My Care Academy
Learning when you need it.

Challenging Conversations Template

Section A - setting the scene and explaining the issue:

1. Begin with a **disclaimer:**

- Start with a disclaimer of anything you (the service user) wish to make clear primarily. For example, you may wish to explain that the purpose of the conversation is **not** to cast blame on anybody for any issues that are discussed.

2. Ensure that everybody is clear on the purpose of this discussion by **clarifying the topic or theme:**

- Note down any topics or themes that you are going to explore.
- Note down exactly what the aim of the discussion is.

3. Clearly explain how this issue or situation **makes you feel:**

- Explain exactly how this situation makes you feel at the moment.
- Avoid making 'you' statements such as "I'm angry because you think I'm stupid". Instead clearly state how certain experiences influence your feelings.
  If this tends to be difficult for you, work with someone to write an explanation of how you often feel in the situations being discussed. Then, you can simply read this statement out during the conversation.

  The statement does not need to be lengthy, however for the sake of covering a variety of common experiences, here is a long example:
  "when nobody asks what my opinion is, I worry that other people don't value my knowledge or ideas and that makes me feel powerless and frustrated. Experiences like these put me on edge and I get worried about saying the wrong thing. Sometimes I'm so on edge I seem like I'm 'snapping' at people and I end up saying nothing at all or shouting in order to get my point across which other people see as anger or aggression. When this happens, I end up feeling isolated and alone and feel embarrassed if I'm reminded about what happened."

4. Why does this topic or issue **matter**?

- Apart from the fact that it might make you feel distressed, there may be other reasons why the other person involved in the discussion should be interested in the issue.
- For example, if the discussion is about your wellbeing in the workplace, you could use this opportunity to explain how your wellbeing also affects your workplace productivity overall.

5. What are the **implications** if things don't change?

- At this point, it is useful to explain what will happen if things continue without any change.

- For example, if the discussion is about your requirement for reasonable adjustments, you might explain that without these adjustments you may become unwell and unable to perform well in your role.

6. What is **your part in the issue**?

- Explain how you are going to help resolve the issue and anything you have done already to try and address the situation. For example, you might say that your part in the issue is that you've identified it, are raising it with those involved and are proposing some ways of resolving the issue.

Part 2 - what can be done to resolve the problem:

It is important to be clear before the discussion exactly what you would like to happen as a result of the discussion. At this point, you will clarify exactly what you want to happen as a result of the conversation.

7. If not previously explained in full, list what **your actions have been** so far:

- List what you / the person raising the conversation, have already done to try and address the issue.
- For example, the service user may state that they consulted their mental health nurse for advice about managing medication side effects in the workplace.

8. Now, clearly propose **what you would like to happen** next:

- List what you would like to happen next, with clear time frames and realistic responsibilities for those involved.
- Make sure that you state what you are willing to do to further work on this issue yourself.

9. Finally, note down **who will take responsibility** for these outcomes.

- Be aware in advance that you may need to make compromises and the priority is finding a realistic way to get the outcomes you need - achieving these outcomes may require input from a range of people and be a group effort rather than one person's responsibility.