



## FACTSHEET

### INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE WORKING WITH GENDER VARIANT AND TRANSGENDER YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS

#### 1) INFORMATION

This factsheet is for professional people who are supporting a young person who may be gender variant, questioning their gender, or may identify as being transgender. If you cannot see the information you seek, please contact us at [info@mermaidsuk.org.uk](mailto:info@mermaidsuk.org.uk).

Gender variance and transgender issues have existed long before the media started to highlight them. They may seem to be on the increase, but this is most likely due to the fact that people are more aware of them, and there is more information available on the internet. These issues can be difficult to understand, but there is a lot of information now available, and also protection within the law. Treatment is available through the NHS. Mermaids can offer ongoing support and information.

Children are known to be aware of their gender from the age of 4 or 5, others even before that age may reach instinctively for the toys of the opposite gender. Sometimes someone who is gender variant may not have been aware of their issues from an early age. They may feel that they do not quite fit in with their peers, but may not yet realise why, until some years later.

These children often do find it hard to be accepted by their peers, so they can sometimes be quite lonely, and often are the victim of bullying. As a result of this, and their worries about their gender, schoolwork can also suffer. Some have complex needs that also need to be addressed, parallel to the gender issue.

Some young people do naturally lose their gender variance as they reach puberty, but even if it is a phase, it can be a painful one for which they may need support and acceptance. Others decide in their teens to not go forward for hormones and surgery, and choose to stay in their birth gender, but even if they do decide to transition, they can still lead a full and rewarding life. Trans people can now adopt or foster, and after completing the required criteria can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (if over 18), which makes their acquired gender

legal in all respects - once they have this they can apply for a new birth certificate, which is the only document that they cannot change prior to getting a GRC.

These online resources can be very useful. The first is to be used by all the professionals who care for young people, as well as by their families. The second is aimed directly at GPs:

<https://www.gires.org.uk/caring-for-gender-nonconforming-young-people>

[www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/gendervariance](http://www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/gendervariance) (from early 2015)

There is very good information on this NHS site, which is excellent [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Gender-dysphoria](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Gender-dysphoria) - there is a video of a transman (FTM) if you click on 'Real Stories).

**Parents/Families:** Gender issues are often hard for parents to understand, as their child might not have shown any indication of their feelings when they were younger. Their child may have learned at a young age not to behave outside the norms for their birth gender to avoid issues such as gentle chiding, ridicule or other forms of bullying. Lots of parents are supportive and accepting, and only want to do what's best for their child. But even so it can be difficult for them. Parents worry about a lot of things to do with trans issues: their child's safety, the difficulty of seeing their child change gender (grief is common, even though their child isn't dying. This may be due to the loss of a familiar relationship, and all that it had meant for the future), learning to cope with a new name etc. They may worry about what other people will think, will their child still do well at school, and will they be able to find work, a career, relationships, marriage, have children? Sometimes the whole thing is so hard to understand that they just ignore it and hope it will go away. If they aren't initially supportive, please be patient – they may yet surprise you!

## 2) TREATMENT

There is professional help available on the NHS with the Tavistock and Portman Clinic's Gender Identity Development Service

This is a specialist clinic that sees young people from any age up to the age of 18 years. <http://gids.nhs.uk/>

This is a multi-disciplinary service, now open 5 full days a week. They do not try to push a child in any direction, but they will do assessment, and assist in alleviating any problems until the gender issues are resolved one way or another. (This might be a natural growing out of the gender variance, or at the other extreme, the use of medical intervention to assist in transition from one gender to another.) They can be very helpful regarding school issues, for instance. They have premises in London, and Leeds and they have an outreach clinic in Exeter. It's worth remembering that the Tavistock has its own funding for those people who live in England and Scotland, so it will not cost the local NHS provider anything to send a child there. At this time, the rest of the UK requires funding.

