



Press Release - Publication of the Advance Care Planning policy document for adults in NI

'Have the conversation' – Swann

Health Minister Robin Swann has encouraged adults in Northern Ireland to have a conversations about what matters to them for their future.

The Health Minister was speaking following the publication of '*For Now and For the Future – An Advance Care Planning Policy for Adults in Northern Ireland.*'

Advance Care Planning is an umbrella term covering personal, legal, clinical, and financial planning. It enables a person to think about what matters to them now and for the future, and to make choices that reflect this.

Welcoming the publication, Minister Swann said **"Advance Care Planning is about people having the opportunity to have conversations with those important to them, and those who provide care, support or treatment.**

"Clarifying your wishes, feelings, beliefs and values, can inform future care, providing peace of mind and reducing the potential for confusion or conflict. However, it can also support an enhanced quality of life now as people at any stage of life have the opportunity to talk about what matters to them. I would encourage everyone not only to read the policy document, but to act upon it.

"The publication of the Advance Care Planning policy and supporting resources is the first step on a road that I hope will lead to more people having the opportunity to reflect on and talk about what matters to them, what they would prioritise in the future should they become unable to make decisions for themselves, and to then make timely, realistic and practical plans for the future."

The policy was launched by the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Sir Michael McBride, at an event held at Belfast Exposed, one of 15 organisations that received Advance Care Planning Seed Grant funding to support creative projects in the community which encourage people to start conversations about their future wishes now.

Sir Michael said: **"Throughout the development of this policy and wide-ranging engagement process, it has been clear that people recognise the importance and benefits of Advance Care Planning. The ambition of the policy is that Advance Care Planning becomes normalised, that all adults have regular**

opportunities to express their wishes, feelings, beliefs and values and that these are reflected in the care, support or treatment they receive. This policy document will not only help people and those important to them, but also those providing care, support or treatment.”

The policy has been developed through extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. This included interested members of the public, those who work in Health and Social Care and statutory organisations, as well as input from the community and voluntary sector and academia.

The Department of Health Advance Care Planning Lead, Corrina Grimes said: **“People have been at the heart of the development of the Advance Care Planning policy. A co-production approach has been central to this with extensive conversations, discussions and input from a significant number of sectors, organisations and people, from earliest design through to public consultation.**

“I want to acknowledge and thank all those who have been involved in this engagement – the policy is the richer for the valuable insights of the many organisations and individuals who have contributed to it.

“During these conversations we often heard about positive lived experiences when people had planned ahead, and of the reassurance and comfort this provided to the person and those important to them, knowing that their care, treatment and other wishes were known. Sadly, there were also instances where people had not planned ahead or had these conversations, which often resulted in distress in times of already immense emotions.”

To help support implementation of the policy, an e-learning programme has also been created to provide information on Advance Care Planning for members of the public, the voluntary and community sector, and all health and social care staff. The e-learning module can be accessed via the Department of Health website at the Advance Care Planning page [What is Advance Care Planning? | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/advance-care-planning)

Notes for Editors

1. More information is available on the Department’s website: [What is Advance Care Planning? | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/advance-care-planning)