

18pt



Whaimana
Support My Decisions

Everyone should get the support they need to make decisions

Adapted in 2026 by Accessible Formats Service,
Blind Low Vision NZ, Auckland

Transcriber's Note: There are two logos at the top of the page. The logo on the left is Whaikaha—Ministry of Disabled People. The logo on the right is Whaimana—Support My Decisions.

Everyone should get the support they need to make decisions

Everyone can make their own choices when they get the right help. Everyone should have access to this support.

A change in thinking

The United Nations (UN) Disability Convention says that:

- everyone has the right to make decisions about their own life
- everyone has the right to get the support they need to do this.

We used to ask:

- can this person understand and make this decision on their own? (Do they have mental capacity?)

The UN Disability Convention says it is more important to ask:

- what support does this person need to understand, communicate, and participate in this decision?

Decision-making capability

In a supported decision-making approach, we think about decision-making capability. Capability means being able to get things done.

- we start by focusing on what the person can do rather than what they can't do
- each person has their own unique decision-making abilities
- different decision-making abilities can be turned into decision-making capability with support and adjustments.

This approach is very practical and positive. The focus is on what support the person needs to make the decision.

One decision at a time

The amount of support needed can vary from decision to decision. A person may be comfortable making decisions in one area of life but want support for other types of decisions. A person may want more support for a decision they find difficult or when they feel overwhelmed.

Ben's Story

Ben experiences times when his mood is elevated—he calls these "having a high". This week, Ben noticed that his mood had started to change. He noticed:

- his thoughts are racing
- he can't sleep
- he has lots of energy and feels restless
- he is exercising a lot more

- he is spending more money than usual.

Ben knows these are early signs that he is experiencing a high. He understands that his mood can affect his choices. Ben talks to his brother, who he trusts. He asks for help to make a budget.

What if the supporter has a formal legal role?

A special support role can be set up in a legal document when a person is assessed as lacking capacity. The supporter can legally communicate or make decisions for the person.

Sometimes this role is set up ahead of time as an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA).

Sometimes this role is set up by the courts. They may be called a Welfare Guardian or Property Manager/Property Administrator. These roles are also called Adult Legal Guardians.

Supported decision-making is still important when the supporter has a formal legal role. The law expects that supporters in these roles will:

- help the person to make decisions
- help the person to develop their decision-making skills
- consult about decisions as far as possible.

Remember that:

- everyone has a right to the support they need to make decisions
- support can improve decision-making capability.
- This is true for everyone. This is true whether or not the supporter has a legal role.

For more information visit:

<https://www.supportmydecisions.nz/what-is-sdm/the-support-they-need> or www.supportmydecisions.nz/101

End of Everyone should get the support they need to make decisions