

A guide for young trans people in the UK

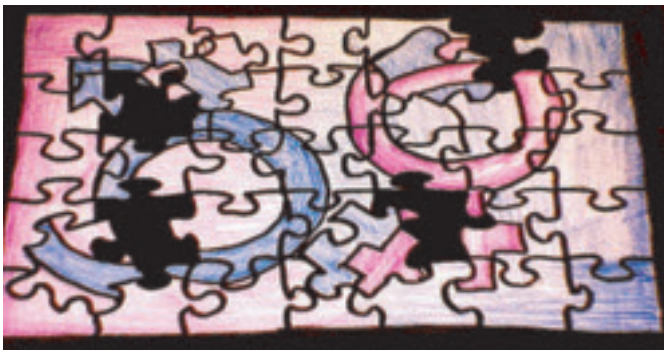


Who are we?

We are a group of young trans people aged between 15 and 22, living in the UK. After having been involved with the 'Sci:identity Project' (an arts project for trans youth), we worked in conjunction with 'Gendered Intelligence' to produce this booklet. We have noticed that there is a lack of clear, structured resources for young trans people in the UK and we wanted to put a booklet together to offer information to trans and questioning young people. Some of us have been part of LGBT youth groups and have found that the information around trans identities is limited. The sources, stories, facts and tips in this booklet have been useful to us, and though they might not be relevant to everyone, we want to give other people the opportunity to access the same information we've found.

We believe that 'trans' is a spectrum. Eight of us have contributed, and we each feel differently about our trans status. You may know you're trans and are looking for some specific information. Alternatively you might be questioning and perhaps decide eventually that you don't identify as trans. You don't have to 'fit' any particular category of trans, but if you're confused about or questioning your gender in any way, hopefully this booklet will help clarify some of your questions and offer you language to express yourself.

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1. So you think you're trans?

What is trans?

Trans is an umbrella term. It includes cross-dressers, transgender and transsexual people as well as anyone else who is in any way gender variant. Before we start it's important to understand that sex is between the legs and gender is between the ears. Sex is male, female, and intersex, and has to do with your chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, etc. Gender is man, woman, boy, girl, androgynous (gender-neutral), and has to do with your internal sense of self and how you choose to express yourself.

A cross-dresser is someone who likes to wear clothes usually associated with the "opposite" gender. They can identify as their birth sex or as gender-queer and can dress as another gender occasionally or permanently. Some people feel this lets them express another aspect of their personality whilst others just feel more comfortable in these clothes. Cross-dressing is usually quite fun for everyone to try occasionally. Most people try it for fancy dress or similar at some point in their lives. This doesn't necessarily make them trans though!

Transsexual people are those whose physical and psychological gender are conflicted. This can be quite hard and most transsexual people struggle with questions about the best way to live their lives. Some may decide to live as their biological sex; most however take hormones and/or undergo surgical procedures so they can be seen socially as their preferred gender. Other gender variant people can identify as both sexes and may present themselves in a way that's unusual for most people of their biological sex. They could be androgynous or enjoy being a masculine female or feminine male.

Trans people can come from all different types of ethnic and faith backgrounds. Different cultural understandings of trans vary and legal statuses differ between countries.



What is trans to me?

Because trans has such diverse meanings, we asked each other what trans means to us.

Here's what some of us said:

"Usually I don't use the label trans, but I was told by an acquaintance at NUS LGBT conference in Summer 2005 that I counted as a valid trans person. Before that I'd been reluctant to call myself trans, because I don't perceive myself as just a transvestite or don't want to go the "whole hog" and have surgery and hormones, i.e. be a transsexual. I have used the term 'gender queer' for a while before being told that it comes under the trans umbrella. I feel that I'm gender queer because for all intents and purposes (other than legally) I'm a guy, seeing as I pass a lot of the time when I'm not even trying, yet I'm usually okay with my body and legal sex."

