

Frequently asked questions

Published: August 2015

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.

As of the end of July 2015:

There are 377 people on our waiting list.

- 17 people have been approved for their operation and given a date
- 68 people have been approved for their operation and are awaiting a date
- 45 people are 'on hold' as they are not yet fit for surgery
- 227 people are waiting for an initial consultation with the consultant
- 6 patients left the waiting list without surgery (this includes patients who have been discharged back for not attending their appointments or who no longer wish to proceed with surgery)
- The average waiting time is 87.5 weeks. This includes delays for hair removal/delays due to the patient being unfit for surgery.
- Between June and July 40 patients were transferred to Parkside

During July 2015:

- 10 people had surgery (3 procedures were performed by Phil Thomas and 7 by Tina Rashid)
- 5 pre-operative assessments were carried out
- We received 15 new referrals
- 5 Imperial patients were treated by a private provider

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 1 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 3 gender reassignment operations a week and this is likely to increase to 4 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 87.5 weeks.

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

The Trust agrees with NHS England that our gender reassignment patients should receive the same services and rights as all other NHS patients and that they should be seen and treated as quickly as possible. This is why we are working with NHS England and the private sector to agree a plan to recruit more surgeons, increase capacity, and reduce the waiting time. Our objective will be to reduce the waiting time for surgery to less than 18 weeks, in line with the national target for treatment to begin within 18 weeks of referral. We are working to agree with NHS England the detail of exactly how this target should apply and be reported for this patient group.

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.

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 July we received 15 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 are you increasing the capacity of your gender reassignment service?

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust is in discussion with NHS England about increasing the number of gender reassignment operations that we are commissioned to undertake each year. The Trust is also working to provide these operations more quickly to our patients.

We are currently finalising an agreement with NHS England to perform a larger number of operations this year and in the future, including continuing to refer some of the longest waits to the private sector. We have also started to recruit and train more surgeons to carry out this important surgical work, currently undertaken by a two-surgeon team.

We will announce the increased number of surgeries as soon as this is agreed with NHS England. We look forward to our patients benefiting from shorter waiting times.

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 coordinator. She can be contacted on 020 3311 5053, Monday to Thursday, 9am - 5pm. Alternatively

you can email her at imperial.grs@nhs.net.

Please note Bolor can only deal with enquiries directly related to the gender surgery department at Charing Cross Hospital. She is unable to help with enquiries relating to the Gender Identity Clinic West London Mental Health Trust. If you need to contact the gender identity clinic please call 020 8354 8354 or visit www.wlmht.nhs.uk.