

PE2104/A: End the pause on prescribing puberty blockers to children in Scotland

Scottish Government written submission, 27 June 2024

The Scottish Government is committed to advancing equality for all LGBTI people, and promoting, protecting and realising the rights of every trans person in Scotland.

Scottish Government is aware that changes to the delivery of gender identity healthcare for young people in the past few months have been difficult for those affected. In [a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 23 April, Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, Jenni Minto \(MSP\), addressed those directly affected](#) to say:

“these last few weeks and months have been incredibly difficult, with increased media attention and toxic online commentary. I understand how shocking, upsetting and destabilising the announcements last week, and the public conversation around them, will have been for you and your families.”

[The Minister highlighted on 08 May in Parliament](#) that:

“young people who are questioning their gender or accessing gender identity healthcare, and their families and those who love them, must be at the centre of all our discussions about the delivery of that care”.

The Scottish Government remains committed to the improvement of gender identity healthcare in NHS Scotland for all who need it.

As is alluded to in the petition, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Lothian—the two health boards in Scotland that have specialist paediatric endocrinology services—issued a joint statement on 18 April confirming a pause on new prescriptions for puberty hormone suppressants and cross-sex hormone medication for young people with gender dysphoria. It is important to emphasise that this was a decision made by the Health Boards on clinical advice. [Their statement can be read here: Service Update - NHSGGC.](#)

This, and all such decisions, should always be made carefully, by the clinicians and Health Boards responsible for providing such healthcare.

In their statement, the Health Boards highlight that part of the rationale for the pause is to generate further evidence of the safety and long-term impact of these treatments.

The Scottish Government agrees there is a need for better, high-quality evidence in this field. Scottish Government have awarded a grant to the University of Glasgow to administer a programme of research into the long-term health outcomes of people accessing gender identity healthcare. The outputs of the programme will be available to Ministers, policy makers, and healthcare professionals to support and drive improvements in service provision and health outcomes for people accessing gender identity healthcare in Scotland.

In addition, together with Health Boards, Scottish Government is also engaged with NHS England on its planned study into the use of puberty blockers in young people's gender identity healthcare and discussions on future engagement are ongoing.

Since the receipt of this petition the UK Government has introduced emergency restrictions on the prescribing, and supply, of gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH) analogues - if they are used to suppress puberty as part of treating gender incongruence or gender dysphoria in young people who are under 18.

The restrictions will apply to prescriptions written by UK private prescribers and prescribers registered in the European Economic Area or Switzerland.

As regulation for the licensing and safety of medicines is reserved to the UK Government and is the responsibility of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, these restrictions apply in Scotland. Some of these restrictions took effect from 3 June 2024.

Also of relevance, [the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health gave a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 23 April: Cass Review and Gender Identity Healthcare](#). In that statement the Minister noted that the clinical recommendations in the final report of the NHS England commissioned 'Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people' (the Cass Review) would be considered by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in the Scottish Government. This work is now well underway by a multi-disciplinary clinical team including paediatric, pharmacy and scientific expertise. The CMO will provide a written update to Parliament on the outcome of that clinical consideration process.

The Scottish Government remains committed to the improvement of gender identity healthcare in NHS Scotland for all who need it and work is underway to support this.

Gender Identity and Healthcare Access
Population Health Strategy and Improvement Division