



headspace toolkit

For Young People who are
Inpatients of Mental Health Services

***‘Your right to know
and your right
to be heard’***

YOUR GUIDE

WELCOME TO THE HEADSPACE TOOLKIT

***‘THIS
TOOLKIT
GIVES ME A
VOICE AND
HELPS ME
EXPRESS
MY
FEELINGS’***



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This booklet provides some information on the law under the Mental Health Act 2001. It does not give a legal interpretation of the Act or a complete description of how it operates, so please do not rely on it for legal advice.

Ask a member of staff if there is something you want to know more about.

WHAT IS THE TOOLKIT?

This toolkit is for you:

- **It is about helping you to take part in the decisions made about you**
- **It is here to help you through everything during your stay**
- **It is for making sure your rights are upheld**
- **You can use it on your own or you can use it with help from an adult that you trust such as a key worker, a nurse or other member of your team**

Staff at your unit will try to help you to feel as included as possible in decisions made about your care and treatment. Sometimes however, you may still find it difficult to get yourself properly listened to. This toolkit has been designed especially for you to use to help you to be heard and to feel more involved in deciding what happens to you during your stay.

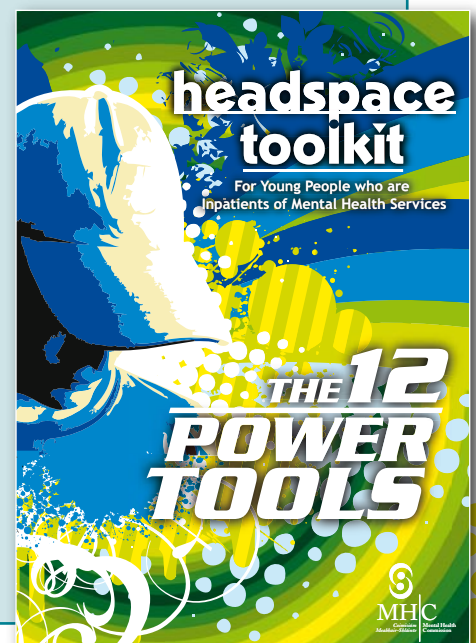
The information in this toolkit will provide you with basic information about being an inpatient, your rights, what the law says, who you can talk to, how to speak up (self-advocate) and get others to listen, what to do if you are not happy with the service you receive and other information that we hope you will find useful. There is information about the law and what it says if you are detained under the Mental Health Act, but it is worth remembering that most young people admitted to hospital are there because they and their parent(s) have agreed to it. If you still have questions (and you may well do so) then we tell you how to get them answered, including getting help from the Power Tools.

***'THE POWER TOOLS
HAVE HELPED ME WORK
THROUGH MY QUESTIONS'***

The Power Tools

The Power Tools are a load of practical tools for you to use. We have called them Power Tools because they are to help you to have more power over your care and treatment. They will help you to have more power because:

- They will make sure that mental health staff and other adults hear you better,
- They will help you to get your questions answered and find out what else you want to know about what's happening with your care, treatment and general circumstances as an inpatient,
- They will help you to work out what you want to happen with your care, treatment and circumstances.



WHY EXPRESS YOURSELF?

No one else knows you better than you do; no one is in a better position to be able to speak up for your needs, wants, views, feelings, opinions, and ideas than YOU.

- Your voice is very important
- You have a right to be heard
- And adults don't always know best

If you use this toolkit you can expect that it will:

- Increase your confidence
- Help you to understand where you are at
- Help you to understand your choices better
- Make sure adults know more about:
 - what you think - what you feel
 - what you want to happen

It will also:

- Help you to be more involved in influencing decisions made about you and your care and treatment.
- Help you feel good as you are more able to say what you really want to.
- Make you feel more empowered in your life.

If you would like more information about this Toolkit or have a comment to make about it please contact:

The Mental Health Commission, St. Martin's House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4.

Telephone: 01 6362400 E-mail: info@mhcir.ie

Visit our website: www.mhcirl.ie

YOUR RIGHTS

**Everybody has rights.
Rights are really important but not
everyone knows about them.**

What are my rights?

Rights are those laws, guidelines and conventions which say how a person should be treated. All children and young people in the world have the same basic rights, and these rights are listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

You also have rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. In Ireland we have a constitution which sets out some fundamental rights of all citizens. If you know about these then you can use them.

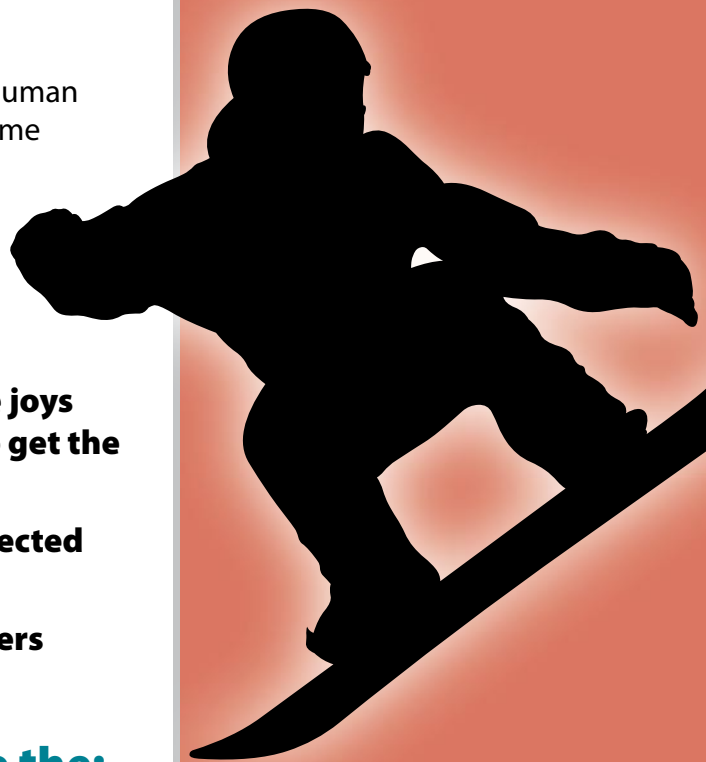
So what does having RIGHTS really mean anyway?

