

### Working with a 'conversation partner'

“Better Conversations: communicating well with Parkinson's” is a speech therapy programme that aims to make day to day conversations more **enjoyable** and **engaging** for those living with Parkinson's.

It involves a speech and language therapist working together with someone who has a diagnosis of Parkinson's, and someone they talk regularly with. We call this second person a '**conversation partner**' – it can be a spouse, family member, or friend.

Both people work together to **build and develop conversation skills**.

### Why work with a 'conversation partner'?

Conversation is a two-way process, and the responsibility to have a 'successful' conversation lies with all those taking part. Parkinson's affects all members of the conversation. Some strategies or 'behaviours' in conversation are intended to help but can in fact get in the way.

Both the person who has a diagnosis of Parkinson's and the other people in the conversation can **make changes to improve conversations**. A friend or family member who regularly talks with the person with Parkinson's can really help, and needs to understand what works for the individual.

Family members and friends tell us that they are motivated to be involved in therapy to:

- increase their **knowledge** about the communication of their family member/ friend
- understand what they can do to **help the conversation flow** better
- **support** their family member/ friend to take a more **active role** in the conversation
- learn new 'tools' to help with communication
- **learn together** how to make life that bit easier
- make their family member/ friend feel more **confident**
- make a difference to their family member/ friend
- improve how **effective** the therapy will be
- take note of skills and remember information that can be used in the future