"My personal experience of transgenderism has been a feeling of alienation from my prescribed gender role as well as an inner nature that conflicts with how others perceive me, creating a great sense of discomfort. I also have discomfort in the way my body is formed. It does not feel right to live in a body which will have coarser skin, flat chest and muscular development. Such changes feel disgusting when applied to my own body, with female development seeming more desired. Luckily, my body is relatively androgynous, meaning that my sense of dysphoria is not as elevated as it could have been. However, I do believe that transgenderism is as individual as the people who consider themselves to be this way."

"I'm not sure I identify as trans in the way that a lot of other people do. I feel very strongly that I am male and always have, without doubt or question. To me my transsexuality is a description of my physical state as opposed to something I take great pride in identifying in. That is not to say I am ashamed of who I am, but I generally don't explain my gender or my identity with language that involves 'trans'. I feel I fit quite neatly in to the 'male' box in the binary gender system, only my physical body tends to contradict that in the eyes of some... it doesn't to me though. There are so many different ways to be a man and so much physical difference between men – I just differ in that my chromosomes are XX."

Other key terms

FTM	– Female to Male, also known as trans man.
MTF	– Male to Female, also known as trans woman.
Genderqueer	– Someone who identifies as something other than male or female, and generally does not believe in binary gender.
Coming out	– A time in your life when you first tell other people about your trans identity.
Passing	– Being perceived as the gender you are presenting as.
Disclosure	– Revealing your transsexual status to someone.
Stealth	– Passing as non-trans without revealing your trans status.
Binding	– Flattening your chest to create the external appearance of a male torso.
Packing	– Wearing a bought or homemade device to create the external appearance of male genitalia.
Drag	– Wearing clothes society dictates as appropriate for the opposite sex.

Recommended films and books

Books

- Becoming a Visible Man** – Jamison Green
- My Gender Workbook** – Kate Bornstein
- Stone Butch Blues** – Leslie Feinberg
- Trans Forming Families: Real Stories about Transgendered Loved Ones** – Mary Boenke
- Respect and Equality: Transsexual and Transgender Rights** – Stephen Whittle
- The True Self** – Mildred Brown

Films

- Transamerica** – An MTF woman travels across the US with her son, who is unaware she is his biological father.
- Boys Don't Cry** – Somewhat unsettling/ disturbing film based on the life and death of Brandon Teena, an FTM who was murdered in the early 90s.
- Southern Comfort** – Documentary film about Robert Eads, a transman in his 50s who died from cancer.
- Funny Kinda Guy** – UK independent film about the transition of an FTM musician.
- It's Different for Girls** – funny upbeat film covering many issues.

2. I'm trans... now what?

Coming out

If you're sure or fairly sure you are trans. It is possible that you will feel the need to 'come out', which means to tell people about your trans status, usually in order to begin 'transitioning'. You may or may not want to ask the people you tell to use a different name or pronoun; it's up to you. Coming out may seem like a fairly daunting prospect, after all, there's no easy way to tell someone you're trans. Try telling your closest friend or friends first. You may need to educate them as to exactly what this means, as people often have inaccurate perceptions of what it is to be trans. If you don't initially receive a positive response, don't panic! It can often take people a while to process the information and to show support. If you are nervous at first about more than a few people knowing, be sure to consider who you tell very carefully as it can easily become gossip. Alternatively, you may want *everyone* to know, in which case it may be worth telling the mouthiest person first! Remember, if you are using a new name or pronoun you may have to continually remind people in order for them to get it right.

Parents

The greatest difficulty can be coming out to parents and family. Parents tend to hold onto the child they have raised and seeing their child seemingly "disappear" can be like a death for them. They may have thoughts such as "this can't be happening" (denial) or "I want my son/daughter back" (grief) or outbursts of rage from shock. Some parents may not be reasonable when you first tell them and it may be a long process for them to accept you. Most people will not know exactly what you are going through or may associate it with sexuality. It takes time to educate others. The key is to show them that you are not really changing, but that you are doing exactly the opposite – being who you are. There is often not enough support for parents, but trans groups do invite parents, friends and family to their social events. Mermaids is an organisation that supports parents (see p.14) and there are some books that we recommend for (see p.6). They could even read this book.

