



## PRESS RELEASE

# A MOMENTOUS DAY FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Today is a momentous day for women's reproductive rights in Northern Ireland. A day when a cruel and outdated law which criminalised women and comprised their care has been brought to an end.

A moratorium on criminal prosecutions has taken effect, meaning that no police investigation may be carried out, and no criminal proceedings may be brought or continued.

For the mother who faced prosecution next month for purchasing abortion pills online for her (then) 15 year old daughter this means that a tortuous legal threat spanning five years will finally come to an end.

The UK Government will now bring forward regulations to introduce a new framework for abortion in Northern Ireland by 31 March 2020.

Commenting on the changes Ruairi Rowan, Director of Advocacy and Policy for Informing Choices NI said:

*“For many years the issue of abortion in Northern Ireland was surrounded by a wall of silence. Today that wall has been well and truly demolished. We must never go back to the days of backstreet abortions, criminal prosecutions and lonely journeys across the Irish Sea. Women’s healthcare should not be dependent on their ability to board a plane. Now that abortion is decriminalised it needs to be de-stigmatised so that we not only remove the wall of silence but also the wall of access.*

*“In the interim period we know that some women will continue to purchase abortion pills online and that many have already ended a pregnancy in this way. If you are considering abortion, or wish to discuss a previous pregnancy experience in confidence Informing Choices NI continue to offer Pregnancy Choices and Post Pregnancy Counselling.”*

### Notes to editor

1. For media enquires please contact Ruairi Rowan, Tel: 028 9031 6107 or Email: [ruairi.rowan@informingchoicesni.org](mailto:ruairi.rowan@informingchoicesni.org)
2. Sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 have been repealed.



3. Section 25 (1) of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 currently remains meaning that abortions '*where the foetus is capable of being born alive*' will continue to be unlawful.
4. The UK Government will bring forward regulations to introduce a new framework on abortion in Northern Ireland to include where there is a risk to a woman's health, in cases of fatal and severe fetal abnormalities, or in circumstances of rape and incest.
5. A public consultation on how the changes will be implemented is being conducted and the UK Government will now bring forward regulations to introduce a new framework for abortion in Northern Ireland by 31 March 2020.
6. The Northern Ireland Office has issued guidance for healthcare professionals to cover the interim period between 22 October 2019 and 31 March 2020.
7. For more information visit [www.informingchoicesni.org/advocacy](http://www.informingchoicesni.org/advocacy)