

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

20th November 2020

LONDON SW1A 0AA

New Constituent,

RE: THE RIGHT TO LIFE & ASSISTED SUICIDE.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the very difficult and emotive subject of the right to life and assisted suicide; your comments upon which I have read with great interest and compassion.

As we all know, coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult both for the patient and their family and friends. These cases are truly moving and evoke the highest degree of compassion and emotion.

I am afraid that as a Government Minister, I am unable to join All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs), but I appreciated you inviting me to attend the webinar from the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group, albeit I was unable to attend.

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 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 debated 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 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. That 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. In the event of such a debate, I would of course listen carefully to all the arguments, the views of my constituents, and wider policy experts and interested parties in the field, before finally deciding how to vote, as that is only right and proper.



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**