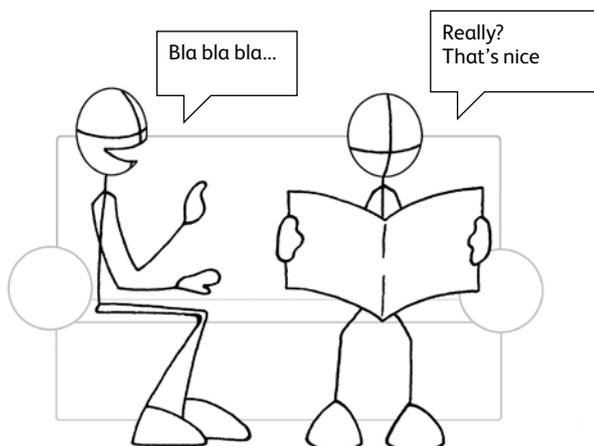
You may be familiar with occasions when you have been engaged in doing something, reading a book for example, and someone talks to you, but what they are saying doesn't impinge on your consciousness. If asked what the speaker was saying a little later, you'd be hard pushed to remember. You may even have murmured something less than meaningful as you realise a response is expected. This isn't active listening!

Repeating

Repeating information back to the speaker also demonstrates that you are listening and can help you to remember what the other person is saying.

Speaker A
'We decided to book the holiday, but I wasn't sure where I wanted to go, so we decided to look on the Internet.'

Listener B
'So you looked on the Internet?'

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is not just repeating what the other person has said, but rather putting it into your own words.

A 'We decided to book the holiday, but I wasn't sure where I wanted to go, so we decided to look on the Internet.'

B 'So you did an Internet search to help you make your mind up?'

You might say, 'Let me make sure I'm with you so far,' and then rephrase the speaker's ideas in your own words. This reflective process helps the listener to check that they understand the speaker correctly. The listener can also reflect what they think the speaker is feeling or thinking.

Clarifying

Clarifying what the speaker has said is useful when you are not sure or unclear, e.g. 'So how many weeks were you there for?' or 'When did you go?'

By asking these types of questions, you want the speaker to elaborate on information already given.

ℹ For further information on questioning,
see module 3.

Summarising

Summarising can be used when the speaker has finished and can help you to recap on the main points that were covered. The speaker will then know if they have been successful in getting their message across. It is a useful way to check information, e.g. if you phone an information line for train times, you can summarise to check that you have noted the times down correctly.

Becoming an active listener: some rules

- Make sure your mind is focused. It can be easy to let your mind wander if you think you know what the person is going to say next, but you might be wrong!

- We need to look at the other person, as a speaker will work harder at sending out information if they see a receptive audience.

- An active listener will stop talking and then nod and murmur to show signs of encouragement for the other person to begin talking. An active listener will use acceptance responses such as 'I see', 'uh huh' or 'OK'.

- If you are really listening intently, you may feel tired after the speaker has finished.

- Let yourself finish listening before you begin to speak. You can't really listen if you are busy thinking about what you want to say next.

- Listen for the main ideas. The main ideas are the most important points the speaker wants to get across. They may be mentioned at the start or end of the talk and repeated a number of times. Pay special attention to statements that begin with phrases such as 'My point is….' or 'The thing to remember is…'

- Ask questions. If you are not sure you understand what the speaker has said, ask. It is a good idea to repeat in your own words what the speaker has said so that you can be sure your understanding is correct.

- Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk. Speakers appreciate having the chance to say everything they would like to say without being interrupted. When you interrupt it looks like you aren't listening, even if you really are.

Top tip!
Resist rehearsing. It's really easy to start thinking about your responses in your head before the speaker has finished. Wait until the speaker has finished making their point.

Accept silence. Allow time for both you and the speaker to reflect. Don't 'jump in' as soon as the speaker pauses, but allow them to properly finish what is being said.

Try it out!
What do you think the barriers are that could prevent you from being an active listener? Think of occasions where you have had to listen to gain some information. Did anything prevent you from getting that information?

Barriers to active listening

Some of the barriers to active listening are listed below. More are listed throughout the module.

- **You may think you know in advance what the other person is going to say**

  If you think you know what someone is going to say, you might 'tune out' and not listen properly. This could lead to finishing the other person's sentences for them or perhaps interrupting while they are talking.

- **Judging people**

  When someone starts to talk, you may be distracted by what the speaker is wearing or their mannerisms, and this may lead to making judgements rather than focusing on what the person is saying.

- **You and your emotions**

  The speaker may remind you of someone you once knew, the subject matter may be something that you find difficult, or you may be having a bad day. It is important to try to put these emotions to one side and focus on the 'here and now' of the speaker's information.

Try it out!
Can you think of any ways in which you can overcome some of these barriers to active listening?

Top tip!

Try the following to improve active listening skills:

- Take a few deep breaths to help you focus on what the speaker is saying.

- Try to concentrate on what is being said rather than on who is saying it.

- Try to see the other person's point of view.

- If you can, listen in a place where there will be no distractions.

- If you know the speaker has a lot to say, or that there will be a lot of important information given to you, have a pen and paper handy.

- Avoid daydreaming. Asking clarifying questions will help to keep you alert and involved with the information you are receiving.

Passive listening

You may remember sitting in classes listening to a boring teacher. You heard the words as background noise while you were actually thinking about doing something else. You may have listened to a salesperson trying to get you to buy something, or you may have had a long day at work but had to listen to a member of your family sharing their news.

yawn
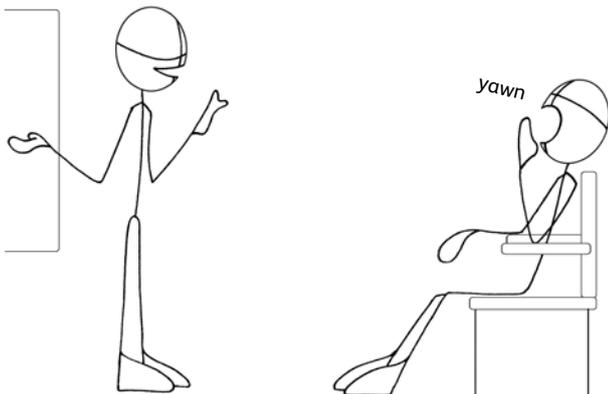
In some cases, passive listening can be quite rude and can demonstrate evidence of disrespect for the speaker. In others, it simply shows that you are tired or lack the energy required for active listening. Many of us will find ourselves sitting on the sofa at the end of the day listening to someone talking about their day but still continue to watch television or flick through the paper. We may well be listening but just lack the energy to demonstrate that we are listening.

Try it out!

Think of situations where you listen passively and compare them with situations where you use active listening skills. Think about how/if you demonstrated that you were listening.

Active listening

You may have used active listening skills when talking to a colleague about a holiday that he or she has just returned from. Your boss may have been filling you in on the latest developments at your workplace, or you may have been talking to a colleague about a local news event. You may have used your voice and non-verbal communication to show that you were listening.

ℹ️ For further information on non-verbal communication, see module 2.

Try it out!

Think about situations where you were the speaker. Make a list of examples of non-verbal communication that might have shown that the listener was or wasn't listening. An example of each is given below to start you off!

Examples that can be interpreted as not listening

- Doodling

Examples that can be interpreted as listening

- Leaning forward

When you have completed this activity, reflect on other examples of active listening that the listener may or may not have shown, e.g. clarifying what you said or using acceptance responses.

Examples of non-verbal communication that can be interpreted as not listening

- Glazed expression
- Slumped in the chair
- Closed body language, e.g. folded arms (Note: folded arms might also mean someone is listening intently and disagreeing with what is being said)
- Asking irrelevant questions
- Looking at watch
- Fidgeting
- Falling asleep!
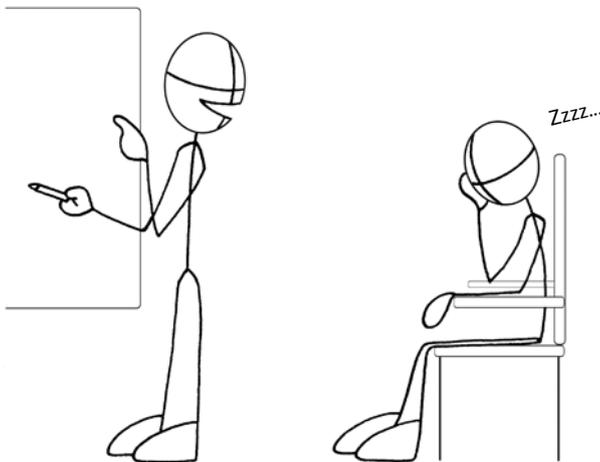
Examples of non-verbal communication that can be interpreted as listening

- Nodding
- Leaning forward
- Murmuring
- Eye contact
- Making notes
- Tilting head towards the speaker
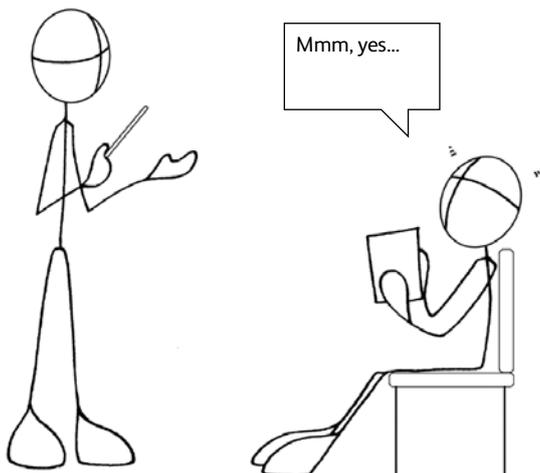
Examples of non-verbal communication which may be interpreted as inattentive or disrespectful

- Shrugging your shoulders
- Looking away from the speaker
- Crossing your arms and/or legs
- Sitting slouched over
- Rolling your eyes
- Yawning
- Tapping your fingers

It is important to note that we may do some of these things without realising, but our actions may have quite an impact on the speaker. If we inadvertently fiddle with our hair (out of habit) or yawn (simply because we are tired), the speaker may start to lose confidence and may be hesitant about continuing to speak.

ⓘ Note: for some individuals with some attention or movement disorders the use of not only doodling but also 'twiddlers or twirlers' or fiddling with a pen throughout may be a useful strategy to support active listening. If offenders require particular seating arrangements, such as balance boards or cushions, this may impact on their ability to actively listen.

Try it out!
How could non-verbal communication show that you are paying attention to the speaker and what is being said?

Ideas check

- Making eye contact
- Smiling
- Nodding your head
- Leaning towards the speaker
- Uncrossing your legs and arms

Non-verbal communication gives the speaker signals that you are paying attention without interrupting what they are saying. Non-verbal communication such as body language can communicate interest and respect for the speaker.

- Head nods show that you are interested in the person and what they are saying, rather than specifically agreeing with them. Care should be taken not to over or under use, as the speaker may view this as being given permission to talk. It is important to note that some people may have excellent use of non-verbal cues which may mask their difficulties in accessing spoken information.

- Our body posture needs to be relaxed but not slumped or appearing too laid back, as this may give the impression that we are being too casual. Conversely, too tense or upright a position will make you feel uncomfortable and may make the speaker feel under pressure.

- A slight leaning forward conveys involvement but too much can look exaggerated and could be seen as an intrusion into personal space. Leaning back may be seen as distancing.

- It is important to try to look at your speaker to create plenty of opportunities for your eyes to meet reasonably often. Don't stare! People feel dominated or 'seen through'. Looking down or away too often may also indicate tension or boredom. Good eye contact helps you to see all the facial messages that your speaker is conveying. It can also show them that you are interested and engaged in what they are saying.
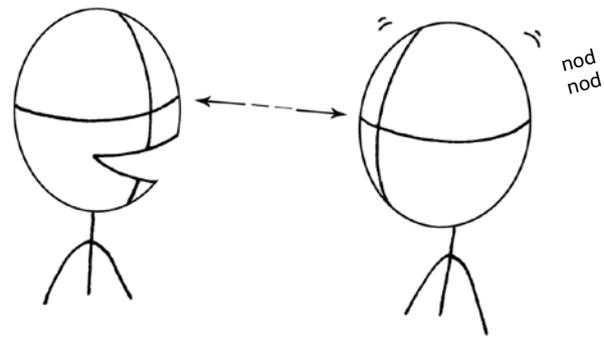
Both 'leaning' and 'eye contact' rely on trust, which may be difficult for some group members due to previous experiences.

ℹ️ Note: Don't spend all of your time reading non-verbal messages, as they are not always reliable on their own. Some people have non-verbal practices that are more a part of their personality than the message they are communicating, e.g. some people fiddle with their hair because it is long and they have a formed a habit. It may not be a sign of disinterest.

It is important to remember that some individuals may find using non-verbal communication extremely difficult. Group members with autistic spectrum disorders may find it hard to communicate directly with other people. Some aspects of social communication are particularly difficult, e.g. eye contact.

Be aware of individuals with communication difficulties who will struggle with expressing and interpreting non-verbal communication in addition to struggling with expressive and receptive language skills. This could be due to underlying attention, memory and listening difficulties and may impair the individual's ability to listen effectively.

Some group members, regardless of any disability, may feel inhibited entering into such a two-way process of communication and may prefer to listen more passively. Furthermore, blind or partially sighted individuals may be unable to receive clues from body language or use eye contact to demonstrate their interest.

Preparing for active listening

If you were phoning the train station to find out about train times, you would be most likely to prepare beforehand by having a piece of paper and a pen handy. Similarly, if you phoned the doctor, you may have your diary to hand to see when you could arrange an appointment.

Even face-to-face conversations may require some kind of preparation to ensure that you can pay full attention and focus on what is being said. If a friend pops round for a drink or a coffee, you may automatically turn off the television, get a drink and 'make yourself comfortable'. You may need to think about the preparation that is required when working with your group.

Try it out!

What preparations can you make to ensure that you will be able to listen attentively? E.g. standing face to face with a colleague, phoning a number to get information (train times, opening times, etc.) or perhaps talking to a friend about what is happening in their life.

Ideas check

Listening well requires concentration, so make sure:

- You can meet in a quiet place.
- You will not be disturbed.
- Your mind is clear from distractions.
- You are not pushed for time.

Preparing to listen may also involve thinking about the position of the chairs, checking the room temperature and making sure that there is enough light.

Try it out!

Listening actively requires you to do more than simply hear what is being said. What else can you do?

Ideas check

- Read between the lines.
- Watch for non-verbal clues, e.g. if the speaker looks confused or uncomfortable.
- Encourage the speaker by asking questions.
- Use your eyes, facial expressions and body to encourage the speaker to talk. Just smiling may encourage a nervous speaker to continue with what they are saying.

Mapping to your context

You will use active listening skills in all of the contexts in which you interact with your group.

Look back at module 1 to see how these might relate to the three areas: Setting the Scene (STS), Working with Individuals (WWI) and Working with Groups (WWG).

ⓘ Module 1 contains more detail about Setting the Scene, Working with Individuals and Working with Groups.

These are some examples:

- Interviews (STS)/(WWI)
- Induction (STS)/(WWI)
- Sentence planning meetings (STS)/(WWI)
- Case conferences/meetings (STS)/(WWI)
- Work or work experience (WWI)/(WWG)
- Delivering training or teaching (WWG)

Some ways you can use active listening skills in these contexts are:

- Use body language to encourage someone to talk and show that you are interested.
- Use acceptance responses to encourage the speaker.
- Ask clarifying questions and summarise information to make sure that you have understood.
- Paraphrase or repeat what has been said to encourage the speaker and to help you recap the information.
- Maintain eye contact to show interest.
- Listen for the main points when someone is speaking.

Try it out!

Think about how you would use active listening with a member of your group during a case conference meeting.

- What verbal cues might you use to show you are listening?

- How might you gauge whether your group member was actively listening to the discussion?

- How would you encourage the individual to contribute to the discussion?

- How might you show that you have understood what your group member is saying?

- What eye contact would be appropriate?

- What non-verbal communication cues might you use to encourage your group member to participate in the discussion?

Links with other modules:
- Speaking and listening skills in context

- Non-verbal communication

- Questioning and checking understanding

- Managing group discussion

- Using technical language

Part 2
Why are active listening skills important – for you, for your group?

The activities that follow will give you the opportunity to explore active listening skills in a little more detail.

Throughout these activities, reflect on your own use of listening skills, and think about the benefits for you of appropriate use of the non-verbal signals as well as verbal feedback. Also reflect on how you can support your group to be more aware of the signals they may be giving to speakers through non-verbal communication and how they can become more active listeners.

Activity 1
Watch the listeners
If you are in a staff room, café or restaurant or watching a television programme, watch people talking together. Observe the ways in which they listen to each other.

- Look out for non-verbal communication such as nodding, hand gestures, eye contact, etc.

- Look at how they are sitting. Are they leaning forward? Are their faces angled towards the speaker?

What does their non-verbal communication suggest?

Activity 2
Sharing observations
You will need two willing colleagues for this activity.

There will be three roles: speaker, listener and observer. Everyone will take each role once, so you need to decide who will take which role first.

A – Speaker
Your task is to talk about something that is important to you. The practice will be more helpful if you talk about something you really care about, although you could role play.

B – Listener
Your task is to practise non-verbal communication, e.g. eye contact, body language, posture. Concentrate on following the speaker's train of thought.

C – Observer
Your task is to observe the listener's non-verbal skills.

Task: The first speaker will talk with the listener for three or four minutes. The listener will then discuss the listening experience with the other two members of the group. The speaker will then share his or her feelings about the listener's listening. The observer will then share any observations made.

The roles are then swapped.

Activity 3a
Listening styles

You will need to ask a colleague or two to help you to do this activity.

- Think of a topic which really interests you. It could be anything – your hobby, the holiday of a lifetime, the most exciting event that has happened this year.

- Talk for a few minutes about your chosen theme.

- Ask your listeners to adopt one of the listening styles from part 1, such as looking out of the window, examining their nails, yawning.

- How did it feel to you? What did your colleagues feel too? Can you remember an occasion when you've displayed similar disengagement from a speaker?

Activity 3b
Extension

Extend this activity by working with two colleagues.

- A: listens

- B: talks about a topic that interests him or her

- C: observes

- C uses checklist 1 to observe and comment on the listener's active listening skills. Checklist 2 can be completed by A (the listener) to encourage him or her to think more deeply about whether any barriers to active listening were experienced and how these can be overcome. (Part of this checklist has been completed to provide an example.)

