

# Doctors who pre-signed abortion forms let off

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SCORES of doctors at abortion clinics effectively provided abortions on demand by pre-signing forms without seeing the patients, official statistics have revealed.

But not one of the 67 doctors identified as either pre-signing or using pre-signed certificates is being disciplined or prosecuted for the crimes.

Lawyers for the General Medical Council, the regulatory body, recom-

mended that none of the doctors should stand before a "Fitness to Practice Panel".

The GMC also declined to refer the cases to the police even though the doctors had forfeited protection offered by the Abortion Act 1967 from possible prison sentences for perjury and for offences against the person.

Abortion is technically illegal in Britain unless clear conditions stipulated by the Act are met, including the

requirement that a mother is assessed by two doctors, who then sign certificates "in good faith" authorising the procedure.

The extent of pre-signing was exposed by a Care Quality Commission investigation into 250 private and NHS abortion clinics in 2012 and which found some of them were breaking the law. The CQC reported that in one case a clinic was using forms pre-signed by a doctors who had left four years earlier.

Parliamentarians are furious at the revelations, which came in response to a Freedom of Information request made to the GMC.

Fiona Bruce, the Conservative MP for Congleton, said: "Nobody disputes that pre-signing is a clear breach of the law. Health Minister Earl Howe said exactly this in a recent debate and that 'if it is found to be happening a prosecution should be brought'.

"The Government has a responsi-

bility to get to the bottom of this, to find out what went wrong and to see that the law is upheld."

David Burrowes, the Conservative MP for Enfield Southgate, said: "It says something about how sinister and unaccountable abortion practice in the UK has become that such a large number of doctors could brazenly break the law and the most senior medical establishment in the land omit to refer their crimes to the police."