Abortion performed in England for women from Northern Ireland: Written statement - HCWS511

On 29 June 2017, the then Minister for Women and Equalities wrote to MPs and informed them that women normally resident in Northern Ireland would no longer be charged for abortions received in England. An update informing the House of progress was given on 23 October 2017. The scheme is now in place and I am pleased to provide a further update.

The three main providers of abortions in England have been awarded grants by the Department of Health and Social Care to fund service provision in England for women resident in Northern Ireland. The cost of this service will be met by the Government Equalities Office with additional funding provided by HM Treasury. A small number of procedures will continue to be provided through the NHS where this is necessary for medical reasons. NHS providers will reimbursed by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Women from Northern Ireland seeking medical support in England are eligible for:

- A consultation with an abortion provider in England, including an assessment of whether the legal grounds for an abortion are met;
- The abortion procedure;
- HIV or sexually transmitted infection testing as appropriate;
- An offer of contraception from the abortion provider; and
- Support with travel costs if the woman meets financial hardship criteria.

This is comparable with the experience that women in England receive.

We have established a central booking service that will be run by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. The central booking service will simplify the process for women who choose to access these services. It means that women from Northern Ireland will have a single telephone number to call and an appointment will be made with the most appropriate provider, based on the woman's requirements, her medical condition and the availability of the providers. The central booking service has been up and running since 1 March 2018.

This scheme does not change the position in relation to the provision of abortions in Northern Ireland. Our scheme does not include the provision of any services in Northern Ireland.

This statement has also been made in the House of Lords: HLWS500