

Debate Pack

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General Debate on Hospice and Palliative Care

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Summary

A general debate on hospice and palliative care is scheduled to take place in the House of Commons Chamber on Monday 13 January 2025. The subject for the debate was determined by the Backbench Business Committee.

Health policy is devolved. This information applies to England. Information on hospice and palliative care in the rest of the UK can be found in sections three and four.

1 Background

1.1 What is hospice and palliative care?

There are varying definitions of palliative care. The World Health Organisation defines it as an approach to improve the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing challenges associated with life-limiting illness, usually progressive.¹ Palliative care can prevent and relieve suffering through identifying, assessing and treating pain and other problems whether physical, social or spiritual.²

The [2022 briefing on Palliative and End of Life Care](#) by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology explains that most people living with a life-limiting illness will require some form of palliative care. Palliative care is typically started within two weeks before death, but an individual can receive palliative care for any length of time, ranging from a few hours to several years.³ Palliative care can occur alongside life prolonging treatments such as chemotherapy.⁴ There are often two pathways:

- **Generalist care:** Most palliative care is provided by health care professionals, such as GPs, community nurses, hospital consultants, nurses and care home staff, for whom care of the dying is not the major focus of their work. It focuses on day-to-day care and support.⁵
- **Specialist care:** Multi-disciplinary teams of specialists co-ordinate and provide care in hospital, hospice and community settings. They can support generalist providers and provide bereavement support.⁶

The role of hospices

Hospices are generally charitable organisations. They form part of palliative care in England and work with NHS palliative care teams. The services hospices provide can vary depending on the individual hospice. They can include:⁷

- pain and symptom control and psychological, social and spiritual support

¹ World Health Organisation, "[Palliative care](#)", 1 June 2023; NHS England, "[Palliative and end of life care](#)", accessed 9 January 2025

² NHS England, "[Palliative and end of life care](#)", accessed 9 January 2025

³ Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, "[Palliative and end of life care](#)", 27 July 2022

⁴ As above

⁵ As above

⁶ As above

⁷ HospiceUK, "[What services does a hospice offer?](#)", accessed 9 January 2025

- care in the community, supporting people to die at home where this is their wish
- rehabilitation
- financial advice
- support for family members, including bereavement support

A government press release on [investment into hospices](#) published in December 2024 says there are around 170 adult hospices and around 40 children and young people’s hospices in England, with some hospices providing care to both.⁸

1.2

Funding and delivery

How is hospice and palliative care funded?

[Section 21 of the Health and Care Act 2022](#) introduced a statutory requirement for integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to commission services to provide palliative care (alongside other healthcare services) to meet the needs of their local population.⁹ ICBs receive a general funding allocation from NHS England to deliver these services.

Hospices receive a mixture of charitable funding and some statutory funding for providing NHS services.

Charitable hospices may provide a range of services beyond those that they legally have to provide and this is reflected in their funding arrangement ([PQ 25325](#)). Some hospices also receive funding from local authorities.

The amount of NHS funding that individual hospices receive can vary between hospices and both within and between ICB areas.¹⁰ This is due to differing levels of demand and the totality and type of palliative and end of life care provision for both NHS and non-NHS services within each area.¹¹

⁸ UK Government, “[Biggest investment into hospices in a generation](#)”, 19 December 2024

⁹ More information on how ICBs work is available in the Library briefing [The structure of the NHS in England](#) (July 2023).

¹⁰ UK Government, “[Biggest investment into hospices in a generation](#)”, 19 December 2024

¹¹ As above

Various stakeholders have reported that about a third of funding for hospices and palliative care comes from the government.¹² The rest is often funded through fundraising and donations.¹³

In 2022/23 and 2023/24, £1.5 billion additional funding was provided at a national level to support ICBs with inflationary pressures.¹⁴ It was for ICBs to decide how best to distribute this funding within the system.

In December 2024, further capital funding for hospices was announced for 2025/26 (see ‘December 2024 funding announcement below’).¹⁵

Children’s hospice grant

In [2007, a Children’s Hospice Grant was introduced](#) providing direct funding to children’s hospices. The funding was intended to compensate for lower levels of local statutory funding compared to adult hospices.

In July 2019, NHS England announced that [the Children and Young People’s Hospice Grant would increase](#) from £12 million in 2019/20 to £25 million by 2023/24.

2023/24 was the final year of the grant.¹⁶ However, NHS England provided an extra £25 million of funding for children and young people’s hospices in 2024/25 to maintain the level of funding.¹⁷ This was distributed through ICBs (rather than directly to hospices from NHS England) for the first time in 2024/25.¹⁸

In December 2024, further funding for children and young people’s hospices was announced for 2025/26 (see below).¹⁹

This Library debate pack published in October 2024 contains [further details on funding for children’s hospices](#).

