

# Making HE more Inclusive for Transgender Students

Medway Learning & Teaching Conference 2023

**22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023**



# Terminology

- In this presentation, **transgender (trans)** is used as an umbrella term for those whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, or who do not conform to conventional gender binaries of man/woman. I use the term 'trans' and 'transgender' as inclusive terms to reflect the full spectrum of identities within this, including but not exclusive to transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, gender fluid, non-binary and gender non-conforming.
- **Cisgender (Cis)** - someone who exclusively identifies as the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Cisnormativity** - how society is orientated around the assumption that a person's gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Deadname** – where a trans person has changed their name, their deadname refers the name they were assigned at birth.

# Background

- UK Gender Identity Clinic (London) – “an unprecedented rise in referrals in the last year... outstripping the number of available first appointments by a factor of 2 to 1.” (Gender Identity Clinic, 2018).
- Transgender people are becoming increasingly visible in public life and that this has embedded transgender issues into popular culture; despite this, gender-identity is one of the “least discussed and under-researched phenomenon within post-compulsory education” Hafford-Letchfield *et al.* (2018).

## **Feb 2023**

264 referrals made to the London GIC.

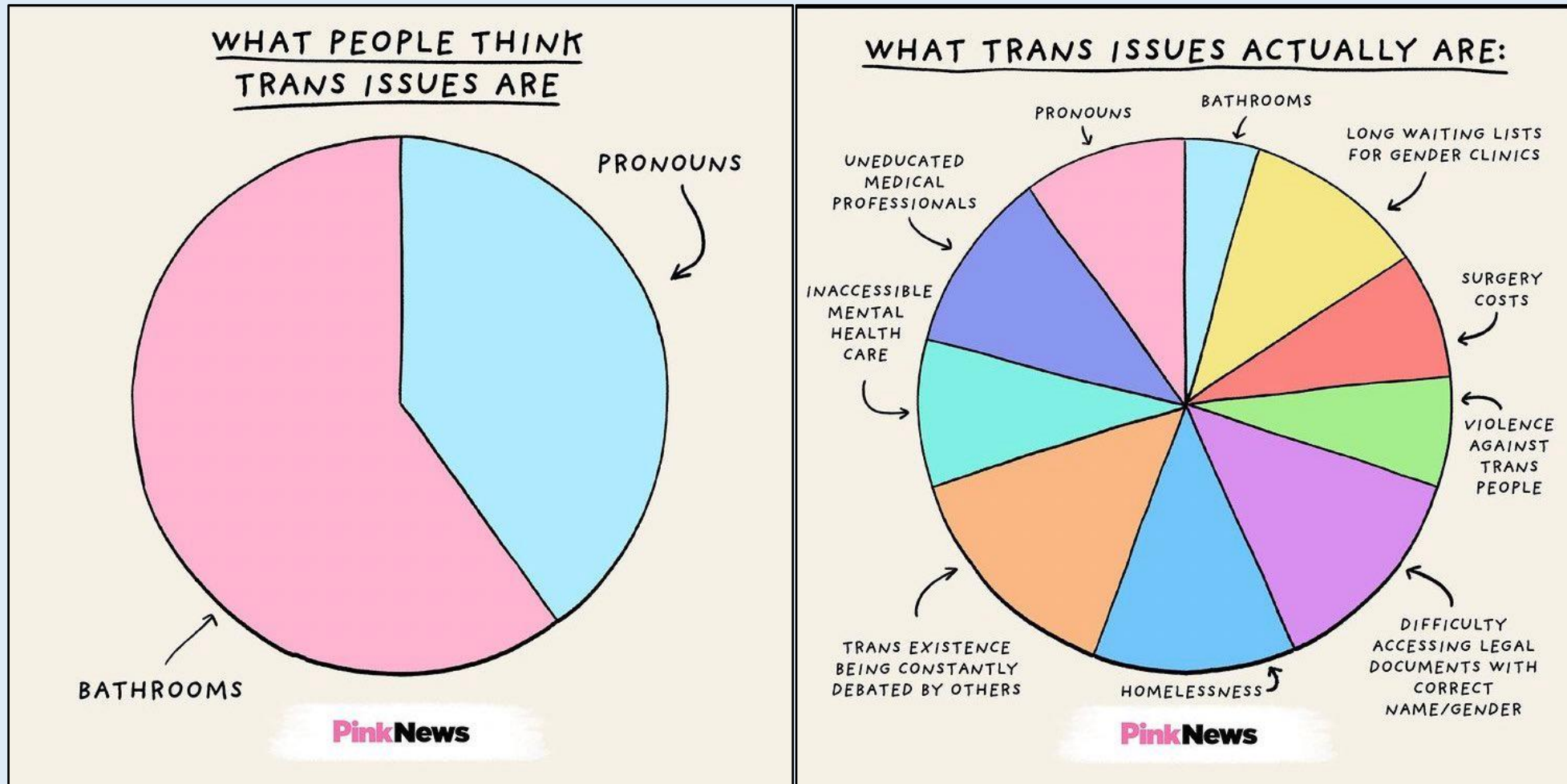
55-month average wait for first appointments.

