



Prof Sabaratnam Arulkumaran: "Five-and-a-half years after Savita Halappanavar's death, people in Ireland have the opportunity to change the harmful law that cost her life." Photo Derek Spiers

Never Again!

On the morning of October 21, 2012 Savita Halappanavar, a 31-year-old dentist, in her first pregnancy attended the University Hospital Galway with a backache and lower abdominal pain at 17 weeks of her pregnancy. Later that day she was admitted to the hospital for management of inevitable miscarriage. Her membranes spontaneously ruptured on October 22. As the fetal heartbeat was present, the consultant continued to observe her condition and delayed terminating the pregnancy. The patient's condition rapidly deteriorated and she went into septic shock followed by multi-organ failure, and died on Sunday, October 28, 2012.

The investigation into Ms Halappanavar's death, which I chaired, found an over-emphasis on the need not to intervene until the fetal heart stopped

"... if a termination had been carried out when Savita and her husband requested, she would not have had sepsis and she would be alive today."

together with an under-emphasis on the need to monitor and manage the risk of infection and sepsis in the patient. In other words, the reason for the delay in terminating the pregnancy despite threat of severe illness and possible death – and the hopeless situation of the fetus – was the presence of the fetal heartbeat.

We considered the interpretation of the law related to lawful termination in Ireland to have been a material contributory factor in this regard. It was clear that the legal issue delayed the doctors from intervening to terminate, as any

doctor in another country would have advised.

I was pleased to be invited to address the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the 8th Amendment and clarify that if a termination had been carried out when Savita and her husband requested, she would not have had sepsis and she would be alive today.

Best medical practice is to terminate the pregnancy if an infection is found to be present. From a purely medical point of view, infection represents a major risk to the health of the woman and her health could be

jeopardised by delay in treatment. If Savita had survived, the delay in intervention could have resulted in serious health issues, including pelvic inflammatory disease, tubal blockage and subfertility.

Infections can escalate rapidly, particularly in pregnancy: one moment, there can be no threat to life, but the patient can take a bad turn within an hour. Medical decisions should be made based on medical need to save lives and promote health. Requiring doctors to wait until a risk to the health of a pregnant woman has unequivocally deteriorated to a point where her life is at risk is clinically unworkable. It is poor patient care and ethically wrong. It is a violation of the right of the pregnant woman to the highest attainable standard of health.

Five-and-a-half years after Savita Halappanavar's death, people in Ireland have the opportunity to change the harmful law that cost her life. By repealing the 8th Amendment, you have an opportunity to uphold women's basic human rights. There is an urgent need to do so and to begin to provide all

"I hope the people of Ireland will vote yes for abortion... my daughter, [Savita] she lost her life because of this abortion law, because of the diagnosis, and she could not have an abortion. She died".

Andanappa Yalagi,
Savita Halappanavar's
father.

possible care to preserve women's health and protect their lives in pregnancy.

Prof Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, who chaired the HSE Inquiry into the death of Savita Halappanavar, is the former President of the International Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology 2012-15; and of the British Medical Association (2013-14)

Why do experts say 12 weeks?

Public support right of women and girls to have abortions if pregnant due to rape

Firstly it was clear from the expert legal and medical testimony given at the Joint Oireachtas Committee, along with evidence provided to the Citizens' Assembly, that significant change is needed to modernise healthcare for women in Ireland and make their needs central to any policy.

There is a practical reality we can no longer ignore: Irish women access abortion everyday. And while the state continues to deny access, we continue to be in breach of human

rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Human Rights.

Both the Citizens' Assembly and the Oireachtas Committee, along with public opinion, support the right of women and girls to access abortion in cases of rape and incest. In discussing the practicalities of such a provision the committee heard from expert legal witnesses including An Garda Síochána and the Rape Crisis Centre.

Given the complexities and

trauma surrounding such a physical attack it was deemed inappropriate to ask a woman to provide proof, or any other preconditions, that would deny her immediate access to a termination. In other words abortion on rape grounds presents legal difficulties that can cause undue delay to access to abortion and can have the effect of re-traumatising a rape victim.

The most appropriate way of dealing with such a horrific scenario is to allow termination



Clare Daly TD, Independents for Change: "12 weeks is common practice in most EU countries and most abortions are carried out safely and legally in the first 12 weeks."

with no restriction as to reason up to 12 weeks. This is in fact common practice in most EU countries and indeed most abortions are carried out safely and legally within the first 12 weeks.

This should be the case too in Ireland so that all women who

need to terminate a pregnancy are given the choice to do so in a medical context, without the interference of courts or solicitors or gardaí; it is a decision for the woman with the support of her doctor.

Clare Daly TD, Independents4Change

Abortion pills a safe option up to 12 weeks

Every day up to five people are ordering abortion pills online, in addition to the nearly 10 women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics. Websites like womenonweb.org and womenhelp.org work to ensure access to safe abortion pills for use in the first 12 weeks to women in countries where abortion is illegal. The law under the 8th Amendment makes it illegal for a doctor in Ireland to prescribe these pills for use in an abortion so women are left to email doctors abroad for that basic support.

The abortion pills mifepristone and misoprostol are on the World Health Organisation's list of essential medicines. Using them in early pregnancy causes an abortion that is like a spontaneous miscarriage. Most women in need of early abortion



Rita Harrold, (centre): "Women facing crisis pregnancies deserve better."

in the UK are now using pills to have a medical abortion rather than having a surgical procedure.

The proposed legislation to provide abortion if the 8th Amendment is repealed would allow GPs to prescribe abortion pills in Ireland up to 12 weeks.

Using the pills is very safe and women would be able to have their abortions at home with support from their GPs under this proposal. Complications are rare and require identical treatment to the care Irish hospitals already provide for

women with miscarriages.

Under the 8th Amendment women who cannot travel for a legal abortion abroad are forced to use these pills in secret and have pills posted to Northern Ireland as Irish customs would seize them otherwise.

"I think the safety and security of your own home when you're going through something like that is just preferable."

Tanya (28) who used abortion pills in Ireland.

Women facing crisis pregnancies deserve better. Like any medical treatment, it is better to have medical support when using abortion pills – for example if a woman is using other medication or has had a caesarean section.

Voting Yes on May 25th would allow for legislation so women could go for pills to their own GP's, without fear of a possible 14-year prison sentence the current law threatens.

Rita Harrold is a ROSA activist

Compelling case for repeal

Some 35 years after the introduction of the 8th Amendment, access to abortion is now being discussed in the rightful realm of women's health care. This was a central feature of the work of the Joint Oireachtas Committee. From our first meeting we were clear that we wanted to hear evidence – not opinions – from experts both

national and international. We started with Justice Laffoy, the impartial Chair of the Citizens' Assembly, so we could understand its recommendations in full. We heard other experts such as Dr Rhona Mahony and Prof. Fergal Malone (Masters of The National and Rotunda hospitals) as well as Dr Peter Boylan (chair of

the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynecology); from the World Health Organisation and Rape Crisis Centre; and from Prof. Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran (Chair of the International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology and author of the HSE report into the death of Savita Halappanavar).

What he said put the impact of the 8th Amendment into sharp focus: '...if she (Savita) had a termination in the first days as requested, she would not have had sepsis. We would never have heard of her and she would be alive today.'

The evidence from Terminations or Medical Reasons speakers was difficult to hear. Their personal stories make a compelling case for repeal of the 8th and it is a pity that the three men who were the most vocal supporters of the Amendment did not stay to hear their heart breaking testimony.

The medical professionals were in agreement: the 8th Amendment means that they are prevented from delivering a full range of



Evidence informed our conclusions

"The business of the State should be to ensure women have access to proper health care services if they need them and if they choose to avail of them..."

... Or are the attitudes from the time of the industrial schools, the Magdalene laundries, and the Mother and Baby Homes, are those attitudes to prevail when women were treated as chattels, with no rights or protections."

Gerry Adams TD, Sinn Féin, Dáil speech

healthcare services to women.

Fact-based information brought the committee to the conclusion that change must happen for the sake of women's health and healthcare.

It is time to trust women, to

trust doctors and to remove this serious barrier to the delivery of healthcare for women out of the Constitution – where it should never have been in the first place.

Louise O'Reilly TD, Sinn Féin

Healthcare path broken again and again

The law stops doctors from helping women to arrange abortions abroad, writes Dr Caitriona Henchion



Dr Caitriona Henchion

Since 1983, at least 170,000 women have travelled from Ireland to the UK for abortion care. Another 3,000 will make the journey this year.

These women are abandoned by the Irish healthcare system.

Doctors in Ireland are prohibited by law from helping women to make arrangements for termination overseas. This is the case even where there is a complex medical history, or where travelling after a procedure involves increased risks because of a health condition.

So women must organise care in an unfamiliar city themselves.

In many cases, they must relay complex medical information to healthcare staff in another state.

This puts an extra burden on patients during a vulnerable time. We know from our services that it causes women additional distress, anxiety, financial cost and risks to their health.

The burden is even greater for women who are disadvantaged, or women in rural areas who have to endure many hours of travel.

After the procedure, they face another journey home - another flight, another long bus journey - while still recovering.

Once they return to Ireland,

the care path is broken again. If a woman has a concern, she may not want to go to her own GP or even know that post-abortion care is available in Ireland.

"These women are abandoned by the Irish healthcare system"

And she is likely to miss out on post-abortion contraceptive counselling.

Women who access illegal abortions through pills ordered

online get an even lower standard of care. And there is evidence that this trend is increasing rapidly.

As medical director of the Irish Family Planning Association, I can categorically state that the experience of women and girls in Ireland who need abortion care does not meet international standards.

This failure of care is a direct result of the 8th Amendment. We must repeal it and provide proper care here in Ireland.

Dr Caitriona Henchion is medical director with the Irish Family Planning Association

Five reasons to vote YES!

She could be your sister, your daughter, your workmate, your friend ... You?

The 8th doesn't stop abortion it makes women's lives harder

Every day at least nine women go abroad for abortions; more take pills at home. Since 1983, over 170,000 have left for medical care they should be able to get in Ireland.

Most are in relationships and already have children.

