

# Marie Goldman



POINTS OF VIEW

MP for Chelmsford

## Air ambulance and hospice left to count cost of changes in Budget

I've been contacted by several charitable organisations concerned about how the rise in Employers' National Insurance contributions (NICs) announced in the Budget will affect them.

One of the charities is the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance, which got in touch to let me know that by its calculations, the rise in Employers' NICs will cost it an extra £100,000 a year.

It already costs more than £1 million a month to run its often lifesaving service and much of this is paid for by charitable donations from the public.

In the 2023/24 financial year, the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance attended 2,635 missions, including attending 547 road traffic collisions.

I know how often I hear and see it in the skies above Chelmsford – so it's not hard to understand how busy it is and how important the service is that it provides.

That's why, when it wrote to me recently explaining how it will be affected by the hike in Employers' NICs, I wanted to make sure I raised the issue with the Government, which I did in Parliament last week.

I was told that Health Secretary Wes Streeting will be looking at ways that the promised money for the NHS can potentially also be used to help services that support the NHS. I very much hope that's the case here.

You can watch my exchange with Lucy Powell MP, Leader of the House of Commons, on Parliament TV: <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/dc56cc53-1093-41c5-8c57-7f53ede13bf?in=12:02:40>

Of course, other charities, organisations and small businesses are also being affected by this change in the budget.

Farleigh Hospice, which has served so many Chelmsford constituents and their families over the years, believes the Employers' NICs change will add another £250,000 to its budget deficit, which it says is the equivalent of five registered nurses or the direct running costs of its children's bereavement service.

It says that if nothing changes to help it, it will be faced with some



The rise in Employers' NICs will cost it the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance an extra £100,000 a year  
MARIE GOLDMAN MP

very difficult decisions.

I will keep pressing the Government for more support.

Staying in Parliament, tomorrow (November 29) sees the Second Reading of The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, otherwise known as the Assisted Dying Bill.

As I type this, about a week before the vote, I still haven't made up my mind which way to vote.

I'm grateful to all those of you who have been in touch to tell me your own stories and why you believe I should or shouldn't vote for the Bill.

As a liberal, I want everyone to be able to lead their lives as full as possible of their own choices.

I want people to have choice in death as they do in life, and that's really the aim of this Bill.

However, the caveat is that any decision to create or modify legislation must also carefully consider the safeguards that the situation demands.

I want legislation that is carefully thought through and that when I ask questions about why a particular clause is written the way that it is, I



Lucy Powell MP, Leader of the House of Commons  
TEJAS SANDHU

want clear and well researched answers.

I'm not currently convinced that's where we are with this Bill as it's currently written.

That's a shame because it makes my decision about whether to vote for it even harder.

On the one hand, I want individuals to have the choice to end their life on their own terms. But on the other hand, I need to make sure that nobody is ever pressured or coerced into ending their life through the provisions in this Bill.

I'm not quite certain that's where we currently are with the Bill. For example, doctors are not prevented from raising the subject with patients.

I have no problem with doctors discussing assisted dying with patients if the patient has raised it first, but nothing in the Bill prevents doctors from being the first to raise it. I am concerned about that. I worry that if a doctor were to be the first to broach the subject with a patient, the patient might feel as if the doctor were recommending it, as if there were no acceptable alternative.

We must remember, of course, that we are often talking about patients who are very vulnerable – both mentally and physically at this stage.

I'm also concerned that while a doctor must refer the patient for assessment if they have doubts as to whether the patient is indeed terminally ill, there is no such requirement for them to do this if they have doubts about the patient's capacity to make the decision.

In this case, the Bill simply says that the doctor may refer the patient. I've asked for clarification on this. I haven't received any.

So I'm genuinely conflicted. But that doesn't necessarily mean that at

this stage I will vote against the Bill. Voting for a Bill at Second Reading allows the Bill to progress further through the legislative process, but there will still be plenty of other opportunities to vote on it and to amend it if necessary at later stages and then, if still not satisfied, to vote against it. This is an option that I am currently considering.

That's not a very cheerful note to end on, so I wanted to finish by saying that while there is much to enjoy about being an MP and spending time in Westminster, I think my favourite part of the job is being back in Chelmsford and meeting with the many, many constituents and organisations that have invited me along to find out more about what they do.

Unfortunately, I don't have a huge amount of time to do this in as I often need to be in London from Monday to Thursday each week (and sometimes even on a Friday), but I've recently especially enjoyed visiting various schools around the constituency, including Chelmsford County High School, who will also be in Parliament tomorrow – I hope to be able to stop by to say hello.

Thanks for reading.

Keep wrapped up warm in the cold weather.

Marie

Farleigh Hospice says that if nothing changes to help it, it will be faced with some very difficult decisions.

Marie Goldman MP