

2066 Reproductive Justice for All

Proposer: _Abbie Mulcairn (Women's Officer)

Seconder: _ Sophie Chapman (Feminist Society)

Union Notes

1. The Abortion Act 1967 has never been extended to Northern Ireland
2. The foundation of NI abortion law remains the Offences against the Person Act 1861 which makes it a criminal offence to have an abortion or perform one on another person. The 1861 Act is still in effect in England and Wales
3. The introduction of the Abortion Act 1967 did not decriminalise abortion in England and Wales: it allowed exceptions to the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act under which the obtaining or performing an abortion would be lawful
4. An abortion will be lawful in NI only if performed:
 - a. to save the life of the pregnant person;
 - b. where continuing the pregnancy would risk permanent and serious damage to the physical or mental health of the pregnant person⁷
5. In the past, people have been arrested for trying to procure an abortion (be it through a GP, travelling to England to obtain an abortion or through backstreet/ self-induced abortions)
6. International students and students from elsewhere in the UK may understandably arrive in Northern Ireland under the false impression that because Northern Ireland is part of the UK, abortion will be legal and accessible on the local NHS. However, this is not true. When registered with a GP in Northern Ireland, you no longer have access to abortion.
7. Reproductive rights activism, like the feminist movement, has often been exclusive and focused on white, cisgender, able-bodied, middle-class women. People of colour often face abusive and coercive reproductive medical practices, such as: forced sterilisation of women of colour across the globe; the use of experimental and dangerous contraception like Norplant, etc.
8. There is increasing pro-choice hostility around the globe. Donald Trump's administration is placing harsher barriers on access to abortion services and Planned Parenthood services. Already, the POTUS has passed an executive order banning international NGO's who provide abortion services from receiving US funding.⁸
9. In October of 2016, women in Poland went on a national strike to protest the government's ban on abortion.⁹

Union Believes

⁷ <https://www.mariestopes.org.uk/overseas-clients-abortion/irish/abortion-and-law/abortion-law-northern-ireland>

⁸ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/23/politics/trump-mexico-city-policy/>

⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37540139>

1. Access to reproductive healthcare is a student welfare issue: students do face crisis pregnancies which have an adverse effect on their university lives
2. The unavailability of safe and legal abortion in Northern Ireland places an undue burden on these students in an already distressing situation
3. If an international student falls pregnant unexpectedly while living in Northern Ireland, they will likely not be able to extend their study visa to accommodate their pregnancy or maternity, nor can they access abortion services in Northern Ireland unless they meet the very strict criteria;
4. There is a rise in anti-abortion and pro-life sentiment in the UK due to the Trump administration and increasing European pro-life movements. We need to be prepared to face threats to abortion and other reproductive services as a result of this growing hegemony.
5. UEA SU should support and promote pro-choice activism but it must be recognised that the ability to have choice is a privilege. Some people do not have choice or their choice is taken away from them due to their circumstances and oppressions.

Union Resolves

1. To take a firm pro-choice stance and stand in solidarity with anyone seeking access to free, safe and legal abortion
2. To release a formal statement of solidarity with those in Northern Ireland and across the globe who do not have safe or legal access to abortion services
3. That the Women's Officer and Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer continue to support pro-choice activists in Northern Ireland, the UK and the rest of the world and campaign against any cuts to vital abortion services in the UK
4. That all UEA SU pro-choice campaigning and activism should be carried out according to the NUS Women's Campaigns toolkit on Reproductive Justice to ensure campaigns are inclusive of all marginalised groups