Personal stories

"I have found that coming out at university has been a very positive experience, and this is shared by many of my trans friends in similar situations. I have also found that being more comfortable with myself has led to me being far more popular and sociable than I ever was, and that even the people who were apprehensive about my trans status at first became surprisingly open minded. Of course in other environments such as school, variant gender and sexualities are often looked down upon and I believe that if I had come out at school I would have received a huge amount of bullying. It is tragic how conforming to one's expected role is praised and any deviation from this is frowned upon, not only by other schoolchildren but also by adults (particularly parents) as well. All of my friends have taken it well, although it's been a little more difficult for my longer term friends. However, once they have seen me as a freer person, it has improved my relationships in almost every case."

"I was born female and wore dresses because, although I remember not liking it, I remember thinking I would disappoint my mother if I didn't. She had very traditional Victorian expectations of a 'proper' family and so I played with dolls (they were butch though). As I grew up I realized that I could be a very outgoing and even dominant person if I felt safe, but I would still be submissive when people thought I was a girl. I felt forced to act that sweet little girl that my mother expected from me. I think it is because of society's insistence on the duties of gender that I hadn't realised my true potential. People say, 'Well you don't just wake up one day and.....'; but that's exactly what happened to me. Everything I'd been feeling came into clear focus and in a way I was more scared than ever before but when I finally came out my confidence excelled. My mum struggles at the moment and says that she's ashamed of me. It's not easy at the moment but let's face it – it could have been much worse. I know she loves me, though."



"I realised that I was a girl at some point and started doing some research on the internet. Then, at the beginning of a holiday, I asked my mum if I could talk for a while. I told her, 'I think I might be slightly gender dysphoric'. I told my dad later, a little after my 13th/14th birthday. After that I got an appointment with my GP and they referred me on to the Child & Adolescent Gender Identity Development Service at the Portman. I'm currently 16 and therefore eligible for androgen blockers, which I'm trying to get through the Portman."

"I had been aware from an early age that I thought I should have been a girl. In my head there was an assumption that when I grew up I would live as if I had been born female. When I was in my late teens I found out about transsexuality through the internet and realised that I wasn't the only person who felt this way. There was a way I could sort my body out. I came out to my parents through a letter, who both took a 'whatever you need to do to be happy is fine' attitude, and then to my friends who were also fine with it. Once I left school I started seeing a psychologist who was experienced in trans issues and after a period of evaluation I was referred to an endocrinologist who prescribed me hormones. After a year on hormones I came out to my employers, who were supportive. I changed my name by deed poll and transitioned. A few people I worked with found it a little hard to understand, but most were fine and no one had anything actually unpleasant to say.

At this point I moved into a house with some other transsexual people, one of whom I was in a relationship with. The main source of unhappiness I had with my body were my underdeveloped breasts. I felt a bit of pressure from the people I was living with, and I allowed myself to be pushed into having genital surgery a bit too soon, rather than continuing to take things at my own pace. I had Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) a year and a half after I started hormones. In the weeks following the surgery I had major complications and life got a bit complicated. I moved away after that and had the breast surgery I have always wanted. Since then I have tended not to think about trans issues. I am simply getting on with my life."

Names

As part of coming out and transitioning, you may feel you need or want to change the name you use or the pronouns people call you. **It's important to remember that you have the right to use whatever name or pronoun you want**, no matter how well you 'pass' or what your stage of transition is. If people ask you for your 'real name', give the one you want to use, even if its not the one your legal documents say.

Here are a few suggestions for choosing a name to use:

- You may already have adopted a nickname or shortened version of your birth name, which may be more suited to your gender identity or androgynous enough to pass for either (for instance 'Sam' could be short for 'Samantha' or 'Samuel').
- During childhood many trans people choose a name for themselves that they'd use had they been born the opposite sex. It's never too late to relive that dream!
- Try looking in baby naming books or websites.
- You can always ask your parents what your name would have been were you born physically the opposite sex. It may give you some ideas!
- Remember that the name you choose may end up being the name you use permanently. It may seem like a good idea to name yourself something totally creative and original, you may wish you had chosen something more 'boring' in retrospect.

