



Abortion Support Network Annual Report 2011–2012

Mission

To provide information, financial assistance and accommodation 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

This year Abortion Support Network (ASN) continued to grow. We heard from more than 350 women, more than half the 600 women we've heard from since launching in October 2009. This year we've also had a number of firsts: our first Annual General Meeting, our first national news debate with an anti-choice MP, and our first celebrity endorsement.

We've recruited new volunteers, including expanding the phone team to a team of six, and fulfilled our ambition to have at least one host near every clinic ASN clients travel to. Increased media coverage has enabled us to subtly shift the way abortion is reported from a "moral" issue to one of economic justice and fairness. And we reached our goal of £1,000 in standing orders per month!

We've done all this while maintaining our minimalist setup. ASN continues to operate as a group of volunteers with a phone, a spreadsheet, a website, and the flexibility to adapt to the ever-varying and often complicated situations women find themselves in. And despite feeling the bite of the ongoing recession this year, we've been able to help more women with less money.

As always, we are enormously grateful to our supporters. Whether you donate £1 or £100, give us your time, help raise awareness of the lack of abortion access in Ireland and Northern Ireland, or reduce abortion stigma by bringing it up at the dinner table or at work, we could not do this work without you. You amaze and inspire us. You keep us going, and we thank you for it.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mara Clarke', written on a light-colored background.

Mara Clarke
Director

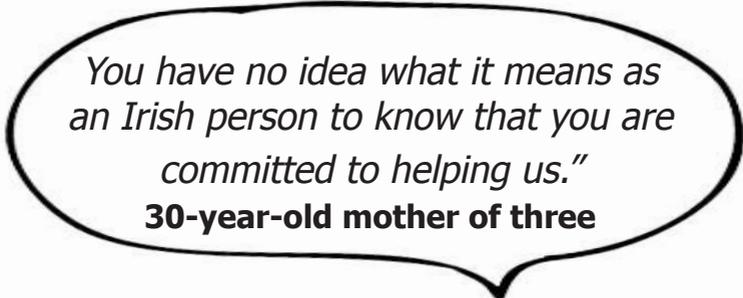
About us

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 many organisations campaign for much needed law reform, ASN is currently the only group on record providing women needing to travel for an abortion with the thing they need the most immediately: money.

Why we exist

In 2011 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, 2012). 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 (which vary depending on the stage of pregnancy) there are additional expenses. These include plane tickets, time off work, child care and accommodation. This means it costs women between £400 and £2,000, and sometimes more, to access a medical procedure which is covered by the NHS for women living in England, Scotland and Wales.



*You have no idea what it means as
an Irish person to know that you are
committed to helping us."*

30-year-old mother of three

How it works

ASN is an abortion fund; an organisation that offers financial assistance and practical support to women seeking abortions. With the generous support of our donors, we do our best to provide assistance to as many women as possible. We raise money, we spend it on grants to help women, we then raise more money, and help more women... and so on.

At times we run out of the money we have available for grants and have to suspend our grant giving (but not the other types of support we offer) until the next lot of regular monthly donations come in.

All an abortion fund can do is to try and help as many women as it can, through grants, by giving information, negotiating discounts with clinics, offering accommodation, and with the support of our donors, by raising as much money as we can.

A woman contacts ASN
by phone, email
or text message

ASN contacts her

ASN assesses her
need and provides
confidential,
non-judgemental
information

The woman arranges
her procedure and
transportation

If accommodation
needed, ASN arranges
volunteer host

If grant awarded,
ASN pays the clinic
directly, reducing the
amount she pays

Key events and milestones

ASN Year 3, Oct 2011 – Sep 2012

October

- Host network extends to Liverpool
- Second anniversary and party with special guest Diane Abbott MP
- ASN 2nd birthday appeal raises over £2,300

December

- ASN on *4thought tv*

March

- International Women's Day Twitter Campaign plugged by Graham Lineham gets ASN 300 new twitter followers
- 40 Days for Life counter protest in London

May

- ASN speaks at Bristol's *Festival of Ideas: The Future of Feminism*

July

- £135 raised for ASN by events held during the *All Ireland Rally for Choice*, Belfast
- *Irish Times*, *Irish Examiner* and *The Guardian* all print stories about abortion as an economic issue

August

- £1,000 per month in standing orders goal achieved

January

- Emma Campbell's book *When they put their hands out like scales*, featuring ASN volunteers is published
- ASN's first TV debate, against anti-choice MP Nadine Dorries

June

- ASN received award for media coverage at National Network of Abortion Funds summit in Chicago, USA
- ASN's first Annual General Meeting

September

- Host network extends to Bristol
- Global Day of Action for Safe, Legal Abortion sees ASN speak at events in Derry, Belfast, Dublin and London

"A baby deserves a good life and right now I can't provide that."
22-year-old woman

"Even though it breaks my heart to do this it has to be a woman's choice. It would be selfish for me to have another baby - I can barely afford the kids I have."

