

*"I just wanted to say thank you for all your help and support for last week...I could barely eat, or sleep, but now thanks to you I can move on and continue making a better life for my two young girls."* **44 year old mother of two**



your decision - our support

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Registered Charity Number 1142120

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abortion  
support  
network

**Abortion Support Network  
Annual Report 2010 - 2011**

## **Mission**

To provide accommodation, financial assistance and information to women forced to travel to England to access a safe, legal abortion.

## **Vision**

A world where women have access to safe, free, legal abortions wherever they live.

## **Values**

- + We are compassionate and respectful of women and their decisions
- + We believe in providing practical support that improves women's lives
- + ASN is pro-choice but non-political

# Introduction

As we go to print, ASN has just come back from a crisis. We had £175 available for grants and four women on the phone needing our help, each needing more than our available funds. We sent an email to our supporters, and within 48 hours raised more than £2,000 from a combination of new and existing donors. Wow!

Those of us who volunteer with ASN can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the work we do. Each week we hear from women who find themselves in horrible circumstances, forced to throw themselves on the mercy of strangers and ask for help. And we help them. It's incredibly personal work we do, helping bit by bit and woman by woman.

ASN may not have offices, a land line, paid staff or stationary. But what ASN has, what keeps us going, are the amazing supporters and volunteers who are willing to give a combination of their time and their money to help women.

You – our supporters, our volunteers, the people who forward our eBulletin to their friends, who re-tweet our posts and mention at dinner parties that legal abortion does not exist for women living in Ireland and Northern Ireland – you amaze and inspire us. You keep us going, and we thank you for it.

Here's to another year of helping women, together.



Mara Clarke  
Director

# About us

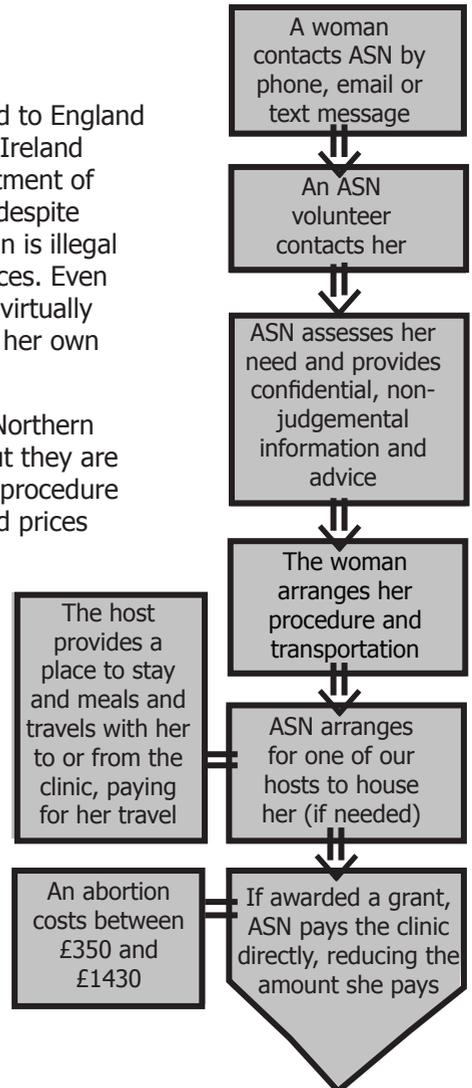
Abortion Support Network (ASN) is an all-volunteer organisation founded in October 2009 to provide financial assistance, accommodation and confidential, non-judgemental information to women forced to travel from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to access a safe and legal abortion. While other organisations campaign for much needed law reform, ASN is the only group on record providing women needing to travel for abortions with the thing they need the most: money.

## Why we exist

Last year more than 5,000 women travelled to England from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to access a safe and legal abortion (Department of Health, 2010). In both Northern Ireland – despite being part of the UK – and Ireland, abortion is illegal except under extremely limited circumstances. Even if a woman meets these strict criteria, it is virtually impossible for her to access an abortion in her own country.