- **It means you have a right to a fulfilling life, the joys that it has to offer, and everything you need to get the best out of life**
- **You have a right to be treated well and to be protected from mistreatment**
- **You have the right to be listened to on all matters affecting you.**

All of 'your rights' say that you have the:

- **Right to express yourself.**
- **Right to be heard and listened to properly.**
- **Right to receive information in a way that you can understand and that you can remember (this includes everything that you are told about your care and treatment).**
- **Right to good health care and to be looked after properly.**

If you want to read more about the Convention on the Rights of the Child see the Appendix, pg 24.



How do I use them?

Your rights under the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights Act are enforceable. This means that they can be used to argue that something should be changed or even bring a case to court.

However, not all of your rights are ones which can be enforceable in law, instead some are set out as guidelines or as statements of how things should be. They can be used to argue your point of view in meetings and other situations.

Even if you have no choice over being in a mental health unit, the Mental Health Act gives three principles that must be followed by anyone involved in your care. These are:

- **that any decision taken about your care and treatment should be done in your best interest;**
- **that any decision taken about your care and treatment must respect your right to dignity, bodily integrity, privacy and autonomy; and also**
- **where it proposed to give you treatment, you should be told about this proposal, as much as you can be, and given the chance to have your views heard before it is decided if you should have the treatment.**

***‘NOW I
UNDERSTAND
MY RIGHTS
I FEEL MORE
IN CONTROL
AND MORE
ABLE TO SAY
WHAT I AM
FEELING’***



The least you should expect when you go into hospital is that:

- **Your best interests must always be taken into account.**
- **You should be involved, as far as you can be, in the planning of your care and treatment, how it is then provided and reviewing how useful or effective it is.**
- **You should be informed of the type or nature of treatment that is being proposed; the reason for it and how it is likely to affect you.**
- **You should always be kept as fully informed as possible, and receive clear and detailed information concerning your care.**
- **Your views, wishes and feelings should always be considered.**
- **You should always be treated with respect.**
- **Your progress and possible changes in your care plan should be reviewed at regular intervals.**
- **Anything that is done to effect your life (like how long you stay in hospital) should be as unrestrictive as possible, and mean the least possible separation from your family, friends, community and school.**
- **You have the right to have contact with family and friends either through visits or on the phone (except under exceptional circumstances).**
- **Anything that is done effecting your life should result in the least amount of stigma.**
- **You should have access to education that is suitable and right for you.**
- **You have a basic right to food, shelter, water, warmth, a comfortable environment, confidentiality & reasonable privacy (both physical privacy and privacy in regard to your personal thoughts and feelings).**

If you feel that people involved in your care and treatment are not properly listening to you and involving you, do not be afraid to speak up, and let people know what you think would be best for you.



WHY AM I IN HOSPITAL?

Why am I here?

**'GAVE
ME THE
CONFIDENCE
TO ASK
ABOUT THE
THINGS
I DIDN'T
KNOW'**



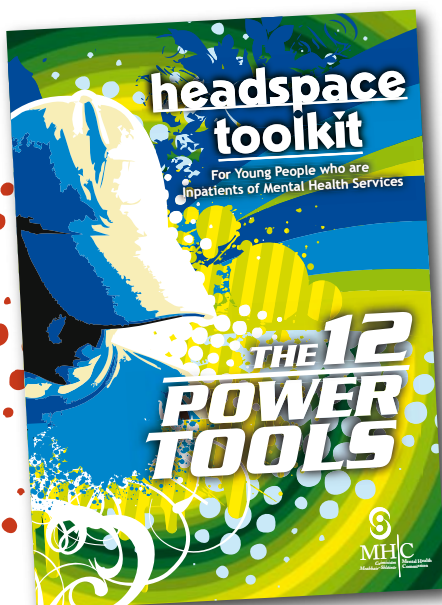
You are in hospital because people in your life were concerned about your mental health and wanted to see you get well again. It may be your parents who were worried about you or other people who thought it would be a good idea for you to come and stay here or you may have decided together with your parents that you wanted to go into hospital.

While in hospital, you will get the support you need to help you recover and return home. All the young people at your unit will be in a similar situation. They too will be ordinary young people who are at the unit to receive care and treatment or have an assessment of their needs. Some may need more treatment or staff support than others, but no one has less right to treatment or should be treated as less important than anyone else. The care and treatment you get in hospital is similar to that you get as an outpatient except it is more intensive.

You will be in hospital as either a voluntary patient or a detained child (by order of the Court), and we explain the difference between those types of patient further down.

It is likely that you will be in a unit that is specifically for young people, but not always. This is something that will depend on your age. In some circumstances it may be that you are on an adult

unit, this could be because of your mental health condition or because there are no beds available in a young persons' unit. We will advise you about what should happen if you are on an adult unit later in the Toolkit, and you can use **Power Tool 2** to get answers.



What is a voluntary patient?

If you are in hospital because someone with responsibility for you (such as your parents or guardian) agreed to it then the law considers you to be a 'voluntary patient'. Most of the young people you meet will be there as voluntary patients. The word 'voluntary' may seem a little strange if you have not agreed to being admitted but according to the law your admission is voluntary if you are under 18 and your parents agreed to it.

As a voluntary patient the length of time you are in hospital will depend on what treatment you are having and how well this is working. Once it is considered you are no longer needing inpatient care you will be discharged, but there is no time limit on how long that can take. Alternatively your parent or guardian may take you out of hospital.

If your parents or guardians wanted to take you out of hospital, but the doctor or nurse did not think that you are well enough to leave, you may be detained.

You can be detained for up to 3 days whilst an application to detain you for longer is made to the District Court. There is more detail about this a bit later in the Toolkit.



What does it mean to be a detained child?

***'YOU SHOULD
HAVE AS
MUCH
FREEDOM IN
DECISION-
MAKING AS
POSSIBLE'***

This is when you are admitted to hospital by an order of the Court. You may be detained because it is considered that you are so unwell that you need to be in hospital for your own good or protection, or the protection of others. If you are detained, you will have been diagnosed as having a mental disorder.

