

Summary of Escalation from Healthwatch England to NHS England (September 2014)

Local Healthwatch have escalated to HWE various issues around gender identity services – particularly linked to lack of access to these services. After receiving the initial escalation, a further 7 local Healthwatch shared evidence of similar concerns. These include:

- Mis-communication locally on who commissions the service
- Mis-communication on funding available for the service
- Considerable delays in accessing this service – years in some cases
- Individuals being put on waiting lists as “money has run out” for the service
- Unclear timelines and changes in timelines on when treatment will occur
- Insufficient support to patients, particularly to those awaiting for treatment
- Lack of communication and contact from providers of the service
- Individuals “falling out” of the access pathway and struggling to re-access the service
- Wider concerns with the treatment of the transgender community by health professionals

HWE then received additional concerns, including:

- There is insufficient communication to patients on what is happening, why they are waiting, and what support they can get whilst they wait to receive treatment
- GPs need to be provided with more information as most are not aware of gender identity services and the current issues. Also patients need to have feedback from the GI Clinic and the initial GP needs to be kept in focus with the patient
- There is a lack of provision locally of psychological therapies for transgender people and their families. People have two options: either they travel to London (usually at their own expense) for a 50 minute session, or they see a mental health professional who does not have expertise around transgender or gender identity locally.
- Long waiting times can lead to anxiety, depression or suicide attempts – and better support needs to be provided to patients

Healthwatch England, 20th November 2014