

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 27 March 2023

Humanist Society Scotland seeks to make the case on assisted dying with First Minister Humza Yousaf

Humanist Society Scotland¹ has written to the new SNP leader and First Minister Humza Yousaf requesting a meeting to make the case on assisted dying. Mr Yousaf has given every reason for hope that he will preserve and build on the progressive legacy of Nicola Sturgeon’s government. Humanist Society believes that acting to ensure the smooth implementation of assisted dying legislation would make a clear statement of intent in this regard.

Fraser Sutherland, CEO of Humanist Society Scotland, said:

“Scotland’s new leader has committed to progressive causes such as the implementation of buffer zones around abortion services and bringing the UNCRC Incorporation Bill back before Holyrood. We’re looking forward to working constructively with him to build a human-centred consensus here in Scotland, including by making the case on assisted dying.”

Liam McArthur recently lodged a bill to introduce assisted dying for terminally ill adults in Scotland. This will shortly begin its passage through Holyrood. On March 8, Humza Yousaf told Humanist Society Scotland CEO Fraser Sutherland that he was “yet to be convinced by the bill.” He added, however, that he would “eagerly engage with proposed legislation and look upon amendments going forwards.”

On March 27 Humanist Society Scotland wrote to Mr Yousaf asking to meet with him alongside representatives of other pro-assisted dying organisations. **Humanist Society Scotland is not looking for a personal change of heart on the issue, which, as we respect, is partly one of faith for Mr Yousaf. However, we ask that, if the bill passes stage-one scrutiny, the new First Minister and Scottish Government start working in good faith, and as a matter of urgency, to ensure the smooth introduction of any successful legislation.** This would include priming relevant departments and teams and ensuring accompanying guidelines are prepared to a high standard.

Whatever Mr Humza’s personal feelings on assisted dying he has promised a vote of conscience on this issue. As such, there is a very real prospect of assisted dying becoming law in Scotland in the next few months or years. We must ensure that any new legislation of this kind is put into effect with efficiency and rational planning to mitigate against misinterpretation and to ensure that its enormous benefits for compassionate end-of-life treatment are realised.

ENDS.

For questions, information, or to request an interview with Humanist Society Scotland CEO Fraser Sutherland contact greg@humanism.scot.

¹ Humanist Society Scotland is Scotland’s national humanist charity. Our work has helped to make Scotland a more secular, rational, and socially just country. We are committed to representing the views of Scotland’s growing non-religious community. We have a membership of over 17,000 people with an active humanist group meeting in Fife every month. We also provide hundreds of humanist funerals and weddings across Fife every year, helping people mark key life events.