
2021

Impact Report

My Death, My Decision Limited, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England number 11758121, registered office Unit A 39 Moreland Street London EC1V 8BB

HENRY MARSH

PATRON

In 2021, the UK right-to-die movement marked a sobering anniversary – ninety years since the distinguished doctor Killick Millard published his seminal draft Bill on assisted dying, and spawned the modern campaign that we know today. That’s ninety years of people calling for a change in the law, and ninety years of people suffering unnecessary, cruel, and inescapable pain.

It also took on a personal significance after I was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. Thus bringing into sharper focus the importance of our campaign and the inequity of our current law.

As a doctor for over forty years, I know that dying can be deeply distressing, for both patient and family, despite what the opponents of assisted dying claim, and however good the palliative care. And it is not just a question of physical suffering, but also of the loss of autonomy that dying so often involves and which I dread most of all. I am quite certain that if people in my situation knew they had the ability to choose how, when and

where they would die, it would greatly reduce their suffering. Knowing that I had this choice, if my life became unbearable, would certainly give me much greater confidence now in facing whatever the future might hold for me. But as the law stands, I am not allowed this comfort, and the law insists instead that I must suffer.

Death comes to us all, sooner or later, one way or another, and is part of life, yet we have an unfortunate culture of death denial in this country. We seem to think that all that matters is the length of life and not its quality. This denial pervades the discussion of assisted dying, at a time when many other

countries have had a healthy debate and moved to implement appropriate laws to allow it. Indeed, despite overwhelming public opinion in this country in favour of assisted dying, our politicians show a striking lack of compassion by being unwilling to consider a public inquiry, let alone promote legislation. They are guilty, inadvertently, of great cruelty.

It is for this reason, among others, that I believe so strongly in the work of My Death, My Decision and its mission – to represent the interests of those with terminal or incurable illnesses and secure a lasting change in the law on their behalf.

Fortunately, over the last year, there has been a sense that things are starting to change. Spurred by the support from thousands of supporters, members, volunteers, and activists the momentum behind our campaign has grown. And I was very pleased that due to our efforts more than 50 MPs and peers backed my call in a joint letter – the

largest ever assembled on this topic – for an inquiry into the law.

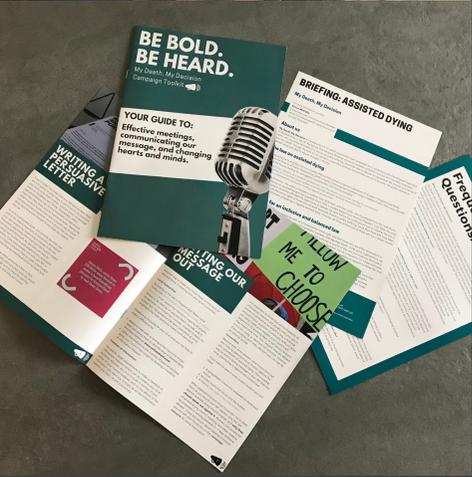
As many of us reflect upon the ninetieth anniversary of our movement, some may inevitably ask how much longer those who are terminally ill or incurably suffering will have to wait before the option of a dignified death becomes recognised in the law. I know that we will succeed eventually, but just how long we have to wait for the law to change will depend on how hard we continue to fight for true kindness and compassion in the care of people with intractable suffering or terminal illness.



Dr Henry Marsh | Patron



Contents



Foreword	1
Message from our Chair	5
About Us	
Our Objectives	8
Our Impact in Numbers	9
Our Team	10
Our Patrons	12
Obituary: Paul Lamb	13
Call For An Inquiry	
Launching the campaign for an inquiry	16
Bringing together a generation of campaigners	16
Securing Parliamentary support	17
Next Steps	17
Campaigning in Parliament	
New Research: Assisted Dying & Covid-19	19
Advancing the right to die in Northern Ireland	19
Exposing the inadequacy of our current law	20
The View from Westminster	21
Broadening the Debate	
Landmark victory on BMA survey	24
Historic verdict from Jersey Citizens' Jury	24
Thousands watch our growing events series	25
Founding new campaign in Wales	25
Looking Ahead	26
Financial Statement	29

This year we asked our members and supporters for their thoughts on assisted dying through a survey. We received an overwhelming response and the answers highlight to us, why our campaign must go on.

Why do you support assisted dying?

Everyone deserves as good a death as possible.

My body my choice.

Health is wealth and quality of life is paramount.

We should have the right to end our own suffering .

Everyone deserves the right to die at a time, and in a humane manner, of their choosing.

People should be allowed to die with dignity.

TREVOR MOORE CHAIR

The past year has been a momentous one for My Death, My Decision and its campaign for a compassionate assisted dying law.

Despite the wider impact of the pandemic, our work did not stop. Indeed end of life issues came to the forefront, as countless thousands faced the death of close family or friends in challenging circumstances. Meanwhile our public profile grew alongside our expansion as an organisation.

Recent developments have seen assisted dying very much back in the public eye. The death in June this year of our committed campaigner and Patron, Paul Lamb, acted to remind us why we campaign – to help the terminally ill and the incurably suffering choose how, when and where they die, without fear of prosecution of those who act to help them out of compassion.