Checklist 1

Active listening skill	Example	Comments
Acceptance response		
Clarifying question		
Repeating		
Paraphrasing		
Summarising		

Checklist 2

Barrier	Example	How to overcome the barrier
Thinking in advance	Jane said she was going to tell me about a new system at work, so I immediately started thinking about how this would affect me and my colleagues and didn't really listen to the first part of what she was saying.	Take some deep breaths to help clear my mind. Focus on the 'here and now' rather than thinking about the possible future.

Barrier	Example	How to overcome the barrier

Activity 4a
Testing your memory

You will need a small group of people for this activity.

- Each person in the group has five blank cards. Each person writes a random, interesting or humorous topic on the card, e.g. the best film I have ever seen, the worst meal I ever made, or what I would spend a thousand pounds on.

- The cards are placed in a pile, face side down.

- The first person takes a card and must talk about the topic for two minutes while the others listen.

- As soon as the two minutes have finished, the next person takes a card and speaks while the others listen.

- At the end of the game the players must try to remember the details and information that people talked about.

The aim is to maintain a fast pace and not pause between speakers.

Although this game seems simple, it will be difficult for people to focus on listening as they will be thinking about their turn and the topics that they wrote on the cards.

Once you have talked about the information that people gave, you can discuss the difficulties that were encountered and the strategies that helped with listening to all the players.

Activity 4b
Extension

An extension to this activity would be to ask the listeners to summarise the information that they hear from each person. The speakers can then tell them if they were right.

ℹ Note: If there are a lot of 'players', you may need to stop every so often to provide the summaries so that people don't have to rely on their memories so much.

Part 3
What you need to think about

How active a listener are you?

You can check how active a listener you are by completing this short test.
If you don't score well on any of the questions, think about ways in which you could improve.

Listening skill	Rating				I could improve by . .
	1 Very good	2 Good	3 Average	4 Poor	
I always concentrate on the speaker and avoid getting distracted by other things going on around me.					
I maintain steady eye contact with the person I'm listening to.					
I avoid finishing other people's sentences.					
I never interrupt.					
I ask relevant questions to obtain information.					
I summarise to check understanding.					
I avoid listening with one ear while thinking about my next question or response.					

Factors that can affect active listening skills

Try it out!
We have already looked at the factors that can affect your listening skills. What are the factors that could affect your group members' active listening skills?

Ideas check
- Mood
- Tiredness
- Medication
- Substance withdrawal
- Time of day
- Atmosphere
- Environment, e.g. distractions, uncomfortable chairs
- Disability, e.g. partial deafness, ADD
- Relationships, e.g. family and/or learner
- Previous learning experiences

This long list of factors demonstrates the need for setting the 'listening' scene very carefully.

Try it out!
How would you go about setting the scene for an active listening activity?

Ideas check
- Lighting and acoustics need to be good for all learners but especially those learners who may have to lip-read to follow discussions.
- You could sit group members in a horseshoe or circle so that everyone can see each other clearly.
- Make sure the environment is welcoming. Avoid having physical barriers like desks in the way.
- Make sure phones are switched off.
- Make sure there is space for latecomers to quickly sit down without interrupting the speaker.
- If you can control the room temperature, make sure it is warm enough.

Hints and tips for active listening

Preparation
- Concentrate.
- Stop talking.
- Avoid classifying the speaker prematurely.
- Get rid of distractions (turn off mobile phones!).
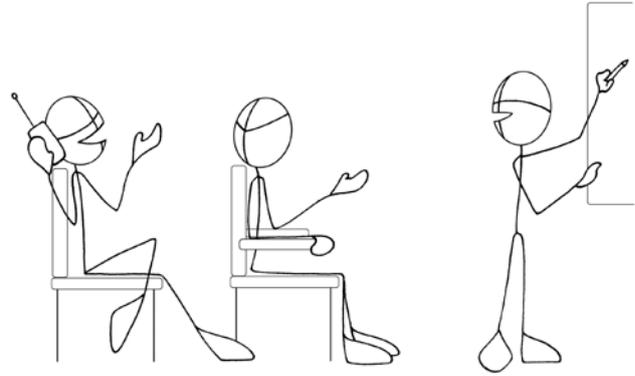
While you are listening
- Be patient.
- Show the other person that you want to listen.
- Put the speaker at ease.
- Be aware of your emotions and prejudices.
- Control your anger.
- Get the main points.
- React to ideas, not to the person.
- Don't argue mentally.
- Listen for what is not said.
- Listen to how something is said.
- Don't antagonise the speaker.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions.

After you have listened
At this point you may want to:
- Ask questions.
- Summarise what the speaker has said.
- Clarify main points.

You can improve and strengthen your listening skills and improve your concentration by following the guidelines from the checklist and these tips.

- **Hold your fire:** Learn not to get too excited about someone else's point until you are sure that you understand it. Don't immediately draw any conclusions (good or bad) and reduce your emotional reactions.

- **Resist distractions:** Try to ignore your surroundings when listening to the speaker. Try to concentrate on the speaker's facial expressions and his/her intonation and meaning.

- **Listen for the main points:** Focus on the main points when you are listening to the speaker. You can try to make a mental outline of the most important points.

- **Focus:** On average, a person speaks 125 words a minute, but we process what we hear at almost four times that speed. Don't let your mind stray while you are waiting for the speaker's next point. Instead, try to 'listen between the lines' and concentrate on the speaker's non-verbal messages.

- **Listen for the whole meaning:** Listen for feeling as well as fact. In other words, try to get inside the other person's head.

Some thoughts and cautions!
Be aware of cultural differences. For some cultures direct eye contact may be considered offensive or aggressive. Be led by the speaker's comfort with eye contact. Effective eye contact usually consists of 'bursts' of eye contact with movement to other parts of the person's face or hands and looking away.

Group dynamics are really important and may change each time you meet your group. Be aware of non-verbal communication when your group arrives to see if certain people aren't getting on. You can then seat them accordingly.

Barriers to listening can include the following:

- negative emotions such as worry, fear, anger, depression;

- individual bias and prejudice;

- language differences;

- noise and verbal 'clutter';

- low attention spans;

- individuals' communication skills to include auditory memory abilities;

- interest in topic of discussion.

We need to bear these barriers in mind when getting ready to listen with groups or individuals.

Reflective log
A reflective log is a useful tool to enable you to think about what has occurred during your interaction with your group. If you complete it after a session with your group, it will give you an opportunity to reflect on the listening skills you may have demonstrated and the listening skills used by them.

ⓘ Look back at the Introduction to see more about reflective practice.

Reflecting on your session will help you to:

- stand back from the session and think about what you did;

- identify what was successful;

- consider any areas for development;

- identify any barriers to your own progress;

- decide how you will overcome them.

Using the reflective log, think about your own listening skills and those of your group. The following questions may guide you:

- What did you do?

- How effective was it? Why/why not?

- What did your group members do?

- How effective was it? Why/why not?

- What would you do differently another time?

Reflective log

- Focus on the aspects of active listening which were most relevant to the session.

- Record what you can. There is no need to complete all the boxes.

Group focus: circle as appropriate

Adult/Young People/Young Offender

Male/female

Group/one to one

Session focus:

Aspect of speaking and listening	What you said/did/thought	What worked well	Points to think about
Active listening (How do you make sure you have heard what an offender has said? How do you show that you are listening to him/her? Use of language? Use of pauses? Use of questions? Use of body language?)			
Use of non-verbal communication etc., in combination with listening (Eye contact? Body position and gestures? Facial expression? Are body language messages the same as those expressed in speaking and listening?)			
Links between your thinking and your speaking and listening (What kinds of things are you saying to yourself during the session? To what extent is this conversation the same as your conversation with the offender?)			
Other			

Part 4
How you could use this with your group

There are many activities which can be used with groups and individuals to raise awareness of the importance of active listening, including some of the 'Try it out!' activities throughout this pack.

You will need to introduce the sessions carefully and make sure that you are preparing your group. Often they may lack the knowledge of appropriate active listening skills, and you will need to start with the basics. Some of the work you have already completed in parts 1 and 2 of this module could be adapted to introduce the topic to your group. For some offenders, engagement and therefore subsequent success in any listening tasks will be influenced by memory and especially auditory memory skills but also significantly by someone's level of comprehension and expressive language skills.

Active listening skills are just one aspect of the speaking and listening skills modules in this pack. It would be useful to start the topic of communication skills as a whole with an appropriate introduction. A suggested introductory session is outlined in module 1.

The activities which follow could be used as part of a whole series of sessions with your group and can be used after the introductory session. These will help group members to develop and practise some of the listening skills they could employ in many contexts, but the focus for these are in an interview/meeting situation.

Offenders in all settings have to attend interviews and meetings of one type or another.

These could be:

- at induction;
- at adjudications;
- case conferences;
- key worker interviews;
- work/work placement interviews;
- sentence planning;
- individual learning planning and review;
- personal adviser interviews.

In these situations offenders will need to use active listening skills in order to gain information and respond to questions. Using their active listening skills will help them to:

- listen out for key information;
- think of appropriate responses and/or questions;
- improve general communication skills (thereby potentially improving employability prospects and level of participation in educational settings).

ⓘ Note: Your group may have different levels of competence in their use of speaking and listening skills, and you may need to differentiate some of these activities to make them more accessible, e.g. ensuring that any technical language used is clearly explained or putting group members into pairs where more confident individuals can support their less confident peers.

ℹ️ There are more hints and tips on adapting activities for a range of individuals in module 1.

Activity 1
What makes a poor listener?
This activity will enable your group to think about what makes a poor listener.

Ask your group to come up with ten top tips on how to be a poor listener. Negative points are often easier to think of than the positives and may inject some humour into the activity.

This activity can be done one to one or also in groups. You could ask each member of the group to come up with two negatives to help you compile a list at the end of the activity or alternatively ask group members to work in pairs to provide whole lists.

Once a list has been compiled, encourage the group to reflect on the impact that poor listening may have on the speaker, e.g. decreased confidence or a provoked emotional response.

Activity 2
Reflection and practice
This activity enables groups to reflect on their non-verbal communication skills when listening.

Introduction:
The group can watch a role play to observe someone listening or perhaps watch an extract from a television programme. The aim is to encourage them to discuss how we show we are listening to people by using non-verbal communication.

Alternative introduction:
Give the group a set of cartoon cards (some of the pictures used in the NVC module or the body postures resource sheet in the Introduction, plus some extra cards depicting both poor and positive NVC could be used for this). You could cut out appropriate images from magazines or newspapers instead.

Ask the group to put the cards into piles. Pile 1 = shows good listening skills; pile 2 = poor listening skills.

Follow-up questionnaire:
This activity encourages the group members to reflect on their non-verbal communication skills when listening. You can use the following questionnaire or adapt it.

When I'm talking with people, do I practise this skill?

Aspect of speaking and listening	All the time	Often	Rarely	Never
Facing the speaker				
Lean towards the speaker				
Maintain eye contact				
Appear relaxed				
Encourage the speaker to talk by murmuring in agreement				
Encourage the speaker to talk by nodding				

Extension:

When the group have completed the questionnaire, they can discuss their results and the ways in which they can improve their non-verbal communication.

Activity 3
Listening for detail

This activity enables group members to understand the need to listen carefully to messages and to speak clearly.

You can record or read out a short announcement (e.g. changes to train times or film listings at a cinema) and tell the group what to listen for. The aim is for them to listen out for the key information.

You can devise a few messages or short passages and the questions to go with them (extracts from coursework, TV magazines, general interest magazines, etc.). It is usually best for you to begin with the first message to show how the exercise should be done and then ask the group to take it in turns to read out the other messages and ask the questions. This usually allows group members to be supportive of their peers and identify the problems that talking too quickly, or not clearly enough, can cause.

Listening passage 1

Read the questions to the group so that they have time to think about the context and information that they will be listening to. Some, or all, of the group could have copies of the questions or key words that they are listening out for.

Read the passage in a normal speaking tone without emphasising key words.

ⓘ Note: The passage can be read more than once if needed and could also be split into sections so that group members do not have to rely too heavily upon their memory skills.

Answerphone message

READ: When you get into work in the morning, there is a message recorded on the answerphone. Listen to the message and the questions that follow.

READ: This is Sally Hardacre, Key Worker for South Eastern Probation. Could you please pass this message on to Darren Benitez, who works in the Stores Department, or his line manager if he's not in?

I have to go to Norwich on Tuesday for a conference so I would like to drop in and see you. I shall probably be at your work by about eleven o'clock, or eleven-thirty at the latest.

I have some forms for you to sign and it's easier to drop in and hand them to you than post them. If it's inconvenient to call in, please telephone me before nine-thirty on my mobile number: 07784 567231. Thank you.

1   **What is the Key Worker's name?**
(A) Sally Hardacre

2   **Where does Daren Benitez work?**
(A) Darren

3   **When is the Key Worker going to Norwich?**
(A) Tuesday

4   **What time will she be at your work?**
(A) 11.00 or 11.30 at the latest

5   **What is her mobile number?**
(A) 07784 567231

After the task

Afterwards group members can discuss this as a group and talk about what they would do if they had missed relevant details. This will lead into a discussion on preparing to listen, i.e. having a piece of paper and a pen handy if you need to get information over the phone, and also preparing to listen to someone face to face.

Activity 4
Listening for gist

This activity is taken from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum. Group members have the opportunity to practise their active listening skills and reflect on any improvements that can be made. You may need to give the group time to prepare in advance, as they may need lots of confidence and trust in a partner in order to engage in this task.

Group members can work in pairs. One of the pair starts off as the speaker and talks about a subject that is important to them. The other individual then listens and summarises what they think the speaker feels and believes. The speaker then has the opportunity to talk about how well they think the listener has understood them. The roles are then reversed.

ℹ Note: Some offenders with speech, language and communication needs may be unable to self-generate topics for discussion so it may be helpful to have some prepared back up cards with generic but meaningful topics on already in case the demand to self-generate is too great.

Activity 5
Listening quiz

This activity will test the listening skills of your group and enable them to consider the importance of listening for what was actually said and meant – not what they thought they heard! (Be aware that this will be difficult for those with auditory memory difficulties, i.e. those that struggle to retain spoken information.)

Copy the list of statements on the resource sheet that follows as a handout for each group member.

Read out the story in the following column and ask the group to mark the statements T for True, F for False and DK for Don't Know on their handout.

When the activity has been completed, encourage a group discussion about the issues that arose from trying to listen to the story and make decisions about what was true or false.

The flowers

A young woman had just returned home and was putting on the kettle for a cup of tea. Before the water had boiled, the doorbell rang. When the door was opened, a tall man was waiting with a bunch of flowers in his hands. He offered the flowers to the young woman who took them and walked back into the house. The man followed. The woman's flatmate went out.

Resource sheet for Listening quiz: The flowers

What to do: Circle T for the statements that you believe are true, F for those that you believe are false, and DK for those that you are not certain to be true or false.

1	A man rang the bell after the kettle had boiled.	T	F	DK
2	The visitor wasn't very tall.	T	F	DK
3	The man had a bunch of flowers in his hands.	T	F	DK
4	The woman who opened the door lived in the house.	T	F	DK
5	The woman put the flowers in a vase.	T	F	DK
6	Someone put the kettle on.	T	F	DK
7	After the man had given the woman the flowers, he went away.	T	F	DK
8	The story does not say what type of flowers the man had in his hands.	T	F	DK
9	The flatmate was a woman.	T	F	DK
10	The story concerns a series of events in which only three people are referred to: the woman, a man who had flowers and a flatmate.	T	F	DK

Answers for Listening quiz: The flowers

Suggested answers are given below. However, some will provide discussion points about interpretation, e.g. Q5. We aren't told what the young woman did with the flowers – we may assume she would put them in a vase, but can't be certain. Some group members may have indicated that this statement was false, and could argue that they were right.

What to do: Circle T for the statements that you believe are true, F for those that you believe are false, and DK for those that you are not certain to be true or false.

1   A man rang the bell after the kettle had boiled.   T **(F)** DK

2   The visitor wasn't very tall.   T **(F)** DK

3   The man had a bunch of flowers in his hands.   **(T)** F DK

4   The woman who opened the door lived in the house.   **(T)** F DK

5   The woman put the flowers in a vase.   T F **(DK)**

6   Someone put the kettle on.   **(T)** F DK

7   After the man had given the woman the flowers, he went away.   T **(F)** DK

8   The story does not say what type of flowers the man had in his hands.   **(T)** F DK

9   The flatmate was a woman.   T F **(DK)**

10 The story concerns a series of events in which only three people are referred to: the woman, a man who had flowers and a flatmate.   **(T)** F DK

Part 5
Next steps

The final activity is a time to reflect on the thoughts, discussions and ideas you've had as you've worked through this module.

Use the action plan below to identify what you think you need to do next and to decide on your priority actions.

There are other modules in this pack which you may want to work through. These are:

- Speaking and listening skills in context
- Non-verbal communication
- Questioning and checking understanding
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language

Speaking and listening action plan

What do I need to do?	What do I want to achieve?	What actions do I need to take?	When do I need to have completed them?	Who will I need to see?

Module 5
Managing group discussions

Part 1
What are the skills for managing group discussions?

A group discussion is not just a discussion in a group setting.

What is a group?

An important part of group discussions is the group itself. A group is a collection of individuals who come together for a particular reason or with a common aim.

Group processes form an integral part of everyday life.

Everyone is a member of several groups, e.g. peer group, family, work colleagues, etc.

Try it out!

How many groups do you belong to? List as many of them as you can think of in two minutes.

Do any of these groups provide a conflict of interest? E.g. are you ecology minded yet drive?

Do any of these groups require particular knowledge? E.g. is there a common language or skill?

Group dynamics

There are stages to group formation, as you may have noticed during your interaction with offenders or in the context of some of the groups you identified in the 'Try it out!' section here. During this time the dynamics of the group can change and adapt.

There are several models of group dynamics. To outline the stages of group formation, a well-known model from Bruce Tuckman[1] is used in this module, although it is worth bearing in mind that other models have been developed.

Tuckman's five stages of group formation are: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. For some groups these stages may be very marked. For others they are barely discernable.

