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Norwich, Diss & London



Wishing you well

What you need to know about Advance Decisions

Advance Decisions are not usually something people talk about, but having one can be just as important as having a Will.

An Advance Decision (often known as a 'Living Will' or 'advance refusal') is a written statement allowing you to indicate that in the event of terminal illness, mental incapacity or permanent unconsciousness, you do not wish to be kept alive by artificial means, or to have your life prolonged by certain medical treatment.

You can also state the types of treatment you wish, or do not wish, to receive, although you cannot insist on a particular treatment or force a doctor to withhold basic hygienic treatment.

At Steeles Law we would always recommend that you consider an Advance Decision as it can help your family, friends and the medical profession with difficult decisions about medical treatment, as they will know what your wishes are.

Often we find people delay making an Advance Decision but the benefit of making one now is that if at some future time you are physically or mentally unable to tell your doctors what you want, your wishes are already clear.

If you have a partner but are not married or in a Registered Civil Partnership, your partner is not your 'next of kin' and may not be informed of your condition. An Advance Decision can include your wish for your partner to be notified if your life is in danger.

Of course, there are alternatives to making an Advance Decision and one alternative would be to make a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) for Personal Welfare, and include your wishes about medical treatment. The purpose of a Personal Welfare LPA is to appoint somebody to make decisions on your behalf about your personal welfare, in the event you are unable to make such decisions yourself.

Through an Advance Decision you can:

- Record your wishes about future medical treatment and care
- Say who you want to be consulted about your treatment and care

Before making an Advance Decision, we advise you to discuss it fully with your GP, who will explain the nature and effects of refusing treatment. You may also want to discuss your plans with your family or friends.

When you have made your decision, we can prepare the document according to your wishes.

Having completed your Advance Decision, you must ensure that your closest relatives and GP know of its existence and where it is kept. You should ask your GP to add a copy of the Advance Decision to your medical records, so that if at a later stage you require treatment, it will be easily and immediately accessible to the doctors caring for you.

To instruct us to write your Advance Decision please contact us at one of our offices.

Here are a few comments made by our clients and the profession

“The attention I received when reviewing my will recently was outstandingly good” *Mrs B, Client Questionnaire 2011*

“Very friendly and helpful” *Mr C, Client Questionnaire 2011*

“...could not have been more helpful and obliging and provided clarity re: a very complex set of problems...”
Mr T, Client Questionnaire 2011

“‘Everyone meets the grade without exception’, in Karen Bacon’s team at Steeles Law LLP, which includes three STEP members and a trained bereavement counsellor” *Legal 500 2010 edition, ranked amongst the top law firms in the region.*

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Remember to:

- Inform your GP of any Advance Decision you have made
- Inform your family and friends that you have made an Advanced Decision and where it is kept
- Ensure it is stored in a safe location
- Update the form should your wishes change