



A broken window at the home of one of our members. But examples of harassment aren't always this overt.

Eliminating Harassment - mainstreaming everyone. A transgender perspective



By **Josh Durham**, Diversity Manager, HM Prison Services

WE ALL RECOGNISE direct bullying and harassment such as physical or verbal abuse, damage to a person's property, offensive graffiti, ostracism, ridicule and humiliation or refusing to recognise that a person has transitioned and deliberately referring to them by their former gender but it is because we still have not addressed the underlying prejudice in societies understanding of gender identity that direct bullying, harassment and transphobic hate crime can still exist.

Unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping around gender identity usually stems from a lack of knowledge or experience, not understanding why a group of people behave the way they do. When faced with something that challenges our world view or is outside our realm of experience it is human nature to fill in the gaps with our own explanations, assumptions and interpretations or to fall back on the discourses or stories that society has formed to label and control people who challenge gender norms.

Unfortunately many of these discourses we fall back on are nothing more than myths or are based on outdated ideas but they still hold a lot of power through having been repeated many times over and still underlie much of the coverage gender identity receives in the media.

Amongst family and friends of trans people I support many have also faced exclusion from family events, abuse and blame for not preventing their partner/child from transitioning at the very time the parent/sibling or child of the trans person needs support and empathy themselves as they go through a gamut of emotions as they adjust to the changes this means for their relationships.

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Why is it important to address this?

"Engendered Penalties" a research project undertaken by [Press for Change](#) found the following:

- ❑ **73% of respondents experienced abuse and 10% experienced assault when they first "cross-dressed" in public**
- ❑ **During transition 47% stopped using social/ leisure facilities and did not resume after completing gender reassignment**
- ❑ **On revealing the need to transition to families and friends 45% experienced family breakdown and 37% were excluded from family events**
- ❑ **At school: 64% of trans boys and 44% of trans girls experienced bullying**



And the reason for this is? Mostly people being afraid of what society will think or reacting from a basis of ignorance and prejudice rather than a place of understanding and empathy.

So what are these underlying discourses that have such power to colour our thoughts and behaviour?

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus the idea of a straight forward gender binary split between the sexes determining the roles we believe people should perform in society, our ideas about the family and how we should dress and behave is a most deep seated attitude and is at the root of much prejudice against trans people. Take time to explore your own assumptions about gender so you are more aware when they are colouring your behaviour and attitude.

It is against nature/ It's a Lifestyle Choice follows on from the assumption that there is a fixed gender binary and everyone fits it neatly, therefore to step outside it or transition is a lifestyle choice. The danger with this assumption is that it minimises the real, lived experience of people who need to transition or live in the opposite gender and can often be heard creeping into comments about the prioritisation of services e.g. health care and treatment in comparison to other medical conditions. Living in the gender I was labelled at birth was against my nature, who I am now feels totally natural.

Cross-dressing expressing gender variance or needing to transition is not the same as dressing up for fancy dress. The person is expressing their identity in a way that feels comfortable for them. Within the wider trans community there are a myriad of ways of gendered expression. Take time to find out more and try not to make assumptions.

LGB&T there has long been an assumption that transsexuality is another sexuality. Trans people can be Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Asexual or Heterosexual just like anyone else. The trans community and LGB community have often faced similar kinds of abuse and exclusion and have formed political, social and cultural links when necessary but they also have different needs and face different barriers. The alliance is not always a comfortable one. LGB people are no more likely than heterosexual people to know or understand anything about trans people and some heterosexual trans people can feel excluded within the LGB&T alliance whilst trans people who are LGB themselves are more likely to feel at home within the LGB&T grouping. Again, don't make assumptions.

We Don't Mean You... the way unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping play out in the workplace or when dealing with service users tends to come in the following forms. Most people don't mean to hurt or exclude but recognising the implications of the things you say without thinking is a step in the right direction towards understanding and empathy.

The Other / It it is tempting for those who do not understand (or do not wish to understand) expressions of gender variance to treat people as "the other," and the most common way this is expressed is in comments such as "he, she, it..." When a person transitions or does not fit into the expected gender binary they do not cease to be human. Classifying us as "it" is the slippery slope to dehumanisation and opens up the door to permitting further abuse or even violence.

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You're one of us it doesn't make it alright when colleagues make comments about a trans service user in front of us when our workmates clap us patronisingly on the shoulder and say "we don't mean you Josh... You're one of us." Actually they do mean me because they have just revealed their animosity and attitude towards trans people by their comments and, even if you don't mean me, it is still not ok to ridicule trans service users.

I was only joking no you were not. Just accept you have said something hurtful and apologise.

You look just like a real man/woman often meant as support or encouragement but is really patronising. Gee thanks.

What you do in your private life is up to you thanks, I had no intention of sharing anything private with you but unfortunately transitioning is not a private process. The implication behind this comment is that being transgender is something deviant that I should do out of sight. Not pleasant.

How do you..? The opposite of the comment above is the too intrusive or invasive question. Some people don't mind sharing intimate information but if you wouldn't ask another colleague the same question it is probably not appropriate to ask us. If a trans person is happy to answer questions they will usually make that clear e.g. when a:gender runs open events we usually offer the chance to ask those burning questions in a safe environment and reserve the right not to answer.

I don't mean to be rude/ personal but yes you do. If you have to prefix a comment like this then don't ask it.

