


Trans, Non-binary and Questioning Coming Out Guide for Young People



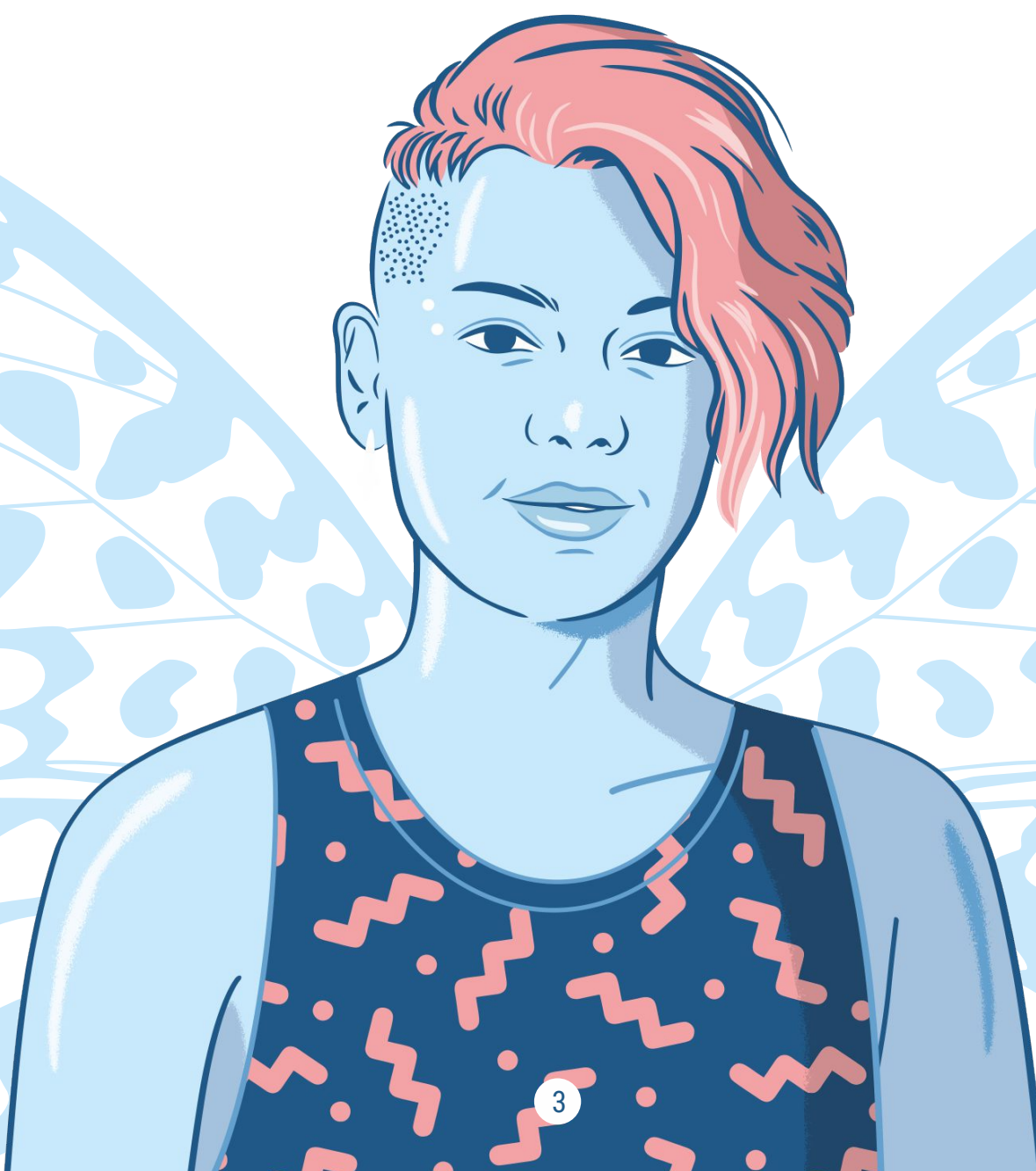


“Self-acceptance is so scary and so important, and it can take so long, but the end result is the more freeing and happy feeling. I’m so proud to be non-binary and I can’t wait for my first Pride where I can wave my flag and feel accepted by everyone around me.”

– 19, Angus



This guide has been co-produced with young people aged between 13-25 who are trans, non-binary or are questioning their gender identity. We hope this guide will help you understand how you are feeling and think about what to do next. We will cover questioning your gender identity, how to come out in a way that is safe for you and how to explore the world of gender expression, gender dysphoria, healthcare, and your rights. We don't aim for this to be a definitive guide, but we hope that it will help you on your journey. We have written this guide for trans and non-binary young people, but you may also find it useful as a family member, friend, or ally of a trans person.



Throughout this guide you'll discover artwork created by our young contributors.



Amelia, 'Soma'. Soma is a word that has a lot of meaning to me. The word soma comes from the Greek word *sōma* meaning 'body', and can be defined as the body as distinct from the soul, mind, or psyche. The distinction is relevant here because of the disconnect that I have felt between mind and body, and also how I have dealt with it.



Amelia, 'Self'. The original image, with the field of flowers, originally had me as the main subject a few years before starting my transition. The picture was taken at a time when I had been starting to question my identity, and in removing myself from the image it was as if I could be the subject as I am now, rather than as I was.

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Key concepts and definitions

Language and labels can be a helpful way to define yourself and can create a sense of community. However, some people find them restrictive. Use the words that feel comfortable and helpful to you. This might change over time and that's OK too!

We are all different and have a range of views about gender and language, so not everyone will use the same terms for themselves. It is always worth checking in with people about how they would like to be referred to. For example, some people may use the word “transsexual” to describe themselves, while others find this term offensive.

These are some of the key concepts and definitions we use in this guide, but it isn't all the words you may come across and language is constantly changing and evolving.

