

More adults urged to make a future healthcare plan **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/113715>)**

Healthcare professionals encouraged to raise healthcare planning with patients

Safeguarding Ireland encouraged more people to make a future healthcare plan – called an Advance Healthcare Directive – as just 4% of people in Ireland have one.

An Advance Healthcare Directive is a document in which a person writes down their future healthcare decisions on refusals and consents regarding treatment, surgery, medicines and resuscitation.

Safeguarding Ireland Chairperson Patricia Rickard-Clarke said the uptake of Advance Healthcare Directives is very low in Ireland compared to other countries, and more take up is needed.

She also encouraged more health and social care professionals to raise, as routine practice, making future healthcare planning with patients and clients, at a time when they are well and have decision-making capacity.

“Making an Advance Healthcare Directive is an important part of protecting rights and ensuring that our wishes will be respected if in the future a person doesn’t have decision-making capacity. It is also better for doctors and families to have clarity on a person’s choices and wishes.

“The plan only comes into effect if there comes a time in the future when a person lacks capacity to make, or communicate healthcare decisions. This could be due to the progression of a frailty, dementia, a serious illness, a physical or intellectual disability, or a sudden accident.

“This Spring Safeguarding Ireland is promoting that all adults, and particularly those using healthcare services or who may face future capacity challenges, to make an Advance Healthcare Directive and to share it with those who need to know.

“Making one is free of charge, not difficult to do – and more information is available at www.safeguardingireland.org (<http://www.safeguardingireland.org>).”

RED C research on a representative sample of 1,000 adults in mid 2024 found that – just 23% understood what an Advance Healthcare Directive was, and just 4% said that a healthcare professional had ever asked them if they have one.

The recommended step to making one is to complete either of the Advance Healthcare Directive templates available at Decision Support Service website (www.decisionsupportservice.ie (<http://www.decisionsupportservice.ie>)), or Irish Hospice Foundation Think Ahead portal (www.thinkahead.ie (<http://www.thinkahead.ie>)).

The details included in an Advance Healthcare Directive are:

- Refusals on life-sustaining treatments, artificial nutrition, surgery, medicines and resuscitation
- Consents on medical and treatment options, including pain relief and where someone would like to be treated
- Appointing someone a person chooses and trust, called a Designated Healthcare Representative, to ensure the plan is correctly interpreted and complied with.

Once made – healthcare professionals are bound to adhere to a person’s refusals and to make every effort to provide the treatments they would like to receive. Also, there is clarity on who can act on a person’s behalf.

Ms Rickard-Clarke added that once a person has made their Advance Healthcare Directive copies need to be shared with relevant people such as; the person’s Designated / Alternative Healthcare Representatives, Family Doctor (GP), healthcare professionals a person is dealing with, the Emergency Department if admitted to hospital, the person in charge if living in a healthcare or residential facility.

Further findings in the RED C research were that among those that had heard of an Advance Healthcare Directive but didn’t have one (19% of respondents) their reasons were:

- 62% had never really thought about it
- 53% have no current health problems and believed they don’t need it
- 42% didn’t know how to go about making one
- 31% considered themselves too young to need one

- 31% were concerned that it would be expensive to get one
- 31% didn't know anyone else with one so it wasn't a priority.

More information at www.safeguardingireland.org (<http://www.safeguardingireland.org>).

Further Information

Ronan Cavanagh, Cavanagh Communications: **(086) 317 9731**. (<tel:0863179731>)

Region

Nationwide

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