



### ***Position Statement – Assisted Dying***

“Teesside Hospice is opposed to any change in the law concerning assisted dying. If the law in England is changed in the future, Teesside Hospice will not be involved in the provision of assisted dying to people under its care.

#### **Background**

Teesside Hospice provides specialist palliative care which affirms life and regards death as a natural part of life. Palliative care aims to enhance patient dignity and choice towards the end of life and neither hastens nor postpones death. Often requests to hasten death are expressions of fear and distress and may reflect a need for assurance that pain and suffering will be relieved and that end of life decisions made by patients will be respected. To value people's lives is fundamental to every aspect of palliative care and is at the heart of our day-to-day care of patients at Teesside Hospice. Assisted dying is not a part of palliative care practice.

Teesside Hospice staff and volunteers believe that all have the right to be well cared for up until the time of death. As part of our compassionate, individualised, holistic and supportive care we encourage patients, their families and carers to talk about end of life decisions with each other and with our staff and we encourage them to make an Advance Care Plan if they wish. Within this we can discuss natural death and explore the alternatives to assisted dying. We believe that everyone should be made aware of the options for hospice and palliative care and should be offered an individual assessment of their needs to ensure that appropriate palliative care is provided.

As an organisation we feel that if any part of Teesside Hospice services were to provide assisted dying, this would fundamentally undermine the trust between patients and staff and negatively affect the care we provide for patients and their families. We are also very concerned that a change in the law may result in vulnerable patients feeling obliged to consider assisted dying for fear of becoming a burden on others, so a right to die may become a duty to die.

We acknowledge and respect the wide range of views and perspectives in society about the ethical issue of assisted dying and this statement makes no value judgement about assisted dying or the people who are supportive of it or who request it. If eligible patients hold views that are different from our own about this or other ethical issues this would not prevent them from accessing our services and support. It would not change the way we care for them.”

**April 2015**