The 8th does not stop Irish women having abortions: it forces them abroad and adds to their hardship.

Remove the obstacles to abortion for women without money or who are physically unable to travel

The 8th creates huge difficulties for women with disabilities, for younger women and those who must get off work to travel - and it could cost over €2000.

Because many women want to keep their reason for going abroad a secret, they fear asking for aftercare.

Support survivors of rape Make abortion pills safer Allow abortion up to 12 weeks

The Joint Oireachtas Committee has proposed that abortion should be made available without restriction up to 12 weeks, for two main reasons:

In Ireland today the law won't let a woman or girl who is pregnant by rape have an abortion here.

There is no medical test to prove rape. Only the courts can do that, but it takes on average 21 months to go to court. This is too late - and it traumatises women.

The committee agreed that forcing a survivor to prove rape so that she can have an abortion is unworkable.

Despite the ban on abortion pills, women buy them on the internet and use them without medical support.

The way to make them safer and legally available, to any woman, is to have them prescribed by a GP without restriction up to 12 weeks.

Remove the ban on abortion in cases of fatal foetal anomaly

In 2011 in the 21st week of her pregnancy, Amanda Mellet found the foetus she was carrying had Edwards syndrome - where the foetus is fatally impaired.

She wanted a termination. But she and her husband had to go to Liverpool Women's Hospital to get one. Twelve hours after it, they returned home because it cost them €2000 and they couldn't afford to stay longer.

They had to leave the foetus's remains behind and the ashes were delivered three weeks later by courier.

The UN Human Rights Committee called for change to our laws and Constitution, to ensure nobody was forced to endure such an ordeal again.

Respect women's medical choices

Once a woman is pregnant, she can no longer decide on her medical treatment. The 8th requires hospitals to avoid any medical procedure, including some cancer treatments, that might lead to a termination or risk to a foetus. So a hospital can ignore a woman's wishes.

*All this must change
Repeal of the 8th is the first step*

Tara Flynn: Yes Repeal



Photo: Ruth Connolly

"My reasons for voting Yes aren't personal. I know Ireland is a compassionate country where people don't want to impose their will and beliefs on others when they find themselves in crisis, let alone force them to do something with which they can't cope. The 8th affects every pregnancy, including those who choose to continue. We need to keep people safe, here at home."

The Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment recognises that not everyone who needs an abortion identifies as a woman. We support access to abortion for all who need it be they cis, trans or gender fluid.

TRADE UNION
CAMPAIGN TO
REPEAL THE **8TH**

Those with least suffer most

We must end the lie that abortion is not an issue for women living here, writes Bríd Smith

A woman's right to choose, to control her own body, is a fundamental issue of women's rights and a key prerequisite of gender equality. But it is, and always has been, also a class issue.

The truth is, women of the upper classes, women with the money, could always get abortions.

This is of enormous importance in this referendum campaign and we cannot lose sight of it. We should never forget that every restriction, every obstacle, put in the way of accessing abortion has a disproportionate effect on women who are working class, in poverty or marginalised. It also leads to later abortions because the procedure is not accessible through the health service.

If you have to travel to the UK or elsewhere it is so much easier if you are well off and have the money and connections. If you are a terrified young working class girl, or a migrant worker, or in direct provision it's much more

difficult – or impossible.

In my own experience being exiled out of one's own country to access abortion carries with it stigma and loneliness that no woman should have to go through. We must end the lie that abortion is not an issue for women living here. It absolutely is. Just not in Ireland because we exile our women or we hold the threat of criminalisation and a 14-year sentence for those who procure the abortion pill here.

Winning repeal on May 25th is an absolute necessity and I appeal to every voter to do their best at work and in their communities to get out the Yes vote. But it is also a staging post in the overall struggle for choice, for a new Ireland where every child is a wanted child with a decent chance in life.

Bríd Smith, TD, People Before Profit: "In my own experience being exiled out of one's own country to access abortion carries with it stigma and loneliness that no woman should have to go through."



Impact of 8th on women

Miss X

In 1992 a 14-year-old girl was raped and sexually abused by a man known to her and her family. When she found she was pregnant she became suicidal. She and her parents decided to travel to England to end the pregnancy. After they informed the Gardaí of the trip and asked if foetal tissue could be used as evidence against the abuser, the State got a temporary court order to prevent the girl from having the abortion. The family returned from England. In a court hearing, a psychologist concluded that the girl's mental health would be seriously damaged if she was forced to continue with her pregnancy and that she could commit suicide. The judge ruled that the risk to her life from suicide was less than the risk to the life of her unborn child if she ended the pregnancy. He ordered that she be prevented from leaving the country for nine months. The Supreme Court overturned this decision on appeal, citing the girl's own right to life, and she was permitted to travel for an abortion. She later had a miscarriage while in England.

In 2012 **Aisha Chithira**, a 32-year-old mother-of-one living in Ireland, became pregnant for the second time. She had uterine fibroids – a serious condition that led to difficulties in her first pregnancy. At eight weeks she presented at a maternity hospital in Dublin to safely end her pregnancy. She was told this was illegal in Ireland. As she then had to raise money to travel abroad, she did not access the procedure in England until 22 weeks, meaning the medical risks were much higher. She had to immediately travel back to Ireland after her procedure in London and was unable stay in the clinic under observation as medically advised. She left early and suffered major internal bleeding, dying of a heart attack in a taxi.

Contraception and sex education

Cost is a barrier to contraception, writes Niall Behan

Statistics from other countries tell us that when abortion is legalised, the rate of abortion comes down.

Why? It's because legal abortion care is combined with improved access to contraception and sexual health education.

The effects of better access to contraception in Ireland are clear. In the 20 years after the 8th Amendment was added to the Constitution, the number of women travelling to the UK for abortion care doubled. But with

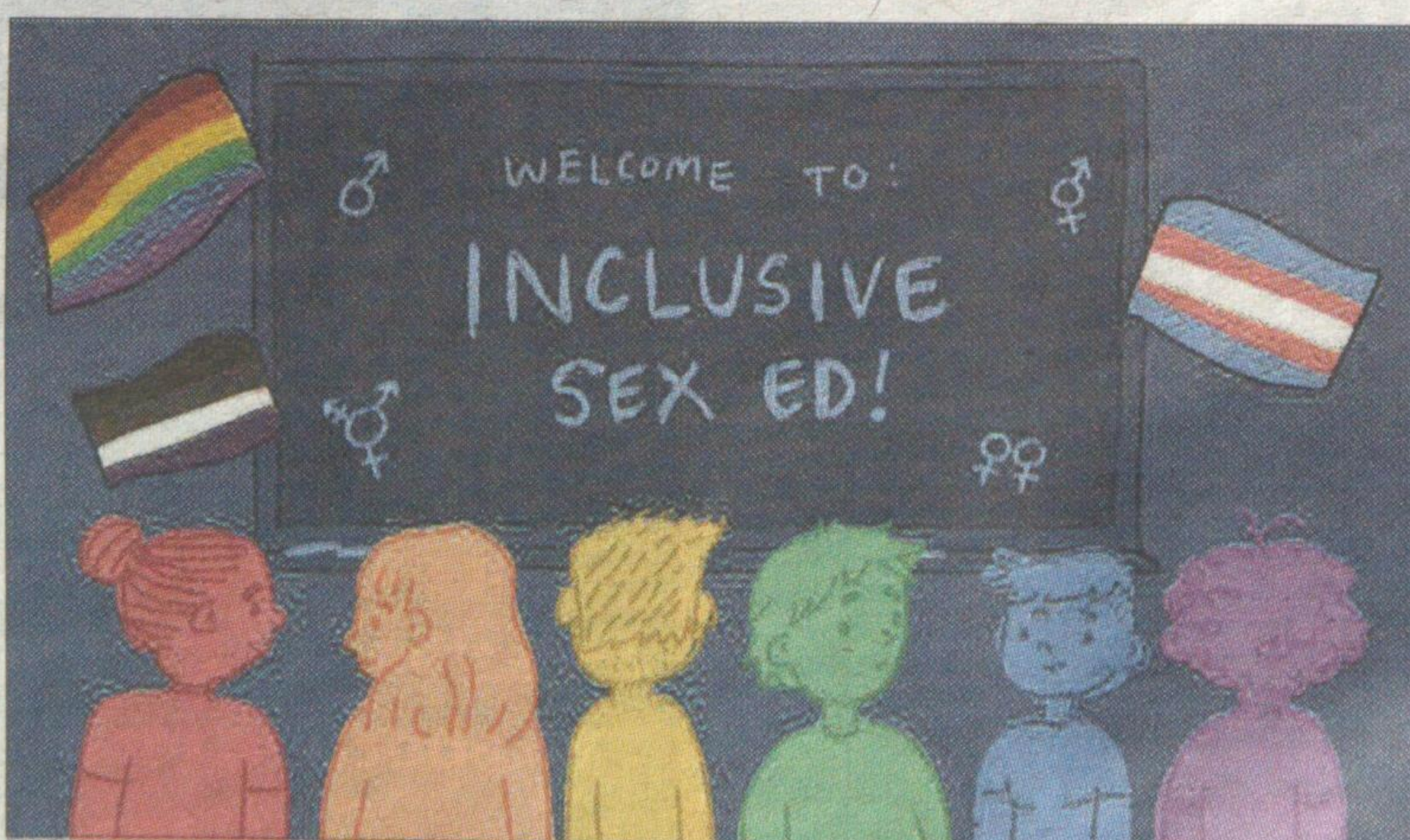


Photo GCN

the establishment of the Crisis Pregnancy Programme and better access to contraception, the rate began to fall – and kept falling. At the same time the teenage

pregnancy rate plummeted.

But we need to do much more. Sexuality education is far from ideal in Irish schools. Some schools, usually because of religious

ethos, are failing young people and providing sexuality education that is neither comprehensive nor evidence based.

And cost is still a barrier to access to contraception. Many women simply cannot afford the most effective method, especially after paying for an abortion abroad.

If we want to ensure a low rate of abortion, we must learn from other countries. We must provide women with free contraception integrated into safe and legal abortion care and give young people quality sexuality education.

Niall Behan is chief executive of the IFPA



'I was told my baby would never be born alive'

Despite a serious risk to my health the doctors said there was still a foetal heartbeat and they couldn't induce labour, writes Amy Walsh

When I found out in September 2014 I was going to be a mother, I was overcome with joy. While my early pregnancy was like any normal pregnancy, at 14 weeks a midwife told us our baby would never be born alive. I was told a miscarriage was probably imminent but they would have to do further genetic tests to figure out the condition my baby had. We later learned she had stopped growing due to a very rare chromosomal condition called Triploidy. She had 23 extra chromosomes and no intervention could save her. Our daughter had what is medically termed a fatal foetal abnormality (FFA).

Our medical team explained that because of the 8th Amendment if we wished to stay in the Irish hospital system and under its care, the only maternity option available to us was for me



Amy Walsh and her husband, Yousef, with baby Rose

to remain pregnant and to wait for our daughter to pass away naturally. If we wanted a different care path, we would have to leave our home, our families, our support network and our country. I wanted my daughter to be born at home, to meet her grandparents and family, so we decided to continue our pregnancy and wait for her to pass away naturally.

But as time passed, my physical and mental health began to suffer. My blood pressure rose and I showed signs of early pre-eclampsia, a complication associated with triploid pregnancies that continue into the third trimester. The condition could develop very rapidly and, depending on its severity, even be life threatening. There was a serious risk to my health but the medical team said that even though my daughter would never

be born alive, the 8th Amendment meant that as long as her heart was still beating they could not induce my labour until my life was at risk.

We found ourselves making the decision to travel to Liverpool Women's Hospital where after a compassionate induction of labour my daughter, Rose, was stillborn. We had wanted to bring her home with us so she could meet our families but as she was so tiny and fragile we were advised not to do this. Leaving Liverpool and returning to Ireland without Rose was one of the hardest parts of the worst and saddest time in my life.

The 8th Amendment meant we could not be looked after at home when we were most in need.

Amy Walsh of Terminations for Medical Reasons gave evidence to the Citizens' Assembly

A midwife's testimony

I am a qualified midwife and I work for an abortion provider. I'm fortunate enough to have never been faced with the decision to end a pregnancy. But even if I did, by the good fortune of where I live, I have a choice. I do not have a story to tell, but I have many.

I am responsible for providing care for the girls and women who take the flight to the UK to end a pregnancy. I hold the hands of the frightened and stunned, the women who find themselves in a foreign city with foreign accents, filled with the yearning of wanting to be at home and safe.

I hug the Irish girls who have never had a passport before, never left their small rural town before and are all alone because they had nowhere to turn in their own country. I have discharged the sophisticated business woman who flew to England in a day to

end a pregnancy that was the result of a bad relationship.

I have watched these brave women walk away from my clinic, knowing they have lied when they said they have a responsible adult to care for them when they leave but having to accept their word because they have a flight to catch and can't afford an overnight stay.

I have administered pills to women, knowing that within 20 minutes there may be an effect and she will start to bleed and cramp as the pregnancy passes. Wondering will she have anyone to hold her hand? Or will she be curled up in an airport toilet with no privacy and dignity in this most vulnerable time in her life? Will other passengers stare? In sympathy or judgement? Will she be ok?

I have pleaded with these women to get some counselling and help when they get home

when I know there is no help for them when they get there.

I come home from work every day and I think of them.

My sisters. Your sisters.

Did I do enough to make it easier? Did they know that I genuinely cared?

I hope there is a modicum of comfort to be taken from that before they return to an Ireland that doesn't want to know about it, wants them to keep their secrets as if it is a personal shame. It isn't.

I don't ask them why they are here. I do not ask them to prove their worthiness to end a pregnancy. Nor should you.

Abortion is not easy. So for our sisters, our daughters, our cousins, our friends, repeal the 8th and show some humanity.

Taken with author's permission from ARC submission to the Citizens Assembly, p51



Liverpool Women's Hospital recently limited services to women from Ireland whose babies have been diagnosed with having a chromosome abnormality. So the safety net for women carrying a foetus with a fatal anomaly is being reduced. For women in these situations, services must be made available in Ireland for those who wish to terminate the pregnancy. This requires repeal of the 8th Amendment.

Will repeal open floodgates?

When the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act was passed in 2013, anti-repeal campaigners claimed it would lead to an 'opening of the floodgates'. This has not happened.

In 2016, only 26 procedures were carried out under the Act; and 25 in 2017.

All reliable research shows that highly restrictive laws do not lead to significantly lower rates of abortion than laws that allow a woman to access abortion when needed.

The statistics from other countries tell us that when abortion is legalised, the rate of abortion comes down.

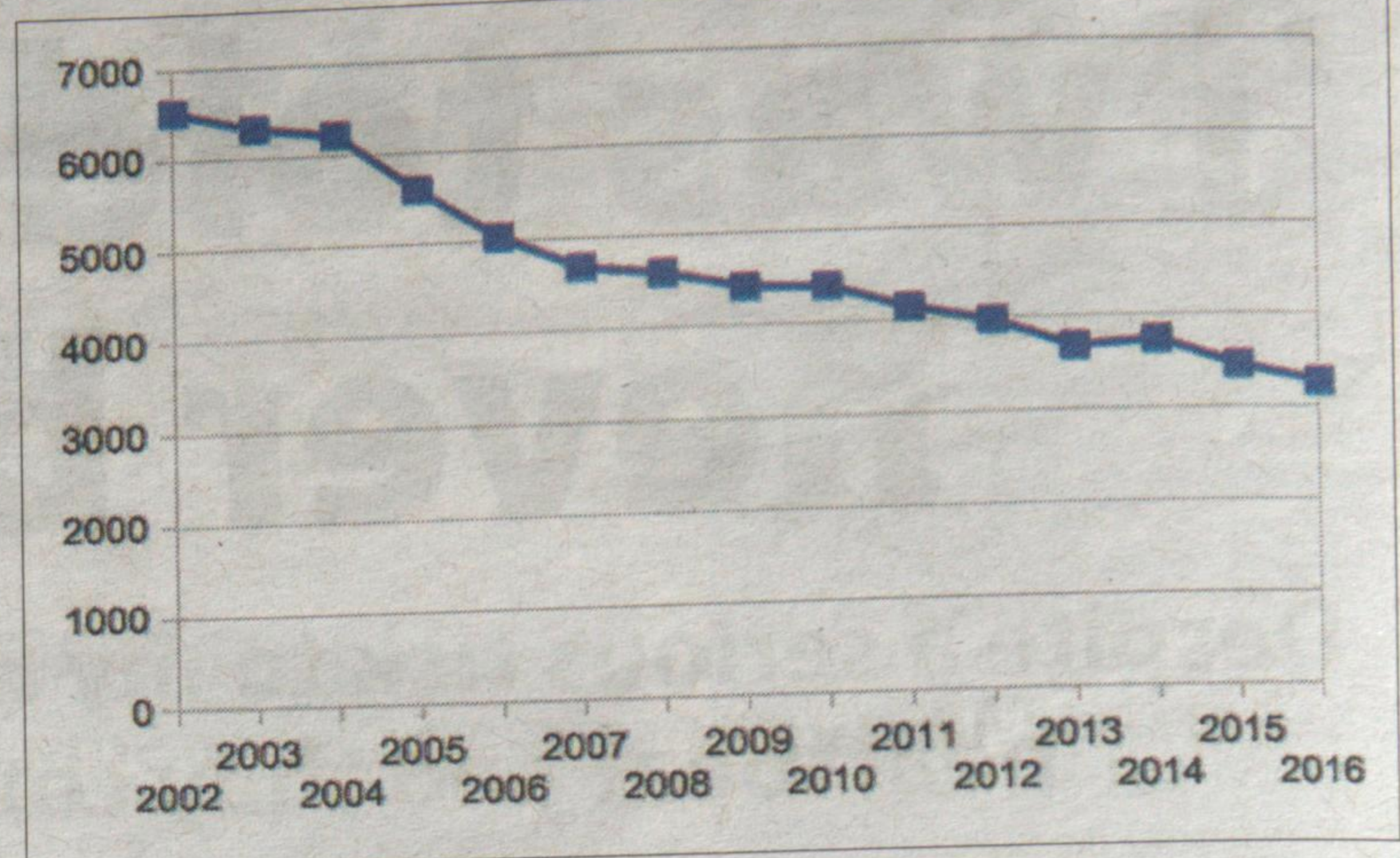
- France legalised in 1975 and the rate dropped by about five per 1,000 women.
- West Germany legalised in 1996 and the rate dropped by three per 1,000 women and is still dropping, from 130,000 recorded abortions a year in 1996 to just under 99,000 in 2016.
- Finland, which legalised abortion in 1970, experienced a drop from about 20 abortions per 1,000 women in 1972 to just 8.2 in 2016.

Countries which have legalised more recently – Switzerland in 2002, Portugal in 2007 and

Spain in 2010 – have all had a decline in the abortion rate. These declines occur because the states have prioritised better access to contraception and sexuality education.

In Portugal for example, 95% of women leave a clinic following an abortion with a contraceptive method. So the abortion rate has dropped from 20,000 a year to 15,000 a year since 2007. In Finland, revised sexuality education led to a dramatic fall in teenage pregnancy.

Figures from the UK Department of Health show that the number of women from Ireland having an abortion in UK clinics began to decline in 2002,



The number of women from Ireland having an abortion in UK clinics began to decline in 2002

in parallel with the establishment of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and better access to contraception.

There is no evidence that repeal of the 8th Amendment will

lead to more abortions. Instead, legalisation will make it safer for women who want abortions.

Dr Caitriona Henchion is medical director with the Irish Family Planning Association

Threats, coercions and forced procedures

Consent is a fundamental cornerstone of modern day healthcare and maternity care is no exception. During a pregnancy a woman will have a multitude of tests, procedures and treatments, and each one should require her informed consent. A pregnant woman needs to know these procedures are in her best interests. To make such an evaluation she should know the benefits, the potential risks, the alternative and the success rates. She can then weigh them up against not doing anything at all or doing something else. Consent must be informed, and once given it can still be withdrawn and there should always be an option for it to be withheld, declined or refused.

