“I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DIE WITH DIGNITY IN MY OWN COUNTRY, IN MY OWN BED. THE LAW NEEDS TO CHANGE.”

BOB COLE 1946 - 2015

Find out exactly what happened with the Assisted Dying Bill on 11th September
You, and everyone involved with Dignity in Dying, worked tirelessly over the summer to persuade MPs of the need for law change. In a campaign that lasted less than 12 weeks supporters up and down the country met with their MPs, sent almost 90,000 emails and thousands more hand-written letters. We successfully raised money online to fund a national billboard campaign (page nine), as well as made the public aware of compelling stories from numerous terminally ill people including Bob Cole (page 10). Sadly, the Bill was not voted through to the next stage by MPs - you can read more about what happened on Friday 11th September on page four.

The defeat was disappointing, something many of you have expressed, but we have no doubt
that the law will eventually change. Dignity in Dying has not lost any of its passion or drive for law change, in fact MPs’ dismissal of the Bill has only made me, my colleagues and fellow activists even more determined. We know we will win.

We know we will win because the majority of the British public still demand law change and every day that goes by that MPs fail to deal with this issue dying people are needlessly suffering. That cannot be ignored.

We know we will win because we have passionate and committed supporters like Eastbourne campaigner, Steve Parlanti, who reminds us (page 18) that no social change such as this has happened without a struggle, assisted dying is not going to be any different. We will, and we must keep on fighting.

We know we will win when we look around the world, most recently at the triumph in California, which now gives choice at the end of life to 39 million more people (page 14). We know we will win when we read the words of Barbara Coombs Lee, President of Compassion and Choices in the US, when she recalls their own journey there “Heaven knows we have suffered losses. But such losses are temporary, and fleeting, and should not influence dedication to our cause or the expectation of eventual victory.”

We know we will win because we have committed and passionate parliamentarians on our side. You need only read some of the moving and considered speeches of our parliamentary supporters (page eight) and compare them to those of our parliamentary opponents (page six) to know that we win the argument and will continue to do so.

But to win we need to intensify our campaign. We need to be smart and targeted and we need to get people talking about this crucial social issue in every community across the country. Over the coming months we will be giving local activists the tools to take the campaign deeper into their communities so we can truly harness the overwhelming power of the public who support this change.

There will be, in time, another Bill. Before then we need to continue to hammer home the message that the current law has consequences.

Whether through cases being taken to the Courts, community action in constituencies or campaigns highlighting the consequences of inaction, MPs will not be able to ignore that their votes have a real impact on people’s lives.

Together, we will win. Thank you.

Sarah Wootton
Rob Marris’ Assisted Dying Bill was defeated at Second Reading in the House of Commons. MPs voted to reject the Bill by 330 votes to 118, meaning that the Bill can proceed no further.

The tone of the debate was broadly respectful and featured some excellent contributions by MPs who support a change in the law. Most notably, Sir Keir Starmer – the Labour MP for Holborn and St Pancras and previously the Director of Public Prosecutions – explained why he thought the current legal situation was in need of reform:

“...we have arrived at a position where compassionate, amateur assistance from nearest and dearest is accepted but professional medical assistance is not, unless someone has the means and physical assistance to get to Dignitas. That to my mind is an injustice that we have trapped within our current arrangement.”

Some of the MPs who opposed the Bill explained that they were unconvinced by the safeguards, even though the House of Lords had agreed that they were workable. It was clear, however, that there was a large core of MPs who simply could not support the Bill due to their own personal beliefs.

The Bill was never likely to pass into law this year, a situation confirmed by the Prime Minister who set out his opposition to the Bill early on in this Parliament. However, during the debate MPs from both sides of the argument agreed with David Cameron that there are “imperfections and problems” with the current law.

The defeat on 11th September was a blow, but this does not mean the assisted dying campaign is defeated for the rest of this Parliament. What gives us hope are the many MPs who are dissatisfied with the current law and made impassioned speeches in support. With their help
we will continue to bring the plight of dying people and the injustice of the current law to the attention of MPs.

