



July 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about abortion.

I completely understand what an incredibly emotive issue this is, and I appreciate the strength of feelings on both sides. It is for this reason that, as with other matters of conscience, the Government adopts a neutral stance on abortion, allowing Conservative MPs to vote freely according to their moral, ethical, or religious beliefs. This is a convention which I support wholeheartedly.

The approach to abortion in Great Britain is set out in the Abortion Act 1967, which states that two doctors must certify that, in their opinion, a request for an abortion meets at least one and the same ground laid out in the Act. These grounds include *“risk to the life of the pregnant woman”*, and *“substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped”*.

I am encouraged that guidance for doctors on how to comply with the Act has been issued, which stipulates that registered medical practitioners should be able to show how they have considered the particular facts and circumstances of a case when forming their opinion. Full details can be found online at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-doctors-on-compliance-with-the-abortion-act.

Abortion on the grounds of sex alone is illegal and I am glad that the Government guidance for doctors on how to comply with the Act makes this clear. With regard to the Non-Invasive Prenatal Test, this test is never meant to be used to determine the sex of a child and I share the concerns that this test could be misused to inform sex selective abortion. Please be assured that the Government will continue to review the evidence regarding the test.

Not every pregnancy goes to plan and foetal abnormalities of varying degree of severity can occur. Women need support and information to reach an informed decision about how to proceed. Health professionals must adopt a supportive and non-judgemental approach regardless of whether the decision is to terminate or continue the pregnancy.

Section 4 of the Act protects the right of staff to conscientiously object to participate in abortion treatment. The Supreme Court has ruled that this right to conscientious objection is limited to those staff who actually take part in treatment administered in a hospital or other approved place. This does not include ancillary, administrative or managerial tasks that might be associated with treatment.



Chris Heaton-Harris

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I know that making a decision regarding abortion care can be an extremely difficult time and we must do all we can to support women to make an informed decision, taking into consideration all their options, with medical professionals offering impartial advice. I will continue to do all I can to ensure plenty of information is available to women making enquiries relating to abortion care, including all options available to them.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**