- A **transgender** person is someone who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, whereas a **cisgender** person does identify with their assigned gender.
- A **trans woman** – someone assigned male at birth and now identifies as a woman.
- A **trans man** – someone assigned female at birth and now identifies as a man .
- **Non-binary** – someone who identifies in a way other than male or female. This is an umbrella term for all people who aren't a binary gender. Some non-binary people have a more specific identity that comes under that umbrella such as bigender, agender, gender fluid, genderqueer or demi-girl/boy.
- Some people use the terms **transmasculine** (if they were assigned female at birth) or **transfeminine** (if they were assigned male at birth) to talk about their experiences and identity, but not everyone does. These can include both binary and non-binary trans people.

Gender identity is our **internal** sense of our own gender.

Gender expression is our **external** physical appearance and behaviour that is related to gender. Gender expression is the way you express your gender by, for example, the way you dress, the cosmetics you do or don't use, your behaviour and the pronouns you use.

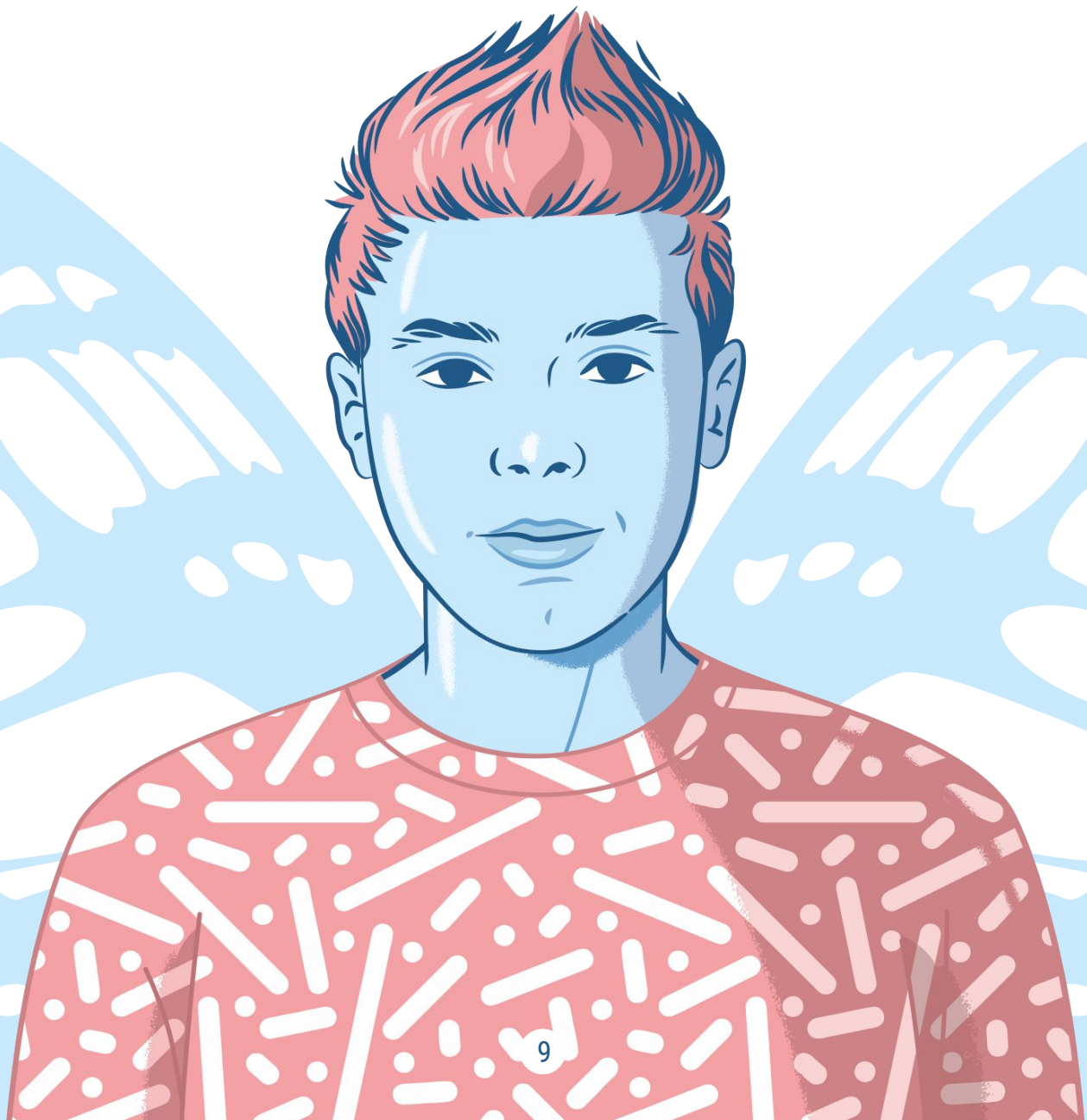
Gender expression isn't the same thing as gender identity: some people are **gender non-conforming** and have gender expression that's different from what society expects of their gender identity. Some trans and non-binary people will transition. This may mean changing their name and pronouns and/or making hormonal or physical changes to their body to match their gender. Your identity is valid even if you don't transition.

A **pronoun** is a word that we use to refer to someone in place of their name, for example instead of saying "Dave went to the shops" we would say "he went to the shops." All people have pronouns, not just trans people.

The **gender binary** suggests that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two. This is how gender was traditionally viewed in the Western world but lots of people have different identities that fall outwith the binary. There are cultures across the world that recognise and celebrate many more than two genders.

Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe people born with a wide range of physical and sex characteristics that don't fit neatly into the traditional understanding of “male” or “female”. This is not the same thing as being transgender, although some intersex people are also trans.

Some trans people are **stealth**, which means that other people may not know that they are transgender. Other trans people are open about being transgender. This is down to personal preference or safety reasons.



Questioning your gender identity

“I wish I’d known that questioning your identity is something perfectly okay to do, everyone has the right to do it and that it’s alright to find that the conclusion you come to is personal and not part of a set of boxes defined by others.”

– 24, Shetland

Questioning gender identity means exploring who you are in relation to gender. It's about figuring out what makes you happy, trying out different ways to express yourself and learning more about what makes you unique!

You might have experienced some conflicts between what is expected of your assigned gender, and how you understand and express yourself. You might feel uncomfortable in your body and have a strong sense that it should be different.

Questioning your gender identity can be a really isolating experience, but you are not alone. Lots of other people go through the same thing. It's OK to be unsure and to take your time to work out how you feel. Only you know who you are. Identity can change over time. For some people labels can give a sense of community and self-awareness, while for other people they can feel like pressure.



“When I came out, I identified as genderfluid and pansexual, asking for people to use they/them for me. Two identities which I no longer identify with, but to me it shows that your identity can be fluid. And that some labels may no longer be useful to you and your journey.”

– 20, South Lanarkshire

There is no right or wrong way to be trans or non-binary. For some people it might involve a process of medical transition and for others it might not: both are valid.

“I felt confused personally as there were things stereotypically associated with both boys and girls that I was into – if I’d had more knowledge about what stereotypes are, I think I’d have felt better and wouldn’t have felt so much pressure to be ‘man enough’ or anything.”

– 17, Glasgow

A **gender stereotype** is a generalised idea about what being a man, or a woman means: for example, that men are strong, and women are better at expressing feelings. Gender stereotypes vary across cultures, and at different points in history. Men, women, and non-binary people have a whole variety of different traits, qualities, and interests. It's ok if you fit with some stereotypes and not others, or none at all. Anyone of any gender can be **gender non-conforming**, which means your identity and presentation don't line up with what would traditionally be associated with one of the binary genders. Both trans and cis people can be gender non-conforming.

Questioning your gender identity can affect the way you feel about other aspects of life – your faith, disability, race or ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

Our culture or faith may have specific identities or customs around gender that you do or don't relate to. Many disabled and neurodiverse people experience their gender differently to non-disabled people and neurotypical people. This can be because our experience of gender is affected by how we understand ourselves and the world.

“My journey of trying to work out who I was started when I was just starting Primary school. From a young age I was incredibly interested in the animal kingdom and that among other things taught me about the different sexes. However eventually I began to notice that there was a distinction between how I understood my gender and what I felt. I felt a lot of confusion but I dismissed it as another symptom of Autism. However, this changed when I entered puberty and at that point, I began to feel increasingly uncomfortable with my body and identifying as male. It felt like I was being herded into a pen by everyone around me and by my own body, like it was speaking for me but not belonging to me at all. This made my teenage years very difficult indeed and despite coming out the feelings haven't gone. It is like my life is a play and I'm trapped in a costume I can't take off. Sometimes I don't think I have ever really known who I am. I think what delayed me being able to accept and trying to understand my identity was mainly a lack of knowledge but also fear. I was never taught about anything LGBTQIA+ in school and the only thing I had heard about it was that gay people were bad. So, when I began to have crushes on people, I withdrew into myself because I thought I was wrong. I only recently came out as bisexual because I didn't really know if I was. I am at peace with my sexuality finally, but I still have a while to wait until I can transition but that is my story so far.”

– 18, Midlothian

Before coming out

Coming out is when we share with others that we are trans, non-binary or questioning. This is a process which might be repeated when we meet new people throughout life. We don't need to come out if it isn't safe or an appropriate time: our identity is valid even if we are the only one who knows about it.

“For strangers and acquaintances in day-to-day life, in non LGBT spaces, I’m a gay trans man with a simple, common, easy-enough to spell name: because that’s nice and simple for folks, and not exactly wrong, just not the full picture. With close friends and online, I’m a nonbinary bigender queer dude named unsubtly after a root vegetable with a different name. Neither is a lie! I express my gender to varying degrees of specificity and try on different pronouns like picking a nickname vs a professional name vs a penname. It’s all me, and it’s all good!”
– 17, Scottish Borders

You may want to tell your friends or your family, your school, or your workplace about how you are feeling but feel worried about how they might respond. It can help to take some time to reflect on some of these points:

- It might feel good to no longer have to keep your gender a secret
- You may be able to express your gender more authentically, for example by changing your name/pronoun or how you express yourself
- You may have to come out many times if your identity continues to evolve
- People may ask you lots of questions that you don't want to answer or don't have the answers to
- Families and friends may not react well, especially at first

There are many ways to come out, taking time to plan this could be helpful. It is OK to decide not to come out or that you need to wait. It is important for you to think about what feels right for you. You are in control of who you tell, when and how you choose to tell them and the amount of detail you share.

Gender is fluid for some of us, or our understanding of ourselves might change, and that is okay. It may be that we come out again and again.

If you have decided to come out, some things to think about are:

- Who you feel most safe to come out to
- Can you test the waters first by mentioning an LGBT storyline in a film or a trans person in public life to see how they respond?
- What space would feel most comfortable for you and the person you are coming out to. Some options might be in person, over the phone, in the car, while on a walk or through a message or email
- Are there any events that are influencing the timing of your coming out?
- Plan what you feel OK to share and what you would prefer to keep private, as well as how to express yourself. Write down some options or practise saying them out loud

Some people might want to have a long chat, for others it will just be a quick acknowledgement, and some may need to have some time to process before coming back to you to chat more.

Those of us that are part of more than one community which is discriminated against might face additional challenges. These identities can include our sexual orientation, being a person of colour, neurodivergent, disabled, working-class, being a young carer, being care experienced, or not having English as a first language. There are many more identities and experiences that could be included in this list.

It is always important to think and reflect on your individual situation and what feels safe and comfortable for you.

If you are coming out to the people you live with and are worried about their reaction, plan for what you might do if things go wrong. For example:

- Telling someone you know and trust what you are planning to do
- Arranging to stay at a friend's house for the night if needed
- Having a bag ready in case you need to leave quickly. The bag could include clothes, money, and important documents such as ID

Coming out can take a lot of courage and for some of us is an important rite of passage. You might want to plan something for afterwards to reward yourself and mark the occasion.

