

## **e-petition: Legalise assisted dying for terminally ill, mentally competent adults**

### **Government response**

This response was given on 3 February 2022

The Government's position is that any change to the law in this area is a matter for Parliament and an issue of conscience for individual parliamentarians rather than one for Government policy.

#### [Read the response in full](#)

The Government's position remains that any change to the law in this emotive and contentious area is a matter for Parliament to decide and an issue of conscience for individual parliamentarians rather than one for Government policy. That is not an indication that the Government does not care about this issue. Rather, because the matter is so important, and is a matter of conscience, it takes no partisan position.

Whether there are any circumstances in which it should not be an offence to assist another person to die is something on which there are passionately held but deeply divided views. Even amongst those who support a change in the law, there are differing ideas on where the line should be drawn, what safeguards should be in place and for whom. Conversely, others feel strongly that the law should not be changed and that safeguards will not necessarily give enough protection to vulnerable people who may feel pressure, whether real or perceived, to end their own lives.

Parliament has so far voted against proposals to allow lawful assistance with suicide, including in September 2015 when the House of Commons rejected the Assisted Dying (No.2) Bill by a substantial majority (330 votes to 118). However, this remains an issue of profound public interest and importance and the Assisted Dying Bill introduced by Baroness Meacher has provided an opportunity for Parliament to consider it afresh.

The Government took a neutral position when the Assisted Dying Bill was debated in the House of Lords on 22 October. The Bill passed Lords Second Reading without a vote. Committee stage - which involves line by line examination of the Bill - has yet to be scheduled.

If the will of Parliament is that the law on assisting suicide should change, the Government would not stand in the way of such change, but would seek to ensure that the law could be enforced in the way that Parliament intended.

Ministry of Justice

Date closed **30 June 2022**