

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Lewis Macdonald MSP  
Convenor  
Health and Sport Committee

By Email.

5 May 2020

Dear Lewis,

### **Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Bill**

Further to the oral evidence provided to the Committee by my officials on 17 March 2020, I am writing to provide some further information that you may find helpful in lieu of my cancelled appearance on 31 March due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Firstly, I wish to reassure the Committee that in recognition of the need for continued national level leadership for the improvement of healthcare and forensic medical services for victims of rape and sexual assault, the Interim Chief Medical Officer, Dr Gregor Smith, is now Chair of the Taskforce overseeing this work.

As you heard on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, a package of resources developed by the Taskforce was due to be implemented on 1 April 2020. As set out in the attached letter from the then CMO to health board Chief Executives, this had to be postponed due to COVID19 but I want to reassure the Committee that the preparatory work has concluded and that a revised implementation date will be arranged as soon as it is practical to deliver the necessary training to staff.

I would however like to draw your attention to other resources that have been published since the introduction of the Bill.

The final Healthcare Improvement Scotland Quality Indicators<sup>1</sup> which underpin the Standards published in 2017, were published on 9 March 2020. You will note that the first measure is the percentage of examinations where a female examiner was available without delay. We know from feedback from survivors and the organisations who represent them, that this is one of the most important aspects of the care they receive. Whilst the number of female examiners in Scotland has increased by 30% since 2017 (to 61%) - improving this figure remains a top priority.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our\\_work/standards\\_and\\_guidelines/stnds/sexual\\_assault\\_indicators.aspx](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/standards_and_guidelines/stnds/sexual_assault_indicators.aspx)

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I am also pleased to provide a link to the national service specification document<sup>2</sup> which was highlighted by my officials during their oral evidence. This has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders, including Rape Crisis Scotland, to help ensure consistency in approach to the development of Scottish Sexual Assault Response Coordination (SSARC) services across the country. It reflects our ambition for trauma informed, age appropriate healthcare settings - designed and delivered by health boards in close collaboration with their multi-agency partners. I note that the ability for survivors to access services across health board boundaries, was also raised in the stakeholder evidence session in March. The specification document provides for this and there are already examples of this happening where it is logistically easier (or an individual's preference) to attend a SSARC out with their own health board area.

I have also provided a link to the CMO Taskforce governance diagram<sup>3</sup> to help the Committee visualise the breadth of work being progressed under its remit and to the 'Easy Read' summary of the Bill, which has been widely circulated to help as many people as possible understand the Bill and participate in the legislative process<sup>4</sup>.

Lastly, you may wish to note the attached National Police Care Network guidance and accompanying letter from Dr Smith, which have been issued to Health Boards to ensure that a trauma informed, person centred forensic medical examination service continues to be provided throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

I would be more than happy to provide any further information or detail you require on any aspect of the above.

I look forward to giving my stage 1 evidence at the earliest opportunity and it is my hope that you would be amenable to Dr Smith joining me to give evidence on the relevant date.

Kind regards,

**JEANE FREEMAN**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rape-sexual-abuse-or-child-sexual-abuse-medical-services-guide-for-service-providers/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-taskforce-governance-structure/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/forensic-medical-services-bill-policy-memorandum-easy-read-summary/>

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## **Accompanying Document**

### **Chief Medical Officer for Scotland letter to Chief Executives**



CMO - Taskforce -  
Letter to NHS Board

### **National Police Care Network Guidance – Forensic Medical Examination during COVID19**



NPCN Interim FME  
Guidance v1.0.pdf

### **Interim Chief Medical Officer Letter to Health Board Chief Executives – FME during COVID19**



Forensic Medical  
Examinations for Vic

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