

Protest ban at abortion clinic is challenged

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Campaigners have launched a legal challenge against a ban on protests at an abortion clinic. Ealing council in west London was the first in Britain to create a demonstration-free zone outside a Marie Stopes clinic.

Alina Dulgheriu, representing Be Here For Me, filed case papers at the High Court yesterday. The group said that the order "criminalises prayer and support outside an abortion clinic".

Ms Dulgheriu said that after becoming pregnant she was offered financial, practical and moral help, as well as accommodation, and now has a six-year-old daughter.

The public spaces protection order came into force on Monday after women using the clinic reported "intimidation, harassment and distress".

John Hansen-Brevetti, clinical operations manager at the clinic, said that women had been told that the ghost of their foetus would haunt them and had holy water thrown on them and rosary beads thrust at them.

Ealing councillors ruled that the order should be reviewed in six months.

Ms Dulgheriu said: "Without sufficient justification, Ealing council has decided to criminalise otherwise lawful behaviour." She said the order violated "the right to free speech, the right to pray, the right to receive information and the right to assemble".

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