

# National Ambulance LGBT Network



The Ambulance Service Trans Toolkit - Book 3

## Supporting Trans Staff

A Professional Development Resource

Josh Barraclough



## **The Ambulance Service Trans Toolkit A Professional Development Resource**

**Written by Josh Barraclough**

**Additional contributions from Alistair Gunn**

**Design and layout by Grainne Slavin: [www.platform74.co.uk](http://www.platform74.co.uk)**

**Copyright © National Ambulance LGBT Network, 2020**

**This is Book 3 of a four-part professional development resource. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the permission of the author.**

**First Edition - March 2020**

**The rainbow and trans star of life logos are registered trademarks of the National Ambulance LGBT Network**



**National Ambulance  
LGBT Network**

## Supporting Trans Staff

▶	Experiences of Trans Staff	2
▶	LGBT Staff Survey 2018	3
▶	Recruitment and Retention	4
▶	Interview Guidance	6
▶	Disclosure in Service	7
▶	Transitioning in the Workplace	8
▶	Challenges for Trans Staff	15
▶	Good Practice	17
▶	A Supportive Workplace	20
▶	Transphobia in the Workplace	22
▶	Scenarios	24
▶	The National Ambulance LGBT Network	25
▶	The Trans Star of Life	26
▶	The Rainbow Star of Life	27
▶	Reflective Checklist	28

## Experiences of Trans Staff

**In recent years employers have begun to recognise the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace. Whilst employers are making great strides in terms of lesbian, gay and bisexual equality, they are lagging far behind for transgender staff despite trans people being covered by employment legislation under the Equality Act 2010.**

Recent research by the LGBT network, OUTstanding, looked at the top firms of the FTSE 100 and concluded that a large majority of these firms failed to demonstrate a commitment to LGBT staff in the workplace, and in particular transgender staff. They found that **99%** had highlighted 'diversity' as an important policy but **80%** neglected to mention non-discrimination policies for transgender staff.

In 2018, Stonewall UK produced a report which highlights the issues trans employees face. They found that in the previous year:

- ▶ A third (**33%**) of trans people had been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues because they are LGBT. This included being outed without consent.
- ▶ **34%** of trans employees were excluded by colleagues. **12%** of trans employees had been physically attacked by colleagues or service users.
- ▶ Half of trans and non-binary people (**51%** and **50%** respectively) had hidden or disguised the fact that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination.
- ▶ Almost a third of non-binary people (**31%**) and 1 in 5 trans people (**18%**) did not feel able to wear work attire representing their gender expression.
- ▶ **15%** were still not addressed with their correct name and pronouns at work.
- ▶ Almost 1 in 10 trans people (**9%**) did not feel able to use the toilet they feel most comfortable with.

# ◀ LGBT Staff Survey 2018 ▶

In 2018 the National Ambulance LGBT Network carried out a staff survey amongst LGBT staff. In the survey we asked:

**Have you suffered any negative behaviours from colleagues and patients?**

**45% of overall responses said YES**

**68% of trans responses said YES**

**How 'open' do you feel you can be at work?**

**65% of overall responses said TO EVERYONE**

**42% of trans responses said TO EVERYONE**

*Sample size: 443*

*Sample size: 19*

More information on the staff survey can be found on the National Ambulance LGBT Network website ([www.ambulancelGBT.org](http://www.ambulancelGBT.org)).

**Thought Exercise**

## **A Trans Friend or Colleague**

Think for a moment about a colleague you are good friends with. Now imagine your friend and work colleague told you today that they were trans. How would you feel? How would it change your relationship with them? Do you think it would impact your personal or work relationship with them? What are some of the obstacles it might create for either or both of you? Be honest with your answers.

# ◀ Recruitment and Retention ▶

**Often there is a lack of confidence when it comes to managing trans staff, and managers do not have sufficient knowledge to support them effectively.**

There can also be very little awareness around gender identity and gender dysphoria, meaning many trans staff are not receiving the support they require. Because trans people are thought to be an emerging population, employers may never have needed to consider these issues before.

As society moves forward however, more trans employees feel they can be open and protected in their place of work, meaning ambulance services will legally need to accommodate their needs and support them accordingly.

It is in our interests to secure the best possible applicants in order to offer the best possible service to our patients.

Significant barriers exist for trans people seeking employment but there are various steps we can take to attract and support any potential trans employees:

**Be thought of as a 'good employer'**

Due to experiencing discrimination in the past, the trans community often seeks out employers and services that are trans friendly and have a good reputation in terms of respecting and protecting trans people. Robust policies, procedures, training and awareness mean that trans people will feel comfortable and confident in applying to your service.

