

6th October 2020

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Transgender Health Services

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 10th September 2020 you requested the following information:

I am submitting this OIA as a way of reviewing how well the healthcare needs of transgender people are met nationwide. While I am aware of the fact that no individual DHB provides some of these services, they are included because some questions pertain to referrals, funding, or to check the accuracy of currently available information.

Of the following list of services, which (if any) does the Counties Manukau District Health Board provide? Does the DHB provide any services for transgender health care not listed, if so, what?

- Puberty blockers
- Hormone replacement therapy
- Fertility preservation
- Mastectomy
- Hysterectomy
- Orchiectomy
- Facial hair removal
- Breast augmentation
- Voice training
- Facial feminization surgery
- Genital reconstruction surgery
- Counselling
- Other mental health support (please specify services in response)

For services provided by the DHB:

- 1. What is their current status? What clinic (or clinics) provides the service? Are they accepting new patients?**

- 2. Broken down by provided services (and initial consultation and readiness assessments or other if applicable), how long is the current wait time on appointments for transgender health? How long have these wait times been in previous years that the service was available?**

3. What set(s) of transgender health guidelines are used to inform practice?
4. What requirements are there for patients accessing care? (Eg. Readiness assessment)
5. For HRT specifically, what is the standard practice regarding choice of medication and dosages? Are GPs expected to be able to provide HRT, and if so what support are they given to ensure quality of care? What measures are in place to ensure that all patients are fully informed of all medications that could meet their HRT needs besides the suggested treatment plan?
6. Does the DHB have a Transgender Health Key Worker (or similar)?
7. Are there any youth-specific service providers? How would an underage person access trans-specific healthcare in the DHB?
8. When were the available services first offered?
9. Have these services ever been unavailable, and if so, between what dates?
10. For the services that are not provided by the DHB:
11. Are patients referred elsewhere for these services? If so, where are they referred to?
12. Were any of these services ever previously provided by the DHB?

Regardless of transgender health service status:

13. Is there any additional support made for healthcare needs that are not particular to transgender health but are particular areas of interest for transgender health? Eg. Substance use, mental health care.
14. What plans are there, if any, to expand or improve care for transgender patients within the DHB?
15. Have there been any internal reviews of the care provided or outcomes for transgender patients? If so, what were the results of those reviews, and what action was taken based on them?
16. What measures does the DHB currently have in place to educate healthcare workers not working in transgender health areas on the needs of transgender patients they may encounter? How is their right to be treated with dignity upheld?
17. Have any actions been taken based on complaints by transgender patients? If so, what actions have been made in response to complaints?

Counties Manukau Health Response:

Counties Manukau Health's (CM Health) Kidz First Centre for Youth Health welcomes gender diverse and transgender young people to our service. We provide support for young people and whaanau/families around gender exploration and transition related healthcare across the whole Auckland Region.

- **Of the following list of services, which (if any) does the Counties Manukau District Health Board provide? Does the DHB provide any services for transgender health care not listed, if so, what?**

The services listed below in table 1 are only provided if service criteria are met and the need is established clinically.

Service	Provided
Puberty blockers	Yes
Hormone Replacement Therapy	Yes
Fertility Preservation	No - by referral to fertility services
Mastectomy	Yes
Hysterectomy	Yes
Orchidectomy	Yes
Facial Hair Removal	No - not available in the public system in CM Health
Breast Augmentation	Yes
Voice Training	Yes
Facial Feminisation Surgery	No - not available in the public system in CM Health
Genital Reconstruction Surgery	No - refer to National Provider
Counselling	Yes
Other Mental Health Support	Secondary Mental Health services if there is significant need; primary mental health support if needed; referral for transgender peer support via Rainbow Youth and/or Outline

Table 1 Sourced: Centre for Youth Health 20.09.2020

For services provided by the DHB:

1. **What is their current status? What clinic (or clinics) provides the service? Are they accepting new patients?**

Publicly available information on the Hauora Tāhine service and CM Health's Centre for Youth Health service can be accessed via the HealthPoint website at the following links, and may answer many of your questions:

- <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>
- <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/paediatrics/kidz-first-centre-for-youth-health/>

Please refer to the health services links (above) for information on the available services, including current information on provision of the procedures you have listed, and availability of a range of other supportive services and resources. This includes hormone therapy, nursing, medical, psychology and counselling services.

As part of general elective services, a small number of elective surgical procedures are provided, primarily for upper body plastic surgery. CM Health does not allocate specific funding for surgical interventions for gender assignment procedures, and referred cases are assessed and managed in line with our standard elective surgery prioritisation criteria.

As per the Hauora Tāhine services Healthpoint link, *at this time surgical services have a limited capacity for chest reconstruction and breast augmentation, with lower gender reassignment being managed by the Ministry of Health's High Cost Treatment Pool.*

More information can be found at the following link:

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/transgender-new-zealanders/health-care-transgender-new-zealanders>

Specialist services for medical support for youth across Auckland are provided via the Centre for Youth Health service, which is part of CM Health. Specialist services for adults are provided by the Regional Auckland Sexual Health Service (ARSHS), which is part of Auckland District Health Board (ADHB). Both of these services are accepting new patients.

