

Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland

The College in Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment on this Bill and has consulted with members across Scotland and from different psychiatric specialties. The following points were agreed:

1. Our members have strongly held and very different views
2. Psychiatrists would not expect to be routinely asked to be involved in determining whether people are able to make the decision about assisted suicides. We recognise that in complex cases psychiatrists may be asked for a judgement on someone's capacity and decision making in relation to ending their life, in the same way that psychiatrists are currently asked to make judgements related to other matters to do with capacity and decision making.
3. Psychiatrists have special expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. They are able to determine the presence of absence of mental illness but would not see this as a determining factor in any proposed process. Patients with a mental disorder should be treated in the same way as patients with a physical disorder and any process should be based on capacity rather than diagnosis.
4. Should this legislation be passed the College would expect to be consulted again and could provide more detail on how the Act may work in practice. The Code of Practice and any documents related to the implementation of the legislation would be extremely important and the College would be happy to provide further advice at that stage.

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