

WHAT IS A LIVING WILL?

A **“Living Will”** (sometimes known as an **“advance decision”**) allows you to set out your wishes to refuse a specific type of medical treatment in the future, in the event you are unable to communicate your wishes at that time.

The Living Will can only record your wishes regarding medical care during your lifetime. Therefore, we would strongly recommend that you also make a separate Will in order to deal with your estate.

TO THINK ABOUT

The medical treatments you decide to refuse must all be specifically referred to in the Living Will. Any decision you want to make about refusal of such treatments should be discussed with a healthcare professional in the first instance. You may also want to discuss your decisions with your friends and family so that they can understand and are aware of your wishes.

REFUSAL OF TREATMENT

If you wish to refuse a specific type(s) of treatment the circumstances must be made clear. You may want to refuse treatment in some situations but not others. It is important to be very clear about your wishes.

TREATMENTS

If there is a specific type(s) of treatment you would want to receive, even if this could lead to your death, this should be specified.

LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENT

It is possible to refuse treatment that would potentially keep you alive. This might include ventilation, CPR and antibiotics. The effect of refusing such treatment would likely shorten your life.

IS A LIVING WILL NECESSARY

A Living Will does not necessarily need to be signed unless you are refusing potentially life-sustaining treatment, then it must be signed and witnessed.

It is however a good idea to write down your wishes so that your healthcare professional(s), friends and family are aware of your wishes and the circumstances surrounding your decision.

Provided certain legal criteria and formalities are met, a Living Will is a legally binding document. The rules regarding Living Wills, and your decisions regarding treatment and healthcare can be complex.

We would also recommend that you think about a Health and Welfare Lasting Power of Attorney which can deal with a broader range of decisions about your health and welfare.

“ADVANCE STATEMENT”

You may have heard the phrase “advance statement” in association with an advance decision or Living Will. An advance statement is not the same as a Living Will. An advance statement sets out a non-legally binding guide of your wishes, values and beliefs regarding your future care. For example, it might set out:

- Where you would like to be cared for
- What food and drink you like or do not like
- What you like to wear daytime and night time
- Whether you prefer showers or baths
- What type of music you like to listen to
- What films, programmes, soaps you like to watch
- Your religious, or other beliefs/values
- Who you wish to be consulted about your care
- Who you would like to visit you

As with a Living Will it is suggested that you consider your wishes with your healthcare professional, family and/or friends. You can record these wishes in any form that suits you, but it is advisable to ensure you review this regularly, and that your healthcare professional, family and/or friends have a copy.

Unlike a Living Will, an advance statement is not legally binding. It is intended as a helpful guide to ensure your wishes and feelings are known when you are unable to communicate them yourself.

If you review your advance statement regularly it is a good idea to sign and date your statement so that everyone is aware of your latest wishes.

We would also recommend that you think about making a Will and/or a Lasting Powers of Attorney