

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request Reference FoI/24/173
Welsh Gender Service Wait Times

Information Requested:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am writing to request information concerning the provision/delay of care at the Welsh Gender Service, which is commissioned by the NHS and operates out of the St Davids Hospital, Cardiff.

- I. *Monthly* figures for the period inclusive of July 2022 - March 2024 detailing:
 - a. Total number of persons *on* the service's waiting list;
 - i. Of this total, the number on the 'Standard' waiting list; and
 - ii. Of this total, the number on the 'Priority' waiting list.
 - b. Number of new persons *added to* the service's waiting list:
 - i. Of this total, the number placed on the 'Standard' waiting list; and
 - ii. Of this total, the number placed on the 'Priority' waiting list.
 - c. Total number of persons *seen for first appointments*
 - i. Of this total, the number seen at first appointments from the 'Standard' waiting list; and
 - ii. Of this total, the number seen at first appointments from the 'Priority' waiting list.
 - d. The number of patients who, at the time of their first appointment, had *already received a diagnosis* of Gender Incongruence/Gender Dysphoria previously— for example, from a licensed physician practicing privately within the United Kingdom or a licensed physician practicing in a person's former country of residence.
- II. For persons assessed at the service from the 'Standard' waiting list, please provide the mean and/or median number of days between the following:
 - a. Placement on waiting list and first appointment;
 - b. First appointment and confirmation of diagnosis;
 - c. Confirmation of diagnosis & prescription of HRT;
 - d. Confirmation of diagnosis & referral for 'top surgery'; and
 - e. Confirmation of diagnosis & referral for 'lower surgery.'
- III. While understanding that individual wait times are variable, please provide the service's *current best projection* of when a person placed on the 'standard' waiting list in the first quarter of 2024 (January – March) can expect to be seen for a first appointment.
- IV. Given patients' right under the NHS Constitution to a no-greater-than 18-month wait between a GP's referral and treatment for 'non-urgent' conditions; and given recent Prevention of Future Deaths Reports in which coroners identify very long wait times for youth and adult GIS services as probable contributory factors in the deaths of several transgender persons, please provide details of the plans the Trust / GIC will implement to abide by these patient rights and decrease the time persons spend on the service's waiting lists. Please provide details of when these plans will be put into effect. Please quantify, if possible, their projected effects on waiting times.

Response Details:

I.

- a. Please see the attached Excel document. Please note that the Welsh Gender Service (WGS) for Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB) does not operate a 'priority' list.
- b. Please see the attached Excel document. This is for the total number of *referrals* received by the WGS, which will broadly equate to the number of people added to the waiting list. Not all referrals will be for a first gender appointment (some will be for endocrine or psychology). It is also not possible to split referrals out accurately. Please note that the WGS does not operate a 'priority' list.
- c. Please see the attached Excel document for the number of first gender appointments taking place in each month. Please note that the WGS does not operate a 'priority' list.
- d. 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 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit') 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.

II.

- a. The data cannot be reported from the WGS's system in an accurate form for historical time periods. However, the WGS shares and discusses this information internally on a monthly basis and has been able to retrieve some data from reporting slides – please find below. These are approximate waits, in months, at each given point in time.

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| • July 2022 – 24 months | • March 2023 – 15 months |
| • August 2022 – 24/26 months | • April 2023 – 14 months |
| • September 2022 – 24/25 months | • May 2023 – 13 months |
| • October 2022 – 23/24 months | • June 2023 – 13 months |
| • November 2022 – 23 months | • July 2023 – 13 months |
| • December 2022 – no meeting | • August 2023 – 13 months |
| • January 2023 – 20 months | • September 2023 – 14+ months |
| • February 2023 – 18 months | • October 2023 – 14+ months |

- November 2023 – 16+ months
 - December 2023 – 16+ months
 - January 2024 – 16+ months
 - February 2024 – 16+ months
 - March 2024 – 15+ months
- b. The UHB believes the section 12 exemption to apply here and is therefore refusing your request.
- c. The WGS is primarily a diagnostic service; after diagnosis the clinicians will provide a treatment recommendation. Where the recommended pathway is hormone replacement therapy, the patient will be seen by their Local Gender Team (based within each health board) for initiation of treatment. Waiting times for the Local Gender Teams vary between health boards and these are not recorded or collated by the WGS.
- d. The UHB believes the section 12 exemption to apply here and is therefore refusing your request.
- e. The UHB believes the section 12 exemption to apply here and is therefore refusing your request.
- III. As of March 2024, there is a wait time of just over 15 months for a first gender appointment within the WGS.
- IV. The document referenced is the NHS Constitution for England. The WGS is commissioned by the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC) to diagnose gender dysphoria and create a treatment plan. Patients who require hormone therapy are then referred back to Local Gender Teams within individual health boards. Patients requiring surgery are referred on to the Gender Dysphoria National Referral Support Service.

Since the inception of the Service in 2019, the WGS has benefitted from an increase in recurrent investment from WHSSC, allowing it to recruit and train several gender clinicians. In addition, we have maximised opportunities for remote appointments and opened a satellite clinic in Holywell, to ensure improved equity of access for patients across Wales. These measures have allowed us to reduce waiting times for an initial appointment.