

1 April 2021



Re: Official Information Act request – DHB Gender-affirming health services

I refer to your Official Information Act request dated 17 March 2021, requesting the following information:

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

- Hormone therapy

Auckland DHB either directly provides or funds hormone therapy.

Transgender health care is managed through either the Centre for Youth Health (CfYH) which is part of Counties Manukau DHB or Auckland Regional Sexual Health Services (ARSHS) which is part of Auckland DHB depending on the age of the patient. Both services provide non-surgical health care for transgender people for the youth and adults of Auckland, Waitemata and Counties Manukau DHBs' populations. This includes hormone therapy, nursing, medical, clinical psychology and counselling.

Please see below link for details of the services provided:

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

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

Please refer to the publicly available information on the Hauora Tāhine – Pathways to Transgender Healthcare Services link for information on processes to access services, including service referral expectations, information on consent and other services available.

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

- **Is care available on an Informed Consent basis?**

Patients are fully informed with the practice based on an informed consent model. The Hauora Tāhine – Pathways to Transgender Healthcare Services provides some of the information given to young people and families.

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

Referrals to the Northern Region Transgender Health Services (NRTHS) can be made directly by a primary care team (e.g. GP, practice nurse), other health services (for example by Mental Health and Endocrinology), or by school-based health teams (e.g. School Counsellor or Nurse). The NRTHS also accepts self-referrals or referrals from family members.

The team works with service users to establish health goals and individualised health plans that may include accessing other Specialist health procedures, services and teams.

The NRTHS clinicians support primary care health teams to provide on-going supportive services, and link service users to other community networks and NGO providers who have particular expertise in this area. When assessed as required, referral to a mental health professional will occur, either in primary care or specialist mental health services.

Referrals for surgical services will be made by NRTHS clinicians to relevant clinical service. All referrals for elective surgery are assessed against standard elective processes and criteria.

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

We note that the prescribing of some hormonal medications is restricted in New Zealand and requires a Medical Specialist authorisation.

Within the NRTHS, the process of starting hormonal therapy includes a multi-disciplinary assessment process, including assessing readiness for hormones from a medical and psychosocial perspective.

General Practitioners may provide maintenance treatment, including some prescribing with specialist oversight and review.

- **Is any period of real life experience required to access hormone therapy?**

Generally yes, but within the NRTHS, the process of starting hormonal therapy includes a multi-disciplinary assessment process, including assessing readiness for hormones from a medical and psychosocial perspective. Please refer to the Hauora Tāhine – Pathways to Transgender Healthcare Services for more information.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE

Chief Executive of Te Toka Tumai (Auckland District Health Board)