If you go to school or college, you should be able to use the name you prefer in class. This may be more difficult in secondary school as most of the time under 16s will need some sort of parental consent when it comes to name changes on documents like the school register. Colleges and universities, however, will allow you to enrol under whichever name you like. If you have a name picked out before you start college or university, put that down on your enrolling forms and you'll be fine. However, you will have to tell them it isn't your legal name. (For information on changing your name legally, see p.15). It should be similarly easy to change your name after you have enrolled. Try speaking to your student services about this.

Passing tips

You may at first find it difficult to be perceived as the gender you feel you are. The best advice is to be observant and aware. What clues let you know whether someone is male or female? It may be their hair, clothes, accessories, mannerisms or they way they speak. For tips look out for men and women who are physically similar to you and see how they look.

Trans women: Passing is not only important so that people can perceive you as you want them to, but also for your own safety. In general project confidence. Walk confidently and look upwards. This is probably 50% of passing! It will prevent you from receiving too much unwanted attention and a good mindset is to think that you are just as female as any other woman. As tempting as it may be to dress up, it's suggested that you dress sensibly. Tight fitting tops are good if your figure is quite feminine. If not, see what women with more masculine figures tend to wear. Try getting breast forms which are appropriate for your body size and hold them in with a bra. Many authentic looking forms can be expensive, but check out www.nicolajane.com for some reasonably priced ones.

Longer hair can be a big help in passing, but short hair in a feminine style can also make a big difference. Fringes are particularly feminising. Hair extensions can look very natural, but are just as difficult to maintain as natural hair and can be very expensive. Wigs and hairpieces are an option if you do not have suitable natural

hair. If you are unsure about makeup, start subtly. Mascara and eye-shadow are a good start and will help to lift and feminise your features. If you have bad skin or masculine features try foundation and face powders. If you have facial hair that is barely visible it is best to leave it alone, otherwise use hair removal cream or wax. Remember a lot of girls have problems with excess body hair and there are lots of products to help deal with this.



As a trans woman with a more masculine appearance, you may need to compensate with other “elements” that convey that you are female. The “feminine walk” may help. If you place each foot across yourself each time you take a step this creates the “bum swish”. As a younger MTF, even if your voice is completely broken, it has been less exposed to testosterone, so is more likely to be malleable. For techniques, type in “feminising voice transsexuals” into search engines. In general, try to imitate voice patterns of genetic women with deep voices by using a less monotone style of speech and raising the pitch of your voice. Also soften your voice and prevent it from creating the resonance of the “full male voice”. Changing voice can be difficult for some, but it will be much harder to pass if you do not try.

Trans men: A short back and sides from the barber is the most masculine haircut you can get, so it may be a good place to start. However, keep in mind many men these days have many different haircuts with all lengths. Haircuts look most masculine if the sideburns are cut straight across as opposed to at a pointed angle. If you’re concerned about what to say the first time, tell the barber you’re playing a boy in a play. Be aware, not many places will cut more than a foot of hair off in one go, especially if you’re young. If you have very long hair you could donate it to a charity like <http://www.locksoflove.org>. Wear clothes meant for boys/men. Patterned shirts and loose fitting trousers will help you hide any curves. A reliable binder like one from <http://ftm.underworks.com> will help give you a male-appearing chest. Generally men are more confident and firm in their behavior. They usually take up more space and use calm, firm gestures. Use a more even tone when speaking, as women tend to vary pitch more. To make your voice sound deeper/more resonant, put your hand on your chest and try to get the sound to reverberate there.

If you’re looking for voice care as a trans man contact: mail@johntuker.com. For more passing tips, see: <http://www.geocities.com/ftmpass>, or <http://kpscapes.tripod.com/passing.html>.

Toilet situations

As a trans person you may find that using public toilets becomes difficult, particularly if you are not feeling confident enough to venture into “unknown territory”! Only you can be realistic about your own passing experience and whether or not you feel you will be safe in the toilet you intend to use.

