

# UK Government announces preparations to ensure availability of abortion services in Northern Ireland

Press release

Government is to prepare work on further regulations to ensure abortion services are made available.



- The UK Government is preparing regulations to take the necessary powers to directly commission abortion services in Northern Ireland if urgent progress is not made.
- Team of experts brought in to the Northern Ireland Office to monitor progress and assist the NI Department of Health.
- Northern Ireland Secretary, Brandon Lewis – “women and girls must have access to safe, high-quality abortion care in Northern Ireland as they do everywhere else in the UK.”

The UK Government has announced today (Thursday 24 March) its intention to prepare work on further regulations to ensure abortion services are available in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, has today set out the legislative options being explored by the UK Government, in a [Written Ministerial Statement](#).

The announcement comes as it becomes increasingly clear that the Northern Ireland Department for Health will miss the deadline of the end of March to ensure abortion services in Northern Ireland are commissioned in full.

The regulations being planned, if they must be enacted, would place a further

duty on the Department of Health to make abortion services available as soon as is reasonably practicable, and remove the need for Executive Committee approval before services can be commissioned.

The Secretary of State will have the powers to intervene directly following the Assembly elections in May, if sufficient progress has still not been made.

The Secretary of State is also immediately setting up a small team in the Northern Ireland Office with relevant health experience to work directly with the NI Department of Health on this issue.

**Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:**

“I firmly believe women and girls must have access to safe, high-quality abortion care in Northern Ireland. It is unacceptable that access to basic abortion healthcare is not available as it is across the rest of the UK.

“It has become increasingly clear the Northern Ireland Department of Health will fail to commission abortion services in full by the deadline I set out last year despite being given every opportunity to do so.

“I am determined to do everything I can to ensure full services are delivered.”

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