

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Written statement on the handling of information and evidence

Introduction

1. Liam McArthur MSP introduced the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament on 27 March 2024.
2. The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee has been designated as the lead committee for Stage 1 consideration of the Bill. Under the Parliament's Standing Orders Rule 9.6.3(a), it is for the lead committee to report to the Parliament on the general principles of the Bill.
3. Given the sensitive nature of the issues it anticipates exploring as part of its scrutiny of this Bill, the Committee wishes to set out publicly its overall approach to scrutiny, and more detail on its approach to the handling and processing of data it receives as part of the scrutiny process.

The Committee's scrutiny

4. The Committee will take a balanced and thorough approach to its scrutiny, taking time to consider all views.
5. The Committee's approach to scrutiny, and subsequent handling of evidence, will be as follows:

Written evidence

6. The Committee will issue two calls for written evidence in June 2024.
7. Both calls for written evidence will be published on Citizens Space, a digital platform used to undertake Scottish Parliament consultations.
8. The calls for evidence will take the form of the following:
 - A short survey, for all those wishing to provide general views and comments on the Bill overall.
 - A detailed call for evidence for those who wish to provide comments on individual provisions in the Bill.
9. Both the short survey and the detailed call for evidence will be treated as equally valid means of responding to the call for views and will be given equivalent weighting in analysis.

Short survey

10. The short survey is comprised of predominantly quantitative tick-box questions. The responses to these questions will be presented as charts to provide a visual snapshot of the general reasons underlying support for, or opposition to, the Bill. We would emphasise that this is not a representative sample and analysis will be presented in a way that reflects this.
11. We will encourage individual members of the public who wish to express general views about the Bill to use the short survey.
12. The short survey also contains a small number of free text boxes to enable respondents to make further comment. The Committee anticipates that it may receive a high volume of responses to the short survey, therefore a sample of the qualitative data collected in response to these questions will be analysed using thematic analysis to develop an understanding of respondents' views.
13. Individual responses to the short survey will not be published. Instead, a summary of responses will be published.

Detailed call for evidence

14. The detailed call for evidence consists of predominantly qualitative questions. The responses gathered from this survey will be analysed using thematic analysis, and a summary of evidence will be produced by SPICe. All submissions to the detailed call for views will be published, with the exception of those that contain defamatory or offensive language; do not comply with legislation protecting personal data; have been accepted on a confidential ("not for publication") basis in accordance with paragraph 16 below; or are not relevant to the scope of the Bill. Submissions which relate to matters which are outwith the remit of the Committee cannot be accepted.
15. We will encourage stakeholders who may have more detailed comments to make on specific aspects of the Bill to use the detailed call for evidence. There is no requirement to answer all questions so respondents can choose to focus on those issues which are most relevant to them.
16. We will aim to publish all responses to the detailed call for evidence. However, should the Committee receive a very high volume of responses, we may not be able to publish all of them. If we do receive a high volume of responses, a sample will be selected for analysis by SPICe, with priority afforded to responses from stakeholders directly affected by the Bill.
17. Anyone submitting written evidence to this consultation can request that their evidence be anonymised or that it should be treated as "confidential" (not for publication) by contacting the clerks at **ADBills@parliament.scot**.

Factors for both surveys

18. The Committee will redact personal or other identifying information in material it publishes where it considers it necessary to do so to comply with legislation protecting personal data.

19. Submissions which contain offensive or abusive language will not be considered/published. Defamatory comments will not be published.
20. The purpose of the call for evidence is to gather views on the Bill that will inform the Committee's scrutiny. Its purpose is not to establish whether more people support or oppose the Bill. It is rather for the Committee to understand the reasons people have for either supporting or opposing the Bill or specific ways in which they would like to see the Bill amended.
21. By its nature, responses will be self-selecting and therefore cannot be assumed to be representative of public opinion. During its scrutiny, the Committee will base any assessment of public opinion on published data from opinion polls rather than responses to the call for evidence.
22. The Committee recognises that campaign groups with a clear view on the Bill (whether for or against) may want to encourage their supporters to contribute to the call for evidence. All such submissions are welcome if submitted individually using the Citizens Space platform. However, if it becomes apparent that campaign groups are using non-standard means to channel their supporters' views (for example, if the call for evidence receives a high volume of submissions from a single IP address), the Committee may be unable to accept those submissions. In particular, the Committee reserves the right to reject submissions that have been made using third-party software unless it can be satisfied that they are the views of real individuals who have given the appropriate permissions and have been given access to all relevant accompanying information (including the Scottish Parliament's privacy notice, explaining how their personal data will be processed) before submitting their views.
23. The Committee would encourage any interested campaign group to contact the clerks to discuss how to ensure its supporters can respond to the call for evidence in a way that avoids the risk of submissions being rejected for the reasons outlined above.
24. If the Committee receives a number of responses which are substantially the same in content in the detailed call for evidence, it will publish the response once with a list of respondents that submitted.
25. The written calls for evidence will close on 16 August 2024 and no extensions will be granted.
26. The Committee will only accept submissions made via the online platform. If you require assistance to share your views via the platform, please contact the clerks by emailing **ADBill@parliament.scot**, and they will add your submission via the platform on your behalf.
27. Analysis of the Committee's calls for evidence will be published ahead of oral evidence being taken.

Oral evidence

- 28. The Committee will take oral evidence on the Bill from a range of stakeholders and groups.
- 29. The Committee is already aware of a number of stakeholders it would like to hear from in relation to the Bill.
- 30. Additional witnesses will be determined through the Committee's calls for written evidence and programme of informal scrutiny. The Committee will decide on any additional stakeholders in autumn 2024. The Committee will aim to issue invitations for oral evidence before the analysis of the calls for views is published.

General considerations

- 31. The Committee will publish all documents as packages, after making any necessary redactions, rather than individually as they are received.
- 32. If the Committee seeks evidence directly from individuals, it will do so with due regard to legislation protecting personal data as well as observing principles of fairness and human rights. The Committee will consider what processing is necessary, proportionate and fair on a case-by-case basis, according to the individual circumstances of the data subject concerned.
- 33. The Committee will collect and retain only the minimum amount of personal data needed to fulfil its remit.
- 34. For more information or queries regarding the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill, please contact the Clerks to the Committee at **ADBill@parliament.scot**.

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
June 2024