Delivering palliative care services

NHS England has published [statutory guidance for ICBs on palliative and end of life care](#). This guidance points to two existing frameworks to guide palliative care delivery:

¹² Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, “[Palliative and end of life care](#)”, 27 July 2022; Hospice UK, “[Hospice sector facing collective deficit of £77m](#)”, 15 April 2024; All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hospice and End of Life Care, “[Government funding for hospices](#)” (pdf), January 2024

¹³ Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, “[Palliative and end of life care](#)”, 27 July 2022

¹⁴ DHSC, [Letter from the Secretary of State, Steve Barclay to the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee](#) (PDF), 19 June 2023

¹⁵ UK Government, “[Biggest investment into hospices in a generation](#)”, 19 December 2024

¹⁶ [\[PQ 14273 | 27 November 2024\]](#)

¹⁷ As above

¹⁸ As above

¹⁹ UK Government, “[Biggest investment into hospices in a generation](#)”, 19 December 2024

- [Ambitions for Palliative and End of Life Care: A national framework for local action 2021-2026](#) (PDF) was developed by a wide range of NHS organisations, professional bodies, charities and patient groups. It sets out a framework for ICBs to evaluate commissioning and delivery of local palliative care services.
- The [NHS England Palliative and End of Life Care National Delivery Plan 2022-2025](#) (PDF) sets out a three-year plan to improve access, quality and sustainability of palliative care.²⁰

1.3

Government activity

December 2024 funding announcement

In December 2024, the government announced [new investment into hospices](#). This includes £100 capital investment to improve buildings, equipment, accommodation and digital upgrades. A further £26 million revenue funding for children and young people’s hospices will be provided in 2025/26.²¹

Commission on palliative care

At the start of December 2024, it was reported in the press that Rachael Maskell MP would lead a commission on palliative care to help improve end-of-life care.²²

An article by the charity Together for Short Lives says the following regarding the aim of the commission:

By bringing together voices from across the sector, the Commission aims to develop actionable solutions to ensure every child and family can access the care and support they need, no matter where they live.²³

An article in the Guardian in December 2024 suggested the commission is backed by more than 20 health and social care organisations and will take evidence on failures and improvements to end-of-life care.²⁴ It also said Lord Darzi (who led the [government commissioned independent investigation of](#)

²⁰ NHS England, “[Palliative and End of Life Care: Statutory Guidance for Integrated Care Boards \(ICBs\)](#)”, 29 September 2022, page 10

²¹ UK Government, “[Biggest investment into hospices in a generation](#)”, 19 December 2024

²² The Guardian, “[New plan would ‘transform’ end of life care for 100,000 in England and Wales](#)”, 1 December 2024

²³ Together for Short Lives, “[Together for Short Lives joins national commission to address postcode lottery in children’s palliative care](#)”, 12 December 2024

²⁴ The Guardian, “[Two ministers to sit on assisted dying bill committee](#)”, 11 December 2024

[the NHS](#) in summer 2024) will sit on the commission.²⁵ The article said the commission will start taking evidence in January.²⁶

1.4

Stakeholder commentary

Commentary on the hospice funding model

The former All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Hospice and End of Life Care published [a report on Government funding for hospices \(pdf\)](#) in January 2024.

The report says that many hospices would not want to be 100% government funded as this would remove their flexibility to provide ‘enhanced services’.²⁷ However, it said many hospices agree that the full costs of core services that would otherwise be provided by the NHS, should be met by commissioners.²⁸ The report noted the intention behind the statutory requirement for ICBs to commission palliative and end of life care was to prevent core clinical services from being subsidised by local communities.²⁹

The report said that whilst NHS England had provided guidance on the services that ICBs should commission (see section 1.2), it was not consistently applied on the ground and that it was difficult for hospices to indicate the costs of their services to commissioners.³⁰

The APPG called on the government to:³¹

- commission work to understand the costs of different models of palliative and end of life care, with the aim to develop agreed reference costs that can be used by commissioners as a basis for funding
- develop national standards and outcome measures
- set out a national minimum standard for the level of palliative and end of life care provided in all ICBs
- ensure uplifts to hospice contracts are equitable with NHS services and contracts are multi-year, to provide consistent and fair funding

²⁵ The Guardian, “[Two ministers to sit on assisted dying bill committee](#)”, 11 December 2024

²⁶ As above

²⁷ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hospice and End of Life Care, [Government funding for hospices \(pdf\)](#), January 2024, p24