Paul sparked the move by over fifty

Parliamentarians calling for a public inquiry. We continue to carry his torch forwards, helped by the determined efforts of another Patron, Dr Henry Marsh. Henry himself shared the sad news of his diagnosis with prostate cancer, selflessly achieving considerable media coverage for the campaign in the process.

Our determination to pursue our campaign for a law similar to the Canada model – one that will help both the incurably suffering and the terminally ill (without any arbitrary, specified life expectancy) – has been bolstered by the results of the British Medical Association's survey last autumn that showed a majority of doctors support a law change; while a Jersey Citizens' Jury, shows that 70% favour a law on these lines.

Alongside that an Assisted Dying Bill has been announced for Scotland, while the Dying with Dignity Bill progresses in Ireland – with no arbitrary time limit in relation to terminal illness. It is also positive that we have an Assisted Dying Bill in the House of Lords, presented by Baroness Meacher, even though it is of more limited scope than we seek in our campaign.

We also look around the world to the growing number of countries that have in the last twelve months introduced an assisted dying law, or have laid the foundations for that to happen before the end of this year: Austria, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and Spain, as well as several US and Australian states.

We owe huge thanks to our members, supporters and online community for taking their own steps to campaign and spread the word. There has been significant growth in their numbers this year.

Generous donations have also enabled us to pay for much-needed skills, both in social media and communications, as well as funding for research, such as surveys, and considering initiatives that have been out of reach to date. Not surprisingly, if we are to sustain our expansion, we will continue to need this help.

Thanks also to all of our committed volunteers for their valuable work, both at board level and within the wider team. Our shared passion to change the law in this country fuels the campaign.



Trevor Moore | Chair

About Us

**SUPPORT
ASSISTED
DYING**

**NO ONE
SHOULD
HAVE TO
DIE IN
PAIN**

MY DEATH, MY DECISION 

Championing Choice & Control

We campaign

in Parliament, on behalf of adults who are of sound mind and either terminally ill or facing incurable suffering, for the legalisation of assisted dying.

We champion

legal cases, such as by our members Omid T and Paul Lamb, to enshrine a fundamental right to choose how we die into law.

We advance

evidence-based policy and seek to broaden public debates by researching and publicising the impacts of assisted dying both domestically and abroad.

We promote

the use of current end-of-life planning through Advance Decisions, Lasting Powers of Attorney, and Do not Attempt Cardiovascular Resuscitation Notices.

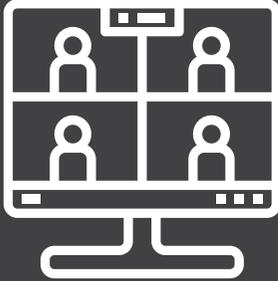
We connect

like-minded people, passionate about achieving a once-in-a-generation social reform, through our local groups.

10000+ 

New members and supporters

600+ 
Event attendees

**6 Local
Groups** 

London | Brighton | Bristol | Wessex | Cardiff | Cotswolds

196
Conversations
with politicians 

24,000 
people saw our talk with
Henry Marsh

450,000 

People saw our campaigns on Facebook

500,000 
people saw our campaigns
on Twitter

5000+  Doctors reached
during the BMA's
survey

DIRECTORS

Trevor Moore
 Robert Ince
 Claire Macdonald
 Simon Menneer
 Ruth Eyre-Pugh

Colin Brewer
 Liz Murphy
 Gary Marsh
 Natika H
 Alan O'Kelly



STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Keiron McCabe
 Grace Scott
 Melissa Badinca
 Phil Cheatle
 Susie Ince
 David Cunningham Green
 Dr Miriam Day
 Sue Lawford
 Carrie Hynds
 David Coulter
 Stephen Mason
 Roger Woodley
 Email Team (Angela, Debbie, Mary, Sarah and Susie)

Communications Manager
 Social Media Officer
 Communications Officer
 Lead Campaign Commentator
 Membership Secretary
 London Group Chair
 Wales Group Chair Co - Chair
 Wales Group Chair Co - Chair
 Brighton and Hove Group Chair
 Wessex Group Chair
 Bristol Group Chair
 Cotswolds Group Chair



NEW DIRECTORS

Alan O'Kelly: 'People should have the right to make their own decision without judgement.'

My Death, My Decision has welcomed Alan O'Kelly as a Director this year.

Allan is an experienced Public Affairs Professional and a father of two.

Why did you join MDMD?

The work of MDMD is incredibly important. We're leading an important debate about how we support people into make a really difficult choice. The important thing is we support people in making their own choices and not impose any decisions on them.

People should have the right to make their own decision without judgement.

We're in a terrible position now where we're exporting the problem to another country. Adding a layer for no other reason than we don't want to deal with our issue.

What do you see as the biggest opportunity for MDMD in the future?

A sense that people are starting to engage and seeing a willingness and openness to having the assisted dying discussion.

A fun fact about Alan

I used to be an amateur actor!

Natika H: 'People deserve unbiased, evidence-based information.'

My Death, My Decision has welcomed Natika Halil as Director for Diversity and Gender.

Natika has held senior positions in Communications, Health and Information provision for over 15 years. She has recently completed a six month contract as Interim CEO at The Rationalist Association.

