

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

7th June 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about abortion in Northern Ireland and Alabama.

Abortion remains a highly sensitive issue, regardless of where your view lies and one where it is important that the matter is considered with due care and sensitivity. When the issue of abortion has been debated in the House it has been as a matter of conscience and has been conducted as a free vote; and the same applies in Northern Ireland.

The Government's position, which has been outlined on many occasions by the Northern Ireland Secretary is that the best way forward is for locally accountable politicians in Northern Ireland to make decisions. Restoring the Executive remains the Secretary of State's key priority and it is very positive news that a new phase of talks began on the 7th May.

It is important to note, however, that the Government has acted in this area: since 29 June last year women from Northern Ireland have had access to free abortion procedures performed in England. This decision strikes an appropriate balance between respecting the devolution settlement and supporting women from Northern Ireland to access safe and affordable abortion services in England.

Regarding the abortion legislation in Alabama, the UK has a close relationship with the US at all levels. Our friendship does not preclude disagreement with any of our allies and where these exist, my colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will not be afraid to make these clearly heard.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

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