



Guidance for school  
leaders on supporting  
**trans staff**

This guidance is aimed at providing school leaders with advice to help them develop an inclusive working environment that will support transgender staff members and ensure they do not experience unfair treatment or discrimination at work. NAHT has separate guidance on supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual staff (LGB+) members, which is available on its website. A separate annex to this document, 'LGBT and the law', is also available on NAHT's website; it highlights those aspects of the legislation that school leaders must be aware of to comply with statutory provisions and, in equal measure, promote good employment practice.

## Introduction

A transgender (trans) person is someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not fit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross-dresser, non-binary or gender queer.

Many trans people face harassment and discrimination at work even though this is unlawful. A review, commissioned by the Government Equalities Office in 2016, found evidence of very high perceived levels of discrimination and harassment at work against trans people, with up to 50 per cent of respondents experiencing this<sup>1</sup>. Trans respondents reported receiving poor workplace support from human resources managers following incidents of bullying or discrimination, and they highlighted a lack of understanding of trans issues by their managers.

Workplace bullying affects employment choices and staff retention, negatively impacts on productivity and well-being, and causes some people to decide not to disclose their gender identity or gender history at work. There are impacts on recruitment too – a 2012 survey of 889 trans people by McNeil et al<sup>2</sup> found that 16 per cent had not applied for a job because of expected harassment and discrimination.

Fears around discrimination and harassment are likely to be even more pronounced in schools where concerns about the responses of pupils and parents – as well as the responses of colleagues, school leadership and governors – may deter staff members from being open about their gender identity or gender history with close colleagues, let alone more widely in the school.

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Inequality among lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender groups in the UK: a review of evidence, 2016. [https://www.niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/160719\\_REPORT\\_LGBT\\_evidence\\_review\\_NIESR\\_FINALPDF.pdf](https://www.niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/160719_REPORT_LGBT_evidence_review_NIESR_FINALPDF.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> McNeil et al, Trans Mental Health Study, 2012. [http://www.gires.org.uk/assets/Medpro-Assets/trans\\_mh\\_study.pdf](http://www.gires.org.uk/assets/Medpro-Assets/trans_mh_study.pdf)

## The importance of an inclusive school environment

An intolerant working environment can have a serious impact on the mental health, happiness and motivation of school staff members as well as pupils. A work environment that is negative or hostile to trans individuals and issues is not one in which trans staff members will feel encouraged to disclose their gender identity or gender history to colleagues. A 2015 study of 200 senior LGBT workers in the business sector found that 80 per cent of respondents felt not being openly themselves at work damaged their confidence; 86 per cent thought it left them isolated from their colleagues, and 86 per cent felt the fear of being 'found out' caused anxiety<sup>3</sup>.

In a 2016 survey of more than 90,000 staff members, Stonewall found that trans people who were comfortable disclosing their trans identity to everyone at work were 77 per cent more likely to be satisfied with their job security, 68 per cent more likely to be satisfied with their sense of achievement and 67 per cent more likely to be satisfied with the support they receive from their manager compared with those who are not comfortable disclosing their gender identity to anyone.

The evidence is clear: people perform better and are happier when they can be themselves in the workplace.

School leaders should, therefore, seek to develop and maintain an environment that welcomes diversity, champions equality and encourages staff members to be their own authentic selves.

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## Visibility of trans issues, individuals and perspectives

Stonewall's School Report 2017<sup>4</sup> found that more than 10 years on from the repeal of Section 28, 40 per cent of LGBT pupils are never taught anything about LGBT issues at school, and 77 per cent had never learnt about gender identity and what 'trans' means at school. The report also found just three per cent of LGBT pupils know of an openly trans member of staff, and 44 per cent of trans pupils said staff at their school were not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means.

Reluctance or anxiety around teaching LGBT issues and a lack of visible trans role models (whether in the school staff or represented throughout the curriculum) have a knock-on effect on pupils and the wider school community because it diminishes the visibility and perceived acceptance of trans individuals.

On the other hand, when trans staff members are able to be authentic in their school, they can provide an important role model for pupils. When pupils see staff members are

<sup>3</sup> OUTstanding, OUTstanding survey, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2tKBpSK>

<sup>4</sup> Stonewall, School Report, 2017

able to be authentic about themselves within the school community and are treated with equal respect and acceptance, they are more likely to feel able to be authentic and open themselves as well as encouraged to treat all members of the school community with equal respect.