²⁸ As above

²⁹ As above

³⁰ As above

³¹ As above

Accessibility of palliative care

The 2022 report from POST stated the following regarding inequalities in accessing palliative care:

There is substantial evidence that inequalities in access to P&EOLC [palliative and end of life care] relate to many factors, including ethnicity, socioeconomic deprivation, homelessness, imprisonment, learning disability, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, diagnosis, geographic location and socioeconomic status. These barriers are exacerbated by uncertainty in prognosis, the needs of particular groups and a lack of public awareness of hospice services. Older people and those with a non-cancer diagnosis are less likely to access SPC [specialised palliative care] services. A 2018 study found that those without a cancer diagnosis, and those aged 75 and over, had a shorter length of time between referral to hospice SPC and death. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to receive SPC in the last year of life and are more likely to rate their end of life care experiences as fair or poor. A 2021 systematic review found that people with severe mental illness may not be accepted for end of life care by hospices or care homes if staff feel unequipped. Stakeholders call for inequalities in access to P&EOLC to be addressed.³²

Other factors affecting the provision palliative and end of life care

The [2022 report from POST](#) identified various other factors impacting the provision of palliative and end of life care to all those who need it, including:

- some stakeholders argue that more research is needed to understand the costs of palliative and end of life care
- research shows patient demand continues to outstrip the recruitment and retention of NHS staff and there is a shortage of palliative care expertise and training
- there can be challenges in clinicians assessing patients needs
- there can be challenges in the co-ordination of information between care providers

The POST report summarises [various stakeholder recommendations](#) for improving palliative care.³³

³² Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, "[Palliative and end of life care](#)", 27 July 2022, page 4

³³ As above

2 Parliamentary materials

2.1 Parliamentary questions

Hospices: Charitable Donations

8 January 2025 | UIN 21470

Asked by: Martin Wrigley

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to monitor the declining charitable income of hospices and the potential link to deterioration in service.

Answering member: Stephen Kinnock | Department of Health and Social Care

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, also play in providing support to people at end of life and their loved ones.

Individual ICBs oversee palliative care provision by NHS and non-NHS services, including charitable hospices, within each area.

The biggest investment in a generation for hospices has been announced by the Government, ensuring that hospices can continue to deliver the highest quality end of life care possible for their patients, families, and loved ones.

This was through a £100 million boost for adult and children's hospices to ensure they have the best physical environment for care, and £26 million of revenue to support children and young people's hospices. Further details of the funding allocation and dissemination will be set out in the new year.

We, alongside key partners NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with our stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face.

Hospices: Employers' Contributions

10 December 2024 | UIN 17871

Asked by: Mike Amesbury

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the changes to employers National Insurance contributions on the financial situation of hospices.

Answering member: Stephen Kinnock | Department of Health and Social Care

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget, which enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. The rise in employer National Insurance contributions (ENICs) will be implemented in April 2025, and the Department will set out further details on the allocation of funding for next year in due course.

The Government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, like hospices, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of businesses with ENIC liabilities either gain, or see no change next year. Businesses and charities will still be able to claim ENIC reliefs, including those for under 21 and under 25 year old apprentices, where eligible.

Hospices: Rural Areas

29 November 2024 | UIN 15638

Asked by: Sir John Hayes

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support hospices in (a) rural and (b) remote areas.

Answering member: Stephen Kinnock | Department of Health and Social Care

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing National Health Services. The amount of funding each charitable hospice receives varies both within and between integrated care board (ICB) areas. This will vary depending on demand in that ICB area but will also be dependent on the totality and type of palliative and end of life care provision from both NHS and non-NHS services, including charitable hospices, within each ICB area.

Due to the way the hospice movement organically grew, hospice locations were largely not planned with a view to providing even access across the

country, or to prioritise areas of greatest need based on demographics. Therefore, there are inequalities in access to hospice services, especially for those living in rural or socio-economically deprived areas. NHS England has developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of those in their local population, thereby enabling ICBs to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities.

I have met NHS England to discuss how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care. We, alongside key partners NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with our stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face.

Hospices: Finance

20 November 2024 | UIN 6542

Asked by: Daisy Cooper

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether hospice funding will be included in his Department's 10-year plan for health and care.

Answering member: Stephen Kinnock | Department of Health and Social Care

We want a society where every person, as well as their families and carers, receives high-quality, compassionate care, from diagnosis through to end of life.

I recently met NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care in England. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including hospice funding, in the coming months.

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, by driving three shifts in the way health care is delivered. We will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, including those in the hospice sector, as we develop the plan.

