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# Making Every Contact Count



**Helping you to use brief advice to  
Ask Advise and Act**



Gwneud i bob cyswllt gyfrif  
Making every contact count

## **Making Every Contact Count:**

### ***What is it about?***

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is a national programme which aims to enable individuals working with the public to more routinely and more effectively incorporate health behaviour change conversations into their daily contacts with people.

Certain behaviours such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol, eating an unhealthy diet or being inactive can have a significant impact on an individual's health. Making small, positive changes to any of these health behaviours is likely to benefit an individual and help them to live a longer and healthier life. We can all play a part in helping our friends, family, colleagues and clients to make healthier choices.

### **This booklet can help you to...**

- Discuss healthy choices as part of your everyday conversations
- Give basic information to people on common health topics including smoking, alcohol, healthy weight, healthy eating, physical activity, flu vaccination and good mental wellbeing
- Let people know about specialist local support available

# Helping People to Make Healthy Choices:

## *What you can do*

At your MECC training session, you will have learnt about how you can help people to make healthier choices. This can be done through something as simple as a brief conversation lasting between 30 seconds and 3 minutes. This is referred to as **Brief Advice**. Brief advice can happen as part of a planned conversation, when a person asks for information, or whenever the opportunity arises. It can be done by anyone, anywhere and at any time.

Brief Advice is based on three simple principles;

- **Ask** a person about their health and well-being when the opportunity arises
- **Advise** them to consider the benefits of making a change, if they are interested
- **Act** by offering encouragement and information about sources of support

## **When to offer brief advice**

Opportunities to chat about healthy choices and offer brief advice can occur anywhere and at any time. They could take place in the corridor, over lunch, in the kitchen or while out walking.

Brief advice involves asking an **open question** to find out if there is a specific health issue that a person is interested in. It involves assessing each situation and responding to the needs and interests of the individual you are talking to. This is something we are all used to doing on a daily basis, and often do so without even thinking about it. Some examples of when these conversations may occur are;

- A New Year's resolution
- Needing to save money
- Having some health problems
- Struggling with weight
- Feeling low or little energy
- Having a big drinking session
- A friend or family member who drinks too much
- Flu circulating in the community

There may be times when you feel it is not appropriate to ask a person about a particular aspect of their health and this is ok. You are not expected to be an expert, have all the answers or tell people what to do. You are not responsible for whether someone decides to make a change. However you can help to guide people in the right direction, and help them to find solutions for themselves.

### **Brief advice works best when we;**

- Listen (active listening)
- Look interested and be responsive
- Sound warm and friendly
- Don't judge or sound or look shocked
- Show understanding (empathy)
- Are positive and re-assure the person they can change
- Ask open questions

### **Open questions:**

Open questions are a great way of finding out more about a person and their situation. They usually start with, 'What', 'When', 'How', 'Where' or 'Why'. For example;

- What do you think about healthy eating?
- What did you do last weekend?
- What motivates you follow a healthy lifestyle?
- What do you like/dislike about...?
- What do you find difficult about.....?
- How often do you exercise?
- How would you change your habits to be healthier?
- How confident are you that you can change?
- How are you feeling/How are things going for you at the moment?
- Where do you see yourself in a year's time?
- Why is cutting down on your alcohol important to you?
- Why do you think it is important to change?
- Tell me more about....

**Open questions are important because they allow a person to lead the conversation and voice their own thoughts and feelings. Have a think about the phrases below. Do you agree?**

People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered, than by those which have come into the mind of others (BlaisePascal, *Pensées*, 1670)

"....when you seek advice from someone it's certainly not because you want them to give it. You just want them to be there while you talk to yourself (Terry Pratchett, *Jingo*, 1997)

## Are they ready to change?

You may pick up clues from what a person says or does that suggest how ready they are to make a change. These clues will tell you if a person is willing to talk and which issues they are interested in talking about, e.g. smoking, alcohol use, weight, healthy eating, or physical activity. When we are using brief advice to help encourage change, we are mostly aiming to influence people in the 'not sure' and 'motivated' categories (see below).



