End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance is the national membership body for independent advocacy organisations. We promote, support and defend the principles and practice of independent advocacy across Scotland. Independent advocacy is about safeguarding people who are vulnerable and discriminated against; empowering people who need a stronger voice by enabling them to express their own needs and make their own decisions; enabling people to gain access to information, explore and understand their options, and to make their views and wishes known; and speaking on behalf of people who are unable to do so for themselves.

In terms of the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill, we would request that reference be made to the role independent advocacy might have should a person be considering seeking assistance to end their life under the terms of the Act. Independent advocacy can help ensure that the person’s wishes are heard and taken seriously should there be any disagreement amongst professionals and / or family members relating to a person’s request for such assistance. The Act talks about appropriate safeguards to ensure that the person requesting end of life assistance has not been pressurised to make such a request. Here, independent advocacy can also be useful, as a truly independent voice for the person, to enable them to make an informed decision.

We acknowledge that not all people seeking end of life assistance will need or want independent advocacy. We request that a statement be included in the Act that when a person is expressing a desire to seek assistance to end their life, that they be informed of their right to independent advocacy and a referral be made should they request it.

Vincent Finney
Elder Abuse Development Officer
SIAA
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