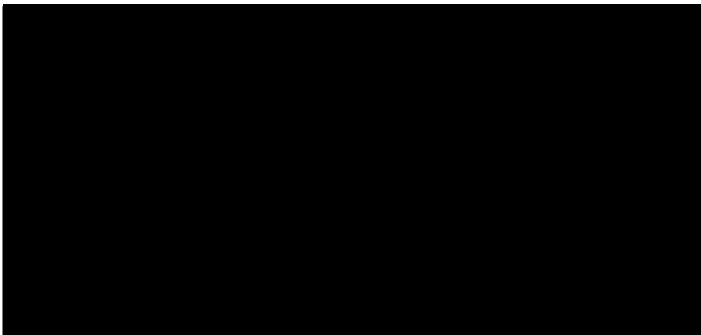


6 October 2020



Re: Official Information Request – Gender affirming healthcare services

I refer to your official information request dated 17 September 2020 requesting the following information:

Could you please advise whether the following gender-affirming healthcare services are funded by this DHB for transgender patients, and whether the services are currently available:

- **Hormone therapy**
- **Mastectomy**
- **Hysterectomy**
- **Orchidectomy**
- **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?**

Could you please advise what the process is if transgender patients require one of the above services, but the DHB does not offer this service? Does the DHB currently fund patients to travel to other areas to access this healthcare?

RESPONSE:

Could you please advise whether the following gender-affirming healthcare services are funded by this DHB for transgender patients, and whether the services are currently available:

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

Auckland DHB either directly provides or funds services including:

- Hormone therapy
- Mastectomy
- Hysterectomy
- Orchidectomy

Specialist Transgender health care is managed through either the Centre for Youth Health (CfYH) which is part of Counties Manukau DHB or Auckland Regional Sexual Health Services (ARSHS), which is part of Auckland DHB, depending on the age of the patient. Both services provide non-surgical health care for transgender people for the youth and adult Auckland, Waitematā and Counties Manukau DHBs' populations. This includes hormone therapy, nursing, medical, clinical psychology and counselling. Primary care are also involved to support management of health needs. Where appropriate, a client will be referred to a mental health professional for any underlying mental health issue.

In addition, some general surgical procedures including mastectomy, hysterectomy and orchidectomy are provided as part of the general elective services for the Auckland population. The mastectomy service is provided by the regional plastic surgery specialist surgery centre at Counties Manukau Health. Auckland DHB does not allocate specific funding for volumes of surgical interventions for the Auckland transgender population. Patients referred for surgery are assessed against the service's clinical prioritisation tool.

Auckland DHB does not provide or fund services for the following procedures for transgender or other people:

- Breast augmentation
- Facial hair removal

Voice therapy is available for people with eating or swallowing issues only.

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 CfYH at Counties Manukau DHB in

January 2017. Most young people within Auckland DHB who have required support services relating to gender identity will use the CfYH service, although a small number of young people have used services provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services at Auckland DHB.

Please see below link for details of the services provided and process of accessing them:
<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

Referrals for consideration of surgery may be sent by CfYH, ARSHS or specialist referrers to the relevant clinical service. Patients referred for surgery are assessed against the service's clinical prioritisation tool.

- **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 have access to psychology and mental health clinicians as part of their service, and most young people will be seen by them 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?**

Any registered medical practitioner can prescribe these medications. However, as most young people under the age of 18 years in Auckland DHB are seen by CfYH they will have these medications started through CfYH. A general practitioner may provide maintenance treatment, including prescribing of appropriate medication, with specialist oversight and review.

Some general practitioners may be initiating these prescriptions but we do not have the data available to be able to confirm this is occurring.

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

For all surgeries, excluding genital gender-affirming surgery, real-life experience is not a requirement. Further information regarding these services are available on Hauora Tāhine - Pathways to Transgender Healthcare Services at below link
<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

Genital surgery is funded and managed by the Ministry of Health on behalf of the DHBs. The Ministry of Health can provide details of these services.

Could you please advise what the process is if transgender patients require one of the above services, but the DHB does not offer this service? Does the DHB 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 as metro Auckland services. Auckland DHB funds all these services and there is no additional funding step or requirement in the patient pathway described above to access these services for patients from Auckland DHB. If patients meet the criteria of the National Travel Assistance (NTA) policy to access any of these services, then this will be provided.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive