

Annual Report Summary

Providing Information



Leading Action



Sharing expertise



Connecting People



SPPC's Member Organisations

We strive together to improve everyone's experiences of living with serious illness, dying and bereavement.



Everyone dies.

Palliative care helps people to live until they die.

Scotland spends £2.3 billion on health and social care for people in their last year of life in Scotland.

These resources are spread across a range of sectors and care settings, a range of staff roles, and supporting people with various health conditions.

This can easily lead to fragmented working within a complex system.

The Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care therefore provides an essential function:

With connections across the whole system, the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care brings people together to find ways of improving experiences of death, dying and bereavement in Scotland.

Scotland's aging population means that the numbers of people who need palliative care are increasing.

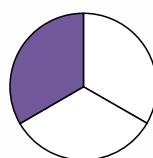
Around 89% of people in Scotland will need palliative care.

By 2040, 63,353 people each year are expected to die with a palliative care need. 42% of these people will be aged over 85.



1 in 3 hospital beds are occupied by people in the last year of their life.

Most people who live in **care homes** for older people are in their **last 18 months of life**.



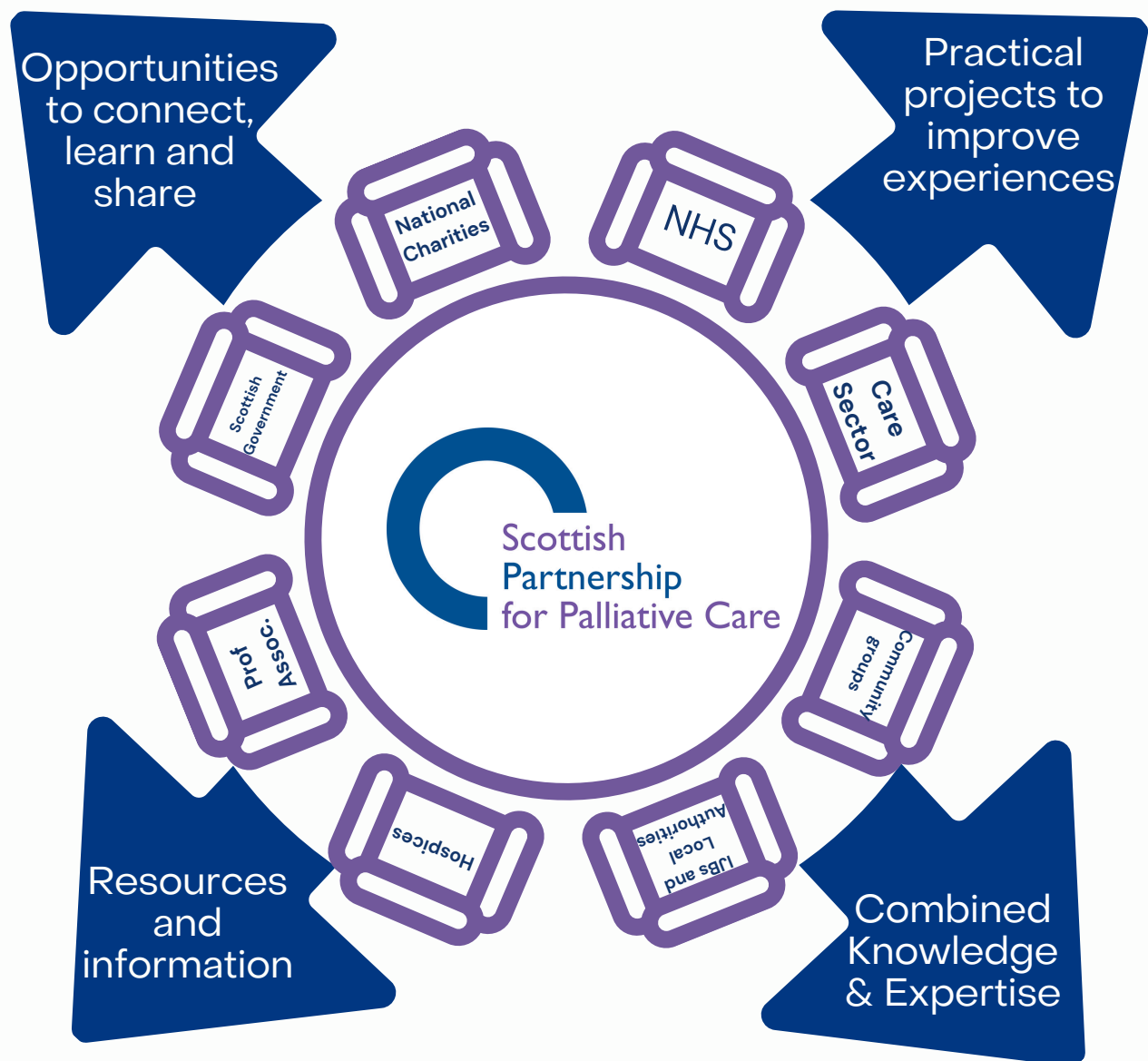
Research estimates that almost one in three people in Scotland die with unmet palliative care needs.

