

Helping a young person to give their views – Guide for Parents and Carers

According to SEN and disability law local authorities must consider young people’s view, wishes and feelings. It stresses the importance of young people taking part as fully as possible in decisions made about them. A child becomes a young person, under SEN Law, when they are over compulsory school age **(the last Friday in June after they turn 16)**.

From Year 9, especially if your young person has an Education Health and Care Plan, the local authority, school, college, and others will begin to make plans for their adult life. It is important for your young person to be included in decisions about their:

Education and training

Health

Where they might live

Relationships in their lives

Money

Their role in society

As a parent/carer you have a key role to play in this. You should encourage your young person to be ambitious for their futures, whatever their needs, and support them in the choices they make, allowing them to communicate this in a way that suits them best.

Starting by sharing decision making with you and then with your support, developing the confidence to make those decisions themselves. Learning from mistakes should be a positive part of this process for young people.

You know your young person best. The home or any place where they feel comfortable and safe is usually the best place to start to talk to your young person about their views.

- It is important that young people understand that there are no right and wrong views and opinions about what is best for them and they will not get into trouble for what they say;
- They understand why these questions are being asked.

It can be easier to talk during a shared activity such as drawing or in the car. Keep things brief. You can return to it at another time, especially if they seem uncomfortable. Help them to understand they may not always get the things they want but it important to have a ‘voice’ in decisions.

If your young person is comfortable talking about their views, explore:

- ❖ What do people like and admire about them
- ❖ What makes them happy
- ❖ How do they want to be supported?
- ❖ What they want to do as an adult
- ❖ What do they need to feel happy, safe and to learn well?
- ❖ What motivates them and is enjoyable
- ❖ What are they good at and proud of?
- ❖ What things are hard and they would like to change
- ❖ How to they feel about their condition e.g. Autism

This table gives some suggestions what they might include:

<p style="text-align: center;">Things you might include that are important to the young person including things that are working well (home, school, or college) and that they enjoy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family life, friends and social life• Hobbies, leisure time and interests• Anything or anyone that helps them at school and that they couldn't do without• Health, sports and exercise• Getting around, being independent, and getting where they want to go• What motivates them• Skills and the subjects they find interesting (home and school)• What achievements are they proud of?
<p style="text-align: center;">Things the young person would like to change (home, school, or college)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remembering, planning or organising things• Understanding work, taking exams, or getting help with learning• Getting around school, or getting out and about• Relationships and friendships• Understanding rules, instructions, or other people• Health, taking care of themselves or staying safe• Family and social life• Hobbies and interests
<p style="text-align: center;">Hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do they want to go to college, what type of college would they like to go to?• What subjects would they like to study?• Would they like to go to work or volunteer? What sort of jobs or volunteering are they interested in?• What do they need to learn before they can go to college or get a job?• Where would they like to live? Who would they like to live with?

When your young person's views might be used

- School, college or other meetings e.g. making and reviewing support plans, EHC Plan annual review
- As part of a specialist assessment
- In planning for transitions e.g. move to post 16 education or training
- In Section A of an EHC Plan. (This gives key information about the young person's goals and ambitions; strength and needs; support they need and the difference this will make to them. This links to the outcomes and provisions throughout the plan, referred to as 'The Golden Thread')
- During dispute resolution, mediation or appeal to SEN Tribunal

It is important for young people to attend the meetings in which decisions are made about them. They may not feel comfortable to stay for the whole meeting which is fine. You could write down their views and ambitions before the meeting to make sure their voice is heard even if they are not present at the time it is being discussed.

You can contact our team for legally based, free, confidential, impartial advice and support including:

- **Advice on SEN support at school/college aged 0 - 25 years;**
- **Explain the EHCP assessment process and your rights;**
- **Support in Annual reviews and meetings;**
- **Support in mediation and appeals;**
- **Advice on school exclusions.**

We would be happy to hear from you:

- **KIAS – (Kirklees enquiries) – Tel: 0300 330 1504**
- **SENDIASS – (Calderdale enquiries) – Tel: 01422 266141**