

Transgender and Transitioning - Definitions

The inappropriate use of language, often due to a lack of understanding and knowledge, may cause offence and distress to a transgender employee therefore, understanding the appropriate terminology relating to transgender and transitioning may help to minimise the potential for offence and develop a culture of inclusiveness.

Listed below are some terms people may use to describe their gender identity (but is not an exhaustive list). It should be noted that transgender terminology is constantly evolving and a transgender person's own self-identification should be respected.

Non-binary: an umbrella term used to describe a person who identifies outside of the gender binary i.e. outside of male or female or both male and female.

Pronouns: Certain pronouns refer to a person's gender eg he, she, they. For many transgender people it is extremely important that the correct pronouns are used. The gender of the pronoun should always match the person's gender identity, including gender neutral pronouns for non-binary people. If you are in doubt about which pronouns to use, ask the person and respect their choice.

Transgender or Trans: An umbrella term that refers to those with identities that cross over, move between, or otherwise challenge the socially constructed border between the genders. This can include medical transition or social transition, or both. Some transgender people opt to have surgery, while others do not.

Transsexual: A highly medicalised term referring to a person who does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth and wishes to realign their gender and their sex through use of medical intervention. Transsexual people often have surgery, if available to the individual, restraints can be age, availability or physical medical reasons.

Transition: is the process and steps a transgender person may take to live in the gender they identify as. Each individual's transition will be different, for some it may involve medical interventions such as hormone therapy or surgery (but this is not a pre requisite for transition). It might also include telling friends and family, dressing differently or changing official documents.

Gender reassignment: is another term that may be used to describe a person's transition. It may involve counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery. It can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Gender Dysphoria: is a recognised medical condition for which gender reassignment treatment is available. Gender dysphoria is when someone experiences significant and long-standing distress, unhappiness and/or discomfort about their physical body not fully matching their gender identity. Some transgender people experience intense gender dysphoria which is significantly reduced or even eliminated by transitioning to live as their self-identified gender and by taking hormones and perhaps getting surgery to make their physical bodies match their gender identity and gender expression better. Other transgender people may experience various degrees of gender dysphoria, especially when unable socially to fully express their gender identity.

Gender Recognition Certificate or GRC: enables transgender people (over the age of 18 who have or have had gender dysphoria, lived in their acquired gender for at least 2 years and intend to live in their acquired gender for the rest of their life) to be recognised in their self-identified gender and issued with a new birth certificate. Not all transgender people will want to apply for a GRC (for a number of reasons including health, personal or family reasons).