Women report that in the Irish maternity service, informed consent and informed refusal are often not an option. In a survey carried out by AIMS Ireland with nearly 3,000 respondents in 2014-15 we found only 49% received the opportunity to decline a treatment test or procedure during pregnancy and only 50% had this opportunity during labour and birth.

Why are the figures so low? In Ireland, the minute a woman



Kryisia Lynch, chairperson, AIMS Ireland: "In Ireland, the minute a woman becomes pregnant her body is subject to constitutional law."

becomes pregnant her body is subject to constitutional law. Consent in pregnancy is guided by the National Consent Policy which is in turn informed by the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution.

The policy questions the

rights of a pregnant woman to make an informed refusal and decline a medical procedure outside of recommendations of medical professionals. It enables and encourages health care professionals to seek legal advice and to make an application to the

High Court with the intention of forcing a woman to submit.

The policy enables medical professionals to practise in a certain way and the realisation that this behaviour is permissible often leaves women terrified and violated on the threshold

of motherhood. Until the 8th Amendment is removed pregnant women in Ireland will be subject to these threats, coercions and forced procedures during pregnancy, labour and birth.

Kryisia Lynch is chairperson of AIMS Ireland



'Like Mary Robinson and Michael D Higgins, I opposed the 8th Amendment'

Catherine McGuinness is a former Supreme Court Judge

I was there in 1983. I was a member of Seanad Éireann. Like other senators at that time, including Mary Robinson and Michael D Higgins, I opposed the introduction of the 8th Amendment and campaigned against it. We argued that it was wrong for legal and social reasons. This was despite the no doubt sincere beliefs of its advocates. The amendment would not achieve its own aims. It would in fact become an instrument of oppression of women and of uncertainty and difficulty for the medical profession. Legislation through the normal processes of the Oireachtas was the place to regulate termination of pregnancy, as was the case with other medical and health matters.

All that has happened since 1983 has not made me change my mind. Indeed the sad trail of the cases that have unfolded over the past 30 years since the X case has only strengthened and confirmed my original beliefs. We seem to have forgotten that the dire outcomes

of the 8th meant we had to enact the 13th and 14th amendments on freedom of travel and access to even limited information. We are still trying to retain an oppressive version of "an Irish solution of an Irish problem" – to use a rightly discredited phrase.

I have indeed not changed my mind. I give my full support to the Yes campaign.

We need to accept the reality that there is abortion in Ireland. Technically it may take place in Britain, or perhaps in the Netherlands. It takes place here at home through the administration of pills obtained through the internet and taken without medical advice or supervision. The numbers we know from British sources are understated as many women do not give Irish addresses. We have little idea how many women have used pills they found online, and no way of measuring this. Making abortion secretive and hard to talk about does not mean it does not happen. It is part of the history of many families in

this country. It is rank hypocrisy to pretend that this is not so.

The repeal of the 8th Amendment will allow for the introduction of a properly regulated, properly limited medical service governed by legislation. It will allow for the support of women in crisis situations and of their families, without the need for them to flee the country like refugees, without the need for them to take poorly identified drugs without medical help.

The argument is being made that repeal will mean Ireland will follow the English model – the old familiar "floodgates" argument. This is the same argument made at the time of the referendum on divorce. In the marriage equality referendum we were told (by the same people) that this would be the end of marriage. It did not happen. The floodgates did not open. The time has come for us to accept the world of 2018 and to vote Yes for repeal of the 8th Amendment.



Catherine McGuinness: "Making abortion secretive and hard to talk about does not mean it does not happen. It is part of the history of many families in this country." Photo Derek Spiers

Amanda Mellet was 21 weeks pregnant in November 2011 when she was told her baby had a fatal diagnosis of Edward's Syndrome.

After three weeks of anxiety she and her husband travelled to Liverpool Women's Hospital for a termination. After a 36-hour labour she delivered a stillborn baby girl. She had to fly home 12 hours later as the couple couldn't afford to stay any longer. They had to leave the foetal remains behind and received the ashes three weeks later by courier. The UN Human Rights Committee found Ireland's ban on abortion violated Ms Mellet's right to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Ours was an average tragedy but it utterly devastated us

I was 14 when I heard about the X Case. I was living at home with my family, just outside a large country town, surrounded by a staunchly conservative rural heartland. I didn't believe in those values so when I read about the young girl's tragedy, I was horrified.

The X Case made me more aware of the serious social issues that affect our society. How the state that I live in, could force a 14-year-old rape victim to be put through such torture was beyond my comprehension.

I had never heard of the 8th Amendment. I had no idea why there were no reproductive rights

for Irish women. I probably had no idea what reproductive rights were. But I did know that if a woman needed an abortion, under no circumstance should she be disallowed from seeking it safely and legally in her own country. And she should never be ashamed.

Unfortunately, I now know the awful history of the 1983 amendment, that it was one of the most tragic and cruel mistakes of our past. The pain it has caused will take many years to heal.

Six years ago the 8th Amendment affected me and my



wife personally and I have never been the same since. Ours was an average tragedy in the larger scheme of things. To us it was utter devastation. But deep down you know somebody else has had an even worse experience.

You know, because you know of the X Case. You know because of the personal stories of the hundreds of testimonies now bravely shared in public forums. You know because thankfully we don't live in such a secretive and judgmental society any more. Repealing the 8th Amendment and allowing reproductive rights will help continue the healing of our society.



Doctors say repeal 8th

'I've never met a woman who wanted a termination'



Prof Louise Kenny:
"The 8th Amendment casts a shadow over the care of every woman of reproductive age with complex medical needs in this State."

I've worked as an obstetrician for 25 years, in the UK where I trained and for the last 12 years in Ireland, as a specialist in the management of high risk pregnancy.

In all that time, I have never met a woman who wanted a termination. I've met many who desperately needed one.

I've looked after women with complex medical conditions whose health, and on occasion their very life, has been threatened by pregnancy. Under

the 8th Amendment, doctors like me have to wait until the threat to life is "immediate and substantial" - neither of which has a legal or a medical definition - before we can perform a termination.

The 8th Amendment casts a shadow over the care of every woman of reproductive age with complex medical needs in this State.

When we see a woman with an underlying serious medical condition, we have to make decisions in a legal rather than

a medical framework and under the threat of a custodial sentence. This absolutely results in poor outcomes.

We can no longer support a system where the health and long-term wellbeing of women is ignored. We can no longer export some of most vulnerable citizens for medical treatment in the UK. This is human rights issue. We must repeal the 8th.

Prof Louise Kenny is a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist

No distinction between medical and mental health

Since the 8th Amendment there have been two other "abortion" referendums, and one piece of legislation, Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013. All followed from the mess created by the 8th referendum and all involved mental health issues.

In the first post - 8th Amendment referendum, in 1992, the Irish public voted to include suicide as a reason for a life-saving abortion. This followed the case of Miss X, who was suicidal because of an unwanted pregnancy. The public were asked this same question again in the 2002 referendum, and for a second time voted to include a suicide clause. In the debate leading up to the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 suicide again became the central issue.

While there was little, if any, vocal opposition to abortion being made available for women with life-threatening obstetric or medical conditions, the issue of whether a suicidal pregnant woman could theoretically have an abortion was debated with some intensity. Much of the debate centred around whether women could be believed and whether the suicide clause would "open the floodgates" for women to have abortions.



Dr Veronica O'Keane. Photo: Derek Speirs

Since then a total of seven women have been registered as having had an abortion to prevent suicide: three in 2014, three in 2015 and one in 2016. These statistics fly in the face of the "floodgates" scare.

Last year the Citizen's Assembly reinforced my faith in the Irish public's understanding of mental health when they recommended that there should be no distinction between medical and mental

health. This was reiterated by the Joint Oireachtas Committee this year. I gave evidence at both forums and was struck by how sensitive the members were to mental health issues. Perhaps this is why mental health has not featured hugely in the current debate as a reason to prevent the introduction of legislation should the 8th be repealed. But mental health remains a central issue in repeal of the 8th and in the

proposed legislation agreed by the Oireachtas.

"Mental health" is at the core of the decisions that women make during crisis pregnancies and it encompasses everything from being acutely suicidal to knowing that you can't become an adequate mother to a child, usually another child. It is no surprise that mental health is the most common reason cited for having an abortion, because our lives depend on our mental health.

"Mental health" means a woman is protecting herself, her family and a possible baby from unbearable stress. Women are very vulnerable during pregnancy to depression and anxiety disorders. In fact, during pregnancy women are at the greatest risk of developing depression than at any other point in the female life cycle. This risk is increased by 50% if women have an unwanted pregnancy.

We cannot talk about mental health without talking about stigma: the stigma that "women who travel" feel and are made to feel. We have heard much about the loneliness, the isolation, the lack of support, the fear to seek medical help, that women who travel or who take the illegal abortion pills in Ireland experience. This makes what

would normally be a sad and difficult time into a traumatic lonely experience.

The most in-depth report on mental health and abortion was written by the Academy of Royal Colleges, UK in 2016. It reported that stigma about abortion, but not abortion itself, led to mental health problems.

"The Academy of Royal Colleges UK has reported that stigma about abortion, but not abortion itself, leads to mental health problems."

We cannot have good mental health without having adequate reproductive healthcare. People in Ireland have demonstrated that attitudes to trusting women and to mental health have changed: I am hopeful that they will vote "yes" for change, for repeal of the 8th, and for the introduction of safe medical care for women in this referendum.

Veronica O'Keane, professor in psychiatry, TCD and Tallaght Hospital

Amendment – Vote Yes!

Time for us to deal with abortion in Ireland

It is ignoring reality to say we do not have abortion here, writes Peter Boylan



Dr Peter Boylan: "The Constitution is no place for regulating the complexities of medical care." Photo: Derek Speirs

The 8th Amendment gives rise to significant difficulties for doctors practising obstetrics in Ireland, and has caused grave harm to many women in Ireland, including death.

In 1983, the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists did not have an official position on the 8th Amendment. Thirty-five years later, having seen at first hand the unintended, unforeseen and damaging consequences,

the institute has an agreed position – we want to see the 8th Amendment repealed for the good of Irish women today and into the future.

