



8 May 2019

Gloria Fraser

Email: fyi-request-10090-d6fd02f8@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Gloria

Re: Official Information (OIA) request - Gender - affirming healthcare provided 2018

Thank you for your request for information made on 12 April 2019 regarding services and treatments available for transgender patients. Our responses are listed below following each question. We have endeavoured to answer these questions as fully as possible using the information available to us.

I am writing to request information about the gender-affirming healthcare services provided by the Waitematā District Health Board, as a follow up to a similar request I made in May 2018.

- 1. Could you please advise whether the following gender-affirming healthcare services are funded by the Waitematā District Health Board for transgender patients, and whether the services are currently available:**
 - Puberty blockers
 - Hormone therapy
 - Mastectomy
 - Hysterectomy
 - Orchidectomy
 - Facial hair removal
 - Breast augmentation
 - Voice training
 - Facial feminization surgery

Waitematā DHB provides funding for gender-affirming health care to the Centre for Youth Health (CfYH) at Counties Manukau DHB and the Auckland Regional Sexual Health Service (ARSHS) at Auckland DHB. Both of these services provide non-surgical health services for transgender people for the youth and adult Waitematā DHB population. This includes hormone therapy, nursing, medical, clinical psychology and counselling. Where appropriate, a client will be referred to a mental health professional for any underlying mental health issue. This may be to either primary mental health services or secondary mental health services depending on the need identified. Please see the below link for details of the services provided:

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/paediatrics/kidz-first-centre-for-youth-health/>

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/northern-region-transgender-health-services/>

Waitematā DHB does not provide funding for the following gender-affirming services:

- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training

A small number of general surgical procedures including mastectomy, hysterectomy and orchidectomy have been done over the past three years as part of the general elective services for the Waitematā population. Waitematā DHB does not allocate transgender-specific funding for surgical interventions for the Waitematā transgender population.

Could you please also advise:

- Are transgender healthcare providers under the Waitematā District Health Board encouraged to follow Oliphant et al's (2018) Guidelines for gender affirming healthcare for gender diverse and transgender children, young people and adults in Aotearoa New Zealand? If not, which guidelines do they follow, if any?

Waitematā DHB follows the Northern Region Guidelines for gender-affirming healthcare for Gender Diverse and Transgender Children, Young People and Adults the details of which can be found through the following link:

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/northern-region-transgender-health-services/>

- Is a readiness assessment required to access gender-affirming healthcare services? (This is an assessment of readiness for treatment from a medical and psychosocial perspective, as well as whether the client understands the risks and benefits of treatment, and is sometimes referred to as a 'mental health assessment').

Both the ARSHS and the CfYH provide a full initial assessment. The non-surgical services provided by ARSHS do not require an assessment by a mental health professional unless there is an identified underlying mental health issue which requires mental health expertise. Where this is identified, a referral to either the primary or secondary mental health services will be made.

CfYH will seek a mental health assessment prior to commencing hormone therapy and prior to referring for surgical services.

- If a readiness assessment is required to access gender-affirming healthcare services, who carries out this assessment? Is this assessment funded by the Waitematā District Health Board? Does the assessment use an informed consent model?

Both the ARSHS and CfYH follow an informed consent model. Please refer to the link below for details of referral guidelines and pathway information:

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/northern-region-transgender-health-services/>

Waitematā DHB funds these assessments in both the CfYH and ARSHS services for the Waitematā DHB population

- What steps is the Waitematā District Health Board taking to improve healthcare provision for transgender New Zealanders?

There are a number of initiatives underway to improve healthcare provision for transgender people in the Northern Region. This includes the implementation of two new service enhancements, Peer Support Service and Key Worker, described below, as well as a Governance Group that provides oversight of services.

Northern Regional Transgender Peer Support Service

Peer support is associated with improved access to healthcare, reduced risk of suicide, is effective at engaging people into care, reducing the use of emergency rooms and hospitals and reducing substance use, reducing the use of crisis services and feelings of isolation, increasing social networks and wellness, and has a valuable role in quickly connecting with persons typically considered to be among the most-alienated from healthcare. The new Northern Regional Transgender Peer Support Service will use a multi-faceted approach to service-delivery, including: Peer Support Workers (PSW), who are trained and working in a locally informed Intentional Peer Support model; Peer Volunteers who receive training to run peer-led groups and other low-level interventions; and moderated online channels to increase access to peers and information outside of formal appointments. Service-users of the Peer Support service will be transgender people aged 12 years or more and the Whānau of transgender people of all ages. The Northern Region district health boards are in the process of appointing their preferred provider, following an open tender process (via GETS).

Key Worker - Auckland Sexual Health Service

A key worker will shortly be appointed to work within ARSHS. The purpose of this role is to provide health and social service navigation support to ARSHS service-users who are accessing gender-affirming medical treatment. A key focus of the work with service-users involves connecting them into primary care services and supporting non-clinical aspects of transitioning (social transition).

Northern Region Clinical Governance Group

Waitematā DHB is an active participant in the Northern Region Clinical Governance Group. The role of the Clinical Governance Group is to provide oversight of transgender health service-provision in the Northern Region, with a particular focus on equity, consumer satisfaction, access, safety, timeliness, quality and service improvement.

I trust that this information meets your requirements. Waitematā DHB, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's understanding of how we are delivering publicly-funded healthcare.

This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



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Director Funding
Waitematā District Health Board