

Supporting transgender individuals in the workplace.

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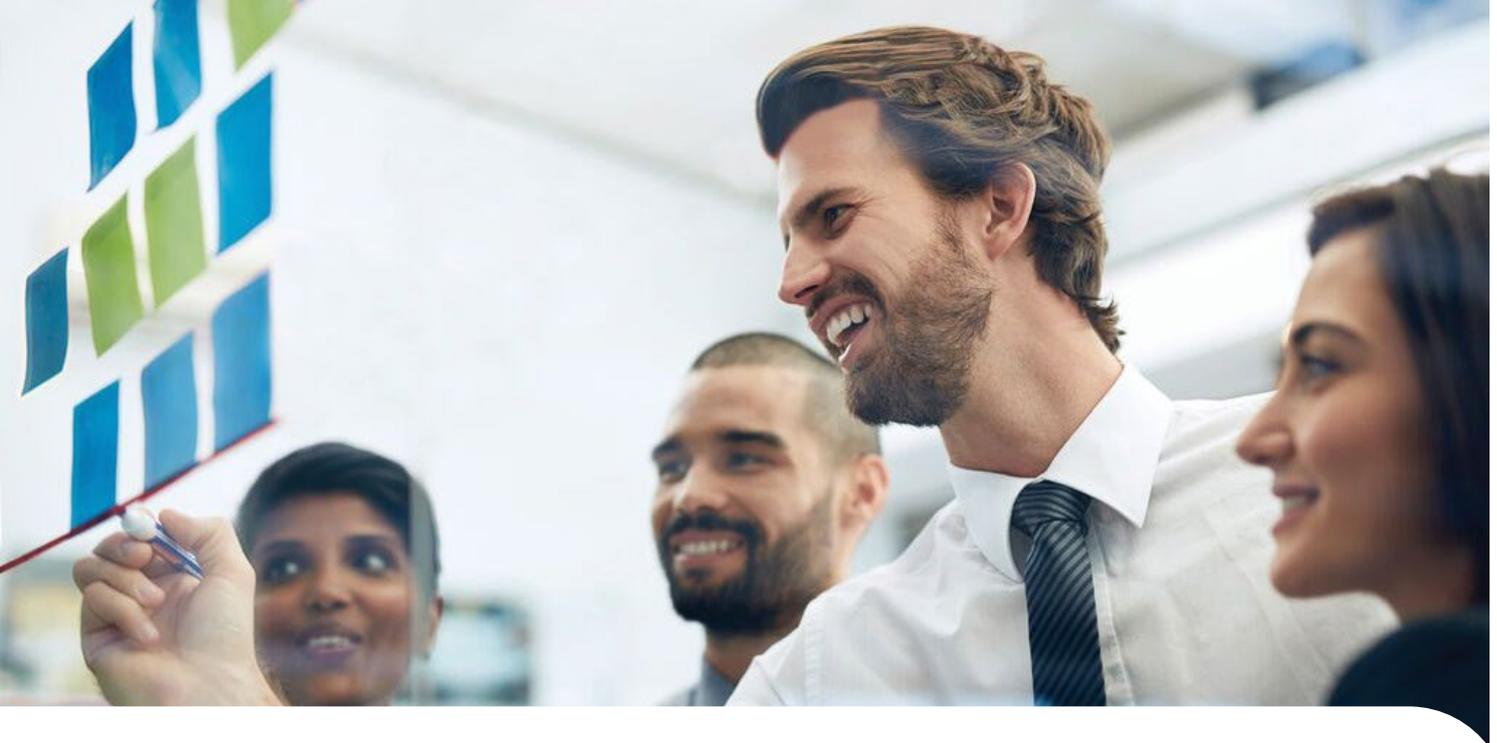
Introduction.

The workforce is made up of a diverse group of individuals. If you're a people manager, knowing how best to support your team and their individual needs can be challenging. In this article we explain how you can support transgender individuals in your workplace.



