

Improving the integration of care for trans adults: ICTA a mixed-methods study

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research, or similar, and contains language which may offend some readers.

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

This research concerns improving the range of National Health Service health services that trans adults need. Trans people have a different gender from that assigned at birth or in early childhood. Not all need to make a medical transition to express their gender, and transition can take many different forms, including hormone therapy, various kinds of surgery, and other procedures such as hair removal. At the time of writing, trans people over 17 who need to make a medical transition can seek care at one of the United Kingdom's 10 specialist National Health Service Gender Identity Clinics. However, people must wait a very long time before they are seen.

Through 110 in-depth interviews, as well as focus groups attended by 23 people, this research explored recent experiences of trans people receiving various kinds of health care. A further 55 interviews investigated the views of National Health Service and voluntary-sector staff involved in delivering trans health care. All of this has led to insights about how services can be improved, and the development of online courses for healthcare staff and for people who use services or support those who use services.

The research indicates what can lead to experiences of poor care that is not 'joined up':

- lack of respectful treatment of trans people by general practitioner practices;
- inadequate funding of services;
- lack of support while waiting;
- the extended and difficult nature of Gender Identity Clinic diagnostic assessments;
- breakdowns in collaboration between Gender Identity Clinics and general practitioner practices over hormone therapy;
- lack of National Health Service psychological support for trans people.

The research indicates some important ways to improve care:

- training in trans health care for general practitioners;
- third-sector peer-support workers for trans people who come to National Health Service services;
- gender services taking a collaborative approach to assessing what people need, clarifying treatment options, benefits and risks;
- regional general practitioner-led hormone therapy clinics, bringing trans health care into the mainstream;
- psychology services that support trans people rather than assessing them.

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