

# Marie Stopes urged to explain

## why it halted abortions

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Britain's biggest abortion service is under pressure to say what inspectors found to force the suspension of terminations for under-age girls and vulnerable women.

Abortions for hundreds of women were halted on Friday after the Care Quality Commission said it had concerns that teenagers may not be giving proper consent and medical staff carry-

ing anaesthetics may lack training. Inspectors say they are barred from revealing the details until they publish a full report.

Marie Stopes carries out 70,000 abortions a year at 64 locations, about a third of all procedures in England and Wales. All but 10,000 are paid for by the NHS. About 250 women a week will be affected by the suspension.

Last night the charity declined to say anything about what it is doing to

address concerns, insisting only that it hoped to win permission to restart the procedures within a few days.

Health workers discussing abortions with patients must have proper training and must be confident that under-age girls are mature enough to understand advice and give valid consent.

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) said its staff were going "above and beyond" to fit in women who could not have abortions at Marie

Stopes clinics, but added that a "vacuum of information" risked scaring vulnerable women. "It would be better if people were clear on what exactly has happened. Abortion is a very stigmatised thing. This may add to that anxiety," a BPAS spokeswoman said.

Inspectors say there is no evidence that women have been harmed but have concerns that Marie Stopes procedures were not robust enough to prevent problems.

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