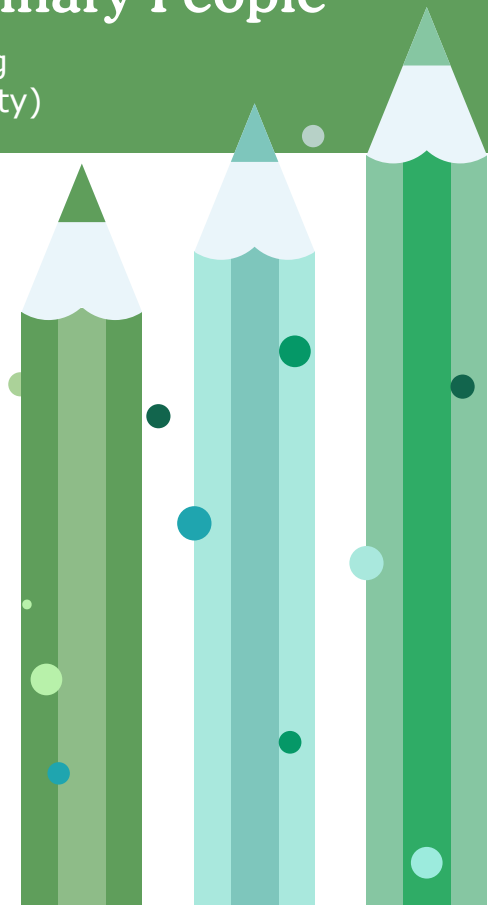




gendered intelligence
increasing understandings of gender diversity

Good Practice When Working With Young Trans and Non Binary People

(including those questioning and exploring gender identity)



WORK IN EDUCATION

“When there is someone who’s obviously getting hassle and presenting differently, don’t wait for them to come to the teacher... [it would be good] if the teacher sort of makes it known, ‘I am here, I can help you’. Because quite a lot of people are too scared to go to a teacher, because ‘oh they might not understand, they’re going to be even more critical, they’re from a different generation...’. Quite often that isn’t the case, but that’s how it appears to a young child.”

*Young person at
secondary school*

INTRODUCTION

This Good Practice guide is intended to help anyone working with young people to be inclusive of those who may be trans or non binary or who are questioning their gender identity.

Young trans and non binary people who are well supported have better mental health. Consequently, this has positive effects on life chances. It also increases attendance and attainment in education and elsewhere.

At Gendered Intelligence, we know that those working with young trans and non binary people take their duty of care to them seriously. We know that you want to make a difference to their lives and to see them thrive, like any other young person.

The good practice points in this guide will help you to make that difference, giving young trans and gender questioning people a positive, non-judgmental space in which to grow up and be themselves.

Why is this important? Here are some findings...

Young trans people whose gender identity is respected and supported broadly experience no higher levels of mental ill-health than their non-trans peers.

[American Academy of Pediatrics Volume 1 37, number 3, March 2016]

Young trans people who can go by their chosen name anywhere experience markedly fewer symptoms of severe depression when compared with young trans people who aren't able to use their chosen names in any situation.

[US Journal of Adolescent Health 63, 2018, 503-505]

Yet we also know that the experience of many young trans and non binary people, especially in education, is still poor. Stonewall's "School Report: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools in 2017" indicated:

- 64% of trans pupils are bullied for being trans at school
- 33% of trans pupils are not able to be known by their preferred name at school, while 58 per cent are not allowed to use the toilets they feel comfortable in

This is despite young trans people being less safe in environments that make them use the toilets that align with their sex assigned at birth.

[American Academy of Pediatrics, May 2019, as reported in Reuters Health]

Don't forget - the 2019 Ofsted School Inspection Handbook establishes a requirement of inclusivity for trans pupils (Item 214) and records of transphobic bullying (Item 53)

EVERYDAY PRACTICE

These points of good practice are important because you won't always know when trans or non binary people are around. Someone may be starting to question their gender; or they may already know they are trans but haven't told anyone.

These good practice points support all trans people, including those who are not 'out'. Many of these actions have wider positive impact for everyone.

