

30 March 2017

Thank you for contacting me about abortion.

I understand what an important issue this is for many people in the constituency. This is an incredibly delicate area of law and, regardless of the views of individual MPs, one which is treated with the utmost rigour.

I recognise the sensitivity of the Private Member's Bill you refer to.

The approach to abortion in the UK is set out in the Abortion Act 1967 and this remains unchanged. Abortion legislation can only be changed by Parliament. It is accepted Parliamentary practice that proposals for changes in the law on abortion come from backbench members and that decisions are made on the basis of free votes.

The Government has no plans to change the 24-week limit on abortion.

I am aware that an update to the procedures that detail the conditions that independent sector abortion clinics must adhere to was published in 2014 to take into account a number of regulatory changes and to bring the requirements in line with current policies and guidance.

The Department of Health issued guidance for doctors on how to comply with the Act in 2014. This makes clear that abortion on the grounds of gender alone is unlawful and further sets out how the law is interpreted by the Department of Health. Full details can be found online here:

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

The Abortion Act sets out that two doctors must certify that in their opinion, which must be formed in good faith, a request for an abortion meets at least one and the same ground set out in the Act. I am encouraged that the Department of Health has taken the view 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.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

Follow Alok on Twitter: @AlokSharma_RDG

**Please reply to: Alok Sharma MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
e: alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk w: www.aloksharma.co.uk t: 0118 941 3803**