

Freedom of Information Act 2000 disclosure log entry

Reference

16-17107

Date sent

06/07/2016

Subject

Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) Referrals and Waiting Times

Details of enquiry

The information I would like pertains to the Tavistock GIDS for children and adolescents - branches in London, Exeter and Leeds.

How many patients have been referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016?

How many patients referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016 saw a specialist in less than three months from the date they were referred?

What is the average waiting time for patients referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016 (in days)?

Response Sent

Your request for information, as detailed in your email below, has now been considered in line with the requirements of the FOI Act 2000, and the information requested follows below.

- 1. How many patients have been referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016?**
The total number of patients referred to the Service between 1st January 2016 and 31st March 2016 is 415. This covers all referrals to the service, whether seen in London, Leeds, or Exeter.
- 2. How many patients have been referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016?**
415 referrals received in the period 1st January 2016 – 31st March 2016

3. **How many patients referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016 saw a specialist in less than three months from the date they were referred?**

Of the 415 referrals received in the period, 393 were accepted onto the waiting list. Of these 393 referrals, 3 were seen within 3 months of being referred.

4. **What is the average waiting time for patients referred to the service between 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2016 (in days)?**

Since the service was nationally designated in 2009 we have consistently seen referrals within the agreed NHS standard 18 week wait time, despite a year on year 50% increase in referrals. However last year we had an unpredictable and unprecedented 100% increase in referrals and from September 2015 our wait times for first appointments began to increase.

When we look at the figures between January 2016 – March 2016, 393 referrals were accepted and 16 of those have been allocated a first appointment. The average waiting time for these 16 patients was 21 weeks (147 days).

Outside of this, wait times are averaging around 36 weeks; we are working closely with NHS England to reduce these times. To this end, following a review of the staff resource needed to deliver the service and reduce wait times, NHS England has increased funding for the service and we are employing new staff. We have recruited 22 new members of staff across London and Leeds, this is in addition to a further 12 recently appointed staff.. We will also be increasing our administrative capacity by employing 5 new posts.

Other work includes developing tailored training for new members of staff. Professional groups are actively working on developing training for professionals who are keen to specialise in this area, but in the meantime new clinical staff in all gender services need to train in post. This means that time is required not only to employ new staff but also to train them. We have developed a new programme of in house training for new staff who will also be individually supported by experienced clinicians.

Other work to improve the situation includes looking at offering group appointments in the first instance to share information and provide more immediate support for young people and their families. Many young people who attend the service are already attending their local CAMHS. We are happy to liaise with CAMHS and will use any assessment work that has already taken place.

It's important to say also, that as every case is different, generally it's difficult to give exact waiting times for the service. We appreciate this is frustrating for some young people and families.

Young people are referred to the service at different ages with diverse needs and they stay with the service for different lengths of time. Appointments are therefore arranged with young people and their families on a case by case basis – depending on their specific requirements. It is very difficult to accurately predict how long a young person will remain with the service or exactly how much input will be required. Some referrals require extensive liaison with the local network and local network meetings in addition to direct contact.

It is also not possible to accurately predict when young people who have been referred to adult gender services will be seen. Adult gender services frequently have long waiting lists, which vary both across the various adult services and at different points in time within specific adult services. It is often not possible to discharge service users waiting for an appointment with adult services, as this would interrupt physical interventions they have started or leave them with no psychosocial support.

Despite these issues up until last year we were able to give fairly accurate information about wait times and at the very least say that the wait for a first appointment would not be longer than 18 weeks. Unfortunately, this has become increasingly difficult since September 2016, due to the steep increase in number of referrals but we have plans in place to address this and to reduce waiting times.

We take the increase in wait times very seriously. With the support of NHS England we are working hard to review and improve access to this specialist service.