

Nuffield Council on Bioethics'
Terms of Reference for the Assisted Dying Content Group
Project title: Exploring public views on assisted dying

1. Introduction

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NCOB) has begun a new project exploring public views on assisted dying and the associated social, ethical, and practical considerations that they consider important in forming their views and in their deliberations. The project will deliver:

- Two quantitative surveys on the public views towards assisted dying
- A Citizens' Jury with members of the English public to explore the current law on assisted dying; the circumstances and conditions where assisted dying should, or should not, be permissible; and the associated social, ethical, and practical considerations raised by assisted dying that the public considers important in forming their views and their deliberations

The project will publish the findings from the public engagement work, including the recommendations from the Citizens' Jury. It will not give a NCOB view, position, or recommendations on assisted dying or the ethics of assisted dying.

NCOB has commissioned Hopkins Van Mil (HVM) and their partners M.E.L. Research and the Sortition Foundation to carry out the assisted dying public engagement project.

Aims and objectives

Project aim

To deliver credible, well-informed, evidence of public views about assisted dying in England, with the goal of generating an informed public conversation on the issue and embedding the findings of the public engagement with key decision-makers.

Specific project aims

- To explore public attitudes towards assisted dying in England and the circumstances and conditions where assisted dying should and should not be permissible; and to understand the associated social, ethical, and practical considerations that the public consider important in forming their views and deliberations.
- To identify the most up-to-date evidence and analysis of the diverse range of ethical views on assisted dying in order to inform the public engagement process.
- To inform future conversations in this area and embed the findings of the public engagement with key decision-makers to inform any future policy and practice related to assisted dying.

Primary project objectives

- To deliver two quantitative surveys and a Citizens' Jury with members of the public to explore the public attitudes towards assisted dying in England - the circumstances and constraints where assisted dying should and should not be permissible, and to

understand the associated social, ethical, and practical considerations that the public consider important in forming their views and deliberations.

- To commission a series of authoritative and accessible opinion pieces on the range of ethical views on assisted dying.
- To engage government, media, and decision-makers (including professional bodies) on the findings of our report and public engagement, with the intention of informing future debates in this area.

Specific objectives of the public engagement activities

- To conduct a nationally representative quantitative survey of the English population to explore and capture current attitudes towards assisted dying.
- To use these initial survey results to inform the recruitment stratification criteria for the Citizens' Jury.
- To use the deliberative public engagement exercise to explore the views and deliberations of an informed Citizens' Jury regarding the current law of assisted dying in England; the circumstances and constraints where assisted dying should or should not be permissible; and the associated ethical, social, and practical considerations raised by assisted dying that the public considers important in forming their views and their deliberations.
- To conduct a second nationally representative quantitative survey of the English population to gather views on the recommendations and views of the Citizens' Jury.
- To produce a report suitable for sharing that will contribute and inform current and future conversations related to assisted dying.

2. The role of the Content Group

The role of the Content Group will be to:

- To support the NCOB and HVM to ensure the overall evidence, content, and stimulus materials presented to the Citizens' Jury and survey respondents is balanced, accurate, and accessible. They will help to ensure the evidence is:
 - inclusive and covers a range of perspectives and viewpoints and is balanced in that regard
 - covers each viewpoint to a similar level of detail or that any difference is objectively justifiable rather than stemming from bias (e.g. the difference is because a greater level of detail is necessary for Jury members' understanding)
 - factually accurate
 - and accessible on the issues and includes support for deliberating on and considering differing positions
- Advise on the content of the survey questions.
- Advise on the range of speakers for the Jury workshops and identify people to fulfil the role of 'Jury friend'.¹
- Oversee the briefs given to speakers for their role in terms of content they need to include and cover.

¹ Distinct from Jury witnesses, 'Jury Friends' will attend sessions in a 'hands on' role to support Jurors to develop an understanding of complex issues.

- Review all draft stimulus materials for use in online and in person Jury sessions.

Members of the Content Group will be independent from the project team. The NCOB project team and the contracted organisation commit to reporting back on how they have responded and acted on the advice of the Content Group.

3. Membership

The Content Group comprises subject matter experts related to the topic area with a range of views on assisted dying.

The Content Group meetings will be led, and meetings facilitated, by HVM working with NCOB.

Members should be committed to open dialogue, mutual respect, tolerance of other views, and willingness to see their own and others' opinions reviewed and discussed on merits.

Observers may attend from the NCOB, HVM and partners to keep a record of the Board's advice. The Chair of the Advisory Board will attend Content Group meetings in an observer role and if unavailable will elect a representative of the Advisory Board to attend in their place.

4. Time commitment

We expect the Content Group to meet at least 3 times between January 2024 to March/April 2024. This will be decided according to the needs of the project and Content Group members. Meetings will likely be no more than 3 hours in duration.

Every effort will be made to find dates when all Content Group members can attend meetings. For key items of business where the group's opinion is sought, those not attending meetings will be invited to submit comments and views in advance. These will be presented to the rest of the Content Group.

We expect to hold the meetings online remotely via video conference to accommodate maximum attendance.

For each meeting, pre-reading will be provided (approximately 2 hours). These materials will be discussed during the upcoming meeting. You will receive these materials 7 working days before the meeting.

5. Conflicts of interest

Participants are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest that might compromise their participation in the Content Group, prior to taking up the role. A register of interest will be kept for the duration of the project and members will be asked to complete a form to declare any necessary interests when appointed.

6. Confidentiality

All Content Group members must treat as confidential any discussions at Content Group meetings, emails, and any papers that are tabled, including pre-publication copies of outputs/materials/reports.

7. Compensation

Content Group members will be offered an honorarium of **£160** for attending each meeting.

8. Transparency

Action notes will be taken at the Content Group meetings and kept on record.

Members who were unable to attend the meeting will have 5 working days to comment on meeting notes once received before they are circulated more widely. All members will have an opportunity to request additions or changes where the notes are not deemed to accurately reflect the substance of the discussion.

Notes will be stored securely in accordance with Data Protection Arrangements at the NCOB and will not be shared beyond the immediate membership, although summary action points will be conveyed to the wider research team as appropriate.

Membership of the Content Group, along with their organisations and roles will be indicated on the NCOB's website, though members will be marked as attending in a personal capacity. The contribution of the Content Group will also be attributed to project outputs, such as reports, press releases, blog, as appropriate.