

Welcome to the Making Decisions Alliance campaign pack.

Making decisions is something we do all day, everyday. We don't always find it easy, for many different reasons. However, it's a basic human right to be able to make your own decision and yet millions of people are discriminated against and their right to make their own decisions are ignored everyday because of a lack of comprehensive legislation to protect this right.

After more than a decade of promising to act, the Government has not introduced legislation. This pack sets out the reasons why we believe this situation cannot go on. We welcome the Government's announcement that it is starting work on drafting a bill, but we need your support to make sure this bill becomes legislation. We hope this pack will encourage you to support our campaign for legislation to be introduced.

We've formed the Making Decisions Alliance because the current legal situation with mental capacity is totally inadequate and affects so many different people. This pack explains who we are, why we are campaigning and what you can do to help. The campaign is aimed at getting new legislation introduced in England and Wales (because of the different legislative system in Northern Ireland) although we hope that this work might support any activities that are happening in Northern Ireland. At the back of the pack, there are information sheets with ideas for different ways that you can get involved. If you need this pack in another format (for example, in larger print) please see contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Our campaign has two aims:

- lobby the Government to introduce mental capacity legislation in the next Queen's Speech, by November 2003
- increase awareness of the need for new legislation.

You can find more information about the Alliance in the section called 'What is the Making Decisions Alliance?'

How will this pack help?

We hope this pack will help you take local action to support our campaign. You can do this by:

- writing to your MP (there are two template letters included in the pack)

The Making Decisions Alliance believes that new legislation on mental capacity is urgently needed

For more information and other formats of this pack visit www.makingdecisions.org.uk

- sending press releases to the local press (a sample is enclosed)
- using the information to raise awareness of the issues (please tell us what you do using the enclosed feedback form)
- telling us how the lack of legislation is affecting you or someone you know (enclosed is a form to help you do this)
- providing simple reference information on this complicated subject (the pack is designed to be photocopied and each section can be used separately).

What else are we doing?

We are doing lots of work in this area in addition to producing this pack. We support work that organisations such as the Law Society are doing nationally to influence the Government. In July 2002, we launched a joint charter on mental capacity and decision making in Parliament with the Law Society and the British Medical Association outlining why we think the Government needs to act now. Organisations which are members of the Alliance may also be doing complementary work independently of the Alliance.

This pack is just the start of our work to help people understand the important issues around making decisions, for example by exploring in more depth the issues of advocacy, fluctuating capacity and how mental capacity is assessed. Further copies of this pack are also available from www.makingdecisions.org.uk

If you'd like to find out more about how to support the work of the Alliance, please contact one of the member organisations listed below. If you represent an organisation and want to know how it can join the Alliance, please contact Micky Willmott at Age Concern England (tel: 020 8765 7440).

We look forward to hearing about your work. Thank you.

Micky Willmott
Age Concern England, on behalf of the Making Decisions Alliance

Please see factsheet 17 for a list of contact details for organisations who are member of the Making Decisions Alliance.

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