It is legal for women living in Ireland and Northern Ireland to travel abroad for an abortion, but they are required to pay privately for their abortion procedure and related costs. Even with the discounted prices clinics offer to women travelling from Ireland and Northern Ireland, women must pay between £350 and £1,500 for the procedure alone, depending on the stage of pregnancy. With the additional expense of accommodation, plane tickets, child care and time off work, women can end up paying as much as £2,000, and sometimes more, to access a medical procedure which is covered by the NHS for women living in England, Scotland and Wales.

### How it works



# A brief word about abortion funds

Abortion funds largely exist in the United States, and ASN is a member of the US-based National Network of Abortion Funds ([www.nnaf.org](http://www.nnaf.org)). These groups, which offer financial assistance and practical support to women seeking abortions, are a band-aid solution to the larger problem of lack of access to affordable, safe and legal abortions.

As your generous support enables ASN to help women in need, more women find out about us. Then we help more women. Then we tell people we helped women, and more wonderful people like you donate money. Then more women call us, and we help them.

An abortion fund will never have the resources to help all the women who need assistance. At times, if our money runs out, we may have to suspend our grant giving (but not the other types of support we offer) until we have more funds. **All an abortion fund can do is try and help as many women as it can**, through grants, by giving information, negotiating discounts with clinics, offering accommodation, and by raising as much money as we can.

It can be frustrating being involved with an abortion fund because someday there will be a woman in need who we will not be able to help. We consider ourselves very fortunate that, due to the incredible generosity of our supporters, that day has not yet come. But as more women learn about our services, we will be spending more and more money helping them. This is a good thing! Or, as a good friend of ASN's who runs a fund in the US once said, "If you're not running out of money, you're not doing it right."

*"I just can't have this baby... I'm a grown woman and I should be able to make this decision myself."*

**42 year old mother of three**

# Key events and milestones

## OCTOBER 2010

First birthday & party

Publication of *Fundraising Toolkit*

## FEBRUARY 2011

ASN emergency appeal raised £2,000+

ASN gave a talk on fundraising for abortion at abortion conference in Berlin

## APRIL 2011

First grant from a trust! £2,500 from the Feminist Review Trust

Launch of new website

## DECEMBER 2010

European Court of Human Rights ruling on the ABC case; ASN is quoted in media coverage around the world

## MARCH 2011

Launch of £1,000 Standing Order Campaign

St Patrick's Day Pro-Choice Happy Hour

## MAY 2011

Charitable Status!

3 screenings of Sarah Diehl's *Abortion Democracy: Poland/South Africa*, organised by ASN volunteers and supporters

More media coverage for ASN following publication of DoH abortion statistics

## JANUARY 2011

Stand-up comedy: *Making a Holy Show of Myself* with Ann Rossiter

### **JUNE 2011**

ASN awarded prize for volunteer recruitment at NNAF summit in US

### **JULY 2011**

ASN's Mara Clarke speaks at pro-choice rally held at Parliament Square

### **SEPTEMBER 2011**

2nd Anniversary Campaign and Emergency Appeal

ASN held a number of events this year, all organised by ASN volunteers and supporters. These events raise funds, give us the chance to socialise and network and are a great way to introduce more people to ASN. Events with external speakers gave us the chance to gain new perspectives. Organising events for ASN takes some work, but is also very rewarding – and great fun! After organising a film screening for ASN, one of our volunteers had this to say:

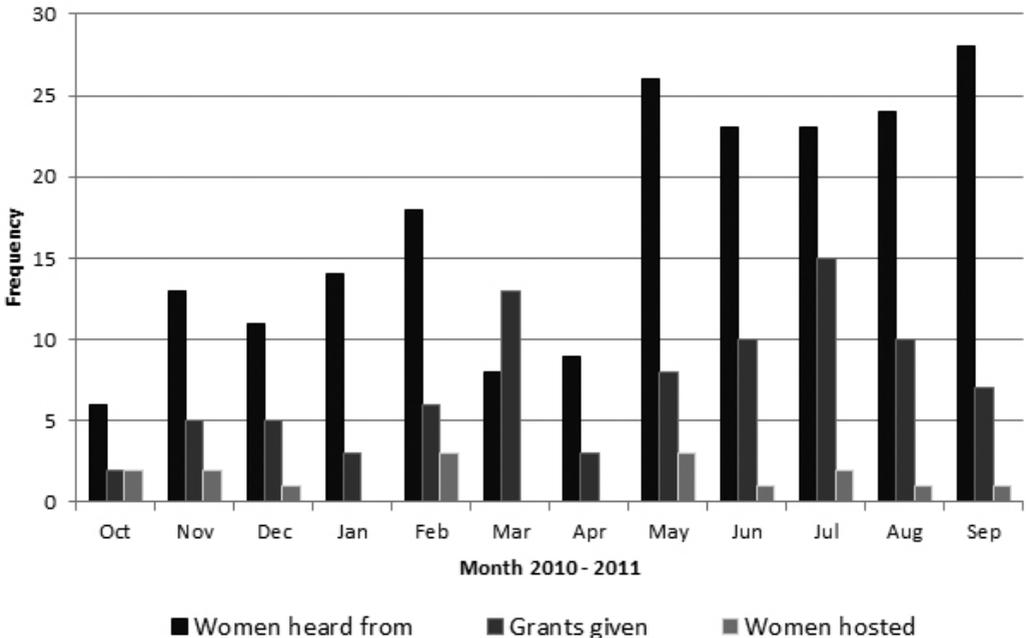
“It was a fun and rewarding experience and one that was made a lot easier thanks to ASN’s volunteer network. Other volunteers came through with everything from finding a screening room to baking cakes to sell.”

# Women we've reached

## This year we have:

- Heard from and **given confidential, non-judgemental information to 203 women** – triple the number of women in ASN's first year (66).
- **Given grants to 87 women, totalling £17,091** to help reduce the combined cost of travelling and paying privately for an abortion. This is over double the number and total amount of grants last year (34 grants totalling £7702.51). The grants have ranged from £20 to £537, with an average of £100 to £200.
- **Arranged more than £10,000 in reduced clinic fees** for women, on top of the financial assistance provided by our grants - thank you clinics!
- **Hosted a total of 16 women and five companions for a total of 25 nights** – another significant increase since last year (9 women and 3 companions, for 14 nights).

In some cases, we have been able to help women in the early stage of pregnancy to access a safe and affordable medical abortion by directing them to Women on Web ([www.womenonweb.org](http://www.womenonweb.org)), a fantastic, trustworthy, life-saving organisation for women.



Some of the women who contact ASN do not require help beyond the information and support we provide over the phone. Of these women, some go on to have abortions in England or by other means, others have a change of circumstances, and some we do not hear back from. Some women are able to access an abortion with a combination of funds they have raised themselves and a discount in the abortion fee that ASN has arranged with one of the fabulous clinics we work with. **To date we have not turned down any woman who could not access an abortion without our financial assistance.**

Of the 203 women who reached out to ASN, 103 contacted us from Ireland, 86 from Northern Ireland, six were in other countries, including England, Wales, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and eight were unknown.

### **Supporting women in great need**

As word has continued to spread about ASN we have experienced a dramatic increase in demand for our support. This may also be due to the global financial crisis and the increasing financial hardships women are having to bear.

#### **Here are some examples of the women we've supported this year:**

- A 34 year old migrant woman and mother of one who called ASN in severe distress after discovering that her pregnancy was affected by severe foetal anomalies. Adding to her and her husband's turmoil, she needed to obtain a visa to enter Britain and they were turned down for a bank loan they needed to pay for the procedure and flights. She was able to borrow some money from friends and ASN negotiated a reduced rate at the clinic and gave her a grant covering the balance of the procedure.

- A 22 year old woman who became pregnant when her contraception failed. With a violent partner and trying to make ends meet living on disability allowance, she contacted ASN. She was able to raise some of the necessary funds herself and ASN negotiated and gave her a £100 grant towards the cost of the procedure.

- A woman who had the necessary amount of funds, but didn't have a credit card which she needed to book the flights. We lent her €80 for the ticket, and she paid back €250 in return as a thank you!