People close to you may need some time to process what you have said and may also have questions. Those who initially have a negative reaction may change to grow to accept you and your gender after having some time to learn and reflect. It can help to have some resources ready that your friends and family can read. At the end of this guide, we have added some top tips for allies.

Helpful websites with more information about coming out which we like:

- LGBT Youth Scotland – www.lgbtyouth.org.uk
- Gendered Intelligence – www.genderedintelligence.co.uk
- The Trevor Project (US) – www.thetrevorproject.org

You don't have to come out to everyone at once. It can help to set boundaries and remind your friends or family that coming out is your journey, and it is not ok for them to tell other people without your permission.

If you would want your friends or family to inform others, have a conversation about what this could look like and what you are happy for them to share.

“I found it comfortable to talk to my mum about anything personal when we were on a car journey, including coming out. Whilst being in the car I knew we wouldn’t be overheard, and we couldn’t be interrupted. Sitting in the passenger seat whilst she drove, we couldn’t make direct eye contact, which was helpful for me because I find it difficult to retain eye contact when talking to someone at the best of times. These conversations felt confidential and non-confrontational, so it became a good space and time to talk about my identity and transitioning. As well as coming out to someone you trust and feel safe with, it’s important to find a space that is also comfortable for you.”
– 20, Edinburgh

“I had been struggling for a while with my gender identity and decided to come out to my parents. I wrote a letter explaining how I was feeling and what it meant. I left the letter on our kitchen table and went to bed. In the morning, my parents didn’t say anything, so I started to worry that they didn’t accept me, but eventually they talked to me about the letter. They didn’t really accept me, but my friends did, and they’ve really helped. I was sad that they didn’t accept me/like it, but it still felt like a massive weight off my shoulders.

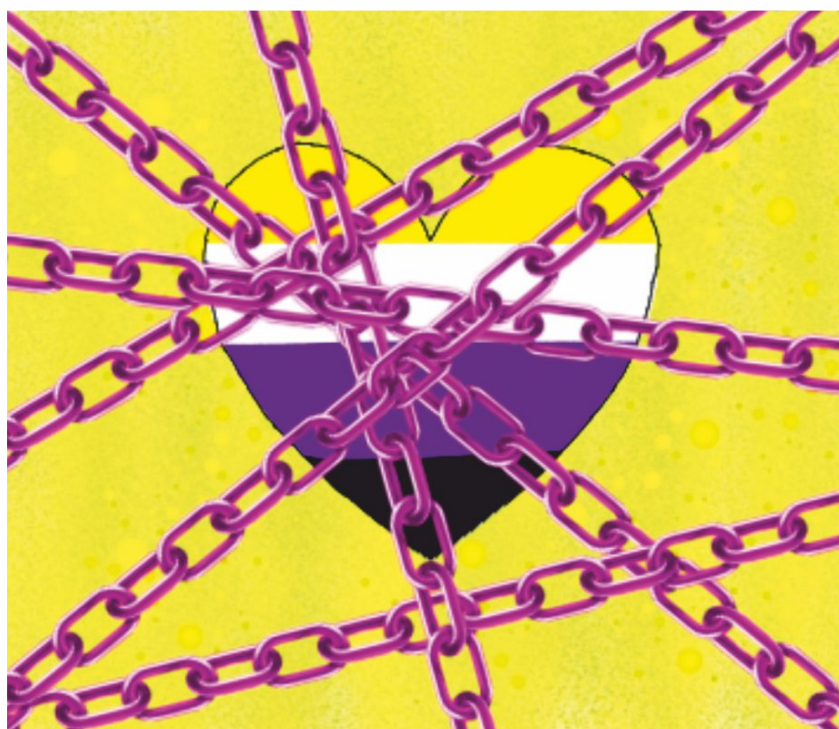
The person you’ve come out to may need a few days to understand what you’ve said. If it’s not safe to come out it’s safer to stay closeted. I wish I’d put more of an explanation in the letter, that I had put that I’d known for 2 years prior to telling them. I also wish that I knew that I’d misgender myself after coming out a bit.”

– 15, Scotland

Remember: If you come out to someone it is your right to ask them not to share this with others. If you are okay for people to share information about yourself, be clear about what is and isn't okay.



Aidan



Cyle, 'Lock Heart'

Reacting to negative responses

Some of us experience negative responses after coming out. Some people may simply not understand your identity, and others may actively say or do harmful things.

Before coming out or coming out it can be helpful to think about how to cope with any negativity, or if somebody outs you without your permission. You might feel rejected, sad, angry, or numb. Take some time to consider your feelings by:

- Writing down how you feel
- Talking to a supportive friend, family member, youth worker, teacher or counsellor
- Expressing yourself creatively
- Doing some physical or practical tasks

Remember: a person's first reaction may not be their forever reaction.

“I came out to my father who had in the past made a lot of transphobic comments. I wrote him a letter explaining how I want to be identified and with what pronouns, and how what he said made me feel. He really took this on board as his chance to do better and is now trying to not misgender me.”

– 14, Falkirk

Think about the boundaries that are right for you and how best to express them. This could mean:

- Spending less time with certain people, and more with others
- Being clear about what behaviour is unacceptable to you
- Sharing resources with family and friends, and letting them know where they can get support

Setting boundaries can be tough: it can help to acknowledge how the other person feels, how you feel and what you need from them. For example, by saying: “I understand that you won't get it right all the time, but it makes me feel sad when you misgender me. I need you to use the correct name and pronouns.”

Repeat your boundary and be clear what will happen if the other person does not respect this. For example, by saying: “I have been clear that I need you to call me by my chosen name. If you are unable to do that right now, I will need to leave.”

