

A series from thelovetank

**Bridging
prescriptions**

**LITTLE
BACK
POCKET
GUIDE TO**

**The Love Tank CIC acknowledges
the expert health that informed
this booklet.**

**Thank you to the queer people
- especially those with bridging
prescriptions experience - who
helped create this booklet, and
who pushed for it to be produced.**

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone who wants to know more about one of the lesser known routes to accessing hormones for free, via the NHS. You may be thinking about, or already taking hormones yourself, or want to equip yourself with information to support your friends and community.

Glossary

BMA - British Medical Association

GMC - General Medical Council

GP - General Practitioner (family doctor)

R.C.Psych - Royal College of Psychiatrists

GIC - Gender Identity Clinic

CCG - Clinical Commissioning Group

THIS IS DANI



What is a bridging prescription?

Hi Hormonal Friend! I'm Dani, I've been on gender-affirming Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) for 4.5 years. Last month, after a 5.5 year wait, I had my first appointment with a Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) - mazal tov! In that appointment, I was successfully discharged back to my GP, with the expectation that they will continue to prescribe my hormones forever - success! true story!

A bridging prescription does what it says on the tin - in theory, it is intended to 'bridge' a gap in care whilst you're waiting to access a specialist service, from the point of referral. A bridging prescription isn't specific to gender-related healthcare, any specialist service could use one. If you are referred to a specialist service (in this case the GIC), your GP

could use a bridging prescription to prescribe some or all of the medications you will be taking under that service - in this case, hormones.

Clinical speak >

“ ... the GP or other medical practitioners involved in the patient’s care may prescribe ‘bridging’ endocrine treatment as part of a holding and harm reduction strategy while the patient awaits specialists endocrinology or other gender identity treatment and/or confirmation of hormone prescription elsewhere”. (from Good practice guidelines for the assessment and treatments of adults with Gender dysphoria, p.25 - R.C. Psych, 2013).

Your GP can prescribe hormones!

BUT

- Not many GPs are aware of this
- Not all GPs will agree to do it
- They don’t strictly have to
- There are criteria

The first step is to scope it out with a GP you trust. Remember, you can usually register with a GP if you live, work or have a connection to an area. And you can change GPs whenever you want.



THESE PEOPLE CAN ALL BE CONSIDERED FOR A BRIDGING PRESCRIPTION...

I'M SELF
MEDICATING



MY DR HAS SOUGHT
EXPERT ADVICE



IT WILL REDUCE RISK
OF HARM TO ME



I'M ON A
GIC WAITLIST



Who can get a bridging prescription?

The GMC advises that it can be considered when:

- Someone is self medicating hormones without prescription (e.g. from the internet or a friend)
- The bridging prescription will reduce risk or harm to the patient (i.e. it's affecting their mental health to wait GIC wait times, etc)
- The doctor has sought out expert medical advice (more on this later)
- And - you are on the waiting list/have been referred to the GIC

- * You don't need a dysphoria diagnosis, or to have changed your name
- * You don't need to meet all of these criteria but it helps (and lots of us do anyway!)

There is **NO TIME LIMIT** for the length of time your doctor can give you a bridging prescription [mine is now forever]. You can collect your prescription from any chemist. Check if your benefits entitle you to free prescriptions. A prescription certificate could save you some money here.

A note on self-medicating /self-prescribing

This is a valid way to access the healthcare we need and are often denied. But it can be: expensive; and a little risky if you aren't having check-ups to monitor your bloods. **BUT** – you have places that will monitor your bloods, for free, and with no judgement.

Shared care plans

So, the General Medical Council **ACTUALLY SAYS**:

“we don't believe that providing care for patients with gender dysphoria is a highly specialist treatment area requiring specific expertise” – letter to the BMA, 2016.

BUT – your GP might not see it that way (sigh) and might want a **SHARED CARE PLAN**

A shared care plan (sometimes called a shared care agreement) is nothing complicated and your GP will be familiar with it. It just means they **OUTSOURCE** parts of your **CARE** they might not feel familiar with to an **EXPERT**.

