Abortion Rights

Abortion Rights Annual General Meeting
Saturday 12th March 2022
Executive Committee Candidate Statements

1. Name of candidate: Alice Chilcott



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Wallis Grant

Supporting statement:

I have been a member of the Abortion Rights Executive Committee for a year and have been able to contribute on matters of political engagement as well as helping to organise the successful SB8 march in late September. As someone who works in global women's rights advocacy including SRHR, and having previously held the role of coordinator for the APPG on SRH, I believe fiercely in the aims of Abortion Rights. I hope to continue to enhance Abortion Rights' political engagement including via more creative and grassroots ways.

2. Name of candidate: Amy Wright



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Wallis Grant

Supporting statement:

I am incredibly excited to submit this application to join the Executive Committee of Abortion Rights UK. The fight for access to safe, free, legal abortions and reproductive healthcare for everyone is something that fuels me and that I'm deeply committed to. I am a vocal supporter of abortion rights groups in the UK, acting as a steward at protests and public gatherings, and sharing my own story as part of my activism. This is, un-ironically,
a dream opportunity for me to which I would bring passion, creativity and boundless motivation.

As a queer woman, I know that sexual minority women are more likely to experience unintended pregnancy; I know that trans and non-binary people need abortions, too. Part of my desire to work with AR is due to understanding that we share this knowledge and that of the importance of inclusivity and an intersectional approach to abortion and reproductive healthcare.

I have over seven years of experience working in operational roles in the charity sector, with a strong focus on volunteer management and service delivery. The people I work with are often facing multiple layers of disadvantage and I always do my best to take a compassionate, non-judgmental and empowering approach. I have made it a priority to push for inclusive ways of working – in a recent role I was able to influence my team to produce resources for sex workers in financial hardship, which up until then had been lacking from the charity's offer.

I am also skilled in partnership working and building relationships with stakeholders - I believe this is a key area to develop with AR, to ensure both sustainable funding and increase the impact of our work.

I would love to add to AR's capacity to reach more people across the UK and in the South-East particularly; I am based in Folkestone in East Kent. It would be amazing to have the opportunity to support such important work and build on the fantastic campaigns that AR is running.

3. Name of candidate: Ann Cruse-Stoddart



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Alisa Berry-Ryan

Supporting statement: I want to work with women by listening to and involving them in tackling and opposing the very real issues and expressions of discrimination that we face today in Abortion Rights and my trade union. I have been an active trade unionist for over twenty years and am the regional convenor and Vice-Chair. As such, I have led and been involved in a number of highly

successful campaigns within my organisation. I was also the Women's Officer for my Constituency Labour Party for two consecutive years.

I am seeking election to the Executive Committee as I believe passionately in full reproductive rights for women. The devastating impact of being denied choice through oppressive structures and institutions cannot be allowed to continue. In order to play a full and active role in society, women must have freedom of choice. I believe my position in my trade union affords me the opportunity to work towards this aim and I remain committed to doing so.

I believe Abortion Rights should continue working with Trade Unions to secure affiliation as a means of further raising it's profile and securing membership from a wide range of organisations. A united voice is a powerful voice." the campaign, makes me a valuable member of a diverse and dedicated Executive Committee.

4. Name of candidate: Anne Dean



Nominated by: Ann Henderson

Seconded by: Fiona Menzies

Supporting statement: I am standing for election to the Abortion Rights Executive Committee to provide a voice for the Abortion Rights Scotland campaign at the UK level and will continue to - promote and defend women's access to legal, safe and accessible UK wide abortion services - oppose any restrictions to women's rights and access to free abortion reducing delays and barriers of any kind. - help raise the profile of the pro-choice campaign. Having now retired from my 40+year NHS nursing career, I have more time to spend on campaigning and contributing to fundamental women's issues such as Abortion Rights and have been working in the organising group in Scotland for the past year, having been a member and supporter for a number of years. As a senior representative within GMB Scotland, I sit on the UK

Central Executive Committee. I am also a Women's Lead on GMB's National Women's Forum. As such, I am involved in planning and organising events and conferences for GMB Women and also Equalities generally within Scotland. As a former chair and member of the STUC Women's Committee, I promoted women's health issues, lobbying the Scottish Health Minister directly, regarding the issue of 'buffer zones' around women's clinics. Having listened to many older women who confided in me, as their nurse or friend, as to how different their lives, and the lives of women and families around them, would have been, had they been given the rights that were won here in the UK in the 1960s to free contraception and legal safe abortion, it is crucial that we keep fighting!

