



Children's Health Ireland

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann (SLÉ), Herberton, Siúlán San Séamas, Rialto, D08 HP97, Éire
Children's Health Ireland (CHI), Herberton, St James's Walk, Rialto, D08 HP97 Ireland

Our Ref: PQ 6565 22

7th February 2022

Deputy Stephen Matthews
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

RE: PQ To ask the Minister for Health his views on the adequacy of existing healthcare options available for transgender children and adolescents (Limited service had been outsourced by the HSE to Tavistock in the UK until January 2021 but this has been withdrawn since that date); if a review of services is proposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Matthews

In response to your PQ Transgender children CHI currently have no active patients under the primary care of Tavistock Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS). Following the High Court ruling in England on the 1 December 2020 regarding the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) in Tavistock and Portman (NHS Foundation Trust), a decision has been made by Tavistock and Portman service to suspend new referrals for under 16's pending the outcome and determination of any appeal. This impacts on patients who have historically had access to the Tavistock and Portman service through the HSE Treatment Abroad Scheme.

Gender incongruence is not uncommon in early childhood. Where gender incongruence persists, some young people can become more distressed with the onset of puberty (known as gender dysphoria) and may seek out medical interventions to change their natal gender. The diagnosis of gender dysphoria is dependent on strict criteria as assessed by mental health professionals. Only approx. 40% of young people with gender dysphoria will be eligible for consideration for medical intervention. There is a high proportion of young people with co-existing mental health or developmental disorders (e.g. autistic spectrum disorder) which can impact on the presentation and management of gender dysphoria.

A robust and agreed care pathway for young people with gender dysphoria needs to be developed for Irish patients in Ireland, in line with international best practice. It is equally important that the care pathway applied to children and adolescents is compatible with the adult service to which they are likely to transition, in order to provide a comprehensive, sensitive and safe service for these young people. Local and international experience



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increasingly suggests that this multidisciplinary approach should be led by a child psychiatrist with a particular interest in childhood and adolescent gender identity. The existing pathway in Ireland for pre-pubertal children generally begins with an approach by the child and family to their General Practitioner who may then refer to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). At this stage, a social transition may be advised with careful management between the family, GP, CAMHS team and school services. Assessment and management of any co existing mental health or developmental disorders need to be prioritised.

For young people under the age of 16 years, once the assessment has been made and if referral for medical intervention is being considered, this can only be done as part of a cohesive specialised team multi-disciplinary team (MDT) so that any medical intervention can be done in a safe manner, in line with best international practice and with the capacity for audit and evaluation of outcomes. The MDT team will be led by a Paediatric Psychiatrist(s) with a particular interest in Gender Identity. CHI at Crumlin have recruited a Consultant Paediatric Endocrinologist who is currently on maternity leave.

Yours sincerely

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