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## Transphobic bullying

Transphobic bullying and the use of transphobic language are often widespread in schools. If teachers are not allowed – or don't know if they are allowed – to educate students about LGBT issues, it is difficult for them to tackle and challenge transphobia and transphobic bullying when they arise. This can lead to a school environment that is not safe or inclusive for trans staff members or pupils.

Stonewall's 2017 School Report found that almost half of LGBT pupils (46 per cent) hear transphobic language frequently or often<sup>5</sup>. Sixty-eight per cent of LGBT pupils report that teachers or school staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenge transphobic language when they hear it.

Schools have a role to play in creating an inclusive and safe environment for all trans staff members and pupils regardless of what point in their transition they are in.

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## The role of school leaders in creating an inclusive environment

School leaders have the opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership and take responsibility for promoting, developing and assuring an inclusive school environment. As school leaders, NAHT members are in an ideal place to create environments where their trans staff can feel safe to be open with colleagues and pupils by undertaking the following approaches:

- Being clear with all staff members that creating and maintaining an inclusive environment is central to the school's ethos as well as an expectation of the UK's government and the inspectorate
- Ensuring LGBT and equalities issues are not automatically delegated to the equalities lead or an LGBT member of staff. All staff members - in particular, school leaders - should take responsibility for promoting an inclusive school environment and tackling transphobic bullying

<sup>5</sup> Stonewall, School Report, 2017, [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_school\\_report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_school_report_2017.pdf)

- Forbidding complaints (or fear of complaints) from parents, governors or staff members to interfere with their commitment to an inclusive school environment - any more than they would allow complaints to interfere with their commitment to supporting black, asian or minority ethnic (BAME) or disabled staff. It is important that all staff members are clear that they will be supported and defended by the school's leadership team in such matters
- Stating clearly to all staff members that it is appropriate and encouraged to cover trans issues in an accessible and appropriate way as part of their curriculum - both in the school's policy documents and through verbal reinforcement
- Incorporating the expectation in your school's codes of conduct policies that all staff members should model the values and behaviours, for example, by never using transphobic language
- Demonstrating strong leadership by developing clear policies and all-school strategies to tackle and prevent transphobic bullying. As part of this, making it clear that transphobic 'banter' is not acceptable by school staff members or pupils because it can harass and discriminate
- Celebrating trans people, issues and experiences within the school and across the curriculum to celebrate diversity and ensure visibility of trans perspectives
- Ensuring relationships and sex education (RSE) is inclusive of trans people and their experiences, including in discussions around online safety
- Ensuring dress codes for pupils and staff members are modified to avoid gender stereotypes and allow trans staff members to dress in accordance with their gender. Be aware that a gendered dress code that specifically outlines appropriate workwear for men and women may not be appropriate for genderfluid or non-binary individuals. Ensure the phrasing of dress codes is gender-neutral.

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## Adopting a whole-school approach

It is good practice to ensure the school's commitment to an inclusive learning and working environment is celebrated and made visible to staff members, pupils, parents and governors from day one. The following activities demonstrate how this might be implemented:

- School policies on developing an inclusive and diverse environment should be clearly displayed and publicised throughout the school, including on the school's website and regularly promoted in handbooks, annual reports and induction packs for new staff members

<sup>5</sup> Stonewall Education Equality Index, 2017, [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/education\\_equality\\_index\\_report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/education_equality_index_report_2017.pdf)

- All staff members and pupils need to know that developing an inclusive environment and tackling transphobic bullying are a priority for the school leadership team. School leaders can clearly and regularly communicate their commitment to these aims through newsletters, meetings and assemblies
  - The school's commitment to equality and inclusion should be clearly communicated to parents and carers through newsletters, social media and other channels, with specific mention made of trans inclusion among all equality work
  - School leaders can ensure parents and carers understand and sign up to the school's inclusion and anti-bullying policies. Letters or emails may be sent to explain the school's policies, and parents and carers may be regularly consulted through surveys, forums or meetings. Consultation with parents and carers should form part of a school's annual policy review alongside consultation with staff members, students and governors
  - Equalities policies should specifically mention trans equality rather than just broad or general statements. It may be useful to develop a detailed contract of inclusivity that everybody signs, including new staff members, parents, governors and pupils
  - Job advertisements can explicitly set out the school's commitment to trans inclusion and equality.
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### **Working with other schools and organisations**

- It can be helpful to work with other schools who are already engaged in work to tackle transphobic bullying and improve inclusivity, such as sharing resources and knowledge on trans issues. There may also be opportunities for primary feeder schools to get together to ensure a consistent approach when pupils move from primary to secondary school. This may include developing joint policies with shared values, commitments and expectations of behaviour from all pupils and staff members
- Stonewall's school champions programme offers teacher training and a network of schools that shares best practice and support.

