

## A BIT OF INFORMATION ON GENDER IDENTITY

Sex and gender are two different things. Sex refers to the physical characteristics of a person whereas gender role and gender expression are terms that describe how people behave and express their gender identity in society.

Some people find that the way they look and the way they are expected to behave doesn't fit how they feel inside. This is known as 'gender incongruence', and it can cause a feeling of discomfort and unease that is described as 'gender dysphoria'.

***This is not a mental illness.*** It is increasingly understood to happen before birth when the brain is developing.

## THE WIDER TRANS\* POPULATION

Every individual is unique within so each person will experience their dysphoria (or discomfort being labelled as a boy or a girl) to a different degree.

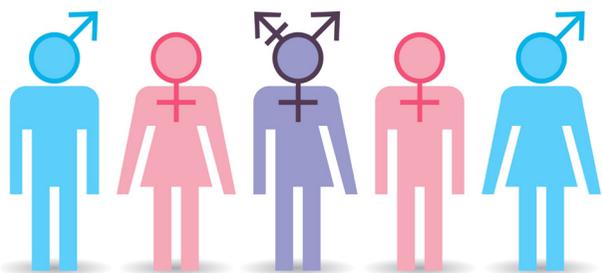
Labels don't really do justice to the wide variety of feelings and gender identities out there, but the terms 'trans', trans\* and transgender are probably the most commonly used.

These terms include a broad spectrum of people. Some people do not identify comfortably as men or women and may be non-gender, where they don't feel as they relate to any gender. Others identify as non-binary or gender queer, which means that they feel that they are somewhere in between male and female.

Other descriptions that some people in the spectrum use to describe their gender identity include: pan-gender, poly-gender and neutrois. Gender neutral pronouns such as 'they', 'per', 'zie' and 'fey', can be used instead of 'he' or 'she'. Titles, such as 'Mx' or 'Pr' instead of 'Miss', 'Mrs' or 'Mr' can also be used.

Gender can be very fluid - some people may adjust their gender role, but not seek treatment and others may cross-dress.

## GENDER IDENTITY



## INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

## GENDER IDENTITY AND PUBERTY

Puberty can be a traumatic time for those who continue, or start, to experience a gender identity that is different to their sex.

Puberty brings the development of breasts and periods or facial hair, masculine features and a deep voice.

This can be very upsetting for those who feel like they're growing into a gender they don't want to live as.

Hormone-blockers may be given in early puberty, to suspend the development of the sex characteristics that are hard or impossible to reverse. The medication is safe and reversible. You can speak to your GP about this treatment.



## HOW DO I SUPPORT MY TRANS\* CHILD?

Children's understanding of their own gender identity should be respected. When talking to them, or about them, names and pronouns that they are comfortable with should be used.

It's important that as a parent or carer you listen to your child and you're there to support them. Although this may be confusing for you, it can be more confusing and even scary for a child to accept their gender identity. Telling you is a brave step towards living the life your child wants to live to be happy.

Mermaids are a UK-based charity for trans\* young people and their families and they can also provide support. Visit their website for more information: [www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk)

## WHERE CAN I SPEAK TO OTHER PARENTS/CARERS?

There are many different support forums and resources for parents and carers of trans\* children.

If you visit [www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk) and select 'Support' you will see a 'Parent's Forum' option. There you can apply to become a member of their free support forum which offers a safe space for you to ask questions, talk about how you are doing, and share experiences with others in the same or similar circumstances to you.

## EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

'Gender reassignment' is a 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010, making it unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise trans people. This protection extends to those who are associated with them, e.g. a relative or carer.

## REPORTING A HATE CRIME

A hate crime is any incident or crime which is motivated by someone's irrational hatred of the differences of others such as sexuality or gender identity.

You can report hate crime and find more information on hate crimes and incidents at [www.report-it.org.uk](http://www.report-it.org.uk). You can also report hate crimes by calling the Police on 101. Always call 999 if you think a person is in immediate danger.

## DOS AND DON'TS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

**DO** refer to your child with the name they choose and with the pronouns they feel comfortable with.

**DO** remember to get support for yourself if you need it. Although this is a hard time for children, it can be hard for parents too. Talking to others in the same situation as you can really help.

**DO** let them express their gender identity through clothes, make-up and social group.

**DO** educate yourself on gender identity - [www.gires.org.uk](http://www.gires.org.uk) and [www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk) are great places to start.

**DON'T** assume that it's a phase, trusting and respecting your child's decision is important.

**DON'T** stop them from expressing their gender identity as this can cause distress and unhappiness.

**DON'T** forget to remind them that you love them however they identify!

## GET IN TOUCH WITH OUR TEAM

We're here to help if you need advice or information on trans\* young people.

✉ Email [lgbt@ssotp.nhs.uk](mailto:lgbt@ssotp.nhs.uk)

☎ Call 0300 123 0970

INFORMATION TAKEN FROM GIRES AND MERMAIDS. FIND MORE INFORMATION AT [WWW.GIRES.ORG.UK](http://WWW.GIRES.ORG.UK) AND [WWW.MERMAIDSUK.ORG.UK](http://WWW.MERMAIDSUK.ORG.UK)