**Attract trans applicants**

One benefit to being an inclusive employer is that they attract and keep the best employees. Many of these potential employees could be trans. We should consider how we present our service as a diverse employer in order to attract the widest pool of applicants.

Recently, researchers at Skidmore College (USA) introduced the term Gender Identity Bias (GIB). Their research, which consisted of three experiments, showed that equally-qualified trans and gender diverse applicants were considered equally capable, but were considered not as employable and as such would not be hired. However, their research also showed that exposure to gender diverse people in the workplace decreased GIB.

## **Inclusive recruitment**

Trans people face several subtle hurdles in the hiring process, which often inadvertently place them at a disadvantage. ID verifications or even phone interviews can be situations where trans applicants feel the need to explain their gender identity with strangers. These conversations can distract from the candidate's qualifications and reduce their chances of being hired.

## **Have an inclusive workforce**

Having a diverse workforce means we will have a better understanding of our patients including trans patients. Ambulance staff treat people from all walks of life and at some point are likely to treat a trans person.

Having a workforce which reflects all our patients, including those who are gender variant, means we will have a better understanding of our patients.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are not necessarily the same as trans issues. Although we often see those who identify as LGBT as one group of people, it is important to be aware that the issues faced by trans people are not always the same as those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

## **Make your policies available**

Make your inclusion plans and HR policies accessible, including any trans policy you may have.



**Employers who understand the benefits of a diverse and engaged workforce will recognise the need to respond to the differing needs of all their staff.**

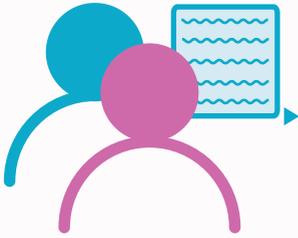
**They understand the importance of affording everyone dignity and of making people feel included so that everyone adds value and can fulfil their potential without fear of discrimination.**



**The Recruitment and Retention of Transgender Staff Guidance for Employers**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>





## Interview Guidance

- ▶ **Make sure managers have training on best practice when dealing with transgender staff.**
- ▶ **Transgender people do not have to disclose their trans status at interview and this should not be asked by those who are recruiting.**
- ▶ **It may be that during an interview a prospective employee may express that they intend to transition. If this is the case, assure them that they will receive support if they are successful at getting the job.**
- ▶ **Documentation should be dealt with sensitively by management and HR. When identity and documentation checks take place this should be done with the utmost discretion.**

## ◀ Disclosure in Service ▶

**You should only identify a person's trans status if you have permission to do so. 'Outing' a person as trans is classed as direct discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 and could result in criminal charges under the Gender Recognition Act 2004.**

The fact that an employee is trans should not be disclosed without the person's permission. If they wish to discuss their trans history, then the lead should come from the trans employee themselves.

Trans staff may feel most comfortable talking about any issues related to their trans history with a designated individual. This could be their line manager, someone from HR or a union rep.

Many trans staff can experience workplace bullying and inappropriate behaviour whether directly or indirectly. All staff should be made aware what is appropriate and what is not.

In many organisations there is a lack of training regarding transgender people in the workplace amongst HR. Increasing training in this area would be beneficial.

A transgender employee does not have to tell an employer they have changed gender either before or if they get the job. Similarly, an applicant who identifies as non-binary doesn't need to tell an employer about their gender identity if they don't want to.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service: Transgender Applicants**

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) offers a confidential checking service for transgender applicants in accordance with the Gender Recognition Act 2004. This is known as the sensitive applications route and is available for all levels of DBS check. The route gives transgender applicants the choice not to have any gender or name information disclosed on their DBS certificate that could reveal their previous identity.

**Sensitive Applications Team: 0151 676 1452 / [sensitive@db.gov.uk](mailto:sensitive@db.gov.uk)**

## ◀ Transitioning in the Workplace ▶

**Due to the general lack of awareness in relation to gender identity issues in the workplace, it can be an extremely difficult step for someone to approach their manager to tell them they are planning to transition.**

Often individuals do not know what the manager's response will be or how an organisation would deal with the news. These concerns can be offset if the trust has an inclusive approach and a culture that values difference. However, the key issues for managers at this early stage are:

