

## **New Specialist Gender Service for Children and Young People Opens**

We are delighted to announce that a new service providing specialist gender related care and support to children and young people opens on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

Commissioned by NHS England, the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Service (North West) will be hosted by Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust and delivered in partnership with the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital (part of Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust).

In September 2020, NHS England commissioned an independent and wide-ranging expert review of gender identity services for children and young people led by Dr Hilary Cass, past president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

Together, Alder Hey and the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital have used guidance set out by NHS England – informed by the Cass Review's interim report (published in 2022) - to develop and deliver a new kind of service.

The Cass review was clear that the new regional centres should be led by experienced specialist children's healthcare providers and ideally specialist children's hospitals with strong links to mental health services.

The service will be open to children and young people up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It will focus on both physical and mental health support, provided by a multi-disciplinary team of paediatricians, nurse specialists, mental health professionals (including psychiatrists and psychological professionals), occupational therapists, social workers, youth workers, family therapists and speech and language therapists. We have appointed a number of roles in the service – including clinical practitioners from a range of professions – which enables us to safely start the service. Recruitment will continue to fill all remaining positions.

All staff involved in the service have been given specialist training, including programmes delivered by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. The new service will follow NHS England's policy on puberty suppressing hormones [NHS England » Clinical policy: puberty suppressing hormones](#) and gender affirming hormones [NHS commissioning » Gender Services Clinical Programme \(england.nhs.uk\)](#).

Our team of specialist health professionals will work alongside local services including GPs, other health and social care professionals, voluntary sector services and mental health teams to ensure children and young people are given the support they need. Children and young people will have the time, space and support to consider their options in a welcoming and friendly environment. Families and/or carers will also be involved and supported.

Underpinning the new service is a committed focus to research which will enable it to evolve over time in response to the latest evidence and feedback from children, young people and their families. Learning from what works well and what doesn't is going to be important to ensure the service delivers the best possible care to children and young people.

“We are proud of the team from Alder Hey and Manchester who have worked tirelessly together to develop this hugely important new service for children and young people. This will be a fundamentally different service to what was offered previously and brings the expertise of two specialist children's hospitals, mental health services and other local services together to provide the care recommended by Dr Cass.

“At the heart of the service is a real focus on delivering quality care to children and young people, many of whom have experienced emotional distress in their lives, and who deserve all the care and support that together Alder Hey and Manchester can offer them. We look forward to welcoming them and their families from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024”.

**Louise Shepherd (Chief Executive of Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust) and Stephen Dickson (Chief Executive of the Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital)**

The service will be one of the first specialist regional centres of its kind to open; two regional centres have been commissioned by NHS England to start on 02 April 2024, one in the North-West and one in London. NHS England has indicated there will be a total of up to seven or eight regional centres opened across the country over time.

The North West Service will work closely with the NHS Children and Young People’s Gender Service (London); a partnership between Evelina London Children’s Hospital (part of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust), Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

From April, both regional centres will focus on the safe transfer and care of existing children and young people from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, which was previously the only NHS provider of gender services for children and young people.

The national waiting list is being held by Arden and GEM CSY on behalf of NHS England and children and young people will be transferred across to the new regional centres as soon as appointments become available.