

Briefing for MSPs prior to the final debate on the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

Who We Are

The Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC) is a partnership of more than 100 organisations involved in providing care towards the end of life. SPPC's membership includes all the territorial NHS Boards, Scottish Ambulance Service, all IJBs, local authorities, Scottish Care, all the hospices, other Third Sector organisations and a range of professional associations. SPPC works closely with Scottish Government to facilitate engagement with the sector and to inform and support implementation of policy.

It's Time for Palliative Care!

Over the past 22 years the Scottish Parliament has devoted considerable time and energy to considering the issue of assisted dying – from Jeremy Purvis MSP's 2004 proposal via Bills from Margo MacDonald MSP, Patrick Harvie MSP and now Liam McArthur MSP. Throughout the many consultations, evidence sessions and debates everyone has been in agreement – that improving palliative care should be a priority.

Everyone is affected by serious illness, death or bereavement at some stage in their life. Everyone dies. Everyone loses people they care about. Everyone is deeply affected by these experiences. How Scotland supports people through these most difficult times is a true litmus test of our values as a nation and our determination to put those values into action.

Whatever the outcome of the vote on the Assisted Dying Bill tomorrow the vast majority of people in Scotland will continue to depend on the provision of palliative care to enable them to live as well as possible with a life shortening condition, and to die comfortably and with dignity.

The new SG palliative care strategy, like the previous two strategies, describes areas where improvement is long overdue. However, there is no new investment to support change (beyond welcome support to sustain *existing* hospice services).

SPPC asks that the next Parliament uses its time and influence to drive tangible improvements in palliative care, including a meaningful right to palliative care built on national standards.

Our Position on Assisted Dying

SPPC does not adopt a position in principle either in support or in opposition to a change in the law. However, we have engaged very actively with all stages of this Bill, seeking to inform, question and amend. Our input is based on the vast experience and unique perspectives of our members who work every day providing care and support for people approaching the end of life. We have focused on the need to protect vulnerable people, and on protecting the practice and provision of palliative care.

We believe it is important to acknowledge openly that there may be trade-offs between different factors should the Bill become law. For example, maximising personal autonomy for some may increase the risk of coercion of other vulnerable people, since procedural safeguards are seldom fully effective.

More Information

The Bill raises complex and nuanced issues which we explored in our [evidence submitted](#) to the Health Social Care and Sport Committee earlier in the process. This paper explores the following issues clearly and in depth:

- Public Opinion Polls, Public Understanding and Careful Use of Language
- Opioid medicines at the end of life
- Shifting views and wishes towards the end of life
- Impacts on doctor-patient interactions toward the end of life
- Technical limits of palliative care vs deficiencies in palliative care provision
- Good palliative care as a vital safeguard
- Eligibility criteria for assisted dying
- Future broadening of eligibility
- Declaration/assessment processes
- Delivery of medication - potential complications and other issues
- Monitoring and oversight
- Resourcing of palliative care and assisted dying
- Various other important issues

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Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care¹

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¹ This briefing represents the corporate view of SPPC, but may not reflect the exact position of each and every member organisation across all issues.