

Daughter given four years for killing father in 'act of mercy'

◆ A woman convicted of suffocating her bedridden father has been jailed for at least four years after a judge accepted that she believed the killing was an "act of mercy".

Claire Darbyshire, 36, killed 67-year-old Brian Darbyshire, who had multiple sclerosis, with a plastic bag at their home in Dagenham, Essex, in September. She claimed they had made a suicide pact as his illness had become "intolerable".

After a trial at the Old Bailey, Darbyshire was

found guilty of murder. Yesterday Judge Nicholas Hilliard QC jailed her for life with a minimum term of four years, one of the shortest life sentences in legal history. He said the key to the case was her failure to establish that her father had agreed she would also kill herself in a suicide pact.

He said he accepted her evidence that her father wanted her help to end his life. But he added she had unlawfully killed her father behind "closed doors" and no defences to murder applied.

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