



Supported Decision-making Guide

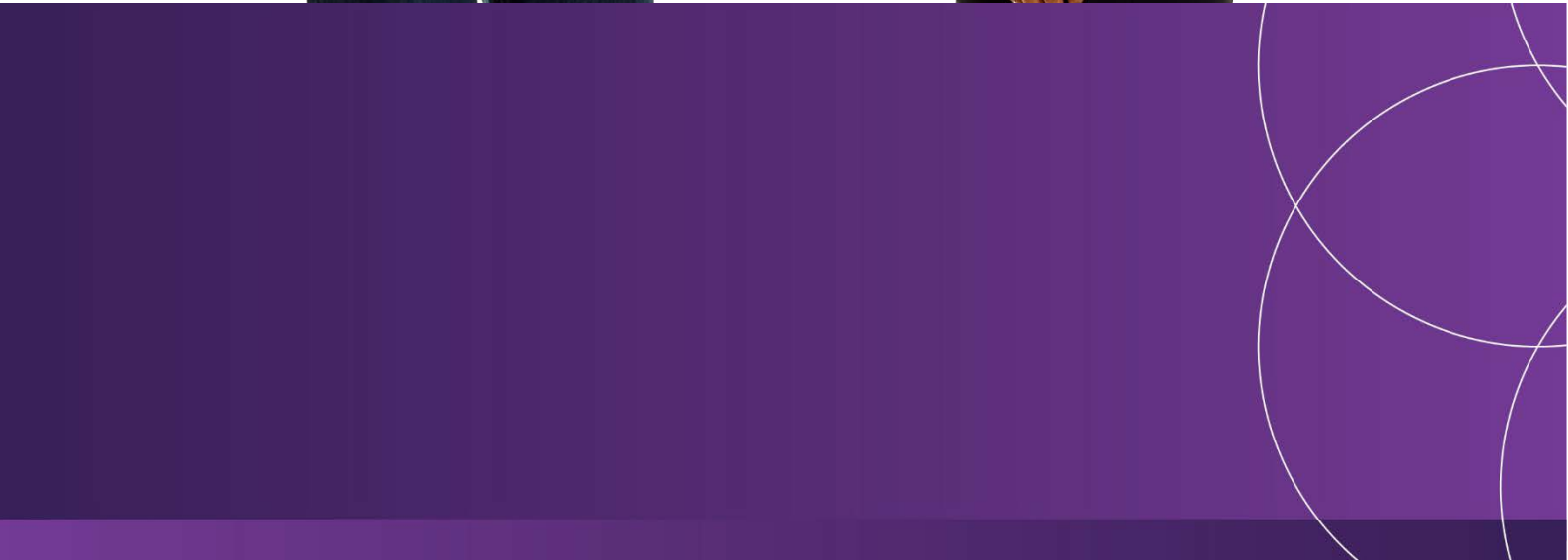
Information to help you



What's in this guide?

Getting to know the person	4
Understanding who the person is	5
What is life like now?	8
Learning by listening	9
Understanding who the important people are	70
Understanding decisions in the person's life	81
Being clear about what's important	16
Resources you can use	18
Supporting decision-making	17
The principles of supported decision-making	2124
Stages of decision-making support	25
Resources you can use	33
Good support	38
What makes a good life?	39
Good support	41
Who is the expert?	42
Conflict of interest	45
Getting clear	47
Resources you can use	49
Understanding how someone communicates	54
Understanding how someone communicates	55
Showing others how someone communicates	60
Resources you can use	62
Contact us	64

Getting to know the person



Understanding who the person is

We share information about ourselves so we can:

- understand each other better
- develop a good relationship.

Good decision-making support is about really understanding someone.

If you want to give someone the right decision-making support, you need to:

- work together
- really listen and hear what is important to them.

The information we find out about someone should be about:

- who the person is
- their interests
- their passions
- the special talents they have.

It shouldn't just be about their disability and the challenges they face.

Good person-centred questions can help us learn about people in a way that keeps them in control. The questions can help us build a rich picture of who a person is and how they choose to live their life. We are in a better position to support people in decision-making if we really understand who they are.



Questions to think about

By asking these questions you can understand someone better and build a good relationship:

- What do I like about the person?
- What do I respect about the person?
- What does the person offer the people around them?
- What is the person passionate about?
- What hobbies and interests does the person have?
- What's really important to the person?
- What do you need to know about the person's life that makes them who they are?
- Who are the people that matter to the person?
- Where are the places that matter to the person?
- What have they achieved in their life so far?
- What would a good future look like for the person?
- What have been the best times in the person's life? Why?
- What does this teach us about them?



What is life like now?

It's important to think about what the person's life is like now. It will help us learn about some really important areas, such as:

- what is important and should stay the same
- important relationships the person has
- the pace of their life
- what their goals are
- how closely their life matches who they are.

For most people, life is more than a series of activities or ways to fill up their day. In services, we focus on these because they look like things we can manage and show others what our support looks like. We can support Mary as she looks for work, we can assist John with the everyday tasks of life. We need to know and understand the things that make Mary enjoys and make her happy. It is harder to work with Mary in a way that meets her deepest needs – the need for:

- meaning
- love
- belonging.

