

21 June 2018

Gloria Fraser

By email to: fyi-request-7889-74e4c5d7@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Gloria

Re: Official Information (OIA) request - Services and treatments available for transgender patients

Thank you for your OIA request on 23 May 2018 regarding services and treatments available for transgender patients. Our responses are listed below following each question and we have endeavoured to answer these questions as fully as possible using the information available to us.

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

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

Auckland DHB provides funding for gender affirming health care to the Centre for Youth Health (CFYH) at Counties Manukau DHB and the Auckland Regional Sexual Health service (ARSHS) at Auckland DHB. Both of these services provide non-surgical health services for Transgender people for the youth and adult Auckland DHB population. This includes hormone therapy, nursing, medical, clinical psychology and counselling. Where appropriate a client will be referred to a mental health professional for any underlying mental health issue and this may be to either primary mental health services or secondary mental health services dependant on the need identified.

Please see the attached link for details of the services provided:

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/paediatrics/kidz-first-centre-for-youth-health/>
<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/northern-region-transgender-health-services/>

Auckland DHB does not provide funding for the following gender affirming services:

- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training

A small number of general surgical procedures including mastectomy, hysterectomy and orchidectomy have been done in the past three years as part of the general elective services for the Auckland population. Auckland does not allocate specific funding for surgical interventions for the Auckland Transgender population.

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

Auckland DHB established a new service arrangement for the provision of specialist and support services for young people with gender identity issues, with the Centre for Youth Health (CFYH) at Counties Manukau DHB in July 2016. Most young people within Auckland DHB who have required support or services relating to gender identity will use the CFYH service, although a very small number of young people have used services provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health services at Auckland DHB.

Further information regarding these services are available on Healthpoint (refer to the previous link included in this response).

Referrals for consideration of surgery may be sent by primary care referrers or specialist referrers to the relevant clinical service, and patients would be assessed for consideration of surgery through each service's standard elective surgery process.

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

The non-surgical services provided by ARSHS do not require an assessment by a mental health professional unless there is an identified underlying mental health issue which requires mental health expertise. Where this is identified a referral to either the primary or secondary mental health services will be made.

CFYH will seek a mental health assessment prior to commencing hormone therapy and prior to referring for surgical services.

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

Under New Zealand legislation, any registered medical practitioner can prescribe these medications. However, it is our understanding that most young people under the age of 18 years in Auckland DHB will have these medications started by specialist services, which in most instances will be the CFYH. A general practitioner may provide maintenance treatment including prescribing of appropriate medication, with specialist oversight and review.

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

Real life experience is a requirement for all genital gender affirming surgery, but not other surgeries.

All patients currently in New Zealand who wish to have genital gender affirming surgery are required to have more than two years of successful and continuous real life experience as a woman / man. As per the MoH High Cost Treatment pool:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/hospitals-and-specialist-care/high-cost-treatment-pool/gender-reassignment-surgery>

The CfYH applies the following criteria with regard to referrals to other specialist surgical services for the Auckland metro region:

- 12 months of testosterone or clinical review of breast development (usually about two years) prior to mastectomy.

3. Finally, could you please advise what the process is if transgender patients require one of the above services, but the Auckland District Health Board does not offer this service? Does the Auckland District Health Board currently fund patients to travel to other areas to access this healthcare?

The non-surgical and surgical services provided to Auckland DHB residents are delivered by all three DHBs in the Auckland region and Auckland DHB funds all these services. If patients meet the criteria of the National Travel Assistance (NTA) policy to access any of these services, then this will be provided.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive