

Will London Follow Belgium Into Euthanasia?

British disabled people “will be looking nervously” at Belgium’s decision to introduce child euthanasia, the chief executive of the disability charity Scope has warned.

Following Belgium’s vote on the issue last week, Richard Hawkes cautioned against “loud, well-organized” calls to allow assisted suicide in Britain.

Hawkes said lots of people, “not least disabled people,” “are really worried at the way we seem to be edging towards a change in the law.”

He also called for politicians to “guard against community bullying” of society’s “most vulnerable members” when the issue is discussed in Parliament later this year.

Last week Belgium became the first country to allow euthanasia for terminally ill children of all ages.

The legislation was supported in Parliament despite more than 160 Belgian pediatric doctors opposing the change.

The country legalized euthanasia for adults in 2002.

Writing on Scope’s website, Hawkes said, “Many British disabled people will be looking nervously over at Belgium.

“Right now there are loud, well-organized and influential, calls to legalize assisted suicide for terminally ill adults.

“But there are lots of ordinary people, not least disabled people, who are really worried at the way we seem to be edging towards a change in the law.

“We can’t change a law that works on the basis of powerful,

but exceptional cases.

“Politicians will debate assisted suicide again later this year. They need to guard against community bullying of our most vulnerable members.”

Last year in Scotland, Margo Macdonald introduced a bill to legalize assisted suicide, and in Westminster, Lord Falconer is also pushing for a change in the law.