Example Descriptions of Terms
Gendered Intelligence

This glossary focusses specifically on a short list of terms that describe key ideas relevant to trans people's lives. These are terms that enable us to think and talk meaningfully about wider trans inclusion and to establish positive, inclusive policy and practice. It is not an exhaustive list of all terms relating to trans people, and the descriptions should not be regarded as fixed definitions used or agreed by everyone. However, they have been carefully considered and written to underpin a consistent, practical understanding of the basics in a workplace setting.

Whilst it includes some terms that people may use to describe their identity or experience, the focus of those terms in this context is not to list identities, but to offer some basic umbrella language to refer to broad groups of experiences that are not always recognised or provided for in the workplace - people whose gender is not binary, people whose gender is not fixed, and people who don't experience a sense of gender.

Whilst some individuals might use these particular terms to describe themselves, it should not be assumed that all people with those experiences do. We have deliberately structured these descriptions to emphasise individual language choice, for example "People may use the term 'trans' to describe themselves if..." rather than emphasising labelling by saying "Trans people are…".

It also includes a page of other notes about language, discussing the use of terms such as 'gender diverse' and 'gender identity'.

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Trans - People may use the term 'trans' to describe themselves if their own sense of gender (their *gender identity*) does not match or sit easily with the gender they were assumed to have based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

NOTE: Whilst not everyone who has this experience uses the term 'trans' to describe themselves, it is probably the broadest and most widely used single-word term currently in use. As such, this glossary uses the term 'trans' as a very broad single-word umbrella term to include trans men, trans women, non-binary people, gender fluid people, agender people and anyone else with an experience of gender like or similar to the above.

Non binary - one of a number of terms people might use to describe the experience of having a gender that is neither male nor female, both male and female and/or between, beyond or unrelated to the binary categories of man and woman. Some people use it as an umbrella term, encompassing a spectrum of experiences such as those described under gender fluid and agender.

Gender fluid - one of a number of terms people might use to describe the experience of having a gender that varies. This may be variation over time, or in another way, for example according to different environments / settings.

Agender – one of a number of terms people might use to describe the experience of having no gender (or very little gender).

Gender questioning – exploring your gender with a view to understanding it more fully

Sex – the term usually used to refer to a person's biological and physical characteristics, associated with the categories of male and female. It includes external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones and secondary sex characteristics such as facial hair that typically develop around puberty. Sex is assigned at birth, typically based only on the appearance of the baby's genitalia.

NOTE: In many circumstances, such as on registration forms and in relation to single sex spaces, sex is often in practice used interchangeably with gender as the two are intertwined and are not experienced independently of each other. Some languages do not have separate words for sex and gender and may use terms such as 'lived sex', 'physical sex', 'legal sex' to talk about different aspects of sex/gender.

Gender – a wide-ranging term used to describe several different but intersecting aspects that are mainly social, cultural and behavioural:

> **Gender as a concept** refers to the social and cultural ideas we hold about masculinity and femininity, and what it means to 'be a man' or 'be a woman'. These ideas vary across time, across location and across cultures and are therefore often described as 'culturally constructed'. Although it may be constructed, gender is both powerful and real. Gender affects almost every aspect of the world we live in, including goods, services, spaces, practices, laws and language.
> When these ideas about gender become rigid and inflexible, they are often

called gender stereotypes. These are the roles, interests, attributes and behaviours typically expected of a person based on other people's perception of that person's sex and/or gender. Stereotypes often limit or constrain a person's life, closing down opportunities and self-expression and causing harm.

Gender as a sense of self ('gender identity') refers to a person's inner and deeply held sense of themselves as, for example, a man or woman or non-binary person.

Gender as behaviours ('gender expression') refers to the cultural gender-related cues and behaviours a person uses, traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity, such as name, pronoun, title, clothing, hair, walk, speech, mannerisms and any other gendered aspects of presentation. It can also extend to which gendered spaces a person uses (such as toilets) and the gender marker they have on documentation (such as their passport and driving licence)

All these aspects of gender intersect and are not experienced independently of each other, nor is gender experienced independently of physical embodiment.

Transition –The changes a trans person makes to affirm their gender identity and to live their life in a way that better aligns with that identity. These changes can be:
- **Social** (e.g. changing their name and/or pronoun; changing aspects of their presentation such as clothes, hair, mannerisms etc; changing the gender marker on their documents like passports; changing which toilets they use)
- **Emotional** (e.g. adapting to the world responding to them differently because of the shift in how their gender is perceived; learning how to navigate new or unfamiliar situations and spaces)
- **Medical** (e.g. using hormones and/or surgery)
- **Legal** (e.g. changing legal sex)[1].

NOTE: Some trans people make a social transition and don't seek medical support. Of those who do use medical support, not everybody takes up every option, and people may use medical support in different ways. Not all trans people transition.

Cisgender - one of a number of terms people might use to describe the experience of having a gender that matches their sex assigned at birth in the typically expected way. In other words, a man assigned male at birth, or a woman assigned female at birth.

NOTE: It is important to have a term to describe this life experience, because otherwise the norms associated with it can be invisible, and the privileges attached to it can be taken for granted.

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[1] In the UK, the Gender Recognition Act 2004 enables people to change their legal sex. However, very few trans people do so. Legal sex affects very little in practical terms, the process is currently intrusive and bureaucratic, and there is as yet no option for non binary people.

Intersex – one of a number of terms people might use to describe the experience of being born with sex characteristics (including genitals, reproductive organs and/or chromosome patterns) that vary from typical binary notions of male or female bodies. It is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of natural bodily variations.

NOTE: Intersex variations are often not noticed or apparent at birth as all that is typically looked at is whether a person's external genitalia broadly look like what's generally expected. Intersex variations may become apparent later in life e.g. at puberty if secondary sexual development does not occur as expected; during fertility investigations; or accidentally during unrelated surgery or other investigations. Some people will spend their entire lives unaware they have an intersex variation.

The terms intersex and trans refer to two different life experiences, although some people may have the intersectional experience of both.

Pronoun - a word that stands in for a name, to avoid constant repetition of that name e,g. 'John took John's ball with John to the park - John loves playing catch' is more usually written as 'John took his ball with him to the park - he loves playing catch'. In English, some 'third person' pronouns are commonly associated with gender ('he', 'she'), whereas first person ('I') and second person ('you') pronouns are gender neutral. Singular 'they' is an example of a third person gender-neutral alternative.

Other Notes about Language

We are increasingly seeing the terms 'gender diverse' and 'gender identity' being used when someone means 'trans'. This can include, for example, policies headed 'Gender Identity Policy' instead of 'Trans and Non-binary Inclusion Policy', or which talk about 'people who are gender diverse' instead of 'trans people'.

Although there is widespread use of these terms in this way, and indeed GI itself has (and sometimes still does) use 'gender diverse' in this way, we are increasingly recognising it can be misleading.

Gender identity
Everyone[2] has a sense of gender (gender identity), including cisgender people, and there are multiple and complex ways in which these senses of self come about. However, policies titled 'Gender Identity Policy' typically don't cover cisgender experiences – they are usually about trans experiences.

Using 'gender identity' to stand in for 'being trans' implies that only trans people have a gender identity. This can lead people to distinguish between trans and cis identities in ways that sometimes create a hierarchy e.g. "This person just 'identifies as' a woman, but I <u>am</u> a woman."

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[2] Agender people may consider their experience specifically to be an absence of gender identity, although it is an experience in relation to gender.

Gender diverse

'Diverse' means 'many' / 'a variety of' / 'lots of different (items, ways)', so it describes a population, or a collection. To describe an individual (as opposed to a group of individuals) as 'gender diverse' therefore doesn't quite work. Whilst some individual people may experience many genders, most don't.

Using the term in this way could inadvertently create the impression that all trans people have many genders, changeable genders, or choose their gender.

For the phrase to make sense, we would need to say, for example, 'gender divergent' or 'gender different'. However, this language doesn't feel very inclusive – it is quite 'othering'. It prompts the question 'divergent or different from what?' and of course the answer is divergent from cultural expectations and norms. Trans people tend to experience difficulties precisely because they diverge from those cultural norms, so it is important to shine a light on them.

Because 'diverse' feels more inclusive, it has become a euphemism, and like many euphemisms, it risks obscuring something important. If 'diverse' is used to mean 'non-cis ways of doing gender', this positions cis experiences as the invisible and unspoken norm *outside* of the spectrum of diversity, instead of *inside* it where they can be recognised as some of the many equally valid ways to experience gender.

This spectrum can be described as 'gender diversity'. This is a good term to indicate *all* the many ways people might experience / express gender, including cis experiences. It describes a 'cloud of possibilities'. This is really useful when we are speaking about including everyone, which should be the starting point for all inclusion work.