

Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill **Call for written evidence** June 2014

The right to independent advocacy for those with mental disorders or who are potentially at risk is enshrined in Scottish legislation. However, independent advocacy can also have a key role in supporting anyone who is vulnerable due to their situation or circumstances. The SIAA aims to ensure that independent advocacy is available to any vulnerable person in Scotland.

Q1. The SIAA agrees with the general purpose of the Bill to make it permissible, in the circumstances provided for, to assist another to commit suicide.

Q11. We believe that anyone considering assisted suicide should be referred to independent advocacy. Independent advocacy helps to safeguard rights, ensure people have access to information so that they can make informed decisions and gives people a stronger voice. We believe that all professionals who may be involved in assisted suicide should have a duty to inform people about independent advocacy and the support it can provide. Independent Advocacy could help a person considering assisted suicide to clearly think through their options in a way that did not influence them either way but would give them the opportunity to talk freely because the independent advocate is free from conflicts of interest and therefore does not have a vested interest in the situation. The independent advocate would also help the person to understand the situation, their rights and the responsibilities of professionals involved. They would help the individual to navigate the system whilst making a decision about assisted suicide.

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) is Scotland's national membership body for advocacy organisations. The SIAA promotes, supports and defends independent advocacy in Scotland. It aims to ensure that independent advocacy is available to any person who needs it in Scotland.

www.siaa.org.uk

London House, 20-22 East London Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4BQ, Telephone: 0131 556 6443

SIAA is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charity number SC033576