

# **CASE Training Communication and Engagement Strategy**

## **1. Introduction**

CASE is dedicated to the improvement of life choices for people with learning disabilities through the provision of high quality training, support and employment opportunities.

This Communication and Engagement Strategy outlines our approach to communicating with and engaging stakeholders to enhance the quality of services provided by CASE. It will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it reflects our stakeholders and their needs.

This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print upon request. Please contact 01482 320200 or email [enquiries@casetraininghull.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@casetraininghull.co.uk).

Communication is an essential part of everyday life, but it can present unique challenges for adults with learning disabilities. Here at CASE, we believe that fostering effective communication is key to supporting independence and enhancing quality of life for our trainees. By using tailored strategies, it's possible to improve both verbal and non-verbal communication skills, allowing our learners to engage more fully with their communities and build stronger relationships.

## **2. Objectives**

We summarise our objectives below:

- **We will empower trainees:** CASE will facilitate trainees' independence and self-expression; ensuring that we communicate effectively with trainees and deliver person-centred support which helps trainees to meet their goals and aspirations.
- **We will build strong relationships with families/carers/advocates:** CASE will encourage feedback and ensure open lines of communication with families, carers, advocates where they are involved with trainees' support.
- **We will engage and retain skilled staff and volunteers:** We will foster a motivated workforce through transparent communication and involvement in CASE activities; ensuring that all staff and volunteers are fully supported.
- **We will strengthen community and stakeholder ties:** We will continue to raise awareness of CASE's role and our activities. We will continue to foster partnerships.
- **We will continue to develop and improve:** We will use feedback from our trainees, their families/carers/advocates, our staff and volunteers, local authorities that we support and other relevant stakeholders to continuously enhance the quality and inclusivity of services. We use external auditors to carry out quality assurance checks and observations; identifying areas for improvement.

## **3. Target Audience**

This Communications and Engagement Strategy is focused on the following:

**Primary audience:** Adults with learning disabilities attending CASE

**Secondary audience:** Families and advocates of trainees, staff, volunteers, local authorities, healthcare and social service professionals, and the broader community

#### 4. Communication Channels and Engagement Activities

We will use various communication channels suited to the needs of different stakeholders:

##### TRAINEES

Communication challenges that adults with learning disabilities may face can vary greatly depending on the individual and the type of disability, but common barriers include difficulty in processing language, trouble with verbal expression, and challenges when understanding non-verbal cues such as body language or facial expressions.

Recognising these challenges is crucial for developing appropriate communication strategies. It's important to remember that communication isn't just about words - listening, observing and using visual or tactile aids are also part of the process.

Individual trainees will have a Care and Support Plan which includes a Communication Plan. This Communication Plan considers the trainee's communication needs and sets out how best to support communication with them. CASE adapts its communication approaches to meet the individual needs and preferences of each trainee.

CASE will therefore utilise a variety of ways to support communication including:

**Active Listening and Patience:** Effective communication is a two-way process. For adults with learning disabilities, our staff, volunteers and the trainee's caregivers and support workers must practice active listening, giving the individual time to process information and respond. Patience is key - allowing someone the space and time to communicate at their own pace reduces frustration and anxiety, making communication more meaningful and enjoyable for both parties.

**Incorporating Non-verbal Communication:** CASE's trainers are experienced members of staff; who are emotionally aware and responsive to the needs of the individual trainees. Non-verbal communication plays a crucial role for many adults with learning disabilities. Eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and body language can all convey important messages and emotions. We will therefore enhance communication by paying attention to these non-verbal cues and responding appropriately.

For some individuals, incorporating tactile elements such as touch or sensory objects can further enhance communication, providing an alternative method of expression. Understanding and responding to non-verbal signals helps to create a more supportive and inclusive communication environment.

**Visual Aids, Easy-Read Materials:** Picture cards, charts and symbols can help individuals to express their needs, understand instructions and engage in conversations. These wide-ranging tools simplify complex ideas and allow for clearer communication without relying solely on verbal language. All staff are currently learning Makaton and are at different stages in their learning journey.

**Accessible Digital Tools:** Technology plays a key role in supporting communication for individuals with learning disabilities. Laptops and tablets, communication apps and speech-generating tools allow users to communicate through text or images, providing an effective alternative for those who struggle with speech. These tools can be particularly useful for enhancing independence, allowing individuals to express themselves in social, educational or work environments.

**Promoting Social Interaction:** Developing communication skills is often best achieved through regular social interaction. Group activities, community involvement, days out and social clubs provide opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to practice their communication skills in real-world settings. These interactions build confidence, help reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen the individual's ability to navigate social situations. CASE therefore provides regular opportunities for all of its trainees to support such interaction.

