



## Rethinking Youth Gender Medicine Conference: First Do No Harm

 Sun 5 Jul 2026 9:00 AM - Mon 6 Jul 2026 5:30 PM

 University College London, Malet Pl, Bloomsbury, London,  
WC1E 7JE



CAN-SG in partnership with SEGM welcome you to our second International conference on youth gender health care. Our theme is Rethinking Youth Gender Medicine: First Do No Harm. The conference will be live-streamed and registrants will receive a recording after the conference.

This conference brings together experienced clinicians, academics and researchers, alongside patient and parent voices. Sessions will examine the history and rapid global spread of the medical affirmation model; possible drivers of the rise in gender distress; and challenges in diagnosis, terminology, and research. We will also explore ethical tensions between autonomy and the duty to avoid harm, wider social influences—including rising youth mental health difficulties—and alternative psychotherapeutic approaches to supporting gender-distressed children and young people.

This international conference brings together leading clinicians, researchers, patients & academics to examine gender-related care in children and young people



In the UK, puberty blockers are no longer routinely prescribed, the PATHWAYS trial has been paused pending review of risks, and new proposals may further restrict cross-sex hormones for under-18s. Does this herald real change towards an ethical evidence based treatment approach? It is too early to say and in many other ways the gender affirming approach is still entrenched in the NHS, along with the ideology that underpins it. In the UK over 6000 young people a year under the age of 25 are referred to adult gender clinics. The largest group of referrals to adult clinics are now women under 25 with complex issues. Yet they can still get cross sex hormones and surgical referral after two appointments, with no mandatory mental health input.

Clinicians in the adult clinics told Dr Hilary Cass about the poor quality of care some young people were receiving there and this led to the Levy Review. Disappointingly the Levy Review was very limited and did not question the care model itself, leaving this group at substantial physical and psychological risk. Levy's main solution is to encourage more GPs to prescribe cross sex hormones - a policy enthusiastically supported by the Royal College of General Practitioners. Is more GP prescribing really the answer?

Sessions will address current evidence, models of clinical practice, aetiology, & ethical frameworks, alongside evidence based challenges to medical interventions



Clinicians face growing uncertainty. If medical intervention is no longer appropriate, what should replace it? We will hear from several clinicians pioneering psychotherapeutic approaches to helping children, young people and their families to deal with gender related distress.

And how should practitioners support adults living with the known—and unknown—long-term effects of hormones and surgery? Two years after NHS England said it would implement the recommendation of the Cass Review to provide services for detransitioners, no progress has been made. The conference will hear from detransitioners and those supporting them to find out what kind of services detransitioners need.

The programme will also consider broader social influences and the role of non-medical approaches in supporting gender-distressed youth



The last conference was in the spirit of the Cass Review recommendation for open respectful professional discussion in order to find the best ways to help those experiencing gender-related distress.

Instead the conference was heavily protested and the RCGP whose venue we had hired went to great pains to distance themselves from us. There are still few opportunities for clinicians to meet or discuss their concerns about gender medicine.

We are delighted that Maeve Halligan who founded the Cambridge Society for Women who will talk about the importance of courage to speak out. It's only be meeting, talking, debating, sharing ideas and, yes, disagreeing that we can hope to resolve a situation that threatens the health of so many vulnerable young people and ensure that we as clinicians are practising ethically and safely.

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### **Conference opening: Welcoming speeches from Baroness Dianne Hayter and Maeve Halligan.**





## Day one | Aetiologies, evidence, research, and ethics

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### Panel One: History and aetiologies

**Chair: Dr Stella Kingett** *Co-chair, Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender*

**Zhenya Abbruzzese** *A brief history of gender medicine and the rise of the Dutch protocol*

**Prof Michael Biggs** *How the availability of puberty suppression transformed the social, cultural, and medical landscape*

**Prof Alex Byrne** *Diagnoses in gender medicine*



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## Zhenya Abbruzzese

Healthcare researcher and author of several widely read, peer-reviewed publications in paediatric gender medicine. She co-founded the Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine in 2019 and co-authored the 2025 Health and Human Services report on paediatric gender dysphoria. Zhenya will present a brief history of gender medicine and the rise of the Dutch protocol



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## Prof Michael Biggs

Professor of Sociology at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St Cross College. He was the first to uncover the use of puberty blockers at the Tavistock Gender Identity Development Service and to publish findings highlighting unfavourable outcomes. He will discuss how the availability of puberty suppression has transformed the social, cultural, and medical landscape



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## Prof Alex Byrne

Professor of Philosophy at MIT. He is the author of *Trouble with Gender: Sex Facts, Gender Fictions* (2023) and a co-author of *Treatment for Pediatric Gender Dysphoria: Review of Evidence and Best Practices*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2025). Alex will talk about diagnoses in gender medicine.