- ▶ Listen, show support, discuss levels of confidentiality, agree to seek advice and agree to work in partnership. The process should be led by the individual as much as possible.
- ▶ Take advice from the HR, inclusion and diversity team or LGBT network.
- ▶ Understand that individuals could have a range of experiences or objectives. Some people prefer as few people as possible to know about their transition and decide to discuss this with their manager but require no further action. Others may be planning a medical intervention and others may prefer transition that does not involve any medical intervention or surgery. The key thing is that managers need to adopt an approach that meets the needs of the employee.
- ▶ Agree with the member of staff which steps need to be taken before, during and after their transition. Some people refer to this as developing an agreement, an action plan or a memorandum of understanding.
- ▶ A series of review meetings should be scheduled, at an agreed frequency, as part of any action plan and at any significant stage of the process (fortnightly/monthly).
- ▶ The plan should be updated and developed, not fixed.
- ▶ There should be an agreement about where the plan or any meeting notes are kept and who has access to them.

A trusting and open relationship between the trans employee and the manager and HR is important. This should involve joint problem-solving (such as anticipating and planning for any problems), confidentiality, reliability (doing what you say you are going to do) and empathy (providing support). *The Recruitment and Retention of Transgender Staff Guidance for Employers: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>*

## Practical considerations

**Times and dates:** this includes any changes within the workplace and planning when these will happen. This will be an individual process for each person and should include things such as name change, any changes on documents and short-term role changes.

**Records and information:** records will need to be changed and updated. The trans employee and management should agree what needs to be changed and when this will happen on any records or IT systems. Payroll and National Insurance information may also need to be changed.

**Use of facilities:** trans employees should be able to use the toilets that align with their gender identity. It is not appropriate or legal to ask a trans member of staff to use any other available facilities. If there are male and female facilities, the trans employee will be able to use the toilets of the gender they present as. If they choose to use disabled or unisex facilities instead, that is their choice and should not be requested of them.

**Absence:** an employee who is transitioning will often need to attend medical appointments and may require time off for appointments, operations or procedures. These absences should be recorded but should not count against an employee with regard to any absence management policy.

**Job change:** in some cases a trans employee may feel that a short-term job change would be beneficial for them. This should only be done if both the employee and the Trust agree.

**Requests for anonymity:** some trans people may request for information about them to remain anonymous. If this is the case, then this should be respected by the employer as much as possible.

**Occupational Health:** a referral to an occupational health therapist may be beneficial to any trans employee who is currently or intending to undergo transition. This will then enable us to put any appropriate support in place. However, this should only be done in agreement with the trans employee.

**Dress code:** make sure that trans staff are able to wear clothing or uniform which is appropriate to their gender identity. The employee may be able to lead when and how this change will happen and managers should help to support this as much as possible. Badges should be replaced with the employee's new name and/or title with this change.

**Tailoring support:** every trans person is an individual and may need different levels of support in different areas of their work life and at different stages of their transition and beyond. An occupational health assessment can identify these individual needs for each trans employee and advise which steps are necessary to support everyone in the best way that the Trust can.

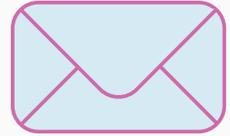
## Informing colleagues

Employers should discuss with the trans employee what they feel is the best way to inform any colleagues, should they want to.

This could take many forms such as in a meeting, letter or electronic communication. Whether the individual wants to be present during any discussions or meetings is up to them. It may be useful to include some general awareness-raising material. It should also include information regarding how to address the trans colleague (name, correct pronouns) and how to appropriately direct any questions someone may have.

The page opposite shows an example letter which could be distributed to all employees within a department if the trans employee feels comfortable to do so.

In larger departments this can be a good way to communicate any changes of pronouns and name so that all staff are made aware how to address the person correctly. This should only be done if the trans employee is in full agreement.



## Dear Colleagues

I want to inform you of a very important change which is happening in my life. It is something which will take some time for us all to get used to, but I am very hopeful everyone here will respect this change.

I have been diagnosed with a condition called gender dysphoria by medical specialists. This means that the biological sex I was assigned at birth does not match my gender identity. Basically, this means I have always identified as (gender identity). I have always felt a displacement between my body and my identity and this can be very uncomfortable for me. I am transgender and I decided a while ago to transition so I can live a comfortable and happy life.

I plan to transition to (name) on the (date). I am very pleased to be able to take this step toward personal wholeness whilst staying in a job I find very rewarding. Some of you may not understand the life changes I'm undertaking.

The LGBT Network may be able to answer your questions ([www. ambulanceLGBT.org](http://www.ambulanceLGBT.org)) or offer you any support if you feel you require it.

