

9 October 2020

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100 Heads Road, Private Bag 3003
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Dear Jade

Official Information Act Request – OIA 13123 Transgender Health

On 10 September 2020, under section 12 of the Official Information Act, you requested the following information from Whanganui District Health Board (WDHB):

Of the following list of services, which (if any) does the Whanganui District Health Board provide? Does the DHB provide any services for transgender health care not listed, if so, what?

- Puberty blockers
- Hormone replacement therapy
- Fertility preservation
- Mastectomy
- Hysterectomy
- Orchiectomy
- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training
- Facial feminization surgery
- Genital reconstruction surgery
- Counselling
- Other mental health support (please specify services in response)

For services provided by the DHB:

What is their current status? What clinic (or clinics) provides the service? Are they accepting new patients?

Broken down by provided services (and initial consultation and readiness assessments or other if applicable), how long is the current wait time on appointments for transgender health? How long have these wait times been in previous years that the service was available?

What set(s) of transgender health guidelines are used to inform practice?

What requirements are there for patients accessing care? (E.g. Readiness assessment)

For HRT specifically, what is the standard practice regarding choice of medication and dosages? Are GPs expected to be able to provide HRT, and if so, what support are they given to ensure quality of care? What measures are in place to ensure that all patients are fully informed of all medications that could meet their HRT needs besides the suggested treatment plan?

Chief Executive | Phone 06 348 3140 | Fax 06 345 9390

Does the DHB have a Transgender Health Key Worker (or similar)?

Are there any youth-specific service providers? How would an underage person access trans-specific healthcare in the DHB?

When were the available services first offered?

Have these services ever been unavailable, and if so, between what dates?

For the services that are not provided by the DHB:

Are patients referred elsewhere for these services? If so, where are they referred to?

Were any of these services ever previously provided by the DHB?

Regardless of transgender health service status:

Is there any additional support made for healthcare needs that are not particular to transgender health but are particular areas of interest for transgender health? E.g. Substance use, mental health care.

What plans are there, if any, to expand or improve care for transgender patients within the DHB?

Have there been any internal reviews of the care provided or outcomes for transgender patients? If so, what were the results of those reviews, and what action was taken based on them?

What measures does the DHB currently have in place to educate healthcare workers not working in transgender health areas on the needs of transgender patients they may encounter? How is their right to be treated with dignity upheld?

Have any actions been taken based on complaints by transgender patients? If so, what actions have been made in response to complaints?

Whanganui District Health Boards response:

Of the following list of services, which (if any) does the Whanganui District Health Board provide? Does the DHB provide any services for transgender health care not listed, if so, what?

- Puberty blockers
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- Genital reconstruction surgery
- Counselling
- Other mental health support (please specify services in response)

WDHB 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

For services provided by the DHB:

What is their current status? What clinic (or clinics) provides the service? Are they accepting new patients?

Sexual Health Clinic (SHC): 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

Broken down by provided services (and initial consultation and readiness assessments or other if applicable), how long is the current wait time on appointments for transgender health? How long have these wait times been in previous years that the service was available?

Sexual Health Services

Wait times are often between 2-3 weeks to be seen from the acceptance of referral.

Wait times have increased over the past six months due to the increase of referrals. However, since beginning of this year, WDHB have employed a Sexual Health trained Nurse Practitioner (NP) and this has helped shorten waiting times for transgender clients. The NP provides assessments and puberty blocker treatment.

In previous years transgender clients were referred to the medical team at the MidCentral DHB Sexual Health Service and were seen within a four-week period. Referrals are received from Youth Services Trust, MICHAMHS, or General Practitioner.

MICHAMHS:

In this service clients are triaged and assessed. The transgender clients will be given a choice of appointment within one week of acceptance of the referral and then offered an appointment following this.

What set(s) of transgender health guidelines are used to inform practice?

The following listed guidelines are used:

- Guidelines for gender affirming healthcare for gender diverse and transgender children, young people and adults in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Northland Region Guidelines: Hauora Tahine. Pathways to Transgender Healthcare Services.

