

# Supporting Effective Participation of the Adult in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences



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## 1. Introduction

The adult's views and wishes are central to adult support and protection, and every effort should be made at each stage of the process to ensure that barriers to the adult's participation are minimised.

“There should be a basic assumption that the adult will be involved in all meetings that are about them. It should be the responsibility of the relevant adult protection practitioners and of those chairing case conferences to ensure that the adult has been invited to meetings and that they are involved to maximise the likelihood of their attendance.

[Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007 Code of Practice \(page 39\)](#)

## 2. Purpose of this Guidance

This document offers good practice guidance to effective participation of adults being supported and protected under the [Adult Support & Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#), particularly in relation to ASP Case Conferences. It provides pointers as to how to facilitate meaningful engagement, taking a holistic view of the perspective and circumstances of the adult, including experience of trauma.

This guidance is adapted from [Good practice for effective participation by the adult in Adult Support and Protection case conferences](#) published by IRISS. The guidance was informed by the views of people with lived experience of Adult Support and Protection, practitioners involved in Adult Support and Protection work, and agencies and services who engaged in national work to ensure the implementation of the national Code of Practice is cognisant of user voice.

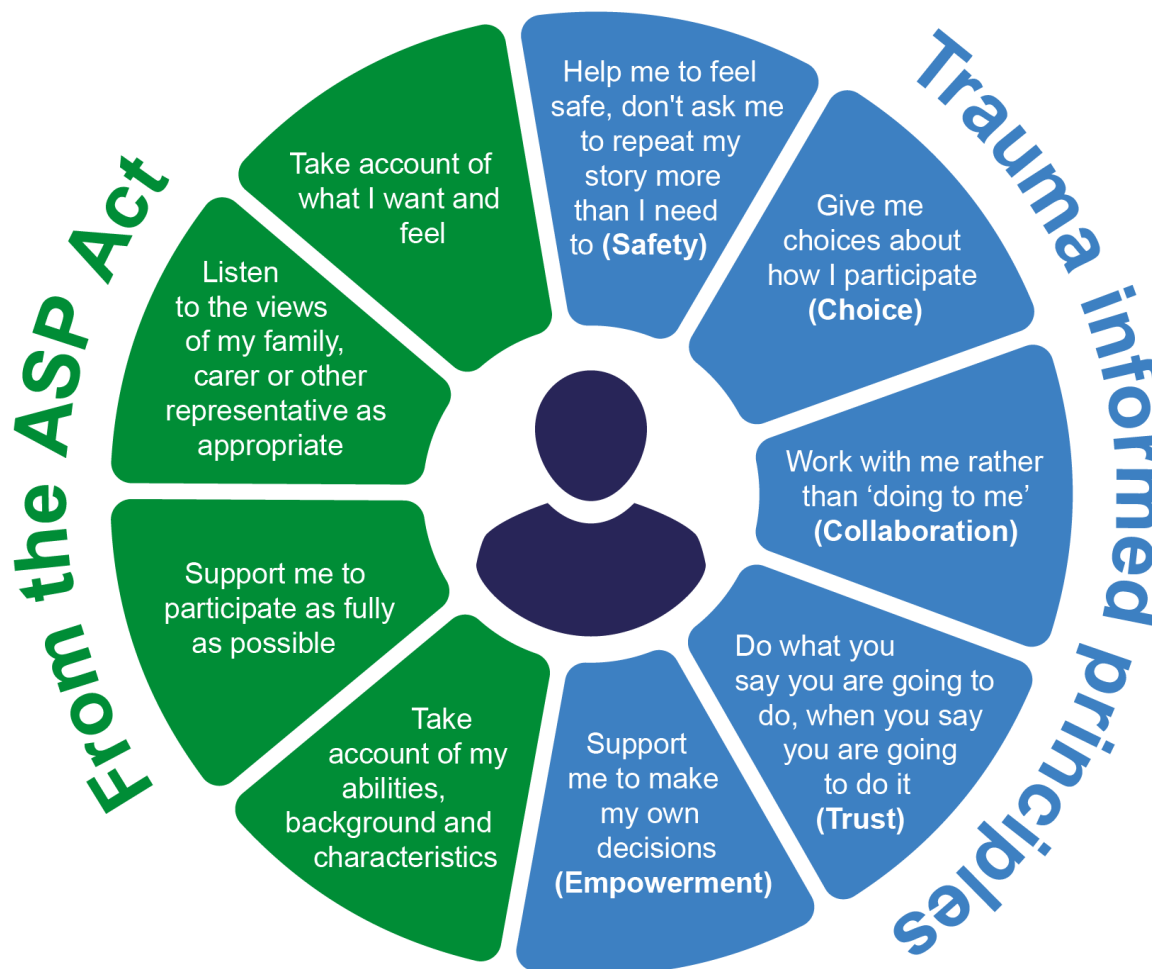
## 3. What does this Guidance cover?

