

Transgender and Transitioning – FAQs

Q1. What does it mean if someone is transgender?

Transgender or Trans is an umbrella term used to describe people who present themselves in a gender that differs from the one they were assigned at birth. This is a broad term and refers to those who cross over, move between, or otherwise challenge the socially constructed border between genders.

There is a separate definitions document available within AskHR on the Zone.

Q2. Why is there a separate definitions document?

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

Q3. What does it mean if someone is transitioning and what does it involve?

This is the process and steps that a transgender person may take to live in the gender they identify as. The term gender reassignment can also be used to describe a person's transition and is a 'protected characteristic'. Each individual's transition will be different. For some, it may involve medical interventions (medical transition) such as counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery (but this is not a prerequisite for transition). For some, it may involve telling friends and family, dressing differently or changing official documents (social transition). For some individuals it may involve social transition or medical transition, or both.

Q4. What is a 'protected characteristic'?

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection to people with the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

A person has the 'protected characteristic' of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Q5. What is transgender equality?

As an equal opportunities employer, we recognise that a culture of acceptance and inclusiveness, free from discrimination, harassment and bullying is important in ensuring fairness in all areas of employment for all individuals to fulfil their potential and add value to the organisation.

The Transgender Equality and Transitioning in the Workplace Guidance is in accordance with the contents of the Diversity and Equality Policy. It provides information and good practice so that no individual who is intending to transition, is transitioning or has transitioned is unfairly disadvantaged or excluded in terms of any aspect of their employment.

Q6. What protection do transgender employees have in the workplace?

There are various pieces of legislation that provide protection for transgender people in the workplace including The Gender Recognition Act 2004, The Equality Act 2010, The Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The protections provided for include protection from non-consenting disclosure of an employee's transgender history, protection from discrimination and protection from harassment. See the Transgender Equality and Transitioning in the Workplace Guidance for further details.

Q7. What do I do if I feel someone is using inappropriate language in relation to a colleague who is transgender or transitioning?

You should inform your line manager as soon as possible so that appropriate action can be taken.

Please see the Transgender Equality and Transitioning in the Workplace Guidance for further details regarding Protection from Harassment and Protection from Victimisation.

Q8. Is there training about transitioning and transgender equality/issues?

You should discuss this with your line manager but there is more information about Equality and Diversity within Your Employment in AskHR on the Zone, including details of the equality groups in HR and development opportunities.

Line managers can also seek advice and support from HR and consider any training needs or awareness raising sessions that may be required.

Q9. Where can I find out more information about transgender and transitioning?

There are various resources available to supplement the Transgender Equality and Transitioning in the Workplace Guidance all available within AskHR on the Zone.

- Definitions document
- Useful Contacts document
- FAQs from a transgender employee's perspective

Your line manager should also be able to discuss with you in general about transgender equality and transitioning.