Stage 1: Forming

Forming is the initial coming together of the group, the development of bonds and the exchange of information. During this stage individuals are beginning to interact and may be worrying about their role within the group and about possible expectations being placed on them.

[1] For further information on Tuckman see: Tuckman, B.W., 'Developmental Sequences in Small Groups' in Psychological Bulletin, vol. 63, 1965, pp. 384–399. Tuckman, B.W. and Jensen, M.A.C., 'Stages of Small Group Development revisited' in Group and Organizational Studies, vol. 2, 1977, pp. 419–427.

i Note: Individuals in secure settings may have particular difficulty with trusting peers and professionals due to bad experiences. You will need to be patient and accept that the group may take time to gel for this reason.

Welcome! Please do take a seat...
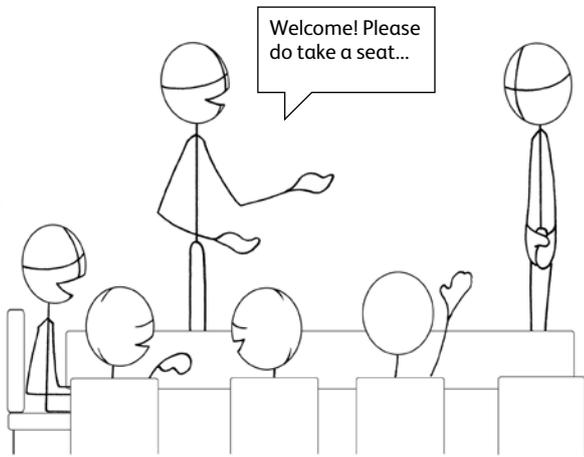
Try it out!

Can you remember when you last joined a group for the first time?

- What thoughts or anxieties did you have?

- What kind of conversations did you have with other group members?

- What about your first impressions? Was your perception of people the same once you had got to know them?

Ideas check

- I hope the rest of the group will like me and accept me.

- I hope I don't say anything wrong.

- I'm feeling a little nervous and apprehensive and I hope it doesn't show.

- I want to fit in and be able to join in with the activities.

- I hope this group will be like the people I usually work with.

- I don't want to show any weaknesses and give too much away about myself.

- I wonder what we'll have to do and if I'll be able to do it.

- I hope I'll be told who will be in charge of the session and what contribution I will be expected to make.

- I'm not sure how I would react if I do something wrong and I'm criticised.

- I hope I'm not asked to do something I don't want to do or can't do.

Most people like to belong to a group and need to feel included. Individuals can become part of a group for many reasons, e.g. a shared interest, to feel a sense of belonging, as a member of a professional organisation, as a MUD (Multi User Dungeon) game player over the Internet, or by living in a specific neighbourhood.

This initial group forming stage can be a stressful time, but the rewards are usually worth the effort, e.g. companionship, cooperative working, mutual support and friendship.

Stage 2: Storming

This is a critical stage. If any conflicts that arise are not dealt with promptly, the group may never progress. The conflict may be a challenge to authority, i.e. the tutor, or a disagreement between group members that can cause a split into factions – the 'us versus them' syndrome.

If disagreement between group members, or group members and the tutor, is not dealt with, then it can result in confrontation and even outright hostility.

Try it out!
What do you think could cause problems within a group? Jot down a few thoughts from your own experience and other ideas you may have.

Try it out!
Watch the second video clip that accompanies this pack and note down:

- signals that show that the group are at the storming phase;

- non-verbal communication signals;

- questions you could ask to determine the problem.

You have an important role in the leadership of the group. Some important points to think about in your role as a group leader:

- Show consideration – the empathy must be real, not just feigned.

- Be willing to explain clearly and paraphrase if necessary without appearing patronising.

- Be a good listener – use active listening skills.

- Be approachable.

- Be a good role model who treats everyone as equals.

- Be able to facilitate the discussion – try not to stress your own views.

- Promote acceptance that people have differing opinions and differences in opinion should be respected.

These would also be important points for any of your group who may act as the group leader.

ⓘ Leaders must behave how they would wish the group members to behave.

Stage 3: Norming
As long as the last stage is dealt with efficiently, the group can now move on to seeing themselves as a group. It is at this stage that support for each other can begin to emerge and cooperation on tasks can become the norm.

GROUND RULES
1. No swearing
2. No shouting
Let everyone have a turn to say something
No interrupting
Respect what
what said he
...ential
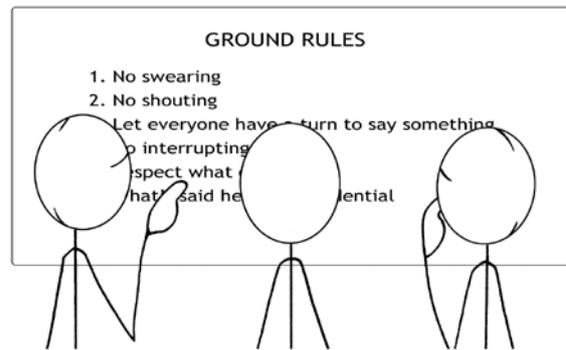
It is a good idea to get the group to negotiate a set of ground rules for behaviour in the sessions. If they create the rules (with your assistance), this encourages ownership. Therefore, at this stage, the rules set become the normal behaviour for the group.

Roles within the group
For any group to be successful in their task, it needs a mix of people and the skills and attitudes they bring to the group. To have an effective team, a balance is needed between the individuals in the group. If there were too many leaders on a team, they might all want to take on the leading role. This could leave too few people to complete the task in hand. A football team made up entirely of strikers may score many goals, but they might have even more scored against them without a dedicated goalkeeper!

In the planning stage for your group discussion, you may need to consider whether to allocate roles to individuals in the group or to allow the group to decide on the roles group members will assume.

Deciding on the skills and attitudes needed to complete the task set will determine the different roles group members will need to take.

Although there are different models for team roles, one of the best known is from the work of Meredith Belbin[2], who, with a team of researchers, determined that there was a finite number of team roles which individuals can naturally adopt. This model was developed following nine years' research studying the patterns of behaviour of managers from all over the world.

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[2] If you want to find out more, you could access the website at http://www.belbin.com/ However, please note that it is an infringement of copyright, owned by Belbin Associates, to use or reproduce Belbin materials without permission, particularly the Belbin testing methods.

Identifying the roles group members are able to assume is important when managing a group.

The nine team roles identified by Belbin are:

- Plant – the problem solver
- Co-ordinator – makes the goals clear and promotes decision making
- Monitor Evaluator – sees all the options and makes accurate judgements
- Implementer – turns ideas into practical action
- Completer Finisher – searches out errors and omissions, and delivers on time
- Resource Investigator – explores the opportunities and develops contacts
- Shaper – provides the drive and courage to overcome obstacles
- Teamworker – helps to build the team and avert friction
- Specialist – provider of specialist knowledge.

Try it out!
Look at the list of group roles. How many of these roles would you have? How many could be delegated?

Stage 4: Performing
At this stage the group now falls into the pattern of working together on tasks. They see themselves as a unit and therefore care about the other members. They are now more motivated and are likely to work more efficiently than in the initial group forming stages.

However, any changes in the group members can alter the group dynamics and throw the group back to the storming stage.

Feeding back to the group
Setting aside time for feedback to individual group members and the group as a whole is very important. Group members need to know exactly where they stand with regard to their behaviour, output and accomplishments.

Feedback to individuals about their behaviour can help them to learn about the impact it may have on other people, and can make them more aware of what they are doing and why they do it. This can help them to modify their behaviour, making their interactions with other group members and the wider community more rewarding and effective.

Feedback on progress can help group members to be better equipped to reach their targets. This may help them to become more successful learners and to communicate more effectively within and outside the group.

Top tip!
Some hints for giving feedback:

- Give feedback on the behaviour, not the person.
- Give feedback on the behaviour that the individual can change.
- Don't overwhelm an individual with too much feedback. Focus on the most important areas for change.
- Make sure the feedback is constructive so group members feel motivated to address the behaviour.
- Give feedback promptly and relate it to the specific situation or occurrence.
- Focus feedback on what has been achieved, rather than the effort put into the task.
- Explain how the change in behaviour can lessen the consequences of the action/s.
- Give both formative (during the task) and summative (at the end of the task) feedback, so group members have ongoing awareness of their progress.
- Give credit where it's due. Remember the 'brick sandwich' when feeding back, i.e. any less positive remarks should be surrounded with praise. However, be careful when using the word 'but'. Anyone accepting feedback is always waiting for this word and may therefore only hear the disparaging comments that follow it and forget everything that went before. Consequently, the individual is less likely to listen to the rest of the comments, however good they may be.

Some ideas for feedback comments:

- 'You made a good start, then forgot to . . . '

- 'You've nearly cracked this problem. I know it's a tricky one. Try . . . '

- 'It might help to jot down the instructions next time – it'll remind you where to start the work.'

- 'Well done, that was clearly explained.'

- 'Even though some of your facts are questionable, you've done a good job of arguing that . . . '

- 'I felt confused when you were explaining . . . although I clearly understood your introduction.'

Praise is a very valuable tool but must not be given too lightly or inappropriately or it loses value. Recognising the individual's worth is a very important aspect of self-esteem, and effective praise can be informational, stating clearly what an individual has done and acknowledging their effort.

Try it out!
How many ways of giving praise can you brainstorm apart from 'well done'?

Stage 5: Adjourning
The group has completed the task, discussion or course. The goal has been reached. At this point you can thank everyone for their participation and ask about the learning points. Use open questions, e.g. use what, how, why, to get the group to tell you what they have learned. If you use closed questions that only require a yes or no answer, you may not be able to gauge whether the group have learned very much at all.

Group discussions: some first thoughts
A group discussion should be just that. All group members should be able to feel that they can voice their opinions and that these will be listened to openly.

Understanding the stages of group formation can help the group and tutor deal with feelings and possible problems.

However, there are some considerations you need to have in mind before even starting your group discussion. Planning your session carefully can help the activity along.

Try it out!
What practical considerations do you need to think about while you are planning your group session?
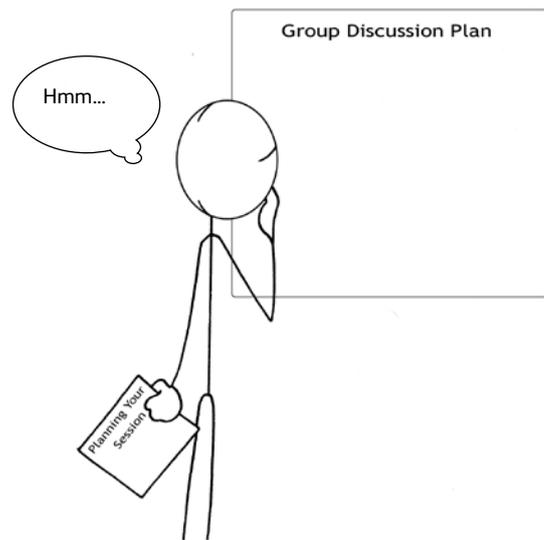
Ideas check
- How many will be in the group and what will they be like?

- What are the aims and objectives of the session?

- What specific activities and resources will I need to organise the session?

- Have I assessed/do I have the assessment results for group members?

- How and when will we set and agree the ground rules for participation, and will these fit into the disciplinary procedure?

- How will I introduce the session to group members?

- How will I manage any problems that arise?

- How will I decide if the objectives have been met?

- Have I strategies to support group members who do not speak English as their first language?

- What type of records will I need to complete?

Try it out!
What preparations do you need to think about while you are waiting for your group to arrive?

Ideas check
- Is the group size manageable? (Maximum of about twelve, but eight would be ideal.)
- Is the seating arranged so that everyone can see and hear each other?
- Do you know the names of your group members?
- Do all the group members know each other?

Getting the group started: breaking the ice
Managing the forming stage effectively will ensure cohesion of the group. Cohesion is the most powerful influence on the character and quality of group interaction.

The more cohesive the group, the more likely they are to:

- actively participate;
- be less susceptible to disruption;
- be more supportive of each other;
- remain as a group for longer (subject to outside constraints);
- achieve the objectives of the task/discussion;
- collaborate.

Managing this stage effectively may also prevent a difficult storming stage. This stage allows the group members to address their goals and how they will be achieved; it also keeps the group motivated and enthusiastic.

So, to get the individuals to form into an effective group, they need:

To be comfortable with each other. This is where an ice breaker comes in. (See the suggested activities in part 4.)

A safe environment. This means:

- No interruptions and no disruptive external noise.
- A comfortable environment, i.e. warm enough and each person allocated enough space to call their own.
- Trust within the group. This can be done in the norming stage by getting the group to draw up their own ground rules for group behaviour, e.g. respect for each other's opinions, no gossiping about what has been said or has occurred within the group. This will help to create ownership of the rules and can be referred to during the discussion to remind group members of what has been agreed.
- An understanding that feedback offered by group members will be constructive. It would be helpful to discuss what constructive feedback means to ensure that all the group members understand the difference between constructive and unconstructive feedback.
- That any disruption will be acted upon, e.g. name calling, bullying.

An understanding of what will be expected of them. This means:

- Giving clear instructions as to what is expected, what will be discussed, and arrangements for tea breaks and toilet facilities.
- The learning points need to be explained and you need to check that what you have said has been fully understood. So speak clearly and slowly, be aware of the language used in relation to the level of your group members, and use reflective open questions to check understanding. Don't just ask 'Does everyone understand?', because no one will want to look stupid at this stage by admitting that they don't. Do ask, for example, 'How would you summarise today's task?' or 'What do you think you have learnt today?'
- Check the group's understanding. Check they know what is to be discussed, how long it will be discussed for, what the aim of the exercise is and what (if any) individual or sub-group tasks will be.

ℹ Remember the importance of non-verbal communication!

What might go wrong and how can I fix it?

Try it out!
Consider the factors which contribute to an ineffective group discussion in the table that follows. Complete the table with your ideas of factors which make an effective group discussion.

Group discussion factors

Factors which contribute to ineffective group discussion	Factors which contribute to effective group discussion
Not willing to listen to others' views	
Not joining in the discussion	
Excluding some group members	
Lack of confidence in knowledge and opinions	
Feeling intimidated – both by tutor's knowledge and/or by other members of the group	
Uncomfortable with long silences	
Not feeling as though you can ask questions	
Some members not responding to other people's ideas, e.g. looking out the window, staring at the floor, fidgeting and tapping feet, etc.	
Physical environment, room, seating	
Large group	
Uncertainty about discussing issues and group support	

Ideas check

- Promoting active listening by group members – especially to each other's points of view.

- Encouraging contributions and sharing of ideas, so group members are not afraid to take risks.

- Ensuring group members have a chance to put their views forward and have their say.

- Being well prepared and making sure all group members know what the discussion is about.

- Creating a safe and relaxed atmosphere through trust and mutual respect.

- Ensuring the group realise that giving each other time to reflect and think through ideas is important too.

- Being prepared to ask questions, clarify points, and elicit feedback.

- Using positive non-verbal communication to show involvement in the discussion – e.g. nodding, eye contact, affirmative noises, which all help to create a mutually supportive atmosphere.

- Making the best of your setting, even though it is often beyond your control. Arranging the seating so you can see all members of the group.

- Breaking down large groups into smaller groups.

- Making it one of the ground rules that all members of the group contribute by helping to create a safe environment for the exploration of ideas.

Try it out!

Think about the factors for effective group discussion and list some points you feel should be included in the ground rules for all discussions in your context.

As you make your list, think about the reasons for each point you identify.

Some thoughts and cautions!

You will need to think about the skills of your group. You may need to support some individuals who have not acquired the social communication skills to participate in group discussions effectively. However, developing these skills in offenders over time is vital to enable them to become confident in using the skills both in custody and on release.

For group members who do not speak English as their first language or have SLCN, participating in a group discussion can be challenging and may feel threatening. Think back to the 'Try it out!' activity when you were considering how you felt when you last joined a group for the first time. Would it have been less comfortable if you didn't feel very confident in your use of English?

You will need to be aware of the needs of group members for whom English is not a first language and ensure that they are provided with additional support if required, e.g. providing hard copy of any handouts or background information, being aware of and explaining colloquialisms, ensuring that oral information is repeated if necessary, and checking understanding of information, instructions and group members' contributions.

Try it out!

Think about the skills your group members need to take part in a group discussion.

Ideas check

- Be comfortable working with peers.

- Have adequate hearing and vision.

- Be able to listen to several people talking and understand language used by others.

- Be able to retain what has been said.

- Understand the need to take turns.

- Use language to explain thoughts coherently.

- Be able to ask and answer questions, and sequence ideas.

- Use and understand non-verbal communication.

- Be comfortable working with others, in a group.
- Be able to see things from someone else's point of view.
- Have confidence in own opinion, self-esteem.
- Have fluent and intelligible speech.
- Be assertive and able to talk about things that are relevant.

Mapping to your context

You will use group discussion in many of the contexts in which you interact with your group.

Look back at module 1 to see how these might relate to the three areas: Setting the Scene (STS), Working with Individuals (WWI) and Working with Groups (WWG).

ⓘ Module 1 contains more detail about Setting the Scene, Working with Individuals and Working with Groups.

These are some examples:

- Induction (STS)/(WWI).
- Sentence planning meetings (STS)/(WWG).
- Case conferences/meetings (STS)/(WWG).
- Work or work experience (WWG).
- Delivering training or teaching (WWG).
- Offending Behaviour Programmes (STS)/(WWG).

Some ways to use discussion management skills in these contexts:

- Agree the ground rules.
- Ensure the group understand the session and have the skills to participate.
- Use leadership skills to encourage and motivate group members.
- Use body language to encourage group members to talk.
- Ask questions to move the discussion forward.
- Use appropriate interventions to maintain a comfortable atmosphere.

- Make group members feel comfortable to contribute by using appropriate non-verbal communication.
- Use strategies to encourage participation.
- Protect group members from ridicule if they are wrong.
- Accept silences.

Try it out!

Think about how you might see your role as the group leader during a group discussion session.

- How would you make your role clear?
- How would you introduce the discussion topic at the start of the session?
- How would you ensure that you restate the topic as needed during the session?
- How would you reinforce understanding of the issues arising?
- How would you use non-verbal cues to direct the discussion?
- How would you handle not having the answer to a question?
- How would you recognise that a discussion had gone off track? How would you bring it back again?

