



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Jo Churchill MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention,
Public Health and Primary Care*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

PO-1258693

020 7210 4850

The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

10 February 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 September to Matt Hancock on behalf of a number of your constituents about gender identity services. I apologise for the delay in replying, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence in recent months and work to ensure frontline services are delivered.

I understand your constituents' concerns and I am grateful that you have taken the time to write about this important issue.

Specialised services for gender dysphoria are directly commissioned by NHS England and Improvement (NHSE&I), which acknowledges that waiting times for these services are high. This is due to a significant increase in demand in recent years and to the lack of ability to increase clinical capacity, owing to constraints in the national gender dysphoria workforce.

I would like to assure your constituents that NHSE&I is taking several steps to increase clinical capacity and reduce waiting times. It has also increased financial investment in gender dysphoria services by nearly 50 per cent in recent years.

In April 2019, NHSE&I began a process of national procurement to determine which organisations are best able to deliver adult gender dysphoria services in the future. The process of procurement is open to organisations that currently host a gender dysphoria clinic, as well as new providers. The outcome of this process is expected to be known shortly.

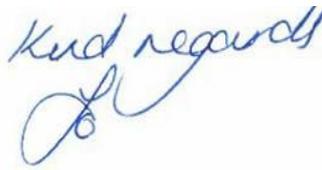
Separately, NHSE&I is building a new delivery model that involves the training of a new clinical workforce with expertise in sexual health and primary care services. The first of these services began in July 2020 in London, sited alongside a specialist sexual health service run by Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust. This is the first new gender dysphoria service established in the NHS in England for around 20 years and has been positively received by people who are using it. People using the service will see a team of multiskilled professionals that will include established experts in gender dysphoria healthcare. The service will deliver a range of interventions, such as assessment, diagnosis, hormone therapy, voice therapy and referral for surgery and signposting to other holistic services.

NHSE&I has undertaken further consultation on the delivery of gender dysphoria clinics (GDCs). As a result of this consultation, it was concluded that a new services specification

was needed that would place GDCs within local health settings and other primary care services. This service specification is currently being piloted and three new services having been commissioned, in London, Manchester, and Cheshire and Merseyside. All these services are now open and seeing patients. They are being assessed as pilots for 3 years with planning underway to create more services such as these across the country.

In addition, NHSE&I committed additional money for specialised surgical services for individuals with gender dysphoria in 2020/21. Unfortunately, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on elective surgery across all specialties last year meant that the funding could not be deployed. However, NHSE&I has confirmed that it will continue to set aside additional money in 2021/22 to fund a planned increase in the number of surgical procedures.

I hope this reply is helpful to your constituents.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kind regards" followed by a stylized signature.

JO CHURCHILL