

# How to access gender affirming healthcare in Guernsey

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## Healthcare for Trans people in Guernsey

Transgender people follow different paths in terms of their own social and medical transition. There is no single route to follow and it is important to know what the options are so that you can make an informed choice as to what you want to do and when you want to do it. It is also important to remember that healthcare isn't just about medical transitioning and accessing those services – people will need to access medical treatment for a range of physical and mental health reasons and it is important that you are addressed in the way that you want to be, that your medical records reflect accurate information and that you feel comfortable with the professionals you are in contact with. Not everybody who identifies as transgender will identify as binary male/female, some may not want any medical transition, some may not have disclosed to others their identity, some will be known as one identity in some settings and another in others. It is a very individual thing and the presentation of this often changes over time. All people should be treated with dignity and respect, so if there are any issues that occur around being transgender, then please speak to Liberate further.

Guernsey does not have anti-discrimination law at this time covering trans people whilst accessing education or goods and services i.e. Health services - although the [Sex Discrimination \(Employment\) Law](#) offers protection for trans people within their own workplace from discrimination. However, most organisations follow UK guidelines but these are not enforceable and some places simply do not have experience of what the 'best practice' should be. Also, Guernsey does not practice having a 'protected records' system unlike the UK. If you change your name and/or gender on records, then previous identities are not sealed off and have restricted access. Obviously, confidentiality and GDPR does operate, but potentially people could know previous details. Hospital records that are changed from now will be held in a way that respects privacy but also gives medical staff the information they need (on a need to know basis) although people whose records changed in the past will not have the same levels of access. Additional notes are in a separate document regarding name changes and the use of acquired and legal gender.

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## Doctors/GP's

As with any medical area, some GPs will have more understanding and experience than others. There is no list of GPs locally who specifically deal with trans patients, but within the Liberate Trans group people are able to give examples of personal experience of GPs who have been particularly helpful and/or have experience of

trans healthcare. This anecdotal information can be useful, but do remember that each person's experience is the combination of a large number of factors including how well the professional knows you and other health issues, so if they ask for additional information or ask more questions, it is usually in order to ensure that they are providing the best service for you as an individual.

It is really important to be able to talk to your GP, and they are centrally involved in the day to day side of medical transition and accessing services. They are also responsible for all of your health needs, so if you are having mental health issues relating to dysphoria or you are taking hormones, then the fact that you identify as transgender is information that they need, whether or not you want things like name and gender changed on their records. Some people feel that they want to start afresh with a GP for this part of their journey, especially if it has been the 'family doctor', whilst others want to stay with someone who knows them, especially if there are other health issues that the GP has already been supporting them with.

If you wish to change your name and gender at your GP practice, you can do this with a deed poll and will have to sign their forms. You will also need to change this directly with the hospital, since they will communicate with your doctor. You can use acquired gender – you do not have to have lived in a role for a specific length of time or fulfil any other criteria. One implication of this is that you will not be called for routine screenings such as cervical cancer, breast cancer or prostate cancer - please make sure you access these important screenings if you do not receive notification of them being due, work with your GP to make sure you do not miss vital screening.

Some surgeries have leaflets available explaining what needs to be done for transgender patients (male and female) depending on which gender is held on record. The other big implication is that if blood tests are taken, the results show the typical range for the gender stated on the request form. Your blood test forms will need to reflect the gender assigned at birth unless hormone therapy is being taken.

If you wish to pursue medical transition there are two routes – one is funded by the States and the other is private.

The GP is the essential starting point for both. In either case, the route you take will very much be based on your individual circumstances and wishes. It is therefore not possible to predict how many appointments will be needed, if there needs to be additional investigations and so on. In general, people need to be in a stable mental health position (having mental health conditions in itself does not prevent transitioning happening) and to have stopped smoking prior to starting hormones or having surgeries.

Legally, GPs are allowed to prescribe bridging prescriptions for hormone treatment whilst somebody is on a waiting list to see an endocrinologist. However, this is only

done in very exceptional circumstances and is not common practice prior to someone having actually had a consultation with an endocrinologist.

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## **Medical transition - funded by the States of Guernsey**

The States of Guernsey will support funding for transgender patients in a number of areas. The States have set out exactly what they will and will not cover and there is a [set procedure for accessing this](#). Patients referred to specialist Gender Identity Clinics (GIC's) are not required to have started living in their desired social gender role or to have had a psychiatric assessment or have engaged in psychotherapy prior to referral. For any appointments off island, the States would cover travel expenses (as for any other medical appointments off island). The Travel Team automatically books trains and flights. For surgeries where you are unable to travel home straight away, the States will make appropriate arrangements.

Until mid 2022 this was through the NHS but new contracts have been put in place with private GIS's to offer trans people in Guernsey a more timely and reliable service. It is important to note that private GIC's still operate as private clinics and people may choose to see them privately and pay themselves, but the contract with the States means that they will see Guernsey patients through the States' scheme. For clarity, we will refer to 'private GIC' and 'States GIC'.

Under States GIC, clinics have made a commitment to see new referrals in a short time frame – certainly within 6 months, but hopefully more like 2-3 months. People who are on the NHS waiting list have the option to transfer to States GIC. If people are at the start of their journey, they will have an initial gender psychiatric appointment and then video and face to face appointments with an endocrinologist. These are again within short time frames, but a lot will depend on individual circumstances and what treatment is being sought. For people who have already begun medical transition, it will be up to the GIC what appointments and information they need, but they will look at each referral to establish this. They will then correspond with your GP.