I know that some people may not approve of what I'm doing; that is your right. However, I anticipate that everyone will treat me with dignity and respect. Beginning on (date), I ask that you call me by my new name (name) and use the following pronouns (pronouns) when referring to me. I know this will take a little time to get used to and I expect that we will all make mistakes at first. All I ask is that you understand that this is a very vulnerable time for me and we all try to get it right.

Respectfully

**Name**

## Barriers and challenges

### ▶ Lack of knowledge on the part of the employers

Many employers are not up to speed when it comes to trans awareness or the law on gender reassignment discrimination. Increasing training in this area would benefit ambulance Trusts, managers and any trans staff.

### ▶ Practical considerations

Practical considerations such as use of toilet facilities, uniform and name badges should all be agreed and organised within a certain timeframe. Should other staff members have an objection to the above for any reason, they should discuss this with their manager. The discussion should include reference to the law advising that the trans employee can legally use a particular facility.

The Trust's values of care and compassion and the Trust vision of an inclusive workplace.

### ▶ Persistent stigma around trans issues

Harassment may arise due to the stigma associated with trans issues and transphobia. 'Banter' can be viewed as harassment. It is not acceptable to make jokes about trans people or a particular trans person.

Refusal to use the new name and/or pronoun of the trans person or objections about sharing toilet facilities could be the start of behaviours leading to harassment. Unacceptable behaviour should be stopped immediately and reported so that there is no escalation.

### ▶ **Educating the workforce**

Staff who have been informed that a colleague is transitioning may have lots of questions. They can be educated by referring them to their local or national LGBT Network. General awareness material can also be distributed to staff to educate and encourage inclusion.

### ▶ **Trans employees bear the burden of driving the process forward**

Due to the general lack of awareness on trans issues, trans employees often bear the burden of educating staff, driving forward the process of their transition or advising on the correct guidance and support required by trans staff. This can often leave the trans employee lacking confidence in their employer because they seem unsure what they are required to do. Being trans in the workplace can be difficult and has many challenges to overcome. This added burden a trans employee may face could add extra stress and may mean they do not have the sufficient support they require.

### ▶ **Insufficient manager confidence**

A study conducted in 2017 for ACAS has shown that workplaces that train and support their line managers to be comfortable and confident with trans issues are more trans inclusive. Line managers are on the front line dealing with day-to-day issues. This includes being the first port of call for many gender identity matters, including bullying, harassment, emotional support and workplace transitions. For example, if a trans employee is persistently misgendered, a trained manager would understand how harmful this could be and would challenge any unacceptable behaviour in a timely fashion.



## Experience



### SJ's Story

I knew from a very early age that I was different: something was not right. So, like many brave souls before me, I did what seems very common and tried to ignore these feelings, push on and try to be the most macho version of the wrong me that I could possibly be. Of course that only led to unhappiness until I was finally through with pretending, completely exhausted, and I came out (as it were) as the real me....

I joined the ambulance service initially as a 999 call handler and, I have to admit, I was terrified. How would they perceive me? How would others treat me? Would they all gang up and gather the pitch forks and light the torches and come for me in the night? As you can see, these are all pretty ridiculous! From day one I was always treated just like any other woman joining the service, still petrified taking that first emergency call, but not petrified because I am a trans woman, petrified because it's just bloody scary!

I progressed through the ranks from Emergency Medical Advisor (EMA) to EMA Coach, Senior EMA and finally Emergency Dispatcher - not bad huh? Then the call of the open road got to me and I joined LAS as an apprentice Associate Ambulance Practitioner, which I am still working my way through now. After 6 months of constant exams I've been on the road for just under 2 months. The role is amazing, I've still got heaps to learn but my colleagues, management and the service as a whole have all been so supportive (again, not because I am trans, it's just the way they are). We have LGBT support networks, but - I can't stress this enough - I have never felt that I have been treated differently to any other member of staff and that in itself is simply amazing!

**SJ**  
**Associate Ambulance Practitioner**



# ◀ Challenges for Trans Staff ▶

## Public-facing roles

For those who work with the public, an employee's gender transition may be unavoidably visible, especially in the early stages. There may also be trans and non-binary people who do not fit into society's expectations of what it means to be a man or a woman. This could potentially leave those individuals at risk of harassment or abuse from transphobic members of the public.

It is highly important to recognise the impact and risks this could have for any trans public-facing staff member and ensure that the employee is supported, feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. A zero-tolerance approach should be taken when behaviour is unacceptable to any staff member, including any transphobia or harassment of trans employees.

