

## Pros/Cons – Decisional balance exercise

### Why and Who?

- This exercise aims to build motivation to change substance use (or other target behavior) by reflection and eliciting change talk.
- This exercise should only be used with young people **wanting to make a change** or when you are aiming to cement their decision. It should not be used with people in the precontemplative stage of change because it may solidify their reasons to continue using.
- If someone is already really motivated – go straight to developing a change plan.

### How?

#### 1. Explain the purpose of the exercise:

- *'Young people use substances because they enjoy them, and for lots of other reasons. In this exercise, we're going to write down lots of good things about your use, and then weigh them up against the things that might be not so good.'*

#### 2. Ask the young person to write down all the good things about their substance use using the worksheet:

- *'Tell me about your drinking. What are the good things about it? What do you like about it? What are the fun things? How does it help you? What's positive about drinking/using for you?'*
- Reflect and summarise during the process.

#### 3. Next ask the young person to write down some of the not so good things about their substance use:

- *'And what about the other side? Do you have any concerns about your drinking? Does it ever cause you difficulties? Is there anything not so good about it?'*
- Reflect and summarise during the process.

#### 4. Either go straight to the next step or consider doing an additional step of:

- Asking the young person which are the most important items they have identified, and/or,
- Asking the young person whether each item is a good thing or a not so good thing in the short or long term, and/or
- Creating a flashcard of the not so good things; laminate it and give it to the young person.

#### 5. Summarise the work that has been done thus far.

- Reflect on the notes that have been made on the sheet to elicit change talk from your young person.
- Use your MI skills, summarising and reflection, to 'Tip the Balance' in terms of their motivation for change.
- *So, on the one hand you enjoy the buzz of getting drunk - you get to chill with mates and it helps you socialise, and on the other hand it sometimes gets you into trouble - your hangovers are affecting your studies and it's too expensive.*
- *You reckon that if you cut down you'd have more money to spend on your car and have more focus in school.'*

# Pros/Cons

Good things about _____	Not so good things about _____