

Document 1

From: Minne, Jill [Redacted Section 40(2)]

Sent: 21 March 2025 16:25

To: Johnston, Gareth [Redacted Section 40(2)]; Godfrey, Katrina (DAERA – Perm Sec) [Redacted Section 40(2)]; Gibson, Neil [Redacted Section 40(2)]; Brady, Jayne [Redacted Section 40(2)]

Cc: TEO Perm Sec Support <TEOPermSecSupport@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk>

Subject: SGM-0330-2025 RE: Belfast Pride

Very happy to participate in discussion.

We have prepared (short) comms lines and these have been shared with [Redacted Section 40(2)] and Shanan as chairs of LGBTQ+ staff network (see BBC story below – no doubt we will be approached soon)

BBC story

[Belfast Pride latest to ban political parties from parade](#)

Last year's Belfast Pride theme was 'Love Your Mind', with the parade led by the city's Lord Mayor Micky Murray

Belfast Pride have become the latest organisers to ban political parties who supported a ban on the sale or supply of puberty blockers to under-18s from taking part in its parade.

In December, the four parties in the executive - Sinn Féin, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Alliance and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) - voted to introduce an indefinite permanent ban.

Puberty blockers are drugs used to delay or prevent puberty happening and had sometimes been prescribed to children questioning their gender.

Last month, organisers of Foyle Pride, Causeway Pride and Mid and East Antrim Pride [told political parties not to attend their Pride events](#) over the ban.

Belfast Pride Festival is one of the biggest festivals in the city, with hundreds taking part in the parade which marches through the city centre.

'Anger and frustration'

In a statement on Friday, Belfast Pride said following a community consultation, the organisation would not be accepting applications from those executive parties to take part in the parade.

"Belfast Pride is deeply concerned about the impact this decision has had, and will have, on trans young people," it said.

Organisers said what was universal in responses to its consultation was the "anger and frustration expressed at the decision to ban puberty blockers in Northern Ireland".

Image source, PA Media

Image caption,

Hundreds normally take part in the annual pride parade in Belfast

"For at least a decade concerns about the failures in trans healthcare have been expressed to political panels at Belfast Pride and by our partners in the LGBTQIA+ sector," it added.

"Despite this, no meaningful action to improve these services has been undertaken or plan developed - other than to remove one of the limited services available."

Belfast Pride also said the failure to include LGBTQIA+ people in the Programme for Government was "extremely disappointing".

"We are living in unprecedented times where our hard-won rights are once again under threat," the statement said.

"We call on all political parties to take meaningful action to address the inequalities still experienced by our community."

Sinn Féin's equality spokesperson, Carál Ní Chuilín, said the decision to exclude executive parties was "deeply disappointing" and a "backwards step".

"Pride has always been an inclusive event welcoming people from all backgrounds to participate and celebrate LGBTQIA+ people," she said.

"While we fully respect the right of the organisers to take this decision, we believe this is a missed opportunity to once again stand together to confront those whose agenda has been, and continues to be, to marginalise, undermine and divide supporters of LGBTQIA+ rights."

Puberty blockers in Northern Ireland

Until the ban in Northern Ireland, puberty blockers were only available on NHS prescription for under-18s, for those young people who were accepted onto the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Gender Identity Service endocrine pathway prior to March 2020.

It is understood children already on this medical pathway will continue to receive treatment.

Hormone suppressors also remain available for patients receiving the drugs for other uses, such as early-onset puberty.

The move to ban puberty blockers came after a report into children's gender services - [the Cass Review](#) - said there were "gaps in evidence" around the drugs.

The review was led by leading paediatrician Dr Hilary Cass and prompted the last government to ban the use of puberty blockers for under-18s questioning their gender – a move which was then supported by Labour when they won the election.

From: Johnston, Gareth [Redacted Section 40(2)]

Sent: 21 March 2025 12:52

To: Godfrey, Katrina (DAERA – Perm Sec) [Redacted Section 40(2)]; Minne, Jill [Redacted Section 40(2)]; Gibson, Neil [Redacted Section 40(2)]; Brady, Jayne [Redacted Section 40(2)]

Cc: TEO Perm Sec Support <TEOPermSecSupport@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Belfast Pride

Katrina:

Your sources are better than mine! Jill and I had a brief word on this at the Network lunch in the Castle, and felt that, if this were to transpire, the distinction remained between NICS as an employer and Executive policies. Participation in the Pride parade itself is led by the Staff Network who invite colleagues to join them. But it is clearly a sensitive topic and I'd be happy to join a discussion.

GWJ

From: Godfrey, Katrina (DAERA – Perm Sec) **Redacted Section 40(2)**

Sent: 21 March 2025 12:45

To: Minne, Jill **Redacted Section 40(2)**; Gibson, Neil **Redacted Section 40(2)**; Johnston, Gareth **Redacted Section 40(2)**; Brady, Jayne **Redacted Section 40(2)**

Subject: FW: Belfast Pride

Colleagues

Not sure whether this has issued yet (had sight of it last night) but I think we should discuss implications for any NICS presence.

Katrina

Katrina Godfrey

DAERA Permanent Secretary and Joint NICS Diversity & Inclusion Champion

First Floor

Clare House

303 Airport Road West

BELFAST

BT3 9ED

Redacted Section 40(2)

Redacted Section 40(2)

My pronouns are she/her



Just FYI below apparently embargoed to Noon tomorrow

Belfast Pride Statement

Following our community consultation, Belfast Pride has decided that we will not (be accepting applications from) be inviting those political parties involved in the decision to ban puberty

blockers in Northern Ireland to register for the Belfast Pride parade. Belfast Pride is deeply concerned about the impact this decision has had, and will have, on trans young people.

We would like to thank all the LGBTQIA+ people and allies who responded to our survey and attended our consultation events. We recognise that there are diverse opinions on the involvement of political parties in Belfast Pride, and that some LGBTQIA+ people will be unhappy with this decision. We commit to developing a framework for political party representation at future Pride parades in consultation with our community.

What has been almost universal is the anger and frustration expressed at the decision to ban puberty blockers in Northern Ireland and the poor communication and consultation surrounding this decision.

For at least a decade concerns about the failures in trans healthcare have been expressed to political panels at Belfast Pride and by our partners in the LGBTQIA+ sector. Despite this, no meaningful action to improve these services has been undertaken or plan developed - other than to remove one of the limited services available. We call on all parties to publish their position on the wider trans healthcare agenda, to which they can be held to account, and to make meaningful efforts to address the systematic failures in these services.

Belfast Pride are extremely disappointed that the NI Programme for Government does not mention LGBTQIA+ people once. We call on the Northern Ireland Executive to recognise their failures to address the inequalities experienced by our community and take action to remedy this as a matter of urgency.

We call on all our political allies to recognise the genuine concern felt across our community. We are living in unprecedented times where our hard-won rights are once again under threat. We call on all political parties to take meaningful action to address the inequalities still experienced by our community.