12,296 people on the waiting list.

First appointment referrals being made to those referred in July 2018.

(Gender Identity Clinic, 2023).

# There is more to trans issues than pronouns and toilets



# Study

What are the experiences of trans students in HE and how well are HEIs supporting trans students, including the development and implementation of trans student policy?’

Internet survey:

- **164 participants**
  - 65 male
  - 30 female
  - 61 non-binary
  - 8 ‘other’
- **61 HEIs**

One-to-one  
interviews:

- **7 participants**
- **7 HEIs**

Documentary  
analysis:

- **8 HEIs**

# Main themes

Institutional facilities and administration

Harassment, bullying and transphobia

Representation in the curriculum

# Institutional administration

*“One of the biggest problems for me in my experience was that I was constantly reminded of the name I didn't choose. I don't even care all that much about the pronoun stuff, to be honest, I care way more about the name because if they call me by my old name, I just feel 21 years of frustration and anxiety building up in me... That's just all of these constant reminders are just really unpleasant and hurtful .”*

# Facilities

*“The gender-neutral toilets are also the disabled toilets, which is interesting because I’m able-bodied and so I don’t always feel comfortable using toilets that are specifically for disabled people.”*

*“I had to either go to the women’s restroom and feel wrong, or go to the men’s restroom and feel even more wrong because, you know, I can’t pee standing... It really comes down to these very detailed personal experiences.”*



# Harassment, bullying and transphobia



# Representation in the curriculum

English Literature student:  
*"If you are cis you probably look at it and find it really interesting, but when you're trans, you're reading it and it's, it's really bad... I read it and I was like, this is awful, why am I, why are they making me read this?"*

Nursing student:  
*"It needs to be demystified and debunked. And I think the heat needs to be taken out of it... It's about having a vocabulary for it, about feeling okay not knowing and feeling okay to be able to sort of say 'I'm not that familiar with working with trans people, can you help me out here? What pronouns do you like to use? How do you like to refer to things?'... It's not one size fits all. Language that I might feel comfortable with might not be suitable for somebody else."*

# Implications for professional practice

Improving administration and facilities

Acknowledging and questioning institutional cisnormativity

Creating an inclusive curriculum

Improving mental health support for trans students

# Improving administration and facilities

Changing personal details –  
name, title, gender identity

Student data records, IT  
systems and registers

Updating names and photos on  
ID cards

Creating more gender-neutral  
toilets

# Acknowledging and questioning institutional cisnormativity

HEIs need to acknowledge the privilege of a majority cisgender environment with, in most cases, totally cisgender decision and policy makers at the higher echelons of leadership.”  
(Calafell, 2020)

Entrenched cisnormativity can make the campus climate “hostile” and exclusive as the needs of trans students are not being met (Swanbrow Becker *et al.*, 2017).

Accidental misgendering  
perpetuating cisnormativity

Administrative processes based  
on cisnormative assumptions  
of gender identity

Binary normativity in the choice  
of gender markers

Gendered toilet facilities

# Creating an inclusive curriculum

“What is oppressive is having to experience, again and again, the privileging of only certain ways of identifying, thinking, or relating to others.”  
(Kumashiro, 2002)

Resistance to anti-oppressive change

Working collaboratively with trans students around inclusive teaching

Inclusive language

# Professional health and social care curricula

Students need to be provided with the 'tools' to help them work with and respect trans people.

Improving the curriculum in these areas will help to reduce the variation that exists in health and mental health care and improve the experiences of trans people.

It is important that professional health and social care students learn about how to address and talk to trans people, the value of affirming language, and how to recognise and address prejudice and bias.

# Mental health difficulties and gender dysphoria

Gender dysphoria is no longer classed as a mental health disorder.

Trans people are often at higher risk of mental health difficulties due to a number of factors, including having experienced social exclusion, discrimination and violence, or having kept their identity hidden.

GICs and wait times in England:

Northampton (49 months), Exeter (82 months), London (55 months), Leeds (48 months), Newcastle (60 months), Northants (49 months), Nottingham (26 months), Sheffield (62 months)

(Gender Construction Kit, 2023)



# Improving mental health & wellbeing support

BACP: Despite the higher rate of mental health concerns among trans students, there is a lack of understanding and experience in supporting this student group (Swanbrow Becker, 2019).

Counselling and mental health providers must have an understanding of the difficulties trans students may be experiencing.

