

Informal Planning

What is an Advance Care Plan?

An advance care plan or an advance statement (as it is sometimes called) is a written statement that sets down your preferences, wishes, beliefs and values regarding your future care.

The aim is to provide a guide to anyone who might have to make decisions in your best interest if you lose the capacity to make decisions or to communicate them to others.

What does an Advance Care Plan cover?

An Advance Care Plan can cover any aspect of your future health or social care. This could include:

- how you want any religious or spiritual beliefs to be reflected in your care
- where you would like to be cared for – for example, at home or in a hospital, a nursing home, or a hospice
- how you like to do things – for example, if you prefer a shower instead of a bath, or like to sleep with the light on
- concerns about practical issues – for example, who will look after your dog if you become ill

You can make sure people know about your wishes by talking about them. By writing your advance care plan down, you can help to make things clear to your family, carers and anybody involved in your care.

Who makes an Advance Care Plan?

You write an advance care plan yourself, as long as you have the mental capacity to make these plans. You can write it with support from relatives, carers, or health and social care professionals.

Mental capacity is the ability to make decisions. Sometimes, people do not have mental capacity. This can be for a number of reasons, including illness.

Is an Advance Care Plan legally binding?

No, an Advance Care Plan is not legally binding, but anyone who is making decisions about your care must take it into account.

How does an Advance Care Plan help?

An Advance Care Plan lets everyone involved in your care know about your wishes, feelings and preferences if you are not able to tell them.

Does it need to be signed and witnessed?

You don't have to sign an Advance Care Plan, but your signature makes it clear that it is your wishes that have been written down.

Who should see it?

You have the final say in who sees it. Keep it somewhere safe, and tell people where it is, in case they need to find it in the future. You can keep a copy in your medical notes.

Named Spokesperson:

You do not have to have a conversation about your future care, but you may wish to nominate someone to be involved in decisions about your care if you are not able to in the future. This person would be called a named spokesperson. This person would be anyone that knows your wishes and preferences or who you would trust to be involved in decisions about your care.

You must ask this person if they are happy to be named as your spokesperson, and you must make sure that this information is shared with all those that are involved in your care, plus any family members or friends.