

**Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament  
on End of Life Choices**

**Convener**  
George Adam MSP

**Vice-Conveners**  
Jackson Carlaw MSP

**Secretary**  
Amanda Ward

**Minute of the meeting of the Cross-Party Group  
in the Scottish Parliament on End of Life Choices**

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at 6 pm  
Committee Room 5, Scottish Parliament**

**Attendance**

George Adam MSP (Chair) (GA)  
Jackson Carlaw MSP (JC)  
Patrick Harvie MSP (PH)  
Michelle Ballantyne MSP (MB)

29 members of the group attended

**Apologies:**

Rachel Hamilton MSP, Karen Rookwood, Adrian Ward, Ben Colburn, Tish Chalmers, Karen Currie, Sheila Duffy

**1. Welcome, introductions and apologies**

Jackson Carlaw (JC) welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 17 were approved with no amendments. .

**3. Adults with Incapacity Act Consultation**

Members were reminded that the Scottish Government were currently consulting on the Adults with Incapacity legislation and were encouraged to respond. Section 11 deals with Advance Directives, it was highlighted that respondents needed to state reasons for their answer not merely give a yes or no response to the question.

**4. Discussion**

Aly Thomson from Dignity in Dying Scotland spoke about the True Cost report

- Report shows that 'the law in the UK is broken', the laws need to change not leaving people to travel to Switzerland
- Over 14,000 searches a year in the UK using the search term 'Dignitas'
- The families of those who took part in the research were clear they were prepared to break the law and support their family, but the dying person was worried about implications for families and friends who may end up being questioned by the police on their return.
- The lack of clear guidance in Scotland is a source of further uncertainty for people
- Dignitas's need for detailed medical records is a problem – GPs often refuse to provide

information if they become aware of what it is for

- Current laws create huge inconsistencies & a post code lottery on end of life choices
- Average cost to travel to Dignitas is £10,000 can only be afforded by 1/5 of Scots
- Having to travel aboard puts pressure on people to end their lives early as they have to be well enough to travel
- Assisted Dying allows people to live while they are dying, free of worry about how their lives will end.

**Group discussion followed and included the following issues:**

- Suggested that if it is legal to provide medical treatments which prolong life, if must be legal for people to say no more and be allowed to end their life
- Many doctors are supportive of assisted dying but because of how the issue is often portrayed by the media they tend not to be vocal while still practising.
- Individual opinions on this often change when people have experience of family members with dementia and a lot of people would want this included in any legislation. However, given that capacity has been central to any legislation, it is likely that there will need to be a separate discussion on this issue.
- Need to recognise that it is possible for people to be suffering intolerably without being terminally ill.
- Suggested that a citizen's panel may be a good way of going forward, similar to what happened in Ireland re abortion. This saw opinions change. However, it was highlighted that the issue in Scotland is more with politicians than the public who time and time again say they are supportive.
- Report raises a moral issue that those who are affluent can buy themselves a peaceful death.
- Its felt there is a level of hypocrisy in medical treatment in that we talk about freedom of choice and being person centred until it comes to end of life care.
- We need to get people in Parliament to recognise the basic principle that change is needed as the current situation does not work, is unfair and stops people having choice. Its felt that there are a number of people in current parliament willing to have a look at this.
- Argument needs to be framed as respecting everyone's choices, this includes campaigning for better palliative care for those who want this while having the option of assisted dying for those who want this. Needs to be framed as about personal choice this could ameliorate some of our opponent's arguments.
- 76% of Scots want MSPs to vote for Assisted Dying, 40% feel very strongly about this issue.
- If law not changed its felt there will be a lot more suicides and a lot more botched suicides, we are aware people who find life intolerable or are terminally ill are already taking their own lives this was a central argument in the Campaign in Victoria, Australia.
- Need to engage with medical bodies over this issue as their stance is at odds with a large number of their members.

**5. Any other competent business**

**6 Date of next meeting 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018, 6-8 pm in CR3.**