



Hello again

Welcome to the third **Healthy Living Pharmacy (HLP)** newsletter to help you build on being an active and engaged HLP.

This month we are focusing on **starting and engaging in difficult conversations** with customers, and the benefits these conversations can have on the individual.

Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

You might have heard of **MECC** – it's a framework that provides the skills needed to recognise the opportunity everyone has to help people have a greater awareness of their health and wellbeing. It is then about empowering people to seek out their own solutions to supporting their own health and wellbeing.

Telling people what to do is **not** the most effective way to help them change. MECC is about altering the way we interact with people so that we don't tell them but help them to help themselves. Part of this approach will be knowing when we can have that type of conversation in our normal day-to-day contact with the people coming into our pharmacies.

MECC is an approach that uses the interactions that you have in a pharmacy to support people make positive changes to the physical and mental health and wellbeing. It is not intended to add to busy workloads but is about enhancing the conversations we are already having.

Why use this approach?

It is not easy to raise questions about lifestyle behaviours. Adoption of the Health Champion role in community pharmacy has been an outstanding success with many thousands within the pharmacy workforce now qualified with the **Royal Society for Public Health Level 2 award in Understanding Health award**.

However, this is largely a knowledge-based course and doesn't provide the practical skills required to engage confidently, competently and in a way, that supports a behaviour change.

Opening conversations

You will have your own favourites when starting a conversation and some of the following can be good openers: "How are you doing?" "How can I best help you?" "How do you feel about your current health?" "What aspect of your health would you like most to change?"

Listen more than you talk. Engaging eye contact, removing any barriers and being sensitive to people around you so as not to be overheard. Offer the use of a quieter area or the consultation room. Try not to be distracted, even if there's a queue. Pause often to allow them to take control of the conversation. Frequently with difficult and sensitive conversations, silence can work well to encourage someone to open up.

WHAT or HOW questions

Use as many **open discovery questions** as possible, particularly those that start with 'what' and 'how'. Useful questions include: "What help would suit you best?" "What has worked well for you before?" "How would you like to take this forward?". Closing the conversation down can include: "Have you talked to anyone else about this?" and "If it helps, you can talk to us here at any time". If they don't want help, don't push them. Sometimes it's easy to want to try and fix a person's problems or give them advice.

It's usually **better for people to make their own decisions**. Help them think of all the options but leave the choice to them. Being there for them in other ways, like through socialising or helping with practical things, can also be a great source of support.



Health Champion Hints & Tips

TIPS - Think, Ask, Advise, Act

- ✓ **Think:** about the health concern, who is at risk? What health concerns are associated?
- ✓ **Ask:** Open with **What** and **How** questions which are non-judgemental. Allow time for the answers and if the response is that they do not wish to talk, let them know it's okay and that they can come in and have a conversation in the future.
- ✓ **Advise:** personal advice, what the future looks like if small lifestyle changes are made. How it's never too late to make a small change for a big difference.
- ✓ **ACT:** Find **online help and support**, **signpost** to local groups, run **awareness campaigns**



Weight Management

- ✓ **Think:** Someone who is overweight or obese is more likely to have a heart attack or stroke. Being overweight and obese is also associated with cancer, disabilities reduced quality of life and premature death. They may also suffer from depression and low self-esteem.
- ✓ **Ask:** Open the discussion about weight in a respectful and non-judgmental way. Patients may be more open if they feel respected.

"What would you most like to change about your health?"
 "How do you feel about your weight?"
 "How do you like to lose weight?"
 "What has worked in the past when you have tried to lose weight?"
 "What would you like to try but haven't yet?"
 "What would be a healthy weight/realistic goal for you?"

- ✓ **Advise:** The best way to achieve a healthy weight is to eat a healthy balanced diet and increase activity levels, avoiding fad diets and rapid weight loss. Often people don't like to exercise or feel they cannot join expensive gyms. Increasing general activity levels like walking more, taking the stairs and carrying shopping, will help.
- ✓ **Act:** Offer to measure weight, waist circumference and body mass index, as well as provide information on local weight management and activity services.
- ✓ **Tips for you to get involved:**
 - Run a sponsored weight loss campaign in your pharmacy, raising money for a local charity
 - Find out what local support services are available, so you can signpost people to them (adults and children)
 - Download Public Health England's guidance on activity levels

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/all-our-health-personalised-care-and-population-health>



Health Champions Facebook Community



Here we share ideas and you can share your stories and pictures.

Please sign up and get involved

www.facebook.com/hlpcommunity

Next Month's Feature

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Want to send us a question?
Got any tips or pics to share and be featured in our next newsletter?

Please get in touch