

# COMPASSION

IN DYING

SUPPORTING YOUR CHOICES  
AT THE END OF LIFE

## FACTSHEET – Your rights in Northern Ireland

This is a quick guide to your rights at the end of life in Northern Ireland. 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 rights do I have at the end of life in Northern Ireland?**

At the moment there is no law in Northern Ireland that gives adults with mental capacity the legal right to refuse medical treatment, as there is in England and Wales.

However, it is still worth discussing your wishes with your loved one and doctors so they know what you want. You can also set your wishes out in writing for the future. This is called making an **Advance Decision**.

Laws covering the refusal of treatment in Northern Ireland may be introduced in 2011.

### **What is an Advance Decision?**

An Advance Decision is a document that you can use to set out your wishes for treatment, so that doctors will know what you want if you can't make or communicate your own decisions - for example, if you develop severe dementia or fall into a coma. You can use an Advance Decision to refuse treatment and ask for treatment.

It is a good idea to make an Advance Decision because:

1. It helps you to think about what treatment you would want if you couldn't make or communicate your own decisions.
2. It can help you to talk to your loved ones about what you would want, so they know your wishes.
3. Your doctor will keep your Advance Decision with your notes, so other doctors will know how you want to be treated.

## **Lasting Powers of Attorney**

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

At the moment there is no legally binding Power of Attorney for health and welfare, as there is in England, Scotland and Wales. This could change in 2011.

Enduring Powers of Attorney cover property and finance only. They are legally binding in Northern Ireland. Contact the **Office of Care and Protection** for more information.

### **The Office of Care and Protection**

Tel: 028 9072 4733

Email: [officeofcare&protection@courtsni.gov.uk](mailto:officeofcare&protection@courtsni.gov.uk)

### **How can we help?**

- We can send you a free **Advance Decision** form and help you to fill it in
- We can give you more information about any changes to the law in Northern Ireland
- Call our free **Information Line** if you have further questions

**181 Oxford Street**  
**London W1D 2JT**  
Information Line **0800 999 2434**  
Email [info@compassionindying.org.uk](mailto:info@compassionindying.org.uk)  
[www.compassionindying.org.uk](http://www.compassionindying.org.uk)