## Panel Two: Evidence, uncertainty, and risk from childhood into adulthood

**Chair: Dr Louise Irvine** *Co-chair, Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender*

**Dr Alison Clayton** *Diagnostic, aetiological and prognostic uncertainty in youth gender medicine*

**Scot Bradley Glasberg, M.D** *Breaking the Mold: How the American Society of Plastic Surgeons Decided to Put Evidence First*

**Dr Ray Zhang** *Is there equipoise for interventional trials?*

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**Dr Alison Clayton**

Psychiatrist, psychotherapist, and historian of psychiatry, practising in Melbourne. She is the author of several academic publications focusing on paediatric gender medicine. Alison will speak about diagnostic, aetiological and prognostic uncertainty in youth gender medicine.



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**Scot Bradley Glasberg MD**

Past President American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Past President the Plastic Surgery Foundation. President, Plastic Surgery Practice Solutions (subsidiary of ASPS) Past Governor, American College of Surgeons. Councilor, Medical Society of the State of New York. Scot's talk is on "Breaking the Mold: How the American Society of Plastic Surgeons Decided to Put Evidence First"



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**Dr Yuan (Ray) Zhan**

Researcher at Evidence Bridge. He holds a PhD from McMaster University and a Master's degree from Peking University. His work focuses on clinical guidelines, patient values, and strengthening trust through transparent healthcare decision-making. Ray will ask whether there is equipoise for interventional trials in gender medicine



## Panel Three: Research

**Chair: Prof Alice Sullivan**

**Prof Alice Sullivan** *Barriers to research in gender medicine*

**Prof Sallie Baxendale** *Effect of puberty blockers on the adolescent brain*

**Dr Hannah Ryan** *Adverse effects of hormonal interventions in gender medicine*

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**Prof Alice Sullivan**

Professor of Sociology at the UCL Social Research Institute. Alice was commissioned by the UK government to carry out an independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender. Alice will talk about the difficulties and barriers to research in the field of gender medicine.



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**Prof Sallie Baxendale**

Professor of Clinical Neuropsychology at the UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology. She was awarded the International Neuropsychological Society Arthur Benton Prize in 2018 in recognition of her outstanding scientific contributions to the field of neuropsychology, and received the Distinguished Contribution Award from the British Psychological Society in 2023. Sallie will talk about the effects of puberty blockers on the adolescent brain.



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## Panel Four: Ethical challenges

**Zhenya Abbruzzese** (*Chair*)

**Prof Moti Gorin** *Evidence, ethics, and youth gender dysphoria*

**Dr Sinéad Helyar** *Pathways puberty blocker trial and why it does not comply with UK research regulations*

**Parent perspective** *Ethical dilemmas for parents of trans identified children*





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**Evening 5-7.30:** summer drinks reception

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## **Day two | Social and cultural contexts, clinical perspectives**

### **Panel Five: Society, culture and detransition**

**Prof David Pilgrim** *Chair*

**Stephanie Davies-Arai** *Social transition: what's the harm?*

**Sarah Mittermaier** *Beliefs about medical transition and the body in online trans support spaces*

**Maeve Halligan** *Social pressures on young women*

**Michael Kerr** *Detransition pathways: going back, but moving forward*

**Dr Stella O'Malley** *Beyond Trans; psychological support for detransitioners*

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## Dr David Pilgrim

Semi-retired clinical psychologist and medical sociologist. He is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, University of Southampton



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## Stephanie Davies-Arai

Founder and director of Transgender Trend, a UK organisation advocating an evidence-based approach to children who are distressed about their sex. With a background in education and parenting, Stephanie was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to children. Stephanie will talk about social transition as both a result of social and cultural pressures and an active intervention that changes the trajectory of the gender-questioning child

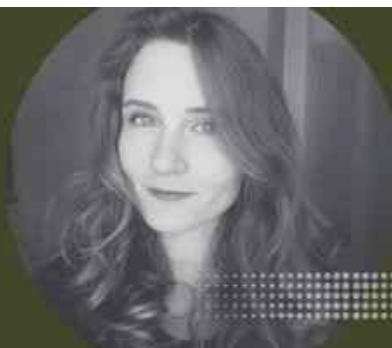


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## Sarah Mittermaier

Researcher exploring online communities where young people adopt new attitudes and beliefs about gender and set expectations and intentions for transition. She is currently writing a book on gender medicine for Polity. Sarah will explore the beliefs about medical transition and the body in online trans spaces.