**YOUR SUPPORT WAS VITAL!**

The vocal campaign by Dignity in Dying supporters made a big impact and gave the issue the attention it deserved. Tens of thousands wrote to their MP, many of whom followed it with a meeting to persuade them of the arguments. In addition there were hundreds of supporters joining together outside Parliament on the day, chanting and drawing the attention of MPs, the media and passers-by. There was a mood of frustration directed at Parliament following the vote, but without doubt a conviction that we will carry on fighting and that we will eventually win.

**WHAT NEXT FOR THE ASSISTED DYING CAMPAIGN?**

There will be future opportunities to legislate on the issue in subsequent years of this Parliament.

Our focus will be on contacting those MPs who expressed doubts about assisted dying and on addressing their concerns. We at Dignity in Dying, and our members and supporters across the country, need to lobby MPs who do not oppose the principle of assisted dying but who nonetheless opposed the Bill on this occasion.

We will ensure that our Parliamentarians must confront the inadequacies of the current law. This proposal for legislation was defeated, but that does not mean that the law we have works well.

In the light of MPs’ refusal to debate the issue further, we will continue to ask the Courts to do what they can to interpret what is an increasingly dysfunctional law.

Dying people are being forced into desperate situations now, and they deserve the choice just as much as dying people across the world who already have that option.

If you haven’t written to your MP about the debate, please do so. If your MP supported the Bill, praise them; if they opposed the Bill, ask them why. If your MP did not vote, please ask them why they were not able to attend the debate – and ask whether they would have supported the Bill in any case. It is crucial for our campaign to have the best idea of MPs’ thinking on the issue to help us focus our efforts in the future.

To find out how your MP voted, please call Thomas Davies, Public Affairs Manager or visit our website:

**020 7479 7734**

**www.dignityindying.org.uk/commons**
ARGUMENTS THAT IGNORE THE FACTS.

BY LLOYD RILEY

Many of those who voted against the Bill made various misleading and ill-informed claims about assisted dying. Dying people deserve an evidence-based debate on this issue and it is disappointing that so many MPs ignored the available evidence and made these unsubstantiated claims.

ROBERT FELLLO
Stoke-on-Trent South, Labour

“...it does fundamentally change the relationship between doctors and patients, and that change cannot be undone once it has been made. We are talking about overturning 2,000 years of the Hippocratic oath.”

DR LIAM FOX
North Somerset, Conservative

“It is widely understood that the Hippocratic Oath is incompatible with modern medicine and has since been replaced by the Declaration of Geneva, which does not in any way prohibit assisted dying. More importantly, Dr Fox needs to listen to his constituents, more than 87% of people in the UK say a change in the law would actually increase or have no effect on their trust in doctors. Surely a bigger risk to the relationship is that the medical profession continue to ignore the wishes of their patients. Current medical guidance emphasises patient centred choice and care, which underpins assisted dying.”

In around 7% of cases, the person suffers from vomiting or spasms. In one in every 10 cases there can be problems with administering the barbiturates. In addition, in about 1% of cases, the person has woken up.

This 7% figure is almost entirely irrelevant; as the research was conducted in the Netherlands more than 15 years ago. Whereas, the most recent data from Oregon published this year, shows that in only 2.6% of cases is the life-ending medication regurgitated and there were no reported seizures. Crucially, the Assisted Dying Bill in this country – unlike that in Oregon – would have a healthcare professional present that would further reduce the already minimal risk of complications.

Many of those who voted against the Bill made various misleading and ill-informed claims about assisted dying. Dying people deserve an evidence-based debate on this issue and it is disappointing that so many MPs ignored the available evidence and made these unsubstantiated claims.
NADINE DORRIES
Mid Bedfordshire, Conservative

“The poison administered when someone makes the choice to take their own life, however, is not pleasant. They choke. It is not a good death.”

Such claims are simply not true and there is no evidence to justify this claim. Research has found that in Oregon the experience of death of those pursuing assisted dying was no worse compared to those who did not, and in many cases family members rated the experience as far better. Ms Dorries seems to have forgotten and displays little sympathy or concern for those who, under the current law, are forced to take their own life behind closed doors without any advice or professional assistance.

