

14 December 2020

Dear GIDS service user,

You may be aware of a High Court ruling on 1st December 2020 in the case *Bell v Tavistock*. The judgment means that children and young people may be unable to consent to puberty-blocking treatment, and that an application to the Court may be required for such treatment to continue. Links to the full judgment and to NHS England's revised service specifications are at the end of this letter.

In the Gender Identity Development Service, the University College Hospital (UCLH) and Leeds Teaching Hospital (LTH) endocrine teams, we understand that this will be unsettling news for you and your family, and you will have many questions about what this means for your treatment. We care about you and are here to support you. In this letter we will describe what the ruling may mean for your current treatment. **In all cases please be reassured: there are no immediate plans to stop your treatment with puberty blockers or cross sex hormones.**

The ruling does not impact on the psychological and counselling support that is provided by the Gender Identity Development Service. This will continue to be available to you and your family.

If you are over 18, this judgment will not apply to you.

What does this mean for your care?

If you are under 16 years old and are currently receiving puberty blockers

If you are aged below 16 years and are currently receiving puberty blockers, **your access to medication will not be automatically withdrawn.**

The UCLH / LTH team and the Gender Identity Development Service at the Tavistock and Portman will conduct a clinical review of your case, working with you and your parents/carers to make sure you fully understand the treatment and any side effects. These clinical reviews will occur in early 2021 and we will be in touch to arrange this in due course.

The purpose of the clinical review is for us to decide, together with you, whether a continuation of puberty blockers is in your "best interest". If that is what we conclude through our clinical review, and if you agree with that conclusion, we will then have to apply to the Court. We will ask the Court to agree that it is in your best interests for treatment to continue. **You will continue to receive your medication until the outcome of this application to the Court is known.**

Alternatively, if you decide that you do not want to continue with puberty blockers, or if we decide through our clinical review with you that it is not in your best interest to continue with puberty blockers, we will agree a timeframe for withdrawing medication in a clinically safe way without the need for a Court order. **In this case, medication will not be withdrawn immediately but in the safest possible way.**

If you are aged 16 or 17 years and are currently receiving puberty blockers and / or cross sex hormones

The Court ruled that young people who are aged 16 or 17 years are more likely to be able to give informed consent, because they are more likely to understand the issues. Therefore, a

Court order is probably not necessary for you to continue to receive puberty blockers or cross sex hormones.

We will still carry out a clinical review of your case, working with you and your parents/carers to make sure that you fully understand the treatment and any side effects. If there is any doubt between us and you about what is in your best interests we will consider an application to the Court for a best interests order. **Your medication will continue until the outcome of this application to the Court is known.**

Where to go for further support or information

There has been a lot of information published online since the ruling. Unfortunately much of it is speculative and unhelpful. We encourage you to visit <https://gids.nhs.uk> regularly for up-to-date and accurate information.

We are contacting individual patients as quickly as we can – please bear with us while we do this. You can also contact the GIDS psycho-social team by:

- writing to gids@tavi-port.nhs.uk or gidsleedsadmin@tavi-port.nhs.uk
- calling **020 8938 2030** (London) or **0113 247 1955** (Leeds)

We are sharing this letter with your GP, asking them to continue to support you with access to your current medication.

The NHS is here to support you and your family. If you want to talk to someone, help is here for you:

- If you need urgent mental health support or advice, please head to: <https://nhs.uk/urgentmentalhealth>
This website can tell you which NHS organisations can help you in your area, including 24/7 crisis support, or you can text **SHOUT** to **85258**
- If you are currently being supported by your GP, a Children and Young People's Mental Health Service, a paediatric or medical team or Children's Social Care, then talk to them about your feelings and worries. It may help to show them this letter. These professionals are also very welcome to contact either our team or the Tavistock for further advice in how best they can help you
- Helpful mental health and wellbeing advice is also available from the places below:
 - Every Mind Matters for young people and parents/carers
<https://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>
 - Youngminds
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help>
 - MindEd for Families
<https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk>
 - Parents can also call the YoungMinds parents helpline:
0808 802 5544, 9.30am to 4pm on weekdays

We understand how difficult and uncertain this time will be for you and your family. We remain committed to your ongoing care and the NHS is here to support you. Our team will keep you regularly updated. If you need to talk to us at the clinic, please call us on the number above.

Links to the full judgment and the revised specifications

Judgment:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Bell-v-Tavistock-Judgment.pdf>

Revised NHS England service specifications:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Amendment-to-Gender-Identity-Development-Service-Specification-for-Children-and-Adolescents.pdf>

Best wishes,

The Gender Identity Development Service