



## FACTSHEET

### INFORMATION FOR TRANSGENDERED TEENAGERS

This factsheet is for young people who are transsexual, questioning their gender, or have any other transgender issue. If you cannot see the information you seek, please contact us as [info@mermaidsuk.org.uk](mailto:info@mermaidsuk.org.uk).

Gender variance and transgender issues have always existed long before the media started to highlight them. They may seem to be on the increase, but this is most likely down to the fact that people are more aware of them, and there is more information available on the internet. These issues can be very scary, but there is a lot of information available these days, and protection within the law. Treatment is available on the NHS, and Mermaids can offer ongoing support and information.

Children are known to be aware of their gender from the age of 4 or 5, others even before that age may reach instinctively for the toys of the opposite gender. Sometimes someone who is gender variant or trans may not have been aware of their issues from an early age. They may feel that they do not quite fit in with their peers, but may not yet realise why, until some years later.

Gender variance and transgender issues can be very scary, but there is a lot of information available these days, and protection within the law. Treatment is available on the NHS, and Mermaids can offer ongoing support and information. The important thing to remember now is that you are not alone - there are other young people like you, other families like yours. Gender Dysphoria is a medical condition recognised in the UK, and therefore you are entitled to treatment.

These online resources can be very useful. The first is to be used by all the professionals who care for young people, as well as by their families. The second is aimed directly at GPs:

[www.nlmcontent.nesc.nhs.uk/sabp/gv](http://www.nlmcontent.nesc.nhs.uk/sabp/gv)

[www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/gendervariance](http://www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/gendervariance) (from early 2015)

There is a lot of information about gender dysphoria via the NHS - <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Gender-dysphoria/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

This page explains how it can affect children and young people:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Transhealth/Pages/Transparentalworries.aspx>

The NHS pages above are also useful for family members, and friends.

Gires ([www.gires.org.uk](http://www.gires.org.uk)) also has a lot of information, for families, for you, and they have information on treatment, and legal issues for young people. Gendered Intelligence also have an excellent resource for family and friends:

<http://www.genderedintelligence.co.uk/>

**Parents:** Gender issues are often hard for parents to understand, as their child might not have shown any indication of their feelings when they were younger. Their child may have learned at a young age not to behave outside the norms for their birth gender to avoid trouble. Lots of parents are supportive and accepting, and only want to do what's best for their child. But even so it can be difficult for them. Parents worry about a lot of things to do with trans issues: their child's safety, the difficulty of seeing their child change gender (grief is common, even though their child isn't dying!), learning to cope with a new name etc. They may worry about what other people will think, will their child still do well at school, will they be able to find work, a career, relationships, marriage, have children? Sometimes the whole thing is so hard to understand that they just ignore it and hope it will go away. If they aren't initially supportive, please be patient – they may yet surprise you!

## 2) TREATMENT

In order to start the ball rolling for treatment, you need to see your GP for a confidential chat. There is a specialist NHS clinic that sees children and young people with gender issues, this is the Gender Identity Development Service, mainly based at the Tavistock clinic in London - they also have a clinic in Leeds, and an outreach clinic in Exeter. The Tavistock can also try to help parents (and siblings) understand their child's feelings. They refer people on to an adult GIC once they reach 18 years.

<http://www.tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/care-and-treatment/information-parents-and-carers/our-clinical-services/gender-identity-development>

The Tavistock's Patient leaflet is helpful and detailed: <http://snipurl.com/patientleaflet>

There is also NHS help available for young people from the Sandyford, in Glasgow - [http://www.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentityservice\\_sf\[1\].pdf](http://www.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentityservice_sf[1].pdf)

The route to get to any of these, if you (and your parents if you are under 18) feel it is a good idea, is:-

- 1) GP for a confidential chat - they could refer you directly to the Tavistock or the Sandyford, but might also refer you instead to...
- 2) CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service) for initial assessment and local support.

