

28th August 2026

Important update about the Welsh Gender Service

Dear Patient,

We are writing to share an important update about the Welsh Gender Service. We understand that this news may be upsetting or concerning, particularly if you are currently waiting for, or considering, gender affirming surgery. We want to explain what has happened, what it means for you, and how we will continue to support you.

What has happened?

The NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (NWJCC) has asked Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to immediately pause referrals from the Welsh Gender Service for gender affirming surgery, and scheduled surgeries, while further independent clinical review work is carried out.

The decision was made following a NWJCC Quality, Safety and Outcomes Committee meeting on 24 August 2026, where the service was escalated to Level 3. Level 3 escalation is a formal NHS improvement and assurance process. It means concerns have been identified that require increased oversight, monitoring and improvement action.

The decision follows concerns arising from referral data from 2025-26 indicating significantly higher rates of referral for gender affirming surgery from the Welsh Gender Service compared with English gender services. In addition, concerns were raised regarding aspects of referral and assessment processes.

As a result:

- New referrals for gender affirming surgery have been paused.
- Surgical assessments and scheduled surgery relating to the Welsh Gender Service pathway have been paused.
- An independent clinical review will be undertaken to provide assurance about assessment, referral and governance arrangements and to identify any actions required to support improvement.

What is the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee?

The NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (NWJCC) is the NHS organisation responsible for planning, commissioning and overseeing a range of specialised health services on behalf of the population of Wales. Its role includes ensuring that services are safe, effective and provide high-quality care.

The NWJCC has made this decision as part of its responsibility for overseeing commissioned services and ensuring that any concerns about quality, safety or governance are fully reviewed.

What does this mean for me?

At this stage, the pause applies specifically to the surgical pathway. Other elements of care provided by the Welsh Gender Service continue to operate, including:

- Hormone therapy support
- Endocrine review
- Psychological support services
- Speech and language therapy

These services are not affected by the current pause.

If you are currently waiting for surgery, assessment for surgery, or have questions about your individual care, we recognise that you may have concerns and uncertainty about what this means for you personally.

Patients who have scheduled appointments with the Welsh Gender Service should continue to attend for discussions around next steps and psychological support.

Our commitment to patients

We appreciate how significant this announcement may feel. The Welsh Gender Service supports people at important stages in their lives, and we recognise the distress that uncertainty about future treatment may cause. Our priority is to ensure patients are treated with dignity and compassion throughout this process. We are committed to:

- Keeping patients informed as further information becomes available.
- Providing clear and honest updates.
- Ensuring any communication is factual, evidence-based and sensitive to the impact on those affected.
- Working with NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee to ensure patient support arrangements are in place.

We recognise that gender affirming care is a topic that attracts strong and differing views across society. It is important that public and political discussion remains grounded in accurate information and harmful speculation is avoided.

What happens next?

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board is working closely with the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee as part of the review process and to determine the next steps. We will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available and will contact patients directly if there are developments that affect their individual care.

Support available

We recognise that this update may be upsetting, frustrating or cause uncertainty for some patients, their families and those supporting them.

If you would like additional support, there are a number of organisations that provide information, advice, advocacy and emotional support for transgender and LGBTQ+ people, including:

- **Umbrella Cymru** – umbrellacymru.co.uk (Gender and sexual diversity support specialists)
- **Switchboard** – switchboard.lgbt (Free LGBTQIA+ support line)
- **Samaritans** – Samaritans.org (24/7 helpline if you need to talk)

These organisations operate independently from NHS Wales and may be able to provide additional advice, information and peer support.

Questions, concerns and support

We understand that many patients may have questions about what this announcement means for their care. If you have questions or concerns, or need some support, please contact us via email: Cav.Concerns@wales.nhs.uk

Please note that we may not be able to answer all questions immediately while the independent review is underway. However, we are committed to keeping patients informed and providing updates as further information becomes available.

Welsh Gender Service
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board