Abortion can arouse strong feelings. This booklet aims to:

* help you understand more about abortion
* give you information about abortion that could help you, or someone you know, make a choice about what to do when facing an unplanned pregnancy.
Women from all cultures and backgrounds have abortions.

In Britain, one in five of all known pregnancies are terminated – about 180,000 a year. Women in their 20s account for more than half, teenagers about a fifth.

Over half of all pregnancies in under 16s end in abortion. About 90% of abortions take place very early in pregnancy – in the first 12 weeks (i.e. within eight weeks of missing a period).

WHAT IS ABORTION?

An abortion is when a pregnancy is ended, or terminated.

Sometimes a fertilised egg or embryo is lost naturally. This is known as a spontaneous abortion or miscarriage, and happens in about one in five known pregnancies. Many more occur within the first weeks of pregnancy, before a period is even missed.

An induced abortion (usually just called abortion or termination) happens when a fertilised egg or embryo is removed from the womb, either by taking pills to expel the pregnancy, or by surgery.

Many people find it difficult to talk openly with family and friends about abortion because it can arouse strong feelings. Many people have strong views about unwanted pregnancy. Some say it's the woman's right to choose what to do. Not everyone agrees...
ABORTION – RIGHT OR WRONG?

Life begins when a sperm fertilises an egg!

The safety and life of the woman is most important until the fetus can live independently.

Legal! Abortion saves lives.

The fertilised egg possesses a soul that has a right to life!

Even when she's been raped?!

A pregnant woman is responsible for the life that she is carrying!

The unborn child has a right to be born.

Around the world, individual attitudes and laws on abortions are very different...
Abortion is legal in England, Scotland and Wales. A woman who wants an abortion up to the 24th week of her pregnancy will be able to have a safe, legal abortion, with the agreement of two doctors. They will need to agree that it is necessary for her mental or physical health. It is NOT legal in Northern Ireland, apart from in exceptional circumstances.

A legal abortion after the 24th week of pregnancy is extremely rare. It can only take place if the mother’s life is in danger or if there’s something seriously wrong with the baby. Worldwide, about 500,000 abortions take place each year under unsafe conditions and about 300 women die because of illegal abortions.

In countries where abortion is legal, some individuals and groups violently oppose it. Making abortion illegal does not stop women from seeking an abortion. In countries where abortion is illegal unless it is to save the woman’s life, many women risk permanent injury and death by visiting “back-street” abortion providers.

That’s why, in Great Britain, where abortion is legal, most people want it to stay that way.
Are abortions free?

Abortion provided by the NHS are free.

In some areas, 90% of all abortions are carried out by the NHS. In other areas, very few are provided by the NHS. There is a wide variation, because each health authority has to decide how much money to put into local abortion services.

Early abortion (under 12 weeks) at a clinic run by a charity, such as the BPAS, will cost around £300. The cost at a privately-run clinic can be higher.

Is abortion safe?

Legal abortion is very safe. There is very little risk, particularly in early pregnancy.

However, no clinical procedure is completely free from risk. As with any operation, the commonest risk is from infection. In many cases, the infection is a flare-up of a pre-existing sexually transmitted infection like Chlamydia. Women may be checked for this before their abortion.

There is an extremely small risk of damage to the womb. Repeated abortions, and abortions in later pregnancy, increase the risk, but all legal abortion methods are still very safe. The only kind of abortion that is dangerous is an illegal one.

Will an abortion stop me from having a baby in the future?

Early abortion is safe and does not affect a woman’s health or her chance of having a baby in the future.
WHY WOMEN CONSIDER HAVING ABORTIONS

MANY pregnancies happen without planning. When a woman finds out she is pregnant and it is unplanned, she may decide to keep the baby, have it adopted (though this is not common today), or have an abortion.

Some women know immediately what they want to do. For others, it can be a difficult decision. Faced with an unplanned pregnancy, some women find that their views on abortion change. Clear information, advice and support can help a woman decide what to do. But NO woman becomes pregnant in order to have an abortion.

I don’t want a child until I’ve finished my education.

We BOTH want a baby, but in the future.

Becoming a parent will change my life. I’m not ready for it.

My boyfriend has left me and I don’t think I can cope by myself.

I think I am too young to have a baby.

I’m not in a relationship.

I can’t afford children yet.

It will be hard to keep my job.

Having a child would stop me from having a life of my own.

Leaving so soon?

I’m sorry! The childcarer’s ill!

YOU can stay in...

I’m off to the pub!
People say they'll support me but how can I be sure?

We don't want to be parents.

I don't want anyone to know that I've had sex or that I'm pregnant.

We want children some day, but we're not ready for the responsibility yet.

We have all the children we want!

It will be hard for me to care for my other children.

Many women who choose abortion have several of these reasons.

Other reasons may be that a woman's husband, partner, or parent wants her to have an abortion, she or the fetus has a health problem, she was a victim of rape or incest,

This may be a difficult time for men, too. Some will want to share in the decision; others won't want to be involved at all. Many will support their girlfriend's or wife's decision, even if it conflicts with their own feelings. Even where there is no relationship, a man may feel he has a right to be informed.

However, it is up to the woman to decide whether or not to involve the man in her choice. He has no legal right to be informed, or to be involved in her decision.