# Controversy erupts over removal of High Court oversight in assisted dying bill



Fierce reactions have erupted following a parliamentary committee's alarming decision to eliminate a crucial clause mandating High Court approval for applications concerning assisted dying under the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. This contentious shift has led opponents to accuse the government of breaking its promises and placing vulnerable lives at risk.

In a troubling display of disregard for accountability, the 23-member scrutiny committee voted to strip away the protective judicial oversight that was originally embedded in the legislation. The initial framework required a dual approval process involving two doctors and a High Court judge before terminally ill adults in England and Wales could engage in assisted dying. This vital safeguard has now been disregarded in favour of an untested structure that could erode the very protections meant to shield those most in need.

Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, the chief architect of this Bill, has proposed amendments that would replace the High Court's oversight with the role of an assisted dying commissioner backed by expert panels. These panels, which include a senior legal figure, a psychiatrist, and a social worker, would be charged with evaluating applications for assisted dying. However, critics rightfully highlight that this could lead to a deeply unaccountable system devoid of necessary checks and balances.

Recent responses from a faction of 26 Labour MPs opposed to the Bill have underscored these valid concerns. They argue that the removal of judicial oversight fundamentally undermines protections for the most vulnerable individuals, effectively misrepresenting the nature of the proposed decision-making structure as it creates an unaccountable quango incapable of summoning witnesses or formally gathering evidence. This dismantling of judicial oversight is a betrayal of the very principles of justice and care.

Conservative MP Danny Kruger, who has consistently voted against the Bill, described the panel's replacement as a "weird creature" lacking coherence and warned that by removing a judicial entity, the legislation has lost its "gold-plated" safeguards. Such significant changes to the Bill's structure call into question its integrity and the moral implications of such decisions.

While some proponents of the Bill are inclined to see the amendments as progressive, this perspective overlooks the potential dangers of implementing a system that could compromise accountability. Liberal Democrat MP Tom Gordon may consider this a step in the right direction, but such an approach endangers the very foundations of ethical governance by placing critical health decisions in the hands of a panel rather than a court of law.

Leadbeater's defense of these modifications, which she claims will enhance patient-centred safeguards, rings hollow when juxtaposed with the overwhelming criticism of the removal of judicial resources from the process. The suggestion that a diverse array of expertise from a multidisciplinary panel could replace the rock-solid integrity of the judiciary seems more like a desperate grab for legitimacy rather than a genuine commitment to protecting the interests of vulnerable individuals.

As this contentious scrutiny of the Bill continues in Parliament, the implications of its evolution warrant close examination. The next debate and potential vote, anticipated towards the end of April, will be pivotal in determining whether the principles of justice and accountability are allowed to thrive or whether they will succumb to the whims of a controversial political agenda.

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

## References

* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/pbc/2024-25/Terminally_Ill_Adults_(End_of_Life)_Bill/08-0_2025-02-11a.290.0> - This URL supports the discussion around the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, specifically amendments related to the geographical scope of assisted dying in England and Wales.
* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/pbc/2024-25/Terminally_Ill_Adults_(End_of_Life)_Bill/10-0_2025-02-12a.377.3> - This URL provides details on amendments aimed at enhancing safeguards in the Bill, such as preventing coercion or manipulation, which are crucial in ensuring the integrity of the assisted dying process.
* <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0012/amend/terminally_ill_adults_rm_pbc_0214.pdf> - This URL offers insights into various amendments proposed for the Bill, including changes to the definition of terminal illness and the capacity assessment process, which are central to the ongoing debate.
* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/25596/kim_leadbeater/> - This URL provides information about Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, who is associated with the Bill, and her role in proposing amendments.
* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/25360/danny_kruger/> - This URL offers details about Conservative MP Danny Kruger, who has expressed opposition to the Bill and its amendments.
* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/25361/tom_gordon/> - This URL provides information about Liberal Democrat MP Tom Gordon, who may have differing views on the Bill's progression.