These are the things that make us human. They:

- add richness and quality to our lives
- become a base for us to explore more in life.



Learning by listening

It's important to listen in a way that is:

- helpful
- supportive.

The person might have areas of their life that we need to know about – things that:

- are important to them now
- must be part of their future.

We might find out something about the way the person is living their life that is not right for who they are.

Here's an example.



Judy is said to be the 'life and soul of the party'.

She loves having a good time with other people.

As part of her life now, Judy doesn't have a chance to:

- celebrate or party with other people
- host parties of her own.

Judy's life now does not match the type of person she is or the life she wants.

We can support Judy by making sure she has plenty of chances to host parties of her own.

Understanding who the important people are

Everyone has important people in their life – people we:

- like
- respect
- love.

We use these people for support when we need to make important decisions. They can offer us their point of view based on how well they know us. We choose certain people depending on the decision we have to make. Some people might need help working out who the right person is. We need to know who is important in someone's life so we:

- know who to work with
- can make the right decisions.

It can be helpful to have a circle of support. A circle of support is a group of people who:

- care about the person
- understand the person
- have a good relationship with the person
- can help make decisions
- the person wants to have involved.

Understanding decisions in the person's life

It's important to think about how:

- we all make our own decisions
- we all use the support of other people
- the person makes their own decisions
- other people help the person make decisions.

Decisions I make	Decisions I use support to make	Decisions other people make	Meaningful ways the person can take part in decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what to wear • what to eat • who to spend time with • what music to listen to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what to spend money on • where to live • who to live with • who will give support • where to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • big decisions about money • health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking about what: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ they want ○ is right for them • sharing important information • having good ways to communicate

Step 1 – understanding who is in a person’s life

There are many ways to work out who is close to the person.

Work together to list people who:

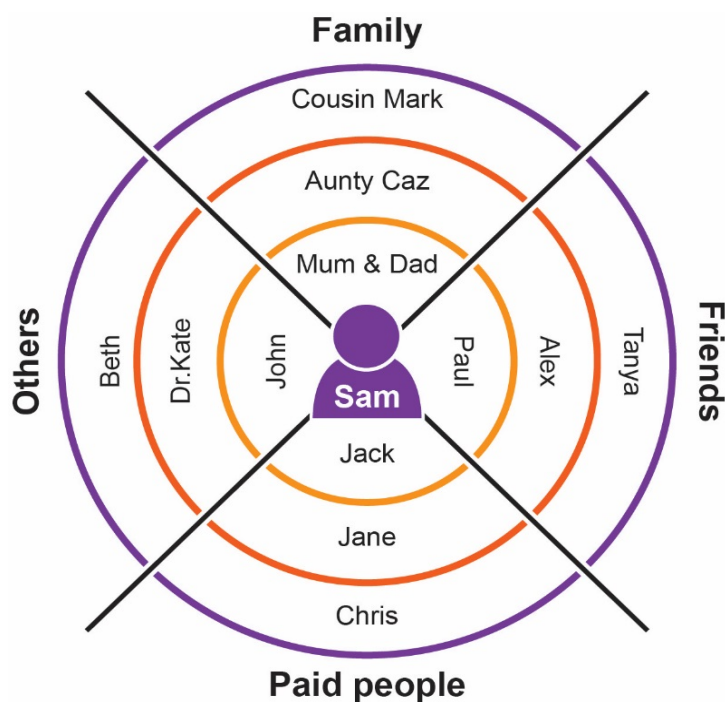
- are important
- have a positive relationship
- understand the person well.

What do they show us about the kind of people the person gets along with?

What is it about these people that the person likes?

Why are those things important?

This chart is one way to do that.



Put the person at the centre of the chart – write their name or use a photo.

Add other people’s names or photos to the other sections.

Put the people who are closest to the person near the centre, close to the person.

Put people who are connected, but not so close, further out.

Think about what it would take to get people near the outside to be part of a circle of support.

Ask the person:

- Who are the people you are closest to – the ones you couldn't live without?
- Are they:
 - people in your family?
 - people from work?
 - neighbours?
- Who are the people you:
 - do things with?
 - talk to?
 - work with?
 - spend time with?
- Who do you spend the most time with?
- Who are the people that know you best?
- Who are the people you trust and can rely on?

Who are the people that support you to live your life?

Step 2 – understanding what a circle of support might offer

Work with the most important people to find out how they could support the person to make decisions.

For example, there may be someone who:

- loves the person and will make sure their voice is always heard
- knows a lot about housing and could help make a housing decision.

A good conversation about this is all that is needed. The chart below shows you a way to work out what each person might have to offer.



How do other people take part in your life?

People	Ways they could offer support
Kate – John’s mum	<p>She loves John to bits and will protect what matters to him.</p> <p>She wants John to have choice and control so she will support John to be heard.</p> <p>She can help make decisions about John’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• day-to-day living• future planning• housing• work.
Ted – a long-time support person	<p>He understands what matters to John.</p> <p>He would make a good support for John.</p> <p>He has supported John to make decisions in the past such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• everyday choices• good supports to use.

