

PRESS RELEASE

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LIFE warns that new screening technique will increase abortion for disability

The national pro-life charity, LIFE is calling on the Government to halt the introduction of a new pregnancy screening technique approved by the National Screening Committee (NSC) today.

LIFE says the NSC approval is deeply concerning as it will make it even easier to search out babies with foetal abnormalities and lead to an increase in the number of abortions for babies with Down's Syndrome.

LIFE's Director of Education Anne Scanlan, said: "We must remember that when we say screening, we are screening for something: abnormality, disability and imperfection. Whilst this may prepare some couples for the prospect of raising a child with a disability, we currently live in a society which aborts 90% of children with Down's Syndrome in the womb. The RAPID study projects that 102 more children with Down's Syndrome will be detected and therefore we can expect an additional 92 abortions of babies with Down's Syndrome every single year. Based on current figures, this will see a 13% reduction of live births of children with Down's Syndrome annually".

It is estimated that the new second-tier screening, known as cfDNA testing, will prevent 25 miscarriages a year that are associated with more invasive amniocentesis tests.

However, Ms Scanlan explains that, "the message being sent by the NSC is that the lives of 25 'healthy' babies are worth more than the lives of 92 babies with Down's Syndrome. In fact, the NSC cfDNA review summary lists costs per baby with Trisomy as an important factor to consider.

Children with and without disabilities have equal inherent dignity, worth and value, and we therefore fully support the "Don't Screen Us Out" campaign run by a coalition of Down's Syndrome advocacy groups. The campaign is calling on Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt to halt the implementation of cfDNA screening and to introduce much needed support to parents and families expecting a child with a foetal abnormality in order for the UK to fulfil its obligations to the UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities."

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For further media comment please call the LIFE Media Hotline on 07867 744502

LIFE is a pro-life charity that supports anyone facing a crisis pregnancy, pregnancy loss or after an abortion, and strives to engage, inspire and inform the next generation to value all human life from beginning to end