

Person-centred observation prompts

Person-centred observation is a term used to describe a qualitative non-participative user research approach for gathering insights into how people experience and might be impacted by behaviours and interactions with people, services or environments of care and support.

This approach could be described as being a ‘fly on the wall’ where we would simply observe what happens in an environment where care or support is being delivered. The observer will use all their senses (what they see, hear, smell and feel) to gather factual insights on what they observe. They will then consider their observations and record their reflections about what it made them think and feel, and the questions the observation raised for them.

The following prompts may help observers to develop observation practice on specific areas that affect person-centred care or support.

Prompts

Positive interactions

These interactions:

- Show warmth, are respectful and enabling
- Provide people with a feeling of safety and significance
- Are sensitive and assist individuals to make choices and be in control

Examples:

- Giving encouragement during care or support tasks and recognising achievements
- Giving options and respecting choice
- Explaining and tailoring information for the individual, checking their understanding
- Checking proactively to see if anything is needed (and responding accordingly)
- Showing kindness, eye contact, smiling or offering a greeting
- Showing interest in and demonstrating a knowledge of the person and their life
- Welcoming people to the environment
- Responding warmly to questions
- Recognising and responding to emotions

Basic or neutral interactions

These interactions:

- Neither undermine nor enhance and could be considered as 'part of the job'
- Are part of carrying out care or support in order to get the task done
- Involve a request, suggestion or information exchange without any of the features of positive social interaction

Examples:

- Perfunctory completion of care or support tasks such as checking readings, filling in charts without any verbal or non-verbal contact
- Offering brief verbal explanations and some encouragement, but only that necessary to complete care tasks
- Speaking to someone in a manner that lacks empathy but is not necessarily rude or disrespectful
- Telling someone what is going to happen without offering choice or the opportunity to ask questions
- Not introducing yourself by name
- Actively avoiding conversation
- Giving minimal response to questions

Less positive interactions

These interactions:

- Lack warmth or respect
- Undermine feelings of safety or significance
- Are insensitive or disempowering

Examples:

- Ignoring or talking over the person when providing care or support
- Telling the person they can't have something without discussion
- Telling or instructing the person to do something without discussion or offering assistance
- Treating a person in a child-like or disapproving way
- Not allowing a person to use their abilities or to make choices (even if said in a 'kind' way)
- Being rude, short or unfriendly
- Being angry or scolding people

Singular events or behaviours

You can also record one-off events where there was little or no interaction but there is still likely to be an effect on the experience, comfort, dignity or safety of a person or group of people.

Examples:

- A member of staff going the extra mile or being compassionate
- Ignoring or not responding to someone calling for attention
- A person being left inadequately clothed
- Ignoring a person who is visibly upset
- Taking away an uneaten meal without attempts to discover the reason or offering an alternative

Environment

Use your senses and record what you see, hear and smell in the environment that could impact on the person(s) experience of the service, either positively or negatively.

Examples:

- Environment feels welcoming, calm or chaotic
- Environment is clean, tidy or cluttered
- There is clear signage
- Broken or unsightly equipment or furniture
- Unpleasant smells
- Litter not cleared away promptly
- Laundry bags left in a care or public area
- Pleasant or well decorated rooms
- Homely touches
- Personalisation reflecting the person residing in the environment
- There is clear information visible/accessible for people using the services and their families and carers
- Staff are all wearing name badges/identification