“When our child first came out to us, we were not totally shocked, but many parents are taken completely by surprise. This may have been on the child’s mind for months or years and they may feel a real need to move quickly, but many parents will need some time to get their heads around it. Even if we react badly at the start that doesn’t mean we won’t end up being your biggest supporter, just that we may need some time to learn and adapt. Sometimes parental love is very wrapped up in ‘protection’, and the fear of the unknown may be overwhelming for us.”

– Proud mum, and member of Transparentsees support group

Gender expression

How you express your gender is personal to you. You may want to change and experiment with it. It is OK if it doesn't change at all, or if the way you express your gender identity is different from the stereotypes that are attached to being a man, woman, or non-binary person. Your gender expression might also look different depending on your culture and background: we express our gender in a wide variety of ways which is a wonderful thing.

“I’ve always been feminine, and I still am but I never really felt right calling myself ‘she’. Being non-binary and using they/them pronouns was hard for me to accept but this is what I identify with. People in my town aren’t accepting, being different is not good here but I didn’t feel different, I just felt like me. Expressing myself in clothes and hairstyles and make up is still so scary when I go outside but I’m learning that being myself is so important and I’m slowly starting to believe that the only person that should care how I look, or dress is me. Self-acceptance is so scary and so important, and it can take so long, but the end result is the more freeing and happy feeling. I’m so proud to be non-binary and I can’t wait for my first Pride where I can wave my flag and feel accepted by everyone around me.”

– 19, Angus

Gender euphoria and gender dysphoria

Gender Dysphoria and Gender Euphoria are both terms used to describe how we feel about ourselves, our bodies, and how other people view us:

Gender euphoria

Feeling happy and confident with a positive connection to your gender, this could be because others are perceiving you in a way that feels good, or in a particular situation that makes you feel seen and understood. We all experience gender euphoria in different ways.

Gender dysphoria

A sense of discomfort or distress in your gender, sometimes related to your body. Other people not seeing you as you really are. You don't have to experience gender dysphoria to be trans, and not everyone who experiences dysphoria at some point in their life will go on to transition.

Gender dysphoria can cause a lot of difficult feelings that can be tough to cope with. For some of us, dysphoria is a temporary experience, and for others it is a long-term part of our lives.

How people try and cope with gender dysphoria in a move toward gender euphoria is very personal.

Some things people try might include:

- Spending time with people who respect your gender identity
- Doing things which make you happy and help your mental health
- Reminding yourself of the positive things by making a list of all the things that you like about yourself
- Changing your appearance through hair style, clothes, and makeup. This can be done in subtle ways that feel safe for you
- Exploring gender expression on your own or with supportive family, friends, youth worker or within a youth group
- Exploring different characters when gaming, alone or with friends
- Some people may wish to change their chest appearance by using breast inserts or binding their chest to make it flatter
- Some people may look to change the outward appearance of genitals by packing (looking as if you have a penis) or tucking (reducing the look of having a penis)

Please note: binding and tucking can pose serious health risks, and we recommend speaking to a health professional to ensure you are safe before experimenting.

You can chat to a youth worker about how you are feeling on live chat by going to **www.lgbtyouth.org.uk**

Keeping a record of how you are feeling about your gender and your experiences can be helpful. In the short term, it can help you tidy up your thoughts, and name your feelings. In the long term, it can be a helpful basis for talking to a doctor at the Gender Identity Clinic, if this is a path you decide to take.

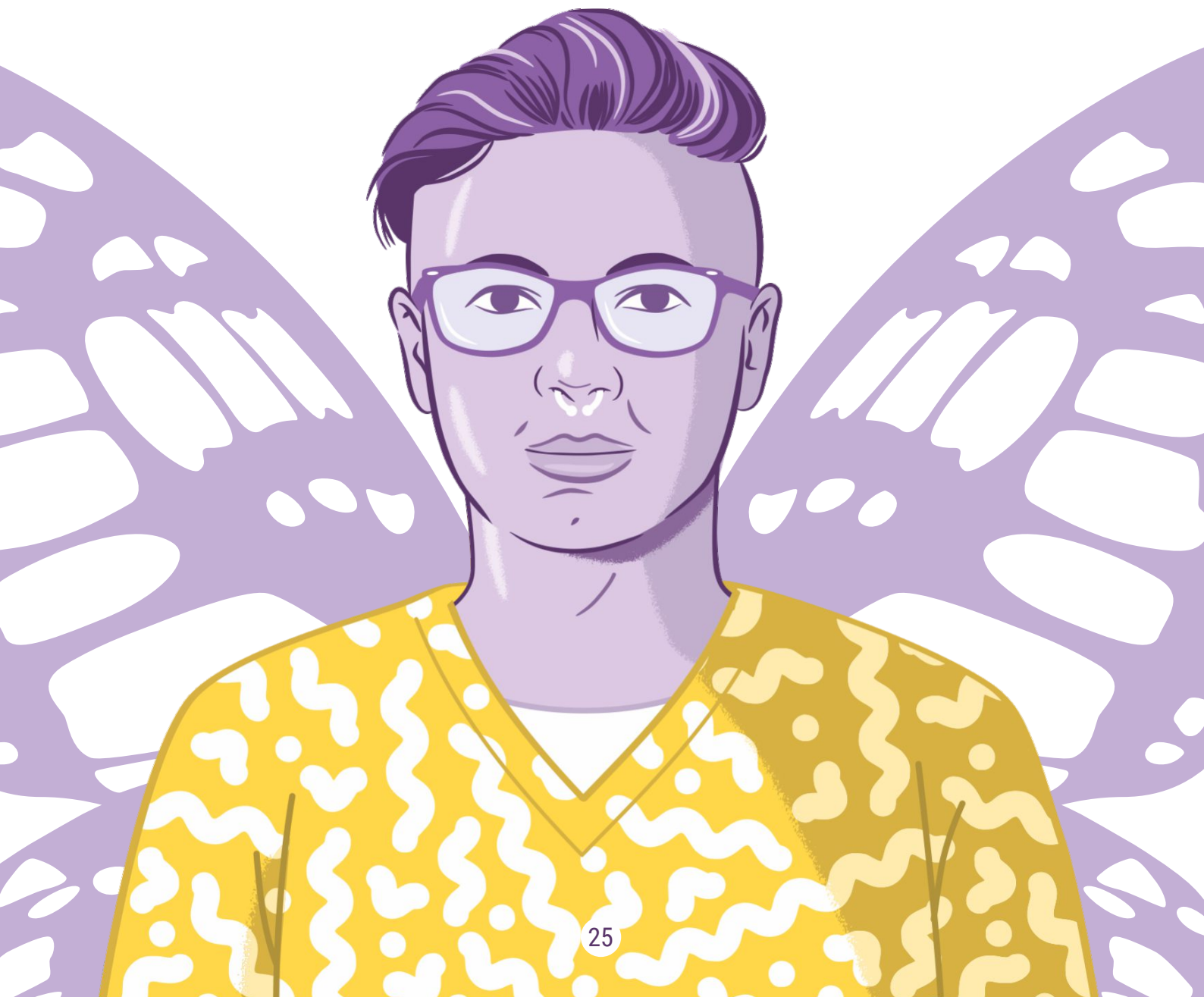
“The thing that kept me going was that I got my first taste of living, my mum took me shopping for girls’ clothes, I got some makeup and hand-me-downs from her, I started buying other stuff online, and above all life started feeling real. No longer was I stuck in a state of derealization and depression, I was let to feel good, to feel me, and as time went by, I was allowed to be me full time, and I have been since.”

