

Health Improvement Board

Thursday 13 June 2024

Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

Purpose / Recommendation

1. The Health Improvement Board is asked to:
 - (a) note the opportunities of Making Every Contact Count (MECC) to improve population health and reduce health inequalities
 - (b) note the progress made so far in Oxfordshire to scale up MECC
 - (c) note the summary of actions described in this report under 'Plans for this financial year (2024-25)' and offer any feedback on where your organisation could support

Background

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is an evidence-based approach to health improvement which involves training people to give them the confidence to raise issues about health with others and follow up with very brief advice and signposting for support.

MECC involves responding appropriately to cues from others to encourage them to think about behaviour change and steps that they could take to improve their health and wellbeing. MECC works through opportunistic conversations in everyday life – this could be at work, at school pick up time, in a shop. Anywhere, where there is contact between individuals, not just in health-related settings.

Training in MECC can take various forms including face-to-face and online training. The training typically covers five lifestyle behaviours: healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight; physical activity; smoking; alcohol and mental wellbeing. More recently, the MECC training in Oxfordshire has been adapted to include other current issues such as money worries, food poverty, blood pressure and oral health. People who receive MECC training are not expected to be health experts but will understand the basis of MECC and gain confidence to use the skills learnt. Across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB), we also encourage a sustainable cascade approach by training staff in different organisations to become MECC trainers themselves and roll out the training within their team. These courses are currently delivered by the BOB Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB).

MECC is recommended by a range of health organisations, policies and strategies as a key driver for improving health outcomes in a population. These include The

Local Government Association¹, the NHS 5-year Forward View², NHS England³ and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities⁴.

In Oxfordshire, there is a MECC Partnership which drives MECC activity across the county and oversees the county's action plan for MECC. In June 2023, the board were asked to review this [MECC action plan](#) and offer any feedback and suggestions where they or their organisation could support.

Key Issues

Update on activity in the financial year 2023-24

Key programmes of work that have been completed or are ongoing, since the last [MECC report](#) was presented at the Health Improvement Board on 15 June 2023, include:

Raising the profile of MECC and measuring its impact:

- In the last financial year, 512 people undertook MECC training and 28 people completed the MECC train the trainer course in Oxfordshire. Attendees covered a breadth of different services including the voluntary sector, local authority, justice system, education and healthcare. The numbers stated above are likely to be an underestimation as we know that MECC training is being delivered by organisations across the county which are not reported.
- Increased and continued efforts went into measuring the impact of MECC and collecting case studies. E.g. in the last financial year, 8,702 MECC conversations took place in libraries. 49.4% of these conversations were on the topic of mental health and wellbeing. Physical activity accounted for 8.8% of conversations, smoking 2.4%, alcohol 2.4%, weight/healthy eating 6% and 31% were on another health topic. Libraries also collected 29 case studies which show the impact of MECC on their customers.

Financial support and contractual arrangements:

- Provided financial support to organisations to help them rollout MECC such as Good Food Oxfordshire, Here for Health at the Oxford University Hospital Trust, Age UK Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire District Council to rollout MECC in Better Leisure centres and Citizen's Advice Cherwell.
- Embedding MECC within the contracts of Public Health commissioned services (e.g. Better Housing Better Health, sexual health services, all age healthy weight service, mental health training) and delivering MECC training to staff within some of these services (e.g. Active Oxfordshire, Community Safety Practitioners at the Oxford University Hospital Trust, Reducing the Risk).

¹ Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/making-every-contact-count>

² NHS 5 year forward view <https://www.england.nhs.uk/five-year-forward-view/>

³ NHS England <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/population-health/our-resources-hub/making-every-contact-count-mecc>

⁴ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities/about>

Sustainability and efficiency:

- Worked with the BOB ICB to ensure there is a sustainable and efficient MECC training programme in Oxfordshire. This has led to the production of a set of resources to support the continued implementation of MECC e.g., a [video](#) to promote MECC, offering MECC mentoring to trainers, [MECC signposting resources](#), MECC Z-cards, MECC e-badges and physical badges, MECC banner and cost of living handout (see appendix A for images of these resources).
- Implementing measures to promote the long-term sustainability of the Oxfordshire MECC programme such as working with organisations to develop their own implementation plans, embedding MECC into meeting agendas, job descriptions, inductions and supporting organisations to have in-house MECC trainers.

Plans for this financial year (2024-25)

In Spring 2024, the MECC action plan was refreshed to account for upcoming planned activity for the financial year 2024-25. Headline actions for this year include:

Upscaling of MECC:

- Continue to provide financial support to help organisations embed MECC in their work and continue to support organisations who have already received funding to rollout MECC effectively.
- Continue to support the scaling up of MECC across large organisations in Oxfordshire like the Oxford University Hospital Trust, Oxford Health, district councils, Oxfordshire County Council and South Central Ambulance Service.

Promote sustainability of MECC:

- Increase MECC training and train the trainer capacity.
- Promote the future sustainability of MECC by exploring whether a partner(s) in the system could take on a coordinating role for MECC alongside their business as usual. A sustainability workshop will be held with key stakeholders in September 2024.
- Expand on a MECC training offer to students/trainees/apprentices, as part of their studies, recognising that they are our future workforce.

Evaluation:

- Continue to evaluate MECC activity across the county and provide a framework for organisations to use to help them evaluate MECC. Two students from Oxford University will be supporting part of this evaluation from May to July 2024 through the local policy lab initiative.

Future plans for the MECC work programme 2024-25 onwards

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group provided funding of £200,000 in April 2022 and we are expecting that most of these funds will be used by April 2025. The funding has provided a strong base for MECC activity across the system, by enabling system coordination, MECC training and grant funding to local organisations. As we move into a new phase of the MECC work we need to focus on how MECC is adopted in a more business as usual way of working within organisational work streams. There will be a MECC sustainability workshop with key stakeholders held in September 2024 to progress planning of this.

Equalities implications

A key focus of the Oxfordshire MECC programme is to tackle health inequalities. The programme focuses on embedding MECC within organisations/services that are located in or serve people living in areas of inequality in Oxfordshire or who support groups in the community who are more likely to experience inequalities. Organisations supporting people across the life course are encouraged to get involved in the MECC programme such as early years settings and services aimed at older adults.

It is anticipated there will be no groups who would be disadvantaged by the updated MECC action plan.

Communications

The Oxfordshire MECC action plan has been developed in collaboration with the Oxfordshire MECC Partnership. Members of the partnership include:

- Active Oxfordshire
- Adult Social Care
- Age UK Oxfordshire
- Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board
- Carers Oxfordshire
- Cherwell District Council
- Good Food Oxfordshire
- Fire and Rescue Service
- NHS England Workforce, Training and Education
- Library Service
- Local Pharmaceutical Committee Thames Valley
- Oxford City Council
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxfordshire Mind
- Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- South Central Ambulance Service
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council

Report by Kate Austin, Public Health Principal, and Imogen Coningsby, Health Improvement Practitioner

Contact: Kate Austin, Public Health Principal, kate.austin@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Imogen Coningsby, Health Improvement Practitioner,
imogen.coningsby@oxfordshire.gov.uk