

Ending a Pregnancy

Please note: *The information provided in this section has been sourced from the ARC website and was not created by Ellie's Gift. ARC has been instrumental in supporting the development of Ellie's Gift and their contribution has been significant to the content within our specific TFMR area. ARC were also involved in the focus groups that helped inform and shape the content that has been developed to support families experiencing TFMR.*

If you are considering ending a wanted pregnancy because of what has been detected in your baby, it is very normal to experience a range of emotions. You may also be very worried about what you will have to go through. Nothing can make this experience easy but good information and individualised support can help you to prepare and to think through your options.

The law and termination of pregnancy: 'Ground E'

When a test result or scan findings show a significant issue with your baby's development, doctors may offer you a termination of pregnancy. This is because they have decided that the finding fits the wording of the abortion law that says that there is 'substantial risk' that if the baby was born he or she would not survive or would have 'significant handicap' (the wording is not very sensitive as the law was written in the 1960s). You can have a termination at any time in pregnancy under this clause of the law which is known as 'Ground E'.

Change in the law at 24 weeks

Before 24 weeks, if the doctors do not offer a termination of pregnancy, a woman can usually still have one as there is another clause in the abortion law that allows it. But this clause can only be used until 24 weeks of pregnancy. After 24 weeks the doctors have to be confident that what has been diagnosed in a baby fits 'Ground E' of the law. If you want a termination after 24 weeks but your doctors do not agree to this, you can ask for a second opinion.

If you have a termination after 24 weeks, the baby's death must be registered. You will also be entitled to full maternity leave and benefits.

Methods of termination

This is just a short summary of the methods used to end a pregnancy:

- If you are less than 13 weeks pregnant, most hospitals will usually give you the choice of medical induction (labour and delivery) or a surgical termination under general anaesthetic.
- If you are over 13 weeks pregnant – most hospitals can only offer medical induction to end the pregnancy. This is because there are few trained surgeons working in the NHS. It is possible to have a surgical procedure up to 23 weeks 6 days) with an independent abortion provider, such as the BPAS or MSI Reproductive Choices under NHS contract. Although independent services in the UK are highly competent and professional, for some women it can feel difficult being in an environment where terminations are being carried out because the pregnancy is unwanted.
- Most hospitals give a tablet of Mifepristone 24-48 hours before admission to hospital for the induction. If you find this is too long to wait, you can ask for admission to hospital 12 hours after taking the tablet. There is a 1% chance you may begin labour earlier than expected. If there are any signs, for example a 'show' or pains, you should go straight to the hospital. If you have any concerns after taking the tablet, contact your doctor or midwife.
- If you are more than 21 weeks pregnant – it may be suggested that the baby is given an injection (the medical name for this is feticide). This is to ensure that the baby dies before the induction of labour. This procedure is usually done in a specialist fetal medicine centre.

ARC - Call our helpline

Want to talk? We're here as often as you need us. Our helpline is answered by trained staff.

020 7713 7486

Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 5.30pm

Or text: **07908 683004**

Tuesday and Thursday: 8 – 10pm – email

info@arc-uk.org to arrange an evening call.

Disclaimer

The information contained within this resource was correct and accurate at the time of production, based on the original sources available in **2026**.

Information, guidance, services, contact details and external resources may change over time. Ellie's Gift CIC cannot guarantee that information remains current or that external services, organisations or websites continue to operate as described.

Please check the original source or relevant organisation directly for the most up-to-date information.