

Improving the experience of health services for trans and gender-diverse young people and their families: an exploratory qualitative study

Melissa Stepney,^{1*} Samantha Martin,²
Magdalena Mikulak,³ Sara Ryan,⁴ Jay Stewart,⁵
Richard Ma⁶ and Adam Barnett⁷

¹Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

²Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

³Department of Social Care and Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

⁴Department of Social Care and Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

⁵Gendered Intelligence, London, UK

⁶Department of Primary Care and Public Health, Imperial College London, London, UK

⁷DIPEX Charity, Oxford, UK

*Corresponding author melissa.stepney@psych.ox.ac.uk

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

This report was written during 2022–3 prior to the final Cass Report recommendations and during a period of significant uncertainty in trans health care.

Published February 2025
DOI: 10.3310/XCYT6530

Plain language summary

Improving the experience of health services for trans and gender-diverse young people and their families: an exploratory qualitative study

Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2025; Vol. 13: No. 4
DOI: 10.3310/XCYT6530

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain language summary

In the United Kingdom, there is a lot of debate and misleading information about young transgender people's access to health care. Transgender young people face many challenges including being treated unfairly in healthcare services. They face long waits for specialist services and, as a result, often turn to online spaces for information and support. However, finding good-quality information can be difficult. When young people do not get the support they need, it can impact their well-being and mental health. Through interviews, we listened to young trans people talk about their experiences of health care and how they thought this had affected them. We also talked to parents/carers of young trans people and people who work in health care to better understand their experiences.

Doctors and people who work in health care also spoke about not feeling supported. They felt they needed better information and training. Young people wanted to reach a shared agreement with doctors, rather than doctors deciding if and when treatment should happen. They wanted doctors to know more about supportive care for transgender young people, and to appreciate that there are many ways to be transgender. Parents experienced difficulties too. They felt they did not get much support when their child was on the waiting list, and thought the assessment process was unclear. Many participants talked about negative attitudes and unfair treatment of trans people in health care. This means there is a need for improvement in health care for transgender young people and families. This includes changing the way that decisions are made to improve young people's experiences. Better training for doctors is needed, that is more supportive of young people, making sure they are listened to, respected and believed. Finally, the National Health Service needs to positively influence current debates and challenge false and misleading information about transgender people.

Health and Social Care Delivery Research

ISSN 2755-0079 (Online)

A list of Journals Library editors can be found on the [NIHR Journals Library website](#)

Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb™ (ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA), NCBI Bookshelf, Scopus and MEDLINE.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

This journal was previously published as *Health Services and Delivery Research* (Volumes 1–9); ISSN 2050-4349 (print), ISSN 2050-4357 (online)

The full HSDR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr.

Criteria for inclusion in the *Health and Social Care Delivery Research* journal

Manuscripts are published in *Health and Social Care Delivery Research* (HSDR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HSDR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HSDR programme

The HSDR programme funds research to produce evidence to impact on the quality, accessibility and organisation of health and social care services. This includes evaluations of how the NHS and social care might improve delivery of services.

For more information about the HSDR programme please visit the website at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/health-and-social-care-delivery-research.htm>

This article

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HSDR programme or one of its preceding programmes as award number 17/51/07. The contractual start date was in January 2019. The draft manuscript began editorial review in September 2022 and was accepted for publication in June 2024. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HSDR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' manuscript and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this article.

This article presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, the HSDR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, the HSDR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

This article was published based on current knowledge at the time and date of publication. NIHR is committed to being inclusive and will continually monitor best practice and guidance in relation to terminology and language to ensure that we remain relevant to our stakeholders.

Copyright © 2025 Stepney *et al.* This work was produced by Stepney *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This is an Open Access publication distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, reproduction and adaptation in any medium and for any purpose provided that it is properly attributed. See: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. For attribution the title, original author(s), the publication source – NIHR Journals Library, and the DOI of the publication must be cited.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Newgen Digitalworks Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India (www.newgen.co).

