

## **Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill**

### **Evangelical Alliance**

The Evangelical Alliance in Scotland is the largest body serving evangelical Christians in Scotland and has a membership including denominations, churches, organisations and individuals. Across the UK, Evangelical Alliance membership includes over 700 organisations, 3500 churches and thousands of individuals. Our members in Scotland include the Baptist Union of Scotland, Vineyard Churches, the Salvation Army, Newfrontiers, Elim Pentecostal Churches, Assemblies of God, The Free Church of Scotland, Brethren, a number of congregations within the Church of Scotland and other independent churches. We have a number of organisations as members in Scotland including Glasgow City Mission, Bethany Christian Trust, Tearfund and Scripture Union Scotland. Within our Scottish membership a number of churches, organisations and members have direct experience working with vulnerable and elderly people, those needing end of life care, and those suffering after bereavement.

The Evangelical Alliance welcomes the opportunity to make a brief response to the Call for Evidence. As part of the Care Not Killing Alliance we associate ourselves with the detailed response of Care Not Killing however we would also like to make a few brief points which may be taken in answer to question one for the purposes of the committee.

- The Evangelical Alliance membership of organisations and churches deal with society's most vulnerable people on a daily basis. This includes elderly people, those with disabilities and those experiencing terminal illness and bereavement. Churches have vast experience in this area and indeed much of the hospice movement has its roots in faith communities. We therefore speak from experience and our concerns regarding this bill are based primarily on the protection of society's most vulnerable.
- We remain opposed to the provision of assisted suicide in Scotland because this would have negative ramifications for our most vulnerable in society – the elderly, sick, disabled or depressed. It would place unfair pressure on these vulnerable people to end their lives for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden upon others. The pressure would increase in times of economic recession with families and health budgets under pressure. Elder abuse and neglect by families, carers and institutions are real and dangerous and this is why strong laws are necessary.
- The focus should therefore be on ensuring good care and palliative care, where needed, that effectively addresses physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs and is accessible to everyone. We note that where proper care is being received there are very few persistent requests for assisted suicide which can be seen in the fact that in the last ten years only 150 British people have travelled abroad to commit assisted suicide or euthanasia – a very small number when compared to countries that have legalised either assisted suicide or euthanasia.

- It is clear that many groups working with vulnerable people oppose any changes in this law. Significantly this includes:
  - All major disability rights groups in Britain (including Disability Rights UK, SCOPE, UKDPC and Not Dead Yet UK) oppose any change in the law and believe it will lead to increased prejudice towards them and increased pressure on them to end their lives.
  - The vast majority of UK doctors are opposed to legalising euthanasia along with the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Association for Palliative Medicine and the British Geriatric Society.

We trust that as the committee considers the evidence received the protection of society's most vulnerable people will be at the heart of its considerations.

**Evangelical Alliance Scotland**