

Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport
Maree Todd MSP

Gillian Martin
Convenor, Health, Social Care and Sport
Committee
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22 March 2023

Dear Gillian,

I am writing to update the Committee on early medical abortion at home (EMAH), given Committee members' previous interest in this matter. Today, the Scottish Government has published an evaluation on the safety and efficacy of the current EMAH arrangements.

As the Committee is aware, the former Minister for Public Health issued an approval in March 2020 which allowed women to take both sets of abortion medication, mifepristone and misoprostol, at home in certain circumstances whilst the coronavirus was considered a serious and imminent threat to public health. Following on from this the Scottish Government launched a consultation on the future of EMAH in September 2020 which closed in January 2021. A copy of the analysis of consultation is available online at <https://consult.gov.scot/population-health/early-medical-abortion-at-home/>. This found there were a wide range of strongly held views both for the continuation of arrangements and opposing views raising concerns about safety. As a result, I commissioned a clinical evaluation of early medical abortion at home, which considered the safety and efficacy of the service, both in terms of evidence of clinical risks and patient experience, to allow the Scottish Government to decide on future arrangements. This evaluation was undertaken by NHS Lothian, with partners from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

In May 2022, I issued a revised approval which removed the need for coronavirus to be a serious and imminent threat to public health and maintained the arrangements which were put in place in March 2020. Both approvals were accompanied by guidance from the Scottish Abortion Care Providers network (see [https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO\(2020\)09.pdf](https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO(2020)09.pdf) for a copy of the current approval and guidance).

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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I can now confirm that evaluation has completed and can be accessed in full here (see <https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781805253747>). The evaluation concluded the evidence demonstrates the high effectiveness of EMAH care within Scotland, as well as showing there are no indications of any concerning changes in the low levels of complications compared with arrangements in place prior to March 2020. The evaluation makes a number of recommendations, which the Scottish Government will be considering with Health Boards and other bodies.

However, the first of these recommendations is that current EMAH arrangements should continue. Based on the findings from the evaluation, I can confirm that the current approval, which allows both sets of abortion medication to be taken at home, will remain in place.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Maree Todd MSP

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