

Writing to your MSP.

If you're not sure who they are, you can find your MSP by entering your postcode here: www.parliament.scot/msps.aspx. If you don't have access to the internet, you can call the Scottish Parliament's public information team on 0131 348 5000 or 0800 092 7500. Depending on what you would prefer, you can just contact your constituency MSP, or you can also write to each of your regional MSPs to share your views.

Tips on what to write

- **Tell them you live in their constituency/region and include your address.** This is so they will read your letter and take the time to consider your views.
- **If you want to, say you are writing to request a meeting** to discuss the law on assisted dying.
- **Be clear about what we're campaigning for.** An assisted dying law would allow terminally ill, mentally competent adults to request life-ending medication from a doctor, which the patient would self-administer at a time they chose.
- **Explain why assisted dying matters so much to you.** If you are living with a terminal illness, or someone close to you wanted the choice of an assisted death, do share this, if you feel comfortable.
- **Include some facts, stories and examples to support your argument.** We've included some key points below – choose the ones you feel are most persuasive.
- **Mention Dignity in Dying** and ask them to visit our website to read the personal stories of those affected by the issue at www.dignityindyingScotland.org.uk/why-we-need-change/personal-stories/ and to learn more at www.dignityindyingScotland.org.uk/why-we-need-change/the-facts/
- **Tell them you look forward to receiving their reply** and thank them for reading your message.

Facts, stories, and examples

Below are some points for you to use when writing to your MSP. Don't feel you need to include all of these points – just choose the ones that you feel are most persuasive.

What we're talking about:

- An assisted dying law would allow terminally ill, mentally competent adults to request life-ending medication from a doctor, which the patient would self-administer at a time of their own choosing.
- Above all, subject to strict upfront safeguards as assessed by two doctors, it will give dying adults peace of mind that the choice of assisted dying is available if their suffering becomes too great for them in their final months of life.
- Assisted dying legislation would result in fewer dying people – and their families – facing unnecessary suffering at the end of their lives, instead giving them choice and control.
- Support for assisted dying is higher than ever before – 87% of the Scottish public agree it's time to change the law (Populus poll, 2019)

The current law is broken and doesn't protect people:

- Every 8 days someone from the UK travels to Dignitas for help to die, and prosecutors are turning a blind eye. For more on this, see the True Cost report at <https://features.dignityindying.org.uk/true-cost-dignitas/>
- Many more dying people cannot afford the huge financial (average £10,000) and emotional costs to travel abroad and are taking their own lives in the UK out of

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desperation – often in very distressing circumstances.

- Recent YouGov (2017) polling shows that two-thirds of Britons would consider helping a loved one (who had a terminal illness and who'd expressed a wish to have an assisted death) to travel to Switzerland for an assisted death.
- The current law on assisted suicide doesn't protect vulnerable people, as cases are only investigated after someone has died.
- The current law prohibits dying people discussing their end-of-life wishes with their doctors, meaning professionals have little awareness if someone is going to end their life at home or abroad, or indeed if they are vulnerable.

Palliative care & medical opinion:

- Assisted dying is not an alternative to palliative care, but an option within good end of life care that some will choose to take.
- Evidence shows that even the best palliative care cannot and does not relieve all suffering, and up to 11 people a week in Scotland will suffer as they die, despite access to high quality care. For more on this, see the Inescapable Truth report at <https://features.dignityindying.org.uk/inescapable-truth-scotland/>
- Evidence from Oregon shows that palliative care improved when assisted dying legislation was introduced.
- Following a survey of its members, the Royal College of Physicians dropped its historic opposition and adopted a neutral position on assisted dying in March 2019, reflecting a shift in medical opinion across the UK in recent years.

Assisted dying laws work well in the USA:

- Evidence shows no sign of the law widening, (so called 'slippery slope') in 20 years in Oregon
- Assisted dying legislation exists now in 9 states in the USA, in Canada, and in the Australian state of Victoria. That means 1/5 Americans and 1/4 Australians have access to assisted dying.
- End of life care improved as a result in Oregon.
- In over 20 years there have been no signs of abuse, and the number of deaths has stayed at a steady 0.3% of all deaths (Oregon Report 2016).
- Many more dying people take comfort knowing the option is there, even if they don't use it.

Personal Stories:

- Liz Wilson watched her husband Craig suffer terribly at the end of life. Whilst Craig was dying of cancer Liz found herself acting as his voice with the doctors and nurses in charge of his care. She now wants to be his voice in death as she calls for a compassionate law on his behalf. You can read more of her story on our website here: www.dignityindyingScotland.org.uk/story/liz-wilson/
- Kay Smith, a retired palliative care specialist nurse, has an aggressive form of Lupus, which means she now relies on a wheelchair. She is allergic to antibiotics and is likely to die an agonising death within years. She is sharing her story because she believes we should have the option to choose an assisted death. You can read her interview with the Daily Record here www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/dying-ex-palliative-care-nurses-14079732
- Richard Selley, a retired headteacher from Perthshire, suffered from motor neurone disease and chose to have an assisted death in Switzerland in 2019. Before he dies, Richard said "If an assisted death was possible in Scotland, I would be able to die at a time of my choosing, at home." You can read more about his story here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-49614843>
- You can read more personal stories at www.dignityindyingScotland.org.uk/why-we-need-change/personal-stories/