**Not showing any interest**  
"We've all got to die of something, might as well enjoy life..."



**Not sure**  
"I know I should, but I'm not sure I can..."



**Motivated**  
"I want to do this, who can help me...?"



**Doing it already**  
"It's been a few weeks now, no slip-ups so far...it's not been easy mind."

It is unusual for change to happen without a few hiccups along the way. It takes time to form new healthy habits. Lapses (slipping back into old habits) are a natural part of making a change. We can use brief advice and MECC skills to help somebody to stay motivated and encourage them to get back on track as well as to encourage them to make the initial change.

# Smoking

## *Did you know...?*



- ✓ Stopping smoking is the single most important thing a smoker can do to benefit their health
- ✓ In Powys, Stop Smoking Wales (SSW) and the Level 3 Pharmacy Scheme provide a free support programme to help you to stop smoking. This includes free motivational support and free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)
- ✓ A person is four times more likely to succeed with the support of an NHS stop smoking service (such as Stop Smoking Wales or Level 3 Pharmacies) than if they try to quit alone
- ✓ There are a range of medications proven to help, your GP or pharmacist can talk through the options
- ✓ The benefits of quitting start straight away and it is never too late to stop
- ✓ Stopping smoking can help protect those around you from the dangers of second hand smoke

# Smoking

## Ask, Advise, Act



### ASK about smoking

- What are your thoughts about smoking?
- Why do you want to quit?
- Are you interested in stopping smoking?
- Have you ever tried to stop smoking before? What happened?
- What do you enjoy about smoking? What are the things about smoking that you don't enjoy?
- What do you think would be the benefits of stopping smoking for you?
- Many people find it takes a few attempts to succeed in stopping for good. If you were to try to stop smoking again, what do you think might help you? What would you do differently?

### ADVISE about smoking

- Stopping smoking is the most important thing you can do to benefit your health
- Smoking is linked to a number of serious health conditions including some cancers, stroke, heart disease and lung diseases
- Quitting smoking will save you money – over £3000 a year if smoking 20 cigarettes a day
- The benefits of quitting smoking start immediately – it is never too late to quit

### ACT

- There is plenty of support available if you are interested in stopping smoking. Would you like to know more about local smoking cessation services?
- To make an appointment with Stop Smoking Wales in your local area, call free on **0800 085 2219** or visit [www.stopsmokingwales.com](http://www.stopsmokingwales.com)
- You can also visit your local pharmacy to book a free appointment
- You are 4 times more likely to successfully quit smoking with the support of an NHS cessation service compared to if you try to quit alone

# Alcohol

## *Did you know...?*



- ✓ It is recommended that men and women should drink no more than 14 units of alcohol a week
- ✓ If a person drinks as much as 14 units a week, it is recommended that they spread their consumption of these units across the week, rather than consuming them all in one sitting
- ✓ A unit is less than you think: a half pint of beer, a small glass of wine or a single shot of spirits
- ✓ It is recommended that men and women should have at least two alcohol-free days every week
- ✓ Pregnant women should not drink alcohol at all as we do not know what affect it may have on the unborn baby
- ✓ Older people are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol, and should take extra care when consuming alcoholic drinks
- ✓ Alcohol contains hidden calories. A pint of lager contains the same calories (170kcal) as a sausage roll, and a glass of red wine (175ml) contains the same calories (120kcal) as a slice of cake
- ✓ Although alcohol contains calories, it has little nutritional value, and should not be seen as a replacement for food
- ✓ Alcohol has been linked to increased risk of certain cancers, high blood pressure, cholesterol and heart disease. It can also lead to weight gain



# Alcohol

## Ask, Advise, Act



### ASK about alcohol

- What are your thoughts about your drinking?
- Are you interested in making a change to the amount of alcohol you drink?
- What do you think are the consequences of continuing to drink at your current level?
- Is there anything that concerns you about your drinking habits?
- What benefits do you think you would experience if you reduced your drinking?
- What do you usually drink on an average weekend/week?

