



Thinking Ahead Folder

Information for patients,
carers and families

Introduction

Health and care organisations across Norfolk and Waveney have worked together to develop some documents to help you to plan your current and future care. The documents have been given to you in a yellow 'Thinking Ahead Folder'.

Included in this folder are an Advance Care Plan and ReSPECT form. Your health or care team will discuss these with you in the coming weeks. It is important that you keep these documents safe and available to any health or care teams who may help to care for you. The documents should be kept in your yellow Thinking Ahead Folder and taken with you to appointments or to hospital should you need inpatient care.

What should I do now?

Although it can sometimes feel upsetting, it can be helpful to talk to your family and loved ones about your wishes. Documenting your thoughts is important so those close to you know what your wishes are for now and for your future care.

The ways that you can record your wishes include:

- An Advance Care Plan
- A ReSPECT form
- An Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment (ADRT)
- A Last Will and Testament
- A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)

Advance Care Plan

An Advance Care Plan is a record of your wishes, feelings, beliefs and values which can be used if you later become unwell and need care or medical treatment. An advance Care Plan is not legally binding. This means that a healthcare professional does not have to follow the instructions that are in it. However, what you write in your Advance Care Plan is still important because your wishes must be taken into account when decisions need to be made for you.

Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)

A Lasting Power of Attorney is a legal document that appoints someone – your 'attorney/attorneys' – to make decisions on your behalf.

There are two types of LPA: one for making financial decisions and another for making health and care decisions. You can set up LPAs for both types of decisions.

An LPA for health and care decisions can only be used if you lose mental capacity. An LPA for financial decisions can also be used while you still have mental capacity if this is what you'd prefer, but you need to choose this option when setting it up.

You can only create an LPA if you have mental capacity to do so and you haven't been put under any pressure to set it up.

What should I do now?

You should choose someone that you are close to, such as family members or friends to be your attorneys. You can apply for an LPA directly, or you can use a solicitor. It is more costly if you use a solicitor rather than filling the forms yourself, but you might find that the reassurance of having professional advice is worth it. <https://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney>

What if I change my mind?

An LPA isn't necessarily permanent. You can cancel it at any time while you have mental capacity by writing to your attorney or attorneys and the Office of the Public Guardian and advising them of your decision.

Where should the form be kept?

You can choose to keep your Lasting Power of Attorney in a safe place at home. You should let your loved ones know where your LPA is kept.

Last Will and Testament

Your Will lets you decide what happens to your money, property, and possessions after you die. If you die without a Will, there are laws that will determine how your money, property and possessions are distributed. There is no legal requirement for a Will to be drawn up and witnessed by a solicitor, if you want to make a Will yourself you can do so but it is advisable to use a solicitor or chartered legal executive unless the will is going to be straightforward. You will need to include details of executors in your Will. Executors are the people who are responsible for carrying out your wishes and sorting out the estate following your death.

What should I do now?

If you do not already have a Will, or if you have a Will that you think needs changing, you should think about if you are able to write the Will yourself or if you need legal assistance to do this. If you need legal assistance, you will need to contact a solicitor, chartered legal executive or Will writing service. You should remember that a solicitor will charge for their services in drawing or changing a Will.

What if I change my mind?

You can change your mind about what is written in your Will at any time. If you used a solicitor to write your will then you will need to ask the solicitor to help you make changes.

Where should the form be kept?

You can choose to keep your will in a safe place at home. You can also choose to keep your Will with the solicitor who has helped you. You should let your loved ones know where your Will is kept.

Advance Care Planning is a voluntary process of person-centred discussion between an individual and their care providers about their preferences and priorities for their future care. The process may involve a number of conversations over a period of time with a healthcare professional such as your GP, consultant or nurse as well as with your family and loved ones.

By recording your wishes, you will give those around you a clear idea of what is important to you if you are unable to tell them.

What should I do now?

The Advance Care Plan is included in the yellow folder. You may want to start filling in some of the sections such as the key information on the first page. You can then talk to your health and care team about who might be able to help you to record your wishes and complete the rest of the form.

There are lots of people that you can get help from to complete your advance care plan:

- Community nursing team
- General practitioner
- Specialist care team in the hospital
- Palliative care team in the hospital
- Palliative care team at the hospice
- Marie Curie companion at home service

What if I change my mind?

You can change your mind about what is recorded in your Advance Care Plan at any time. You can ask your health and care team to review and rewrite your plan regularly, and you can also update the plan yourself as and when you want to.

Where should the form be kept?

The Advance Care Plan should be kept at home with you in the yellow folder so that you or your carer can show it to health or care professionals in an emergency.

Emergency care and treatment plan (also known as ReSPECT)

In a crisis, healthcare professionals may have to make rapid decisions about your treatment, and you may not be well enough to participate in making decisions. The ReSPECT process empowers you to guide health and care professionals on what treatments you would or would not want to be considered for.

Many life sustaining treatments involve risks of causing harm, discomfort and loss of dignity, or the risk of dying in hospital when you may have wanted to be at home. The ReSPECT form can record preferences and recommendations for emergency situations, whatever stage of life you are at.

Your views are crucial. The health and care professionals will make every effort to come to a joint agreement with you, however it is important to understand that the ReSPECT form cannot be used to demand treatments that are not likely to benefit you.

What should I do now?

The ReSPECT form is included in the yellow folder. If it has not already been completed, you can talk to your healthcare team to request that this is done. After talking to you, the doctor or nurse will complete the ReSPECT form summarising personalised recommendations of your clinical care in a future emergency where you may be unable to express your choices.

What if I change my mind?

If your condition or circumstances change, or if you want to change your mind for any reason then the ReSPECT form can be changed.

Where should the form be kept?

The ReSPECT form should be kept at home with you in your yellow folder so that you or your carer can show it to health or care professionals in an emergency.

Advance decision to refuse treatment (ADRT)

An Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment is a decision you can make now to refuse specific treatment in the future and is legally binding. An ADRT is very specific and is used in situations when you would want to refuse particular treatments.

Anyone deciding to draw up an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment should seek advice from their health care team. The ADRT is legally binding and as such should be written and witnessed. You may choose a solicitor to do this.

What should I do now?

The ADRT is not included in the yellow folder. If you would like to consider this, you should speak to your healthcare team. It is very important that your healthcare team know your wish to refuse treatment so this can be documented in your medical notes.

What if I change my mind?

If your condition or circumstances change, or if you want to change your mind for any reason then the ReSPECT form can be changed.

Where should the form be kept?

The ADRT should be kept at home with you in your yellow folder so that you or your carer can show it to health or care professionals in an emergency.