It is up to the Court or the doctor to decide when you are ready to leave hospital. Your doctor will tell the Court how you are getting on. There are however certain time limits on how long you can be detained for.

There is more information about what it means to have a mental disorder and being detained later in the Toolkit.

Can I choose whether to be admitted or not?

As explained earlier, as a voluntary patient the decision about whether you will be admitted will be made by someone who has responsibility for you, such as a parent or guardian. It is for them to decide, with the advice of the doctor, how long you stay in hospital. Hopefully you agreed along with your parents to coming into hospital, if you are not happy about your admission, you should talk with a member of your team or someone you trust about this. Power Tool 3 can help you find out more about why you are in hospital.

If you have been diagnosed by a doctor as having a mental disorder, it will be up to the Court to decide if you are admitted as a detained child. How that process works is described later in the Toolkit.

The Mental Health Act says that, no matter what age you are, your views should be taken into consideration when a decision about your mental health care and treatment is being made.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT BE LIKE?

You should normally be on a unit that is only for young people. So you should be with other children and young people. The environment should be suitable for young people; there should be things available that young people like to do and the staff should have specific training to work with young people.

You will have a team of people involved in your care and treatment and they will give you information on your illness and the treatments available in the unit to help you. Your educational needs should also be considered by your team as you have a right to access education. What you can do, will obviously depend on your mental health condition.

There should be facilities that allow you to practice any religious or cultural activities.

Sometimes, because of your condition or for some other reason, you might be admitted to an adult unit. If this happens there should be separate sleeping and bathroom areas for young people.

If you are on an adult unit everything should be done to make sure that you feel safe, and that you are not bothered by the other patients.

If the staff on an adult unit are not trained to work with young people then there should be someone from the staff who has experience of working with young people, and they should be in charge of your treatment, or advising the staff on your unit.

You may have lots of questions like what is there to do on the unit, what can you bring into the unit, will you have internet access or will you still be able to see your friends.

Power Tool 2 will help you to ask questions about the unit.



CAN I MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS ABOUT MY TREATMENT?

Treatment means any medication, tests, therapy, nursing and other care given to you in hospital with the aim of helping you feel better and recover so you can return home.

If you are under 18, in general, you do not have the right under the law to decide whether to consent to mental health treatment or not.

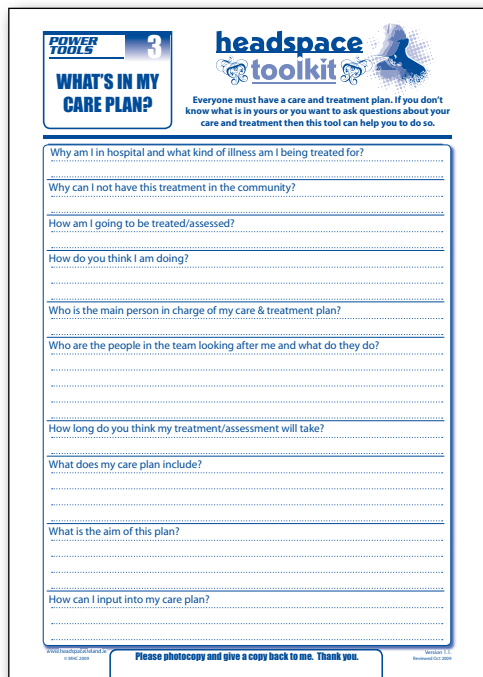
The mental health law does however state that, no matter what age you are, when it is proposed to give you treatment, you should be consulted and your views listened to before the treatment is given to you. So, your doctor and/or your team should consult you about any treatment that is proposed. That doesn't mean the doctor and/or your team has to agree with what you want, but your views should be taken into consideration. If you disagree with your treatment, you can use power tool 6 to tell your team or parent or carer why.

There is a Code of Practice for staff on the admission of children and this says that you should be involved in all aspects of your care and treatment while you are in hospital, based on your needs and wishes. So you may also be consulted about how treatment may be given and about how effective the treatment has been. The law also says that you must be given information that is clear and easy for you to understand on your illness and on any medication given to you including any possible side effects to taking it.

**'I ASK
QUESTIONS
NOW AND IT
REALLY HELPS'**



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POWER TOOLS 3

headspace toolkit

Everyone must have a care and treatment plan. If you don't know what is in yours or you want to ask questions about your care and treatment then this tool can help you to do so.

Why am I in hospital and what kind of illness am I being treated for?

Why can I not have this treatment in the community?

How am I going to be treated/assessed?

How do you think I am doing?

Who is the main person in charge of my care & treatment plan?

Who are the people in the team looking after me and what do they do?

How long do you think my treatment/assessment will take?

What does my care plan include?

What is the aim of this plan?

How can I input into my care plan?

Please photocopy and give a copy back to me. Thank you.

Voluntary patient

If you are a voluntary patient then your parent or legal guardian must give consent for you to be given any treatment

Detained child

If you are a detained child, the doctor gets permission from a Judge to treat you, and so even your parent or legal guardian do not need to be consulted or give their permission about treatment decisions. The doctor decides what type of treatment would be best for you, although some treatments can only be given with the permission of a Judge.

You can use Power Tools 3 and 4 to get your questions answered about your treatment and medication

ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT & BEING DETAINED UNDER IT (the legal bit)

The Mental Health Act 2001

The Mental Health Act is the law that relates to mental health care and treatment in Ireland. It applies both to adults (aged 18 and over) and young people.

There are some specific bits of the Act that only apply to young people although these bits are mostly relevant to you only if you have been diagnosed with a mental disorder. It sets down what must and mustn't happen if someone is diagnosed as having a mental disorder.

There is also a Code of Practice that sets out what should happen if a young person is admitted to hospital. The Code of Practice is not something that doctors and your team must follow, but they must have a very good reason not to.

The Act is set out in sections that deal with specific things, and these sections are numbered. So, for example, **Section 3** sets out what is meant by a mental disorder.

What do they mean when they talk about a mental disorder?

This is when you have:

A mental illness – this is a state of mind which affects the person's thinking, perceiving, emotions or judgement to the extent that they require care or medical treatment in their own interest or in the interest of other people. Examples of this may be when a person is very depressed or anxious to a point that makes them think, behave and feel so differently from what is usual that it causes others to be so concerned for their welfare and those around them that medical treatment is thought to be necessary.

