

## Confidence in Conversations

Our conversation starters intend to give community organisations and groups a simple, structured way to discuss subjects and topics related to mental health that have an impact on their work. Conversations should aim to create a safe space where people's contributions and perspectives feel respected and valued without being judged. We suggest:

- Use the discussion starters in small groups of four to eight people
- Set aside 60 minutes of protected time for the conversations
- Begin with a group agreement of how your group will engage together
- Aim to keep contributions relevant and on topic
- Look to identify common ground and develop solutions where appropriate
- Think about how you will use the time effectively. We suggest a few minutes introducing the topic, 20-30 minutes on discussion around the talking points, and leaving 15 to 20 minutes noting any actions or next steps that can be taken



### Introduction

Living on a low income can mean worry about the basics, like being able to afford food, covering your rent and paying bills and that these worries can adversely affect a person's mental health. Whether talking about poverty or talking about mental health we know that when people are struggling, opening up to other people can be daunting. There can be a stigma around poverty or mental health. People may feel embarrassed, afraid or that they don't deserve support and this can stop people from asking for help.

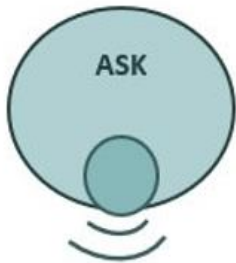
Talking about money and financial struggles can feel tricky and can bring up a great deal of emotion for the person. There is the potential for the conversation to become awkward or uncomfortable and we don't want to say the wrong thing, or make things worse. It is important to be mindful of how the person may be feeling. Safe, open conversations will feel more considerate and respectful and can help others feel more able to talk about what they are experiencing.

It is important to relate to people's lives, for them poverty isn't a policy solution or set of statistics, it is a real life situation. Financial pressures can lead people to feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, counter fatalism by emphasizing potential solutions and what steps can be taken to address the situation.



## Talking Point:

Conversations matter, they can make all the difference. Ask. Listen. Support.



Be interested. Ask open-ended questions that invite a more detailed response. For example, you could ask "What's been going on for you lately?" "How are you managing today?",

Be an active listener. Give them your full attention, both verbally and nonverbally, and showing that you are engaged and understanding.

Emphasize solutions. Look to what support can be put in place, but also help them identify and implement solutions or strategies that can help them focus on their strengths and skills.

1. What are the common situations and/or challenges people accessing your service are struggling with on a day-to-day basis?
2. What helps improve your confidence in difficult conversations and what if anything make you feel uncomfortable or unsure about conversations?
3. When you have had difficult conversations or meetings at work where can you reach out for support for yourself?



## Resources:

Talking about Mental Health: Mental Health Foundation. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/talking-about-mental-health>

Being there for someone: SAMH <https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/samh-publications/being-there-for-someone>