

# **Labour MP Kirsteen Sullivan cannot support the assisted dying bill**

**Bathgate and Linlithgow Labour MP Kirsteen Sullivan has said she cannot support the assisted dying bill going before parliament today, (Friday).**

The MP said she did not believe the Private Members's Bill by fellow Labour MP Kim Leadbeater did enough to prevent coercion.

Ms Sullivan said: "Mistakes in the context of Assisted Dying can't be undone; the person will be dead."

In a statement to the Local Democracy Reporting Service Ms Sullivan said: "I do not believe the Bill contains sufficient safeguards to protect against coercion of individuals at the most vulnerable point in their lives.

"This is particularly important where the medical practitioner is unlikely to know the individual well enough to fully appreciate the personal context of the decision being made.

"Coercion can be incredibly difficult to detect, as we know from cases of domestic abuse."

The MP also cited concerns about under investment in palliative care, the risk to doctors involved in such decisions as well as the lack of certainty in time-frames.

She added: “we all know of instances where people have been given limited time-frames only to outlive expectations, as well as cases where people have been given a longer time-frame only to pass away at an earlier point.”

Ms Sullivan, who before her election was a councillor for the Whitburn and Blackburn ward on West Lothian Council, also said she believed there was too much variation in the way health services were delivered and the pressures faced in the different countries of the UK for the practical introduction of such legislation.

The MP said: “Over the past few weeks, I have received hundreds of emails and letters from constituents regarding the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill.

“I have met with local groups from the constituency as well as engaging with national organisations such as Marie Curie.

“I am grateful to Carers of West Lothian for facilitating a round table discussion for me with service users to share their thoughts and opinions based on their very personal experiences.”

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill in the House of Commons is a vote of conscience for individual MPs. It was a vote Ms Sullivan said that had weighed “heavily “upon her.

“I appreciate some people will take a different viewpoint based on their own research and individual beliefs, I respect their right to do so.

“Ultimately, this is a decision for each of us. I hope the respect and compassion that has been shown in debating such a sensitive issue will continue and underpin a full and frank discussion around the need for improved services and care for people to live.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter