

Abortions for women from Northern Ireland in Scotland - FAQs

These FAQs cover; travelling to Scotland for an abortion, how abortion services in Scotland operate, and confidentiality.

Abortion services in Scotland

- **Can I travel to Scotland for an abortion?**

Women who normally live in Northern Ireland can access abortion services in Scotland for free.

- **If I live in Northern Ireland, will I have to pay for an abortion in Scotland?**

Women who normally live in Northern Ireland will now not be required to pay when they access NHS abortion services in Scotland.

- **Can I access abortion services anywhere in Scotland?**

Yes. All Health Boards will care for a patient who presents in their area. However, some Health Boards, such as those in the Islands, do not have their own local abortion services and would have to refer you to another Health Board.

- **Can I bring someone with me? Do I have to ?**

You can bring someone with you for support if that would make you feel more comfortable. If you are under 16 you should be accompanied by a trusted adult.

- **Do I need any proof I am a resident of Northern Ireland?**

NHS Boards are obliged to provide free abortion care to women who normally live in Northern Ireland. We recommend that you bring proof of address in case you are asked for evidence that you normally live in Northern Ireland.

Abortion services in Scotland

- **What kind of abortion treatments are available in Scotland?**

In Scotland, the most common type of abortion procedure is medical abortion, however, surgical abortion is also available. Your clinician will discuss the options available to you and help you to decide on the best option for you.

If you would like further information on what to expect when you go for an abortion you can find information here <https://www.nhsinform.scot/tests-and-treatments/surgical-procedures/abortion#> or alternatively you can watch a short film here <https://vimeo.com/195506081>

- **Can I get a 1-day abortion in Scotland?**

None of the NHS Boards in Scotland provide a 1-day abortion service. If you decide to have a surgical abortion, this will be scheduled for another day after your initial assessment appointment. If you decide to have a medical abortion, the different drugs will need to be taken on separate days.

- **Up to what gestation (i.e. the number of weeks) can I access an abortion in Scotland?**

Some NHS Boards in Scotland are able to provide abortions up to 20 weeks gestation, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Lothian, but some Boards are only able to provide abortions up to a lower gestation.

If your gestation means that the Board you present in cannot treat you, they will need to refer you elsewhere for treatment, which may mean that you have to travel to England.

- **How do I make an appointment for an abortion in Scotland?**

Different Health Boards in Scotland have different arrangements for how women access abortion services and there is no centralised booking system. Information on how to access services is available at [\[insert website\]](#).

- **What can I expect when I go for an abortion?**

When you go for your first appointment (sometimes referred to as the 'assessment' appointment), you will be given the opportunity to talk about your situation. You will be informed about the different methods of abortion, and which methods are suitable for your stage of pregnancy. You will also be advised about any related risks.

The doctor or nurse will take your medical history to make sure that the type of abortion you are offered is suitable for you. At the assessment appointment, a number of other things usually happen, including:

- *an ultrasound scan to check how many weeks pregnant you are (this may be abdominal or internal/vaginal)*
- *a blood test to check your blood group and to see whether you are anaemic*
- *a routine test for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)*
- *information and advice about which methods of contraception you could use after the abortion*

You can find more information about abortion treatment at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/tests-and-treatments/surgical-procedures/abortion#>

- **How long will I have to stay in Scotland?**

This will depend on the type of procedure you have, local practices, the time between your initial assessment appointment and having treatment, and the length of time the treatment takes. In some Boards you may need to wait a few days to start treatment, particularly if you are not having an early medical abortion.

- **What aftercare support will be available?**

At your appointment you will be provided with information outlining what to expect following your abortion. This will include a number for the clinic to call if you have any concerns.

- **What if there are complications after my abortion, once I return home?**

You will be provided with a contact number for the clinic so you will be able to receive advice over the phone. Guidance published by the Northern Ireland Executive is clear that aftercare services should be available in Northern Ireland to any woman who presents with complications following a termination of pregnancy, regardless of where it was carried out.

- **If I have a pre-existing medical condition how will this be managed?**

If you have a pre-existing medical condition it is very important that you discuss this with your clinician who will advise you of any impact this may have on your choice of procedure and what to expect.

- **Can I access support following my abortion if I need to?**

You will be given information about how to access support following your abortion when you visit the clinic for your appointment.

In Northern Ireland the Family Planning association (FPA) also offer non-judgemental pre and post abortion counselling should you require it. More information is at <https://www.fpa.org.uk/unplanned-pregnancy-and-abortion/unplanned-pregnancy-post-abortion-counselling-northern-ireland>

Confidentiality

- **Will any communications be sent to my home address?**

No correspondence will be sent to your home address unless you agree to this.

- **Is the service confidential? / Will my GP have to be informed?**

The service is confidential. If you agree, a letter can be sent to your GP informing them of the treatment you received, for their records. This is entirely your decision and is not a requirement. You will be given a 'to whom it may concern'

letter outlining the treatment you received that you can give to a clinician should you wish to if you require to access emergency care.

- **If I am under 16 will my parents be informed?**

If you are under 16 years of age, you can have an abortion without telling your parents, as long as two doctors believe it's in your best interests and you fully understand what is involved.

However, the doctors will encourage you to involve your parents or another adult in your decision-making process. This increases the amount of support you have available.