

A PILLS-BY-POST CASE STUDY: STUART WORBY

WHAT HAPPENED?

In August 2022, Stuart Worby used abortion pills to poison his pregnant girlfriend, causing her to have a miscarriage at 15 weeks gestation.

Worby, aged 39, conspired with friend Wayne Finney, 41, to obtain the drugs. Finney's partner, Nueza Cepeda, 39, who was not pregnant herself, received the abortion pills following a telemedicine consultation.

Worby then administered the drugs to his pregnant girlfriend – the first, mifepristone, he put in her orange juice; the second, misoprostol, he administered by means of a surreptitious assault. She began to miscarry. She contacted the police after reading messages between Worby and Finney on Worby's phone. One read: "It's working, she's bleeding." Worby refused to take her to the hospital for four hours.¹

HOW DID THEY GET THE ABORTION PILLS?

Pills-by-post abortion (also known as telemedicine, remote, or DIY abortion) is when women are approved for an abortion via a remote consultation, i.e. by telephone or video call. The drugs used for a medical abortion are then posted to the woman, who self-administers them. There is no requirement for the woman to be seen in person, by a medical professional. This means that her pregnancy is not confirmed or dated using ultrasound scan. Because of this, it is possible for a woman to mislead medical professionals, intentionally or otherwise, as to the date of her pregnancy, or if she's pregnant at all.

In 2020, pills-by-post abortion was approved as a temporary measure during the coronavirus pandemic. Despite public opposition in Government consultations, the policy was made permanent in 2022.

WHAT WERE THE CHARGES?

At Norwich Crown Court, A jury unanimously found Worby guilty of assault and administering a poison with intent to procure a miscarriage.² *The latter was under sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861*. Notably, these are the sections of the law that proponents of decriminalisation of abortion are trying to repeal. Worby was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Cepeda also pled guilty under sections 58 and 59 of the OAPA 1861. She received a 22 month sentence, which was suspended.



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'A SELFISH MAN'

The Court heard that Worby's victim has since met another partner and has been unable to conceive. She told the Court, "The only baby that I could have had was the one I lost."

The judge who sentenced Worby, Judge Joel Brennathan, said, "You must have known this was dangerous for the victim. She spoke of the betrayal and pain and the strong possibility that you have stolen the one possibility she had to be a mother. You are a selfish man."

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

This case illustrates how dangerous sending abortion pills in the post can be. They were used maliciously, to drug a woman without her knowledge or consent, leading to the death of her child at 15 weeks gestation.

This is not an isolated incident. In May 2022, Georgia Day was sentenced in Derby Crown Court for obtaining abortion pills through telemedicine abortion in order that her lover could use them to drug his pregnant partner. Thankfully, the pregnant woman discovered them before they could be administered.³

This makes clear the importance of sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861. It is under this law that justice was brought against a man who enacted violence against a pregnant woman and her child. Decriminalisation of abortion would remove this important protection from criminal law.

1. <https://www.wattonandswaffhamtimes.co.uk/news/24653173/jurors-told-woman-sexually-assaulted-forced-abortion/>
2. <https://redlionchambers.co.uk/rare-poisoning-trial-ends-with-unanimous-convictions/>
3. <https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/local-news/woman-lied-doctors-plot-abort-23972859>



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