

Indigo Gender Service

Frequently Asked Questions - V.3

What is Indigo Gender Service?

Indigo Gender Service is a Greater Manchester based two-year pilot for a new way of delivering trans healthcare. We are a partnership between *gtid healthcare* and LGBT Foundation, and supported by the Nottingham Centre for Transgender Health (NCTH) to deliver a service designed by and for trans and non-binary people.

What makes Indigo different?

Indigo is a new model of trans healthcare - whilst the current gender identity clinics (GICs) are a specialised centre which all trans and non-binary people must attend if they wish to pursue medical transition, Indigo is based in primary care. This means our clinical team will be based in GP Practices across Greater Manchester, and we will also have additional services such as voice coaching and therapeutic services delivered in settings around Greater Manchester.

We are a team of trans, non-binary and LGBTQ practitioners and allies working collaboratively to bring together a broad range of expertise and experience.

We take a holistic and flexible view of transition, helping people to be informed and supported to make decisions that are right for them.

What services are available at Indigo?

Services we offer include:

- Support and advice around gender identity
- Assessment and diagnosis of Gender Incongruence
- Voice and communication therapy
- Hair removal
- Recommendation of hormone therapy
- Assessment and referral for top surgery
- First assessment for lower surgery
- One-to-one and group psychological support
- Care navigation, peer support and social prescribing

How can I get referred?

In order to be a patient with Indigo, you must meet the following criteria:

- aged 17 or over
- registered with a GP in Greater Manchester **and** eligible for NHS treatment
- on a waiting list for a gender clinic as of 1 December 2020, **and** have not yet had your first appointment

We are contacting eligible people directly to let them know about the service and invite them to join Indigo.

If you meet this criteria, please read through the rest of our FAQs and decide whether you would like to transfer your care from your current waiting list to Indigo. You will be able to have a discussion with a Care Navigator or nurse before deciding if you want to move to the Indigo list.

Indigo is a pilot service and is not currently taking new referrals from people who do not meet the above criteria. We will update these FAQs when this changes. If you are not yet on a waiting list for a GIC but are wanting to be referred, then ask your GP to refer you to the Nottingham clinic who will have a 'holding list' for Indigo until the end of the pilot.

Who are the staff at Indigo?

We employ and work with a range of people from an array of professional backgrounds. Many of the people working in both patient facing, administrative and senior roles are trans and/or non-binary themselves, and trans and non-binary people have been part of leading and designing the service from the very beginning.

Is Indigo a private gender service?

No, Indigo is an NHS service, and we are free to access.

Why hasn't Indigo contacted me yet?

You may not have heard from us for a number of reasons. For instance, we may not be aware that you are currently on a waiting list for an NHS GIC and eligible to access Indigo services, or you may have changed your contact details since your last visit.

If you meet the eligibility criteria for Indigo, please read through the rest of our FAQs to help you decide whether you would like to use our service.

If you think you are eligible, but you haven't yet heard from us, you will be able to contact us and check your eligibility for the service. You can email us at hello@indigogenderservice.uk or call us on 0161 710 1196.

What can I expect my experience to look like?

Whilst everyone's experience is unique, most will begin with a Care Navigator - someone with lived experience who will listen to your experiences and priorities and ensure that the service meets your specific needs. Our experienced GPs are able to provide you access to treatments in the 'gender dysphoria non-surgical specification', including hormone replacement therapy.

We also offer a range of other support you may wish to access, including talking therapies, support with deed polls, document updates, and hair removal. There is no one standard transition pathway, so you can choose the services that you wish to access without pressure to follow a specific route.



I'm eligible and I'd like to transfer my care over to Indigo. What happens now?

A member of Team Indigo will be in touch to speak with you about the new service. You will then be contacted by a Care Navigator who will be your main point of contact and will help guide you through your time with us. You will also have the chance to ask the Care Navigator questions about the service.

What then?

We understand that choosing your gender clinic is a big decision. You don't have to give us an answer on the spot and we want you to have all the information you need to make the best choice for you. Take some time to read through our FAQs and any information we send you. We'll call you back in 7 days to see if you would like to book your first appointment with us.

Booking your appointment:

We'll contact you and ask if you're ready to book your first appointment. If you are, we'll arrange a time and a date that's convenient for you to see one of our clinicians online or in person at one of our sites in Greater Manchester. We'll text you the details of your appointment, and you'll also get a reminder text a few days before your visit.

We'll ask you to notify your existing GIC that you are transferring your care to Indigo as soon as possible (if you haven't already).

What happens if I don't want to move over to Indigo now?

That is fine! If you've read through all of our information and decided that Indigo isn't right for you, it won't count against you in any way.

You don't need to give us a reason and you can keep using any other services provided by LGBT Foundation and *gtd healthcare* without any issues.

What will happen at my first appointment?

Your first contact with the service will be with a Care Navigator with lived experience, who will welcome you to the service. This is an opportunity for you to explore the services we offer in more detail and to ask questions about various aspects of social or medical transition. The Care Navigator will explain how the service works and explore if you would like any additional holistic support, like a peer support group for non-binary people, or if you would like any support with reducing your drinking or drug use. You might want to bring a list of questions that the Care Navigator can support you with.

Your first appointment will be with a GP with specialist skills in trans health. We will most likely discuss:

- Your gender and how you feel about it
- Your hopes and goals for the future
- Various aspects of your life, such as hobbies, work, or education
- Your wellbeing and mental health
- Your relationships and support networks
- What will happen next

If you want to medically transition, we will ask about any health conditions you have and any medication you take. One of our clinicians will measure your height, weight and blood pressure, and take some blood tests. You will have a minimum of two 1-hour appointments with the GP to make sure you are supported to make decisions that are right for you.

As this is a pilot and new service it will be supported by clinicians from the Nottingham clinic. This may mean that clinicians may 'dial in' to remote consultations and give clinical advice Indigo clinicians about your care.

Sometimes it may be necessary to refer you on to a specialist at the Nottingham clinic, this additional support pathway is to make sure you get the best and safest care.

You are encouraged to bring anything that you need to make your appointment most comfortable. This might be a list of questions for us, something to take notes with, a comfort object, or a friend, partner, family member or advocate. We also encourage you to wear whatever you feel comfortable in. It won't affect your treatment if you present in a certain way, and we want you to have the best possible experience with us.

When can I start hormones?

We can recommend and support your own GP to start hormone therapy at your second appointment if:

- You're diagnosed with Gender Incongruity at your second visit
- You feel confident that you've understood the information we've shown you, including the possible risk and side effects of any treatment options. You're feeling ready to start hormones
- It's medically safe for you to do so

We understand that some people may wish to wait and/or access additional support before starting hormone therapy (if they choose to take hormones at all). Indigo offers a range of services designed to support you to make the best possible choices about your care.

It's important that you think about your future fertility before you start taking hormones as you may want to consider egg or sperm storage. We recommend that you look at the information from the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority about [trans and non-binary people and fertility preservation](#).

Can I obtain top surgery through Indigo?

Yes, we can refer you for top surgery in collaboration with our linked Gender Identity Clinic in Nottingham.

Can I obtain lower surgery through Indigo?

We can help by referring you to our linked Gender Identity Clinic in Nottingham to be assessed for lower surgery, however we are currently unable to refer you directly.



Will I need to have blood tests?

If you want to start hormones, or if you are taking hormones already, you will need to have some blood tests. Someone from our clinical team can do these for you, or we can send some information to your own GP practice to help the staff do your blood tests there if you prefer.

An important part of hormone care is having regular blood tests to check your hormone levels, your liver and kidney function, and your full blood count. If you start taking new medications as part of your Indigo care, we will support your GP practice to check your blood at regular intervals (1, 3 and 6 monthly). After you are stable on your medication, you will need blood tests every 6 months to 1 year.

We will work with your GP practice to start you on your medication and help them to feel competent and confident to carry out your blood monitoring and prescribing in the long term.

When will my first appointment be?

It depends how long you have been on the waiting list for your current GIC. We will make sure that we see the people who have been waiting the longest first, and we will let you know where you are on the list.

The Indigo pilot has been commissioned for 2 years. By the end of the pilot, we anticipate that all Indigo patients will be discharged from the service. After this we hope that Indigo will go from being a pilot to a permanent service for trans and non-binary people across Greater Manchester.

Will I have to wait long between appointments?

The time between your first and second appointments is usually around four to six weeks. Some people may choose longer periods between appointments for a number of reasons e.g. to access additional support or services or to spend more time considering the various options available to them. We're a flexible service and we'll be led by you.

I've been diagnosed with gender dysphoria in a non-NHS service, do I need to receive a diagnosis with Indigo?

Not necessarily. We want to make sure that Indigo is as accessible as possible, and we understand that many people will have been diagnosed in private services or abroad. Some people may have started hormone therapy or had some surgeries before being seen at Indigo.

I'm already on hormones, but I still want to access other services. Can I still register with Indigo?

Yes. As long as you meet the eligibility requirements for Indigo, it doesn't matter if you've had some treatments before you come to see us. We know that everyone's experience and life is different, and our role is to support you to get the care that is right for you.

How will Covid-19 and local / national restrictions affect my care with Indigo?

We want to make sure that your care is safe, inclusive and affirmative. We may need to adapt the way that our services are delivered to ensure both you and our teams are safe. All of this will be discussed with you by your Care Navigator. Some of the adjustments we are taking include:

- Care Navigation will be delivered remotely, at least for now while certain restrictions are in place. We can discuss the different ways we can do this, either through video calls or telephone calls
- Clinical appointments can be remote or in person (with risk reduction measures and PPE in place for safety)
- Blood tests and medical checks will be carried out safely in person
- Voice and communication will be delivered remotely while certain restrictions are in place
- Talking therapies will be delivered remotely while certain restrictions are in place
- Hair removal offer may be reduced under certain restrictions due to mainly being offered by beauty salons. We will discuss options for this with you.

Can I receive support for other things such as mental health, sexual health, substance use or domestic abuse?

One of our partner organisations, LGBT Foundation, can provide services to support your mental health and sexual health, and to help you with your substance use or if you are experiencing domestic abuse. Our Care Navigators will be able to talk you through the different types of support available to you, including services provided by different organisations and groups throughout Greater Manchester.

Can Indigo help me to get a gender recognition certificate by providing supporting information?

Yes. The current process for obtaining legal gender recognition in the UK requires an application for a Gender Recognition Certificate in accordance with the Gender Recognition Act 2004. See the Gov.UK website for further details.

Our teams can support you with this process, and provide some of the evidence needed for your application. If this is something you are interested in, you can discuss this with our team in one of your appointments.

I have more questions, who can I speak to?

You can contact one of our team at hello@indigogenderservice.uk or call us on 0161 710 1196.

