

THE ASSISTED DYING BILL

Assisted Dying Bill safeguards



Current law safeguards

The Assisted Dying Bill would give terminally ill, mentally competent adults the choice of an assisted death. **The Bill contains 15 safeguards compared to the current law's 2 safeguards.**

The Bill would provide greater protection for vulnerable people than the current law. The current law neither prevents people ending their own lives illegally nor protects those who do so.

- Research suggests **348 terminally ill adults take their own lives in England every year** - almost one a day. These deaths happen in secret, sometimes with the support of family and friends who risk prosecution, but often alone and in distressing circumstances.¹
- On average, **one Briton is assisted to end their life every two weeks** at Dignitas in Switzerland.²

Investigations into these deaths are rare and take place after someone has died, when it is too late to check their mental capacity, prognosis and the quality of their decision-making - and too late to prevent potential abuse.

Comparison of the safeguards shows that a safeguarded assisted dying law would be much safer than the status quo. The Bill includes far more, and more effective, safeguards than the current law.

For more detailed information on the Assisted Dying Bill please visit:
<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/assisteddyingno2.html>.

1. The circumstances of 760 suicides were examined in detail through an FOI request. Based on the data, in 7% of suicides the person had a terminal illness (Dignity in Dying, October 2014, http://www.dignityindying.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/FOI_report_A_Hidden_Problem.pdf). When applied to the most recent national data (ONS, 2014 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-385245>) this suggests there are 348 suicides by terminally ill people in England every year.

2. Dignitas, January 2015, <http://www.dignitas.ch/images/stories/pdf/statistik-ftb-jahr-wohnsitz-1998-2014.pdf>

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15 SAFEGUARDS UNDER THE ASSISTED DYING BILL

Before someone ends their life:

- 1 Two doctors independently confirm the person is terminally ill and expected to die within six months.
- 2 Two doctors establish that the person has the mental capacity to request assisted dying.
- 3 If either doctor is unsure about the person's capacity to make a request they are referred to a psychiatrist.
- 4 Two doctors assess that the person is making an informed decision without pressure or coercion.
- 5 Two doctors ensure the person has been fully informed of palliative, hospice and other care.
- 6 The person signs a written declaration of their request which is witnessed and signed by both doctors.
- 7 A High Court judge confirms that the person's decision has been reached voluntarily and all other safeguards and eligibility criteria have been met.
- 8 A waiting period of 14 days allows the person time to reflect on their decision. This timeframe is shorter if the person is expected to die within a month.
- 9 The life-ending medication is stored at a pharmacy and only delivered to the person when they request it.
- 10 A healthcare professional brings the medication, checks the person continues to have a settled intention to die, and remains nearby.
- 11 Only the person can administer the life-ending medication, to ensure the final decision is their own.

After someone ends their life:

- 12 The Bill creates new criminal offences in relation to making a false declaration, providing a misleading or false expert opinion or hiding a declaration.
- 13 It would continue to be a crime to directly end someone's life. It would continue to be a crime to provide assistance to end life in any circumstances other than those set out in the Bill.

Other safeguards:

- 14 Every assisted death under the law will be recorded and reported.
- 15 The law will be reviewed by Parliament after 10 years.

2 SAFEGUARDS UNDER THE CURRENT LAW

Before someone ends their life:

- 1 The law criminalising assistance to end life is intended to act as a deterrent. However, assistance happens, with no safeguards to prevent potential abuse.

After someone ends their life:

- 2 If someone is believed to have assisted someone to die, they may be investigated. If there is evidence that they assisted, and the authorities believe it is in the public interest to do so, the person will be prosecuted.

Other safeguards:

None



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