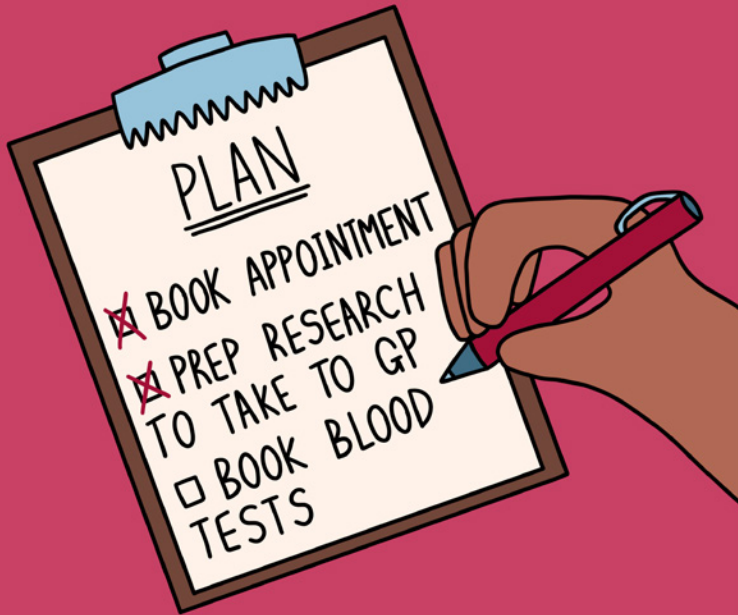
Think about what would suit YOU

This usually means:

- * Blood monitoring
- * Dosage options
- * Types of hormones (gel, pills, patches, injections etc)

Do some research and consider what might feel like a good starting point for you – e.g. wanna microdose? Want minimal healthcare encounters? Slower changes?.....

What to expect – and how to prepare



Expectation	Preparation
Your GP to look at your blankly as you say you want hormones	Baby steps. Start from a point of believing they want to help, but they may need educating.
Your GP to send you for lots of blood tests etc before prescribing anything	Dealing with people in the medical field can be traumatising and tricky to navigate. Manage your expectations around things like pronouns, legal names etc.

Expectation	Preparation
None of this will happen overnight	But it will happen, and a lot quicker than the 2, 3, 4+ years you'd wait for the GIC - and SO much cheaper than going private!
This may feel like a lot for you to manage on your own	I would say always take someone with you to appointments if you can - ideally someone who can advocate for you if needed, and can back you up if difficult conversations come up.

Troubleshooting & advocacy advice

What if your GP flat out refuses?

DON'T WASTE YOUR ENERGY trying to convince them! There are lots of trans friendly doctors out there. Ask about and switch, switch, switch!

What if your GP asks something like 'WHAT'S DYSPHORIA?'

This really happened to me when I was advocating for someone! Deep breaths! This may be time to set your GP a bit of reading homework. Remind them they have a duty of care!

What if your GP tries to play smart (or shy!) with things like:

"The CCG won't fund unlicensed medicines (medicines/drugs not used for their licensed purpose i.e. for cis people in this case)"



Your trans and genderqueer/enby friends and family are one of your most brilliant resources here!!

- this is nonsense! The GMC fully supports using unlicensed drugs safely when they are of clear benefit to a patient's health. It happens in lots of cases, including for cancer treatments.

"This is too risky and needs the specialists"
- three words: SHARED. CARE. PLAN.

"I'd just love to help but I'm just not sure how"
- again, three words: SHARED. CARE. PLAN.

ALSO – don't be afraid!

Go in armed – take printouts of prescribing guidelines. Have websites pre-loaded on your phone to show them. Don't give them any room for doubt
- you can do this! Some useful reading at the end of this guide.

YOU ARE YOUR OWN EXPERT!





Trans specific services

These are trans specific services that are **HAPPY** to help you get the **CARE YOU NEED**. They are also very familiar with shared care agreements and can provide you with letters for your doctor outlining the services they can provide for you (though also these are on their websites, so don't be afraid to direct your doctor there yourself - tell them to google it!).

