



Gender Identity &

Expression –

A Guide to Terminology

**Introduction**

This guide is designed to be an introduction to the terms widely in use to describe gender identity and gender expression. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and everyone will have terms they prefer to use.

You should always check with the person you are speaking to which terms they prefer to use, and which best fit their definition of who they are.

If you make a mistake – like using the wrong name or pronoun – it’s important to acknowledge it. The best thing to do is apologise to the person, correct yourself and move on.

Gender identity is also a dynamic area in which understanding, and language evolves and develops as our awareness grows. It is intended that the below explanation of some of the more common terms will help you begin to feel more confident in understanding and exploring gender identity issues with people where appropriate.

**Terms**

**Cisgender**

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Deadnaming**

When someone refers to a transgender or non-binary person by a name they used before transitioning. This is often the name they were given at birth, also called a deadname. Deadnaming can be intentional or unintentional but both instances can be harmful to the person. Therefore, it is important to respect a person’s chosen name and pronouns.

**Gender**

Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Dysphoria**

Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn’t feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Expression**

How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender.

**Gender Identity**

A person’s internal, deeply held sense of their own gender. For many people, their gender identity corresponds to the sex they were registered at birth. For others, it does not. Some people see gender identity as more of a spectrum, rather than a binary.

**Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)**

This enables trans people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and you currently have to be over 18 to apply. The legal basis for creating a Gender Recognition Certificate is found in the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

**Intersex**

A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female.

**LGBTQ+**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer. The ‘plus’ is often used to denote the many other sexual and gender identities that people may have.

**Non-Binary**

A term used by people who identify their gender as something other than male or female. Their gender identity can be stable or fluid over time.

**Pronoun**

Words we use to refer to a person, e.g. she/her, he/him, they/them, etc.

**Queer**

A term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

**Sex**

Assigned to a person based on primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions.

**Transgender (Trans)**

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transgender Man**

A term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man.

**Transgender Woman**

A term used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman.

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For further information and to view a broader list of terminology please visit the link below.

[Stonewall list of LGBTQ+ terms](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/list-lgbtq-terms)

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