



## Children and young people

### How do I recognise signals of gender variance in children?

- Children from the age of 3 to 5 years already have a fairly good idea of their own gender. They can therefore express their own gender identity from an early age - which may be different than expected by relatives given the gender they were assigned at birth. In addition to verbal expression, the child can also use other signals to express how they feel, such as through clothing, play, and so on. These signals may indicate gender variance, which is not the same as being trans. Children must be given the space to be who they are, regardless of what they like, how they want to dress or name themselves. This support includes respecting their gender role and expression, as well as referring to them with the name and pronouns they request.
- Other children and young people do not realise their trans identity until they are older, into their teens or even older. This does not mean their expressions are less valid or should be questioned. For some young trans people, particular parts of puberty trigger questions and feelings that had not surfaced until the body started to change.

### When should I refer to a specialised healthcare provider?

- If a child or young person indicates that they have difficulty with their gender identity or suffer because of their mixed feelings, it is advisable to seek support from psychosocial professionals. When the parents are struggling, a referral to a professional for the parents can be very useful, in addition to or independently of support services for the child. After all, not every parent knows how to support a child who has a different gender identity or expression than what the parents expected. In some cases, parents will need psychosocial support but the child will not; in these circumstances, it is inappropriate to base care decisions for the child based on the parents' needs.
- It is advisable to contact specialised care before puberty, when possible. They can already give the family a lot of tips and support, for example in the context of school, family, friends, etc. If the child has a strong desire not to develop physically according to the gender assigned at birth, then puberty blockers can assist the child in this.

### How does the Gender Wellbeing Clinic guide children and young people?

- Transgender persons or families with children and young people under 16 years of age can register through a referral letter from a professional (social worker, psychologist and/or a medical doctor), after which the child is referred to the paediatric endocrinologist. Children presenting no mental health conditions are followed by the paediatric endocrinologist. Children who need support with their transition or who have accompanying mental health conditions also receive psychosocial support through the gender wellbeing clinic. Psychosocial support is also provided to significant others.

- From the onset of puberty (Tanner stage 2), puberty blockers can be started if desired with parental consent. If this is the case, an appointment will be made with the endocrinologist for examination (blood test, bone density, risk of thrombosis). In the meantime, counselling is continued. A check-up is planned at the endocrinologist every few months.
- Hormone therapy can be started as from age 16, if desired, based on adolescent development and emotional maturation. Parental consent for those over 16 is not a requirement.
- From the age of 17 years, chest surgery can already be planned for trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth. Other operations are possible from the age of 18. Not all surgeries are as yet possible through the National Health Service.

## What are puberty blockers?

- Puberty blockers ensure that puberty is put on hold, as a result of which the sex characteristics linked to the birth sex do not develop (e.g. no menstruation, no hair removal, drop in voice, etc.). This gives the young person more time to explore gender identity without being faced with unwanted physical changes. Therefore, puberty blockers mainly give young people time to find out where they want to go without irreversible consequences.
- There are also young people who after a while decide to let their bodies evolve according to the sex assigned at birth based on considerations such as fertility and access to surgical techniques that would be available to them. When one stops puberty blockers, one simply enters puberty according to the birth sex. After stopping puberty blockers, there is no influence on fertility.