Some staff may elect to move to another role during transition, however, they cannot be required to do so. Similarly, the way someone looks and the negative reactions this might elicit from certain members of the public must not be a barrier to recruitment for a public-facing role. In these circumstances it is important that managers support the member of staff in a

positive manner and constantly listen to how they feel about things and how they feel they are coping. Co-workers may benefit from advice on how to contribute too.

## Call-takers

For some trans people, phone calls can be daunting. Problems often arise when the pitch of the voice of the trans person and their gender identity appear not to match for the caller who cannot see them. Often this leads to misgendering and can be a source of dysphoria. This could be particularly difficult for any trans or non-binary call takers.

Whilst speaking to callers and patients, it is likely, particularly for trans-women, non-binary people and those just starting their transition process, that they will be misgendered. Some call takers in the ambulance service take many calls every shift and this could potentially mean that misgendering may happen often, even during a single shift.

Trans people are often particularly sensitive to being misgendered when using the telephone and it can cause a great amount of gender dysphoria.

It is important that managers are aware of the impact and distress this could cause a trans employee and that sufficient training and measures are put in place to support them.

### **Psychological difficulties**

The process of transition can be particularly stressful and for many trans people it may take years for them to transition to a stage at which they feel most comfortable.

If undergoing medical transition, hormonal changes and possible

surgery can also be stressful. Due to transphobia, stigma and lack of awareness of trans issues, trans employees may face psychological difficulties or mental health problems.

It is important that managers are aware of this, listen to how any trans employees are feeling and understand how they are coping.

Julie Dennis, Acas Head of Equality has previously advised:



**Nine out of ten trans people have suffered from depression so employers should ensure that managers are properly trained to support them.**



## ◀ Good Practice ▶

**In 2018, Stonewall released a list of the most trans-inclusive employers in the UK for the first time in its history. When we look at these employers, we can see that not only do they legally meet the rights and requirements of their trans employees, but they are going above and beyond to be inclusive to everyone, including trans and non-binary staff.**

Whilst we are already making great strides to be more inclusive to our trans employees, here are some areas of good practice we already have and how these could be implemented further within the ambulance service.

### **Guidance for call takers**

The National Ambulance LGBT Network (<https://www.ambulancelgbt.org>) has guidance developed by the Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust for call takers which has been distributed to many staff to advise employees how to best manage calls from trans patients.

### **Apply principles of the z-card to our own staff**

The 'Supporting Trans People' z-card produced by the National

Ambulance LGBT Network offers guidance for treating trans patients.

However, ensuring we also apply the same principles to our own staff shows that we have the same consideration for our trans staff as we do our patients.

### **Awareness raising – let's get people talking about it!**

Raising awareness within our own trust by celebrating Trans Day of Visibility, Trans Pride or recognising Transgender Day of Remembrance within our offices, call centres and ambulance stations. This will help to show our support of trans rights throughout our service and make any gender-variant staff feel supported and included.

### **Pronouns on email signatures**

Whether you are trans or not, including the correct pronouns to use when addressing you shows you understand the importance of pronouns, especially for trans and non-binary people. It also encourages the idea that pronouns should never be assumed.

### **Transgender champions/ role models**

Whilst many ambulance services have LGB champions or role models very few have any trans champions.

As discussed previously, trans needs are often different from lesbian, gay or bisexual people's needs.

Having trans role models would show support to any trans colleagues and these individuals could help raise awareness internally and publicly by organising activities and celebrations for Trans Pride and Trans Day of Visibility.

Not all trans staff may want to get involved, and may prefer their trans history to remain confidential, however any trans employees who are eager to get involved should be encouraged to do so.

### **Recognise and include non-binary identities**

Whilst we are striving forward with transgender awareness within our service, non-binary people and the issues they face are often forgotten about.

Whilst there is often a lack of understanding and awareness of general trans issues, there is even less for non-binary people. Including non-binary people in our policies and in any trans awareness and education shows that we recognise them as valid members of staff who are included and supported as part of the trans community.

### **Clear guideline or procedures for people who are transitioning**

Transitioning is a process that encompasses all areas of a person's life and can cause numerous anxieties at work. In fact repercussions at work can be a reason why they may delay transition or choose not to.

The most inclusive employers have policies or procedures that enable people to transition whilst working in a way which is as stress-free as possible. These employers emphasise that every transition is unique and that trans people will lead with what they feel is right for them. A majority of Ambulance Trusts already have policies in place for those intending to transition in the workplace.