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What does transgender mean?

If someone is transgender (trans), it means that the gender they identify with doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, an individual who was assigned male at birth might have a gender identity of a girl or woman. Or an individual assigned female might identify as a boy or man.

However, it's important to understand that a person might not identify as a man or a woman. They might identify as having no gender ('agender'). Or they might be non-binary, which means they don't identify as strictly male or female. Somebody's gender identity might stay the same, but it could also change over time ('genderfluid').

Non-binary

Gender identity may fall between the binary model, or outside of it completely.



Mental health

Trans individuals can face discrimination. This can be extremely challenging and damaging to their mental health. For example, it may lead to anxiety, depression, self-harm, and even suicide. So it's important that these individuals get the help and support they need.

As an employer, you can make a real difference by providing an inclusive and comfortable environment. Your employees should feel able to embrace their gender identity in whatever way they wish, while feeling safe and supported to do so.

What you can do to help

1 Understand

If you're a people manager, make it your mission to understand more about the trans community. Every individual's experience is different, and they'll have different preferences about the support they'd like. But by educating yourself, you put yourself in a better position to listen to and support your employees. Organisations like the [Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(GIRES\)](#) are great places to find information and resources.

2 Pronouns, pronouns, pronouns

You use pronouns when referring to someone without using their name. For example, you might be used to describing people as he or she. But some individuals use gender-neutral pronouns, such as they/them.

Ask yourself, "How does this individual want me to refer to them?" For example, if you're asked, "Where's Ashley?" how will you respond – *he's* gone for lunch, *she's* in a meeting, *they* are on a conference call? Get into the habit of asking someone's pronouns and then make sure you put them into practice.

If you're unsure how to go about this, try introducing your pronouns first. For example, "Hi I'm Yasmeen, my pronouns are she/her/hers. What are yours?"



3 Don't make assumptions

As well as using the correct pronouns, it's also important that you don't assume someone's gender identity based on their gender expression – these are two different things. Gender identity is an individual's innate sense of their gender, be it boy/man, girl/woman, or something different. Gender expression is how someone presents their gender, for example through the clothes they wear, their hairstyle, or mannerisms. It's also important to understand that not every transgender individual will have gender affirmation surgery or hormone therapy. Be aware and understanding of this. Don't assume, and make sure you listen.

4 Protect personal data

When you apply for a job, you're asked to supply lots of information, from identity documents to your national insurance number and beyond. And it doesn't stop there. When in post, further information may be collected, such as records of maternity leave.

For trans employees, this information is extremely sensitive and can risk outing them against their will if it's not used and stored correctly. Outing someone means you publicly reveal their sexuality or gender identity without their consent. As a manager, it's important to work with your HR department to ensure this information is secure.

Tip

Remember to check your website for any information too. An outdated Meet the Team page or photo of an individual may cause distress, so be sensitive and thorough with your checks.



5 Culture is key

A culture that values inclusion and diversity creates a safe and welcoming environment for employees, but also enables businesses to recruit and retain the best talent. So make sure the culture you foster is an inclusive one.

Think about your policies and how you put these into practice. For example, is your company's dress code inclusive? Does your organisation have an equality, diversity, and inclusion policy and are you familiar with it? Does your workplace have communities or support groups you could signpost trans employees to?

You may also need to support your wider team to help them understand their colleagues better and act with kindness and sensitivity. Diversity and inclusion training may help, especially if it addresses gender identity and discrimination.

Useful resources

[The Clare Project](#)

The Clare Project is a trans support and social group. They also offer training to raise awareness and understanding of gender identity to help organisations become more inclusive.

[Transgender inclusion in the workplace: A toolkit for employers](#)

This is an American resource created by The Human Rights Campaign, but it contains useful information, most of which can be applied in the UK.

[Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(GIRES\)](#)

GIRES is a UK-based organisation that provides support and information about the wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people.

Sources

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