### ****Your Child’s Voice Matters!****

### ****Supporting Your Child to Express Their Views****

Young people now have the right to make decisions about their education and support once they reach the end of the academic year in which they turn **16**. As a parent or carer, you will still play an important role in guiding and supporting them, but their views will take precedence.

Encouraging your child to take part in decision-making from an early age can help them:
✅ Build confidence and decision-making skills
✅ Gain independence and prepare for adulthood
✅ Set aspirations and goals for the future
✅ Engage more positively in their education and support

### ****When Will My Child Be Involved in Decisions?****

🔹 Their views will be gathered for assessments, plans, and reviews.
🔹 They will have a say in their post-16 education or training options.
🔹 They will be invited to meetings that directly affect them.

### ****How Can I Support Them?****

💬 Encourage informal conversations at home about their views and wishes.
📖 Provide relevant information to help them make informed choices.
📝 Take notes of their thoughts and preferences, especially before meetings.
🤝 Support them to communicate effectively with professionals.

### ****What If My Child Finds It Hard to Communicate?****

Children express themselves in many ways beyond talking. Consider using:
🖼️ Photos, pictures, or choice boards
💻 Computers or assistive technology
🙂 Facial expressions or body language
🤟 Sign language or communication aids

### ****Understanding Mental Capacity****

The **Mental Capacity Act 2005** states that young people can make decisions unless proven otherwise. Key principles include:
1️⃣ Everyone is presumed capable of making their own decisions unless proven otherwise.
2️⃣ All practical steps must be taken to support decision-making.
3️⃣ Making an ‘unwise’ decision does not mean they lack capacity.
4️⃣ Any decisions made on their behalf must be in their **best interests**.
5️⃣ Actions taken must **minimise** restrictions on their freedom.

### ****What If My Child Disagrees With Me?****

🗣️ Let them share their views without frustration.
🤔 Explore both perspectives with factual advice.
⏳ Choose the right time and place for discussions.
⚖️ Remember, after **compulsory school age**, the law prioritises their decisions.

### ****Where Can We Get Support?****

🔹 **For Young People:**

* **Shropshire IASS** – impartial information and advice
* **School or college staff**
* **Health and social care professionals**
* **Voluntary organisations** (see the **Local Offer** for more)
* [Shropshire Local Offer](https://shropshire.local-offer.org/)
* [Shropshire Youth Services](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CCarrieChoudhary%5CDesktop%5CWEBSITE%5CSchool%20Communication%20and%20Collaboration%5Cwww.shropshireyouth.info%5C)

🔹 **For Parents and Carers:**

* **All of the above resources**
* **Supportive family and friends** to help gain perspective