

# Welcome to Choice Support





# Contents

<b>Welcome to Choice Support</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About Choice Support</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Working together</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Building good relationships</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Moving into a new home</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Supporting with money</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>How we check the quality of our services</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Keeping people safe</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Making decisions</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>GDPR</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Compliments, comments and complaints</b>	<b>24</b>



# Welcome to Choice Support

My name is Sarah Maguire,  
and I am privileged to be the  
CEO at Choice Support.

I began my career in the late 1980's when the old learning disability hospitals were closing across England. Since starting my career in social care, I have worked in many roles including support worker, house manager, training officer, and director of operations and quality assurance.

Throughout my career I have worked alongside families to ensure that people we support are active members of their communities. This includes making sure their rights as citizens are upheld and to challenge any injustice they may face.

These ideals are part of the Choice Support Vision: *We want to be part of a world where everyone matters, and everyone cares. We want all our staff to understand the part they play in helping us achieve our purpose: To create opportunities for people to be happy.*

Our values were co-produced with the people we support and reflect what is important to them. The way we achieve our purpose is through living out our values:

## **We care**

We care about people and stand up for what is right.

## **We respect**

We are open and honest and value people for who they are.

## **We learn**

We listen, we work together, and we continue to improve.

## **We lead**

We are experts at what we do and make good ideas happen.

Supporting people to build a life starts with having a place to call home. We have found that families often struggle to get the right advice on housing and support. It can be very complicated. So now we have a housing team that provides advice to families to find individual solutions.

We are very proud of our safeguarding standards and commitment to providing all our staff with the skills and training to keep people in our care safe and happy.

Like all providers I know that we won't always get things right, but we will always listen and learn. We know that when it comes to your family, you are the expert. Our role is to work with you, to support you, to involve you. Together we can make sure people we support get to live their best lives.

Once again,  
welcome to  
Choice Support.

**Sarah Maguire**  
CEO





# About Choice Support

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## Who we are and what we do

Choice Support has been in existence since 1984. We started in a small way supporting people with learning disabilities leaving the old learning disability hospitals which were closing across England. We offer support services around the country, from Hampshire and East Sussex in the south to Yorkshire in the north.

Over the years, our expertise has extended to supporting adults with a wider range of support needs, including learning disabilities, mental health issues and autistic people. We have built a strong, nationally recognised track record for quality and innovation. Placing control with people and families has always been an important part of our work. We were one of the first social care charities to commission support directly from a family and have continued to champion the use of individual budgets.

Listening to the voices of people who use our services, and their family carers, is built into our Quality Assurance system. We have a paid team of Quality Checkers (people who use our services) who check that we are supporting people in the ways that matter to them. As a result of our expertise in this area Choice Support now holds the national contract to provide Experts by Experience for the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Experts by Experience deliver the voice and experience of people who use health and social care to the CQC. They work alongside CQC Inspectors as part of their CQC inspection teams for all regulated services.

We also build new homes in partnership with the NHS and local authorities designed specifically for people leaving Assessment and Treatment Units (ATUs). We are committed to helping people with the highest support needs to live in their community, with the right support, and close to their family and friends.

We are also working as part of a consortium to deliver national training for health practitioners as part of the government drive to improve the experience of autistic people. Campaigning for rights has been a proud tradition at Choice Support. This includes making sure peoples' rights as citizens are upheld and injustices are challenged. We lead the Supported Loving network that highlights the importance of good support in helping people find friendship and love. You can read more about this on our website [www.choicesupport.org.uk](http://www.choicesupport.org.uk)



# Working together

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## Working together to give your family member the best support

We know how important it is that your family member has the right support and is given opportunities for happiness. We understand that working together helps everyone achieve this.

Choice support takes our role in your family member's life very seriously; we pride ourselves on our values and the support we provide. Choice Support understands you are important in your family member's life and are a valuable source of information and support.

Sometimes things may not go to plan, but working together and great communication means we can all quickly get back on track.

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## Communication

Communication is the key to good relationships. We will actively listen to what you have to say and value your feedback. It's important that everyone involved in your relative or friend's support feels comfortable communicating with each other; this means we can give great support and so small issues should not become big problems.

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### What we will do

- Make sure you have contact details for your relative's team.
- Communicate with respect and kindness.
- Use your preferred contact method.
- Make sure you feel comfortable and welcome.
- Tell you if something has not gone to plan.
- Respect your relative's choices around information sharing.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Ask (for feedback).
- Listen (to what you say).
- Do (something about it).

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### What you can do

- Tell us how you like to be contacted and give us your contact details.
- Communicate with respect and kindness.
- Speak to your relative's team straight away if you have any concerns.
- Tell us what we are doing well.
- Use our complaints policy when you need to.
- Let us know any information you think is important.
- Tell us if your contact details change.



## Getting to know you and your relative or friend

Each person we support is an individual, so getting to know them and the important people in their lives is key to providing great support. Good relationships help everyone work together to create opportunities for happiness for your family member.

We need to check that we can provide the right support for your family member, so there is a lot of information we may ask for. Everyone feels better if they know who they are talking to; this helps build trust and openness.

### What we will do

- Make sure you have all the contact details you need.
- Make sure you have the family partnership information you need.
- Carry out a comprehensive assessment for your relative.
- Ask what you expect from your friend's or relative's service.
- Tell you if we don't think we are the right people to support your friend or relative.
- Respect your relationship with your family member and your knowledge about them.
- Keep your family member at the centre of everything we do.
- Create a personalised support plan for your family member.

### What you can do

- Spend some time getting to know us.
- Let us have your contact details.
- Tell us about all the important people in your family member's or friend's life.
- Share information to help us provide great support.
- Ask any questions you may have.
- Be open about your expectations, so we can tell you if we can meet them.
- Get involved in your family member's or friend's support planning.
- Contact our family ambassador if you want impartial information about Choice Support.

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>

# Building good relationships

## Working together

Choice Support is committed to creating opportunities for happiness for everyone we support. We are also committed to building positive relationships with people we support, their relatives and friends, and, at the same time promote the wellbeing of our staff and colleagues.

Because we work closely with people; complicated and emotive situations can happen, these can be challenging for everyone involved. Our aim is to work together in a way that leads to the best outcomes for the people we support.

The team supporting your relative is keen to work with you; they welcome your input and expertise. By following the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) our teams will also promote the rights of people they support.

Communication is vital to help build positive and strong relationships. We expect our colleagues to always communicate with respect and kindness and we ask that you uphold the same standards when communicating with them.





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## Family partnership

Choice Support has a family ambassador who shares your experience of having a relative who needs social care support. The family ambassador welcomes contact at any time from relatives who may want to chat more about this, or if you want to talk through an issue in confidence with someone independent.

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/about-choice-support/family-ambassador>

We can offer extra help to ensure your voice is heard, so we can work together towards finding positive solutions in an impartial and non-judgemental way.

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## External organisations

Sometimes, we may need extra support from an external organisation who are experts in their field. Choice Support can help signpost you to these other providers. Here are a few of the organisations we work with:

Learning Disability England (LDE) works to bring people and organisations together to create a movement for positive change, where people with learning disabilities, families, friends, and paid supporters come together on an equal basis.

<https://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk>

Supported Loving network – For people with learning disabilities, finding friends and love is often more than just chemistry – it can come down to getting the right support from your staff. Members of the Supported Loving network share their expertise and tools with everyone providing support, so individuals can access better support for their relationships.

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/supported-loving>

Access Social Care provides free legal advice to people with social care needs, helping to achieve a better quality of life.

<https://www.accesscharity.org.uk>

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## Respecting diversity

Choice Support is a diverse organisation: we respect the backgrounds of people we support, their friends and family, and our staff. We do not tolerate any behaviour that does not respect protected characteristics as defined under legislation.

Find out more about protected characteristics by following the link below:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination>

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>

# Moving into a new home

It can be both exciting and scary to move home (either into a house or flat), especially if your relative or friend is moving away from their family home for the first time. There are lots of things to think about. We know you will have many questions about supporting your relative with this significant event.

The team helping your relative move in will be happy to give you information and discuss any questions you may have. Everyone we provide support to is an individual but we have tried to answer some common queries below.

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## What is the difference between registered care and supported living?

### Registered care

In a registered service, the people we support live under the 'care' of the home, rather than having a tenancy agreement. Choice Support receives a block of funding for that location, rather than for an individual. We then allocate our staffing in the best possible way to meet everyone's needs.

A registered service has a registered manager who is responsible to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for the standard of care and support.

### Supported living

In a 'supported living' situation, Choice Support receives funding for providing our staff. This means that we do not contribute to any of the daily living costs your relative may have such as bills, food, activity and travel or holiday costs. We are responsible for any staff-only costs such as cleaning products for a sleep-in area for staff. The team supporting your relative will be able to discuss this in detail with you.

Choice Support will support people who own their homes or who have a tenancy agreement. We provide supported living services to all types of people, including people with complex support needs.

The funding authority will decide how much staff support your relative needs and what for. Your relative (or their financial representative) can pay for this support using a direct payment or they can ask the funding authority to pay Choice Support directly. Your relative may be asked to contribute towards their care costs using a 'fairer charging' assessment from the local authority.

Our staff will provide the support your relative has been assessed to receive; this can range from a few hours a week, to having staff with them 24/7.

Your relative can claim any benefits which they are entitled to; these benefits help pay their costs such as rent, bills and food.

A supported living service will have an individual management arrangement, depending on the amount of support your relative receives. There will be a CQC registered manager for the area your relative is living in. The team supporting your relative can let you know exactly what this arrangement is.

## My relative will be sharing with other adults in supported living – what do we need to think about?

### Shared spaces

Your relative might be moving into a shared house, rather than living alone in their own flat or house. This means there will be communal areas used by everyone, such as the lounge, kitchen, garden, parking, and bathrooms.

Our staff will help all tenants to respect each other's personal space such as their bedrooms. The team supporting your relative will be able to discuss this with you further. They will let you know how they support everyone who lives there to have equal access to shared spaces.

### Visiting

We know how important visits are to you and your family member. All we ask is that you observe the normal courtesies you would extend to others. The team supporting your family member can discuss details with you, including accessing a building where your family member is not the only tenant.

### Shared household expenses

In a shared house the tenants are responsible for all the normal household expenses such as utility bills, rent, landlord charges and buying items for the house or garden, according to their tenancy agreement. The landlord and your relative's support team can help you understand who pays for what in the building.

Your relative may need to share bills with others or make agreements about shared purchases (for example, what happens when the kettle breaks). We will follow the mental capacity process to help your relative make these decisions and document them. You can read more about how we support people using the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) in our: *'Making decisions'* leaflet.

Your relative will be responsible for furnishing and decorating their own space. The landlord and support team can help with any questions you or your relative may have.

## What happens about shopping, food, and transport?

Your family member is responsible for paying for all their own transport. This could either be by public transport or buying a car through a scheme like Motability. Choice Support can help you and your family member access the best solutions.

If your relative receives a **supported living service** from us and we have been asked to help them shop and cook, we will agree the best way to do this. Your relative uses their own income to pay for items.

In a **registered service**, all the money for food, cleaning/household items is paid directly to Choice Support. A budget is allocated to spend weekly, and staff will help everyone living there to shop according to their needs. Each house will have arrangements that meet the needs of people we support, so please ask the team supporting your relative for more information.

If they share with others, there might be an agreement that some shopping and cooking is done together, according to all the tenants' wishes and needs. Any personal shopping like clothes, toiletries, gadgets etc will need to be paid for from your relative's income.

We will follow the MCA to help make these decisions. Please let your relative's team know if you have any queries.

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>

# Supporting with money

You and your relative may have lots of questions about money, especially if the person is moving out of their family home for the first time. This guide covers some of the most common areas we need to think about together.

Everyone we support has individual needs around support with money. Some people need help with finances while others may be independent. It is important that we give support to adults according to their capacity, circumstances, and needs.

If we have been asked to help your relative with their money as part of their support package, we need to discuss and agree with you what this

support will look like. When your relative moves into their own home or starts receiving support from Choice Support, we need to have clear discussions about their finances so everyone knows what support we will give.

There may be many new things that your relative has to budget for such as bills, activity costs, transport, food, and household expenses and even paying a contribution towards their own support via the local authority.

The team helping your relative move in will be happy to give you information and discuss any questions you may have. Each person has individual requirements, but we have tried to answer some common queries opposite.





## How do we agree what support with finances is required?

If needed Choice Support can assist with arrangements for finances. Support might include:

- Claiming benefits.
- Administering their bank account.
- Budgeting and saving.
- Checking and recording financial transactions.
- Learning how to be more independent with money.
- Making financial decisions using the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA).

Your relative might be receiving a specific service from us, for example help to attend work or an activity each week. We will work with you to agree what expenses need to be paid.

Our: *'Moving into a new home'* leaflet, gives more details on everyday living costs.

## Keeping things safe around finances

Helping someone with their money is a position of great trust and responsibility. We take this very seriously and make sure that our staff are well equipped to give good support with finances.

Where people need our help to manage their money, we know their money must only be used for them and spent in line with their wishes and best interests.

All of our employees are trained in safeguarding adults, which includes awareness of financial abuse and our responsibilities around this. You can read more information in our: *'Keeping people safe'* leaflet.

Your relative will have a detailed section in their support plan saying what staff do around finances. This includes how we record, monitor, check and audit any financial support given by our staff. We have a clear Finance Policy which details how to deal with concerns or discrepancies.

If you have any concerns or worries about your relative's money, speak to their support team or you can speak to your local Choice Support regional manager, our quality and safeguarding team or to your local authority safeguarding adults' team.

# How we check the quality of our services

We are committed to providing high quality services which make a positive difference to the lives of people we support. We are regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) <https://www.cqc.org.uk> which carries out inspections at our registered services. We also provide information on request to our local funding bodies and we are available for any external reviews when requested.

At Choice Support quality is about:

- Satisfying our stakeholders – these are the different people and groups with an interest in our work. For example: the people we support, families, local authorities, and our regulatory body the CQC etc.
- Delivering on our purpose to: *'Create opportunities for happiness,'* for everyone we support.
- Knowing what we want to do and how to do it.
- Learning from what we do and using this to develop our organisation and our services.
- Achieving what we set out to do.

We use a documented quality management system which meets the ISO 9001 Quality Management Standard. We use the: *'Plan, Do, Check, Act'* approach which promotes continuous improvement. This ensures that while working towards our vision, in line with our values and internal rules, we meet all current regulations and the law.

## Ways we monitor good support

Each of our services has an identified member of our quality and safeguarding team assigned to them. To find out who yours is you can ask your team leader, services manager, or regional manager. The quality and safeguarding team carries out an annual review to monitor quality and compliance. Quality information is reviewed including complaints, compliments, information, and feedback from people we support. We review quality in six areas:

1. Are people being well supported?
2. Are people achieving valued outcomes?
3. Are staff competent and caring?
4. Is the service well managed?
5. Is the service compliant with our policies?
6. Is the service innovative?

We capture best practice information that can be shared with others. We have a red/orange/green traffic light system to indicate how well our services are performing, with a 'green star' rating for those that are 'outstanding'. A quality review report is produced and sent to the whole team providing support to your relative or friend with, if identified, any suggestions for improvement. We will write and congratulate teams where excellent or innovative support is being developed and delivered.

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## Who checks the quality of our services

### Quality Checkers

Quality Checkers are people with lived experience of using support services. They have a schedule of visits to our services where they spend time talking with people we support and if appropriate that person's support staff. The feedback reports they produce give insight into what is good, and what could be better, from a supported person's perspective. Your local manager will be asked to comment on this feedback and develop action plans if required.

### Trustee visits

A schedule of Trustee visits to our services over the course of the year enables Trustees to provide valuable feedback. It gives them the chance to talk directly with our staff and people we support.

### Central services audits

Central services functions are subject to internal audits. We make sure our internal systems and processes meet internal rules, regulations, and the law, and are delivered in line with our vision and values. They may also be subject to external audit if deemed necessary by our senior leaders.

### Property inspections (where Choice Support is the landlord or managing agent)

Property inspections are carried out annually by the Choice Support housing officer.

These inspections focus on the condition of the property, maintenance, and safety issues as well as tenant satisfaction, cleanliness, and decor. Certification and servicing records are held centrally and regularly checked by the housing department. These include gas servicing, legionella, and fire safety equipment. Staff and tenants can raise issues and discuss any planned changes with their housing officer. Follow up actions are summarised in a monitored action plan.



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## What do we do with the information?

Every quarter the quality and safeguarding committee meets to review trends and information. Improvements are noted and areas of concern regionally or nationally are considered and addressed.

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## How do we involve families?

