

WHO ARE WE?

“Reclaim Rosslyn Road” is a group of East Twickenham residents who think local people - and clinic users - should be able to go about their business without feeling harassed or threatened by these protests.

We are not taking sides on the “abortion debate” or trying to curtail freedom of speech.

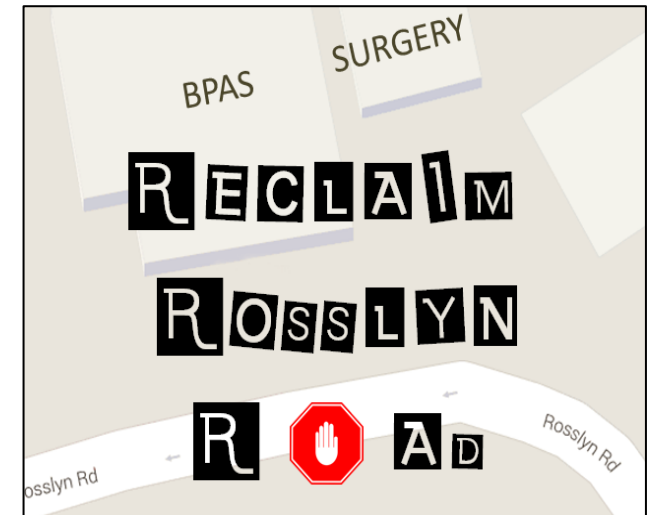
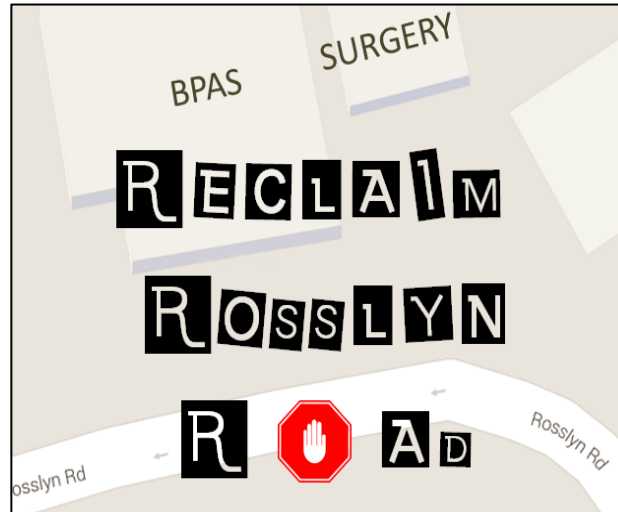
We don’t have formal membership or subscriptions, and we are not necessarily seeking active input, though feel free to give it. But we would welcome your support. If you’re on our mailing list (which you can leave at any time) you’ll receive occasional updates on what is happening.

Please contact us by email

reclaimrosslyn@gmail.com

or through our website:

<http://e-voice.org.uk/reclaimrosslynroad/>



**HAVE YOU BEEN STOPPED OUTSIDE
ROSSLYN CLINIC OR SEEN OTHERS BEING
STOPPED?**

**ARE YOU UNHAPPY WITH THE
PERMANENT PROTEST OUTSIDE THE
CLINIC?**

**YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!
HERE’S HOW**

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WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Regulars at Twickenham Park Surgery will have seen protesters standing outside the British Pregnancy Advisory Service clinic next door. The clinic is a pregnancy advisory centre run by BPAS; amongst other things, it carries out pregnancy terminations under the auspices of the NHS.

The protesters are organised by an anti-abortion group called the "Good Counsel Network". Their aim is to stop women using the clinic.

Someone is stationed by the clinic gate almost all the time BPAS is open; **one of them is actually paid to be there**. Sometimes they're joined by a larger group loudly praying from the opposite side of the street. And, in the past, they have sometimes demanded to use the patients' toilet in the doctors' surgery. **This protest has been going on for years**.

The protesters aim to stop any woman of childbearing age who they think intends to enter the clinic. At first glance their approach appears to be respectful. They say they are 'here to help and inform'. But they are expert at putting pressure on women to abandon their appointments. They hand out leaflets that claim, amongst other things, that there is a direct link between abortion and breast cancer yet the World Health Organisation states clearly there is no evidence to support this claim.

They know nothing about the circumstances that lead often vulnerable women to the steps of the clinic, or the consequences of dissuading some of them from going in.

The protesters don't only harass women trying to enter the clinic. Local people who have nothing to do with BPAS are affected. **In two cases, residents have even been followed home after an altercation**. In another case, receptionists at the doctors' surgery

were so incensed by the upset caused to a patient with a history of pregnancy problems that they were involved in a full-blown row with the protesters. The police were called, as they have been on many other occasions.

In our opinion, the protest is **obtrusive, disrespectful and unremitting**. Our quiet and pleasant neighbourhood is sometimes quite the opposite.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?

In November 2014 we presented a petition to Richmond Council. They responded by committing to "*do whatever is lawful to stop these protesters*". But the protest still goes on, month after month.

We met Dr Vince Cable MP (our MP prior to May 2015). He was sympathetic and wrote to the Home Office expressing his concern. But the response to Dr Cable's letter from the Home Secretary, Theresa May, was that the police already have adequate powers to deal with such protests.

Whilst the local police are aware of the Home Office view and have listened sympathetically to our concerns, **no-one has been able to take any effective action** either here or in other places with the same problem.

It is clear that the police and local authorities do not have the necessary powers to deal with this type of protest. So we now support the "Back Off" campaign for **buffer zones** around abortion clinics, which has the support of BPAS, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Mumsnet, Women's Aid and others. Protesters could continue to protest, but not within these zones. A petition with nearly 120,000 signatures calling for buffer zones was presented to 10 Downing Street in

March 2015. And Dr Tania Mathias (our MP from May 2015) has said she will support this campaign.

CAN I TAKE ANY DIRECT ACTION?

We must all remain scrupulously within the law. Anti-abortion groups are backed by powerful lawyers and are well-funded, sometimes from the USA. One local resident was prosecuted after taking offensive anti-abortion posters off the pavement and putting them in the bin. The case against him was thrown out, but it shows how litigious the protesters are and how careful residents need to be to avoid allowing the protesters to present themselves as victims.

However, **British law protects our freedom of speech as well as that of the protesters**. The protesters cannot stop a resident from speaking to a woman who has been stopped. It is your right to ask politely if she is ok. It is your right to point out that some protesters are paid to be there. It is perfectly valid to point out that the protesters have one objective and, regardless of a woman's circumstances, will attempt to dissuade her from entering the clinic. No one should be browbeaten or emotionally blackmailed into abandoning an appointment to access NHS healthcare. If the woman is happy to have a dialogue with the protesters, and understands their objective, that is her right and choice. However, we know that this is often not the case and your presence can help her disentangle herself and go about her business unhindered. None of this requires that you speak to the protester. Indeed, our experience is that arguing with the protesters is at best a waste of time and at worst counter-productive –some of them like the attention!

If you do decide to help a woman in this way, please let us know what happened.