



Dear Colleague

NHS Waiting Times Guidance 2023 - application to Gender Identity Clinics

1. You will have noted that the Scottish Government's updated [NHS Scotland Waiting Times Guidance](#) published in December 2023, as well as an updated [National Access Policy](#).
2. A letter [issued to you](#) on 4 December 2023 highlights:
 - the expectation that the principles contained within the Guidance should be followed from issue, but that it is understood that a transition period will be required to allow full implementation by Health Boards; and
 - a request that Health Boards complete and return implementation plans to the Scottish Government by 30 April 2024.
3. The Scottish Government is aware that queries regarding the application of waiting times guidance/standards to services provided by NHS gender identity clinics feature frequently in communication from patients to Health Boards. The purpose of this letter is to confirm to Health Boards that it is expected that the updated Guidance is applied to waiting lists to access NHS gender identity clinics.
4. The application of this updated Guidance in respect of gender identity clinics was supported by the Waiting Times Guidance Review working group. All four NHSScotland gender identity clinics are also aware that the Guidance should be applied in respect of their clinics, through their membership of the Scottish Government National Gender Identity Healthcare Reference Group.
5. NHS gender identity clinics can provide a range of

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Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Scotland

For information

Directors of Nursing,
Directors of AHP,
Directors of Operations,
Medical Directors

Enquiries to:

Scottish Government Planned Care
Policy Team

E-mail: waitingtimespolicy@gov.scot

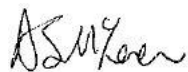
support, treatment and onward referral. As a result, some specific treatment offered within these services, or onward referral, may be subject to [Psychological Therapies and Interventions Waiting Times Standards](#). However, gender identity clinics should in the main be treated as consultant-led outpatient services and the requirements and principles set out by the updated NHS Waiting Times Guidance should therefore apply to waiting list management for gender identity clinics and their patient cohort. These services, and referral into them from Health Boards who do not host a gender identity clinic themselves, should be considered in the development of broader Guidance implementation plans.

6. The Guidance includes information on the importance of providing clear, accurate and transparent communications for those at the beginning of their care journey as well as expectations in terms of waiting list validation and standard waiting list management principles.

Gender identity service waiting times and patient cohort data – Public Health Scotland (PHS)

7. Linked to the above, the Scottish Government has commissioned Public Health Scotland to improve data reporting for gender identity clinics in order to establish robust national waiting times data collection, monitoring and reporting for these clinical services. This work is now well established. Health Boards providing gender identity clinics are asked to ensure continued cooperation with this work.
8. Working collectively to deliver as high quality and standardised waiting list and referral data as possible is of key importance in this field. In particular, this information will help support evidence-informed, long-term planning for sustainable delivery of these clinical services.

Yours sincerely



Douglas McLaren
Deputy Chief Operating Officer