Being clear about what's important

Often, when you rely on support, the focus is on things that will keep you:

- safe
- healthy.

There is much less focus on what is important to you. It's important to find a balance between what is:

- important *to* you
- important *for* you.

Michael Smull from Essential Lifestyle Planning for Everyone described a useful approach for exploring what's important to people.

“What is important to a person is what they say through their own words and behaviours about what really matters to them. What is important for people are the things that help people become or stay healthy and safe, whether it is important to them or not. The balance between the two is the compromise that all of us experience in life: between wanting to eat chocolate and maintain weight, and between having lazy evenings and wanting to get fitter at the gym. We all need to find a balance so that our lives are not just about what we choose, but also what we know needs to happen for us to be safe and healthy.”

[You can find out more about this here.](#)

Sometimes, when people rely on support, the focus is on what's important for their health and wellbeing – things that will keep the person safe or healthy – instead of the things that are important to the person. We are aiming to understand and support people to explore a balance of what's important **to** you and what's important **for** you. Working out the difference is important when you are supporting someone to make decisions.



Important to you	Important for you
<p>Relationships and people to be with.</p> <p>Things to do.</p> <p>Places to go.</p> <p>Routines.</p> <p>Pace of life.</p> <p>Things to have or own.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what matters the most to the person • what a good life means to them. <p>They express what they want using their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words • actions. <p>When the words and actions don't match up, pay attention to their actions.</p>	<p>Things that need to be remembered including their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health • safety • wellbeing • emotional needs.

