

TOP TIPS

FOR WORKING WITH TRANS* AND GENDER QUESTIONING YOUNG PEOPLE



Written by the young people of Transformers,
Allsorts Trans* Youth Group with support from staff

Public

When we use the word “trans*” we understand it as an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not line up with the gender they were given at birth.



PRONOUNS AND NAMES

For a young person who is exploring their gender identity, a name change or the decision to use a pronoun which is in keeping with their gender identity can be hugely empowering and validating.

Remember that not all young people identify as male or female (gender binary), they may identify as gender fluid, non-gendered or in other ways and may choose to use gender neutral pronouns (Ze or they) or no pronouns at all.

Always try your best to use correct pronoun and name and allow young people to change their name or pronoun as many times as they need to in order to reflect what might be a changing or developing identity. Do not worry if you make a mistake when referring to someone, it happens and can be rectified by an apology and a commitment to try harder to get it right.

Some trans* children and young people may wish to change their name in line with their true gender identity. Although they may not have changed their name legally, individuals have the right to choose the name by which they are known to staff, friends and family. This will include making changes on any records that a service holds about the young person.

DON'T ASSUME

Try not make assumptions about someone by their appearance.

Just because a young person may present in a certain way does not mean that they are what you assume them to be. For example, a trans woman may not be presenting in a typically feminine way at the point which you meet her (or ever) but still very much identifies as a woman. Try to look past appearances and let the young person show you who they are.



CLOTHES AND APPEARANCE

Trans* or gender questioning young people have the right to dress in ways that are consistent with their gender identity or gender expression.

The choice to begin dressing in clothes associated with your true gender can be a very big and potentially daunting step for some young people. It is important to realise the significance of this step for the young person and also to recognise that in dressing differently a young person may become vulnerable to transphobic bullying or discrimination. Care should be taken to ensure that trans* children and young people are given the support they need at this time. Staff training is useful in ensuring that all staff have an understanding of what it means to be trans* and exactly why a young person is choosing to dress differently. Remember that a young person who identifies as a trans girl but was assigned male at birth is not a 'boy dressed as a girl' but is a girl who outwardly at this point resembles a boy. By supporting a trans* young person to dress in clothes which they feel comfortable with, you are empowering them to express themselves by bringing their outward appearance in line with that of their internal gender identity.

TOILETS AND CHANGING FACILITIES

Trans* children and young people have a right to access the toilet that reflects their gender identity.

This can be a very challenging area for a lot of people who are trans* or gender questioning who may feel unsupported in their choice to use a toilet that reflects their gender identity or unsafe when they do. Ideally, mixed gender or gender neutral toilet facilities would be available, however a young trans* person should not be required to take this option.

Using a trans* positive toilet sign or trans* safe space stickers are another way of highlighting trans* inclusion at your youth project. Young people at Allsorts designed these signs:



LISTENING AND COMMUNICATION

Trust that what a young person presents to you is the reality of their situation at the time.

They may be presenting you with ideas and feelings with which you are not familiar but you can support them by giving them a safe space to explore these ideas and by learning with them.

There is nothing constructive or supportive about assuming that someone may be in a phase. Even if this turns out to be the case, this is still a valid form of self-expression and development.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Everyone has a right to privacy, this includes the right to keep one's trans status private.

A trans* person's previous name, gender assigned at birth or anything else regarding their transition constitutes as private information and to share this information without the knowledge or consent of the young person (unless legally required to do so) is a breach of their confidentiality. Workers should not discuss trans* young people out of work, even when making no particular reference to their name or personal details. The trans* community is incredibly small that even a casual remark may inadvertently out them. When a young person discloses their trans* status, it is important to discuss confidentiality with them and who they would like information to be shared with. This is particularly important for multi-agency working.

TRANSITIONING

Transitioning can broadly be described in two ways; social and medical.

A social transition is generally the first port of call for a trans* person. It is different for everyone and may include a name and/or pronoun change, using toilets/changing facilities appropriate to their gender, dressing as their identified gender etc. A social transition may or may not be part of a gender reassignment process and it's important to recognise that a young person may just be experimenting with their gender identity rather than making a decision to transition. In either case, a non-judgemental attitude, support and advice for the young person will be vital.

A medical transition is generally done through a Gender Identity Clinic (GIC). Medical treatment is provided in a series of phases that include: a psychological assessment with the local mental health team (CAMHS or adult services), medical treatment that could include hormone blockers or hormones, and gender reassignment surgeries - these are not usually carried out until a person is over 18. Not all trans* people have the same medical treatment (or choose to have medical treatment at all) and it is important to remember and consider this when young people express their intentions of a potential medical transition.

TACKLING TRANSPHOBIA, WHOLE SERVICE APPROACH

All services should work towards a robust, organisational approach in developing an understanding of trans issues and prevention of transphobia.

This not only provides a safe space for the young person but also shows unity and consistency for all. When a young person's trans* identity is known, organisations need to comply with the Equality Act and Human Rights Act to counteract any prejudice expressed or concerns raised. Some approaches could include; a trans* policy, an anti-bullying policy, celebrating LGBT history month and providing resources, information and signposting around trans* issues.

EQUALITY ACT

The Equality Act 2010 protects children, young people and adults against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to housing, education, clubs, the provision of services and work.

Discrimination is broadly unfair treatment related to:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Equality Act provides protection from discrimination because of gender reassignment. It is unlawful to treat young people less favourably because of their gender reassignment. Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process (or part of a process) part process of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes. A person does not have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender, or proposing to do so.

USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Assigned sex - The sex you were assigned.

Cisgender - A match between your biological sex and your gender. For example a female sexed person identifying with their female gender. Also a term for non-transgender people.

Coming out - A process by which a trans* person will tell friends/family/co-workers etc about their trans* status.

Deed Poll/Statutory Declaration - The means by which a person can legally change their name.

FTM/Trans man/a transsexual man - Someone assigned female at birth but has transitioned or intends to transition to male.

FAAB - Female assigned at birth

Gender - How a person feels in regards to male/female/ neither/both. A cognitive process of recognising one's identity.

Genderqueer - A gender diverse person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or a combination of male and female.

Gender dysphoria - A recognised medical term which refers to the physical/ mental/social discomfort of being perceived and living as one's assigned sex.

GIC - Gender Identity Clinic

Lower Surgery - Surgical process by which an individual's genitals can be altered to come in line with their preferred gender identity.

MTF/Trans woman - Someone assigned as male at birth who has transitioned or intends to transition to female.

MAAB - Male assigned at birth

Non binary - To not identify within the binary male or female ideologies in Western society. See also 'Gender Queer'.

Oestrogen - Oestrogen is the female hormone which some trans women use in order to help their appearance become more feminine.

Passing - Being seen or read as the gender you present yourself as e.g. a male identifying person being read as male.

Pronouns - He, him, his, she, her, they, them, their, hir, sie, ey, zie. (gender neutral)

Sex - Assigned at birth in relation to ones genitals, chromosomes etc.

Sexual Orientation - Attraction to people i.e. gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual etc.

Stealth - Living in one's acquired gender without anyone knowing about one's trans* status.

Testosterone - Testosterone is the male hormone which some trans men use to help their appearance become more masculine.

To gender - To assign someone else a gender by noticing behaviour and body presentation.

Top surgery - Known term that trans men use when referring to chest surgery which produces a male contoured chest via double incision surgery or peri areola.

Transition - The act of changing one's physical appearance in order for it to come in line with one's gender identity (whatever that is, binary male/ female or a non binary/ gender queer identity.) Transition is a process which is personal to each individual and can take many forms, from simply changing the pronoun which one uses, to changing the style of one's dress, to taking hormones and/or undergoing surgery.

Transphobia - Irrational fear, hatred, abuse etc. of trans* people and people who do not conform to traditional gender norms.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Allsorts Youth Project

Brighton based youth project that provides a range of support services for LGBTU young people. Includes a trans* youth group called 'Transformers' and 1-2-1 support for trans* and gender questioning young people. Also support for parents of trans* and gender questioning children and young people.

www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

FTM Brighton

Brighton based monthly peer support group for trans* masculine or genderqueer people (over 18) and those questioning their gender identity.

www.ftmbrighton.org.uk

Clare Project

Brighton based weekly drop-in for trans* adults.

www.clareproject.org.uk

Mermaids

National service for trans* children and their families.

www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Gendered Intelligence

Based in London and working with young trans people across England. Provides a range of services including art projects, peer support and training for professionals.

<http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>

Trans



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