



Get involved: Open up conversations about health improvement and support people to improve their health and wellbeing.

A small change makes a big difference.

## How to have health promoting conversations

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As health and social care professionals we all have a responsibility to promote health. Our aim for all staff is to make health promoting conversations part of our everyday interactions with patients and people who use our services. In a time pressured working environment this can be challenging. By starting with small changes to our practice we can make a difference to the experience people have. The more each of us do this the bigger the difference.

**A one minute conversation is a good start.** You can introduce health improvement by asking people about their health and what matters to them.

## Understanding the health and social care system

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The language and processes used by health and social care services can be hard to understand. People may struggle to make sense of information they receive about their health conditions. Or they may find it hard to communicate well with doctors, nurses, and health and social care staff. This is referred to as health literacy.

Things can be even more challenging when people are faced with stressful health issues or life circumstances. Together these factors reduce people's ability to manage their own health conditions safely and effectively and to maintain their health and wellbeing. This is a major cause of health inequality.

## Getting the communication right

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- **Chunk and check:** break what you need to discuss into small chunks, and check understanding before continuing.
- **Use pictures:** draw or show a picture to help convey a complex concept or body part.
- **Use 'Teach-back' type techniques<sup>1</sup>:** check that you have explained everything in ways people understand, by asking them to explain in their own words the information you have given.
- **Use simple language:** avoid jargon and use language that is easy for the person in front of you to understand, both when you speak to them and in any written information you provide.
- **Literacy awareness:** routinely ask people if they would like help in filling out forms.<sup>2</sup>

## Understanding patient engagement

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Getting the communication right is a first step, it's also important to understand patient engagement. Attitudes to health vary and range from the '*health involved*' who embrace preventive healthcare, to the '*health wary*' who have significant worries about healthcare.<sup>3</sup>

No single approach is the most suitable. People with significant emotional or practical barriers can be engaged through a non-judgmental, empathetic and flexible approach.



A one minute conversation is a good way to find out what matters to people and how you can support them to make a positive change to their health and wellbeing.

## Person-centred consultations

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A person-centred consultation combines clinical guidance with support to address a patient's priorities. You will achieve a more successful outcome if you support a process of change, rather than simply recording patient status and providing advice.

## A one minute conversation

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Not many health practitioners have enough time to undertake a full brief intervention utilising motivational interviewing skills. However **most of us can take a minute to talk to our patients.**

Whether it's a chance to introduce a topic like smoking, food, physical activity, emotional wellbeing or screening and how it might benefit their health, or an opportunity to pick up on an issue raised by your patient, it will start to make a difference.

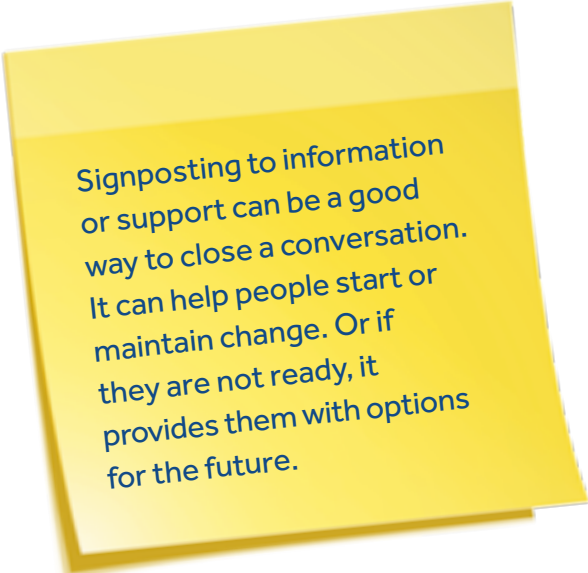
## Follow on support

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Once you've opened up the conversation, further support is available.

The Wellbeing Service supports people to change their lifestyles and improve their emotional wellbeing. Wellbeing advisers are based in all GP practices in the Borders. You can refer people to the Wellbeing Service using a healthcare professional referral form or people can self refer. For more details visit

<https://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/wellbeing>



Signposting to information or support can be a good way to close a conversation. It can help people start or maintain change. Or if they are not ready, it provides them with options for the future.

# Brief intervention

A brief, four stage evidence based intervention can be used to talk about lifestyle issues and support patients to make or think about making changes. Aspects of this approach to a brief intervention are based on the Health Behaviour Change Competency Framework<sup>4</sup>.

This outlines three key routes to behaviour change:

**Motivation** development; **Action** on motivation; and **Prompted/Cued** routes.

## 1. Gather Information:

Use open questions to assess the person's current health status. This can help to identify where a person might not be meeting recommended guidelines and/or are experiencing problems around key lifestyle factors and life circumstances.

## 2. Agenda setting:

Find common ground. Jointly agree the focus of the consultation/ interaction. People feel dissatisfied if the practitioner focuses on a topic that isn't important to them. What you perceive as the most important thing to discuss may not be the person's top priority.

## 3. Explore motivation (readiness to change):

Importance of change and confidence to change are key aspects of motivation. If one or both are low, a person is less likely to feel ready or able to change.

## 4. Is the person ready to make a change?

### Yes: Support **Action** on Motivation

**Goal-setting** allows the person to take control of their health. Setting small, specific and achievable goals is the most effective way to build confidence and momentum. As well as focusing on a behaviour change, encourage the person to think about what they want to achieve overall to help them meet their goal.

### No: Support **Motivation**

Ask people to consider the **pros & cons** of their current behaviour and of making a change. This can be helpful to find out a person's own reasons for change. If the person is still not quite ready to change, you have made an important first step in supporting them to think about their health. Pushing for change in such cases may lead to greater resistance.

**Signposting** to information or support can be a good way to close a conversation. It can help people initiate and maintain change and it's helpful to know where to go should people wish to access it in the future.

# Equip yourself with skills

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If you are interested in learning more about health behaviour change and effective person-centred consultations, visit the health improvement page of the NHS Borders website or the Small Changes Big Difference website.

» [www.SmallChangesBigDifference.org](http://www.SmallChangesBigDifference.org)

Here you can find a menu of learning, covering health behaviour change, health literacy and inequalities.

The basics of the MAP model and Behaviour Change Techniques (BCTs) are covered in an NHS Education for Scotland (NES) interactive e-learning module: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/> (register and search for 'The MAP of Health Behaviour Change'). Skills-based MAP workshops are also available through NES or the Joint Health Improvement Team.

## References

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1. Teach back toolkit: Scottish Health Council [http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient\\_public\\_participation/participation\\_toolkit/teach-back.aspx#.VBA7IVC8C9o](http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient_public_participation/participation_toolkit/teach-back.aspx#.VBA7IVC8C9o) accessed 1 July 2019
2. Making it Easy, the National Health Literacy Action Plan for Scotland, 2014. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/06/9850/downloads> accessed 1 July 2019
3. Reid M, Report of research to explore motivators and barriers to engagement with Health Checks. Health Scotland, January 2009.
4. Dixon, D. & Johnson, M. (2010). Health Behaviour Change Competency Framework: Competences to deliver interventions to change lifestyle behaviours that affect health. [http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/4877-Health\\_behaviour\\_change\\_competency\\_framework.pdf](http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/4877-Health_behaviour_change_competency_framework.pdf) Accessed 2 May 2019

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