

# A Guide for Parents Services

## Trans Identities and Communities

### About this leaflet

In conjunction with the LGBT Consortium, Gendered Intelligence, an organisation who work with young trans people, have put together a short leaflet to offer some information to any parent service in the UK that may come into contact with trans issues.

### What is trans?

Trans is an umbrella term for various people who feel that the sex that they were assigned at birth does not match or sit easily with their sense of self.

The world is generally divided into two categories - men and women. Sometimes it is thought that trans is complicated because a trans person doesn't fit neatly into these two categories. Indeed the concept of 'trans' raises questions about what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman'.

The trans spectrum encompasses transsexuals, transgendered people and crossdressers, or anyone who challenges gender norms.

It may be that a trans person feels more the "opposite" sex and so chooses to use medical intervention in order to align their body with their mind, their outside appearance with their internal feelings. Crossdressers may dress to express the more masculine or feminine side of themselves, or simply because those clothes feel more comfortable.

### The trans community

Like all communities, the trans community is diverse. There are trans people all over the world who come from all different ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds. As a result of this trans people might have different self-understandings of their trans identity.

### Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Trans people can identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, straight or asexual. Many trans people have histories from within the lesbian, gay and bisexual community or go into it after transitioning or identifying as trans. Others will feel themselves to be part of the heterosexual world and not have any affiliation to the lesbian, gay and bisexual community, regardless of their own or their partners' gender identity.

People sometimes confuse gender identity with sexual orientation and as a result think that trans is another category of sexual orientation or sexuality. Trans, however, describes how you feel your gender identity to be. From that self-identification you may use another word to describe your sexual orientation or sexuality. For example, a trans man who tends to be attracted to men might describe himself as a gay trans man. A trans woman who is attracted to men might describe herself as straight. Those trans people who do not wish to define their sexual orientation in terms of the gender binary (male and female) may describe themselves as queer.



**gendered intelligence**

understanding gender diversity in creative ways

[www.genderedintelligence.co.uk](http://www.genderedintelligence.co.uk)



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Key terms	
<b>A transgender person</b>	Someone who self identifies their gender identity as that which does not match the sex which they were assigned at birth
<b>A transsexual person</b>	This is a more clinical word used in the medical world and usually describes those who have decided to undergo procedures such as hormone therapy or surgical intervention
<b>FTM</b>	Female to Male (also known as transman)
<b>MTF</b>	Male to Female (also known as a transwoman)
<b>Intersex</b>	Someone whose genitalia, reproductive organs, chromosomal or hormonal make up can not be defined clearly as either 'male' or 'female'
<b>Cross dresser/ transvestite</b>	People who sometimes wear hair, clothes or makeup commonly associated with the 'opposite' sex
<b>Gender variant or Gender queer</b>	Someone who does not fit into neat categories of man or woman. These descriptions also allow for a person to identify outside the gender binary ( man/woman).
<b>Transitioning</b>	Transitioning describes the journey going from female to male or male to female. This may or may not be through taking hormones or having surgical intervention.
<b>Coming out</b>	Disclosing your trans status to another person.
<b>Gender dysphoria</b>	This is the clinical diagnosis for transsexualism.
<b>Transphobia</b>	Transphobia is the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as trans.

### How parents and family members may feel when their loved one comes out as trans

**It is often a difficult time when a person tells their parents and family members that he or she is trans. Parents and family members have been said to feel confused or shocked initially, in denial or even grief stricken. Some parents have equated their child's transition with the loss of a son or a daughter.**

*"I was not particularly taken aback, but I was taken aback by my own physical reaction, because I just couldn't stop crying. It was uncontrollable."*  
(Parent of a trans person)

**It takes time for parents and family members to realise that being trans does not change the person deep inside, even though he or she may begin to look somewhat differently.**

*"I feel it's the same person... the person inside is exactly the same person that I've always loved."*  
(Parent of a trans person)

**No one really knows for sure what it is that makes someone trans. Parents might feel guilty or responsible for their loved one's trans identity. However, in order to come to terms with a loved one's trans status, it is important that parents do not blame themselves or think that they have done something wrong. It can be hard seeing a loved one struggling or feeling unhappy. Siblings of trans people can also have struggles and questions that need attending to.**

### Gaining support

**There is growing support networks for trans people across the UK, however for parents and family members of a trans person finding someone to talk to about their own feelings are not so easy to find.**

*"There was nobody I knew in my situation that I could talk about it with."* (Parent of a trans person)

**Not having anybody to talk to can be detrimental to a parents' or family members' well-being. It may be that parents and family members of trans people would like to meet others in similar circumstances to share stories and find out information. The best way to go about this is to access the trans community. There are also various Internet forums and e-mail services where parents and family members can chat on line. It decreases the sense of isolation and ensures people that there's nothing wrong with being trans.**

**To find out more about the various support groups and services for parents and family members of trans people visit the Consortium's website on: [www.LGBTconsortium.co.uk/parenting](http://www.LGBTconsortium.co.uk/parenting)**