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Tavistock transgender clinic could face mass legal action 'from 1,000 families of children who claim they were rushed into taking life-altering puberty blockers' weeks after NHS shut it down in wake of damning report

- Thousands of young people were treated by Tavistock centre in north London
- Many of them were prescribed powerful drugs to delay onset of adolescence
- But now the NHS has ordered it to be shut down in the wake of a damning report

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Former patients of the [NHS](#)'s controversial [gender](#) identity clinic for children may now take legal action against it.

Thousands of young people were treated by the Tavistock centre in north [London](#) – and in many cases were prescribed powerful drugs to delay the onset of adolescence.

But now the NHS has ordered it to be shut down in the wake of a damning report that found teenagers were suffering because they were being forced to wait for treatment.

The expert carrying out the review also warned of potentially serious side-effects of 'puberty-blocker' drugs.



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Dr Hilary Cass told NHS England there is no way of knowing if the medication may 'disrupt' the process of children deciding on their gender identity, rather than 'buying time' for them.

She also raised concerns that the drugs could interrupt the process of the brain maturing, affecting children's ability to exercise judgment.

Her findings raise the prospect that patients treated at the Tavistock and their parents may now sue the NHS for compensation.

They could try to prove they were damaged by the medication, which staff at the centre are said to have claimed was 'fully reversible' despite a lack of evidence.

The patients may also claim they could not have given informed consent to take the drugs given the lack of knowledge about their long-term effects.

A high-profile court case was previously brought against the Tavistock by Keira Bell, who transitioned after being prescribed puberty blockers but later regretted it.

Judges initially ruled that under-16s could not consent to the treatment but the ruling was overturned on appeal.

James Esses, co-founder of Thoughtful Therapists, said: 'I have been contacted by a number of detransitioners who are considering taking legal action.'

'Already in the USA there are class lawsuits being taken by parents of children prescribed puberty blockers. It is only a matter of time until we see similar action on our shores.'

He went on: 'Gender dysphoria is a mental health condition and should be treated as such – through explorative therapy, rather than irreversible medication and surgery.'

'Far too many children have been left with physical and emotional scars from decisions we should never have let them make.'

John McQuater, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, said there is a 'potential for claims' but only in specific circumstances.

He said: 'A patient can only claim redress if he, or she, has been injured. The law does not require clinicians to provide exemplary standards of care, it only requires healthcare professionals to exercise reasonable standards of care and skill.

'The decision about what level of care is reasonable is made by fellow clinicians and, where the standard has fallen below that benchmark, that patient has every right to full redress to help put things right.'



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Stephanie Davies-Arai, founder of Transgender Trend, who raised concerns on behalf of Tavistock patients' parents, said: 'I would imagine that parents who did not agree with the treatment or approach may now consider a challenge.'

But she said that in many cases parents were keen for their children to be treated and added: 'It's very hard for parents because their priority is always to maintain a good relationship with their children.'

Barrister Simon Myerson QC predicted that the scandal could even lead to a criminal investigation.

He claimed months ago 'that the next wave of legal action will be in respect of gender identity and children' and now believes 'closing the Tavistock will accelerate that process'.

'Interesting to see which solicitors firms do the work. I predict a police investigation into the Tavistock by June 2023,' he wrote on Twitter.

'We're in the extraordinary position that drugs prescribed to children as safe and reversible appear not to have yet been subject to clinical trials in respect of the purpose for which those children received them. There is thus unlikely to be informed consent to taking them.'

Laura Preston, a principal lawyer in clinical negligence at Slater and Gordon, one of Britain's biggest law firms, said: 'It is certainly possible that we could see a wave of compensation claims as a result of the closure of the Tavistock clinic.'

'This is clearly an emerging area of medicine that requires greater research and regulation in order to better serve the potentially vulnerable people accessing the service.'

'We encourage the use of independent reviews which ensure medical facilities are adhering to the strict standards that are expected of them.'

'In this instance, the Tavistock clinic was not up to standard and therefore potentially placing patients at risk, which warrants investigation and may result in the need to compensate injured patients.'

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust insisted that the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) was only being closed because the Cass review recommended a regional model instead of a single national service, and not because of safety concerns.

A spokesman said: 'We are not aware of any claims for compensation levied against the Trust by GIDS patients.'

'The Trust is proud of its Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), which for 30 years has been providing support to children and young people experiencing difficulties around their gender identity development. It is a caring and thoughtful service.'

Any claims against the Tavistock would be handled by NHS Resolution, which deals with clinical negligence claims across the country. Latest figures show it paid out £1.7billion in damages to patients in the past year.