ABORTION SUPPORT NETWORK

Annual Report 2018

"You've probably heard this hundreds of times before but when you're flailing around in the dark not knowing what to do, you are amazing and a lifesaver.

Thanks a million."

Vision Mission Values

A world where women* and pregnant people have the information and accommodation to means to access safe, legal abortions wherever forced to travel to they live.

To provide information, financial assistance and those who may be England to access a safe, legal abortion.

We believe that all those who need them have the right to safe and legal abortions. We believe in providing practical support to enable people to exercise this right. We are compassionate and respectful of abortion-seekers and their decisions.

*ASN does not ask clients their gender, nor does gender identity influence grant eligibility.

Briana* contacted ASN as she was having a number of problems accessing an abortion including lack of funds, mental health problems and recovering from an illness. She was suicidal but was not "suicidal enough" to be eligible for an abortion in Ireland.

Briana booked an appointment and was trying to sell her car to raise funds, but couldn't afford flights. She also missed her first appointment due to a panic attack.

Thanks to your support, ASN were able to help her rebook her appointment, arrange a clinic discount and pay for flights so she and a friend could travel. Briana was able to have the abortion she needed.

We were glad to get a final, positive message from her: "Thank you so much for helping to fund my treatment yesterday. I felt really suicidal since finding out I was pregnant. I'm so angry at my own country for not taking my mental health seriously during this time. I'm so grateful to ASN for helping me. I wouldn't have been able to afford it alone. Thank you so much, it is such a relief to not be pregnant."

* Not her real name.

CEO's letter

Dear ASN supporter,

When I joined ASN in January 2018 we didn't know what the year would hold. We knew there would be a referendum in Ireland on repealing the eighth amendment but we didn't know that an overwhelming, staggering majority of 66% of voters would vote YES. The triumph of repealing the eighth meant a lot to me, and I'd only been involved for a few months, so I could only imagine what it meant to abortion rights activists, and those abortion-seekers who've travelled or accessed abortion by other means.

Aside from the victory of the repeal campaign, 2018 was guite a year for ASN: we were contacted by our 5,000th client and were able to give over £90,000 in grants to clients. We gave advice, support and information to hundreds of people who didn't need financial help. We looked at ASN's progress since 2009, and began the work of looking forward to the next ten years.

Our plans for the future mean we will be able to help even more people, in more places, as we move forward. We're only able to do that because we know that people like you: people who offer your time and your money, who help us in whatever way you can, have our backs, and have the backs of people who are forced to travel to access a safe, legal abortion. ASN supporters, donors and volunteers are the most fiercely pro-choice, person-centred, warm and welcoming bunch of humans. It is a treat to work with you and for you. Thank you for welcoming me to the team, and especially thanks to Mara for being an outstanding colleague – we have big plans!

With great warmth,

Ruth Taylor CEO

About ASN

We're called Abortion Support Network because we are a network that supports abortion. ASN connects people without resources to you, the people who reach out your hands or dig into your wallets to help.

Every penny raised or donated and every action of support means we can help people urgently seeking an abortion.