You will be able to think a little more about your group discussion management skills when you complete the reflective log in part 3 of this module. It may be useful to make some notes against these points about your role as a facilitator and compare it with your reflective log at a later stage.

Links with other modules

- Speaking and listening skills in context.
- Non-verbal communication.
- Questioning and checking understanding.
- Active listening.
- Using technical language.

Part 2
Why is effective management of group discussions important – for you, for your group?
The activities that follow will give you the opportunity to explore group discussion in a little more detail.

Throughout these activities, reflect on your own use of group management skills, and think about the benefits for you of appropriate use of the non-verbal signals as well as verbal feedback. Also reflect on how you can support your group to be more aware of the signals they may be giving to speakers through non-verbal communication and how they can become more active group members.

Activity 1
Checking your progress
If you work with offenders in a context other than Skills for Life learning, it would be helpful to work in partnership with a *Skills for Life* tutor to complete this activity. *Skills for Life* tutors use the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum[3] to help them to identify and support particular aspects of literacy development.

ⓘ You could use the Functional English criteria[4] as well as or instead of the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum.

The Adult Literacy Core Curriculum divides literacy into three areas: speaking and listening, reading, and writing. It is the speaking and listening skills elements that this activity suggests are used.

Using the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum, develop a checklist against which you and your group can check their progress in the use of group discussion skills.

ⓘ Note: You will need to mediate the language used in the Core Curriculum with your group. Many group members may not be able to access the technical vocabulary used and would need support to be able to contribute to the development of a checklist.

The speaking and listening elements for both Level 1 and 2 of the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum are detailed in the following pages. You will need to adapt these for group members who are not yet functioning at these levels.

You could use a simplified version of the Core Curriculum elements as a discussion topic with your group of offenders to develop a checklist that everyone can agree on.

[3] The interactive *Skills for Life* core curricula can be accessed at http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum
[4] Functional English criteria can be downloaded from http://www.ofqual.gov.uk

Level 1 Literacy Skills – Speaking & Listening

Code	Skill
SLlr/L1.1	Listen for and identify relevant information from explanations and presentations on a range of straightforward topics
SLlr/L1.2	Listen for and understand explanations, instructions and narratives on different topics in a range of contexts
SLlr/L1.3	Use strategies to clarify and confirm understanding (e.g. facial expressions, body language and verbal prompts)
SLlr/L1.4	Provide feedback and confirmation when listening to others
SLlr/L1.5	Make contributions relevant to the situation and the subject
SLlr/L1.6	Respond to questions on a range of topics
SLc/L1.1	Speak clearly in a way which suits the situation
SLc/L1.2	Make requests and ask questions to obtain information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
SLc/L1.3	Express clearly statements of fact, explanations, instructions, accounts and descriptions
SLc/L1.4	Present information in a logical sequence and include detail and develop ideas where appropriate
SLd/L1.1	Follow and contribute to discussions on a range of straightforward topics
SLd/L1.2	Respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions
SLd/L1.3	Use appropriate phrases for interruption

Level 2 Literacy Skills – Speaking & Listening

Code	Skill
SLlr/L2.1	Listen for and identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations on a range of topics
SLlr/L2.2	Listen for, understand and follow lengthy or multi-step instructions and narratives on a range of topics and in a range of contexts
SLlr/L2.3	Respond to detailed or extended questions on a range of topics
SLlr/L2.4	Respond to criticism and criticise constructively
SLc/L2.1	Speak clearly and confidently in a way which suits the situation
SLc/L2.2	Make requests and ask questions to obtain detailed information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
SLc/L2.3	Express clearly statements of fact, explanations, instructions, accounts, descriptions using appropriate structure, style and vocabulary
SLc/L2.4	Present information and ideas in a logical sequence and provide further detail and development to clarify or confirm understanding
SLd/L2.1	Make relevant contributions and help move discussions forward
SLd/L2.2	Adapt contributions to discussions to suit audience, context, purpose and situation
SLd/L2.3	Use appropriate phrases for interruption and change of topic
SLd/L2.4	Support opinions and arguments with evidence
SLd/L2.5	Use strategies intended to reassure (e.g. body language and appropriate phraseology)

Activity 2
Checking up on others!

Watch a variety of discussions on the television from a range of programmes, including political discussions, current affairs programmes, BBC Parliament, etc. Use your checklist and the information you have gained from your work on this module to decide if the participants would meet the criteria you have set down in your checklist!

Identify the key issues that contributed to any participant not meeting your criteria, in other words – what went wrong?

Activity 3
The worst or the best?

You will need to engage some willing colleagues in this activity (it's not easy to have a group discussion with just one!).

The topic of the discussion is: 'The best and worst experience of group discussions I have had.'

From your discussion, identify and note down the key elements which made the 'best' and 'worst' experience of group discussions.

Using your notes, develop a 'Do' and 'Don't' checklist for your group to use during discussion sessions.

Activity 4
Sociogram

In this activity you will be drawing a sociogram. A sociogram, originally developed by Mareno[5], can be used as a diagrammatical illustration to record the frequency and/or duration of contributions to a discussion.

You will need agreement from willing colleagues again for this activity. You may be able to negotiate a five to ten minute window in a normal group meeting where discussion takes place to opt out and complete this activity.

Your role will be as the observer. Sit outside the group, but make sure you can see and hear all group members.

On a sheet of flip chart paper, draw a circle for each group member (an example follows) and a circle in the centre.

Each time a group member makes a significant contribution to move the discussion forward, draw a line from the circle representing the contributor to the circle representing the participant to whom the contribution is addressed, showing the direction of flow with an arrowhead.

If the contribution is made to the whole group in general, draw your line from the contributor to the circle in the centre.

Continue until your time is up.

Discuss your sociogram with the rest of the group, or make some observation notes about the interaction during the discussion you observed.

[5] MARENO, J. L., *Who Shall Survive?* Washington, D.C.: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, (1934).

Example of a sociogram
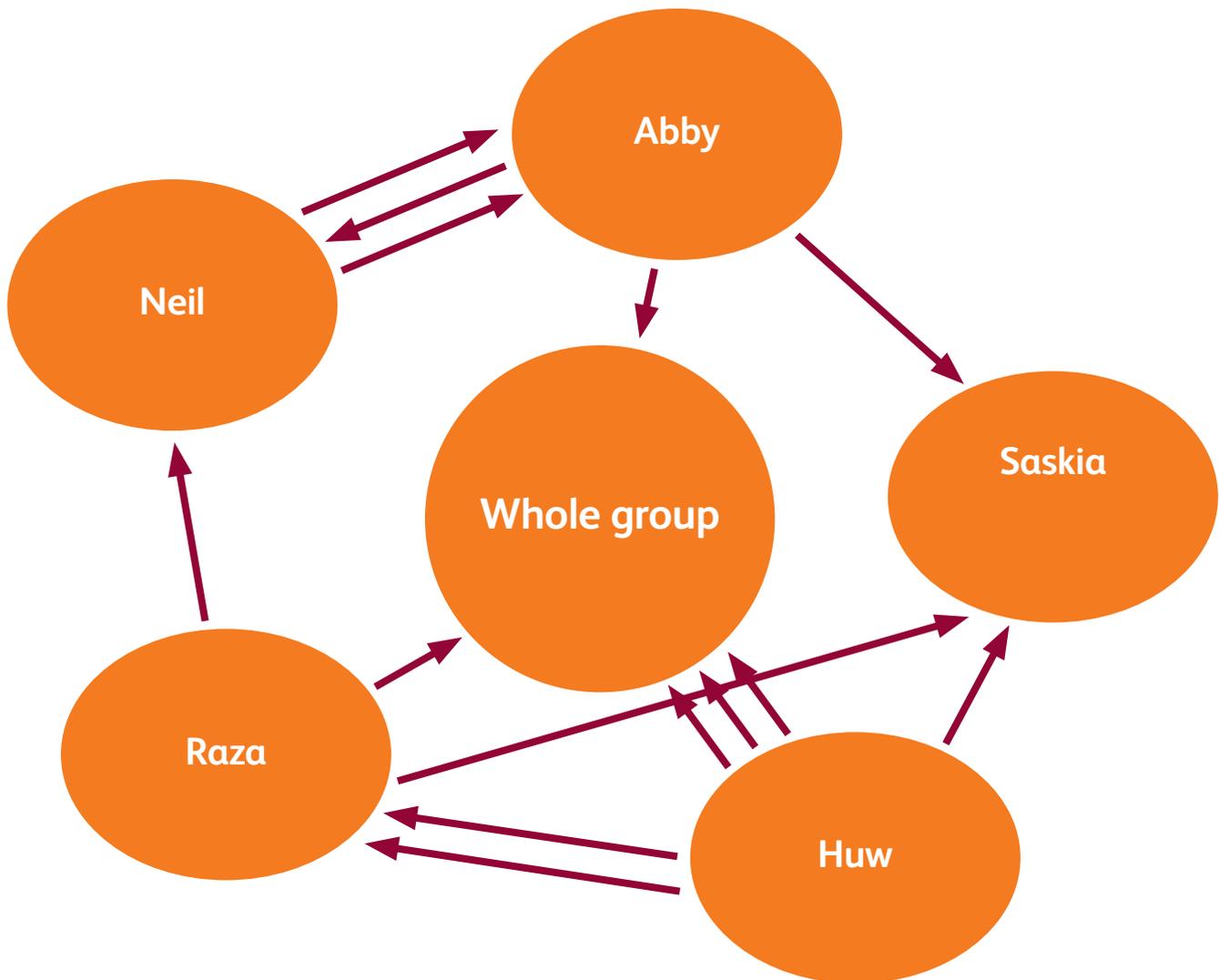
Some thoughts to consider:

- Who made the most contributions
  to the discussion?

- Did the pattern of communication change
  during the discussion?

- Was there anyone, like Saskia in the diagram
  above, who made no contribution to the
  discussion? If so, can you think of any
  reasons why?

- Was there an exchange between group members
  which excluded the rest of the group? Neil, in the
  example above, only communicates with Abby.
  Was this reflected in your observation?

- Did anyone appear to dominate the discussion?

Part 3
What you need to think about when managing group discussions

Hints and tips

There are some hints and tips that can help you to manage your group discussions effectively at some of the vital and potentially tricky stages of the group development process.

Stage 2: Storming

It is important to be able to manage the group effectively and demonstrate leadership.

A good leader:

- shows consideration;
- encourages;
- praises;
- is willing to explain;
- listens;
- shows empathy;
- is aware of diversity and treats all group members as equals;
- is willing and able to respond to individuals' needs;
- assigns tasks;
- monitors communication and gives clear instructions;
- is non-judgemental;
- is open-minded;
- uses conflict resolution strategies effectively.

Hints and tips on dealing with disagreement

Look out for signs, e.g. body language, that will signal disagreement. If group members are splitting into factions, move them around. If the group is to be together on more than one occasion, it is good to constantly change the seating arrangements. This way each person gets the chance to get to know and work with the whole group rather than just the few individuals in close proximity.

Don't argue with a group member. Instead use the motivational tool of rolling with resentment, i.e. if you know you are overweight and really should start going to the gym, how are you likely to react when someone tells you this? You may argue back, dig your heels in and find reasons why you can't possibly go to the gym. Yet if you are asked what someone could do if they were overweight, you would probably suggest they should go to the gym.

If you argue with someone, you could entrench beliefs. So, if you ask what problems someone might face, then you will probably get an answer, and you may also get suggestions for overcoming these problems. This helps individuals to take ownership of the problem and to vocalise what needs to be done.

> **Try it out!**
> Tell a smoker that they should really give up. What is their response?
>
> Ask them how to give up and compare the two responses.
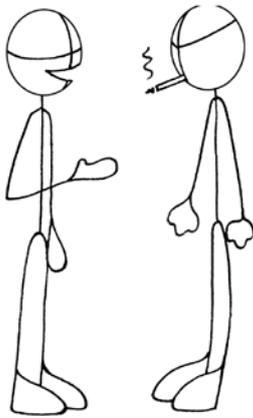
So, keeping it in the third person, ask group members what problems they can foresee for a new group member and how could these be overcome. Use open questions to find the root of the problem.

Conflict can be good if it engenders growth, so see it as a way of moving things on. If you try to ignore it, it can easily escalate.

Conflict resolution strategies
- Sharing or taking turns
- Mediation
- Active listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes*
- Postponement
- Using humour*
- Compromise*
- Expressing regret without taking the blame
- Problem solving using discussion

* Note: An individual with ASD (autistic spectrum disorders) may not be able to do some or all these, or will struggle to understand.

Sharing or taking turns is all about being seen to be fair:
- Get group members to put a hand up when they wish to talk.
- Allow each person no more than two minutes to say what they want to say.
- If they are doing work in smaller groups, vary the people within each group and put a different member in charge each time.

Mediation. Remember when mediating to:
- Allow the participants to share their own needs and perception of the problem.
- Listen without interrupting or judging.
- Remain calm.
- Define the conflict as a win/win situation.
- Brainstorm possible solutions.
- Commit to a solution that is mutually agreeable.
- Keep it private.

ⓘ For further information on active listening, see module 4.

Active listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes:
- Be aware of body language – for example by showing interest with eye contact etc.

- Actually thinking about what the other person has said before commenting, showing interest with verbal encouragers, i.e. 'mmm', 'oh, yes', 'really'.

- Don't fidget or shuffle. Allow silence – it may give individuals time to reflect.

- Reflect back some of what the other person has said.

- Put yourself in others' shoes. How would you feel if, for example, someone was rude to a member of your family, or you'd been waiting for a long time in a queue and someone queue-jumped, or you were stopped and searched on the street for no apparent reason, other than your appearance, or that you had a very important point to put across and someone kept butting in?

- Take a newspaper article or view expressed on television either in a documentary or interview that you disagree with. Ask yourself why that person may think as they do. Put yourself in their shoes and generate arguments in support of their view.

Postponement. If people are heated or emotions are running high, it is always best to wait until everyone has cooled down before trying to sort out the issue.

Using humour can be a good diffuser of awkward situations, but beware of anyone being the butt of the humour or stereotyping.

Compromise – negotiate a solution:

- Remember that when negotiating both people have to be able to accept the outcome – this is win-win negotiation.

- Allow those in disagreement time to talk to say what they want to say.

- Then ask each person what they think the other person wants or feels.

- It is important to suggest a number of possible options and agree on a compromise.

Expressing regret without taking the blame:

- Take responsibility for the problem without taking or giving blame.

- Start your comments with phrases such as: When you… then I…, I feel…, I'd like… For example, 'I'm sorry, but when you started shouting, then I forgot what I was going to say. I feel disrespected and somewhat angry. I'd like you to calm down and speak to me in a proper manner.'

Problem solving using discussion:

- Use open questions to see how the group perceive the problem and to get at the root of it.

- Use open questions to brainstorm possible solutions.

- Discuss the pros and cons of possible solutions to promote pro-social behaviour (pro-social behaviour is helpful behaviour intended to benefit another). If the situation has already gone wrong, ask:

  - What triggered the problem, how did the individual/s react and why?

  - What were the consequences of that reaction?

  - What else could I have done? i.e. How else might I have reacted to the situation or how might someone else have reacted?

  - What would have been the consequences of that?

Try it out!
- Think about the strategies mentioned for resolving conflict. Practise some of them in your group context.
- Which strategies worked best and why?
- You could discuss strategies with colleagues to see if they have tried and tested ones which work for them and then add them to your list.

Stage 4: Performing

The aim is to get every group member participating. Therefore, you have to encourage the quiet and the less enthusiastic, and to discourage those who would be happy to monopolise the discussion.

Hints and tips on encouraging participation

ℹ️ For further information on questioning, see module 3.

- Ask suitable questions, e.g. use questions that begin with what, where, how, why, or do you…?, have you…? to encourage group members to give a response.
- Ask: What do you think about what he or she just said?
- Listen openly to the answer you have asked for. Comment positively on appropriate responses.
- Be sensitive to the individual group members.
- Be able to paraphrase any questions to explain them further, but also to allow time for a group member to formulate an answer.
- Be aware of your own body language.
- Use follow-up questions. If you ask a question, and a group member responds, promote discussion by asking a follow-up question. This could help your group members to check their understanding of the topic under discussion.

Hints and tips on discouraging participation

It helps to explain to the group when you introduce the discussion that you do have a time limit and will therefore curtail individual offerings if necessary. If you have a talkative person in the group who is taking over the discussion, move the group on with a comment such as: 'Thank you for that, but we must move on.'

If the group are to meet more than once, you can draw the talkative person to one side and explain that you greatly appreciate their contributions but that there are some group members who appear happy to let others do all the work. What you would like this person to do is try to stay quiet for some of the time in order that the others can be encouraged to contribute.

You may find that non-verbal communication signals can be used to encourage or discourage group members to contribute to a discussion, e.g. using eye contact and open gestures directed at individuals may provide an opportunity for them to respond.

ℹ️ For further information on using non-verbal communication skills, see module 2.

Try it out!
With a partner, chat to each other about a topic you are comfortable with and discuss which hand movements encourage you to talk and which encourage you to stay silent.

What other non-verbal communication will encourage or discourage?

It is important to feel in control of the discussion. Group members may try to sidetrack you by asking unrelated questions or raising other issues – it's a trick many groups will try on their tutor or teacher to avoid having to contribute! You can deflect this by reminding the group of the topic under discussion and suggesting they consider the last point raised, or you could offer an alternative question which will lead the group back onto the subject. However, sometimes group members' comments or questions can open up discussion of a new area or an issue you hadn't previously considered. You will need to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the group and the desired outcomes of the activity.

Some group members may want to know what you think about the subject under discussion. Giving your views may influence the progress of the discussion. On the other hand, remaining neutral could be more effective if you want the group to come to their own conclusions.

You could reply that you will tell them at the end of the discussion, or you could suggest a counter query which is deliberately provocative to divert the attention back onto the group, e.g. 'It would be interesting to know if you think that… rather than…'

If there is an argumentative group member, use the other group members to diffuse the argument by asking what they think about what has just been said. If they are reluctant to respond, rephrase the point made, using open questions, and invite comment from the group. Setting time limits on contributions may also help to move the discussion forward. Allocating each group member a specific number of opportunities to speak (see part 4, activity 2) may discourage the more argumentative individual from being unhelpfully confrontational.

Keeping it in the third person can be a good way of dealing with awkward situations. If someone is constantly butting in, ask as a general question how group members feel when they are talking and someone interrupts.