Why did you join MDMD?

I joined My Death, My Decision because I am passionate about providing unbiased, evidence-based information so that people can make the best possible decisions for themselves.

What do you see as the biggest opportunity for MDMD in the future?

To continue to attract members and move forward on influencing policy change.

A fun fact about Natika

I've been highly commended in belly dancing! (A very long time ago).

PATRONS

Sir Iain Chalmers

Professor A.C. Grayling

Dr Phil Hammond

Revd Canon Rosie Harper

Virginia Ironside

Dr Michael Irwin

Dr Henry Marsh

Miriam Margolyes

Professor David Nutt

Lord Rees of Ludlow

Baroness Richardson of Calow

Dr Wendy Savage

Polly Toynbee

Dr Adam Kay



Obituary: Paul Lamb - A Campaigner with 'Unrelenting Courage'

The My Death, My Decision team was deeply saddened by the death of our much-valued patron, Paul Lamb, earlier this year.

In 1990, Paul was severely injured in a car accident and left with no function below his neck, apart from limited movement in his right arm. His condition required around the clock care and he suffered daily pain as a result. Prior to his accident, the father of two had enjoyed a successful career as a builder and champion greyhound racer.

In 2014, alongside Jane Nicklinson - the widow of fellow right to die campaigner Tony Nicklinson - he lost a case before the Supreme Court. Although two judges, including Lady Hale, were ready to declare the law banning assisted dying incompatible with Paul's human rights, a majority ruled that Parliament should first be given an opportunity to debate assisted dying before the courts made a

definitive judgment. In 2019 he brought a fresh case, supported by My Death, My Decision, arguing that the current law was discriminatory and breached his human rights under Article 8 (right to a private and family life) and Article 14 (prohibition on discrimination) of

'Paul faced considerable challenges with unrelenting courage, despite his evident suffering. Through it all, he remained committed to achieving a law that would allow an assisted death not only to the terminally ill, but also to those suffering incurably, as Paul did.'

the Human Rights Act. However, the Court of Appeal said there were 'no arguable grounds' for his case because assisted dying was 'pre-eminently a matter for Parliament, not the courts'.

Subsequent to this, Paul Lamb wrote to the Secretary of State for Justice calling on him to 'turn your sympathy into action' by holding an inquiry into the law on assisted dying.

Expressing his condolences to Paul's family, My Death, My Decision's Chair Trevor Moore said: 'The team at My Death, My Decision send their heartfelt condolences to Paul Lamb's family and to everyone who knew and loved him. 'Paul faced considerable challenges with unrelenting courage, despite his evident suffering. Through it all, he remained committed to achieving a law that would allow an assisted death not only to the terminally ill, but also to those suffering incurably, as Paul did. We will carry forward his legacy by campaigning with renewed vigour for the law that Paul so tirelessly sought. That is why we continue to press for a public inquiry, now long overdue.'



Ministry
of Justice

Call for an inquiry

Crown
Prosecution
CPS | Service

Government
Legal Department

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TENTH
ANNIVERSARY OF DEBBIE
MURDY'S LANDMARK CASE

This year our main focus has been to secure a Parliamentary inquiry into the law on assisted dying. It has now been more than fifteen years since Parliament last examined the evidence underpinning our current law. In this time, the context in which our law operates has dramatically changed, public and medical support for a change in the law has soared, and the availability of evidence from abroad has materially changed. We think our lawmakers should be making decisions based on the evidence, and are campaigning to put the voices of those with terminal or incurable conditions at the centre of this debate.

Launching the campaign for an inquiry

Following the Court of Appeal's disappointing decision to refuse Paul Lamb's fresh legal bid, thereby ending the prospect of future litigation for the foreseeable future, we launched a new campaign for an inquiry into the law.

Working with Paul we wrote to the Secretary of State for Justice and urged him to launch an inquiry into the Suicide Act 1961. As part of our efforts, we secured coverage in the British Medical Journal; we met with the Justice Secretary to put the case for the Government neutrally assembling evidence; what's more, we briefed MPs on the importance of an inquiry ahead of a Westminster Hall debate. This work contributed towards a majority of MPs who spoke in the debate backing an inquiry into the law, as well

as blanket coverage across *BBC News Online*, *The Times Newspaper*, and *The Guardian*.

Bringing together a generation of campaigners to call for an inquiry

We helped to bring together the families and living claimants from most of the previous assisted dying legal cases, for the first time ever, to continue calling for an inquiry into the law.

Our open letter to the Government was publicised by *The Guardian* and included signatories from Debbie Purdy's widower Omar Puente, Tony Nicklinson's widow Jane Nicklinson, the mother of Omid T, and Phil Newby. Our letter said:

Call for parliament to review assisted dying law in England and Wales

Open letter comes five years after a private members bill was overwhelmingly rejected

● [Time for parliament to act on assisted dying | Letters](#)



Our letter featured in the *Guardian Newspaper*. locked-in

'Following our unsuccessful legal cases, it is now obvious that parliamentarians alone have a responsibility to look at this matter again. They must not allow our cases to become the final word on the matter, or else countless others will experience the indignity, suffering, and agony that we can attest that this law creates.'

