



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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Terminally Ill Children

Thank you for contacting me about terminally ill children.

The loss of a child is always a heart-breaking experience. Doctors, nurses and other medical professionals in the NHS work extremely hard to provide the best care for patients, but tragically some illnesses are irreversible. When the painful decision to withdraw life support from a child has to be made, there are safeguards in place to ensure this is done as a last resort.

Medical experts will do everything they can in terms of testing and treatment to help save the life of a child in their care. But in serious cases of terminal illness, medical experts may conclude that further procedures will not lead to a recovery. It is then their duty to make the child as comfortable as possible through palliative care until there is no choice but to withdraw life support. This is never an easy decision, but sadly it is sometimes the only option left.

When parents disagree with medical experts over how to proceed with the care of their child, it then becomes a matter for the courts. The judge will base his or her decision on what they believe to be the “best interests” of the child. It is a process in which the views of the parents are important and valued, but do not have absolute authority. There is then the possibility of the parents appealing to the Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights, but there is no guarantee of success.

This is a long and distressing process. But there is the best possible medical and judicial expertise on hand to help parents and protect the interests of their child.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP