

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

5th February 2021

Dear Confront,

RE: THE RIGHT TO LIVE AND ASSISTED DYING.

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

This is a subject which is truly moving and evokes the highest degree of emotion, and at the outset I want to say that I completely recognise the strength of your feeling on this matter – as I do those on all sides of this debate. 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, and any vote would be a free one should the law in this area ever be altered. In the event of a debate, as I have consistently said, 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.

All that said, I really do recognise that coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult both for the patient and their families.

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 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 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.

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