### ADVISE about alcohol

- Men and women should have at least 2 alcohol free days each week and should drink no more than 14 units a week
- Instead of drinking, try to find other ways to relax and wind down e.g. pampering yourself with a bath, starting a new hobby or catching up with friends over the phone
- Swap your usual drink for:
  - a smaller drink e.g. a smaller glass of wine
  - a lower-strength drink e.g. one with less units or lower alcohol content (ABV)
  - a soft drink/glass of water
- Cutting back on alcohol can also help you to save money, lose weight, have more energy, feel less tired during the day, feel in better shape and make your skin look better

### ACT

- Some people find it helpful to keep a diary of their drinking for a few days to keep track of what and how much they drink. Would that be helpful for you?
- Have you considered talking to anyone about reducing your drinking? It could be a family member, friend or health professional. Or contact the Wales Drug and Alcohol helpline: **0808 808 2234**
- There are a variety of apps that you can use to help monitor your drinking habits. Try Change4Life website or 'One Drink One Click'
- You may also like to give a person an alcohol wheel or alcohol beaker to help them monitor their drinking habits.
- In Powys, you can contact Kaleidoscope for support: **01686 610422**



# Physical Activity

## *Did you know...?*

- ✓ Being active has benefits for physical and mental health
- ✓ Doing something active has been shown to relieve stress and anxiety. Even a five minute walk can lift your mood
- ✓ Being active can help you to maintain a healthy weight, have more energy, as well as decreasing your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and certain cancers
- ✓ There are different physical activity guidelines for different age groups. The important guideline for everyone is to be active every day and reduce long periods of sitting down, move more and move more often.
- ✓ Adults should aim for 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week. This can be accumulated in 10 minute bouts.
- ✓ Try to choose activities that you enjoy, or that you can build into your everyday life. It's not just about sport - housework, gardening and walking all count too. Remember, exercise does not have to be strenuous to be beneficial
- ✓ There are also some specialist schemes to help people become more active. For example, the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS), Fresh (for children and families aged 5-11 years), Sblash a Sbri (mum's and young children) and Bumps and Buggies walking groups. Change4Life also has some great tips for getting both individuals and families more active.

# Physical Activity

## Ask, Advise, Act



### ASK about physical activity

- What are your thoughts about physical activity? How much physical activity do you do?
- Are you interested in being more active?
- What would be the benefits for you if you became more active?
- What types of activity do you enjoy (or have enjoyed in the past)?
- How do you think you could build more activity into your daily routine?

### ADVISE about physical activity

- Exercise doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial
- Some people find it helpful to keep an activity diary for a few days, noting what activities they do and for how long they do them for. Would that be helpful for you?
- Exercise is an opportunity not an inconvenience! Making small changes to your lifestyle like parking your car further away, walking or cycling short trips instead of using the car can make a huge difference. If you sit down at a desk all day, can you get up and move for 1 minute every half hour?
- Being active helps keep weight down, reduces stress, reduces our risk of serious illnesses like heart disease, diabetes and stroke and makes bones and muscles strong

### ACT

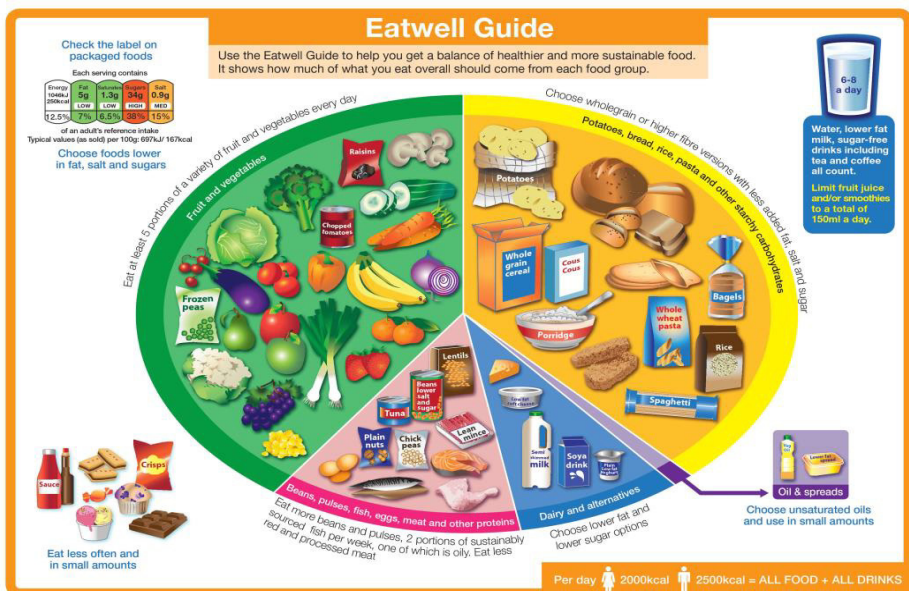
- There is support available if you are interested in increasing your activity levels. Have you considered talking to your GP or another health professional?
- There are range of clubs and activities on offer at your local leisure centre or you can try looking on PAVO info engine - <http://powys.info-engine.org.uk/>
- Change 4 Life website has information about being more active – [www.change4lifewales.org.uk](http://www.change4lifewales.org.uk)
- There are plenty of apps you can download onto your phone to help you to monitor your activity levels. Have you thought about trying any?
- There are lots of different programmes to support you and your children too. Have you heard about Bumps to Buggies, Sblash a Sbri and Fresh?



