

10. Top ten tips for improving communication

1. **Communicate with residents** – use a variety of means including meetings, letter drops, surveys, newsletters and noticeboards.
 - > Inform residents in writing about meetings and then inform them about the outcomes of the meeting in writing.
 - > Ask questions through surveys and tell residents in advance that there will be a survey. Guarantee anonymity in surveys.
 - > Encourage people to get involved and turn their answers into productive actions, otherwise this is lip service.
 - > Put information onto the noticeboard.
 - > Don't be biased towards a particular form of communication – residents should know they will still get information even if, for example, they cannot attend a meeting.
 - > People do not like surprises. Don't announce things suddenly.

I have increased the number of methods used to communicate with residents by...

2. **Recognise that residents have a right to express their views** – people need to be able to express their views about issues affecting their life in the village without fear of any recrimination from the manager or from other residents.
 - > Take what's communicated to you on board, including the negative, without showing it upsets you or makes you uptight.
 - > Prevent small issues becoming large ones by being open to discussing issues at any time.
 - > Bring a sincere attitude to the communication as this will have a positive effect on the outcome.

I have become more open to the views of all residents, by...

3. **Communication is also about listening** – listening is not about waiting for your turn to speak. Effective listening is the essence of good communication.

I have increased my preparedness to listen to residents by...

4. **Know the culture of your village** – there may be a culture of complaints and negative comments where minor frustrations can turn into big problems. While you can never completely eliminate these, being alert to them can assist you to nip them in the bud. However, if lots of people are complaining, then it is more serious.

I have increased my communication with residents, who may communicate less often, by...

5. **Good communication is critical to inform residents about management obligations and to minimise the risk of disputes** – some communications will be pleasant, some won't – but you can endeavour to reduce the number of poor communications.
- > Some residents may not be able to communicate well but you need to learn to do so.
 - > Always be polite and take the personality out of it when dealing with complaints in order to remain professional.
 - > It can be useful for residents to know the roles and responsibilities of village staff as this may help to eliminate confusion and misunderstanding.
 - > Use an advocacy service to assist with resident concerns, preferably in the earlier stages, to help resolve issues sooner.
 - > Educate yourself – there is a lot of advice on Google (online) regarding communication.

I have increased my skills in communicating by...

6. **Be alert for complaints** – increase your skill in handling complaints.
- > Don't try to knock them back by being defensive.
 - > Be professional when dealing with a complaint – put on your 'Complaints Hat', accept it, write it, ask questions about it to make sure you grasp the issue.
 - > Practise strong follow-up to cultivate the confidence of residents in your commitment to change things for the better. Make it part of your philosophy and integral to your work practices.

I have increased my skills in handling complaints by...

7. **Take a positive attitude to receiving complaints** – remember that most events can be controlled in some way.
- > Everyone has a different style of expressing themselves and you can only change your style.
 - > Remember that residents have only you to deal with but you have to deal with multiple residents.

I have increased my control over how I accept comments and complaints, regardless of whether I regard them as querulous, by...

8. **Be alert to things that can go wrong** – do you really need residents to tell you what’s going wrong or do you already know those things? Increase your proactive stance by:
- > writing down the concerns you believe are important to residents and considering what your response could be.

I have increased my positive attitude to things that can go wrong by...

9. **Positive communication is the key to success** – miscommunication can cause conflict and frustration in relationships with residents.
- > Have patience and aim for communication to flourish even when you don’t like the person or their message. Allowing time now can save you time later.
 - > Increase your time management and allow real time for communication with residents.

I have ensured that management is responsive to residents’ views by...

10. **What do you want residents to say about your village?** – In a competitive marketplace, operators have to ensure their approach to residents is a measure of the village’s worth, so
- > be professional, supportive and helpful to residents;
 - > make the quality of your management practices central to your ongoing success.

I work with the residents’ committee to promote the village both internally and to the outside community by...

See also: ‘2. Consultation with residents’ information sheet
‘9. Top ten tips for improving consultation’ worksheet

For more information:

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