

LIVING MY LIFE

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WHO CURRENTLY IDENTIFY AS TRANS
OR WHO ARE BEGINNING TO EXPLORE THEIR GENDER IDENTITY



Thanks to the support of my
awesome mum and friends...
I am finally able to just be me.

CHARLIE

INTRODUCTION

A trans person is someone who feels that their gender identity does not correspond to the one they were given at birth.

The word trans is an 'umbrella' term for all people who cross traditional gender boundaries – whether that is permanently or periodically.

Many trans people know from a very early age that they don't identify with the gender that is assigned to them at birth whilst others come to this conclusion much later in life. Every trans person's journey through life is unique and individual to them. There are no right or wrong ways of being trans. It's what works best and feels right for you!

This booklet aims to provide information and guidance to anyone who identifies as a trans person or who thinks that they may be trans. It also signposts people to other sources of support and information.

We hope that people who work with trans people will also find this a useful resource that will help them better understand some of the issues and challenges that trans people may face in their lives and help them to provide the best possible service to their trans clients.

I was always me,
but didn't look like me.



PENNY

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

There are many different terms and phrases that are used to describe trans people. This can be confusing because each has a different meaning to different people. Overleaf is an explanation of some of the more common words that are used to describe and define trans people. But, it is really important to know that you don't have to identify with any of these – you are unique and should be free to use words or phrases that you feel best describe yourself.

Politically and collectively the word **trans** is useful as an 'umbrella' word. It is generic and captures the variety of trans identities without being limiting. Many services and organisations now use **trans** to refer to anyone who crosses traditional gender boundaries – whether permanently or periodically.

One common misconception is that a trans identity is linked to sexual orientation. This is not true. Being trans is about gender identity and (whilst part of this identity is about how we and who we choose to relate to emotionally and sexually) it is about how someone defines themselves on the female to male spectrum.





Transgender – A transgender person is someone whose personal idea of their gender does not match with his or her assigned gender role.

Transsexual – Someone who uses hormones and/or surgery to correct their gender identity from the identity given at birth.

Transvestite – Someone who dresses as the opposite gender for emotional comfort, erotic pleasure or because they feel comfortable in doing so – sometimes called a cross-dresser.

Trans Man – Someone who has transitioned from female to male. Someone who was labelled female at birth but has a male gender identity and therefore transitions to live as a man.


Trans Woman – Someone who has transitioned from male to female. Someone who was labelled male at birth but has a female gender identity and therefore transitions to live as a woman.

Transition – A trans person who wishes to live permanently in the social role of the opposite gender and who makes changes necessary for them to function in this role.

Gender Queer – A term for gender identities other than male or female. People who identify as gender queer may think of themselves as being both male and female or as being neither. Others may consider themselves to be “third gender”. Identify as genderless or agender.



JULIE

A man with a mohawk hairstyle and glasses, wearing a red button-down shirt and blue jeans, is playing a white and black electric guitar. He has a frustrated or intense expression on his face, with his mouth open as if shouting or singing. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Your patience may be tested
to the limits, but don't give in –
it does get better.

FRANK

A GENDER SHIFT?

Many people assume that it means someone who has either had or who is currently in the process of physically (and probably surgically) 'changing' from a man to a woman or from a woman to a man. Because of this, many people who are just coming to terms with their trans identity also believe this to be the case – but it's not that simple.

Being trans can involve many different types of gender identity and covers a variety of life choices. This can include:

- Living permanently with a different gender identity.
- Living part-time with a different gender identity.
- Changing your appearance to reflect another identity through choice of clothes and other methods of presenting as your true self.
- Partly or permanently changing the appearance of your body through hormone therapy and/or surgery.

- Not conforming to any gender stereotypes – for example, a trans person who was born male who has facial feminising surgery and breast implants but does not want to have any lower body surgery.
- Not transitioning but occasionally wearing clothes usually associated with the 'opposite' gender.
- Being gender neutral and not wishing to present as either male or female.