OR

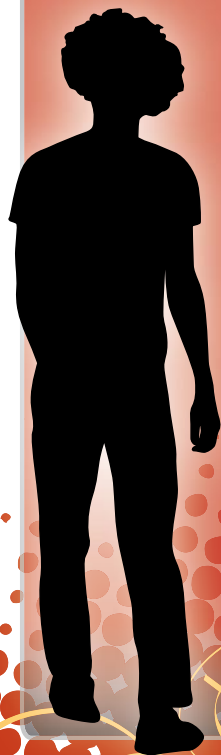
Severe dementia – this usually involves some physical changes in the brain that badly effects a persons ability to think, remember and understand things. It only really happens to older adults.

OR

Significant intellectual disability – this is where a person's mind does not fully develop and the problems with their mind affects them to such a degree that they struggle to get on with other people and do things that may be considered to be very reckless or possibly harmful to themselves or others.

AND - A doctor must also have concerns that because of the mental illness, disability or dementia, there is a serious likelihood that you may cause immediate and serious harm to yourself or to other persons or your ability to think and act sensibly is so impaired that if you are not admitted to hospital it would be likely to lead to your condition getting much worse or unless you were in hospital you could not be given the right treatment, and it is likely that if you went into hospital your condition would get much better.

***'TRUST IS
A MAJOR
THING.
IF THERE ARE
FRIENDLY
STAFF THAT
YOU CAN
SPEAK TO
YOU FEEL
MORE OPEN'***



In the previous text some of the key words are 'serious', 'severe', and 'significant'. So if you have a mild bout of depression (a few days of feeling very low) or if you have a slight learning disability it is very unlikely you will be detained under the Mental Health Act. It is only when you begin to get really unwell, or people feel that you could do something, because of your mental state, that might harm you or someone else that professionals will start to consider whether it may be in your best interests to be detained under the Act.

It is worth knowing that very few young people are detained in hospital. Even if you are detained, you still have a lot of the rights (as described earlier in the toolkit).

Section 4 says that all decisions around care and treatment (including being detained) must be made in the person's best interests. It also says a person must be consulted about any proposal to give treatment, and it says that a person's rights must be respected.

Section 23 sets out what has to happen if as a voluntary patient you try to leave hospital, or your parent tries to discharge you, but the doctor or nurse considers you should stay in hospital because you have a mental disorder.

Section 25 is a very important section as it talks about what must happen for a young person to be detained under the Act.

It states that if a young person is thought to be suffering from a mental disorder and needs treatment in hospital that they're unlikely to get if an order is not made, then the Health Service Executive may go to the District Court and ask for an order allowing them to detain the young person.

However, the young person must have been examined by a consultant psychiatrist who has diagnosed that the young person has a mental disorder, unless there are good reasons why that cannot be done.

In the situation where a young person's parents do not allow the psychiatrist to carry out an examination, but there is a reasonable cause to believe that the young person has a mental disorder, the Court may authorise the consultant psychiatrist to carry out an examination, and go back to the Court if he or she is satisfied that

the young person does indeed have a mental disorder. The young person may be detained whilst this examination is done and whilst the Court is considering the results of the examination.

If, after receiving the consultant psychiatrist's report, the Court is satisfied that the young person has a mental disorder and needs to be in hospital to be treated, it can then order that the young person is detained for up to 21 days. This does not mean that the young person must be detained for 21 days, only that they cannot be detained for longer than that without going back to Court.

If the Court does order a further period of detention then it can only be for a specific period up to a maximum of 3 months but it does not have to be for the full 3 months. For example, the consultant psychiatrist may ask the Court to detain you for a further 14 days. Any further authorisation will be for specific periods up to a maximum of 6 months.

The Court must have considered the welfare of the young person as the most important factor when making a decision about whether a young person should be detained or not.

The Court must also try to take the young person's wishes into consideration.

While I'm detained in hospital does that mean I must stay there until I'm discharged?

No.

Section 26 gives your doctor the right to allow you to leave hospital for a specified period. This may be for an hour or a few days. It depends on how well you are, and whether the doctor thinks it would be good for you to spend some time away from the unit. This permission has to be in writing and can only be given by the doctor in charge of your care.

The doctor might put some conditions on the permission to leave the unit. This might be that you can only go out accompanied by a member of staff or your family or only go to certain places.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

***'I HAD
SO MANY
QUESTIONS
- BUT ONCE
THEY WERE
EXPLAINED
I RELAXED'***



These are some questions we were asked when making this toolkit

“How long will I be here?”

You will be in the unit for the shortest time possible to allow you to recover and be well enough to go home again. You can talk to someone on your team about when this is likely to happen.

Tool 10 can help you set goals for yourself while in hospital and you can use **Tool 12** to plan for going home when you are ready.

“What does confidentiality really mean?”

Only people involved in your care and treatment who ‘need to know’ should have access to your personal information.

Your right to privacy with your personal information is very important. You should be told who within the unit or mental health service providing care for you will see your health records and who will know what is in your care plan.

Normally your information will be shared with your parents or legal guardians, but it will only be shared with other people without your agreement if:

- **It is in the public interest**
- **What you have said could be evidence of a major crime.**

You have a right to see health information that is kept about you (unless your doctor thinks it would not be in your best interests) – this includes all your health records.

Your right to confidentiality should be respected.

Any limits to the confidentiality of what you say should be made clear to you.

“Can I have visitors and still see my friends while in hospital?”

Yes, you should be able to meet with visitors, of all ages, in a comfortable place. However there may be times when it is considered not to be in your best interests to meet with visitors so you should ask a member of staff about having visitors.

“Can I choose whether my key worker is male or female?”

Sometimes it is possible to request this. If you feel that you have a good reason then it is important that you talk with someone about it as soon as possible.

“Can I be secluded or restrained against my will?”

Yes, but it is very rare and will only happen when it is considered to be the only way of protecting your own safety or the safety of others.

