

Health, Sport and Social Care Committee call for evidence on the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill – QNIS submission

The [Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland](https://www.qnis.org.uk) is a charity that works with community nurses and midwives to help them build a fairer, kinder, healthier Scotland. There are over 150 contemporary Queen's Nurses in Scotland who work in many distinct roles across health and social care, including care home nursing, district nursing, and palliative care nursing.

QNIS holds a neutral stance in relation to assisted dying for people who have a terminal illness. However, there are issues in the bill that would directly impact community nurses and as such we believe that it is important for us to highlight the following points to the committee:

- There is a knowledgeable and skilled workforce in community nursing that provides high quality person-centred care to adults, young people, children, and families. These services are already under resourced and very stretched and need significant investment to meet current demand. We would urge the committee to scrutinise the impact the proposed bill will have on these already overburdened services and the staff who deliver them.

Assisting a death is not something that should be rushed. Consideration needs to be given to how an additional service could be funded in a landscape where current services are already calling for increased funding. Creating a separate service that would accept referrals could be considered as an alternative proposal.

- The importance of investing in excellent palliative and end of life care cannot be underestimated and must be considered alongside this proposed bill. QNIS would like to see a commitment to the provision of accessible, holistic, compassionate palliative and end of life care, which requires significant resourcing.
- It is vital that any legislation gives nurses genuine choice about whether, and to what extent, they are willing to participate. We are concerned that the legislation as currently written does not adequately provide this. QNIS believes that an opt-in model should be considered. It is also important that there is a right to object for any reason, which does not need to be based on matters of conscience.
- QNIS does not think it is appropriate for there to be only one authorised health professional in attendance at an assisted death. This presents significant risk, leaving the individual open to professional challenge and exposing them to safety vulnerabilities.
- It is not clear from the bill how prescribing, dispensing and substance supply would work, and there is not enough in the bill about who is responsible for the substance throughout the process.
- Review and regulation of all assisted deaths must be included in any legislation. There is also currently nothing in the bill about recording adverse events.

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