



Time to think

NORTH EAST REGIONAL CHARTER

COMPASSION AT END OF LIFE

All of us should have the right at the end of life to experience a good death and our family, partners or other carers deserve support and compassion at this time.

Sensitive and appropriate end of life support should begin at the time illness is identified and continue throughout ill health, during death and in bereavement. It should be available to people coming to the end of life at any age and from any condition.

This charter will guide health, social care, community, voluntary and other organisations, groups or individuals who plan, develop and provide end of life care or support. It will help to ensure the right services are available at the right time for individuals who are dying, their families and carers.

All care providers should be aware of the charter, and its impact on their work, not only those who work specifically in end of life services.

Principles of a good death

Respect:

- To see death acknowledged as a part of life.
- To be treated with dignity, respect and privacy, according to our wishes.
- To value each individual and the contribution we may still wish to make to our family, job or social network, in a caring and supportive way.
- To have clear, honest and tailored information and good communication throughout illness or frailty.

Time to plan:

- If appropriate, to be told clearly and compassionately the reality that death is coming.
- To be provided, where possible, with a sense of how long illness may last and information about what can be expected, to allow time to plan.
- To be given the opportunity to make a plan for our care in advance which takes account of our wishes, and to have that respected by health, social care and all other services.

Care:

- To have access to end of life care in the location we choose, with every effort made to support this.
- To have a named key worker who will organise and coordinate care, including where this cuts across organisational boundaries.
- To have clear information about whom to contact around the clock and seven days a week if advice or care is needed at home.
- To be given every opportunity to take part in decisions which affect care. If the person who is dying is unable to do this then the views of people close to them must be taken into account.
- To receive speedy, practical help for the end of life.
- To receive the best care and support with any social difficulties.
- To have help to control physical pain and to alleviate emotional distress, if they occur.

Support:

- To have support with the practicalities of dying, death and matters after death.
- To receive appropriate emotional or spiritual support, with our beliefs and values honoured.
- To have access to appropriate specialist support, including counselling if required, for families, partners, carers and staff. This may be before or after death occurs.

This draft charter was produced in partnership across health, social care and other organisations in the north east of England, and with the involvement of patients, carers and their representatives.

It has been updated and amended to take account of the views expressed by members of the public and professionals during the consultation exercise which ran between October and December 2009.

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