

Frequently asked questions about Trans*

Does being transgender mean I'm mentally ill?

No. Transsexualism (Gender Incongruence) and Gender Dysphoria are listed in psychiatric manuals because of the distress the unresolved condition can cause. This severe distress consequently requires NHS funded interventions aimed at resolving a person's conflict between their body and their sense of self. However, a person can be transgender and function exceptionally well in society. If a person is functioning well it may seem inappropriate for them to receive a diagnosis of (what is technically) a psychiatric disorder, however, such a diagnosis may be made so that they can receive the appropriate treatments to prevent future problems.

Seeing a psychiatrist or psychologist does not in itself mean that one has a mental illness.

Does being transgender mean I won't be able to get a job?

No. The vast majority of transgender people have jobs and many employers have policies in place to deal with trans-related issues that may arise. People who transition at work are also protected under employment law. Being transgender is not enough in and of itself to justify seeking benefits for ill health.

Does being transgender mean I won't be able to get a partner?

No. Just as with anyone else, many transgendered people are in long term relationships, some are married, some are in a civil partnership and some have relationships with more than one partner. Often the relationships that last longest are those where the transgender person is openly so, but their partner is not with them for that reason. Every relationship is different.

What causes transgender feelings?

There are so many different ways of being transgender that there is no single "cause". The academic literature suggests that it may be any (or any combination) of: genes, pre-birth conditions, hormones, neurology, learning, choice etc. It is important to realise, however, that speculating on causes doesn't tell you as an individual what to do.

Can being transgender be cured?

Being transgender is not a problem in and of itself and so not something which could, or should, be 'cured'. The distress that can be caused by being transgender in an occasionally misunderstanding society can be distressing, however, and the 'cure' for that distress will be different for different people. We do know that for significant numbers of transgender people, talking therapies do not resolve their gender issues. Consequently, for some people the appropriate course of action is for the body to be altered to fit the mind through hormonal and surgical interventions.

Is there a 'right' way to be transgender?

No. there are a great many ways to be transgender and, sadly, one of the most common forms of distress among trans people is in not fitting in to some 'ideal' - whether derived from the wider media or the trans communities themselves. It is important for people to transition to being more themselves rather than to another way of being which is simply differently incongruent. You do not have to have hormones or surgery to be transgender, or to live a content life in a different gender role.

Should surgery be funded on the NHS?

Yes. Genital reconstruction surgery (GRS or SRS) is necessary for many transgender people to live their lives; and for some denial of access to treatment can be life-threatening. However, as NHS surgery is funded by the taxpayer it is important that only people who would benefit from it are given it. This is one of the reasons, aside from the great number of ethical considerations, that we have a process of diagnosis and evaluation.

Where can I get clothes/wigs/binders/packers/electrolysis? Do you know any good clubs?

As we are part of the NHS we don't recommend any private outlets or providers unless they are being used as providers of NHS services. Support groups listed on our support pages may be able to point you in the right direction.

Which transgender groups do you recommend?

Please see our support pages for links to some places which offer support.