

## **Your child's Voice matters!**

### **How to support your child or young person to express their views.**

Since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014, changes to the law have given new rights to young people over compulsory school age (at the end of the academic year they turn 16) to make requests and decisions that apply to them directly.

It is likely that a parent or carer will remain a key part in supporting any decision making, but it will be the young person's views that will take precedence.

Although this can seem a daunting concept for both you and your child, there is a lot of help and support available to ensure the best possible outcomes

The earlier you include your child in making some decisions the more beneficial it will be for you and them. They will:

- Build on decision making skills
- Gain independence and maturity, preparing for adulthood
- Encourage them to have aspirations and goals for the future
- If they are involved in decisions made about their life, they are more likely to progress and achieve.

### **When will my child or young person be involved in decision making?**

- Their views will be recorded for assessments, plans and reviews
- Deciding what path they would like to follow post 16
- They will be invited to meetings regarding them directly

### **How can I support them?**

- You know your child better than anyone so it is important that you help them to communicate effectively with people involved
- Encourage them to participate in some informal conversations at home about their views and wishes
- Provide them with relevant information to support and advise their decisions
- Take some ongoing notes about things they say, particularly if there is a scheduled meeting.

## **What if my child can't talk or doesn't understand?**

There are many ways to communicate other than verbally. People who know your child well will have an understanding of their level of language and emotional maturity which must be considered when communicating effectively. It is important that if your child is unable to talk, they are given opportunities to communicate in their own way. This could be:

- Using resources such as photos, pictures, choice boards
- Using a computer
- Facial expressions
- Sign language

Regarding their understanding, the right of young people to make a decision is subject to their capacity to do so as set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Mental capacity- 'the ability to make decisions based on a single decision at a single time

## **5 key principles**

1. It should be presumed that everyone can make their own decisions unless it is proved otherwise
2. Do not treat people as incapable of making a decision unless all practical steps have been tried to help them
3. A person should not be treated as lacking capacity just because they make an unwise decision
4. Actions or decisions carried out on behalf of someone who lacks capacity must be in their best interests
5. Actions or decisions carried out on behalf of someone who lacks capacity should limit their rights to freedom of action as little as possible.

## **What if my child's view is different to mine?**

- Don't get frustrated if your child has a different view to yours
- Allow them to discuss their point of view
- Offer some helpful and factual advice, perhaps exploring both of your views together and reasons for them.
- Don't push them for information and make sure you chose an appropriate time and place to have a discussion

**REMEMBER:** the law states that once they are over compulsory school age, their decisions will take precedent.

## **Where can my child or young person go for further information?**

- The Information, Advice and Support Service
- School or college
- Health and social care professionals involved
- Voluntary organisations and charities- information on these can be found in the Local Offer
- The Local Offer found at <https://shropshire.local-offer.org/>
- Information, Advice and Guidance from Shropshire Youth [www.shropshireyouth.info/](http://www.shropshireyouth.info/)

## **Where can I go for support?**

- All of the above links are also useful to parents and carers to obtain information and support
- Talking to supportive family and friends can often help you see a different perspective.

## **Where can I get further information, advice or support?**

Contact the IASS team on:

**Phone:** 01743 280019 (Open 10am-4pm Monday—Friday)

**Web:** [www.cabshropshire.org.uk](http://www.cabshropshire.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire](https://www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire)

**Email:** [iass@cabshropshire.org.uk](mailto:iass@cabshropshire.org.uk)

**Address:** Fletcher House, 15 College Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1LY