

- 8 JUN 2018

Gloria Fraser

Email: fyi-request-7907-814392f5@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear G. Fraser,

Thank you for your request dated 23 May 2018 requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982, regarding gender-affirming healthcare services. You requested:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The information pertaining to your request is below.

Question 1:

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

- Hormone therapy*
- Mastectomy*

- Hysterectomy
- Orchiectomy
- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training"

The endocrinology service at Hutt Valley DHB provides transgender clients with the commencement and initial supervision of gender affirming hormonal therapy, but will look to discharge clients back to their GP for longer term follow up.

The DHB is not involved in other aspects of transgender care including primary care health and surgical procedures.

Question 2:

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

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

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

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

An assessment is required in order to access gender affirming healthcare services, and whilst this is currently provided by a psychologist, it does not necessarily need to be undertaken by a mental health professional. The content of the assessment is well established and should be consistent. It could be undertaken in the future by GPs with appropriate support from counsellors / psychologists as required.

In the case of hormone therapy, there is nothing to currently stop primary health care providers prescribing many of the hormones used, with the exception of some forms of testosterone and cyproterone, which require specialist approval. However, all transgender hormonal treatment in the 3DHB region is currently initiated by an endocrinologist. There is active work to upskill select primary care centres to perform this instead and remove the need for clients to attend a hospital setting, with similar future work around wider availability of this process in primary care.

As the DHB is not involved in surgical procedures of transgender care we do not have a time frame of lived experience.

Question 3

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

When Hutt Valley DHB are unable to provide services locally and the referral meets the national specification, the DHB would refer the patient to another DHB. This travel may be covered under the National Travel Assistance programme, information is available for the criteria of this on the Ministry of Health website.

I trust this information fulfils your request.

You have the right to seek a review, under section 28(3) of the Act, by way of a complaint to the Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dale P. Oliff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Dale Oliff
Acting Chief Executive
Hutt Valley District Health Board