

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW ABORTION FRAMEWORK WELCOME, BUT GLOBAL HEALTH PANDEMIC LEAVES WOMEN WITHOUT CARE

Informing Choices NI (ICNI) call for the immediate use of telemedicine and to allow both abortion pills to be taken at home.

Today, the Northern Ireland Office has published the new framework for abortion services in Northern Ireland. This follows legislation passed by the UK Parliament which resulted in the decriminalisation of abortion.

The framework allows for abortion on request in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and up to 24 weeks where the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman, greater than the risk of ending the pregnancy.

There is no upper gestational limit where there is a risk to the pregnant person's life, to prevent grave permanent injury to their health, or when a serious or fatal fetal anomaly has been detected.

Previously the law in Northern Ireland was one of the most restrictive globally and carried the harshest criminal penalties in Europe.

Commenting on the new framework, ICNI's Director of Advocacy and Policy, Ruairi Rowan, said:

"ICNI welcome the introduction of the new abortion framework for Northern Ireland. Abortion is a healthcare and human rights issue and for too long women and pregnant people have been denied access to these vital services.

"ICNI provide the only non-directive pregnancy choices counselling service in Northern Ireland and every day we witness the devastating impact that restrictive abortion law has on our clients and their families. We are currently experiencing a greater demand for our counselling service with people struggling to access abortion care due to travel restrictions, flight cancellations and hotel closures.

"Therefore, we urgently call for the immediate introduction of an early medical abortion telemedicine service and home use of mifepristone alongside misoprostol. This would enable access to abortion during this global health emergency and allow people to follow current government guidance to stay safe and stay at home without being forced to continue a pregnancy against their will.



“Today is an important day for reproductive rights in Northern Ireland. Going forward services need to be commissioned to provide for accessible abortion provision, added investment in contraception clinics, the introduction of safe access zones outside sexual and reproductive health services and pregnancy counselling centres, and the inclusion of contraception and abortion as compulsory components in the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum in all schools across Northern Ireland.”

ENDS

ICNI provides the only non-directive pregnancy choices counselling service in Northern Ireland. This provides information and support on all pregnancy options, including abortion.

We also provide post pregnancy counselling on traumatic birth, postnatal depression or anxiety and pregnancy loss, either through miscarriage, stillbirth or abortion.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, our offices are now closed until further notice. Our sexual health helpline, 028 9031 6100, is still staffed from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Our counselling service is now operating as a telephone service. Daily appointments are available and can be made via our helpline.