**Planning for the Future**

It’s never too early to think ahead to a time when we may need help to make decisions about our finances or about our health and treatment. Often we wait until we have been diagnosed with a serious condition, or suffer from an illness that is chronic or has become worse or we have recently been admitted to hospital. But we can think ahead at any time.

This article is to help explain some of the terms you may have heard, such as advance care plans, treatment escalation plans, living wills, power of attorney, advance directives to refuse treatment (Living will) and resuscitation or DNAR.

Planning ahead gives us control over our future care, treatment and day to day living - and reassurance that the right decisions will be made.

There may come a time when we become unwell and can’t tell the people around us what we do and don’t want. Should this happen, having a clear plan in place will help to ensure that our wishes are known about and can be followed.

**Advance Statements or advance care plans**

These record a person's wishes, feelings, beliefs and values - so that those involved in a person's future care know what's most important to them. Ensure you tell your family, and any others who support you, where you keep this document.

If you have access to the internet take a look at this clip called **advance care planning in 5 simple steps.**

<https://vimeo.com/216198924>

**Treatment Escalation Plans**

These are completed with you by your GP or nurse practitioner or by one of the hospital doctors if you have been admitted to hospital. They are to communicate your wishes about what you do and don’t want to happen to you if you are admitted to hospital or become acutely unwell and unable to speak for yourself. If you are seeing any of our health connectors they can discuss this with you and answer any questions you may have.

**Lasting Power of Attorneys (LPA)**

A Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare gives someone you trust the legal power to make decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so for yourself. This can cover medical treatment, day-to-day care and where to live.

A property and financial affairs LPA is for decisions about finances, such as managing your bank account or selling your house. There are strict procedures that must be followed to create and register an LPA; otherwise it will not be valid.

If you would like more information about LPAs you can visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) and type ‘LPA’ into the search box or you can telephone the OPG on 0300 456 0300

**Advance Decisions (Living Wills)**

These allow you to write down any medical treatments that you don’t want to have in the future.  An advanced decision is recognised by the law as your right to refuse medical treatment. It can be helpful to discuss this with your GP or another trusted health professional as there are common misunderstandings about treatments like Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

*NB - You can have both an LPA and an Advance Decision (Living Will), but each has different rules, and the one that you made more recently will take priority.*

Your feelings about the future may change over time; documents can be changed at any point and it is advisable to review them regularly to see if they still reflect your wishes and values.

**Making a will**

Making a Will helps to avoid problems after someone has died about what should happen to their personal possessions. If there is no Will, the time taken to sort things out can be lengthy and expensive, the outcome may not be as you would wish. You can make a Will without a solicitor and you can buy forms from stationers or via the internet. The Law Society advises people to seek specialist advice from a solicitor.

**Helpful questions that you might want to consider and discuss with your family:-**

1. What is important to you- family, home, independence?

2. What are your thoughts about your future care? What would you like to happen if your health became worse, or you were admitted to hospital again? What would not be acceptable to you? What are your expectations for the future?

3. Who would you like to be involved in your care and who would know about your wishes?

4. If or as your condition changes or if you are looking at end of life, where would you like to be cared for?

5. Do you have an LPOA (Lasting Power of Attorney) for health and welfare?

Do you have a LPOA for finance and property?

6. Do you have a treatment escalation plan? If not ask your doctor or heath professional.

**Our Advice**

We would advise planning ahead and putting some of the above into place at any time, but especially if:

* You have recently been diagnosed with a disabling chronic condition, or a condition you are already suffering from becomes worse.
* You are becoming more dependent on others or more forgetful; perhaps your memory is getting worse?
* You have been in and out of hospital recently. You are beginning to feel you are physically less able to do things. Maybe you are beginning to worry and feel uncertain about whom or how you will be cared for as you get older?

**Recommended links**

**Planning for the end of life- Independant age**

<https://www.independentage.org/information/advice-guides-factsheets-leaflets/planning-for-end-of-life>

**Your Guide to decisions about Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation**

[https://www.eolc.co.uk/educational/your-guide-to-decisions-about-cardiopulmonary-resuscitation-cpr/#](https://www.eolc.co.uk/educational/your-guide-to-decisions-about-cardiopulmonary-resuscitation-cpr/%23)

**Advance care planning NHS Somerset clinical commissioning group**

https://www.somersetccg.nhs.uk/about-us/how-we-do-things/palliative-care/?PCR#ACP

**Your life and your choices Plan ahead Macmillan cancer Support**

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk>