

Gender Identity Development in Children. Top Tips for Prescribers NW

Primary care prescribers are finding themselves being asked to take on “shared care” for children, from Gender Identity Clinics operating independently (outside the NHS).

You might find yourself feeling under pressure because:

- The patient/parent has researched the topic and is articulate about the subject
- You might be feeling out of your depth/beyond your competence
- You want to help prevent further suffering
- You do not want to be accused of being prejudiced
- The paperwork and websites look slick and professional

Here are some top tips to help, until the Cass Review is published (<https://cass.independent-review.uk/>)

1. If you feel uncomfortable, then:

- Give yourself time to **educate yourself**. A circular was published in 2018 to help GPs with decision-making and whilst this relates to adults rather than children, it reminds us of the importance of ensuring requests to share care come from reputable gender identity services: <https://www.dpt.nhs.uk/download/VjSSV5TQVv>.
- **seek support and document** your conversations with colleagues such as: consultants, gender identity specialists, pharmacists, safeguarding, safety teams, prescribing colleagues, and the contacts below.
- **clarify expectations** with the patient/parent, namely:

“if a doctor feels under pressure to prescribe a medication that they believe is not in the patient’s interests, the doctor should follow the GMC guidance *“Consent: patients and doctors making decisions together”* Paragraph 5d states: *“If the patient asks for a treatment that the doctor considers would not be of overall benefit to them, the doctor should discuss the issues with the patient and explore the reasons for their request. If, after discussion, the doctor still considers that the treatment would not be of overall benefit to the patient, they do not have to provide the treatment. But they should explain their reasons to the patient, and explain any other options that are available, including the option to seek a second opinion.”*

2. In cases of shared care, be clear about what you are agreeing to take responsibility for. You DO NOT HAVE TO PRESCRIBE. Suggestions in how to support your patient could be to provide parts of the service within your comfort/competence (e.g. do blood tests locally and send to the specialist for monitoring).

3. Remember whoever signs the prescription takes responsibility. The GMC states:

“You are responsible for the prescriptions that you sign. You must only prescribe drugs when you have adequate knowledge of your patient’s health. And you must be satisfied that the drugs serve your patient’s need” (see further reading for the complete guidance including shared care responsibilities).

4. Remember that evidence-based-medicine and safe prescribing requires you to consider 4 things together:

- scientific evidence (e.g. the formulary, NICE guidance, advice from meds management etc)
- patient’s values and preferences
- clinical judgment (e.g. prescribers past experience, competence)
- affordability.

5. Many of the hormonal blockers are classed as Controlled Drugs (Schedule 4 Part 2). Remember to report any concerns to the Accountable Officer for Controlled Drugs at www.cdreporting.co.uk

Further reading and support

GMC Guidance on prescribing responsibility <https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-practice-in-prescribing-and-managing-medicines-and-devices#:~:text=You%20are%20responsible%20for%20the,drugs%20serve%20your%20patient's%20need.&text=It%20reminds%20you%20that%20where,or%20those%20close%20to%20you>. April 2021

Primary Care Responsibilities In Regard To Requests by Private On-Line Medical Service Providers to Prescribe Hormone Treatments for Transgender People
<https://www.dpt.nhs.uk/download/VjSSV5TQVv> January 2018

NHS. Think your child might be trans or non-binary?
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/think-your-child-might-be-trans-or-non-binary/> 4 June 2018

Cheshire and Merseyside

CAMHS crisis care line which is open 24/7 patients/parents/carers can access this directly on (0151) 293 3577

Trans-Health Education (THE) in Liverpool is run by YPAS and offers support to any young person who is gender diverse or questioning. It offers group sessions to meet others and also one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance and help with accessing referrals. They will also advocate on the young person's behalf. They work with anyone from 12 to 18 but advice and guidance is available from 10 to 25 years. Self or professional referral.

CMAGIC -- the NHS England/Improvement funded pilot adult GID service for Cheshire and Merseyside. The service itself is only for adults but clinicians would be able to help or signpost.

Lancashire and South Cumbria

<https://gids.nhs.uk/>

Greater Manchester

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/>

<https://www.theproudtrust.org/>

https://lgbt.foundation/?_cf_chl_managed_tk__=pmd_7Pk6gG8tx6NpOr9bWY8HaTmh1yaZM_wq2FEXxrC3lfc-1633520482-0-gqNtZGzNAqWjcnBszRKR

<https://indigogenderservice.uk/>

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Issued October 2021

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