

The Girls' Brigade in Scotland

Supporting Adult Leaders: Gender Identity

Leaders who are transgender have the right to be treated as their acquired gender, regardless of what (if any) medical or legal steps they may have taken.

Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, placing similar obligations on organisations as is required for disability, whether or not the person is undergoing medical treatment. Discrimination or harassment is against the law, and there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that Trans members can continue with their Girls' Brigade leadership role, including anticipating the needs of any future members.

How can we support a volunteer who is transgender?

- Respect the rights and privacy of the person.
- Reassure the person that you will support them. Ask how you can support them. You can also ask questions to help build your understanding but remember to be sensitive in how you do this. Remember, the person may be happy to do this with you or a small group of people they trust but may not want everyone to be asking questions.
- Be sensitive and sympathetic to the person's situation. This can be very challenging for the person and you might want to think how you might feel if born with a body which didn't match your gender. It is quite common for people to have had negative responses from others when they share that they are Trans. This can affect their mental health.
- Ensure you don't treat the person differently. It is important to treat them in the way they consider to be their true gender.
- When addressing the person make sure you use their preferred name and pronouns. If you aren't sure about this, ask. If a mistake is made, simply correct it and use the person's preferred name.
- Do not share information about the person's gender identity history or Trans status, unless at the specific request and agreement of the person. Remember, it is a criminal offence for anyone acquiring information about a person's gender recognition history in an 'official capacity', to disclose this to another person, without consent of the person (Gender Recognition Act, 2004).
- If required, you can seek support or guidance without revealing the person's name/identity.

- Do not comment on the person's appearance, in relation to their acquired gender unless they specifically seek your view on this.
- Be prepared for any questions or comments from other volunteers or young people.

What facilities should the person use?

The individual has the right to use the toilet facilities of their acquired gender. However, it may be that they are not comfortable with this (particularly if they have recently transitioned) and they may wish to use a unisex toilet (e.g. accessible/disabled toilet) instead.

Is there any restriction on what the person can do?

No, the individual should continue to go about their duties in the same way that any other male or female GB leader does. For example, if a girl requires to visit the bathroom a leader, irrespective of gender, should only show where it is but not enter the bathroom itself.

What needs to be considered when planning trips or holidays?

If on a company holiday or residential event the person will require separate sleeping accommodation, as is already the case in Girls' Brigade Scotland where we have both male and female leaders.

If you are travelling abroad for a company holiday or nominating an individual who is Trans for a GB event you should be aware that some countries are not as open as the UK, legally and/or culturally. Some countries may even have laws which make it illegal to be part of the transgender or homosexual community. Check the laws for the country before you visit, and plan ahead.

How can we support someone undergoing gender reassignment or transition during their role?

A current adult volunteer may inform you that they will be changing their physical appearance, from their birth gender to their acquired gender. At this point it is important to prepare and plan carefully in order to support the individual. Take time to have a relaxed and confidential discussion with the person so that you can find out what they want, how they would like to proceed and how you can support them. Remember, individuals will have different views but you may wish to discuss with them whether or not they want to continue to work in the same section or to take a break, e.g. over the summer holiday period, before returning to company in their new gender.

Working with the volunteer, take time to decide how to discuss the issue with the

girls and their parents/carers. It is important the volunteer is in agreement with any planned course of action. We recommend that the news be conveyed in a face to face meeting rather than in a written format and is kept simple and factual, e.g. Ms X has advised us that as from now they wish to identify as Mr Y or vice versa. Ask everyone to use their new name as from that time and explain that there is no issue with this as Girls' Brigade Scotland already has male and female leaders, all of whom are members of the PVG scheme and fully trained, irrespective of their gender.

Remember, it is important to update all communications and records as soon as possible, to the correct pronouns and name. You do not need to ask for proof for their records to be altered (e.g. to show their Gender Recognition Certificate or a change of name by Deed Poll).

How to respond to those volunteers or others who are not inclusive of transgender members?

Volunteers should be reminded of their commitment to The Girls' Brigade in Scotland Equal Opportunities Policy and if they continue to have difficulty with this you should contact the Commissioner of the Division who will explain the position further to help them understand what is required of them. Sometimes, people can appear negative due to a lack of understanding or awareness of what being transgender really means and further information or training may be required. This could involve discussion or it may be necessary to seek more information and/or training by contacting GB Headquarters. Some, including Chaplains, may hold a theological view that does not agree with people being transgender but they are reminded that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and we are called to respect and love one another. In Girls' Brigade Scotland it is the responsibility of all adult volunteers to be good role models for everyone by being inclusive and to create an environment where all members are valued and safe to enjoy their GB membership.

If you still continue to have difficulties with individual volunteers please speak with your Commissioner and/or contact the Chief Executive at Girls' Brigade Scotland – caroline.goodfellow@girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk

[CG/Exec – February 2019]