- A 17 year old, pregnant as a result of rape. Her father called us and explained the situation, including how he was “living week to week” trying to provide for his children while living on benefits because he was unable to work. ASN was able to negotiate a reduced fee at the clinic and pay the balance of the procedure. The family didn’t pay their rent for a month in order to pay for their flights.

*ASN thanks these women and men for sharing their stories with us, and for permitting us to share them with you.*

### **Helping women battle against all the odds**

While the individual circumstances of the women who turn to us for support vary greatly, they all experience a number of difficulties in travelling to England for an abortion. Many are incredibly isolated and make the journey alone. Increasingly, we have been hearing from women facing extremely complex circumstances.

The women we’ve supported this year have faced many challenges:

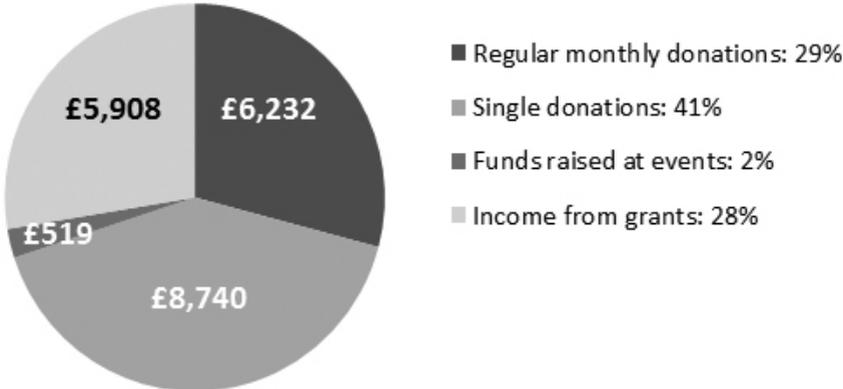
- Obstruction by anti-choice organisations or health professionals, including doctors, protesters at clinics and workers at rogue crisis pregnancy centres
- Having no passport or needing a visa to travel
- Not qualifying for a credit card, overdraft or bank loan
- Travel difficulties, such as flights being cancelled, missed or unavailable
- Severe health problems
- Finding out about their pregnancy late or confusion about dates
- Inability to find care for children while they travel to and from England
- Lack of internet access

*“I’ve been calling people for weeks and no one could help me until I spoke with yourselves.”* **21 year old mother of one**

# Fundraising

ASN relies on a combination of grants, regular donations and single donations from our individual supporters. We have one regular monthly grant which covers all running costs (largely our phone bill and web domain registration), so **all donations from individuals go directly towards helping women access a safe and legal abortion**. Additionally, this year we received our first grant from a trust: £2,500 from the Feminist Review Trust. Our total income for this year was £21,399 – over two times more than our first year (£8,944). This breaks down as follows:

## ASN Year 2 Income by Funding Source



The *ASN Fundraising Toolkit* was launched at our first birthday party and we're happy that it is being put to good use. The kit provides ideas for raising money and plenty of useful tips on how to organise an event. It is available from our website.

Supporters and volunteers have raised money for us in many ways; from asking for donations instead of birthday gifts to soliciting a donation from a children's charity fundraiser who approached them in the street! One of our amazing volunteers raised funds for us by running the Edinburgh marathon in May, and told us, "I'm raising funds for ASN for the same reason I volunteer for ASN. I am incredibly lucky to be living in a country where I could access an abortion quickly, and for free. I want to do my bit to help make it just a little bit easier for women in Ireland and Northern Ireland."

# Spreading the word

It's been a great year for ASN in both social media and the press.

Our response in November to the European Court of Human Rights ruling on the ABC case of three women from the Republic of Ireland claiming that their human rights were breached by Ireland's abortion ban (one of whom won), raised our profile dramatically. Further press and outreach work, including press releases, interviews and articles by ASN on a range of issues have also seen significant take-up in media in England, Ireland and internationally.

