

TO: Assembly
FROM: Laura Curran
RE: Pro-choice Stance on Abortions
DATE: 3 November 2022

Assembly notes:

1. That, in line with the Abortion Act 1967, people in England, Scotland, and Wales can legally have an abortion if it is performed by a registered medical practitioner (a doctor) and it is authorised by two doctors acting in good faith, on one (or more) of the four grounds within the Act (with each need to agree that at least one and the same ground is met):
 - a. This includes pregnancies that have not exceeded their twenty-fourth week.¹
2. That some abortions can be carried out after their twenty-fourth week in very limited circumstances.²
3. That abortions which do not meet the requirements of the Abortion Act 1967 are still considered a criminal offence in England, Scotland, and Wales.
4. That two women are currently awaiting criminal trial in England for abortion-related offences; both are facing charges that carry a maximum sentence of life.³
5. That abortion is the only medical procedure in the UK that requires the approval of multiple doctors before being allowed to proceed.
6. That abortion laws vary across the globe, and they continue to change as a direct consequence of legislative decisions (e.g., the Supreme Court overturning Roe vs Wade in the United States via Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization)⁴.
7. That, both before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, Durham has seen numerous pro-life protests throughout the city, with protesters persistently and intentionally using harmful and disturbing images as part of these protests.
8. That the above pro-life protests have occurred both at random times in the year and during scheduled events targeted at students (e.g., Freshers' Fair).

¹ Abortion Act 1967. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/87/contents>

² NHS Overview: Abortion. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/abortion/>

³ The Guardian: Think abortion is legal in Great Britain? Ask the two women currently facing life sentences. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/19/abortion-legal-great-britain-women-life-sentences-roe-v-wade>

⁴ Supreme Court of the United States. Available at https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf

9. That Durham students have been responding to the above pro-life protests with legal, peaceful, pro-choice counter-protests on an ad-hoc basis.
10. That Durham Students' Union have had a pro-choice policy, which expired on 19th June 2021 due to the two-year lifespan of "Policy under the old Standing Orders".⁵

Assembly believes:

1. That individuals should have control and autonomy over their own bodies, and thus should include the individual's decision on whether they wish to continue or terminate a pregnancy.
2. That safe, free, and legal abortions should be accessible healthcare, available to all, without the requirement for multiple doctors to authorise the procedure.
3. That students should be aware of their legal right to abortion and know how to access one if they wish.
4. That pro-life protests actively target University campuses, including Durham University, and their intimidating campaign tactics are distressing and harmful to members of the Durham community.
5. That, after noting the activity of the pro-life protesters over the past few years, it is safe to say that these pro-life protests are likely to continue, both in this academic year and beyond.
6. That, although there are students who hold pro-life views, and we acknowledge the right people have to keep such opinions, these views and the expression of them through lawful protest should not infringe on an individual's legal right to access safe abortions or intentionally negatively impact an individual's well-being.

Assembly resolves:

1. That Durham Students' Union adopts a pro-choice stance on abortions, which should include at least the following:
 - a. Durham Students' Union believes that individuals should have control and autonomy over their own bodies and thus should include the individual's decision on whether they wish to continue or terminate a pregnancy.
 - b. Durham Students' Union believes that safe, free, and legal abortions should be accessible healthcare, available to all, without requiring multiple doctors to authorise the procedure.
 - c. Durham Students' Union prioritises the well-being of Durham students, visitors, and members of the community and thus opposes the deliberate and unnecessary use of

⁵ Support access to free, safe and legal abortions. Available at <https://www.durhamsu.com/policy-hub/support-access-to-free-safe-and-legal-abortions>

harmful and disturbing images as a means to cause distress and harm via intimidation to students, visitors, and members of the community.

- d. Durham Students' Union supports students who engage in legal, peaceful counter-protests in response to pro-life protests that occur on our campus.
 - e. Durham Students' Union will signpost students to resources and services relating to safe and legal abortions, both upon request and on the Durham SU Website.
2. To mandate the Welfare and Liberation Officer to lobby the University to ensure that the necessary support is available for students in respect of safe abortion access. This should include at least the following:
- a. Implementing measures or guidance for students and student leaders who wish to respond to pro-life protests with legal, peaceful counter-protests that occur alongside events run by and/or for students.
 - b. Signposting students to resources and services relating to safe and legal abortions on appropriate Durham University webpages.