For people previously referred who have opted to stay with the NHS: The NHS Gender Identity Clinic that they refer people to currently is Charing Cross, and once a referral has been made, the process for Guernsey residents is exactly the same as for anybody else accessing their service – waiting lists, number of appointments, recommendations and so on. Full information on this can be found [here](#). They will then correspond with your GP.

In order to access the States GIC route, your GP needs to make a referral to the Oberlands. The psychiatrist then usually completes the referral form, and depending on circumstances they may do this in one appointment or may want to have further consultations. The initial appointment with Oberlands usually comes through quite quickly – maybe a couple of months. Once Oberlands has completed this form, it is then countersigned by a Consultant Psychiatrist and will

be forwarded to the Off Island team which will sort out the funding approval. Until the Off Island team has sent this to GIC and it has been received by them, this time does not count within the ‘waiting list time’.

There is no universal journey – some people do not want any medical intervention, some want psychological support, some want hormone treatment, some want surgeries and again which surgeries varies. The system is designed that it meets what you need and not feel that ‘to be trans you have to do x, y and z’. If you have already got a private diagnosis of gender dysphoria and/or are on hormones, it will be up to the GIC to decide what they can accept or what they need to confirm again for hormone treatment, gamete storage, surgeries and so on. Any surgeries require one or two specialists to act as signatories. There are also some guidelines relating to requirements for certain procedures. Liberate will always be up to date with local agreements and know general information, but it is best to check out specific questions with the provider. It is also important to remember that the funding for Guernsey residents may cover slightly different things than the UK. With the change of contract to States GIC, it is very early days in terms of anecdotal experience and knowing timescales and expectations – so some things may have unknown elements to them.

Once you have started to be seen by States GIC, the exact number of appointments and the course of action will be individual. They will give their recommendations to your GP and it will be your GP practice that takes blood tests and writes prescriptions or orders medical tests.

Whilst on the waiting list (and thereafter) it is essential to inform them of any changes of name, doctor and address.

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### **Medical transition - Private route (not funded by the States of Guernsey)**

People may choose to see private specialists. This was especially the case when referrals went to the NHS, which had very long waiting lists.

There are multiple private GIC’s across the UK, please research which would be best for you.

Several people within the Liberate Trans Group have used different clinics and can provide information on their own experiences. The private clinics can provide diagnosis of gender dysphoria, hormone treatment, referrals for surgeries and actual surgeries or people can use the referrals to have private surgeries elsewhere. The clinics can provide other services which are listed on their sites. Please note that people using the online service of GenderGP have had issues with GPs accepting shared care and surgeons accepting referrals from them.

The number of appointments, treatments available and so on are once again very dependent on the individual. Waiting lists are usually far shorter than on the NHS,

but estimates can vary from a couple of months to just over a year, depending on who you want to see and when you ask. The demand for private clinics has risen and there can be waiting lists to be seen privately. Now that the States has its contract, it is expected that less Guernsey people will use the private route, but it is always an option and people may want to use this for reasons other than waiting list times e.g. to not be limited by the States choosing what can be covered or which medical professionals are seen.

The initial stage is to have psychological assessments for gender dysphoria and discuss what you are wanting. This would be with a psychologist or psychiatrist. You may have to provide additional documents from your Guernsey records, such as a most recent letter from a psychiatrist if you have/had one or reports on other health conditions. This is to ensure that they have a full up to date picture of who you are and that they can provide the best and most appropriate care. If you do want hormone therapy, you will then need to book to see an endocrinologist and have blood tests done prior to this and will need regular appointments to review these.

If you are considering using a private clinic, the best thing to do is to contact them by phone or email and ask them about their current costs, estimated number of appointments needed for different stages and their waiting list times.

If you are contacting a private GIC, it is advised to speak to your GP first. A private clinic can enter a Shared Care Agreement with a GP, so the clinic agrees to provide the reviews and will recommend treatment and the GP agrees to take blood tests, do prescriptions and alert them if there are any concerns. Many GPs locally are willing to sign up to this type of agreement but there is no obligation for them to do so. Within the Liberate Trans Group, people are able to anecdotally share which GPs have done so. The important thing is that you know that you have the medical support and back up for the route you are choosing. If you don't have the support of the GP in this way, then you would still be able to use a private clinic, but you would have to pay private prescription prices and pay for private blood tests and if there were any adverse effects or you were unwell then it would be harder to access the needed medical care.

If you do choose to use a private gender clinic, you can still also be on the list for the States' route. The timescale for States GIC referrals is now quick that this is unlikely to be used much, but it was an important element when they were using the NHS clinics and it could be 4+ years for a first appointment. The private clinics are happy to transfer your care over when you get an appointment, but until that point you would have to pay for your care and then you would be able to receive funding for further appointments, treatment, hormones, surgeries and so on. When making this decision, do bear in mind that it is not just the costs of one or two assessments – depending on how it goes you may need more initial assessments and you will need ongoing appointments if you are on hormone therapy.

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*Please note that all 'How to' information sheets are only a guide. Links and information are correct, to the best of our ability, at the time of creating but things can change over time. It is your responsibility to check the current process. If any of these guides need updating or if you notice any mistakes please let us know and we can update them.*