



Women and Equalities Committee

Maria Caulfield MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care)

Via email

12 May 2022

Dear Maria

Hormone Replacement Therapy and related matters

Thank you for attending to give oral evidence to the Committee on 16 March 2022.

I am writing to you regarding a number of recent reports around Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) supplies, and also to clarify some other issues.

You told the Committee on 16 March that:

- There have been delays with the roll out of the proposed digital pre-payment certificates which would allow women to pay one annual charge of £18.70 to receive 12 months' supply of HRT (regardless of how many products are issued).¹ However, under current NICE guidelines, GPs are able to issue a paper certificate for 12 months' supply of HRT so long as the patient has used HRT for three months with no concern. This should mean that HRT products can be issued through a single (paper) certificate at the single cost of £18.70 for the year.² You acknowledged, however, that many GPs were simply not aware that they can do this, resulting in many women still paying monthly charges and being charged separately for oestrogen and progesterone.³ You told us that your department would work with the Royal College of GPs and NICE to ensure GPs were aware of the guidelines enabling them to prescribe 12 months' supply of HRT;⁴
- There was some concern over supplies of HRT, due to the increased number of women being prescribed HRT and you told us that "suppliers are starting to struggle to keep up with some of that demand";⁵
- Candidates for the role of women's health ambassador were being interviewed, and an announcement about appointment would be made in the "next few weeks".⁶

¹ Q149

² Q149-151

³ Q155, Q175, Q177

⁴ Q175

⁵ Q151

⁶ Q156



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We have been concerned to read recent media reports and hear from some of our constituents, that many women across the country simply cannot access HRT due to shortages of certain products. We were also alarmed to read and hear reports of women considering potentially dangerous steps to ensure their supply of medication was not interrupted, including acquiring HRT from friends or strangers. We note that the Secretary of State for Health announced on Sunday 24 April to the *Mail on Sunday* that he will appoint an 'HRT tsar' to oversee supply issues and has now appointed Madelaine McTernan.

We would be grateful if you could clarify the following:

- what communication you have had since our evidence session, with the Royal College of GPs and NICE to ensure GPs are aware they can issue pre-payment certificates;
- what Ms McTernan's role will be;
- what steps the Government is taking to ensure women are still able to access HRT medication; and
- when the women's health ambassador will be appointed.

I am sure you will agree with us that the issue of HRT supplies requires urgent resolution.

Yours ever

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee