



# Decisions

**NZDSA**  
resources

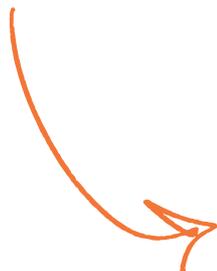


A guide to providing support to people with Down syndrome when making decisions.



# SUPPORT TO MAKE DECISIONS

Trish Grant, Director of Advocacy at IHC explains why people with intellectual disabilities need to be enabled to make their own decisions.



*“People with intellectual disabilities want to be able to make decisions on how we live our lives. Sometimes we may need help but that doesn’t mean we can’t make decisions. It feels awful when you are not heard, not listened to, not acknowledged or treated with respect. It feels very awful when someone else takes control of your life. It is disempowering when someone else has the final say, you don’t have a choice.”*

- David Corner (IHC Self Advocacy Advisor)

Being able to make our own decisions is a key part of how we all live our lives and being able to make free and informed choices is linked to our sense of wellbeing. Most of us use supports to help us make decisions - we ask for advice, gather information and often consult with family and friends we trust. All of us, including people with intellectual disability, get better at making decisions when we have lots of practice starting from childhood and the right support.



The support a person with intellectual disability needs will look different for each individual and can change with each decision being made. Knowing and understanding the person who is being supported is critical, as is ensuring that the right support people are involved for specific decisions being made.

Typically, other people's judgement of an individual's capacity and ability to make decisions determines the extent to which they are allowed to make their own decisions. There is a general misunderstanding about intellectual disability and capacity, with views that capacity is fixed and that unwise decision-making indicates a lack of capacity. If a person with an intellectual disability makes a poor decision, they can be viewed as being incapable of making future decisions – but, like building a muscle, the more someone has the opportunity to do something, the better at it they become.

IHC promotes supported decision-making as being central to quality life outcomes for people with intellectual disability. In all of our Advocacy work we draw guidance from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person's with Disability (UNCRPD).

Article 12 of UNCRPD is about being treated equally by the law. For people with intellectual disability this means:

- Being respected by the law like everyone else.
- Having the same right to make their own decisions about important things as everyone else.
- Having the proper support they need when making decisions. If a person really does need someone else to make decisions for them then there should be rules to make sure this is done properly.

*You can find more information about supported decision-making, workshops and IHC's Advocacy programme at [ihc.org.nz/advocacy](http://ihc.org.nz/advocacy)*

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## **NZDSA** resources

### **Want to know more?**

The NZ Down Syndrome website can provide more information and link you to many more articles and organisations.

[www.nzdsa.org.nz](http://www.nzdsa.org.nz)



0800 693 724

[nzdsa.org.nz](http://nzdsa.org.nz)

PO Box 4142, Shortland Street

Auckland, 1140

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*For permission requests contact the New Zealand Down Syndrome Association*

*[neo@nzdsa.org.nz](mailto:neo@nzdsa.org.nz)*

**OR**

***NZ Down Syndrome Association Inc.***

***P O Box 4142***

***Auckland, 1140***