

What to expect: LGBTQ+ young people and healthcare

LGBTQ+ people often face difficulties accessing healthcare;

- A lack of available services.
- The possibility or fear of discrimination.
- Having had a bad experience within a healthcare setting before (or knowing someone who has).
- Believing that your problem isn't severe enough to need help
- Lack of support from family (especially if you're not out yet).
- A lack of LGBTQ+ awareness amongst healthcare professionals.

No matter how big or small the problem seems, it's always worth asking for help and support.

This series of posters aims to make accessing healthcare less scary and gives you an idea of what to expect. Each poster covers a different healthcare setting and provides some tips on what to say and things you can do to make the experience easier.

This poster series includes:

- Coming out to your GP
- Talking to your GP about pronouns
- Talking to your GP about medically transitioning
- Going to a sexual health clinic
- Giving blood
- Mental health services

What to expect: Coming out to your GP

Your sexual orientation or gender identity may impact on your health needs, so it can be useful for a healthcare professional to know. However, don't ever feel pressurised into telling anyone. You don't need a separate appointment to come out to your GP, it's good to bring it up when you are already planning on seeing your GP about something else.

Studies have shown that LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to suffer from issues with mental health, alcohol/ smoking/ drug misuse, have an increased risk of HIV and/or STIs and also have more issues accessing services related to domestic violence. Coming out to your GP can help you gain access to many support services you might need.

It may be the first time you've come out to a healthcare professional so take your time.

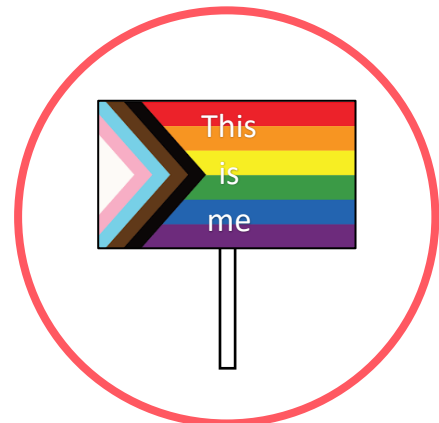
Say it in a way that feels right to you e.g. "I just wanted to let you know that I identify as [LGBTQ+]"

Talk to other LGBTQ+ people and find out if they have had any good/bad experiences with certain GP practices.

Knowing about your sexual orientation means that they are less likely to ask you irrelevant personal questions that could make you feel uncomfortable.

Ask questions. Think of some useful questions you want to ask your doctor about before you go, e.g. sexual health, support services.

Answer their questions honestly, e.g. if they ask about sexual health and use gendered language you can say "Actually, I identify as [LGBTQ+] and I am not currently seeing anyone/I am in a long term relationship with my partner etc."



What to expect: Talking to your GP about pronouns

Although the NHS do not record pronouns, it is important to let your GP know (if you feel comfortable telling them). They will be able to record your correct pronouns in your medical notes and will have a better understanding of your needs if you want to talk to them about mental health support. You don't need a separate appointment to talk to your GP about pronouns, it's good to bring it up when you are already planning on seeing your GP about something else.

Be yourself! You know more about yourself than anyone else.

If your visit is to do with mental health, then it can be important for your GP to know your pronouns. Not only so that they can refer to you correctly, but so they can ask you questions that may be more relevant to you.

It could be good to bring up before you start talking about the reason you are there e.g. "Before we start, I just wanted to let you know that I now go by they/them pronouns".

Mention the topic of pronouns when you feel comfortable, if it doesn't feel right to you then don't push it.

You can bring someone you trust to support you.

If they misgender you, correct them politely e.g. "I actually go by he/him pronouns".

If you are asked something about your sexual health that you don't feel comfortable answering, then say you would rather not answer. Only give details when you're ready to give them.

Know what you want to get out of the appointment, e.g. you want your healthcare provider to know your pronouns, you want a referral to a gender identity clinic or you want to get inclusive mental health support.

He/Him

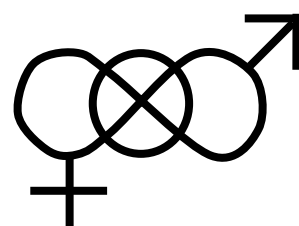
She/Her

They/
Them

Ze/Zir

Xe/Xem

All
pronouns



What to expect: Talking to your GP about medically transitioning

If you are considering medically transitioning, then talking to your GP can get everything started. There is no time limit, so make sure you feel comfortable talking about your experience and how you feel. The GP may not have all the information for you, but they will be able to send you in the right direction.

Start with your name and pronouns and ask if they will address you as such e.g. “Actually, I go by [Insert your name] now and I use She/her / He/him / They/them, etc pronouns”.

Bring someone along that you feel comfortable with.

Ask them if they will use your correct pronouns and name in your medical notes.

Talk about your experience but take your time. Go at your pace.

Know what you want to get out of the consultation, whether you just want your GP to be aware that you identify as a different gender or you want to be referred to a gender identity clinic (GIC).

