

Frequently asked questions

We will update our FAQs monthly in order to provide you with the most up-to-date information about our gender reassignment service and its performance.

How does the gender reassignment process work?

Patients who wish to explore this option are referred by their GP to a gender identity clinic (GIC), run by a separate mental health trust. Many of our patients attend the GIC run by West London Mental Health Trust, which is located near Charing Cross Hospital in Hammersmith. GICs undertake an intensive process of psychological and psychiatric assessment which lasts at least one year, following the patient's change of social gender role. Once the patient has been recommended for gender reassignment surgery and funding has been confirmed, we arrange an outpatient appointment, check it is clinically safe to perform the surgery, and then book surgical and other procedures. West London Mental Health Trust has published some frequently asked questions about this process on its website which may be helpful.

How many gender reassignment operations do you perform a week?

We currently carry out an average of three gender reassignment operations a week and this is likely to increase to four in the near future. We have to take into account Ms Rashid's on-call commitments and annual leave for both surgeons, as well as the repairs that are needed.

How many gender reassignment operations do you carry out a year?

We carried out 178 gender reassignment operations in 2013/14, 143 in 2012/13 and 132 in 2011/12.

How long is the wait for gender reassignment surgery?

Individual patient waits vary according to the needs of the patient – for example, some patients need some months of electrolysis treatment before they are ready for surgery. Currently the average wait for the surgery is just

over one year from the point at which funding is confirmed.

How many patients are waiting for gender reassignment surgery?

There are currently 376 patients approved for this surgery.

What is the 18-week referral to treatment target and does it apply to this procedure?

It is a target set by the government which means that hospitals should aim to start the treatment of 95% of their patients within 18 weeks of their GP referral to us. It applies to many, but not all, NHS treatments. Because the gender reassignment process is complex and involves psychiatric assessment as well as surgical treatment, the 18-week referral to treatment target does not apply to these surgical procedures.

Can I go to a private hospital for my surgery?

The GICs may only make referrals to providers contracted by NHS England. GICs can also make referrals for self-paying patients who wish to fund their own treatment.

Why have you sent some of your patients to a private provider?

During this time of transition in our service, we have agreed to pay for a small number of our patients who have waited longer than others, since being assessed as clinically safe for surgery. In September we referred four patients to another provider.

Do you treat any surgical repairs needed after gender reassignment surgery has been carried out?

Surgical repairs are occasionally required. Patients needing repairs are put on the waiting list once they have had consultation with the surgeon and have agreed the surgical procedure required. Currently our gender reassignment surgeon Mr Phil Thomas is seeing these patients.

How many referrals do you get from GICs?

Referral numbers change month by month. In September we received 20 new referrals. By year, in 2013/14 we had 300 referrals, 275 in 2012/13, and 195 in 2011/12.

What are you doing about the increase in numbers of referrals?

We are considering the appointment of a third surgeon to increase our capacity for this service and we will be discussing this with NHS England.

How can I get more information?

Manjit Takhar and Leena Anthony are our two gender clinical nurse specialists, and Bolor Batjargal is our gender service co-ordinator. She can be contacted on 020 8483 2866, Monday to Thursday, 9am - 5pm.