

# Family Education Trust

## Submission in response to the

### Northern Ireland Assembly Justice Committee Call for Evidence on the Justice Bill and the Proposed Amendments

We write in support of new clause 11A on 'Ending the life of an unborn child' proposed by Jim Wells MLA.

In Northern Ireland abortion is restricted to cases where the mother's life is at risk. Under such rare circumstances, the NHS is perfectly capable of providing the necessary facilities for the operation to take place. There is no need for the involvement of private organisations. If abortions were to be performed in private clinics in Northern Ireland, we fear it could open the door to an undermining of the law and the creation of a profit-making abortion industry.

Since 2012 a private clinic run by Marie Stopes has operated in Belfast. Marie Stopes not only profits from women having abortions, but actively campaigns against Northern Ireland's abortion law. The UK policy and communications director for Marie Stopes, has described Northern Ireland's abortion law as a 'walloping inequality'.<sup>1</sup> An official statement of Marie Stopes UK states:

We're proud to join Voice for Choice, Abortion Rights, Abortion Support Network, Alliance for Choice, Antenatal Results and Choices, bpas, Brook, FPA and Reproductive Health Matters in calling for women's health and rights to be prioritised.<sup>2</sup>

Marie Stopes' mission statement is 'children by choice not by chance' and they have advocated for the liberalisation of abortion laws all over the world. They have also failed to be transparent about the number of abortions they have provided in their Belfast clinic.

Marie Stopes have positioned themselves to be the prime beneficiaries from any private provision of abortion in Northern Ireland. Given the organisation's vigorous campaign in support of liberal abortion laws, it would be thoroughly inappropriate for the Northern Ireland Executive to turn to Marie Stopes for the provision of the limited abortion services that the law in the province allows. For these reasons we strongly support Jim Wells's amendment.

**11 September 2014**

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<sup>1</sup> Genevieve Edwards, 'Why abortion is the UK's most controversial postcode lottery', <http://www.mariestopes.org.uk/news/comment-why-abortion-uks-most-controversial-postcode-lottery>

<sup>2</sup> 'Marie Stopes United Kingdom sends message of solidarity to women in Ireland', <http://www.mariestopes.org.uk/news/marie-stopes-united-kingdom-sends-message-solidarity-women-ireland>