



April 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about abortions carried out at home, in particular during the Coronavirus pandemic.

I completely understand what an incredibly emotive issue this is, and I appreciate the strength of feelings around this matter. It is for this reason that, as with other matters of conscience, the Government adopts a neutral stance on abortion, allowing Conservative MPs to vote freely according to their moral, ethical, or religious beliefs. This is a convention which I support wholeheartedly.

Abortion care is an essential part of care for women, and safeguarding measures are still in place as part of care during the pandemic. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has offered guidance on this issue which can be found here:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-abortion/information-for-women/>

Guidelines have been issued which enable women to take both Mifepristone and Misoprostol at home for the duration of the outbreak, so that they do not have to visit a medical practice and risk exposure to the virus and to enable doctors to prescribe medicines from home via telephone or video consultations without consulting a second practitioner, so that abortion care can be provided even in the case of staff shortages. I have been assured this alteration will last only as long as the temporary provisions enacted by the Coronavirus Act 2020 to protect women seeking care endure.

The medicines must still be instigated prior to nine weeks and six days into the pregnancy. I am aware of data that indicates an increase in the number of abortions carried out in April 2020 by comparison with April 2019; I am also aware that the same dataset shows lower abortion rates during May and June 2020 compared with the same months in 2019. The pandemic has had an impact on many aspects of daily life, the full picture of which may not be clear for some time to come. I will, of course, continue to monitor this sensitive issue.

A consultation has been announced to explore whether these temporary changes should be enacted long term. You can find more information on that here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/home-use-of-both-pills-for-early-medical-abortion>



Chris Heaton-Harris

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It is extremely sad to read news reports of cases where abortions had been sought and enacted after the ten-week legal limit for taking the medicines at home and have caused further illness and even death. I understand that these instances are being investigated to ensure that women are accessing safe care, and that clinicians are properly supported through the consultation process. While it would be inappropriate for me to pre-empt the outcome of these investigations, I will continue to support all efforts to ensure safety is a paramount consideration for any amendments to regulations, however temporary. I will continue to monitor this issue closely.

I know that making a decision regarding abortion care can be an extremely difficult time and I believe that we must do all we can to support women to make an informed decision, taking into consideration all their options, with medical professionals offering impartial advice. I will continue to do all I can to ensure plenty of information is available to women making enquiries relating to abortion care including all options available to them.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**