

Lasting Power of Attorney revamp to improve safety and efficiency

- New safeguards to protect against fraud and abuse
- Process to be made simpler, quicker and easy to use
- New digital service to reduce application errors and speed up registrations

Ministers have set out plans to transform the lasting power of attorney (LPA) system – making it quicker to use, easier to access and even more secure from fraud.

Under the proposals, people will be able to make an LPA completely online for the first time – bringing it in line with other government services such as applying for a divorce. The current paper-based system will continue to operate meaning people can choose an accessible process that's best for their specific needs.

Crucially, the reforms will bolster safeguards to protect vulnerable people from abuse or fraud. The plans include new identification checks which would require official documents or information such as a driving licence, passport or Government Gateway account as part of a strengthened verification process.

The number of registered LPAs has increased drastically in recent years to more than 6 million, but the process of making one retains many paper-based features that are over 30 years old.

Today's announcement follows a government consultation which sought views on modernising the system. The proposals have been developed following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders such as Age UK, the Law Society, and the National Mental Capacity Forum, to ensure that they work for those who rely on LPAs to manage their affairs in later life.

Justice Minister, Tom Pursglove MP, said:

A lasting power of attorney provides comfort and reassurance to millions of people that decisions will be made in their best interests should they lose capacity.

Our reforms will make the system easier to access, simpler and even more secure from fraud. This forms part of our plans to harness technology across government and provide better services to the public.

An LPA is a legal document which allows people (a donor) to appoint someone else (an attorney) to make decisions about their welfare, money, or property. It's an important tool that allows people to choose someone they know and

trust to make decisions for them were they to lose capacity in future. They are often used by older people but can be made by anyone over the age of 18.

The service is operated by the Office of the Public Guardian and currently handles more than 19 million pieces of paper annually. The introduction of a new digital process will improve the efficiency and sustainability of the organisation and reduce its carbon footprint.

Digitisation will also help reduce errors from donors, attorneys and others involved in the process by ensuring these can be picked up and fixed early on – ultimately helping to slash waiting times.

Stuart Howard, Interim Public Guardian for England and Wales, said:

Lasting powers of attorney are vital in helping people plan for the future and stay in control of their decisions.

These reforms will enable us to modernise the process – ensuring our service is fit for the future, safe and simple to use, and can be accessed online.

The government has also committed to looking further into how the new digital system could improve the witnessing process and make it simpler. It would give donors more time to focus on the important decisions in the process such as who they are giving powers to and the scope of those powers.

Notes to editors