

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)

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (e.g. whether it is the view of particular office-holders or has been approved by the membership as a whole).

I am responding on behalf of the Kirk Session of Harris Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The comments expressed are shared by all members of the Kirk Session.

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).

Harris Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

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.

We believe that the introduction of such a Bill would result in individuals believing they have control over the end of their lives when this belongs only to God.

We are concerned that people may feel under pressure to end their lives prematurely if they become, or fear becoming, a burden to their family / other carers.

It should be noted that two medical organisations - the British Geriatrics Society and the Royal College of General Practitioners - are opposed to assisted suicide. Whilst we are aware that the British Medical Association have adopted a neutral stance on the matter the majority of members working in the fields of palliative care and geriatric medicine remain opposed.

We are concerned that such a practice would result in damage to the doctor - patient relationship. Doctors have a professional responsibility to preserve life and, as far as possible, alleviate symptoms - not to prematurely curtail the lives of their patients.

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 are wholly opposed to the proposed legislation.

We believe that adequate resources should be directed towards providing adequate palliative care for patients who require it - rather than providing the alternative of an untimely death

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.

Step 1 - We are very concerned that elderly / disabled or other vulnerable people may be coerced to consider assisted dying. Would there be adequate checks in place to detect this?

Making the diagnosis of a terminal illness - or indeed any medical diagnosis - is not always clearcut.

Furthermore even when an accurate diagnosis has been made giving an accurate prognosis is often difficult. We believe therefore that there is a real danger of people making - literally - life or death decisions based on inaccurate medical information.

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 do not feel they would be adequate - please see earlier comments

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

Unsure

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

Please see earlier comments.

We believe it is utterly contrary to the professional duties and responsibilities of medical professionals to be involved, in anyway, with assisted dying.

Irrespective of any proposed safeguards we remain wholly opposed to the introduction of such legislation.

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:

don't know

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.

Please see earlier comments.

We fear that the elderly, disabled and those with cognitive impairment / learning difficulties could be negatively impacted by this legislation if their lives are deemed less worthy of saving than other members of society.

During the ongoing Covid pandemic we have been made aware of an increasing use of "Do not attempt resuscitation" orders - sometimes with inadequate consultation with the patient / their relatives. The availability of "assisted dying" may further lessen the respect society should hold for the lives of all its members.

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?

Unsure

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)?

No