

GHN STATEMENT

Gender Affirming Care Services in Ireland

Gay Health Network, 16 October 2024





Outhouse LGBT Centre, 105 Capel St., Dublin D01 R290

E: info@ghn.ie

W: www.ghn.ie

Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20078454

GHN Statement on Gender Affirming Care Services in Ireland

The Gay Health Network (GHN), representing a network of Irish organisations and individuals with expertise in the physical, sexual and mental health of the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland welcomes the Government's intention to review and overhaul the current model of gender-affirming care in Ireland. This review is badly needed to address Ireland's consistent ranking as among the worst in Europe for access to gender-affirming careⁱ

However, GHN is dismayed at the lack of meaningful consultation with patient groups and trans communities in this review. HSE guidance states that meaningful patient and public involvement (PPI) should be an integral part of researching, designing, developing, managing, and evaluating healthcare services.ⁱⁱ Yet, despite repeated approaches from many of our relevant member organisations, HSE has yet to hold any meaningful patient or community consultation.

GHN is concerned that clinician and 'expert' consultation to date appears to be restricted to those advocating one model of care while ignoring alternative models that are acceptable to patients and communities as well as being simple and cost-effectiveⁱⁱⁱ. GHN is also concerned by the potential adoption of the Cass review which has been questioned by international medical bodies, the British Medical Association, Yale School of Law, and other respected leaders in medical research. Coupled with the lack of patient engagement, the uncritical reception of this review despite its many flaws, gives grave cause for concern as to the direction the HSE is taking in this area^{iv}

GHN, at its Annual General Meeting last week agreed on a joint call to urge the Irish Government to (a) commence meaningful consultation with patients and communities, (b) to examine the models of care already proposed to the HSE by representative community organisations^v, (c) to consult with clinicians providing informed-consent and community-based models of gender-affirming health care elsewhere in the world.

GHN stands ready to collaborate with the Department of Health and our community partners to help develop a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to gender services that prioritises the well-being of Irish youth and transgender people.

ⁱ TGEU (2022). Trans Health Map. <https://tgeu.org/trans-health-map-2022/>

ⁱⁱ [HSE Better Together Patient Engagement Roadmap Book](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ These models, currently in use in Malta, Australia and New Zealand, are based on an informed consent model, prioritise psychological support when needed, respect for bodily autonomy, and ongoing monitoring

and support, predominantly in community health settings. These serve as exemplary standards for gender-affirming care.

^{iv} The UK Department for Health commissioned review of gender care for young people (the Cass Review). Respected international organisations such as the World Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), Yale Law School Review the British Medical Association and the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research have found that the Cass review has fundamental flaws and should not be used to shape transgender care services. Moreover the UK government has used the Cass Review as evidence to introduce a ban on the use of puberty blockers despite the review making no such recommendation.

^v Quilty, A & Belong To (2024) Trans Healthcare in Ireland: Accessing Healthcare related to Gender Identity for Trans and Non-binary People. Dublin: Belong To. <https://www.belongto.org/app/uploads/2024/09/Belong-To-Trans-Healthcare-in-Ireland-Research-Report.pdf>

TGEU (2022). Trans Health Map. <https://tgeu.org/trans-health-map-2022/>