



Ministry
of Justice

Central Correspondence Team

MoJ ref: TO45531

Mr Arjuna Subanandan
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20 November 2017

Dear Mr Subanandan,

Thank you for your email of 31 December about the issue of assisted dying. I am responding on behalf of the Criminal Law Policy Team and I do apologise for the unacceptable length of time this has taken.


There are deeply divided views and a great deal of debate about the law in relation to assisted dying. Whether there are any circumstances in which it should be legal to end someone's life (euthanasia) or help someone to take his or her own life (assist a suicide) remains a highly controversial issue. Even amongst those who support a change in the law in principle, there are differing ideas on where the line should be drawn, what safeguards should be in place and for whom. Conversely, other people 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.

The government, like previous ones, believes that any change to the law in this emotive and contentious area is an issue of individual conscience and a matter for Parliament to decide rather than one for government policy.

Parliament has debated this issue on several occasions. The most recent debate on specific legislative proposals was held on 11 September 2015 when the Assisted Dying (No.2) Bill had its Second Reading in the House of Commons. The Bill, introduced by former MP Rob Marris, sought to legalise assisted suicide for terminally ill, mentally competent adults who are reasonably expected to die within six months. Members of Parliament voted against the Bill by 330 votes to 118.

The debate on this issue will no doubt continue. As things stand, however, the will of Parliament is that there should be no change in the law.

Yours sincerely,


Julia Fulcher
Ministry of Justice