

## How to start conversations about mental health

# The power of small

Thank you to all our participants at our Time to Talk event on 4 February 2021 who shared their tips and knowledge.

### 1. Allow them time

#### Patience achieves more than force

- ☐ Allow the person to set the pace of the conversation
- ☐ Don't rush someone during the conversation - give them time and space to say how they are feeling
- ☐ Don't try to fix things or force them to get professional help, they might not be ready right now

### 2. Provide options

#### Let them choose what works best for them

- ☐ Would they like to chat on the phone or via text or e-mail?
- ☐ Might it be easier to chat while in the car or on a walk?
- ☐ If this is not a good time, let them know you are there for them when they are ready to talk

### 3. Talk about other stuff as well

#### It doesn't have to be long and formal

- ☐ Starting a conversation about everyday things can be useful
- ☐ If you don't know them well, try and find some common ground to help build rapport
- ☐ Talking about other stuff can also help to keep the conversation going or start it up again on another day

### 4. Be open to share

#### A great way to establish trust

- ☐ To help open up a conversation, share how you have been feeling if it feels ok for you
- ☐ You don't have to disclose anything you don't want to, but sharing a feeling or worry helps to show that there are no judgement and that they are not alone

### 5. How are you today?

#### Small things can make a big difference

- ☐ Sometimes taking time to simply ask someone how they are doing can start off a conversation
- ☐ You don't have to be an expert to talk about mental health, you just have to show you care
- ☐ Sending a text or a card to someone lets them know that you are there for them

### 6. Reassure them

#### It is ok to talk about mental health

- ☐ People might have taken time to build up courage to say how they are feeling - let them know it is ok to talk about it
- ☐ Really listen to them so they realise you are validating what they are saying (our listening tips on page 2)

How to be a better listener when someone is talking about their mental health

## The power of small

Thank you to all our participants at our Time to Talk event on 4 February 2021 who shared their tips and experiences.

### 1. Avoid distractions

Give your full attention

- ☐ Put your phone away/upside down
- ☐ Focus on them and their words, instead of your responses
- ☐ If it is a phone conversation, don't multitask by typing or checking e-mails while you're listening

### 2. Silence is a gift

Be comfortable with their silence

- ☐ Listen and silent are spelled with the same letters - think about it ...
- ☐ Resist the urge to interrupt; pause before you say something
- ☐ Sometimes not saying anything is enough; people will open up if you don't interrupt

### 3. Body language

Show you are listening

- ☐ Nod your head and make eye contact, if appropriate
- ☐ Sometimes sitting next to someone, rather than opposite, works better
- ☐ Use open and encouraging body language: uncross your legs and arms

### 4. Check in

Reflect, paraphrase, question

- ☐ Acknowledge what has been said by reflecting back or checking in
- ☐ If there is something they said that you did not fully understand, ask them about it
- ☐ Ask open-ended questions to encourage conversation, but try not to be too intrusive or interrogating

### 5. A quiet voice

The way you sound is important

- ☐ Take some deep breaths to steady your voice if you are worried
- ☐ Keep your tone of voice calm and reassuring
- ☐ On the phone, make affirming sounds (mmm) to let them know you are there

### 6. Respect

Be mindful of your responses and reactions

- ☐ Respect their time limits and offer another time to connect
- ☐ Don't leap to offer advice, give them space to think things through
- ☐ Check if they want to talk about it elsewhere (another room/outside?)