The guidance starts with an overview of the principles underpinning working with individuals being supported and protected under the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, alongside the six principles of trauma-informed practice. An overview of the challenges and barriers which may impact on an adult's participation are set out, followed by practical steps to facilitate positive and meaningful involvement and engagement, before, during and after Case Conferences.

Key points in relation to the offer and involvement of independent advocacy are provided, and the guidance includes a specific section which shares a good practice checklist for those chairing case conferences – a critical role.

A series of appendices provide templates which may be helpful, and also signpost to additional resources.

#### 4. Adults' expectations of Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences



#### 5. Potential barriers

It is important to anticipate potential barriers which may impact on an adult's participation. Be professionally curious: What is preventing the person from participating and/or wishing to attend?

Emotional	Practical Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety, shame, mistrust based on experience</li> <li>• Cognitive and mental health needs</li> <li>• Trauma and re-traumatisation</li> <li>• Undue pressure</li> <li>• Discussing personal and sensitive topics in a group setting</li> <li>• Rigid procedures (lack of flexibility – breaks etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific communication needs</li> <li>• Accessible advance information</li> <li>• Technical (internet) access</li> <li>• Venue accessibility</li> <li>• Meeting size, number of attendees, duration, procedural jargon</li> </ul>

## 6. How can you facilitate participation?

**Stop and think – what will work best for this person?**

## 7. Before the Meeting

- Participation begins with the first contact and wording of introductory communication: How are formal Adult Support and Protection letters worded? Formality can frighten people, and they may believe they are being blamed. Guilt, shame, anger or fear can impact on someone's desire to attend and/or participate.
- Written materials, including minutes, need to be accessible (easy read; larger print; audio?) – Check the person's understanding of the process and of their expectations of the meeting. Will you send the agenda in advance?
- Ask the person **where** they want to attend – virtual or in-person meeting and provide necessary support for this choice (transport, IT, independent advocacy etc)
- Ask the person **how** they want to contribute to the meeting (i.e. When they would like to speak...at the beginning or after the other people) Would they like independent advocacy to support them to have their say? Do you have a template to capture their views?
- Consider **who** may affect their ability to participate (i.e. police (have I done something wrong?), the psychiatrist; the cause of harm (fear, undue pressure, untrustworthy relationships)
- Consider **how many** people really need to be there? Can one person represent a team or service? Does a practitioner's manager really need to attend? Can some of the work be done before the APCC via information sharing communication? i.e. resource discussions; 3rd party information. Could legislative options or SOME decisional capacity considerations be explored via phone call or email in advance?

**Caution** - The adult should not be deliberately excluded from decision making forums without due explanation.

**Stop and think – what can we do to make it easier for the person to attend?**

- If the person does not wish to attend, how are their views and wishes going to be represented? (independent advocacy/other person, written or audio record).
- At this point, the opportunity should be taken to capture the views of the individual, unless it has been agreed that this would be to their detriment (regardless of whether or not they attend the Adult Support and Protection Case Conference) based on the following questions:

- What things in your life are most important to you?
- What is difficult in your life?
- How safe do you feel?
- What do you think should happen to keep you safe?