32-year-old mother of two

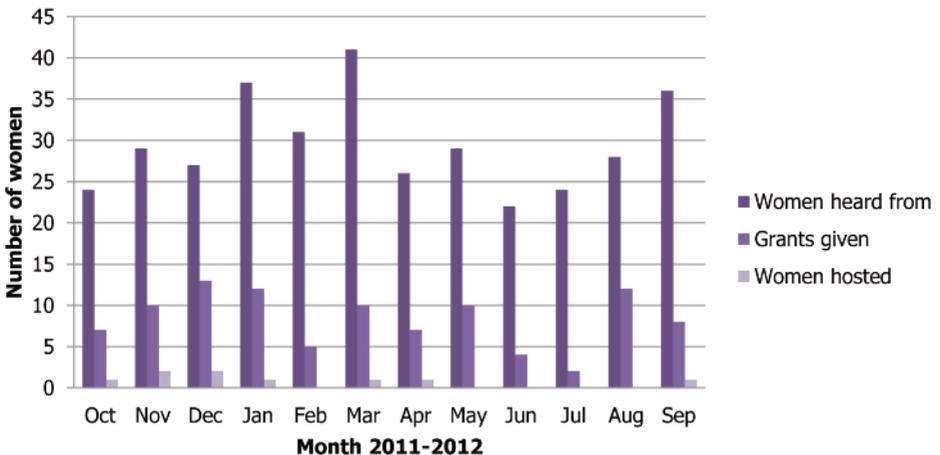
Women we've reached

This year we have¹:

- **Heard from 354 women** - a 74% increase from the previous year (203) and more than five times the number of women we heard from in our first year (66). Most of these women have received some combination of confidential, non-judgemental information, financial assistance, and/or accommodation. Unfortunately, due to the significant increase in demand for ASN's services, over the course of this year there were a few women who reached out to ASN that we were not able to contact.
- **Given grants to 100 women**, totalling £16,099 to help reduce the combined cost of travelling and paying privately for an abortion, compared with 87 grants totalling £17,649 in the previous year. The grants have ranged from £20 to £430, with an average of £100 to £200. With the rapid increase in calls that we have experienced this year and reduced funding overall we've had to do more with less and have made our funds go further using stricter criteria.
- **Hosted 9 women for a total of 11 nights.**
- **Arranged more than £13,000 in reduced clinic fees**, on top of the financial assistance provided by grants – thank you clinics!

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).

Women we've reached: Year 3



Many women, many circumstances

Every month ASN receives calls and emails from women in a variety of circumstances. Some of the women who contact ASN do not require help beyond the information we provide. Of these women, some go on to have abortions in England or elsewhere, some have a change of circumstances, and some 'disappear'.

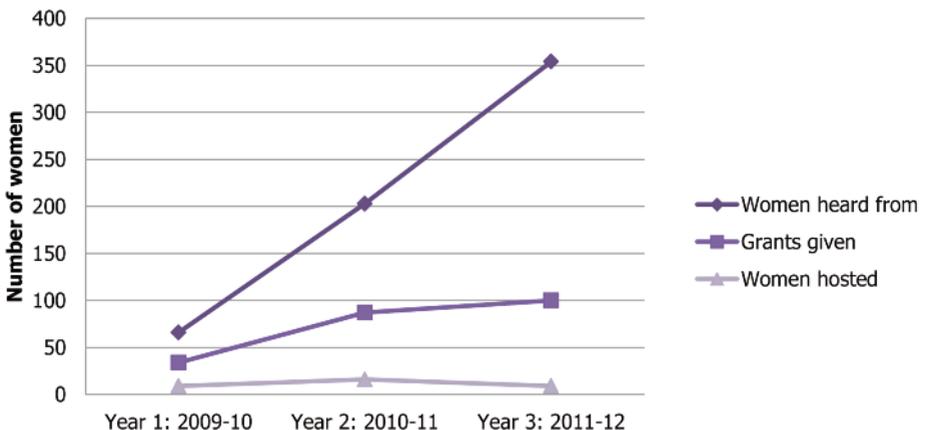
The women who ASN provides financial assistance to are able to access an abortion with a combination of funds they have raised themselves and a grant from ASN. In cases of the utmost need, ASN is sometimes able to arrange a discounted fee with one of the clinics we work with.

