

End harassment and intimidation on Mattock Lane

Proposer: Cllr Binda Rai

Seconder: Cllr Gareth Shaw

Ealing Council notes the 3,593 residents who signed the Sister Supporter petition and the dozens of letters from residents on and around Mattock Lane who report a “detrimental effect on my quality of life” as a result of disruption and distress caused by the protesters.

This motion is explicitly not one for or against abortion, which is available in Great Britain in the circumstances laid out in the Abortion Act 1967. It is a motion that seeks to protect the rights of individuals from harassment and intimidation when accessing legally existing health services and of local residents not to be exposed to related disruption and distress on a daily basis.

Many protesters use deliberately disturbing and graphic images and models, including those purporting to be of dismembered fetuses. They also distribute leaflets containing misleading information about abortion, and often follow, record and question women as they enter or leave the centres. Significant numbers of women report feeling intimidated and distressed by this activity as they try to access a lawful healthcare service in confidence.

The right to protest needs to be balanced with the right of pregnant women to choose and to obtain advice and treatment in confidence and free from intimidation. Those who wish to campaign to restrict women’s reproductive choices have plenty of opportunities and locations in which to do so. The area outside a clinic need not and should not be one of them.

Equally, local residents who live on Mattock Lane and surrounding streets should not have to be exposed to constant nuisance, disruption and anxiety caused by such protests on a daily basis. Further, the staff at Marie Stopes and all women’s health clinics should be protected from bullying and intimidation at their place of work.

This Council commits to fully explore every possible option and will take all necessary actions within its powers, utilising all necessary resources, to prevent anti-abortion protestors from intimidating and harassing women outside the Marie Stopes Clinic on Mattock Lane.

The Council will do this to provide the necessary reassurance and security that all women need and deserve as they make their own personal decision about their pregnancy and to defend the quality of life of those residents living nearby who pass the clinic on a regular basis.