

From the Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP  
Secretary of State for Health

**DH** Department  
of Health

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The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP  
House of Commons  
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Dear Tessa

12 DEC 2008

Thank you for your letter of 4 December enclosing an example of correspondence you have received from a number of your constituents about abortion.

There are no plans to change the law on abortion, as we believe that the Abortion Act 1967 works as Parliament intended. The purpose of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill is to update existing laws on embryology to take account of developments in science and society.

This flagship Bill completed the final stage of its Parliamentary passage on 29 October, when the House of Lords considered and agreed the amendments made in the House of Commons. The Bill has received Royal Assent and it is planned that the majority of its provisions will come into force in October 2009.

It is accepted Parliamentary practice that proposals for changes in the law on abortion have come from backbench members and that decisions are made on the basis of free votes. Several amendments were laid on abortion during the passage of the Bill, which were voted against, withdrawn or not reached.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours  
Alan

ALAN JOHNSON