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## Maeve Halligan

Founding president of Cambridge University Society of Women. She has spoken about the harms of medical transition to children and young people, especially young gay and lesbian people.



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## Michael Kerr

Michael is a detransitioned man from Scotland who identified as transgender for seven years, five of which involved medical treatment. Michael has created a peer-to-peer support organisation to help other detransitioners. His talk is titled: "Detransition pathways: going back but moving forward"



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## Dr Stella O'Malley

Psychotherapist, author, and Founder-Director of Genspect. She is the author of several books, including Bully-Proof Kids and co-author of When Kids Say They're Trans. Her doctoral research at the University of Dundee focused on parents' perspectives on gender dysphoria in childhood and adolescence.



### Panel Six :Psychotherapy

**Dr David Bell** *Chair*

**Anastassis Spiliadis** *Embodied distress in adolescence*

**Dr Anna Hutchinson and Dr Celia Sadie** *Psychotherapeutic work with gender-distressed youth*

**Dr Stephen Levine** *Working psychotherapeutically with families of gender distressed youth*

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## Dr David Bell

Retired Consultant Psychiatrist at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. In 2018, whilst serving as Trust Governor representing the clinical staff, he authored a report that was highly critical of the Tavistock Gender Identity Service for children and adolescents (GIDS)

A circular portrait of Dr David Bell, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a suit and tie, sitting in front of a bookshelf.

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## Anastassis Spiliadis

Psychotherapist working with adolescents, adults, couples, and families. He recently contributed to the training of clinicians in the new youth gender services in the UK. Anastassis will talk about psychotherapeutic work for embodied distress in adolescence.

A circular portrait of Anastassis Spiliadis, a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a dark shirt, sitting in front of a bookshelf.

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## Dr Anna Hutchinson

UK-based clinical psychologist specialising in adolescence, the relationship between mental and physical health, and identity development. She is committed to thoughtful, evidence-informed, and ethical practice, with an interest in the interplay between mind, body, and society. Anna will talk about psychotherapeutic work with gender-distressed youth



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## Dr Celia Sadie

Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Organisational Consultant in private practice. She worked for 20 years in the NHS in adolescent Tier 4 and forensic custodial settings, specialising in trauma and adolescent development. Celia will talk about psychotherapeutic work with gender-distressed youth.



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## Dr Stephen Levine

Psychiatrist who started one of the first gender clinics for patients with gender-related concerns in 1974. Long interested in psychotherapy as an investigative and therapeutic tool, he posits the hypothesis that a new trans identity is a creative unconscious solution to existential woes that must be understood in terms of the youthful sensibilities of minors. Stephen will talk about working psychotherapeutically with families of adolescents with Gender Dysphoria



### Panel Seven: Clinical perspectives

**Dr Aileen O'Brien** *Chair*

**Dr Louise Irvine** *Uncertainty and risk: should GPs prescribe cross sex hormones?*

**Dr Katie Alcock** *The link between autism spectrum disorders and gender related distress*

**Elaine Miller** *Pelvic floor complications of testosterone use in women and how physiotherapy can help*

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## Dr Louise Irvine

Retired general practitioner, GP trainer, and programme director. She is co-chair of the Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender. She will speak on evidence, uncertainty, and risk in gender care for young adults, with reference to the Levy Review's failure to address key concerns.



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## Dr Katie Alcock

Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Lancaster University. She works on language and cognitive development. She is interested in how young children understand sex and gender, and how this may differ in some children (e.g. autistic children). Katie will talk about the link between Autism Spectrum Disorder and gender distress.



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## Elaine Miller

Fellow of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and a pelvic health physiotherapist based in Edinburgh. She has co-authored a comprehensive literature review on pelvic health conditions associated with cross-sex hormone use and will talk about the role of physiotherapy in managing the unwanted effects of gender interventions, with particular focus on pelvic health conditions.