Many women, after our initial contact with them, never get back in touch with us. In these cases, we have no way of knowing if these women decided to continue their pregnancies, if they were able to access an abortion without our assistance, or, our fear, that circumstances (an abusive partner, a lack of childcare, the inability to obtain a visa in time) kept them from travelling.

Of the 354 women who reached out to ASN this year, 196 contacted us from Ireland, 130 from Northern Ireland, 8 were from other countries, including England, Scotland, Brazil, Egypt and the US, and 20 were unknown.

¹The figures in this section relating to grant expenditure in the previous year (2010-11) differ a little to those reported in ASN's two year report which was published prior to the production of our end of year financial statements. The difference relates to factors that came to light at the end of the financial year.

Women we've reached: Years 1-3



Women we've heard from:

- *A student who was pregnant as a result of rape. Just when she felt she was starting to "get back on her feet" she discovered that she was pregnant. Unable to confide in anyone she couldn't get together all the money necessary for an abortion. ASN provided her with a grant and a place to stay while she was in England for the procedure.*
- *A married couple in their 30s with a large family, facing an unplanned pregnancy. For health reasons they felt unable to have another child, but with the husband having recently lost his job they were struggling to find the money they needed for an abortion. We gave them information on how to access an affordable safe medical abortion through Women on Web.*
- *A young woman who had to flee to a friend's house in order to escape her abusive drug-using partner. She was desperately afraid that her family would find her and force her to continue with the pregnancy. ASN was able to help her cover the costs of her flights and procedure.*
- *A 29-year old single parent who was incredibly distressed about not being able to raise enough money to pay for her abortion. Expressing the relief she felt to speak to ASN she told us, "This whole experience has made me feel like I'm being burned at the stake". We arranged a grant for her and in the end provided a smaller grant than we'd agreed because she rang us the day before the procedure to say she'd been able to raise an extra £50.*

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

The numbers speak for themselves

In the three years we've been open ASN has heard from

more than 600 women.

We heard from young women, older women, husbands, sisters, friends, mothers, grandmothers.

Their **ages** ranged from
14 to 46 years old,
with more than 21 girls of 16 or under

At least **26**
were in, or trying to
escape, **abusive**
relationships

More than
200 were
already
mothers

More than **31** had
serious health
complications
which were aggravated
by pregnancy or meant
they had been warned
against pregnancy

At least **9** were
living in shelters

At least **4**
had tried to
self-abort

At least **19** were
pregnant as the
result of **rape**

More than **10**
delayed paying
rent and faced
eviction in
order to raise
funds for their
abortions

At least **21** were
experiencing serious
mental health
problems.
At least **4** had
learning
disabilities

52: The number of times
we heard "**He wants nothing**
to do with it"

These numbers only represent some of the circumstances faced by women who have contacted ASN. These are simply 'snapshots' as we don't ask women how they became pregnant or why they are choosing not to continue their pregnancies. Our two main criteria are a woman's financial need and whether or not we have funds available to help.

Fundraising

The good news: ASN has reached its goal of raising £1,000 a month in regular donations.

The bad news: Our overall funding has decreased while the number of women contacting us continues to rise.

Standing Order Campaign

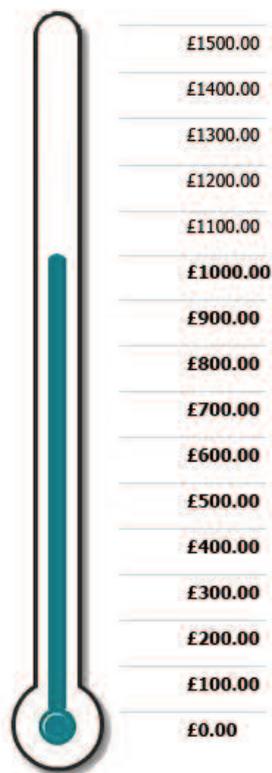
Help us reach our new target of £1,500 a month in regular donations - please spread the word! Talk to people about the abortion law in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter – and encourage friends to do the same.

Funds are down, calls are up²

This year's rapid increase in calls from women needing our support has made it impossible for our volunteer fundraising efforts to keep up. At a time when donations to many charities are down, we are extremely grateful to our supporters. Donations to ASN from individuals have increased to £15,779 in the last year, compared with £15,156 in 2010-11. Yet because ASN wasn't able to secure any grants this year – not from lack of trying! – our overall income is down 10.6% (£19,317 versus £21,603 in 2010-11).

