

Palliative care in Scotland: understanding the essentials

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What is Palliative care?

- Good care for those with serious or life-limiting illness
- Goal to improve quality of life for the person and those close to them
- Relief of suffering whether it is physical, psychological, social or spiritual
- Realistic Medicine/Values based approach
- Appropriate at any age and at any stage of a serious illness

Who provides palliative care?

Generalist palliative care- all health and social care professionals

Specialist palliative care- specialist multidisciplinary teams

Public health palliative care- Compassionate communities

- Primary care
- Care homes
- Care at home services
- NHS 24
- Scottish ambulance service
- Hospices
- NHS specialist palliative care units
- Acute hospitals
- Community hospitals

Proposed Right to Palliative Care Bill Scotland

- A legal right to palliative care for people of all ages living with a terminal illness. Equitable access to palliative support when and where it is needed
- Generalist services overstretched
- Lack of early identification and future care planning = crisis interventions/ unnecessary hospital admission treatment
- Lack of sustainable funding for Specialist Palliative Care services
- In Scotland over half of Specialist Palliative Care services are charitably funded

Medication myth busting

- Morphine does not shorten life or hasten death
- Palliative sedation may be used in last hours/ days of life for severe uncontrolled distress
- Optimum management of physical/psychological/spiritual symptoms
- Intention to relieve suffering using minimum effective dose of sedative

Death in Scotland

- 2023, there were almost 63,445 deaths registered in Scotland
- 90% of those (56,700) had a palliative care need.

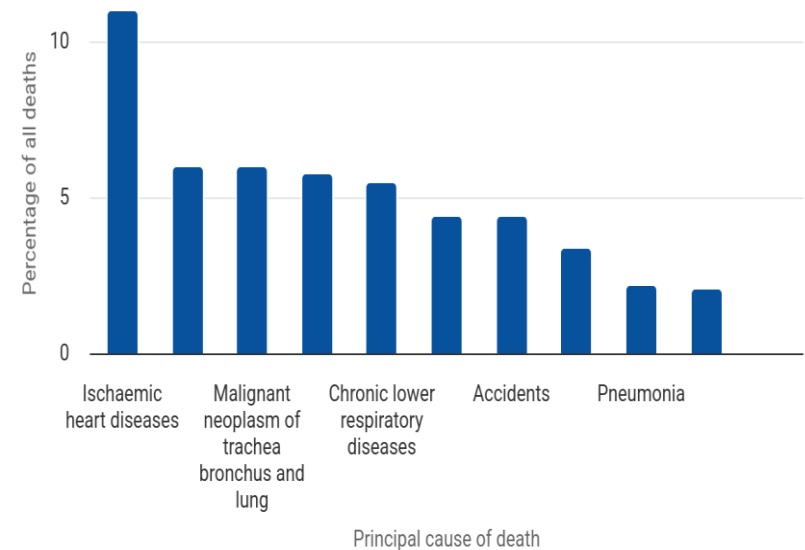


Leading causes of death

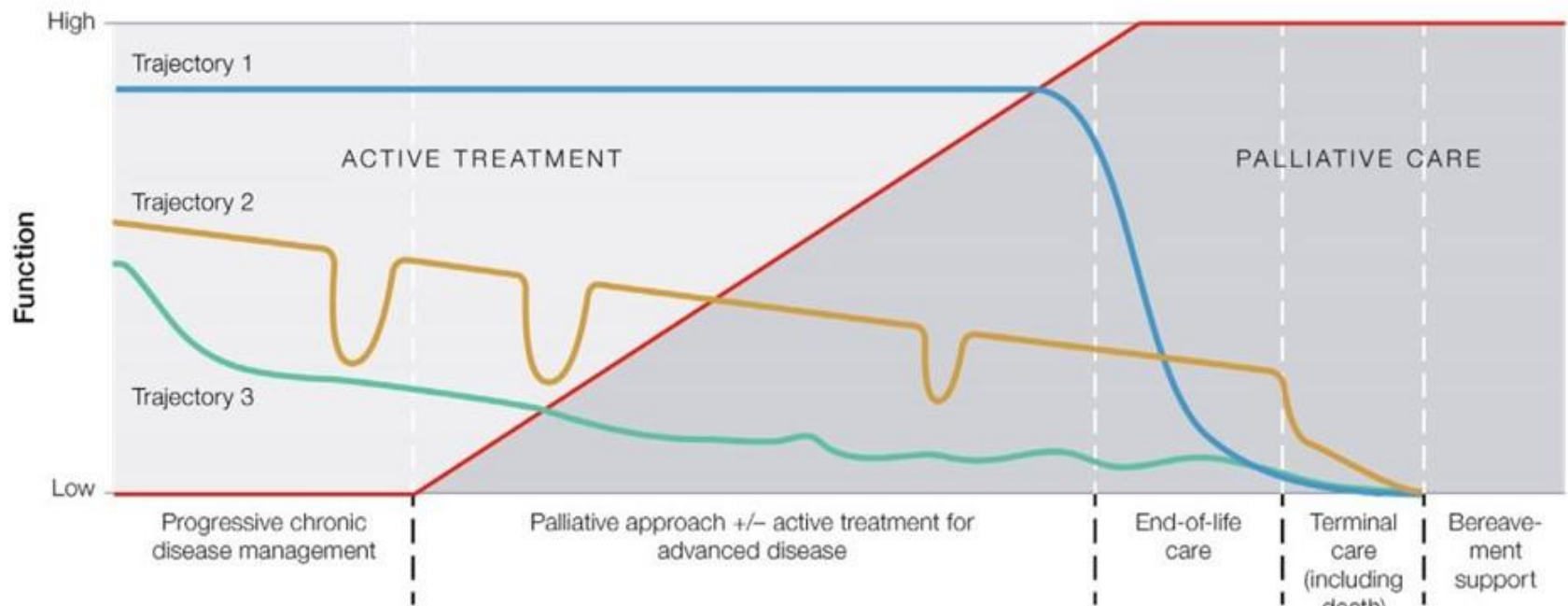
- Heart disease 11%
- Dementia and Alzheimer's 10%
- Cerebrovascular disease 6%
- Cancers 6%
- Chronic lower respiratory diseases 5.5%

Chart 1: Ten most frequently occurring principle causes of death, 2023

Source: Source: NRS (based on 3-digit ICD-10 codes)



Trajectories



Place of death (average Scotland)

- Hospital 46%
- Home 32%
- Care home 21%
- Other 1%



The Cost of Dying

- 1 in 4 working age people die in end of life poverty
- 1 in 6 pensioners die in end of life poverty
- 1 in 5 die in fuel poverty at the end of life



Public expenditure in Scotland in last year of life (2022)

- **£2.3 billion** in last year of life (£36,590 per person)
- **58% (£1.3 billion on healthcare)**
- 20% social care
- 22% social security
- **Of the healthcare spend £1.1 billion was for care in hospital**

Public expenditure in last year of life. The Nuffield Trust and Health Economics Unit Feb 2025

Looking ahead 2040

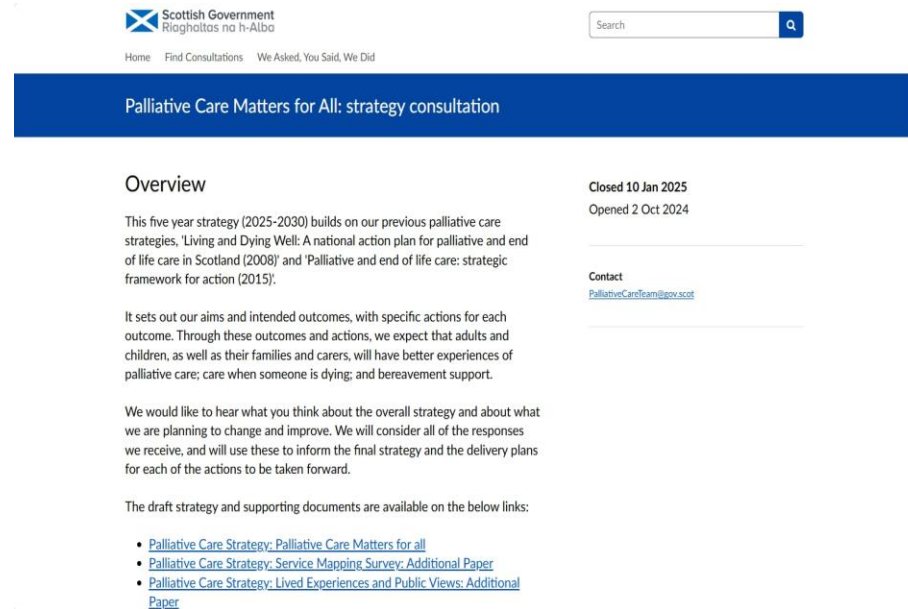
- Over 60,000 people will die with palliative care needs by 2040
- Over 85s accounting for 45% of all deaths
- Cancer and dementia are projected to increase significantly as main causes of death.
- People dying with multi-morbidities (more than one terminal condition) will have increased by over to 43% of all deaths
- By 2040, nearly two-thirds of all deaths in Scotland will take place in care homes, people's own homes or hospices.

Finucane AM et al. How many people will need palliative care in Scotland by 2040? BMJ Open.

Palliative Care Strategy:

Palliative Care Matters for All

- Everyone who needs it can access well-coordinated, timely and high quality palliative care, care around dying and bereavement support based on what matters to them
- Ensuring equity and equality of access to generalist and specialist palliative care whenever and wherever they need it



The screenshot shows the Scottish Government website for the 'Palliative Care Matters for All: strategy consultation'. The header includes the Scottish Government logo and a search bar. The main navigation bar is blue with the text 'Palliative Care Matters for All: strategy consultation'. The content area is titled 'Overview' and contains the following text:

Overview

This five year strategy (2025-2030) builds on our previous palliative care strategies, 'Living and Dying Well: A national action plan for palliative and end of life care in Scotland (2008)' and 'Palliative and end of life care: strategic framework for action (2015)'.

It sets out our aims and intended outcomes, with specific actions for each outcome. Through these outcomes and actions, we expect that adults and children, as well as their families and carers, will have better experiences of palliative care; care when someone is dying; and bereavement support.

We would like to hear what you think about the overall strategy and about what we are planning to change and improve. We will consider all of the responses we receive, and will use these to inform the final strategy and the delivery plans for each of the actions to be taken forward.

The draft strategy and supporting documents are available on the below links:

- [Palliative Care Strategy: Palliative Care Matters for all](#)
- [Palliative Care Strategy: Service Mapping Survey: Additional Paper](#)
- [Palliative Care Strategy: Lived Experiences and Public Views: Additional Paper](#)

On the right side of the page, there is a section for 'Closed 10 Jan 2025' and 'Opened 2 Oct 2024', and a 'Contact' section with the email PalliativeCareTeam@gov.scot.

Andy



- Desire for hastened death
- Pain relief
- Good care
- Social work help with finances
- Chaplaincy
- Found meaning reconnecting with family

Dying in the margins study

Photo credit: Margaret Mitchell

Thank you

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