Palliative care is provided in care homes, in hospitals, in hospices and in people's homes.

It is palliative care regardless of whether someone has cancer, organ failure or 'old age'. It is palliative care whether they are living at home, in a hospice, in a care home or in a medical ward, ICU or neonatal ward. Palliative care is not synonymous with death – it is about life, about the care of someone who is alive, someone who still has hours, days, months, or years remaining in their life, and about optimising wellbeing in those circumstances.

Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

The Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC) was founded in 1991. The idea was to create a neutral organisation to enable palliative care professionals and other stakeholders to collaborate to improve palliative care across the whole system. That original intent remains more relevant than ever. SPPC has grown over the years to welcome everyone with an interest in improving experiences of death, dying and bereavement.



Across all our areas of work we regularly consider how we can support recognition of, and action on, health and wellbeing inequalities.

Our Purpose

SPPC strives to improve how people living in Scotland experience declining health, dying and bereavement.

Our Vision

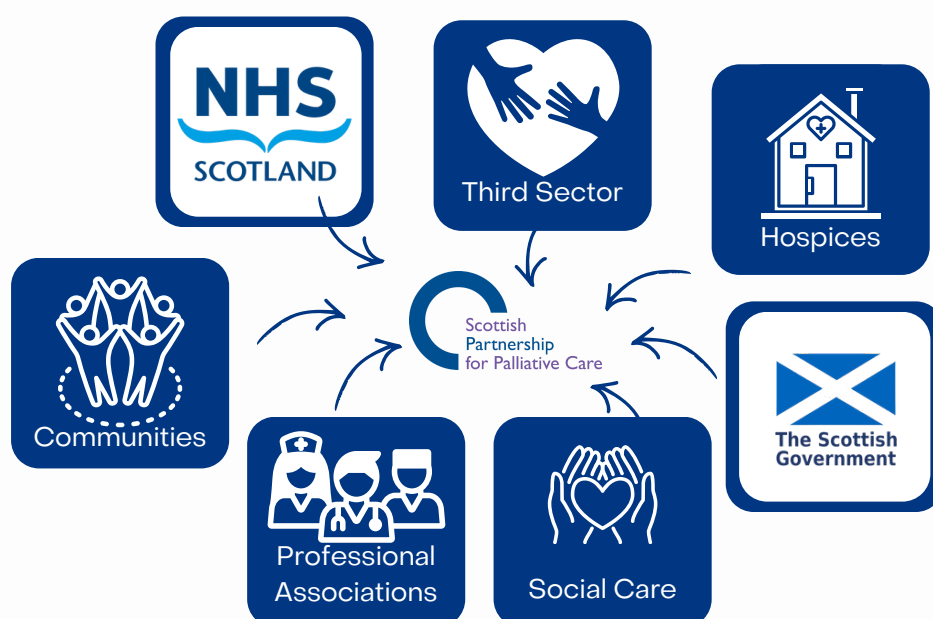
We are motivated and united by a vision of a Scotland where:

- all people's comfort and wellbeing is supported even as their health declines.
- all people die feeling well looked-after with their beliefs and wishes respected.
- the role of unpaid carers is recognised and supported.
- all people feel supported throughout bereavement.

This vision remains a long way from fulfilment. There is much work to be done.

Our Stakeholders

SPPC is a thriving partnership of over 100 organisations involved in providing and improving palliative care. Currently seven staff and around 100 volunteers are engaged in delivering our varied portfolio of work.



Opportunities to learn and connect in 2025–26

We create opportunities to share best practice, collaborate, and keep abreast of the latest developments.

“The SPPC is the conduit for effective change across Scotland to benefit those with palliative and end of life care needs as well as those who care for them, professionally or informally.” *

SPPC provides the secretariat for the Scottish Parliament’s Cross Party Group on Palliative Care, which met four times in 2025–26.

‘SPPC is a fantastic organisation and a credit to Scotland in helping lead the way on Palliative Care. Their skill in bringing people together is hugely needed and they serve as important stewards of the national work and response to palliative care requirements.’ *

	Who is it for?	Meetings per year
Scottish Network for Acute Palliative Care (SNAPC)	Hospital palliative care teams	3
Community Palliative Care Network	Professionals providing palliative care in the community	4
Specialist Palliative Care Network	Professionals who provide specialist palliative care	3
National Charities Network	National Charities providing palliative care and bereavement services in Scotland	4
SPPC Annual Conference & Poster Exhibition	Palliative Care Professionals	1
Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief network meetings	Volunteers, communities, professionals and organisations	2
Update e-bulletin	Palliative care professionals	10
Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief e-bulletin	Volunteers, communities, professionals and organisations	6



A source of knowledge & expertise in 2025-26

SPPC members and staff have a combined knowledge and expertise that can play a hugely helpful role informing relevant policy and practice.

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

Part of SPPC's work is to engage with policy consultations and legislative scrutiny processes.

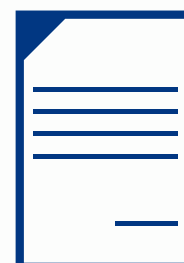
In 2025-26 SPPC devoted a significant amount of time to the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill. Our aims were to bring the experience, expertise and perspectives of our members and stakeholders to bear in informing the scrutiny process.

SPPC did not take a position in principle either for or against a change in the law. However, we raised many issues relating to the specifics of the Bill for MSPs to consider by working with Bob Doris MSP to lodge amendments designed to protect the interests of vulnerable people and to protect the practice and provision of palliative care.

These amendments resulted in changes to the Bill relating to issues including:

- definition of terminal illness and eligibility
- indirect coercion
- documenting the assessment process
- mandatory referral to specialist palliative care
- documenting the reasons for seeking assisted dying
- data collection for oversight/audit/review
- the assessment process
- dealing with 'incomplete dying'
- the 5 year review of the Act
- processes for raising concerns/complaints

SPPC provided two written briefs for all MSPs, and featured prominently in national TV and radio coverage, calling for improvements to palliative care. SPPC's detailed written briefings and evidence were referenced in BBC coverage of the Bill.

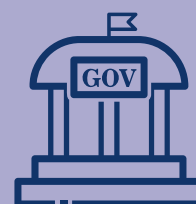


A source of knowledge & expertise in 2025-26

Scottish Government Palliative Care Strategy

During 2025 SPPC continued to support Scottish Government's development of a new national strategy for palliative and end of life care. This included:

- participation in the Strategy Steering Group
- contributing to the Clinical and Policy Advisory Group
- supporting the launch of the strategy and its dissemination through our networks, newsletter and at the Cross Party Group.
- contributing to the development of the initial Delivery Plan.



Responding to consultations

SPPC provided written evidence to **Scottish Government's consultation on a new Framework for Long Term Conditions** and responded to **Public Health Scotland's consultation on its new strategy**.

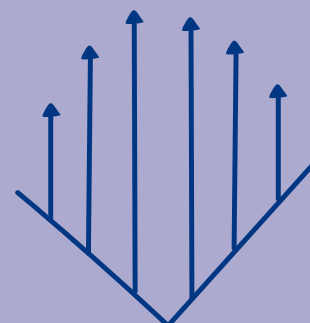


Input to relevant workstreams

SPPC shared its work and perspectives at many external events and conferences including:

- Cross Party Group on Funerals and Bereavement
- European Association for Palliative Care conference
- Bereavement Charter Group Conference
- Hospice UK Clinical Leaders Group (Scotland)
- Tayside Together Palliative Care Steering Group
- Cross Party Group on Palliative Care
- SALUS Healthy Working Lives webinars
- Edinburgh Napier University nursing students

In addition SPPC continued to deliver a module on Public Health Approaches to Declining Health, Dying and Bereavement which is part of Edinburgh University's online Masters in Public Health Module.



Practical Projects in 2025-26

We lead Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief, a community of action for people interested in creating more openness and knowledge around death, dying and bereavement in Scotland.

We take a public health approach to palliative care. This means that we try to understand and influence the structural and social determinants of death, dying and bereavement experiences.



To Absent Friends Festival

To Absent Friends is a people's festival of storytelling and remembrance that takes place across Scotland from 1-7 November each year. Groups, communities and organisations are encouraged to plan events, and these become the To Absent Friends event programme. We were low on funding this year, so for the first time in the Festival's 12 years of existence, were unable to offer small grants to support communities to participate.

