

Secretary of State issues updated direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health to make Abortion Services available

Press release

UK Government directs Department of Health to commission abortion services so they are available in Northern Ireland as soon as is reasonably practicable.



On 20 May 2022, the Secretary of State issued further Directions to the Department of Health in Northern Ireland, in exercise of the power in the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021. The Abortion Services Directions 2022 replace the [Abortion Services Directions 2021](#), which are revoked.

The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022 which were made on Wednesday 18 May, and laid in Parliament on Thursday 19 May, amend the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021.

The amendment has the effect that directions given under the 2021 Regulations, including the Abortion Services Directions 2022, must be complied with irrespective of whether any matter has been brought to the attention of, or discussed and agreed by, the Northern Ireland Executive Committee.

The new Directions are substantially similar to the 2021 Regulations which they replace. While the 2021 Directions required the Department of Health to secure the commissioning of relevant health care by 31 March 2022, the Directions now require relevant health care to be provided as soon as reasonably practicable.

There are four further changes to the Directions:

- The Directions do not include a requirement in respect of the funding of

health care; that requirement is now imposed by the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022.

- The Directions do not include a direction to the Health and Social Care Board, reflecting that the Board has been dissolved.
- The Directions do not require the interim provision of an information and referral service, in light of such a service being in place and provided by BPAS.
- The Directions do not deal with matters being brought to the attention of the Executive Committee, in light of the amendments to the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021 referred to above.

The Secretary of State expects the Minister of Health to provide a clear and unambiguous commitment that the Department of Health will comply with its obligation to commission and fund health and social care that implements the CEDAW recommendations.

The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022, provide that these obligations must be complied with irrespective of whether the matter has been brought to the attention of, or discussed and agreed by, the Executive Committee.

[The Abortion Services Directions 2021](#)

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[Abortion Services Directions 2022](#)

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