

Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 26/7/24

26th July 2024

Lord Falconers Bill on Assisted Dying

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses highlight concerns about Lord Falconer's Bill being debated today in the House of Lords. Although the Bill focuses on those over 18yrs of age, many young people will continue to use children's services into young adulthood. The ABPN are calling on politicians to ensure safeguards are in place to protect young people and for urgent action by UK Government to ensure that all children have access to:

- Age-appropriate palliative care across the health and social care sector
- Appropriate pain and symptom management, including medications
- Support to enable them and their families to maintain their normal routines for as long as possible, including attendance at school if appropriate
- Flexible support to enable them to receive care at all stages of life in their preferred place of choice, recognising that choices can change
- Support from an appropriately trained, sustainable workforce

Support for children with palliative care needs starts at diagnosis, and for many children with life-limiting conditions this can be at birth.

Together for Short Lives, the UK charity for children's palliative care describe palliative care for children as an active and total approach to care, from the point of diagnosis, throughout the child's life, death and beyond. It embraces physical, emotional, social and spiritual elements and focuses on the enhancement of quality of life for the child or young person and support for the whole family. It includes the management of distressing symptoms, provision of short breaks, care at the end of life and bereavement support.

It is estimated that almost 100,000 children* across the UK are living with a life-limiting condition and may need palliative care.

Together for Short Lives identify that only a third of local areas in England are meeting the required standard for 24/7 end of life care for children and young people at home. Access to appropriate palliative care services across the UK currently depends on where you live. The ABPN say this is unacceptable, postcode lotteries have no place in the care of children.

“There is considerable evidence that 24/7 end of life care, delivered by services that understand the specific age-appropriate needs, makes an enormous difference to lives of children, young people and their families. The rights of children and young people to be able to access such services needs to be safeguarded and enhanced”

Professor Bernie Carter, President

Notes for editors

*The term child refers to infants, children, young people and young adults up to the age of 25 years of age

The ABPN is a network of children's nurses with a wide membership of experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research. It is the oldest children's nursing association in the world, established in 1938.

ABPN Position statement on Assisted Dying and Children see - www.abpn-uk.com

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