

Making Decisions Alliance: template press release

For immediate release

FAO: News desks

MAKING DECISIONS - A BASIC RIGHT?

Millions of people who may have difficulty making decisions and need help to do so at some stage in their life are currently unprotected by any legal safeguards to ensure their views are respected. Furthermore, family and those closest to them have no automatic right to make decisions on their behalf.

The Making Decisions Alliance, a new coalition of charities and support organisations, is calling on the public to join its new campaign calling for the urgent introduction of legislation to protect anyone affected. It is an issue that has the potential to affect anyone and everyone.

In Scotland new laws were introduced in 2000 to ensure people are able to make decisions about their money, health and welfare and nominate someone to make decisions for them in the future in case they are unable to. But in England and Wales the problem persists because we have no legal definition of 'capacity.'

People with physical or learning disabilities, dementia, head injuries or mental health problems may have problems making decisions independently. This could be someone who has suffered severe physical injury in an accident or a person who can communicate and make choices but cannot use speech.

The outcome could have a major impact on their lives, affecting their health and medical treatment, personal finances or social care.

The Alliance is urging people to write to their MP and ask them to press the matter with the Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine of Lairg to review the gap in the law. The Making Decisions Alliance can also be contacted for a copy of its campaign 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

Mrs Ann Brown, Chair of the St Albans xxx (local charity group), and a member of the Making Decisions Alliance said:

“Any one of us or a member of our families could find themselves in a situation where we need to be involved with making serious decisions about our or a loved one’s life. We have the extremely inequitable situation where individuals and carers in Scotland have clear rights but a gaping hole persists in the UK.”

Mr John Read from xxx St Albans and a member of the Making Decisions Alliance said:

“We are working together in St Albans with other charities in the Making Decisions Alliance to ensure that peoples basic rights are protected. Here in St Albans, there are potentially over 4000 people who could be directly affected by the lack of legislation in this crucially important area.”

(the 2 quotes are to try and encourage liaison between local charities and members at a local level)

– Ends –

Notes to Editors:

This issue affects about 2 million people, over 700,000 people with dementia in the UK, one in six adults aged between 16 and 64 have severe and enduring mental health problems. (Source: ONS), over 145,000 adults with severe and profound learning disabilities, 310,000 adults in the UK with an autism spectrum disorder, 135,000 people in the UK with severe head injury and over 300,000 people in England and Wales disabled following a stroke.

Member organisations of the Making Decisions Alliance are:

Action Elder Abuse, Age Concern England, The Alzheimer’s Society, Caring Decisions, The Down’s Syndrome Association, Help the Aged, Headway, Leonard Cheshire, Mencap, The Mental Health Foundation, Mind, The National Autistic Society, Patient Concern, Relatives and Residents Association, Respond, Rethink, Scope, Sense, Stroke Association and Turning Point.

* Campaign packs are available from the Making Decisions Alliance website.

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