

Many of us have long been thinking about end of life planning and have been prompted to take practical action by the health pandemic. We are fortunate to have [Gentle Dusk](#) in our midst, an organisation whose purpose is to lift the taboo around death and dying and to raise awareness of the importance of end of life care planning. They do this by supporting people to talk openly about death and by helping them to put their end of life care plans in place. Gentle Dusk works in partnership with Age UK Islington on the [Future Matters](#) project and many of you will have heard them speak at the February monthly meeting. You may also have also attended one of the Death Cafes that have taken place in recent years.

Much practical help and support is available from [Future Matters](#). But with numerous documents and a litany of abbreviations, some of the practical aspects can be confusing.

Here to help you is a glossary of some of the most important documents with links to helpful organisations:

Advance Decision (or Advance Directive)

Sometimes called a "Living Will", an Advance Decision enables you to record the type of treatment or care you are prepared to refuse, should you to become unable through illness to communicate your decisions yourself. It advises your doctors, carers and family members about the various specific treatments you wish to refuse to sustain life.

The Advance Decision must be signed, dated and witnessed. Copies should be kept with your Will, your GP and your executors. It can be attached to your CMC (see below) if you have one.

The organisation [Compassion in Dying](#) is an excellent source of information on Advance Decisions. You can contact them on 0800 999 2434

Coordinate my Care

[CMC](#) is new system that enables you to set out your care wishes so that they are taken into account by health professionals involved in treating you. Originally intended for urgent care, it now covers care wishes more broadly. CMC includes information about your health, how and where you would like to be cared for and people to contact in an emergency.

You can start your own CMC plan online through [myCMC](#) and you can stop and start whenever you like, saving details as you go. When you have filled in the details, you book a consultation with your GP who will add any relevant clinical details and upload your plan to the CMC system. It can then be viewed by health professionals treating you such as 111, your out-of-hours GP and the ambulance service. They will be better equipped to respect your wishes because they will be guided by how you want (and don't want) to be treated.

More information at [CMC](#). The best source of support and advice in Islington is [Future Matters](#) who can provide further information about CMC and help you to record your information and wishes in the online portal. Contact details below.

Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)

A [Lasting Power of Attorney](#) is a legal document that lets you appoint one or more trusted individuals ('attorneys') to take care of you, your health and/or finances if, at some future time, you lack the mental capacity to make decisions. This gives you more control over what happens to you if you have an accident or an illness and that prevents you from making decisions. The LPA replaced the Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) in 2007 although EPAs made before that date are still valid.

There are two types of LPA – one for Health and Welfare and one for Finance and Property. You can start your LPA online or seek the advice of a solicitor. If you choose to use the online service and would like some help, email the Office of the Public Guardian at customerservices@publicguardian.gov.uk. People without internet access or who prefer to speak to someone can ring 0300 456 0300 for help. You can also ask the [Office of the Public Guardian](#) to send you hard copies of the forms and a guidance document.

Completed documents need to be printed, signed, witnessed and sent to the Office of the Public Guardian for registration. [Future Matters](#) can guide you through the relevant paperwork and help to make the process as straight forward as possible.

Letter of Wishes

An often overlooked but key document that accompanies your Will. Not a legal document but a guide for your executors and those you leave behind as to your wishes. The Letter can advise on anything, but it must not conflict with your Will.

Frequently covered topics include: who you wish to be informed of your death; what sort of funeral you want; location of your Will; location of deeds to your house, finances and utility providers; whether you have opted out of the [organ donor register](#) (since May 2020 all adults in England are deemed to have agreed to be an organ donor when they die unless they have opted out); location of spare keys to your house; who knows the code to your burglar alarm; who do you want to have Great Aunt Agatha's pearl earrings or Grandpa's snuff box; who is to take care of your dog/budgerigar/pet snake.

A new and invaluable book covering this subject and all aspects of death planning is *Last Orders: your executors' guide to your letter of wishes* by Patricia C Byron (2nd ed June 2019, Stellar Books ISBN: 978-1910275245). The first edition published in 2010 was a bestseller – the second is even better with more comprehensive coverage.

Will

An estimated 54% adults in the UK do not have a Will, the key document that makes the process of sorting out your affairs much more straightforward. A Will is the simplest form of forward planning that allows you to decide what happens to your possessions and money. It has been described as one of the greatest

legacies someone can leave. Helpful information on Will writing available from [Which?](#) and [Gov.uk](#).

References

For more information about the Future Matters service, including help with completing a Coordinate my Care plan and Lasting Powers of Attorney, contact Age UK Islington on 020 7281 6018 or email: gethelp@ageukislington.org.uk