



# The Conversation Solution in Keynsham

## What is The Conversation Solution?

It has been one of the founding objectives of Keynsham Action Network (KAN) to improve both the quality and quantity of conversations within the community. The understanding that this is important and potentially transformative comes from the application of 'systems thinking' to community development. Here is a quotation from one of KAN's founding documents (1).

The 'new' science of complexity ... tells us that the interactions we have with one another, repeated innumerable times, are the main determinants of the patterns of being and behaving that emerge within families, communities and society (2). There is no need for a master plan, which in any case, will oversimplify, be unresponsive, prone to political whim and to powerful vested interests. The process is more like balancing a bicycle than carving a statue – it is dynamic and fluid with a pattern of movement that never repeats itself exactly, though the overall direction is more predictable. Given the right conditions, wellbeing will emerge. This is how the natural world works, for natural systems will self-organize to create patterns that are unpredictable but vary, often in beautiful ways, around a theme determined by the quality of the innumerable interactions within the system. In the case of human communities, these interactions are conversations and shared activities.

Some conversations are more helpful to people and communities than others. We are looking for those that enable a person to discover what would give them more meaning and purpose in their life - what matters to them. This self-discovery often reveals hidden strengths. When such discoveries are linked to an enabling community network, this can often lead to a new level of fulfilment for the individual. At a whole community level, the social norms and culture of the community can shift in the direction of caring and kindness as the people become more fulfilled. We expect this to be followed by an increase in vibrancy and resilience leading to improved health of individuals and improvement in other parameters of a healthy society.

So The Conversation Solution is about revealing the hidden assets within the community through finding the hidden assets of its people; then enabling them to be realised. In the jargon, this is called ***solutions-focused practice*** in pursuit of ***personal outcomes***. The table below summarises the differences between this approach and conventional health and social care provision.

The conversational methodology is based on Solution Focused Brief Therapy (originally from the USA) and the application in health and wellbeing was developed through the Fife Shine project in Scotland (3). The novel contribution of KAN's The Conversation Solution is to set the methodology within a discrete community and observe the changes at community level.

From Service-led to Outcomes Focused		
Features	Traditional/ Service-led	Personal Outcomes and Asset-Based Approaches
Engagement/ assessment	Deficit model: needs, pathology, dysfunction assessed (What's the matter with you?)	→ T Assets-based model: focus on what matters most and what outcomes an individual wants to achieve (What matters to you?)
Service provision	Expert provision of services	R A Identify and build on individual's strengths, abilities, existing social networks and community resources... then addition of services/ input if required.
Practitioner role	Treat, fix, "do to"	N Empower, collaborate, "do with"
Role of Person	Passive recipient of care	S Actively involved in own care
Choice	Pre-determined, service-led	F O Flexible, innovative, creative response to care planning
Performance/ Evaluation	Outputs-activity: throughput, number of admissions, discharges, waiting list times	R M → Outcomes – impact of services on individual's life. Realisation of personal outcomes

References

1. <http://www.keynshamactionnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BHMA-article-The-Community-and-the-Chocolate-Factory-April10-edited-Jan2018.pdf>
2. Sweeney K, *Complexity in Primary Care*, Oxford, Radcliffe, 2006
3. [http://admin.fifedirect.org.uk/weborgs/nhs/uploadfiles/publications/c64\\_Item9dDPHReporttoClinicalGovernance.pdf](http://admin.fifedirect.org.uk/weborgs/nhs/uploadfiles/publications/c64_Item9dDPHReporttoClinicalGovernance.pdf) p.25

-----

*The Conversation Solution* is brought to Keynsham through a collaboration between KAN, St Monica Trust, St Augustine's Medical Practice, The Thistle Foundation and the International Futures Forum. The collaboration is facilitated through the CHAIN group (Community Health and Involvement Network), a local voluntary group of residents and providers of services within Keynsham.