

GLADD statement on 'puberty blocker' prescribing ban

On the 29th May the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Minister for Health unilaterally restricted the private prescription and supply of GnRH analogues ('puberty blockers') for under 18s for the treatment of gender dysphoria. This emergency order is in effect in England, Wales and Scotland until September. Those on existing treatment will only be able to continue this if an NHS prescriber takes over prescribing. are not affected. New routine NHS prescriptions were banned earlier this year.

This decision was made without consultation with professional or patient bodies; indeed it is not clear who advised the Secretary of state or minister, who had been in role for two days and six months respectively and who are not medically qualified. As GnRH analogues can continue to be used in the treatment of several medical conditions in cisgender children, this order is clearly not about the safety of the medicines themselves, rather how the government wishes them to be used.

GLADD is deeply concerned about the effects of this order on the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people, who continue to be used as political pawns. They have yet again not been included in decisions made about them. The government did not feel it necessary to undertake an impact assessment of the order due to the 'small number' affected, neglecting to consider the potentially profound impact on individuals.

It is difficult to see this order as anything other than a politically motivated and ideologically driven manipulation of healthcare provision, given the lack of medical evidence provided to justify it. The timing of the order immediately before the dissolution of Parliament prevents proper scrutiny and democratic accountability. The former Shadow Health Secretary has supported this order and we call on him to reflect on his position, and whether he would wish to continue a flawed, dangerous and regressive agenda. Whomever forms the next government must end the manufactured culture war and address trans people's access to healthcare as a priority.

We have written to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Minister for Health and the former Shadow Health Secretary to request urgent clarification of their decision making process and call for reflection on the implications for trans young people.

Trans, gender diverse and gender questioning people are individuals in need of compassion, understanding and high quality care. We will continue to focus on the best interests of young LGBTQ+ people, supported by the best available evidence, and work towards a progressive future in which they are properly respected and valued in society.