



Independent review  
into gender identity  
services for children  
and young people

## Lived experience focus group – background information for participants

Thank you for offering your time to share your thoughts and ideas about NHS gender services for children and young people. You may find it helpful to read this background information before you attend the session.

### About the Cass Review

You may be aware of the independent review of gender identity services for children and young people known as The Cass Review.

The review is separate from the NHS and the government. Our job is to make recommendations about how to develop and improve the services provided by the NHS to children and young people who need support around their gender identity. The NHS then decides whether it accepts our recommendations and, if so, how it will put them into practice.

Last year the Review published an interim report which set out our work to date and what we had learnt about gender healthcare for children and young people. The report gave some early advice to the NHS on how it could improve services, but it did not set out final recommendations.

We know that there has been a lot said about the Review in the press and on social media and this isn't always very accurate. The Independent Review has a website where you can find out more about what we are looking at, how we are going about our work and read the advice that has already been given to the NHS. <https://cass.independent-review.uk/>

### Why the current service needs to change

Not all children and young people who are transgender, non-binary, gender diverse or who are exploring their gender identity will need or want help from the NHS, but some will. Over the past few years many more young people have looked for care and treatment from the NHS.

At the moment there is only one specialist gender identity service for children and young people in England - the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

The increase in referrals to the service has meant that everybody has to wait longer to be seen and, at the moment, this wait can be several years. We know that this long wait can be frustrating and distressing. We also know that while people are waiting to be seen by the gender clinic, some of the other things they might need help with can get overlooked.

We understand that experiences in the wider NHS can also be difficult, and you might find that some clinicians don't feel confident to talk to you about your gender identity or provide the care and support you might need.



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## What has the review said so far?

The Review is clear that transgender, non-binary, gender diverse and gender questioning children and young people must receive the same standards of clinical care, assessment and treatment as every other child or young person accessing health services, from their first encounter with the NHS and at every level within the service.

To do this the care offered by the NHS needs to change, with support offered at different levels of the health service.

The Review has advised that, rather than having a single national service, several regional centres should be set up to assess and treat children and young people who may need specialist help. We have said that the regional centres will need to work together so that wherever in the country a person lives, they will receive the same standard of care and support.

We have also said that the regional centres will need to work closely with local services to make sure that young people can access clinical, psychological and social support more quickly and get help when they first feel gender distress. For some people, local services, with additional training, and support from the regional centres, will be able to give a young person the care they need, closer to where they live.

In terms of assessment, the Review has said that clinicians should be respectful, remain open and explore each young person's experience and the range of support and treatment options that may best address their individual needs. This will be different for each person.

## About the focus groups

The Review wants to better understand the thoughts and ideas of young people and young adults with lived experience about how NHS gender services for children and young people could and should be delivered in the future.

Understanding what is important to you, your thoughts about the care you would want to receive, and your ideas about how services could be organised will help the Review to develop our final recommendations to the NHS.

We have asked support and advocacy organisations, groups that you may know and already be linked in with, to hold a series of focus groups in a supported environment, so that you can feel comfortable and be confident to speak freely.

The support organisations will write up the learning from the focus groups and send them to the Review to help inform our thinking and recommendations. They will not provide your names or any details that would identify you.

We want to thank you for taking the time to help us.

If you would like to talk directly to Dr Cass and the Review team about your experiences and/or share your thoughts about how services should look in the future, you can contact the review at [cass.review@nhs.net](mailto:cass.review@nhs.net)