

New online service to improve Lasting Power of Attorney

- online tool will enable attorneys to contact banks and healthcare providers easier
- replaces paper-based system which delays important decisions
- maintains safeguards to protect elderly and vulnerable from abuse

Unveiled by the Office of Public Guardian (OPG), the new digital 'Use a lasting power of attorney' tool will help those acting as an attorney to contact organisations like banks and healthcare providers more easily. This will improve the speed with which they can make important decisions, such as those related to their loved ones' care or property.

The current paper-based process can take weeks, as documents need to be requested and confirmed between organisations and individuals, before being posted as physical copies. The new system will allow those acting as an attorney to provide a secure code, which when submitted to the online portal will nearly instantaneously confirm their status as an attorney and the power they hold – authorising them to take actions on their loved ones' behalf.

A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) is a legal document which allows people to appoint someone else (an attorney) to make decisions about their welfare, money or property. They are often used by older people to choose someone they know and trust to make decisions for them were they to lose capacity in the future – but can be used by anyone at any age. The number of registered LPAs has increased drastically in recent years to more than 4 million, with many taking the important step to plan for the future.

The new service, available to newly registered LPAs from today, is part of a wider transformation of the work of OPG – making better use of digital products and services, and using smarter ways of working. Crucially, the new tool maintains existing checks, including to confirm whether someone has the legal right to act as an attorney and the powers they may be entitled to – protecting the vulnerable and elderly from abuse of an LPA.

Nick Goodwin, Public Guardian for England and Wales, said:

More people are taking the important step to plan for the future and apply for a Lasting Power of Attorney, and we want to make sure those they entrust with making vital decisions on their behalf receive the very best possible support.

Our new digital service will ensure attorneys can make effective and efficient decisions when managing their loved ones' affairs – without the delays a paper-based services can cause.

But this is just one part of our ambitious transformation programme

and we are constantly looking at how we can improve as an organisation to benefit the public and our partners.

Justice Minister Alex Chalk said:

This new innovative system will make a real and positive difference to people dealing with what can be an emotional and difficult process.

It is just the latest example of the way we are using technology throughout the justice system to create better, more effective services for the public.

The new system has been tested by various stakeholders, including the Department for Work and Pensions and HSBC UK, who aim to use it to maintain services to their customers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Maxine Pritchard, Head of Financial Inclusion & Vulnerability – HSBC UK Retail said:

We've worked closely with the Office of the Public Guardian on the design and development of the new service to create a much-improved journey for our customers.

The ongoing pandemic has brought challenges to us all and we've been working hard to ensure our customers, and their care network, are able to get the support they need. We've enabled a digital registration of Power of Attorney, removing the need for customers to visit a branch. We're now able to authenticate the document so we know it's genuine and of course the customer experience is greatly improved.

Notes to editors

- The new system, known as 'Use a lasting power of attorney', will be available from today (17 July 2020) to newly registered LPAs and can be accessed at www.gov.uk/opg
- The Office of the Public Guardian are working on extending this system to already registered LPAs.