

Proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

A proposal for a Bill to enable competent adults who are terminally ill to be provided at their request with assistance to end their life.

The consultation runs from 23 September 2021 to 22 December 2021.

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice attached to this consultation which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

No Response

About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

No Response

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

Christian Life Issues Group of the United Free Church of Scotland.

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

Aim and Approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

Fully opposed

Please explain the reasons for your response.

During this Coronavirus period we have sought to preserve and promote life, especially amongst the most vulnerable in Scotland's society. In Scotland, we are fortunate that there are great moves to include those in society with physical and mental challenges. Liam McArthur has stated that we need to 'create a new standard for how we die' and indeed the United Free Church of Scotland would endorse the view that as a

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

society we need to consider what it means to live and die well.

The United Free Church of Scotland, as a mainstream, Reformed and Presbyterian church welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this debate in wider society. As a church, we are we are called to speak up for the vulnerable and marginalised in our society (Proverbs 31:8-9) and to promote life in all its fullness (John 10:10) regardless of cost and circumstance.

Our concerns are that Liam McArthur's proposal is wrongly focused exclusively on what should be called 'assisted suicide' – rather than promoting life such as that found in palliative care – which is much needed, appreciated and requires further investment.

The Assisted Dying Bill as it stands would create an unjust society as it would imply that some lives are not worth living. As a Christian Church we believe that human beings are made in God's image and likeness and this gives an inherent and value and dignity to all humans. Perhaps some would not share our worldview, however the principles of promoting life are found in the Hypocritic Oath and the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

At the beginning of life children need our care and support and that same care should be available at the end of life. The proposals in this bill would send a message that some lives are no longer worth living and complex questions arise as to who chooses to end such lives and who approves it. In summary, this Bill could be said to place pressure on vulnerable and ill individuals, undermines palliative care, contradicts the great work done in communities to prevent suicides and ultimately is open to abuse.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

We do not believe that legislation is required. Instead, more emphasis should be placed on palliative care, suicide prevent and programmes to highlight and empower the value of human life, whatever the person's physical and mental health or other circumstances.

Q3. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed process for assisted dying as set out at section 3.1 in the consultation document (Step 1 - Declaration, Step 2 - Reflection period, Step 3 - Prescribing/delivering)?

Fully opposed

Please explain the reasons for your response, including if you think there should be any additional measures, or if any of the existing proposed measures should be removed. In particular, we are keen to hear views on Step 2 - Reflection period, and the length of time that is most appropriate.

On the surface, a fourteen day reflective period sounds like a reasonable safeguard, however this is not akin to a 'cooling off' period for a transactional obligation in a sale and purchase of goods. The person questioning these matters would no doubt be going through these things in their mind with conflicting opinions and pressures. There is also the issue of the medical professional going from preserving life at one end - to then accepting and progressing the patient's view of the time to end life.

Q4. Which of the following best expresses your views of the safeguards proposed in section 1.1 of the consultation document?

Fully opposed

Please explain the reasons for your response.

We note that the principal safeguard seems to be that two doctors will be involved in the assessment. However, we know that doctors are under an incredible amount of pressure and most of them will sign off such work based on their colleague's assessment.

Capacity is very difficult to assess and someone can lapse between periods of capacity and periods when they lack capacity. Vulnerable people are, and will be open to exploitation.

A diagnosis of a terminal illness is also to be a safeguard, but who decides what is terminal and the time

Q4. Which of the following best expresses your views of the safeguards proposed in section 1.1 of the consultation document?

projections on what is terminal?
These safeguards are therefore very weak when addressing issues of mortality.

Q5. Which of the following best expresses your view of a body being responsible for reporting and collecting data?

Fully opposed

Please explain the reasons for your response, including whether you think this should be a new or existing body (and if so, which body) and what data you think should be collected.

We would have concerns that such recording and definitions/terminology used would be open to abuse.

Q6. Please provide comment on how a conscientious objection (or other avenue to ensure voluntary participation by healthcare professionals) might best be facilitated.

If this were to proceed, practitioners would be passing on these cases to other professionals if they did not agree. However, what happens if assisted suicide were to become the norm and those professionals who are opposed are then excluded from working in their fields of expertise? There are many dangerous loopholes present.

Financial Implications

Q7. Taking into account all those likely to be affected (including public sector bodies, businesses and individuals etc), is the proposed Bill likely to lead to:

a significant reduction in costs

Please indicate where you would expect the impact identified to fall (including public sector bodies, businesses and individuals etc). You may also wish to suggest ways in which the aims of the Bill could be delivered more cost-effectively.

We would be concerned that the promotion of assisted suicide would be perceived as a way of reducing caseloads and therefore reducing costs, but also reducing the value of life.

Equalities

Q8. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Negative

Please explain the reasons for your response. Where any negative impacts are identified, you may also wish to suggest ways in which these could be minimised or avoided.

Q8. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

The legalisation and normalisation of assisted suicide would utterly undermines the equality in value and worth of all lives in Scotland. We are deeply concerned that this legislation will result in undue pressure being placed on the elderly and the disabled to end their lives and also pressure to do so from their carers. This legislation would there create inequality in which lives matter.

Sustainability

Q9. In terms of assessing the proposed Bill's potential impact on sustainable development, you may wish to consider how it relates to the following principles:

- living within environmental limits
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting effective, participative systems of governance
- ensuring policy is developed on the basis of strong scientific evidence.

With these principles in mind, do you consider that the Bill can be delivered sustainably?

No

Please explain the reasons for your response.

The proposals undermine have a sustainable society of differing individuals with different competing and complex needs where they are met due to care and patience for all. It would not create a 'just society' but that of exclusion for those in need and their carers.

General

Q10. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

The emotive language often used in the promotion of such legislation, for example 'my life, my death my choice' and 'living and dying well' does not take into account that lives are lived in community and gives the feeling of empowerment, and there is an impact of others of a life being ended, especially when a decision is taken by someone out of desperation and ending lives is such a way is actually dis-empowerment of the most vulnerable and is open to severe abuse.

The United Free Church of Scotland is fundamentally opposed to assisted suicide for it removes the value and dignity of human life, it places undue pressure on the vulnerable and their carers and families. and is open to abuse. We believe life is a gift from God and those suffering deserve our time, patience, compassion and care. Accordingly, we are committed to more palliative care and comprehensive emotional and spiritual support for those facing illness and death, and for their families.