Despite this, there were 33 events and activities (compared to 76 in 2024). Two events were online. In person events took place from Lochgilphead to Peterhead. Activities took place in public libraries, care homes, hospital wards, universities, parks, community centres, a youth centre, a prison and a crematorium.

'As always, it was positive, transformative and valued by the attendees and organisers alike.'

– Event participant

Demystifying Death Week

Each May we run Demystifying Death Week. The week is about giving people knowledge, skills and opportunities to plan and support each other through death, dying, loss and care.

Organisations, community groups, and individuals across Scotland organise events. We provide support for participation including small grants, event ideas and activities.

Across Scotland, member organisations of Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief held 56 events, 17 with the support of SPPC small grant funding.

Activities included...

3 film screenings



16 "meet a professional" events



5 Death Cafes



5 events supporting carers, professionals and volunteers



24 information session



4 food-sharing activities

3 events for children and families



Practical Projects in 2025-26

Through Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief we run several projects focused on supporting death literacy and compassionate communities in Scotland.

These projects support community-led action across Scotland.

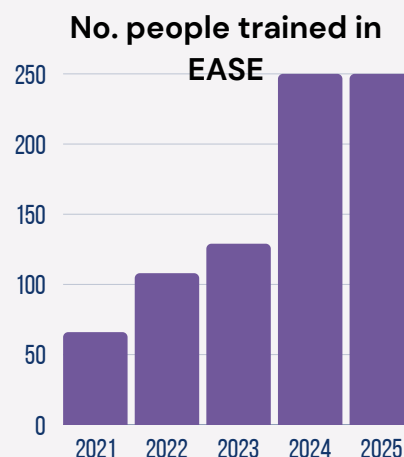
"It was one of the best courses I've done in ages. Wish I'd done this before my Dad died. It's been hugely supportive. I've met a wonderful community. Very special group that really trusted and shared very sensitively and openly. Learned/relearned so much." EASE participant

End of Life Aid Skills for everyone (EASE)

SPPC developed EASE, a free course for people who want to be better equipped to help friends or family who are caring, dying, or grieving. SPPC runs courses, and equips volunteer facilitators to run EASE within communities across Scotland.

In 2025:

- 250 people participated in EASE
- 21 new facilitators were trained
- we ran 7 taster courses reaching out to new communities
- we employed local sessional workers to focus on building connections and increasing courses in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee.
- We worked with a Public Health Masters student to evaluate the longer term impacts of EASE



Bereavement Charter Mark: Schools

In collaboration with St Columba's Hospice Care and University of Strathclyde SPPC has developed and supported the piloting of a Charter Mark for primary schools.

2025-26 saw the collaboration expand, 8 schools successfully apply for the schools Charter Mark, and a further 13 schools working towards it.

Bereavement Charter Mark: Workplaces

16 new workplaces were awarded the Bereavement Charter Mark in 2025-26, demonstrating their commitment to creating a 'bereavement-friendly' workplaces.



The SPPC Community Development Lead worked with Simba; the Intensive Therapy Unit at St John's Hospital and Media Education to create case study resources.

SPPC supported an Edinburgh University Masters student to conduct an evaluation of the longer-term impact of the Charter Mark for Workplaces.

Resources and information in 2025-26

SPPC develops free information and practical resources for professionals and members of the public.

Escape Room

We created an Escape Room kit to provide organisations with an engaging activity they can use to help people learn about future care planning.

Entitled *Powers, Puzzles and Prescience*, the Escape Room is designed around an engaging story which helps participants start to think about planning for the future (whilst having fun).

Upon completion, participants receive a themed leaflet on six ways to plan ahead. We had 51 requests to use the kit, and received positive feedback.

"The Young Adult Carers put their investigative hats on and enjoyed working through puzzles to solve the escape room. Thanks again to Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief for this incredible resource which allowed us to have fun as well as have important conversations. We had a great time!"
GLGDGG member



Supporting Compassionate Communities

We created two new resources for communities – *Creative Workshops for Remembrance: Four templates for group activities* and a downloadable *Guide to Holding a To Absent Friends Supper*. We created a new online resource to support the creation of more bereavement-friendly prisons. We continued to loan out the It Takes A Village Exhibition, send out free information leaflets, and update the Compassionate Communities and Bereavement Friendly Workplaces Toolkits with the latest resources.

