

Disabled People and Assisted Dying

A recent briefing makes several claims¹

Claim 1: “People with disabilities are not generally opposed to assisted dying laws”¹

A survey of the views of disability rights organisations on assisted dying found that 94% declined to comment, with only 4% declaring they were neutral and 4% opposing, ie. none were in support.²

The reluctance to state a position by disability rights organisations does not imply neutrality or support

Disabled people’s organisations choose to prioritise their limited resources in supporting disabled people to thrive with dignity, independence and equality.

Twelve disabled people’s organisations have actively come out against the Meacher bill in the last 2 months

Claim 2: “Assisted dying laws do not harm people with disabilities:”¹

Reports acknowledge the existence of abuse³ or explicitly describe higher proportions of vulnerable individuals requesting an assisted death⁴

Case reports of assisted deaths in intellectually disabled people are a particular concern.⁵

Discrimination cannot be excluded as nowhere in the world do official reports on assisted dying monitor or document the decisions made in deciding eligibility

In 2020, 53% of those choosing an assisted death in Oregon described feeling a burden.⁶ Disabled people are therefore more vulnerable to the offer of an assisted death.

All legislatures and retrospective studies on assisted dying rely on the physician to self-report, so discrimination and unconscious bias⁷ will be missed in all such reviews and studies

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Considering the inability of current systems to identify discrimination, individual cases of abuse are likely to be the tip of the iceberg.

Claim 3: “Assisted dying laws do not show disrespect for people with disabilities”¹

The law exists to protect the majority and particularly those at risk

Scandals involving the elderly or disabled people remain rife. We are still struggling to implement 15yr old capacity legislation across the UK.

Disabled people are not inherently vulnerable. It is the systems that discriminate against them

The suggestion that legalising assisted dying should not be delayed during attempts to fix disability discrimination, is an insult to disabled people and is itself discriminatory.

It is a delusion that assisted dying ‘safeguards’ will magically improve existing discrimination

Claim 4: “Assisted dying laws don’t damage healthcare for people with disabilities,”¹

The average growth in palliative care services was much slower in west European countries allowing assisted dying, compared with countries without assisted dying.¹² Particularly striking is the lack of any growth in palliative care services in Belgium and the Netherlands from 2012 to 2019.

Everyone, including disabled people, are less likely to have the choice of palliative care in many assisted dying countries. This compounds the existing, widespread inequalities in healthcare that disabled people already must endure.

**ASSISTED DYING IS A
MAJOR CONCERN
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE**

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