

NHS spends £1m a week on repeat abortions: Single women using terminations 'as another form of contraceptive'

- **Figures reveal some women have returned for as many as nine terminations in their lifetime**
- **Repeat abortions most prevalent in London**
- **Half of all terminations carried out in Croydon were on women who had previously had at least one abortion**

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The Health Service is spending around £1million a week providing repeat abortions.

Critics said figures revealed yesterday show thousands of women are using the procedure as a form of contraception. It is not unknown for some women to have seven, eight or even nine terminations in their lifetime.

According to the statistics, single or unmarried women account for five out of every six repeat terminations. Around a third of all abortions carried out in England and Wales are repeats.

The figures will fuel the debate on whether abortions, which cost the NHS up to £1,000 each, are being sanctioned as more of a lifestyle choice than a medical requirement. In one London borough, half of all abortions are requested by women who have already aborted at least one foetus.

In 2010, the latest year for which figures are available, some 189,000 abortions took place. Of these, more than 64,000 terminations were on women who had already aborted a foetus in the past.

More than 50,000 of them were single or living with a partner; while around 9,500 were married – with the marital status unknown for the rest.

Critics of the current legislation said terminations have become just another form of contraception because of the lack of independent counselling at clinics which leads to women making the choice to have an abortion rather than continue with their pregnancy. Some experts claim the number of abortions could be reduced if contraception was made more easily available and sex education was improved. Across all age groups, a total of 85 women had an abortion despite having had seven previous terminations.

Josephine Quintavalle, of the Pro-Life Alliance, said: 'The number of repeat abortions is simply extraordinary. 'Abortion is an unpleasant and harrowing experience for women and to hear it is happening repeatedly makes your hair stand on end.

'These figures show that sadly, abortion is being seen by many as a form of contraception.

'But is this surprising when we live in a society which says it's all right to have an abortion once.

'If it's fine once, why not two, three or four times.'

I HAD MY FIRST ABORTION AGED 12



Lucy Lanelly

WHEN she had her first abortion at the age of 12, Lucy Lanelly should have learned the dangers of unprotected sex. But disturbingly, she carried on as if it had never happened.

Astonishingly she went on to have more abortions when she was 13, 15, and 16 – effectively using terminations as a form of contraception.

Speaking four years ago, when she had turned 18, Miss Lanelly, from Doncaster, said she did not regret the abor-

tions but did regret having sex when she was not mature enough to deal with it.

Following her first abortion, she was lectured about contraception and given a contraceptive injection – but simply failed to turn up for booster injections.

She said: ‘I’ve blanked out my abortions and I have too much self-respect to go through all that again. I just wish other young girls would respect their bodies enough not to give them up to anybody.’

The statistics showed that repeat abortions were most prevalent in London. Of the 23 primary care trust areas with the highest proportion of repeat abortions, 21 were in London. Croydon had the highest ratio with half of all terminations being carried out on women who had previously had at least one abortion. Almost 100 of the women who came back for at least their second termination were under the age of 20. Of the 950 repeat abortions, 787 were for unmarried women, of whom 545 were under the age of 30. The boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark and Barking & Dagenham all saw 46 per cent of terminations carried out on women who had undergone the procedure in the past. The lowest rate was in Cambridgeshire where just 23 per cent of abortions were on women who had had one before. In total, some 9,564 married women had a repeat abortion in 2010, with more than two thirds of them over the age of 30.

Across England and Wales, married women accounted for 16 per cent of repeat terminations – but there was a wide regional variation.

The North West was the area where the highest percentages of repeat abortions were carried out on unmarried women.

In Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral just 5 per cent of repeat terminations were performed on married women.

But in Monmouth in Wales, the proportion of married women having a repeat termination jumped to 34 per cent, followed by Harrow on 33 per cent and Hounslow on 31 per cent.

Back in 1998, 29 per cent of abortions were repeats – a proportion which has risen to 33 per cent now. A regional breakdown of the figures – revealed in a parliamentary question submitted by Labour health spokesman Diane Abbott – show that by far the most repeat terminations occur in London.

There were 19,295 of them in 2010. The North West is next on 7,537; while the West Midlands on 7,190.

Figures late last year showed that each abortion costs the NHS an average of £680. It means around £850,000 is spent on repeat abortions every single week in England and Wales.

The figures do not include Scotland and Northern Ireland, which means the full UK cost will be around £1million a week.

Stuart Cowie, a spokesman for pressure group LIFE, said: ‘These figures show that “no questions asked” abortion on demand trivialises the process so much that it is no longer seen as the last resort.

‘We would like to see more counselling offered to women, and more conversations in the classroom about responsibility.’