The difficult task of diversifying our funding sources remains a top priority and **donations from our supporters remain critical for sustaining our work.**

As our small running costs (mostly the phone bill and web registration) are covered by a regular monthly grant, **all donations from individuals go directly towards helping women access a safe and legal abortion.**



²The figures in this section relating to our income in the previous year (2010-11) differ a little to those reported in ASN's two year report which was published prior to the production of our end of year financial statements. The difference relates to factors that came to light at the end of the financial year.

Help us help more women

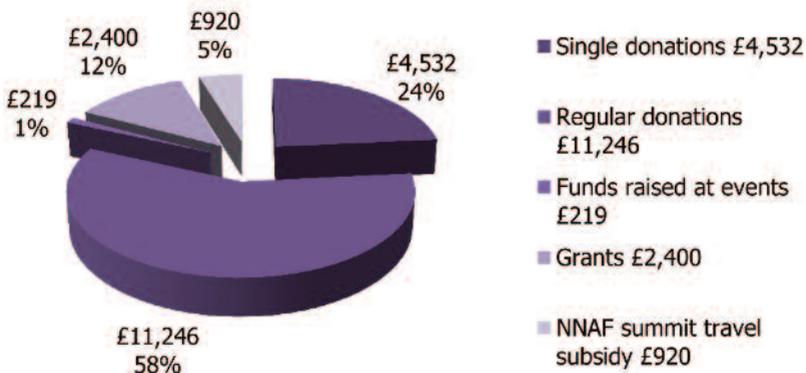
Your donations are vitally important to the lives of women facing crisis pregnancies. Please encourage your family, friends and colleagues to make a contribution – however small.

Now that we have registered for **Gift Aid**, if you are a UK Taxpayer ASN can reclaim 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you, and on any donation you have made since 6 April 2008. The online form can be completed on our website.

Have you got more time than money? Being passionate about a cause is what puts the FUN in fundraising. Fundraising activities achieve more than just raising money; they help to increase awareness and support. You may be surprised to find out how many people don't know that abortion is illegal in the Republic of Ireland and that women in Northern Ireland do not share the same rights as those in the rest of the UK. Through fundraising, you can help publicise ASN's work, build new networks and get more people involved. These are just some of the things that can be achieved through the wonderful efforts of those fundraising on behalf of ASN.

Take a look at the recently updated **ASN Fundraising Toolkit** available on the website for some easy and effective ideas. ASN doesn't expect you to raise huge sums of money (although this would be great!) but fundraising is the backbone of any charity and ASN would not be here today without it. Be sure to let us know if you are organising an event, need flyers to pass around, or have other innovative ways to raise funds.

ASN Year 3 Income by Source



Furthering our goals

At the end of ASN's third year it's time to look at our progress towards achieving the goals we set in the past as well as plan for the future.

Here's an update on our goals for last year:

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

Despite the rapid increase in the number of women contacting ASN and our fundraising feeling the strain, we've worked hard to make our limited income go even further and have been able to support more women with less money this year.

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

Achieved! Now on to £1,500.

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

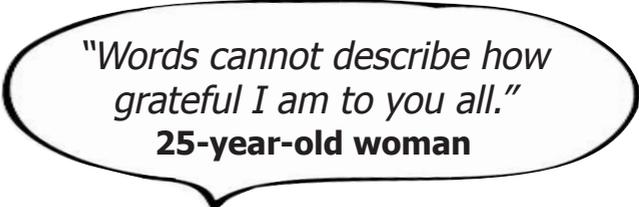
Despite applying to a number of charitable trusts and foundations, we did not receive any new grants this year. This makes the continued support of our individual donors all the more crucial. We will continue to seek new funding sources, as well as work to increase our regular monthly income.

