



Dear Members of Parliament,

We are writing to express serious concerns about the *Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill* and the failure to address what has become known as the “anorexia loophole.” As currently drafted, the Bill could allow people with eating disorders to qualify for assisted death — not because of a psychiatric diagnosis, but because of the physical deterioration caused by the illness.

While this may not be the stated intention of the Bill’s sponsor, the current wording leaves room for this interpretation. All amendments put forward to prevent this outcome — including those backed by clinicians, researchers, and people with lived experience — were rejected.

As charities and professionals supporting people affected by eating disorders, we know how profoundly this illness can distort a person’s sense of worth and views of the future. When someone is seriously unwell, they may believe their life is no longer worth living. This Bill, in its current form, could allow someone with an eating disorder to be offered lethal medications in their most despairing moments.

During committee proceedings, numerous amendments were proposed to close this loophole:

- Clarify a person cannot be deemed terminally ill solely because they have stopped eating or drinking;
- Ensure person would only be considered terminally ill if their death were likely even if the person were to undergo treatment;
- Make clear that the physical consequences of a mental illness would not allow a person to qualify for assisted death.

Sadly, none of these recommendations were taken onboard. The recent Equality Impact Assessment does not go far enough to consider the unique complexities of eating disorders and has failed to address the concerns raised by eating disorder patients and clinicians.

In recent years, UK courts have authorised the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment in young women with severe anorexia, based on clinical opinions that their condition was “untreatable” or “terminal.” This Bill would not prevent that same reasoning from being used to justify assisted death.

We acknowledge the complex ethical issues surrounding assisted dying and respect the wide range of views held in Parliament and among the public. However, we remain concerned that the Bill would allow people with eating disorders to qualify for assisted death, not because their illness is truly terminal — but because their illness has become life-threatening due to current gaps in care.

We therefore urge you to vote against the Bill at third reading and support efforts to develop a national strategy on eating disorders. Before Parliament legislates for assisted death, it must consult stakeholders and work to address the gaps in NHS care that may lead people with eating disorders to feel there is no other option.

## **SIGNATORIES**

**Hope Virgo**, Founder of #DumptheScales

**Bryony Doughty**, Head of Marketing, MQ Mental Health Research

**Chelsea Roff**, Executive Director, Eat Breathe Thrive

**Gemma Oaten**, CEO, SEED Eating Disorder Support Services

**Robin Hepburn**, CEO, Beat

**Tom Quinn**, Director of External Affairs, Beat

**Shannon Scott**, Group Patient Inclusion Lead, Queensway Hospital

**Matthew Wilson**, Carer Representative

**Louisa Rose**, CEO BEYOND

**Nicky Smith**, Carer, Advocate

**Jodie Goodacre**, Lived-Experience Campaigner

**Kel O'Neill**, Counsellor / Psychotherapist, The ED Recovery Companion

**Hannah Hickinbotham**, Founder of Full of Beans

**Marie-Ellen Dove**, Training and Network Lead, tastelifeUK

**Diana Archer**, CEO tastelifeUK

**Christian Robinson**, Health and Wellbeing Lead, Seacity Partnership

**Andrea Stroud**, Lived-Experience Campaigner

**Hilary Miller**, Tastelife volunteer course leader

**Fiona Tipson**, Network Administrator, tastelifeUK

**Cherry Dakin**, Youth Resources Coordinator, tastelifeUK

**Kathy Walton**, Lived-Experience Advocate

**Dr Nikki Burnard**, Clinician with Lived-Experience

**Claire Jackson**, CEO and Founder Member, Caraline Eating Disorder Service

**Suzanne Baker**, Carer Representative, FEAST

**Jeff Cotterill**, Retired GP, Trustee of tastelife

**Rowan Miller**, Development Director, on behalf of REDCAN UK Regional Eating Disorders Charities Alliance and Network

**Dr Agnes Ayton** MD, FRCPsych, MMedSc. MSc, Consultant Psychiatrist, Oxford

**Paula Blight**, CEO, SWEDA

**Nerissa Shaw**, Clinical Lead, SWEDA

**Thomas Midgley** BSc, RD, PGDip, Director, The Body Image Treatment Clinic

**Michelle Hinde**, Clinical Lead and Acting CEO, SYEDA

**Daniel Magson**, Chief Executive Office, First Steps EDs