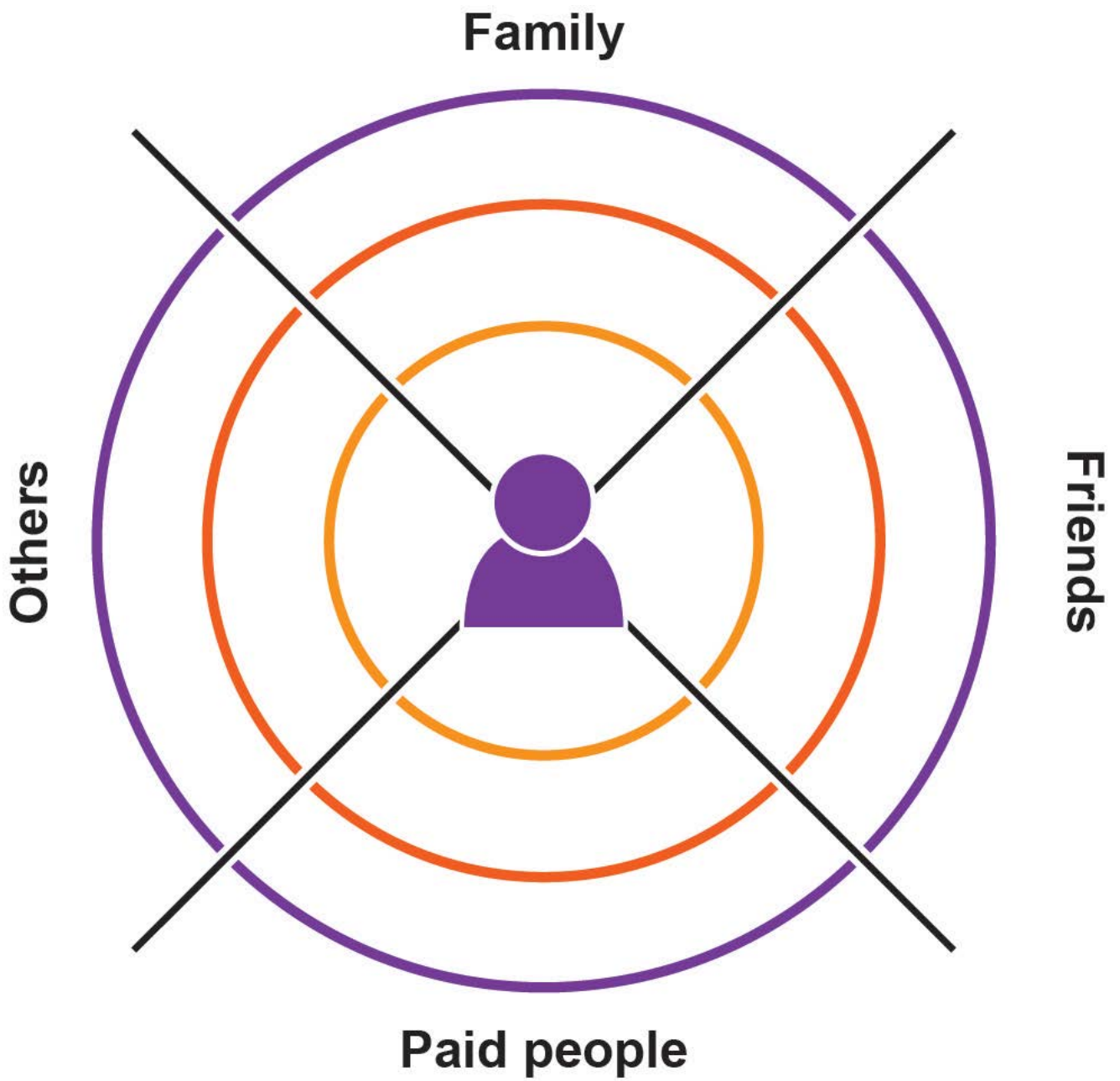
Resources you can use

Person-centred questions

- What do I like about the person?
- What do I respect about the person?
- What does the person offer the people around them?
- What is the person passionate about?
- What hobbies and interests does the person have?
- What's really important to the person?
- What do you need to know about the person's life that makes them who they are?
- Who are the people that matter to the person?
- Where are the places that matter to the person?
- What have they achieved in their life so far?
- What would a good future look like for the person?
- What have been the best times in the person's life? Why?
- What does this teach us about them?

Decisions I make	Decisions I use support to make	Decisions other people make	Meaningful ways the person can take part in decision-making

Exploring the important people in the person's life



Exploring the contributions of people in your life

People	Ways they could offer support

Important to	Important for

Supported decision-making



The principles of supported decision-making

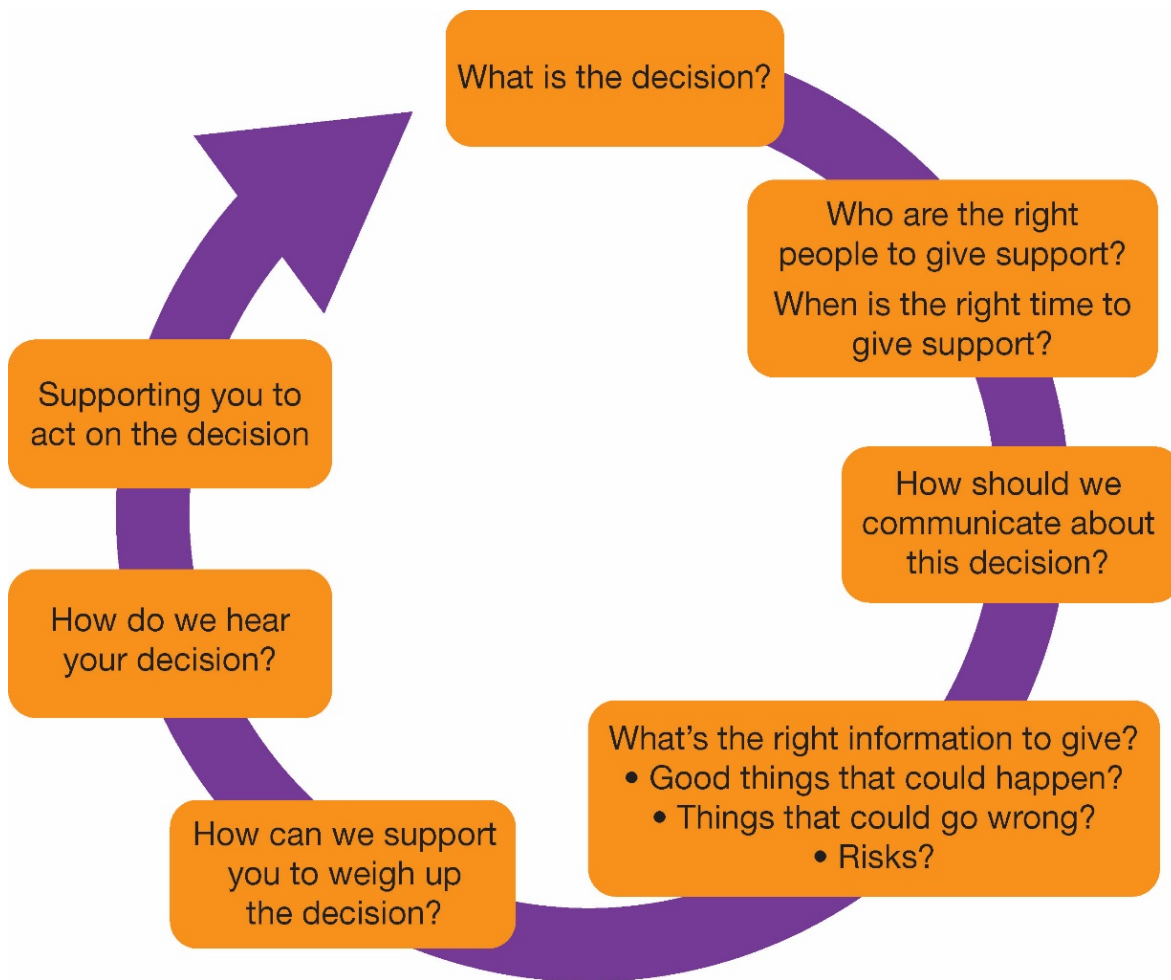
Supported decision-making is a term used to refer to a range of practices whereby people with disabilities are assisted to make or implement their own decisions.