What requirements are there for patients accessing care? (E.g. Readiness assessment)

No requirements, however, discussion around current support networks, inclusive of family, friends, online agencies that the clients might be using are checked and encouraged for clients to discuss about.

For HRT specifically, what is the standard practice regarding choice of medication and dosages? Are GPs expected to be able to provide HRT, and if so, what support are they given to ensure quality of care? What measures are in place to ensure that all patients are fully informed of all medications that could meet their HRT needs besides the suggested treatment plan?

- Currently no hormone therapy replacement is prescribed only hormonal treatment is used. The WDHB is working alongside the local primary health care providers to arrange regular supervision, case reviews and support for those GP's working with transgender in our community. Recently, WDHB presented an inter-professional education session alongside a general practitioner with special interest in transgender health to the wider primary health care providers around transgender and community support and agencies available in the Whanganui region.
- In all settings, side effects, adverse reactions and monitoring of medications given are discussed, supported with written information, along with resources and websites as needed on an individual basis.

Does the DHB have a Transgender Health Key Worker (or similar)?

There is no current key worker employed however a liaison worker has been discussed and is in the current plan.

Are there any youth-specific service providers? How would an underage person access trans-specific healthcare in the DHB?

- Our youth-specific service is inclusive of the Youth Services Trust which provides access to a GP, counselling and nurse.
- Light Youth Wanganui also provides regular support for youth to attend and have a shared space for activities, information and support.
- SUPP service also provides support for transgender who use alcohol and other drugs and have a mild to moderate mental health illness.
- Support can be accessed by self-referral, referral through school settings, GPs and counsellors.

When were the available services first offered?

There has been a Sexual Health Service provided by the Whanganui District Health Board for many years. As noted previously, services to support the transgender community have been introduced this year and previously these were referred to the service at MidCentral DHB.

Have these services ever been unavailable, and if so, between what dates?

The Youth Services Trust, Light Youth Group and Sexual Health Clinic are closed over the Christmas and New Year period. Transgender clients can access other services such as their own GP, Whanganui Accident and Medical clinic (WAM) or online services such as 1737 or community mental health crisis team if needed.

For the services that are not provided by the DHB:

Are patients referred elsewhere for these services? If so, where are they referred to?

- Voice training – MidCentral.
- Psychologist – Wellington.
- Additional referrals to MidCentral Sexual Health Service for supervision or support on referrals without readiness or has other sexual health concerns.

Were any of these services ever previously provided by the DHB?

No.

Regardless of transgender health service status:

Is there any additional support made for healthcare needs that are not particular to transgender health but are particular areas of interest for transgender health? E.g. Substance use, mental health care.

SUPP team, cessation support, MICHAMHS, CMHT, PRIDE Wanganui, Light Youth Wanganui.

What plans are there, if any, to expand or improve care for transgender patients within the DHB?

- Additional resources and information are being prepared for the initial assessment and expectation of the service provided by the sexual health clinic. This information will be sent out to transgender clients before their arrival. Assessment templates are being developed and regular support and supervision is to be arranged alongside MidCentral DHB Sexual health service.
- Ongoing health promotion and support is to be provided.
- DHB has completed the gender identity indicator marker removals to make the lab testing environment more inclusive.

Have there been any internal reviews of the care provided or outcomes for transgender patients? If so, what were the results of those reviews, and what action was taken based on them?

No

What measures does the DHB currently have in place to educate healthcare workers not working in transgender health areas on the needs of transgender patients they may encounter? How is their right to be treated with dignity upheld?

- Education is offered to the Public Health service/nurses who are working with youth and are offered the sessions provided by family planning on an annual basis. In-house in-services are provided along with promoting of education held in the community. Information is shared widely within the DHB catchment.
- Inclusive of attending the WIPE session that provided information and support to the primary health care providers in the wider DHB catchment.
- Continuation of the Transgender/Gender Diverse Health Services Meetings.

Have any actions been taken based on complaints by transgender patients? If so, what actions have been made in response to complaints?

No complaints have been received previously, however if there were any from transgender clients, they would be encouraged to make a complaint through the DHB complaints process, and these would be treated as per this well-established process.

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


Russell Simpson
Chief Executive