## Panel Eight: Looking to the future. How can we support young people moving forward?

### Sue Evans Chair

Sue will chair a panel discussion on "Looking to the future: How can we support children, families and young adults, moving forward?" with Stephanie Davies-Arai, Dr. Anna Hutchinson, Dr. Stephen Levine, Dr Hannah Ryan, Michael Kerr and a parent perspective. The panel will also address the implications of the proposed conversion practices bill for therapists, clinicians, parents and same sex attracted young people.



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**Closing remarks: Dr Stella Kingett** *Co-chair Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender*

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The Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender (CAN-SG) is a group of

clinicians campaigning for clearer dialogue, rigorous science and improved treatment options for gender dysphoria.

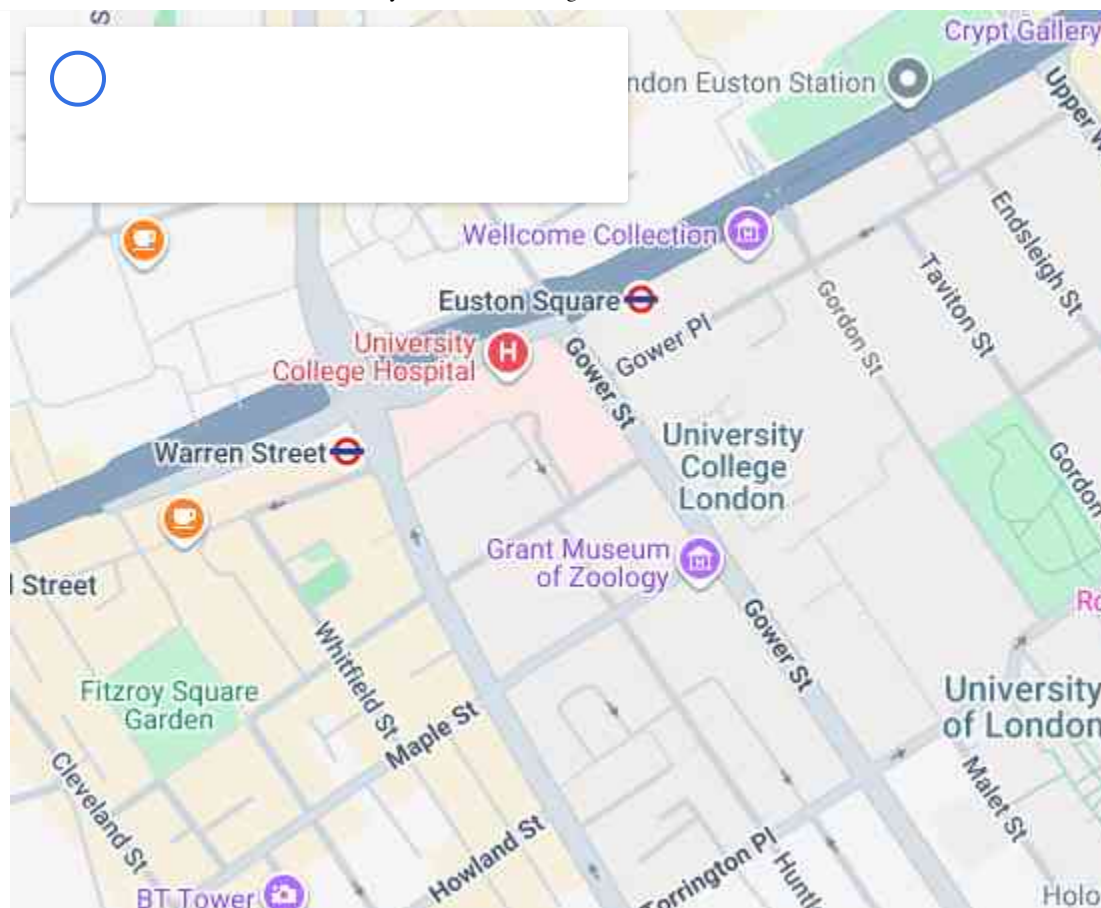
The Society for Evidence Based Gender Medicine (SEGM) aims to promote safe, compassionate, ethical and evidence-informed healthcare for children, adolescents, and young adults with gender dysphoria.

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