



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

November 2018.

Dear Constituent,

A Response to the Assisted Dying Campaign

Thank you for contacting me about assisted dying.

Coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult, both for the patient and their families. These cases are truly moving and evoke the highest degree of compassion and emotion. I accept that suicide, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are subjects on which people hold widely differing but defensible opinions.

Here in Scotland, justice and healthcare are both devolved matters, and therefore the substance and practical application of the law in this area, as well as NHS care for people with a terminal illness, are ultimately the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament.

There is no legislation in Scotland concerning assisted suicide, but it is possible that someone who assists someone to end their life could be prosecuted for murder or culpable homicide. It is ultimately up to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to decide whether to prosecute cases of assisted suicide on a case-by-case basis. This differs from England and Wales, where the UK Government has jurisdiction, and where assisting suicide is a criminal offence in its own right.

As I understand, neither the Scottish Government nor the UK Government have any plans to change the law on assisted suicide in their areas of jurisdiction. The Scottish Parliament also voted overwhelmingly against legalising assisted suicide in a free vote on the issue in 2015.

It is, nonetheless, important that the lives of the terminally ill are valued, and that terminally ill patients receive the highest quality palliative support, as well as end of life care that meets all of their needs.

The UK Government's 'End of Life Care Strategy' is intended to improve access to good quality palliative care, and to encourage further development of specialist palliative care and hospice provision. Likewise, the Scottish Government published a 'Palliative and End of Life Care Strategic Framework for Action' in 2015.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alister Jack".

Alister Jack DL MP
Dumfries and Galloway constituency.

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