

**Chair**  
Eileen Mullan

**Chief Executive**  
Shane Devlin

Our ref: SD/jmck/ew

21 June 2021

**BY EMAIL:** [Jonathan.Lamont@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Lamont@niassembly.gov.uk)

Mr Keith McBride, Clerk  
Committee for Health  
Room 410  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
BELFAST  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McBride

## **PROTESTS AT PREMISES PROVIDING ABORTION SERVICES**

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In refer to your letter dated 11 June 2021 requesting information on measures taken by H&SC Trusts to address concern that both patients and staff may feel intimidated and harassed by protesters, and wish to respond as 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 John Mitchel Place in Newry, and Portadown Health Centre up until the end of March. The service has been 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.

This has caused a great deal of stress to all concerned, including complaints from service users whose mental health has been impacted by the protests.

- The Trust has not publicly confirmed the current locations of the EMA service, but there are now regular protests on the public highway outside Daisy Hill Hospital and Craigavon Area Hospitals.
- We have been liaising regularly with the PSNI, raising concerns in both Newry and Portadown. We have also issued a number of public statements requesting that our staff and users should be able to access any service free from fear and aggravation.
- 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.
- Any measures to address these protests will be a matter for regional authorities.

I trust you find this response helpful and should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



**SHANE DEVLIN**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



## Committee for Health

Mr Shane Devlin  
Chief Executive  
Southern H&SC Trust

By email [Elaine.Wright@southerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:Elaine.Wright@southerntrust.hscni.net)

Our Ref.: C176/21

11 June 2021

### **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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