Lack of social support  
(including rejection by family,  
religion and friends)

Managing an outward  
appearance that may not  
correspond with their identity

Added financial difficulties,  
especially if they have no family  
support

# Improving counselling support

Transgender students may “come to the therapy room with a history of discrimination, rejection, and abuse” and that practitioners should use “trauma-informed care” (Swanbrow Becker, 2019).

Counsellors can help trans students to feel listened to and validated, but the university environment also needs to change in order for them to thrive on campus.

- Their problems may not have anything to do with being trans.
- Where it is relevant, counsellors need to understand the additional stressors that they experience.
- Students having to spend counselling sessions answering the counsellors’ questions about being trans rather than receiving support.

# What can I do?

- [Rainbow lanyards](#)
- [Put your pronouns in your email signature](#)
- [Inclusive language](#)

Lynne Regan (She/Her) is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.  
Topic: DSA Study Needs Assessment  
Time: Jan 26, 2022 6:00 PM London  
Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/xxxxxxx>  
Meeting ID: xxxxxxxx  
Passcode: xxxx



Advice	Don't use	Instead
Use gender neutral terms rather than those that make sex distinction.	Man, mankind, workmanship, man the desk/phones, man made.	Humans, humankind, quality of work/skills, attend the phones, artificial/manufactured/synthetic.
Use gender neutral pronouns and expressions.	Anyone who wants his work evaluated. Welcome ladies and gentlemen.	Anyone who wants their work evaluated. Welcome to friends and colleagues/welcome to everyone.
Respect the preference of those people who want to be referred to by gender neutral pronouns.	She, her, hers and he, him, his.	They, them, theirs (e.g. Xena ate their food because they were hungry). It is correct to use in the singular.

# Policy and procedures

- [University of Kent Trans Student Policy and Support Procedures](#)
- [University of Greenwich Students Transitioning at University Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Canterbury Christ Church University Transgender and Non-Binary Inclusion Policy and supporting guidance](#)
- [Gender reassignment toolkits and resources](#) (Kent)
- [Support for trans students](#) (Kent) – [TG Pals](#) (Canterbury) [MGSDC](#) (Medway)
- [Report + Support \(Kent\)](#) [Report + Support \(CCCU\)](#) [Report + Support \(Greenwich\)](#) – reporting incidents such as sexual assault, harassment, relationship abuse or hate crime
- [Change of personal details](#) (Kent) – How students can amend their title (including to Mx), amend their gender identity marker (male, female, other, prefer not to say), change their preferred name, or advise a legal name change.
- [Gender-neutral toilets](#) (Kent)

# Staff and student training

- Transgender Awareness staff training
  - This module provides information, guidance and resources relating to gender and transgender identity.
- LGBTQI Awareness staff training
  - This module provides information, guidance and resources relating to LGBTQI awareness.
- Links to both modules are on the [EDI Training page](#)
- [Expect Respect module for students](#)
- [Student Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity pages](#)
- [University of Kent guidance on inclusive language](#)
- [University of Kent guidance on pronouns](#)

# Get involved

- [Transgender Day of Visibility](#) – 31<sup>st</sup> March
  - [University of Greenwich 2022 page](#) and [2023 page](#); [University of Kent 2023 page](#)
- [International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia \(IDAHOBIT\)](#) – 17<sup>th</sup> May
  - [University of Greenwich 2023 page](#); [University of Kent 2022 page](#)
- [Pride month](#) – June
  - [University of Greenwich Celebrating Pride 2023](#)
- [Non-Binary People's Day](#) – 14<sup>th</sup> July
  - [University of Greenwich International Non-Binary People's Day 2022](#)
- [Medway Pride \(19<sup>th</sup> August 2023\)](#)
- [Intersex Awareness Day](#) – 26<sup>th</sup> October
- [Transgender Awareness Week](#) – 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> November
- [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#) – 20<sup>th</sup> November

# Useful links

- [Young Minds](#) Gender and mental health.
- [Mind Out](#) LGBTQ mental health service.
- [16point6](#) LGBTQ inclusive healthcare.
- [Transgender Health: A practitioner's guide to binary and non-binary patient care](#) (Vincent, 2018).
- [TransActual](#) Information about the trans community, and resources for trans healthcare.
- [Mermaids](#) Support for trans, non-binary and gender diverse students aged 18-25.
- [Gendered Intelligence](#) Trans support, and inclusivity training, including information and training for therapists and counsellors.
- [FutureLearn course](#) – Transgender Healthcare: Caring for Trans Patients.

*“Diversity doesn’t only talk about transness, diversity talks about everything from, you know, culture, age, income, all these factors that make people different, or that make people’s outside circumstances different... University is there to teach humans how to be humans... I think there should be, either during induction week or actually just one tiny, tiny module or something, where we learn about proper conduct with other human beings... if high school doesn’t do it then university really should. I mean, Christ, it’s really time now, isn’t it?”*



# References

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