

I wish to register my experience as a midwife and abortion provider.

For two years I held the post of Clinical Team Lead in Marie Stopes West London clinic, based in Ealing.

You may be aware that Ealing Council was the first in the U.K. to introduce buffer zones around an abortion clinic and this has been upheld, this was directly implemented due to the harassment occurring outside the clinic where I worked on a daily basis.

The psychological damage inflicted on women accessing healthcare by these protestors cannot and should not be underestimated. Countless days were spent counselling women following accusations of being ‘murderers’ and other tormenting chants.

Furthermore, on a number of occasions, I was followed home from work by these protestors and often felt my safety was compromised.

There is a world of difference between protest and cruelty, and those who protest outside these clinics intend only to punish and not support. Far from a Christian ethos.

Please see this article about the effect the buffer zone on the clinic where I previously worked:

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/laurasilver/heres-how-things-have-changed-at-the-first-uk-abortion>

Following the implementation of the buffer zone, we as staff and patients felt safer attending our work and accessing health care.

We in Northern Ireland have an opportunity here to undo the years of trauma we have already exposed our women to by forcing them to travel to England or continue with unwanted pregnancies.

This now our opportunity to stand as leaders and protectors of women’s health within the U.K. I urge the Assembly to move away from the shackles of the past and offer our women a safe future.

I also urge you to be mindful of the sacrifice made by healthcare staff across Northern Ireland and implies that you create a safe environment for us to work in.