

Dr Tracey Gillies
Medical Director
NHS Lothian

Professor Caroline Hiscox
Chief Executive
NHS Lothian

Fiona Wilson
Director
East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership

By email

14th October 2024

Dear Dr Gillies, Professor Hiscox and Ms Wilson,

**Request to meet to discuss pause to gender affirming surgical
assessments and referrals for trans patients from Chalmers Gender
Identity Clinic**

I'm writing on behalf of Scottish Trans, the trans-specific project of the Equality Network, a leading Scottish LGBTI equality and human rights charity. This project has been involved in advocating for the needs of trans people in healthcare settings since it began in 2007, including working directly and constructively with the NHS on improving gender affirming healthcare for more than a decade.

We have recently been made aware of NHS Lothian having taken decisions to:

- Pause assessments and referrals for all gender affirming surgery undertaken outwith Scotland
- Additionally, pause assessments and referrals for all gender affirming surgery undertaken within Scotland for those aged 18 - 25

Chalmers Gender Identity Clinic has been assessing and referring adult patients for gender affirming surgeries – both those commissioned nationally using the four-nations contract and carried out in England, and those that are locally commissioned – for years.

Gender affirming surgeries are of course an exceptionally important part of the medical interventions that are available to transgender patients. We are also unaware of any changes to clinical guidance that would inform a decision to treat patients aged 18-25 as a discrete group, and differently from all other adult patients at the service.

These decisions present a serious interruption to trans people's ability to access healthcare, particularly as Chalmers provides care to trans people from four of Scotland's health boards. These decisions will undoubtedly be having a significant impact on those people who have been due to have assessments and referrals for surgical interventions in the time since they were taken. Indeed, several people have been in touch with Scottish Trans to ask us if we are aware of these changes, and to express their distress and concern about the delays to their treatment.

We would like to meet with you as a matter of urgency to understand on what grounds these decisions were taken, and more importantly, when trans people can expect to be able to access surgical assessments and referrals from Chalmers Gender Identity Clinic again.

Yours sincerely,

Vic Valentine
Manager
Scottish Trans