

At the meeting of the full Council on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Councillors agreed to write a statement in response to the current vigil being held outside Stapleford Care by the organisation '40 Days For Life'. This statement is as follows:

Stapleford Town Council supports the fundamental rights of all to freedom of speech and peaceful protest. These rights are part of the very foundations of a democratic society.

However, Stapleford Town Council also believes that citizens should be able to access safe, legal NHS facilitated healthcare to which they are entitled, unhindered and unfettered by any such protest, vigil or demonstration. We recognise that gatherings of this kind have the potential to be intimidating or harassing in nature. Therefore, it is the opinion of this Council that any such demonstration, vigil or protest which seeks to make a change in the law would be more effectively directed at lawmakers, politicians and government; not in such a place as could intimidate service users who are accessing, or healthcare providers who are giving, treatment and advice on individual healthcare options.

Furthermore, Stapleford Town Council is of the opinion that religious counsel and/or counsel from other non-medical professionals, is not an adequate substitute for the latter. Any such non-medical counsel should be offered responsibly and in conjunction with professional medical advice from a doctor or qualified healthcare professional.

Stapleford Town Council will work towards developing a policy on this issue, which protects both freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protest, but also which protects the rights of all UK citizens to access legal, safe NHS facilitated healthcare safely and without threat of intimidation or harassment.

We would like to express our support to those residents who have felt negatively affected by this event. You can find support from the following organisations:

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service <https://www.bpas.org/> tel: 03457 30 40 30

Refuge [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk) tel: 0808 2000 247 (National Domestic Abuse Helpline)

The Samaritans [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) tel: 116 123