



FACTSHEET

INFORMATION FOR THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF GENDER-VARIANT AND TRANSGENDER ADOLESCENTS AND TEENAGERS

1) INTRODUCTION

We hope this sheet will give you all the facts you need at the moment. The important thing to remember now is that you are not alone - there are other parents and carers like you, other children like your child. 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.

Grief is common - which may seem odd to some as no-one is actually dying. For some parents it can take a while to realise that it is the loss of a familiar relationship - and all that relationship might have meant for the future. Also change can be hard and very stressful, even when wanted and planned for (eg. house move, new job, new baby, etc) and it isn't just the trans person that does all the changing.

It's also important to remember that this is no-one's fault. Science is starting to prove that this happens in the womb, a short time after conception, so it's nothing that could have been avoided even if you'd been aware of it from the start.

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 the issues now, there is more information available on the internet and people are less frightened of speaking out about their feelings.

It is often hard for parents to understand how their child is feeling as they may not have shown any indication of those feelings when they were younger. This may be because children learn at a young age that to behave outside the norms for their birth gender can result in gentle chiding, ridicule, or outright nastiness - so they learn to hide it. Some children are aware of feeling that their birth gender does not fit with how they feel inside from the age of 4 or 5, others even before that age may instinctively reach for the toys of the "opposite" gender. Some may feel that they do not quite fit in with their peers, but may not yet understand why.

Sometimes someone who is gender variant may not have been aware of their feelings from an early age and start to understand their feelings later- often around the time of puberty.

Gender variant children often find it hard to be accepted by their peers so they can sometimes be quite lonely and often are the victims of bullying. As a result of this, and their own worries about their gender, schoolwork can also suffer. Some have other complex needs that also need to be addressed (eg dyslexia, ADHD, autism spectrum, eating disorders).

Not all young people who are unhappy with their assigned gender role go forward for treatment with blockers, hormones and surgery, and choose to stay in their birth gender. However even those who do decide to transition (live in their true gender) can still be happy, and lead the kind of life that a parent would want them to. Many such young people successfully achieve excellent results in Higher Education, marry with families and go on to good jobs. Trans people can now adopt or foster and for some the chance of fertility preservation may allow them to have their own children.

Legal name change – this can be done (with both parents' permission under the age of 16yrs) either by Statutory Declaration or by deed poll. Names can be changed by deed poll very simply at any time and can be done free. You may find the following sites useful:

<https://www.gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll/overview>

<http://freedeedpoll.org.uk/>

Once a name has been changed by deed poll it is unlawful to use the old name; therefore schools, colleges and other organisations will have, by law, to refer to your child by their new name. Following this, with a supporting letter from a medical practitioner, names and gender markers on passports can be changed

After the age of 18yrs, those who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria and have lived in their true gender for a period of 2 years can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). This makes their acquired gender legal in all respects - once they have this they can apply for a new birth certificate (this is the only document that they cannot change prior to getting a GRC).

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

www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/gendervariance

2) TREATMENT

There is professional help available on the NHS

In England the specialist clinic that sees young people from any age up to age 18 is hosted by the Tavistock and Portman Trust's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS). This is provided out of clinics in London, Leeds & Exeter with some outreach services available in Brighton, Bristol, Bath and Barnstable.

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

The GIDS in Scotland is hosted by the Sandyford clinic in Glasgow

[http://www.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentityservice_sf\[1\].pdf](http://www.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentityservice_sf[1].pdf)

Young people who reside in Wales are seen within the Tavistock and Portman service who have recently opened an outreach clinic in South Wales.

The GIDS is a multi-disciplinary service that is staffed with clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, endocrinologists and social workers. They do not try to push a child in any particular direction but they will explore the child's feelings and assist in alleviating any problems until the gender issues are resolved one way or another (this may range from naturally growing out of the gender variance, to the use of medical intervention to assist in transition from one gender to another). The GIDS can also help advise schools and colleges who have gender variant students.

Following a lengthy period of just talking to assess the situation (usually over 3 to 5 visits), puberty blockers (an injection) may be suggested. These can be prescribed once the assessment process is complete soon after puberty starts. This initial intervention is completely reversible and just suppresses the production of natural sex hormones (oestrogen and testosterone). This gives time for further assessment, and also gives a young person chance to further explore their feelings without the stress of feeling that their body is developing in the wrong direction. If the young person decides not to continue with medical treatment, stopping the blockers will mean that puberty re-starts in the natural way.

