

Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill

Scottish Ambulance Service

Background

The Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill seeks to provide a means for certain people who are approaching the end of their lives to seek assistance to end their lives at a time of their own choosing, and to provide protection in law for those providing that assistance.

The fear of a protracted, painful and undignified death is very real for many people, whether or not they have themselves been diagnosed with a terminal illness or condition. Despite all the advances in medical technology in recent years, and the high-quality palliative care that is available in many places, not everyone can be assured of a “good death” in which pain is kept at bay and a reasonable quality of life is maintained until the end. For some, their final months or years are dominated by pain or discomfort and the inability to experience or enjoy those things that previously gave their life meaning and which most of us take for granted.

The Bill is not just aimed at the small number of people whose quality of life is already so low that they would prefer not to go on living. It is also aimed at those whose diagnosis has allowed them to see such a situation in prospect, and even those who are currently healthy but fear for an uncertain future.

Implications for the Scottish Ambulance Service

The process and governance proposed by the Bill should ensure no operational implications for the Scottish Ambulance Service. There is however a requirement for ambulance clinicians and managers to be familiar with the principles of the Bill which include:

- The distinction between the highly regulated activity proposed by the Bill and non-regulated “mercy killings”.
- The requirement of the Bill that any individual undertaking the act of assisted suicide to be known to and registered with a General Practitioner in Scotland thereby avoiding unknown, non-residents travelling to Scotland to take advantage of the Bill.
- The process required by the Bill whereby individuals seeking to undertake the act of assisted suicide under the provision of the Bill are required to submit
 - A preliminary request
 - A first request
 - A second requestAnd comply with the conditions attached to this process.
- The role of licensed facilitators in both the act of assisted suicide and the subsequent reporting of death.

SAS Response

1. The ASSISTED SUICIDE (SCOTLAND) BILL has no anticipated implications for the SAS and the activity covered within the provision of the Bill will not affect

the operational delivery of our service.

2. Information, aimed at health professionals not involved in this activity, would be helpful to ensure broad understanding and reassurance.

Scottish Ambulance Service