

10 Tips for having advance care planning discussions

It is important to look for non-verbal cues that suggest a person is ready for an advance care planning discussion or indicates signs of unease or distress during a discussion. This may be via their **eye contact, a look of concern, body movement such as fidgeting or a look of discomfort**. If you notice any non-verbal cues, open-ended questions such as **'what are you thinking?'** or **'how are you feeling discussing this topic'** will allow time for the individual to express how they feel and if they want to continue the discussion.

- 1. Be prepared**
Understand the advance care planning process and what is expected of you as the community or district nurse providing care. Always be ready to have an advance care planning conversation.
- 2. Ensure the individual is ready**
Ensure the individual is ready to have this conversation. This may depend on their frame of mind and how they are feeling on the day. When deciding to have a conversation consider how they are feeling and what is going on in their lives at the at the present time. Encourage the person to involve those who are important to them.
- 3. Early planning**
Offer to discuss advance care planning as early as possible and at a convenient time for the individual and those who are important to them or help them identify someone they trust.
- 4. Look for cues**
Look out for cues that someone is ready to engage in these conversations (for example, if an individual mentions dying, is admitted to hospital or discusses disease progression).
- 5. Be sensitive**
Think about how you would like to be spoken to. Be sensitive when introducing advance care planning and do not be afraid to be kind. If you are kind in your approach, then you are less likely to upset someone.
- 6. Listen**
Use active listening throughout the process to ensure the individual's wishes and preferences are being appropriately heard and recorded.
- 7. Be natural**
Be natural, use your own words and use a gentle and caring tone throughout the conversation.
- 8. Respect**
Respect the opinions of everyone in the process particularly the individual in receipt of care.
- 9. It is a process**
Advance care planning is a process and should be carried out over time - it is not a single conversation.
- 10. Be realistic**
Avoid language that will make people feel confused or cause unrealistic expectations of options available in future.