

Insight into...



Young People expressing Gender Variance

Health & Wellbeing Series: 1

Updated August 2020

@WL_EPS

"Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically"

This Insight document has been designed to be read alongside the guidelines "[Supporting Transgender Young People in West Lothian.](#)" and "[Supporting Transgender Young People: guidance for schools in Scotland.](#)"

These existing guidelines outline a range of practical issues which need to be considered for young people who identify as transgender attending schools such as which toilets and changing facilities should be used and how to update educational records. This Insight gives some additional information about what it means to be transgender, assessment and intervention routes, and how we can support young people and their families.



Gender identity is a SPECTRUM

Gender identity is a way of describing how we feel about our gender. Most people identify their gender as either boy or a girl, however some people may feel differently. People are assigned a gender identity at birth based on their sex. Some people may feel a different gender identity from their physical and biological sex. Some people may feel unclear about their gender identity or that they feel both boy and girl gender identities. This is completely fine, everyone is unique.

Gender identity is a spectrum. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in unique and personal ways. This could be through the clothes you wear, the way you stand, the interests you have. It is up to each individual

to decide their gender identity – only they know their true feelings and they should never feel pressured to label themselves or fit in with other people's ideas. These are some of the terms used in Scotland. These are not exhaustive and certainly not infallible. Terminology is still evolving so definitions may change.

Assessment and intervention

There is one clinic in Scotland which will assess, and diagnose 'gender dysphoria' in young people. This clinic is based within the [Gender Service at Sandyford Services](#), Glasgow, and is located within sexual health rather than mental health. There is a 6-12 month waiting list to be seen, with numbers of referrals increasing rapidly in recent years. Referrals can be made by anyone but are typically from GPs, CAMHS services, education, social work, or by the young person themselves. A young person referred to the clinic will undergo a therapeutic exploration of their gender identity, including their experiences, sense of self, psychological/social functioning and mental health. Within this the possibility of intervention will be explored. Some young people may be content to make a social transition and can be supported with this through review at the clinic. Others may be keen to consider physical intervention.

SANDYFORD
Gender Identity Services



Follow this [LINK](#) to find out what the **Equality Act** says about gender reassignment discrimination

What does it mean?

Gender Dysphoria is a recognised medical diagnosis for which gender reassignment treatment is available on the National Health Service in Scotland. Gender dysphoria is when someone experiences significant and long-standing distress, unhappiness and/or discomfort about their physical body not fully matching their gender identity.

Staged approach of physical interventions

Some young people access a physical intervention to help them manage gender dysphoria. Others never want this, or their hopes change over time. A staged approach to physical intervention takes account of both physical and psychological development.

<u>Stage 1</u> Therapeutic exploration/assessment	A holistic view of the young person's life is gathered. If dysphoria is 'persistent, consistent and insistent', physical interventions can be considered
<u>Stage 2</u> Fully reversible interventions	GnRH Analogues "puberty blockers" Used under 15 years old Not neutral – there are side effects Can give breathing space to consider options
<u>Stage 3</u> Partially reversible interventions	Gender affirming hormones (cross sex hormones) used from 16 Must have been progressing with social transition for over 6 months Two clinicians must agree this and give explanation of risks
<u>Stage 4</u> Irreversible interventions	Surgical procedures Bilateral mastectomy and chest reconstruction available from 16 years old Genital reassignment surgery from 18 years old

What do transgender young people want?

Like most young people experiencing a worry or concern, young people who identify as transgender need a safe place and person to talk to and to get information. Some make the social transition to live as their preferred gender without distress, but for many it is a source of uncertainty, fear, worry and stress. Young people want to be able to explore their gender expression, but to be accepted and respected as they do that. They may want to discuss what they are experiencing or their feelings on specific issues to parents or friends.

Many young people experience poor mental health associated with stress, fear, uncertainty and confusion, and in some cases rejection and bullying. It is important that all bullying is challenged including transphobic bullying.



If a person tells you they are non-binary, it is perfectly polite to ask them what pronouns they would like you to use either by asking directly: "excuse me, but which pronouns do you use?" or asking: "how would you like to be addressed?"

Supports and Information

LGBT Youth Scotland: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/>

Mermaids: <http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/>

Scottish Trans: <http://www.scottishtrans.org/>

Support Groups in Scotland: <https://www.scottishtrans.org/support/support-groups-in-scotland/>

LGBT Youth Scotland: [Addressing Inclusion: Effectively Challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia](#)

Gender Identity Research and Education Society <http://www.gires.org.uk/>