



PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release

Medical leaders urge next Scottish Government to invest in the sexual and reproductive health of the population

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH), the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) launch today a manifesto ahead of the elections. The organisations represent more than 3 thousand healthcare professionals and staff from third sector organisations working in sexual and reproductive healthcare.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected those already disadvantaged; services have been shut or drastically reduced, and accessibility seriously impacted.
- Promoting positive sexual and reproductive health across the whole population is important for the next Scottish Government. Everyone has the right to access high quality sexual and reproductive health care and services, and in recent decades Scotland has made significant progress in recognising the importance of sexual and reproductive health improvement.
- However, restricted investment, changing social and sexual behaviours, and demand for services now makes meeting the needs of all those requiring clinical care extremely challenging.
- The manifesto recommends steps for the next Scottish Government to take to rebuild services and to continue innovation - with the aim to improve sexual and reproductive health across Scotland.

Dr Hame Lata, Vice Chair of the Scotland Committee of the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, said:

'The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare believes that sexual and reproductive health improvement in Scotland can only happen if services are appropriately resourced and staff fully supported.'

'Integrated sexual and reproductive healthcare services should prioritise those most at risk of ill health – with primary care supported to provide routine sexual and reproductive healthcare. Without this, specialist services will continue to struggle to prioritise highly complex patients.'

'We need political parties to commit to supporting continuing work to improve and maintain services.'

Dr Rona MacDonald, Chair, British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) Scotland, said:

'Over the last 12 months sexual health services have contracted significantly; they have also needed to focus on the most urgent cases, which unfortunately will have widened existing health inequalities even further. Service changes brought about as a result of Covid-19 have led to a large drop in STI testing against a background of previously rising STI levels, which will impact on Scotland reaching its public health outcomes.

'Strong sexual and reproductive health services are an essential component of public health - it is vital that these services are now prioritised. We therefore ask that political parties continue their commitments to support sexual health services, to allow them to recover and rebuild in order to safeguard Scotland's sexual health into the future.'

Dr Edward Morris, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said:

'It's vital that women and girls in Scotland can easily access high quality sexual and reproductive healthcare whenever they need it. The COVID-19 pandemic has put immense pressure on already stretched healthcare staff and services, and this had led to many sexual and reproductive health services shutting down or being drastically reduced. This can have serious consequences for women and girls, especially from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds who we know are disproportionately impacted. It is more important than ever that these services are given the investment and attention that they deserve. We urge the next Scottish Government to prioritise sexual and reproductive healthcare and respond to our manifesto.'

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Notes to editors

- The FSRH, RCOG and BASHH 2021 election manifesto can be found here: <https://www.fsrh.org/documents/joint-manifesto-scotland-elections-sexual-reproductive-health/>

About FSRH

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), supporting healthcare professionals to deliver high quality care. It works with its 15,000 members, to shape sexual reproductive health for all. It produces evidence-based clinical guidance, standards, training, qualifications and research into SRH. It also delivers conferences and publishes the journal BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health in partnership with the BMJ. You can read more about FSRH here: <https://www.fsrh.org/home/>

About BASHH

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) is the lead professional representative body for those managing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV in the UK. It has a prime role in education and training, in determining, monitoring and maintaining standards of governance in sexual health and HIV care. BASHH also works to further the advancement of public health in relation to STIs, HIV and other sexual health problems and acts as a champion in promoting good sexual health and providing education to the public.

About the RCOG

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is a medical charity that champions the provision of high quality women's healthcare in the UK and beyond. It is dedicated to encouraging the study and advancing the science and practice of obstetrics and gynaecology. It does this through postgraduate medical education and training and the publication of clinical guidelines and reports on aspects of the specialty and service provision.