

# Chapter three: Facilitating Challenging Conversations

## Aims

- to provide resources and support for holding challenging conversations that arise because of issues related to differential attainment; for example, working with colleagues or trainees who may be underperforming or struggling with work-based difficulties
- to provide an inclusive and constructive forum to promote learning and develop skills in managing challenging conversations with individuals and with groups
- to develop skills in group facilitation

## Learning Outcomes

- to identify key concerns about holding a challenging conversation relating to differential attainment
- to share experiences and ideas about supporting colleagues working with or managing people experiencing difficulties due to differential attainment
- to consider the usefulness of Conversations inviting Change as an approach to managing difficult conversations
- to establish a collaborative learning group and analyse its effectiveness
- to develop strategies for managing challenging conversations
- to access resources for further information and training

# Lesson Plan

## Facilitating Challenging Conversations

(3 hour workshop)

*Display slide 1*

### Introductions (10 mins)

Either go around and ask participants to introduce themselves or (depending on numbers) ask for a show of hands – specialty, role etc.

Share with attendees the: Aims of workshop - *slide 2*

Learning outcomes - *slide 3*

Explain plan for the workshop *slide 4*

Say that later in the workshop there will be an opportunity to bring real examples of challenging conversations that participants are currently grappling with.

Emphasise that the workshop works best when people bring real cases/situations that they are experiencing and are still concerned about

When working with real cases do stress the importance of confidentiality

### Review of learning needs (10 mins)

Pose question to group: what do you want to get out of today's workshop? - *slide 5*

Elicit learning needs by asking participants to discuss briefly in pairs or threes

Feedback to the large group and facilitator writes up learning needs on flip chart

### Key challenges (20 mins)

Pose two questions to the group – *slide 6*

1. What challenges have you faced relating to differential attainment?

2. What have you learnt already about addressing these challenges?

Ask participants to discuss in pairs for 10 mins but with a different colleague from the last exercise

Feedback and discussion for 10 mins

Concerns or accusations of bullying or racism may come up here so the facilitator needs to be ready to know how to respond. Think about this before the workshop and be prepared to explain your Trust's guidance or protocol.

### Facilitating difficult discussions: Conversations Inviting Change (CIC) (40 mins)

*Display slide 7*

Facilitator explains that CIC is an approach developed over the last 20 years by Dr John Launer and colleagues, initially at the Tavistock Clinic. It has been widely used in faculty development and professional support, in both hospitals and primary care. The approach is now used nationally and internationally. (2 mins)

It is based on the idea of asking questions rather than giving advice. These questions are informed by the 7Cs: these are conversations, curiosity, context, complexity, challenge, caution, care – slides 8 to 14

Before the workshop go to this link to read a short description of each of the 7Cs  
<http://www.conversationsinvitingchange.com/7401.html>

Ask participants to work in twos or threes

Allocate 1 of the 7 Cs to each pair or trios

Participants are to discuss their C in terms of the following question:

- o How does your C relate to differential attainment? - slide 15 (approx. 5-10 mins)

Feedback and discussion in the large group (approx. 25 mins)

*Tea/coffee Break (15 mins)*

Give out Handout: Conversations Inviting Change – this contains the 7Cs and suggestions for useful questions for challenging conversations

Invite participants to spend a few minutes reading the questions (5 mins)

### **Small group work – collaborative learning groups (55 mins)**

The aim is to do 2 rounds of a minimum of 20 mins each

Divide participants into 2 or 3 small groups depending on numbers (ideally 6-10 people in each group) with one facilitator per group or, depending on numbers, the facilitator can move between groups.

Ask each group to arrange their chairs in a small circle.

Once in small groups, explain the process to be followed:

- stress confidentiality
- ask who has 'a case' i.e. an issue/challenge relating to differential attainment (current, relevant, your own and unresolved)
- ask people to give a 2 or 3 sentence 'headline' of the issue
- note issues on flip chart
- facilitator or small group choose the first issue
- case presenter describes their issue/challenge
- questions of clarification to the presenter – no solutions to be offered at this stage
- presenter poses question or task for group (for example, how else might I resolve my issue?)
- ask the case presenter to sit to the side of circle of chairs and not to make eye contact with the group – their role is to listen
- group discuss (using questions as much as possible) – the presenter listens but does not participate.
- the presenter rejoins the circle and feeds back on what was most useful and what they will take away from the discussion
- repeat the process with next issue/challenge – and repeat again depending on time
- brief discussion of how the process worked: 5-10 mins

Before the workshop it may be helpful for the facilitator to read the short article by John Launer on Collaborative Learning Groups – this article is in the Appendix

**Plenary: next steps/way forward** (20 mins)

Participants discuss in pairs: what will you take away to apply in your work? - *slide 16* (5 mins)  
Feedback and discussion within large group (10 mins)

Evaluation forms, thanks and closure (5 mins)

# Preparation for Challenging Conversations Workshop

As part of the workshop, we will be using real life stories. In order to do this, we need **YOU** to provide the material. This has the advantage of making the workshop highly relevant and provides an opportunity for you to get help with situations that are not yet resolved in their workplace.

You may wish to take a few minutes to think about the question below and jot down your thoughts.

**What *current* dilemmas do I have relating to differential attainment that would benefit from ‘talking things through’ with a group of supportive colleagues?**

This can be relation to your work as: -

- An educator
- A clinician
- A team member
- A colleague
- A manager

**NB:** These scenarios need to be: -

**CURRENT** (not already solved in the past)

**REAL** (not a hypothetical situation)

**YOUR OWN** (not someone else’s problem)

**INDIVIDUAL** (not dealing with generic issues)

**HOT!** (causing you concern but also suitable for sharing with the group)

**MY current dilemmas are: -**

# Conversations Inviting Change (CIC)

## Conversations: The Seven Cs

Curiosity, Context, Complexity, Creativity, Challenge, Caution, Care

### Some Useful Questions for Challenging Conversations

What would you like to change?

What happens if nothing changes?

What would be the ideal outcome?

What can you bring from a previous situation that might be useful here?

What's preventing you from addressing this problem?

What would X say about you?

What would they say if they were a fly on the wall?

What's the worst that could happen?

What is the priority for you (complex problem)?

What would be your plan of action?

Who else could help with this?

### Further Information

<http://www.conversationsinvitingchange.com>

# Facilitating Challenging Conversations: Resources for Facilitators

## The 'Golden Rules'

These can be useful guidance for 1:1 conversations, especially if there is a concern that the situation might escalate or move towards performance management.

- start early but go slowly
- if it's not written down it hasn't happened
- share your notes with the other person (and include any changes requested)
- record any actions needed, by when and consequences if not achieved
- know where to get help

## Links to e-learning modules

Undermining and conflict in the workplace:

<https://www.lpmde.ac.uk/professional-development/elearning-support-and-self-review-modules/undermining-and-conflict-in-the-workplace>

e-learning package for IMGs:

<https://www.lpmde.ac.uk/professional-development/elearning-support-and-self-review-modules/international-medical-graduates>

## Links to papers

Fair Training Pathways for All: Understanding Experiences of Progression Final Report Prepared for the General Medical Council 17th March 2016, and revised 28th April 2016, [https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/2016-04-28-fairpathwaysfinalreport\\_pdf-66939685\\_pdf-73893295.pdf](https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/2016-04-28-fairpathwaysfinalreport_pdf-66939685_pdf-73893295.pdf)

Teaching exercises and explanation of CIC:

<http://www.conversationsinventingchange.com/7601/index.html>