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Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association

Via email

Dear Mr Alexander

Thank you for your enquiry about the gender reassignment service at Charing Cross Hospital. The resignation of Mr Bellringer has created a lot of publicity and we are pleased to have the opportunity to explain what has happened and how we are addressing the future of this important service.

The gender reassignment service is commissioned by NHS England to provide the majority of male to female reassignment surgery in England. There has been a steady increase over recent years in the number of referrals of patients for this specialist surgery after they have undergone the required psychological assessment. Earlier this year, Mr James Bellringer, who was the principal surgeon undertaking this surgery, resigned from the Trust with effect from April. We have appointed a replacement, Ms Tina Rashid, who is currently completing her training in this specialist surgery and will start performing gender reassignment surgery on her own in September of this year. This transition has led to a temporary reduction in the number of cases we are carrying out.

We recognise the impact of these changes on patients and are taking action to address this. Our new gender reassignment surgeon will start surgical lists in September. We hope then to be able to undertake extra surgical lists to ensure patients are seen as quickly as possible. As a temporary measure, we are referring a small number of patients who have waited longer than others to a private provider. And we are considering the appointment of a third surgeon to increase our capacity for this service and we will be discussing this with NHS England.

We believe that these steps will lead to a more robust, sustainable service with a greater number of surgeons than we have previously had. Our service is complex, requiring input from specialist nurses, surgeons and our partners at gender identity clinics, so we are working hard to ensure we carefully build up our service to provide the very best care for all our patients, both now and in the future.

Mr David Hrouda, our Head of Urology, is writing to all of the patients with details of our plans and giving more information about the numbers of referrals, the waiting times, and contact details for patients to find out more. We will also publish this information on our website.

We are proud of the gender reassignment surgery service at Charing Cross Hospital. We apologise that the resignation of Mr Bellringer, and the publicity following this resignation, has created some distress among this group of patients and we are committed to working to address this and restore and strengthen the service at Charing Cross.

Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tracey Batten
Chief Executive