

Phone: 03 546 1723

Private Bag 18
Nelson, New Zealand

20 June 2018

Gloria Fraser
fyi-request-7910-df3c198e@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Gloria

Thank you for your request for official information received 23 May 2018 by Nelson Marlborough Health (NMH)¹ where you seek the following information:

I am writing to request information about the gender-affirming healthcare services provided by the Nelson-Marlborough District Health Board. The DHB Gender Reassignment Services Stocktake in October 2015 indicated that the Nelson-Marlborough District Health Board previously did not provide gender affirming healthcare services (see the Briefing on GRS attached to this previous request <https://fyi.org.nz/request/7586-grs-wait...>)

Please see the NMH response under each of your questions below, where we have included relevant extracts, in italics, from the Gender Dysphoria section of the Nelson Marlborough HealthPathways website which provides guidance on community-based care and management of patients.

- 1. Could you please advise whether the following gender-affirming healthcare services are funded by the Nelson-Marlborough District Health Board for transgender patients, and whether the services are currently available:**

A Hormone therapy

From HealthPathways

Hormone manipulation

- Endocrine hormone manipulation is not undertaken lightly, and usually only considered for those aged >18 years*
- If 15 to 18 years, endocrine therapy may be considered on a case by case basis after psychological assessment.*
- All patients must have had a full psychological or psychiatric assessment, which may take several sessions, and a written recommendation for endocrine manipulation.*
- If a patient is accepted for hormone treatment, this will be directed by an endocrinologist or paediatrician, with appropriate monitoring by general practice.*

¹ Nelson Marlborough District Health Board

Hormone treatment

Patients are seen in the Endocrinology clinic for assessment of hormone treatment after they have had a satisfactory psychology/psychiatry assessment to confirm that they are transgender. We initiate hormone treatment, but ongoing treatment can be prescribed by the General Practitioner (GP).

B Mastectomy

Gender affirming related service not available.

C Hysterectomy

Gender affirming related service not available.

D Orchidectomy

Gender affirming related service not available.

E Facial hair removal

Gender affirming related service not available.

F Breast augmentation

Gender affirming related service not available.

G Voice training

Patients are seen in the Speech Therapy service for gender affirming voice training. The service offers assessment, advice and if required voice therapy. Referrals are usually received via relevant health practitioners although self-referrals are also accepted.

2. Could you please provide information about the process of accessing those services that are available?

Referral by GP to Independent Nursing Practise, which has funding from NMH to provide psychological assessment and support for clients wishing to change gender or explore issues around this, including some psychology support through the process.

A Specifically, is an assessment by a mental health professional required in order to access gender-affirming healthcare services? If so, which services?

From HealthPathways

Psychological assessment or treatment

- Psychological assessment is a pre-requisite for anyone seeking endocrine therapy or surgery.*
- Psychological therapy should ideally be provided by a psychologist with appropriate experience in gender dysphoria.*
- A limited number of funded psychological packages of care are available locally for young people up to and including age 21 years. These must be pre-approved by INP Medical Clinic.*
- Otherwise, psychological assessment and treatment is only available from a private provider.*
- Send a detailed medical and mental health history with all referrals.*

NMH comments that psychological treatment may be all that is needed.

Pre-puberty

- Refer to a paediatrician via Child Health Services for case management, family support, and coordination of medical and psychological care.
- Refer directly to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) if serious mental health issues that meet service criteria.

From puberty to age 21

- Refer to INP Medical Clinic or to a GP with special interest for funded 1 hour transgender assessment and ongoing support.

For funded psychological package of care, fax request to INP Medical Clinic (03) 546-8154, attention Annette Milligan. Funding is limited, and referral does not guarantee availability.

Aged 22 or older

Refer to private psychologist with an interest in gender dysphoria. This is a requirement before any public or private endocrinology referral. PHMI funding may be accessed (Marlborough patients only) for some sessions.

For private endocrinology service, refer to Dr John Wilson, Tasman Endocrinology, 349 – 355 Lower Queen Street, Richmond, (021 827 007).

B In the case of hormone therapy, can primary health providers prescribe hormones, or does this have to be initially approved by an endocrinologist?

Hormone therapy is initially prescribed by a specialist (Endocrinologist or Paediatrician), then followed up by a GP.

C Is any period of real life experience required to access surgery?

Not Applicable– surgery is not provided at NMH.

- 3. A Finally, could you please advise what the process is if transgender patients require one of the above services, but the Nelson-Marlborough District Health Board does not offer this service?***

From HealthPathways

Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS)

- Gender Reassignment Surgery is not funded by the Nelson Marlborough DHB, but there are a small number of gender reassignment surgeries (GRS) funded privately through the Ministry of Health High Cost Treatment Pool.
- Only male to female surgery is performed.
- Referrals can only be made by an endocrinologist.
- Female to male "bottom" surgery can be obtained through private overseas facilities at the individual's cost.

B Does the Nelson-Marlborough District Health Board currently fund patients to travel to other areas to access this healthcare?

This is not available.

This response has been provided under the Official Information Act 1982. You have the right to seek an investigation by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or free phone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Maree Nevill, OIA Coordinator via email maree.nevill@nmdhb.govt.nz or 03 546 1522.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Dr Peter Bramley
Chief Executive