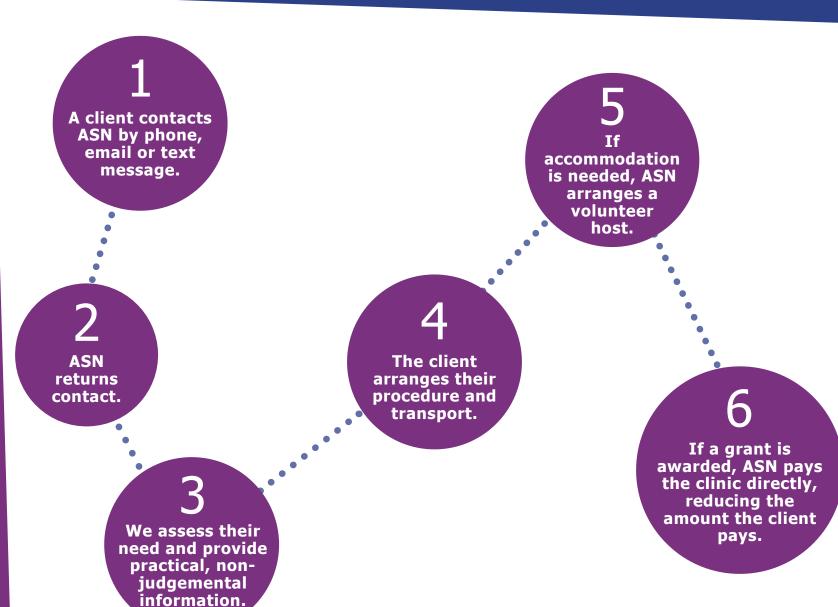
> Unlike many of our clients, teenager Aisling* is lucky enough to have the support of her mother, who contacted us on her behalf. They had already tried to travel to England for an abortion twice, but Aisling scanned further along. They were trying to arrange a third trip but struggling as they had already spent a significant sum. Thanks to your support, and the help of her mother, Aisling was able to travel to England and receive the abortion she needed on her third attempt.

> > * Not her real name.

How ASN works

Your support lets us provide advice and practical assistance to hundreds of clients each year, Because of you, we are able to give them the information and financial help they need to access abortions.

This is how we work.



Who's who at ASN

A small charity with huge drive, ASN relies on **YOU**, our fabulous supporters. **YOU** help our clients in so many ways: **YOU** give us money, through regular donations, one-off gifts and fundraising; **YOU** open your homes when clients need somewhere to stay; **YOU** answer the phone calls, texts and emails; and **YOU** are an essential part of everything else we do. Below you'll find a bit more information about our teams.



Team Frontline

The volunteers who answer calls, texts and emails on our helpline; welcome clients who need accommodation into their homes; do admin and provide tech support.

Our central nervous system.



Team Comms

ASN's communications team generally have something to shout about, and keep supporters informed via Facebook, Twitter, ASN's e-newsletter and in the media.



Team People

Finding and training new volunteers, providing one-to-one support to ASN's helpline sheros, and planning ASN social events, our ace volunteer management team fills a crucial role. The team is comprised of three fabulous people, and you can get in touch by emailing volunteer@asn.org.uk.



Team Funds

Our tireless volunteer fundraisers do everything: run campaigns and run races; write grants and source major donors; organise events and thrill us with their passion and creativity while keeping our doors open. To get involved, email fundraising@asn.org.uk.



Team Trustee

ASN's leadership board is made up of committed volunteers with a passion for reproductive justice and a wide range of skills. Full info on the ASN executive can be found on the ASN website: www.asn.org.uk/the-asn-board.



Team Staff

Over the last few years, as ASN has grown, we've added 3 behind-the-scenes roles which keep ASN running effectively.

Ruth

Ruth Taylor joined ASN as CEO & Fundraising Manager in January 2018. "I've been passionate about sexual and reproductive health and rights since I was a teenager, and the chance to join ASN and be part of this incredible organisation was a dream come true."

Mara

At the start of 2018, ASN founder Mara Clarke moved from being director to a more operational role. "As ASN has grown, it became clear that we needed more than one member of staff to support our volunteers, our clients, and our organisation."

Heather

An experienced book-keeper, Heather Campbell joined ASN in April 2016. She works with us 1 day a week, making sure that we stay solvent and pay all our bills on time.

What changed in 2018

Ireland repealed the 8th!

Irish voters voted to repeal the 8th Amendment, which had made abortion illegal, and the 36th amendment, which legalises abortion up to 12 weeks, was signed into law. This is amazing news and we are thrilled about it.

Free abortions for NI!

In 2017, the UK Government announced that people resident in Northern Ireland would be eligible for free abortions in England. March 2018 saw the launch of a single phone number (0333 234 2184) that anyone in NI can call to book their appointment. Some travel funding is available through this service for those who are eligible.

Isle of Man voted for progress!

