

UK Government to commission abortion services in Northern Ireland

Press release

The UK Government will commission abortion services for women and girls in Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, has announced today (Monday 24 October).



The Secretary of State is under a statutory obligation to ensure that safe services are available. In the coming weeks, he will meet Chief Executives of Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure these services can be provided. The UK Government has been forced to act three years after the decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland, as the Northern Ireland Department of Health has not ensured the availability of services became available and have shown no indications that they will act to provide them.

The commissioning of abortion services follows the making of Regulations by the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis in May 2022, which provided the UK Government with the same powers as a Northern Ireland Minister for the purposes of ensuring that the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Report are implemented.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

The UK Government has been clear that the Government would commission abortion services if the Department of Health did not act to provide them. "Three years on from the decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland, we will be ensuring the commissioning of abortion services by the UK Government. It is unfortunate that we have been forced to commission these services, in what should be a matter for the Department of Health to implement.

However, the Government has been left with no other option, as

women and girls of Northern Ireland have been without safe and high quality services, with many having to travel to the rest of the UK to access healthcare to which they are legally entitled. That is unacceptable.

I will be meeting the Chief Executives of Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland in the coming weeks to ensure these services can be provided. Ultimately, it remains the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive to fund abortion services in Northern Ireland.

The UK Government will ensure that appropriate funding is available to enable healthcare professionals to take the necessary steps to ensure that essential training and recruitment of staff can progress, and services can be implemented.

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Rishi Sunak's first speech as Prime Minister: 25 October 2022

[Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's speech on the steps of Downing Street](#)

Good morning,

I have just been to Buckingham Palace and accepted His Majesty The King's invitation to form a government in his name.

It is only right to explain why I am standing here as your new Prime Minister.

Right now our country is facing a profound economic crisis.

The aftermath of Covid still lingers.

Putin's war in Ukraine has destabilised energy markets and supply chains the world over.

I want to pay tribute to my predecessor Liz Truss, she was not wrong to want to improve growth in this country, it is a noble aim.

And I admired her restlessness to create change.

But some mistakes were made.

Not borne of ill will or bad intentions. Quite the opposite, in fact. But mistakes nonetheless.

And I have been elected as leader of my party, and your Prime Minister, in part, to fix them.

And that work begins immediately.

I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda.

This will mean difficult decisions to come.

But you saw me during Covid, doing everything I could, to protect people and businesses, with schemes like furlough.

There are always limits, more so now than ever, but I promise you this

I will bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today.

The government I lead will not leave the next generation, your children and grandchildren, with a debt to settle that we were too weak to pay ourselves.

I will unite our country, not with words, but with action.

I will work day in and day out to deliver for you.

This government will have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level.

Trust is earned. And I will earn yours.

I will always be grateful to Boris Johnson for his incredible achievements as Prime Minister, and I treasure his warmth and generosity of spirit.

And I know he would agree that the mandate my party earned in 2019 is not the sole property of any one individual, it is a mandate that belongs to and unites all of us.

And the heart of that mandate is our manifesto.

I will deliver on its promise.

A stronger NHS.

Better schools.

Safer streets.

Control of our borders.

Protecting our environment.

Supporting our armed forces.

Levelling up and building an economy that embraces the opportunities of Brexit, where businesses invest, innovate, and create jobs.

I understand how difficult this moment is.

After the billions of pounds it cost us to combat Covid, after all the dislocation that caused in the midst of a terrible war that must be seen successfully to its conclusions I fully appreciate how hard things are.

And I understand too that I have work to do to restore trust after all that has happened.

All I can say is that I am not daunted. I know the high office I have accepted and I hope to live up to its demands.

But when the opportunity to serve comes along, you cannot question the moment, only your willingness.

So I stand here before you ready to lead our country into the future.

To put your needs above politics.

To reach out and build a government that represents the very best traditions of my party.

Together we can achieve incredible things.

We will create a future worthy of the sacrifices so many have made and fill tomorrow, and everyday thereafter with hope.

Thank you.

Ministerial Appointments: October – November 2022

Published 25 October 2022

Last updated 24 November 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 24 November 2022

Appointments have been added

2. 27 October 2022

Updated note on page being continuously updated.

3. 27 October 2022

Updated ministers

4. 25 October 2022

First published.

[Visit the Maidstone flood safety exhibition](#)

- Maidstone is at risk of flooding, so join us to learn how best to prepare, act and survive
- Activities for all the family, including virtual reality flood games for children to learn too
- A special flood tank installation will reveal some of the creepier hazards concealed in murky flood water
- Free entry

This half-term why not come along to the Maidstone Museum to find out what you need to do in the event of a flood? Open from 10am to 4pm on Monday 24 to Saturday 29 October, it's free to enter.

