

# Appendix 3:

## Tips for communicating with the carer of a person with dementia

Family carers of people with dementia are all unique individuals, so they will have their own ways of communicating. However, there are some key tips which you can apply to help a family carer of a person with dementia to communicate with you.

**Timing is everything** – be mindful of the carer’s mood, situation and emotional needs. Communicating at THE RIGHT TIME is crucial.

**Slow down** – talk more slowly than usual and speak clearly; you need to give the person time to understand what you are saying and process it.

**Don’t use jargon** – family carers are unlikely to be familiar with ‘the language of health and social care’ e.g. AD, POC, MSU, MMSE, EPR, MCA, Telecare.

**Use nonverbal communication** – smile, use eye contact, stand or sit at a comfortable distance to the person, and make sure you are at the same level as they are. Don’t stand over the person, try not to fold your arms in front of them, and try not to point as this can feel intimidating and confrontational.

**Write things down** – have a notebook and pen handy. The family carer might be feeling stressed, and they might be receiving information from all sorts of people and organisations. A written record of a conversation would be really helpful for them. Follow up conversations with an email or letter if possible.

**Be aware of any sensory needs** – the person they might have poor vision and/or hearing, so see if they have glasses or a hearing aid.

**Make sure the environment supports effective, compassionate communication** – be mindful of requirements for confidentiality, as sharing of difficult information needs to be done in a calm, quiet, interruption-free environment.

**Always consider the emotional needs of the family carer** – they may be feeling sad, angry, hopeless and helpless, or relieved, content and having a sense of pride in what they do. The family carer’s emotional state will influence how they behave, so offer an empathic approach.

**Remember to ask ‘How are you?’** – family carers report that they are infrequently asked this, but that these three words can make their day!