

Tool 15: Intersectional conversations

This tool helps you to critically think through a conversation with someone, who may be in need of care and support, using the lens of intersectionality.

'I am not one piece of myself. I cannot be simply a Black person and not be a woman too, nor can I be a woman without being a lesbian . . . Of course, there'll always be people, and there have always been people in my life, who will come to me and say, "Well, here, define yourself as such and such" to the exclusion of the other pieces of myself. There is an injustice to self in doing this...'

(Evans, 1979:72)

We've identified five areas to aid intersectional reflection on conversations we've had in practice. These five areas are:

- > intersectional listening
- > situated knowledge
- > intersectional curiosity
- > interdependent connections
- > naming.

We can use these five areas to reflect on previous conversations and also think about what we need to follow up in future conversations:

	Previous conversation	Future conversation
Intersectional listening	What were the interdependent interconnections that you heard during the conversation? How did you respond to these at the time?	Are there interconnections that, on reflection, would be helpful to explore further in future conversations?
	Did you give space so the person could walk through the intersections of their experiences?	How would you like to build on this in future conversations?
Situated knowledge	Were there elements of your situated knowledge that impacted the conversation?	How helpful was this? Would it be helpful or not for this to influence future conversations?
	What situated knowledge of the other person did you learn about?	Can you use what you learnt about their situated knowledge to influence your support?
	Did you or the other person notice experiences of compound injury in the conversation?	Is this something to explore further in future conversations?
Intersectional curiosity	The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of the parts of the person's identity. Were there ways in the conversation that this was acknowledged?	How can you avoid compartmentalising different aspects of their identity in future conversations?
	How did you use intersectional curiosity in the conversation?	How could you use metaphor, stories, images and words to explore their experiences further?
Interdependent connections	How is the person's presenting problem an aspect of compound injury that they have experienced?	How could you help the person explore this further, and see interdependency between elements of their life, identity and context?
Naming	How did you and the other person describe their experiences of oppression, discrimination or compound injury? Were these named in a general or specific way in conversation? What language did the other person use?	Would it be appropriate to move from general descriptions to specific naming of experiences in future conversations?

Reference:

Evans, M. (1979) My Words Will Be There. In Wylie Hall, J. (Ed.) (2004) *Conversations with Audre Lorde*. (pp. 71-78). University Press of Mississippi.

You may find these thoughts from those who took part in the Change Project helpful:

- > *'This helps to structure thoughts around conversation.'*
- > *'The tool can help us to rethink what a response might be - intersectional listening is powerful as a response in its own right.'*
- > *'It is important to start with an open mind, and be open to asking someone about themselves; not coming with our own agenda.'*
- > *'Understand that there is an element of powerlessness that people might experience, and be mindful not to locate this within their identity.'*
- > *'Naming - why do we feel less comfortable in using words like sexism, racism, ableism? Why are we reluctant to use these words in case recording, but we would name things like sexual abuse?'*
- > *'We need to name - so can make sense ourselves and empower; it doesn't make things worse to name.'*
- > *'My take from this is that the concept of identity is often just scratched on the surface and that you cannot claim to have a holistic view without understanding one's identity.'*