The engagement process has been launched, and I would encourage the palliative and end of life care sector, including hospice providers, service users and their families, to engage with that process to allow us to fully understand what is not working as well as it should and what the potential solutions are. More information is available at the following link:

<https://change.nhs.uk/en-GB/>

The Department does not collect or hold data on the number of people waiting for places in hospices run by charitable organisations.

2.2 Debates

[Hospice Funding](#)

19 December 2024 | House of Commons | 759 cc451-462

[Hospice Funding](#)

22 April 2024 | House of Commons | 748 cc700-754

[Hospice Services: Support](#)

14 June 2023 | Westminster Hall | 734 cc128WH-153WH

[Hospice Sector: Fiscal Support and Cost of Living](#)

2 March 2023 | Westminster Hall | 728 cc360WH-372WH

2.3 Written statements

[Hospices](#)

19 December 2024 | UIN HCWS348

Wes Streeting (Secretary of State for Health and Social Care)

3

Press and stakeholder material

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

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3.1

England

[Investment in whole system needed for quality end-of-life care, says BMA in response to hospice funding announcement](#)

British Medical Association
19 December 2024

[Hospices say funding boost will help them give continued compassionate care](#)

The Independent
19 December 2024

[Government expected to help UK hospices hit by national insurance rise](#)

The Guardian
20 November 2024

['It's heartbreaking': Hospices planning cuts to jobs and beds](#)

BBC News
30 August 2024

[Fifth of UK hospices cutting services amid funding crisis, finds report](#)

The Guardian
16 July 2024

[Hospice UK fears 'devastating' effects of £77m funding gap](#)

BBC News
15 April 2024

[Report on hospice funding finds commissioning of services is 'not fit for purpose'](#)

Sue Ryder
24 January 2024

[Hospice funding falls short by £47m](#)

Hospice UK
26 September 2023

3.2

Wales

[Hospices say Welsh Government funding “needs to keep pace with the need for, and costs of, our services”](#)

Wrexham.com

18 June 2024

[Additional funding for hospices is welcome – but what next?](#)

WCVA

16 May 2024

[Welsh Government announce £4m to support hospice services](#)

Hospice UK

12 April 2024

[Funding boost from Welsh Government](#)

Tŷ Hafan

12 April 2024

3.3

Scotland

[Hospice UK responds to draft Scottish budget](#)

Hospice UK

4 December 2024

[Scotland joins hospices’ cry for support](#)

The Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice

28 November 2024

[A fairer funding model for hospice care in Scotland is needed now more than ever](#)

Third Force News Scotland

21 November 2024

[Scotland's hospice CEOs warn sector 'struggling enormously'](#)

The Herald Scotland

14 November 2024

[Hospices in Scotland face collective deficit of £16 million](#)

Hospice UK

18 December 2023

[Scottish hospices are stretched to the brink, says charity](#)

BBC News

18 December 2023

3.4

Northern Ireland

[Palliative Care Week \(NI\)](#)

All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care

8 September 2024

[NI Children's Hospice's position over bed reduction 'unchanged'](#)

BBC News

12 February 2024

[Children's Hospice funding back but bed cut remains](#)

BBC News

9 February 2024

[Parents who rely on NI Hospice care concerned over losing service due to funding cuts](#)

Belfast Telegraph

7 February 2024

4 Press releases and government publications

4.1 England

[Biggest investment into hospices in a generation](#)

Department of Health and Social Care

19 December 2024

[Palliative and end of life care profiles: December 2024 update](#)

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

3 December 2024

[Ambitions for Palliative and End of Life Care: A national framework for local action 2021-2026](#)

NHS England

10 February 2022

4.2 Wales

[Written Statement: Improving Access to Palliative and End-of-Life Care](#)

Welsh Government

18 October 2024

[Vital funding to support Welsh hospices](#)

Welsh Government

12 April 2024

[National Palliative and End of Life Care Programme](#)

NHS Wales Executive

4.3 Scotland

[Palliative care strategy: Palliative Care Matters for All](#)

Scottish Government

2 October 2024

[Palliative and end of life care: Strategy Steering Group](#)

Scottish Government

4.4

Northern Ireland

[Assembly's Health Committee Seeks Views on Access to Palliative Care](#)

Northern Ireland Assembly

11 November 2024

[£70m support package unveiled](#)

Northern Ireland Department of Health

22 March 2024

[Statement by Health Minister Robin Swann on NI Children's Hospice](#)

Northern Ireland Department of Health

9 February 2024

5

Further reading

- [Hospices: State funding](#), House of Lords Library, 21 October 2024
- [Motion on hospice funding](#), House of Commons Library, 11 April 2024
- [Support for hospice services debate](#), House of Commons Library, 9 June 2023
- [Palliative and end of life care](#), POST, 27 July 2022

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