



# Supported Decision Making



## Supporting Decision Making

Principles of Supported Decision Making

Supported Decision Making Approach and Practice

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## Supporting Decision Making Principles

Supported decision making is a term used to refer to a range of practices whereby people with disabilities are assisted to make or implement their own decisions.

### Principles that surround Supported Decision Making

I can change  
my mind

Assume I can

One decision  
at a time

Its up to me

Understand  
me and my  
preferences

Are the right  
people involved

Explore all  
options

Experience to  
explore

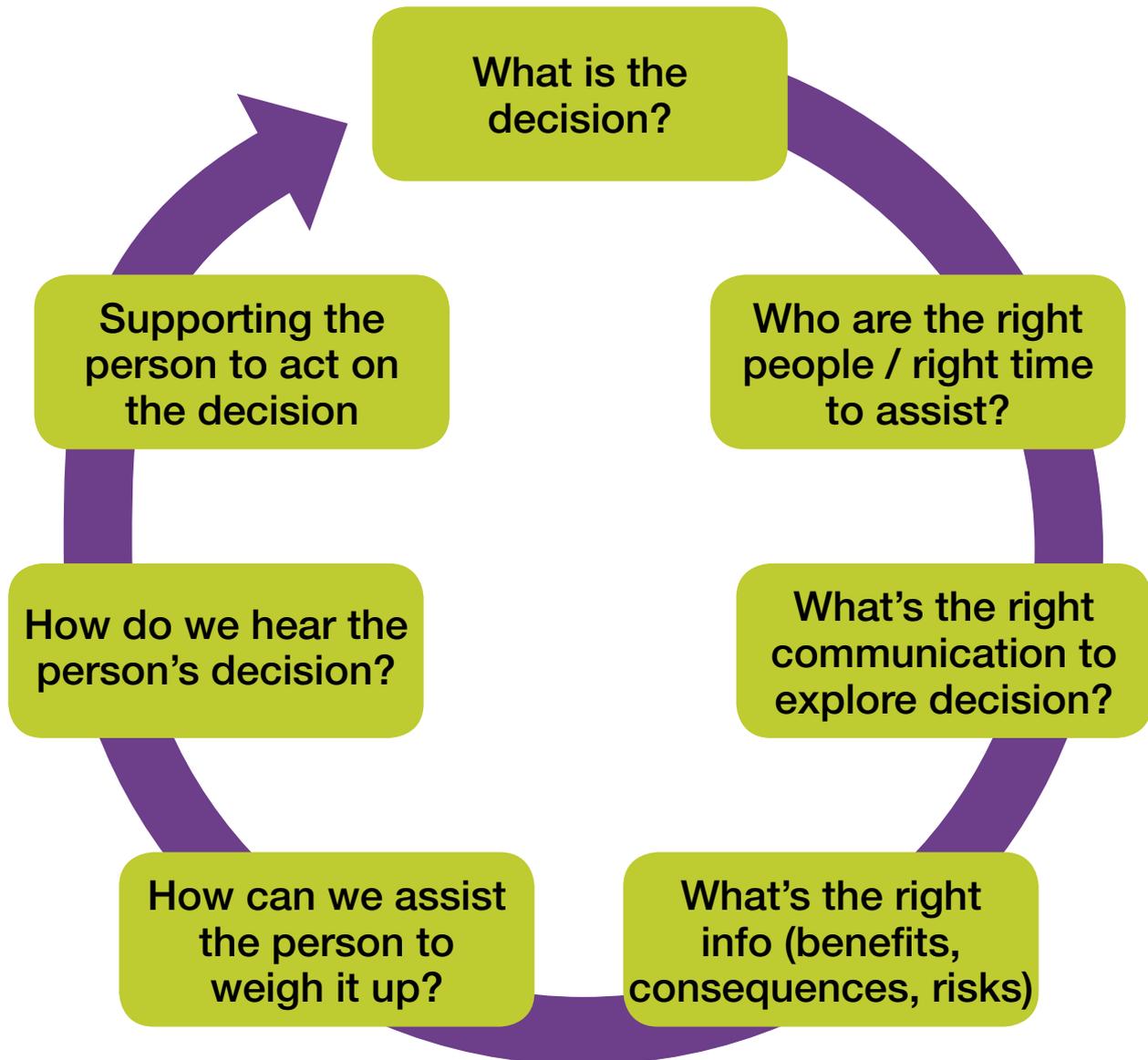
The right  
assistance  
for me

Project Principles

- We assume everyone has the capacity to make decisions, unless proved otherwise - **Assume I can.**
- Capacity is decision specific - **One decision at a time.**
- Support to make decisions needs to reflect good assistance for each person uniquely - **Understand the right assistance for me.**
- Everyone demonstrates preferences and these can be used as the building blocks of decisions - **Understand my preferences.**
- People have the right to make unwise decisions - **It's up to me.**
- People have the right to learn from experience - **Support me to experience choice.**
- People have the right to change their minds - **I can change my mind.**
- Every effort should be made to support people to make their decisions - **Have you explored all options to assist me.**
- Everyone has the right to be involved in decision making including substitute decision making - **Involve me in decisions about my life.**
- Supported decision making relies on integral assistance - **I have the right people supporting me and my decisions.**

## Supporting Decision Making Principles

The process to follow when supporting people to make a decision.



### What is the decision?

Getting clear about the actual decision that is facing the person begins the process. Often there can be multiple decisions all wrapped up in what looks to be one decision. An example may be the decision to go on holiday. Is this a decision about going on holiday? What needs to be considered? Things such as: where do I want to go? How much is it going to cost? When do I want to go? Who do I want to go with? What do I want to do?

Breaking down the decision into one area is really helpful, so in this example beginning with, ‘Do you want to go on a holiday?’ is the first decision. Getting **decision specific** helps to focus your attention as a supporter on the decision and how best to proceed to give the person the best chance possible to make the decision.

## Who are the right people to assist the person to make this decision?

Many of us choose the person we want to assist us in decision making, based on the decision we are facing and the people who are available to us. For example not many of us would ask our parents to support us to explore decisions around intimate issues; equally we may only choose to explore those kinds of subjects with one or two of our closest friends.