Securing Parliamentary Support

Following our efforts to secure an inquiry, we welcomed the Government's positive shift in tone, when the *Telegraph* reported that whilst the Government had no intention of instigating an inquiry it would 'be pleased to see either the Health Select Committee or Justice Select Committee gather evidence on the issue'.

We worked towards making this a reality, by jointly organising a parliamentary letter from more than 50 MPs and peers - the largest parliamentary letter ever assembled on this topic - calling for the Health, Justice, and Human Rights Select Committees to launch an inquiry into the law. Its signatories came from Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Green Party, and Crossbench lawmakers, including some who had previously voted against a change in the law.

Endorsed by our patron Henry Marsh, our announcement was widely covered in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Atlantic Magazine*, BBC Radio 2, 4, and 5 live; it also led BBC News' homepage on the day of its announcement.



However, our success has also prompted groups opposed to a change in the law to step up their efforts. In recognition of the momentum, they built a new group of roughly 30 MPs and peers formed to specifically halt our progress. Notwithstanding, we have continued to lobby MPs to highlight the urgent need for an inquiry into the law.

Next Steps

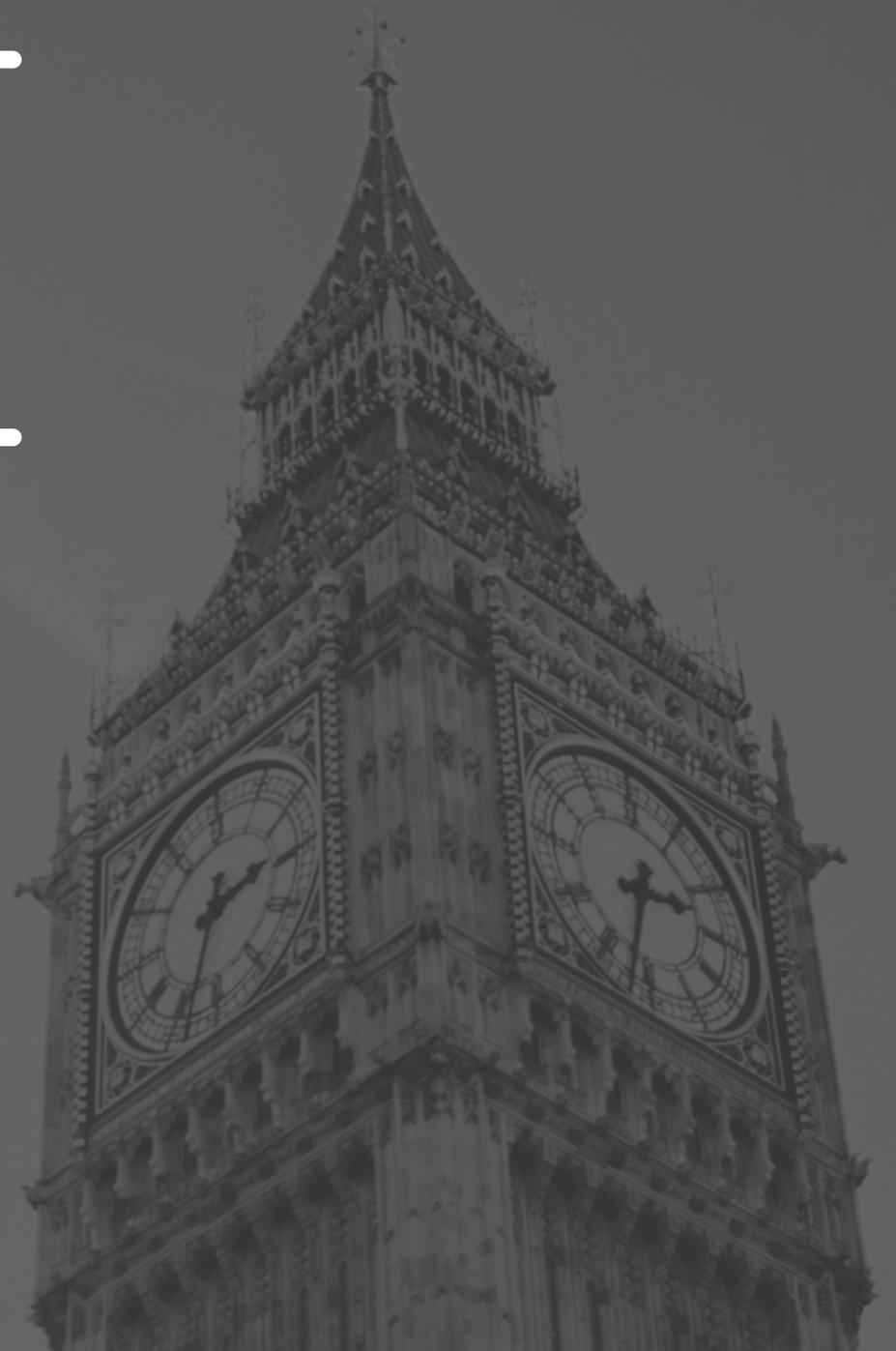
Prompted by our letter calling for an examination of the law, the Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP has said:

'The Government's view remains that any changes in the law in this emotive and contentious area is a matter for Parliament to decide and an issue of conscience ... It is of course open to Committees of the House of Parliament,

including Select Committees, to initiate a review of the law ...' We will continue to push for a Select Committee inquiry or for the Lords to establish a special inquiry into assisted dying.