KARL MCCARTNEY
Lincoln, Conservative

“Assisted dying would devalue any extra development or funding for advances in palliative care, reducing the quality of care that those wishing to receive it could and should receive at the end of their life.”

Mr McCartney seems to be making these unsubstantiated claims without looking at the evidence, as assisted dying and developments in palliative care go hand in hand. For instance, Oregon is rated amongst the best States in the USA for palliative care. The Oregon Hospice Association initially opposed assisted dying but later acknowledged that changing the law had not undermined Oregon’s end-of-life care – with 90% of people having their assisted death while receiving hospice care.
A BROKEN LAW: MPS SUPPORTING LAW CHANGE.

BY MIKE HAMILTON

We were inspired by supporters of the campaign in the House of Commons who contributed to the debate; they often spoke from first-hand professional or personal experience of the current broken law. Supportive MPs came from across the political spectrum; they spoke with evidence and passion.

NORMAN LAMB
North Norfolk, Liberal Democrat
“I just want to say a word about the current law, which puts families in the most invidious position...if someone acts out of absolute compassion, they are still left with their home being declared a crime scene and with a police investigation... That is surely an intolerable position.”

CRISPIN BLUNT
Reigate, Conservative
“The Bill gives people in those circumstances a little bit of control at the end. Perhaps most importantly, it gives everyone the potential to have that little bit of control at the end.”

SARAH CHAMPION
Rotherham, Labour
“This Bill will enable people to have peace of mind. We do not know—we do it only once—what our death will be like, but I would like to give people the peace of mind that if the situation becomes intolerable, they can make an informed choice about their own life.”

MADELEINE MOON
Bridgend, Labour
“There has been much talk about how individuals affected by the Bill may be a burden on their families, but nothing about how life may be a burden on those who are dying.”

KEIR STARMER
Holborn and St Pancras, Labour
“...we have arrived at a position where compassionate, amateur assistance from nearest and dearest is accepted but professional medical assistance is not, unless someone has the means and physical assistance to get to Dignitas. That to my mind is an injustice that we have trapped within our current arrangement.”

CHLOE SMITH
Norwich North, Conservative
“The current law is unclear and often people are forced to take hidden, undignified and desperate action. Some relatives and loved ones are risking criminal prosecution. Ethical problems exist today, whether for the patient, doctor or family—they are not invented by the Bill.”

If you missed the debate or would like to re-watch it you can find a link to Parliament TV at www.dignityindying.org.uk/debate
One thing we’re always thinking about at Dignity in Dying is how we can give supporters like you a voice.

Some MPs just aren’t aware of the strength of public support – so in the run up to September’s debate in the House of Commons we had to think of a way we could communicate this fact.

We had the idea of starting a crowdfunding campaign (a fundraising campaign where supporters can and must raise a set amount of money to achieve a specific goal). Our ask to supporters was to raise £10,000 in just three weeks to pay for ten advertising billboards around London to show MPs we wanted them to take action to change the law.

Having never done something like this before we were a bit nervous about how supporters would react. It turned out we need not have worried as the response was overwhelming. Within hours of launching the campaign we’d raised half our target and by day three we hit our initial target of £10,000. Eventually we went on to raise over £30,000 and were able to secure 31 billboards around the country.

It quickly became clear this campaign was something that really resonated with supporters, some of the comments from people who pledged explain why…

“I have written to my MP, but he does not support this bill, thank you for giving me a voice…”

“Glad to be able to help & contribute my money & voice to a cause so important to me. Sir Paul Beresford, listen up. Heartened by everybody’s contributions and support. Great idea!”

We would like to say a huge thank you to all our supporters who contributed to the crowdfunding campaign, I’m glad we were able to give you a voice – MPs didn’t listen this time, but with this level of support it’s only a matter of time.
Bob Cole, a campaigner with Dignity in Dying, had an assisted death at Dignitas on the 14th August. He courageously spoke out before he died and called on Parliamentarians to legalise assisted dying.