Seclusion means separating a person from others and being placed in a room alone for a short time maybe because they need to calm down. Restraint is when a person is held by another person or where something like straps are used if the person is lashing out. These can only be used in your best interests.

The Mental Health Commission has very clear Rules and a Code of Practice on their use which staff must follow. If you have any questions after reading about these issues, you can ask for a patient information leaflet. Your key worker will probably be the best person to get the information for you or to answer your questions.

“Can I still see someone from the team that looked after me when I was at home?”

Sometimes, this will depend on where the unit you are admitted to is located. If it is far from your home, it may not be possible to see someone from your community team until after you leave hospital. You should ask a member of staff on the unit more about this.

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

***'YOU NEED
TO KNOW
WHO YOU
CAN TALK
TO IF YOU
ARE HAVING
PROBLEMS'***



Here are some people who you may be able to talk to while in hospital. They may help you to get your views heard and your rights respected or they may just help answer some of your questions or listen to you if you are worried about something.

Your team

You can talk to a member of your team. Your team may include some or all of the following people:

Key worker:

They are your main support while at the unit. Hopefully you will be able to build a strong and trusting relationship with them. They can help voice your views but may not be able to advocate for you if they have a different idea of what is best for you.

Psychiatrist:

Your doctor at the unit, though you may also have a different one when you are at home. They have overall responsibility for your treatment at the unit and you can talk to them about being more involved in your care and treatment.

Nurse:

The people you will see most of when you are in hospital will be the nurses. You may find that you get on with one or more of them, and will find it easy to talk to them.

Social Worker:

If you have a social worker they have a responsibility to listen to your views and to look out for your 'best interests'. They will help you look at what things in your life at home may need to change for you to feel better. Sometimes they will be able to advocate (speak up) for you, but not always because what they think is best for you may not be what you think.

Psychologist:

A person whose job is to provide therapy usually by talking through your problems. Over time they will hopefully be able to help you find new ways of looking at what is happening to you and things that you might do to feel better.



Occupational therapist:

Another person you may meet in hospital who may be encouraging and help you get involved in activities on the unit. You might also find it easy to talk to them.

OTHER PEOPLE

There may be other people that you can talk to, for example, other young people you might meet on the unit.

A Friend:

Friends can sometimes speak up for you and support you and your rights, and sometimes not so much. If you have a friend you trust then they can be a good person to talk to, especially if you feel like they understand you. This could be another young person you have met on the unit or it could be a friend from home.

Family:

Family members can sometimes be very good advocates and sometimes not so good at all. It depends on whether or not they agree with your views and what information they have. They usually want you to just be happy and feel better. Sometimes they will go along with your doctor and/or team decisions and sometimes they may disagree.

Independent Advocate:

An independent advocate is someone who is separate from the hospital and social services and can help you to put your side of things across to those involved in your treatment.

Anyone can advocate for you but an independent advocate can do so without any conflict of interest. They are committed to supporting your views and no one else's so can always be a good source of unbiased information, support and rights. Unfortunately independent advocates for young people are not always available in Ireland, that's why the toolkit has been created to help you advocate for yourself. Always ask if an independent advocate is available on the unit.

The Inspector of Mental Health Services

The Inspector of Mental Health Services and his/her team visit every approved centre once a year. While on a visit, they talk to staff and people on the unit about the service and care and treatment that are provided.

Their job is to make sure that you are being looked after properly while in hospital and are getting proper care and treatment. Some of the things they look at when visiting a hospital are:

- **Care and treatment planning**
- **That there are suitable recreational activities**
- **That you are given enough information**
- **That your privacy is respected at all times**

You can ask to talk to the Inspector or an Assistant Inspector if there is something you want to say, but only if they visit the unit while you are staying there.

SPEAKING YOUR MIND

What is advocacy?

- **Advocacy is helping and supporting someone to speak up for what they want**
- **Self-advocacy is being informed and speaking up for yourself and what you want.**

How to speak up and get your views across to other people.

If you understand the words that we have explained in the jargon buster then you can use it to be more assertive and to show that you know what you are talking about.

Don't worry if you find speaking up for yourself difficult. There are lots of other ways to get your views and wishes across. The tools in this toolkit will also help.

You might like to have someone with you that you trust when you speak to your doctor or other members of the team. Asking someone else to speak up for you or to help you to use the tools can work really well too!

How to self advocate

- **Write things down and keep records as much as you can – that way you can be sure of what's been said or agreed rather than having to remember it all. Plus you can refer back to it if you need to.**
- **Take the time to plan what you want to say, especially if you are going into a large meeting. This will help you to get things clear with yourself so you can be clear with others. The clearer you are with other people, the more involved and influential you will be in decisions about your life. Also, think about how others (like your psychiatrist, your parents or carers and the other adults involved in your life) are likely to respond to what you have to say and how you can best deal with how they might react.**
- **Talk to other people – they may have their own experience of advocating for themselves and may be able to support you to do so yourself.**
- **Practice. Rehearse what you want to say. Then you will feel more prepared and confident when meeting with people.**
- **You may want to take with you someone who can provide you with moral support. Check with your team to see who you can ask to attend with you.**