Groupthink
One aspect of group behaviour has been called 'groupthink'. **Groupthink** is a term, coined by psychologist Irving Janis in 1972,[6] to describe how a group can make inappropriate or irrational decisions. In a groupthink situation, each member of the group attempts to make his or her opinions fit into what they believe to be the consensus of the group. This irrational emphasis on solidarity means that the group members will carefully avoid any questions or topics that may lead to dispute.

This is liable to occur if certain factors exist, such as pressure to conform, a feeling of invulnerability as a group, shared stereotyping of outsiders, a belief that the group are right – even if information suggests they may not be. Offenders may be susceptible to some of these factors.

Careful management of the group will help to avoid this aspect of group behaviour. Taking time out to reconsider and challenge the assumptions made by the group will be useful tactics to employ. You can also encourage open discussion and welcome and praise new ideas and differences of opinion.

You should make it clear that all pros and cons of an issue should be presented and explored and you should avoid stating your own beliefs until the end of the discussion, if at all.

Reflective log
A reflective log is a useful tool to enable you to think about what has occurred during your interaction with your group. If you complete it after a session with your group, it will give you an opportunity to reflect on how well the group worked together and how well you managed them.

ⓘ Look back at the Introduction to see more about reflective practice.

Reflecting on your session will help you to:
- stand back from the session and think about what you did;
- identify what was successful;
- consider any areas for development;
- identify any barriers to your own progress;
- decide how you will overcome them.

Use the reflective log on the following pages to think about your group discussion session with your group. The following questions may guide you:
- What worked well and why?
- What did I say to encourage/discourage group members?
- Which roles did I adopt?
- Which roles did group members adopt?
- Did I come across as well motivated and enthusiastic? If so, how did the group members respond?
- What kind of feedback did I offer?
- How did I cope with sidetracks?
- Did I give the group members sufficient opportunity to talk?
- Did I show the group that I was interested in what they were saying?
- How could I improve?

[6] Janis, Irving, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes,* 2nd Edition, ©1982 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Reflective log

- Focus on the aspects of group discussion which were most relevant to the session.
- Record what you can. There is no need to complete all the boxes.

Group focus: circle as appropriate

Adult/Young People/Young Offender

Male/female

Group/one to one

Session focus:

Aspect of speaking and listening	What you said/did/thought	What worked well	Points to think about
Explaining (What you say to explain, for example, a literacy approach or a concept in an OBP, what language you use, how much you adapt, tone of voice, pace, how you summarise, confirm what you've said.)			
Checking understanding (How do you judge whether or not an offender has understood what you've said? Have you got well-tried ways of checking? How do you confirm understanding?)			
Listening, including reflective listening and using pauses (How do you make sure you have heard what an offender has said? How do you show that you are listening to him/her? Use of language? Use of pauses? Use of questions? Use of body language?)			
Enabling offenders to ask questions (What do you say to encourage an offender to ask questions about aspects of what has just been taught/discussed that she/he does not understand, wants to know more about?)			
Other			

Part 4
How you could use group discussions with your group

There are many activities which can be used with a group and with individuals to raise awareness of the importance of group discussion skills, including some of the 'Try it out!' activities throughout this pack.

You will need to introduce the sessions carefully and make sure that you are preparing your group. Often they may lack the knowledge of appropriate group discussion skills and non-verbal communication, and you will need to start with the basics. Some of the work you have already completed in parts 1 and 2 of this module could be adapted to introduce the topic to your group.

Group discussion skills are just one aspect of the speaking and listening skills modules in this pack. It would be useful to start the topic of communication skills as a whole with an appropriate introduction. A suggested introductory session is outlined in module 1.

The activities which follow could be used as part of a whole series of sessions with your group and can be used after the introductory session. These will help group members to develop and practise some of the group skills they could employ in many contexts, but the focus for these are in group discussion settings.

ⓘ Note: Your group may have different levels of competence in their use of speaking and listening skills, and you may need to differentiate some of these activities to make them more accessible. For example, ensuring that any technical vocabulary used is clearly explained or putting group members into pairs where more confident individuals can support their less confident peers.

The level of skill assumed in this section may be quite challenging for some offenders. Many offenders may need to focus on developing much earlier skills required to work within a group such as sitting for a period of time, listening generally as well as active listening, tolerating others, sharing and negotiating skills. It may be useful to adapt some of the activities in this module as build up tasks to help develop these skills.

ⓘ There are more hints and tips on adapting activities for a range of individuals in module 1.

Offenders in all settings have to attend group meetings of one type or another. These could be:

- at adjudications;
- case conferences;
- work/work placement group discussions and meetings;
- sentence planning meetings;
- offending behaviour programme group sessions;
- Skills for Life discussion activities;
- subject/vocational group discussions.

In these situations offenders will need to use group discussion skills in order to gain information, contribute to the discussion and respond to questions. Using their group discussion skills will help them to:

- listen out for key information;
- be supportive of others in the group and allow/encourage them to contribute;
- think of appropriate responses and/or questions;
- contribute to move the discussion forward;
- improve general communication skills (thereby improving employability prospects and level of participation in educational settings).

Activity 1
Suggested ice breakers

ⓘ Note: There are pros and cons of using icebreakers and you will need to use your judgement about when to use one and the most suitable ones to use bearing in mind your group and their backgrounds and levels of speaking and listening.

- Ask each group member to describe themselves as a type of car and explain why, e.g. 'I am like a Volkswagen Beetle because I am compact and very reliable.'

ⓘ Note: Offenders with speech, language and communication needs such as ASD might find such an activity challenging.

- Give each group member two sheets of paper. Ask them to write down any negative thoughts, feelings or experiences they have had that week, that day, or that year on one piece, and on the other to write down positive thoughts, feelings or experiences. Place a large bin in the centre of the room or go round with one and get each group member to screw up the negative paper and throw it away. Tell them that they are getting rid of these feelings for the day. You can tell them that, unfortunately, negative thoughts, feelings or experiences do happen. Then tell them to pocket the other piece because it is private and they need to keep it with them. Reassure them that they do not have to share their thoughts with other group members.

- Pick a sentence starter related to the theme of the group discussion, write it on the board or flip chart and then send it round the group, getting each group member in turn to finish the sentence.

For example:

- Something I do very well is…
- When I disagree with someone I…
- I usually start a conversation with…
- Communicating can be hard when…
- I helped someone yesterday by…

ⓘ Note: Some group members may not be able to do this activity due to the language demands of the task, or the level of personal disclosure. You will need to be sensitive to these concerns and adapt the activity accordingly, or use an alternative icebreaker.

Activity 2
Counters
This activity will enable group members to think about their contributions to group discussions. It may also help them to identify their listening skills too!

You will need fairly small groups – about four to six people is ideal – so split a larger group into small groups. Allocate a small area to each group – perhaps round a table or desk, or suggest they move their chairs into circles.

- Hand out eight counters to each group member. These could be counters from games, buttons or small card tokens.

- Either suggest a topic for discussion or use a topic from the course delivery. You could also introduce the topic with a short video clip (e.g. video clip 1 from the non-verbal communication module – which looks at the issue of bullying in prisons).

- Set a time limit for the discussion. Five minutes may be enough for a starter session, although you may feel more would be appropriate. Aim for no more than six to eight minutes, however, otherwise the discussion may flag.

- Explain to the group that each time a group member speaks they must put one of their counters in the centre or on the table.

- When all of a person's counters have been used, that person can't make any more contributions to the discussion and must stay silent.

- When the time is up, ask group members to jot down their thoughts on what they have learned from the activity, focusing on their own role in the discussion and the speaking and listening skills they have used.

- Ask each group member to share their thoughts with the whole group. If the group is fairly large, it may be more appropriate to ask each group member to identify one or two main learning points.

- Note down on a whiteboard or flip chart any key themes which arise, e.g. whether it was difficult to remain silent when all counters had been used and, if so, why?

Activity 3
Quiz
This activity will enable group members to discuss in pairs and then contribute their answers to a whole group discussion. They will also be able to use research skills to find out the answers.

Using a topic from the course delivery, devise a quiz which asks for true or false answers to some basic questions on the topic. 12 to 16 questions will probably be sufficient.

You will be asking the group to work in pairs, so you will need a photocopy of the quiz sheet for each pair.

For example, using the topic of personal wellbeing:

Q1 You should wash your hands after visiting the toilets. *True or false?*

Q2 Your daily diet should contain five portions of fruit or vegetables. *True or false?*

And so on.

Before handing out the quiz, brainstorm all the words that the group can think of about the topic and write them on a flip chart.

Hand out a copy of the quiz to each pair in the group, and ask them to use textbooks, magazines, and any other appropriate reference material on the topic to find out the answers to the quiz questions. (You may need to tailor this activity to the resource material you have available.)

As a whole group, feedback the answers to the quiz and refer back to the words written from the brainstorm.

Discuss the issues that arise, and focus on:

- how the quiz answers the pairs have found compare to the words from the brainstorm;

- what they have learned;

- whether they have been surprised by anything they discovered.

ⓘ Note: You may need to adapt this activity to the resource material you have available. You may also need to ensure the material is accessible for your group, e.g. readability and the use of technical language. See module 6 for more information on technical language.

Activity 4
Pyramid or snowball
This activity will encourage participation by quieter group members.

- Give group members a task to work on by themselves. You could use a task from the course for this. Set a time limit for this phase of the activity. This will depend on the task, but five to ten minutes should be sufficient.

- After the allotted time, put them into pairs to discuss what they have done. Again set a time limit for this phase – no more than five to ten minutes.

- When the set time has elapsed, put them into fours to discuss their conclusions from the task. A time limit should be set again.

- Finally, hold a whole group discussion to compare the conclusions from each of the groups of four.

Activity 5
Decisions, decisions!

This activity will enable group members to consider alternatives to a problem and to discuss the issues to reach a consensus.

Introduce the activity by explaining that group members have to reach a decision through discussion.

Select a problem which has two equally appropriate options and ask the group to discuss the issues to reach an agreement on the option they would choose.

For example, the government only has funding to build one new rehabilitation centre for offenders.

One rehabilitation centre would allow 20 drug users to stay for an eight-week period to detox and attend a substance misuse programme. The other would be a drop-in centre which would allow 100 drug users to attend daily for as long as they needed the support provided.

Which rehabilitation centre should the government build and why?

Ask group members to assess their contributions to the discussion using a self checklist (perhaps the one from part 2, activity 1).

When the self check has been completed, ask group members to identify one thing from their checklist that they would like to improve. If individuals are in learning and skills provision, this could then provide a discussion point at the next review of targets on their Individual Learning Plans.

Part 5
Next steps

The final activity is a time to reflect on the thoughts, discussions and ideas you've had as you've worked through this module.

Use the action plan on the below to identify what you think you need to do next and to decide on your priority actions.

There are other modules in this pack which you may want to work through. These are:

- Speaking and listening skills in context.
- Non-verbal communication.
- Questioning and checking understanding.
- Active listening.
- Using technical language.

Speaking and listening action plan

What do I need to do?	What do I want to achieve?	What actions do I need to take?	When do I need to have completed them?	Who will I need to see?

Module 6
Using technical language

Part 1
What is technical language?

We all use technical language of one sort or another – quite often we don't even realise we are doing it.

Given the complexity of human beings and the many different factors involved in the communication between them, it sometimes seems a wonder that we manage to communicate at all! By being aware of the potential problems in communication, you can anticipate and try to avoid them. This involves thinking more consciously about what you are doing and what you want to say, thinking about the needs and abilities of the people you are talking to, and making informed decisions about the most appropriate way to communicate verbally in any given situation.

To some extent, we all change the way we use verbal communication according to the situation in which we find ourselves. The language and tone you use to children, for example, is probably different to the language and tone you would use at an interview – and yet you may find you often slip into each way of talking without necessarily consciously realising you are doing so.

Try it out!
Think about the different groups you belong to. Is the language used by group members at least partly specific to any particular group?

"Find the flange with the sprocket and cornice, attach to the hex plate"... what?!

Think about:

- **Leisure interests** – Do you enjoy gardening and use terms which may be natural to you but which to a person with no interest in gardening would be meaningless? Do you ever try to follow Do-It-Yourself instructions and wonder what they mean?

- **Home** – Do you have children? How do you vary your vocabulary when speaking to them? Does their age affect your language? What would happen if you spoke to a seven-year-old in the same language you would use to an adult?

- **Work** – Does your workplace use language specific to its function? Does your organisation use a lot of jargon or abbreviations? Are you given explanations of what they mean or is it left to outsiders to guess?

- **Sports** – What would 'the offside rule' mean to anyone who knows nothing about football? Does the phrase 'an end-to-end game' mean the same as 'end-to-end sentencing'?

Try it out!
In the table below, identify two words or phrases you use in two different settings which you think someone coming from outside that setting would have difficulty understanding. How could you explain each term so that it makes sense?

Setting 1	Word/phrase	Explanation

Setting 2	Word/phrase	Explanation

Some thoughts and cautions!

After doing the last two 'Try it out!' activities, you may have identified some occasions when jargon or technical language has puzzled or confused you. For some individuals, accessing the technical language they need to understand in their course or programme can be even more difficult.

Some group members may not have English as their first language, so technical terminology could be even more difficult for them to access. It would be helpful to be aware of the language background of group members before sessions, to enable you to plan for any extra support that may be needed for group members for whom English is a second or other language. Research into the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of the offender population has identified poor vocabulary in this group of people and making adjustments may also be necessary for offenders with SLCN.

When explaining technical language, you will need to be aware of any specific language or topics that may be culturally sensitive, such as religion or politics. You may need to introduce them differently to avoid causing offence. This may also apply to non-verbal communication cues that you use, such as eye contact or proximity.

ⓘ For further information on non-verbal communication, see module 2.

Some group members could have learning difficulties and/or disabilities which may make accessing technical language more difficult. For example, dyslexic group members or those with auditory memory difficulties may have problems with spelling technical words and will need strategies to remember them, such as a personal word dictionary where they can record and practise difficult spellings.

The Criminal Justice System and technical language

Within the Criminal Justice System there are a number of different sources of 'technical language'. You need to be aware of these sources if you are to successfully communicate with offenders – and indeed with other colleagues. These can be broadly divided into five areas:

- Criminal Justice language;
- organisational language;
- offender language;
- education language; and
- programme/manual language.

Criminal Justice language

Like any large business or organisation, the Criminal Justice System uses a language of its own, talking in both jargon and abbreviations, which makes entry into the world of Criminal Justice difficult for everyone – staff and offenders alike.

Some common words, phrases and abbreviations used every day within the system could be:

Technical language	Translation
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
CC/MC	Crown Court/Magistrates' Court
Committed	Being sent from Magistrates' to Crown Court for trial or sentence; in mental health terms sent to a psychiatric hospital
RoB/UB	Remanded on Bail/ Unconditional Bail
JiC	Judge in Chambers (usually related to application for bail)
RiC	Remanded in Custody
RCP	Record of Court Proceedings
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
CJA	Criminal Justice Act
CP	Community Payback (previously Unpaid work)
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (previously DTTO – Drug Treatment and Testing Order)
Tariff	The amount of time an offender sentenced to life imprisonment must serve as a minimum
SPOC	Single point of contact

i Note: Abbreviations and their associated meanings can change very quickly in most settings, and you will need to keep your mental list of them up-to-date, e.g. PSR (Pre-sentence Report) may now be referred to as an SDR (Standard Delivery Report) in some situations.
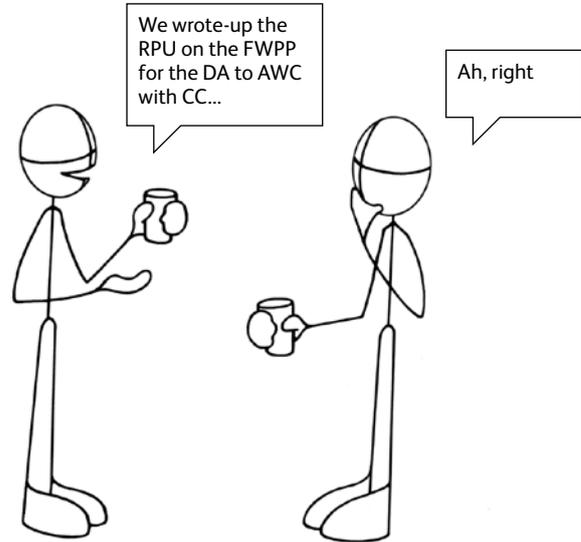
And remember – there are times when one abbreviation can mean different things to people working in different parts of the system. The abbreviation SFO, for example, means one thing to those working in it – the Serious Fraud Office – and another to members of the probation or police services – Serious Further Offence.

Be clear about what you are referring to, and never make assumptions – always check out what the abbreviation means to the person you are communicating with, be it a colleague or group member. In documents, always refer to the full name first, with the abbreviation in brackets. Thereafter, within the same document, the abbreviation only can be referred to.

i Note: Group members with speech, language and communication needs may struggle to retain the meaning of the abbreviation for later use in a document.

Here is an example of how abbreviations should be used:

'This is the first document to be used by the Area when communicating the occurrence to National Probation Directorate (NPD). Complete this form and send it to NPD either by email or by first class post if no email is available. Once this notification has been received, NPD will confirm receipt and issue you with a five digit Serious Further Offence (SFO) case number. This case number is used for the purposes of the SFO only and does not take the place of any case number you have given it at an Area level. You will be required to quote this SFO case number on all documents that refer to this particular SFO, including the remaining four stages, any supplementary paperwork and/or communications . . .'

'Using the new SFO forms', National Probation Directorate (Home Office, 2005)

ℹ️ Note: The passage above would only be intelligible to people working within this context, so you need to adapt this approach to using abbreviations for your group members. For example, you could use a piece of text that is relevant to their interests or course, and break it down into smaller chunks to make it more accessible.

Try it out!
Use books, the Internet, or you could ask colleagues to decipher what technical terms the acronyms in the following table might represent.

There are answers at the end of this module for any you get stuck on!

