




seirbhís tacaíochta  
cinnteoireachta

decision support service

# My Choices

Getting Support  
to Make Decisions



**IMPORTANT:** This guide does not constitute a statement of the law or the provisions under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (as amended) or any ancillary or related legislation. Please do not rely on it for legal advice.

## Who needs support to make decisions?

We all make decisions in our lives. This includes everyday decisions, like choices about what you wear, what you eat and who you spend time with.

It also includes bigger decisions, like choices about where you live, whether to sell a house or farm, whether to get surgery and how to invest a large amount of money.

Many people need help and support to make decisions.

## How can you be supported to make the choices you want to make?

Being supported to make decisions can happen in different ways. A person you know and trust can:

- get information from different organisations and businesses about the decision you need to make
- take complex or complicated information and explain it to you using easy-to-understand language
- talk to you about the different options available to you and help you to understand the upsides and downsides of each option
- talk to you about what could happen in the future if you make different choices
- help you to communicate your choice to others. This could be in person, over the phone or in writing
- help you to communicate in a busy, noisy or stressful environment
- help you to talk to professionals, like doctors and lawyers

## How do you know if you need support?

Sometimes it can be difficult to know if you need help to make choices and decisions. Just because you have a condition, illness, or disability, does not mean you will always need support.

It can be useful to ask yourself the following questions:



Do you sometimes have trouble understanding complex information?



Do you need help weighing up the benefits and risks (upsides and downsides) of different options?



Do you need help talking to some organisations, like banks and utility companies, or professionals, like doctors and lawyers?



Are you able to make some decisions, like choices about how you spend money day-to-day, but need help with bigger decisions, like managing a large amount of money?



Do you sometimes have trouble remembering important information?



Do you need extra time to think about your options so that you can make a choice you are happy with?



Have you experienced any barriers to services, or people not letting you make your own choices?

If you answered **yes** to any of these questions, you **may** benefit from or need a decision supporter.

It is important that you know, even if you need support to make decisions, you are still **presumed** to be able to make those decisions. This is called the **presumption of capacity**.

## What kind of support can you get?

A decision supporter is a person appointed by you, or by the court under a formal legal arrangement, called a **decision support arrangement**.

The level of support they provide and the types of decisions they help with depends on what is included in the decision support arrangement.

There are three different decision support arrangements available for people who need support to make decisions and choices.

### Decision-making assistance agreement

- Lowest level of support
- Supported by a person you know and trust
- You still make the decisions

### Co-decision-making agreement

- Middle level of support
- Supported by a person you know and trust
- Decisions in the arrangement must be made jointly

### Decision-making representation order

- Appointed by the court
- Highest level of support
- Decisions in the court's order are made on your behalf

## Can you plan for making decisions in the future?

If you answered **no** to the questions above, you can still think about planning for a time when you may not be able to make certain decisions.

You can plan ahead for important healthcare and treatment decisions.

You can do this by making an **advance healthcare directive**.

You can also plan ahead for decisions about your personal welfare and decisions about your property and money matters.

You can do this by making an **enduring power of attorney**.

### Advance healthcare directive

- Decisions about treatment
- You can choose whether to have a person you know and trust to ensure it is followed

### Enduring power of attorney

- Choose a person to make decisions on your behalf in the future if necessary
- You choose which decisions they will be able to make

## Who should plan ahead for the future?

Anyone can make plans for a time when they might not be able to make important decisions for themselves.

Planning ahead can help to give you peace of mind that your family and loved ones will follow and respect your wishes.

## What decisions can you get help with?

If you need help making the choices you want to make, either now or in the future, it can be helpful to think about the different types of decisions you want support with.

There are two types of decisions you can get support with. Choices about your **personal welfare** and choices about your **property and money matters**.

### Decisions about your personal welfare

These are about you as a person and can include choices about your health and medical treatment, where you live, who you spend your time with and your social life. It can also include things like participating in research.

#### These are examples of decisions about personal welfare:

Choices about where you want to live. You may need help making decisions about living independently, living with others, or living in a care facility.

Choices about working or education and training. You may need help making decisions about working fulltime, parttime or volunteering. You may also want to do a course or training programme.

Choices about your healthcare and wellbeing. You may need help making decisions about treatment for a condition, having an operation, taking medications, your mental health and dental care.

Choices about social services. You may need help making decisions about social services, allowances, benefits and payments you may be entitled to.

## Decisions about your property and money matters

These are about the things you own and can include choices about your property, your money, bills you need to pay and making bigger purchases.

### These are examples of decisions about property and money:

Choices about managing your property. You may need help making decisions about your bank accounts, looking after a house or property, daily living costs and one-off purchases.

Choices about investments. You may need help making decisions about how to invest bigger amounts of money, like from an inheritance or court award.

Choices about managing debts and taxes. You may need help to make decisions about paying your bills, paying your taxes and submitting a tax return. You may also need to repay a mortgage, student loan or personal loan.

Choices about providing for other people. You may need help to make decisions about giving money or other benefits to your family, loved ones or carers.

Choices about buying and selling property. You may need help to make decisions about selling your house, car, or other things you own. This may be to help you pay off debts or to make sure you have money for daily living costs.

There are many other decisions that you may need support with. This can include business decisions, if you own or run a business.

The choices you make are unique to **you**.



If you are thinking about the type of decisions you may need help with, it can be a good idea to discuss this with your loved ones and other people you trust.

## **Need more information?**

You can find out more about the different decision support arrangements on our website [decisionsupportservice.ie](https://decisionsupportservice.ie).

You can also contact our Information Services team:

**By phone** (01) 211 9750

**By email** [queries@decisionsupportservice.ie](mailto:queries@decisionsupportservice.ie)

**By post** Decision Support Service  
Waterloo Exchange  
Waterloo Road  
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