### **Strive to have inclusive facilities**

Trans people are often denied access to single-sex facilities such as toilets and changing rooms. This is particularly common for trans women, based on discrimination and transphobia surrounding trans women.

Employers committed to trans inclusion support individuals to use the facilities that match their gender. They also strive to implement inclusive facilities, such as gender-neutral toilets and private changing areas. These facilities are important

for all trans people but particularly non-binary people who may not feel comfortable in either male or female toilets. We should as far as possible strive to have inclusive and gender-neutral facilities wherever possible to support any gender variant staff, now and in the future.

### **Bullying and harassment policies that include zero tolerance toward transphobia**

Transphobia often takes on different forms to homophobia and biphobia. It can range from direct discrimination, including verbal and physical abuse, to purposefully using incorrect gender pronouns and indirect forms of discrimination.

We must ensure we have a bully and harassment policy that communicates a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of transphobia.

### **Publicly demonstrate our support for trans equality**

Whether celebrating Trans Day of Visibility, Trans Pride or recognising Transgender Day of Remembrance, we should advocate for trans equality through activities in work, social media channels and public engagement.

This will help to make any trans employees feel understood, supported and included within the ambulance service.

## **Trans Day of Visibility**

Trans Day of Visibility (TDOV) is an annual international day of celebration held on 31 March.

It is dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments and victories of transgender and gender non-conforming people, while raising awareness of the discrimination and transphobia still faced by trans people around the world.

In the past, visibility for those who identify as trans was greatly lacking behind other human right movements.

Thankfully, in recent years there has been an increase in trans awareness and visibility across the globe. However, trans people still face many challenges in society such as, discrimination, transphobia and violence.

By honouring TDOV we can highlight the trans community and their achievements whilst educating each other and raising awareness of the inequalities still faced by many trans people around the world.

# ◀ A Supportive Workplace ▶

## Feeling of belonging

Trans people can often feel different, alone or that no one understands them. This can also be true in the workplace. Creating an environment where trans people can feel safe and accepted by everyone will ensure they feel understood and supported. We can achieve this by fostering a sense of teamwork, increasing education on trans issues, celebrating our differences and also our similarities.

## Mentoring

Mentoring can be an option that is beneficial to trans staff. If there are other trans employees available who have been through transition in the workplace, and both parties are willing to engage, it could provide a vital pillar of support for any trans or questioning employees.

## Recognise that gender dysphoria can be distressing

It can be very difficult to understand what gender dysphoria feels like, but for many trans people it's very distressing to live with. When trans people experience this in the workplace it can be very hard to continue with daily duties as usual. Sometimes colleagues or managers can fail to understand and appreciate how difficult daily life is and might unintentionally invalidate a trans person's struggle.

▼▼  
**When I transitioned to male at work, I was extremely nervous, but I was overwhelmed with how much support I received. People didn't just accept I was transgender, it was celebrated. I received messages of encouragement from colleagues working at another site and everyone made clear their support for me. I felt safe and included. I knew if anyone said anything transphobic my colleagues would be first to stand up for me or report it. It became one of the few places I felt a sense of belonging and acceptance.**  
▼▼

It's important to recognise that gender dysphoria is different for everyone who experiences it, but for some it is highly distressing. If something occurs which makes a trans employee feel this way, try to validate how they feel and be empathetic, supporting them as best you can. If a trans person tells you something work is causing feelings of gender dysphoria, try to accommodate any measures that would help alleviate this.

## Support physical changes

Transitioning can take a long time; it's often years until a trans person feels happy and comfortable.

The physical changes a person may undertake during this process can affect daily life. Hormonal changes take place if a person begins hormone replacement therapy which can have physical symptoms. Binding or other physical practices a transgender person undertakes may cause pain, overheating or other issues. Physical changes may come from surgery depending on the outcome of success. Trans people may require additional support in these areas.

### Support psychological changes

Transgender people can undergo many psychological challenges which are all dependent upon the individual and their circumstances. These can include:

- ▶ Impact on family relationships
- ▶ Impact of relationships at work and with friends
- ▶ Feelings of gender dysphoria and the distress it causes
- ▶ Fears about finding a partner
- ▶ Fears about violence and prejudice
- ▶ Feelings about having to experience surgeries, hormones etc
- ▶ Frustration of having to change or explain legal documents
- ▶ Disappointment that transitioning did not solve all problems

- ▶ Level of satisfaction with appearance
- ▶ Level of satisfaction with any surgeries

It is important to try and validate a trans person if they are having any difficulties psychologically. Recognise that it can be a challenging time, and that work may become more challenging as a result. Try to accommodate any measures which can assist them and this will lead to better mental wellbeing at work.