Bob travelled to Dignitas 18 months earlier with his wife who had progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP). When Bob returned to Chester he joined Dignity in Dying. During this time he gave interviews about his wife’s decision and travelled down to London for our AGM and demonstrations outside Parliament.

Nobody should be forced to end their own life, nobody, but there are some of us who have come to the end and want to bow out with dignity. We want the choice to end our own lives.

Bob was diagnosed with mesothelioma – a lung cancer most likely caused by coming into contact with asbestos when he was an apprentice carpenter in his teenage years. He was given a prognosis of three months in June and his condition deteriorated rapidly with every passing day. He began talking to Dignitas and decided he wanted to control the manner and timing of his death. Given the current law, this meant travelling abroad.

Please forgive me if you think I am being selfish, but there is only so much physical pain one can take. Don’t cry for me and remember the good times and get on with them.

As a campaigner over the last 18 months Bob understood the need to show the reality of the current situation to the public. So with immense bravery he decided to tell his story before he went to Dignitas. He spent two days conducting interviews with ITV News and The Sun, it was physically exhausting for Bob as at this point he could hardly leave his house but he got through them and explained his reasons for travelling abroad.

Bob travelled to Switzerland accompanied by some of his closest friends, who also helped with the media interviews and stated their reasons for supporting their friend.
Bob appeared on the front page of The Sun on the day he had an assisted death. ITV News also carried an exclusive interview with Bob on its evening news. By doing so he became the first person to talk about having an assisted death while in Switzerland. Bob’s story touched millions of people by putting a human face to the subject. Bob died surrounded by his friends listening to Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’ with a smile on his face. However, it was not the death that he wanted, nor the one he should have been able to have. Nonetheless, his death had a lasting impact and was a major discussion point in the days that followed.

Bob’s friend Carol on going with him to Dignitas:
“ I don’t worry about prosecution; it never really enters our head. I think it is a great honour to be with someone when they die. It is a great honour to be asked to do this.”

Bob’s friend Mick on his death:
“ After a short while he went into a deep coma and then he died. I have to say, he died with a smile on his face. His last words were “I am at peace with myself and thank you my friends.”

You can watch Bob on ITV news at www.bit.ly/bobcole
My first incursion into the right to die debate was in 2009 when Debbie Purdy, who suffered from progressive multiple sclerosis, persuaded the highest court in the land to require me, as the then Director of Public Prosecutions, to publish guidelines setting out the approach taken to prosecuting assisted suicide cases. I decided to act swiftly.

Two principles underpinned my approach. First, that the criminal law should rarely (if ever) be used against those who compassionately assist a loved one to die at their request - so long as that person had reached a voluntary, clear, settled and informed decision to end their life. Second, that very strong safeguards are needed to protect those who might be pressurised (in any number of ways) into taking their own lives: those who encourage the death of the vulnerable should feel the full force of the law.

Since then hardly anyone has questioned those principles.
I personally oversaw over 80 decisions not to prosecute in cases of assisted suicide without provoking outrage or a clamour for a change of approach. A motion welcoming my guidelines was unanimously supported by MPs on all sides of the House in a Backbench Business Committee debate in the House of Commons in March 2012.

“...But the truth is that the only safeguard that I was able to put in place in my guidelines was an ‘after the event’ criminal investigation.”

However, over the years I have become increasingly concerned about two inherent limitations in the guidelines. The first is that although those who have reached a voluntary, clear, settled and informed decision to end their lives can now be confident of the compassionate assistance of loved ones without automatically exposing them to the criminal law, the only assistance they can be provided with is the amateur help of those nearest and dearest. They cannot be provided with professional medical assistance unless they traipse off to Dignitas in Switzerland.

