



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd April 2021

New Constituent,

RE: ASSISTED SUICIDE

Thank you for your recent correspondence about the emotive issue of assisted suicide; your comments upon which I have read with interest and great compassion.

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 (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 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, and any vote would be a free one should the law in this area ever be altered. I can tell you that in the eventuality of such a vote, I would listen carefully to the debate, the views of my constituents and expert opinion, before finally deciding how to vote. These are difficult and sensitive matters that warrant the most serious and careful consideration.



Finally, thank you for having invited me to the APPG meeting, although as a Government Minister I am unable to join APPGs, but appreciated the invitation nonetheless. Rest assured, however, that I shall, of course, continue to review emerging research in this area and follow this debate closely.

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**