

How the NHS works for young people

For Healthcare Professionals...

1 When can young people make health decisions?

- **Before 18** years, a young person can independently consent to treatment, if you (their healthcare professional) feel that they have a good understanding of the situation ([competence](#))
- **Before 16** years, you need to assess if they have **capacity to consent**



2 When can they make their own appointment?

- They can make an appointment with a GP **at any age**
- From 16 they can access GP online services, where they can book & cancel appointments, see test results and order repeat medications
- From 16 years, parents should only make, change or cancel appointments if the young person has agreed ([consent](#))

3 When can they see a healthcare professional (doctor/nurse) on their own?

- **At any age**
- Everything they tell you should stay [confidential](#) unless they give permission to share or their safety is at risk
- You should tell the young person before sharing any information about them



4 Can they see a doctor/visit a clinic without their parents being told?

- **Yes.** If they don't want their parent to know about a visit, this information should be kept private
- Encourage the young person to speak to their parents, if you think it is safe to do so
- If you are concerned about their safety, you may share information with other professionals

5 When can they use a pharmacy independently?

- From **16 years old** they can collect their own prescriptions and can buy over the counter medications
- Under 16 years they can sometimes collect prescriptions but this is situation-specific



6 Can their parents still help them after the age of 16 (e.g. book or accompany them to appointments)?

- Yes, **from 16 it's their choice** how much their parents are involved

Tips from other healthcare professionals...

- **Dedicate time to see young people alone** for the whole or part of the appointment. Take cultural beliefs of the family into consideration, how can you help the young person and their parents to feel comfortable with the transition?
- Some young people feel more comfortable speaking about sensitive topics like mental or sexual health when their parents are not in the room - remember the [HEADSSS assessment](#)
- Be aware of your **body language**, always make eye contact and talk to the young person. Think about the room layout, position your chair to face the young person
- If the parent/carer is in the room outline how the appointment will run e.g. the young person will talk uninterrupted first, then discussion together, then you'll see them alone
- **Check the young person has understood** what you have discussed
- Consider if a [chaperone](#) is required
- Ask the young person if they want their **healthcare documentation** to be addressed to them and/or their parent/carer, include useful resources if possible
- Encourage young people to **share** their healthcare decisions with **someone they trust**
- Some young people find it helpful to **write down their concerns and questions**, or make a diary of their symptoms, to bring to their appointment
- Ask young people to give **feedback** on their experience
- Encourage young people to keep the **contact details** for their GP, school nurse and other healthcare professionals and a reminder of appointments **in their phone**
- If there is not time to cover everything book in a follow up appointment



As a young person, can you share an example of when healthcare has worked well for you?

"My occupational therapist is amazing! She listens to me and looks at me as a person"

Anon, 16 years old