



Getting it right

This is the basic plan:

First you need to know what decision the person is being asked to make and what information they have been given - in particular the words that have been used to describe elements such as 'anaesthetic', 'unconscious', medication' and so on. This is so that you can make headings of the areas you expect to populate with their answers, and you will know where to probe if something important is missing.

Then you need to be clear with your interviewee why you are meeting: 'We're here to talk about your operation/move to a care home/your housing contract', for instance.

Get comfortable - this should be a conversation, not an interrogation!

Starter: Ask your interviewee to tell you everything they can remember about the information they were given. Allow plenty of thinking time and **DO NOT INTERRUPT**. Make contemporaneous notes - especially of the words they use for particular things - you will be using these notes later. And no, a recording will not do.

Main course: Looking back to the beginning of your notes, start to probe the information your interviewee has given you.

'You said you were going to the hospital to have a procedure Tell me some more about the procedure - what is that, what will they do?'

Write down the response and continue to probe until you are sure there is no more to come that is relevant, trying also not to annoy your interviewee, then move on to the next part of your notes.

This method preserves the order of the information as the person recalled it, with no hopping around and no sidetracking into new material.

Do this until you have come to the end of your notes, then check to see if you have any areas with missing information. If there are, and you know the person has been given that information, probe for recognition. For instance, if the needle by which the initial anaesthetic is not mentioned, you can ask first *'How does the anaesthetic get into your body?'* and if that doesn't produce the answer you need, be more specific - *'Tell me about the needle and how that puts the anaesthetic into your body.'*

Once you have as much as you think you can elicit from your interviewee, you can ask them what they think they will decide. Record their response.

Now you are done, you can thank them for their time and tell them that your report will be going to the person who needs to have your opinion. Your job now is to look through the information you have obtained in order to form your opinion. See [this](#) page for how to do that.