Technical language	Translation
OCJR	
NOMS	
NPD	
CJB	
YOT	
CO	
DVC	
HOC	
PSA	
CPS	
OLASS	

Organisational language

The constituent parts of the Criminal Justice System and other organisations working with offenders also have their own speech code[1] and shortcuts which then become layered on top of the generic Criminal Justice language. Criminal Justice agencies – the probation, prison, police and Crown Prosecution services; individuals working within the system – sentencers, Court clerks, barristers, solicitors; and partner providers – healthcare, education, accommodation, drug agencies – all use their own 'specialist' language to talk to offenders.
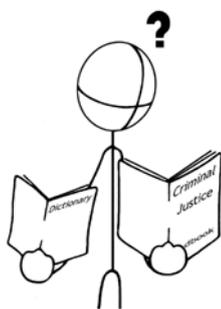
Examples of organisational language might include:

Technical (organisational) language	Translation
OASys (probation/prison services)	Offender Assessment System (a tool to assess the likelihood of re-offending and the risk of harm)
Breach (probation service)	Returning an Order to Court because of non-cooperation
Precons (Crown Prosecution)	Record of previous convictions
BIO (probation service)	Bail Information Officer
Section 9 (police)	Witness statement
PPO (police/probation service)	Persistent and other Priority Offender

Technical (organisational) language	Translation
MAPPA (police/prison/social services)	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements [meeting]
VPU (prison)	Vulnerable Prisoner Unit
Rule 43 (prison)	Prison rule segregating vulnerable prisoners from the main prison population at either the prisoner's request or the prison's discretion
Brief (barrister/solicitor)	Written instructions as to how to present a case
CPN (healthcare)	Community Psychiatric Nurse
Floating support (accommodation)	A system of accommodation support where a number of care worker hours is allocated to and follows the individual offender
ILP (education)	Individual Learning Plan – records levels of educational achievement and outlines targets for education and training progression, including literacy and numeracy
Initial Assessment (education)	Identifies skills and levels to give a starting point for learning or training. Informs the ILP (Individual Learning Plan)
Diagnostic Assessment (education)	Helps provide a detailed learner profile against the Standards and Curriculum documents. Informs the ILP
NVQ (education)	National Vocational Qualification

[1] A speech code is defined as a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct. Philipsen, G., 'A Theory of Speech Codes' in Philipsen, G. and Albrecht, T. (eds.), *Developing Human Communication Theory,* Suny Press Ltd., New York, 1997, pp. 119–156.

New to Court? You'll need one of these...

COUNTY COURT

Glossary

"All tooled up"
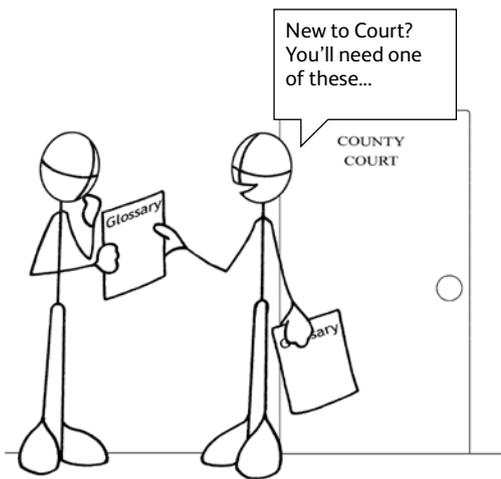
Try it out!
Both Magistrates' and Crown Courts are open to the public. If possible, arrange to spend part of a day in a Court setting. Listen to the language used and make a note of anything you don't understand. Ask staff – the probation service representative, clerks, police, solicitor, ushers – for a translation later!

Put yourself in the position of a first-time offender. How much would he or she understand of what is going on?

You could also liaise with your education provider to spend some time on the initial assessment sessions to identify any specific language used which may be difficult for offenders to understand.

Offender language
Offenders often have their own language which can in itself be hard for those working with them to understand and may be equally hard for other offenders to comprehend. This will vary widely depending on, for example, geographical area and offender group, and may change very quickly. Offenders who misuse drugs, for example, will probably use language specific to the drug culture which may well be unknown to an offender whose main activity is burglary of houses.

Offenders will also have their own language specific to the Criminal Justice System, sometimes using words which have different meanings when used by other individuals within the system. Look at the following examples to see how many you are familiar with. In these instances the roles are often reversed and it is the worker who is reliant on the offender for an explanation!

Although offenders may use technical language within their peer group, it may also be a defence mechanism. It could be used as a method of reducing a sense of guilt by couching criminal acts in a semi-humorous form of words. The example in the following table where 'slapping' is used to mean 'assault' may minimise the sense of harm and seriousness of the offence.

Some general examples are shown in the following table:

Technical (organisational) language	Translation
Brief	Defendant's barrister or solicitor (see previous table for a different meaning of 'brief'!)
Bender	Suspended sentence (or very lengthy drinking session)
Being sent up the road	Committed from Magistrates' to Crown Court
Boss	Usually in prison to prison officer (of any rank) but can also mean 'great'
Screws	Prison officers
Striping/cutting	Stabbing
Slapping/ smacking	Assaulting
Grafting	Committing acquisitive crime
Twocking	Stealing cars (taking without consent)
Dipping	Pick-pocketing
Dizzy driving	Driving whilst disqualified
Screwing houses	House burglary
Tooled up	Carrying a weapon
Tom	Jewellery

Try it out!
The gritty realism of TV drama has put offender language into the mainstream. Watch a soap or crime drama and make a note in the table of slang terms used to soften the impact of serious crime.

Think about the effect on the viewer and for the character.

Name of programme	
Language used by character to describe crime	
Official definition of offence	
Actual criminal behaviour – what happened?	
Effect of language use for character	
Effect of language use on viewer	

Drugs and technical language
For many years professionals in the Criminal Justice field have spoken of and written about the drug culture and sub-culture. It is not surprising, then, that the taking of illegal drugs has a well-established and extensive vocabulary. It should again be acknowledged that this is a language which can change very quickly as the fashion for using different drugs changes.

While it is useful for workers in the Criminal Justice field to be familiar with the language of the drug culture, it is important to avoid falling into the trap of being over-comfortable with its use. Using this language easily in work with drug users may reinforce a sense of 'membership' of a 'legitimate' sub-culture for the offender, giving it a degree of credibility and respectability.

A dictionary of drug culture language would be extensive. The National Drugs Helpline website at http://www.talktofrank.com/ produces a helpful glossary, as do local drug agencies. Below are some examples of commonly used terms.

Technical (organisational) language	Translation
Jellies/eggs	Temazepam
Benzoes	Minor tranquillisers (benzodiazepines)
Ice	Crystallised methadone
Crack	Cooked cocaine – heated and taken as a gas
Speedballing	Mixing heroin with cocaine or crack (used because it gives a quicker, more intense 'high')
Freebasing	Reducing cocaine to its purest form
Works	Syringe
Spike	Needle
Dig/hit	Injecting
Wrap	An amount of a drug, usually heroin, parcelled for sale

Try it out!

Use your own knowledge and the expertise of colleagues to fill each box of the table below with 'street names' for the drugs shown.

There are some answers given at the end of the module, but you may well have many more than are listed.

Cannabis	
Heroin	
Cocaine	
Amphetamine	

Regional language

Each region of the country has its own dialect spoken with a particular accent – the way you pronounce your words. Dialect refers to the words you use and how you organise them.

We all commonly use words and phrases specific to the area in which we live, or have lived; others may find the words, phrases and accent used difficult to follow, but those speaking it are often not even aware they are talking in a dialect. This is not just the language of offending, but everyday terminology of which you need to be aware if you are to communicate with offenders. Again, it is important not to enter into language which creates a sense of exclusivity – but equally you need to be aware of regional language if you are to work successfully with offenders.

Some examples of language used in the Merseyside area are shown in the following table, although many may be more widely used in the offender context

Technical (organisational) language	Translation
Scally	Offender
Bizzies	Police officers
Hobby-bobbies	Motor-cycle/mounted police
Hurry-up van	Secure carrier taking prisoners to and from Court/prison
Nick	Police station/arrest/ steal/prison
Cop shop	Police station
Garys	Tablets – any sort
Kitin'	Cheque card fraud
To wellie	To kick
To get wellied	To get drunk
Kaylied/palatic/ rotten/wrecked	Different words meaning very drunk

Try it out!
Listen to local radio stations, talk to colleagues, talk to offenders – and listen to yourself. What regional language can you identify which an outsider would have difficulty understanding?

The technical language of the world of education

There is evidence that offenders on community supervision by the NPS have poor speaking and listening skills.[2] Researchers assessed the reading, writing and speaking and listening skills of 455 offenders who had been referred to cognitive skills programmes. They found that:

- 35% of offenders were probably below Level 1 for speaking and listening – the skills expected of a competent nine-year-old or less.

- 39% were at Level 1 for speaking and listening – the level expected of an eleven-year-old.

- Only 26% of offenders were speaking and listening at Level 2.

In contrast, the speaking and listening demands of the cognitive skills programmes were often at or above Level 2, requiring tutor skills to tailor the materials as they deliver it.

ℹ The appendix contains more information about the literacy skills up to Level 2.

'Around half of offenders screened by the National Probation Service have very poor basic skills[3], significantly higher than the estimated 20% of the general population with a similar learning need. Many offenders have also had a negative experience of education, and may have truanted or been excluded. They may have little or no enthusiasm or motivation to return to a school or other learning environment. This may be particularly true of young adult offenders whose negative experiences of school may be more recent and vivid than adult offenders.'

'Improving Literacy and Numeracy of Offenders in the Community', Findings of an Adult Learning Inspectorate Review and Government Response (2004)

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[2] Davies, K., Lewis, J., Byatt, J., Purvis, E. and Cole, B., *Finding 233: An Evaluation of the Literacy Demands of General Offending Behaviour Programmes,* Home Office, London, 2004.
[3] The document does not specify what is meant by 'poor basic skills'.

Offenders may have a very limited vocabulary in terms of the world of education in general. Words which to others may be everyday and easily understood could mean little or nothing and may require sometimes quite detailed explanation. There is an obvious tension here between the requirement to use those technical terms and the need to ensure that offenders are not left behind through a lack of understanding. You will have to ensure that any explanation or paraphrase holds a balance between clarity and respect.

Try it out!

Select and watch a programme on the television in a subject about which you know nothing. How much of it could you follow? Did you identify any jargon used? Would you have been able to hold a conversation with someone about the subject you have watched?

If you found it very technical, what would have made it easier for you to understand?

And, importantly, how did you feel about yourself if you were unable to follow the meaning of the programme?

The table below gives examples of commonly used words from the world of literacy and numeracy skills with which group members might have difficulty, together with a possible paraphrase or explanation.

Technical (organisational) language	Translation
Verb	It can be thought of as a 'doing' or 'being' word
Punctuation	A way of marking text to help you understand when you are reading
Exclamation mark	A punctuation mark which looks like this ! You might use it to show when to expect a surprise, a joke or a warning, e.g. Stop!
Conjunction	Joining words which link together different parts of sentences – like 'and' or 'but'
Median	A type of average. To work out the median you put the numbers in order and find the middle number
Deduct	To take one number away from another
Product	The number you get when you multiply two numbers together. e.g. the product of 2 and 4 is 8 (2 x 4)
Equivalent to	Equals, or the same as
Length	How long something is

If your group members have difficulty in understanding particular technical terms, they can often grasp a concept quickly if it is described to them in a way which is meaningful within the context of their lives. The use of sports, soaps and other popular television series, and fast food analogies, for example, can sometimes make perfect sense to an individual who would otherwise have difficulties in understanding a concept.

You may also find that other group members who have understood the concepts and technical terms can explain them to their peers in a way which is accessible.

Try it out!

Think about how you could imaginatively describe the following technical terms to an individual who left school at thirteen and whose grasp of language is equivalent to that of a ten-year-old child.

Check your explanation out with a colleague. Would they say the same or do they have another possible way of explaining?

One example might be:

Technical language	Translation
Fraction	Think about sharing a pizza with friends. If you cut the pizza into six equal pieces, each slice will be one sixth of the pizza.

Be as imaginative as you can in your explanation, while not losing the meaning – keep the meaning but make it come to life!

Technical language	Possible explanation
Width	
Calculate	
Identify the grammatical error	
Adjective	
Ratio	
Assessment	

Accredited Programme-specific technical language

'Tutors should where necessary find equivalent words'

Maguire, J., et al, Think First Programme Manual (Home Office, 2004)

Accredited Programmes are written in a prescribed format to pass rigorous evidential tests, adhering to a set of criteria proven by research to be effective in reducing re-offending. Programme delivery, however, encourages the explanation of technical language in order to respond to the needs of individuals.

The integrity of Accredited Programmes is an important part of their delivery. In order to be successful, research[4] shows that they must be delivered as intended in their design.

Nevertheless, it is important that there is a clear and common understanding of the language used within the group. The distinction between certain words may be difficult for offenders to grasp. Because unfamiliar words may be a barrier to learning new concepts, a vital part of the tutor's role is to 'translate' Programme language in advance of sessions. If an offender does not understand the language used in a session, you should explain it in a way that has some meaning for that individual.

The Principle of Responsivity

'Effective change requires active participation… All offenders are individuals and consequently will vary in terms of learning style, ability to listen, to read and to write, intelligence and verbal ability.'

Chapman, T. and Hough, M., Evidence Based Practice: A Guide to Effective Practice (Home Office, London, 1998)

Some examples of the use of technical language in Accredited Programmes, and suggested ways of explaining them, are shown in the following table:

Technical language	Possible explanation
Programme	A series of defined sessions to be delivered to group members over a set period of time, for example ten group sessions over a two-week period
TF; ASRO; DID, etc.	Think First; Addressing Substance Related Offending; Drink Impaired Drivers, etc.
Objective	What we're going to achieve
Problem	Something that stands in the way of us or others being happy
Interpersonal skills	How we get on with people
Self-instruction	What I tell myself; listening to myself thinking
Contingency planning	Coming up with ways of dealing with all sorts of things that could go wrong
Functional/ dysfunctional	Something that works/ doesn't work
Convergent thinking	Looking for one 'right' answer
Divergent thinking	Looking for lots of possible answers, even if you know some of them won't work

4   Andrews, D. A. and Dowden, C., 'Managing Correctional Treatment for Reduced Recidivism: A Meta-Analytic Review of Programme Integrity' in *Legal and Criminal Psychology,* vol. 10, 2005, pp. 173–187.

Try it out!

The words and phrases in the table below are all used in Accredited Programmes. How could you explain them to a group of offenders without losing the meaning, but making them accessible without being patronising?

Try it on your friends or family – use the technical term first, and then explain what it means in language they will be able to understand. How would you vary this method for use with offenders?

If you are not involved in delivering Accredited Programmes, you may find it helpful to chat to colleagues who are! If these terms are unfamiliar to you, how do you feel when given this type of task to do?

Some suggested answers are shown at the end of the module.

Technical language	Possible explanation
Alcohol unit	
Ambivalence	
Cost-benefit analysis	
Force-field analysis	
Immediate gratification	
Informal rules	
Personal Scientist	
Perspective-taking	
Role play	
Self-management	

Ideas check

Keep it simple!

An example of how it can be done in practice

Think First Programme Manual (Home Office, 2004) instruction is:

'Demonstrate…solutions which…avoid, circumvent or negate the obstacle'

Tutor problem: The offender has no concept of the words 'avoid', 'circumvent' and 'negate'. How do I get the concept across in 'user-friendly' language while being true to the Programme?

Tutor solution: 'How can we get around that problem?'

You could use visual aids to demonstrate, as this will help explanations to stick in the mind.

Some further thoughts!

Asking group members about words or abbreviations they don't understand doesn't always work. One of the problems may well be that individuals think they understand but don't, because the words may have both a technical and an everyday meaning, e.g. 'take away' – which has a mathematical meaning, i.e. subtract, and an everyday meaning, i.e. remove, carry away or Chinese takeaway!

Many offenders with speech, language and communication needs will be able to regurgitate technical or specific vocabulary and even use it when speaking seemingly appropriately but without fully understanding the meaning of the word.

Supporting group members to access technical language is an important part of teaching and learning, and may be identified as a learning outcome for the group or an individual by their tutor or teacher. It is essential that any technical language can be used and understood in a workplace context, for example, where technical terms are used to describe processes and procedures that are part of the work of the organisation or company.

If the outcomes of your session rely on understanding technical terminology, you will need to employ strategies to ensure that group members understand the terms and can use them in the appropriate context. Some strategies to consider are:

- adapting some of the activities in this module for your group;

- explaining the technical terms in accessible language and continuing to use them in context throughout the session, checking that your group have understood the concepts;

- using or adapting some of the activities in part 4 to make the language accessible;

- giving short lists of technical language, together with their meanings, to group members to revise after each session;

- starting a session by encouraging group members to review the technical language used in the previous session as an aid to recall and retention.

It wouldn't be doing your group any favours if all technical language were reduced to simplified explanations!

ⓘ Module 3, Questioning and checking understanding, has more information on strategies for checking your group has understood concepts and information.

Mapping to your context
You will use technical language in many of the contexts in which you interact with your group.

Look back at module 1 to see how these might relate to the three areas, Setting the Scene (STS), Working with Individuals (WWI) and Working with Groups (WWG).

ⓘ Module 1 contains more detail about Setting the Scene, Working with Individuals and Working with Groups.

These are some examples:

- Interviews (STS)/(WWI)
- Induction (STS)/(WWI)
- Sentence planning meetings (STS)/(WWG)
- Case conferences/meetings (STS)/(WWG)
- Work or work experience (WWG)
- Delivering training or teaching (WWG)
- Accredited Programmes (STS)/(WWG)/(WWI)

Some ways you can support the use of technical language in these contexts are:

- Use language appropriate to the audience.
- Ensure the technical language is explained.
- Write any technical terms on a flip chart or whiteboard.
- Use non-verbal communication to reassure.
- Use strategies to check understanding of technical terms.
- Be aware of the literacy levels of your group members and adapt your language use accordingly.
- Don't use explanations which may seem patronising to group members.
- Use examples from other life areas to explain concepts.
- Use visual aids to explain concepts.
- Maintain and update your own knowledge of technical language.

Links with other modules
- Speaking and listening skills in context
- Non-verbal communication
- Questioning and checking understanding
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions

Part 2
Why is it important to use technical language appropriately – for you, for your group?

The activities that follow will give you the opportunity to explore your use of technical language in a little more detail.