Choosing the right person to assist with a decision is really important and understanding the people who are around and close to the person also helps, particularly if we understand what they can potentially contribute and if we know their areas of potential conflict.

People	Possible Contribution / Support	Potential Conflict of interest
<i>Example</i> Kate – Johns mum	Love John to bits and will protect his interests.  Wants John to be in control of as much of his life as possible – so will support John to be heard.  Decisions such as day to day living, future planning, housing, work.	Concerns about John’s safety and risk taking.  Wanting John to be safe so I may be anxious of new things that look too risky.  Want to be involved in John’s life.
Ted – a long time supporter	Has a good understanding of what matters to John and what would make a good support for John.  Has supported John to make decisions in the past.  Decisions such as day to day, good support.	I think I know what good support should look like.  I have views on different organisations based on my professional experiences.

Another way to support the person to explore who they would like to assist them in making a particular decision is by using the following graphic. The graphic helps people to 'weigh up' their thoughts about what may or may not be useful to assist them in thinking about this decision.

## What is the decision?

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Who can help me make this decision?

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Why I should choose them?



Why I shouldn't choose them?

Will the decision affect my support person?

What is the decision? **To go on holiday to Rottne**



Who can help me make this decision?



Louise - my support worker



Why I should choose them?

She will talk to my Mum if I need to

She likes me to be happy

She likes me to save my money



Why I shouldn't choose them?

Will the decision affect my support person?

## When is the right time?

Working out the right time and place is crucial and offers the person the best chance of being able to consider options and make their decision. Some people find a quiet familiar space the best place to explore decision making, and others find a familiar environment can offer comfort and security to think through decisions. Considering the right place and time is based around what we specifically know about a person, what they like and don't like, and what works best for them. For example are they a morning person? Do they like a quiet space, music on; do they prefer a formal space, or an informal space etc.?

## What is the right way to communicate this decision?

Understanding the person's communication is central to supporting people's decision making. You cannot underestimate the importance of this. There is some information about how to do this well in the Communication section of the resources. When supporting someone to make a decision, it is important the way in which the decision is presented, is in a way that the person can understand and they have a way of being able to communicate their decision.

What's the right information including benefits, consequences and risks?