The following services are available in London.

If you are outside London, services like this are springing up - do a bit of digging and check the resource page on our website!

queerhealth.info/lgbt/bp

56T at Dean Street

Soho – appointment only

2nd Floor, 56 Dean Street, W1D 6AE

Every Wednesday, 4:30 - 7pm

CliniQ at Kings College Hospital

Camberwell – walk in

Caldecot Centre, 15-22 Caldecot Rd, London SE5 9RS

Every Tuesday, 4 - 7pm

Bridge @Southwark

Southwark – via registration

ih.bridgeatsouthwark@nhs.net

1st Tuesday of the month



These are free NHS services RUN BY
TRANS+ and QUEER PEOPLE, and people
with huge experience working with us!

And can also administer your hormone injection with proof of prescription (i.e. not stuff you bought online, though they will still monitor your bloods).

THEY ALSO PROVIDE:

- * Sexual health screening
- * Counselling
- * Holistic therapy
- * Housing support
- * Drug and alcohol support
- * Tea! Trans chats/waiting room cruising!
Reliable! Snacks! Warm! Pals! Safe! Tips
and Tricks!

Always worth dropping them an email if there's anything you'd like to know before you go!

They will monitor your bloods for:

- Hormone levels
- Organ function
- Cholesterol
- The whole shebang!

WHAT DO YOU NEED?



Helpful resources

Facebook groups

- * Non-Binary London
- * FTM, MTF Trans & Non-binary Support Group
- * TransPALS UK (Trans People Across London South)
- * Action for Trans Health Advocacy Support

Instagram accounts

- * Radam Ridwan @radamridwan
- * Travis Alabanza @travisalabanza
- * Danni Spooner @dannisp00ner
- * Prinx Chiyo @prinxchiyo
- * Shayshay Show @shayshayshow
- * Lori Mae @motherlorimae
- * Lucia Blayke @luciablayke
- * Black Trans Foundation @blacktransfoundation
- * The Bitten Peach @bittenpeachuk
- * We Exist London @weexistlondon

Instagram accounts (continued)

- * June Lam @assignedfagatbirth
- * JamieBoyKing @boy.king.tattoo
- * Biogal @biogal
- * Pissed Off Trannies @pissedofftrannies
- * Mud Howard @transsexualdreamboat
- * Not A Phase @notaphaseorg
- * QueerGarden @queergarden
- * Pxssy Palace @pxssypalace
- * Transmissions @wearetransmissions
- * Prinx Silver @prinxsilver

Events and socials

- * Transmissions (weekly film screening/social)
- * Fussy Party (club night)
- * Pxssy Palace (club night)
- * Harpies (club night)
- * London Trans Pride (annual protest)
- * Bender Defenders (self defence/fitness class)
- * Femme Fraiche (club night)
- * Body2Body (club night)
- * T-Boys Club (club night)
- * TransFemSocial (monthly social)
- * Testo Hunkie (club night)
- * Shapeshifterz (weekly dance class)

Community spaces

- * London LGBTQ+ community centre (central)
- * The Common Press (east)
- * The Outside Project (south)

Haircare

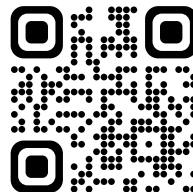
- * Open Barbers (Old Street)
- * Hugo Snips

Lots of others, but I shave my own hair so ask about!

Counselling

- * ELOP
- * Spectra
- * CliniQ
- * 56T/Trans+

Scan the QR code below to visit our website for links to these helpful resources!



References

- ✿ **My personal experiences and experience of friends and professionals**
- ✿ **Good Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Adults with Gender Dysphoria (2013)**
– R.C.Psych
- ✿ **Managing Patients with Gender Dysphoria**
– BMA website
- ✿ **Nursing in Practice website**
- ✿ **CliniQ, 56T, Bridge@Southwark resources**
- ✿ **NHS Website**

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