

Dying Matters Awareness Week

8th – 14th May 2017

This year, Dying Matters Awareness Week's theme is '**What Can You Do?**'. This aims to get people more active in planning for dying and death and helping support those who may need it in times of grief and bereavement, be they **friends**, **family** or in your **wider community**. There will be a number of raising awareness events during the week from 8th - 14th May 2017.



Few of us want to think about getting ill and dying, yet none of us want to make things difficult for our loved ones either. It's important, for their sake, not to delay making significant arrangements like care, wills and funeral plans until it's too late. Encourage family to discuss their wishes and support them to make their plans. Support your friends during these difficult times by offering to help with shopping or household chores, suggest meeting for a coffee and remember it is okay to not know what to say. You can also help in your community by volunteering at a local charity or start to get involved with support groups. This aims to expand on conversation about dying, death and bereavement and get people actively planning and helping those who may need extra support.



During the week, we will be encouraging members of the public to take five simple steps to make their end of life experience better, both for them and for their loved ones.

These are:

1. Write your will

Writing a will allows you to plan what happens to your money and possessions as well as arrangements for looking after any dependent children after you die. It's also a good way of letting people know any wishes you have about your funeral, or how you would like to be remembered. If you die without a will, your possessions will be allocated according to set rules, rather than according to your wishes.

You can write a will yourself, but it's usually best to use a solicitor, to make sure what you have written is legally valid and will do what you want.

2. Record your funeral wishes

Many of us die without making our funeral wishes clear to others. By planning ahead, it's one less thing to worry about and means you can get on with enjoying living, safe in the knowledge that when the time comes, your loved ones will know what you wanted and be spared from having to make difficult decisions.

You can leave written wishes about your funeral and what should happen to your body with your loved ones, or in a will. Or you can make arrangements well in advance with the help of a funeral director.

3. Plan your future care and support

None of us know how things will turn out as we get older. It's quite possible that many of us will need cared for, so now is an opportunity to think about, talk about and write down your wishes and preferences for care and treatment at the end of your life. It may help you to think about what living with a serious illness might mean to you, your partner, relatives or friends, particularly if you become unable to make decisions for yourself.

It's best to write down your plans so that your loved ones have a record.

4. Consider registering as an organ donor

By donating your organs and tissues after you die, you can help save and transform the lives of desperately ill people.

Each donor is precious as fewer than 5,000 people each year in the UK die in circumstances where they can donate. So if you want to make a real difference, join the [NHS Organ Donor Register](https://www.organdonorregister.nhs.uk) and talk about your donation decision with family and friends. Letting them know what you've decided now makes it much easier for them to support your decision to be a donor.

If you want to find out more about organ donation contact NHS Blood and Transplant: www.organdonation.co.uk or 0300 123 2323.

5. Tell your loved ones your wishes

You may find it helpful to talk about your future care with family and friends. Although this could be difficult, having these discussions can be very useful for you and those important to you. This lets you share your thoughts and feelings about the future and gives those close to you an opportunity to talk openly about your wishes.

If you have important documents or notes about your care, please keep them in a safe place and let your loved ones know where they are so that your wishes may be carried out.