Macmillan Response –
Health Committee Inquiry into Healthcare in Prisons

Macmillan Cancer Support believes there is a need to establish a Scotland wide integrated approach to palliative and end of life care in order to support both prison health and custodial staff to deliver high quality end of life care to those in custody.

Macmillan have been working in partnership with SPS, NHS, Local Authority to develop a programme to support implementation of “The Macmillan Adopted Prison Standards” (MAPS) and have now recruited to a Macmillan Project lead post in Jan 2017. This will begin the process of developing and delivering high quality palliative and end of life care within the Scottish Prison Service for those prisoners for whom compassionate release will never be an option due to the nature of their crime or for those prisoners for whom it is their choice to die in prison.

The purpose of the Macmillan Scottish Prison Project Lead will be to lead and develop the project to ensure the development of seamless, timely and high quality pathways of care and support for offenders facing palliative and end of life care requirements whilst in custody.

A Scottish wide approach will be developed ensuring equity of care delivery across the nation regardless of health board location.

This project will enable all care providers to ensure that palliative and end of life care delivery is co-ordinated and takes place in the most appropriate location.

Health care and custodial prison staff will have enhanced skills as a result of this project in relation to palliative and end of life care support.

Background

"Responsibility for the delivery of health care in prisons transferred to the NHS in November 2011 and although support in the past for prisoners requiring cancer, palliative and end of life care has been provided by individual health board areas this has varied enormously with no consistent approach.

Many prisoners will have complex psychological, social and economic needs which may be compounded by mental health issues and/or learning disabilities. Often there will also be complex family relationships and issues.

In-patient facilities are only available in HMP Barlinnie and also in both private prisons in Scotland. If a prisoner facing expected death whilst in custody in another security establishment cannot be released on compassionate grounds they will be required to be transferred to local community hospitals, hospices or larger hospitals in the area for nursing care. This obviously necessitates prison staff or prison escorting services to accompany the prisoner and may in some situations provide a security hazard.
NHS Forth Valley has begun to identify the need to develop clear pathways of care for the prison population accommodated within the 3 prisons in their area. This has arisen due to the increase within Glenochil prison of an older population following transfer of over 250 prisoners from another Scottish prison. Whilst the need at the moment appears to be greater within NHS Forth Valley it would be sensible to work in partnership with the NHS, Health Improvement Scotland (within the National Prisoner Healthcare Network) and the Scottish Prison Service to develop an integrated approach to palliative and end of life care within Scottish prisons in order to support both prison and health and social care staff to deliver high quality end of life care to those in custody."