

The danger of signing away the right to live

SIR – Regarding “assisted dying”, the eminent legal expert Lord Carlile of Berriew (Letters, February 7) makes the point that the most vulnerable need most legal protection, and that campaigners “have repeatedly failed to produce a Bill with sufficient safeguards worthy of the name”.

They never will, because such Bills are devised for certain groups of people – the old, the sick, the disabled, the depressed – by other people.

Many, when in good health, say that if terminally ill they would want “assisted dying”, including 43 per cent of doctors polled by Dignity in Dying (report, February 5).

But those who would sign away their lives when in good health are actually placing a death sentence on

another person – their future self.

Dignity in Dying has promoted some disabled individuals in high-profile legal challenges against the 1961 Suicide Act, but they were not representative of the vast majority who, like me, prefer to be cared for rather than killed.

The “right to die” appeals to many who fear a loss of power; but that very loss of power may be used to hasten their deaths against their will when they have lost the power to communicate.

Too late they will find that far from being empowered, they were disempowered when they handed the power over their lives to other people.

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