

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request Reference: FOI.21.225
Welsh Gender Service

1. Whether the Welsh Gender Service accepts self-referrals

The Welsh Gender Service does not accept self-referrals.

2. Whether the Welsh Gender Service accepts transfers of patients waiting to be seen by gender services under NHS England, NHS Scotland or HSC Northern Ireland.

The Welsh Gender Service will accept transfers of Welsh resident patients waiting to be seen by gender services outside of Wales if the patient has a Welsh address and is registered with a Welsh GP only.

3. Whether the Welsh Gender Service accepts transfers of patients who have been offered an appointment or seen by a gender service under NHS England, NHS Scotland or HSC Northern Ireland.

The Welsh Gender Service is not commissioned to accept transfers of care for Welsh resident patients who have been seen by a gender service outside of Wales.

4. Whether the Welsh Gender Service will accept patients who are not yet 18 but who would be at least 18 by the end of their wait.

The Welsh Gender Service does not provide care or advice to anyone under the age of 18 years old. However, we will receive referrals for patients from the age of 17.5. The referrer and patient must understand that responsibility for the patient remains with the referrer until the patient turns 18 years old and is accepted on to the Welsh Gender Service waiting list.

All patients referred to the Welsh Gender Service must be Welsh residents and registered with a General Practitioner (GP) in Wales.

5. Will new patients receive an acknowledgement of their referral, and within what time frame?

All new patients who have been added to the Welsh Gender Service waiting list will receive a letter acknowledging they have been added to the waiting list. The letter also offers the patients an opportunity to ensure their contact details are correct and notify the service should anything require updating. The service works to ensure patients received their notification letter in line with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's policy of a 28-day turnaround. This cannot always be guaranteed owing to increase in demand for the service and staffing shortages that cannot be pre-empted.

6. Whether patients on the waiting list are prioritised in any way other than a simple “first in first out” system

Patients are prioritised on the waiting list according to their original referral date.

7. Whether patients referred to the Welsh Gender Service, who have previously been on the wait list for another NHS or HSCNI gender clinic but not yet seen, would have this previous wait taken into account in their position in the queue for the Welsh Gender Service.

All patients referred to the Welsh Gender Service must be Welsh residents and registered with a General Practitioner (GP) in Wales despite being on the waiting list for a gender clinic outside of Wales. If the patient is a Welsh resident and is registered with a Welsh GP then the patient’s original referral date will be honored.

8. Whether patients must attend an appointment with the Welsh Gender Service’s own endocrinologist before a GP is instructed to prescribe hormones

GPs may be invited to collaborate with the Welsh Gender Service by prescribing for the treatment of gender dysphoria. They are not ‘instructed’ to prescribe.

Recommendations regarding to the appropriateness of hormone therapy as a component of treatment of gender dysphoria may be made by an experienced gender specialist; this may be made by a non-prescriber. A recommendation to prescribe a specific pharmacological regimen will be made by a medically-qualified prescriber with expertise in sex development, and endocrine intervention in the treatment of gender identity-related bio-psycho-social concerns and gender dysphoria.

The Welsh Gender Service, which includes both the multi-professional specialist team at The Cardiff Clinic and the Local Gender Teams in each University Health Board, may invite GPs to prescribe hormones for the treatment of gender dysphoria for patients with:

- i) Persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria;
- ii) Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to consent for treatment.

If significant medical or mental concerns are present, they must be reasonably well-controlled. An experienced gender specialist will confirm that these criteria have been fulfilled before inviting a GP to prescribe. This will most commonly be confirmed by an experienced gender specialist working with the Welsh Gender Service but appropriate consideration will also be given to recommendations previously made by other experienced (as defined in GMC guidance) gender specialists.

GPs approached by patients seeking a prescription for hormone and other endocrine agents for the treatment of gender dysphoria and related concerns, but who have not received a treatment recommendation from an experienced gender specialist, are advised to refer to GMC advice published on-line, at <https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-hub/trans-healthcare#mental-health-and-bridging-prescriptions>. The Welsh Gender Service is very willing to offer guidance to GPs regarding these issues.

9. The minimum number of appointments a patient must attend at the Welsh Gender Service before being approved for hormone treatment, assuming that the patient has not transferred from another clinic.

We interpret 'approved for hormone therapy' to refer to a decision to initiate endocrine treatment for gender dysphoria. For this purpose, two consultations are required. Our policy is that patients may be endorsed for hormone therapy for the treatment of gender dysphoria by an experienced gender specialist following completion of an assessment, diagnostic and treatment planning process; this may require more than one consultation. This endorsement will then be passed to a prescriber, usually working in a Local Gender Team, who will complete a further assessment before prescribing. Although both assessments will be bio-psycho-social in character, the first will focus on social, psychological and developmental issues, and the second on biomedical issues. In both consultations, careful consideration is given to issues that might affect capacity, including learning difficulty, neurodiversity and psychosocial factors. Adaptations to practice, such as provision of written and visual information, and allowing patients adequate time and the opportunity to confer with others, are made to support patients in informed decision-making.

10. EITHER, average (mean) time in weeks wait for a follow-up appointment since previous appointment, for patients who had a follow-up appointment in the last quarter (between 1st Jan to 31st Mar 2021 inclusive)

In completing a search for the information requested, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB) has confirmed that this information is not centrally recorded or collated. To retrieve the information requested would require a manual search through individual records and the UHB considers that this would exceed the limit set within regulations for responding to a request. The UHB has therefore relied upon the Section 12 exemption ('Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit') of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and is refusing your request.

The UHB has estimated that to complete the work needed to respond to this request would exceed the time limit as set within regulations to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request. Under the Act there is an allowance of two and a half days, or 18 hours, to comply with a request and the cost limit set within the fees regulations for this amount of work (18 hours) is £450 for the UHB. The

fees regulations specify that the cost of complying with a request must be calculated at the rate of £25 per hour.

11. OR, if information about point 10 is not available or practical to provide, the average (mean) time in weeks from first appointment to approval for hormone therapy for patients whose approval for hormone therapy was given last quarter (between 1st Jan to 31st Mar 2021 inclusive)

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