How have the law and BMA policy developed over the past twenty years?

### Key
- **BMA Policy**
- **Cases**
- **Bill debated**

### Timeline
- **2001**
  - The Joffe Bill
  - Lord Joffe’s Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill reached Committee Stage in the House of Lords. It would allow doctors to prescribe lethal drugs to terminally ill adults with 6 months or less to live, for them to self-administer. The Bill did not progress further after the 2005 General Election was called.

- **2002**
  - Debra Purdy
  - Diane Pretty had motor neurone disease, and asked for a guarantee that her husband would not be prosecuted if he assisted her to die. Her case was rejected by the House of Lords, who held that the ‘right to life’ did not include a right to choose the timing and manner of death.

- **2005**
  - Pretty v UK
  - Diane Pretty took her case to the European Court of Human Rights, which also rejected her case. The Court did hold, however, that a right to choose how and when one’s life was part of a right to private life – but that the UK’s ban on assisted dying could be justified to protect vulnerable people.

- **2008**
  - The DPP publishes guidelines for prosecutors in England and Wales
  - Similar guidelines were published in Northern Ireland; the Scottish Lord Advocate is clear that the guidelines do not apply in Scotland and that Scotland – specific guidelines will not be published.

- **2009**
  - The Falconer Bill
  - Lord Falconer’s Assisted Dying Bill passed Second Reading in the House of Lords. It would allow doctors to prescribe lethal drugs to terminally ill adults with 6 months or less to live for them to self-administer. The Bill did not progress further after the 2015 General Election was called.

- **2015**
  - Margo MacDonald’s Bill
  - Margo MacDonald’s Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill reached First Stage debate in the Scottish Parliament. It would allow doctors to provide lethal drugs to terminally ill adults or those who were “permanently physically incapacitated” for them to either self-administer or for a third party to administer to them. It was defeated by 83 votes to 34.

- **2018**
  - The Marris Bill
  - Rob Marris came first in the ballot for Private Members’ Bills in the House of Commons and introduced a Bill modelled on the Falconer Bill – with an additional requirement for a High Court judge to approve each application for assistance. The Bill was defeated at Second Reading by 330 votes to 118.

- **2021**
  - Meacher and McArthur Bills
  - Baroness Meacher and Liam McArthur (MSP) propose new private members bills in the House of Lords and Holyrood respectively.

- **2021**
  - Phil Newby and Paul Lamb
  - In separate applications, Phil Newby, who has motor neurone disease, and Paul Lamb, who had previously joined Tony Nicklinson’s appeal in 2015, sought to challenge the current law on assisted suicide in the UK.

### Further Reading
- For more information on physician-assisted dying go to [bma.org.uk/pad](http://www.bma.org.uk/pad)
- For more detailed information on the historical cases and legislation mentioned here, please see Chapter 3 of Volume 1 of the end-of-life care and physician-assisted dying report, available at [www.bma.org.uk/endolifecare](http://www.bma.org.uk/endolifecare)
- For more information on current legislative proposals in the House of Lords and in Holyrood, please see: [www.bma.org.uk/pad](http://www.bma.org.uk/pad)