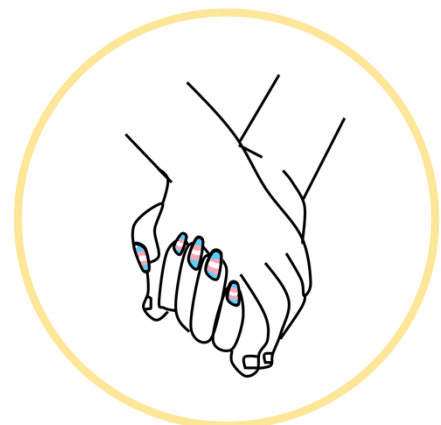
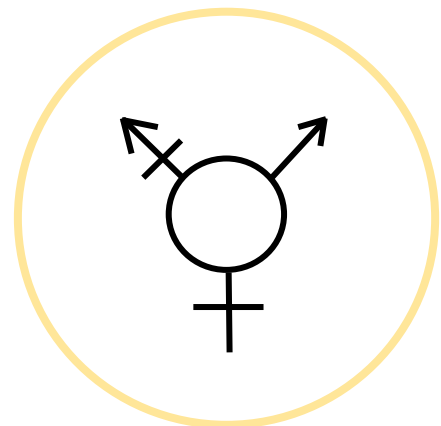
Nothing will happen overnight. There is a long waiting list for referrals to a GIC, but it's worth getting yourself on the list if that's something you would like.

Consider socially transitioning whilst you wait for your GIC appointment as long as you are comfortable with it, the GP may discuss this with you.

There is no legal requirement for an NHS practice to need evidence of a name change, e.g. an official document with your change of name, however they may ask you, as it is considered good practice.

You can ask them to use your old name on letters home if you're not ready to fully come out or if you feel unsafe or the people you live with are unaware.

Age you can start hormone treatment: 16+ (after being on puberty blockers for at least 12 months)
Age you can have gender affirming surgery: 18+



What to expect: Going to a sexual health clinic

If you have symptoms, are worried about an STI or just want to get tested then consider going to a sexual health (GUM) clinic. They offer free confidential advice and treatment, even to people under 16.

You can have a look online or call up first to see if there are any youth or LGBTQ+ clinics.

You wouldn't be embarrassed about having a cold, there's no reason to be embarrassed about getting tested for or having an STI.

You don't need to give your real name if you don't want to.

Feel free to bring someone along that you trust.

You will be asked questions about your sexual health such as: if you have had unprotected sex and whether you have any STI symptoms. It's good to be honest, they've heard it all before.

If you are not comfortable with the doctor that is seeing you, you can ask to see a different one.

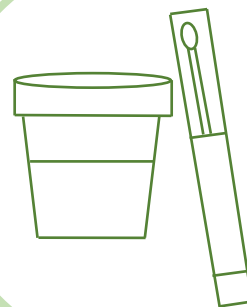
It's a good idea to get tested regularly, e.g. every 3 months, but also get tested every time you think you've been exposed to an STI.

You can order a sexual health home testing kit online from Sexual Health Sheffield if you don't feel comfortable going into a clinic.

Be careful about looking up symptoms online. You won't necessarily get the right information.

Sexual Health Sheffield Website: <https://sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk>
Contact Sexual Health Sheffield: 0114 226 8888

GET
TESTED



What to expect: Giving blood

If you are aged 17-65, fit and healthy and meet the NHS eligibility criteria, you can give blood regardless of your chosen gender or sexual orientation.

You can call up first to get your pronouns and/or gender changed on your donor record.

All donors are addressed according to their choice of title and pronouns.

You can still give blood whilst taking hormone therapy (if taken by mouth or patches).

If the blood donation team mess up your pronouns just politely correct them.

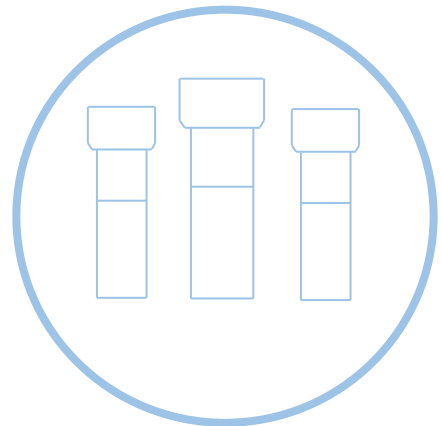
They will ask for your gender assigned at birth, as some blood products are only safe to manufacture from those assigned male at birth.

You do not need to disclose your sexual identity, but you should answer the questions about sex and sexual health truthfully.

You have to have stopped taking PrEP or PEP for at least 3 months to give blood as they interfere with the routine HIV screening tests.

You have to wait 3 months to give blood if you have had anal sex with a new or multiple partners, regardless of gender.

If you have had the same sexual partner for more than 3 months and fit the other criteria, then you will be able to give blood.



Check the eligibility criteria and register to donate on the NHS give blood website:
<https://www.blood.co.uk>

What to expect: Mental health services

If you are struggling with your mental health, please ask for support. Whether it is from your family, friends, a GP, a social worker, or a mental health charity, there is always someone who will listen to you.

Being LGBTQ+ does not cause mental health issues. However, due to inequalities, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to suffer from alcohol or drug misuse, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other mental health problems.

Talking to your GP can be scary, but they are there to help and want what's best for you. It's not too late to get help; no matter how big or small your problems seem.

Take your time and be honest. Your GP should give you time to talk at your pace and say what you want to say.

Bring someone with you that you trust and introduce them at the start "I've brought my friend/parent, etc., with me as I just wanted some support through this conversation."

This can be the first step in healing. It is a long process, but how you feel now won't necessarily be how you feel tomorrow.

Talking about how you are feeling can help you feel better, even if you start by talking to a friend to get more comfortable before you approach your GP.



Mental health support:

NHS urgent 24/7 line (under 18): 0808 801 0612

NHS urgent 24/7 line (over 18): 0808 196 8281

Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

LGBT Foundation email/call: helpline@lgbt.foundation or 0345 3 30 30 30

Samaritans helpline: 116 123