

3 Thomas More Square
 London E98 1TY
 E-mail: letters@thetimes.co.uk
 #letterstoTheTimes



How many want assisted dying law?

Sir, I contradict the claim that it is generally accepted that a large majority of the population want a change in the law with regard to assisted dying (Sir Gordon Downey, letter, Mar 26).

In my 38 years as an MP the number who have written in that cause is below 38. Fewer than ten have raised it in conversation.

In my public and private life more often than most I meet people with bad conditions, people who are dying slowly and I listen to their carers. If many wanted a change in the law they would have told me.

Additionally, I have known people who assured me in advance that they would in certain circumstances deliberately bring their life to its conclusion. Up to now not one has.

Turn to what I describe as death on request. Rare cases only? See the figures in the Netherlands and compare them with the totals for suicides. Consider also the move to death decisions taken for those judged not mentally competent.

There is little reason to be frightened of our deaths or to be put off discussing them. There is every reason to reject sloppy argument and unjustified assertions. Let us limit the law to its present state which to me and to an unknown proportion of the population seems to cover most situations.

SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY, MP
 House of Commons

Sir, A recent ComRes opinion survey helped to undermine the myth that people with disabilities are eager for premature death (letters, Mar 24). In Britain they are more likely than the general public to support a change in the law to prevent doctors from allowing patients to die through dehydration, if they had asked in advance to be kept alive (61 per cent).

At present, people may only refuse sustenance by an advance directive. This may explain why the Liverpool Care Pathway lasted so long.

ELSPETH CHOWDHARAY-BEST
 London SW3