Involving families is important to us and we may contact you during reviews or visits to ask your opinion on the communication provided to you and the quality of the support offered. We also carry out family surveys and welcome feedback at any time. It is important for us to hear any feedback you may have. You don't have to wait for us to contact you. You can contact us on our website here: <https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/visiting-our-offices/give-us-your-feedback>

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>

# Keeping people safe

## What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is defined as protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. Choice Support works actively with the people we support and their families to find out what being safe means to them, and how that can best be achieved. We ensure all our staff have access to our Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and receive regular training and updates.

We promote the key principles from the Care Act 2014 in all our safeguarding work:

- **Empowerment** – supporting people to make their own decisions.
- **Prevention** – acting before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality** – using the least intrusive response to the risk presented.
- **Protection** – supporting and representing those at risk.
- **Partnership** – working with individuals, families, professionals, and communities.
- **Accountability** – being open and taking responsibility for our actions.

We investigate all allegations of abuse about adults at risk in our care. Investigations take account of issues of race, religion, culture, gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

## Involvement

At Choice Support we keep the person involved and at the centre of any safeguarding procedures, to make sure they have the best outcome. This is referred to as Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP).

'MSP means that any procedure should be person-led and outcome-focused. It engages the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing, and safety.' (*Care and Support Statutory Guidance – Care Act 2014*).

We are bound by a regulation called: '*The duty of candour*'. This means that we have a legal responsibility to be open and honest with the people who use our services, and (where appropriate) their families. We must inform people when things go wrong with their care and treatment and apologise when appropriate. Our duty also extends to other people acting lawfully on behalf of individuals we support when relevant (eg, deputies or appointees may need to be informed of financial abuse).

More information about this can be found here: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/all-services/regulation-20-duty-candour>



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## Recognising abuse

**If you have any concerns about someone, you can contact us directly at:**

Choice Support  
Compass House, 84 Holland Road  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1UT

Telephone: 0300 303 3571  
Email: [feedback@choicesupport.org.uk](mailto:feedback@choicesupport.org.uk)  
Website: [www.choicesupport.org.uk](http://www.choicesupport.org.uk)

Or your local authority safeguarding team  
(see local contacts leaflet).

Or the regulatory body:

Care Quality Commission (CQC)  
National Customer Service Centre,  
Citygate, Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4PA

Telephone: 0300 061 6161  
Website: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

There are many different types and patterns of abuse and neglect, and different circumstances in which it may take place. The Care Act 2014 names ten types of abuse:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- psychological abuse
- financial or material abuse
- discriminatory abuse
- organisational abuse
- neglect and acts of omission
- self-neglect
- domestic violence
- modern slavery.

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## Our objectives

Adult safeguarding aims to:

- Stop abuse or neglect wherever possible.
- Prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs.
- Safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making their own choices and to have control about how they want to live.
- Promote an approach that focuses on improving life for the adults we support.
- Raise public awareness so that communities, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.
- Provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe, and how to raise a concern about the safety or wellbeing of an adult.
- Address what has caused the abuse or neglect.

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## Onward reporting

We work with local authorities and follow local procedures when investigating allegations of abuse. When identified we will report any concerns or incidents to the local authority's adult social care department and any registering or inspecting body eg, CQC.

Each local authority has a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). We will work with the local SABs when required. The SAB's main objective is to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements protect adults in their area.

For more information about the Care Act, see:  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>

# Making decisions

## Supporting people within the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA)

Here is some information about the MCA which we hope will be helpful. We believe everyone should make their own choices and decisions and have maximum control over their own lives.

A person with mental capacity is defined as: 'Someone able to make their own decisions. Specifically, it is someone who can make a particular decision at the time it needs to be made.'

People may lack capacity for several reasons including a stroke or brain injury, a mental health issue, dementia, a learning disability, substance misuse or confusion, drowsiness or unconsciousness because of an illness or its treatment.



## About the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA)

The MCA promotes and safeguards decision-making within a flexible, legal framework that places individuals at the heart of the decision-making process. It supports people to make decisions for themselves whenever possible. It protects people aged 16 and over who lack capacity to make a decision. It supports people aged 18 or over with capacity who want to plan for when they may lack capacity.

