

## **Ireland Worst in EU for Transgender Healthcare**

Recently I was scrolling through my Instagram feed when a particularly interesting post popped up. The post was of a news article taken from the Irish Times, “Ireland has ranked worst for transgender healthcare in the European Union.” Out of a possible twelve points, Ireland scored one. That single, pathetic point was given simply because, nominally speaking, Ireland has transgender healthcare in the first place. The quality of that healthcare however is beyond poor.

Further investigation pushed me towards the shocking realisation of how abysmal the system is. My own experience with Transgender Healthcare in this country has been difficult to say the least. However, I never believed that it was as bad as the living nightmare it currently is. In January of 2021, the entire healthcare system for transgender minors completely collapsed and there are still no signs of its return. The provision of healthcare for young people isn't even the worst of it. Once you turn 17, you can register to be seen by the National Gender Service also known as the NGS. This service may seem like a dream come through, the last ray of sunlight permeating the thick depths of an ocean of dysphoria however, this “dream” is much more of a nightmare.

At first glance there's nothing wrong with the NGS, they provide hormone replacement therapy for transgender people in Ireland. However, when you dive deeper into the service, you'll find a waiting list longer than the Nile. To be honest, you could probably walk barefoot all the way from Paris to Shanghai and back again before you would get your first appointment after adding your name to the waiting list. However, to undertake that cross-continental journey would be a walk in the park compared to the pain that people on that waiting list are forced to cope with for an estimated time of between seven to ten years. During that time, transgender people cannot medically advance in their transition, they are forced to wait. This wait can have dire consequences. Many transgender people resort to receiving their hormones on the black market, which can prove dangerous because they don't know if the hormones aren't something more sinister. Not everyone tries getting hormones from there though; some people choose to wait. However, waiting can be just as dangerous. Medically speaking waiting doesn't pose a threat to a person's physical health but where they are mentally can have extreme consequences, nonetheless.

If you believe what you've already read here is the worst that the system has to offer, then I hope you're prepared to be even more disappointed. In Ireland there is no access to gender affirming surgeries such as top surgery and bottom surgery. Since there is no surgeon in the country who can provide these vital surgeries, the transgender people of Ireland who need them are forced to go abroad. Even during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, patients who

should have been treated in Ireland were forced to leave to seek treatment, simply so how they felt on the inside was reflected on the outside.

Transgender people in Ireland face enough adversity here. As a community we are harassed, assaulted, fetishised and murdered. How we progress in our transition should be the least of our problems, yet if it was then I'd be writing this article about something completely different. As a transgender person trying to live here in Ireland, the only home I've ever known, I am appalled to see how bleak my future is if I stay. The system gives us nothing and they expect us to think that it's enough. It's not.