There is much to be done. With the encroaching manoeuvres of the very well resourced anti-choice movement being exported from the U.S. to the UK and elsewhere, it is clear that the Pro-Choice campaign must remain strong, vigilant and proactive, whilst increasing its reach to communities of all ages and backgrounds. It would be a privilege to be given this opportunity to **be** able to contribute to Abortion Rights and the campaign at a UK level.

5. Name of candidate: Bridget Lockyer



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Rachel Earlington

Supporting statement: I wish to stand for election to the committee because the right to abortion is a core principle of mine. Recently we've seen countries go backwards in their abortion laws and provision, highlighting the imperative to continue to fight for it to remain and be free, safe and legal throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland. In terms of my own experience, I have a PhD in Women's Studies and now work as a Senior Research Fellow in Public Health for the NHS in Bradford. I bring to the committee my skills in research, analysis and writing clearly and succinctly for different audiences. My research focuses on reducing health

inequalities and understanding health experiences from an empathetic and contextual perspective. I think this approach is crucial to advocating for abortion rights for all members of society, and understanding the circumstantial and systemic barriers to access.

My most recent strategic achievements have been related to my research around Covid-19 in Bradford, where I and my team sort to understand community and local decision-makers concerns and conduct relevant and operationally minded qualitative research, on topics which included children's wellbeing, Covid-19 misinformation, vaccine hesitancy and access to health services. This has led to producing rapid reports and webinars for local authority and community partners, several journal articles, book chapters and conferences and contributing to national research projects. This was all achieved under the circumstances of the pandemic when potential participants were harder to recruit and interviews and focus groups had to take place via phone or video due to social distancing. At the moment I manage a small team of researchers and I am currently setting up a qualitative research centre at in my research institute, to increase capacity and create opportunities for other researchers.

I believe the future for Abortion Rights includes supporting the use of telemedicine abortions where medically appropriate, and we have seen from the pandemic that this can work. I believe this is crucial to widening access to abortions, reducing stigma and offering people greater choice. More work needs to be done to support access to abortion in Northern Ireland and supporting the campaign there. My recent work around Covid-19 misinformation has given me insights into how abortion misinformation is spread and why. I think it is important that Abortion Rights keeps up to date with the most virulent misinformation stories so it can work with others to counter them. Finally, Abortion Rights need to continue to focus on the decriminalisation of abortion.

6. Name of candidate: Davinia Hamilton



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Alisa Berry-Ryan

Supporting statement I would like to stand for election to the Abortion Rights Executive Committee. I am a dedicated pro-choice activist, originally from Malta, where abortion is banned in all cases.

I have been a member of the EC since 2020, and in 2021 was elected Secretary. I have also worked in the Abortion Rights office since 2019. During my time working for Abortion Rights, I have organised a fundraising cabaret with Amanda Palmer guest starring, which raised over £3k for the campaign, as well as several online panel events, and a lockdown quiz with guest host Alison Spittle. I have also been involved in organising demonstrations, including the march in solidarity with women and pregnant people in Texas last October, managing social media, designing graphics for the campaign, co-ordinating volunteers, writing press releases, and dealing with day-to-day admin. Since 2021 I have also worked on the Abortion Rights weekly pro-choice newsletter.

Besides my work with Abortion Rights, I am a performer and writer. In 2022 I will be performing Blanket Ban, an Arts Council-funded play based on the experiences of Maltese women who have had or have tried to have an abortion, despite the total ban.

I would like to sit on the Executive Committee as I hope to play a part in shaping the campaign from the ground up. I believe that my experience and perspective, as a European migrant, as a woman from a country where abortion is banned, and as someone with detailed knowledge of the campaign, would make me a valuable member of a diverse and dedicated Executive Committee.

7. Name of candidate: Eleanor Hill



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Bronwen Davies

Supporting statement Globally abortion legislation has been discussed in the news more than ever since our last AGM. Shocking events in the US and the continued attempts to roll back American women's freedoms, together with the attack on abortion rights in Poland have seen women rise in protest. Now more than ever we need to work together to support women around the world seeking to access safe legal abortions.

As Secretary of Abortion Rights Cardiff, I am acutely aware that the Welsh Government's consultation on Termination of pregnancy arrangements in Wales, which ended in September 2021, has still not led to a conclusive decision by Welsh Government. Abortion Rights Cardiff has worked within Wales and been instrumental in the creation of a successful cross-party group on Women's Health within the Welsh Government. We will continue to campaign for transparency in our government's decision-making processes and for the well-evidenced success of telemedicine to be acknowledged by the permanent adoption of the current temporary arrangements.

