Written submission from Miss Fiona Bull (ANI0390)

- Devolution – an abortion law should be decided by the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- Positive aspects of the abortion law in Northern Ireland.
- Human rights and equality

I am a Christian and pro-life. I am greatly shocked and saddened by the moves being taken in the UK to allow abortion up to birth. Much is made about the rights of a woman, but this seems to mean that an unborn child has no rights. It seems wrong to me that non-Irish politicians are insisting on similar abortion rules for Northern Ireland.

1. Although the Northern Ireland Assembly is temporarily suspended, MPs across the political parties at Westminster agree that it should be Northern Ireland politicians who decide on an abortion law for Northern Ireland. The current enquiry has been initiated by The House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee which has no members from Northern Ireland. In a recent ComRes poll 64% of Northern Ireland adults said that abortion should be decided by Northern Ireland’s elected representatives.

2. Research has shown that about 100,000 people are alive today as a result of Northern Ireland’s current abortion law. The law also protects the unborn child if it is disabled. Such children can be aborted up to birth elsewhere in the United Kingdom, a horrifying thought.

3. It has been said that the United Nations does not think that Northern Ireland’s abortion laws comply with human rights law. This view does not come from the UN, but in a report issued by one committee, the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However the remit of this committee, set out in the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, does not include abortion. Their view seems to be that women are only equal if they have an absolute right to abortion in all circumstances. This means a woman’s equality is dependent on her freedom to end the life of her child. I think such a view has a very damaging, dehumanising effect on society,
as seen in the fact that the interpretation of the abortion law in the rest of the United Kingdom has been gradually relaxed so that we effectively have abortion on demand up to 24 weeks.

4. I therefore feel strongly that the right of the people of Northern Ireland to make their own decision with regard to the law on abortion through the elected members of the Assembly, should be respected. The current law protects the life of an unborn child, including a child who is disabled, and I do not think a change to this law should be imposed upon the people of Northern Ireland.

December 2018