Later on, after at least a year on blockers and after the age of 16, a low dose of cross-gender hormones might be offered. All of these procedures would require parental permission

The GIDS will also support the family and help them explore how they are feeling about the situation. They host family days, parents groups & groups for teenagers. They also have experience of working with children with special needs or other problems.

The GIDS leaflets can be found here:

<http://snipurl.com/patientleaflet>

<http://www2.sandyford.org/media/88274/genderidentity%20service.pdf>

Referral Process

- 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.

Notes:

1. Some CAMHS have very long waiting lists - which may be over 18 weeks (which is the GIDS' maximum wait time for a first appointment). If your child is close to or already going through puberty ask the GP to refer you to both at the same time. The earlier a referral is made to the GIDS the better.
2. It's worth remembering that the Tavistock has its own funding for those people who live in England and Scotland, so these health authorities will not have to find funding. Sadly the rest of the UK requires funding and so the.
3. The Sandyford also accepts self-referrals.

Older children

Most adult GIDS accept referrals for young people aged 17 or older. Those aged 18 and over will need to be referred to an adult Gender Identity Clinic (GIC). There are various GICs around the UK. If your child is nearly 17 or older it may be worth a referral direct to an adult clinic. However many of the adult services have extremely long waiting lists for first appointments so it is worth doing some research before you decide on your referral route. Recent waiting times for adult GIC can be seen here:

<http://uktrans.info/waitingtimes>

3) LEGAL ISSUES/SCHOOLS

All agencies have a duty of care towards a child with regards to bullying or any other unpleasant situations etc. This is covered in the Equality Act 2010 under the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment' - this sounds odd when talking about a child, but it actually means anyone who is outside the accepted gender norms - someone who acts as though they might one day have gender reassignment, even if they eventually do not, or has had, or will have gender reassignment. This means that the agencies (school, work doctors etc) must take steps to integrate children like your child, and to alleviate any discomfort they may feel. It may mean educating their peers or staff to accept those that are a little bit 'different'. It is not illegal to make special allowances for trans or gender variant young people as they have certain special needs.

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

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

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-LGBT+ bigotry in schools and to provide guidance on an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum.

GIRES also have good resources for schools and can also help advise on legal issues.

<http://www.gires.org.uk/index.php/education>

<http://www.gires.org.uk/index.php/law>

They will also advise schools on all aspects of making provisions for young trans people and will provide in-house training if required.

Changing Exam Certificates

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

AQA:- SMiller1@aga.org.uk

Edexcel/Pearson :- student.requests@pearson.com

OCR:- general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

WJEC:- replacementcertificates@wjec.co.uk

4) USEFUL LINKS

There is very good information on this NHS site

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Gender-dysphoria - there is a video of a transman (FTM) if you click on 'Real Stories).

And here, about children with gender issues:

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

There is a lot of information available on this site for schools, families, and young people www.gires.org.uk. This includes information on bullying, medical treatment, as well as 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

5) BOOKS

There are some useful books that you might consider reading (all should be available from AmazonUK):

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.

6) SUPPORT

All our committee volunteers are DBS checked.

Mermaids has an online forum for parents - this is: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Mermaids-UK-parents/> - the members are very friendly, full of practical advice, and moral support. If you do apply to join, you will be sent an email to which you must reply before membership can be approved. Members are notified of any meetings, and informative news items.

In Scotland, parents and carers can access advice here: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk>

There are also support forums or groups for your child:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mermaids_uk/ (ages 13-19) - all our admins are DBS checked).

www.queeryouth.org.uk - info about local LGBT groups, forums etc.

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

Trans youth North West <http://www.lgym.org.uk/transweb/>

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

Mermaids does not have its own premises, but we do hold some meetings. These are for members only, including those on the forums. They are not advertised elsewhere, for safety and confidentiality.

If you have any questions, do please email us at: info@mermaidsuk.org.uk or call 020 8123 4819. If we do not know the answers, we will endeavour to find them!

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BM MERMAIDS, LONDON, WC1N 3XX - Phone: 0208 123 4819
Web: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk - email: info@mermaidsuk.org.uk
Charity Number 1160575