

TO: Assembly

FROM: Chelsea Lowdon

RE: Support access to free, safe and legal abortions

DATE: 20 June 2019

Assembly notes:

1. In England, Wales and Scotland, an individual can legally access an abortion within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. This is in accordance with the Abortion Act of 1967¹ which requires permission to be given by two doctors. However, in certain circumstances, an abortion can be carried out after 24 weeks².
2. In Britain, 90% of people believe that abortion should be accessible if an individual's health is endangered, and 70% believe that it should be accessible if an individual decides they do not wish to continue with the pregnancy³.
3. Abortion is not legal in Northern Ireland so individuals seeking abortion often travel to England for access putting their health and life in danger⁴.
4. There are a large number of Irish students studying at Durham University⁵.
5. The NUS publicly supports the right to choose and ran a 'Home to Vote' campaign at the time of the Northern Irish 'Repeal the 8th' Referendum in 2018⁶.
6. Recently, some US states (including Alabama and Georgia) have sought to limit access to legal abortions⁷.

Anti-choice protests may be distressing or intimidating to some individuals.

Assembly believes:

1. . That individuals should have control over their own bodies, and should thus have the opportunity to decide themselves whether to continue a pregnancy or not.
2. That safe, free and legal abortion should be available for all
3. Students should be aware of their legal right to abortion and know how to access one should they need it.

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 British Social Attitudes Survey (34). Moral Issues. Available at:

http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39147/bsa34_moral_issues_final.pdf

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⁴ https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/she-is-not-a-criminal-the-impact-of-irelands-abortion-law/?fbclid=IwAR1GfmFdSV_2EeApzTb7x0ZCpHrKff7Obsz-bpLCNcFzG0kbseqQToDnKRQ

⁵ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/student.registry/statistics/summary/1.8nationality/181-8.pdf>

⁶ NUS. Home to Vote. Available at: <https://www.nus.org.uk/en/take-action/welfare-and-student-rights/home-to-v8te/>

⁷ Amnesty International (2019). Abortion Laws in the US – 10 things you need to know. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/abortion-laws-in-the-us-10-things-you-need-to-know/>

4. That anti-choice protests, sentiment and organisations are on the rise. These networks disproportionately target University campuses, and their organising methods can be distressing and intimidating for some.
5. That the Students' Union should campaign for abortion access, not only on behalf of our Northern Irish student population, but also as a fundamental human right
6. An official pro-choice policy would not prevent students who disagree with abortion on ethical or religious grounds from exercising their right not to seek a abortion
7. Pro-choice policy encourages students to make well-informed decisions regarding their bodies and their futures

Assembly resolves:

1. To officially take a pro-choice stance on abortion and support the right to choose
2. To support students who engage in legal, peaceful counter-protests against anti-choice organisations on our campus
3. To work with the NUS wherever possible to support campaigns which support Irish citizen's access to abortion
4. To provide students with information about access to safe and legal abortion via the Students' Union's resources.