

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnstríe O Poustie

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Your Ref:

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Dear *Paula,*

I refer to your recent oral Assembly Question (AQO 2070/17-22) seeking information on the Department's work to improve outcomes for people with endometriosis.

It has come to my attention that part of my response inadvertently contained inaccurate information about the number of accredited endometriosis centres in Northern Ireland. I therefore attach a revised response for your information and have taken the necessary steps to correct the public record.

In collating information for the original response, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust had advised my Department, in good faith, that it held provisional accreditation from the British Society of Gynaecological Endoscopy (BSGE) until March 2022, having had its initial provisional accreditation extended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health and Social Care Board had also understood this to be the case, having advised my Department in good faith that the Belfast Trust was the only BSGE-accredited endometriosis centre in Northern Ireland.

Following Oral Questions on 18 May 2021, a written response was provided to your question as I did not have time to answer it in the Chamber. It was only after publication of my response that an enquiry was received by my Department indicating that the Belfast Trust is not, in fact, accredited. My officials investigated the position and can confirm that there appears to have been a misunderstanding by the Trust as to what is meant by 'provisional status' – this means that it is working towards gaining BSGE-accreditation, rather than holding a temporary accreditation.

I can therefore confirm that there are currently no BSGE-accredited endometriosis centres in Northern Ireland at this time. This is reflected in the revised response to AQO 2070/17-22.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust was an accredited endometriosis centre until last year; however, its accredited status ceased due to the inability to perform sufficient volumes of endometriosis surgery and provide the necessary video evidence during the COVID-19 pandemic. As highlighted in my original answer to your question, the Western Trust is currently working to regain its accreditation, and therefore alongside the Belfast Trust it is

envisaged that Northern Ireland will have two accredited centres when these processes are complete. In the meantime, it is important to make clear that the current lack of an accredited centre is not a negative reflection of the care or expertise provided in Northern Ireland.

I trust that you find this response helpful and I apologise for any inconvenience this has caused to you. I am sending a copy of this letter to the Speaker and Members, and to the Assembly Library Services so that a copy can be placed in the Assembly Library also.

Yours sincerely



Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health