As long as the 8th Amendment is in the Constitution, women who are pregnant because of rape cannot terminate their pregnancy unless they travel to another country. Women who know their baby will die at or shortly after birth cannot

deliver the baby early if that is their wish. Women who have cancer can be denied treatment if they are pregnant, sometimes with fatal consequences. As my colleague Prof Louise Kenny has made clear: "It is a fact that the 8th Amendment casts a shadow over the care of every woman of reproductive age with complex medical needs in this state."

The Constitution is no place for regulating the complexities of medical care.

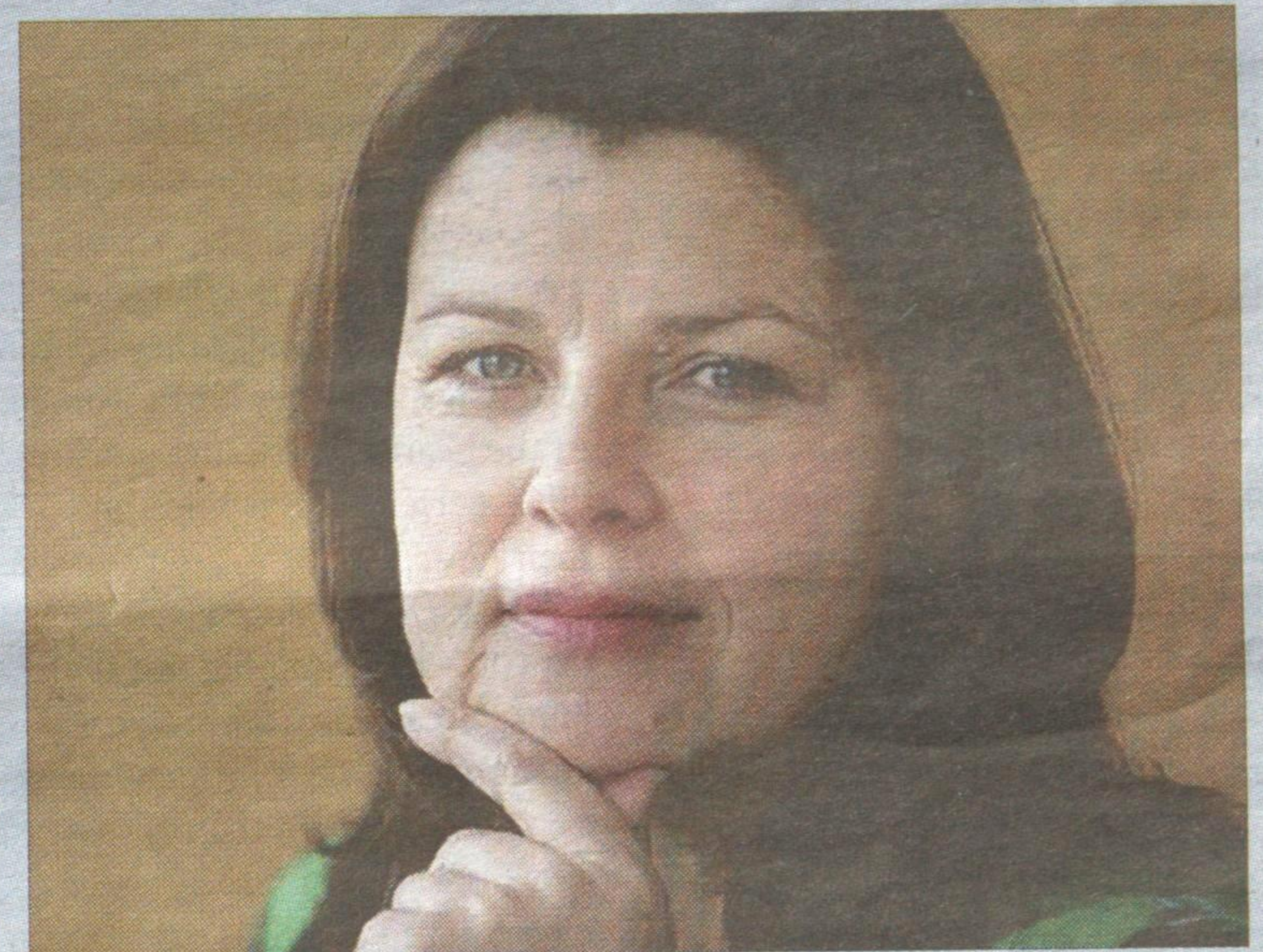
It is ignoring reality to say that we do not have abortion in Ireland today. Women are increasingly accessing abortion pills online, illegally and with no certainty as to their quality. These pills are safe and effective when taken under medical supervision as is the case in virtually every other country in Europe. When they are taken without medical supervision, however, there are significant risks. Doctors worry about this.

Abortion is a difficult issue for many. However, the time has come for us to deal with it ourselves in Ireland. Every other European country has found a solution which works for them. As a mature nation, it is time for us take responsibility ourselves and repeal the 8th Amendment. We need an Irish solution to an Irish problem.

Dr Peter Boylan chairs the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

GP-led abortion services without stigma

After repeal, legislation will be introduced that includes the provision of termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. In this circumstance abortion will be restricted in terms of being provided only by a registered doctor, most probably a general practitioner, by consultation, examination and prescription of medication, and with a probable mandatory three-day waiting period.



Dr Mary Favier: "12-week proposal will prioritise women's health and ensure safe effective reproductive healthcare for women in Ireland"

Access will not be restricted in terms of what reason a woman must give when requesting a termination of pregnancy. The advantages of this proposed service is that it will be safe, it will be accessible to women near them in their communities and will be provided in a doctor's surgery that is not associated with the stigma of clinics.

It will be inexpensive to the health service, and the training and support required can be easily undertaken by general practitioners and other healthcare providers involved.

Before nine weeks of gestation it will not usually be necessary for a woman to have an ultrasound scan and the necessary consultation can be completed entirely with her general practitioner.

Between nine and 12 weeks an ultrasound scan may be needed to confirm the pregnancy dates; how this will be arranged remains to be worked out. General practitioners will work closely with their gynaecologist colleagues to ensure the service provided to women is safe and effective and some early discussion has taken place to this end.

The service can be deemed a success when it results in Irish women no longer having to travel outside of the state to access their healthcare. After 12 weeks, abortion access will be only for substantive risk to health and will be hospital based and will require the signature of two doctors.

General practitioners welcome these proposals as they prioritise women's health and ensure safe effective reproductive health care for women in Ireland.

Cork GP Dr Mary Favier is on the GP Committee of the Irish Medical Organisation and on the Council of the Irish College of General Practitioners

YES REPEAL 

Women's experience at heart of Yes campaign

Together
for
Yes.

Together For Yes is the national civil society campaign to remove the 8th Amendment from the Constitution. We are the broadest platform ever assembled to create a more compassionate Ireland that cares for its women by providing abortion services to those who need them. From day one, this movement has been built on the work and dedication of volunteers, and winning this referendum will be no different. It will be a broad, welcoming, inclusive, and fact-based campaign, always respectful of people's positions and views.

The campaign is co-led by the National Women's Council of Ireland, the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment, and the Abortion Rights Campaign. Together, with

dozens of organisations, including the Irish Family Planning Association, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Women's Aid, Parents for Choice, the Union of Students of Ireland, One Family, Doctors for Choice, trade unions and many more, we are focused on achieving laws and services that respond to women's needs and best medical practice.

We have support in every village and town in Ireland, and this is indicative of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Irish people want to change our abortion laws because they are too restrictive, and they harm women. At the heart of our campaign are the experiences of women and their families.

Extensive evidence given at the Citizens' Assembly and the Joint Oireachtas Committee was unequivocal: the 8th Amendment harms women and their access to healthcare. On rare occasions, it has caused death, as evidenced by the tragic case of Savita Halappanavar in 2012. Together



Orla O'Connor Photo: Derek Speirs

For Yes represents people who believe that Ireland is a compassionate and contemporary country, and that our laws should support, respect and protect women in their time of greatest need.

Removing the 8th Amendment will mean victims of rape who are pregnant, women who learn their pregnancy involves a fatal foetal abnormality, or women whose health is at risk due to their pregnancy will have the choice to access abortion services in their home country. We want to enable women who need abortions to receive compassionate care in appropriate healthcare settings with proper regulation and guidance and without shame, secrecy or stigma. Furthermore, it is important that doctors are able to provide the best care and support possible to women, without fear of prosecution.

We understand that this is a complex and sensitive issue, and we know that talking about abortion can be a tough challenge, that a lot of people still have worries and fears. But we also know, from talking with our own families, friends and neighbours, as well as from the research, that

cruelty of the 8th Amendment, and to ensure that women have the compassionate care and support they need, including regulated access to abortion, here at home in Ireland.

This referendum matters to all of us, men and women. We want a fairer, kinder Ireland, a place where women's lives and health are truly respected and protected; an Ireland which is a country where we are proud to live, and a good place to raise our children and our grandchildren.

Sometimes a personal and private matter needs public support. Life is not black and white, it is much more complex, and we believe that the constitution is not the place to address the complexities of a crisis pregnancy.

We believe this decision is a personal, private one that a woman should be allowed to make under the care and support of her doctor, and her family. We can, and must, respond with compassion to the reality of women's lives. Abortions happen here – that is a fact, and we must put laws and services in place to respond compassionately to women's real-life needs.

This referendum is a critical juncture for Ireland and we invite everyone who wishes to create a compassionate environment for women who need abortions in Ireland to join with us in this campaign. Together we can make a real difference to women's lives, by removing the 8th Amendment we can bring an end to the pain and distress of women shut out by their own country.

Orla O'Connor and Ailbhe Smyth are co-directors of Together for Yes



Ailbhe Smyth Photo: Derek Speirs

Support
the campaign.
Donate today.

togetherforyes.ie/donate

Together
for
Yes.

Vote Yes on 25 May
#Together4Yes

We love our children



Parents Together for Yes want healthcare at home

One in every two of those who need access to abortion care already has children. As parents, we want to be able to do what's best for our families.