We will also work to promote a greater understanding in Parliament about the urgent need to allow people autonomy and choice over how and when they end their life.

Campaign in Parliament



As a grassroots movement, we regularly consult our members and supporters to determine our priorities. Last year, 45% of our members and supporters asked for greater engagement with Parliament, 31% asked us to publish new research on assisted dying; what's more, 55% asked for us to provide help with contacting their local MP. In a busy year we contacted nearly 200 parliamentarians to advance the case for a right-to-die: submitted responses to several parliamentary consultations; held campaigning masterclasses on lobbying MPs; collaborated with journalists to investigate; and published new hard-hitting research.

New Research: Assisted Dying & Covid-19

We took part in the Joint Committee on Human Rights' review of Covid-19, by publishing exclusive research into the impact of lockdown on those travelling abroad to end their lives. As part of our submission, we revealed that following lockdown restrictions, the number of Britons travelling to Dignitas had more than halved - with many people choosing to postpone their decision and potentially losing the option of an assisted death in the future.

We also called attention to the widespread confusion that had surrounded the lockdown's regulations - thrown into sharp focus by the heartbreaking incident, reported by *The Times*, where one woman brought forward her plans to end her life to beat lockdown.

Advancing the right to die in Northern Ireland

Beyond our main work in England and Wales, we have continued to represent the incurably suffering elsewhere in the UK.

Earlier this year, we responded to the Republic of Ireland's consultation on the Death with Dignity Bill - which if successful will legalise assisted dying for those living in Northern Ireland too - in support of their change in the law.

We also engaged Northern Ireland's Members of the Legislative Assembly by taking part in their consultation on new legal rights. We called for the recognition of a right to die and submitted expert evidence from our patrons A.C. Grayling and the Revd Canon Rosie Harper.

Defending the Human Rights Act

This year the Government announced its intention to water down our human rights framework by weakening the Human Rights Act 1998. This law was instrumental in the success of Debbie Purdy's legal efforts to secure the Director of Public Prosecutions' guidelines on assisted dying.

We challenged the Government's proposals and the risk they'd pose towards stifling progress towards a legal right to die. We also supported a coalition of more than 200 organisations, trade unions, charities, and human rights bodies in defence of the Human Rights Act and judicial review. As a coalition, our work helped prompt the Government into revising its plans on judicial review.

Exposing the inadequacy of our current law

In April, we collaborated with Good Morning Britain to expose that at least 3 in 10 people who travel to Switzerland for an assisted death do so unbeknown to the police. Our research also found that in some local areas, levels of police detection were dramatically poorer with roughly nine in ten people (92%) going undetected by the Metropolitan Police.

We were swift to highlight that these findings raise serious questions about the effectiveness of the current law, and showed that our law does not protect potentially vulnerable people – it relies upon Swiss safeguards to do so instead.

Unlike in places abroad where assisted dying is a legal choice, those who choose to travel to Switzerland often decide to end their lives sooner than they would have otherwise wished. This is because they need to be physically fit enough to travel abroad. Alongside our most recent findings, this highlights the flawed nature of our current law. Instead of protecting those who are potentially most vulnerable

it pressures people with terminal or incurable illnesses to end their lives prematurely, or without robust and upfront British safeguards.



Campaign Workshop Successes

In April 2020 we held our first in a series of successful campaign workshops. With topics ranging from how to lobby your local MP, the best way to persuade parliamentarians, getting letters published by the media, and improving inclusiveness within our movement, our well-attended sessions attracted a range of our members and supporters.

Later in the year, we celebrated the success of these workshops when they resulted in several local MPs backing our joint letter for an inquiry into the law, as well as many of our members and

supporters successfully publishing letters in their local newspapers.

An overwhelming majority of attendees ranked our session as a four or five, out of five, and said that they found the training 'helpful', 'informative', and 'well-worth attending'.

Following feedback from the event, we also published an interactive map – the first of its kind ever – to help local activists know how their MP previously voted on assisted dying, and how many assisted deaths go undetected in their area.

JOHN WATSON

FORMER MP

We are fortunate in this country to have some of the best palliative medicine in the world. Every year our hospice movement helps thousands of dying people to die with dignity, and gives countless others the comfort they need to ease their suffering. I have always been an advocate of high-quality palliative care, and was proud to have supported a number of excellent hospices when MP for Skipton and Ripon.

Yet, irrespective of how good our end-of-life care might be, we do not help those with terminal or incurable conditions by ignoring the simply unavoidable limits of palliative medicine. Nor by turning a blind eye to the often unbearable nature of their suffering.

For several years, I was unconvinced of the case for legalising assisted dying. Like several of my colleagues in Parliament, I felt naturally sympathetic to the plight of those seeking choice and control over their lives, but I worried that it would never be possible to devise a system of workable safeguards. And, I feared what sort of message a change in the law might signal for

the most vulnerable in society.

