

DECIDING WITH SUPPORT

Reflecting on support for decision-making



INTRODUCTION

Deciding with Support is a resource based on themes from a research project based at King's College London. It has been developed to provoke reflection on issues that arise when others are involved in supporting a person's decision-making, for example, about living arrangements, health issues, or relationships.

TAILORED SUPPORT

THINGS TO CONSIDER

The difficulties a person faces will often be connected to more than one impairment, and while people with the same disability may share similar barriers, their circumstances may be very different. For some people, a trauma-informed approach, recognizing the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledging the role trauma may play in an individual's life, may be helpful.

BEING THE DECISION-MAKER

It can be really hard to feel comfortable as the decision-maker. As expressed by participants, "the experience can be scary, and consent can be a difficult thing to understand."

BOUNDARIES

The way support is provided could restrict the decision-maker's ability to think about the issue or discuss it with the supporter.

DEPTH AND TEXTURE

It is important to consider personal historical and emotional context, understanding the person's inner life: fears, frustrations and past experiences.

DECISION MAKER

What difficulties are you facing in making this decision?

How could someone show that they see you as the decision-maker?

Would "working as a team" in a way that each provides "different angles" feel supportive for you?

What feelings or past experiences are connected to this decision? Are these barriers in your decision-making? What support might help?

SUPPORTER

What might enable this person, in this situation, to make this decision?

Has there been a time when you felt uneasy in the role of decision-maker? What helped you feel more comfortable? Relate to the person as an adult who makes decisions for their own, personal, reasons, like any adult; and as someone who lives an adult life which includes things like sex and sometimes making "wrong choices".

Approach the role of supporter with humility. Recognising the person as a responsible adult may help establish boundaries.

What fears, frustrations, other feelings or past experiences linked to the decision, for the decision-maker, might shape the support you provide?

PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS

The views and experiences of patients with disabilities has been central to the research undertaken by researchers at King's College London and has been integral to developing this resource. Below are some participant insights which emerged during conversations.

Giving consent can be a difficult thing to understand, especially for someone with much experience of paternalism.

“People need to know exactly where you are in your mind.”

“You need to listen to us even if we don't get the words right, we're trying to tell you stuff.”

“Doing what's best suited for one person not everyone.”

BETHLEM GALLERY'S MENTAL HEALTH AND JUSTICE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Bethlem Gallery is funded by Wellcome to provide public engagement for research into mental health and justice. The public programme influences, and is influenced by, the Mental Health & Justice (www.mhj.org.uk) research team which is comprised of six inter-related research strands involving clinical experts, lawyers, philosophers, neuroscientists, social scientists and service users. Commissioned artists bring people together across these multi-disciplinary strands and across the delineations of service user, clinician, patient, public, artist and researcher to encourage conversations and learning through art practices.

www.bethlemgallery.com/projects/mental-health-and-justice-project/

OOMK / LEVEL PRESS

One of My Kind (OOMK) is a collaborative publishing practice led by Rose Nordin, Sofia Niazi and Heiba Lamara. Working together since 2014, the trio make, publish and distribute books and printed works which arise from self-initiated and collaborative projects. As part of their commission for the Mental Health and Justice Public Engagement Project, OOMK have worked with researchers at Kings College London to develop the **Deciding with Support** resource. OOMK have also worked with clinicians, artists with lived experience of mental illness and patients at Bethlem Royal Hospital to set up Level Press, a Risograph printing press based at Bethlem Gallery.

www.oomk.net

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