

- **Name of the study:** Evaluation of “The Good Conversation” Initiative for Social Workers in Local Authorities
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- **Type of research:** research
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- **Research Authority:** Michlol - the Evaluation and Measurement Unit of the Shalem Fund

Abstract

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The Good Conversation initiative was developed to address an ongoing professional need expressed by social workers in local authorities: strengthening their ability to conduct adapted, clear, and respectful conversations with people with intellectual disabilities. This need has emerged consistently in surveys, evaluations of training programs, and feedback from the field, pointing to a lack of practical tools that demonstrate how to implement effective conversations in real-life situations. The initiative offers a digital platform that includes simulation videos, scripted scenarios, and core principles for effective communication. The purpose of this evaluation study was to examine the initiative’s contribution to learning, to the quality of conversations in practice, and to social workers’ sense of professional competence.

The study included 21 social workers from 13 municipalities, with varied levels of experience working with people with intellectual disabilities. Participants viewed the general principles video and one additional simulation of their choice, then applied the principles in their conversations with service recipients over a period of one to two months. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and open-ended questions.

Findings indicate a substantial contribution of the initiative across three levels of change:

- (1) Learning and understanding the principles – 90% of participants reported that the videos were an effective, clear, and useful learning tool.
- (2) Improvement in conversations and interaction – 76% noted meaningful improvements in the way they conducted conversations and in the quality of interaction, including the use of simpler language, clearer explanations, direct communication with the person, and regular checks for understanding.

(3) Enhanced professional competence – participants reported increased confidence, clarity, and a sense of having practical tools they could apply immediately. They also described improved outcomes for service recipients, including a stronger sense of visibility, better cooperation, and greater empowerment in decision-making.

Participants unanimously recommended the initiative for broader use among social workers, including students, new staff, and support workers. They also suggested expanding the initiative to additional professional audiences and developing dedicated simulations for social workers operating under legal mandates.

Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate the success and value of The Good Conversation initiative as an important professional tool that improves the quality of communication with people with intellectual disabilities and strengthens the skills of social workers in local authorities.

Keywords

Cognitive Accessibility, Easy Language, Adapted Conversation, Adapted Communication, Social Workers, Intellectual Disability, Simulations, Improved Interaction, Professional Development

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