



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk

Protests at Abortion Clinics

Thank you for contacting me about protests at abortion clinics.

I am aware of a number of recent protests outside some abortion clinics, and welcome the announcement of a review of such protests following concerns about the tactics of some protesters. This country has a proud history of allowing free speech but the right to peaceful protest does not extend to harassment or threatening behaviour. The law already provides protection against harassment and intimidation, and the police have a range of powers to manage protests. Like all members of the public, protesters are subject to the law and all suspected criminal offences will be robustly investigated and dealt with by the police.

It is the case that some women have been subjected to harassment and intimidating behaviour from protesters when visiting family planning clinics to seek information, advice and services from medical professionals. I do not want to see peaceful protest curbed, but it is completely unacceptable that anyone should feel harassed or intimidated simply for exercising their legal right to healthcare advice and treatment. The decision to have an abortion is already an incredibly personal one, without women being further pressured by aggressive protesters.

The review, which has concluded, sought to gather evidence from police forces, healthcare providers and local authorities to understand the scale and nature of these protests, before considering what further action can be taken to protect those using or working in abortion clinics. This could include bolstering existing or creating new police and civil powers. The review also considered international comparisons, as similar protests have taken place in Australia, France, and the United States.

I will always seek to make sure that the police have the appropriate powers to protect citizens from abuse and threats, especially in such sensitive circumstances, and I look forward to scrutinising the Government's conclusions.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP