

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED TO SUSTAIN INTERIM ABORTION SERVICES

Commenting on the announcement by the Secretary of State, ICNI's Director of Advocacy and Policy, Ruairi Rowan, said:

"Informing Choices NI welcome this long-overdue action to ensure that women and girls have access to a full range of abortion, contraception and counselling services.

"Immediate action must now be taken to provide the funding necessary to prevent the collapse of the central access point. Supporting the early medical abortion services that are already in place is essential.

"Informing Choices NI stand ready to work with the Department of Health to ensure the continued delivery of a regional high-quality information, support and referral service without further delay."

ENDS

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Informing Choices NI provide the central access point into early medical abortion services in Northern Ireland. Through a single telephone number people can access non-directive information, pregnancy choices counselling if requested, and referral into a local early medical abortion service. Post pregnancy counselling is also available. Between 15 April 2020 to 14 April 2021 2182 women and girls contacted the central access point with an unplanned or crisis pregnancy.

The central access point has been provided outside of a commissioned framework since April 2020. Last month ICNI released a report, ['Beyond Decriminalisation: pregnancy choices and abortion care in Northern Ireland'](#) which outlined how the service has operated to date. Within the report ICNI revealed that if funding was not in place by 1 October 2021, the service would be withdrawn.

The lack of commissioning has meant that the current EMA services are under resourced and at times have been withdrawn. On Monday 5 October 2020 the Northern Trust suspended their EMA service. It was subsequently reinstated on 4 January 2021. On 5 January 2021 the South Eastern Trust suspended their EMA service. It was subsequently reinstated on 1 February 2021. On 23 April 2021 the Western Trust ceased accepting EMA referrals. This suspension remains in place.