Being more aware of the assumptions we are making and the stereotypes that are informing our comments and behaviour means we are free to ask the right questions, to build up knowledge, to understand the differences and nuances within the trans community and so build up confidence to challenge ignorance and prejudice.

This article first appeared in issue 8 of **a:gender** news.

a:gender is the support network for staff in government departments and agencies who have changed, or need to change permanently, their perceived gender or who identify as intersex.

If you are interested in joining **a:gender** or would like more information, please contact:

Dee (a:gender Policy Lead)
Second Floor, Peel Building,
2 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 4DF

Telephone: 020 7035 4253 or
0114 207 2547

Email: agender@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Or visit www.agender.org.uk



Do You Have an Example of Good Practice?

LAGIP continues to strive in promoting good practice and challenge discriminatory / oppressive practices within the service.

Over the coming months it would be really useful to identify examples of good practice within CAFCASS or the Probation Trusts.

If anyone feels that their area has contributed to the positive and fair treatment of LGB&T staff, offenders or victims; then let us know!

Please email your stories to admin@lagip.org.uk

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Visit our website at www.lagip.org.uk



Photo by -Marlith-

JULY 2010

- Saturday 31 July 2010
Norwich Pride

AUGUST 2010

- Sunday 1 August 2010
Leeds Pride
- Saturday 7 August 2010
Brighton and Hove Gay Pride - Parade and park party
- Saturday 7 August 2010
Liverpool Pride
- Saturday 14 August 2010
Stoke Pride
- 16-22 August 2010, parade on Saturday 21 August 2010
Pride Bristol
- 20-30 August 2010
Manchester Gay Pride - Festival
- Saturday 21 August 2010
Lincolnshire Pride
- Saturday 28 August 2010
Manchester Gay Pride - Parade
- Saturday 28 August 2010
Cornwall Gay Pride - @Truro

SEPTEMBER 2010

- Saturday 4 September 2010
Reading Gay Pride

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- ❑ Saturday 4 September 2010
Cardiff Mardis Gras – *Our very own Vice Chair **Amanda Watts** will be running a stall with GALIPS and the Rainbow Network – don't miss it!*
- ❑ Sunday 5 September 2010
Barnsley Gay Pride
- ❑ Saturday 18 September 2010
Worcester Pride

OCTOBER 2010

- ❑ 6-9 October 2010
Iris Prize - LGBT Film Festival - @Cardiff



For more LGB&T events visit
www.gaytoz.com



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SEPTEMBER 2010**

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Clinical Professor of Plastic Surgery,
University of California, USA
&
Lee Gale

Co-Founder of TransBareAll

FULL CONFERENCE COST £165 PER DELEGATE
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and Saturday Evening 3-Course Gala Dinner and Dance

DAY DELEGATES welcome @ £70 PER DAY
includes midday meals and refreshments

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Social Issues.
Life Stories

FOR DETAILS CONTACT:
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TANTALLON, 14 CHANDLER ROAD,
UPPER STOKE HOLY CROSS,
NORWICH, NR14 8RG
TEL/FAX: 01508 492551

An
'Information
Market Place'
will be run
during the
conference

E-MAIL:
TGconferences@transgender-advice.com

WEBSITE:
www.transgender-advice.com

Supported by:
Norfolk County Council Social Services, NHS Norfolk, Press For Change, Beaumont Society,
Town Close Gender Identity Clinic, Gender Trust, BT, Gendys, Oasis Support Group, Gires, Norfolk Constabulary

lesbian
gay
bisexual
trans
**history
month**

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans History Month takes place every year in February, celebrating the lives and achievements of the LGB&T community.

We encourage everyone to see diversity and cultural pluralism as the positive forces that they are and endeavour to reflect this in all we do.

If you would like to get involved, Chris Parks from the **Rainbow Network** welcomes volunteers to help out at the National Archives.

This month they're dropping by the Archives on **Wednesday 4th August.**

Contact chris.park@justice.gsi.gov.uk to find out how to join in.



Working in Partnership to Tackle Hate Crime in Every Local Community

TEN YEARS ON from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, much progress has been made in tackling hate crime in the community with significant improvements in investigation processes and prosecution rates.

Nevertheless, with recent statistics showing hate crime on the rise, a new symposium from the Public Policy Exchange will offer a timely opportunity for local authorities, community safety teams, equality and third sector practitioners and other key stakeholders to:

- **Gain an understanding of the legal framework for tackling hate crime**
- **Explore the next steps in strengthening prevention and intervention procedures and improving prosecution rates**
Consider how to raise awareness of disability hate crime and improve responses amongst the public and front-line practitioners
- **Discuss how to improve the security and safety of disabled people to empower them to live their lives**
Share best practice in eradicating hate crime within every local community

When: Thursday 16th September 2010

Where: Guoman Charing Cross Hotel, The Strand, London

For further details, please [click here to download the event brochure or visit...](http://publicpolicyexchange.co.uk/events/AI16-PPE.php#details)

<http://publicpolicyexchange.co.uk/events/AI16-PPE.php#details>

If you or your colleagues wish to attend, [click here to visit the registration page and download and submit the relevant booking form or visit...](http://publicpolicyexchange.co.uk/register.php)

<http://publicpolicyexchange.co.uk/register.php>



If you'd like to advertise a forthcoming LGB&T event within our newsletter please email admin@lagip.org.uk