3) CAMHS should then refer you to either the Tavistock or the Sandyford, depending on where you live. Ireland is a bit different I think, so please ask us to find out.

Notes - i) Some CAMHS have very long waiting lists - which may be over the 18 weeks which is the Tavistock's current wait time, perhaps the GP could refer to both at the same time, as the earlier a referral is made to the Tavistock, the better.

ii) For those people who live in England and Scotland, the Tavistock does not require funding from the local health authority, as they have their own funds. Wales and N.I. require funding.

iii) The Sandyford also accepts self-referrals.

iv) Nottingham GIC will accept referrals for 17 year olds.

The NHS is very cautious - they do not rush into any treatment that is not reversible. Treatment initially consists of a lot of talking, mainly to create a history of your feelings, and will contain notes on how you continue to feel. You would not get hormones straight away - they like to make sure that any decisions they may be the right ones for you.

Medical intervention, if appropriate, would start with the blocker - provided enough assessment has already taken place. This is an injection which merely suspends the production of your natural hormones for a while, meaning no further physical development related to your biological gender. This can be a useful diagnostic tool, as sometimes young people decide they do not want to be without their natural hormones. Others are happier without them, and so for them decisions may be taken to then give them hormones to induce the characteristics of the desired gender. Hormones would not be given until age 16+. At age 18 they would then, if appropriate, be referred to an adult gender identity clinic. Once there, surgical options could be discussed.

If you are already 18 or over, then your GP should refer you to an adult Gender Identity Clinic (GIC). The one in Nottingham just requires a referral from a GP, all others require referrals to come from a psychiatrist. You will, of course, have to wait until funding is in place. The Sandyford Clinic in Glasgow will see adults.

[http://www.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentityservice\\_sf%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentityservice_sf%5B1%5D.pdf)

Do your parents know how you feel? If not you could have that initial chat with the GP, but if you still live at home then it might be difficult for you to be seeing any therapists without their knowledge. If they do know already, then perhaps you could tell them about the treatment options? Some young people do decide to wait until they are independent of their parents, perhaps away at college or university.

### **3) SCHOOLS, AND YOUR RIGHTS**

You do not need to have medical treatment, either talking, or hormones etc., to transition to the desired gender. The Equality Act 2010 means that people who have the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment'\* have rights to be treated fairly, respectfully, and equally as people who are not trans. All individuals and agencies

(colleges, workplaces, clubs etc.) are subject to this law, too, so they should take steps to integrate trans people, and protect them from transphobic and homophobic hate crimes - which include bullying.

\* this means anyone who looks as if they have had, or might have at some time, gender reassignment. It includes people who may not be trans, but whose appearance may not be that expected of their birth gender. All schools are covered by this and must make allowances for any child who comes under any of the protected characteristics. It is not illegal to make special allowances for them as they have certain special needs.

<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/types-of-discrimination>

[http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/pdfs/public\\_sector\\_equality\\_duty\\_guidance\\_for\\_schools\\_in\\_england\\_final.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/pdfs/public_sector_equality_duty_guidance_for_schools_in_england_final.pdf)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/269341/Equality\\_Act\\_2010\\_-\\_advice.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269341/Equality_Act_2010_-_advice.pdf) schools - gender reassignment p.15

This is a very good Guidance for Schools from the Intercom Trust:

[http://www.intercomtrust.org.uk/resources/cornwall\\_schools\\_transgender\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.intercomtrust.org.uk/resources/cornwall_schools_transgender_guidance.pdf)

There is another resource created by Lancashire council which is also very good, plus another written by Press for Change that we can send as an attachment, if needed. Local education authorities/councils often also have their own guidance.

There is also a lot of help and guidance for schools on the Rainbow teaching website

<http://rainbowteaching.co.uk/>

Their aims are To provide *free* support and guidance to teachers and school staff, to challenge anti-LTBT+ bigotry in schools and to provide guidance on an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum.