Following a lengthy period of just talking with the young person, in order to assess the situation, puberty blockers (a hormone injection) maybe suggested. This initial intervention is completely reversible and just suppresses the natural hormones for a while, giving time for further assessment and a chance for the child to learn whether they like being without their natural hormones or not. Later on, after at least a year on blockers, and after the age of 16 years, a low dose of cross-gender hormones might be offered. All of these procedures would require parental permission. All cases are treated on an individual basis, so there is no guarantee that this would happen with every child.

The Tavistock clinic will also help the family, and have experience of children with special needs or other problems.

There is also NHS help available for young people from the Sandyford clinic, in Glasgow, Scotland –

<http://www.sandyford.org/sandyford-sexual-health-services/what-are-our-services/gender-identity-service/>

The route to attending either the Tavistock or the Sandyford is :-

- 1 via the GP for a confidential chat – a referral can be made directly to either clinic, or they might refer instead to CAMHS. However, we would suggest that a referral to both is made if the young person needs local support with other issues, but if the only help needed is with gender then CAMHS may not be needed and to refer via CAMHS will increase the already lengthy wait. If the GP refuses to refer, the Tavistock will accept referrals from other routes such as schools, colleges, social services and charities such as Mermaids.
- 2 CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) for local support. CAMHS often have no knowledge of gender dysphoria but should support any other issues such as anxiety and depression. CAMHS can also refer to either the Tavistock or the Sandyford, depending on where a young person lives.
- 3 The Sandyford clinic will accept self-referrals
- 4 The Nottingham, Exeter and Northants adult GIC's will accept referrals for 17 year olds

PLEASE NOTE:

Those aged 18 and over **or approaching 16 for a GIC that accepts 17 year olds** would need to be referred to an adult Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) for which funding would be needed. There are various GICs around the UK. The first port of call for the trans\* person is usually the GP, who may refer to a psychiatrist, or directly to the GIC.

### **3) LEGAL ISSUES/SCHOOLS**

#### The Equality Act 2010

With regard to any unpleasant situations or bullying, all agencies have a duty of care towards a child. This is covered in the Equality Act 2010, which has the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment' - this sounds odd when talking about a child of any age, but it actually means anyone who is outside the accepted gender norms, that is someone who acts as though they might one day have gender reassignment, even if they eventually do not, or has had/ will have gender reassignment. This means that the agencies (school, work,

police, doctors etc) must take steps to integrate trans\* and gender variant children, and to alleviate any discomfort they may feel. It may mean educating their peers or staff to accept those that are a little bit 'different'. It is not illegal to make special allowances for trans\* or gender variant young people as they have certain special needs.

<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/types-of-discrimination>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/269341/Equality Act 2010 - advice.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269341/Equality_Act_2010_-_advice.pdf) schools - gender reassignment p.17

Mermaids may be able to put people in contact with other legal experts who are willing and able to help trans\* young people.

This is a very good Guidance for Schools:

<http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/assets/media/Trans-Inclusion-Schools-Toolkit.pdf>

There is another resource created by Lancashire council which is also very good, plus another written by Press for Change that we can send as an attachment, if needed. Local education authorities/councils often also have their own guidance.

Below is a link to a CPS Powerpoint presentation with videos and materials for schools re homophobic and transphobic bullying and hate crime, produced by CPS North West:

[http://www.cps.gov.uk/northwest/get\\_involved/hate\\_crime/schools\\_project\\_lgbt\\_hate\\_crime/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/northwest/get_involved/hate_crime/schools_project_lgbt_hate_crime/)

There is also a lot of help and guidance for schools on the Rainbow teaching website

<http://rainbowteaching.co.uk/>

Their aims are to provide *free* support and guidance to teachers and school staff, to challenge anti-LGBT+ bigotry in schools and to provide guidance on an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum.

Legal name change (if under 16 this must be done with the parents' permission) either by Statutory Declaration, or by deed poll. All documents can be changed to reflect the preferred name and gender, except the Birth Certificate (which requires a Gender Recognition Certificate, currently only available to adults). This includes Passports, and the name and gender recorded on the school roll. Mermaids can advise.

The Educate and Celebrate website is very good, and provides lesson plans covering all aspects of difference in children, including gender preference, in primary schools.

