

Amnesty International UK and Informing Choices NI

PRESS RELEASE

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NORTHERN IRELAND: SECRETARY OF STATE'S ABORTION ANNOUNCEMENT A LATE BUT WELCOME STEP TOWARDS ENDING THE DENIAL OF HEALTHCARE

'Today is a critical step towards ending the denial of abortion healthcare' – Grainne Teggart

Amnesty International UK and Informing Choices NI have today welcomed news that the UK Government will commission abortion services for women and girls in Northern Ireland. However, the organisations have warned that services will not run as the law requires without funding being put in place at the same time that commissioned services are set up.

The news comes after Amnesty published a [poll](#) at end of last week which found that fewer than half (46%) of women in Northern Ireland are aware that abortion is lawful and only 10% know how to access services.

Grainne Teggart, Amnesty International UK's Northern Ireland Deputy Director, said:

"Today's announcement marks a critical step towards ending the denial of abortion healthcare. Westminster has yet again had to intervene to ensure people aren't denied their right to abortion, exposing the clear failure of Health Minister Robin Swann to protect and support women and healthcare professionals.

"It is essential that the allocation of necessary funds for these services is put in place at the same time as commissioned services are established, so they can run effectively and are accessible – not just in law but in practice.

"The Government must also run an information campaign to ensure people are aware of their right to abortion and how to access services - our poll last week showed just how few people in Northern Ireland realise abortion is now lawful."

Ruairi Rowan, Informing Choices NI's Director of Advocacy and Policy, said:

"Following the establishment of early medical abortion care in Northern Ireland demand for our pregnancy counselling services increased by 80%. However, additional funding from the Department of Health to match the increase in referrals has not been provided. As a result, women have been denied timely access to pregnancy choices counselling.

"It is imperative that the UK Government acts quickly to provide women with support when considering their pregnancy options, as well as following the loss of a pregnancy."

ENDS