Background

The Department of Health (DoH), Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Public Health Agency (PHA), Patient Client Council (PCC), Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) staff and patients are working to assist women in Northern Ireland who are experiencing complications after surgery with vaginal mesh.

This is to ensure that women with mesh complications are assessed and treated as promptly as possible and that health services can meet the needs of women who may need surgery in the future for urinary incontinence or pelvic organ prolapse.

Three working groups met between January and March 2018 to agree:
1) where and what services are available,
2) how patients can access these services and what their treatment should be (patient pathways),
3) what data is needed for audit and quality assurance of services and
4) what information materials and consent procedures women need.

A report on their work, findings and recommendations is currently in preparation and will be published.

Update on current position

In July 2017, the HSCB and PHA, together with HSCTs had put in place an interim patient pathway for women in Northern Ireland who suffered complications after surgery involving vaginal mesh.

This included asking GPs to refer women promptly and HSCTs to expedite the assessment of such women.

Useful links

- Frequently Asked Questions about mesh
- Guidance to GPs and HSC Trusts
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
**REVISED PROCESS**

Every woman with stress urinary incontinence considering surgery will in future, receive a standardised suite of information leaflets, outlining treatment options, their chances of success and risks of complications.

This will enable women to have an informed discussion with their clinician and ensure that their preferences and any inherent risks are explored and understood.

This process is intended to be open and transparent to ensure every patient understands that there are several treatment options regardless of whether she is considering surgery for stress urinary incontinence for the first time or has problems following surgery.

We understand that delays in getting appropriate advice and treatment experienced by women have caused concern as well as distress, and we are working to re-build trust between clinicians and patients.

---

**MESH CENTRE BELFAST**

A mesh centre was approved and registered by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) in December 2017 and is developing its capacity to better meet the needs of patients from Northern Ireland.

The mesh centre has a multidisciplinary team (MDT) of experts in pelvic floor problems, including pain and sexual dysfunction, who provide assessment and management of patients with mesh complications and incontinence.

In addition, there are expert practitioners in every HSCT, so we are developing a Northern Ireland network to make use of all specialists, regardless of where they work.

This team needs and is going to receive additional resources to provide a Northern Ireland-wide service including complex mesh removals and non-mesh surgical treatments for urinary and faecal incontinence.

Patient pathways are designed to ensure that women in Northern Ireland have access to the most appropriate treatment for their condition either at their local hospital or at the mesh centre, regardless of where they live.