Information for professionals

Our monthly e-bulletin shares the latest news relevant to palliative care in Scotland. It goes to 1300 professionals each month and web metrics show that recipients actively engage with content.



Acting on Health Inequalities in 2025-26

People who are already disadvantaged by other factors often have worse experiences and outcomes at the end of life.

We regularly consider what SPPC can do to support recognition of, and action on, health and wellbeing inequalities

Bringing EASE to new communities

All EASE courses are offered free of charge, but we know there can be other barriers to people accessing EASE. We therefore proactively engage with small grassroots organisations and groups of people who may have barriers to accessing the EASE course. We offer these groups a “taster course” lasting only one hour, providing an easier opening for people who are unsure about a bigger commitment.

During 2025-26 8 taster courses were run, attended by 125 people. Those people attending included: relatives of care home residents; other informal carers; Community Link Workers; Urdu-speaking women.



Highlighting inequalities to policy-makers

The SPPC worked with Bob Doris MSP to lodge amendments to the Assisted Dying Bill that were designed to protect the interests of vulnerable people.

The SPPC contributed a palliative care perspective to the SCVO publication *(In)visible. Health, Sex and Gender Inequalities: Insights from Scotland's third sector.*

As secretariat to the Scottish Government's Cross Party Group on Palliative Care, the SPPC co-ordinated the production of a 'Key asks for the next Scottish Parliament' document, which highlighted:

- changes that can be made to housing and social security policy to prevent worsening financial circumstances due to terminal illness and bereavement
- the need for fair and equal access to care homes and specialist palliative care so people can remain and die within their own community
- funeral poverty issues
- the needs of people with severe and persistent mental illness.

Acting on Health Inequalities in 2025-26

Working in Dundee's areas of multiple deprivation

We secured funding from the National Lottery to start a project exploring the use of EASE in socio-economically deprived areas of Dundee.

We employed a local sessional worker to deliver courses, we are working alongside the local communities to develop a more in-depth understanding of their interests, needs and preferences. This work will inform potential changes to the content and delivery of EASE.



Understanding some barriers experienced by people with learning disabilities

SPPC worked with Marie Curie to promote the first session in Scotland of No Barriers Here Facilitator Training. No Barriers Here was developed to improve advance care planning and access to palliative and end of life care for people with learning disabilities.

The training is designed to help practitioners ensuring more people have equitable access to planning ahead. As well as promoting the training to networks, SPPC's Community Development Lead undertook the training herself.

Organisations working with disadvantaged groups

SPPC staff and resources support organisations that work with disadvantaged groups to participate in **Demystifying Death Week** and **To Absent Friends**. In 2025 this included the Pilmeny Development Project, Families Outside, PKAVS Carers Centre, D&G Carers Centre, HMP Grampian. All our resources are available free of charge.

Supporting Prisons

January saw the launch of a pilot Bereavement Charter Mark for Prisons, developed by SPPC with HMP Edinburgh. The new charter mark will support improvements in bereavement support for people who live or work in prisons and their families.

Educating professionals

The SPPC Annual Conference explored:

- the often unseen and undervalued role of social care staff in providing physical, practical, social, emotional and spiritual support to both individuals and their family members
- the experiences of people and their families
- a trauma-informed approach.

There were posters on:

- Ethnic Diversity in Patients
Accessing Specialist Palliative Care Services in Aberdeen City
- Bringing Care Closer to Home: Improving palliative care in remote, rural and island communities

The monthly Update e-bulletin shares the latest research and practice relating to health inequalities and palliative care.

Looking to the future.

After over 30 years, the SPPC continues to grow in impact and reach. Over 2026/27, we will:

Support delivery of Scottish Government's strategy *Palliative Care Matters for All*.

Run virtual networks to support collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Provide a monthly digest of relevant policy, practice, research and news.

Work with practitioners at NHS Boards and HSCPs to improve palliative care data.

Provide support for locally designed and led projects to increase integrated palliative care.

Work with HIS to develop an evidence-based Palliative Care Return on Investment Tool.

Deliver more EASE courses, with a focus on groups experiencing disadvantage.

Provide measured, evidence-based input to policy and legislation.

Support community-led action and a public health approach through GLGDGG.

Proactively support Bereavement Friendly Workplaces and Grief Aware Schools.

Run Demystifying Death Week and To Absent Friends, supporting community participation.

Provide high-quality useful information for the Scottish public.

We will continue to bring people together to improve experiences of death, dying and bereavement in Scotland.