Working out how best to present the decision is a process that the supporter should consider. What kind of information is right for this person i.e. using photos, showing videos, going and seeing something – consider all of the ways that the person prefers to view information. Keeping a balance of information for the person to consider is important.

Some people can process a lot of information and some people can process a limited amount of information at any given time. Determining the relevant information and amount that works best for each person, will support him or her in understanding the decision. This may mean limiting the amount of information to two options as opposed to having to choose from five options.

It can be very difficult to make a decision about something you have no experience of or frame of reference about. Working out ways we can experience or understand the decision and its consequences is important, particularly for people who have had limited experiences or opportunities to make decisions.

An example may be if you were considering trying surfing – going to watch surfers at the beach may be one simple way to understand it. Framing the decision and the information in a way that best supports the person to understand it enables them to be more in a position to make a decision. We need to consider how we frame each decision by agreeing how best to present this information to the person. We can do this by asking ourselves – What information is needed for the person to understand and how best can we present it in a way that makes sense for them, in the context of who they are, and what we know about them?

# Framing a Decision

What is the decision? (Be decision specific)	What information will help the person understand the decision?	How best to frame the decision to give the person the best chance to understand and make a decision?

## How can we assist the person to weigh up the decision?

When we are considering a decision to make, we naturally go through a process of thinking about what is good and what concerns us about it. Weighing up a decision is part of the decision making process and exploring the weight of the benefit and negatives can help people to make a decision. There are many ways to this – simply having the conversation about the pros (positives) and the cons (negatives) can be sufficient, but for some people actually weighing out the pros and cons is really useful. Depending upon what makes the most sense, working on the following template is an option or using a real set of weights (so there is a practical and visual representation of the ‘weighing’ up).

### Weighing up a decision

What is the decision?

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What is good about this?



What is not good about this?

### How do we hear the person's decision?

Many people are expressing their wishes every day but are not always heard. It is vital that in supporting people in making decisions, people's wishes are respected and heard, and we discover ways to hear what people have to say.

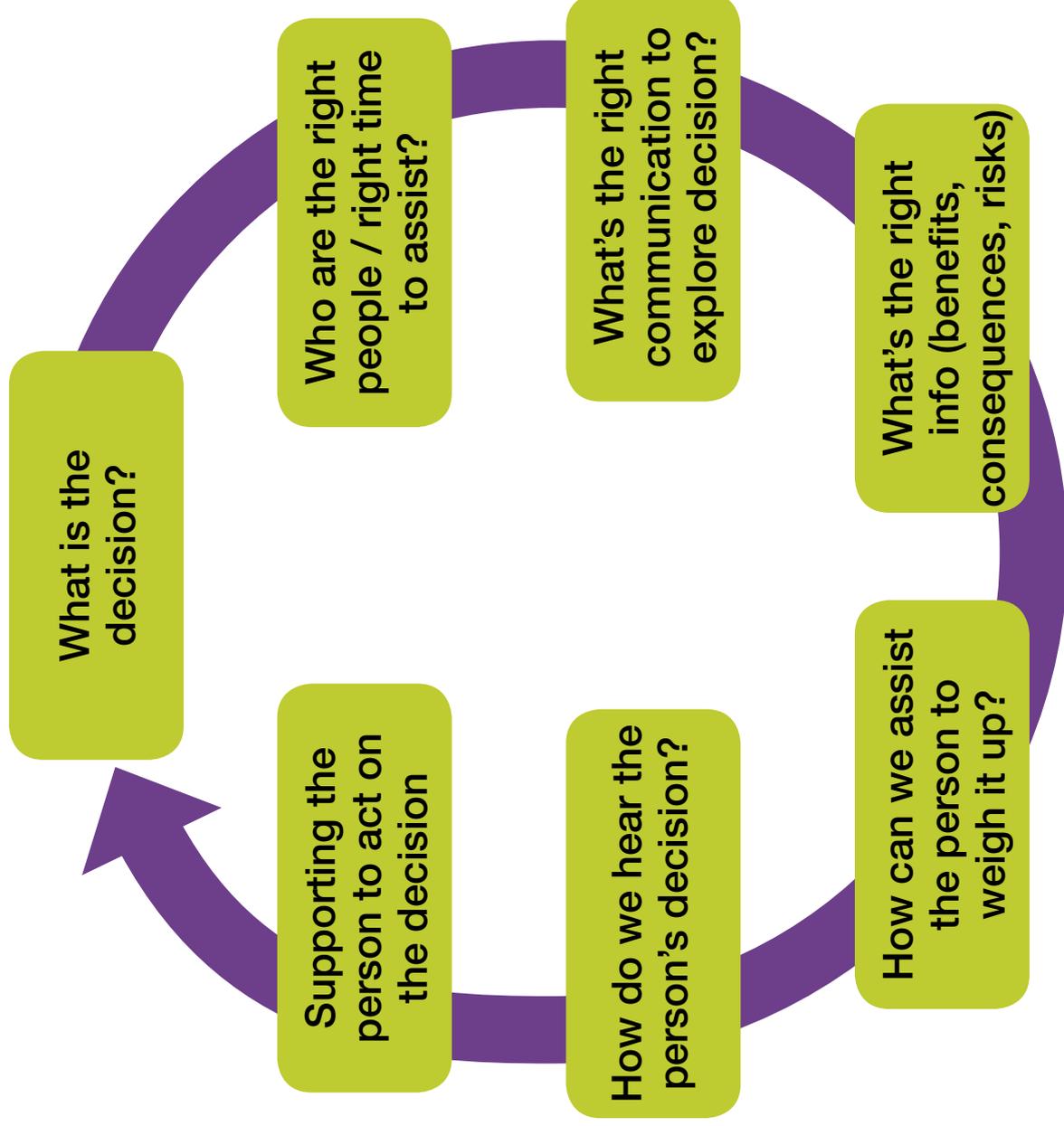
Often people can cajole, encourage, or even use specific tones of voice to people so they choose the outcome they want for the person. This is done with all the best of intention however – in supporting people in decision making we must be vigilant to hear and respect their decisions and be mindful of our input into the decision making process. When decisions have significant consequences for the person, our support needs to be more carefully considered when the person is weighing up the options.



