

# COMPASSION

IN DYING

SUPPORTING YOUR CHOICES  
AT THE END OF LIFE

## FACTSHEET – A Quick Guide to Your Rights at the End of Life

This is a quick guide to the rights you have at the end of life in England and Wales. Contact Compassion in Dying for more information.

INFORMATION LINE: **0800 999 2434**

### **Mental capacity**

You have mental capacity if you can make a decision, and understand the consequences of it.

### **What are my rights?**

1. If you are an adult with mental capacity, you have the legal right to refuse medical treatment. You can do this by speaking to your doctor.

You can refuse any treatment, including life-sustaining treatment. You do not have to justify your decision, but you do have to show that you understand the consequences of making it.

2. You can also make legally binding decisions to refuse medical treatment in advance.

This means your wishes would still be respected if you couldn't make or communicate your own decisions – for example, if you had severe dementia or were in a coma.

There are two ways you can refuse treatment in advance -

- Set your wishes out in writing (**Advance Decisions**).
- Give someone the power to make decisions for you (**Lasting Powers of Attorney for health and personal welfare**).

## **Advance Decisions**

An Advance Decision is a legally binding document that contains your wishes for future treatment.

Free Advance Decision forms are available from Compassion in Dying. You don't need a solicitor to fill one in.

You should discuss your Advance Decision with your doctor and ask them to keep a copy of it. You should also discuss it with your loved ones and keep it up-to-date if your health or wishes change.

See **FACTSHEET – Setting your wishes out in writing (Advance Decisions)** for more information.

## **Lasting Powers of Attorney**

A Lasting Power of Attorney is a document that gives someone the legal power to make decisions for you.

You need to speak to the **Office of the Public Guardian** if you want to make a Lasting Power of Attorney. They normally cost £120, although you may be eligible for a reduction (0300 456 0300 or [www.publicguardian.gov.uk](http://www.publicguardian.gov.uk)).

See **FACTSHEET – Giving someone the power to make decisions for you (Lasting Powers of Attorney)** for more information.

## **How can we help?**

- We can give you more information about **Advance Decisions** and **Lasting Powers of Attorney**
- We can send you a free **Guide to Your Rights at the End of Life**
- Call our free **Information Line** if you have any questions

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