

LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION



Methods of Communication for Staff and Volunteers at LBEA.

Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication is the way we communicate with others. It may be with another person, to a group of people or to the public. It includes written, verbal and non-verbal communication.

General

At LBEA, when communicating with others, take into consideration:

- who you are talking to,
- the type of information to be communicated (for example; confidential, good news/bad news, difficult technical information, instructions, general daily information), and
- what the most appropriate type of communication to use is (for example; verbal, email, memo, handover). This may be determined by the type of information to be communicated.

At all times staff and volunteers need to be respectful and polite to one another and to clients. At no time should they raise their voice, swear, or speak in a manner that makes another person feel belittled.

Cultural awareness

LBEA aims to create a safe and culturally aware work environment.

- We need to recognise that people come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and with them they bring a variety of different values, attitudes and beliefs.
- All staff need to be non judgemental, respectful and tolerant of each other's differences. When communicating with people from other backgrounds care needs to be taken to ensure that cultural differences in both verbal and nonverbal communication are considered.
- Professional development is provided to staff to assist in this process.

Disability support

LBEA aims to create a work environment that is safe and supportive of people with disabilities.

- Alternative methods of communication are maintained and developed when appropriate (for example; translators, voice recognition software, browser readers).
- Professional development is provided to staff to assist in this process.

Routine Workplace Protocols

All organisations have rules for the transfer of information. Knowing how to use the different types of communication and following the correct procedures at LBEA helps to ensure that information goes to the correct place and person.

Communication can be internal or external or both. Internal communication is between staff at LBEA. External communication is between staff at LBEA and clients or other community members including the media.

At LBEA routine workplace protocols exist for:

- written communication (sending and receiving information), and
- verbal communication (giving and following instructions and messages).

Types of **written communication** used at LBEA include:

- email, letters and faxes (internal and external)
- forms, reports and memos (internal and external)
- minutes and agendas for meetings (internal)
- technical and procedural manuals (internal)
- workplace signs (internal)
- whiteboards and pin-up boards (internal)

Written communication is a vital part of communication at LBEA. We recommend that written communication:

- is simple and easy to understand,
- is to the point and avoids unnecessary repetition,
- avoids too many technical terms, and
- avoids slang, offensive language and discriminatory, racist or sexist language.

Types of **verbal communication** at LBEA include:

- handovers (internal)
- telephone (internal and external)
- meetings (internal)

The way we speak to other people can make a difference to the way information is received. At SBHC verbal communication can be improved when:

- it is clear and concise,
- it is friendly and professional,
- appropriate feedback is given,
- active listening is used
- there is an awareness of non verbal communication styles, and
- there is an understanding of cultural differences.

Communication hierarchy

In all organisations there is a correct line of communication. At SBHC the first line of communication is your immediate superior or line supervisor. The LBEA Organisational flow chart will show you who your line supervisor is.

You can discuss any issues or concerns you may have with your line supervisor. Your supervisor may then either take your concern to the next level or you may be advised to do so.

If you go straight to the director or head of the company you will be advised to discuss the matter first with your supervisor.

Computer use

Within an organisation there will be information that is sensitive and confidential in nature stored on the computer network. Most organisations have a confidentiality agreement that employees sign when they first join the company.

These agreements protect the privacy of their clients by ensuring that all staff will not pass on information of a personal or sensitive nature to any outside source.

When using computers at LBEA:

- do not allow access to visitors to view information related to clients,
- file printed information in the appropriate place according to the departments protocols, and
- place information that is to be discarded into the locked confidential papers bins for shredding prior to being discarded.

Email

When writing emails:

- use polite and correct language,
- start with a greeting, for example "Dear Jane", until you know the person well enough to be able to address the email as "Hi Jane",
- explain yourself clearly,
- don't use abbreviations in emails; write all out in full, and
- end the email correctly saying "regards, Jane".

Remember that the person reading your email can't see you so they can't read your body language to see if you are joking, angry or serious.

Whiteboard

Whiteboards may be used to allocate daily duties, rooms, or jobs to staff members.

If a whiteboard is used in your area check that you know:

- what time the entries are put up on the board,
- how you will be notified if there are any changes, and
- what information you need to put on the whiteboard when you have completed a task.

Pin up board

Pin up boards may be used as a means of posting any notices about courses, organisational events or social events. This board must be cleared periodically to remove out of date information.

Handovers

Handovers are the verbal passing of information from one or more persons. This information can also be taped for accuracy to all persons taking over tasks or caseloads When doing handovers:

- make sure that all relevant information is passed on,
- check that the next person has understood everything by asking and answering questions,
- if using a tape recorder, speak clearly and check the recording, and don't rush.

Telephone use

Phones should be answered within four (4) rings.

- Give the name of the organisation and then your own name and job role.
- This helps people know they have dialled the correct organisation, who they are speaking to and what your role in the organisation is.
- Speak clearly and at a speed that enables people to understand you.
- Write any information down as you are listening as it is very easy to get off the phone and find you have forgotten who was speaking, a contact number for them and which information they wanted.
- End the telephone call with some kind of resolution for the person who rang, either get the person with whom they wish to speak, take a message for them, ask the person to ring back at a later time, or solve the issue yourself.

Taking messages

When you take a message for someone make sure you understand the message correctly.

- Repeat the information back to the sender to ensure that the information you have is correct.
- Ensure you have the time of the interaction, the message, the sender's details, name, phone number, and email or address if necessary, so that the recipient can contact them.
- Give messages as soon as it is possible, as it may be something that requires urgent attention. If possible check back to be sure that the person received the message.

Forms

In a health care setting you may be required to complete forms. Each department may use a different set of forms. You must make sure that you know which forms to fill in, when you need to use forms and where to find the necessary forms.

When filling in a form:

- read the form carefully,
- fill in all the required details,
- only include necessary information,
- write clearly and simply,
- check that you have completed it properly, and
- send or give it to the appropriate person, or file in the appropriate place.

If you have difficulties filling in forms, ask a colleague or your supervisor for some help.

It can be useful to obtain copies of forms that have been filled in which you can keep and use to help you.