



E: DHCPolicyHub@gov.scot

*By email*

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31 October 2023

**Speak up week**

Dear Trina Budge,

Thank you for your letter of 2 October highlighting 'Speak Up' Week and including your thoughts on the future use of the Community Health Identifier (CHI) number. At present the CHI number contains a sex code which represents the individual's sex at birth (male and female). Currently trans people are able to request that their CHI number is updated by asking their GP practice to update their gender. The Scottish Government recognises the need, regardless of a person's self-identified gender, to ensure that no-one risks missing important information such as screening appointments, diagnosis, referral, or other clinical support that may be appropriate to their biological sex.

All screening programmes in Scotland identify eligible participants through their CHI number. The screening services that an individual is called for align with their biological sex, if the CHI number was changed after 14 June 2015. However, as it is not always possible to identify people who have transitioned prior to 14 June 2015, a person in this category is not automatically called for screening and must self-refer. Information on how to do so is available on NHS inform ([Transgender screening in Scotland \(nhsinform.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/inform/scotland)).

The Scottish Government is currently exploring, as will be outlined in the forthcoming Non-Binary Action Plan, how CHI might better reflect the gender identity of people in Scotland. While the Scottish Government has agreed to review the use of a sex code in the CHI number, any action taken must be safe and appropriate. The Scottish Government recognises the need to balance people's right to their own identity, while ensuring they maintain access to the health and care services they need based upon their sex at birth.

Given the ubiquity of CHI across Scotland's numerous health and social care systems it is important that the implications of any potential changes to CHI are thoroughly considered. This will be reflected in the commitments made within the Non-Binary Action Plan. At present we anticipate that the Scottish Government's exploratory work will take 12 months to complete.

Thank you for your contribution and for your interest in the ongoing development of the CHI number. We recognise that the wider societal debate on gender identity is complex, with a range of opinions and concerns. Patient safety is the Scottish Government's priority as policies and recommendations are developed for this work.

Yours faithfully,

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