ASN media coverage this year has included:

The Guardian • The Irish Examiner • The Irish Times • TheJournal.ie • Politico.ie • Spin 103.8 FM • Reuters • Le Monde (France)

... and many more



*"The sooner the Irish government rectifies this long-standing injustice, the sooner women will be able to make their own decisions about abortion and make choices that are right for them." ASN's Mara Clarke, quoted in **The Guardian, 16 Dec 2010.***

ASN volunteers and supporters have been putting pen to paper to help spread the word:

- Sarah Fisher's in-depth piece for the *Northern Irish Humanist Association* magazine  
<http://www.humanistni.org>
- Hannah Tipple's piece for popular US blog Feministe,  
<http://www.feministe.us/blog>
- Laura Kaminker's pieces on her award-winning blog,  
<http://wmtc.ca>

Our social media presence has grown dramatically in the last year. Currently we have:



- **605 followers on Twitter**, including one of the few pro-choice members of the NI Stormont Assembly and several high-profile journalists and activists



- **249 people who like our Facebook page**

Getting the word out about ASN raises awareness; many people are simply unaware that women can't access an abortion in Northern Ireland and Ireland, and of the injustice of this situation. The more times we're mentioned in the press, on the radio, or online, the more chance we have of reaching the women who need our help. Women in need of support during a crisis pregnancy are at the heart of everything we do, and our media work is

*"Without your help at the last minute I wouldn't have been able to do what I felt was right at the time for me. Words cannot describe how much you helped me and hopefully I can make a donation soon and give back something that may help other women in my situation." **33 year old woman***

# Why help ASN?

## A word from our supporters

Throughout this report we've included quotes from the women we've helped, to let you know just what a difference ASN has made to them. Yet ASN couldn't exist without the hard work of our all-volunteer team and the generosity of our donors. So we wanted to ask what supporting ASN means to them and why they give their valuable time and money.

"Being a phone volunteer for ASN is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. We play a small but incredibly vital role helping to alleviate the distress of women who are generally in crisis and feel totally alone."

"I've worked with many charities but ASN is unique. It has the ability to have an immediate and dramatic impact on the lives of the women who turn to us for support. In the space of a few minutes from when a woman in desperate need calls, we can help her."

"I believe in a woman's right to choose. I don't believe that anyone has the right to exercise control over another person's body. This is doubly true for women who are discriminated against in so many other ways, direct and indirect, economically, socially and culturally. It is because of this injustice that I donate to ASN, in the knowledge that some women will be able to get the help they require."

"As we all know, abortion rights is not an easy area to work in, it's misunderstood and can be frustrating and heartbreaking. Being involved with ASN is different. I know that any efforts and money I put in goes directly to helping a girl or woman to get the support she needs for an abortion. Month after month ASN helps people through difficult situations. After years of banging my head against the brick wall of abortion law reform, I feel like through ASN I can actually make a difference."

# Furthering our goals

Our second year has been even busier than our first, and once again we are delighted with everything that the all-volunteer ASN team has achieved.

Here's an update on our work towards the goals we set at the end of last year:

» Become a registered charity.

**ASN was granted charitable status in May 2011.**

» Raise more funds, building a more sustainable funding base and diversifying our income streams through grants as well as individual donors.

**We've achieved this and will continue to focus on raising more funds from a greater variety of sources.**

» Continue outreach and work with the media to achieve greater visibility across England, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

**ASN has been covered by press around the world - check out page 11.**

» Expand our volunteer host network outside of London to other cities in England that women travel to for abortions.

**We now have hosts in Birmingham and Manchester, and are working on Liverpool and Bristol.**

» Extend our services to women in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, where there is limited-to-no provision of abortion.

**ASN will help women living in the Isle of Man (where there is no provision), and women in the Channel Islands can access accommodation and information through ASN.**

» Broaden our support base of donors, volunteers and fundraisers.

**Another success and on going priority – especially as our call volume increases.**

» Launch a major fundraising campaign with the goal of raising at least £1,000 per month in regular income.

