

Managing finances for people with dementia

As dementia progresses, there may come a time when the person will struggle to manage their finances and affairs.

At some point, they may need extra support, or for someone to manage their money for them.

Someone may have planned ahead and created an Enduring power of attorney (before October 2007) or Lasting power of attorney for health and welfare (after 2007). However, sometimes families struggle to decide when the time is right to register the power of attorney and start acting on the person's behalf.

If the person's ability to manage their finances is concerning, it may help to identify why they are struggling. Given the right information and support, someone may be able to continue to manage their own finances for longer. For example, some people with dementia may have difficulty remembering card personal identification numbers (PIN). A better alternative would be a 'chip and signature' card. The person with dementia only has to provide a signature and does not have to remember any numbers. Some families also set up direct debits for bills so that the person doesn't have to worry about arranging and remembering payments.

For some people, it might be only specific financial decisions that they struggle with. Often people with dementia can continue with day-to-day finances, such as paying for shopping, but may have difficulty with more complex decisions. For example, the person may find it difficult to change their gas supplier or make choices about investments.

In these situations, carers can consider the least restrictive way of helping them. Some may register a power of attorney, but only use it to

manage the more complex decisions, and leave the person to manage their day-to-day finances.

In time, however, it may become apparent to a carer that, even with support, the person with dementia is struggling to cope. For example, they may fail to understand what needs to be paid, overpay for some things, or leave money unaccounted for. In these situations it may be useful for carers to try and build up a picture of how the person manages their money. Carers can either talk to the person about how they are managing, or monitor their finances over time and check that bills are being paid. Acting as the person's attorney can make this easier. This will ensure that carers do not step in when the person is actually in control and spending their money as they choose.

If carers feel that the person can no longer cope or manage their finances, it may be time to consider registering an LPA. If an LPA has not been made then a carer may wish to apply to the Court of Protection to become a deputy. This can also give them the authority to manage the financial affairs of the person with dementia. When taking over someone's financial affairs, it is important to make each decision in the person's best interests, and to take account of their past and present wishes.

Things for dementia carers to think about with finances:

- What decisions is the person with dementia struggling with?
- Can you support someone to manage their own finances, for example by providing clear and easy-to-understand information?
- Is there support on offer to help someone with their finances, eg chip and signature card, large-print documents, direct debits for bills?

- Are there aspects of their finances that the person is managing well, such as day-to-day affairs like doing the shopping?
- Are there any bills that have not been paid? Have any bills or services been overpaid, or any money unaccounted for?
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