There are some important ideas behind supported decision-making. We call them the principles of supported decision-making:

- **Assume I can** – I can make decisions.
- **Let me make one decision at a time** – Being able to decide depends on each decision.
- **Understand the right assistance for me** – Offer the support that is right for me.
- **Understand my preferences** – Listen to what I choose and like.
- **Remember that it's up to me** – I have the right to make decisions, even if you think they are unwise.
- **Support me to experience choice** – I have the right to learn from trying things.
- **Let me change my mind** – I have the right to change my mind.
- **Make sure you have explored all the options to assist me** – Give me enough information about the choices I have.
- **Involve me in decisions about my life** – Everyone has the right to take part in decision-making, including substitute decision-making.
- **Encourage me to connect with the people around me** – I need good people supporting me and my decisions.



Stages of decision-making support



There are stages to go through when you support someone to make a decision:

1. What is the decision?
2. Who are the right people to give support?
When is the right time to give support?
3. How should we communicate about this decision?
4. What's the right information to give?
 - Good things that could happen?
 - Things that could go wrong?
 - Risks?
5. How can we support you to weigh up the decision?
6. How do we hear your decision?
7. Supporting you to act on the decision.

1. What is the decision?

You need to be clear about the actual decision that must be made.

There could be more than 1 decision to make.

It's helpful to focus on making 1 decision at a time.

2. Who are the right people to give support?

We often choose who we want to support us with our decision-making based on:

- the decision we are facing
- who is available.

It's important to:


- choose the right person
- understand who is:
 - available
 - close to the person
- know what people can offer
- think about problems that might come up.






Choosing the right people to give support

People	Ways they could offer support	Problems that might come up
<p>Kate – John's mum</p>	<p>She loves John to bits and will protect what matters to him.</p> <p>She wants John to have choice and control so she will support John to be heard.</p> <p>She can help make decisions about John's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • day-to-day living • future planning • housing • work. 	<p>She worries about John's safety and risks he might take.</p> <p>She might worry about John doing new things that seem risky.</p> <p>She wants to be involved in John's life.</p>
<p>Ted – a long-time support person</p>	<p>He understands what matters to John.</p> <p>He would make a good support for John.</p> <p>He has supported John to make decisions in the past such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • day-to-day • good supports to use. 	<p>He believes he knows best about what good support is.</p> <p>He has opinions about different organisations based on the work he has done before.</p>

You can use the tool below to help someone choose who could offer the right support for a decision they need to make. It can help 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? 



Who can help me make this decision? 

 **Why should I choose them?** **Will the decision affect my support person?**  **Why shouldn't I choose them?**

Example:

What is the decision?
To go on holiday to Rottneast

Who can help me make this decision?
Louise – My support worker 

 **Why should I choose them?** **Will the decision affect my support person?**  **Why shouldn't I choose them?**

Pros (Left side):

- She will talk to my mum if I need to
- She likes me to be happy

Cons (Right side):

- She likes me to save my money

3. When is the right time to give support?

It's important to work out the right time and place to give someone support to make their decision. Some people try and find a quiet place the person already knows so they feel:

- comfortable
- safe and secure.

Thinking about the right time and place should be based on what we know about a person:

- what they like
- what they don't like
- what works best for them.

4. How should we communicate about this decision?

You need to understand how someone communicates so you can support their decision-making. The person should have a way to communicate their decision with you. You should give the person the information they need, in a way they understand. Think about how the person prefers to get information and try:

- using visuals – photos or videos
- taking them to go and see things that relate to the decision.

Some people can handle:

- a lot of information at once
- only a little bit of information at a time.

5. What's the right information to give?

It can be hard to make a decision when you don't know anything about it. Some people may not have much experience at making decisions. Working out which information matters the most, and how much to give, will support the person to understand the decision better. You might need to limit the information – give them 1 or 2 options instead of 5. They need to understand the:

- good things that could happen
- things that could go wrong
- risks.

You might ask yourself:

- What information do they need?
- How can I give the person the information:
 - in a way that works for them?
 - thinking about who they are?
 - using what I know about them?

You can deliver the information in a way that is right for the person. We call this framing a decision.

Framing a decision

What is the decision?	What information will help the person understand the decision?	What's the best way to frame the decision so the person can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand? • make a decision?
Whether to go on a holiday to New Zealand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information about New Zealand • holiday brochures • talking to people who have been there • getting information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ costs ○ flights ○ places to stay ○ things to do • who to go with • how to pay for the holiday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show them pictures and videos of New Zealand • work out a way to limit hotel choices • show how money could be spent • do the 'Weighing up a decision' exercise on page 34.

6. How can we support you to weigh up the decision?

When you weigh up a decision, you think about the:

- good things that could happen
- things that could go wrong.

Knowing these things can help you make a decision. Sometimes just talking about them is enough. Some people find it useful to actually weigh up the good things that could happen and things that could go wrong.

You could use:

- the template below
- a real set of weights.

Weighing up a decision template

What is the decision?		?	
<hr/>			
			
What is good about this?			What is not good about this?