When we need abortion care, we want to be able to access it at home in Ireland with medical support, surrounded by our families. Right now, we can't. Instead, we must travel abroad, away from our children, to access what is a basic part of reproductive healthcare in almost every other EU country. Or else, we must take pills illegally, in secret, without the support of our doctors. We don't think this is right.

Why do parents need abortion care?

There are many reasons why parents might need abortion care. If we have children with additional needs, we might not feel capable of parenting more children. The situation of someone in an abusive relationship is likely to worsen in pregnancy. A wanted and longed-for pregnancy could be

diagnosed with a fatal foetal abnormality.

Some parents are already struggling and simply can't afford another child. Some have suffered health complications in previous pregnancies and don't want to take the risk of another pregnancy endangering their health and their ability to parent their existing children.

We love our children

We know all about the reality of parenting in Ireland. We know that it is one of the most important jobs in the world, but sometimes also the hardest. It's not something we would put on someone who isn't ready.

We want to be able to make the decisions we know are in the best interests of our children, and we want the same for them when they group up. Our vision for Ireland is one of a compassionate, equal Ireland; one where every parent is a willing parent, and every child a wanted child.

Parents Together for Yes

Commitment to dignity of women

Human rights provide important legal protections to everyone, including women in Ireland. Human rights enjoy the force of law because Ireland has signed up to international human rights agreements.

At the very core of all human rights protections, regardless of the strength of their legal status, is their roots in dignity.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

It is this commitment to the dignity of women in Ireland to decide the most appropriate healthcare pathway for her and her family, which lies at the heart of the Together for Yes campaign. Our campaign believes that women in Ireland deserve compassionate healthcare and

that the 8th Amendment should be removed to prevent the ongoing harms to women.

In the vast majority of countries in the world, access to abortion services is a normal, accepted, de-stigmatised part of a functioning health care system. The legal restrictions imposed by the 8th Amendment have huge consequences for women and families in Ireland, including grave harm to health and even death.

The absolute rigidity of the law, which criminalises women and doctors if equal rights are not given to woman and foetus within all clinical decisions, has been found consistently to violate women's human rights, including by the European Court of Human Rights (A, B, C v. Ireland, 2010).

Several international human rights bodies have called upon the State to take the necessary steps towards constitutional reform and decriminalization of women and doctors, including the UN Human Rights Committee (2014), the UN



Deirdre Duffy: "In the vast majority of countries, abortion is a normal, accepted, de-stigmatised part of healthcare."

Committee against Torture, the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (2015) and the UN Committee for the

Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2017) and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016).

In the last two years, the Irish government has accepted liability for failure to protect the human rights of two Irish women forced to travel to the UK for abortions, who took their cases to the UN Human Rights Committee (Mellet v Ireland (2016); Whelan v Ireland (2017)).

The good news is that Ireland can develop a best practice medical framework which protects women's human rights to access reproductive healthcare if the people vote to remove the 8th Amendment to the Constitution. Any laws which follow should ensure that all women are entitled to equal treatment under the law and no one should be discriminated against in relation to the type of medical service which she needs to access. A YES vote on the 25th May will mean dignity and compassion for Irish women.

Deirdre Duffy is a specialist lawyer in human rights and Together for Yes campaign manager

Catholic women have abortions the same as other women

Ireland is undertaking a historic debate on abortion and the 8th Amendment. A prominent voice in this debate will be the Catholic hierarchy. Recently the Catholic Primate Archbishop Eamon Martin argued that even in instances of rape, the Catholic position would be to deny a woman her right to end the pregnancy. He also called for the voices of Catholics to be heard.

On that I agree with him – Catholics must be respected, and their views on the 8th Amendment should be heard. Where we disagree is on what Catholics might have to say.

The truth is that for years now the majority of Catholics have disagreed with the Church hierarchy on reproductive rights and the health of women, as well as on the role of the secular state. There are Catholics who strongly reject what the hierarchy claims as truth.

The majority of Catholics trust women to grapple with tough moral questions about when and whether to continue a pregnancy, and to make those decisions for themselves. They will not be fooled again with the false equivalencies that ushered in the passage of the

8th Amendment in 1983.

For more than three decades Catholics have seen how this draconian law has punished and shunned Irish women – how it has forced those with the means to travel abroad for the healthcare they needed.

They have witnessed its very real consequences for the lives of women, including Savita Halappanavar, and know there cannot continue to be more deaths like Savita's. They feel they must speak out against the immorality of this law.

Archbishop Martin says we should journey with women and support them with what we know is often a tough decision to continue a pregnancy. But to be truly compassionate we must be there for women irrespective of what choice they decide is ethical and right for them.

The state and our local communities should stand ready to support a woman who decides to continue a pregnancy even if she does not have all the answers about how she will provide for that child.

But we should also support the woman who decides she cannot continue a pregnancy and respect her privacy to make that decision

responsibly and safely in her own community among her friends and family.

The hierarchy may try to sway Catholic voters into believing that a vote for women's conscience is wrong. But many good Catholics support a woman's right to choose because of their faith, not in spite of it.

As reflected in the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas, Catholic teaching puts primacy on developing a good conscience and following it in moral decision-making, even if that means disagreeing with the Church hierarchy.

Many of the hierarchy's teachings on reproductive rights have not been received by the faithful. For instance, the majority of Catholic women have made conscience-based decisions to use contraception responsibly; and Catholic women have abortions at the same rate as other women. They understand these can be ethical choices.

Armed with the knowledge that conscience is not about imposing beliefs that are out of sync with people's lives but that it is about allowing the faithful to formulate their own moral positions, Irish



Jon O'Brien: "Many good Catholics support a woman's right to choose because of their faith, not in spite of it."

Catholics have evolved in their thinking about abortion. They can reconcile the complexities of these weighty matters.

They know you can be a woman who believes she would not have an abortion in any circumstances, but yet can support the right of other women to do so. Or that you have had an abortion and do not want other women to face the restrictions you faced; or that as a man you respect the right of every woman to make her own decision and be author of her own life.

Irish society has evolved greatly in 35 years. A secular society

is one that respects freedom of religion and respects freedom from religion. It upholds the right to decide and follow your own beliefs, making your own moral decisions.

Irish Catholics stand by women and trust them to be moral agents of their own lives. It is important that Catholic voices be heard – because so many of us know in our hearts that repealing the 8th Amendment is the right thing to do.

Jon O'Brien is president of Catholics for Choice, based in Washington DC



Máiréad Enright Photo: Derek Speirs

What will happen after repeal?

The May 25th referendum will ask you whether you want to remove the 8th Amendment from the Constitution and replace it with the 36th Amendment, confirming that the Oireachtas can pass legislation permitting abortion in Ireland. The Supreme Court has held that the 8th Amendment forbids abortion in Ireland except as a last resort, where it is necessary to save a woman's or a girl's life.

Our current abortion legislation, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act, only permits life-saving abortion. The 8th means the Oireachtas cannot legislate to allow women to access abortions in any other circumstances.

The Constitution is no ordinary legislation. It is the most important source of Irish law. Any Act passed by

the Oireachtas must meet constitutional standards. If it does not, the Supreme Court can 'strike it down' so that it is no longer law.

That is why the government is not trying to pass a new abortion Act while the 8th Amendment remains in the Constitution. In March it published a detailed draft of the Act it would support, if the referendum succeeds.

It proposes that women in Ireland should be able to access abortions on request until 12 weeks' pregnancy. After 12 weeks, a woman could not access abortion unless her life was at risk, her health was at risk of serious harm or her foetus was diagnosed with a fatal anomaly.

Except in emergencies, a viable foetus would always be delivered early. The draft

is based on the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the 8th Amendment.

If the referendum passes, Irish abortion law will not change immediately. The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 will remain law at first. But a successful case could come before the Supreme Court to strike it down as it would no longer be constitutional.

So the government will need to pass replacement legislation as soon as possible. As always, this legislation would need politicians' support in both Houses of the Oireachtas. The government's current draft might be amended during that process.

Máiréad Enright, senior lecturer in law, Birmingham Law School.

A YES vote is a vote for choice

The Communications Workers' Union, at its Biennial Conference in 2016, passed a motion proposing support for the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment, which was at that time actively campaigning for a referendum to be held on the issue. The motion was carried almost unanimously and interestingly, by a union whose members are predominantly male (77%) and where the median age of membership is 47. The debate on the motion indicated a clear understanding by delegates present of how women in Ireland continue to be oppressed by an entrenched church/state system which denies them bodily autonomy, with reference made to the case of Savita Halappanavar.

Trade unions have historically been supportive of various civil society movements, such as the

anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa, the Palestinian BDS movement, the Irish anti-austerity campaign, etc. But it was undoubtedly the success of the Right2Water campaign that emboldened unions



to shift focus away from the conventional industrial relations issues which have heretofore dominated the business of trade union conferences, towards a broader range of social issues which affect their members. It can't be denied that the issue of the 8th Amendment is highly emotive and has at times brought out the worst on both sides of the debate and there has been no shortage of vitriol in the arguments directed at the opposition, from the various Yes and No camps. Nonetheless, the fact remains that failure to address the issue simply reinforces the system of oppression

in Ireland and exports the problem to the UK. The CWU's support for a Yes vote on May 25th is based on recognising the need for access to a safe medical procedure for all women in Ireland and is reinforced by the acceptance of a multitude of reasons why a woman may need access to abortion services. The nuances involved in deciding to end a pregnancy are, like the issue being voted on, very personal and informed by the individual's own circumstances. This is the crux of the matter: to say pro-choice is pro-abortion is untrue. To deny every woman in Ireland the choice to access a medical procedure that may in fact be a life-saving intervention, is a derogation of their human rights. To provide abortion services in

the Republic of Ireland will not change the moral basis on which a decision to continue or not with a pregnancy is made. It will simply allow women the choice to safely access a medical procedure which is available to millions of women elsewhere around the world. If possible, one should try to approach the issue in a rational manner and with an open mind. We must each consider the impact that our vote will have on more than just our own lives; it will have a very real impact on someone's life and their ability to access medical care in the Republic of Ireland. A Yes vote is a vote for choice and a step away from the history of abuse that women have suffered at the hands of the church and state. A Yes vote is a vote to trust women.
Steve Fitzpatrick, General Secretary, CWU Ireland

"To provide abortion services in the Republic of Ireland will not change the moral basis on which a decision to continue or not with a pregnancy is made. It will simply allow women the choice to safely access a medical procedure which is available to millions of women elsewhere around the world."

