

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

LONDON SW1A 0AA

31<sup>st</sup> January 2019

*Dear Constituent,*  
**RE: ASSISTED DYING.**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of assisted dying; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

Coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult for both 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 (DPP) published guidelines primarily concerned with advising the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) 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 in the statute book. However, they do not change the law; assisting or encouraging suicide has not been decriminalised.

The DPP further clarified the CPS Policy on the likelihood of the 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.

Although the DPP's policy makes clear that assisting a person to die is still illegal, I am worried that by not prosecuting those assisting in the suicide of others, we will encourage demands for legalising assisted dying. The lives of the terminally ill are of equal value to anyone else's and so they deserve equal protection under the criminal law.

However, 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 assisted dying is a subject on which it is entirely possible for people to hold different, but entirely defensible, opinions. This is why the substance of the law in this area is not a matter of party politics, but of conscience, and any vote would be a free one, should the law in this area ever be altered, and in the event of a debate I would of course listen carefully to all the arguments before finally 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 PURSGLOVE MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**  
**CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**