



Thinking Ahead – Information for You

“helping you make the right choice

for your future care”

■ Introduction

Health and social care organisations in Norfolk and Waveney have worked together to develop these documents which will help you to plan your current and future care. The documents will be given to you in a yellow folder which contains this Information for You leaflet plus:-

- Thinking Ahead – Introduction
- Thinking Ahead – My wishes for my Advance Care Plan
- Your guide to decisions about cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- stickers to identify the use of your yellow folder and its location

You or your health and social care professional may add further information following discussion with you.

■ 1. “What is an Advance Care Plan?”

An Advance Care Plan is a process of discussion and decision making, which is done in anticipation of a possible change in your medical condition. It is an opportunity to think about what care you want now and in the future, and to discuss this with people who are closest to you, and those who provide your care such as doctors, nurses, care home managers or carers. Of course not everyone wants to do this, which is fine. However if you became too unwell to tell people what you want, an Advance Care Plan will help the people looking after you to know what your thoughts and wishes are, and take these into account in any decisions made about you and your care.

Of course your views and feelings may change over time and this Advance Care Plan can be rewritten as many times as you want. It will be used as a guide if you are too unwell to express these views and feelings yourself.

■ 2. “What should I include in my Advance Care Plan?”

This is likely to be personal to you and your specific care needs, and will include things which are important to you. Some areas people often include are:

- What you would and would not like to happen to you in relation to your future care
- On-going care and support
- Whether there is an Advance Decision to refuse treatment
- Whether there is a Lasting Power of Attorney in place
- Where you would like your care to be provided, e.g. usual place of residence, nursing home, hospital etc
- Whether you would like to be admitted to hospital in the last few days of your life
- Concerns about practical issues, e.g. who would look after your pet
- Your beliefs and values

■ 3. “Should I talk to other people about my Advance Care Plan?”

Although it can sometimes be upsetting, it is often helpful to discuss your future care with your family and friends who know you best. This might help you to identify any needs they would have if they are going to take on a caring role. The professionals who provide your care such as your GP, specialist nurse or social worker will also be able to help you plan what care might be appropriate for you and highlight potential decisions that you might need to consider.

■ 4. “What if I change my mind?”

You can change your mind about your Advance Care Plan at any time. Your health and social care team will give you the opportunity to review your plan regularly but you can also rewrite or update this plan yourself as and when you want to.

■ 5. “Is my Advance Care Plan legally binding?”

No. It provides people looking after you with an idea of your thoughts and wishes about your care. However they aren't legally bound to fulfil them. This is different from an “Advance Decision” which is legally binding. If you have any questions or need further information please contact your GP.

■ 6. “What is an Advance Decision?”

An Advance Decision to refuse treatment (also known as a Living Will) is a formal, legally binding document which allows an individual to agree to, or refuse, certain treatments. It does not allow for a request to have life ended and cannot be used to request medical treatments that would hasten the end of your life.

An Advance Decision is very specific and is used in situations when you would not want particular treatments. An example would be if a person had a severe stroke which resulted in swallowing problems. If the thought of being fed by alternative methods, such as tube feeding, was not tolerable then this could be written formally as an Advance Decision.

Anyone deciding to draw up an Advance Decision should ideally ask advice from a member of their healthcare team who understands the complexities of such a document. You should usually do this in conjunction with a solicitor to make sure that it is written, signed and witnessed appropriately so that it is legally binding. It is very important that the medical and social care team looking after you are aware of your Advance Decision if you have one.

An Advance Decision will only be used if, at some time in the future, you lose the ability to make your own decisions about your medical treatment. While you retain capacity to do so, you can change your mind or amend the Advance Decision at any time. However to be legally binding, an Advance Decision must be made before you lose your ability to make such decisions.

If you have any questions or need further information please contact your GP.

■ 7. “What is a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)?”

There are some situations when you might expect mental deterioration (e.g. dementia). If this is the case you may decide to ask a specific person to undertake the responsibility for making decisions for you if and when you are unable to do so yourself. That person is given

Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). The person you choose (known as your attorney) can be a friend, relative or a professional such as your solicitor. More than one person can act as your attorney. The amount of power, and limits of that power, are decided by you. There are two types of LPA.

Health and Welfare Lasting Power of Attorney

This allows your attorney to make decisions regarding your health and personal welfare (e.g. where you should live, your day to day care, or your medical treatment). It only comes into force if/when you lose the ability to make these decisions for yourself, and is only valid once it has been registered with the Office of the Public Guardian.

Property & Financial Affairs Lasting Power of Attorney

This gives your attorney the power to make financial decisions for you (e.g. manage your bank accounts or sell your house). Your attorney has the power to take over the management of your financial affairs as soon as the document is registered with the Office of the Public Guardian, unless the LPA states that this can only happen after you lose the capacity to manage your own financial affairs.

(Enduring Power of Attorney documents which were completed before 1 October 2007, and are still valid, are legally binding.)

Many people who choose to make an LPA will make both at the same time, but you can make just a Health and Welfare LPA, or a Property and Financial Affairs LPA if you prefer. You can nominate the same person as attorney for both types of LPA should you wish to do so.

All LPA documents must be registered with the Office of the Public Guardian and you will have to pay to register them. The forms can be completed and registered without the input of a solicitor, but this can be a complex procedure without guidance. If you have legal help, then there is likely to be a cost attached.



■ 8. “Do I need to make a Will?”

Many complications occur when a person dies without making a Will. The time taken to sort things out can be lengthy and expensive and will cause added stress to your family/next of kin. In addition, the outcome of this process may not be as you would wish, so it is advisable to make a Will to ensure that your personal effects are left to the people you want to inherit them.

You can make a Will without a solicitor, and forms can be bought from stationers or via the internet. This is only advisable if the Will is straightforward; the Law Society suggests that you ask a solicitor for specialist advice.

Think about the following aspects before visiting a solicitor as this will save you time and money.

- Who you would like to benefit from your Will and what you would like them to receive
- A list of your possessions – savings, pensions, insurance policies, property etc.
- Arrangements for your dependants or pets
- Who will be your executor(s) – this is the person who will deal with distributing your money and possessions after your death. You may have up to four but it is a good idea to have at least two in case one dies before you do. They can also be beneficiaries and care should be taken when choosing executors to make sure that they are suitable and also willing. Your solicitor may be your executor if you wish.

■ 9. “Do I need to put my affairs in order?”

It is important to make sure that your paperwork and documents are up to date and easy to find. This will save time and reduce anxiety for your family/next of kin if you become unable to attend to your affairs or if you are taken ill or die suddenly.

You may like to tick the boxes below to show that you have thought about the details listed and recorded them in a safe place. Have you nominated someone you can trust who will be able to access these details if the need arises?

- Bank Name/Account Details (including credit card)
- Insurance Policies
- Pension Details
- Passport/Birth/Marriage Certificate
- Mortgage Details
- Hire Purchase Agreements
- Will and/or Lasting Power of Attorney
- Other Important Documents/Contacts e.g. Solicitor
- Details of any Funeral Arrangements
- Addresses and Contact Numbers for Family, Friends and Colleagues
- Organ Donation/Donor Card
- Tax Office Address and Contact Details
- Other

If you would like more information please refer to <http://bereadyforit.org.uk> or telephone Dying Matters on 08000 21 44 66

Produced by Norfolk County Council, Norfolk NHS and Suffolk County Council in consultation with patients and the public.



If you want to speak to someone or request this in another format, please call 01603 751638