

Two out of Ten people feel businesses know their rights when it comes to Lasting Power of Attorney

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Only 22 per cent of people affected by dementia feel that businesses and organisations understand a person's rights around Lasting Power of Attorney, according to a poll carried out by Alzheimer's Society. The poll (made up of carers, people with dementia and friends/family of people with dementia) was released to mark the launch of *Accessing & Sharing Information - Acting on behalf of a person with dementia* booklet.

There are times when families or friends may need to access or share information on behalf of a person with dementia. The law in this area can be complex and often people, as well as organisations, are unsure about the rights that people have under the Data Protection Act.

Following the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia launched in 2012, Alzheimer's Society has been leading a group looking at the way personal information and data is used by and for people with dementia. As part of the group, Alzheimer's Society collaborated with Office of the Public Guardian and a number of different organisations, including banks and utility providers, to produce this guidance booklet.

Speaking about the booklet, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com and supporter of Alzheimer's Society, Martin Lewis said:

'I'm 42 and I've set up a lasting power of attorney – not because I've any immediate foreseeable chance of losing my faculties, but because we all need to consider the impact and risk if we did. The difficulty for our loved ones in getting access to our cash, even possibly to pay for treatment, would compound the other more obvious issues. Doing it in advance doesn't mean you're ceding control, it means if something happens it's far easier, cheaper, and less stressful for other people to help sort out your finances or health. I'm delighted to see Alzheimer's Society, Office of the Public Guardian and others working closely together to create this great information resource. It's crucial more people and more businesses understand the importance of lasting power of attorney and how to work with it.'

George McNamara, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at Alzheimer's Society, said:

'It is shocking that so many people feel businesses are not aware of people's rights around Lasting Powers of Attorney. LPAs, in many cases, provide a crucial lifeline to maintaining independence. Without access, it often leads to high levels of stress and anxiety amongst people with dementia and their carers, not to mention an inability to use vital services.

'We want people to feel confident and empowered with the right knowledge to exercise their rights and that's why Alzheimer's Society has collaborated with Office of the Public Guardian and various organisations to create this clear and informative booklet. Our aim is that this booklet will act as a catalyst for more dementia friendly policies across service industries.'

Terri Burton from the West Midlands cares for her husband, Robert who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2013. Speaking about their experiences, Terri said:

'When Robert was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, everything happened so quickly and I found the process of applying for a Lasting Power of Attorney very stressful and complicated. Because of this, I find it difficult understanding my rights having an LPA in place. I've also had bad experiences when dealing with businesses, so I welcome this new booklet which will provide clear guidance that can be shared with frontline staff when acting on behalf of my husband.'

Justice Minister Simon Hughes said:

'Having a Lasting Power of Attorney means your choices count, no matter what happens in the future and everybody should consider making one.

'An LPA gives you the peace of mind of knowing that if you ever lose the capacity to make certain decisions yourself, people you have chosen and trust can legally, quickly and easily step in and manage your affairs.

'It is important those using LPAs always get the service they need and this important booklet will help

those managing other people's affairs, clearly setting out their rights and giving important practical advice.'

To mark the launch, Alzheimer's Society, Office of the Public Guardian and various businesses and organisations involved in creating the booklet gathered for a special launch event in London today (11th February). Speakers at the event included; Simon Hughes, Minister of State for Justice & Civil Liberties; Dr Paul Litchfield, Chief Medical Officer & Director of Health & Wellbeing, BT; George McNamara, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at Alzheimer's Society; and Christopher Graham, the

Information Commissioner. Alzheimer's Society ambassador, Trevor Jarvis (person with dementia) and his son Andrew Jarvis also spoke at the event.

Alzheimer's Society's *Accessing & Sharing Information* booklet will be available to download from 11 February from www.alzheimers.org.uk/sharinginformation . Hard copies of the booklet will available from Alzheimer's Society on request.

People needing advice on Lasting Power of Attorney and dementia can call Alzheimer's Society helpline on 0300 222 1122.

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