It is important to acknowledge that not all trans people are able to or choose to have genital corrective (or reassignment) surgery. For others, however, this is an incredibly important stage in correcting the gender they were assigned with at birth and in living the life they want to live.

How you decide to live your life as a trans person is really up to you. The most important lesson is to take your time and not to rush into decisions that you may regret in later life.

Questions you may ask yourself could include:

- Do I want to live full-time or periodically with a different gender identity?
- Do I enjoy dressing in a different gender identity but am happy with my body as it is?
- Does my body match with my gender identity?
- Do I want my body to be different to how it is now?
- Although my external appearance might be that of a male/female – is this really how I feel?
- If I don't identify as male or female, what do I do?
- How do I want to live my life?

Getting help and support from one of the agencies listed later in this booklet can really help to explore your own gender identity and help you to answer these questions and decide the path you wish to take as a trans person.



We are here for a **good time**
not a long time.

SIMONE

TRANSITIONING

Transitioning means a period of time when a trans person begins to live in the gender role that matches with their internal gender identity. For example, someone who was born and raised as a female but identifies as a male and who begins to live in role by: being addressed as male; dressing as a man; taking testosterone hormone therapy or having surgery so that their physical appearance is aligned with their internal identity.

Transitioning can involve many different elements – but all are about changing your external appearance to reflect the gender identity that you feel represents the true you. Talking with other trans people or accessing web-based information can be an invaluable source of advice and guidance on transitioning. As always, don't feel pressurised into adopting any of these transitioning methods – it's what *you* want to do and how *you* want to look that counts. Not everyone who identifies as trans chooses to transition.

For male to female trans people, this may include:

- **Dressing** – choosing the right style of clothing, hair style, make up etc. for you.
- **Voice training** – how to soften the voice.
- **Padding** – how to make your body appear more feminine in shape.
- **Electrolysis** – and other hair removal techniques.

For female to male trans people, this may include:

- **Dressing** – choosing the right style of clothing, hair style etc. for you.
- **Binding** – methods to flatten the chest to create a male appearance.
- **Packing** – devices that create the external appearance of male genitals.

Hormone therapy is also available but as this will permanently alter the composition of your body, you need to be absolutely sure that this is a path you want to take before starting these treatments.

Most health professionals recommend that a trans person lives in the new gender identity for 3 months before starting hormone therapy and 1 year before any surgery.

Taking female hormones may decrease genital size and encourage breast growth. They can also reduce and soften hair growth (although facial hair removal may need many sessions of laser or electrolysis treatment) and may redistribute body fat to produce a more feminine body profile.

Male hormones can increase body and facial hair and lower the voice. The hormones also stimulate muscle growth and redistribute body fat to produce a masculine body profile. Taking male hormones can also stop periods, but periods would return if the treatment was stopped.

Trans people who choose hormone therapy as part of transitioning will need access to endocrinology services to regularly monitor hormone levels and any effects on mental health.



At first you are not quite sure exactly who you are; but you learn.
Then, society is not quite sure who you are; but eventually that changes too.

SURGERY

Surgical procedures that are available for trans people have advanced remarkably in recent years and can be an incredibly liberating and life changing experience for some trans people who consider having gender corrective surgery an important part of transitioning.

This is not the case for all trans people. The decision to have gender corrective surgery is a personal choice. Who says what your body should look like? Some trans women want to have a penis and equally, some trans men are very happy having a vagina. Being trans is about much more than body parts or what genitalia you have.

After surgery, regular post-operative check ups are needed to ensure that all is healing well, being maintained correctly and has not deteriorated since surgery – no matter how long ago that was.

For trans women, surgical options may include:

- Breast implants.
- Removal of testicles (*orchidectomy*).
- Removal of penis (*penectomy*).
- Creation of a vagina (*vaginoplasty*).
- Creation of a clitoris (*clitoroplasty*).
- Creation of labia or 'lips' of the vagina (*labioplasty*).
- Facial feminisation surgery.
- Trachea (or Adam's apple) shaving.

For trans men, surgical options may include:

- Chest surgery/ breast removal (*double mastectomy*).
- Removal of the womb (*hysterectomy*).
- Removal of the ovaries (*oophorectomy*).
- Removal of the vagina (*vaginectomy*).
- Creation of a 'micropenis' from the clitoris (*metoidioplasty*).
- Construction of a phallus (*phalloplasty*).
- Creation of a scrotum with testicular implants (*scrotoplasty*).



I never came out as a transsexual,
I was born a transsexual
and I am also a devoted
Roman Catholic.



SURGERY (contd)

To receive treatment on the NHS (which can include counselling, hormone therapy and surgery) you must first see your GP who will arrange a mental health assessment prior to referral to a specialist gender clinic.


Some people do decide to go private, but this can be a very costly option.

Some GPs who have little or no experience of working with gender identity issues may need help and advice themselves so that they are giving correct and up-to-date information. This can really help to avoid any unnecessary and frustrating waiting times. It may also be useful to contact your Local Involvement Network (LINK) service for support and advice about your rights and treatment options.

For more information about LINK or to contact your local LINK service call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit the NHS Choices website - www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/links/Pages/links-make-it-happen.aspx

NOTE

The only treatment available to under 16s on the NHS is psychological therapy. This is currently only available from the Tavistock Clinic in London.



Some people are Trans.
Get over it.



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

Whilst we should all be able to freely go about our lives without the fear of stigma, discrimination and prejudice, sadly this is not the case for many different individuals and communities.

We need to acknowledge that trans people can and do experience the impact of prejudice and discrimination and many trans people have experienced:

- A lack of understanding from family, friends, employers and others.
- Rejection by family and friends.
- Transphobic comments and insults.
- Intimidation on the streets and outside their homes.
- Being stared at or laughed at when out in public.
- Bullying and name-calling.

- Harassment and discrimination in employment whilst transitioning.
- Discrimination from within the trans community.

This presents a pretty gloomy picture, but most trans people say that being comfortable with your own identity is *the most* important thing in living the life you want to live and that you need to develop strategies to build the resilience to deal with any prejudice or discrimination you may encounter.

SOME THINGS THAT CAN REALLY HELP ARE:

Find your own allies and supporters – these might be other trans people, trans support networks, good friends and family members. People who you can talk to and share any problems you may come across.

Know your rights – verbal and physical transphobic attacks are a hate crime and the police have a duty to respond to these sensitively and with rigour. It is also illegal to discriminate against someone who is trans in the provision of goods and services and there are now employment protection laws in place to protect trans people from harassment and discrimination in the workplace – more details about legal rights are on the next page of this booklet.

Get information and practical support – you can access this through trans support networks where you will find advice and guidance on areas such as tips on how to move about in public without being recognised as trans, support around hormone treatment, help with linking into medical services etc.

YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

In recent years, there have been a number of laws introduced that are intended to protect people with a trans identity from the impact of prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives. These laws basically mean that it is illegal to treat someone differently or discriminate against them because of their trans status.

It is important to know the rights you have as someone with a trans identity or history and, perhaps more importantly, where to go for support and help if you encounter any form of discrimination on the basis of being trans. This could be one of the specific support networks listed in this booklet (e.g. Press For Change or the Gender Trust), your workplace HR Department, your union rep or a solicitor who has expertise in such cases.

The main laws that are now in place to offer legal protection to trans people are:

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

This Act aims to protect individuals from unfair treatment and to promote a fair and more equal society. It includes protection for trans people in employment and in the provision of goods and services. This means that any employer or service provider must not treat someone who is trans differently to their other employees, customers or service users or refuse a service to them on the basis of their trans identity.

This Act also replaces the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* and the *Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999* in that it continues to provide protection for people who are trans from discrimination in employment and makes it unlawful to treat an employee differently to other employees

because of their trans identity (whatever their stage in transitioning). This law protects a person who “intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment” and includes those preparing for such medical treatment.

THE GENDER RECOGNITION ACT 2004

This law enables those who comply with certain conditions to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) that confirms their new gender with the rights and responsibilities legally attached to that gender.

The legislation covers all those with a GRC. To obtain a GRC an individual has to prove they have lived in their acquired gender for a minimum of two years and intends to do so permanently, and can produce medical evidence to confirm this.

Once someone receives a gender recognition certificate, they can obtain a new birth certificate that shows their acquired gender. It also gives the right to marry someone of the opposite gender.

Under section 22 of this Act, it clearly states that someone in an official capacity who discloses information about someone's gender realignment without that person's permission will be acting unlawfully and they could face disciplinary action and/or a fine (e.g. an employee at a medical centre who passes this information on).

CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU (CRB) CHECKS

Some people who are trans are concerned that CRB checks that are carried out when starting a new job etc. will disclose a past gender identity. This is not the

case as the CRB service also needs to work within the Gender Recognition Act and they have developed a separate application procedure which allows trans people to exclude previous names from the disclosure application form through their sensitive casework procedures.

For more information on this contact their Sensitive Casework Manager.

Visit www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/your_rights/equality_and_diversity.aspx

THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998

This Act contains a range of equality and protection legislation that upholds everyone's right to live their lives free from discrimination and harassment and to have the right of respect for their private and family life.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 2003

This Act states that it is a criminal offence for anyone to be subjected to a hate crime on the grounds of their gender identity.

PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY 2010

All public authorities have a duty to consider the needs of trans people in their policy and their decision making.



Being recognised as who I really am is so important.
Being able to transition and finding a community has made my life 100% better.



COMING OUT AS TRANS

The first person to 'come out' to is yourself! It can take a long time between having those first thoughts about your true gender identity to proactively taking the steps you want to take in changing your life and really living the life you want to live.

When 'coming out' to others it is really best to first tell someone who you trust and who you feel will be supportive and understanding. This may be a good friend, a family member, a partner or a professional who has some expertise in trans issues (maybe a counsellor or therapist who specialises in working with trans people).

TIPS ON 'COMING OUT' POSITIVELY:

- Make contact with other people in a similar situation. This can really help you to build your confidence. If you know people who understand, you'll be in a better position to tell others. Some of the organisations that can put you in touch with other trans people are listed on the next page of this booklet.

- Try to act confidently even if you don't feel confident. People usually react positively to someone who appears to be confident.
- Talk to people you trust, and don't tell everyone at once.
- Be prepared for questions, and make sure that you have as much information as possible to answer questions.
- If you tell someone who is close to you and they have a negative reaction, give them space. Try to put yourself in the position of the people you tell, especially partners. Your news can affect how they feel about themselves as well as how they feel about you.
- Remember that it probably took you quite a while to accept your identity as a trans person. Other people also need time to reflect and process this new information about you. They may also need to get support and advice – maybe from a local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) centre, their GP counselling service or from one of the support groups listed in this booklet.

- Be patient but persistent if you want someone to call you by a different name.
- Remember that when other people accept who you are it can have a really positive effect on building your self-esteem.

Finding role models who we can relate to can inspire and encourage us. There are many trans people who are very happily living their lives and achieving great things. Reading stories of other trans people's lives and how they became the person they are today can help give you strength and motivation to continue on your journey to where you want to be as a trans person. This may be people like Jan Morris (author), Stephen Whittle (lawyer), Nadia Amalda (winner of Big Brother), Dana Baitz (musician) or Christine Burns (trans activist).



JASMINE
JULIE
BETH

SUPPORT GROUPS AND NETWORKS

There are a number of national and local organisations and help groups that can be invaluable for finding out information and accessing support. Self-help groups can be an excellent source of advice, strength and guidance for any problems that you may encounter as a trans person. And, perhaps most importantly, they provide a space where you can be yourself.

On this page you will find details of some of the main trans support networks in the UK. They can also help locate support that is in your local area.

When contacting these organisations it is really important to remember that it is your life and that you need to make your own decisions. They can provide advice, information and support for your own personal journey. They should never tell you what you should be doing.