– 17, Perthshire



Transitioning

We can transition in different ways which are all equally valid, and your journey is individual to you. Take your time and allow yourself to explore your gender identity before deciding how to move forward. Social transition means making changes that enable you express your gender identity in a way that feels right. This can mean things like changing your name, or the way you present yourself to others. You may need to socially transition before beginning medical transition. Some of us choose to socially transition and not to medically transition.





'LGBTQ Butterflies'

Changing your name and pronouns

Deciding what name and pronoun you want to use can be both exciting and challenging. It is OK to experiment with different options before finding the ones that feel right. Some people prefer to keep their birth name, or a version of their name that is gender neutral (e.g. “Alex”). Some of us like to involve our family and friends in thinking about and choosing our name.

Pronouns are the words that people use to refer to others when they are not using their name. For example, instead of saying “**Jane** went to **Jane's** room” we would say “**She** went to **her** room.”

Some examples of pronouns are:

she/they they/them

he/they she/her he/him

Neopronouns are pronouns that may be unique or not commonly used: some examples are ze/zir (pronounced “zee”/“zeer”), fae/faer or xe/xem (“zee”/“zem”).

Some of us use more than one kind of pronoun, such as she/they or he/xe, and others don't mind which pronouns are used. Some of us might use different pronouns in different situations depending on what feels safe and/or comfortable.

It is helpful to share with other people what name and pronouns you would like used in different circumstances. For example: “in my youth group I use this name and they/them pronouns but if you see me outside group, please use this name and she/her pronouns.” Similarly, it is helpful to check with other people what name and pronouns they would like to be referred to by and in what circumstances.

Some people use the gender-neutral title “Mx” (pronounced “mix”) as an alternative to terms like Mr., Ms., Mrs. For example, “Mx Smith is a great teacher.”

People may take a while to get used to calling you a different name or using different pronouns. If someone makes a mistake it's OK to just remind them of your new name and pronouns. If they deliberately use the wrong name or pronouns to upset you, this is bullying and is not acceptable.

You can change your name informally by asking people to call you by a new name.

If you are under 16 you need parental consent to change your name on school records (SEEMiS) or on other official documents.

If you are over 16 years old, you can change your name on official documents. Some places, such as school, have their own records and you can ask for these to be updated. In other places, such as your bank, you might be asked to provide evidence of your legal name.

Two ways of changing your name so it can be used on official documents:

- A deed poll which is witnessed by two people who are not related to you and are 18+ years old. You don't need to pay for this, but you can pay to have the deed poll “enrolled”, which allows your new name to go on the public record. **www.gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll**
- You can arrange for a Justice of the Peace to witness your statutory declaration by booking an appointment at your local court. A solicitor or notary public can also witness it, but there is a fee for this service

You may also want to update your gender marker (whether an organisation has registered you as a man or a woman) and your title (such as Miss, Ms, Mrs, Mx, Mr). Different organisations have different processes for updating these, but a statutory declaration or deed poll can be used as supporting evidence.

We realise there is a lot of different information about changing names and gender markers. If this is something you are looking at we recommend the Scottish Trans Website as they will have the most up to date information – **www.scottishtrans.org/trans-equality/change-of-name/**. You can also chat to one of our Youth Workers, who will help you to navigate this.

At the time of writing this guide you cannot change your gender marker to non-binary. Let's hope that we can soon.

Changing your name and gender marker on your records can feel daunting. Think about which ones are the most important to you and pace yourself.

Here is a list to help you start thinking about where you might need to change your name formally. It can be helpful to start with ID documents, like your passport and driving licence, as this can then be used as supporting evidence for name changes in other places. Having changed your name and gender marker is also evidence of your social transition which may be helpful.

- Passport
- Driving licence
- The Department of Work and Pensions if you are in receipt of benefits, or your company's payroll if you are employed
- GP and other health professionals
- School, college, and university records
- Electoral register
- Any clubs and classes that you attend
- Bank
- Utilities bills and council tax
- The person or agency you rent from
- Online shopping accounts

When changing your name and gender marker with your GP, remember that there are times that they may need to contact you in relation to your assigned sex at birth such as for smear tests, breast, and prostate screening.

Some places, such as online shopping accounts, will allow you to select a new name on the shipping address. However, for many accounts, including online shopping, your name on the billing address will need to match that of your bank account.

Be mindful of who has access to your online information by reviewing your privacy settings.



Orion, 'Face'

Mental health and self care

Mental health affects how we feel about ourselves and everyone around us and can affect how we behave. Having good mental health doesn't mean being happy all the time, but it does mean being able to cope with challenges or uncertainty and being able to feel and express both positive and negative emotions.

Our mental health can be affected by gender dysphoria, discrimination, and a lack of acceptance from those around us.

By learning to recognise if we feel low, we are more likely to use coping strategies to help.

Some signs that you might not be doing well are:

- Losing interest in activities you normally enjoy
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Being unable to express emotions
- Worrying a lot
- Struggling to sleep
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Self-harm

Some coping strategies might be:

- Spending time with people who care about and accept you – like supportive family members, an LGBTI youth group, or your friends and chosen family
- Finding a creative outlet such as writing, painting, playing music or spending time in nature
- Expressing your feelings by talking to someone you trust or writing them down
- Taking time to do things that distract you or make you feel happy like watching your favourite TV show, playing video games, or making and eating your favourite food

If you are struggling, you can get support from:

- **Childline** – 0800 1111 or use their webchat service on [*www.childline.org.uk*](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- **Samaritans** – 116 123
- **LGBT Youth Scotland's** live chat service is available by going to [*www.lgbtyouth.org.uk*](http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk)

Medical transition

For people looking for advice and information about hormone treatments or medical transition we recommend looking up the two main NHS Gender Identity Services. These will have up to date resources and information on referral routes.

- Sandyford Gender Service
- Chalmers Gender Identity Clinic

Alternatively, you can access a private gender clinic, though this will cost money.

Waiting lists to see a gender specialist can be long. If during the wait you decide you no longer want the appointment you can just let them know. Non-binary and questioning people can also seek treatment from the gender clinic.

It can help to prepare for your GIC appointment by:

- Looking at the clinic's website. They will have helpful resources to help you plan your first visit
- Visiting the clinic before your appointment to help you plan your journey. Some clinics might be able to arrange a tour in advance of your appointment: you can ask about this. Or your appointment may be digital, in which case check in advance if there is a specific browser you need to install
- Writing down any questions you have and/or things that you would like to find out more about
- Asking someone you trust to come with you to your appointment
- Thinking about your fertility wishes
- Speaking to a trusted family member, friend, counsellor or youth worker who can help you to explore questions you may have

Your first appointment will focus on your individual needs and circumstances such as:

- How you understand your gender
- What support you have around you
- Whether you have begun to socially transition

It might be helpful to take in some notes about these topics so that you can remember everything you want to say.

It is important to be as honest as you can be, and this includes your mental health. If you have concerns about your mental health, it may be worth speaking to a trusted family member, counsellor, or youth worker in advance of your meeting to share any fears you may have about doing this. Any decision about your medical treatment will be made together between you and your clinician.

“As a trans person, we can often be expected to be an expert in trans issues, identities, and healthcare options. Cis people tend not to have to think about these things and are less likely to be affected for not being experts in their identity.

But it is okay to not know everything. It’s okay to ask questions, and to look to other people and services for help explaining what we need, and what we’re experiencing.”

– 22, West Lothian



Skye, 'Trans Hearts'



Cat

My rights

Rights are a list of promises to people to keep them safe. They are used to make sure you are treated fairly and looked after properly. If you are under 18 your rights are written down in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, and if you are over 18, they are written down in the **Humans Rights Act**.

When something is called a right, it means that nobody can take it away from you. It is yours and is meant to protect you and help you have a good life.

Rights for children and young people can be called different things, such as **children's rights** or **youth rights**. No matter what they are called, however, they are for both children and young people – the same rights protect you no matter which you are.

Privacy

Your gender identity is private and should not be shared with others without your permission. Your family and friends should respect your wishes to share or not share information. Your school/college/university or workplace should ask you who you want to know about your transition, and how you would like them to find out. You should be involved in this process at every stage. Whatever you tell a teacher, a youth worker or another professional is confidential unless they think you are at risk of harm.

Discrimination

Gender Reassignment is a protected characteristic under the **Equality Act 2010** which means that transgender people are protected from discrimination and unfair treatment. You do not have to be undergoing medical transition to be protected by the **Equality Act**.

Other protected characteristics are; age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Act provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, victimised, or harassed please do speak to someone about it. This may be to a supportive family member or friend, your teacher, tutor or workplace, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, a youth worker or counsellor or it may be appropriate to speak to the Police.



Education

Being bullied at school because of your identity can affect your ability to learn and achieve your goals. Bullying based on your actual or perceived gender identity can include:

- Calling you names or spreading rumours
- Damaging your property
- Outing you to other people without your permission
- Deliberately calling you by the wrong name or pronoun
- Physical attack (which might lead to the police being called)

The **Equality Act** also protects you from harassment. Harassment could mean:

- Deliberately calling you by the wrong name or using the wrong title or pronoun to upset you
- Outing you as trans to classmates or colleagues
- Making transphobic comments publicly

If this happens, you should speak to people you trust such as your family, teacher, or youth worker. Your school should:

- Listen to you and take your concerns seriously
- Talk to you about what you would like to happen
- Consider your right to privacy
- Take steps to address any underlying prejudice in the school

Helpful resources:

- Scottish Government guidance document: **Supporting Transgender Young People in Scottish Schools**
- RespectMe – www.respectme.org.uk

“I had been out to a few close friends for a while but hadn’t been able to come out to my family, and one day in a shop my mother deadnamed me and it made me feel so horrible that I decided to come out. A few weeks later I sent her a message explaining everything and although at the time she didn’t say much she has since been very supportive. I gave my siblings little letters saying my new name and pronouns and contacted the school about changing my name. After about 6 months I was outed to my wider community and was lucky in that they were very supportive, and I was comfortable enough in my own identity to handle this.”

