motor neurone disease association

Review of policy on assisted dying

In 2018, the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association's Board reviewed the Association's policy on assisted dying. This was in recognition of the importance of the issue to many people living with MND, their carers and families.

The Board carefully considered the current position of neutrality to a change in the law on assisted dying and the implications of a change to that position. It took the decision that it wished to continue with the policy of neutrality.

As part of this discussion, the Board recognised that in recent years the Association has taken a more active role on assisted dying – this includes covering the issue in *Thumb Print* (our magazine for members), signposting members to their MPs during parliamentary activity and maintaining contact with those organisations campaigning both for and against a change in the law.

The Board agreed that neutrality does not mean inactivity and expressed a view that its current more active role should continue, indeed where possible this approach should be enhanced. They also felt that the Association could do more to communicate our position more openly and give greater depth to the reasons why we take a neutral position on a change in the law. This communication forms part of that process.

Assisted dying is an issue on which many people will have a very personal view. However, it is important to consider the policy from the point of view of ensuring that the Association can fulfil its role of supporting and representing all people living with MND, their carers and families. No doubt, there are members and supporters both for and against this issue. A neutral position allows the Association to continue to represent all members and a move away from this would run the risk of losing significant and valuable support. We recognise that there are a number of very active organisations on both sides of the debate which our members and supporters are free to join.

The MND Association is campaigning in a number of areas to ensure that people living with MND, their carers and families can access the care, support and information they need, when and where they need it. In taking up a position either for or against a change in the law we could by default make this a priority campaign issue, which would divert resources from other important campaigns.

Over recent years the Association has increased the amount and depth of information we provide on end of life issues, including the award-winning *End of life* guide. The Association will continue to support people living with MND, their carers and families when they are faced with these extraordinarily difficult decisions, while of course remaining within the law as it currently stands.

Since 2018, the MND Association's Board has kept the policy under regular review. The Board reviewed the policy and this statement in May 2021 and May 2023 and agreed that both should remain as they stood.

If you have any questions or comments on our assisted dying policy, please contact Chris James on chris.james@mndassociation.org.

May 2023