To find information about local and national services for trans people contact NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

THE GENDER TRUST

Offers support for all those affected by gender identity issues.
0845 231 0505
www.gendertrust.org.uk

PRESS FOR CHANGE

Campaigning for respect and equality for all trans people.
www.pfc.org.uk

THE BEAUMONT SOCIETY

National self-help body for trans women and those who cross-dress.
01582 412 220
www.beaumontsociety.org.uk

GIRES

Information for trans people, their families and the professionals who care for them.
01372 801 554
www.gires.org.uk

MERMAIDS

Family and individual support for teenagers and children with gender identity issues.
0208 123 4819
www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

QWEST FTM UK

Self-help group for all female-to-male trans people and those exploring this aspect of their gender.
www.westernboys.org

TRANSBAREALL

Works with the trans community, helping people accept their bodies and live more fulfilling lives.
0702 112 2998
www.transbareall.co.uk

DEPEND

Support, advice & information for anyone who knows or is related to a trans person in the UK.
www.depend.org.uk



You go through the rain
to get to the rainbow.

LAYLA

PROVIDING THE BEST POSSIBLE SERVICES FOR TRANS PEOPLE


It's basically all about respect. Trans people do not want to receive special treatment but they do want to be treated with dignity by services that understand the issues associated with living a life with a trans identity and some of the specific challenges and issues encountered by trans people.

For example, trans people's general health needs are the same as anyone else's. They can be diabetic, have dental problems, get stomach bugs, have high blood pressure, may need to see a podiatrist etc. However, there are additional health needs that may be linked directly to their trans identity such as mental health issues that have their roots in experiences of discrimination and transphobia.

It is also important to remember that some trans people experience mental ill health that is completely separate from their gender identity and should be treated as such.

Here are some tips for services that will help them provide an excellent service for trans people.

- Make sure that you are aware of local trans support services/support groups and referral pathways.
- Always use the name and title (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Mx etc.) that the trans person wants to be called. If you are unsure about a person's gender identity, or how they wish to be addressed, ask for clarification. Doing this shows a level of understanding of trans issues.
- Do not comment on a trans person's appearance or 'passability' unless they specifically ask for your opinion.
- Do not confuse being trans with sexual orientation. It is a gender issue. Trans people can be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or asexual.
- Under the Gender Recognition Act it is illegal to disclose someone's trans status without prior consent or to anyone who does not explicitly need this information.
- Become knowledgeable about transgender issues. Get training on trans issues and know where to access resources.
- Remember that not all trans people are the same. Like everyone else, different trans people have different identities, experiences, needs, and interests.
- Welcome trans people by getting the word out about your services and displaying trans-positive information in your workplaces.
- Establish an effective workplace policy for addressing discriminatory comments about and behaviour towards trans people.

A black and white close-up portrait of a man with a goatee and a hand on his chin. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his facial features. He has a small hoop earring in his left ear.

I don't think of myself as being trans, more like I had a birth defect that restricted my life.

Now it's fixed and the future looks good.

ROB

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

THE TRANSGENDER ZONE

www.transgenderzone.com

NHS CHOICES

Transgender health info

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Transhealth

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RESOURCES

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/index.htm)

[Publicationsandstatistics/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/index.htm)

- Transgender Experiences: Information & Support
- A Guide To Hormone Therapy
- A Guide For Young Trans People
- NHS Funding Processes and Waiting Times for Adult Service-Users

GIRES RESOURCES

www.gires.org.uk

- A Guide to Lower Surgery for Trans Women
- A Guide to Lower Surgery for Trans Men

AGE UK FACTSHEET

www.ageuk.org.uk

- Transgender Issues in Later Life

GOVERNMENT EQUALITIES OFFICE

www.equalities.gov.uk

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (EHRC)

Has a specific section on transgender equality

www.equalityhumanrights.com



Never be afraid to be 'who' you are.

This booklet has been produced by the
Centre for HIV and Sexual Health in partnership
with TransBareAll as part of the Pacesetters
programme to reduce health inequalities.

For further information and copies of the booklet,
please contact the Centre for HIV and Sexual Health
www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk

