



Viewpoint - Factsheet for carers

What is Viewpoint?

Viewpoint is a computer program designed to engage young people in conversations about their care plans and allows them to provide feedback on their care experiences. It includes several questionnaires, each designed for different age groups and ability levels.

Viewpoint encourages young people to talk about what is going well for them; what they're concerned or worried about; and to think about any solutions to the issues they have raised.

Why do we need it?

We all know how hard it can be for young people to say what they're really thinking and feeling. Sometimes it's too difficult for them to communicate with adults.

Despite these difficulties, it is crucial that every young person in the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Communities (the Department's) care has an opportunity to talk about their views and wishes, and to raise any worries they have. Viewpoint allows young people to provide this information in an easy and enjoyable format.

How does it work?

Most young people feel confident and comfortable using electronic devices. Viewpoint harnesses this confidence to engage them in an electronic self-assessment questionnaire. It gives young people a chance to express themselves in a non-threatening environment. Young people have said that using Viewpoint is a much more comfortable way for them to raise issues than face-to-face conversations with adults.

Viewpoint has a choice of questionnaires to suit different ages. The graphical version offers a choice of vibrant background themes and appealing animated 'assistants' who guide the user through the questions. The 'assistants' can read out the questions to support children or young people with literacy difficulties. There are also intermittent game breaks to maintain interest and provide rewards.

A simpler version still offers sound and a read-back function but doesn't include the graphics or game breaks. This allows a young person to quickly finish the questionnaire. An additional version with symbols has been designed for young people who require a support person to assist them.

Young people can set the pace themselves, but the child protection worker will encourage them to try and complete the questionnaire in one or two sittings. An electronic notepad is available throughout, so they can add their own comments and have them read back to them.



[Viewpoint Factsheet for Carers]

How is it delivered?

Young people can do their questionnaires on any device with an internet connection (desktop, laptop, tablet) or a mobile phone. The Department can also supply iPads for them to use.

In many cases, a person from the Department will be present to help and support young people. This person can help them to log in or to understand things they may find difficult. If it's appropriate, a young person can do the questionnaire independently on their phone.

The child protection worker will talk to the child about their responses and explore ways of addressing any issues raised. This may happen during the Viewpoint session, particularly if the young person is being supported to complete the questionnaire, or it may take place later. This conversation, in combination with the questionnaire responses, will be used to inform their care plan.

Young people will still be encouraged to participate in person in care planning discussions or meetings. Experience shows young people are more likely to do so when they've used Viewpoint because they feel clearer about the issues, more confident about what they want to say and more assured that their views are important.

Viewpoint in WA

Viewpoint has been used in Western Australia since 2011 and every young person in the CEO's care must be given the opportunity to use it as part of their care planning process. It has been received with enthusiasm by young people, who consistently tell us that it's relevant and easy to use. Positive feedback has also been received from carers.

In addition to informing their own care plans, the responses are also anonymised and used in reports to provide feedback to the Department. This allows young people to provide feedback as a group about what they think we're doing well and where we need to do things better.

What happens to the information provided through Viewpoint?

When young people are asked to be open and share very personal information in any forum, they need to feel confident that the information they provide won't be automatically shared with others.

When the child protection worker speaks to the young person about their questionnaire and the information they provided, they will ask them what information they are happy to discuss in their care planning meeting. If there are no safety concerns and there is no specific need to share this information, the child protection worker will be guided by the young person in what will be shared and what will remain confidential.

The child protection worker will also explain that information must be shared if there are safety concerns for the young person or others, or if their file is requested by a Court. This should not be a surprise to the young person, as the same rule applies to any communication with Department staff, and is therefore no different from a discussion, phone call, email or letter.



[Viewpoint Factsheet for Carers]

If a young person doesn't want to share information, but has raised several issues, the child protection worker will work with them to find alternate ways to address their concerns. After this discussion, the young person may feel more comfortable sharing their concerns. However, if they are still not willing to share information and there is no clear necessity to do so, the information should remain confidential. In this case, only the child protection worker, team leader and Viewpoint administrator will have access to the information.

The responses collated into anonymised reports will be shared in order to improve services. The young person will be reassured that this information is anonymous and can be openly shared with foster carer groups through our partnership networks, without anyone knowing where the information came from.

How will this affect me as a carer?

There's nothing new about child protection workers talking to young people to find out about their care experiences, wishes and concerns as part of the care planning process.

The *Children and Community Services Act 2004* states that care planning must be an inclusive process in which the views and wishes of the young person are gathered and documented.

How can carers support Viewpoint?

Your encouragement is critical in supporting the young person in your care to use Viewpoint. Please ask for further information or raise any questions you may have with the young person's child protection worker.

You can also contact the Advocate for Children in Care on 0429 086 508 or email advocate@communities.wa.gov.au

Viewpoint is featured under 'Information for current carers' on the Department's website. Go to www.communities.wa.gov.au and click on Child Protection and Family Support.