I would very much like to continue as a member of the Abortion Rights Executive Committee representing both my own views and sharing those of the members of our affiliated group Abortion Rights Cardiff. It has been an honour to be part of the Executive Committee of Abortion Rights.

8. Name of candidate: Emily Butler



Nominated by: Alice Chilcott
Seconded by: Alisa Berry-Ryan

Supporting statement: Why I wish to stand for election to the Abortion Rights Executive Committee:

I am passionate about abortion rights, an area I have previously worked in. As I'm currently working for the suicide prevention charity Samaritans, I'm keen to continue to support the abortion rights movement in whatever way I can.

I also love that Abortion Rights is a grassroots campaigning organisation that isn't scared to say the important things, has a bold style and approach, and is inclusive of trans people.

I have a range of experience from 10 years working to influence change through a number of different charities. This includes significant experience in public campaigning, parliamentary lobbying, digital and communications, press, public speaking, strategy and evaluation from this variety of roles.

In a number of these jobs, I was also specifically working to further abortion rights, including during my time at the Family Planning Association and Amnesty UK.

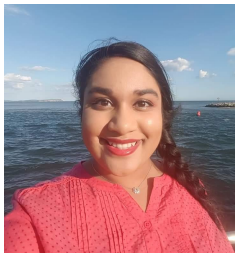
· Organising an abortion rights suitcase-march across Westminster Bridge in 2019, which gained widespread press coverage.

· Running the national Sexual Health Week in 2018, which reached 72% more people through social media than the year before, and 24% more through press coverage.

· Coordinating one of Samaritans first-ever public-facing campaigns.

I believe this lies in Abortion Rights making the most of its unique role as a grassroots campaigning organisation and growing networks of local campaign groups to influence political decision-making at all levels. And channelling the anger many people felt when they learned of the lack of access to safe and legal abortion care in Northern Ireland, by building a generation of well-informed local campaigners calling for the half-finished work of the 1967 Abortion Act to finally be completed with full decriminalisation.

9. Name of candidate: Isadora Sinha



Nominated by: Davinia Hamilton

Seconded by: Maddy Cooper

Supporting statement: I wish to stand for election to the Abortion Rights Executive Committee as I have always been a vocal activist for women's rights, especially the fundamental human right to bodily autonomy. I feel I have made a positive change in my student community, but I wish to push for larger scale impact as the laws within the UK are still in dire need of change to protect women's right to choose.

In terms of skills and experience, I have been in multiple roles that add to my skillset for this endeavour. In 2019, I was the face and leader of the pro-choice push within Cardiff University (CU) and founded the CU Pro-Choice Society. During 2019/20 I was also the Wellbeing Officer for CU Feminist Society so have plenty of training in handling sensitive women's issues. Last academic year, I was elected as Cardiff University's Students' Union's (CUSU) Black and Minority Ethnic Officer and am currently the Vice-President for our Pro-Choice Society. This means I have an established skillset of: organising events; social media campaigns, branding and accounting (I was also the financial director and graphic

designer for the NVGOW); communicating with a diverse range of people from different backgrounds; handling delicate topics such as abortion and racism. Further, my biological and medical knowledge, which is sharp as I am currently studying for a PhD in Medicine, is also useful for debunking anti-choice rhetoric efficiently.

During 2019, I could see an anti-choice society in CU becoming very vocal and making many students feel uncomfortable and as our student's union had no official stance, many young women were left feeling unsupported. I took it upon myself to research and propose a motion for CUSU to officially adopt a pro-choice stance. I had to present this motion at the AGM and speak in front of 800 fellow students as well as debate men who were claiming this pro-choice stance was "an attack on their rights". I can proudly say that CUSU is now officially pro-choice. There was a backlash from CBR UK and others which made me a target; I handled myself calmly and ensured that the pro-choice motion stuck no matter how much pressure was placed upon myself and CUSU. To ensure students felt supported when CBR UK started to "protest" at CUSU with explicit images, I started up the pro-choice society, forming a supportive and educational network.

Within the UK, abortion is still regulated under criminal law; this is the first thing that must change. I wish to do everything I can to help Abortion Rights tackle this issue; safe, legal, accessible abortion services are an essential healthcare need.