### **Changing Exam Certificates**

Names can be changed on exam certificates by contacting the exam boards

AQA:- [SMiller1@qa.org.uk](mailto:SMiller1@qa.org.uk)

Edexcel/Pearson :- [student.requests@pearson.com](mailto:student.requests@pearson.com)

OCR:- [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

WJEC;- [replacementcertificates@wjec.co.uk](mailto:replacementcertificates@wjec.co.uk)

## **4) USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS**

There is a lot of information available on this site for schools, and young people - [www.gires.org.uk](http://www.gires.org.uk). This includes information on bullying, treatment, and legal issues.

This link takes you to a comprehensive directory of the groups campaigning for, supporting or assisting transgender people and their families across the UK

[http://www.gires.org.uk/tranzwiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.gires.org.uk/tranzwiki/index.php/Main_Page)

Press for Change are the UK specialists in transgender legal issues: [www.pfc.org.uk](http://www.pfc.org.uk). Mermaids may be able to put people in contact with other legal experts who are willing and able to help trans children.

Legal name change (if under 16 this must be done with the parents' permission) either by Statutory Declaration, or by deed poll. All documents can be changed to reflect the preferred name and gender, except the Birth Certificate (which requires a Gender Recognition Certificate, currently only available to adults). This includes Passports, and the name and gender recorded on the school roll. Mermaids can advise.

## 5) BOOKS

There are some useful books that you might consider reading, often available from Amazon UK (there are lots of others):

**The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals** by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper

A comprehensive, first-of-its-kind guidebook for the unique challenges that thousands of families face raising children who step outside of the pink or blue box.

**Gender Born, Gender Made** by Diane Ehrensaft.

a comprehensive guidebook for the parents and therapists of children who do not identify with or behave according to their biological gender.

**Helping your Transgender Teen**, by Irwin Krieger.

only 80 pages, paperback, packed with useful and sensible information.

**The Boy who was Born a Girl**, by Jon and Luisa Edwards - it is excellent in explaining things from a transperson's point of view. Jon is a young transguy (born female) but his experiences are similar to those of a transgirl, and his mother's feelings are quite typical of those of other Mermaids' mums.

**Luna by Julie-Ann Peters** - story of a teenaged transgirl (MtF) as told by her sister.

[http://www.library.uiuc.edu/blog/esslchildlit/archives/2011/01/transgender\\_lit.html](http://www.library.uiuc.edu/blog/esslchildlit/archives/2011/01/transgender_lit.html) for young adults

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Read-the-Rainbow-A-Discussion-of-LGBT-Young-Adult-Literature/196568187053965>

## 6) SUPPORT

All our committee volunteers are DBS checked.

Do you think it might help if you were to be able to talk to other young people with similar problems? We have an online forum for teenagers (age 12-19). The admins are CRB/DBS checked. It is a very friendly group.

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mermaids\\_uk/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mermaids_uk/)

We also have a similar one for parents, which is also very friendly.

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Mermaids-UK-parents/info>

This link takes you to a comprehensive directory of the groups campaigning for, supporting or assisting transgender people and their families across the UK

[http://www.gires.org.uk/tranzwiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.gires.org.uk/tranzwiki/index.php/Main_Page)

There are other places you could choose, too:

[www.queeryouth.org.uk](http://www.queeryouth.org.uk) - info about local LGBT groups, forums etc.

Gendered Intelligence. <http://www.genderedintelligence.co.uk/> (London)

In Scotland: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk>

NW England: <http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk/for-young-people-2/afternoon-tea/>

And numerous LGBT youth groups around the UK (many listed on the Queer Youth network.

Mermaids doesn't yet hold regular meetings, but we do hold some. We do not advertise them - they are for members only, which means members of the online forums, or people we have got to know a little, whose contact details are held on a confidential list.

Do let us know if you have any questions - if we do not know the answers, we will endeavour to find them.

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