**'READING
THE POWER
TOOLS
HELPED MY
CONFIDENCE
SO I COULD
EXPLAIN'**

HOW TO BE ASSERTIVE

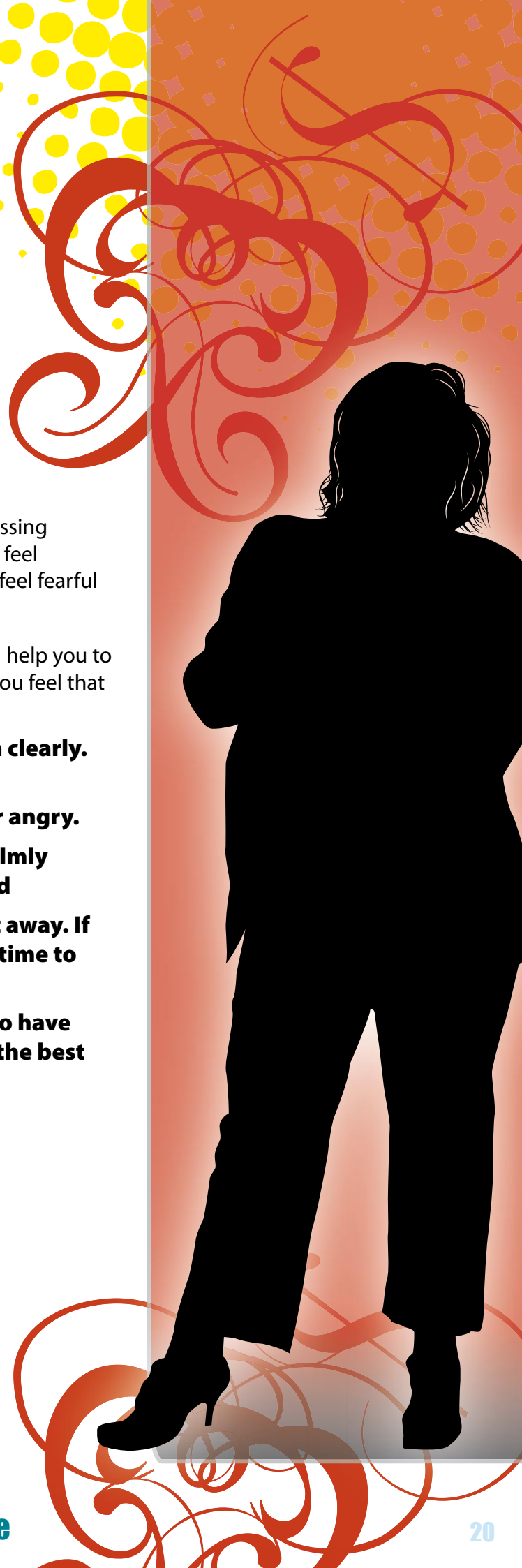
All of the Tools can be used to speak your mind and to be assertive

It is easy to feel under pressure when it comes to expressing yourself. You may feel under the spotlight and may not feel confident about what to say, especially when you may feel fearful of how it will be heard by others.

There are a few basic things, which you can do that will help you to be clear and confident in what you are saying, even if you feel that it may be different to the views of others.

- **Plan what you want to say and write it down clearly. You could also rehearse it with a friend.**
- **Try to stay calm even if you feel uncertain or angry.**
- **If you think you are not being heard then calmly repeat yourself, until you feel acknowledged**
- **You don't have to answer questions straight away. If you feel under pressure, say you would like time to think about it please.**
- **You have a right to express your views and to have them respected. Trust yourself. You can get the best care for yourself by being:**
 - friendly – yet firm
 - assertive - not angry
 - persistent – not pushy

**Be positive.
Keep trying and, eventually,
it will pay off.**



Before complaining it is good to be clear with yourself:

- **The facts of what has happened**
- **Who has been involved**
- **Was anyone else there and did they see or hear what happened?**
- **Your feelings about what has happened**
- **What you would like to see change as a result of your complaint (not just your view on what is wrong)**

Your complaint has more chance of being heard and dealt with if you express it sooner rather than later.

All patients should be given information and a leaflet on how to make a comment or complaint about their unit, so you should ask for this.

Comments or complaints can be useful for your unit as they can show them where they could be doing things better.

There may also be a suggestion box on your unit.

COMMENTING OR MAKING A COMPLAINT ABOUT A SERVICE

If you are feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with the way you are being cared for or treated then making a complaint is a reasonable way of letting this be known. You can use Power Tool 9 to help you do this.

It is OK to make a complaint about something, however unimportant it may seem. If it is important for you then it matters. Or, you may just have a comment or suggestion to make about how you would like to see things done differently.

There may also be times when you want to express how good a service has been for you. This can be a valuable process of acknowledging how you feel about something that has really helped you. It will also be very valued by those responsible for the service.

You have a right to be treated and cared for in the best way possible. You have a right to be protected from mistreatment, neglect or any kind of attack on who you are. If you are subjected to mistreatment of any kind you have the right to complain about it and for your complaint to be taken seriously.

There are two different ways you can make a complaint:

- **Informally – by finding someone to talk to about the issue and then getting their help in sorting it out. This is usually the best place to start. You should be able to talk to a staff member or the unit manager if you want to make a complaint.**
- **Formally – by using your unit's official complaints procedure.**

You can do either of these by yourself or with the help of someone else (like a parent, friend or advocate).

If you are unhappy with how your complaint has been dealt with, you can contact the Ombudsman for Children's Office. See page 24 for contact details.

SKILLS IN EXPRESSING YOUR COMPLAINT

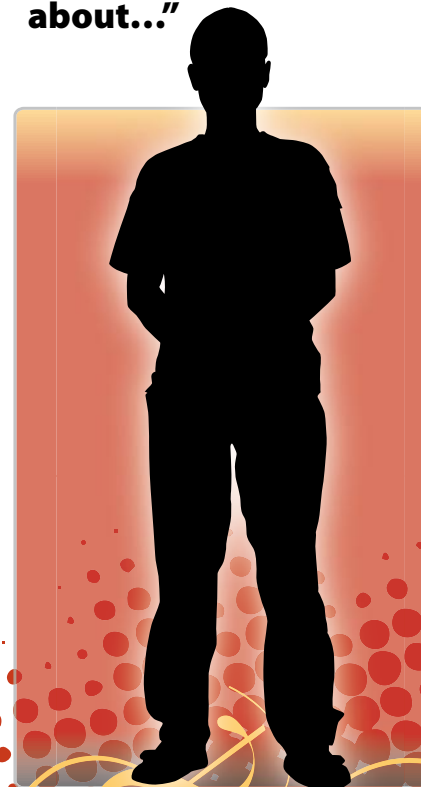
How you express your complaint is as important as what you have to complain about.

- **Assertiveness skills are very useful when complaining. The calmer you can be the more chance you have of getting the people you are talking to to listen.**
- **Think about your strategy – could your concern be sorted out in ways other than a formal complaint?**
- **Always be clear as to what you want from making a complaint and what you want to be different.**
- **Be prepared to be patient as complaints can take time to be investigated while people check out with others before making a judgement.**
- **Be confident – you have a right to receive a satisfactory service and to speak up if it is not right for you**
- **Bear in mind that sometimes when you are not happy about the way things are, that they may not be able to be changed (e.g. it is a law) or that you may have misunderstood something. You still have a right to express your view on this though. Be prepared to ask for something to be explained more.**
- **Remember that how something feels to you is what is important and if you feel that what has happened is not right then you have a right to complain and be fully heard in that complaint.**

Things you could say to start talking about your complaint

“I don’t quite understand this...”

