

BHA BRIEFING 2009: Coroners and Justice Bill

Amendments to the Suicide Act

Briefing for Commons Report & 3rd Reading, 23rd & 24th March 2009

The British Humanist Association has long been involved in the debates around assisted dying. We defend the ethical principles of the right of each individual to live by her/his own personal values, and the freedom to make decisions about her/his own life so long as this does not result in harm to others.

We believe that people should be able to access good quality, patient-centred treatment and care at the end of life; and terminally ill, mentally competent adults should have the choice of an assisted death, within strict legal safeguards, if they feel their suffering is unbearable.

Amendment

An amendment to the Coroners and Justice Bill has been tabled by former Health Minister Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP: 'Acts not capable of assisting or encouraging suicide (exception for travel abroad)'.

The amendment would remove the threat of prosecution to those who accompany a loved one to a country in which assisted dying is lawful.

The Coroners and Justice Bill will be debated in the House of Commons on Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th March.

New clause tabled by Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP, Crispin Blunt MP, Dr Evan Harris MP, Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP, Chris McCafferty MP, Richard Ottaway MP and James Plaskitt MP.

After Clause 46 insert new clause: Acts not capable of assisting or encouraging suicide (exception for travel abroad)

"2ZA Acts not capable of encouraging or assisting

(1) An act by D is not to be treated as capable of encouraging or assisting the suicide or attempted suicide of another person ("T") if the act is done solely or principally for the purpose of enabling or assisting T to travel to a country or territory in which assisted dying is lawful;

We are encouraging MPs to support this amendment and to join the debates in support of a reformed law on assisted dying in the UK.

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