



May 2024

Dear Party Leaders,

Re. A manifesto for palliative and end of life care

We are writing to you in Dying Matters Awareness Week to ask you to commit to ensuring everyone receives the best possible care and support at the end of life, and through bereavement, in your party's general election manifesto. Whether or not people of all ages can die with dignity, are able to access the care and support they need, and can be confident that their loved ones will be helped through their grief, is a significant marker of a civilised society.

Across the United Kingdom today, far too many families' experiences of end of life are irredeemably traumatic. Because of unmet palliative care and end of life support needs, people are dying in pain, in poverty and alone; their carers and families don't know where to turn for help; and many bereaved people struggle to find practical and emotional support.

That is why we are writing this joint letter – to ask you, ahead of the General Election, to recognise palliative and end of life care as a vital part of our health and social care systems. We call on you to commit in your plans for government to making the reforms necessary to ensure that everyone receives the best possible care and support at the end of life and through bereavement.

The imperative for making these changes is practical as well as moral. The demand for palliative and end of life care is rising fast as our adult population ages and more children, young people and adults live longer with multiple complex health conditions.

Up to 90% of adults who die would benefit from palliative and end of life care and we know that many already miss out on the care and support they need. Furthermore, due to the UK's ageing population, around 32,000 more people would benefit from palliative care at the end of the next parliament (2029), compared to the start (2024).

If you do nothing to fix the problems that dying people currently experience, hundreds of thousands will miss out on vital care and the trauma of seeing a loved one die without support will live in the minds of a generation. People who are dying, and their loved ones, deserve better.

In our [joint manifesto for palliative and end of life care](#), we have identified five key policy priorities for you to include in your party's election manifesto:

1. **A new funding solution for hospices and palliative and end of life care** – to end the postcode lottery in access, reduce reliance on charitable donations, and ensure services are fit for the future
2. **A national palliative and end of life care delivery plan in every nation** – to ensure 24/7 access to care, commissioning that meet the needs of our population and a health and a care workforce that can respond to future need
3. **A guarantee that palliative and end of life care services meet each individual's needs** – with personalised care and support planning for everyone and the sharing of plans to ensure joined up support

4. **End poverty among people at the end of life and tackle inequalities in palliative and end of life care** – including by ensuring those of working age can claim their state pension and other pension age benefits and delivering a cross-government strategy to address health inequalities
5. **Improving support for families and carers of people living with a terminal illness** – including by better identification, needs assessments, financial and bereavement support for carers and extending statutory bereavement leave and pay to more bereaved people

We would urge you to set out your commitments to the electorate by reflecting deeply on how we can improve experiences of dying and bereavement, because every one of us will face these experiences in our lives.

Yours sincerely,



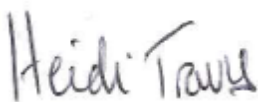
Toby Porter, CEO, Hospice UK



Matthew Reed, CEO, Marie Curie



Andy Fletcher, CEO, Together for Short Lives



Heidi Travis, CEO, Sue Ryder



Alison Penny, Coordinator, National Bereavement Alliance