The second inherent limitation in the guidelines goes to the heart of the argument advanced by those who do not want any change in the law. They, rightly, point to the risk that some people might be pressurised or encouraged to take their own lives by those who do not have their best interests at heart; and argue for the blanket criminalisation of assisted suicide, subject to the operation of my guidelines, as offering the best protection against abuse. I have always given great weight to that argument. I completely accept the case for very strong safeguards to protect those who might be put upon (in any number of ways) to take their own lives. But the truth is that the only safeguard that I was able to put in place in my guidelines was an ‘after the event’ criminal investigation into the motive of the individual who assisted their suicide. As the President of the Supreme Court observed in the Nicklinson case it would provide far better protection if there was a system whereby an independent assessor assessed the person’s settled decision in advance.

The safeguards in the Assisted Dying Bill that were proposed by Rob Marris MP were certainly strong and robust. A person may only be provided with assistance to end his or her life if a High Court judge (Family Division) confirms that he or she is satisfied that the person has a voluntary, clear, settled and informed wish to end his or her own life. Only those diagnosed by a registered medical practitioner as having a terminal illness and less than six months’ life expectancy may apply to the High Court.
In the aftermath of the House of Commons voting down the Assisted Dying Bill in September it would be easy to become deflated. However, on 5th October news came in that the Governor of California had signed a Bill that gave choice to Californians at the end of life. It is something to celebrate that 39 million Californians have the right, should they be terminally ill, to control the manner and timing of their deaths.

The Californian Governor, Jerry Brown, is a committed Catholic and yet he has introduced a law that the church here and abroad is virulently opposed to. He had three options: veto the Bill, allow the Bill to pass without his signature or sign it. Vetoing was a possibility, but doing so in the face of the State Assembly and mass public support would have had significant political ramifications. He could have easily have not signed the Bill, meaning it would still come into law but without his endorsement. It is a symbolic action which many Governors take if their state assembly votes in a law that they personally disagree with.
In a true demonstration of leadership, against strong opposition lobbying from his own Church, he signed the Bill into law himself. In an accompanying letter, the Governor told the State Assembly:

“In the end, I was left to reflect on what I would want in the face of my own death.

I do not know what I would do if I were dying in prolonged and excruciating pain. I am certain, however, that it would be a comfort to be able to consider the options afforded by this bill.

And I wouldn’t deny that right to others.”

The Governor specifically cited the case of Brittany Maynard, a 29-year-old woman with terminal brain cancer who uprooted her home from California to Oregon so that she could have the option of assisted dying when the time came. This caused a nationwide discussion in the United States, and it was particularly charged in California which had to face up to the fact that one of its citizens had been let down by the state.

In California, politicians decided to act. It took political leadership in the face of hardened opposition, but act they did. Parliamentarians in the UK need to show similar courage.

A MESSAGE FROM THE USA:

PLEASE KEEP FIGHTING ON.

Following the defeat in the House of Commons Barbara Coombs Lee, President of Compassion in Choices in the US, sent us and all our supporters a message of hope.

“I know a loss like this can be disheartening. Heaven knows, Compassion and Choices has suffered plenty of them. But such losses are temporary, and fleeting, and should not influence dedication to our cause or the expectation of eventual victory.

Our members and donors support us when we lose. In fact they become even more devoted, because they see we are the only ones standing up for their most fervent wish --- to die peacefully when their time comes. No one else, no one else, speaks for them in the corridors of power.

Please keep on with as much fervour and dedication to assisted dying as ever. Those facing horrific deaths in the UK, and throughout the world, need to see this loss has neither weakened nor deterred you, but indeed, it has strengthened your resolve.”
FORMAL BUSINESS

1. The minutes of the 2014 AGM were approved.

2. The accounts for the year ended 31st December 2014 were approved and adopted.

3. Following recent Board elections Jane Calvert-Lee and Jo Gibbons were elected as Board members.

The AGM took place on 9th June 2015. The AGM was opened by Rob Marris MP who announced that, upon coming top of the Private Member’s Bill ballot, he would be taking forward an Assisted Dying Bill to be debated in the House of Commons in September 2015.