Here are a few of our experiences:

“I remember quite clearly the first time someone actually called the manager when I was in the girls’ toilets. I’d had the looks before, the double-takes, the walking out to check the sign... but never had it reached this sort of peak. I’d come out as FtM about three months previously and my hair was shaggy. I had no means of binding and the men’s toilets (in my mind) were out of the question. The woman who objected to my presence was loud and aggressive. I could hear her storming outside the toilets. The sound of her shouting carried through the walls... and when I heard her get the manager I froze. What was I supposed to do? I couldn’t prove I was a girl, because I’m not a girl, but I didn’t think I looked enough like a boy either to be anywhere else. Where was I supposed to go if both options got me in trouble?”

“The first time I used the men’s toilets was in my local pub. I knew the bar guys really well and my mate got drunk and outed me to them. I was out for the evening and obviously I ended up needing a piss, except every time I went into the ladies these girls kept coming up to me, chatting me up and asking what I was doing in the wrong toilets. After about half an hour, I was really desperate so I asked the bar guys if they were cool with me using the men’s.

They were fine with it so I used them. I was FINALLY using the right toilets! It was weird because even though the toilets stank and were broken and were covered in graffiti I really loved being in there!”

Accessing resources

LGBT Youth Groups

Ask other people on message boards/forums/ mailing lists/groups/communities if they know of any good groups, meetings or activities in your area. This is a more effective way to find active groups rather than search engines and the internet, because sometimes groups are disbanded despite still being advertised on the web.

Also you will have no idea about the atmosphere, or suitability for your age, gender and trans status. Your local Connexions centre will definitely be able to help you find a local LGBT youth group, but you could also try asking at your library, community centre, GUM clinics or 'Terrence Higgins Trust'. Also check out Pride festivals and the stands there.

Internet resources and message boards

To learn more about trans people and find information, the internet is the best resource out there. You'll be able to find the most up to date and comprehensive information available, but don't believe everything you read! There is lots of inaccurate information and people tend to have biased opinions, particularly on forums. Research as much as you can and gather information from lots of different places. We have listed a few of the websites we feel are most useful, but you may want to try searching 'google' to find others.

Mermaids UK – Organisation for trans/questioning youth in the UK under the age of 19 and their parents.

<http://www.mermaids.freeuk.com>

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mermaids_uk/

T-Vox – Recently developed, UK-based 'wiki' for all things trans.

<http://www.t-vox.org>

UK FTM Network – FAQ/Support. <http://www.ftm.org.uk>

GYUK – UK support forum for LGBT youth <http://www.gyuk.co.uk/forums>

'Our Trans Children' – PDF booklet aimed at parents/family

<http://www.transfamily.org/booklet.pdf>

3. Taking it further

Trans groups

You may decide you want to visit social/support groups for trans people. This is a good opportunity to meet others in the same situation. Be aware that not all groups allow under 18s and the location can change, so it's worth emailing or checking the website before going along.

FTM London – A support and social group run by and for trans people on the FTM spectrum. The meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month from 6pm at the Trinity United Reform Church, Buck Street, Camden. The meetings are for FTMs only until 8.15pm, partners and significant others are welcome to attend for social time until 10pm. E mail: info@ftmlondon.org.uk/ <http://www.ftmlondon.org.uk>

T- Boys – A social group for FTMs and partners living in the North. They are a friendly group who get together to talk about our experiences, offer support and friendship. Meets 2nd weekend of each month alternating between Leeds and Sheffield. For more details contact Lee by e-mail: tboysuk@yahoo.co.uk

Western Boys – Support and social group in Taunton for transmen in the West. Meets every third Saturday of the month. <http://www.westernboys.co.uk/>

Transmen Scotland – Membership organisation for transmen, including support meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh. See www.transmenscotland.org.uk/

Translondon – A recently formed support and social group inclusive of ALL transgender people – FTM, MTF, genderqueer etc. See <http://www.translondon.org.uk/> for information about location/time.