7. How do we hear your decision?

When you support someone to make decisions, you must:

- listen
- hear what they have to say
- respect what they want.

Some people have ways to get the decision they want for the person. For example:

- persuasion
- encouragement
- using a certain tone of voice.

This may not respect the person.

We need to think carefully about:

- how we might affect the decision the person makes
- how we give our support for decisions that have:
 - risks
 - things that could go wrong.

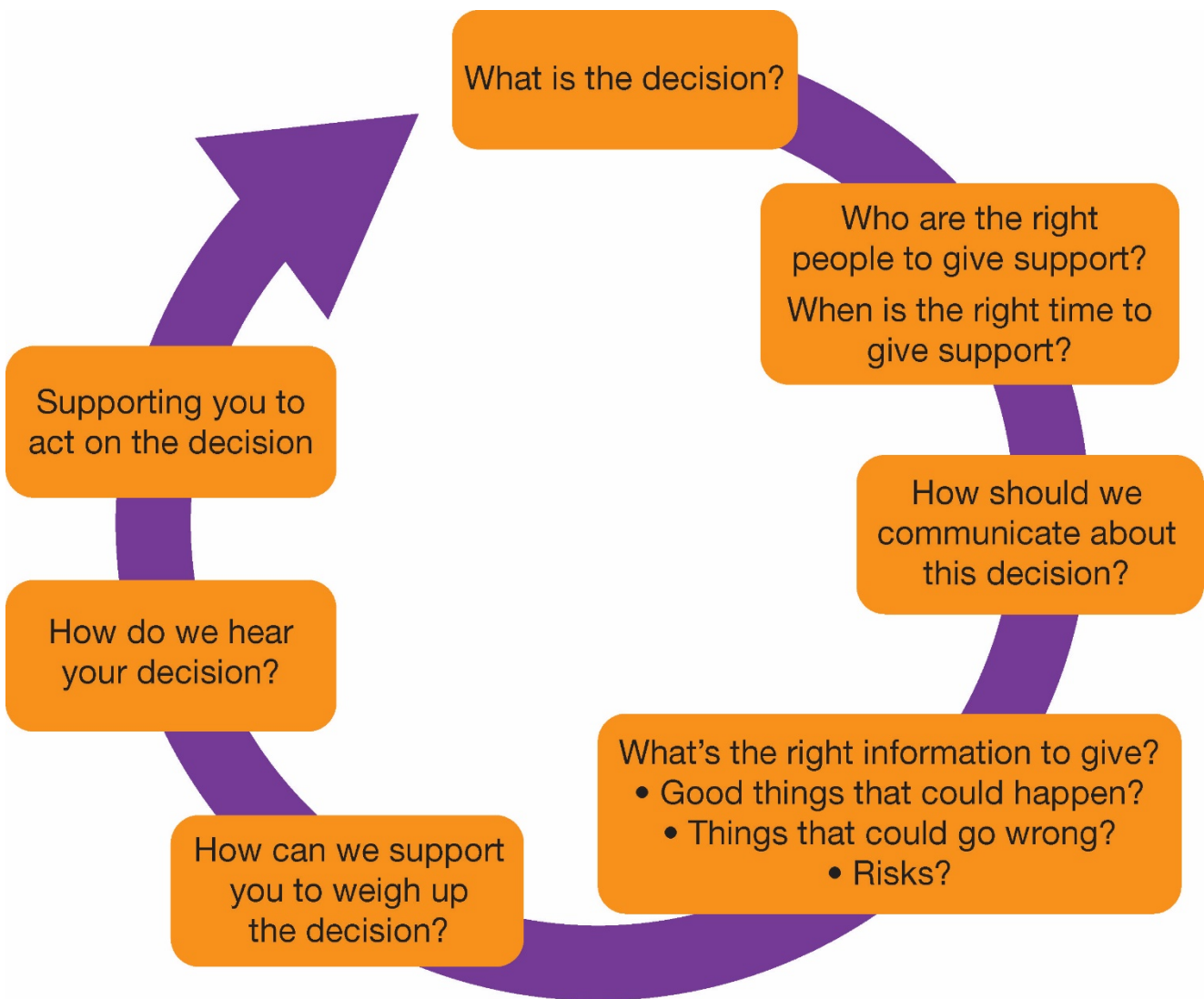
8. Supporting you to act on your decision

We talk about this more in the next section.



Resources you can use

Supporting the person to make a decision



People	Ways they could offer support	Problems that might come up

What is the decision?



Who can help me make this decision?



Why should I choose them?

Will the decision affect my support person?



Why shouldn't I choose them?

Framing a Decision

What is the decision?	What information will help the person understand the decision?	What's the best way to frame the decision so the person can: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand?• make a decision?

Good support



What makes a good life?

We all choose to live our lives in a way that:

- makes sense to us
- is based on our:
 - interests
 - what's important to us
 - what's important for our health and wellbeing.

Having a good life is different for everyone. There are five areas that are important in developing a good life:

- sharing ordinary places
- making choices
- developing abilities
- being treated with respect and having a valued role in the community
- growing in relationships.

