

# ABORTION FOR DISABILITY

## THE FACTS

**Did you know?** British law allows for the abortion of **disabled children** right up **until birth**.

There were **3,208** abortions for disability in 2016

These were carried out on the grounds there was a *“substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.”*

**Which conditions?** In 2016:

**706** abortions due to **Down’s syndrome**

**288** due to *“cardiovascular anomalies”* (heart problems)

**177** suffering from **spina bifida**

**9** for **cystic fibrosis**

Other abortions for disability are carried out because of genetic disorders or bodily deformities; eg. 9 abortions were carried out because the child had cleft lip or cleft palate.

One of the most important things to note is that **most** of these conditions are **not life-threatening**.

### Under reported?

Recent studies and reports have given reason to think that the Department of Health statistics concerning abortion for disability may not be providing an accurate picture.

In 2012, an article in the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology by Draper et al. compared DoH figures with those indicated by the Epicure Preterm Cohort Study and found *“substantial under-reporting”* of late abortion in the official statistics.

## THE PROBLEM

**Every** human being has special and **equal value**, simply because they are **human**.



**Right to Life** – the foundation for all other rights

Life believes that abortion is always wrong regardless of the unborn child’s physical health.

Abortion for disability raises important issues to do with **equality, diversity and discrimination**.

Allowing abortion up to birth for disability

*“is offensive to many people...it reinforces negative stereotypes of disability.”*

(Disability Rights Commission)

It sends out a message that society simply tolerates those living with disabilities rather than values their presence.

The principle of not discriminating against people unfairly is held dear by many in our society and has been enshrined in law in various ways over the last few decades. The **womb** is one of the few places where **disabled people are yet to achieve equality** (one of the others, of course, is the IVF laboratory, where embryos that carry certain medical conditions are routinely discarded or destroyed.)

### Caring for disabled children

Bringing up disabled children can be very difficult and can place a strain on relationships and change family dynamics in unsettling ways. We believe the most compassionate response for both child and family is to provide high quality care and support.

### Zoe’s Place

This is why Zoe’s Place Baby’s Hospice was set up (Life’s daughter charity) where the needs of the child and their family are central to their care plans. See [www.zoes-place.org.uk](http://www.zoes-place.org.uk)



lifecharity.org.uk