Given the experience elsewhere, no matter what safeguards are promised, laws which allow people to be "helped" to die or allow someone else to "help" a patient to die are easily abused and alter the culture's perception of the value of life in ways often not intended and very very hard to avoid. It would be all too easy for elderly, infirm, disabled or even those who feel neglected to feel a real pressure to end their life prematurely. Sometimes the last months, weeks days of hours of someone's life can have a disproportionate significance to their family and friends, to how they are remembered and to how prepared someone is for the crucial transition from this life to eternity - how would we ever know the value of what would be lost if lives were ended earlier than they should be.

Let's learn from the countries where it is legal, let's learn form the under-reporting, the detrimental effect on palliative care, the pressures put on the vulnerable and their families, the undermining of trust in doctors and let's not make the mistake of legalising killing.

Clare Bremner
12 May 2010