

Lords consideration stage briefing on home early medical abortion provisions in the Health and Care Bill

5 April 2022

Introduction

Ahead of the Lords Consideration of Commons amendments to the Health and Care Bill on Tuesday 5 April 2022, this briefing outlines the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's (RCPCH) position on home early medical abortion.

On 30 March 2022, MPs voted to make early medical abortions provided via telemedicine permanent in Englandⁱ. This involves patients in the early stages of pregnancy, up to ten weeks gestation, being able to take an abortion pill in their home without attending a clinic or seeing a healthcare professional face-to-face. However, the change in the legislation through the Health and Care Bill leaves a glaring gap – children and young people.

This briefing sets out the RCPCH's position in relation to Baroness Eaton's proposed amendment 92B to amendment 92A.

RCPCH's position

- Every child and young person has the right to the best possible health. It is in the best interests of a child or young person to have equitable access to safe, effective and quality abortion services.
- Children and young people are a distinct group and telemedicine can present particular challenges for them, where it is especially important to consider their safeguarding and holistic wellbeing, as well as their physical health needs.
- Children and young people under the age of 18 must be offered and actively encouraged to take up a face-to-face appointment to assess gestation, support their holistic needs and assess any safeguarding issues as part of the pathway for early medical abortions.
- The **RCPCH has been calling on governments and health services providers across the UK** to consider the specific needs of this group when planning, delivering and evaluating early medical abortions.

Baroness Eaton's proposed amendment 92B to amendment 92A

The proposed amendment 92B to amendment 92A would allow for children and young people under the age of 18 to be seen face-to-face. The reasons why children and young people must be offered a face-to-face component to the service is so there can be:

1. An overall assessment of health (physical and mental)
2. The opportunity to undertake a safeguarding assessment
3. The ability to determine gestation of pregnancy

RCPCH is supportive of the proposed amendment 92B. The RCPCH and National Network of Designated Healthcare Professionals for Safeguarding Children (NNDHP) are health organisations whose remit is solely focussed on children and young people. Both support face-to-face consultations as part of the pathway for telemedical abortion care.

ⁱ Clause 92A, Health and Care Bill, Commons Disagreement, Amendments in Lieu, Amendment to a Lords Amendment and Reasons, page 21, available at: <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46087/documents/1713>

About RCPCH

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) is the membership body for paediatricians, representing more than 20,000 child health professionals in the UK and abroad. We are responsible for the training, examinations and professional standards of paediatricians across the country, and we use our research and experience to develop recommendations to promote better child health outcomes.

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