Family members and caregivers can also play a role by encouraging social engagement and creating opportunities for the individual to communicate in a variety of settings. This might include attending social events, joining support groups, or participating in recreational activities that promote interaction.

CASE's engagement activity for its trainees; beyond day-to-day training interactions includes:

### **Prior to joining CASE**

**Websites and Social Media:** Information is posted regularly on CASE's website and social media platforms about CASE's activities and the support that we provide. In addition, local authority websites including <https://hullsendlocaloffer.org.uk/> and <https://hull-communitydirectory.powerappsportals.com/> provide information to potential trainees.

**Visit to CASE:** Potential trainees are invited to visit and have lunch or attend a taster session to see if CASE suits them.

**Induction, Welfare Support Plan, Consent:** Trainees are sent an induction pack. They are invited to CASE to go through the paperwork with CASE and supported by family/an advocate if they wish. They meet with the CEO and the Welfare Team and are introduced to everyone at CASE as part of their visit to each department. The meeting enables CASE to identify their needs and requirements and how CASE can support these goals and aspirations.

The induction pack is Easy Read and includes staff photos, important times (timetable), safeguarding, trainee Committee Meetings, Welfare Support Plan Reviews and other relevant policies and procedures.

Following receipt of the trainee's Care Plan and PEN profile, a person-centred Welfare Support Plan and supporting risk assessments are developed with the trainee's full involvement to ensure that CASE provides person-centred care and support. Additional input may also include involvement from a trainee's family member, carer, advocate, social worker or other relevant individuals.

CASE will support all trainees to make their own decisions wherever possible. Staff are fully trained in the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and how decisions can be supported. Some individuals attending CASE have a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DoL) in place and for these trainees, CASE will support Best Interest decision making for particular decisions as set out in the Care Plan.

### **Whilst at CASE**

**Welfare Support Plan Reviews:** Reviews of Support Plans are carried out annually (or more frequently if something important happens). The trainee can be joined by people who support them, for example, family/an advocate/social worker. This provides an opportunity for the trainee to provide feedback and identify if changes to the support that CASE provides needs

to be made. The trainees goals, needs and preferences can be reviewed and updated as necessary.

**Timetables:** Individualised timetables are provided to trainees weekly in Easy Read/Pictorial form. These include a picture of the relevant training room and the trainer.

**Feedback:** All trainees are encouraged to provide feedback. Details of how this can be made are provided in their induction pack and trainees are also regularly reminded by trainers and the CEO.

Trainees can speak to all members of staff easily at any time and tell them their ideas or feedback. For example, the CEO is on-site and available to speak to.

Any issues are managed by the trainer, or the Welfare Team will also be asked to provide support to the trainee if necessary. There is a formal complaints procedure in place.

CASE will introduce satisfaction surveys to trainees. These will be tailored to reflect trainees' communication requirements.

**Trainee Committee Meetings:** Trainee Committee Meetings are held every two months. Trainees from each department meet with the CEO and provide ideas and feedback from their department. This may include ideas for activities or outings, celebrations etc. Minutes of the meeting are taken and shared with all trainees.

**Feedback/Suggestion Box:** A feedback box is located in the restaurant so that all trainees have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback.

**Website/Social Media:** CASE provides regular updates on its trainees achievements, celebrations and other relevant information via its social media channels and website.

## **FAMILIES/CARERS/ADVOCATES**

CASE recognises the importance of communicating with the trainee's family, carers and/or advocates; in line with consents in place.

Trainees' families//carers/advocates are welcome to visit CASE or have an informal meeting with a member of staff at any time.

In addition to informal communication at drop-off/pick-up times, requests for one-to-one meetings and involvement in Welfare Support Plan Reviews, engagement with families/cares/advocates includes:

**Portal:** Families/carers/advocates can log into the portal to find information; including group information on upcoming events and celebrations of achievements.

**Letters, emails, social media:** Letters are set to families/carers/advocates advising them of important information such as holiday times/annual shutdowns. Information is also sent by email and social media.

**Meetings and Open Evenings:** CASE holds open evenings for families/carers/advocates; providing the opportunity for visits three times a year to see the centre, meet staff and review the trainees' work.

**Family Forum:** CASE will create a Family Forum in 2025 which will act as a focus group and offer families//carers/advocates a chance to share ideas, discuss improvements and voice any concerns. It will be hosted by the CEO.

**Additional Feedback:** Families/carers/advocates are encouraged to provide feedback. CASE has an open-door approach and they can reach staff at any time to discuss any issues. They will be issued with a copy of CASE's Complaint Policy.

CASE will be carrying out satisfaction surveys (beginning 2025) to ensure that families/carers/advocates' views are known so that any issues may be addressed.

## **STAFF**

CASE is committed to providing a supporting and inclusive environment for its employees. We operate an open-door policy and welcome feedback from staff.

