



Gender Dysphoria Therapeutic Service - referral guidance for parents, carers & professionals

Who we are & what we offer

We are a Southampton based service that aims to provide a safe, thinking space for Young People (YP) aged 11-18 who are experiencing confusion, distress or interpersonal difficulties related to gender dysphoria. The YP group meets weekly during term time on a Thursday evening between 5.15 and 6.45 pm and has a maximum of eight group members at any time. It is run by Jo Pearce (Group Psychotherapist) & Cliff Free (Art Psychotherapist) who share significant experience of working with young people and running groups in a range of settings. YP don't have to be any good at art to join the group but our approach stems from our training in Art Therapy and Talking Therapies so we use games & creative activities as well as discussion to encourage YP to:

- explore gender identity / dysphoria - what it means to them and how it impacts
- exchange ideas & experiences alongside young people facing similar (as well as some different) challenges
- build communication skills & social confidence through getting support from and being helpful to others
- consider the many different ways of understanding & managing their difficulties
- recognise uncertainties and the potential for thoughts and feelings to change over time
- celebrate and build on their strengths

What we ask for

- This is not a 'drop-in' service so we ask YP to let us know if they are going to miss a session or be late and to attend regularly as this helps group members get to know and build trust with each other.
- We have some fun and laughs but we do also discuss challenging, sensitive and sometimes upsetting issues so it is important a YP is prepared for this if they decide to join.
- We find there are lots of alternative ways of thinking and feeling about gender in the group and we encourage YP to be curious and thoughtful with each other and open to different viewpoints.
- We encourage as much openness as possible & it is important for parents/carers/professionals and YP themselves to let us know if they are particularly struggling with anything inside or outside the group – if we don't know we can't try to help.
- To support YP people feeling safe and included we ask that they switch phones off in the group & don't contact each other or link on social media outside of the group during the time they are involved.
- It is really important that the YP involved feel safe enough to explore these issues. Because of this we require that they keep each other's information confidential and within the group.

Confidentiality

If a YP is involved with any other professionals it is usually important that they continue to receive that help alongside attending the group and we ask for permission to share information if we feel it would be helpful to be joined up. Other than this we keep the things YP tell us confidential unless we're concerned about their own or somebody else's safety, in which case we may share our concerns with parents/carers and/or other professionals as appropriate.

Support for families

If a YP is under 18, we prefer to meet them with a parent/carer at our first appointment if possible but if there are problems with this we are happy to talk about this. Alongside the YP group we offer a termly group for parents/carers to share their experiences and think about how they can best support the young people they are involved with.

How can we access the service?

If you have questions or would like an informal discussion, please email info@yellowdoor.org.uk. Alternatively you and/or the YP can complete our referral form available on our website. Please [click here](#). We only work part-time for this service and usually have a waiting list but will attempt to contact you within four weeks of receiving your form.

