



## Supporting Trans and Gender Non-Conforming

### What does trans/transgender mean?

A trans or transgender person is someone whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. This term can include diverse gender identities. Some of these gender identities and expressions are outlined below. To learn more please go to [teni.ie](http://teni.ie).

### Introduction to Sex and Gender

It is important to clarify the distinctions between sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

**Sex:** The designation of a person at birth as male or female based on their anatomy (genitalia and/or reproductive organs) or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones).

**Gender Identity:** Refers to a person's deeply-felt identification as male, female, or some other gender. This may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Expression:** The external manifestation of a person's gender identity. Gender can be expressed through mannerisms, grooming, physical characteristics, social interactions and speech patterns.

**Sexual Orientation:** Refers to a person's physical, emotional or romantic attraction to another person. Sexual orientation is distinct from sex, gender identity and gender expression. Transgender people may identify as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer or asexual.

### Short Glossary

**Cisgender:** A non-trans person (i.e. a person whose gender identity and gender expression is aligned with the sex assigned at birth).

**Gender variant/Gender Non-Conforming:** People whose gender identity and/or gender expression is different from traditional or stereotypical expectations of how a man or woman 'should' appear or behave.

**Non-binary:** An umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of male or female. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively male nor female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders. Similar to the usage of transgender, people under the non-binary umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms.

For more information about non-binary identities and supporting non-binary members please see:

<http://teni.ie/attachments/faf990d7-47ca-4bcc-b9c4-cbed08961d1c.PDF>

**Trans man:** A person who was assigned female at birth but who lives as a man or identifies as male. Some trans men make physical changes through hormones or surgery; others do not.

**Trans woman:** A person who was assigned male at birth but who lives as a woman or identifies as female. Some trans women make physical changes through hormones or surgery; others do not.

**Transphobia:** The fear, dislike or hatred of people who are trans or are perceived to challenge conventional gender categories or 'norms' of male or female. Transphobia can result in individual and institutional discrimination, prejudice and violence against trans or gender variant people.

**Transvestite (Crossdresser):** A person who wears clothing, accessories, jewellery or make-up not traditionally or stereotypically associated with their assigned sex. This generally refers to a male to female transgender person who does not wish to transition or change their assigned sex but prefers to live 'dual role'.

This glossary is an abridged version, for a more complete glossary of trans terms please visit [http://www.teni.ie/trans\\_terms](http://www.teni.ie/trans_terms).

### When do people realise they're trans?

The age at which someone realises that they are trans is different depending on the person and their own experiences. For some people, this is as young as 2 years old although it is possible to realise at any age.

There is no right age to realise you are trans or to transition. Many people may have felt different throughout their lives and, on learning the language around gender identity, realise that they fit under the trans umbrella.

### Coming Out/Disclosing a Trans Identity

There is also no right or wrong time to disclose your trans identity. Some people may be seen as gender non-conforming as children and may have some form of social transition in primary school. Other people may be well into adulthood prior to disclosing their true gender. It is dependent on individual experience as to what road a person takes.

### Transitioning

Transitioning is a process through which some transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned at birth. Transition might include social, physical or legal changes such as coming out to family, friends, co-workers and others; changing one's appearance; changing one's name, pronoun and sex designation on legal documents (e.g. driving licence or passport); and medical intervention (e.g. through hormones or surgery).

## Supporting Young People

**This page contains practical guidance on supporting young people who are trans or gender non-conforming.**

Scouting Ireland is committed to diversity and inclusion, and is open to all young people regardless of their gender identity.

People who are transgender have a right to be treated as their true gender, regardless of what (if any) medical or legal steps they have taken.

There is great potential to offer trans young people support at a time when they may feel excluded from many of the social activities that most young people take for granted.

Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender is against the law. There is a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that trans members can access Scouting, including anticipating the needs of any future members.

### **What does it mean to be a trans or gender non-conforming young person?**

The young person may have chosen to or be considering living as their true gender. This might include being known by a different name, wearing different clothes and/or concealing parts of their body. The young person may or may not decide to transition legally or medically during their time in Scouting.

### **A young person is going through or considering medical transition; what does this mean?**

The young person may decide they want to either permanently alter their body or their appearance to match their true gender. Young people may be prescribed medication to stop puberty from progressing, or hormones to allow their body to develop in the way of their true gender. Later on, the young person, they might undergo surgery to change their bodies to match their true gender. This whole journey is known as medical transition, and is usually a complex process taking place over a long period of time, varying between individuals. Be aware that this experience can be very stressful and the process might be confusing for the young person.

The young person has a right to be treated as their true gender irrespective of what stage they are at.

### **What are some of the challenges faced by young people who are transgender?**

#### *Puberty:*

Puberty can be a very difficult time for all young people, but even more so for young trans people, because their body is changing physically in a way that contradicts their true gender. Drugs may be prescribed to 'block' puberty. Young people who are developing breasts may strap down their chest, to make it less obvious. This is called 'binding' and it is important to respect the young person's decision to do this.

