

# Viewpoint – Fact Sheet for carers

## What is Viewpoint?

Viewpoint uses contemporary electronic devices to engage young people in care in developing their care plans and providing feedback about their care experiences.

It's an easy-to-use, enjoyable opportunity for young people aged from 5 to 17 to contribute to their individual care plans and to join with others in providing group feedback to all of us who look after them. It gives them a chance to say about what's going well, what they're concerned or worried about, and where we need to improve the services and support we provide.

## 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 just too difficult for them to communicate with adults. It may be that a young person is caught up with conflicting emotions or perhaps they're just too embarrassed or restless to sit down and tell us what's really on their minds.

## How does it work?

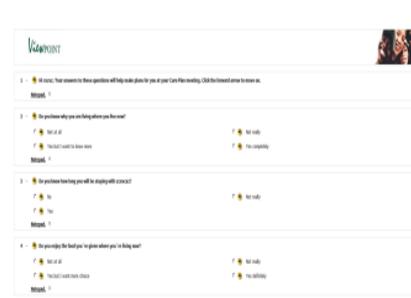
Most young people feel confident and comfortable using electronic devices. Viewpoint harnesses this to engage them in electronic self-assessment questionnaires designed for different age groups and ability levels. It gives young people a chance to express themselves in a non-threatening environment where they feel more able to say what they think than in face-to-face conversations with adults.

Viewpoint has a choice of versions to suit different young people. The graphical version offers a choice of vibrant background themes and appealing animated 'assistants' who guide the user through the questions, speaking them out loud so that there's no need to have high levels of literacy. There are also intermittent game breaks to maintain interest and provide rewards. For more mature young people, there's a plainer version which still offers sound and the read-back function, but doesn't include the graphics or game breaks. A version with symbols is also available for young people who need extra support.

### *Graphical Version*



### *Plain Version*



### *Symbols*



Young people set the pace themselves, and a note-pad is available throughout so they can put their in own comments and have them read back.



### **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, for example by helping them to log in or to understand things they may find difficult. However, where it's appropriate, an older young person can do the questionnaire independently on their phone.

What's very important is that a conversation takes place between the young person and their case manager - either while they're giving their answers or soon afterwards - to talk about their responses in more depth and explore ways of addressing their issues. From the questionnaire responses and the in-depth conversation, the case manager can be effectively informed about what the young person wants included in their Care Plan.

Young people will still be encouraged to participate in person in care planning discussions or meetings. Experience shows they're 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 seen as important.

### **Viewpoint in WA**

Viewpoint has been used in WA since 2011 and every young person in 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 easy to use, the questions are relevant, and that they would like to use it again. Carers have also been positive about it.

Young people's responses have been invaluable in giving them a say in their own care planning processes. Putting individual responses together in aggregated reports also allows young people a powerful voice as a group, feeding back what they think we're doing well and where we need to do things better.

### **What happens to the information young people provide 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.

They'll be told that their responses in Viewpoint are confidential and won't be disclosed without their consent unless there's some reason for the Department to be concerned about their safety or someone else's - or unless their file is subpoenaed by a court of law. This same rule applies to any communication between young people and Department staff, and is therefore no different from a discussion, phone call, email or letter.

Young people will also be told that their responses will be added anonymously to the responses given by others so we can hear from them as a group and improve the services we provide. This information is anonymous and can be openly shared with foster carer groups through our partnership networks.



With the young person's agreement, their individual issues and proposals will be discussed with carers, family members and other significant people as part of the care planning process.

If a young person doesn't want to share information, we'll negotiate with them to find other ways of addressing their issues. Again, this is no different from any other situation when young people raise issues with their case manager.

### **How will this affect me as a carer?**

There's nothing new about case managers talking to young people to find out about their experiences, wishes and concerns as part of their 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; and that young people are given the opportunity to participate in significant planning decisions about their care.

Viewpoint gives us better access to young people's perspectives, but there's no other change to general procedures. The rules about confidentiality are exactly the same as before, and any issues that arise about a young person's care arrangements will be dealt with in the same way.

### **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 case manager.

You can also contact the Advocate for Children in Care on (08) 9222 2518 or freecall 1800 460 696.

Viewpoint is also featured under 'Information for current carers' on the Department's website. Go to [www.communities.wa.gov.au](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au) and click on Child Protection and Family Support.