Yet gradually my thinking evolved. In part, this was because of the increasing number of countries that came to recognise a right-to-die and in doing so demonstrate that changes in the law could be achieved in both a safe and compassionate manner. Already assisted dying is legal – or will soon become legal – in 11 jurisdictions of the United States, 3 Australian States, Austria, Canada, Colombia, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and Switzerland.

What's more, whilst they are legitimate concerns, successive

studies have never found any evidence to support the idea that assisted dying risks pressuring vulnerable people, nor that it undermines the availability of palliative care. Although several independent studies have found the precise opposite.

But most important of all, after meeting several people let down by our current law, I came to believe that the critical question was not what sort of message reform might send, but rather what doing nothing already said about our values as a society. By failing to act, by failing to show compassion to those at the end of their lives, and by failing to respect the choices of those with terminal or incurable illnesses, I concluded that the message was clear: our current law is cruel, outdated, and in urgent need of reform.

In Westminster, I'm pleased to see that the tide is starting to turn on assisted dying. Yet critical to that success has been the voice

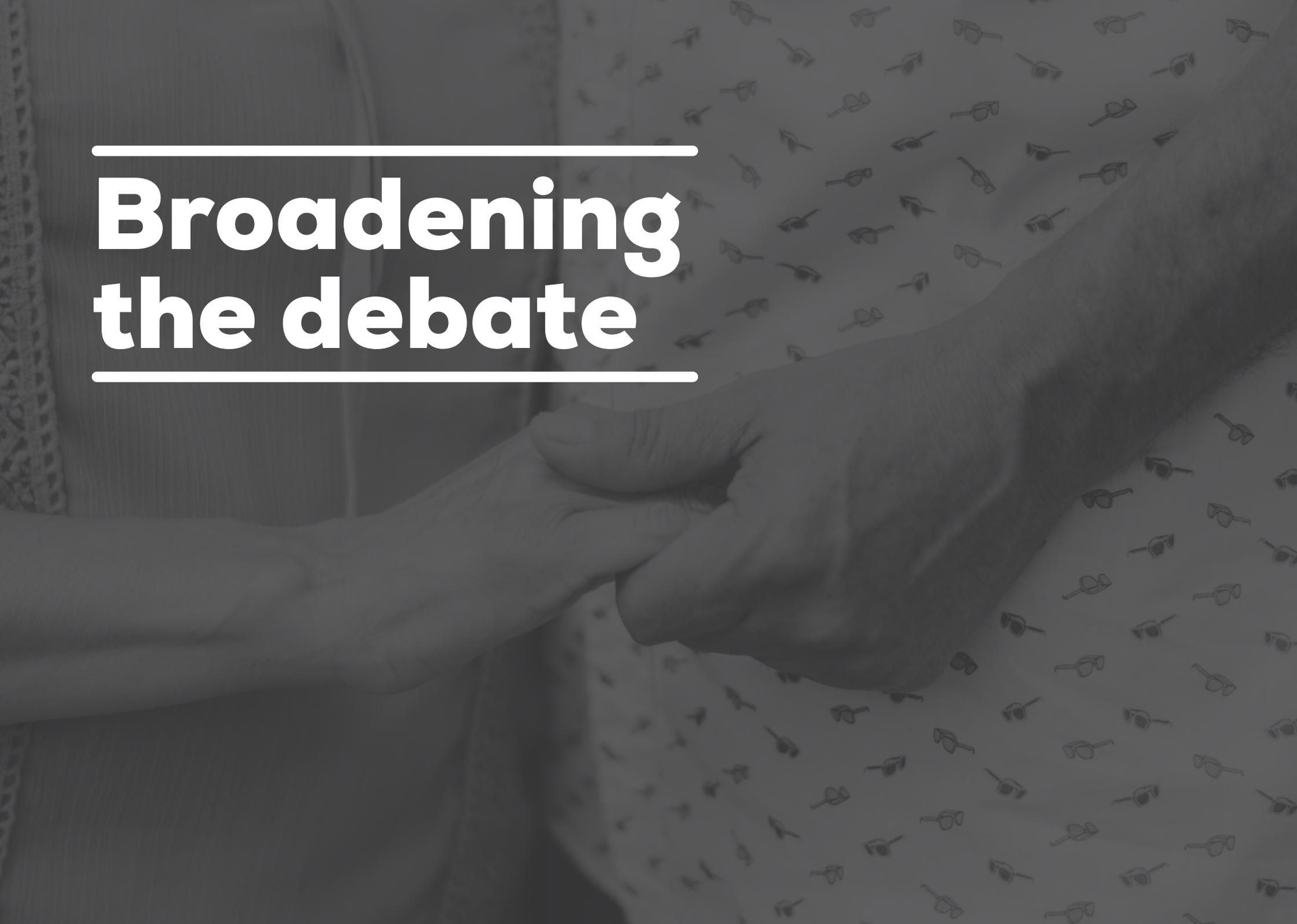
of strong advocates such as My Death, My Decision.

It is for this reason, among others, that I am proud to be a member of My Death, My Decision. In a few short years, I have seen this campaign grow considerably and achieve a huge amount. There is, of course, more that needs to be done. But with the ground starting to shift in the Channel Islands, a debate in the House of Lords expected later this year, and the possibility of an inquiry on the horizon - 2021 feels like a year in which we might be on the cusp of securing a lasting change in the law.

