



LGBT+
in facilities management

Best Practice Guidance

Introduction to Transgender

Introduction

We hope this guide will help people and organisations across the Facilities Management sector to support colleagues who identify as transgender, having already undergone transition or are going through the process.

The guide is based on the collective experience of our committee members; individuals representing a variety of organisations with personal and professional experience of being LGBT+, including Transgender, and /or managing Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace.

It is not designed to be a 'one size fits all' guide; is not exhaustive or representative of the experience of all Transgender people. The needs of every Transgender person, every organisation and every workplace are different and this advice needs to be placed into that context. It is intended then that this guide will continue to evolve to reflect our ever-changing society and world of work, and we very much value your contributions and suggestions to help that journey- please email any comments to lgbtinfm@gmail.com

We hope you will find this guide useful in developing more inclusive cultures that support Transgender people in the workplace.

The LGBT+ in FM committee will be producing further guidance with a focus on transitioning in the workplace, and other minority genders.



Coming out at work

What, and what not, to do to support Transgender colleagues

- **Definitions**
- **Transitioning**
- **Identity and pronouns**
- **Stigma and discrimination**
- **Talking about the past**
- **Asking questions**
- **Respect their privacy**
- **It's okay to make mistakes**
- **Additional support**

Definitions

- **'Transgender'** is an umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or expression does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Often this is just abbreviated to 'Trans'.
- **'Sex'** is what body you have whereas **'gender'** refers to a person's identity.
- **'Cisgender'** is a term for people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.
- **'Gender expression'** is how that person expresses their identity to others, for example through dress, mannerisms, behaviour, voice and hairstyle.
- **'Gender identity or expression'** should not be confused with **'sexual orientation'**. Transgender people can be bisexual, gay, heterosexual, lesbian or asexual. Do not assume that a trans person has a particular sexual orientation. Some trans people's sexual orientation will change when they transition.
- **'Genderqueer'** is a broad term that covers people that don't fit into the stereotypical gender binary – they may feel they don't have a gender at all or feel that they fit into another, third, gender or that they flit between those options, making them 'genderfluid'.
- **'Transitioning'** is a term used to describe the steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify as.

Definitions

- **'Trans Man'** is someone who has transitioned from female to male.
- **'Trans Woman'** is someone who has transitioned from male to female.
- **'Transsexual'** is someone who uses hormones and or surgery to correct their gender identity from the identity given at birth.
- **'Transvestite or cross-dresser'** describes someone who chooses, some of the time, to wear clothes associated with the opposite gender to the one that they were assigned at birth.
- Many cross-dressers are comfortable with their assigned gender and do not intend to live permanently as the opposite gender. However, many trans women spend a significant period as a cross-dresser before they decide to transition.
- **'Real life experience'** refers to the period of time that a person must live and work in their acquired gender before they will be given medical treatment through the NHS. In most cases, this period is between one and two years.
- There are other identities under the minority gender umbrella, for example non-binary and intersex, and we will be producing future guidance documents.
- Managers should be aware that terminology relating to transgender issues is evolving as society becomes more tolerant and individuals increasingly self-define.

Transitioning

Each person's transition will involve different things. Trans people may:

- Live permanently with a different gender
- Live part time with a different gender identity
- Change their appearance clothes and other methods to reflect their true identity
- Fully or partly, permanently change the appearance of their body through hormone therapy and/or surgery
- Not conform to any gender stereotypes – for example, a trans person who was born male may have facial feminising surgery and breast implants but does not want to have lower body surgery
- Be gender neutral and not wishing to present as either male or female.

Identity and pronouns

- A person's identity is their own to decide.
- If someone tells you they are a "he", a "she", a "they" (which some genderqueer people opt for), use that pronoun.
- You do not decide a person's identity, they do, both because it's their right and because they are the only people that can ever truly know. Respect their wishes without question.
- If you really don't know which pronoun to use, the best option is to just ask. Dancing around the subject, or mis-gendering can be irritating or hurtful for a transgender person. Think of it like asking someone's name: until you ask what it is, it's fine for you to not know!
- If you've not had an opportunity to ask yet, "they" is a good general purpose pronoun to go for.
- Definitely don't resort to "it", "she-he", "he-she" etc. as most people find these names horribly degrading.

Stigma and discrimination

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 their own identity far outweighs the negative issues that go with living their life and they develop strategies to build the resilience to deal with any prejudice or discrimination they encounter.

Talking about the past

- When you're referring to things in the past, never say things like "when you were x gender", or "born a man/woman".
- Most transgender people feel like they have always been the gender they have come out to you as, but needed to come to terms with it in their own way.
- Instead refer to the past without referencing gender, for example, "last year", or "when you were a child".

Asking questions

Each person is different, some trans people won't want to talk about it at all, whereas some might enjoy the opportunity to discuss it. The worst thing you can do is be awkward about it; just ask them if they want to talk about it!

At the same time, don't ask questions that would be strange to ask a cis person. Transgender people and cis people should be treated the same – don't start conversations about their bodies, for example, that wouldn't be normal to discuss with your cis friends.

Forget stereotypes

Never call out a trans person for behaviour which isn't stereotypical for their identified gender, for example, if your trans-woman friend decides she doesn't feel more comfortable in trousers sometimes.

Gender identity is much more than just the things people do and the way they dress, but it's not uncommon for transgender people to feel pressured into following stereotypes to "prove" themselves to their friends.

Respect their privacy

This one should be obvious, but never 'out' someone unless they've made it clear they are openly transgender.

It's up to the individual to decide when they are comfortable coming out to people, and it is possible for them to be out to some people, but not others, so don't assume that because they've come out to you there's a free pass to tell everyone about it.

It's okay to make mistakes

Although it is important you try your best to respect a person's identity, you are only human

– if you've known your friend a long time, you'll likely have a lot of habits to break, including a change of name, pronouns, etc. As long as you're trying, transgender people normally don't mind.

Sometimes they might point out that you've messed up, and that's fine. When they do, measure the tone of their voice: if they are annoyed about it, calmly say sorry and try to ensure it doesn't happen again. But equally, if they seem happy, don't make a massive deal of it.

Don't know? Don't worry!

If you see someone in work and you can't figure out what gender they are, just don't worry about it!

Definitely don't have a loud conversation discussing what "they might be", and absolutely don't try to peek under their skirt or into their shirt to see what 'parts' they've got. Yes, some transgender people really do have to put up with that sort of thing.

Where to go for additional support

LGBT+ in FM will support where possible, but here are other organisation that provide information and support:

mindout.org.uk LGBTQ mental health support

stonewall.org.uk/help-and-advice LGBT information and advice

switchboard.lgbt/contact LGBT helpline

transunite.co.uk find a trans support group near you

mermaidsuk.org.uk helping gender-diverse kids, young people and their families

genderedintelligence.co.uk supporting young trans people



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