<http://www.educateandcelebrate.org/>

#### 4) USEFUL LINKS

[http://issuu.com/thegenderbook/docs/the\\_gender\\_book/3](http://issuu.com/thegenderbook/docs/the_gender_book/3) (rough draft)

The GENDER book is a fun, colourful, community-based resource, which illustrates the beautiful diversity of gender - a sort of gender 101 for anyone and everyone.

[www.gires.org.uk](http://www.gires.org.uk) - they have information for young people including an NHS booklet about medical treatment, information for families, bullying, etc. They sometimes do training.

This link takes you to a comprehensive directory of the groups campaigning for, supporting or assisting transgender people and their families across the UK

<https://www.gires.org.uk/the-wiki>

Gendered Intelligence have a number of good resources for families that you might be able to make use of, and also do training. [www.genderedintelligence.co.uk](http://www.genderedintelligence.co.uk) They work with young trans people aged 13-25 using the arts, and hold youth groups, and sometimes SOFFA meetings at times (SOFFAs – significant others, friends, family, allies).

#### 5) BOOKS

There are some useful books that you might consider reading, often available from Amazon UK (there are lots of others):

**The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals** by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper

A comprehensive, first-of-its-kind guidebook for the unique challenges that thousands of families face raising children who step outside of the pink or blue box.

**Gender Born, Gender Made** by Diane Ehrensaft.

a comprehensive guidebook for the parents and therapists of children who do not identify with or behave according to their biological gender.

**Helping your Transgender Tee** by Irwin Krieger.

only 80 pages, paperback, packed with useful and sensible information.

**The Boy who was born a Girl** by Jon and Luisa Edwards - it is excellent in explaining things from a transperson's point of view. Jon is a young transguy (born female) but his experiences are similar to those of a transgirl, and his mother's feelings are quite typical of those of other Mermaids' mums.

For Trans\* youth:

**Luna** by Julie-Ann Peters - story of a teenage transgirl (MtF) as told by her sister.

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Luna-Julie-Anne-Peters/dp/143528481X>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Read-the-Rainbow-A-Discussion-of-LGBT-Young-Adult-Literature/196568187053965>

There are books for younger children:-

**10,000 dresses** by Marcus Ewart

**My princess Boy**

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Princess-Suzanne-DeSimone-Cheryl-Kildavos/dp/1442429887>

**William's Doll**

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Williams-Doll-Trophy-Picture-](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Williams-Doll-Trophy-Picture-books/dp/0064430677/ref=pd_bxgy_b_text_z)

[books/dp/0064430677/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_b\\_text\\_z](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Williams-Doll-Trophy-Picture-books/dp/0064430677/ref=pd_bxgy_b_text_z) - about a boy that would like to have a doll

**When Kathy is Keith** (FTM child)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/When-Kathy-Keith-Wallace-Wong/dp/1465371419>

**The World Belongs To You**, by Riccardo Bozzi and Olimpia Zagnoli. This has a very simple yet powerful message, and the pictures are also very simple, yet striking. A lovely slant on those times in life when things get tough and our children might struggle to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is aimed at younger children, but it can be enjoyed by everyone, it is a gorgeous book with a very loving, positive message. <http://tinyurl.com/pmb6cmz>

More books suitable for children:

<http://www.mombian.com/2012/02/20/books-for-and-about-transgender-children/>

## 6) **MERMAIDS SUPPORT**

- Helpline and email information and support service
- Parents and teens online forums
- Residential weekends for whole family
- Local groups at 8 locations nationwide
- Campaigning and advocacy
- Speaking at conferences and events nationwide
- Raising awareness by attending Pride and other LGBT events
- Training into schools, social services, and many other agencies supporting children, young trans people and their families
- Liaise with EHRC and other agencies to help identify and combat poor practice

Do let us know if you have any questions - if we do not know the answers, we will endeavour to find them.

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Suite 5, High Street House, 2 The High Street, Yeadon, Leeds, LS19 7PP

Phone: 0344 334 0550 Web: [www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk)

Email: [info@mermaidsuk.org.uk](mailto:info@mermaidsuk.org.uk)

Charity Number 1160575