There will be information on display all week. While members of the Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team will be there on Monday 24, Friday 28 and Saturday 29 October with even more activities.

Maidstone is at risk of flooding from the river Medway and many local residents will remember recent major floods in Maidstone in 2013 and in 2000. Flooding can happen at any time and with today's climate emergency. There are ever increasing risks of extreme weather that could lead to life-threatening floods affecting properties and infrastructure.

The team will be on hand to offer advice to help people to prepare, act and survive at times of flooding. Important information will be available on how people can protect themselves and their homes from the devastating effects of flooding.

Fun for the all the family!

During the week there will be information shared, as well as fun activities for families and children of all ages.

There will be a chance to join in virtual reality flood experiences. 'Help Callum' and 'Help Sali' where you can immerse yourself in a flooding scenario that can be seen from a child's perspective.

A special flood tank installation will reveal some of the creepier hazards concealed in murky flood water.

Emma Crofts, Environment Agency, Flood Resilience Advisor, said:

Flooding is devastating and affects people's lives. During half-term week at Maidstone Museum we hope to meet lots of people. We will also be able to provide advice on how best to prepare, act and survive in the event of a flood.

Our aim is to help people understand how flooding happens and what the impacts can be. We can show them how easy it is to sign up for flood alerts and flood warnings, for themselves, friends and family. We'll also explain how to make a flood plan and the actions to take before, during and after a flood.

There'll be activity for all the family, so please come along and see us during the week!

For additional information email: FloodResilienceKSLES@environment-agency.gov.uk

Follow the Flood Resilience team on [Twitter @FloodAwareKSLES](https://twitter.com/FloodAwareKSLES)

In 2013, 41 properties including businesses were reported as flooding in Maidstone town centre. In addition, a number of residents in flats reported access issues due to ground floor entrances being flooded.

Between September and November 2000, up to 20 properties were reported as flooding in the town centre, including businesses.

First ever UK woodland natural flood management guide published

A new United Kingdom-wide guide outlining how our forests and woodlands can reduce the damaging effects and financial impact of flooding on vulnerable communities has been published today (Tuesday 25 October) by the Forestry Commission, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Forestry and Northern Ireland Forest Service.

Woodlands can play a key role in flood mitigation and make an important contribution to reducing downstream flood risk. Tree planting can significantly affect the volume, pathway and timing of surface run-off, slowing and reducing flood peaks, while management operations such as cultivation, drainage, road construction and harvesting can have the opposite

effect if not appropriately managed.

Produced by Forest Research, the new Practice Guide provides advice to landowners, forest and woodland managers, planners, practitioners and flooding authorities on how forests and woodlands can make a positive contribution to natural flood management and play a stronger role in flood mitigation.

Advice includes:

- How to identify whether downstream communities are vulnerable to flooding and if so, modify the design of the woodland to enhance the flood benefit.
- How to amend the scale, timing and type of woodland operations to minimise the impact of flood risk and flood run-off.
- Where and how to use leaky dams to slow flood flows.

Applying this guidance will assist land managers and forestry practitioners in meeting the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and will help deliver a more sustainable and integrated approach to managing flood risk – reducing the damaging effects and financial impacts of future floods on downstream communities.

Richard Stanford, Forestry Commission Chief Executive, said:

Our woodlands and forests play a key role in reducing the peaks in water flow. This helps to protect communities across the UK vulnerable to flooding from their devastating impacts.

This new Practice Guide will enable the forestry sector to harness the benefits of tree growing to reduce the risk of flooding, while ensuring that management operations do not increase peak flows. It will promote working with natural processes to deliver a more sustainable, catchment-based approach to managing flood risk to benefit communities across the UK.

Dominic Driver, Natural Resources Wales' Head of Land Stewardship, said:

Helping to prevent flooding is one of the many benefits of planting trees and creating new woodlands, but we also recognise that inappropriate forest management can risk environmental harm and reduce the well-being benefits that we derive from water.

The UK Forestry Standard helps us ensure sustainable forest management in Wales, and this practice guide will help contribute to that. We will now be integrating this practice guide to our work in managing and regulating forestry activities.

A wide range of organisations are responsible for managing flood risk across the United Kingdom and rely on partnership working to help protect affected communities and assets from flooding. Implementing the guidance as described will enable foresters to meet UKFS requirements and guidelines, and in so doing, make a positive contribution to reducing flood flows and the damaging effects of flooding.

By playing a stronger role in flood mitigation, it will also help the forest sector increase the resilience of downstream communities likely to be impacted by more frequent flooding due to climate change.

[The new UKFS Practice Guide can be downloaded free of charge from the Forest Research website.](#) Printed copies will also be available to order shortly.