



SCFAD Reflective Afternoon

University of Glasgow – 13 April 2026

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: Reminder of Stages and Timescales - /

- **May 2021 Holyrood election**
 - Shortly after, Liam McArthur (LM) confirms plans for a Member's Bill on AD
 - Supported by FATE, DiD, HSS
- **September 2021**
 - LM lodges draft proposal and launches his own consultation
 - Over 14,000 responses received – 76% supportive
 - Nov 2022 Medical Advisory Group to LM recommends detailed framework
- **March 2024**
 - LM introduces full Bill to Scottish Parliament
 - Parliament refers the Bill to the Health Committee to progress
 - Health Committee launches its own consultation
- **25 July 2024 – SCFAD is formed**
 - The founders (Core team) met in Glasgow to prepare a response to the Bill consultation (8 page response submitted August 2024)
 - SCFAD subsequently invited to give oral evidence to Committee (Jan 2025)

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: Reminder of Stages and Timescales - //

- **April/May 2025 – Bill at Stage 1**
 - Health Committee publishes its report on the principles of the Bill.
 - Stage 1 vote by all MSPs – Bill **passes** by 70 votes in favour to 55 against
- **October/November 2025 – Bill at Stage 2**
 - Stage 2 consideration of Bill by Health Committee – wide range of amendments considered
 - 26 Nov 2025 – Bill as amended in Committee at Stage 2 goes back Parliament for Stage 3
- **March 2026 – Bill at Stage 3**
 - All MSPs can propose amendments: 10-13 March 309 amendments considered of which 175 are passed
 - Final Stage 3 vote – Bill is **lost** by 69 votes against to 57 in favour on 17 March 2026
- **May 2026 – a fresh Holyrood election**
 - Possible scope for new legislation? If so, what is the role of SCFAD?

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: The Final Stage 3 Vote: 17 March 2026 - /

- **Sandesh Gulhane MSP:**
 - Today, the option of a peaceful assisted death is effectively available only to those with the financial means to travel abroad. Those without such means often face prolonged suffering without the same choices, and that inequality should trouble us.
- **Carol Mochan MSP:**
 - Let us give dying people the chance to decide their last moment for themselves.
- **Evelyn Tweed MSP:**
 - This bill has come too late for Kate, but it is not too late for us to vote for assisted dying and to give terminally ill people like Kate the death that they wished for. Remember Kate's words and do right—do right for Scotland.
- **Ross Greer MSP:**
 - For my part, I cannot reconcile myself with the prospect of denying those who face a life-ending illness the dignity of dying on their own terms. I will vote for the bill this evening.
- **Maggie Chapman MSP:**
 - I believe that life is precious. ... That worth does not diminish with illness, with disability or with proximity to death. However, valuing life is not the same as insisting that life must be prolonged at all costs, in all circumstances, regardless of the suffering and regardless of the wishes of the person living it.
- **Monica Lennon MSP:**
 - [Quotes Rhona Baillie Chief Exec of a Hospice] She is advocating for a rights-based approach that is centred on the patient. I am heartened to hear that, should the bill be agreed to, her hospice is adequately prepared to engage with the new legal clinical framework.
- **Lorna Slater MSP:**
 - [Speaking about her father] I wish that death for myself. I wish it for anyone who wants it for themselves. I do not mind if you would never want this choice for yourself but please, please do not prevent other people from choosing it for themselves. We should all have the right to choose.

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: The Final Stage 3 Vote: 17 March 2026 - //

- **Jamie Greene MSP:**
 - If I want that choice at the very end, I must offer that choice to others. I have no privilege in death. If we vote to deny people that choice tonight, we deny everyone that choice, including ourselves and including people out there who one day might need it – and who am I to deny someone that most final of decisions in life?
- **Elena Whitham MSP:**
 - [Speaks of a woman she knew] She was anything but suicidal. A Catholic of strong faith in the Quebec Roman Catholic tradition, she said that she knew that her God was merciful and that she had the support of her priest and her community when she set in train the plans that would help her to leave this world on her terms, as she had lived her whole life. ...
 - My decade at Scottish Women's Aid taught me how real coercion can be, but it also taught me that the answer to risk is not to look away from difficult situations. I spent time training police officers, social workers and housing staff about coercive control before this place had even named it and recognised it. With the right skills, training and opportunity, it can be detected. To say otherwise is simply to walk away from a wicked issue.
- **John Mason MSP:**
 - On the financial front ... another angle that relates to finances is whether there is an opportunity to save money if someone chooses an early death. It seems to me that the public purse has the potential to save on hospital places, on care home fees, on pensions and, perhaps, on other costs if assisted dying becomes an option. ...
 - What about the angle from a Christian perspective? At its core, our belief is that God gives life and God decides when life should end. Clearly, there are also human reasons for both birth and death, but we believe that, behind all that, God is guiding and directing. I should say, to be fair, that not all Christian believers oppose assisted dying; just on Sunday, one of my friends at church told me that he supports it.
- **Kenneth Gibbon MSP:**
 - We must recognise that, across the UK, 300 to 650 terminally ill people take their own lives in despair each year, denied an assisted dying safe death. Desperate people watching a loved one die in agony sometimes risk prosecution and incarceration by ending the life of a terminally ill loved one. Palliative care does not always alleviate insufferable pain. A regulated system, backed by legislation, must be better than the status quo.

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: The Final Stage 3 Vote: 17 March 2026 - III

- **Jackson Carlaw MSP:**
 - It is the voices of the terminally ill that are missing from the chamber tonight. I ask members to look around and answer this: if your neighbour said to you, "I'm dying in excruciating pain," would you say, "Well, I'll do something about palliative care, years from now," or, "I'm very sorry, you'll have to endure"? That is not the answer.
- **Christine Grahame MSP:**
 - I repeat that I respect those with firm religious opposition to assisted dying but I know that, no matter how we amend the bill, they are never going to vote for it. That is it for them, so I want to speak to people who are on the cusp, or to the people who have said that they are in doubt and are not going to support the bill. I will speak to them. I have listened to the concerns about capacity, undue influence and coercion, mostly in the context of disability, both physical and mental, or of domestic abuse. I say to members that I am satisfied that the bill provides barriers and protections for those vulnerable groups and that I certainly would not vote for it if that were not the case. Indeed, if it is passed, I predict that this will be the most policed and most closely monitored legislation ever, and I welcome that.
- **Liam McArthur MSP:**
 - [Gives examples of several individuals who have suffered extremely painful deaths] Could any of us face that palliative care consultant or the family of that poor man, look them in the eye and say honestly that nothing can be done, that there is no alternative and that introducing more choice, in the way that many other states and countries have done safely and successfully over recent years, is beyond us here in Scotland? ...
 - The issue is not going away. However, by refusing to take this opportunity to act, the Parliament will simply force people to travel overseas and take decisions behind closed doors, with no safeguards, no protection and no support, or condemn them to suffer like Brian, Cath and Heather.

Pause for Reflection

- What do we feel as Christians about the debate?
- Could we have done more to enable Christian voices *in support* of legislation for AD to be heard?
- What are the implications for Christian engagement with any future legislation?