The Clare Project – A safe and confidential drop-in for anyone who wants to talk about gender identity. Meets weekly on a Tuesday afternoon, at Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Brighton. e mail: stephscott2@hotmail.com tel: 07776 232 100 www.clareproject.org.uk

Legally changing your name

Legally changing your name in the UK is a fairly simple and inexpensive process. There are two main ways of doing this: deed poll and statutory declaration. Statutory declaration is the simplest and most common and it only costs around £5 to have it

witnessed by a solicitor. The declaration is basically a document that states quite simply that you are no longer using your previous names and now intend to use your new name. It needs to have a specific format in order to be legally binding. The best thing to do is to follow a template, such as that found at: <http://ftm.org.uk/faq/changename>. You may also want to change your name on your qualification certificates which can be done by writing to your examining boards.

The black and white of living in the grey area

For all legal purposes, if you do not intend to live permanently in the gender role opposite to the sex on your birth certificate you will be treated as the sex your birth certificate says you are. You can only take advantage of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) if you live permanently in the opposite gender role (with OR without hormones and surgery) and are diagnosed by a medical professional as suffering from gender dysphoria. You cannot legally be treated as neither male nor female, with reference to the law. Socially and even at school/university/work you can tell people of your non-binary-gendered status and preferred pronouns, but legally you must be either male or female.

Finding counsellors

Many trans and gender-variant people choose to see a counsellor to talk about their feelings in confidence without risking telling people they already know such as parents or friends. Schools, colleges and particularly universities usually have general counsellors who are free and you can see them about any issues young people may have. Unless there are extreme concerns for your well being counsellors are obliged to keep whatever you decide to tell them in confidence. They will listen to you and even if they are not personally able to offer advice they should know where you can go to find further help.

A couple of us have seen college and university counsellors, others have seen support workers at LGBT groups and then sought advice from mental health professionals. These include getting referrals from GPs to gender clinics (there are a few of these across the UK including The Portman Clinic and Charing Cross) and investigating websites such as the Gender Trust and Pink Therapy which specialise in work with gender variant people.

Some mainstream services for young people are:

National Self-harm Network (NHSN) – web: www.nshn.co.uk

Young Minds – web: www.youngminds.org.uk; parents info service: 0800 018 2138

The Samaritans – web: www.samaritans.org.uk; 24-hour helpline: 08457 90 90 90

Brandon Centre – telephone: 020 7267 4792

How to get treatment

Getting medical treatment as a trans person means that you will have to see quite a few doctors and gender specialists. ‘Treatment’ may be defined as receiving counselling, hormones, or even surgery. It’s up to you to decide if you want any of these things. Your GP is the first person you will need to visit to get the ball rolling.

If you are going to do this, it may be helpful to plan a strategy. Work out what you want to say beforehand.

- Bring general information with you that will explain your situation clearly.
- Have a clear idea of what you want from the appointment and be direct when asking for this. (For instance, a referral to a gender clinic.)
- Be realistic in what you expect to achieve from your appointment.
- If your GP isn’t supportive or helpful don’t be afraid to swap and remember you do not need to give a reason for doing this. PALS can help you and can be contacted through your local Primary Care Trust or GP Surgery.

NHS vs Private

Some trans people opt for the private route instead of NHS. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these routes, and just because you start on one it doesn’t necessarily mean you cannot change part way through. Although it is considered unethical (see BMA.org.uk) you may experience some difficulty going from private back into NHS routes.

	Pros	Cons
NHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's free. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are long waiting lists for NHS gender clinics • You will have less control over timescales/treatment. • You may not have much choice over surgeons/procedures.
Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will not have to wait long for treatment. • You have more choice over timescales and treatment options. • You have a choice of surgeon if you choose to have surgery. • You will be treated with respect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be quite expensive. • You will have to pay for consultations with specialists, consultations with surgeons and surgery itself. You may have to also pay for hormone prescriptions.

