

Right-to-die plea 'serious threat to disabled people'

By Emma Lander

A woman who recovered from locked-in syndrome has spoken out against the latest attempt to change the law on assisted suicide.

Paul Lamb, 58, has taken up the case started by right-to-die campaigner, Tony Nicklinson, saying the "cruel" law that forbids assisted deaths must be changed and that he should be able to end his life with dignity.

Mr Nicklinson, 58, died last year shortly after he lost his legal bid to end his life with a doctor's help, but his family are continuing his campaign.

Mr Lamb, who has waived his right to anonymity to speak out, has joined the challenge, and the two cases will be heard in the Court of Appeal on 14th and 15th May.

Mr Nicklinson's widow, Jane, said she was "over the moon" that her late husband's cause will continue - and said he would have been equally pleased.

But Nikki Kenward, a disabled woman from Shropshire who spent a year in hospital with locked-in syndrome, said: "Mr Lamb is clearly depressed.

"The bad news is that disabled people like me and rucks of others get depressed because, just when we thought we might have a place in society, along comes another 'my life isn't worth living' campaign.

"Even though right-to-die campaigners keep banging on about euthanasia being only for terminally ill people, I believe that these changes in the law would pose a genuine threat to people like me."

In 1990, Mrs Kenward suffered Guillain-Barre syndrome, a disorder of the peripheral nervous system that left her paralysed, but for my right eyelid.

She was unable to communicate for five months, before learning to make herself understood by flickering her eyelashes.

Most people who contract the rare disease go on to make a full recovery, and it took Mrs Kenward a year in hospital, and several years of recovery at home, to recover from total paralysis, although she still cannot use her legs.

Mr Lamb, from Leeds, was severely injured in a car accident in 1990.

For the past 23 years he has been unable to use any of his limbs apart from slight movement in his right hand, is in constant pain and needs round-the-clock care.

As the Court of Appeal heard Mr Lamb's request last month for the right to pick up where Mr Nicklinson left off, he said in a statement that life was "pointless" and he would like a doctor to help him die by lethal injection, preferably in his own home.

Mr Lamb added: "I consider that I have lived with these conditions for a lot of years and have given it my best shot. Now I feel worn out and I am genuinely fed up with my life.

"I feel that I cannot and do not want to keep living. I feel trapped by the situation and I have no way out. I am not getting any younger and I cannot carry on as all that my life consists of is being fed and watered.

"I feel that the truth is that I have had enough. I have been in pain since July 1990 and there is no way of getting rid of the root pain. My daily routine is tedious, monotonous and pointless. I often go to bed early at 5pm - such is the pointlessness of it all.

"I am 58 years of age and I am fed up of going through the motions of life rather than living it. I feel that enough is enough.

"People tell me that I must keep trying - but there is only so much that a person can take.

"I wish I could end my own life but I cannot."

Disability charity Scope also



Speaking out:
Nikki Kenward

strongly opposed any changes to the law and said Mr Lamb's views are not shared by many disabled people.

Chief executive, Richard Hawkes, said: "It is important that the views of Paul Lamb are set in context.

"Although many people will sympathise with these cases, we must remember that the current law on assisted suicide protects the lives of disabled people in Britain.

"We must avoid any temptation to change assisted suicide laws based on a couple of undeniably heart-wrenching and tragic cases. Many disabled people are against any weakening of the law, and their voices need to be heard in this debate."