

New adult gender identity service to be established in Wales

To coincide with Pride Cymru, the Health Secretary has announced a significant step forward in healthcare for transgender people, with the establishment of specialist hospital-based services in Wales for the first time.

Improvements to community-based care will also be made, with a network of General Practitioners across Wales with a specialist interest in gender identity healthcare able to provide more care closer to people's home, which will improve access and experience for people needing care.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Over the last few years, we have seen an increase in demand for transgender health services in Wales. As part of our commitment to improve health and wellbeing for all, this year we made additional funding available within the Welsh Government budget to improve gender identity provision in Wales.

“The new services I'm announcing today means all but the most specialist services will soon be delivered in Wales, closer to people's homes, which will improve access and experience for people needing care. I look forward to seeing great improvements to those services.

“The All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group has been actively involved in designing the new pathway and will continue to be involved in all future work. I want to thank them for the work to date and for their continued commitment and engagement in developing an improved service to meet the needs of transgender people in Wales.”

As part of the new arrangements, the foundations of a new interim care pathway will be put in place by the autumn. The interim pathway has been endorsed by the All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group, which includes representatives from the transgender community and service users.

Under the new model, a multidisciplinary service, known as the Welsh Gender Team (WGT), will provide support to a network of general practitioners (GP's) across Wales with a specialist interest in all areas of gender care, including hormone replacement therapy and will accept direct referrals from GP's. The service will initially facilitate the prescribing of medication for individuals who have already attended appointments at the Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) in London.

From the end of March next year, the WGT will accept new referrals and

repatriate appropriate individuals who are currently on waiting lists for treatment. This will be done in partnership with the GIC, where the pathways will remain open for individuals with complex needs or those requesting gender reassignment surgery. Those who would prefer to continue their treatment with their current provider will be able to do so.

The new arrangements will result in shorter distances to travel, improved waiting times and better user experience. It will also ensure current clinic capacity is freed up for those requiring more specialised services, as well as shortening the steps between initial referral and beginning treatment.

In parallel with the implementation of the new service, the All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group will take the remainder of the recommendations forward to build on the interim service and develop a full gender identity service and referral pathway.

Jack Jackson, from north Wales, who is a member of the All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group said:

“I’m delighted to be able to be part of the process and hope I can make some contribution and improve things for the future of transgender services and people in Wales.”

Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair of the BMA Cymru Wales GP Committee said:

“GPC Wales is delighted to see how Welsh Government has taken a proactive approach to listening and addressing the holistic care needs that the transgender community has.

“We’re also pleased that this will involve GPs with specialist interest being a pivotal part of the proposed service, and all GPs involved in the patient journey, with clarity on referral pathways being a first for the UK.”