



Almost 570,000 people die in the UK every year, yet evidence shows that many don't make adequate plans for end of life care, for example where they want to die.

Making future plans through Advance Care Planning enables people to plan things that are important to them, including dying in the place of their choosing.

## Macmillan literature review

In 2015 we carried out a survey of 81 studies about ACP to identify key themes and what healthcare professionals could do to better promote this process.

We found four key themes:

- **the benefits of ACP**
- **the barriers preventing the use of ACP**
- **factors that could enhance the use of ACP, and**
- **factors that could improve the quality of ACP.**

**TAKING  
OPPORTUNITIES TO  
PROMOTE  
ADVANCE CARE  
PLANNING**

**WE ARE  
MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**

As someone working with people affected by cancer, you know that cancer doesn't just affect them physically. It can affect everything – their relationships, finances and careers.

We want to work with you to help you provide the best support possible. So as well as offering resources to support you and your colleagues in your roles, we can provide additional information to the people you support, so they know they'll never have to face cancer alone.

Together, we can help make sure people affected by cancer get the support they need to feel more in control – from the moment they're diagnosed, through treatment and beyond.

To find out more about all the ways we're here for you and the people you support, visit [macmillan.org.uk/professionals](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/professionals)

# What is Advance Care Planning (ACP)?

**A voluntary process of discussion, planning and review about future care between an individual, those close to them and their care provider.**

The purpose of the discussion is to help an individual plan ahead for a time when their health may change and they lose capacity to make their own decisions or the ability to communicate their wishes to others.<sup>1</sup> Advance care planning is particularly important for people who may be reaching the end stage of their lives.

## A person may choose to plan ahead by:

- **Making an Advance Statement of their preferences and wishes for their future care.** This can include how and where they want to be cared for.
- **Creating a Power of Attorney.** A person appoints someone to make decisions on their behalf. These may include decisions about property, finances, or their health and welfare. Powers of Attorney vary across the UK.
- **Making an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment or an Advance Directive – Scotland.** A person records decisions about treatments they don't want to have or would want stopped.

Although ACP refers specifically to these three ways a person can plan ahead, it may also prompt a person to make other plans for when they die, **such as making a will, registering for organ and tissue donation, and funeral planning.**

In Scotland the term Advance/Anticipatory Care Planning is used to describe Advance Care Planning as above, and Anticipatory Care Planning. Anticipatory Care Planning is planning care to support people living with long term conditions whose health or social status is expected to change or deteriorate.

1. The definition for Advance Care Planning has been adapted from – The NHS National End of Life Care Programme: revised 2008: A Guide for Health and Social Care Staff (PDF) [http://www.bgs.org.uk/pdf/cms/reference/advance\\_Care\\_Planning.pdf](http://www.bgs.org.uk/pdf/cms/reference/advance_Care_Planning.pdf)

## Benefits of ACP

- Improves end of life care by enabling a person's wishes to be fulfilled.
- Enables people to die at home if this is what they wish.
- Decreases hospital stays.
- Reduces psychological distress for patients and their families.
- Enables better communication between the individual, family and healthcare professionals.

## Barriers preventing ACP

- People are likely to wait until healthcare professionals initiate discussions about ACP, but healthcare professionals find it difficult to do this.
- Healthcare professionals may not know when the best time is to initiate these conversations, and too early or too late may deter people from using ACP.
- It can be more difficult to know when to start an ACP conversation with people who have non-cancer diseases because the trajectory of their disease can be less predictable.
- Cognitive impairment may prevent people from understanding ACP. A person must have mental capacity to make an Advance Care Plan.

## Factors which could enhance the use of ACP

- Talking with people about ACP and giving them information about it.
- Discussing concerns about the future to see if ACP can help address these.
- Integrating ACP into healthcare systems so that opportunities for conversations about ACP aren't missed.
- Remembering that those healthcare professionals who spend the most time with patients have the biggest influence when discussing ACP.

## Factors which could improve ACP quality

- Developing better ways or systems to improve ACP communications between patients, their families and healthcare professionals.
- Making sure ACP is individualised so that people can express their specific preferences.
- Training healthcare professionals so that they are equipped with the skills they need to have ACP conversations and to help people make advance plans.

## Conclusion

ACP has many benefits for people who are reaching the end stages of their life. Our literature review highlights that knowing about the barriers and factors that enhance the uptake of ACP can help healthcare professionals to take action to enable ACP to become part of mainstream practice.

Here are three simple steps that you could take to promote ACP:

- ✓ **Make sure that ACP is part of End of Life Care but remember it is voluntary.**
- ✓ **Ensure that colleagues have the knowledge and skills and recognise when to have ACP discussions with patients.**
- ✓ **Improve people's understanding of ACP.**

Macmillan has developed resources for both patients and professionals to improve their understanding of ACP.

Visit [learnzone.org.uk/advancecareplanningvideo](http://learnzone.org.uk/advancecareplanningvideo) to access an e-learning toolkit for healthcare professionals, a video to help introduce ACP to your patients, and the references from this literature review.

Visit [macmillan.org.uk/advancecareplanning](http://macmillan.org.uk/advancecareplanning) to order free copies of our information for patients.