

Position Statement



Assisted Dying

In October 2024 the UK Government launched a Bill to make a law about assisted dying. It is called the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. It is sometimes referred to the Assisted Dying Bill.

This statement sets out All Wales People Firsts position on the Assisted Dying Bill.

We understand the aim of the End of Life Bill is to create a law that will help some people with terminal illness to choose to die in peace and comfort.

We understand a terminal illness means a person is going to die from the illness and there is no cure for it.

We recognise the benefits about being in control of our own end of life treatment, but there are serious issues that decision makers must take into consideration.

Firstly, there will always be loopholes in law. Loopholes in a law which helps people to die are especially worrying. Learning Disability is still often viewed as an illness within medical settings and there is a misunderstanding that the life of a person with a

learning disability is lower in value than someone who does not have a learning disability.

For example, during the Covid Pandemic, Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders were placed on some people with learning disabilities. The orders were placed on the basis of their learning disability, not because of any health condition.

“Society treats our learning disability as an illness and makes a judgement on our quality of life” AWPf member November 2024

“Stop labelling us as ill, learning disability is not an illness” AWPf member November 2024

“I’m scared, I have multiple impairments and my condition is rare and misunderstood” AWPf member November 2024

“People with learning disabilities could be lumped together with people who are terminally ill” AWPf member November 2024

We understand the Bill intends to be strict about only allowing people who have six months or less to live, being able to ask for help to end their lives. However, this does not give us enough confidence that people with learning disabilities will be safeguarded. Doctors and other professionals sometimes get things wrong. It is difficult to predict how long someone has to live. Even for medical professionals.

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Also, having a terminal illness can make a person feel depressed or under pressure. If those people do not have the right support around them, they could decide or be persuaded to end their lives when it is not necessary.

“Someone might make the wrong decision because they have the wrong support” AWPf member November 2024

In countries where assisted dying is legal there have been times when people have been helped to die when they were not terminally ill. Including people with learning disabilities.

Because laws progress over time, we are worried that opening the door to assisted dying could result in the law being used inappropriately.

“It could be used by families to assist vulnerable people to die for financial gain” AWPf member November 2024

“Some people are seen as a burden and assisted dying could be a way of getting rid” AWPf member November 2024

“It’s hard to legislate for this and keep people safe” AWPf member November 2024

"It's worrying if you think about someone who has a learning disability and a terminal illness, with no capacity to speak for themselves" AWPf member November 2024

If the Assisted Dying Bill is passed into law, it could leave people with learning disabilities vulnerable. It is essential that people with learning disabilities are protected from misunderstanding or misuse of this law.

Calls to Action

- 1) We call on UK Government not to make a law which allows assisted dying.
- 2) We call on UK Government to make sure that any future law will provide the right safeguards so that people with learning disabilities can never become victims of misuse or misunderstanding of assisted dying legislation.
- 3) We call on Welsh Government to recognise the risks of legalising assisted dying, and to take all possible steps to oppose a law which will make it legal to die with assistance.
- 4) We call on Welsh Government to make sure that all possible safeguards and supports are in place to ensure that people with learning disabilities are protected from misuse or misunderstanding of assisted dying legislation.

'Nothing about us without us!'

Kurtis Marshall, Vice chair of the National Council

In consultation with the All Wales People National Council and members.

All Wales People First

