



Tool 3.2: Checklist – triggers that might indicate a need for a capacity assessment

The Capacity Toolkit states: “It is not always obvious when a person can’t make a specific decision. However, particular circumstances, events or behaviours might lead you to question a person’s capacity at a point in time. These are called **triggers**.”¹⁸

The following list of triggers may indicate that a capacity assessment should be conducted.

Trigger	Yes?
Repeatedly making decisions that put the person at significant risk of harm or mistreatment.	
Making a decision that is obviously out of character and that may cause harm or mistreatment.	
Often being confused about things that were easily understood in the past.	
Often being confused about times or places.	
Having noticeable problems with memory, especially recent events, and which have an effect on the person’s ability to carry out everyday tasks.	
Dramatically losing language and social skills. For example, having difficulty finding a word, not making sense when speaking, not understanding others when they speak, having wandering thought patterns, interrupting or ignoring a person when they are speaking, or failing to respond to communication.	
Having difficulty expressing emotions appropriately, such as inappropriate anger, sexual expression, humour or tears without actual sadness.	
Displaying sudden changes in personality. For example, excessive irritability, anxiety, mood swings, aggression, overreaction, impulsiveness, depression, paranoia or the onset of repetitive behaviours.	
Declining reading or writing skills.	
Having difficulty judging distance or direction, for example when driving a car.	
Not looking after him/her self or their home the way they usually do and this being bad for their health or putting them at significant risk. For example, neglecting significant personal concerns such as health, hygiene, personal appearance, housing needs or nutritional needs.	
Not paying bills or attending to other financial matters, such as running their business, repaying loans or other debts.	
Making unnecessary and excessive purchases or giving their money away, and this being out of character.	
Noticeably being taken advantage of by others, such as being persuaded into giving away large assets that they still require such as a house, car or savings, or signing contracts that disadvantage them.	
Having been diagnosed with a condition that may affect their capacity.	
Having lacked capacity to make decisions in the past.	