Over 3,000 artists call for repeal

Statement by the Artists Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment

The 8th Amendment of the constitution of Ireland, article 40.3.3 inserted in 1983, has prevented our doctors and our legislators from providing proper care to women in Ireland. The resulting physical and emotional trauma inflicted on women is inexcusable and an ongoing shame for Irish citizens. The 8th Amendment undermines the status of the Irish constitution. It is a key source of Ireland's failure to reach international human rights standards and of the state's failure to meet its

obligations to vindicate women's human rights. We, along with over 3,000 other artists, call for the repeal of the 8th Amendment to the Irish constitution and for action by our elected legislators to provide women in Ireland with modern reproductive health services in line with best medical practice and international human rights norms.
Edna O'Brien, Cillian Murphy, Anne Enright, John Banville, Christy Moore – amongst many others



YES REPEAL ✓

Unions say **YES!**

Denmark, Iceland - the facts



The Danish and Icelandic Ambassadors have written to the Dáil to correct claims about their governments' approach to Down's syndrome.

Ambassador Sondergaard from Denmark said it is not his Government's policy to eradicate Down's syndrome and that children with Down's are born in Denmark every year.

As to prenatal testing for Down's and other conditions, the National Board of Health in Denmark says: "The purpose of prenatal diagnosis is, within the framework of Danish legislation, to assist a pregnant woman wishing for such assistance to make her own choice"

Ambassador Carsten from Iceland said: "It is a core principle of Icelandic society to respect people with disabilities as part of human diversity. The full human rights of disabled persons will be strengthened, protected and ensured on equal terms with others, and conditions created enabling the disabled to live an independent life on their own premises."

The TUCR agrees with this approach, which supports both women and people with disabilities.

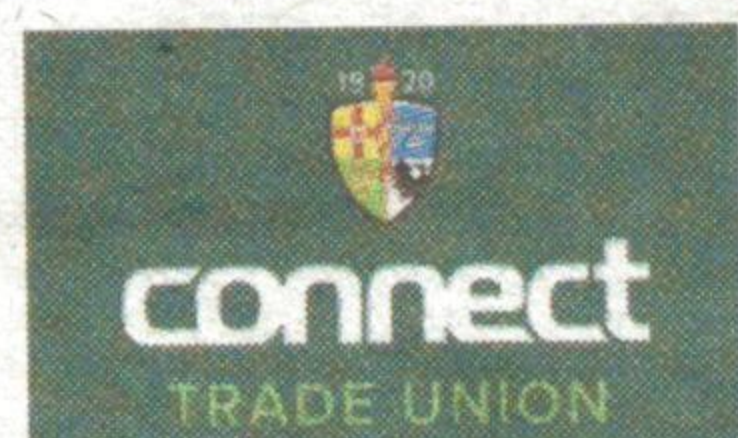


Members of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' executive council and staff show their support for a Yes vote Photo: Photocall



Congress opposed 8th Amendment in 1983 – says repeal now!

Congress opposed the 8th Amendment to the Constitution back in 1983 and our position remains unchanged – we are supporting repeal of the 8th in the forthcoming referendum. We believe that repeal is necessary in order to achieve a more compassionate Ireland, one in which restrictions on women's healthcare are removed from the Constitution. It would then be a matter for our elected representatives in the Oireachtas to legislate for the introduction of a regulated, comprehensive and quality healthcare service that is safe for women and girls, in line with international norms. It is our view that the 8th Amendment prevents this from happening and should now be repealed.



Provide a choice

In November last year a resolution supporting repeal of the 8th Amendment was unanimously passed by Connect trade union's national executive. The primary concern expressed in the debate was the according of dignity to women in relation to control of their reproductive functions.

Allied to this, was a conviction that decisions in this regard be taken by women and that in supporting Repeal, we were not compelling any woman to adopt a particular course of action but were providing her with a choice. We believe that our decision supports the case for properly resourced and supported care in our own country for women who require an abortion.



Abortion a trade union and class issue

The Dublin Council of Trade Unions was among the first trade union bodies to affiliate to the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment. Abortion is a trade union and class issue. The necessity to travel adds expense, time and the hassle of securing time-off to crisis pregnancies for working women. The imposition of one particular ideology goes against the separation of Church and State. There is hardly a more material issue for a working woman, as real as wages and working conditions and sometimes more urgent, than control over her own body. The DCTU calls for a resounding Yes to Repeal on May 25th.



Women's Committee, Trades Union Congress, Britain

The TUC Women's Committee stands shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with our trade union sisters in Ireland who have fought for a woman's right to abortion for so long. Abortion is and has always been a human rights issue, a workplace issue, and a trade union issue. To deny women the right to end an unwanted pregnancy is to deny her human rights. The fact that a referendum on the 8th Amendment is imminent is a testament to the tenacity and strength of the women of Ireland who have never given up.

Dealing with abortion at work



All-Ireland workplace survey: 80% of 3,000 surveyed want change in abortion law to make women's health the priority

Unite the Union represents working people across the economy. Our women members may be archaeologists or accountants; they may be delivering care in a nursing home or answering the phone at a call centre. Since they are in the workforce, union members are obviously more likely to be of childbearing age than the population as a whole.

Unite's policy is determined by our members, and our pro-choice stance goes back many years. In 2015, delegates to our Irish Policy Conference called for decriminalisation of abortion in line with international human rights standards through the island of Ireland – a move which would necessarily entail repeal of the 8th Amendment in the Republic.

We have long argued that abortion is a workplace issue – a view confirmed by the ground-

breaking research into Abortion As a Workplace Issue, which Unite helped sponsor.

We view abortion as an issue not just of gender equality, but also of economic equality.

"We view abortion as an issue not just of gender equality, but also of economic equality."

At a time when, despite the economic recovery, the Republic is facing a low pay crisis, women are disproportionately likely to be low-paid and/or in precarious work.

Low-paid women and trans workers, those dependent on Social Protection, or those in relationships where they do

not enjoy financial autonomy, are particularly disadvantaged since the cost of procuring a termination outside the jurisdiction may be prohibitive. Depending on how far advanced

the pregnancy is and the type of procedure required, the cost can be up to €2000 – and that does not include travel and accommodation expenses.

In addition, many women or trans people needing to travel for a termination face childcare issues which may be both practically and financially

insurmountable. They may be forced to access essential savings, take out a credit union loan or even have recourse to moneylenders in order to fund a termination. For many others, access to an essential healthcare procedure is simply beyond their financial reach.

And that does not take account of those who are unable to travel for medical reasons, who are living in Direct Provision, or whose immigration status makes it impossible for them to travel.

Financial constraints are not the only obstacles facing working women or trans people seeking a termination: they also face issues as workers.

In a situation where access to abortion is largely unavailable in this jurisdiction, and a termination is not viewed as a normal healthcare procedure, pregnant workers are faced with a

range of workplace issues which, in practical terms, further restrict their access to a termination and to essential post-abortion healthcare.

At the most basic level, they may be unable to obtain leave of absence at short notice and without explaining the situation to their line manager.

Upon return, they may find it difficult to take the time necessary for post-abortion check-ups, or to take time of work for any health or wellbeing issues connected with the abortion.

Union members – Unite members – need access to abortion. They need Repeal of the 8th Amendment. And that is why Unite says – **Yes Repeal!**

Taryn Trainor,
Regional Women's & Equalities
Officer, Unite the Union

No second chance to vote **Yes**

A Yes vote on May 25th is crucially important for the wellbeing of all women in Ireland, but particularly for low paid and vulnerable women. There will be no second chance.

Mandate Trade Union represents almost 40,000 workers in the bar and retail sectors across Ireland (think Dunnes Stores, Tesco). Most are low paid – 70% are women, many of childbearing age who are particularly affected by the State's almost complete ban on abortion.

In 2014 our members across the State elected an executive committee that looked at what was happening in Ireland and decided to campaign for repeal of the 8th Amendment. They did so for a number of reasons.

While almost every year 4,000 women and girls living here avail of their human right to travel and seek an abortion overseas, many on low or welfare dependent incomes who have a crisis pregnancy do not have the same options as women from more affluent backgrounds.

In some instances women with no money may resort to induced miscarriage at home without any medical assistance. This added trauma is extremely detrimental to their mental and physical health.

Opinion polls show a majority in Ireland support a Yes – but we must make sure we all vote.

In a recent poll carried out by Behaviour & Attitudes, 64% said they supported removing the 8th Amendment, while 36% said

they did not, excluding “don't knows”.

The Citizens' Assembly was set up by government with randomly selected members of the public of whom:

- 89% supported abortion where pregnancy is a result of rape.
- 89% supported abortion where the unborn child has a foetal anomaly likely to result in death before or shortly after birth.
- 78% supported abortion when there is a risk to the woman's physical or mental health.

A cross-party Joint Oireachtas Committee of elected representatives spent weeks listening to experts from



John Douglas, General Secretary, MANDATE

both sides of the debate and eventually recommended repeal of the 8th by a margin of 70% in favour, 30% against.

They also recommended legislation to allow a termination up to 12 weeks – the norm across the developed world.

A No vote will prevent women who have been raped from availing of a termination in all

circumstances.

A No vote will force women carrying a foetus with a fatal anomaly to continue their pregnancy to full term.

A No vote could prevent cancer victims from accessing life-saving healthcare services should they need them.