We need to give people support in a way that offers them a better chance of success in these five areas. We need to think about:

- how our support works for people
- if our support is getting people closer to the 5 areas, or further away.

What's working towards this? What's working against this? You can use the table below to help you work this out.



Working towards	A good life	Working against
	Sharing ordinary places	
	Making choices	
	Developing abilities	
	Being treated with respect and having a valued role in the community	
	Growing in relationships	

Good support

Good support depends on what makes sense for the person needing the support. Good support comes from choosing the best person to support you. This can also affect supported decision-making. People often choose people to support them who have:

- similar interests
- certain personalities
- certain skills and talents.

It's important to help the person think about who they would like to have support them. There are 5 main ideas behind being a good supporter:

- **Be present** – focus your attention on what is happening here and now.
- **Check your intention** – make sure supporting the person to make their own decision is the reason for what you are doing.
- **Explore your beliefs** – understand the beliefs that you have that could affect how you support the person.
- **Be positive** – understand how your attitude can:
 - shape everything
 - lead to things getting better.
- **See possibility** – believe that:
 - people can, and do, make their own decisions
 - creativity can lead to new possibilities.
- **Understand your impact** – be someone who:
 - brings out the best in other people
 - understands how you can affect other people
 - finds ways to make sure the person feels comfortable.



Who is the expert?

People and their families are the experts on:

- their own lives
- the support they need.

A support person becomes important when they understand and care about the person, their family and their situation. Good support means offering support to work out decisions based on:

- the person and what's important to them
- what's important for their health and wellbeing.

Some support people might think they know:

- every answer
- what's best for the person.

This can affect the person and their family – they need to feel like they're the experts.

Working on the inside – personal checklist

Ways to do things	Things I might try	Things I will try
Think about who the expert is	How do you allow people and their families to be the experts when you work with them? How do you show that you respect others as being the expert? What would people and their families say about this?	

Ways to do things	Things I might try	Things I will try
<p>Be in the here and now</p>	<p>How do you focus your attention on what is happening here and now?</p> <p>Are there ways you could try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mindfulness • meditation? <p>Try really being present at different moments during the day.</p> <p>How can you and the people you work with be more mindful?</p>	
<p>Check the reasons why you are doing this</p>	<p>Describe the big picture of what you want to achieve.</p> <p>Look at the things you support people to take part in. Are you clear about what the intention is?</p> <p>Talk to people and their families about what they believe the intention is.</p> <p>What does this mean for you and your role?</p>	
<p>Understand your beliefs</p>	<p>Think about how you see the people you are connected to, including people you work with.</p> <p>What is your team's story? Who are you as a team? What are you supporting people to achieve?</p> <p>What can you learn from stories you are told about families?</p> <p>How can you influence the stories that are told about people you support?</p>	

Ways to do things	Things I might try	Things I will try
Be positive	<p>Understand the things that help you be positive. Make sure you include them in your day.</p> <p>Turn the negative things you say to yourself into positive things.</p> <p>Look for the positive things about other people.</p> <p>How can you help you and your team be positive?</p>	
See possibility	<p>Start dreaming about your life. What would your ideal life look like? What small steps could you take to get closer to that?</p> <p>Dream together with people you are connected to. What would their ideal life look like? What small steps could you take to get closer to that?</p>	
Understand your effect on others	<p>Ask people you trust for feedback – do my emotions affect you?</p> <p>Ask for feedback from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people you work with • families. <p>Look back at your week and think about times when how you were feeling might have affected the job you were doing.</p>	

Personal bias

Someone giving decision-making support might have strong opinions about a decision because the result will affect them. We call this a personal bias.

The supporter needs to:

- be open and honest about a possible personal bias
- look into other support the person could use for the decision.

There are some things you need to think about:

- how you might be affected by the result of a decision
- what the personal bias is
- how you can support the person with the decision in a way that is fair
- other people who could support the person with this decision instead.

It can be hard to admit there is a personal bias. It's helpful to be honest and direct about a possible personal bias.

Using the chart below can help you work out if there is a personal bias.



Example

People	Ways they could offer support	Possible personal bias
<p>Kate – John’s mum</p>	<p>She loves John to bits and will protect what matters to him.</p> <p>She wants John to have choice and control. She will support John to be heard.</p> <p>She can help make decisions about John’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • day-to-day living • future planning • housing • work. 	<p>She worries about John:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being safe • taking risks. <p>She worries about John doing new things that seem risky. They scare her.</p> <p>She wants to be involved in John’s life.</p>
<p>Ted – a long-time support person</p>	<p>He understands what matters to John.</p> <p>He would make a good support person for John.</p> <p>He has supported John to make decisions in the past such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • day-to-day • good supports to use. 	<p>He knows best about what good support is.</p> <p>He has opinions about different organisations based on the work he has done before.</p>

Getting clear

Being clear about decision-making is very helpful for:

- the person
- their supporters.

It's important to:

- record the decisions that are made
- review them – look at them again to make sure they are still right.

This gives you an agreement about the decisions and how the person will take part.

Recording decision-making

What is the decision?	Who are the right people to offer support? Where is the right place?	What's the right way to communicate?	What's the right way to present the information?	How can we support the person to weigh up the decision?	How do we hear the person's decision?	How do we support the person to act on the decision?
Whether to go on a holiday in March	Dad and best friend John Talk in a quiet place	Use communication board	Visuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • photos • videos Visit the airport Sleep at a friend's home overnight	Understand that there will be time away from home Look at the total cost and how that will affect other things	Understand how the person communicates Include people who know the person well	Help with online bookings Practise packing a suitcase
Be clear about the actual decision	What are the good things that could happen? What are the problems that might come up?	What do we know about the best way to communicate with the person?	What do we know about what works best for the person?	What do we know is important: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the person? • for the person? 	Be clear about how you will know the person has made their decision	How do we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the person to act on the decision • see how they respond?

Resources you can use

Working towards	A good life	Working against
	Sharing ordinary places	
	Making choices	
	Developing abilities	
	Being treated with respect and having a valued role in the community	
	Growing in relationships	

Working on the Inside – Personal Checklist

Ways to do things	Things I might try	Things I will try
Think about who the expert is		
Be in the here and now		

Ways to do things	Things I might try	Things I will try
Check the reasons why you are doing this		
Understand your beliefs		

Ways to do things	Things I might try	Things I will try
Be positive		
See possibility		
Understanding your own impact		

Recording Decision-Making

What is the decision?	Who are the right people to offer support? Where is the right place?	What's the right way to communicate?	What's the right way to present the information?	How can we support the person to weigh up the decision?	How do we hear the person's decision?	How do we support the person to act on the decision?
Be clear about the actual decision	What are the good things that could happen? What are the problems that might come up?	What do we know about the best way to communicate with the person?	What do we know about what works best for the person?	What do we know is important: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the person? • for the person? 	Be clear about how you will know the person has made their decision	How do we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the person to act on the decision • see how they respond?

Understanding how someone communicates



Understanding how someone communicates

Communication is about expressing what is inside your head to another person

It could be your:

- thoughts
- feelings
- desires
- wants
- wishes.

We communicate to:

- share who we are
- share information
- form relationships
- share what we want and need for ourselves and from others
- learn about life
- be offered choices
- express feelings
- understand others
- request or have access to information
- be included socially
- seek and reject assistance.

Communication is very important when you support someone's decision-making. To be a good communication partner we need the desire to really hear a person and learn how the other person:

- communicates
- needs you to communicate with them.

In exploring people's communication, we need to think about their ability to understand spoken or written language. You need to keep listening to, and learning with, the person.

Everyone has their own way of expressing themselves. Not everybody uses speech or words to communicate. You may need to find other ways, such as:

- objects
- photos
- drawings
- symbols
- sign language
- body language.

We need to know which ways suit each person best.

Many people have a way of communicating that:

- only they use
- only people who know them well can understand.

Many people have a communication style that is unique to them. Sometimes they rely heavily on the people who know and understand them well. It's important to keep a record of how someone communicates so other people around the person can learn their style.

By working through the following communication chart, (adapted from Fulton, Woodley and Sanderson), you can help everyone understand how the person communicates.



Communication chart

At this time	The person says or does this	We think it means	You should do this
When does this happen? Are there certain times or places?	What do you see the person do?	What does everyone think it means? At times we may need to use our best guess.	What do we agree we should do in response?
any time	the person's neck goes red	embarrassed	reassure them that things are ok, it's not the end of the world
in the morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asks a lot of questions about other people isn't satisfied with the answers given 	needs to know what is happening today but doesn't know how to ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sit down with the 'now and then' board put the right photos on for the day

How other people should communicate

At this time or in this situation	When we want the person to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> know or understand something do something 	You should do or say this
At 7 o'clock in the morning	It's time for work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show me the work photo symbol tell me it's time for work

Showing others how someone communicates

There are ways to support someone's communication that are:

- practical
- person-centred.

You can create a:

- communication passport
- personal profile.

Communication passports and personal profiles describe:

- who the person is
- what is important to the person in their everyday life
- what other people need to know about how the person communicates
- what to do so the person can be:
 - listened to
 - heard
 - understood.

The topics covered include:

- my journey
- who I am
- things you need to know about me
- who is important to me – people in my life
- things that others like about me
- things I like or don't like – food, places, people, hobbies, animals
- things I like to do
- places I like to go
- who I like to do things with
- what I like to talk about
- things that are important *to* me
- things that are important *for* me – health and wellbeing
- how I communicate
- what you need to do to:
 - understand me
 - support my communication.

Resources you can use

The following chart explores how I communicate with others

At this time	The person says or does this	We think it means	You should do this
When does this happen? Are there certain times or places?	What do you see the person do?	What does everyone think it means? At times we may need to use our best guess.	What do we agree we should do in response?

The following chart explores how others communicate with the person

At this time or in this situation	When we want the person to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• know or understand something• do something	You should do or say this

Contact us



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