### Recognise that trans people are individuals

There are some areas trans people may need additional support in, however each trans person is an individual. Some may need a lot whilst others may need very little or no support. It is best not to assume what is best for the employee in terms of supporting their needs and instead create open, trusting dialogue to create a workplace where the staff member feels supported but not singled out. If in doubt, ask the person how they are and whether they need any support with anything. Some people may prefer to keep their trans history private and may not want to discuss it: that is within their right. Others may want more in depth support. If in doubt, an occupational health assessment can always help to pinpoint areas where support may be appropriate.

# ◀ Transphobia in the Workplace ▶

**Transphobia is fear, hatred of or discomfort with people whose gender identity or gender expression does not conform to cultural norms.**

It can include a range of negative actions, attitudes and feelings towards transgender people. Whether intentional or not, it can have severe consequences for the target. Sometimes people don't realise that what they are doing is transphobic because they don't recognise their own prejudice. This can happen even in the most inclusive workplaces.

**Is that a girl or a boy? A man or a woman?**

There are no set rules for what a man or woman should look like. If that were true everyone would look the same. Not all men are masculine nor are all women feminine. A trans person is exactly who they feel they are - not respecting that is transphobic.

**Referring to someone as 'it', 'he-she' or using other slurs**

This is extremely offensive and does not show respect for the person. If you are not sure which pronouns to use it is always best to ask politely.

**I don't want them using the male/female toilets at work**

Trans people have the right to use whichever toilet matches their gender identity and whichever toilet they feel most comfortable with. It is transphobic to demand that they use different facilities.

**Using the wrong name and/or pronouns on purpose**

It can take a little while for people to use the right pronouns, especially if they once used different pronouns. However, if someone is doing this on purpose or refuses to use the correct pronouns then this would be transphobic.

**What are you really? Have you had surgery? How do you have sex? What is your real/old name?**

Asking these kinds of questions is invasive and offensive. You wouldn't ask a colleague who isn't transgender these things, so it is transphobic to ask trans colleagues.

**Asking others if someone is transgender or telling others someone is trans**

A trans person is exactly who they tell you they are and should be treated as such. It is up to the individual whether they want to disclose their trans status to another employee and this should not be asked or discussed with others.



## Experience



### Cole's Story

I have worked for West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (WMAS) for almost four years now. I started my transition when I was part-way through my paramedic course. I decided the best way for me to approach the situation was to complete my first training block at university and inform my managers, so that when I came back to operational duties there was sufficient time between informing staff, changing my personal details and giving my colleagues chance to adapt as I had already worked many shifts with them before coming out as transgender.

This was a very nerve-racking and anxious time for me as I was aware that no-one had transitioned within the service prior to me. However, the support I received was outstanding. I had plenty of meetings with my managers and the Trust's LGBT network in regards to what extra support I needed and how I wanted to approach telling my colleagues who had also been very supportive and caring.

I am very open about being transgender, especially at work, as I find this has helped many of my colleagues adapt to the situation, and has allowed me to educate them. When I started hormones many colleagues made positive comments and this boosted my confidence and helped me feel more comfortable talking about trans-related things. I had top surgery 1 year ago and again the support from the service was great. They stayed in regular contact with me to see how the surgery had gone and made sure I was fully recovered before returning to operational duties.

I am now two years post coming out as transgender and support is still there for me if I need it. I'm the most confident I have ever been and am able to talk openly about my transition with staff due to them being so accepting right from the start of my transition.

**Cole - Trans Man  
Paramedic, WMAS**



## ◀ Scenarios ▶

**Below are some scenarios. Imagine the following situations and explain what the most appropriate action would be. Try to put into practice some of things we have learnt during this learning resource.**

### **Scenario One**

Greg is a paramedic who recently transitioned to male. Whilst attending a patient on-scene some passers by use transphobic slurs towards him. Greg is very upset but seems to shrug it off and continues with his shift. His line manager Amir is concerned about the transphobia Greg has been victim to.

**What do you think would be the best course of action for Amir to take? What would be inappropriate to do in this instance?**

### **Scenario Two**

Harriet is a manager in a large department within the ambulance service. In the canteen one day she hears two employees discussing whether a new employee, Hillary, is a trans woman or not.

**In this instance what would be appropriate action for Harriet to take? Is it appropriate for two members of staff to be discussing and querying whether someone is trans or not?**

### **Scenario Three**

John is applying for a role within the ambulance service. He needs to have ID and qualification checks done. He rings the recruitment team and explains that he was assigned female at birth, but he wishes to keep this information confidential. He also explains he is worried about any DBS checks and that it may reveal his birth name.