10. Name of candidate: Judith Orr



Nominated by: Maddy Cooper
Seconded by: Kerry Abel

Supporting statement: The second year of the pandemic has reinforced the need to remove abortion from criminal law, to allow telemedicine and give women the full right to control their own bodies. I believe the fight to decriminalise abortion in Britain has a greater potential to succeed than ever before and has wide support, including in the trade union movement.

I have been on the EC for over a decade, I'm a socialist and am committed to building Abortion Rights as a broad inclusive campaigning organisation.

I have helped organise many different Abortion Rights events and actions, including the march on the US Embassy last year in protest at the anti-abortion restrictions in Texas.

I'm the author of 'Abortion Wars, the fight for reproductive rights. I believe Abortion Rights can help lead and shape the debate and campaign to extend reproductive rights as well as oppose the anti-abortion lobby whenever it mobilises.

I also believe that demonstrating international solidarity with pro-choice movements is vital at a time when abortion rights are under serious threat in the US. If Roe versus Wade is overturned anti-abortion campaigners will gain confidence everywhere.

11. Name of candidate: Kerry Abel



Nominated by: Davinia Hamilton
Seconded by: Rachel Earlington

Supporting statement: I am extremely proud to have been Chair of Abortion Rights in 2021.

We set ambitious targets to celebrate our 18th birthday since the merger of the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) and Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) in 2003. We held several panel discussions with international guests such as Women On Web's Dr Rebecca Gomperts and We Testify Renee Tracy Sherman in the US. All in spite of the ongoing pandemic.

On top of that, we researched and write our response to the early medical abortion/telemedicine consultation - with support particularly from Scottish activists - and encouraged as many Abortion Rights supporters

and organisations to submit too.

In October I walked behind the Abortion Rights banner, alongside our dedicated activists from Trafalgar Square to the US Embassy to demonstrate our wholehearted solidarity against the increasingly serious attempts to undermine abortion law and access in the USA.

More than eighteen years on I want to be part of a campaign that continues the values both as a grassroots activist in the spirit of NAC and with our ability to influence Parliament from ALRA.

I hope I can continue to edit the weekly Abortion Rights newsletter and develop the campaign's communications this year to widen out our support and strengthen the links with our trade union affiliates.

12. Name of candidate: Lilly Burton



Nominated by: Alisa Berry-Ryan
Seconded by: Kerry Abel

Supporting statement: I am a performer, writer and theatre facilitator. My show, All Aboard! At Termination Station, a comedy cabaret about my personal experience of abortion has become much more than a theatre piece, rather a platform to speak out about abortion. My artistic intention has now become my campaign, to help open up a dialogue amongst the audience about their own experience of abortion, to help educate, and to take away the shame and stigmatisation surrounding the subject.

I wish to stand for the election of the committee as a creative I am able to think of initiative ways to engage audiences with taboo conversational topics and want to carry on this work on a much larger scale with Abortion Rights UK.

I have worked with AR now for several years helping raise thousands of pounds towards the campaigns through performance lead fundraisers. I

have curated act line-ups, created relationships with venues and have opened up audiences to femme pro-choice performers who are willing to stand up for the cause of helping to gain access and equality for women's reproductive health.

The future looks bright... it looks PINK! My focus would be to continue to help curate events and fundraisers across London and the UK and look at working and developing workshops on creative activism for young people.

13. Name of candidate: Lucy Jamieson



Nominated by: Kerry Abel
Seconded by: Judith Orr

Supporting statement: In September 2021, following the news of the Texas abortion ban, myself and a close friend- Emily, just two twenty-three year old women with no prior experience of organising a protest, decided to do just that. We took to Instagram and created the London March For Texas, completely out of our depth but fuelled by anger, disgust and a burning need for justice. Spreading the word as far as we could, we were contacted by Alisa and Kerry from Abortion Rights Uk. I had come across Abortion Rights during my research and had planned to contact them about our protest, unaware that they were planning a demonstration of their own. We joined forces, organising a march standing in solidarity with Texas, and I have never felt more encouraged that I have the power to really do some good in this world and make huge changes where they are critical and needed.

I have had an abortion myself, but I wouldn't say that this is the reason I wanted to protest for Texas in October. I wouldn't say that it is the reason I wish to become a member of this executive committee. It isn't what drives me to stamp out the stigma surrounding abortion. I am just a woman who wishes to live in a world where people who can get pregnant can also access free, safe and legal abortions. Stigma free! It shouldn't be that hard to ask for right? But instead we must demand for it. I want to be a member of Abortion Rights executive committee so that I can play a

more active role in its campaigns and its demanding for reproductive freedom.

