

# Advice on planning ahead for your health and care in later life

There are many things that need to be considered and decided on by others if you lose mental capacity, such as the many types of medical and care treatments you could receive. This includes whether you want life sustaining treatment in all scenarios, life support decisions, where you live, your daily routine, organ donation and even what you wear and eat. Anyone that makes decisions about you must act in your best interests. If you state your wishes, values and feelings, it then makes it easier for this to happen and for the right choices to be made. Some decisions may also require more than just a simple yes or no answer. Consider your wishes in detail and think about every aspect of your care.



## 1. Think about your wishes and write them down

Sitting quietly and thinking about what you would want should you lose mental capacity and can no longer make decisions for yourself is a vital first step. If it helps, write down your wishes, so that you really think about what you would want and how you would like to live.



## 2. Have the conversation

It's really important to consider and talk to the person or people, such as a family member or close friend, who you want to make decisions on your behalf should you lose capacity. You need to let them know you'd like to leave your wellbeing in their hands and what you'd like to happen when it comes to key decisions. Some people may find this kind of conversation very difficult, it may bring up topics that we naturally shy away from. However, having a conversation about your medical and care instructions and preferences early will ensure that your wishes will be followed. It's worth considering who the right person is to act in your best interests – someone who knows you well and feels confident making decisions on your behalf. It's never too soon to have these conversations with them, but it can be too late. If they are to carry out your wishes and retain control, they need to know what you want.

## 3. Speak to a specialist and get your wishes finalised in a legal document



It is possible to create your own DIY lasting power of Attorney (LPA) online and register the document with the Office of the Public Guardian. This is the cheapest way of getting an LPA in place. National charities such as, Age UK and Alzheimer's Society has volunteers than can help with the process, although they are not legal professionals. Seeking specialist advice means you avoid the risk of a weak or flawed document, which is sometimes the case with a DIY LPA. A self-made LPA may not consider all possible outcomes and be legally inaccurate, causing significant emotional and financial strain when you come to use it. A lot of thought may go into getting your wishes down on paper and not all choices will be straightforward. An expert with experience of creating robust LPAs will be able to help you set out exactly what you want using the right terminology, and prompt you to consider things you may never have thought of.