#### *Prejudice and discrimination:*

Unfortunately, people who are transgender often experience prejudice and discrimination, much of which is unlawful and is covered by equality legislation. Young people may have experienced or be experiencing transphobic bullying.

### *Emotional wellbeing:*

People who are transgender are more likely to experience mental health issues or have low self-esteem, often due to prejudice and discrimination they may encounter; they may not have told their families or may be facing hostility from them.

### **How do I make my Section inclusive?**

- Avoid gender stereotyping (e.g. boys like football, girls like the colour pink).
- When addressing the whole Section, gender neutral terms will help to support an open and inclusive environment. For example, use "hello everybody" instead of "hello gentlemen" or talking to a group of female Scouts as "ladies".
- Don't split young people by gender in any activities.
- Allow young people to express their identity freely and don't make assumptions.

### **How can I support a young person who is transgender or questioning their gender identity?**

- Be led by the young person, and, where supportive, the parents/carers. Be aware of the possibility that parents/carers may have their own prejudices or may be unaware of how the young person feels. Only support the young person without the consent of their parents as a last resort. Make every effort to include parents and young people in conversations. Bring TENI on board with these conversations if needed.
- Listen to and accept what the young person is telling you, without judgement. Reassure them and explain that there are other young people who have these feelings, including those in Scouting. Refer on to organisations like TENI if needed.
- Be vigilant at looking for signs of bullying. Treat this in the same way as any other bullying, following our anti-bullying policy. It may be that effectively raising young people's understanding of gender identity issues will prevent or eliminate any bullying.
- Find out whether or not the young person is happy for others to know that they are transgender. Respect the young person's rights and privacy, and reassure of complete confidentiality; do not tell others without their consent. It is illegal to disclose someone's trans status without their consent according to the Data Protection Act.
- Don't ask for information about what medical treatment they have had unless you need to ask for a valid reason.
- Ensure when addressing the young person that you use their preferred gender, name and pronouns. Deal with any mistakes sensitively, correcting by use of the young person's preferred name.
- If the young person change's their name / gender during their time in Scouting, ensure you change all records. You do not need any evidence or proof to do so.
- It is important to treat the young person as a member of their true gender, whilst protecting them and all young people from vulnerable situations. Be aware that the young person will not want to appear

different from their peers to avoid causing any embarrassment. Don't let their gender identity become a frequent talking point.

- Conduct any conversations in an appropriate environment and in accordance with the Scouting Ireland's Code of Good Practice.

### Will I need to adapt activities?

- If you have young people who are binding their chests, monitor them carefully during particularly physical activities (such as rock climbing) and hot temperatures. There is a chance that the binding could cause discomfort or even impair breathing, and it may be necessary to subtly offer more breaks.
- Special considerations will be needed around water-based activities such as swimming. Plan ahead and discuss with the young person/parent in advance.
- Be aware that the young person may want to wear layers of clothing to conceal their body.

### What toilets should the young person use?

- Gender Neutral toilet facilities are preferable for some trans people **but often not available**. Always be led by the preferences of the young person, around which facilities they feel most comfortable and safe using. Ideally, this would be a cubicle in facilities of their true gender, but they may wish to use the accessible/disabled toilet as an alternative. If using the accessible/disabled toilet is the young person's preferred option, refer to and label toilets appropriately (e.g. 'gender neutral/accessible toilets' rather than 'disabled').
- Be aware that young trans people may have a lot of anxiety around using toilet facilities, and may even avoid using the toilet or drinking. This can lead to ill health, so it is important to be aware of this and provide reassurance if needed. Remind the young person that they can use whichever facilities they find most comfortable and at any time.

### What about nights away, camps and trips?

- Discuss options well in advance with the young person and others involved, whilst protecting the young person's right to privacy. The principle is to make sure that everyone is comfortable with the arrangements. Be sensitive to the needs of the young person; avoid making them feel singled out or not respected.
- As with all young people, confirm whether the young person is on any medication that they will need to take.
- Consider having one named scouter, who is aware of the young person's trans status and any treatment/medication they are on, who could provide support if medical treatment is needed. Ask the young person who they wish the leader to be, regardless of the scouter's gender.

### **How can I manage the sleeping arrangements?**

- Sleeping arrangements should be carefully planned, assessing the needs and ages of young people and any risks. A young person may be binding their chests or wearing very tight underwear to flatten themselves. The chance to privately remove this clothing overnight is very important.

The following are some options to consider, they should be risk assessed and spoken about with the young person and their family:

- Sharing with other young people of their true gender (or their sex assigned at birth if they would prefer), either in large or small tents with their trusted friends.
- Large tents with various sleeping compartments, discretely allocating the young person their own compartment for privacy.
- Having their own tent / room.

### **What about toilets, showers and changing facilities?**

Wherever possible, select a venue that has separate shower and changing cubicles, and gender-neutral toilet facilities (*see guidance around toileting above*). Monitor the young person during the event to check that they are not avoiding drinking or using toilets. They may wish to use the facilities when everybody else is busy doing a different activity.