We advertise for new staff across job boards such as Indeed which have a wide reach. Our advertisements state that we are an equal opportunity employer and celebrate diversity.

Prior to joining CASE, new starters are provided with a copy of CASE's Employee Handbook and a copy of the Employee Guidebook. A key part of these includes CASE's Code of Conduct and emphasis on speaking up if things aren't right. It includes details of how to raise any concerns. In addition, a Whistleblowing Policy is in place.

When new staff start, they then undertake a two-week induction. A timetable is developed to ensure that the new starter spends time in each training department, as well as Reception, Finance and Welfare.

CASE is a relatively small organisation and staff are encourage to approach the CEO at any time if they have any issues or concerns.

Staff engagement and communication also include the following:

**Team Meetings:** CASE holds monthly team meetings to discuss CASE activities, individual trainees' needs and team well-being.

**Individual Meetings:** The CEO holds individual meetings with each member of staff fortnightly. These offer a chance for review and discussion of any issues.

**Access to Resources:** Staff can access relevant information and resources through the staff portal.

**Appraisals:** CASE conducts annual 360-degree appraisals; focusing on staff training and development.

**Training:** CASE offers a wide range of training for its staff; including mandatory and non-mandatory training. This includes ongoing training in communication methods such as Makaton.

**Additional Feedback:** CASE will also be implementing staff satisfaction surveys (2025) which will provide staff with the opportunity to provide further feedback.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Engagement to find volunteers has been on an informal basis since Covid led to a drop in the number of volunteers. CASE will be gradually increasing its focus on engagement with potential volunteers over the next year. This will be through our social media posts, blogs and press releases.

All volunteers undertake an induction programme and spend time in each department. This allows CASE and the volunteer to identify the areas where the volunteer will be comfortable and get the most out of it; whilst bringing the benefit of their time and expertise to CASE.

Engagement with our volunteers includes support by the individual trainer in charge of the department the volunteer is working in, and volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback or talk to members of staff, including the CEO, at any time.

## **COMMUNITY AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

CASE has been actively engaging with the local community and stakeholders for many years; building an excellent reputation and strong relationships. Engagement and communication include for example:

**Attendance at Partnership Boards:** CASE is on the Hull and East Riding Partnership Boards. The CEO attends these and in the case of the Hull Partnership Board three or four attendees also attend at times since CASE hosts the Board in our restaurant. Attendance ensure that CASE remains up-to-date with relevant information and that we are able to contribute actively to discussions; using our expertise supporting individuals with learning disabilities.

**Attendance at multi-agency meetings:** the CEO and Welfare Team members attend multi-agency team meetings as necessary.

**Public Awareness Campaigns:** CASE posts regular updates on its websites and social media to raise awareness about learning disabilities and promote CASE and its trainees' roles and successes in the community.

**Open Days:** Members of the local community or businesses are invited to visit CASE, either as part of a formal event or on an individual basis, to learn more about CASE and engage directly with our trainees and staff.

**Volunteer Programmes:** We will be increasing our activity to encourage volunteers with us which would provide opportunities for skills development and foster inclusive relationships.

**Partnerships with Local Services:** We work closely with local organisations. For example, CHCP/NHS provides CASE with health briefings and support. In return CASE supports their nursing recruits who spend time at CASE as part of their training.

In a similar way, CASE also takes nursing recruits from Humberside University and they spend placements with us.

CASE has developed strong relationships with the Police and Ambulance Service who send trainees to CASE to enable them to learn how to approach individuals with learning disabilities. Healthwatch Kingston upon Hull also regularly approach CASE for support and input in specific projects.

**Partnerships with local sports clubs:** CASE works in close partnership with West Hull Rugby FC. We are also part of the Football Disability League.

**Work Experience:** CASE has a well-developed partnership with Asda and trainees from CASE attend the Asda Supported Internship Programme.

CASE also offers work experience opportunities to students from local colleges.

## **5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

CASE will regularly review our communication and engagement efforts to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all stakeholders and improve service quality. Our approach includes:

**Annual Reviews:** Assessing the effectiveness of each communication channel and engagement activity, with adjustments as needed.

**Annual Report:** CASE produces an annual report which details progress, success stories and future goals.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); including feedback:** The CEO will track metrics such as trainee participation, family/advocate satisfaction, staff and volunteer retention, and community engagement levels to measure impact.

The results will be reviewed by the CEO and Trustees; with action plans developed and monitored.

## **6. Summary**

This Communication and Engagement Strategy is integral to building an inclusive, responsive, and supportive day-care environment for adults with learning disabilities at case. Through clear, accessible communication and meaningful engagement, we aim to empower our trainees, support their families, carers and advocates, retain skilled staff and volunteers, and foster an inclusive community.

**Mark Cooke, CEO**

Date: October 2024