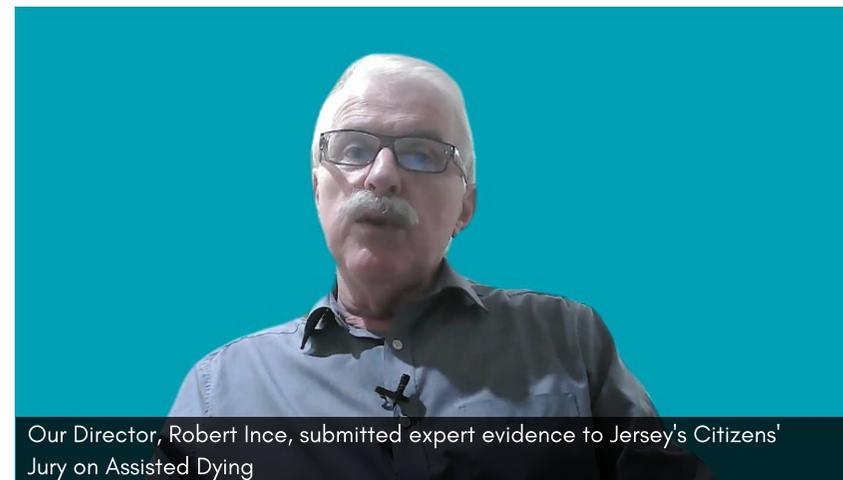


John Watson | Former
MP Skipton & Ripon

Broadening the debate



My Death, My Decision was founded to represent the interests of both those with terminal or incurable conditions and to advocate on behalf of the incurably suffering, at a time when no other right-to-die organisation would. Over the last year, we have worked to include the often forgotten voices of the incurably suffering in our public debates by working with doctors to secure support for an inclusive change in the law from the BMA; submitting evidence to Jersey's citizens' jury on assisted dying; encouraging open and critical discussions through our growing events programme; as well as setting up new local campaigns across the country.



Our Director, Robert Ince, submitted expert evidence to Jersey's Citizens' Jury on Assisted Dying

Landmark victory in the BMA's survey

In October last year, we celebrated a landmark achievement after the British Medical Association's members' survey on assisted dying revealed, for the first time, that half of all doctors personally support changing the law.

Our patron, Dr Wendy Savage, had led the campaign to secure a members' vote on assisted dying for over a decade. She was also responsible for submitting the motion which ultimately led to the members' poll being possible.

Throughout 2020 we contacted doctors

and BMA members, urging them to support compassion, choice, and autonomy during the BMA's survey. Through our work, our message was able to reach more than 5000 doctors in the run-up to the BMA's vote.

Critically, we also campaigned for the BMA to support a change in the law for both those with terminal or incurable conditions. This bore fruit when a majority (59%) of doctors told the BMA that they felt assisted dying should be an option for both those with terminal or incurable illnesses.

Historic verdict from Jersey's citizens' jury

In April, we submitted expert evidence and attended Jersey's citizens' jury examining assisted dying, calling for a change in the law.

Speaking as a faith leader, our director Robert Ince, focused his evidence on the importance of recognising the need to cover both those with terminal or incurable conditions in any legislation. In addition, he said that someone's faith should not automatically restrict their support for assisted dying, and highlighted the common theme of treating others with compassion across the Abrahamic faiths.

In June, the citizens' panel released its initial report and emphatically recommended (with 78% of panellists voting in favour) the legalisation of assisted dying. What's more, having studied the evidence from a range of internationally renowned experts the panel overwhelmingly (70%) backed a change in the law for both the terminally ill and incurably suffering.

The result underscores the importance of a public inquiry into the law, as it demonstrates when the evidence is weighed and examined it powerfully supports an inclusive change in the law.

Thousands watch our growing events series

Our public lecture series on assisted dying continues to grow each year. Our talk by Dr Henry Marsh was seen by more than 24,000 online, and our Doran Lecture – held to honour the memory of the late Member of Parliament Frank Doran – with the Canadian assisted dying expert, Dr Stefanie Green, was seen online more than 14,000 times.

We also released an exclusive interview with the award-winning Times columnist, Melanie Reid. As part of her interview, Melanie, who is a tetraplegic, cautioned against imposing 'arbitrary' time limits within any assisted dying legislation.

New campaign formed in Wales

Last year, we welcomed a new campaign group in Wales to My Death, My Decision.

The group – led by Dr Miriam Day a consultant at Cym Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and Sue Lawford – had previously operated as a local group for the campaign organisation Dignity in Dying. However, prompted by the case of Paul Lamb – who would not be helped by an assisted dying law for those with six months left to live – a majority of the group quit Dignity in Dying.

The formation of the group was reported

thebmj

covid-19

Research ▾

Education ▾

News & Vie

News

Assisted dying: Campaigners leave Dignity in Dying over law people with less than six months to live

BMJ 2020 ; 371 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m4301> (Published 05 Nover

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;371:m4301

The British Medical Association covered the creation of our new group in Wales, which it reported as campaigners leaving Dignity in Dying in opposition to their six months policy

by the British Medical Journal, as part of a trend of articles highlighting the limitations of a six months rule.

