

Cross-Party Group on end-of-life choices

16th April 2024 at 6pm GMT by zoom webinar

Minute:

The minutes of the AGM on 28th November, 2023 were circulated. Alastair Morton proposed the minutes and Julie Lang seconded.

Present:

33 non-MSP members.

MSPs:

Rona MacKay MSP
Liam McArthur MSP
Stuart Macdonald MSP
Rachael Hamilton MSP

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, introductions and apologies

Rona MacKay MSP expressed her gratitude to attendees. Emma Cooper, representing Friends at the End, highlighted the organisation's 20-year involvement and their role as secretariat for the Cross-Party Group. She noted that the Assisted Dying Bill was launched on 28th March, during which Liam McArthur participated in a photo call with supporting MSPs and addressed questions related to the Bill. The event attracted significant media attention, and the coverage was overwhelmingly positive. Representatives from Friends at the End, Dignity in Dying, and the Humanist Society Scotland were present to show their support.

Rona MacKay MSP provided an overview of the Bill's forecasted progression through Stages 1 to 3, emphasising the forthcoming detailed scrutiny. Placards at the launch underscored constituency poll numbers showing strong support for Assisted Dying. Alyson Thomson, Director for Scotland, Dignity in Dying further explained the polling system, known as Multi-level Regression Post-stratification (MRP) analysis, which demonstrated widespread support for Assisted Dying across all constituencies, with figures ranging from 66% in Glasgow to 82% in Orkney, and a national average of 76%. These statistics are available for review on the Dignity in Dying website.

Agenda item 2: Matters arising

None

Agenda item 3: Liam McArthur MSP Bill update

The Parliamentary Bureau met with Liam McArthur, where it was confirmed that the Bill would be overseen by the Health and Sport Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Delegated Powers Committee.

These committees are expected to invite stakeholders and the wider public to submit written evidence, a process anticipated to last approximately 12 weeks. Feedback will be sought on specific questions, with this phase likely extending until the summer recess.

Following this, the committees will conduct oral evidence sessions, featuring a diverse range of expert witnesses. Both written and oral evidence will be used to evaluate the general principles of the Bill. Key points will be presented, but ultimately, MSPs will form their own opinions on the principles. The Bill will then proceed to the chamber for a vote, which is expected to take place in early 2025.

Liam McArthur is working to secure MSP support for the Bill. He acknowledged the efforts of his team and all stakeholders involved. Liam will work closely with the committee and the shadow Bill team to navigate the Bill process to completion.

A Q&A followed for approx. 55 minutes.

Agenda item 4: AOB

None

Agenda item 5: Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be decided in due course.