

# SPUC BRIEFING



## WHAT YOU CAN DO to defend human life in the 2021 Scottish Election

### Introduction

Abortion law has been devolved to the Scottish Parliament since 2018. While Scotland has so far largely followed UK laws on abortion, the devolved administration at Holyrood has the power to change abortion law. Assisted suicide/euthanasia is also under the competency of the Scottish Government. It is therefore very important that pro-life people in Scotland consider the views on these matters of the MSPs they elect to the Scottish Parliament.

The main threats to human life in the next Scottish Parliament are DIY at home abortions, buffer zones around abortion providers, and assisted suicide. This briefing gives you information on these issues, as well as guidance on how to question your candidates on them.

### SPUC has also prepared:

- ‘Value your vote’ flyers – please distribute these as appropriate according to the COVID-19 restrictions in place in your area. You can order flyers by calling 0141 221 2094. You can also download an electronic version of the flyer to send to others at: [www.spuc.org.uk](http://www.spuc.org.uk)
- ‘Scottish election 2021 – Questions to put to candidates’ – A questionnaire for parliamentary candidates to find out how they intend to vote on DIY abortion, buffer zones and assisted suicide, if these issues come to a vote in the new Scottish Parliament.

### Please do all you can to be a voice for unborn babies and vulnerable people at this election.

You can do this in two ways:

#### 1. Questioning your parliamentary candidates.

You can ask the candidates in your constituency about how they will vote on three key pro-life issues.

#### 2. Share this information with others.



## DIY abortion

On the 30th March 2020, the Scottish Government approved the home as a place where early medical abortion (EMA) could take place, as a temporary measure during the coronavirus pandemic. This means that women can have a consultation by telephone. The abortion pills are then sent to them in the post. The woman then self-administers the pills, and completes the abortion at home.

The approval was supposed to be an emergency measure during the pandemic, but the Scottish Government has carried out a consultation on whether to make it permanent.

At the time of writing, the Scottish Government is considering responses from the consultation. It is possible that making the measure permanent will be voted on in Holyrood, and we need pro-life MSPs to keep up the pressure on Government.

### Why DIY abortion must be stopped

DIY abortion is:

- **UNREGULATED** – In a recent investigative exercise<sup>1</sup>, 26 women phoned abortion providers giving fake details. All 26 were sent abortion pills in the post. Powerful abortion drugs are being sent in the post with no way of checking who actually takes them. The law has been broken with women being sent abortion pills over the 10-week limit for medical abortions, and even over the 24 week limit.
- **UNCARING** – Women are left to deal with the traumatic consequences of a DIY abortion at home. A SavantaComres poll conducted for SPUC found that 83% of Scottish adults are concerned about women finding it distressing

potentially having to dispose of the terminated pregnancy either into the toilet or sanitary pads.<sup>2</sup>

- **UNSAFE** – No medical supervision means health risks for women and increases the opportunity for abusive partners to force women into abortion. Freedom of information requests in England and Wales have found that ambulance calls concerning medical abortions were up 52% in 2020 over the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

## Buffer Zones

Pro-life people's right to peacefully pray and offer help to women outside of abortion providers is under serious threat.

To date, Edinburgh and Glasgow city councils have considered putting in place 'buffer zones' around abortion providers, making it illegal for pro-life vigils to happen. Police Scotland and the NHS Health Boards have all confirmed that there is no evidence to suggest these buffer zones would be necessary.

Now both the councils and pro-choice activists are looking to the Scottish Government to pass national legislation on this issue. 'Back Off Scotland', a pro-choice campaign group, are petitioning the Government for such legislation.

### Buffer zones:

- Remove a lifeline for women who want to keep their baby, but feel they have no other choice than abortion.
- Remove pro-life citizens' rights to gather peacefully, and women's rights to receive the information they offer.
- Set a dangerous precedent for restricting freedom of speech in Scotland

<sup>1</sup> [www.percuity.blog/mystery-client-survey](http://www.percuity.blog/mystery-client-survey)

<sup>2</sup> [https://2sjwunnql41ia7ki31qqub1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final\\_SPUC\\_Savanta-ComRes\\_Dec-2020-Poll\\_Scotland\\_Tables.pdf](https://2sjwunnql41ia7ki31qqub1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final_SPUC_Savanta-ComRes_Dec-2020-Poll_Scotland_Tables.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [www.christianconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CC-Resource-Briefings-Report-Hospital-Treatments-Complications-DIY-Abortion-210215.pdf](http://www.christianconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CC-Resource-Briefings-Report-Hospital-Treatments-Complications-DIY-Abortion-210215.pdf)



## Assisted suicide

Bills attempting to legalise assisted suicide were debated in the Scottish Parliament in 2010 and 2015.

Campaigners have said that a fresh attempt to change the law is likely to be made at some point in the next Parliament. Liberal Democrat MSP Alex Cole-Hamilton said he believed the election of just a "few more" progressive MSPs in May's Holyrood election is likely to secure majority support for change.

