



Royal College
of Nursing
Scotland

**RCN Scotland's response to the
Scottish Parliament consultation on a**

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

September 2021

Context

The aim of the proposal is to enable mentally competent adults who are terminally ill to be provided with assistance to end their life at their request. In Scotland, a person is terminally ill if a registered medical practitioner has diagnosed them as having a progressive disease, which can reasonably be expected to cause their death. The person must be 16 years of age or over, which is the age of majority in Scotland, and have been a resident of Scotland for at least twelve months.

The proposal explores what safeguards could be put in place, how the law might be changed, what the current position is, public opinion on the issue, palliative care provision and international context. The process proposed by the consultation could involve Registered Nurses in the delivery of medication, establishing consent and being present at the time of the person administering the medication themselves to end their life. The proposal notes it is important for registered healthcare professionals to be able to conscientiously object to take part in the procedure.

RCN Scotland response:

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the world's largest professional organisation and trade union for nursing staff, with members in the NHS, independent and third sectors. RCN Scotland promotes patient and nursing interests by campaigning on issues that affect members, shaping national health policies, representing members on practice and employment issues and development opportunities. With around 40,000 members in Scotland, the RCN is the voice of nursing.

As referenced in the consultation, the RCN hold a neutral position in relation to assisted dying for people who have a terminal illness. This position was adopted following an extensive and detailed consultation process with members.

The RCN provides guidance to support nursing staff with relevant information and signposting, should a patient, family or carer, ask about assisted dying or actively hastening death. The RCN is committed to ensuring that the nurse-patient relationship is maintained, and our neutral position on assisted dying reflects this.

Should the Bill progress, the RCN will play an active role in any discussion around assisted dying to ensure that the nursing voice is heard. The implications of the Bill if enacted would require extensive consultation with professional bodies, regulators, patient groups and all relevant stakeholders.



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