Hormones

Sex hormones are responsible for the changes in human bodies that produce male and female characteristics. The male hormone testosterone is produced in the testes and the female hormone, oestrogen is produced in the ovaries. For some trans people hormone therapy can be an important part of their transition, but may not be for everyone. In the case of MTFs, oestrogen is often prescribed to feminise the body and hormone blockers are given to halt or regress masculinisation. In the case of FTMs, testosterone will bring on many of the male secondary sex characteristics.

It is important to take responsibility for yourself as to whether hormone treatment is right for you. Changing the makeup of your body is one of the most serious decisions you may ever make and much consideration must take place before reaching a decision. In order to aid with this most doctors would



recommend between 3 months and 2 years' "real life experience" (living in your chosen gender) in order to make sure you want to live full time as the man or woman you feel yourself to be. Without hormone therapy, however, passing can be difficult for some. As with any prescribed lifetime medication it is advisable to maintain a healthy lifestyle, exercise and a balanced diet, as well as not drinking excessively, taking drugs or smoking. Hormones might not be prescribed if you are not in good health. You will need to have regular blood tests and will be referred by your GP to an endocrinologist.

Trans Women

The hormones effectively produce a female puberty, with the exception of menstruation. Hormones will reduce but not eliminate hair growth. Treatments such as laser or electrolysis will do that. Hormones do not change the voice. Reversible effects of MTF hormone therapy include:

- Softer skin
- Reduced hair growth
- Reduction in sex drive
- Increased mood swings/depression
- Redistribution of fat to produce a more feminine figure
- Fuller cheeks from fat redistribution for a more feminine face

Irreversible effects of MTF hormone therapy include:

- Some breast and nipple growth
- Eventual infertility
- Decrease in genital size

Trans Men

Testosterone is a powerful hormone and offers very effective masculinisation for FTMs. It can be taken in numerous ways, the most popular being injection or gel. Reversible effects of male hormones include:

- Change in face structure
- Change in quality of the skin
- Redistribution of body fat to a typical male's
- Periods will stop
- Increase in muscle mass
- Increase in hunger
- Increase in sex drive

Irreversible effects of male hormones include:

- Voice will become lower
- Increase in body hair
- Develop facial hair

Hormone Blockers

If blockers (or anti-androgens) are taken when younger, the effects from puberty are likely not to occur and a more passable body is likely to result. That said one should not rush into anything. It is important to go at a pace that suits you. Blockers might be a good way to create a thinking space where one can freeze pubescent development. It is not possible to take anti-androgens indefinitely, however. Regular blood tests are also necessary when on hormone blockers. If you are under 16 a lot will depend on gaining the full support from your parents. In other countries hormone blockers can be given to younger transsexual people which will prevent the onset of unwanted secondary sex characteristics. This may mean that you look further than the UK for medical intervention. It would be undesirable to buy hormones over the internet without fully knowing what you are buying. Also it is

important that you are under professional medical care so that your health can be monitored regularly.

Surgical options

It is a personal choice whether or not to undergo surgery, and your legal rights will not be compromised if you do not choose to undergo surgery. In order to undergo surgery you will need to be in good health, as being overweight or smoking makes surgery dangerous and surgery may even be declined.

No surgery

Some trans people may wish not to have any surgical intervention, and may, for example, prefer the uniqueness of having male genitalia with a female identity. This is an entirely valid option and one that you may consider for a variety of reasons.

Trans women

Sex Reassignment Surgery (or Gender Confirmation Surgery)

This is the most often heard of surgery for MTFs, euphemistically referred to as “the operation”, but it is not a necessary prerequisite for “becoming a woman”.

Technology for SRS is quite advanced and with good surgery even gynaecologists are said to find it hard to distinguish a constructed vagina from a natal one. It is normally possible to still be able to experience sensation and orgasm, although one cannot mimic the natural lubrication of the natal vagina. Genital surgery is irreversible, so it is a decision which one must be entirely sure of before undertaking.

Orchidectomy

Orchidectomy is the removal of the testes. This operation means that testosterone will no longer be naturally produced in the body and therefore you can do without your testosterone blocker. In general, the lower the dose of any drug the lower the health risks you will have. Some trans women may feel they need hormonal changes to the body, but are not comfortable with the idea of SRS. Some trans women may even feel that having a penis is important for their sexuality, but will have an orchidectomy for hormonal reasons.

