

15 October 2020

Susan Strongman
Radio New Zealand

Via email: Susan.Strongman@rnz.co.nz



100 Heads Road, Private Bag 3003
Whanganui 4540, New Zealand

Dear Susan

Official Information Act Request – OIA 13132 Gender Affirming Healthcare Services

On 17 September 2020, under section 12 of the Official Information Act, you requested the following information from Whanganui District Health Board (WDHB):

Could you please advise whether the following gender-affirming healthcare services are funded by this DHB for transgender patients, and whether the services are currently available:

- Hormone therapy
- Mastectomy
- Hysterectomy
- Orchidectomy
- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training

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

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

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

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

Could you please advise what the process is if transgender patients require one of the above services, but the DHB does not offer this service? Does the DHB currently fund patients to travel to other areas to access this healthcare?

The information sought in this request is to be used as part of a report by RNZ into transgender healthcare. As the information will be used to ensure a greater understanding of the issue, I ask that any fee is waived.

It is understood elements of the requested information might not be considered public information. If this is the case, I would ask each element is considered separately, described as best it can be and reasons for any information being declined being set against the information sought.

I would like to register my desire to have the information provided electronically.

Whanganui District Health Boards response:

Could you please advise whether the following gender-affirming healthcare services are funded by this DHB for transgender patients, and whether the services are currently available:

- Hormone therapy
- Mastectomy
- Hysterectomy
- Orchiectomy
- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training

Whanganui District Health Board provides services for transgender health care inclusive of:

- Puberty blockers
- Hormone Therapy
- Sexual health testing, monitoring, treatment and advice
- Information on transitioning
- Availability to obtain Pre –exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and other medications
- Counselling
- Mental Health Support

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

Walk-up or referral

Sexual Health Clinic (SHC): Access to this clinic is via walk-in or referral from another healthcare provider.

Has a specific pathway that incorporates:

- Initial consultation
- Readiness assessments
- Referral to psychologist
- Referral to speech language therapist for voice training
- Referral to local support networks and agencies
- Contacts and resources to wider community services and agencies for client to access, that include, binders, hair removal, brassiere fitting, voice training. Websites: Gender Minorities <https://genderminorities.com/database/contact-transgender-support/>
- Work collaboratively with and being part of and support the current PRIDE Whanganui, and support the PRIDE week with education, screening opportunities and access to health care.
- Health promotion and support for secondary schools on implementing guidelines, information and support for students around discrimination and how to access the public health nurse within the school setting
- Connect family and whānau to support groups where needed, or to resources about supporting and affirming their family member who is transitioning.

Maternal, Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Addictions Service (MICHAMHS):

- Initial consultation
- Referral to SHC for readiness assessment
- Ongoing support with clients as needed

Community Mental Health:

- Support and guidance as needed for clients
- Referral to SHC and other supporting agencies like PRIDE Whanganui

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

No. In the first instance services can be accessed without formal mental health assessment. Psychology and counselling support are offered as part of service provision.

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

Primary health providers can prescribe hormone treatment without the need for initial approval by an endocrinologist.

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

We do not provide surgical services at the Whanganui District Health Board.

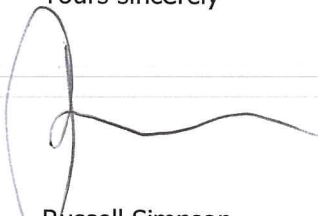
Could you please advise what the process is if transgender patients require one of the above services, but the DHB does not offer this service? Does the DHB currently fund patients to travel to other areas to access this healthcare?

If a transgender patient requires an above services and it is not available referral can be made to other DHBs who do. Funding for these are covered under Inter-district flow arrangements.

In the case of surgical services this is a nationally funded programme.

Should you have any further queries about the above information, please contact our OIA co-ordinator Anne Phoenix at anne.phoenix@wdhb.org.nz

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell Simpson', written over a horizontal line.

Russell Simpson
Chief Executive