Dignity in Dying Patron, Lord Joffe, who deserves our immense gratitude for his work on the campaign, reflected the achievements there have been since his Bill in 2006. Barbara Coombs Lee, President of Compassion and Choices in the US, spoke movingly about Brittany Maynard who had an assisted death in Oregon in November 2014, and whose courage and determination has been instrumental in pushing for change in California.

Chief Executive Sarah Wootton encouraged supporters to take action in light of Rob Marris’ announcement, Sarah added, “MPs have spent too long listening to the 12% of their constituents who don’t want a change in the law. We, the 82% who want to have choice at the ends of our lives, need to remind politicians of our strength of feeling”.

Treasurer, Robert Hayward OBE (now Lord Hayward of Cumnor) gave a detailed Report, highlighting the significant increase in members and supporters for the campaign, and the huge increase in social media reach. Dignity in Dying Chair Sir Graeme Catto chaired the meeting and gave the results of the recent Board elections.

In the afternoon session, Lord Low provided additional insight on bringing the Falconer Bill back to Parliament, and Davina Hehir, our Director of Legal Strategy and Policy discussed potential legal challenges ahead. There was then a section on local Dignity in Dying activists and how they can make the case for law change. It was stressed that, “the most important feature of being a successful campaigner is feeling passionate about the subject”.

Finally, we heard from Dignity in Dying Patron, The Rev. Professor Paul Badham who spoke about his new essay collection, Assisted Dying: For and Against the Proposed Legislation, focusing on the religious, medical and international perspectives.
WHY DOES THE BMA OPPOSE ASSISTED DYING?

The debate on 11th September demonstrated that the opinion of healthcare professionals plays a significant role in influencing people’s views on assisted dying.

In the week leading up to the debate, a number of eminent healthcare professionals wrote to every MP, expressing the view that the current law prohibiting assisted dying is “dangerous and cruel”. The signatories included seven past presidents of the medical Royal Colleges, two former presidents of the British Medical Association (BMA), a former Chief Nursing Officer for England and the present Chief Knowledge Officer of the NHS.

The letter also mentioned polling that showed that many doctors support assisted dying and would be willing to be involved in the assisted dying process should the law change. Despite this, a significant number of MPs decided to vote against the Bill on the grounds that they believed the medical profession as a whole was opposed.

At first this seems surprising but on closer inspection it is perhaps understandable given the vocal and ferocious opposition of the BMA. The BMA’s briefing to MPs in the week of the debate warned that a change in the law could have a “profound and detrimental effect on the doctor-patient relationship”.

The BMA’s policy on assisted dying simply does not stand up to scrutiny and its 154,000 members have never been consulted on this issue. This is unacceptable given the importance of this issue and the weight that the voice of the BMA carries with lawmakers.

WE WILL NEED YOUR HELP.

If you are a healthcare professional then please join HPAD by visiting our website:

www.hpad.org.uk

If you are a member of the BMA and want to know what you can do to help the campaign then please email:

office@hpad.org.uk

If you are not a healthcare professional, why not make your views known to your doctor and encourage them to join HPAD?
Why did you get involved with the Dignity in Dying campaign?

It was after watching my mum die in a manner totally against her wishes; I was in disbelief that in this day and age people are forced to suffer at the end. I wanted something positive to come out of my mum’s terrible death.

When you met with other campaigners in Eastbourne how did you get started?

We felt a good way to start was to publicise the cause as much as we could, and to get people talking about the campaign. The majority of the British public support law change, we wanted to encourage as many as possible to actively support change.

How did your local MPs vote on the Assisted Dying Bill?

Unfortunately my Eastbourne MP, Caroline Ansell, is firmly against assisted dying. In my opinion her reasoning is flawed and ultimately comes down to her religious beliefs. Before the debate a group of us visited Caroline to try and convince her of the arguments or abstain from the vote – but we failed in this mission! We have been active in eight constituencies, on 11th September four were supportive, three were against and one abstained – I hope our campaigning made an impact!

What other activities have you and fellow activists got up to?