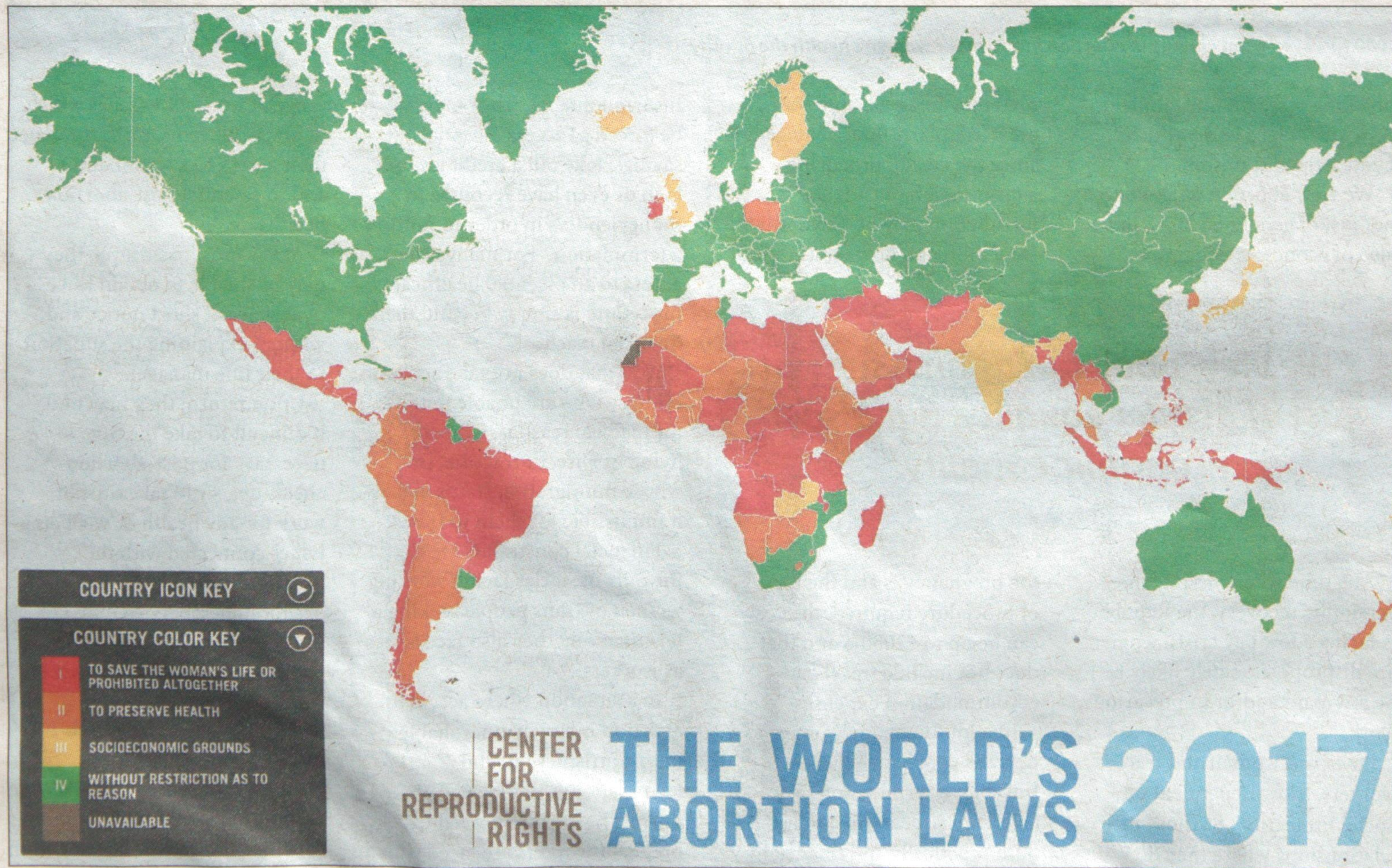
The removal of the 8th Amendment is the only compassionate way to ensure women can get the care they desperately need during a crisis pregnancy.

Whatever your opinion about the circumstances when access to abortion should be available, the Irish Constitution should not be used to regulate and control women's bodies.

Have confidence in yourself and vote Yes. Trust your mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and all of the other women in your life to make the right decision about their own bodies.

A Yes vote is not a vote for abortion, it's a vote for choice.

Vote Yes and let's bring Ireland into the 21st century.



*David Gibney,
Communications Officer,
MANDATE*



Balancing beliefs and duty of care



Breedagh Hughes: Balance rights of workers and rights of women to healthcare

There are ways to balance the rights of staff with the rights of women to access abortion services. Staff must however inform their employer of any conscientious objection so that services can be planned and delivered to accommodate both the rights of workers and the right of a woman to access healthcare services.

Asserting a right to conscientious objection may be seen as a religious or even a moral right. However the Royal College of Midwives sees it as a workplace right. Most of our members are women – all of whom have their own individual story – and we must ensure they are not forced into participation in a procedure

that for some of them would have deeply personal and painful ramifications. Some of these women have suffered recurrent miscarriages; some may be undergoing fertility treatment or have a history of a previous stillbirth or a neonatal death.

The right to conscientious objection cannot however remove the professional duty for nurses, midwives and medics to participate in any emergency treatment which is necessary to save the life, or prevent grave, permanent injury to the physical or mental health of a pregnant woman.

The RCM has had a position on conscientious objection for over 30 years. Healthcare staff employed in Britain have a statutory right, contained within the 1967 Abortion Act “not to participate in any treatment... to which he has a conscientious objection”. The UK Supreme Court has defined ‘treatment’ as participation in the actual act of terminating a pregnancy. It does not have a provision to avoid caring for a woman before or after an abortion. As the Act does not apply in Northern Ireland, there is no such right for healthcare staff there. But the RCM believes this right should be extended to all healthcare workers.

*Breedagh Hughes,
Royal College of Midwives*

Show solidarity

SIPTU supports repeal of the 8th Amendment and is actively calling on its members to vote Yes for repeal in the forthcoming referendum.

SIPTU’s decision to become involved in the campaign for repeal was arrived at through an informed and respectful debate at our Biennial Delegate

Conference. Delegates debated the issues involved and voted overwhelmingly in favour of a referendum to repeal the 8th. On foot of this vote, SIPTU’s

National Executive Council has been directing a campaign to give expression to the conference decision.

SIPTU believes the 8th Amendment is a barrier to women accessing all of their maternal and reproductive healthcare needs in this country.

We recognise the reality that over 5,000 women in Ireland have

terminations each year: either legally, by way of travel to Britain and, to a lesser extent, other countries; or illegally, by getting abortion pills online.

Unknown to many of us, our family members, work colleagues, friends and neighbours are terminating pregnancies.

We believe the 8th Amendment prevents appropriate medical care for women when their lives or health in pregnancy are at risk and it has given rise to unsafe practices, further putting the lives of women in pregnancy at risk.

We know that for many union members, this may not be the most important issue for them and their families right now. We are also conscious that for some members, it may never be a consideration regardless of the circumstances.

However, we respectfully ask members to show solidarity with the thousands of women who cannot access healthcare services here in Ireland and travel abroad or depend on the internet. We ask that members not stand in the way of affording women access to timely, affordable and accessible care in a safe setting in the health service of their own country.

As the largest union of healthcare workers in Ireland, SIPTU wants to ensure that our members who work in front line healthcare services are protected and supported. This is why we are in favour of the provision of conscientious objection for medical and healthcare workers.

SIPTU



YES REPEAL



"Lying to your employer, taking sick leave, having to make travel arrangements while worrying if you get 'caught' how will you explain yourself."

Trade union survey



Photo: Rose Comiskey

Is abortion a workplace issue?

Upon posing the question 'is abortion a workplace issue?' the response is usually one of a puzzlement – the reactions include 'why would it be', 'it's not something I have ever thought of'.

A ground-breaking study, funded by UNITE the Union, Unison, Mandate Trade Union, the CWU Ireland and the GMB set out to explore if abortion was indeed a workplace issue. The study, led by these unions and activist groups the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th and Alliance for Choice, also sought to

gather union members' views on legislative reform in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Over 3000 trade union members took part in the study, which was carried out by a team of researchers at Ulster University. Participants indicated broad support for legal reform, with 80% supporting the view that women's health should be the priority in any legal reform. The vast majority, 87%, believed that a woman who had an abortion should not be criminalised.

Of those surveyed, 20% had

direct experience of abortion as workplace issue. This included cases such as women unable to get time off due to precarious employment, stigma in the workplace, and a lack of support from employers.

"...my case was very complicated due to fatal foetal abnormality...I just told management I lost my baby when I was put under a lot of pressure to return to work...their response was what I expected. They told me they would get help and support for me but nobody to this day ever contacted me."

An online discussion forum that formed part of the study allowed participants to discuss their views and share their

experiences. Hostile views on abortion were expressed by some participants, however after engaging with those with direct experience, changes were evident.

"Personally... although I abhor abortion itself, I think the woman worker is entitled

to full union protection after she has finished her deed. There is no point in compounding a difficult scenario."

This perspective, highlights how recognition that abortion was a workplace issue led to the conclusion that unions had a role to play in providing policies to support workers who have taken the decision to have an abortion.

The study, the first of its kind in

the world, provides clear evidence that unions can play a pivotal role in campaigning for reform and can lead the way in supporting those directly affected.

Dr. Fiona Bloomer, Ulster University, is author of Abortion as a Trade Union Issue.

"Trying to co-ordinate my flights, the clinic appointment as well as childcare was difficult. The only clinic I could attend was near Heathrow which meant that flights were super expensive. I had no option but to travel alone..."

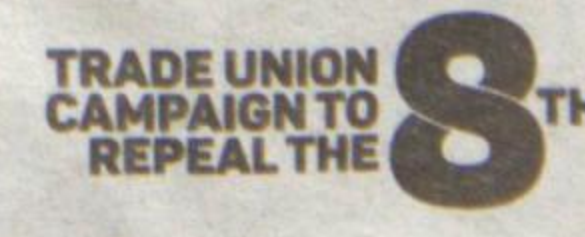
Susie 'Everyday Stories'

"It would be three weeks before I made my journey. I had to work my ass off doing extra shifts and trying to care for the baby I already had. Also trying to keep on top of lies I had created so that no one knew what was happening. I was numb and robotic for those three weeks..."

Lisa 'Everyday Stories'



Vote YES on May 25th



Title: Yes Repeal

Organisation: Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the
Eighth Amendment

Date: 2018

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