

Memorandum 40

Submission from Alive and Kicking

1 Introduction

1.1 Alive and Kicking (A&K) is an alliance of the following organisations:

CARE
Christian Medical Fellowship
Comment on Reproductive Ethics
Evangelical Alliance
Guild of Catholic Doctors
Lawyers' Christian Fellowship
LIFE
ProLife Alliance
Real Choice
Student LifeNet

1.2 A&K is seeking review of the abortion law in the light of new sociological, medical and scientific information relating to the practice of abortion. We welcome the Committee's inquiry and we are grateful for the opportunity to contribute.

1.3 As most of the member organisations of A&K have made submissions to this inquiry, we will not reiterate evidence that has been already submitted. Instead we will outline the terms of our campaign and the evidence for support for a change in the law on abortion.

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 A&K's near-term objective is to halve the yearly abortions through the following measures:

- An immediate, substantial reduction in the upper age limit for abortion
- Eliminating the discriminatory abortion of disabled babies up to birth
- Proper enforcement of the abortion law as originally intended
- A prohibition of abortions for social convenience

- A Charter of Informed Consent drawn up to ensure women are made aware of medical and psychological risks associated with abortion
- A cooling-off period between diagnosis of pregnancy and access to abortion
- Provision of compassionate alternatives to abortion
- Increasing support for families with disabled children
- Guaranteed regular reviews of the abortion law

3 Support for a change in the law on abortion

3.1 63% of MPs support a reduction in the 24-week upper age limit.³⁶⁹

3.2 Nearly two-thirds of the public want the 24-week upper age limit reduced.³⁷⁰

3.3 More than three-quarters of women support a reduction in the 24-week upper age limit³⁷¹

3.4 76% of the public think that aborting a baby at six months is cruel.³⁷²

3.5 Nine out of ten MPs want the abortion law to be under continuous review in light of advances in medical science.³⁷³

3.6 A public opinion poll found that 81% of those who expressed an opinion believe that ways should be found of reducing the 200,000 abortions performed each year in Britain.³⁷⁴

3.7 A recent poll of medical professionals in Pulse magazine found that one quarter of doctors refused to refer for abortion and one fifth said it should not be legal.³⁷⁵

3.8 Even leaders in the pro-choice lobby accept that *“Women can already get early abortion more easily than ever under the existing law...”*³⁷⁶ whilst others accept that change must happen.³⁷⁷

³⁶⁹ Communicate Research survey of 154 MPs, June 2005

³⁷⁰ YouGov/Daily Telegraph poll of 2432 GB adults, August 2005

³⁷¹ Ibid

³⁷² Communicate Research poll, May 2006

³⁷³ Communicate Research survey of 154 MPs, June 2005

³⁷⁴ Communicate Research poll of 1005 GB adults, October 2005

³⁷⁵ Pulse magazine survey, May 2007

³⁷⁶ Article by Ellie Lee, *Marie Stopes International lets women down*, 3/4/05

www.prochoiceforum.org.uk/ocr_abort_serv3.asp

³⁷⁷ *“We do feel that in light of medical developments the upper limit should come down.”* Tim Black, Chief Exec., Marie Stopes International, Sunday Times 3/4/05

3.9 The desire to establish a joint committee to examine abortion legislation was supported by 158 members of Parliament who signed Early Day Motion 2379, which stated:

“... this House endorses Recommendation 77 of the Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Human Reproductive Technologies and the Law; and calls on the Government to set up a joint committee of both Houses to consider the scientific, medical and social changes in relation to abortion that have taken place since 1967, with a view to presenting options for new legislation.”

4 Concluding remarks

4.1 Abortion law has not been reviewed for seventeen years. Whilst there is certainly a growing Parliamentary and public consensus that it should be revisited, we trust that any reform will only be undertaken after extensive and in-depth research into the various issues at stake.

September 2007