

A Statement of Advance Choice

What is a Statement of Advance Choice?

A Statement of Advance Choice expresses your views on what you would wish to happen, how you would wish things to be done, if you lose the ability to offer your opinions for yourself.

The document is not legally binding but does offer a clear steer for those involved in your care and administration of your affairs. There is an obligation for such people to respect your views, which is more likely if you have made clear what these are.

A Statement of Advance Choice is not the same as an Advance Directive (living will) which offers direction on how you wish to be cared for in the final stages of life. A Statement of Advance Choice is about you expressing advance choice about how you wish to live, should you become unable to express this for yourself.

How do I make a Statement of Advance Choice?

- There is no set format.
- It can be handwritten. It can even be audio / recorded.
- It is better that it is signed and dated.
- It does not have to be witnessed.
- Keep it with you and update it as things occur to you.
- You should review it regularly, say annually, or if there are major changes to your circumstances, and show that you have reviewed it by updating the date.
- When you feel it is complete make sure you provide a copy to all the relevant contacts e.g. an attorney if you have one, your family, good friends, your doctor, your bank.

What should I include in a Statement of Advance Choice?

There are no rules about what it should, or should not, include; it can include anything that is important to you. The following information will offer you a guide.

Factual information

It is helpful to include some factual information e.g.

- Name of your doctor & address of the medical practice
- Any relevant past medical history
- Medications that you are on
- Any allergies you may have
- Any aids you may need for your mobility
- Name of your dentist & address of the dental practice
- If you have false teeth, a dental plate or crowns
- If you wear distance or reading glasses, if you wear contact lenses.
- If you wear a hearing aid / where you have your hearing tests.
- Name of your opticians and/or audiologist
- Where you bank
- Where personal papers can be found
- If you have made a Power of Attorney, and where this can be found
- Anything about your pensions that the person may need to know
- Any other financial information they may need
- Who you use a Financial Advisor, if you have one
- Who your Solicitor is, if you have one.
- Who holds title deeds to your house, if you have one.
- Where a copy of your Will can be found, if you have one.
- Which church you worship at, if you do.
- Any social groups you attend
- If you donate to any charities, or would not wish donations to certain charities
- Which hairdresser you use, if you do.
- Any other factual information about you that your attorney may not know or that you would want your attorney to know.

Special Instructions

If there are particular instructions include these in the Statement. For example:

“I wish my daughter Beth to continue to live in the house, even if I have to go into care. This is her home.”

“I do not wish you to sell the diamond necklace in my jewellery box as this is gifted to Beth in my Will”

This section can be helpful to offer your views if you envisage potential family fall outs e.g. if your children and step children do not speak but you would still wish to see both sets. You can leave express instruction to this effect. *“I wish for both my children and stepchildren, should they wish, to continue to visit me”.*

Preferences

Include in your Statement of Advance Choice your preferences on anything you want to draw to your loved ones /carers attention.

Examples are:

- Religious or spiritual beliefs that you would wish respecting.
- Dietary requirements you would wish respecting; or just your favourite foods, or foods you don't like
- Any preferences on your clothing (eg. some women prefer not to wear trousers, some men prefer always to be formally dressed, some people prefer to wear natural fibres only)
- Any preference on where your clothes are purchased from, or not.
- Any care preferences (eg. prefer a shower to a bath, need to sleep with a light on, need to be in bed by 10pm, prefer my main meal at lunch time)
- Any soaps / soap powders you prefer, or cannot use.
- Any shampoos / conditioners you prefer, or cannot use.
- Perfumes/aftershaves you particularly like, or not.
- Music you like / do not like
- Television programmes you like
- Films you like
- If you like peace and quiet or prefer to be in the midst of the group
- What hobbies you have / Places you like to visit
- If you wear makeup – any preferences you wish to offer about this.

- If you have pets, any comments you wish to make about them? What are their likes/dislikes, who would you wish to look after them if you are ill, which kennels do you prefer, which vet do you prefer etc?
- There is no limit to this list, include anything which is important to you and which you would wish others to know about.

Explanatory Information

Some of the things you have requested above may be news to the person now caring for you, or may come as a surprise to them. If you think this is likely to be the case it can be helpful to offer some explanatory information, this helps your loved ones understand your position and thus makes it more likely that they will respect it.