“Something happened that I don’t feel happy about...”



USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS & ADDRESSES

Aware –

is a voluntary organisation providing support through depression.

Helpline 1890 303 302.
www.aware.ie

Bodywhys –

is a voluntary organisation that provides a range of support services for people affected by eating disorders, including specific services for families and friends.

Helpline: 1890 200 444.
www.bodywhys.ie

Grow –

is an organisation that helps people who have had, or are currently experiencing mental health problems.

Infoline on 1890 474 474.
www.grow.ie

Headsup –

is an online mental health promotion project to help prevent suicide and it provides appropriate information and support to young people.

www.Headsup.ie

Letsomeoneknow -

is a website to help you understand more about what's getting you down, and hopefully find a few ways to help.

www.letsomeoneknow.ie

Mental Health Ireland –

is a national voluntary organisation that aims to promote positive mental health and actively support people with mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights.

Tel: 01 2841166
www.mentalhealthireland.ie

Samaritans –

is a national helpline which provides 24 hour emotional support for those feeling despair. 1850 60 90 90.

Shine –

is a national organisation dedicated to upholding the rights and addressing the needs of all those affected by enduring mental illness.

Infoline 1890 621 631
www.shineonline.ie

Spunout –

is an online youth powered national charity working to empower young people to create personal and social change.

www.Spunout.ie

Other Useful Contacts

Barnardos

– is an organisation that supports children whose well-being is under threat, by working with them, their families and communities and by campaigning for the rights of children.

Callsave: 1850 222 300.
www.barnardos.ie

Childline

– is a national 24 hour helpline to empower, support and protect young people.

Tel: 1800 66 66 66.

Headstrong

– is a national organisation working with communities in Ireland to make sure that young people aged 12 to 25 are better supported to achieve mental health and wellbeing.

Tel: 01 6607343.
www.headstrong.ie



National Service User Executive (NSUE)

– is an organisation set up to help ensure that the voice of people with mental health problems is heard in the planning and delivery of services.

www.nsue.ie

Office of the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs

– is part of Department of Health & Children, set up to give a stronger voice to children on issues that affect them in society.

Tel: 01 635 4000.

www.omc.gov.ie

For Complaints or Comments:

HSE -

www.hse.ie/eng/Your_Service_Your_Say/.

A HSE website which tells you how to make a comment, compliment or complaint about a public health service.

Ombudsman for Children

– is an organisation there to make sure that the government and other people who make decisions about young people really think about what is best for young people. They give more information on your rights on their website.

Free-phone 1800 20 20 40.

www.oco.ie

APPENDIX

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

This describes the basic human rights to which every person under the age of 18yrs is entitled. It applies to children of every background and include the right to survival, to develop to the fullest, to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. While having these rights is not the same as being law, countries still have to make their laws to fit with these rights.

The rights are set out in what are called Articles and some examples of these rights are:

Article 3

it says that in all actions concerning children the best interests of the child will be the most important thing to consider.

Article 12

says that children have a right to give their views freely in all things that affect them and that these must be taken seriously.

Article 16

says that children have a right to privacy not just in places they are staying but also concerning their relationships and conversations with other people such as when seeing visitors or having phone calls as well as confidentiality of their notes and records.

Article 23

says that any child who is disabled, physically or mentally, has a right to be treated with dignity and enjoy a full and decent life as well as be helped to play an active part in the community.

Article 28

says that all children, even those who are detained should be able to access education.

Article 37(c)

says that every child that has been detained has a right to be treated with respect and dignity which takes into account the child's needs and age. Also the child should be separated from adults unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests not to. Also a child should have a right to keep in contact with family through letters and visits unless there is good reason for this not to happen.

THE POWER TOOLS

How do I use the Tools?

There is no right or wrong way to use these tools.

With some of them you can just tick the boxes and give it to a member of staff. Other tools are more for your information and to help you work out your rights or what you would like to happen.

Use them all to get your views across and to be your own advocate.

What's going on – your right to know

Getting your views across is much easier if you know what is going on.

The Mental Health Commission has a Code of Practice covering admission, transfer and discharge from hospital. It says that you should be provided with various information on admission to hospital such as information on your rights while in hospital and information on the care and treatment you can expect to receive. Staff should check that you understand your rights.

The law also says that you must be given information about the unit you are admitted to such as mealtimes, visiting times and how they will look after your possessions. You must also be told about your illness, any medications given and any advocacy services available to you.

You have a right to have things written down as well as explained to you by someone. Having things written down is useful because it will help you to remember what has been said.

Some questions will not be simple ones for staff to answer and you may have to wait a little while. Nonetheless you have a right to have an answer while the question is current for you.

***'NOW I KNOW
I CAN HAVE
THINGS
WRITTEN
DOWN I CAN
READ THEM
AT MY OWN
SPEED'***



What if your request is misunderstood or not answered? Try to be patient and assertive, and explain the issue again (see the section on assertiveness). If this doesn't work then you could ask to talk to another member of staff about it or ask for someone else to follow it up for you (they would be advocating for you).

If you don't feel that things are getting sorted, you may want to think about making a formal complaint (Power Tool 9)

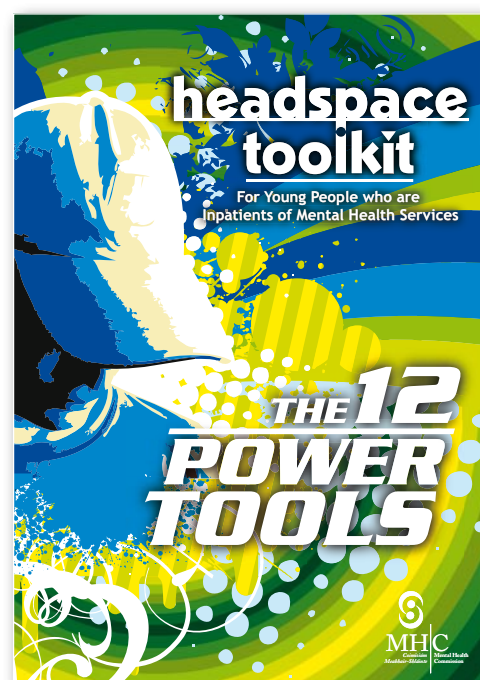
I've got some information from the booklet and other people – now what?

