

# Consent to medical assessment, care and treatment: a guide for young people



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Healthy  
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**Young people aged 16 and over are usually allowed to consent to their own medical treatment.** This is because they will usually have enough understanding to be able to make an informed choice in the same way that adults can.

**Young people under the age of 16 can also consent to their own treatment, but only if they're believed to have enough understanding to fully appreciate what's involved.** Usually, a parent or carer will consent on behalf of the young person, but if a young person wishes to receive treatment without consent, they can do so as long as they've been assessed as being Gillick competent.

**Read on to find out more.**

Gillick competence helps people who work with young people to find a balance between **listening to young people's wishes** (which are sometimes different to the wishes of their parents or carers) and recognising that they **might not yet have enough understanding** to make an informed choice.

Gillick competence recognises that young people mature at different rates, and that the age that they are able to make competent decisions **won't be the same for everyone**. Even if you are deemed to be Gillick competent in making one decision, you may not be in another.

If you're under 16 and your parent or carer agrees with your decision about whether or not you should have treatment, they can consent (or not) for you, and you won't need to be assessed for Gillick competence.

If you wish to receive treatment without the consent of your parent or carer, or perhaps even without their knowledge, then it is **really important that everyone involved is certain that you know what you're consenting to**.

Your competence to make medical decisions **must be assessed by a trained professional**. You can't assess your own competence, and nor can an older friend or your teacher.

## What is Gillick competence all about?

## Who decides if I'm Gillick competent?

## How will it be decided if I'm Gillick competent?

The professional who assesses your competence will need to consider:

- your age, maturity and mental capacity
- how well you understand the issue and what it involves - including the advantages and disadvantages (pros and cons) and potential long-term impact
- how well you understand the risks, implications and consequences that might arise from your decision
- how well you understand any advice or information you've been given about it
- your understanding of any alternative options
- your ability to make and communicate a reasoned decision about what your wishes are

## What if my decision goes against my parents' or carers' wishes, or I don't want to tell them?

It's really important that you have a conversation with your parent or carer, wherever possible, about any health concerns you have. If at first you're not in agreement about what's right for you, **it can help to talk things through**, so that you can understand their concerns and they can understand yours.

If you seek medical treatment without your parent or carer's consent, the medical professional you speak to may try to encourage you to have another conversation with them, but if you don't feel comfortable doing that or if they still don't agree with your decision, **your treatment can still go ahead as long as you're assessed as being Gillick competent**. Your parent or carer won't find out about any treatment you've had without their consent, unless there are serious concerns about your welfare.

## How do I get a Gillick competence assessment?

First, **speak to your parent or carer if possible**. You might be able to reach an agreement with them about whether you should receive the medical treatment.

If you can, speak to the health professional involved in your care.

If you don't know who this is, or want to find out more, get in touch with the **Healthy Futures Calderdale school nursing team**. They will be able to talk you through your options and work with the right health professionals to arrange a Gillick competence assessment for you.

You can get in touch by calling **0303 330 9974** or sending a text to ChatHealth – our secure and confidential text messaging service – on **07480 635297**.