All professionals involved in the care, treatment and support of people aged 16 and over living in England and Wales have a duty to comply with the MCA and the MCA Code of Practice. The MCA is underpinned by five statutory principles:

**Principle 1: Always presume capacity** – *a person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity.*

**Principle 2: Support decision making** – *a person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help them to do so have been taken without success.*

**Principle 3: Unwise decisions do not necessarily imply a lack of capacity** – *a person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because they make an unwise decision.*

**Principle 4: Respect the person's best interests** – *an act done, or decision made under this Act, for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity, must be done, or made, in the person's best interests.*

**Principle 5: Seek the least restrictive option** – *before an act is done, or a decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights or freedoms of action.*

## What decisions are covered by or excluded from the MCA?

The MCA covers a wide range of decisions made and actions taken on behalf of people who lack capacity to make specific decisions themselves. This may be everyday decisions through to more serious decisions such as where to live, whether to have surgery or how to manage finances or property.

The MCA applies when someone is unable to make a particular decision at a particular time because of the way their mind or brain is affected. Someone may lack capacity to make a major decision but may be able to make smaller decisions.

**Some decisions can never be made on behalf of a person who lacks capacity to make those decisions because they are so personal or are covered by other legislation. These include decisions about marriage or civil partnership, sexual relationships, divorce or dissolution of a civil partnership, adoption, voting and fertility treatment.**



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## Assessing capacity

We will encourage and support people to make their own decisions. We will give all practical help before we assess someone as unable to make a particular decision. If lack of capacity is established, we will involve the person as far as possible in making the decision.

The MCA identified a two-stage test to assess capacity:

**Stage 1:** Does the person have a temporary or permanent impairment of the mind or brain, or is there some temporary or permanent disturbance affecting how their mind or brain works? If the answer to this question is *no*, the person is deemed to have capacity to make the decision. The test will then end. If the answer is *yes*, the assessor will record why and continue to Stage 2.

**Stage 2:** Does the impairment or disturbance mean that they are unable to make the particular decision at the time it needs to be made?

To answer this question, the following needs to be considered. Can the person:

- understand information given to them
- retain that information long enough to be able to make the decision
- weigh up the information available to make the decision
- communicate their decision (this could be by talking, using sign language or even simple muscle movements such as blinking an eye or squeezing a hand).

### Who will assess capacity?

Different people will be involved in assessing capacity at different times. The final decision about a person's capacity will be made by the person, or people, intending to make the decision or carry out the action on behalf of the person who may lack capacity.

## Making decisions in people's best interests

If a person has been assessed as lacking capacity in relation to a particular decision at a specific time, any action taken, or any decision made for or on behalf of that person, must be made in their best interests.

### Best interests decisions can be made in relation to financial, personal welfare and healthcare decisions

The person who has to make the decision is known as the: '*decision maker*.' Where decisions about treatment, care arrangements or accommodation need to be made the decision maker could be a professional such as a doctor, nurse, or social worker. The MCA is clear that the family, friends, and important people to that person are involved and consulted with during the best interests process.

### 'Best interests'

The MCA provides a non-exhaustive checklist of factors that decision makers must work through when deciding what is in a person's best interests. It provides the framework for ensuring that the individual remains at the centre of the process. When making a best interests decision, the decision maker/s should not make it based on what they would want to do if they were the person who lacked capacity. They should:

- consult with others on what is considered, as best they can, the person's past and present wishes and feelings
- include any advance statement of preferences and wishes made when the person had capacity
- consider the beliefs and values likely to influence the person's decision if they had capacity
- and take account of any other factors the person might consider if they were able to do so.

For more information on the MCA you can visit:

<https://www.hft.org.uk/our-services/family-carer-support-service/fcss-updates/mental-capacity-act>

This is a free downloadable guidance booklet about the MCA for family and friends of people with learning disabilities.

<https://paradigm-uk.org/2020/09/07/supported-decision-making-a-guide-for-supporters>

This guide was written by Paradigm and Helen Sanderson Associates, it is available to download for free.

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## Questions or concerns?

If you have any concerns or questions regarding the MCA or how we support your relative to make decisions, please contact your relative's team leader/manager or write to us at: Choice Support, Compass House, 84 Holland Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1UT. Phone: 01622 722400 or email: [feedback@choicesupport.org.uk](mailto:feedback@choicesupport.org.uk)

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>



# General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

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## Processing data

Choice Support holds and processes large amounts of data about the people we support, friends and family and our employees. It is essential that we have secure data management processes that comply with the law.

*The Data Protection Act 2018 gives people greater control over personal data held and sets out penalties for mishandling data.*



## How does this apply to family members?

We collect a vast amount of personal data about people we support, including information about family and friends. This helps us support people well and maintain relationships.