- Use language thoughtfully – ask, listen, respect. Start with gender neutral language until you know someone's choices. Recognise and apologise for mistakes, then move on
- Avoid unnecessary gender divisions (e.g. 'boys on the left')
- Challenge gender stereotypes (e.g. boys play football, girls do ballet) to the benefit of all
- Challenge and stop HBT (Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic) related bullying, including comments or 'jokes'
- Provide gender neutral options for facilities such as toilets. Ensure all spaces offer adequate privacy for everyone
- Avoid dividing uniform and sports kit options by gender; ensure there are options for all
- Give inclusive options on databases and forms wherever possible
- Ensure trans people are represented in the curriculum and in resources such as the library
- Establish and support LGBT+ groups or networks



PROVIDING SUPPORT WITH GENDER EXPLORATION AND SOCIAL TRANSITION

In addition to the everyday good practice elements, there are some extra things to consider in the specific situation when a young person is exploring their gender, or transitions in your setting. These points of good practice are key to ensuring young people have a positive experience.

- Recognise and honour the trust a young person places in you by telling you that they are, or think they might be, trans; or are exploring their gender
- Create a supportive environment where the young person feels safe; assign a named support person. It is helpful to offer a non-judgmental space where the young person can think things through
- Let the young person take the lead. Enable them to set the agenda and pace – what, when, who, how (and whether). Support them to explore options
- Recognise that some young trans people are certain, whilst others are unsure and need time and support to explore their options. Don't expect them to have all the answers (although some of them might have!)
- Being trans is not, inherently, a safeguarding matter, either for the young person or their peers
- Pay particular attention to (physical) privacy and confidentiality – telling others (including their parents/carers) should, in most situations, only be done with the young person's consent
- Respect their chosen name, pronoun and other gendered language; this may mean changing name/pronoun more than once or using different names/pronouns in different spaces. It may also mean updating records and ID
- Establish ways to discuss important matters. If the young person is ready to do so, explore with them the language they use for their gender identity (and sexuality/sexual attractions) – what does it mean for them?
- Enable free exploration - remove barriers and assumptions without replacing them with other barriers/assumptions. Exploring your gender is how you find out you are not trans as well as how you find out you are

Supporting a young person's gender expression is about taking away the pressures to conform to any expectations or narratives and allowing free exploration

- Support their access to gendered spaces/groups (e.g. toilets, accommodation, sports teams) that correspond to their gender identity, across the full range of experiences, including trips, away matches, social activities
- Support their access to clothes/accessories that support their gender identity (e.g. uniform, sports kit)
- Support access to medical services if needed. This may be a GP, CAMHS or GIDS (Gender Identity Development Service). However, recognise there may be no need
- Help them to find and access sources of social support e.g. trans youth groups, if they wish
- Give space to think through practicalities, for example, the potential responses to coming out, and their readiness to deal with those. If they wish to transition, help them to make plans
- Commit to ongoing learning – attend training; read articles/guidance; ask the young person if there are things they'd like you to watch or read
- Become a champion of young trans and gender questioning people – advocate for their rights, challenge transphobic behaviour, ignorance or prejudice; challenge gender stereotypes and binaries. Celebrate and affirm your young person's identity or exploration

“There’s this one teacher in my school... and she’s just been brilliant the whole time. If anyone ever says anything to me she’ll go and speak to them. And she actually... educates herself about this stuff.”

Young person at secondary school

THE WIDER SETTING

All of the previous points of good practice sit within the wider context and ethos of your educational setting. These underpin good practice and give you firm foundations to fall back on if needed, so those need to be trans inclusive too.

- Good policies and procedures that cover trans people – implemented and visible
- Encourage and support staff and peers with education and training; enable questions
- Establish a culture of inclusion; explain and communicate; create confidence to challenge poor behaviour
- Champion trans people's rights
- Celebrate gender diversity/raise awareness of trans lives, identities and achievements – LGBT History Month, Trans Day of Visibility, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, Trans Day of Remembrance



ABOUT GENDERED INTELLIGENCE

Gendered Intelligence is a registered charity, working since 2008 to increase understandings of gender diversity and improve the lives of trans people, especially young trans people.

We offer a broad spectrum of non-judgmental, practical services to the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, designed to develop, improve and enhance trans inclusion and appreciation of gender diversity.

Gendered Intelligence works with around 500 young trans people in the course of a year. The team consists of skilled trainers, facilitators, youth workers and mentors, and all of our delivery staff have a lived experience of being trans and/or non-binary. We have an in-depth knowledge of the wider trans community and of the young trans community in particular, and a solid understanding of potential challenges within educational settings.

In educational settings we offer:

- Trans Awareness Training for staff
- Consultancy to help develop policies, strategies and working practices or work through specific issues or questions
- Workshops, Lectures and Assemblies for young people
- 1:1 mentoring support for trans, non binary or gender questioning students

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Work in Education
Good Practice
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