# Healthy Eating

## Did you know...?

- ✓ Healthy eating is not about cutting out foods or following a special 'diet'
- ✓ All foods can be included in a healthy diet. We just need to ensure we get the right balance
- ✓ A healthy balanced diet includes plenty of fruit and vegetables every day - at least five hand-sized portions
- ✓ A healthy balanced diet includes only small amounts of foods which are high in fat and sugar, such as cakes, crisps, biscuits or fizzy drinks
- ✓ There are strong links between what we eat and how we feel. It can be helpful to think not just about what we eat, but why and when
- ✓ Eating healthy foods can help to give us more energy, as well as decreasing our risk of developing some illnesses and diseases including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and some cancers
- ✓ The Eatwell Guide gives us a good indication of the types of food we need to be eating to make sure we have a balanced diet.



# Healthy Eating:

## Ask, Advise, Act



### ASK about healthy eating

- Are you interested in making any changes to what you eat?
- How healthy is your diet at the moment?
- How do you think you could improve your diet?
- What would you say are the good things about your current eating habits?
- What would you say is not so good about your eating habits?
- What do you think would be the benefits of eating more healthily for you and those around you?
- What changes have you made to your eating in the past? If you were to consider making further changes, what would you do next?

### ADVISE about healthy eating

- Try to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- Try to limit your intake of added sugars and salt
- Make sure you drink plenty of water
- Limit your intake of saturated fats, and try to opt for unsaturated fats where possible
- Ensure you are eating appropriate portion sizes (not too large or too small)

### ACT

- When we are working out our eating patterns, some people find it helpful to keep a food diary for a few days. Would that be helpful for you? You can download an app for your phone to help you to do this.
- There is support available if you are interested in making changes to your eating. Have you considered talking to your GP or another health professional?
- Change 4 Life website for further information about how to eat well – [www.change4lifewales.org.uk](http://www.change4lifewales.org.uk)
- You can also find information on NHS Choices – <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx>
- You may wish to give a person an Eatwell guide, information leaflet or portion sizes guide

# Mental Wellbeing



## Did you know...?

- ✓ People are often unsure of the best approach to take to address mental ill health and promote good mental health
- ✓ The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are a great resource that you can use to promote good mental health. Evidence indicates that each theme of the 5 ways (connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, give) positively enhances personal wellbeing. Research shows if you have these 5 things built into your life you can live 7.5 years longer than someone who doesn't.
- **Connect** - Spend time with family, friends or colleagues. Invest time in these relationships. Building these connections will enrich your life and theirs and provide support when you need it
- **Be Active** - Go for a walk; join a fitness group; get out your bike; climb a hill; turn up the radio and have a dance; do some gardening. Physical activity helps to make us feel good as well as helping to increase our health and fitness
- **Take Notice** - Notice the leaves on the trees; the flowers in the park; beauty in your surroundings; the smell of freshly brewed coffee. Savour the good things in your life, however small. Reflecting on the good things in your life can improve your mood and help you to appreciate what is important to you
- **Keep Learning** - Try a new recipe; sign up for a course; rediscover an old hobby; take on a new role at work or at home; learn a new language. Setting yourself a challenge to learn something new can make you more confident as well as being something that you can enjoy.
- **Be Creative and Give** - Do something nice for a family member, friend or stranger. Perhaps you could thank someone; smile at a stranger; give way at a junction; volunteer your time; join a community group. Seeing your happiness and wellbeing linked to your community can not only increase the connections with the people around you but can also be rewarding.

## Pum Ffordd at Les Powys Five Ways To Wellbeing



# Mental Wellbeing

## Ask, Advise, Act



### ASK

about  
wellbeing

- How are you feeling today?
- How are things going for you at the moment?
- How are things at work/home?
- How would you like things to be different?

### ADVISE

about  
wellbeing

- There are lots of things you can do to improve your mental wellbeing. Think about the 5 ways to wellbeing themes, 'connect', 'be creative and give', 'be active', 'take notice' and 'keep learning'. What do you do well and what do you not do so well? Which do you think you could improve the most?
- Focus on the one or two of the 5 ways that you are not doing so well in. How might you improve them? (See previous page for practical examples of the 5 ways)
- PAVO Info Engine is a great search facility that you can use to find out about what is going on in your local area - <http://infoengine.wales/>

### ACT

- If you are worried about someone's mental health, the first point of call is always the GP
- MIND have support services that you can access by calling **0300 123 3393**
- Powys also have a mental health information and advice service where you can access information, advice and support - <http://www.powysmentalhealth.org.uk/info.html>
- There is a free '5 Ways to Wellbeing' App for phones that you can download to monitor how you are doing in relation to the 5 ways [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nhs.somerset.fiveways&hl=en\\_GB](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nhs.somerset.fiveways&hl=en_GB)
- The public health team have 5 Ways 'Map and Plan' activity cards that you can download - <http://www.powysthb.wales.nhs.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing>

# Immunisations and Health

## *Did you know...?*



### Vaccines and Immunisations

- ✓ Immunisation protects against an increasing number of diseases, from infancy to old age
- ✓ Anyone can check if they are up to date with the vaccines they need by checking with their GP

### Seasonal Flu

- ✓ You can catch flu all year round, but it's especially common in winter, which is why it's also known as "seasonal flu".
- ✓ Flu is not the same as the common cold – it is caused by a different set of viruses and the symptoms tend to be more severe and last longer.
- ✓ People in at risk groups are more likely to develop potentially serious complications of flu, such as pneumonia (a lung infection), so it's recommended that they have a flu vaccine every year to protect them.  
At risk groups include;
  - People who are 65 years and older
  - Pregnant women
  - People who have long term medical conditions
- ✓ The flu virus changes from year to year so it is important to have a new vaccination each year as the vaccine changes to try to match the virus
- ✓ Children aged between 1 and 2 years old and children in reception to Y4 in Powys, have the option of a needle- free seasonal flu vaccine.



# Immunisation and Health

## Ask, Advise, Act



### ASK

about  
immunisation

- Are you / your child up to date with your immunisations?
- Would you like more information on the flu jab?

### ADVISE

about  
immunisation

- Staying up to date with immunisations is an easy and safe way of protecting yourself and your family from serious illness
- Vaccines are available from your GP for a range of serious illnesses in children and adults, including; measles, flu, whooping cough, cervical cancer and meningitis.

### ACT

- You can find out about what vaccinations are available for children and adults in Powys by checking the Teaching Health Board website:  
<http://www.powysthb.wales.nhs.uk/immunisation-and-vaccination>
- There is plenty of information available if you would like to know more about flu and the flu vaccine. You can check the NHS live well website:  
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/pages/fluandthefluvaccine.aspx>
- For 'at risk' groups, free Flu jabs are available from your GP and many Pharmacies in Powys – you can check if you should see your GP or pharmacist for a free flu jab here:  
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/pages/fluandthefluvaccine.aspx>
- You can also find out more and see if you are up to date with immunisations, by checking with your GP or practice nurse

For smoking, I will;

**ASK:**

**ADVISE:**

**ACT:**

For alcohol, I will;

**ASK:**

**ADVISE:**

**ACT:**

For physical activity, I will;

**ASK:**

**ADVISE:**

**ACT:**

For healthy eating, I will;

**ASK:**

**ADVISE:**

**ACT:**

For mental wellbeing, I will;

**ASK:**

**ADVISE:**

**ACT:**

For flu and immunisation, I will;