### Six key points against assisted dying

#### 1. Doctors oppose assisted dying

Dr Gordon Macdonald, Chief Executive of Care Not Killing said:

'[Doctors] recognise the significant problems of scrapping long-held universal values which protect terminally ill, sick and disabled people from feeling pressured into ending their lives because they fear becoming a care or financial burden.'

#### 2. Assisted dying puts pressure on vulnerable people

When people are offered the choice to end their lives, this creates pressure for them to choose death. Where assisted dying is legal, one reason people choose to die is because they feel they are a burden on others. In Washington State in 2017, **56%** of people who were killed by assisted dying said that being a burden on family, friends and caregivers was a reason to end their lives.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3. Assisted dying is not the answer to pain

Assisted dying is not a solution to pain. Good palliative care should ensure that pain is controlled well. Legalising assisted dying risks less investment being made in palliative care.

We must work to enhance life for sick, disabled and elderly people, not pass a law which offers them death as a solution to their problems.

#### 4. Assisted suicide kills those who are not dying

In 2017 in the Netherlands, 166 cases of euthanasia and assisted suicide were patients with early-stage dementia, with an additional three cases of patients with late-stage dementia.<sup>5</sup>

#### 5. Changing the law will lead to rising numbers of deaths

Wherever euthanasia and assisted suicide have been legalised, the numbers of people being killed in this way have risen steadily. For example, in Belgium in 2002, 24 deaths were reported to the Federal Commission for Euthanasia Control and Evaluation. 2,022 deaths were reported in 2015.<sup>6</sup>

#### 6. Assisted dying is wrong in principle

The most basic reason to oppose legalising assisted dying is because it is wrong in principle.

**These are all reasons why any future bill to legalise assisted dying should be rejected outright. The current laws in Scotland protect the most vulnerable in our society; the elderly, the sick and disabled, from feeling pressured into ending their lives.**

<sup>4</sup> [www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/422-109-DeathWithDignityAct2017.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/422-109-DeathWithDignityAct2017.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Regional Euthanasia Review Committees RTE Annual Report 2017 [www.english.euthanasiecommissie.nl/documents/publications/annual-reports/2002/annual-reports/annual-reports](http://www.english.euthanasiecommissie.nl/documents/publications/annual-reports/2002/annual-reports/annual-reports)

<sup>6</sup> [www.ieb-eib.org/docs/pdf/2016-11/doc-1554801216-14.pdf](http://www.ieb-eib.org/docs/pdf/2016-11/doc-1554801216-14.pdf)

# Scottish Parliament candidates

The Scottish Parliament has 129 elected members (MSPs) – 73 Constituency Members and 56 Regional Members.

Elections to the Scottish Parliament use the Additional Member Voting system, which combines the traditional First Past the Post system (FPP) and Proportional Representation (PR).

## Electors have 2 votes to cast:

1. The first vote is to select a person to be their **Constituency Member**. The person who wins the most votes using the FPP voting system becomes the Constituency Member.

2. The second vote is to elect **Regional representatives**. Voters can select a political party or an individual candidate for a seat in a Scottish Parliament Region. Each registered political party standing in the regional ballot will have submitted a list of their candidates in order of the party's preference. The names on a list are in a fixed order. The first person on the list will take the first additional seat a party wins, the second person will take the second additional seat, and so on. There are 7 MSPs for each of the Scottish Parliament Regions.

**We suggest that you focus on interviewing the individuals standing to be a Constituency Member. If you are able to interview some of the regional candidates, those at the top of each party's list would be the place to start.**



## Interviewing candidates

- Please contact the candidates from the major parties standing to be your Constituency Member. Ask to interview them over the phone, if possible. If not, you can ask the questions by email.
- The telephone interview need only take 5 minutes. Explain that you wish to ask them about abortion and assisted suicide.
- **Before the interview** make sure you have the form '**Scottish Election 2021 – Questions to put to candidates**'. You can download the form from [www.spuc.org.uk](http://www.spuc.org.uk) and print one for each interview. Or you can call SPUC Scotland on 0141 221 2094 and ask for forms to be sent to you.
- **At the interview**, explain to the candidate that you have three prepared questions and that you would like to note down his/her answers.
- Using the 'Questions to put to candidates' form, read the questions clearly and note down the answers.
- If you can only communicate with the candidate by email, please **copy the questions into your own email, rather than sending the SPUC form**.
- If the candidate does not answer a question, record that fact.

- Remember that the questions are not asking for the views or opinions of the candidate but **how the candidate intends to vote** on
  - DIY abortion
  - Buffer zones around abortion facilities
  - Assisted suicide

should any of these issues be put to the vote in the new Scottish Parliament.

- If candidates ask what we plan to do with the information they provide, the answer is that we hope to inform our supporters in the constituency about all the candidates and what commitment they have on pro-life issues.
- Please let us know each candidate's response straight away – don't wait until you have interviewed all the candidates! We can then let other supporters in your area know how candidates intend to vote.
- Please send your completed forms to [election2021@spucscotland.org](mailto:election2021@spucscotland.org) or post them to

SPUC Scotland  
82 Union Street  
Glasgow  
G1 3QS