

Number 12

New Inquiry – Palliative Care

Palliative care seeks to improve the quality of life of patients and their families facing potentially terminal illness. It seeks to prevent, assess and treat pain and other physical, psychological and spiritual issues. Many readers will be aware of the problems that it poses.

The Parliamentary Health Committee have decided to undertake an inquiry into palliative care (but expressly not extending to issues relating to euthanasia). Separately, the House of Lords have agreed to establish a Committee to consider the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill.

As far as palliative care is concerned, the Committee will inquire into “the provision of hospice and palliative care by the NHS and by independent services, including the related support services of local authorities and other agencies for both adults and children”. The inquiry will look at the extent to which the needs and desires of patients of differing ages are considered including reviewing their care choices, ethnicity, cultural and spiritual beliefs. It will also look at the financing, governance, staffing, locations and quality of palliative care.

In particular, as part of this Inquiry, the Committee will review:

- “Issues of choice in the provision, location and timeliness of palliative care services, including support to people in their own homes.
- Equity in the distribution of provision, both geographical and between different age groups.
- Communication between clinicians and patients; the balance between people’s wishes and those of carers, families and friends; the extent to which service provision meets the needs of different cultures and beliefs.
- Support services including domiciliary support and personal care.
- Quality of services and quality assurance.
- Extent to which services meet the needs of different age groups and different service users.
- Governance of charitable providers, standards of organisation, links to the NHS and specialist services.
- Workforce issues including the supply and retention of staff and the quality and adequacy of training programmes.
- Financing, including the adequacy of NHS and charitable funding and their respective contributions and boundaries.
- The impact and effectiveness of Government policy including the National Service Frameworks, the Cancer Plan and NICE recommendations”.

The Committee is likely to hear evidence in March 2004 and report on a date to be fixed thereafter.

© RadcliffesLeBrasseur
February 2004

For more information on Care Home Law contact Andrew Parsons at RadcliffesLeBrasseur on 020 7227 7282, or email: andrew.parsons@rlb-law.com.

Out of office emergency advice available 24hrs on 07802 506 306.

Readers are advised to take specific advice before acting in reliance on the matters set out in this briefing.