Now I'll be honest here. Despite my own experiences with abortion, despite London March for Texas, I am very much a newbie. Back in September, if you had of asked me what Roe v. Wade was, I might have guessed that it was an American blockbuster starring Morgan Freeman, but I've enjoyed learning so much these last few months! And I think I can encourage other young people to do the same. I am an actor, currently training at drama school with some of the best young and up and coming talent who are all activists in the making. Many of them joined the march in October. I would love to play a part in recruiting a younger and more diverse set of members, who in turn can become the next generation of Abortion Rights Campaigners.

It has been an honour to be a member of Abortion Rights Uk over the last six months, and I can only wish that I had been so for longer, but I am very excited to continue my work with Abortion Rights in the fight for reproductive freedom in the Uk and globally.

14. Name of candidate: Lynsey Mitchell



Nominated by: Ann Henderson
Seconded by: Fiona Menzies

Supporting statement: I have sat on the Executive Committee of Abortion Rights Scotland for the last year. I am keen to get more involved in the national campaign and also act as a link between the two committees. I am a human rights law academic and as such I am keen to be involved in the legal and policy side of Executive Committee conversations.

As well as organisation and campaigning skills that I have honed on the Scottish committee, I have several years' experience sitting on academic committees in a professional capacity. I have held various roles on these committees, such as fundraising, communications and PR, report writing

and minute taking. I have previously worked for organisations such as Citizens' Advice, The Scottish Refugee Council and I am a member of Engender, so I have many years experience working with charities and campaign organisations.

I am a legal academic in the field of human rights law. My research specifically focuses on women's rights and reproductive rights.

I helped to organise and was a steward at the Edinburgh Abortion Rights rally in support of women in Texas. I also live-tweeted the event and raised the profile of Abortion Rights Scotland internationally. I am working to promote the work of Abortion Rights and Abortion Rights Scotland to student networks in order to further raise awareness and increase members.

I see Abortion Rights continuing to work for full decriminalisation of abortion law throughout the UK. I would work with the existing committee members to help to develop the organisation's media profile and gain new members to further press for change.

16. Name of candidate: Polly Jackman



Nominated by: Alisa Berry-Ryan
Seconded by: Kerry Abel

Supporting statement: I would love to join the Abortion Rights Executive Committee so that I can contribute in a meaningful way to protecting and extending free, safe, legal and local abortion care across the United Kingdom.

I passionately committed to advocating for bodily autonomy and for the right for everyone to choose if, when and how they have children. For me, this is the first and most vital human right, necessary in order for everyone to be able to fully participate in society.

I have been involved in the London-Irish Abortion Rights Campaign and Sister Supporter for many years, helping to campaign successfully to Repeal the 8th Amendment, for the cost of terminations and travel to

England by women in NI to be paid for by the government, for the decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland, and for buffer zones outside abortion clinics. I know that there is so much work to be done to ensure that our hard-fought rights remain in place, and to make the provision of abortion as accessible and stress-free as possible – and I am up for the fight! I believe the future for Abortion Rights lies in focusing on retaining telemedicine, obtaining national legalisation for abortion clinic buffer zones, and campaigning for the commissioning of abortion service provision in Northern Ireland.

I am a lawyer with a focus on strategic litigation, and am a committed campaigner, and I would bring these skills to Abortion Rights.

17. Name of candidate: Victoria Blake



Nominated by: Liz Lawrence Elawrence
Seconded by: Rhiannon Lockley

Supporting statement: As UCU's Anti-Casualisation Committee Chair, I built trust and understanding across the union and engaged with media and social media to build public understanding. This was pivotal to cementing the issue of insecure work and how it intersects with (in)equality at the heart of our bargaining agenda.

I have worked hard to continue this approach and to make the sometimes complicated workings of our union more accessible and through this encouraged and developed many members to take on more active roles as activists, reps, and officers at local and UK level. The excellent Abortion Rights UK 2022 resolutions listed on the website represent massive potential for progress.

Policy wins and cultural shifts are within grasp when we continue to build and organise well, perhaps most imminently with telemedicine. I see several areas of challenge we need to overcome, including:

* Improving community access to evidence-based knowledge

* Greater active involvement and undertakings to spread the word from supportive individuals and organisations

* Further developing fundraising and membership for greater resources to campaign to decriminalise abortion and to oppose threats to roll back existing abortion rights.

* The need for more sustained, active involvement from supporters, perhaps especially from the trade union movement, where there is often broad support not replicated at scale in physical presence at demonstrations or inactive organising.