We had a General Election hustings for the Eastbourne constituency, and four of the six Parliamentary Candidates came along to debate assisted dying, the others sent prewritten statements. It turned out the majority of candidates were supportive of assisted dying, unfortunately the two who opposed were the only ones who had any chance of winning the seat, which was incredibly frustrating. In addition to holding stalls I have spoken on national and local radio on numerous occasions. For the debate itself ITV News Meridian visited me at home and carried the piece as their second story on the 6 o’clock news.

How do you feel about the campaign going forward?

Although disappointed with the result of the vote, we are determined not to stop campaigning. No major social change has ever come about without a struggle, and assisted dying will be no different.

www.dignityindying.org.uk/takeaction
My first day at Dignity in Dying was definitely a dive in at the deep end, joining right at the beginning of a high-profile parliamentary campaign of national importance. It is certainly the quickest way to get to grips with a new job!

My first ten weeks were almost entirely consumed with helping ensure we made as much noise as possible, whether that was in the media or through tens of thousands of supporters. With their help we ran a huge campaign with it becoming one of the biggest issues over the summer. Tens of thousands of people took action including Bob Cole who, facing his own imminent death, wanted his story to be told in aid of the campaign. I am incredibly impressed by the amazing supporters we have across the country.

Sadly it did not result in victory. With limited time to campaign, even less time for the debate itself, no Government support and a new cohort of unknown MPs who were subjected to scaremongering of opponents, we faced an uphill struggle from the start.

It is incredibly disappointing that we did not win. Terminally ill people and their loved ones are still in the same difficult and dangerous situation now as they were before the debate. I feel deeply for those who are now denied hope or security as a result. I am also disappointed on behalf of the tens of thousands who took action, many of whom told their heart-breaking stories to MPs in an attempt to persuade them.

What the result has clearly shown is that, even in 2015, MPs are very vulnerable to the fear spread by opponents. Before joining Dignity in Dying I worked at Stonewall, the LGBT charity that campaigned for equal marriage. There I faced those who claimed that giving people freedom over their own lives would damage society as a whole and put others at risk. For many years MPs listened to those opponents, refusing to change the law as a result, but soon saw this for what it was: baseless scaremongering.

I have no doubt that MPs will, in time, come to realise the same about opposing assisted dying. We will, with your continued support, win this fight.
Over the past few months disabled activists, with Dignity in Dying, have made it clear to MPs that an overwhelming majority of disabled people, 86%, support assisted dying.

As part of the campaign for the Bill, Disabled Activists for Dignity in Dying (DADiD) produced a video featuring Lucy Aliband. Lucy became disabled following a severe car accident ten years ago and she explained why the choice of an assisted death should be available to mentally competent, terminally ill adults.

The video was sent out to all MPs prior to the debate and included a clear message to charities representing people with disabilities.

Lucy says these charities are “completely ignoring their members, they are giving us no choice; they’re treating us like infants. How can a body that purports to represent you, go completely against your wishes?”

Research has shown that 82% of disabled people do not feel charities that oppose a new law on assisted dying best reflect their views. Sadly, some MPs in the debate feared that a new law would lead to disabled people being forced to have an assisted death, which is why many MPs fear such a change. But they ignored the fact that the Bill would be a choice solely for terminally ill dying people with less than six months left to live. Sadly this misconception continues to be spread by groups opposing a change in the law.

With an overwhelming majority of disabled people behind us and a campaign group that continues to grow, DADiD will challenge those determined to scare disabled people. We will continue to provide evidence that the current law is failing terminally ill people and that disabled people are fully protected under a new law for assisted dying.

To watch Lucy’s video online go to: www.dadid.org.uk/lucy
It is one year since the ambitious My Life, My Decision project was launched, so it is a good moment to pause and reflect on the achievements to date. The service supports people over 50 to ensure their wishes for treatment and care are known and respected.

This service has allowed Compassion in Dying to reach many communities that may otherwise have remained unaware of their rights. In partnership with local Age UKs we have been informing and supporting communities directly in Oxfordshire, East London, Hillingdon, Lancashire, South Lakeland, South Tyneside and Trafford.