2. Broken down by provided services (and initial consultation and readiness assessments or other if applicable), how long is the current wait time on appointments for transgender health? How long have these wait times been in previous years that the service was available?

CM Health is unable to comment on the waiting time for ARSHS, ADHB can provide information on this. The waiting time for clinic at the Centre for Youth Health fluctuates depending on demand and acuity. Demand is greater than available spaces, so there can be a delay.

As part of general elective services, wait times are managed in line with our standard elective surgery prioritisation criteria and waiting lists.

3. What set(s) of transgender health guidelines are used to inform practice?

CM Health uses the Northern Regional DHB Guidelines for Gender Affirming Healthcare. This guideline was developed with support from the Northern Region Clinical and Consumer Advisory Group. The guideline can be found at the following link:

- <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

Use is also made of the broader Aotearoa guidelines, "Guidelines for Gender Affirming Healthcare for Gender Diverse and Transgender Children, Young People and Adults" (Oliphant, October 2018).

- <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/12160>

4. What requirements are there for patients accessing care? (Eg. Readiness assessment)

Patients are eligible for Centre for Youth Health care if they need specialist care for medical management of gender affirming care, and fit age and domicile criteria. Please refer to the Hauora Tāhine services link (below) for more information on processes to access services, including service referral expectations, information on consent and other services available.

- <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

Referrals can be made directly by a primary care team (e.g. GP, practice nurse), other health services (for example by Mental Health & Endocrinology), or by school-based health teams (e.g. School Counsellor or Nurse). Self-referrals or referral by family members are also accepted.

5. For HRT specifically, what is the standard practice regarding choice of medication and dosages? Are GPs expected to be able to provide HRT, and if so what support are they given to ensure quality of care? What measures are in place to ensure that all patients are fully

informed of all medications that could meet their HRT needs besides the suggested treatment plan?

The Hauora Tāhine HealthPoint link below details some of the information given to young people and families. The informed consent model is used. Information to support GPs managing hormones once established is on the local Health Pathway for primary care.

- <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/sexual-health/hauora-tahine-pathways-to-transgender-healthcare/>

6. Does the DHB have a Transgender Health Key Worker (or similar)?

CM Health's Centre for Youth Health is a multidisciplinary team, and all young people work with a doctor and a nurse or social worker. ASHS at ADHB have a key worker; the DHB funds specific transgender peer support service.

7. Are there any youth-specific service providers? How would an underage person access trans-specific healthcare in the DHB?

CM Health's Centre for Youth Health is a Specialist Youth Provider.

8. When were the available services first offered?

Medical Services have always been available if needed, the volume has greatly increased and grown over the last 14 years.

9. Have these services ever been unavailable, and if so, between what dates?

Medical care has always been available. There is variation in availability of surgical care depending on availability of space and development of pathways.

For the services that are not provided by the DHB:

10. Are patients referred elsewhere for these services? If so, where are they referred to?

Patients are referred to Fertility services, national genital reassignment surgery service and laser hair removal in private clinics.

11. Were any of these services ever previously provided by the DHB?

No.

Regardless of transgender health service status:

12. Is there any additional support made for healthcare needs that are not particular to transgender health but are particular areas of interest for transgender health? Eg. Substance use, mental health care.

As per any person accessing services within the DHB, comprehensive care is provided and connection to other services as needed.

13. What plans are there, if any, to expand or improve care for transgender patients within the DHB?

CM Health reviews current service delivery and future service demands on a regular basis. Regional demand is discussed with the respective regional Funding and Planning staff as to what additional volumes will be funded in the following year.

14. Have there been any internal reviews of the care provided or outcomes for transgender patients? If so, what were the results of those reviews, and what action was taken based on them?

Pathways supporting care are regularly reviewed as new information becomes available.

Audits are done to review progress against care pathways that are developed. A research project was completed in 2017-2019 on the wellbeing of young people being seen by Centre for Youth Health, this is currently being written up for publication and feedback to participants.

There is also a Regional clinical governance group to help guide and monitor delivery of services and outcomes.

15. What measures does the DHB currently have in place to educate healthcare workers not working in transgender health areas on the needs of transgender patients they may encounter? How is their right to be treated with dignity upheld?

There is an online training module available for all staff via our electronic learning portal. This course is available for any DHB staff member wanting to learn about working with gender diverse and transgender people.

We have a comprehensive values programme for all staff members at CM Health that underlines the service that each of us provide to each other, the interactions we have with patients, family/whaanau and our community.

16. Have any actions been taken based on complaints by transgender patients? If so, what actions have been made in response to complaints?

All complaints are taken seriously and responded to using the appropriate DHB framework. As detailed above, the DHB is continually striving to improve its care to all the population and learning from complaints is valuable in aiding this.

For context, CM Health employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

I trust that this information is helpful. 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 may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health