1) DEVOLUTION
I am concerned about the continual pressure to change the law on Abortion in Northern Ireland the latest being by The House of Commons Womens Equality Committee. In Northern Ireland WE actually have the correct legislation in relation to abortion whereby BOTH women and unborn children are respected. No woman’s life is at risk as the law allows for abortion where there is a risk to the mothers life OR a serious risk to her mental or physical health. There is a proper recognition that a child’s life does not just begin at birth and should not be ended because the child maybe born with a disability, a life limiting condition or for social or economic reasons. The fact is in the past our assembly and elected members have been more in touch and had more discussions with people locally about this issue than in other parts of the UK and world.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
I have been very relieved in the past both personally and professionally as a Gp that our law on abortion in N.Ireland has offered protection for preborn children. Legislation which is built on respect reflected by deeply held faith in God which may not be the case in other parts of the UK or other countries. We aspire to offer hope, support and emotional and practical help to those in difficult circumstances which is the best long term solution for women and the only hope of a life for those who are preborn. As a doctor I see no difference between a child who is wanted and one who is not, between a child who I can see directly and one who can only be seen with a scanner. We need to foster respect for all human beings and not discriminate against any.

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
Every human being has the right to life. To deny life and to eradicate another human being is to deny every other right to that person. But it also causes an erosion of societal respect. Carrying a child is a unique situation and at the end of the day it is nine months. I have had four children so I am not speaking without experience. I think there needs to be a change in how we see children so that they are not seen as an inconvenience or a commodity. A human being is a human being, a unique person with a particular set of genes to form talents, inventions, interactions this is so no matter what the circumstances of their conception, they are not their father or their mother and once eradicated can never be replaced.

4) PERSONAL STORIES
My third child was a girl with anencephaly. That is a life limiting condition. Thankfully I was not pressurized into having an abortion. I felt anxious about what would happen especially about delivery and afterwards but I am glad I didn’t have an abortion. At the end of the day I only had those nine months with her. No mother knows how long their child will live whether disabled or not.

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