

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

29th June 2017

Dear Constituent,

RE: ASSISTED SUICIDE.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of assisted suicide.

I appreciate your concerns on this very sensitive issue. Coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult both for the patient and their families. These cases are truly moving and evoke the highest degree of compassion and emotion.

Assisting or encouraging suicide is a criminal offence under Section 2 of the *Suicide Act 1961*, for which the maximum penalty is 14 years' imprisonment. I am aware that the Director of Public Prosecutions has published guidelines primarily concerned with advising the Crown Prosecution Service prosecutors about the factors which they need to consider when deciding whether it is in the public interest to prosecute a person for assisting, or encouraging another, to commit suicide.

The House of Commons has discussed the DPP's guidelines and these were unanimously commended as being a compassionate and measured way of dealing with one of the most emotionally-charged crimes on the statute book. However, they do not change the law; assisting or encouraging suicide has not been decriminalised.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has now further clarified the CPS policy on the likelihood of prosecution of health care professionals, to specify that the relationship of care will be the important aspect and it will be necessary to consider whether the suspect may have been in a position to exert some influence on the victim.

I believe the application of the law should be flexible enough to distinguish the facts and the circumstances of one case from another. To this end, the DPP's policy offers important and sensitive guidance.

I fully accept that suicide, assisting or encouraging suicide, assisted dying and euthanasia, are all subjects on which it is entirely possible for people to hold widely different, but defensible, opinions. This is why the substance of the law in this area is not a matter of party politics, but of conscience. Should the law in this area ever be altered, it is neither a matter for the Government to decide, nor a matter for the judiciary, but ultimately a matter for Parliament and therefore it would be a free vote. Of course,



should a debate take place, I would listen carefully to the arguments made, before ultimately deciding how to vote.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes

Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**