

When you're helping a young person to give their views, it can be hard to know where to start. The pressure of getting everything down on paper can feel overwhelming for a young person and their parent.

There are many ways to gather views and how you do it will depend on how the young person likes to communicate, how they like to record information and who they feel most comfortable with.

Always remember though – there is no right or wrong way to do this and everything a young person says is relevant.

## Who is going to help?

Often parents are the best people to support a young person to share their views. But sometimes, as a young person gets older and becomes more independent, it can be helpful for someone else to do it.

A trusted adult who's seen as not taking sides may be able to help a young person express ideas or feelings that are different from their parents, teachers or the local authority. You could ask your young person who would be the best person to help them, such as a teaching assistant, support worker or friend.

Whoever gives the support, it's important that they're focused on the young person's needs and goals. If they can help them to think big, be independent in their views and clear about exactly what they want, that will help too!

## Helping a young person share their feelings and ideas

Every young person should feel free to say whatever they like. It's the job of whoever is with them to enable them to think about and decide what really matters.

A good way to do this is by using a mix of open and closed questions. Open ended questions are those which take more than one word to answer. Closed questions usually give one-word answers. So, "How was college today?" is an open question and "Did you have lunch today?" is a closed question (the answer would be yes or no).

Mixing the two types of question up can help to move a conversation on – you can listen to an answer and then ask another question to get a bit deeper into how they're feeling.

If the young person says something which you feel they could expand on, you can use the technique of repeating it back to them and acknowledging their feelings at the same time (see the example below).

## What are you trying to find out?

Start with a loose plan and some questions, which allow your young person to go off on a tangent. Often when people know it's OK to speak freely, you can find out more. They might say something which seems so basic, but which tells you a lot about how they are feeling, if you dig a bit deeper.

So, for example

**Q:** "What do you do in your spare time?"

**A:** "I play Minecraft."

**Q:** “Oh OK – so what do you really like about Minecraft?”

**A:** “I have friends on Minecraft, but not at college. No one talks to me, but on Minecraft everyone thinks I am good at the game, so I feel happy. When I am at college people think I am weird because I have a helper with me all the time. I hate it.”

These are the kind of questions you can use:

- What makes you happy?
- What are you great at?
- What worries you or makes you sad?
- What do you find hard?
- What do you want for your future?
- Where do you see yourself as an adult?



### Here’s an example of how a conversation might go

**Q:** “When do you feel happiest Claire?”

**A:** “I think it is in lunchtime at college. I get to be with all my friends, and we go to computer club. They’re really kind to me.”

**Q:** “So, being around your friends and on the computer make you feel really happy?”

**A:** “Yes”

**Q:** “What happens in the lessons then? Do you have friends in the lessons?”

**A:** “Everyone talks lots in the lessons and I can’t even see what I am doing in my work, so I don’t like making friends in the lesson.”

**Q:** “So, everyone talking lots in lessons means you find it hard to focus? It sounds like you find that frustrating. Shall we put that down as something you found challenging about last year? It’s something that you can be supported with a bit more. What would you like to happen to make it a bit easier for you in lessons?”

- speak to a supporter who can write things for you
- fill out the ‘All about me’ or ‘This is Me’ profile pages - these are on the DiAS website
- use pre-made online personal profile one-pagers
- write a letter or song or rap and record it



### From the conversation with Claire, you could come up with something like this

I feel happiest at lunchtimes with my friends. I like computer club because I can focus more at lunchtime on the stuff I enjoy. I like having friends and talking, but in lessons I can’t focus at all and it makes people think I am shy. It’s too noisy and bright, people are shouting and laughing. I’m sat at the back and I sit next to a boy who is really loud. My TA Sandra tries to talk to me too and I just feel like crying all the time.

I wish that I wouldn’t get so upset, because when I am older, I would like to work in a computer shop. I need to be able to speak to different people. I also want to live alone or with friends, not with my parents, so I hope I can be a bit more confident. I want to go to college and do a course in retail and customer service. Then I’d like to get an apprenticeship in a shop. I could tell the customers lots about Minecraft and other games.

I think if I could sit nearer the front, next to quieter people and be allowed to work in the library more, I would be able to learn better.

## Need more information?

### Sheffkids (part of the site for adults)

One-page profiles to download

w: [www.sheffkids.co.uk](http://www.sheffkids.co.uk)

### Careers South West

Information and advice about post 16 options

[cswgroup.co.uk](http://cswgroup.co.uk)

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## How do I record what’s been said?

There are lots of ways to record a young person’s views.

Here are a few ideas for your young person to try:

- use a big sheet of paper and jot down lots of ideas
- record a video
- draw pictures - use pens, pencils, a computer, paint, cutting and sticking, do a collage