

# Adult Social Care

## Understanding Mental Capacity

### What is a mental capacity assessment?



Easy read version



Coventry City Council

**ONE**  
**COVENTRY**

## Making decisions



People must be allowed to make their own decisions. If you are concerned that your friend or relative can't do this, start by giving them extra help and support to make the decision.



Sometimes people need extra help to make a decision. You could:

- Give them more information
- Give them more time to think about it
- Give them the information in a different way



This should always be done if it helps the person to make their own decisions.



If you are still worried that a member of your family or friend is unable to make particular decisions, they may need to have a mental capacity assessment.



Sometimes people make bad decisions, but this does not mean they lack capacity.

## What is a mental capacity assessment?



A mental capacity assessment is an assessment that finds out if someone can make one decision at one time.

Everyone is different and every decision is different. Somebody may not be able to decide whether to move house. They need people to help them make this decision, or to make this decision for them if they can't. But they may be able to decide what to eat and what to wear. They must be allowed to make those decisions.

The person having a mental capacity assessment could be you, or a friend or family member.



It isn't always a professional who carries out the assessment or makes the decision.

Sometimes, family, friends and carers can assess a person's capacity.

## What to expect before an assessment



An assessor will get in touch with the person to arrange a time and place to do an assessment.



They will think about the best way to give information to the person to see whether they can make a decision. They may ask family, friends or other supporters to help.





Think

They will find out the best language and way to communicate to the person.



People might be worse or better at making decisions at different times or on different days. So the assessment might be done more than once at different times or on a different day.

## Who can be at the assessment?



The person can have someone to support them in the assessment. They can decide this.



The assessor may also want to speak to the person or their family and friends in private.

## What happens in a mental capacity assessment?



A mental capacity assessment is an assessment that shows if someone can make one decision at one time.

It is not a memory test.





The assessor will check that the person can do these four things:



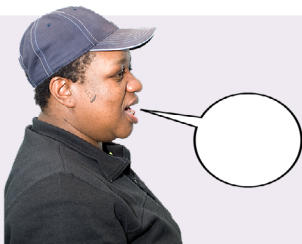
1. Does the person understand all the information they have been given to make a decision?



2. Can they remember the information for long enough to make a decision?



3. Can they think about what the different options are to make a decision?



4. Can they tell this decision to someone else? This could be done by nodding their head or blinking their eyes.



If the assessor says 'no' to any of the questions, it means that the person lacks the mental capacity to make the decision at the time.

## What happens if someone doesn't have mental capacity?



For every day decisions like what to wear or what to eat, a carer or relative can make a decision for them.



For more complicated decisions, like medical treatment or where to live, a professional may need to get involved.



Remember – a mental capacity assessment needs to be done every time a big decision needs to be made.

## Recording and sharing information



Every day decisions will be recorded in the persons 'Care and Support Plan'.



More complicated decisions will be recorded in the persons medical or social care record.



The assessment may be reviewed in the future to check it is still needed.



The information from the assessment may need to be shared with others.



A lasting power of attorney (LPA) is a legal document that lets a person (the 'donor') choose one or more people (known as 'attorneys') to help them make decisions or to make decisions on their behalf.

This gives them more control over what happens to them if they cannot make their own decisions in the future (if they 'lack mental capacity').



If there is a lasting power of attorney (LPA) in place that covers the decision being made, the attorney will make the decision.

A professional may be asked to help with this.



If the person has a lasting power of attorney for their health and welfare, their attorney can also ask for information and in some situations decide what information is shared.