**What could you do in this instance to make John feel more at ease? What information could you give him regarding his DBS checks? How could you help John keep this sensitive information confidential?**

# ◀ The National Ambulance LGBT Network ▶



**The National Ambulance LGBT Network was created in August 2015.**

The aim was to bring together all local NHS Ambulance Service LGBT staff networks, provide support and promote equality across the UK.

The network is committed to supporting trans patients and colleagues by educating our staff, so they feel more confident when treating trans patients and supporting trans colleagues by:

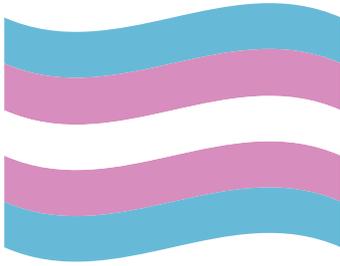
- ▶ Offering support from informed people so that employees can do their job effectively.
- ▶ Making links with local trans support groups.
- ▶ Attending events and telling trans communities we care about them.
- ▶ Developing resources to educate our staff on trans issues and raise awareness.
- ▶ Recognising annual events such as Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance.

LGBT staff networks can significantly improve the inclusion of trans employees.

The National Ambulance LGBT Network has produced a range of resources to support working with trans people. Find out more at:

[www.ambulanceLGBT.org](http://www.ambulanceLGBT.org)

## ◀ The Trans Star of Life ▶



### What is the Trans Star of Life?

The trans star of life is a fusion of the internationally-recognised symbol of pre-hospital emergency care and the transgender pride flag: the most recognisable flag representing the trans community.

It was created in 2017 by the National Ambulance LGBT Network and pin badges of this emblem are worn by ambulance staff all over the UK.

### Why is it important?

Trans people face many inequalities. Our aim is to raise awareness and let trans people know we support them. It is likely that many trans patients may see the pin badge on a member of a staff and feel much more comfortable and safer in their care.

Another reason is to make sure our trans colleagues feel understood and supported within our organisations, alongside everyone else. The trans star of life is important to raise awareness and ensure policies and guidance are in place to support all transgender employees.

## ◀ The Rainbow Star of Life ▶



### What is the Rainbow Star of Life?

The rainbow star of life was created in 2011 by staff from the LGBT Network from Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust. In 2016 it was adopted by the National Ambulance LGBT Network.

The rainbow star of life symbol is a fusion of the internationally recognised symbol of pre-hospital emergency care and the rainbow flag representing the LGBT community.

### Why not just the Rainbow Star of Life?

It is important to recognise that the issues faced by members of society who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) are different to those who identify as trans (T).

There are still many inequalities that trans people face, including health inequalities which differ from those who identify as LGB. To show that we recognise these challenges and support our trans colleagues and patients we can wear the trans star of life pin badge.



## Reflective Checklist

Use this checklist to consider the issues discussed in this resource. Assess how confident you feel in applying these points when providing support to trans colleagues, and reflect on any areas that may require some improvement.

- ▶ **I am aware that the experiences of trans people in the workplace and the inequalities they face.**
- ▶ **I have reflected honestly on how I might feel if a colleague told me they were trans and how that might affect our relationship.**
- ▶ **I have gained knowledge on the recruitment and retention of trans employees.**
- ▶ **I am more aware of how to support potential and current trans employees with regard to confidentiality and disclosure.**
- ▶ **I feel able to support a trans colleague who is currently, or intending to, transition within the workplace.**

- ▶ I am aware of some of the challenges and barriers faced by trans people and those transitioning in the workplace.
- ▶ I am more aware of some of the specific challenges faced by trans employees in the ambulance service.
- ▶ I know what transphobia is and would recognise unacceptable behaviours in the workplace.
- ▶ I understand the meaning of the rainbow and trans star of life symbols and why they are important.
- ▶ I know the National Ambulance LGBT Network is a source of support and offers a range of resources to help trans employees.

For more information about the  
National Ambulance LGBT Network visit:

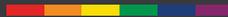
[www.ambulanceLGBT.org](http://www.ambulanceLGBT.org)



We are delighted to be partnering with CPDme to bring  
you high quality professional development resources:

[www.cpdme.com/NALGBT](http://www.cpdme.com/NALGBT)

CPDme<sup>®</sup>  
Development for Life



**National Ambulance  
LGBT Network**