Throughout these activities, reflect on your own use of technical language, and think about the benefits for you in appropriate use of the non-verbal signals as well as verbal feedback. Also reflect on how you can support your group to understand some of the technical language they will need in order to cope effectively with the task in hand, and in their future work or life, and how they can become more aware of the signals they may be giving to speakers through non-verbal communication.

Some thoughts before you try the activities
When you are working with your group, you may need to impart information which does not relate to what group members see as their needs or which challenges their views. Information presented in a 'dry', technical way, and/or in a language that is not easily understood will be a barrier to communication – and will have little or no impact. You may need to be unambiguous and direct in your delivery to ensure that your message and meaning is clearly conveyed.

You may also find that some group members will use their lack of understanding, or their own version of technical language, to be divisive. This may be calculated to make you think they do not understand the concepts, or to undermine the session, you or other group members. You will need to decide whether an individual is genuinely failing to grasp a concept or if that person is trying to thwart the objectives of the work being done.

🛈 For further information on managing group discussions, see module 5.

You need to be aware that you could make assumptions about group members. They could appear confident and loud, verging on arrogant, and sometimes be aggressive in their body language. You may feel they are being difficult and disruptive, but it may indicate they are experiencing the natural fears and anxieties many of us would feel in a new situation, or they may have under-developed social communication skills. Perhaps this is because they do not know what to expect. They may have been in educational-type situations which have caused them embarrassment, and their experience of the formal education system may not have been a positive one. If their literacy skills are limited or their communication skills impaired, their confidence can be low (although often they would never admit to lack of confidence in front of a group).

In addition, if you then imagine circumstances where group members either do not understand the language used, or understand it in a different way, this could be very stressful and potentially aggravate the situation.

Try it out!

Think about a time when you were in a new situation – your first day in a new job, for example.

Can you note down any technical language you found unfamiliar in the first few days? How did you feel about not understanding some of the terms and acronyms?

Ideas check

Perhaps you felt:

- uncomfortable about having to ask for an explanation;

- worried that you would forget half (if not more!) of the meanings and explanations;

- as though you were a nuisance constantly asking for the meanings of terms;

- confused by the amount of new terms and language;

- isolated, as you didn't feel able to join in conversations;

- worried you'd use the wrong terms in the wrong place;

- unsure whether you fully understood some of the language.

Putting an individual at ease in those situations is critical to a successful outcome for the session you are delivering. If group members are made to feel ill-at-ease and do not understand what they are being asked to learn or asked to do, they will at best learn far less than they may be capable of, and at worst simply vote with their feet and not come back. Either end of that continuum will serve only to reinforce what they have already experienced – that learning is not something with which they wish to engage. Making your sessions interesting, meaningful and relevant is a key factor in reassuring and engaging group members.

Try it out!

Note down some hints for yourself on how you might make sessions hold the interest of the group.

Ideas check

Keep the language simple.

- Once a word or phrase is understood, don't be afraid to use it repeatedly – a common understanding of 'buzz-words' helps group dynamics.

- Use references to popular culture – TV, films, advertising.

- Use visual props to illustrate a point.

- Allow group members to explore their understanding of particular words.

- Always seek to use a relevant, concrete example to illustrate a theoretical point – most helpful if it can be a problem or issue coming from a group member.

🛈 For further information on managing group discussions, see module 5.

Activity 1
Supporting strategies

Select one session that you have delivered which contains technical language. Try to select a session which has been challenging for you to deliver because of the technical language used.

Make a note of the technical language and the context within the session and the strategies you used to explain the meanings of the terms to your group.

Think about one alternative strategy for explaining the same or similar language (you may find it helpful to consult colleagues for ideas).

Try your original strategy and the new one out over the next two sessions and evaluate them. Use the headings in the following table to note down your thoughts.

Technical language

Strategy 1

How effective was it for me?	Why?

Strategy 2

How effective was it for me?	Why?

Activity 2
Spot the technicalities

Watch video clip 2 that accompanies the pack, and note down on the following table some of the technical words used which you think may have been explained earlier in the session, or may need to be explained in the scene you are watching.

How do you think you could explain these words in accessible language?

Technical language	Possible explanation

Activity 3
SMOG it!

This activity will enable you to think about the ways you can help to make information easier to access for group members with literacy difficulties, and is very useful in identifying how technical words can make a piece of text more difficult for group members to access.

One of the potential barriers for your group members could be the information they receive. It is important that any literature you produce for them is accessible in terms of readability. If the information is presented in language that isn't accessible for group members, they will feel disheartened and negative about the task you are asking them to complete.

You are going to look at a generic piece of writing below and identify the level of demand required to access the information.

You are going to use a well-known basic skills technique for doing this, and you may find it helpful to work with a colleague. The technique is called 'SMOG' (which some people insist stands for Simplified Measure of Gobble-de-gook!) and gives an indicator of the 'reading with understanding' level of a piece of text.

Follow the process outlined in the first box below for the passage about Sue Torr, adapted from Skills for Life Update, Issue 6, 2002/03.

SMOG readability formula

- Step 1   Select a piece of text.
- Step 2   Count 10 sentences.
  Tip: Count 10 full stops.
- Step 3   Count the number of words with 3 or more syllables.
- Step 4   Multiply this number by 3.
- Step 5   Circle the number closest to your number.

1	4	9	16	25	36	49
64	81	100	121	144	160	

- Step 6   Find the square root of the number you circled.

1	4	9	16	25	36	49
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

64	81	100	121	144	160	
8	8	10	11	12	13	

- Step 7   Add 8 to this number to find the readability level.

Sue Torr could not read or write until the age of 38. She told no one about it, not even her husband or children. For **everyday** tasks she relied **heavily** on her **family**. She was **desperate** to tell someone that she could not read, tired of telling lies every day, and lacked any self-esteem.

In 1991, she met Sue Collins, a parent **education** worker at the **primary** school, who was there to help parents with their **literacy** problems. **Everything** began to change for Sue. She began lessons and learned to read and write. She was **encouraged** to write up her **experiences** and an outreach worker from the **Theatre** Royal, Plymouth, turned her writings into a script. The play "Shout it Out" has gone on to win many awards and is part of a **successful national literacy** project **supported** by the Basic Skills **Agency**.

After 20 years of keeping her **illiteracy** a secret, Sue is now **regularly invited** to speak at **conferences** around the world, raising **awareness** of **literacy** issues and **inspiring** others with her **remarkable** story.

Answer:

Step 2:   There are 10 sentences in this passage.

Step 3:   The **bold** words are all three or more syllables long (it may help to beat out the syllables as you say the words – it is easier to count that way!). There are 24 of them in this passage.

Step 4:   Multiply 24 x 3 = 72

Step 5:   The number closest to 72 is 64

Step 6:   The square root of 64 is 8

Step 7:   Add 8 to the square root: 8 + 8 = 16

The readability of this text is 16. This may mean that only someone who has Level 2 reading skills will be able to read and understand it. A readability level of 10 – 12 is good for most adults.[5]

Now pick one session from your programme or lesson at random and complete a SMOG test on a section of information you will be expecting your group to use and understand.

If the answer is higher than 12, you may need to think about your strategies for explaining any technical words in the session!

You could also SMOG some of the leaflets The Probation Trust produce for offenders. If you ask offenders to identify all the three syllable words, you can then support a discussion about whether all 'long' words are 'technical' or is there something else that makes it more or less difficult to understand.

Activity 4
Glossary

Think about the technical language used in your sessions and, when you are reviewing or planning a session, note down any of these technical words together with an explanation by the side. Keep the list going as you deliver your sessions, and it will build into a glossary which you may be able to copy for your group.

If you use IT to produce your glossary, you can sort the information alphabetically to make it easier to use.

[5]   Note that the SMOG formula will give an indicator of the 'reading with understanding' level of a piece of text. The readability of text will also depend on the context and the task set based on the text.

Part 3
What you need to think about

There are some hints and tips that can help you to use your technical language effectively in some of the contexts in which you may be working with groups.

Working together and planning

Before the delivery of any session to a group or individual, think about the language used in the session and any technical terms that may require an explanation, keeping in mind the needs and abilities of your group. If you and your colleagues are likely to be using similar technical language, it is important that you all agree on the explanations to ensure group members aren't confused with different versions of the same technical terms.

If you are co-delivering the session with a colleague, you will need to plan the delivery together. This will enable you to share expertise and agree on common explanations of any technical language used in the delivery. This can be a supportive experience for staff new to delivering the session, and will enable you and your colleague to discuss approaches to the delivery of any 'difficult' terms or exercises, to ensure a common understanding and a model for use with the group.

Good planning and preparation will ensure that the whole session is seen as the joint responsibility of a supportive pair of session leaders, rather than two individuals dividing the work between them. Going into a session without that support and common understanding is likely to lead to failure to communicate the lessons of the session. This may create a divisive situation where group members play off one leader against another, and allow individuals to tire of the programme or learning and drop out or become disengaged.

Think about:

- How do you and your co-deliverer exchange thoughts on which group members are more likely to have a problem with the words, phrases or exercises that form part of your sessions?

- How do you agree on the strategies to support group members' understanding of technical language?

- What would you do if you and your co-deliverer disagreed on a suitable explanation of some technical language?

Your delivery style

Tutors, trainers and teachers need to be aware of their own style of delivery and to become familiar with the different ways their group members learn. To meet the needs of group members, you should vary your delivery style and use a range of media. Group members with auditory processing difficulties, for example, may have problems following verbal explanations of technical terms. Providing them with written notes on the terms would be helpful and enable them to participate in the activity planned.

Think about your strategies for explaining technical language:

- What strategies do you use currently?

- What other strategies could you try?

- How would you evaluate the success, or otherwise, of the strategies?

Sharing effective practice

'Good ideas often fall through poor implementation'

Chapman, T. and Hough, M., Evidence Based Practice: A Guide to Effective Practice (Home Office, London, 1998)

'Teachers should also use more direct teaching strategies to teach new terminology and concepts, introduce new skills and consolidate or extend previous work'

Delivering Skills for Life, Raising Standards, A Contextual Guide to Support Success in Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Provision (Prisons) (DfES, 2004)

- [6][Programmes] All Programme sessions are videotaped for quality assurance purposes. These can be an excellent source of training materials for other tutors – new tutors in particular may find it very helpful to watch more experienced colleagues deal with difficult concepts 'live'.

- [Education] There may be a member of staff who is confident about using technical language in a session who may be willing to have it videotaped and used as a discussion point at a staff meeting.

- Observing experienced deliverers may also be a useful exercise, as you can pick up some helpful hints for your own session delivery.

- A great deal of excellent resource material has been developed as part of the *Skills for Life* strategy[7], but there are teachers, tutors, trainers and support staff in many provider organisations and departments who will be developing materials and ideas to support groups in the secure and community setting. Sharing these resources and ideas, both within the organisation and at cross-sector meetings, will ensure a richer pool of material for everyone.

- Regular meetings of staff, e.g. 'Practice Issues' meetings for tutors or team meetings for education staff, are one of the best sources of support and development. These meetings provide an ideal opportunity to table an agenda item to share and exchange 'what worked well' ideas that may provide strategies for engaging group members in using and accessing technical language.

- A 'paper bank' of more creative ideas for the delivery of challenging sessions, including strategies and activities for using technical language, is another rich source of material. This could be a simple lever arch file where copies of suggested activities are filed and kept for the whole team to access and use.

- Sharing ideas and effective practice, both formally and informally, between Programmes teams and Skills for Life teachers may generate new ideas for developing strategies for supporting group members to access technical language.

Think about:

- What methods of sharing practice exist within your workplace?

- What scope is there for the introduction of other methods?

- How might you introduce a 'Swap Shop' or a 'paper bank' of ideas for delivering sessions which involve technical language?

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[6] Note that some of these suggestions may relate solely to Offending Behaviour Programmes delivery or *Skills for Life* teaching, but they provide ideas which may be transferable to other contexts.

[7] Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy can be accessed at: http://bit.ly/XtgRMf

And finally, a word of warning.

A true story!

Don't make assumptions about a common understanding of what may appear to be the simplest word.

An offender in an Accredited Programme had reached session 6 before having the courage to ask the tutors, 'So when does it begin then?' Bemused, the tutors asked what he meant.

'The Programme,' came the reply.

'But you've been doing the Programme for the last six weeks,' the tutors said, still bemused.

'No – the Programme,' insisted the offender. 'Where's the telly?'

Reflective log

A reflective log is a useful tool. If you complete it after a session where you know you've had to use a lot of technical language, it will give you the opportunity to reflect on how well the group understood the vocabulary and concepts. You will also be able to reflect on how you managed the explanations of the technical words. If you are able to video a session, this could be very useful.

ⓘ Look back at the Introduction to see more about reflective practice.

Reflecting on your session will help you to:

- stand back from the session and think about what you did;
- identify what was successful;
- consider any areas for development;
- identify any barriers to your own progress;
- decide how you will overcome them.

Use the reflective log on the following pages to think about your session with your group. The following questions may guide you:

What worked well and why?

- How did I explain the terminology used in the session?
- How did I check whether the group understood the technical language?
- Am I confident that they will remember the words and their associated meanings for the next session? If not, what could I try next time? If so, what did I do that supported this?
- Are there other strategies I could try?
- How did I feel about the session?
- Which of my colleagues could I approach for ideas?
- How could I improve?

Reflective log

- Focus on the aspects of technical language which were most relevant to the session.
- Record what you can. There is no need to complete all the boxes.

Group focus: circle as appropriate

Adult/Young People/Young Offender

Male/female

Group/one to one

Session focus:

Aspect of speaking and listening	What you said/ did/thought	What worked well	Points to think about
Explaining (What you say to explain, for example, a literacy approach or a concept in an OBP, what language you use, how much you adapt, tone of voice, pace, how you summarise, confirm what you've said.)			
Checking understanding (How do you judge whether or not an offender has understood what you've said? Have you got well-tried ways of checking? How do you confirm understanding?)			
Use of technical language (Do you use specialist vocabulary, e.g. verb, interpersonal skills? Terms, acronyms, academic language? If so, what are they? How do you introduce them and use them? Confirm understanding?)			
Use of non-verbal communication etc. in combination with speaking and listening (Eye contact? Body position and gestures? Facial expression? Are body language messages the same as those expressed in speaking and listening?) that she/he does not understand, wants to know more about?			
Other			

Part 4
How you could develop an understanding of technical language with your group

There are many activities which can be used with groups and individuals to raise awareness of the importance of using and understanding technical language, including some of the 'Try it out!' activities throughout this pack.

You will need to introduce the sessions carefully and make sure that you are preparing your group. Often they may lack the knowledge of appropriate learning skills and non-verbal communication, and you will need to start with the basics. Some of the work you have already completed in parts 1 and 2 of this module could be adapted to introduce the topic to your group.

Using technical language is just one aspect of the speaking and listening skills modules in this pack. It would be useful to start the topic of communication skills as a whole with an appropriate introduction. A suggested introductory session is outlined in module 1.

The activities which follow could be used as part of a whole series of sessions with your group and can be used after the introductory session. These will help group members to develop and practise some of the skills they could employ in many contexts, but the focus for these are in the use of technical language in a range of contexts.

Offenders in all settings are exposed to technical language of one type or another. This could be:

- work/work placements;
- sentence planning meetings;
- offending behaviour programme group sessions;
- *Skills for Life* sessions;
- subject/vocational training;
- Supervision meetings.

In these situations offenders will need to be able to access and understand the technical language used in order to gain information, contribute to the session and respond to instructions. Using strategies to support their understanding of technical language will help them to:

- access and understand key information;
- be supportive of others in the group;
- use some of the technical language with confidence;
- develop their skills in learning new vocabulary;
- improve general communication skills (thereby potentially improving employability prospects and level of participation in educational settings).

Activity 1
Getting technical with IT
This activity can be completed using IT equipment or by writing into a pre-prepared table. Language is often best learnt in context, so it is important that the words used in this activity form part of the session and that group members will have an opportunity to listen out for and use the terms in context. You could follow this activity with one or some of the other activities to enable group members to practise using the words in context.

Using IT
If you have access to IT, this activity will encourage groups to use IT to find the meanings of technical words.

Before the session begins, write on the board a couple of the key words that will be introduced in the session.

As the group members arrive, ask them to enter the words into a word processing document, and using the built-in thesaurus (one technical word you will need to explain!) find the meaning/s for each of the words.

Ask each group member in turn to explain the meanings they have found. As some words may have more than one meaning, you will need to guide the discussion by identifying the appropriate meaning in the context of the session. Group members could then highlight the relevant meaning on their document.

As a variation of this, you could have a template set up on the computers for each group member to access. If group members enter the words you have written on the board into the template together with the appropriate meaning, they will develop their own glossary over time.

Another variation would be to write individual key words onto card. These are handed out to group members as they arrive – one for each person. Each group member has to find out the meaning of the word using the computer, or a dictionary, and explain it to the rest of the group.

Using a pre-prepared table

You will need to have copies of a table and dictionaries available.

Follow the activity as above, but using the dictionaries to find the meaning/s of the words.

ⓘ Note: Some group members may not be able to do this activity due to the language demands of the task. You will need to be sensitive to these concerns and adapt the activity accordingly.

Individuals with expressive language difficulties may find it difficult to explain what they have found and you may need to provide some additional support, such as pairing them with more confident peers.

Activity 2
Gap-filling

This activity will enable group members to think about the context for the words they have to use in the session.

This is a follow on from the initial explanation of the key words chosen for the session.

Before the session, write gapped sentences (called a Cloze exercise) which require one of the key words from the session to complete each sentence. Ask group members to fill in each gap with one of the technical words for which they have had to find the meaning.

This is a helpful step to learning the words, as learners often need to make the connection between the word and its context in order to be able to access, understand and apply it over time. It may also provide you with a way to test to see if they have made the link between the word and its definition and use in context. The mechanical act of writing the word can also help to group members to learn both the spelling and the meaning of the word.

Activity 3
Words and pictures

This activity will enable group members to 'see' the word in context. This will be helpful for visual learners, who may find that using a dictionary doesn't give them a 'feel' for what the word really means.

Use pictures from magazines and books which illustrate the word, or a video clip which demonstrates the word in context.

Ask group members to do their own drawing or representation of the word. Drawing skills aren't important; it's what the individual can put down on paper that is meaningful to them that is important. If there are individuals who feel uncomfortable drawing even roughly, use magazines and newspapers which they can browse to find appropriate images to cut out and stick onto paper.

