



GP refusal to prescribe HRT:

Summary report

October 14, 2024

1. Context

In May 2024, TransActual became aware of a number of anecdotes of NHS GPs refusing to prescribe hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to trans people who had a letter from an NHS gender clinic asking the GP to prescribe. We launched a short survey in the same month to enable us to monitor and report on the situation.

The survey tracks all circumstances in which a GP might refuse to prescribe a trans person's HRT – for example, refusal to offer a bridging prescription. However, this report focuses on those individuals who have had a prescription refused despite having a letter from an NHS gender clinic.

2. Who was refused?

- 215 respondents to the survey who have been refused HRT in the last year.
- 26% of respondents have been refused HRT by their GP despite having a recommendation from an NHS gender clinic. (56/215) This report focuses on that specific group of people.
 - Of these people, only 27% were seeking a new prescription (15/56)
 - And, 73% had already been on HRT (41/56)
 - More than a third, 38%, had already been discharged by their NHS gender clinic (21/56)
 - 14% had had either an orchidectomy or oophorectomy (8/56), meaning that the refusal will have additional health implications for them (such as increased risk of osteoporosis).
 - The majority of respondents in this group were in England (86%, 48/56), with 9% (5/56) from Scotland, 5% (3/56) in Wales and none in Northern Ireland.
 - Nearly half of respondents had been on HRT for more than 5 years at the time of refusal (45%, 25/56) and just 20% had been on HRT for less than a year (11/56).

3. Reasons for refusal

Respondents often gave more than one reason for prescription refusal.

- The most common reasons are lack of training and perceived lack of competence, no policy requirement or, personal beliefs.

- No GPs refused to prescribe because of medical contraindications.

Reason	Number
Doesn't feel competent to prescribe or hasn't been trained in it	24
No Integrated Care Board/Health Board policy on shared care with NHS gender clinics	10
There's no policy that says they have to	8
Personal beliefs	7
Not funded to prescribe HRT to trans people	7
Royal College of GPs says I don't have to	6
No Primary Care Network policy on shared care with NHS gender clinics	6
They're worried about the impact on your health	5
They will prescribe if an endocrinologist says they should	5

Other reasons given in the free text box included:

- Statements that GP practices are not commissioned to provide treatment for gender dysphoria and care must sit with the specialist or private provider. (3)
- They only prescribe with ongoing involvement from a specialist – so will not prescribe for people who have been discharged from an NHS Gender Clinic. (2)
- Issues around GIC reports not being attached to medical records. (2)
- The practice doesn't enter into shared care with NHS providers (1) or NHS providers out of the ICB area. (1)
- Because the medication is not licensed in the UK for gender reassignment. (1)
- GP does not "recognize" the NHS gender identity service. (1)
- The ICB has told GPs not to. (1)

4. Cancelled prescriptions

Out of the respondents that have been refused HRT by their GP despite having a recommendation from an NHS gender clinic, 44% of those GPs had previously prescribed their HRT and have now stopped. (25/56)

- As in section 2, the most common reasons are perceived lack of competence and GP's understanding of national and local policies.

- Two respondents reported that their GPs were yet to offer a reason for the refusal, with one saying that their GP “simply cancelled my repeat without warning or explanation”.
- Nobody reported that the GP had stopped prescribing because of a specific change in their health or because of interactions with newly prescribed medications.

Reason	Number
Doesn't feel competent to prescribe or hasn't been trained in it	9
Personal beliefs	3
No Integrated Care Board/Health Board policy on shared care with NHS gender clinics	3
They're worried about the impact on your health	2
Not funded to prescribe HRT to trans people	2
No Primary Care Network policy on shared care with NHS gender clinics	2
Royal College of GPs says I don't have to	2
They will prescribe if an endocrinologist says they should	1
There's no policy that says they have to	1

5. Geographical patterns

This section continues to focus specifically on those trans people refused an HRT prescription by their GP despite having a letter or report from an NHS gender clinic asking the GP to prescribe. Because our data set is relatively small, with fewer than 5 reports per ICB or Health Board, we are reporting on a regional basis for England and a national basis for Scotland and Wales.

Of the respondents based in England, 39 told us which ICB area they live in. Refusals to prescribe had occurred in 22 of the 42 ICBs, although this of course only relates to incidents we are aware of. There are reported incidents of GPs refusing to prescribe HRT to trans people in all regions of England.