Our Training Leads, Project Co-ordinators and volunteers have delivered short talks and training to staff and volunteers at Age UKs, GP surgeries, residential homes, hospitals and hospices, and to the general public at community groups, events and conferences. In the first year we have reached thousands of people.

Importantly we have provided one-to-one support to hundreds of people completing an Advance Decision, Advance Statement or Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare. We have had overwhelmingly positive feedback on the service.

“At any stage, if anything was wrong the Project Co-ordinator came to my house and answered all my questions and supported me. She didn’t push it, but she was there when she was needed.”

The impact of the service for our clients like Glenda (pictured) is typical

“It gives you confidence and for me it has given me a happier life knowing that my wishes will be known and respected.”

The next twelve months will be busy. In addition to the client support we have found that clinicians and social care staff want and value our training and information. This will be rolled out in the next year as we deliver our free CPD accredited training, The Three Tools for Planning Ahead: An Introduction.

To find out more on My Life, My Decision go to: www.compassionindying.org.uk/services-near-me
Talking about what is important to you helps make sure that people understand what you want, and can respect your wishes at the end of life. Some people find talking about their wishes easy. Others find it more difficult. That is why Compassion in Dying has launched a new booklet which aims to support you to talk about your wishes for care and treatment with your family, friends and doctor.

When writing this booklet we spoke to over 300 people about their experiences of discussing their wishes for health and care and the quotes within it are taken from the insights they shared.

“Telling our loved ones our wishes helps them have the confidence and comfort to know that they are doing what we want them to do.”

You may have thoughts about where you want to be cared for, how you would like to be treated if something happens to you, or what is important to you at the end of life. In the
future, you could become unable to explain what you want or make these decisions for yourself. Talking about what is important to you helps make sure that people understand what you want, and can respect your wishes.

For you, talking about your wishes can:
• Help you to make informed decisions in your own time by considering your options.
• Give you control over the care and treatment you receive, whether that is tomorrow or further in the future.
• Give you peace of mind that you have taken steps to make sure your wishes are known about, recorded and respected.

For those close to you, talking about your wishes can:
• Help them to feel involved in your decisions and to understand your wishes.
• Make sure they are not left guessing what you want if doctors ask them to help make a decision about your care or treatment.

“I think I felt it was better not to talk about things in case it made them happen. But when I did talk about it, I felt relieved. It wasn’t without challenges, but it’s my life at the end of the day and I want my family to know what’s important to me.”

To order a free copy of this booklet please contact us:
T 0800 999 2434
E info@compassionindying.org.uk

NEWS ROUNDUP.

Making and implementing Advance Decisions: a toolkit for healthcare professionals was launched at the beginning of October. Written in consultation with a range of healthcare professionals, this toolkit focuses on how healthcare professionals can support their patients and service users to make an Advance Decision. It also looks at some of the difficulties healthcare professionals may face when acting on someone’s Advance Decision once they have lost capacity.

On Monday 17th November we will be launching our new Online Advance Decision form. This allows you to create an Advance Decision or an Advance Statement (or both) online, to then print out and sign. It will outline different scenarios in which to refuse treatment as well as giving accessible guidance throughout the form. Discover the new tool at our website www.compassionindying.org.uk

Contact us to find out more about any of these projects, or if you would like a copy of our publications:
T 0800 999 2434
E info@compassionindying.org.uk
W compassionindying.org.uk/library
As a member of Dignity in Dying you are entitled to use a free Will-writing service with solicitors local to you. It allows you to support the campaign at absolutely no cost to you.

Dignity in Dying relies on the generosity of its members to continue campaigning, so terminally ill adults will have real choice at the end of life.

Leaving a gift in your Will would be a tribute to your beliefs and principles, by helping to bring a compassionate change in the law for future generations.

Supporter bequests fund 25% of the assisted dying campaign. Whether your gift is large or small, it will make a difference.

To get your Free Wills pack get in contact with Mike Hamilton:
T 020 7479 7109
E mike.hamilton@dignityindying.org.uk
W www.dignityindying.org.uk/legacy