# Louise Shackleton under investigation after assisting terminally ill husband with assisted death at Dignitas



Louise Shackleton, a 58-year-old woman from North Yorkshire, is under investigation after assisting her terminally ill husband, Anthony Shackleton, 59, in ending his life at the Dignitas clinic in Switzerland last December. Anthony had been living with motor neurone disease for six years before making the decision to seek assisted dying abroad.

The couple had been together for 25 years, having met when they were teenagers. Louise described the emotional and logistical difficulties they faced in the process, including the moment Anthony received confirmation of his death date via email from Dignitas, which she said left her world "blown apart." Anthony, however, was reportedly relieved to have a set date and marked it on his calendar with happiness.

Anthony’s condition had been deteriorating, and Louise explained that he experienced anxiety leading up to the "provisional green light" from Dignitas. After receiving this approval, he began contemplating practicalities such as how his body would be repatriated to the UK. He also expressed concern about not wanting others to face legal repercussions for assisting him in his final journey.

When Anthony was informed by Dignitas staff that he would not wake up from the procedure, he responded, "What do you think I’m here for? Let’s do this." Louise described the moment she lay beside him as he took his own end-of-life medication, saying she "couldn't look at him doing that" but held him as he gently passed away. She recalled that after he began to feel sleepy, he let out a snore, to which she responded with a joke, and he "laughed and gently slipped away" in what she called a "beautiful death."

Louise also shared the heart-wrenching experience of having to leave the clinic without immediately informing their three children or Anthony’s elderly parents, due to the legal constraints surrounding assisted dying in the UK. The family were "blindsided" by the news, and Anthony was unable to say proper goodbyes since the journey to Switzerland was kept secret. In the days before their departure, Anthony reached out to friends to say his farewells, except one whom he could not contact, to ensure his loved ones were spoken to before he left.

The couple had been considering assisted dying for over two years, with Anthony viewing it as the only means to avoid the pain and suffering his condition inevitably would bring. Currently, assisted suicide is illegal in the UK, though prosecutions are rare. Ms Shackleton has publicly voiced that the existing laws forced Anthony to die prematurely and away from the family that loved him.

She voluntarily reported herself to the police upon return from Switzerland, admitting that she had committed a crime by assisting him but expressed no regret for her actions. Speaking to Sky News, she said: "He was my husband and I loved him."

The case comes amid ongoing debates in UK Parliament over a proposed assisted dying bill. The legislation would permit individuals with terminal diagnoses and less than six months to live to end their lives following approval by two doctors and a panel of experts. The next vote on the bill has been postponed by three weeks to allow further consideration of amendments.

Opponents of the bill raise concerns about potential risks to vulnerable individuals who might feel coerced and argue that the focus should instead be on improving palliative care. Meanwhile, advocates stress the need to respect patient choices when it comes to end-of-life decisions.

Ms Shackleton has expressed the belief that while safeguards are essential, the wishes of terminally ill individuals must be honoured. She chose to tell Anthony’s story publicly to honour his final wish—that his death should not be in vain. "This is about a dying person's choice to either follow their journey through with disease or to die peacefully when they want to, on their terms, and have a good death. It's that simple," she said.

According to data from the Dignity in Dying campaign, British membership of Dignitas has increased by more than 50% over the past five years. Sarah Wootton, chief executive of the campaign, highlighted the Shackletons' story as an illustration of the difficulties faced when safe and lawful assisted dying is not available in the UK. She pointed out that the substantial costs associated with end-of-life care at Dignitas — roughly £15,000 — leave many without the option, forcing them to suffer or take matters into their own hands.

North Yorkshire Police have confirmed that their investigation into Ms Shackleton’s case is ongoing but declined to provide further details at this stage.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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