The Tynwald, the Manx parliament, voted through one of the most progressive abortion reform bills in the world. The legislation spent the rest of 2018 awaiting Royal Assent, which was granted in January 2019, and the Abortion Reform Act comes into force on 24th May 2019.

Will ASN be closing?

Sadly, no. While we would love to shut down the phone lines, and will as soon as we are no longer needed, there are still people who need ASN. While doctors and other healthcare professionals did a grand job of getting the service up and running in a tiny amount of time, there will continue to be women who fall through the cracks of the services offered and ASN is their safety net.

Who might need ASN in 2019?

The good news is that provision of legal abortion in Ireland, while imperfect, means we will have fewer clients. The better news is with fewer clients, we will be able to do outreach to the hardest to reach, most at risk groups to find those who really, really need it. Those likely to need ASN will be the most vulnerable and those in difficult situations, including: couples with severe but not "fatal" foetal abnormalities; people with health problems; and people unable to manage the multiple appointments mandated by the medically unnecessary 3-4 day "cooling off" period. People having issues accessing post 9 week procedures. Migrants ineligible for free abortion care. Anyone who is near or beyond the 12 week cut-off period, which in our experience tends to include the very young, the much older, and women with or escaping abusive partners.

Does ASN need less money now?

Nope. We hope to spend more in 2019 and will continue to make good use of every penny we are given. In our perfect world, no one would have to say "I'm a mother because I couldn't afford an abortion".

Malta and Gibraltar

A lot of work we'd done in 2018, including consultation with our supporters, came to fruition in February 2019 when we announced that ASN would start providing abortion support to people in Malta and Gibraltar. In Malta, abortion is completely illegal and in Gibraltar it's only legal to save a woman's life. We are pleased and proud that when we asked if you would support us as we reach out and help more women, you gave a whole-hearted YES with only 0.5% of you saying 'no'.

2018 in pictures



Abortion Support Network

@AbortionSupport

Stop press... we just heard from our first client who may be able to access treatment in Ireland!

10:01 AM - 29 Dec 2018



Alliance For Choice

Send an informative and evidence-based email on abortion to DUP councillor, receive this in response #DUPdialogue

Your organisation is disgusting.

I would be obliged if you did not contact me again.

Regards,

John.

Cllr. John Hussey Ormiston DEA Belfast City Council

Email: john.hussey@belfastcity.gov.uk

Post: Cllr. John Hussey, c/o Members Room, City Hall,

BELFAST, BT1 5GS



Gardai inquire into 12-year-old girl's abortion

it takes a village to arrange an abortion



JULY 2018









Zoë McKendree

@AbortionSupport

6:11 AM - 11 Dec 2018

15 Retweets 47 Likes

Since Ireland #RepealedThe8th, ASN has given over £42,000 in grants to enable people to access safe, legal abortion.

X Tá

After the Eighth

For anyone looking for the #Brexit silver

abortions in England are now cheaper for

lining. Since the pound has dropped

Irish women 🎑 @AbortionSupport

FORTY TWO THOUSAND POUNDS, y'all.

Money please. asn.org.uk/donate/

5:24 AM - 19 Dec 2018





World Cup Top Trumps on Abortion, and a letter is signed by 173 politicians in Ireland and UK organised by Stella Creasy,

estellacreasy eAll4Choice

Who we've helped in 2018

Our job is not to interrogate people, it's funding abortions so we don't have – and don't need to have – full or detailed information about our clients. We don't ask how people got pregnant or why they want an abortion. We don't ask about gender identity, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, employment status or citizenship unless we absolutely have to, for example to help someone arrange a visa. Our only criteria are financial need and availability of funds and we keep our questions few and non-invasive wherever possible. As a result, the information below is partial and limited, based on what clients chose to share.

