

Joint Editors-in-Chief

Dame Tina Lavender and Yana Richens

Editor

Lauren Newman
bjm@markallengroup.com

Commercial Manager

Colin Williams
colin.williams@markallengroup.com

Group Classified Manager

Omar Farhan Rafique
Omar.farhanrafique@markallengroup.com

Circulation Director

Sally Boettcher

Group Production Manager

Jon Redmayne

Production Assistants

Jamie Hodgskin and Lee Upton

Editorial Director

Julie Smith

Publishing Director

Chloe Benson

Managing Director

Anthony Kerr
anthony.kerr@markallengroup.com

Chief Executive Officer

Ben Allen

UK PERSONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Quarterly Direct Debit	£41
Annual Direct Debit	£161
Annual Credit Card	£169
1yr Student	£99
2yr Annual Credit Card	£287
3yr Annual Credit Card	£406

Subscribe online at: www.magsubscriptions.com

For further information please contact the subscriptions department on 0800 137201 or +44 (0)1722 716997 when calling from outside of the UK.

Contact institutions@markallengroup.com for institutional pricing



A MARK ALLEN GROUP COMPANY
www.markallengroup.com

The *British Journal of Midwifery* is published by MA Healthcare Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, UK
 Tel: +44 (0)20 7738 5454
 Website: www.britishjournalofmidwifery.com

MAG ONLINE LIBRARY

© MA Healthcare Ltd, 2018. All rights reserved. No part of the *British Journal of Midwifery* may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishing Director.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the *British Journal of Midwifery*. Advertisements in the journal do not imply endorsement of the products or services advertised. The journal accepts advertising from all companies operating ethically and in accordance with UK law and regulations. Editorial content in the journal is entirely separate from advertising and, unless clearly stated, commercial companies have no influence over the content of articles.

Please read our privacy policy, by visiting <http://privacypolicy.markallengroup.com>. This will explain how we process, use & safeguard your data

ISSN 0969 – 4900
 Printed by Pensord Press Ltd, Blackwood, NP12 2YA

Cover picture: Adobe Stock/Joshua Resnick



The paper used within this publication has been sourced from Chain-of-Custody certified manufacturers, operating within international environmental standards, to ensure sustainable sourcing of the raw materials, sustainable production and to minimise our carbon footprint.

A quiet revolution? It's not where you'd think

It's been a long time coming, but on 26 May in a so-called 'quiet revolution' (BBC, 2018), the Republic of Ireland voted to repeal the Eighth Amendment of its constitution, ending some of the strictest abortion legislation in Europe. The significance of the result—as an endorsement of women's right to choose and as a promise to protect those previously forced to travel to the UK—cannot be overstated.

The decision nevertheless poses a dilemma for the rest of the UK, not least with regards to Northern Ireland, now the only place in which abortion is limited to case of 'permanent and long-term' threats to the mother's physical or mental health (Marie Stopes UK, 2018). Abortion is not permitted in instances of rape, incest or fatal fetal abnormality, which the United Nations (2018) has ruled a violation of women's human rights. Prime Minister Theresa May has been urged to act; the Government has insisted that abortion is a devolved matter. But with no government at Stormont since January 2017, this is easier said than done.

Even if there were, policing abortion will surely become more difficult after the Republic of Ireland passes new legislation. Women who may have travelled to London or Liverpool could simply cross the border to access medical care without the need for flights, hotels or childcare—this is in addition to the women who order abortion pills online. One of the key messages of the campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment was that abortion was a reality in Ireland: the referendum merely proposed to bring it under medical supervision (Together for Yes, 2018). When safe, legal abortion arrives on Northern Ireland's doorstep, it may become more difficult than ever to ignore.

It would be wonderful if the Republic of Ireland could legislate to give women informed choice, expert care and freedom from fear and criminal sanctions. If an example were needed, politicians could look to the Isle of Man, where an Abortion Reform Bill is making its way through the Tynwald. If approved, women

could access abortion up to 14 weeks, up to 24 weeks in cases of fatal fetal abnormality, and later if there is a risk to the life of the mother or the fetus (Perraudin, 2018). Women would be offered counselling before and after the procedure, and 'access zones' will be established to prevent 'pavement interference' outside clinics. Allowances will also be made for doctors to decline if abortion conflicts with their beliefs.

If the Bill passes, the Isle of Man will replace some of the most restrictive abortion laws with some of the most progressive—with provisions that even the UK has yet to consider. Not all of it will be acceptable to all countries, and some, such as the Republic of Ireland, are just beginning the long process of creating new laws. But there are values that all countries could endorse: women's right to safe care, protection of women's mental health, and respect for medical professionals and their beliefs. If Ireland's referendum was a 'quiet revolution', the Isle of Man's has been virtually silent, but hopefully the rest of the UK can listen and learn. **BJM**

BBC. Irish abortion referendum: Ireland overturns abortion ban. 2018. <https://bbc.in/2IQAVH0> (accessed 29 May 2018)

Marie Stopes UK. Is Abortion Legal in Ireland? 2018. <http://bit.ly/2IWTBki> (accessed 29 May 2018)

Perraudin F. Isle of Man abortion law change could be weeks away. 2018. <http://bit.ly/2H0ciSC> (accessed 29 May 2018)

Together for Yes. Does abortion happen in Ireland? 2018. <http://bit.ly/2JiuLiB> (accessed 29 May 2018)

United Nations. UK violates women's rights in Northern Ireland by unduly restricting access to abortion—UN experts. 2018. <http://bit.ly/2L2ewU0> (accessed 29 May 2018)



Lauren Newman
 Editor