### **What do I need to consider when organising international events?**

Be aware that some countries are not as open as Ireland, legally and culturally. Some may even have laws which make it illegal to be part of the transgender community. Check the laws for the country before you plan a visit. Consider any border crossing checks e.g. airport security screening and that their passport may be in a different name to their preferred name.

### **Is there anything else I need to consider?**

Be aware that young trans people can sometimes attract a lot of unwanted media attention. In the event of enquiries, make sure 'no comment' and 'no access' are your first responses. Make sure that they are not photographed or identified by name in any way.

### **How do I respond to any volunteers in my County who are not inclusive of transgender members?**

Volunteers should be reminded of their commitment to our Equal Opportunities Policy and their Section/Group Leader or County Commissioner should support them to change their practice. Often, a lack of awareness or understanding can be to blame, and some education may be needed. This could involve discussion, or it may be useful to arrange an awareness raising session in your County.

It is the responsibility of all adults to act as role models by celebrating diversity and creating an environment in which all members can enjoy safe, inclusive Scouting.

## Gender identity: Supporting adult volunteers

**This page contains practical guidance on supporting adult volunteers who are trans or gender non-conforming.**

Scouting Ireland is committed to diversity and inclusion, and is open to all people regardless of their gender identity.

People who are transgender have a right to be treated as their true gender, regardless of what (if any) medical or legal steps they have taken.

Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender is against the law. There is a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that trans members can access Scouting, including anticipating the needs of any future members.

### How can I support a volunteer who is transgender?

- Respect the person's rights and privacy.
- Reassure the person that you will support them and ask how you can support them. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Be sensitive and empathetic, consider how it may feel to be in their position. The individual may have had negative experiences in the past and their mental health may have been affected by this.
- Don't treat the person differently – respect their true gender identity and treat them as such.
- Ensure when addressing the person, that you use their preferred name and pronouns. If you're unsure, ask. Deal with any mistakes sensitively and simply, and correct by use of the person's preferred name.
- Do not share information about the person's trans status, unless at the specific request and agreement of the person.
- If needed, you can seek support without revealing the person's name/identity.
- Do not comment on the person's appearance, in relation to their true gender unless they specifically ask for your opinion.
- Be prepared for any questions or comments from other volunteers or young people.

### What facilities should the person use?

The person has a right to use the toilet facilities of their true gender. However, if they are not comfortable with this (particularly if they have recently transitioned), they may wish to use a gender-neutral toilet (e.g. accessible / disabled toilet) instead.

### What do I need to think about when planning trips or events?

Be aware that some countries are not as open as Ireland, legally and culturally. Some may even have laws which make it illegal to be part of the transgender community. Check the laws for the country before you visit,

and plan ahead. Consider any border crossing processes e.g. airport security screening.

### **How does this affect the Membership Process?**

Every Adult Member or Non-Member Adult Volunteer must undergo Garda Vetting, however there is a slightly different Vetting process for trans volunteers. They can contact the Garda Vetting Bureau (GVB) prior to going through the usual vetting process; this allows them to go through Vetting without needing to disclose their trans status or previous name to other leaders. They should then follow the standard vetting process as they will already have been prechecked by the GVB.

It is an offence for anyone acquiring information about a person's gender recognition history in an 'official capacity', to disclose this to another person, without consent of the person (Gender Recognition Act, 2015).

### **How can I support someone transitioning during their role?**

A current adult volunteer may inform you that they will be changing their physical appearance, from their birth gender to their true gender. Careful preparation and planning is needed, to support the volunteer.

We would recommend a private discussion with the volunteer to discuss how they would like to proceed and how you can support them. You can discuss a range of options, as appropriate, including:

- remaining continuously at the same Section;
- having a break for a number of weeks or months, then returning to the Section as the opposite gender;
- if the person is uncomfortable remaining within the same Section, they may wish to move to a different Section/Unit, starting their new role in their true gender.

It may be appropriate to plan (alongside the volunteer) a discussion with young people or parents/carers. In this case, we recommend the following is considered when working together to determine the best course of action:

- Current awareness of the Section/Unit involved and the characteristics / dynamics of the young people, parents, etc.
- Who the person is comfortable confiding in.
- Keeping the volunteers' thoughts and feelings at the centre.

It is important to update all communication and records as soon as possible to the correct pronouns and name. You do **not** need to ask for proof for their records to be altered (e.g. to show their Gender Recognition Certificate).

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Section/Group Leader or County Commissioner should support them to change their practice. Often, a lack of awareness or understanding can be to blame, and some education may be needed. This could involve discussion, or it may be useful to arrange an awareness raising session in your County.

It is the responsibility of all adults to act as role models by celebrating diversity and creating an environment in which all members can enjoy safe, inclusive Scouting.

**Guidance created in partnership with Transgender Equality Network Ireland and inspired by the LGBTQ+ guidance from the UK Scouting Association.**