

Consultation questions

Question 1: Should the gestational limit for early terminations of pregnancy be:	Yes	No
Up to 12 weeks gestation (11 weeks + 6 days)	Yes	
Up to 14 weeks gestation (13 weeks + 6 days)		No
<p>If neither, what alternative approach would you suggest?</p> <p>The Church of Ireland is not in favour of abortion on demand and believes the service should only be available in cases of medical necessity and, in such a case, as early as possible in gestation.</p>		

Question 2: Should a limited form of certification by a healthcare professional be required for early terminations of pregnancy?	Yes	No
<p>If no, what alternative approach would you suggest?</p> <p>While the Church of Ireland is not in favour of abortion on demand, even up to 12 weeks, it would still be important, if the service is available, that it should be under the consultation and supervision of a medical practitioner.</p>		

Question 3: Should the gestational time limit in circumstances where the continuance of the pregnancy would cause risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or girl, or any existing children or her family, greater than the risk of terminating the pregnancy, be:	Yes	No
21 weeks + 6 days gestation		No
23 weeks + 6 days gestation		No
<p>If neither, what alternative approach would you suggest?</p> <p>The Church of Ireland is not in favour of abortion except in cases of medical necessity. The Church and Society Commission feels that the standard set in the legislation in the Republic of Ireland between 12 weeks and the point of fetal viability – “a risk to the life, or of serious harm to the health, of the pregnant woman” – is a helpful guide that might be considered in terms of this legislation in NI. This also has the advantage of maintaining a single standard across the island of Ireland, which, given the likelihood of cross-border access to services, seems desirable. It is important that there should be independent medical assessment by at least two medical practitioners around such cases.</p> <p>The criteria described in this question seem to go very far beyond a definition that could be supported by the Commission. The Church and Society Commission commented that this was a deeply worrying proposal.</p>		
Question 4: Should abortion without time limit be available for fetal abnormality where there is a substantial risk that:	Yes	No
The fetus would die in utero (in the womb) or shortly after birth		
The fetus if born would suffer a severe impairment, including a mental or physical disability which is likely to significantly limit either the length or quality of the child’s life		

If you answered 'no', what alternative approach would you suggest?

Where the child is diagnosed with a condition that can be described as a fatal fetal abnormality, the Church and Society Commission feels that a medically-led response is the most desirable course to follow. If a child has died in the womb, the woman and her partner must be part of the decision-making process as to next steps.

However, the criteria outlined in the question raise the possibility of terminations being sought where the condition affecting the child is not likely to be fatal. The Church and Society Commission stands against the introduction of abortion criteria that would permit disabilities to become a reason for termination.

Question 5: Do you agree that provision should be made for abortion without gestational time limit where:	Yes	No
There is a risk to the life of the woman or girl greater than if the pregnancy were terminated?		
Termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or girl?		
<p>If you answered 'no', what alternative provision do you suggest?</p> <p>Again, the Church and Society Commission would lean towards medically-led decision making in this respect and believes such decisions should only be taken around criteria that define medical necessity. Once a fetus is capable of surviving outside the womb, the Commission would feel that it would be entirely wrong to permit abortion without gestational time limit.</p>		

Question 6: Do you agree that a medical practitioner or any other registered healthcare professional should be able to provide terminations provided they are appropriately trained and competent to provide the treatment in accordance with their professional body's requirements and guidelines?	Yes	No
<p>If you answered 'no', what alternative approach do you suggest?</p> <p>The Church of Ireland Church and Society Commission believes that, in the event that such procedures are to be carried out, abortion should only be provided by suitably qualified medical practitioners (not simply a registered healthcare professional) with appropriate training and under the guidance and regulation of their professional body.</p>		

Question 7: Do you agree that the model of service delivery for Northern Ireland should provide for flexibility on where abortion procedures can take place and be able to be developed within Northern Ireland?	Yes	No
		No
<p>If you answered 'no', what alternative approach do you suggest?</p> <p>Similarly, given the potential for complications that may require emergency treatment the Church of Ireland Church and Society Commission believes that in the event that such procedures are to be carried out they should only be provided in a suitable location where suitably qualified medical professionals are available.</p>		

Question 8: Do you agree that terminations after 22/24 weeks should only be undertaken by health and social care providers within acute sector hospitals?	Yes	No
<p>If you answered 'no', what alternative approach do you suggest?</p> <p>The Church and Society Commission considers “the point of viability” as the point where no consideration of termination should arise. Medical issues arising after this stage should be provided for in an appropriate acute care or hospital environment.</p>		

Question 9: Do you think that a process of certification by two healthcare professionals should be put in place for abortions after 12/14 weeks gestation in Northern Ireland?	Yes	No
	Yes	
Alternatively, do you think that a process of certification by only one healthcare professional is suitable in Northern Ireland for abortions after 12/14 weeks gestation?		No
<p>If you answered 'no' to either or both of the above, what alternative provision do you suggest?</p> <p>Requiring two medical practitioners to certify a request for an abortion is almost unavoidable particularly where the concern is for the mental health of the mother and it may be essential to involve a mental health specialist in addition to a medical doctor.</p>		

Question 10: Do you consider a notification process should be put in place in Northern Ireland to provide scrutiny of the services provided, as well as ensuring data is available to provide transparency around access to services?	Yes	No
	Yes	
<p>If you answered 'no', what alternative approach do you suggest?</p>		

Question 13: Do you agree that there should be provision for powers which allow for an exclusion or safe zone to be put in place?	Yes	No
	Yes	
If you answered 'no', what alternative approach do you suggest?		

Question 14: Do you consider there should also be a power to designate a separate zone where protest can take place under certain conditions?	Yes	No
		No
If you answered 'no', what alternative approach do you suggest?		