Group members could then exchange their images/pictures and see if they can guess the technical word represented.

Activity 4
Real words, real life

This activity will enable group members to identify the use of technical language outside the classroom or group room.

Ask group members to record and report back to the group if they hear or see one of the key words anywhere outside of the classroom or group room.

You could suggest they note down the word, its meaning and where they heard/saw it. You may find some individuals deliberately use the word so someone can say they heard it – but that's a good sign that they are improving their vocabulary and using the new words!

Activity 5
Word Bingo

Provide group members with a blank grid in which they can write any of the technical words used during the session. Each time a word is used, it can be entered into the grid. Critically, they must also note or remember the context (otherwise they'll just listen out for the word, and not pay attention to anything else).

The first person to fill in the grid is the winner, although they will need to explain the contexts to the rest of the group as they check off their own grids. This may generate some discussion which will further embed the learning of the new vocabulary.

Part 5
Next steps

The final activity is a time to reflect on the thoughts, discussions and ideas you've had as you've worked through this module.

Use the action plan on the page below to identify what you think you need to do next and to decide on your priority actions.

There are other modules in this pack which you may want to work through. These are:

- Speaking and listening skills in context
- Non-verbal communication
- Questioning and checking understanding
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions

Speaking and listening action plan

What do I need to do?	What do I want to achieve?	What actions do I need to take?	When do I need to have completed them?	Who will I need to see?

Answers

Criminal Justice Language
Try it out!

Abbreviation	Translation
OCJR	Office for Criminal Justice Reform
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate
CJB	Criminal Justice Board
YOT	Youth Offending Team
CO	Community Order
DVC	Direct Victim Contact
HOC	Home Office Circular
PSA	Probation Service Assistant
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
OLASS	Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

Drugs and technical language
Try it out! (Taken from the national drugs helpline website at http://www.talktofrank.com)

Cannabis	bhang, black, blast, blow, blunts, Bob Hope, bush, dope, draw, ganja, grass, hash, hashish, hemp, herb, marijuana, pot, puff, Northern Lights, resin, sensi, sensemilla, shit, skunk, smoke, soap, spliff, wacky backy, weed, zero. Some names are based on where it comes from: Afghan, homegrown, Moroccan, etc.
Heroin	brown, skag, H, horse, gear, smack
Cocaine	coke, charlie, C, white, Percy, snow, toot
Amphetamine	Speed, Amphetamine Sulphate, Phet, Billy, Whizz, Sulph, Base Amphetamine, Paste, Base Ice, Meth, Methamphetamine, Dexamphetamine, Dexies, Dexedrine, Yaba

Accredited Programme-specific technical language
Try it out!

Technical language	Possible explanation
Alcohol unit	A measure of alcohol content
Ambivalence	In two minds, undecided
Cost-benefit analysis	Looking at the pros and cons now and in the future (pluses and minuses)
Force-field analysis	Looking at what you could gain or lose from each option and how important they may be
Immediate gratification	I want it now!
Informal rules	Unwritten rules in groups about behaviour
Personal Scientist	Working out what makes you tick
Perspective-taking	Seeing things from another point of view
Role play	Trying things out in practice. As if . . .
Self-management	Controlling your own behaviour

Appendix

Appendix

Despite the fact that speaking and listening skills development has sometimes been seen as secondary to the teaching of reading and writing, there are some useful and readily available resources to support speech, language and communication skills learning.

This appendix seeks to provide some background to how speaking and listening is taught from the very early years of the nursery to adults in a range of contexts and settings, including custody and community.

While these resources are current at the time of the review of this pack (2012) they may not be always be accessible over time. However, a search through the Internet will usually turn up many of the documents and materials in various archives, although not all of these have been referenced in this pack.

Development of speaking and listening skills

Speaking and listening skills are recognised as important skills throughout the Key Stages. There are four key stages as well as an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The EYFS covers education for children before they reach five (compulsory school age). The Key Stages are shown in the table below:

Age	Stage	Year	Test/Qualifications
3 – 4 4 – 5	EYFS	Reception	
5 – 6 6 – 7	Key Stage 1	Year 1 Year 2	Teacher assessments in English, maths and science
7 – 8 8 – 9 9 – 10 10 – 11	Key Stage 2	Year 3 Year 4 Year 5 Year 6	National tests and teacher assessments in English, maths and science.
11 – 12 12 – 13 13 – 14	Key Stage 3	Year 7 Year 8 Year 9	Ongoing teacher assessments Teacher assessments in English, maths and science and other foundation subjects.
14 – 15 15 – 16	Key Stage 4	Year 10 Year 11	Some children take GCSEs. Most children take GCSEs or other national qualifications.

Early Years Foundation Stage

A revised EYFS framework[1] and EYFS Profile statutory assessment will be in place from 1 September 2012. This will have a stronger emphasis on the three prime areas which are most essential for children's healthy development. These three areas are: communication and language; physical; and personal, social and emotional development.

The early learning goals relevant to speaking and listening are under the prime area of communication and language:

Listening and attention: children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.

Understanding: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.

Speaking: children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

Key Stages 1 and 2

The Key Stages 1 and 2 provide a framework for developing speaking and listening skills.

Speaking and listening: during Key Stage 1 pupils learn to speak clearly, thinking about the needs of their listeners. They work in small groups and as a class, joining in discussions and making relevant points. They also learn how to listen carefully to what other people are saying, so that they can remember the main points. They learn to use language in imaginative ways and express their ideas and feelings when working in role and in drama activities.

Speaking and listening: during Key Stage 2 pupils learn how to speak in a range of contexts, adapting what they say and how they say it to the purpose and the audience. Taking varied roles in groups gives them opportunities to contribute to situations with different demands. They also learn to respond appropriately to others, thinking about what has been said and the language used.

Key Stage 3

On 20 January 2011 the Secretary of State for Education announced a review of the National Curriculum in England. The review will look at the National Curriculum for both primary and secondary schools.

The new National Curriculum will set out only the essential knowledge that all children should acquire, and give schools and teachers more freedom to decide how to teach this most effectively and to design a wider school curriculum that best meets the needs of their pupils.

While the review is being conducted, the existing National Curriculum requirements for secondary schools remained in force until 2014.

The speaking and listening skills identified for Key Stage 3 children (11-14 years old) in the version which is current until 2014 are[2]:

Speaking and listening

Pupils should be able to:

a. present information and points of view clearly and appropriately in different contexts, adapting talk for a range of purposes and audiences, including the more formal;

b. use a range of ways to structure and organise their speech to support their purposes and guide the listener;

c. vary vocabulary, structures and grammar to convey meaning, including speaking standard English fluently;

d. engage an audience, using a range of techniques to explore, enrich and explain their ideas;

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1 *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five,* DfE, 2012

2 *English Programme of study for key stage 3 and attainment targets,* QCA, 2007

e. listen and respond constructively to others, taking different views into account and modifying their own views in the light of what others say;

f. understand explicit and implicit meanings;

g. make different kinds of relevant contributions in groups, responding appropriately to others, proposing ideas and asking questions;

h. take different roles in organising, planning and sustaining talk in groups;

i. sift, summarise and use the most important points;

j. use different dramatic approaches to explore ideas, texts and issues;

k. use different dramatic techniques to convey action, character, atmosphere and tension;

l. explore the ways that words, actions, sound and staging combine to create dramatic moments.

Key Stage 4

During Key Stage 4 most young people will be preparing for GCSEs or other national qualifications. In English, during Key Stage 4, young people will be working towards learning how to use language confidently, both in their studies and the wider world beyond school. They will be taught to use and analyse complex features of language and should be able to read many types of text and comment about them. Specifications for GCSE English require the range of speaking and listening skills to be assessed, and include the ability to:

- explain, describe and narrate;

- explore, analyse and imagine;

- discuss, argue and persuade

in a variety of formal and informal contexts. Assessment should focus on extended individual contributions, group discussion and interaction, and drama-focused activities.

It is important to note that the transition from Key Stage 3 to 4 and Stage 4 itself is a time when many young people slip through the 'educational net'. It can be a difficult time for young people as they may have many pressures, such as:

- pressure to seek employment at 16 or further work-related study;

- pressure to continue studying after GCSEs;

- pressure of comparison with peers.

Young people with literacy, communication and language needs may have the added pressures of:

- people finding out about their lack of skills;

- failing exams;

- not being able to cope with the GCSE subjects they have chosen.

If a young person leaves school before the end of Key Stage 4 or has had gaps in their education, vital chunks of the formal development of listening and speaking skills will have been missed. Although informal development of speaking and listening skills will continue, it may not be focused on the skills needed for employability and progress in the wider world. An offender may not realise this gap in their knowledge, as speaking and listening are developed alongside other skills and are not usually taught in isolation.

Adult Literacy/Functional English

The Adult Literacy Core Curriculum[3] provides support for developing these skills in adults and covers the levels from Entry 1 to Level 2. The Curriculum covers the ability to:

- speak, listen and respond

- read and comprehend;

- write to communicate.

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[3] Accessible through the interactive *Skills for Life* core curricula at http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum

The Curriculum provides opportunities for exploring a range of speaking and listening skills at the different levels. It is important to note that an offender may very well have a spiky profile, e.g. a higher level of speaking and listening in comparison to reading and writing skills, or vice versa. It can be easy to make assumptions about an offender's level of skills based on their speaking and listening ability, thus reinforcing the need for thorough assessment.

Speaking and listening skills are being assessed in the national tests in Functional English.[4]

However, the processes required to use speaking and listening skills effectively in Functional English are very similar to those that underpin Skills for Life as outlined in the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum.

Progress in speaking and listening through the levels from Entry 1 to Level 2, as outlined in the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum and the Functional English criteria, are shown in the tables that follows.

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum				
Entry 1	**Entry 2**	**Entry 3**	**Level 1**	**Level 2**
Speaking and Listening At this level, adults can:	**Speaking and Listening** At this level, adults can:	**Speaking and Listening** At this level, adults can:	**Speaking and Listening** At this level, adults can:	**Speaking and Listening** At this level, adults can:
Listen and Respond to spoken language, including simple narratives, statements, questions and single-step instructions	**Listen and Respond** to spoken language, including straightforward information, short narratives, explanations and instructions	**Listen and Respond** to spoken language, including straightforward information and narratives, and follow straightforward explanations and instructions, both face to face and on the telephone	**Listen and Respond** to spoken language, including information and narratives, and follow explanations and instructions to varying lengths, adapting response to speaker, medium and context	**Listen and Respond** to spoken language, including extended information and narratives, and follow detailed explanations and multi-step instructions of varying length, adapting response to speaker, medium and context

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[4] Functional English is the replacement for the Communication Key Skill and *Skills for Life* Literacy (Functional English criteria can be downloaded from http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum				
Entry 1	**Entry 2**	**Entry 3**	**Level 1**	**Level 2**
Speak and Communicate basic information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics	**Speak and Communicate** information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics	**Speak and Communicate** information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics, using appropriate formality, both face to face and on the telephone	**Speak and Communicate** information, feelings and opinions adapting speech and content to take account of the listener(s) and medium	**Speak and Communicate** straightforward and detailed information, ideas, and opinions clearly, adapting speech and content to take account of the listener(s), medium, purpose and topic
Engage in Discussion with another person in a familiar situation about familiar topics	**Engage in Discussion** with one or more people in a familiar situation to establish shared understanding about familiar topics	**Engage in Discussion** with one or more people in a familiar situation, making relevant points and responding to what others say to reach a shared understanding about familiar topics	**Engage in Discussion** with one or more people in familiar and unfamiliar situations, making clear and relevant contributions that respond to what others say and produce a shared understanding about different topics	**Engage in Discussion** with one or more people in a variety of situations, making clear and effective contributions that produce outcomes appropriate to purpose and topic

Functional English criteria				
Entry 1	**Entry 2**	**Entry 3**	**Level 1**	**Level 2**
Speaking, listening and communication	**Speaking, listening and communication**	**Speaking, listening and communication**	**Speaking, listening and communication**	**Speaking, listening and communication**
Skill Standard Participate in and understand the main points of simple discussions/ exchanges about familiar topics with another person in a familiar situation.	**Skill Standard** Participate in discussions/ exchanges about familiar topics, making active contributions, with one or more people in familiar situations	**Skill Standard** Respond appropriately to others and make some extended contributions in familiar formal and informal discussions and exchanges.	**Skill Standard** Take full part in formal and informal discussions and exchanges that include unfamiliar subjects.	**Skill Standard** Make a range of contributions to discussions in a range of contexts, including those that are unfamiliar, and make effective presentations.
Coverage and range a) Understand the main points of short explanations; b) Understand and follow instructions; c) Respond appropriately to comments and requests; d) Make contributions to be understood; e) Ask simple questions to obtain specific information.	**Coverage and range** a) Identify the main points of short explanations and instructions; b) Make appropriate contributions that are clearly understood; c) Express simply feelings or opinions and understand those expressed by others; d) Communicate information so that the meaning is clear; e) Ask and respond to straightforward questions; f) Follow the gist of discussions.	**Coverage and range** a) Follow the main points of discussions; b) Use techniques to clarify and confirm understanding; c) Give own point of view and respond appropriately to others' point of view; d) Use appropriate language in formal discussions/ exchanges; e) Make relevant contributions, allowing for and responding to others' input.	**Coverage and range** a) Make relevant and extended contributions to discussions, allowing for and responding to others' input; b) Prepare for and contribute to the formal discussion of ideas and opinions; c) Make different kinds of contributions to discussions; d) Present information/ points of view clearly and in appropriate language.	**Coverage and range** a) Consider complex information and give a relevant, cogent response in appropriate language; b) Present information and ideas clearly and persuasively to others; c) Adapt contributions to suit audience, purpose and situation; d) Make significant contributions to discussions, taking a range of roles and helping to move discussion forward;

Resources
Skills for Life resources

The *Skills for Life* Strategy Unit produced a comprehensive range of materials and resources to support Skills for Life teaching and learning. The table below suggests some of these resources which may still be available to download and would be useful for supporting the development of speaking and listening skills, and includes:

- Core Curriculum documents
- learning materials
- assessment tools (screening, initial assessment and diagnostic assessment).

It may also be worth enquiring of local Skills for Life providers to see if they still have copies of some of these resources and would be willing to share them with you.

Resource	Where available (2012)	Description
National Standards for Adult Literacy and Numeracy	http://www.ifl.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/6639/14130_national_standards_for_adult_literacy_numeracy_ict.pdf	Nationally agreed benchmarks against which skills can be assessed
Interactive ESOL Curriculum and downloadable pdf	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum	Skills, knowledge and understanding required to meet the National Standards at each level
Interactive Literacy Curriculum and downloadable pdf	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum	Skills, knowledge and understanding required to meet the National Standards at each level
Interactive Numeracy Curriculum and downloadable pdf	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum	Skills, knowledge and understanding required to meet the National Standards at each level
Interactive Adult Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework for Literacy and Numeracy	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum	Framework of the entitlement to learning literacy and numeracy for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have not yet reached Entry 1
Access for All Downloadable pdf	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Access%20for%20All/	Guidance on making the adult literacy and numeracy core curricula accessible
Literacy Learning Materials	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Literacy/Literacy%20teaching%20and%20learning%20materials/	Learning materials referenced to the core curriculum

Resource	Where available (2012)	Description
Numeracy Learning Materials	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Numeracy/Numeracy%20teaching%20and%20learning%20materials/	Learning materials referenced to the core curriculum
ESOL Learning Materials	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/ESOL/ESOL%20teaching%20and%20learning%20materials/	Learning materials referenced to the core curriculum
Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Diagnostic Assessment Materials	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/	Detailed assessment of a learner's skills and abilities against the requirements set out in the National Standards and core curricula
Dyslexia Diagnostic Assessment Materials	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/	Detailed assessment of a learner's skills and abilities against the requirements set out in the National Standards and core curricula
ESOL Initial assessment	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/ESOL/	Assesses ESOL speaking and listening skills from Entry 1 to Level 2
Literacy and numeracy screening tool	http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary	Generic tools covering Entry 1 to Level 2
Literacy and numeracy initial assessment	http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary	Generic tools covering Entry 1 to Level 2
Workplace screening tool	http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary	Contextualised to the generic workplace, covers Entry 1 to Level 2
Workplace initial assessment tools (Literacy, numeracy, ESOL)	http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary	Contextualised to the generic workplace, covers Entry 1 to Level 2
Sector specific assessment tools	http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary	Health and Social Care, Retail, Passenger Transport and Facilities Management
Teaching speaking and listening a toolkit for practitioners	http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=224140	Resource to support speaking and listening skills from the Key Skills Support Programme

Resources to support communication skills in young people

Bliss, T., *Managing Children, Managing Themselves,* Lucky Duck Publishing, 1994.

Kelly, A., *Talkabout: A Social Communication Skills Package,* Speechmark Publishing Ltd, Bicester, 1996.

Alex Kelly and Brain Sains, *Talkabout for Teenagers Developing social and emotional communication skills,* 2009.

For further information visit
http://www.speechmark.net

Wendy Rinaldi, *Social Use of Language Programme – Youth Justice,* 2011.

Victoria Joffe, *Narrative Intervention Programme* (2011) and *Vocabulary Enrichment Programme* (2011), both published by Speechmark http://www.speechmark.net

Further resources to support social and communications skills can be found in the Xtra Young Adults section of Winslow Resources available at http://www.winslow-cat.com

Other resources to support speaking and listening

Learning for Living: You may find the suite of *Learning for Living* documents will provide additional guidance for staff working with offenders with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The series contains *Developing access to Skills for Life for Offender Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.* The documents and resources can be downloaded from http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk

Sentence Trouble: This site by has been developed by The Communication Trust, The Dyslexia SpLD Trust and the Autism Education Trust and contains information booklets, web links and a video providing hints and tips on working with offenders with speech, language and communication needs. These can be accessed at http://www.sentencetrouble.info/

Department for Health: *Positive Practice, Positive Outcomes A handbook for Professionals in the Criminal Justice System working with offenders with Learning Disabilities* (2011 Edition, A DH publication) contains a section on effective communication. This publication can be downloaded from http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_124743

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT): The RCSLT is the professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK. They facilitate and promote research into the field of speech and language therapy, promote better education and training of speech and language therapists and provide information for their members and the public about speech and language therapy. http://www.rcslt.org/