

First Minister
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Tuesday 9th June 2026

Dear First Minister,

We are writing as a coalition of healthcare bodies and women's rights organisations to express our deep concern about the removal of the Women's Health Minister role following last month's appointment of the new Scottish Government Cabinet and Ministers.

At a time when women's healthcare in Scotland faces sustained challenges, we believe that a lack of explicit ministerial responsibility risks undermining progress, reducing accountability, and signalling to the public that improving women's health is no longer a priority for this government.

We are grateful that you have retained the national Women's Health Champion post. However, your decision to remove this important ministerial portfolio comes amid continuing pressures and safety concerns within maternity services, rapidly rising waits for gynaecological care, inequitable perinatal mental healthcare provision, and longstanding evidence that has demonstrated that women experience deep-rooted systemic bias, poorer outcomes, and barriers to care across the health system.

Ongoing gaps in abortion provision also continue to persist, and have forced hundreds of women in the past few years to travel to England to access care unavailable to them in Scotland – an unacceptable situation that requires sustained political will and accountability to resolve. At a point when the Scottish Government is considering recommendations relating to abortion law and has committed to undertaking a public consultation on the issue, it is more important than ever that women's health has a dedicated portfolio to drive progress and deliver meaningful improvements to care.

We also have concerns around the oversight of planned maternity service reform. The previous Women's Health Minister, Jenni Minto, chaired the Maternity and Neonatal Taskforce and was responsible for the progression of work related to the national review. The removal of this post has created uncertainty regarding who will now provide the strategic leadership needed for such a significant piece of work.

Historically, women's mental and physical health has been overlooked and deprioritised, including for most of the period since devolution. The establishment of a dedicated ministerial portfolio in 2021, only five years ago, was an important turning point for women's rights in Scotland and was recognition of the leadership needed to address these deep-rooted and long-standing inequalities. Crucially, it also reflected the need for a broader understanding of women's health, recognising that issues such as violence against women and girls have profound and lasting impacts on women's health outcomes.

We therefore urge you to reinstate a dedicated Minister for Women's Health, which we believe would provide the leadership, accountability, and visibility that women's healthcare so desperately needs and deserves.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alison Wright, President
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists



Gill Walton, Chief Executive
Royal College of Midwives



Dr Sinead Cook, Chair of Scotland Committee
College of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare



Dr Emma Ferriman, President
British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society



Dr Tracey Masters & Dr Patricia Lohr, Co-Chairs
British Society of Abortion Care Providers



Heidi Stewart, Chief Executive Officer
British Pregnancy Advisory Service



Dr Jayne Kavanagh & Dr Hayley Webb, Co-Chairs
Doctors for Choice UK



Nikki Wilson, Chief Executive Officer
Maternal Mental Health Alliance



Jane Fisher, Director
Antenatal Results and Choices



Maree Aldam, Chief Executive Officer
Amma Birth Companions



Stephanie Millar, Head of Policy
Scottish Women's Aid



Carole Erskine, Head of Policy and Campaigns
Pregnant Then Screwed



Susie Corfield, Executive Director
Abortion Talk



Lucy Grieve, Co-Founder
Back Off Scotland



Roz Foyer, General Secretary
Scottish Trades Union Congress



Gil Long, Chair
Scottish Human Rights Consortium



Catherine Murphy, Executive Director
Engender



Nicola Love, External Affairs Manager
Rape Crisis Scotland



Agnes Tolmie, Chair
Scottish Women's Convention



Anna Ritchie Allan, Executive Director
Close the Gap



Close the Gap

Jenni Snell, Chief Executive Officer
The Young Women's Movement



Laura Tomson, Co-Director
Zero Tolerance



Talat Yaqoob & Katy Hightet, Co-conveners
Women Against the Far Right Scotland



Janine Hunt, Chief Executive Officer
Humanist Society Scotland



Heather Williams, National Co-ordinator
Women's Support Project



Tejesh Mistry, Chief Executive
Voluntary Health Scotland



Sara Cowan, Director
Scottish Women's Budget Group



Satwat Rehman, Chief Executive
One Parent Families Scotland



Mukami McCrum MBE, Project Co-Ordinator
KWISA



Keith Park, Chair
Neurological Alliance of Scotland



Carolyn Currie MBE, Chief Executive
Women's Enterprise Scotland



Jo Anderson, Director
MS Society Scotland



Fiona Collie, Head of Public Affairs and Communications
Carers Scotland



James Calder, National Policy and Research Lead
Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP)



Mairi Oliver, Owner
Lighthouse Books



Laura Baillie, Policy, Research, and Press Officer
Scotland for Decrim

