

# More than 500 abortions after Down's screening

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Equality Act 2010, MPs said. Figures showed that there were 146 abortions after the 24-week limit in 2011 in England and Wales out of a total of almost 190,000. More than 500 abortions followed screening for Down's syndrome.

Experts on the panel include Virendra Sharma, the Labour MP for Ealing Southall, and Baroness Hollins, a cross-bench peer and president of the British Medical Association.

This month, the Government was urged to open a separate inquiry over fears that illegal abortion on the grounds of gender may be taking place within immigrant communities.

Officials found signs that birth rates for girls and boys varied noticeably according to where their mothers were born.

Earl Howe, a health minister, said that these differences in births among mothers of certain nationalities may "fall outside the range considered possible without intervention".

It was the first official statistical evidence potentially backing up concerns that sex-selection abortions are being

carried out in Britain. Andrew Lansley, the former health secretary, last year criticised the "illegal and morally wrong" practice following a *Daily Telegraph* investigation into the issue.

After this newspaper received information that the procedures were becoming increasingly common for cultural and social reasons, undercover reporters filmed doctors offering women terminations based on gender.

As a result of the investigation, the Crown Prosecution Service is considering criminal charges against doctors in three cases.

The practice of aborting unborn babies on the basis of sex has long been considered a problem in areas of India and China, where boys are sometimes considered favourable for cultural or economic reasons.

Abortions for non-medical reasons are legal until 24 weeks, but terminations on grounds of sex of the foetus are illegal under the 1967 Abortion Act.

In 2010 there were 189,574 terminations in England and Wales, up eight per cent in a decade.