**We are over three quarters of the way to achieving our target and with your help we can reach our goal next year.**

After such a successful second year it is time to look ahead and set new goals:

» **Maintain our rate of growth so we can keep up with increasing demand** and support as many women as possible to access safe and legal abortions.

» Raise at least **£1,000 per month in regular income.**

» **Diversify our funding streams**, including more grants from charitable trusts and foundations.

» **Maximise our income through Gift Aid** – meaning that donations from UK tax payers will go 25% further!

» Hold our first Annual General Meeting.

# A huge thank you

We're lucky to have even more people to thank this year.

The clinics and providers in England continue to help us and our clients, despite their ever-increasing numbers and varied circumstances. bpas, Calthorpe Clinic, Marie Stopes International and South Manchester Private Clinic, we thank you for your generosity and flexibility in working with us to make safe abortion services accessible to so many women.

Thank you also to the agencies, organisations and individuals who give women unbiased information, respect their decisions, raise awareness and campaign tirelessly for abortion law reform.

South Manchester Private Clinic and the Feminist Review Trust have both generously provided us with funding this year. We also thank our other funders: individual donors and supporters who have thrown parties, hosted film screenings, given up their birthday presents and even run marathons! Sarah Diehl, thank you for allowing our supporters to screen your film *Abortion Democracy* and donate the proceeds to ASN. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you.

Thanks to our 103 sister organisations in the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) in the US for including and inspiring us - and of course for the volunteer award! The advice you've given us is invaluable, and it's always good to know we're not working alone.

Many thanks to everyone who has volunteered for us. ASN would not exist without your hard work. Our volunteers support women by phone, liaise with clinics, open their homes, organise events, fundraise, promote us via social media, manage our finances, get ASN in the news, run our website, design this report and so much more.

Once again, our supporters have made it possible for us to end the year saying that **we have never had to turn away a woman who couldn't access an abortion without our financial support**. Thank you, thank you, thank you to all of you! If you have donated to an emergency appeal, set up a standing order, made a direct debit or attended an event, you have directly helped a woman in desperate need to access a safe and legal abortion. As always, our clients say it best:

*"Thank you so much, you have no idea, I am getting bigger every day and all I can think about is this problem I am in. I am not working and all I am thinking about is the future for myself and my daughter and you have no idea how much you are helping me, I hope that one day I can meet you in person and tell you how much your help has meant to me, it is such a good thing you are doing."*

# Standing Order Mandate



Registered Charity Number 1142120

To the Manager of [Your Bank Name]: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Bank Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Bank Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Bank Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Pay: \_\_\_\_\_

HSBC/BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET

Abortion Support Network

Sort Code: 40-11-18

Account Number: 64409302

Payment Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of First Payment: \_\_\_\_\_ Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Details

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**This form should be completed and forwarded to  
YOUR OWN BANK**

Don't forget gift aid - If you are a UK tax payer, ASN can claim 25p of tax on every £1 you give. Complete a simple form at:

<http://www.abortionsupport.org.uk/support-us/donate/gift-aid/>

Please drop us an email at [info@abortionsupport.org.uk](mailto:info@abortionsupport.org.uk) to let us know about the standing order so we can keep you informed about the women we are helping together.

CUT ALONG THIS LINE

# Help us help more women!

## Donate.

ASN is run entirely by unpaid volunteers. All donations directly help a woman with her abortion or travel costs. Regular donations via Standing Order (form on page 17) are particularly important because they help us guarantee a certain amount of income and grants each month.

[www.abortionsupport.org.uk/donate](http://www.abortionsupport.org.uk/donate)

## Volunteer.

We are always looking for help with fundraising, event planning, media outreach, and accountancy.

## Keep in touch.

For the latest news, visit [www.abortionsupport.org.uk](http://www.abortionsupport.org.uk) to receive our monthly eBulletin.

Join our Facebook Group at [www.facebook.com/AbortionSupportNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/AbortionSupportNetwork).

Follow us on Twitter at, [www.twitter.com/abortionsupport](http://www.twitter.com/abortionsupport).

*"I always thought I wouldn't do this, but you can't judge anyone, you don't know until you're put in that position."*

**26 year old mother of two**