

Statement on Decriminalisation

Abortion in England, Scotland, and Wales is allowed in certain circumstances laid out in the Abortion Act of 1967 (and revised by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act of 1990).¹

In England and Wales abortions that are not covered by the circumstances listed in the 1967 Act are covered by a Victorian law, the Offences against the Person Act of 1861. This means abortion is part of criminal law and is not available on demand.

Abortion Rights calls for full decriminalisation of abortion. We argue that it should be removed from criminal law and treated as any other medical procedure.

The law ought to have no place in determining what should be a private decision, to be undertaken with sound medical advice. The different treatment afforded to abortion, in contrast to all other medical procedures, adds to the stigma surrounding termination. Abortion should be available as early as possible and as late as necessary to all who require one.

Abortion is one of the safest elective procedures it is possible to undergo - far safer, statistically speaking, than childbirth.²

The only person who ought to have final say over whether to continue with a pregnancy or not is the person who is pregnant - not the government.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/87/section/1>

² [Obstet Gynecol.](#) 2012 Feb;119(2 Pt 1):215-9. doi: 10.1097/AOG.0b013e31823fe923.