

Patient information leaflet

Planning ahead: your Somerset treatment escalation plan

*"In the end, what gives a life meaning is not
only how it is lived, but how it draws to a close"*

Dame Tessa Jowell,

Speech in the House of Lords, 25 January 2018,
campaigning to improve end of life care in the NHS

What is a treatment escalation plan?

A treatment escalation plan guides healthcare teams in making decisions regarding your care and treatment where decisions need to be made quickly and you are not well enough to speak for yourself.

A form is created to record the decisions you, your family/carer and your health care team have made regarding the treatments that would be best for you in the future of your care. It helps to ensure the right people have been included in these important discussions.

You may have already created an Advance Care Plan to record important decisions should you become ill or are dying such as, care arrangements, legacies, funeral, and financial plans. A treatment escalation plan (or TEP) is part of this and relates only to medical care and treatment.

It is important, although sometimes difficult, to think of the care and treatments we would, or would not like to receive if we became ill. Having a conversation with your health and care team and your loved ones to work through your wishes will help to make these important decisions regarding what is right for you. They will be able to understand your priorities and wishes and can support you now and in the future.

Thinking about these decisions in advance can apply particularly if you have complex health needs, are nearing the end of your life, are considered at risk of sudden deterioration or your heart/breathing suddenly stopping. You may have other reasons to record your care and treatment preferences. Whatever the reason it is important to discuss, record and communicate your wishes and conversations.

For more information, speak to any members of the health and care teams looking after you. They will make sure you get the right support. You can search online for more information about 'Somerset Treatment Escalation Plan' and to download a copy of the form at <https://www.somersetccg.nhs.uk/for-clinicians/somerset-treatment-escalation-plan-step/>

Who can help me with making a treatment escalation plan?

Your healthcare teams will be able to help you to think about these decisions. The Somerset TEP form has options, which will enable you discuss treatments that are suitable for you and your medical conditions, for example:

- should I go to hospital, or not? If not, what would your care plan be?
- support arrangements available for you at home
- some specific treatments you do, or do not want to have e.g. supported breathing options, blood transfusions and use of certain medicines

Following discussion, your wishes will be recorded in your TEP and you will be given a copy of your document. You will need to keep a copy safe at home and be able to share it with any family and friends or representatives you wish to be aware of your decisions. Your TEP will be recorded in your medical notes and made available to health and care staff when needed, enabling any member of the team involved in your care to access your plan at any time.

Why do I need a treatment escalation plan?

In an emergency, health or care professionals may have to make rapid decisions regarding your treatment, because you may not be well enough to discuss and make choices. This plan empowers you to guide them on the treatments you would or would not want to be considered for. It records those treatments that could be important, or those that would not work for you.

Many treatments that can prolong life for some people carry a risk of causing harm, discomfort, or loss of dignity to others. People can choose not to accept that risk if the likelihood of benefit from treatment is small. This plan is to record your preferences and agreed realistic recommendations for emergency situations, at whatever stage of life you are.

A TEP is advisory. The doctor and team treating you will need to make decisions based on your clinical condition at the time, but knowing your wishes will be extremely helpful. The TEP cannot be used to ask for treatments that are not likely be of benefit to you and would not be offered.

You must keep a copy of the plan to be immediately available to healthcare professionals called to help you in an emergency, whether you are at home or being cared for elsewhere.

Ambulance crews, out-of-hours doctors, care home and hospital staff will then be able to make quick decisions as to how best to help if they are able to see your TEP form in an emergency. Some people keep it in a prominent place such as fridge door or kitchen noticeboard.

Who decides on resuscitation?

Resuscitation is one of the decisions that will need to be considered when completing a TEP. Resuscitation is the use of manual and medical treatments to try to re-start a stopped heart and/or breathing. Your healthcare team can help explain whether a resuscitation attempt might be successful for you.

If your healthcare team believe you might benefit from an attempted resuscitation you are still allowed to refuse it. Mostly resuscitation is not successful and while a person's heart or breathing may re-start there may be a poor quality of life afterwards. For this and other reasons, many people decide they do not wish to have a resuscitation procedure attempted.

If you and your healthcare team decide you are for a 'Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation' (DNACPR) order, this does not prevent you from coming into hospital, or having other treatments, provided they are suitable for you and wanted by you. Should you not agree with the advice the medical team have given regarding attempted resuscitation, or other treatments, you are entitled to ask for a second opinion.

Can I change my treatment escalation plan?

This is your plan. As things change for you, so can your TEP. You should review your TEP regularly. As your health care needs increase, the plan helps to think about what matters to you, making sure you understand what treatments your healthcare team would be able to offer you.

Speak to your healthcare team regarding the changes you wish to make. They will be recorded and communicated to hospital and ambulance teams.

Remember to also update any other plans, such as your Advance Care Plan. If you have appointed a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) make sure they know about your current TEP.

What about people who cannot decide their own plan?

In these circumstances, health and care professionals will need to follow the Mental Capacity Act; which is a legal requirement. Professionals will need to initially determine if you, the person, has or lacks mental capacity. Having mental capacity means that you are able to make a decision for yourself. If a health or care professional has any doubts regarding your capacity to plan about your care or treatment, they will carry out the test of capacity.

If you are assessed as lacking capacity, then another person will have to plan in your best interests. This could be someone you have appointed to act on your behalf through a Lasting Power of Attorney, or, if you have not made plans in advance, the professional responsible for working with you in relation to your future treatment will have to decide what should happen in your best interests.

The professional must establish whether or not the decision can wait until you regain capacity and are able to make that decision. They must involve you in the decision as much as possible, taking into account your wishes and feelings and talking to your friends and family to establish who is able to say what you would have wished had you been able to make the decision yourself. If you do not have anyone close and able give a view on what you would have wanted, then an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) will be appointed to consider and represent your best interests.

If your family, friends or an IMCA disagree with the best interest decision made by the healthcare professional, they are able to challenge this

This information leaflet is available in other languages and formats. Please contact us on 08000 851067 or email somccg.pals@nhs.net

Information current as of November 2020