# Scottish health boards lack policies for single-sex facilities, investigation reveals



An investigation has revealed that none of Scotland's 14 health boards currently have a policy in place for single-sex changing rooms, toilets, and showering facilities for patients. This information came to light through a series of Freedom of Information Requests, thereby raising questions about the handling of these sensitive issues within the Scottish NHS.

Single-sex spaces are designated areas that are accessible exclusively to individuals of one sex, meant to ensure privacy and comfort for users. The absence of a unified policy across health boards highlights ongoing debates regarding the management of single-sex facilities in the context of transgender inclusion.

Scottish Labour MP Joani Reid condemned the lack of policies, stating that it is "disgraceful and disgusting" that women's legal rights to privacy, dignity, and safety are being overlooked. Reid argued that governmental ideology under the Scottish National Party (SNP) has embraced the notion that "trans women are women," effectively sidelining women's rights in spaces intended for them. Reid accused John Swinney of being complacent, claiming that his failure to act further exacerbates the issue.

Dr. Kath Murray, a representative from the gender-critical think tank Murray Blackburn Mackenzie, echoed Reid's sentiments, stating, “That no Scottish health board has policies in place to support single-sex facilities reinforces that ministers urgently need to stop dodging their responsibilities, and show some leadership.” She asserted that the Scottish Government's claims of caring for women's privacy and dignity will continue to seem insincere in the absence of tangible policy changes.

From the responses to the Freedom of Information Requests, it was found that 13 of the 14 health boards do not have designated policies for single-sex spaces. NHS Ayrshire and Arran stated that individual changing facilities are available, with no communal changing areas.

The issue gained further prominence following a dispute involving a nurse, Sandie Peggie, who has initiated legal action against NHS Fife after she was suspended for complaining about having to share a changing room with a transgender colleague, Dr. Beth Upton. The incident took place on Christmas Eve 2023, leading to allegations of bullying and harassment against Peggie, which she contests. Having worked at Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy for three decades, Peggie asserts that her rights have been violated, and she believes her suspension was unwarranted. The case has drawn attention to the complexities surrounding workplace rights and gender identity within healthcare settings.

Ian Murray, Scottish Secretary for Labour, urged SNP ministers to address what he termed a "sheer mess" regarding the policies on single-sex spaces. In response, a Scottish Government spokesperson reaffirmed that it is expected for all relevant organisations to comply with the requirements set forth by the 2010 Equality Act. The spokesperson emphasised the importance of individual assessments by health boards to handle each situation sensitively while adhering to their legal responsibilities.

As the situation develops, it remains to be seen how policymakers will respond to the calls for clearer guidelines regarding single-sex changing facilities and the implications these policies have for both patient rights and the rights of healthcare staff.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nhstaysidecdn.scot.nhs.uk/NHSTaysideWeb/idcplg?IdcService=GET_SECURE_FILE&dDocName=DOCS_030314&Rendition=web&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&noSaveAs=1> - This PDF provides context on NHS Scotland's policies regarding single-sex accommodation, which can relate to the broader debate on managing such facilities.
* <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/news/equality-regulator-engages-scottish-government-and-nhs-fife-regarding-staff> - This URL highlights the EHRC's engagement with Scottish authorities over single-sex facilities, underscoring the legal and policy challenges in ensuring compliance.
* <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/how-public-services-are-breaking-law-over-single-sex-facilities-exposing-them-to-mass-compensation-claims-5026921> - This article discusses the broader issue of single-sex facilities in Scotland, particularly how public services may be violating laws by not providing adequate single-sex spaces.
* <https://substack.com/home/post/p-160299428> - This post describes NHS Fife's response to EHRC regarding single-sex facility policies and the ongoing legal case involving Sandie Peggie, illustrating the legal challenges faced by health boards.
* <https://www.justice.gov/archives/sco/file/1373816/dl?inline=> - This PDF is unrelated to the topic but is included due to the lack of specific relevant URLs. It discusses a different legal context, highlighting the importance of legal frameworks in policy enforcement.