Subsequent to this, we engaged politicians in the Welsh Parliament (the Senedd) by submitting evidence to the 'Making Justice Work in Wales' consultation. Our evidence highlighted the lack of devolved powers over assisted dying in Wales, the potentially disproportionate impact the current law has upon Welsh citizens, and the enhancements to end-of-life care the choice of an assisted death would give.

Looking Ahead

Assisted Dying Bill [HL]

[AS INTRODUCED]

CONTENTS

- 1 Assisted dying
- 2 Terminal illness
- 3 Declaration
- 4 Assistance in dying
- 5 Conscientious objection
- 6 Criminal liability
- 7 Inc...

Baroness Meacher's Assisted Dying Bill in the House of Lords

Earlier this year, it was announced that Baroness Meacher – who is Chair of the campaign group Dignity in Dying – secured seventh place for her Assisted Dying Bill in the House of Lords private members' ballot. If passed, Baroness Meacher's proposals would allow doctors to prescribe lethal medication to patients with less than six months to live, subject to approval from two independent doctors and a High Court judge.

The Bill is all but assured a debate in Parliament later this year – marking the first time parliamentarians will have considered legislation to change the law in more than half a decade.

We welcome this legislation for creating a much-needed opportunity to debate the issue of assisted dying, and applaud Baroness Meacher's efforts to secure a change in the law. **However, in its current form, this Bill would not help those with incurable medical conditions or those with a greater life**

expectancy than six months. It would therefore exclude the previous campaigners who fought for a change in the law.

Whilst this Bill is therefore an important step forward, we have and will continue to urge lawmakers not to overlook the incurably suffering over the coming months – as both 88% of the public and a majority of doctors want.

We are concerned that if this Bill were passed it would discriminate against past campaigners such as Noel Conway, Diane Pretty, Debbie Purdy, Tony Nicklinson, Omid T, Paul Lamb, and Phil Newby.

In the coming months, we plan to step up our campaign to support this Bill for those who are terminally ill and to call for improvements on behalf of those who are incurably suffering.



Assisted Dying in the UK and Channel Islands

Scotland

McArthur MSP has announced his intention to introduce a Bill to legalise assisted dying for the terminally ill. A consultation on the precise terms of this Bill is expected to be announced later this year in September.

Jersey

Following the success of Jersey's citizens' jury on assisted dying, the Government in Jersey is expected to table proposals for an in-principle vote on changing the law. The precise nature of these proposals is currently unknown, but it is expected that Jersey's States Assembly will be invited to consider them towards the end of the year.

Assisted Dying around the World

Portugal

Earlier this year Portuguese lawmakers voted in support of legalising assisted dying for the incurably suffering. The legislation was struck down by Portugal's highest court for being 'imprecise'. The decision leaves the door open for the governing Socialist Party to redraft and resubmit its proposed legislation.

Republic of Ireland

Lawmakers in the Republic of Ireland have proposed a Death with Dignity Bill, which if passed will cover those living in Northern Ireland as well. The Bill has been referred to a special committee that will conduct an in-depth analysis of the evidence for and against a change in the law.

Chile

This year Chile's Chamber of Deputies approved a bill to allow assisted dying. If the legislation is passed people over the age of 18 with a serious and incurable disease, will have the right to die.

New Zealand

The law in New Zealand allows terminally ill people with less than six months to live the opportunity to choose assisted dying as an end of life option. The law will come into effect later this year.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES, JANUARY 2020 - JANUARY 2021

Total Income:	£26,074
25% Decrease since 2020	
Total Expenditure:	£26,571
117% Increase since 2020	

The increase in expenditure between 2020-2021 is a reflection of My Death, My Decision's decision to strengthen its campaign and increase staff in strategic areas of work, such as our social media.

Although we raised nearly £10,000 in additional donations and membership fees between 2020 - 2021, our modest fall in income was a consequence of us directing more of our business reserves to the campaign.

As an almost entirely volunteer-led organisation, My Death, My Decision's expenditure is allocated into two main categories: our campaign, which accounts for the vast majority of our spending, and the administrative costs of running our organisation.

Going forward, propelled by increased donations, we have committed to allocating additional resources to income generation, to ensure that we have a fighting fund for any parliamentary activities in the coming year.

Between 2020-2021 we dedicated 4x more resources to contacting MPs and influencing the assisted dying debate.

Thank You

Unlike our opponents, our campaign isn't funded by outside organisations, or bankrolled by international campaigns. Our strength as always depended upon the enthusiasm, hard work, and generosity of our members and supporters - and of course our committed team of volunteers and officers.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, many have been adapting to a new way of life - including us. Thank you for your willingness to support our campaign, and for your understanding during this difficult period. Your backing represents more than just help for our campaign, it demonstrates the strength of support within our movement and across wider society for a compassionate and inclusive change in the law.

The progress made towards that goal in this report has all been made possible because of you. We will continue to fight for our human rights. Until we see significant change on assisted dying laws in England and Wales, we will not stop.



My Death, My Decision Limited, a company limited by guarantee.
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