Region	Number of refusals	ICBs with 1 incident	ICBs with 2 incidents	ICBs with 3 incidents	ICBs with 4 incidents
East of England	6	1	1	1	0
London	3	3	0	0	0
Midlands	7	4	0	1	0
North East & Yorkshire	9	1	0	0	2
North West	4	0	2	0	0
South East	4	1	0	1	0
South West	6	3	0	1	0
Total	39	13 ICBs 13 refusals	3 ICBs 6 refusals	4 ICBs 12 refusals	2 ICBs 8 refusals

Of the 3 respondents based in Wales:

- 2 were in different areas from each other
- 1 declined to tell us which area they live in

Of the 5 respondents based in Scotland:

- 2 were in the same Health Board area, 1 was in a different area
- 2 declined to tell us which area they live in

Because our data covers so few people in Scotland, we will not be publishing the names of the two Health Boards in which refusals took place.

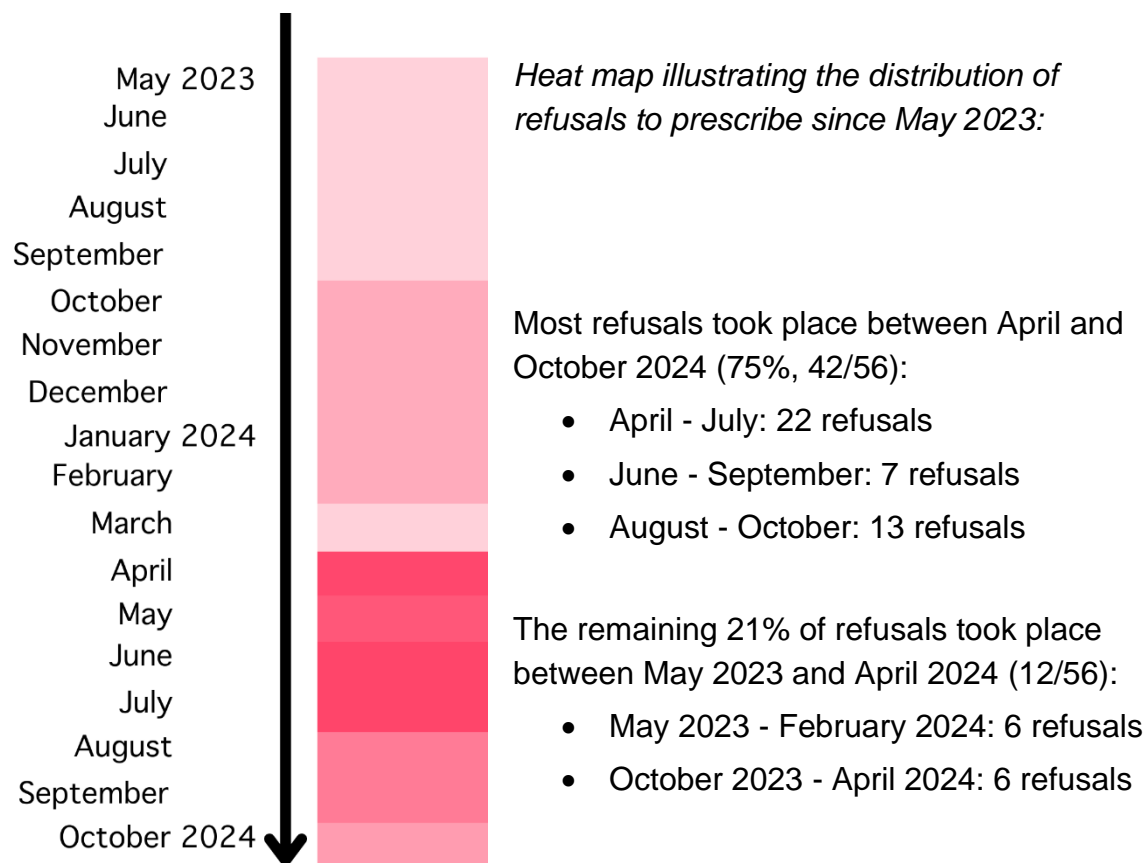
6. Changes over time

Respondents were asked when their GP had refused to prescribe HRT to them.

For ease, they were asked to choose one of the following options:

- This week
- This month
- 1-3 months ago
- 3-6 months ago
- 6-12 months ago
- More than a year ago (these responses are not included in this report)

Due to this method of data collection, our data is based on rolling time periods rather than specific time periods.



7. Summary

Of our respondents, those whose GP refused their HRT prescription despite their patient having a letter or report from an NHS gender clinic requesting that they do:

- Most had previously been able to access a prescription from their GP, and nearly half had previously been prescribed HRT by the GP that is now refusing.
- Nearly half had been on HRT for more than 5 years.
- More than a third have been discharged from an NHS gender clinic and, according to the care pathway, ought to expect their GP to offer continuation of care.

The most common reasons given by GPs for refusing to prescribe relate to local and national policies on prescribing and shared care, GP funding, GPs not feeling competent to prescribe, and the personal views of the GP. There were no reports of GPs refusing on the basis of medical contraindications.