– 18, Dundee



Protection from violence, abuse or neglect

If someone commits a crime against you because of your gender identity, this is a hate crime. A hate crime could be:

- assault
- harassing you and making you feel frightened
- damaging your property

You can report hate crime to Police Scotland by calling 101 or by speaking to a 3rd party reporting centre like LGBT Youth Scotland. Experiencing hate crime can be scary: talk to a trusted adult about how you feel.

“I got support from LGBT Youth when I was experiencing bullying at school, and outside of school. The youth worker helped me to have a voice and I was able to speak to my mum and a teacher. It really helped and I then spoke to the Police who charged two of the boys who were perpetrating the Hate. My life is so much better now. I advise anyone experiencing bullying or hate crime to speak to a youth worker and to speak up. It does really help!”

– 16, Edinburgh



GodonS



Matthew

Conclusion

We hope you have found this guide helpful. We recognise that you may still have lots of questions. We found talking to family and friends, counsellors and youth workers really helpful.

“When I learn that a friend is part of the LGBTQ+ community, however they identity and express themselves, they are still the same person I’ve known and liked but they are also different too, because it’s as if being able to be their authentic self somehow makes them radiate a joy and sense of freedom that’s really infectious and is a lovely thing to witness.”

– 20, ally, cis-woman

Information for family and friends

If you have been given this guide by someone in your life, they may be reaching out to you and want you to understand some of what they may be experiencing. Everyone is different, and there may be other things you can do not listed here to help them, but these are some starting points.

Keep an open mind

Trans and non-binary people express themselves in many different ways; and how they dress or act might not match their gender. You may already know other trans people who just haven't shared this part of their identity with you. Accept what the person in your life tells you about themselves. Listen to them and trust them. Be patient and offer to help them explore their feelings without judgement.

Do some research

There are a lot of resources out there for allies and taking the time to find them for yourself can take a lot of the pressure off the person in your life. It's okay to ask some things directly (like their new name, pronouns, and if there's anything you can do to support them), but they may prefer to guide you to other resources like this one, as explaining things which are personal like this can be tiring or scary.

Respect their names and pronouns

Asking someone what name and pronoun they would like you to use is powerful and respectful. Trying hard to use these has a positive impact. It can take some time to get used to these changes, but it is possible with practise, no matter how long you have known them. If they have already come out to other people, encourage others to use the right name and pronouns even when they are not around. If they are not out to everyone yet, ask who they are out to so you don't out them to others, as this can put them in danger. If you make a mistake, it is okay to just say sorry once, correct yourself, and move on.

Offer support

You don't need to be an expert in trans issues. If they tell you they're struggling with something, it's okay to ask, "What can I do to help?"

Speak up against transphobia

Try to never let anti-trans comments slide, it's important that you tell others it's not acceptable when you hear it. Trans and non-binary people have to correct people daily and doing so can put them in danger. Educating others takes some of the burden off trans people.

“There are various organisations which can help support parents and carers through this initial phase, and they were invaluable to us; Transparentsees and Mermaids in particular. They helped us see a new future that could still be positive and hopeful, and reduced the isolation every parent feels at the start. Nearly 4 years later we have a stronger bond than ever, and we couldn’t be more proud of how far we have come as a family. The most important message I can give is this: your child hasn’t said this on a whim. Take them seriously. Listen to them and trust them. They are braver than you know, and you can learn a lot from them. Metaphorically speaking, this bus is moving forward, you either get on the bus with them, or get left behind. This journey could be amazing, and you don’t want to miss any of it. We haven’t lost our child at all, despite our initial fears. In fact, we couldn’t be more proud.”

– Proud mum, and member of Transparentsees support group



Places to get support



LGBT Youth Scotland

www.lgbtyouth.org.uk: Live Chat days and times are advertised on our website. You can also contact ***info@lgbtyouth.org.uk*** who will put you in touch with a youth worker.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing Helpline

0300 123 2523

helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk

Mermaids

Phone lines open to young people up to age 20 and their families.
0808 801 0400

info@mermaidsuk.org.uk

Text chat on ***www.mermaidsuk.org.uk***

Police Scotland

Call 999 (Emergencies) or 101 (Non-Emergencies)

Text Relay: 18001101 for deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or speech-impaired callers.

More information about hate crime and reporting:

www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/reporting-hate-crime/

Victim Support Scotland

Support services for people who have been victims of and/or witnessed a crime.

0800 160 1985

Text chat on ***www.victimsupport.scot***

You can self-refer here:

www.victimsupport.scot/self-referral/

Citizens Advice Scotland

0800 028 1456

www.cas.org.uk

Childline

Call 0800 1111 or use their webchat service on ***www.childline.org.uk***

Samaritans

Call 116 123

Transparentsees

Group run by and for parents and carers of transgender young people:

transparentsees@gmail.com



Nabeel, 'Who am I, 1 & 2' (2020). Acrylic, pens and oils on canvas. A self-portrait about gender and fitting in. Two incomplete "faces" which represent the confusion and struggle of finding myself and understanding who I am and where I belong. Neither faces gendered, or even human. The background of the portrait resembles an older work "CONFUSION", and the graffiti style writing is layered over the paint, referencing the theme and title of the painting. This also references how I feel out of place in society, from growing up in Glasgow where I felt like an alien – to now where I am still finding my place.



Thank-you

This guide was co-produced with young people from across Scotland who have met lots of times to create something we hope is useful for you.


Special thanks to Frankie, Jade and Dan for being on the Steering Group.

Artwork created by Aidan, Amelia, Cat, Cyle, GodonS, Matthew, Nabeel, Orion and Skye.

Quotes throughout the guide were given by people who wanted to share their experience with you.


Design – www.createpod.com





“I wish I’d known that questioning your identity is something perfectly okay to do, everyone has the right to do it and that it’s alright to find that the conclusion you come to is personal and not part of a set of boxes defined by others.”

– 24, Shetland



Trans, Non-binary and Questioning Coming Out Guide for Young People

lgbtyouth.org.uk

