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27th October 2022

Dear NHS Board Chief Executives and Mental Health Leads,

In my work to engage with stakeholders to inform the upcoming Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, I have been asked questions about the processes and policies Scottish hospitals use when managing inpatient admissions of transgender patients to NHS inpatient services.

My officials have had initial conversations with some Boards who have clarified that there is currently no specific protocol for management of this patient group. However, I am keen to ensure that transgender patients have all of their rights met, and are treated in an appropriate manner, whenever they come into contact with NHS inpatient services.

I am therefore writing to all Boards to ask for clarification on:

1. The processes and guidance currently used when assigning transgender patients to inpatient wards, and;
2. Current policies or processes your Board may have in place to support patients admitted to acute services who are waiting to access gender identity clinics (GICs).

Consistency of approach will be particularly important as Boards move to use ICD-11 to support diagnostic conversations. As you will know, ICD-11 has redefined gender identity-related health, replacing outdated diagnostic categories like ICD-10's "transsexualism" and "gender identity disorder of children" with "gender incongruence of adolescence and adulthood" and "gender incongruence of childhood". Gender incongruence has also been moved out of the "Mental and behavioural disorders" chapter and into the new "Conditions related to sexual health" chapter.

This change is welcome and reflects current knowledge that trans-related and gender diverse identities are not conditions of mental ill-health, and that classifying them as such can cause enormous stigma.

I intend to use the information in your returns to provide assurance to my stakeholders that the rights of the transgender community are being fully considered and upheld when they are receiving inpatient care in Scottish hospitals.

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I would appreciate your response by the end of November.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Stewart', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Kevin Stewart
Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care

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