

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department of Health

WRITTEN STATEMENT TO THE ASSEMBLY BY HEALTH MINISTER MIKE NESBITT MLA – 11 DECEMBER 2024 THE INTRODUCTION OF A UK-WIDE INDEFINITE ORDER TO PREVENT NEW PATIENTS AGED UNDER 18 FROM TAKING PUBERTY BLOCKERS FOR THE PURPOSES OF GENDER INCONGRUENCE AND/OR GENDER DYSPHORIA UNDER THE CARE OF PRIVATE PRESCRIBERS

Published at 1pm on Wednesday 11 December 2024

Mr Nesbitt (The Minister of Health): I am writing to inform members that Executive agreement has been reached on the progression of legislative proposals for Northern Ireland in respect of the making of an indefinite UK-wide order to prevent new patients aged under 18 from beginning to take puberty blockers for the purposes of gender incongruence and/or gender dysphoria, under the care of private prescribers.

A temporary UK-wide ban on the sale and supply of puberty-suppressing hormones - known as 'puberty blockers' - expires on December 31. This ban applies to the sale or supply of these drugs, prescribed by private UK-registered prescribers for gender incongruence or dysphoria, to under 18s not already taking them. It also prevents the sale and supply of these medicines from prescribers registered in the European Economic Area or Switzerland for any purposes to those under 18.

Following recommendations from the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), it is now intended that we will replace the UK's existing temporary restrictions with an indefinite ban, subject to review in 2027.

NHS clinical trials will be undertaken to determine the safety and effectiveness of the 'puberty blocker' drugs. Children and young people in Northern Ireland will have equitable access to these clinical trials. The analysis of the findings from these clinical trials will inform the long-term policy position and inform future decisions.

I am committed to improving wider gender identity service provision for children, young people and adults in NI. This will require investment in gender identity services through a business case which is currently being considered. Despite the very challenging financial position facing my Department I have advised officials that I will prioritise the development of this service to ensure the appropriate advice and support is available to individuals and their families.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health