Trans men

Chest Surgery

There are two common procedures used for chest surgery (also known as top surgery). To check out some images of trans men's chest go to: www.transter.com

Double Incision: This surgery involves the breast tissue being removed with a scalpel through two incisions. The nipples are removed and grafted back on the chest in the correct position. The skin is then stitched back together. This surgery is used on people with larger chests.

Peri-Areolar: This surgery involves the skin being opened around the areola. The breast tissue is removed by scalpel, with the nipple left attached to retain sensation. This surgery is only possible on people with smaller chests.

Genital Surgery

There are two common procedures for genital surgery (also known as bottom surgery). Both of these procedures can involve the addition of testicular implants.

Metoidioplasty: This surgery involves the release of the enlarged clitoris to form a small penis. This procedure allows the individual to urinate standing, retain sensitivity and leaves less scarring than phalloplasty.

Phalloplasty: This surgery involves a skin graft from the inner forearm or abdomen to form an adult sized penis. This involves a multi-staged procedure. There are various options which relate to the potential to urinate standing, to sustain an erection, and to achieve aesthetic quality.

Hysterectomy

This surgery involves the removal of the interior female sexual organs. This prevents the risk of cancer and forever prevents periods or risk of pregnancy.



4. Support and Positivity

What if you're not trans? other identities

If you realise after reading this booklet that a sex change operation or hormones are not for you, you could still identify as a “non-ho-non-op (meaning non-hormone and/or non-operation) transsexual”, transgender/full-time crossdressing/crossliving person, genderqueer/gendervariant (neither gender/between genders) or bigendered/part-time crossdressing/living (both genders)!

You may also feel that you get turned on by cross-dressing but don't feel that it's part of your gender identity. You could choose not to identify as trans; you might feel that being trans was a phase you've grown out of; or feel that you were never trans to begin with. Take what fits you best.

Trans respect

Here are some things we think our families and friends can do to respect our trans identities:

- Think of this person as being the gender they want you to think them as.
- Use the name and pronoun (he, she, her, him etc.) that the person asks you to. If you aren't sure what the right pronoun is...ask. If you make a mistake with pronouns, correct yourself and move on, don't make a big deal out of it.
- Respect people's privacy. Don't ask what their 'real' or 'birth' name is. Trans people are often sensitive about revealing information about their past, especially if they think it might colour how they are perceived in the present.
- Similarly respect their privacy with identity and other personal documents which might have their old name on them.
- Respect people's boundaries. If you want to ask a personal question, first ask if it's okay to do so. Personal questions include anything to do with one's sex life, anatomy (not just genitalia), and relationship status – past, present or future. Be warned that some people may even consider questions like “are you on hormones?” personal. When in doubt, ask if you may ask them a personal question before going ahead.
- Listen to the person and how they want to be treated and referred to, also be aware no two trans people are alike so don't think you know it all!

Sexual health/sex and relationships

Aside from the usual condom, lube and regular GUM testing advice, being trans can lead to other awkward complications in your love and sex life. As a trans person, whether you identify as straight, gay, bisexual or queer, telling a current partner that you're trans can be messy for a variety of reasons (see p.16) . They may or may not want more information about why you feel this and what all the terminology means. If you're single (and "pass" and are "stealth") then it can often be a difficult decision when and how to "disclose" to new potential partners about your trans status. Be prepared for them to feel quite awkward and unsure about going further, but it's better to play the honesty card. If they don't like you as a trans person then they're not someone you want to be dating anyway.

Identifying positively as trans

Just because you are trans it doesn't mean that you don't have the same prospects as everyone else. Trans people usually fall in love, succeed in their chosen careers, have good friends and loving relationships with their family just like everyone else. Living as a trans person might be difficult because society is not equipped to deal with such things. It's up to us to change that though and a good start is to remain positive and even celebrate our trans status.

Here are some links showing "successful" trans people:

<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSsuccesses/TSGallery1.html>



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