

Writing to MSPs about the Assisted Suicide Bill

You have 8 MSPs who represent you in the Scottish Parliament. One MSP is elected from your local area (your 'constituency MSP') and seven others (your 'regional MSPs') elected from the wider area in which you live. For those of us living in Stirling and surroundings you are in the Mid-Scotland and Fife region; if you live in Falkirk you will be in the Central Scotland Region.

You can find out who are your constituency and regional MSPs by going to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msps.aspx> and entering your post code.

You should write to all your MSPs; each of them, whether a constituency or a regional MSP, has a vote when legislation is voted on in the Parliament. A posted letter is likely to be the most effective method of contacting your MSPs, but if you are unable to send a letter please do e-mail.

If you are a medical professional it will be especially helpful if you were to contact your MSPs.

Some suggested points to raise with MSPs:

- The issue has already been **comprehensively debated and defeated** just five years ago
- **Palliative care**, including the treatment of depression, is available in nearly all cases of terminal illness
- In other countries where assisted suicide has been introduced, especially Netherlands and Belgium, eligibility for assisted suicide **has gradually been extended to more and more groups of people**, particularly to those with a disability
- **Medical professionals** should not be asked to be involved in intentionally ending lives
- The bill has **no conscience clause** for those doctors who do not want to be involved in assisted suicide
- **Terminology in the bill is vague**: for example allowing assisted suicide for those who have 'life-shortening conditions' includes many people who may not be terminally ill
- There is no provision in the bill for **psychiatric assessment** of anyone who is seeking assisted suicide; depression, with the possibility of treatment, could therefore be unrecognised
- There are no proposals in the bill for regulating or reporting on assisted suicides, opening up the **possibility of abuse**
- Elderly and disabled people could well feel under pressure to ask for assisted suicide if they **perceive they are a burden** to others