



**Mini Project Summary January 2008:
Listening to users and carers who have limited communication capacity
or skills
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Project Aim

This project aimed to enable students to reflect on the human factors central to effective communication using the power of story telling by disabled people and their carers.

Context

Disabled people, especially those with different communication needs, are some of the most marginalised groups in health and social care provision. Their views are rarely sought. Their additional support needs mean they are seldom included in patient/user groups who teach pre-registration health and social care students. Safe and effective services depend on successful interactions not only between professionals and users and carers but also between members of interprofessional teams. Interprofessional education is a key context for communication skills as they are a core professional requirement.

Objectives and Methods

This project used research methods to build on prior experience of working with users and carers, by working with groups of disabled people, parents and carers to design, deliver and evaluate a learning event for interprofessional student groups. The intended outcome was a one-day learning event.

Results/ Outcomes

One-to-one interviews with users informed the cyclical development of the project. Students' views were also used to shape the teaching programme. In this way we developed an effective learning event which focussed on user and carer narratives emphasising the importance of listening. The outcome is a powerful learning event reflecting the human side of health care delivery emerged.

Conclusions and Key Messages

Work with users and carers takes time and resources. It has the potential to deliver enhanced, highly relevant and explicit learning opportunities.

Key Words: Disabled people, communication, interprofessional, partnership, empowerment, user and carer stories.