

Position Statement on Prescribing in Gender Incongruence for Children and Young People

Puberty-blocking medicines: gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH)

NHS South West London (SWL) does not support prescribing of puberty-blocking medicines GnRH analogues for children and young people (under 18 years) by GPs in primary care. The prescribing responsibility for puberty-blocking medicines for children and young people will remain under the gender identity services.

- No children and young people under 18 years should be started on GnRH analogues to suppress puberty for gender incongruence or gender dysphoria.
 - The initiation of GnRH analogues is not possible in the NHS specialist Children and Young People's Gender Service unless this is part of a future National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) study or the patient was referred to an NHS paediatric endocrinology team for assessment of suitability of GnRH analogues for gender incongruence or gender dysphoria on or before 31 March 2024.
 - Other NHS clinicians cannot initiate a new NHS prescription.
 - Private practitioners cannot initiate a new prescription to patients who have not yet started treatment.
- Children and Young People under 18 years who have already started puberty blockers may need to continue in primary care:
 - For patients under the care of an NHS provider, prescribing may need to continue in primary care until the patient is next reviewed by the service lead clinician under the NHS Gender Identity Service (prescriptions marked SLS).
 - For patients under the care of a private provider, prescribing may need to continue in primary care until the patient is next reviewed. Patients should be advised of the new NHS policy and recommendation made to return to the private provider for consideration of stopping (prescriptions marked SLS).
- GnRH analogues are medicines that consist of, or contain, buserelin, gonadorelin, goserelin, leuprorelin acetate, nafarelin or triptorelin.
- The government has introduced indefinite restrictions to the prescribing and supply of puberty-suppressing hormones (GnRH), known as 'puberty blockers', to children and young people under 18 years in England, Wales and Scotland. These will apply to prescriptions written by UK private prescribers and prescribers registered in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland. No new patients under 18 years will be prescribed these medicines for the purposes of puberty suppression in those experiencing gender dysphoria or incongruence under the care of these prescribers.
- In addition, the government has also introduced indefinite restrictions to the prescribing of these (GnRH) medicines within NHS primary care in England, in line with NHS guidelines.

- Puberty suppressing hormones (PSH) are not available as a routine commissioning treatment option for treatment of children and young people who have gender incongruence or gender dysphoria.⁶

Gender affirming hormones (GAH): masculinising or feminising hormones

NHS SWL does not support the routine prescribing of GAH (masculinising or feminising hormones) testosterone or oestrogen for children and young people (under 18 years) by GPs in primary care. The prescribing responsibility for GAH (masculinising or feminising hormones) will remain under the gender identity service until an appropriate shared care guideline is reviewed at the SWL Integrated Medicines Optimisation Committee (IMOC).

- GAH (masculinising or feminising hormones) are available as a routine commissioning treatment option for young people with continuing gender incongruence or gender dysphoria from around their 16th birthday subject to individuals meeting the eligibility and readiness criteria as set out in NHSE clinical commissioning policy: [Prescribing of Gender Affirming Hormones \(masculinising or feminising hormones\) as part of the Children and Young People's Gender Service](#).

Gender Identity Services

- The Southern Hub Service for Gender Incongruence in children and young people is formed through a partnership between Great Ormond Street Hospital, Evelina London Children's Hospital (part of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust) and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. New referrals will continue to be made to NHS Arden & GEM Commissioning Support Unit (The CSU) who will hold the national waiting list on behalf of NHS England until referrals may be passed to a new provider in chronological order. Where children or young people will benefit from additional local support, advice will be provided to GPs and local professionals on appropriate sources of support.⁹
- Children, young people and their families are strongly discouraged from sourcing puberty suppressing or gender affirming hormones from unregulated sources or from on-line providers that are not regulated by UK regulatory bodies.
- When managing patients with gender dysphoria, the GP or local health professional should consider what safeguarding protocols may be appropriate for the individual child or young person's wider circumstances. GPs or local health professionals should explore what regulatory bodies may need to be informed if healthcare professionals registered with a UK professional body are prescribing medication contrary to NHS protocols⁴.

Rationale

- 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 Cass¹ which examined the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, the only specialist gender dysphoria service for children and young people.

- In December 2024, the Government has introduced permanent restrictions on the use of GnRH analogues used to suppress puberty as part of treating gender incongruence or gender dysphoria in children and young people who are under 18 years of age.
- It will become a criminal offence for a doctor, pharmacist, or any other individual in Great Britain to sell or supply these drugs to patients under the age of 18 except in the following circumstances:
 - The child or young person is prescribed these medicines on an NHS prescription (for example, from the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Service). All NHS prescriptions and directions are outside of this ban (Formulary status: Red, specialist only via Gender Identity Services).
 - The child or young person is prescribed these medicines on a private prescription from a UK prescriber that fulfils the following criteria:
 - The prescription was dated prior to 3rd June 2024; or
 - It is a repeat prescription but only when the initial prescription was written in the six months prior to 3rd June 2024;
 - There are also requirements for prescriptions issued from 3rd June 2024 to be marked with the person's age, annotated by the prescriber with "SLS", and in the case of prescriptions issued before that date, for the person to provide proof of identity and age.
 - The prescription is for a purpose other than the treatment of gender incongruence or gender dysphoria, or for gender incongruence/dysphoria if the patient started treatment for gender incongruence/dysphoria before 3rd June 2024.
- Pharmacies in Great Britain will no longer be able to dispense new private prescriptions, dated on or after 3rd June 2024 for GnRH analogues from the EEA or Switzerland for anyone under 18 years.
- Additionally, from 26th June 2024 General Practitioners (GPs) in England will only be able to supply prescriptions for GnRH analogues in the following circumstances:
 - The patient is aged 18 years or over; or
 - The patient is under 18 years and the purpose of the prescription is for a medical condition other than gender incongruence or gender dysphoria; or
 - The patient is under 18 years and has started treatment with these medicines, and for these purposes they will be treated as having started treatment if they have been issued with a prescription for these

medicines since 3rd December 2023, even if they have not yet started taking the medicines.

- As indicated above, new private prescriptions for GnRH analogues from a prescriber in the EEA or Switzerland who is not UK registered are banned from being supplied in Great Britain in all circumstances for patients aged under 18.
- Prescribing from unregulated sources and unregulated providers: children, young people and their families are strongly discouraged from sourcing puberty suppressing or gender affirming hormones from unregulated sources or from on-line providers that are not regulated by UK regulatory bodies. SWL ICS does not routinely support shared care prescribing with private prescribers.
- The General Pharmaceutical Council has published a resource for pharmacy professionals to support them in providing information, support and services to children and young people with gender incongruence or dysphoria; '[Gender identity services for children and young people: making compassionate, professional and ethical decisions](#)'.

References

1. The Cass Review [Publications – Cass Review](#).
2. NHS England Interim Service Specification for Gender Incongruence Services for Children and Young People [NHS England » Interim service specification for specialist gender incongruence services for children and young people](#)
3. Great Ormond Street Hospital Statement on the development of gender identity services [Statement on NHSE intention to develop Early Adopter gender identity services | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](#)
4. BMA Managing Patients with Gender Dysphoria [Gender incongruence in primary care \(bma.org.uk\)](#)
5. New Government restrictions on use of Puberty Suppressing Hormones (Puberty Blockers); Information for prescribers and pharmacists/dispensing doctors
6. NHS England Clinical Commissioning Policy [Puberty suppressing hormones \(PSH\) for children and young people who have gender incongruence / gender dysphoria \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
7. NHS England Clinical Commissioning Policy [Prescribing of Gender Affirming Hormones \(masculinising or feminising hormones\) as part of the Children and Young People's Gender Service \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
8. [Gender identity services for children and young people: making compassionate, professional and ethical decisions \(pharmacyregulation.org\)](#)
9. [Updated NHS England information and information pack regarding children and young people impacted by the introduction of permanent restrictions on private prescribing of puberty suppressing hormones.](#)
10. NHS SWL Interface Prescribing Policy. [Prescribing: Interface policy \(swlimo.southwestlondon.icb.nhs.uk\)](#)

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