Here's who you helped in 2018:

15
were pregnant from rape

49
were dealing with mental health issues

14 were suicidal

20**
were
homeless

4 were Irish Travellers were diagnosed with foetal abnormalities

* Double the number in 2017. ** Massive increase on 6 in 2017. 46*
were migrants
or refugees

50 had other health or medical issues

30 were dealing with domestic violence

2
tried to self-harm
or dangerously
self-terminate

18
had medical issues with past pregnancies

18 needed a visa to travel

Fiona* had been told that she couldn't have more children, so her pregnancy came as a surprise. "I cannot carry this pregnancy full term," she told us. "I suffer from depression and PTSD. I do not feel at this time that I can bring a child into this world."

In Ireland illegally and unemployed, she was unsure as to how she could access an abortion. "I am working on getting residency," she told us. "I am not sure how my citizenship status will affect making arrangements at a clinic."

While her partner was supportive, Fiona said their families did not know about her situation – they were not people she could turn to for emotional, financial or practical help.

Fiona faced a number of hurdles, from the legal issues surrounding her travel and residential situation to mental health and financial problems. Thanks to your support, ASN was able to help her overcome all of these and access the abortion she needed.

*Not her real name.

How we've helped in 2018

In 2018, we funded a higher proportion of clients and gave larger average grants than in previous years. This is mainly because we were contacted by more clients in more vulnerable positions, such as refugees and people dealing with homelessness. Thank you for giving us the financial security that makes us able to provide more funding when needed, so clients don't have to visit loan sharks or risk eviction due to non-payment of rent.

820 clients heard from

Our helpline team responded to thousands of calls, emails and texts, sometimes working with individuals over weeks or months. Many callers simply needed information and didn't ask for funding help.

245 women funded

We gave out grants totalling £91,897.76 to help people travel to access abortion.

22 clients hosted

Our volunteer hosts opened their homes for 31 nights. We also spent £1,387.85 on accommodation where hosting wasn't available.

£2,184.18 difference between our largest and smallest grants The largest grant we gave was £2,199.18 and the smallest just £15. This shows the difference in need between individuals in different circumstances – and how much impact a small sum can have.

£15,000+ in clinic discounts

The clinics we work with routinely offer discounts to ASN clients, on top of their already reduced fees for women from Ireland and NI.

Someone we couldn't help

Maria* is an asylum seeker living in the Direct Provision programme. She is not allowed to work and has €20 per week to live off. When she contacted us, she was already past the point where she could take safe but illegal abortion pills – to access an abortion she would need to travel.

Lack of funds wasn't Maria's only problem: she needed a special travel document as well as an entry and exit visa. Working through the process to get the necessary travel document and visas was complicated: among other issues, it involved 3 payments to 3 different organisations using 3 different methods (postal order, credit card and cash). ASN paid the application fees, including finding someone in Ireland who could get a postal order and meet Maria in person so she could pay for the final piece of the jigsaw.

While waiting for a visa, Maria started bleeding and spontaneously miscarried

Five months later, she finally heard the results of her visa application – the UK Home Office denied her a visa, after delaying so long that she would not have been able to have an abortion anyway.

*Not their real names.

Clients we heard from

After all the good news we've had this year, people often ask us why ASN is needed. Our clients can explain it best themselves, using their own words.

In this transitional period, many people are contacting us for information, rather than funding, as they struggle to figure out what is available, what is legal and what is safe.

"My sister is 19 and pregnant and has decided that abortion will be the best option. We are trying to figure out best options for her."

Many of the 800+ people who contacted us in 2018 were able to access an abortion on their own, using their own funds, after we gave them information about their options, including receiving safe but illegal early medical abortion pills by post.

"I wouldn't want to take your funds if there are people in more need than I am, it'll be tight for a couple of weeks but I can just afford it."

Others still needed to travel, and a significant number will need to travel from Ireland, even after the new law and provision are fully in place.

"I need help as soon as possible. Am 19 weeks pregnant and on my own with my toddler. I have suffered with my mental health for years but for the past few months have been getting very bad and have suicidal thoughts. Have explained this to my GP but I don't think there is a hope of me getting an abortion here. I need to go to the UK but have no money."

By removing the financial barrier to abortion, we give women a real choice about whether they become parents.