An example may be:

I would like my grandson Adam to take over the running of my business if I am not able to do so personally. This may come as a surprise to some of you, as he is fresh out of college, but I see him as an extremely bright young man who will go far in the business world. We have had many a long conversation about his aspirations and he shows a natural aptitude for the business. He is enthusiastic and can be hands on, when I know the rest of you already have your own families and work to look after. Adam - Sally, my very trusty secretary, has all the information you need to 'hit the ground running'. Use her wisely Dear Boy and treat her well. Good luck, have fun, be happy and do me proud. I have every faith"

Information on Family and Friends

This section is particularly important if you have a more complex family situation. It is quite common for long lost family to get in touch when they hear a relative is ill. It can be hard for those caring for you to know if they should allow a particular individual, or certain people, to visit you.

Offering them some guidance within your Statement of Advance Choice about who you would wish to see, or maybe who you would not wish to see no matter what, can be extremely helpful.

If there is a good friend that you have shared many confidences with it can be helpful to name this person in your Statement. This person would potentially be able to offer your family information about you that maybe your family themselves do not know.

Confidentiality

It can be hard for your loved ones to know what information to share with others, particularly other family members. This is often the cause of family upsets, where one family member thinks information is being deliberately withheld from them but the other family member is only trying to respect your confidentiality. Consequently, it can be helpful to include something in your Statement of Advance Choice about what information you are happy to be shared with whom, or not, as the case may be.

Expressions of Love, Affection and Appreciation

Some people chose to include in their Statement of Advance Choice an expression of their love, affection, or appreciation, to family and friends; this is especially so if they have struggled to find the right words whilst able to do so.

It is important for any person close to you to hear of your love, affection or appreciation if they haven't already, but it may be particularly important if you have a family member who has become estranged.

“To Paul, I know we fell out a long time ago but I want you to know that I have thought about you every day and no matter what happened you will always be my son and I will always love you”

If including such statements is not for you, just omit this.

Style

A Statement of Advance Choice does not have to be a dull list of instruction. It can be a legacy for your family if it shows 'you' / your personality. The comment to Adam above, is an illustration of how a Statement can show personality. There is no set format, so draft it however it seems right for you.

Thanks / close

It can be nice to offer thanks to the person now taking care of all your wishes.

“These are my wishes and feelings. I am aware that this is not a legally binding document but if I lose the capacity to make decisions personally, I wish for this document to be used by others to guide how I should be cared for and how my affairs should be administered.

I thank, most sincerely, those who are now, as far as is possible, trying to respect my choices. Your efforts for me are very much appreciated.”

Then remember to sign and date this.

Who should have a copy of my Statement of Advance Choice?

This is up to you. Keep it somewhere safe and tell key people where it is.

If you have a Power of Attorney, give a copy to you nominated attorney/s.

If you have a solicitor, you may wish to give a copy to them.

You should give a copy to your doctor for filing in your medical records.

Anticipatory Care Planning?

A Statement of Advance Choice can complement an anticipatory care plan.

Anticipatory care planning helps you make informed choices about how and where you want to be treated and supported in the future. It requires health and care practitioners to work with you and your carers to ensure the best outcomes for you are achieved.

It is not the purpose of this paper to give you detail about Anticipatory Care Planning; if an Anticipatory Care Plan is something which you think would be of benefit for you a web search for 'Anticipatory Care Planning' brings up several highly reputable sites which give you all the relevant information.

A Life Story Book?

Some people wish to do a Life Story Book in addition to a Statement of Wishes. This can be helpful too as it shows 'you' to people caring for you at a later stage who may not have known the younger you. A Life story Book is like an album, with pictures, souvenirs and mementos from your life which you accompany with the story of your life. There is no set format, include whatever makes you who you are, examples may be:-

- Where you were born
- The names of your parents and any siblings
- Where you lived as a child

- Any pets you had
- Where you were schooled
- What qualifications you got
- Any memories that stay with from your young days
- Any higher education
- Your working life
- Things you have achieved /are proud of
- When and how you met your Partner
- The birth and names of any children
- Hobbies / Volunteering
- Family holidays
- Times with good friends
- Things you have enjoyed in retirement
- And anything else which you feel makes you who you are

Advance Directive (Living Will)

An advance directive offers your views on your care in the final stage of life . A Statement of Advance Choice does not replace an Advance Directive. You may still wish to complete an Advance Directive.

An Advance Directive is not legally binding on the health care staff but the law requires your wishes to be taken into account, an Advance Directive is a clear expression of these.

It is not the purpose of this paper to give you detail about Advanced Directives, if you are interested in making an Advanced Directive a web search for 'Advanced Directives' brings up several highly reputable sites which give you all the relevant information.