4. Maximise our income through Gift Aid so that donations from UK tax payers go 25% further.

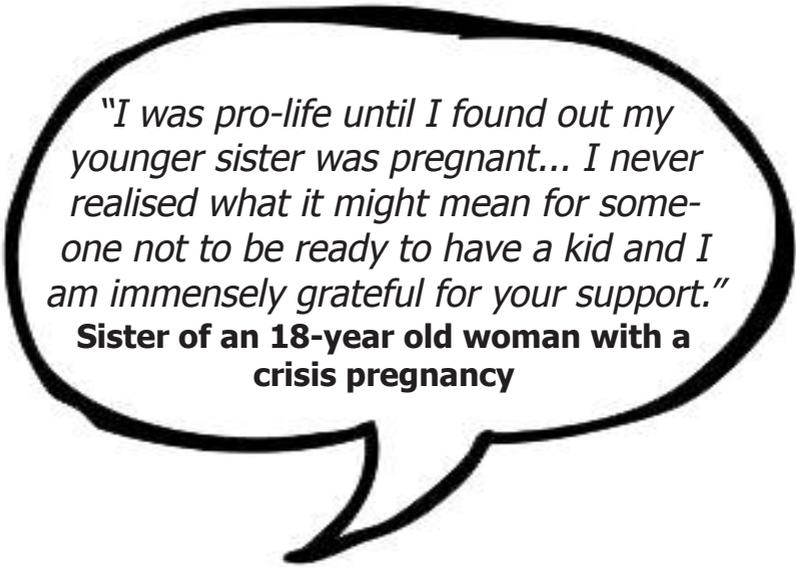
Done! So if you've donated to us at all since May 2011 please fill out a gift aid form on the ASN website to increase your donation by 25%.

5. Hold our first Annual General Meeting.

We were proud to hold our first AGM in June 2012 and our second one in March 2013.



"Words cannot describe how grateful I am to you all."
25-year-old woman



"I was pro-life until I found out my younger sister was pregnant... I never realised what it might mean for someone not to be ready to have a kid and I am immensely grateful for your support."

Sister of an 18-year old woman with a crisis pregnancy

Our goals for the year ahead remain focused on ensuring that we can help as many women as possible:

- 1. Sustain our work so that we can continue to help women.**
- 2. Raise £1,500 per month in regular income.**
- 3. Diversify our funding streams.**

And of course our ultimate long-term goal remains the same – that Ireland and Northern Ireland will liberalise their abortion laws so that ASN's work is no longer needed.

Statement of financial activities

1 October 2011 – 30 September 2012

	Unrestricted funds (£)	Restricted funds (£)	Total (£) 2011-12	Total (£) 2010-11
Incoming resources				
Individual donations	15,778.74		15,778.74	15,156.05
Fundraising income	218.53		218.53	538.75
Grants	2,400		2,400	5,907.98
Travel subsidy		919.54	919.54	0
Total incoming resources	18,397.27	919.54	19,316.81	21,602.78
Resources expended				
Cost of generating funds	36.3	0	36.3	58
Grants to clients	16,098.61		16,098.61	17,649.32
Operational expenditure	3,077.41	919.54	3,996.95	2,881.82
Total resources used	19,212.32	919.54	20,131.86	20,589.14
Total incoming/outgoing resources	-815.05	0	-815.05	1,013.64
Fund balance brought forward 01 October 2011	2,374.97	0	2,374.97	1,361.33
Fund balance carried forward 30 September 2012	1,559.92	0	1,559.92	2,374.97

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 to let us know about the standing order so we can keep you informed about the women we are helping together.

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 previous page) are particularly important because they help us guarantee a certain amount of income and grants each month.
www.abortionsupport.org.uk/donate

Volunteer.

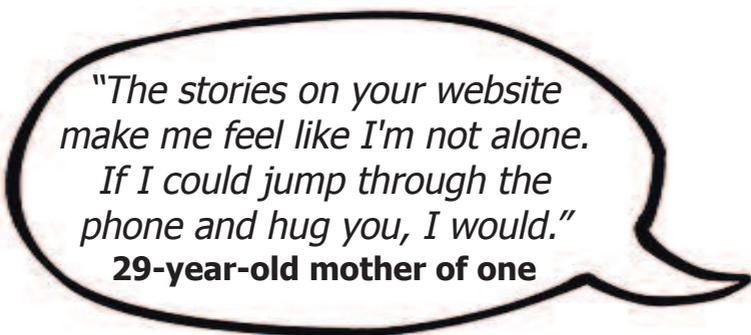
We are always looking for help with fundraising as well as hosts near clinics we work with.

Keep in touch.

For the latest news, visit www.abortionsupport.org.uk to sign up for our monthly eBulletin.

Join our Facebook Group at www.facebook.com/AbortionSupportNetwork

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/abortionsupport



*"The stories on your website
make me feel like I'm not alone.
If I could jump through the
phone and hug you, I would."*
29-year-old mother of one

A massive thank you

...to the groups and organisations providing women with information and care, and for those campaigning for law reform, including:



... and to the amazing individuals who help us help women every single day - our volunteers, our supporters and every last one of our donors.

"I only hope that in the future I will be in a position to help other women and girls the way you have."

18-year-old woman



Your decision - our support

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Registered Charity Number 1142120

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