

A-Z of Key Trans Terminology in use in Scotland

Source: Stonewall Scotland & the Scottish Transgender Alliance

Acquired Gender

This is a term used in the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to mean the gender role that a person has transitioned to live their life in and which matches their self-perceived gender identity. The acquired gender of a male-to-female trans woman is therefore female and the acquired gender of a female-to-male trans man is therefore male.

Androgyne People or Polygender People

These are terms used to describe people who find they do not feel comfortable thinking of themselves as simply either men or women. Instead they feel that their gender identity is more complicated to describe and non-binary. Some may identify their gender as being a form of combination between a man and a woman, or alternatively as being neither. Like transsexual people, some androgyne people and polygender people can experience gender dysphoria and may sometimes at least partially transition socially and may take hormones or occasionally have some surgery done.

Biological Sex

A person's biological sex includes all aspects of their gender-related biological structure: not only their genitals but also their internal reproductive system, their chromosomes and their secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, voice, and body shape. Most people's biological sex will be clearly and consistently female or male. However, a small but significant number of people have bodies which are not completely male or female. People born with these kinds of physical variations are referred to as intersex people. A person may also have a biological sex which is not completely clearly male or female if they have undergone some hormonal or surgical intervention as part of a process of gender reassignment.

Cross-dressing People

This is a term used to describe people who dress, either occasionally or more regularly, in clothes associated with the opposite gender, as defined by socially accepted norms. Cross-dressing people are generally happy with the gender they were labelled at birth and do not want to permanently alter the physical characteristics of their bodies or change their legal gender. They may dress as the opposite gender for emotional satisfaction, erotic pleasure, or just because they feel more comfortable doing so. Cross-dressing men are sometimes referred to as transvestite men, however this is becoming an increasingly out-dated term and may cause offence.

Female-to-male (FTM) transsexual man (trans man)

This is someone who was labelled female at birth but has a male gender identity and therefore is currently seeking to transition, or has already transitioned, to live permanently as a man.

Gender Dysphoria

This is a recognised medical condition for which gender reassignment treatment is available on the National Health Service in Scotland. Gender Dysphoria is distress,

unhappiness and discomfort experienced by someone about their biological sex not fully matching their gender identity. Transsexual people usually experience intense gender dysphoria which is significantly reduced by transitioning to live as their self-identified gender, perhaps taking hormones and/or getting surgery to make their physical bodies match their gender identity better. Other types of transgender people may also experience various degrees of gender dysphoria, especially when unable to fully express their gender identity.

Gender Expression

This is an individual's external gender-related appearance (including clothing) and behaviour (including interests and mannerisms). A person may have masculine, feminine or androgynous aspects of their appearance or behaviour.

Gender Identity

This is an individual's internal self-perception of their own gender. A person may identify as a man, as a woman or as androgyne/polygender.

Intersex People

This is a term used to describe people born with external genitals, internal reproductive systems or chromosomes that are in-between what is considered clearly male or female. There are many different intersex conditions. When an intersex baby has ambiguous genitals, medical staff often make an educated guess about which gender to assign to the baby. Sometimes the person's gender identity matches their assigned gender, but sometimes the guess made by the medical staff turns out not to match the intersex person's own gender identity. In many cases, an intersex person will simply self-identify as a man or as a woman. However, in some cases, an intersex person may self-identify as being neither a man nor a woman.

LGBT

This is the acronym most commonly used in Scotland to talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. LGBT equality work addresses the two equality strands of sexual orientation and gender identity together due to shared experiences of discrimination and harassment, shared social 'scene' venues and community groups, and also similar issues around decisions on whether or not to 'come out' about their identity to colleagues, family and friends. However, transgender people can be lesbian, gay, bisexual or straight – just like anyone else.

Male-to-female (MTF) transsexual woman (trans woman)

This is someone who was labelled male at birth but has a female gender identity and therefore is currently seeking to transition, or has already transitioned, to live permanently as a woman.

Transgender People, Trans People or Gender Variant People

These are umbrella terms used to describe a whole range of people whose gender identity or gender expression differ in some way from the gender assumptions made about them when they were born.

Transsexual People

This is a term used to describe people who consistently self-identify as the opposite gender from the gender they were labelled at birth based on their physical body.

Depending on the range of options and information available to them during their life, most transsexual people try to find a way to transition to live fully in the gender that they selfidentify as. Transitioning is also known as gender reassignment. Many, but not all, transsexual people take hormones and some also have surgery to make their physical bodies match their gender identity better.