

Chief Executive Office

Keith McBride  
Committee for Health  
Room 410  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

24 June 2021

Dear Mr McBride

**Re: Protests at premises providing abortion services**

In response to your letter received on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021 requesting information on measures taken by Health & Social Care Trusts to address concern that both patients and staff may feel intimidated and harassed by protesters, please find our position outlined below:

- All patients and staff should be able to access any health care facility for any treatment free from harassment, intimidation and confrontation.
- The Trust had been providing the Early Medical Abortion (EMA) service in Coleraine Community Clinic from January 2021. The service has requested to be transferred due to concerns about patient and staff confidentiality, and the on-going impact on all service users of the personal and abusive protests around these facilities.
- The Trust is actively scoping an alternative area to relocate the EMA service.
- The Trust has not publicly confirmed the current locations of the EMA service, but there are now weekly protests on the public highway outside Coleraine Community Clinic.
- We have been liaising regularly with the PSNI and the EMA team has been using the datix system to record any incidences relating to these weekly protests.
- As a Trust – a provider of health care services - we have no powers of enforcement in relation to public protests. We can raise concerns but have no authority to take any measures to prevent lawful protest on a public highway. Therefore any measures to address these protests will be a matter for the PSNI.

Yours sincerely



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Jennifer Welsh  
Chief Executive

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"To deliver excellent integrated services in  
partnership with our community"



**Committee for Health**

Ms Jennifer Welsh  
Chief Executive  
Northern H&SC Trust

By email [Karen.OKane@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:Karen.OKane@northerntrust.hscni.net)

Our Ref.: C175/21

11 June 2021

Dear Ms Welsh,

**Re: Protests at premises providing abortion services**

At its meeting on 10 June, the Committee for Health discussed the matter of protests held outside premises providing abortion services and other healthcare services.

Whilst recognising that there is a right to protest, the Committee is concerned that both patients and staff may feel intimidated and harassed by protesters. The Committee agreed to write to the H&SC Trusts to ask what measures they have taken, or plan to take, to address these concerns.

I am writing in similar terms to the Department of Justice and the Department of Health.

I would appreciate a reply by 25 June 2021.

Yours sincerely,

**Keith McBride**  
**Clerk**  
**Committee for Health**

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