# Transport for London blocks Bpas ads urging abortion law reform amid legal debate



Transport for London (TfL) has made headlines once again by blocking advertisements from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (Bpas) that call on the public to lobby for the decriminalisation of abortion in England and Wales. This decision, which TfL claims could tarnish the reputation of the police and City Hall, arrives at a critical moment as Parliament is set to vote on amendments to the criminal justice bill aimed at changing the current legislation surrounding abortion.

The adverts, which had received approval from the Advertising Standards Authority, feature anonymised case studies highlighting the distressing experiences of women investigated or prosecuted following terminations or pregnancy loss. Bpas argues that these stories are vital for illustrating the consequences of current laws. The charity has expressed its disappointment and confusion regarding TfL's refusal to allow the campaign, insisting that its messaging is straightforward and devoid of inflammatory language. They contend that the intention of the adverts is to foster democratic discourse rather than provoke unrest.

For context, TfL has previously accommodated campaigns related to sensitive issues. In 2024, the organisation permitted advertisements advocating for the legalisation of assisted dying, displayed prominently across the London transport network. This campaign received a warm reception, with TfL confirming it adhered to both its advertising policy and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) code at the time. The juxtaposition of these two decisions highlights an apparent inconsistency in TfL's approach to contentious social topics.

The blocking of the Bpas adverts has incited significant backlash, with Bpas's chief executive, Heidi Stewart, asserting that this action marginalises the voices of women who have suffered under an "archaic" legal framework. Stewart emphasised, “Women deserve to have their stories told – and the public has a right to hear them.” In a similar vein, Labour MP Tonia Antoniazzi, who is advocating for an amendment to the criminal law concerning abortion, condemned the ban as an attempt to suppress critical narratives surrounding the police's role in enforcing these laws.

Antoniazzi further indicated that the current legal environment fosters fear among women, who risk criminalisation for seeking bodily autonomy. Her amendment, which seeks to remove women from the criminal law entirely regarding abortion, has garnered backing from numerous charities and medical institutions, demonstrating a growing consensus on the need for reform.

The issue has been further complicated by broader societal changes. Following the recent implementation of safe access zones around abortion clinics in England and Wales, designed to protect women from harassment, the ongoing debate around abortion law reform has gained traction. Activists argue that the decriminalisation of abortion is essential to ensure that women are treated with dignity and respect rather than as potential criminals.

While TfL justifies its decision by suggesting the adverts could discredit the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), critics maintain that it is the enforcement of these laws that undermines public trust. As discussions loom in Parliament, and as public sentiment intensifies surrounding reproductive rights, the decision by TfL will likely remain a focal point in this crucial dialogue about women's rights and public safety.

The contentious nature of this topic illustrates a broader societal struggle, where past decisions have sparked ongoing debates about the role of institutions in addressing sensitive issues. The apparent disparity in TfL's advertising approvals highlights the challenges of navigating public sentiment, regulatory frameworks, and social responsibility in London’s diverse landscape.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20nrjevgv2o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion), [[6]](https://www.bpas.org/about-bpas/press-office/press-releases/bpas-welcomes-safe-access-zones-after-a-decade-of-campaigning/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/23/senior-labour-figures-seeking-water-down-plans-decriminalise-abortion)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion), [[6]](https://www.bpas.org/about-bpas/press-office/press-releases/bpas-welcomes-safe-access-zones-after-a-decade-of-campaigning/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/31/transport-for-london-tfl-blocks-ads-bpas-decriminalise-abortion> - Transport for London (TfL) has blocked adverts from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) that urged the public to lobby MPs for the decriminalisation of abortion. TfL stated that the adverts could bring the police and City Hall into disrepute. The BPAS campaign featured anonymised case studies of women investigated or prosecuted after terminations or pregnancy loss. The Advertising Standards Authority had approved the adverts, but TfL's decision has sparked controversy, with BPAS planning to appeal the ruling.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20nrjevgv2o> - In November 2024, Transport for London (TfL) approved adverts promoting the legalisation of assisted dying by the campaign group Dignity in Dying. The adverts, displayed across the London travel network, featured individuals advocating for the right to choose in end-of-life care. Despite some opposition, TfL confirmed that the campaign complied with its advertising policy and the Committee of Advertising Practice code, allowing the adverts to run on the network.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/03/22/advert-claims-social-media-killing-muslims-banned-tube/> - In March 2024, Transport for London (TfL) blocked an advert from Muzz Social, a Muslim-focused social media platform, which claimed that social media was 'killing Muslims'. TfL expressed concerns that the advert could cause widespread offence and be subject to vandalism. Muzz Social criticised the decision, arguing that the campaign aimed to raise awareness of issues faced by Muslims online and was not intended to offend.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-47318803> - In February 2019, a ban on junk food advertising across London's public transport network, including the Underground, Overground, buses, and bus shelters, came into effect. The ban aimed to tackle child obesity by reducing exposure to unhealthy food adverts. While some advertisers adjusted their campaigns to comply, the Advertising Association expressed concerns that the ban might have limited impact on broader societal issues related to obesity.
6. <https://www.bpas.org/about-bpas/press-office/press-releases/bpas-welcomes-safe-access-zones-after-a-decade-of-campaigning/> - In October 2024, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) welcomed the implementation of safe access zones around abortion clinics in England and Wales. The zones, established after a decade of BPAS campaigning, create a 150-metre buffer to protect women seeking abortion services from harassment and intimidation. The law, which came into force on 31 October 2024, prohibits activities designed to influence women or cause distress within these zones.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/23/senior-labour-figures-seeking-water-down-plans-decriminalise-abortion> - In March 2024, reports emerged that some senior Labour figures were seeking to modify plans to decriminalise abortion in England and Wales. The proposal, led by Labour MP Diana Johnson, aimed to remove the criminal offence associated with a woman ending her own pregnancy. While the proposal had support from MPs across different parties and medical groups, concerns were raised about its potential implications, including the provision of telemedicine for early-stage abortions.