Included in this are:

- contact details and how to communicate with you
- birthdays and special dates
- consent to share information with you.

It is important that you understand why we ask for your personal information, what we do with that information and how we keep it secure. You can read our privacy notice here: <https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/privacy>

Do not hesitate to ask us if you are not sure and need more information.

## Contacting you

We will ask you for contact details and the best way to contact you. Our families newsletter is sent out to you via email or post. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Choice Support may contact you to ask how we are doing with your family member's support. This could be a phone call or a survey. Please let us know if you don't want us to contact you for these reasons.

***If your contact details or communication preferences change, please let us know as soon as possible.***

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>

# Compliments, comments and complaints

## Compliments

Everyone knows how nice it is to get a compliment, but we sometimes forget to give them.

At Choice Support we like to record compliments about our staff so that they are given the right recognition. A compliment could range from a simple smile and a thank you, to a written letter or email of gratitude. This feedback means a huge amount to our staff.

You or your family member can give any member of staff a *formal* compliment. Just say or write, "I'd like to log this as a formal compliment." The team can then place the compliment directly on to the staff IT system and it can be reported upwards as far as the senior leaders or Trustees. It will certainly be acknowledged to the member of staff or the team, and it could even result in them being individually rewarded.

## Gifts

You may wish to show your appreciation to staff through a small gift. Our staff generally should not accept any gifts, loans, benefits, or hospitality from the people they support, their families, friends, or contractors. However, it is recognised there may be occasions when this gesture should be accepted, an example being a small, inexpensive gift such as a tin of biscuits at Christmas. We ask, if you would like to provide any form of gift to the team, that you consult first with the point of contact given to you.

## Complaints

We hope complaints will be few, but occasionally we all feel we need to complain. Especially if we think things have gone wrong, if there has been an accident or a misunderstanding, or there is an area of concern. We aim to respond to complaints and resolve problems quickly. If we don't know about it, we can't solve it. Be assured that any complaint will be dealt with in confidence.





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## Comments

For day-to-day issues it may be best to talk to the responsible person in your relative's team, in confidence if necessary. You might want to make an appointment for a convenient time and place. Make a note of your discussions and ask what the plan will be to resolve things.

If that isn't possible then contact your regional manager.

### **If you feel your complaint has not been properly addressed or you wish to make a formal complaint you can:**

Write to us at Compass House, 84 Holland Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1UT. Telephone: 01622 722400. Email: [feedback@choicesupport.org.uk](mailto:feedback@choicesupport.org.uk)

We will acknowledge your complaint and contact you for more information where necessary. It will help us to resolve your complaint if you can provide us with the following information:

- What the problem is.
- When it happened.
- Is it ongoing.
- Who was involved.
- What you would like us to do about it.

After your complaint has been investigated you will be notified of our findings within 28 days from receipt of complaint, unless there is good reason that this was not possible. If you are unhappy with the outcome, you can appeal by email to the address provided in the outcome letter within five working days of receipt or by contacting the following external bodies:

### **For local authority or self-funded services:**

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGO), PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0E. Telephone: 0300 061 0614, or visit their website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

### **For our registered services:**

Care Quality Commission (CQC), National Customer Service Centre, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 4PA. Telephone: 0300 0616161 or visit their website: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

### **For NHS funded services:**

Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman. Telephone: 0345 015 4033 or visit their website: <https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/making-complaint>

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## Reasons we may not investigate a complaint

We may refuse to investigate a complaint if:

- it has already been investigated previously and nothing significant has changed
- there is a reasonable belief that it is a malicious or dishonest complaint
- the complaint is over a year old.

If your complaint or concern is about a safeguarding matter, then please contact us or the local safeguarding team as soon as possible. See section 8 of this guide: *'Keeping people safe'* for more details.

We hope you have found this guide helpful. If you have any suggestions for improvement, please let us know by contacting [familyconnect@choicesupport.org.uk](mailto:familyconnect@choicesupport.org.uk)

Your relative's team will give you all the local information you need, such as contact details. Please do not hesitate to ask your local team if you need any more information.

<https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries>







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## Contact us

If you want to get in touch please:

### Write to

Compass House  
84 Holland Road  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1UT

### Use our enquiry form

[https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/  
contact-us/general-enquiries](https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries)

**Visit** [choicesupport.org.uk](https://www.choicesupport.org.uk)