End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill
Nursing and Midwifery Council

Thank you for giving the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) the opportunity to contribute to your consultation on the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill. I am responding on behalf of Professor Dickon Weir-Hughes, the NMC’s Chief Executive and Registrar, who is away from the office at the current time. Please accept my apologies that our letter is coming to you after the closing date. Nevertheless, I hope that you will be able to consider our thoughts at this time.

The NMC is a statutory regulator within the United Kingdom and exists to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public. We do this by maintaining a register of nurses and midwives, setting standards for education and practice, and giving guidance and advice to the two professions. We aim to inspire confidence by ensuring that the nurses and midwives on our register are fit to practise and by dealing swiftly and fairly with those who are not.

The NMC is not a representative body; we do not seek to reflect the views or interests of nurses, midwives or those in our care. We do, however, require those on our register to take account of current law, and the principles of good practice set out in The code: Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives NMC 2008 (the code).

We recognise that the issue of end of life assistance is an extremely emotive one for healthcare professionals, patients and members of the public. Any move towards legislation in this direction would have a significant impact on nurses and their practice and their adherence to our code of practise. As a healthcare regulator operating across the four UK countries, you will also appreciate that any legislation of this nature affecting Scotland would have considerable implications for the NMC in its setting of UK-wide standards.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the developing debate on the planned legislation and we look forward to hearing how we can bring the NMC’s perspective on the implications on this legislation to the attention of members of the Scottish Parliament.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Peter Pinto de Sa
Manager, Office of the Chair and Chief Executive
Nursing and Midwifery Council
14 May 2010