

Planning Ahead

What Matters?

This information leaflet is for patients with a life-limiting condition and their families, who wish to consider their wishes and preferences for the future

Why consider what matters to you?

In life we prepare for many things – birth, education, marriage and retirement. We may also wish to prepare for a time of failing health and approaching end of life.

There may come a time when we lose our capacity to make decisions, but would still want our wishes known.

It can be difficult to discuss such issues, but for some patients and families this may be very important. Having a clear sense of someone's wishes and doing as much as possible to plan ahead can give someone the freedom to get on with living now.


In hospital it may feel overwhelming to make too many decisions at one time and equally these are sometimes difficult decisions to make. However, it may help to start conversations and to ask for advice and guidance from senior nursing staff and the medical team whilst you are here.

Talking about your wishes for future care and writing down your preferences can help those who care for you understand what is important to you. This can inform your care plan and ensure that your preferences and wishes for future care are known and understood by your nursing and medical team, should you ever be unable to tell them yourself.

Discussions that might be helpful

Understanding your illness or condition

- What is the nature of your illness or condition
- What to expect in the future in relation to your illness or condition

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- Sharing the uncertainty of the situation – very often it is difficult to predict the course of someone's illness, but you may wish to discuss this with the healthcare professionals
 - Your thoughts about treatment or future hospital care.

Understanding and planning for future care

- Options about where you might wish to be looked after
- Care that may be available to help you stay at home
- Care provided by nursing homes and residential homes
- Some people like to talk about where they would like to be cared for towards the end of their life
- Who you would like involved in your care
- You may wish to consider attending to decisions, such as Lasting Power of Attorney, Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment or making a will.

Personal wishes

- Wishes and preferences - these are wishes that are personal to you as an individual. They may include anything that you feel is particularly important to you and your family
- The name of a person you wish to be consulted on your behalf. If you do not have family close by this could be a friend or someone from a local advocacy service. Please ask for details about the service in your area.
- Any particular religious, spiritual or cultural beliefs that you may have and you would like to make known.

Things to remember

- Entering into these discussions is entirely voluntary
- Any decision you make can be changed by you at any time
- Your health condition can change and this can influence your ongoing decisions.

Useful terms to discuss and understand

- Advance Care Planning (ACP): the process of planning ahead and considering what matters to you
- Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment (ReSPECT): to record recommendations for possible future care and treatment
www.respectprocess.org.uk
- Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) for Health and Welfare, and for Finance: to appoint someone who, in case of your incapacity, can make decisions to make decisions on your behalf

If you and your family wish to discuss your thoughts or wishes or would like some clarity about medical decisions and the plan of care, please speak to a senior member of the nursing staff or medical team involved in your care.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

Date of publication: 08/03/23 | Ref: RUH PLC002
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