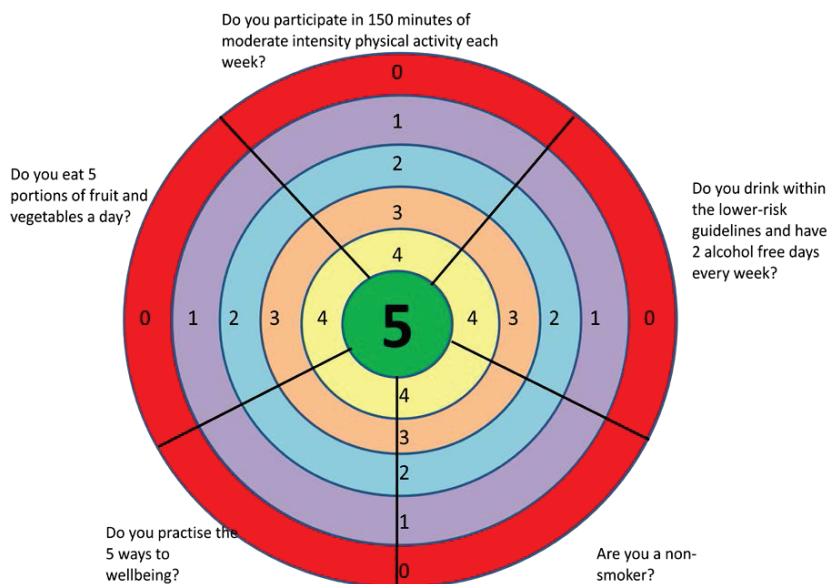
**ASK:**

**ADVISE:**

**ACT:**

## What About You?

The demands of our busy lifestyles often mean that we don't take the time out to consider our own health. Keeping our minds and bodies healthy can help us to have more energy, sleep better, feel better and reduce our risk of illness and disease. Take a look at the chart below. Give yourself a score between 0-5 for how close you think you are to meeting the guidelines for each health behaviour (0 being not at all, 5 being meeting guidelines). How close are you to reaching the bullseye for all 5 of the health behaviours?



### Ask yourself;

Which behaviour am I most willing to change?

How important is it to me to change my behaviour?

How confident am I that I can change my behaviour?

What would my life look like if I make a change/what are my reasons for changing?

Write down your thoughts and see if you can come up with a simple goal that you are willing to commit to for the next 6 weeks. Keep track of your progress, and remember that you can always ask family, friends and colleagues for support. Remember effective goals are **SMART** goals; **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound.

## Using the scales

When discussing lifestyle with an individual, there are two main questions that provide a lot of information about 'readiness' to change. Ask the individual:



How important is it for you to make a change?



How confident are you that you can make a change?

Ask what factors made choose their score and not a lower score: this brings out the positive aspects of the person's thoughts about making a change.

Ask them what would increase their score: this highlights potential obstacles to change. You can discuss these with the individual and help them to consider ways of overcoming these barriers. The patient may need more support in developing a plan of action.

## The change I am thinking about is:

On a scale of 0-10, I would rate the importance of making the change as a

\_\_\_\_\_

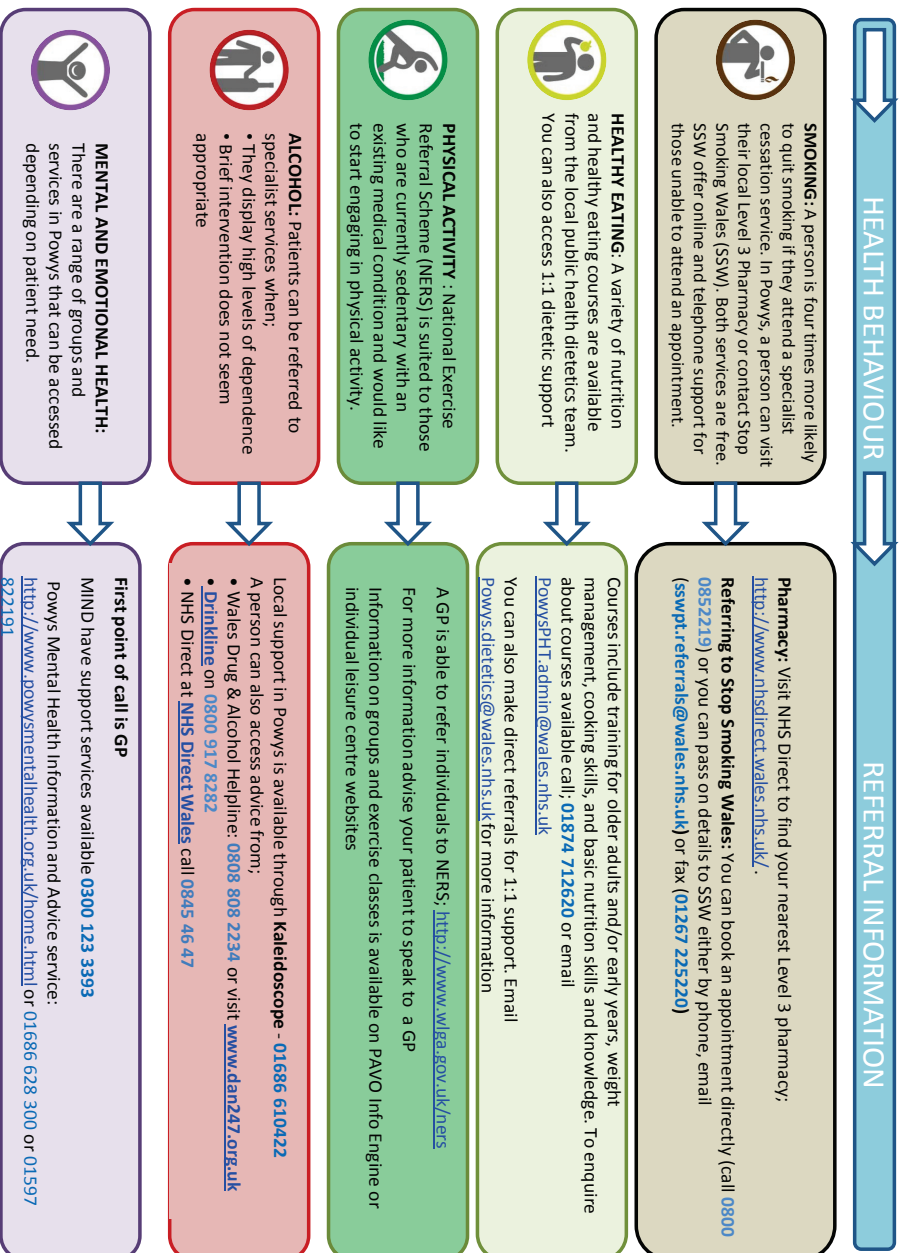
On a scale of 0-10, I would rate my confidence in my ability to make the change as a \_\_\_\_\_

My Reasons for continuing as things are now...

My Reasons for making a change...

My next step is... (remember to think SMART)





## **My Notes Page**

Some useful websites/sources of information that I have come across include;

Resources that I think will be helpful for me in delivering MECC and having healthy chats with people include;

One thing that I intend to change in my practice after my MECC training is;

## Further Information:

PTHB Internet: <http://www.powysthb.wales.nhs.uk/staying-healthy>

NHS Choices: <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx>

Change for Life: <http://change4lifewales.org.uk/?lang=en>

**National Exercise Referral Scheme** - a Welsh Government funded scheme which offers two fully supervised group-based sessions every week for 10 weeks. The scheme is designed for people who have a chronic disease or who are at risk of developing a chronic disease.

**Website:** [www.wlga.gov.uk/ners](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/ners)

**NHS Direct Wales** - To speak to a Health Information Adviser call **0845 4647** or visit their website:

[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/DoItYourself](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/DoItYourself)

**British Dietetic Association** – go online to access free, downloadable Food Fact Sheets, written by dietitians to help you learn the best ways to eat and drink to keep your body fit and healthy.

**Website:** <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home>

**British Heart Foundation** – has a section on healthy eating with links to further information, recipes and a free downloadable book.

**Website:** <https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/preventing-heart-disease/healthy-eating>

**Powys Mental Health Information and Participation Team** - The Powys Mental Health Information and Participation Team provides information and support to anyone working or living in Powys. The team provides a mental health information service that can be accessed 5 days a week between 9 am and 5 pm.

**Tel:** **01597 822191**

**Email:** [pamhinfo@pavo.org.uk](mailto:pamhinfo@pavo.org.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.powysmentalhealth.org.uk>

**Free Health Leaflets:** If you would like to order any health promotion resources for your patients, staff or setting, you can do so via the Health Promotion library. All their resources are free of charge. Visit the link <http://www.healthchallengewales.org/full-list-of-titles>

## **Powys Public Health Team Contact Details:**

Email: [Powyspht.admin@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Powyspht.admin@wales.nhs.uk)

Tel: **01874 712738**