## 8. During the Meeting: Whose meeting is it anyway?

- **Person Centred** — Please do not let the person be waiting around to be invited into the meeting. **This is not person centred. It is process driven.** Consider an alternative – could the meeting begin with the person, supporter, chair and council officer and then other people join them? This would allow the person to meet the chair who could explain the meeting format and ask how the person would like to participate in the meeting. If they are joining the meeting after others, consider ways to reduce the impact of this - ask the others to leave the room and re-enter; turn their cameras and microphones off until the person is settled.
- **Duration** — Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences can be tiring. Keep it to 1 hour or take breaks. It may be helpful for some resource and administration discussions to occur outside the meeting with a summary of these to be provided so that the person hears, understands, and is included in the final discussion. Be careful **not to** conclude decisions in the person's absence.
- **Inclusive communication** — Some (but not all) people actually appreciate the structure and formality of an Adult Support and Protection Case Conference. But we still need to ensure that the terminology is inclusive (avoid professional jargon) and that interpretative services, supports for communication (e.g., Talking Mats, independent advocacy) are arranged in advance.
- **Format** — The Chair introduces and sets the scene but then who speaks next? The person should be asked if they would like to tell the meeting their views about their situation or would they rather hear the others present their reports before they share their views and comments?
- **Wellbeing** — The person may not be confident to interrupt or ask for a break or time out. The chair should periodically check their wellbeing.
- **Understanding** — The Chair should periodically (perhaps after each speaker) check the person's understanding and provide a summary if necessary. After each presentation/ report, the adult will be invited to ask the professional/s questions, unless this will be to their detriment.
- **Collaboration** — Consider (in advance) whether the person is able and/or willing to be involved in the support and protection plan.

## 9. After the meeting

- Share the minutes of the meeting, in an accessible format, with the person/ independent advocacy worker.
- Nominate someone to explain what has happened, and to check their understanding of the decision making and the support and protection plan.

- At this point, the opportunity could be taken to check in with the individual about their experience of the process so far – questions along the following lines might be helpful:

- Have you felt listened to?
- Have you felt involved in decisions made about your safety?
- Do you feel safer?
- What could be better?

## 10. Top tips about use of independent advocacy

- Provide accessible information and give adult time to consider independent advocacy.
- Explain to family members/carers to help in providing information about independent advocacy.
- Refer to independent advocacy as early in the ASP process as possible so that they can get to know the person well in advance of any meetings. Consider re-arranging the meeting if the referral has been too late to allow advocacy to meet the person first.
- Independent advocacy helps people speak up when they find it difficult.
- Independent advocacy is not part of the Council or the NHS.
- Independent advocacy will help the person understand their rights and options.
- Independent advocacy will make sure professionals know what the person wants but they will not share their own views.

## 11. Good practice checklist for chairs to promote the participation of the adult

- ✓ **Ask** yourself why an adult may not be willing or able to participate.
- ✓ **Ask** the adult/representative what supports they need to participate.
- ✓ **Consider** alternative, creative approaches to overcome barriers as suggested above
- ✓ **Consider** meeting the adult beforehand to involve them in planning their participation; to explain the formalities and allow them the opportunity to ask questions.
- ✓ **Consider** ways to ensure the restricted information section starts at the agreed time (could this be conducted separately or at a different time?).
- ✓ **Explain** information clearly before/during/after the meeting. Written information to be provided in an accessible format, and independent advocacy offered at the earliest opportunity.
- ✓ **Ensure** the adult's voice is captured and expressed, whether or not they are present.
- ✓ **Check** with the adult that they have understood any information or decisions.
- ✓ **Confirm** that decisions and outcome will be conveyed to the adult after the meeting.

## **12. Appendix – Useful Resources**

[Working Together in Adult Support and Protection](#) – an online resource from Iriss which supports the participation of adults and carers throughout the Adult Support and Protection process.

[Multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences](#) – an online course from Iriss supporting professionals to understand and improve practice in Adult- Support and Protection Case Conferences.

[Working Together in Adult Support and Protection](#) – video supporting professionals to put the voice of adults and carers at the centre of their experience in Adult Support and Protection.