

Motion to the Emergency Members Meeting: Support a Student's Right to Choose – UCLU should be Pro-Choice

Proposer: Annie Tidbury, History

Seconder: Candice Ashmore-Harris, Human Sciences, Women's Officer

This Union notes:

1. An individual has the right to termination within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy in accordance with the Abortion Act of 1967.
2. There is a clear pro-choice majority in the UK – around 75% and 80%.¹
3. UCLU currently advises students who are pregnant and in need of advice to contact Brook which informs women of all their options, including their right to abortion.²
4. The organisation Abortion Rights is supported by the NUS Women's Campaign.
5. 3 student unions – Oxford, Leeds and Goldsmiths - are already affiliated to Abortion Rights.³
6. On 31st October 2011, UCLU Catholic Society advertised a *discussion* around the issue of abortion which consisted of one pro-life speaker.⁴ It is also noted that people who held opposing views were invited to attend.
7. On 17th November 2011 UCLU Women's Forum made an indicative vote to put forward pro-choice policy to UCLU.
8. Nadine Dorries attempted to amend the Health and Social Care Bill 2011 (HSCB), which would have blocked Marie Stopes International and BPAS from providing counselling services in favour of 'independent' counselling services, which could include anti-abortion groups.⁵

This Union believes:

1. That both men and women have the right to exercise complete control over their own bodies and this includes the right to decide whether to terminate a pregnancy or not.
2. Safe and free termination should be available for all who require it in the same way that childcare and other support services should be available for those who choose to carry a pregnancy to full-term.
3. Students should be aware of their legal right to abortion and know how to go about obtaining one if they needed it.
4. While the HSCB amendment was defeated by a 250 majority the fact that it was debated in parliament still represents an attack on termination rights in the UK.

¹ <http://www.healthcentre.org.uk/abortion/abortion-controversy.html>

² <http://uclu.org/activeuclu/sex-and-relationships.php>

³ This information was obtained directly from the organisation.

⁴ <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=226470454082349>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nadine_Dorries

5. An official pro-choice policy would not prevent students who disagree with termination on ethical or religious grounds from exercising their right *not* to seek a termination.
6. Pro-choice policy encourages students to make well-informed decisions regarding their bodies and their futures.
7. When clubs and societies invite pro-life speakers they should also invite a pro-choice speaker to balance the debate and vice versa.

This Union resolves:

1. To officially take a pro-choice stance and support students' right to choose the best option for them when pregnant, whether this involves continuing or terminating the pregnancy.
2. To affiliate to Abortion Rights – an organisation that campaigns for safe termination across the country.
3. To launch a poster campaign in order to inform students of their options and rights when pregnant.
4. To update the UCLU website in order to publicise the affiliation to Abortion Rights under the section 'Sex and Relationships' as well as providing a link to the organisation's website.
5. To ensure that any anti-choice campaigns run on campus are obliged to inform the Union in advance so that pro-choice campaigns have the opportunity to campaign at the same time with an equal budget and an equal amount of advertising space and vice versa.
6. To ensure that any future open events focusing on the issue of termination invite a anti-choice speaker and a pro-choice speaker as well as an independent chair, to ensure there is a balance to the argument.

This Union mandates:

1. The Women's Officer together with the UCLU Women's Network to design posters to be approved by the Union and then distributed around campus to inform students of their options and rights when pregnant.
2. The Welfare Officer to contact Abortion Rights and affiliate.
3. The affiliation with Abortion Rights to be publicised to the student body in the next all-student email by the Democracy and Communications Officer and on the homepage of the UCLU website for two weeks to make people aware of the new affiliation.
4. The Student Activities Officer to inform all clubs and societies of this change in policy and its implications for any future events they may hold.