

# Frequently asked questions

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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 February 2015:

There are 389 people on our waiting list.

- 10 people have been approved for their operation and given a date
- 76 people have been approved for their operation and are awaiting a date
- 39 people are 'on hold' as they are not yet fit for surgery
- 264 people are waiting for an initial consultation with the consultant
- 0 patients left the waiting list without surgery (these include 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 69 weeks. This includes delays for hair removal/delays due to the patient being unfit for surgery.

During February 2015:

- 12 people had surgery (five procedures were performed by Phil Thomas and seven by Tina Rashid)
- 7 pre-operative assessments were carried out
- We received 14 new referrals
- 0 Imperial patients were treated by a private provider

## **How does the gender reassignment process work?**

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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?**

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We currently carry out an average of three 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?**

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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?**

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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 69 weeks.

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

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It is a target set by the government which means that hospitals should aim to start the treatment of 95 per cent of their patients within 18 weeks of their GP referral to us. It applies to many, but not all, NHS treatments. Because the gender reassignment process is complex and involves psychiatric assessment as well as surgical treatment, the 18-week referral to treatment target has not traditionally applied to these surgical procedures which come after the patient has been treated in the gender identity clinics. However, we are in discussion with NHS England about increasing the volume of the surgical service which we deliver for them, with a view to reducing the waiting time over the next two years.

## **Can I go to a private hospital for my surgery?**

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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.

## **Why have you sent some of your patients to a private provider?**

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Due to a period of transition in our service in 2014 (staffing changes), we agreed to pay for a small number of our patients who had waited longer than others, since being assessed as clinically safe for surgery. We aim to avoid transferring patients to a private provider and explore all other options first. However, in exceptional circumstances, i.e. if a patient's surgery is cancelled at short notice and they cannot be treated by the Trust within a reasonable timeframe, the patient may be transferred to a private provider for treatment.

## **Do you treat any surgical repairs needed after gender reassignment surgery has been carried out?**

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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?**

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Referral numbers change month by month. In February we received 14 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?**

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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 can I get more information?**

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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 8483 2866, Monday to Thursday, 9am - 5pm.