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Deciding right on death and dying

Posted on Thursday 20th September 2012

A new approach to death and dying will be launched at three events across Cumbria this Friday (September 21).

The 'Deciding right' initiative on end of life care is the first of its kind in the UK and will provide a region wide fully integrated approach to making care decisions in advance for people of all ages - children, young people and adults.

Events for health team leaders - including nurse and ambulance services managers as well as carers and clinicians from across the county - will be held at Hundith Hill Hotel, Cockermouth for West Cumbria, Newbiggin Village Hall, Penrith for North Cumbria and Stricklandgale House, Kendal for South Cumbria.

Developed in the North East by NHS North East, Deciding right is being rolled out across Cumbria with involvement of GP practices, adult social care, community services, paramedics, hospices and in other NHS care settings.

Developed by developed by senior clinicians in the North East, as well as patients and carers, 'Deciding right' creates one standard region wide process to help people make shared healthcare decisions in advance. It will help patients of all ages who do not have capacity to make their own choices, or who may lose capacity for making choices in the future.

Crucially, for the very first time, 'Deciding right' will provide common regional documentation for use in any Cumbrian care setting, which will be easily recognisable by all health and social care professionals and have the legal authority to ensure patients' wishes are followed right at the very end of life.

Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) End of Life Clinical Lead, Dr Geoff Joliffe said: "'Deciding right' is about putting patients, their families and carers at the very heart of shared decisions about their future care, making sure they understand the choices available and providing dignity in death by making sure their wishes are followed.

"Often, people may have made decisions about their future care but not written them down formally or told family members. They may have actually made an advance care plan, but not shared it with all the relevant agencies and people.

"Equally, because different organisations have their own policies and procedures in place, patients' choices may not be recognised from one care setting to another and can sometimes be disregarded by professionals in the heat of dealing with immediate life and death situations."

To overcome these common issues, 'Deciding right' sets out clear principles for all healthcare organisations and professionals in Cumbria to follow, focusing decisions on individual patient needs and wishes, rather than organisational policies and procedures.

'Deciding right' follows the UK's first ever charter to talk about death and dying, 'A Good Death', which was launched in October 2009.

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