"I am not sure I want an abortion but I'm a single mum so I can't afford one anyway."

Many of the clients who contact us are cautious, and with good reason. As well as concerns about whether it is legal to travel for an abortion or access abortion pills, clients worry about the response from their partners, families and communities.

"I'm not sad about my decision, I'm very clear about it, but I'm alone and I don't have the resources to do it."

Other clients have very real concerns for their safety.

"I really I'm not ready to be a mum now and I really can't cope with having a baby from a man who abused me."

Abortion doesn't just affect women, and we receive calls from pregnant people, their partners, friends and family members. We are always here to help people struggling to access abortion or looking to find out the truth about abortion.

"Do you have any idea which abortion clinics in the UK are good and which ones to stay away from? I have heard some horror stories and I'm worried if I go down that route of picking a bad, unsafe or dirty one."

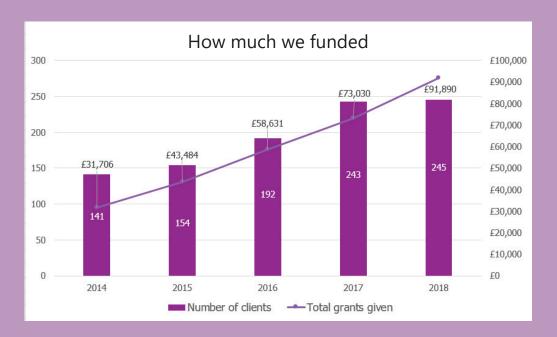
We are always glad to hear that a client is OK and that they are happy with the outcome, whether that's an abortion or continuing the pregnancy. However, not all clients check in, and we don't follow up with everyone who contacts us. Many of our clients face censure or even, in some cases, threats of violence from their family or community for even considering an abortion, so we have to keep their best interests in mind each time we make contact.

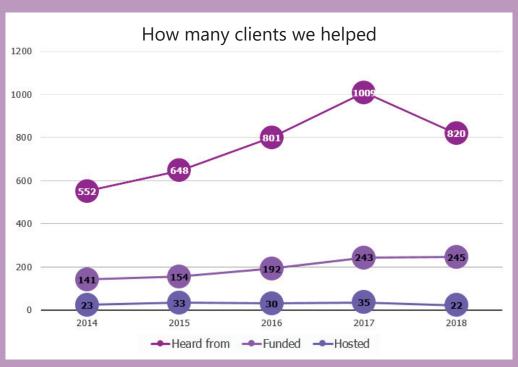
"I think this is such a wonderful service you provide, thank you so much for everything"

Our work 2014 - 2018

ASN started as a spark of an idea in 2009, and hosted its first client in December of that year. In 2018, we heard from our 5,000th person, funded our 1,359th client, and hosted our 204th client for a total of 276 nights. Thanks to the increasing availability of alternatives, including abortion pills, we are finding that fewer of our clients need our help to travel, but that more and more people are turning to us for reliable, unbiased information. Below you'll find more detailed information on our work over the last 5 years. Full information about previous years can be found in previous annual reports, available on our website.







Data for 2009-2013 is available in previous annual reports available on www.asn.org.uk/annual-reports

How you have helped in 2018

Your support is what keeps ASN running. Your regular and one-off donations fund our grants, keep our phone lines open and our email inbox and website running, so we can continue to provide clients with the help they need, from factual information about abortion pills through to support booking flights to help finding childcare.

In 2018, we heard from an unusually high number of very vulnerable people. Thanks to your support, we are able to say that no one was turned away due to lack of funds. We were also able to offer larger grants, which means there are fewer families skipping essential bill payments and fewer women going to loan sharks to pay for access to services that are available for free and locally on the NHS in England, Wales and Scotland.

Helen* contacted us after speaking directly to an abortion clinic, who advised that we might be able to help her with the financial costs of accessing an abortion.

She told us that she had been assaulted, which resulted in a pregnancy "I am pressing charges and I don't think it's in the best interests of me or my family to continue this pregnancy," she said. "I have been through such a terrible and scary situation all I want to do is protect and keep my current children and myself safe from harm."