# Supported Decision Making

## Resources

# Supporting the person to make a decision



People	Possible Contribution / Support	Potential Conflict of interest



# What is the decision?

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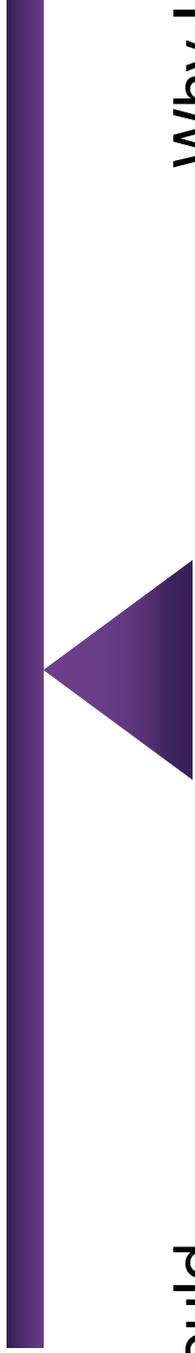


Who can help me make this decision?

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Why I should choose them?



Why I shouldn't choose them?

**Will the decision affect my support person?**



Supported Decision Making

[www.waindividualisedservices.org.au](http://www.waindividualisedservices.org.au)



# Framing a Decision

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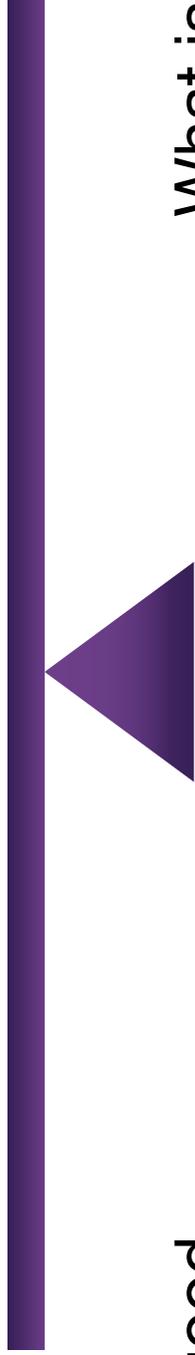
Weighin up a decision

What is the decision?

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What is good about this?



What is not good about this?



Supported Decision Making

[www.waindividualisedservices.org.au](http://www.waindividualisedservices.org.au)







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