

COVID19 Blog: 3. COMMUNICATION

Here we go again folks! As we look to explore the very important world of what and how we connect with each other across varying levels, personal, corporate, family and everywhere else, there is a need to listen, look and engage during this very difficult period of Covid-19; almost everything we do or did has changed.



On a personal level, my wife has to shield for twelve weeks. This means no going to work or even basically leaving the house. Suddenly I have become the messenger who needs to navigate round huge supermarkets; now the shopping list can no longer be random or I would cover ten miles zig zagging back and forth like a game of hide and seek to source various requirements! So my list now needs to resemble a roadmap round the various isles, I suppose a bit like a Sat Nav system. You can appreciate how this small communication fix saved me a lot of time and effort.

My Daughter works for the NHS and her partner HMPPS, both deemed high risk occupations, so they took the decision for her two children to reside at their Dads as he is currently working from home and it keeps them safe. So we no longer see our Daughter or Grand-Children, except occasionally if they are out on their bikes and shout up from the bottom of the garden for a few minutes. We have now moved on to Zoom to keep in touch with each other, so our choice of communication has changed to include technology. So many of us are having to learn to talk to each other in different ways!



Consider those around you, people acting differently, neighbours not taking the milk in or cutting the grass. They might just need a few kind words or even a phone call to perk them up at the moment. Look for signs within your peer group or workforce, being late in to work, perhaps dishevelled, all give away signs that all is not well. And the residents – how might they be acting out at the moment. Look for the signs.



In our work with Enabling Environments with prison sites and Approved Premises we have had to move on to I.T. solutions such as Teams, Zoom, Skype to name a few. Even for the EE team just to keep in contact with each other, along with the phone and good old emails which we all previously took for granted, we have had to alter how we communicate as we can no longer meet up, drop in, or arrange meetings in person. It has been a challenge for us too, but everyone is in the same boat “all be it two metres apart”!

There is quote I like by John Powell who said “communication works for those who work at it” and I feel this is very relevant in our current situation, especially when working in prisons and approved premises. Even on a good day, residents, prisoners, service users are suspicious of any gaps in information which they will naturally fill with rumour or misinformation, so you can appreciate it is vital we all do our bit to ensure there is not a void created.



We really need to consider and remember all those in our care who rely on us/you to keep everyone updated and informed. Also to be aware of the non-verbal signs to look out for when people become withdrawn or quiet when they are usually chatty and engaging or even the opposite when normally quiet people act out by shouting or causing harm to themselves, consider what is behind these masks, what is the person trying to tell you; we really are all in this together. We need to keep

together in order to emerge in the best shape we can from this virus situation. To do that we need to ensure everyone has an opportunity to engage and have an input by their preferred medium. If this is missed then people stop engaging, stop listening and in some cases stop caring.

I will sign off with the words of Nat Turner who said “Good communication is the bridge between confusion and clarity”

Talk to each other, communicate, stay safe

Drew Agnew
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Whole Body LISTENING



EYES
Looking at person talking



FEET
Quiet on the floor



EARS
Both ears ready to hear



BODY
Facing the speaker



MOUTH
Quiet (no talking, humming or making sounds)



BRAIN
Thinking about what is being said



HANDS
Quiet in lap, pockets or by side



HEART
Caring about what the person is saying