Because she lived in the Isle of Man, Helen had no local access to a service that would have been free if she lived in England, Scotland or Wales.

Thanks to your support, we were able to help Helen travel to access the abortion she needed, saving her from being tied to her assailant for life through giving birth to his child.

* Not her real name.



• £104,609.73 in regular monthly donations
Or an average of £8,717.48 per month.
Thanks to the 1,000 or so people who donate each month.



• £86,491.06 from one-off donations

Thank you to our one-off donors too! We received almost 1,200 individual donations ranging from £3 to £6,000.



£10,800 in sponsorship
 Abortion care providers sponsor our website.
 Their logos appeared on our site throughout 2018.



• £22,410.78 in Gift Aid

The Gift Aid scheme lets us claim back the tax you've already paid, increasing the value of your donation by 25%.

Visit www.asn.org.uk/gift-aid to learn more.



• £11,434.50 from community fundraising events
From bake sales to marathons to comedy nights,
your efforts covered 34 average clinic grants.

£3,000 from trusts and foundations



In 2018, ASN received a grant from Funderbirds, a charity dedicated to supporting organisations which support women's well-being and women's rights.

What's next for ASN?

Ireland, NI and the Isle of Man have all made abortion access easier, so many of you have been asking: what does this mean for ASN? What's next? ASN will not be shutting its doors – in fact, as we turn 10 in 2019, we'll be expanding to support clients from other countries in Europe; working hard to share our model; grow the abortion funds movement; and, of course, continuing to provide direct financial and practical support to abortion seekers from Ireland, NI and the Isle of Man.

"As an organization we would love to not need to exist," says ASN CEO Ruth Taylor, "and while these changes haven't meant that it's time for us to hang up our helpline, we are in a new era. This means ASN can do more, and do things differently." We can't say much more right now, but look for more exciting announcements from ASN later in 2019.

Malta and Gibraltar

One big change you'll have noticed is that as of February 2019 ASN has expanded to fund abortion seekers from Malta and Gibraltar too. "Once the repeal campaign had won, and we knew that change was coming for the Isle of Man, too, we worked closely with our Board of Trustees, as well as asking volunteers and supporters for insight, and came up with our new strategy," explains Ruth. "Mara had a long-held vision of one day launching a pan-European abortion fund, and I come from a background in international development, so we were both excited by the prospect of making ASN's services available to people from more countries." Malta and Gibraltar were chosen because they have the worst anti-abortion laws in Europe and ASN had been approached from activists from both places.

Mixed reactions

While expanding ASN to cover Malta and Gibraltar had overwhelming support from ASN supporters and donors, reactions on the ground have been mixed. "The Maltese press hate us, tell us we aren't needed and yet love giving us lots of free coverage," says Ruth. Abortion is a truly controversial topic in the predominantly Catholic country, and the country's first pro-choice movement only launched in March 2019. Meanwhile in Gibraltar it seems as though the law may change sooner than expected, which would be a brilliant outcome. In both cases, ASN is definitely needed. We have a great team supporting clients and strong relationships with the activists on the ground, who originally requested our support.

What about Ireland, NI and the Isle of Man?

Overall, fewer clients are contacting ASN in 2019, and fewer clients contacted us in 2018 (820) than 2017 (1,009). We believe the drop in 2018 was due to greater awareness of the availability of safe but illegal abortion pills online. Free NHS abortions for NI launched in 2017 and Irish abortion provision launched in January 2019, and abortion provision on the Isle of Man is due to launch in May 2019 which will help cement this trend.

Still needed

However, although this is excellent news, there are still many people who need ASN including those who are past the 12 week limit in Ireland or who are dealing with foetal abnormalities that aren't 'fatal enough'; those who aren't eligible for travel funding in NI and many other very vulnerable people. "We'll be needed, in some form or another, until everyone who wants or needs an abortion can get one safely and legally without travelling, and ideally, locally and for free," says Ruth.

Statement of Financial Activities

Please find below Abortion Support Network's Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2018. If you have any questions about our accounts, please contact our chief executive via email at ruth@asn.org.uk.

Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure account) for the year 31 December 2018

		Unrestricted funds	Total year to 31 December 2018	Total year to 31 December 2017	
		£	£	£	
	Income				
	Donations	194,515	194,515	160,385	
	Community, challenge, events	11,435	11,435	14,783	
	Events and crowdfunding		0	11,074	
	Gift aid	22,411	22,411	13,536	
	Website sponsorship	10,800	10,800	12,200	
	Bank interest	84	84	31	
	Total income	239,245	239,245	212,009	
	Expenditure				
	Fundraising costs	23,809	23,809	22,935	
	Grants to individuals	91,898	91,898	73,031	
	Operational expenditure	23,060	23,060	12,878	
	Human resources	69,894	69,894	37,223	
	Total expenditure	208,661	208,661	146,067	
	No. 10 No. 1				
	Net income (expenditure) and				
net movement of funds for the					
	year	30,584	30,584	65,942	
	Fund balance brought forward		176,238	102,868	
	Fund balance carried forward	206.800	206,800	176,238	

Notes:

There was no restricted income or expenditure in 2018.

ASN's operating costs increased this year in large part as a result of doubling our staff team.

Our strong reserves position going into 2019 gives us a secure base from which to implement our ambitious new strategy of expansion.

1st May 2019



Thank you from our clients

"I'm just so so thankful, I can't stop saying thank you. I can't believe someone is helping me."

"Thank you so much, it is such a relief to not be pregnant, once I fully recover my friends and I will start a fundraiser for you. Thank you!"

"Thank you guys so much for your help, advice and support so far. It is greatly appreciated and I cannot thank you enough for even existing, you provide such an invaluable service. I'm off to work now and on the way, I stopped at my polling station to vote YES in our referendum."

"I think this is such a wonderful service you provide, thank you so much for everything."

"Thank you and your team for all the support I got from you as I couldn't receive it anywhere else. I made the very hard decision of continuing with my pregnancy and delivered a very healthy and happy boy. Thank you so much for everything you did and what you tried to provide and help me with, and for that I am, and forever will be grateful."

"It's just so lovely that there are women out there in another country looking after women like me."

"You made it very easy for someone who was nervous. Everything was really straightforward and it was done in a way I felt comfortable. I really appreciated people asking if I was OK to talk. I honestly couldn't believe how easy you made it for me, especially since I did it all alone. I'm really glad you called — I always wanted to be able to say thank you."

How you can help

Donate

As an abortion fund, our ability to help clients is governed by our bank balance. Our regular donors are what keep us going but we also gratefully accept one-off or occasional donations. For more information visit www.asn.org.uk/donate.

Register for Gift Aid

If you are a UK tax payer and an ASN donor, registering for Gift Aid gets ASN an extra 25p for every £1 you donate – at no extra cost to you. Go to www.asn.org.uk/gift-aid to find out more.

Give us your time

Go for a sponsored run, host a movie night, hold a bake sale – there are lots of ways to fundraise for ASN. Email fundraising@asn.org.uk for ideas and support. Or if you'd like to become more involved with ASN, you'll find our current list of available volunteer roles at www.asn.org.uk/volunteer.

Keep in touch

Sign up for our newsletter, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter. You can find all our handles at www.asn.org.uk.

Leave a legacy

By leaving a gift to Abortion Support Network in your will, you can help us to be there for women struggling to access safe, legal abortions long into the future. Email Ruth at ruth@asn.org.uk for further information.

We couldn't do this without you

ASN is part of a constellation of organisations who have supported us, fought for abortion rights, or helped people access safe abortion in 2018. Here we celebrate just some of those stars.





















































"I have no idea what I'm doing, I don't have a plan. You don't plan for something like this until it happens to you."

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> > Web: www.asn.org.uk Tel: +44 (0)7897 611593 E-mail: info@asn.org.uk

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