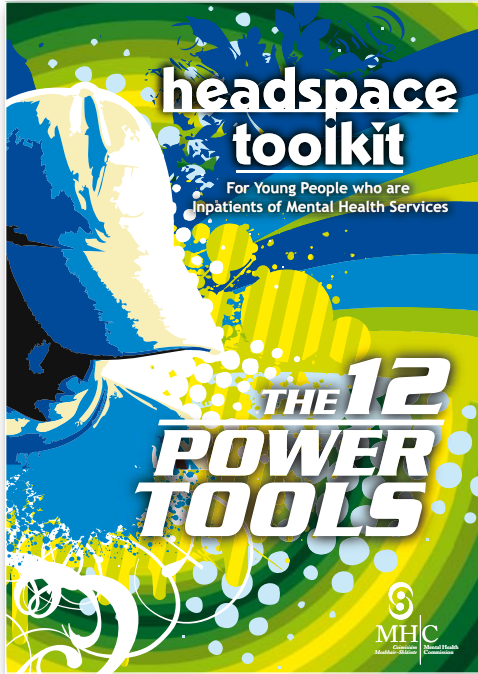
Advocating for yourself is easier if you understand the information you have been given. If you are able to show other people that you know what you are talking about then you have a better chance of being understood by them and of influencing decisions made about you.

Questions you could ask yourself and your care team about the information you are given:

- **What does this information mean to me?**
- **Do I understand this? If not, then who could explain it to me some more?**
- **What impact does it have on my care and treatment:**
 - **Now?**
 - **And for my future?**
- **Does it raise new questions for me?**
- **How can I best get these new questions answered?**

Your life doesn't stop just because you are in hospital. There will be things outside of the unit that may be important to you such as school or friends. It is OK to ask about these things and express your views on them whatever they are. You may also be thinking about what will happen when you leave hospital.





THE 12 POWER TOOLS

POWER TOOL 1.

All About Me –

This will let staff at your unit know what is important to you. Use it to tell them stuff about you that you think they will need to know to understand you and to look after you well.

POWER TOOL 2.

What's on my unit?

These are questions that will give you more information about the unit you are on.

POWER TOOL 3.

What's in my Individual Care and Treatment Plan?

Everyone must have a care and treatment plan. If you don't know what is in yours or you want more details about it then using this tool will help you to find out.

POWER TOOL 4.

What's my medication?

Helps you find out more about your medication.



POWER TOOL 5. It's Your Meeting

How to make the most of your meetings. You can use this tool to communicate what you want to be discussed at any of your meetings.

POWER TOOL 6. Disagreeing with my care and treatment

Use this form to work out and explain to others what you disagree with and why, and what you will and will not agree to with your care and treatment.

POWER TOOL 7. Looking out for myself

Planning for how to keep yourself safe when you are on your own.

POWER TOOL 8. Planning for Tough Times.

Sometimes things may get worse before they get better. You can use this tool to plan for how you want to be treated if you start feeling worse or become unable to clearly express what you want.

POWER TOOLS 6
DISAGREEING WITH YOUR CARE & TREATMENT

headspace toolkit

This tool is to help you work out what to do if you disagree with any part of your treatment and care. It is also for you to explain clearly what you do agree with and what you are unhappy about. You will need to show it to your consultant, team and to the person who has agreed to you receiving treatment (usually your parent or carer).

I want to disagree with my treatment because

I feel that this is not helping me because:

What I would like to happen is:

POWER TOOLS 11
MAKING A DECISION OR CHOICE

headspace toolkit

It can help to make a list of advantages and disadvantages when trying to decide between two or more options or choices.

Use this tool to help you find a way forward. It may be useful to ask someone to help you with making this list as other people can often see possibilities that we might not be aware of ourselves.

The decision or choice that I need to make is:

Do I need more information before I can work out what my options are? Yes/No

If Yes, where can I get this information

The different choices/options I seem to have are:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

POWER TOOLS 12
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

headspace toolkit

Name of member of staff going through the toolkit with you:

My other questions...

I've had my questions answered - now what?

Advocating for yourself is easier if you understand the information you have been given. If you are able to show other people that you know what you are talking about then you have a better chance of being understood by them and of influencing decisions made about you.

Questions you could ask yourself and your care team about the information you are given:

- What does this information mean to me?
- Do I understand this? If not, then who could explain it to me some more?
- What impact does it have on my care and treatment
 - Now?
 - For my future?
- Does it raise new questions for me?
- How can I best get these new questions answered?

Your life doesn't stop just because you are in hospital. There will be things outside of the unit that may be important to you. It is OK to ask about these things and express your views on them whatever they are. You may also be thinking about what will happen when you leave hospital.

Please photocopy and give a copy back to me. Thank you.



POWER TOOL 9. **Your Right to make a Complaint**

Complaining can seem a scary business. This tool will guide you through it and help make it an easier and less daunting experience.

POWER TOOL 10. **Setting Goals.**

It can be a good idea to look back at how things have gone and set goals for the days and weeks ahead. This tool can help you.

POWER TOOL 11. **Making a Decision or Choice.**

It can be useful to list the pro's and con's when trying to make a decision or choice. Tool 11 can guide you with this.

POWER TOOL 12. **Planning for the Future.**

You will leave your unit at some point. This tool is for helping you to think about what you would like to happen when you leave the unit for good and for creating your own plan for before and after you are discharged.

NOTES

[illegible]

**'this Toolkit gives me a voice and
helps me express my feelings'**

visit our website:

www.headspaceireland.ie

**to request, print and download this
toolkit in an electronic PDF format**

***YOUR
GUIDE***