



Facts for Families: Health series

1. DNAR

This is the first in a series of factsheets we are writing to inform families about health issues that might arise in their loved one's life. We have learned that people with learning disabilities and autism do not have equal access to the same quality of healthcare as other citizens. We are working with people with learning disabilities and autism and their families and colleagues across the health and social care sector to make sure everyone gets the treatment they need at the right time.

Everyone gets ill at some point in their life. We think it is better to have all the information you need ahead of a health concern or crisis so that you can make advance plans in a more considered way.

DNAR stands for Do Not Attempt Resuscitation

You might also see the abbreviations DNR (do not resuscitate) and DNACPR (do not attempt cardio pulmonary resuscitation) on hospital notes.

When a person is seriously unwell, or about to undergo major surgery it is common practice for a doctor to discuss the risks and potential outcomes of the particular set of circumstances. If the person (the patient) has capacity to make this decision *at this time* their views will be respected. If health circumstances or learning disability mean they are not able to make *a decision of this nature at this time* a **Best Interests Decision** will be made in consultation between the medical team, the next of kin and significant others who know the person well such as their support team.

A **Best Interests Decision** is made under the Mental Capacity Act and it is important that everyone involved understands the Act well. If family are Court Appointed Deputies for Health and Welfare then the deputy/deputies must make the decision.

Doctors should not make this decision alone.

Quality of life is an issue taken into consideration before issuing a DNAR as the hoped for outcome of any medical procedure is to maintain or improve a person's quality of life. Sometimes people assume that those with learning disabilities and autism can never have a good quality of life so we need to make sure that outdated attitudes do not form the only basis of a decision not to resuscitate a person.



What is resuscitation?

CPR stands for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. It's an emergency treatment used to restart a person's heart and breathing if they stop.

There are risks associated with CPR and it is not as successful in real life as the scenes you might remember from TV. Risks can include brain damage and broken ribs. The doctor should explain the risks and help everyone to make an informed decision when deciding whether CPR will be used.

If a decision is reached to not attempt resuscitation, a DNAR form will be completed. This enables the healthcare team to make quick decisions. In the absence of a DNAR form, resuscitation will always be attempted.

Cancelling a DNAR

When a person recovers from the health crisis it is important to consider whether the DNAR needs to stay in place. Learning disability and autism are not reasons to have a DNAR form in place for otherwise healthy people.

You can ask for the DNAR to be removed from the records after a health crisis has passed. This would need to be another **Best Interests Decision**. If a consensus cannot be reached then it would be a decision for the Court of Protection.

We recognise that making a decision about whether or not to resuscitate a loved one is extremely stressful. Dimensions colleagues will do their best to support families who are faced with this issue.

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There for you

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