## Training and continuing professional development

Lack of staff members' confidence and awareness can be major barriers to teaching about trans issues and tackling transphobic bullying in schools.

- School leaders can ensure all staff members receive specific training on how to identify, challenge and prevent transphobic bullying as well as how to challenge transphobic language
  - It is helpful to ensure that training and continuing professional development (CPD) are available to all staff members on how to develop and maintain an active commitment to inclusivity. This may include general training on LGBT inclusivity within the workplace or more specific training on including trans issues and perspectives in an inclusive curriculum. Related training may be particularly useful for teachers of RSE
  - Training and CPD should cover how to interact respectfully with trans people (for example, the importance of respecting people's names and pronouns where these change in the course of employment), and it should ensure that staff members at every level understand the policy on confidentiality and harassment.
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## Confidentiality and reporting

Confidentiality is a key issue when it comes to trans staff members (and pupils), and care must be taken around the storage and handling of old documentation referring to an individual's previous gender, name or title. Staff members and pupils should be able to raise concerns, report bullying and provide feedback anonymously if they wish.

- Consider implementing mechanisms by which pupils and staff members can report prejudice-based bullying and incidents anonymously. Some organisations offer purpose-built bullying reporting facilities (eg apps) that allow pupils and staff members to report incidents of bullying anonymously. Such facilities can also be implemented at little to no cost, and schools should ensure they explicitly reference transphobic bullying
- School leaders should regularly review the effectiveness of any policy adopted with the aim of improving inclusivity. Careful records should be kept of the number of complaints made by any staff member (and pupils) that relate to transphobia and the outcomes of these complaints
- Low levels of complaints may suggest individuals have little faith that their complaints will be taken seriously or addressed satisfactorily. An increase in complaints can suggest workers trust the complaints process and trust that the school's leadership team will take steps to improve conditions

- All bullying incidents that are motivated by a prejudice should be carefully recorded, monitored and reported. The information from such recordings can be used to target future anti-bullying interventions and amend inclusion policies and approaches
- All-staff surveys can be a useful way to gauge levels of support for policies and obtain feedback on further improvements to be made. Individuals should be able to respond anonymously to such surveys to avoid any concern around being outed.

Develop a transitioning at work policy to ensure any member of staff wishing to transition will be able to work with the school to plan carefully how to best inform colleagues and pupils about their plan to transition. The wishes of the trans individual are most important, but management has the responsibility to ensure the process of informing others is safe and respectful.

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### Administrative arrangements

- The Gender Recognition Act, 2004 (GRA), allows those who have changed their gender role permanently to obtain a gender recognition certificate (GRC). If a person has applied for a GRC, information about their gender history is described as ‘protected information’ and must not be passed on to anyone without the permission (preferably written) of the person concerned
- Under GRA s22(4), if a member of staff discovers in the course of doing their job that a colleague has a trans history and shares that information with another person without obtaining the trans person’s consent, this could be considered a criminal act
- Not having a GRC must not be used to disadvantage a trans person. Asking to see a GRC is not allowed and may be regarded as harassment. It is best to treat all known trans and non-binary people as though they have the protection of a GRC. Birth certificates should also not be requested. Identification can usually be provided by passports or driving licences
- If a member of staff is transitioning, ask them when and how any name change is to occur. A name change can occur without any legal process, informally and on request by the trans individual. You may wish to request a simple signed statement of this request, but no further paperwork should be required<sup>6</sup>
- Ensure any previous names, titles and pronouns of trans staff members that may appear in old records or documents cannot be seen except by authorised individuals. Hard copies of any such documents that cannot be altered or replaced should be stored securely in sealed envelopes, marked strictly confidential and kept separately from the files of other employees. The name(s) of those who are allowed to open these envelopes should be clearly written on the envelope itself

<sup>6</sup> Gender Identity Research and Education Society, Transgender Policy Guide for Employers, 2015 <https://www.gires.org.uk/assets/Workplace/Transition-in-workplace-policy-Nov-2015.pdf>

- Ensure that all IT records that may state previous names, titles or pronouns of trans staff members are secured in accordance with data protection legislation and are password protected
  - Ensure any references in the school to a trans staff member's name are immediately updated, so they only show their current name and title (for example, on name badges, email address, the school's website, wall displays or classroom signs).
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## Medical treatment

Each person's transition will involve different things. For some, this involves medical intervention (such as hormone therapy and surgeries), but not all trans people want or are able to have this.

- Time off for treatments associated with gender reassignment is specifically protected under the Equality Act 2010; such absences cannot be used against them as criteria for training, promotion, etc. Trans people may need to have time off that is not in line with the school's policy for other staff members
  - It is good practice to discuss, as far as possible, in advance the time away from work that an individual will need. Be aware that timescales may change over time and could be unpredictable if treatment is in the NHS, so flexibility should be allowed. Consultations and hospital appointments may require full days away from work in addition to any time required for surgical procedures
  - It may not always be necessary for people to have time off work in connection with hormone therapy
  - Be flexible about any temporary adjustments to help those returning to work and who may not at first be able to undertake all aspects of their former role. Take a case-by-case and common-sense approach that is sensitive to the needs of each individual.
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## Use of single-sex facilities

- Ensure that clear arrangements are made around the use of toilets and changing facilities. Trans individuals should be able to use the gendered facilities that align with their gender identity
- It is never appropriate to require trans workers to use the toilets or facilities for disabled workers unless they are disabled. And it is never appropriate to require trans workers to use unisex toilets or facilities unless these are the only facilities available (or are the facilities preferred by the trans person)

- If any member of school staff does not wish to use the ‘ladies’ or ‘gents’ toilets or facilities with a trans person then it is they, not the trans person, who should be asked to use alternative facilities
- Consider making gender-neutral toilets and/or changing facilities available as an alternative to the ‘ladies’ or ‘gents’ facilities. These may be particularly important for individuals who do not identify as either (or exclusively) a man or woman.

## Developing an inclusive school environment

Developing an inclusive school environment will also support staff members for the reasons outlined above. There are a number of key approaches that can support or undermine this as outlined below:

### Dos and don'ts

**Do:** ensure the school's policies and processes are appropriate to all types of family relationships and identities, including relationships that include trans people

**Don't:** advise or instruct school staff members not to disclose or talk about their sexuality in the workplace. LGB+ individuals should be able to talk openly about their partners or spouses just as heterosexual colleagues are able to talk about their partners or spouses

**Do:** make it clear that incidents of whistleblowing, and complaints or concerns raised will be taken seriously; and staff members' confidentiality will be respected

**Don't:** allow school's firewalls and IT filters to automatically screen and block content containing words such as transgender, transsexual, queer or non-binary

**Do:** take a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and harassment from both staff members and students. Where such incidents do occur, there should be clear disciplinary procedures in place for the person responsible and support for the victim

**Don't:** address letters as 'sir/madam' or any other form of assignation that automatically assumes stereotypical family units.

**Do:** proactively reach out to 'out' trans parents and carers, and ensure all parents and carers feel able to take part in school life. For instance, through attending events or joining the PTA, parents' council or the school's governing body

**Do:** ensure trans students and children with trans parents feel included in their learning, and trans staff members feel positively represented in lesson content and welcomed in the school environment. Primary school leaders may want to ensure books featuring trans parents or celebrating gender identity and difference are included in the curriculum

**Do:** ensure the school celebrates diversity by inviting external speakers and by marking events that celebrate diversity, for instance, Trans Day of Visibility on 31 March and LGBT history month in February. Consider joining Stonewall's school champions programme, which enables members to access visits from LGBT role models who are trained to speak to pupils about celebrating different identities

**Do:** ensure the dress codes for pupils and staff members are modified to avoid gender stereotypes and allow trans staff members to dress in accordance with their correct gender

**Do:** be aware that a gendered dress code that specifically outlines appropriate workwear for men and women may not be appropriate for genderfluid or non-binary individuals. Ensure the phrasing of dress codes is gender-neutral. A simple phrase of "employees may choose which uniform to wear" will suffice

**Do:** update your data systems and recording processes to allow people to use the gender-neutral title Mx or self-describe their gender if they wish to accommodate any members of staff or pupils who identify as non-binary

**Do:** consider on a case-by-case basis whether it is necessary on forms and internal systems to ask staff members about their genders and titles.

