



Jane Hunt MP
House of Commons

24th January 2020

Dear local resident,

Thank you to those who have contacted me about assisted dying.

I recognise that coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult both for the individual and their families, and that it is entirely possible for people to hold widely different but defensible opinions on the matter. I, therefore, think that this is an issue which warrants further discussion, which is why I attended the Westminster Hall debate yesterday. If you would like to watch the debate, it can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/vc9wxdpy>

As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Chris Philp MP, set out during the debate, 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. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) 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 already 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.

With regards to the Government holding an inquiry into the current law, the Minister was clear yesterday that:

"The Government do not have any plans at the moment to initiate any review or call for evidence; our view is that it is for Parliament to act in this space. But of course it is open to Committees of the House, including Select Committees, to initiate reviews, calls for evidence and investigations, if they see fit to do so."

Given local residents' interest in this, I will be writing to the new Chair of the Justice Select Committee, when they have been elected next week, to see whether the Committee would consider holding an inquiry into assisted dying. I will be sure to send you a copy of their response when I have received it.

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If you have any further concerns about this, or any other issues, please do get back in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Hunt'.

Jane Hunt MP