## Further resources

- [Educate and Celebrate](#) offers a training programme ‘[PRIDE in Organisations](#)’ for workplaces, businesses and organisations that enables key team members to lead on LGBT+ inclusive initiatives to gain LGBT+ friendly status
- [Inclusion For All](#) provides multi-award winning positive LGBT+ inclusion training across the UK for primary and secondary schools for school staff, school leadership teams and school governors devised and led by ex-school leader, homophobia survivor, NAHT member and ‘point of light’ @ShaunDellenty
- [Just Like Us](#) provides resources for schools and supports secondary school visits from LGBT+ volunteers
- [Unison](#) offers a [range of resources](#), including fact sheets on [workforce monitoring for sexual orientation and gender identity](#), [non-binary inclusion](#) and [transgender workers rights](#). It also has a model trans equality policy available on its [website](#)
- [Galop](#) is an LGBT+ anti-violence charity for those experiencing hate crime, sexual violence or domestic abuse
- [Schools Out](#) offers a range of resources aimed at making schools and educational institutions safe spaces for LGB&T individuals and communities
- [Stonewall’s](#) train the trainer course on [creating a trans-inclusive school](#) gives one member of staff the skills, tools and confidence to support a trans young person and create an inclusive environment for pupils. There are also courses on tackling transphobic bullying and language in school. Participating schools are also automatically enrolled in Stonewall’s school champions programme
- [Supporting trans staff in the workplace](#) - a suite of resources by Stonewall to help organisations to support their trans staff members at work
- [Stonewall’s workplace resources](#) - a range of resources for organisations to use to support and empower LGBT staff members.

## Glossary

Different individuals prefer to use the below terms in different ways to describe their gender identity. The terms that individuals use to describe themselves or their gender identity may change over time.

The below glossary provides a brief overview of some commonly used terms and descriptors.

**Cisgender** - someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth

**Gender dysphoria** - used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth

**Gender identity** - a person's internal sense of their gender - whether male, female, both or something else

**Gender reassignment** - another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment, usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it also means changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected in the Equality Act 2010. Medical intervention is not required for protection under the Equality Act

**Gender stereotypes** - the ways that we expect people to behave in society according to their gender or what is commonly accepted as 'normal' for someone of that gender

**Gender variant** - someone who does not conform to the gender roles and behaviours assigned to them at birth

**LGBT+** - the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and people who define themselves as, for example, queer, asexual or pansexual

**Non-binary** - an umbrella term for a person who does not identify as male or female

**Outed** - when a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent

**Pansexual** - refers to a person who has a sexual, romantic or emotional attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity

**Pronoun** - words we use to refer to people's genders in conversation. For example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender-neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their

**Queer** - in the past, a derogatory term for LGBT individuals. The term has been reclaimed by some who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation, but it is still viewed to be derogatory by some

**Questioning** - the process of exploring your sexual orientation and/or gender identity

**Sex** - assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are interchanged to mean 'male' or 'female'

**Sex reassignment surgery (SRS)** - refers to surgical alteration, and it is only one small part of transition. Preferred term to "sex change operation." GRS (gender reassignment surgery) or GCS (gender confirmation surgery) are also used. Not all trans people choose to have SRS/GRS/GCS

**Trans** - an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not fit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) trans, cross-dresser, non-binary or gender queer

**Transgender man** - a term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man

**Transgender woman** - a term used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman

**Transitioning** - the steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify as. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some, this involves medical intervention (such as hormone therapy and surgeries), but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents

**Transphobia** - the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as trans

**Transsexual** - this was used in the past as a more medical term (similarly to homosexual) to refer to someone who transitioned to live in the 'opposite' gender to the one assigned at birth. This term is still used by some, but many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

This guidance has been developed in consultation with the following individuals and representatives from organisations:

- Fay Bartram, Abby Crawford and Nick Corrigan (Stonewall)
- Sally Bates (chair of NAHT's equalities group)
- Sandra Bennett (NUT)
- Grahame Colclough (operations leaders, Burnwood Community School)
- Shaun Dellenty (Inclusion For All)
- Troy Jenkinson (head teacher, Highgate Community Primary School)
- KT Khan (The Garden School)
- Tim Ramsey (Just Like Us)
- Sue Sanders (Schools Out)
- Simon Stokes (ATL)
- Carola Towle (UNISON)
- Nick Ward (Teach First)
- David Weston (Teacher Development Trust).



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