

Creating Trans Inclusive Spaces:

Advice & Ideas from Young Trans People



evolve

map

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Introduction

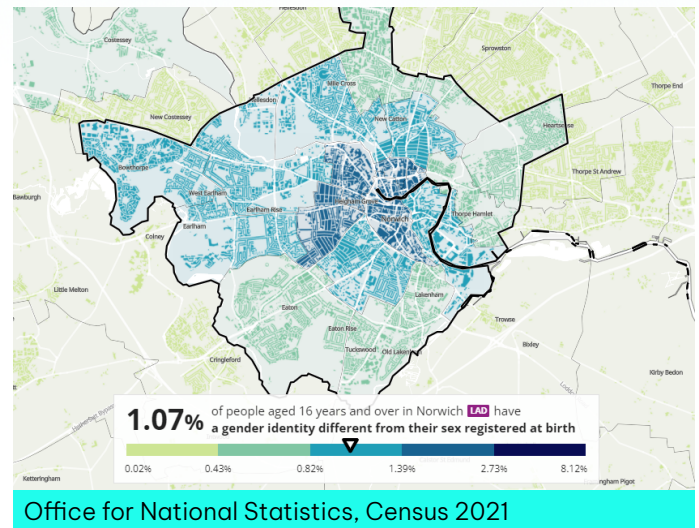
The 2021 census revealed that Norwich has the second-highest proportion of trans and non-binary people outside London. It also has the third highest number of LGB+ people outside of London.

However, young trans people in Norfolk describe mixed experiences of how they have experienced treatment from others in public and when engaging with services and organisations. Many have gladly seen improvements over the years, but there is still much to be done. Often transphobia comes from lack of knowledge, or people feeling that they don't know what the right thing to say or do is – and then saying or doing nothing, contributing to young people feeling isolated and invisible.

All too often young people find themselves needing to educate others in how to be more inclusive and respectful – talking about the basics of remembering to get names and pronouns rights and providing inclusive activities and facilities such as toilets is still taking up young people's time and energy. What can be extremely debilitating to wellbeing is when these discussions become a toxic debate, questioning the validity of a person's identity.

Young trans people don't want 'special treatment', but they do want and deserve respect, understanding and sensitivity to 'even the playing field' in order to enjoy every opportunity to thrive equally alongside their cis peers.

Here, young trans people have shared their experiences, thoughts, and feelings to help others to reflect upon how they may engage fully with the trans population, provide safe and relevant events, services and activities, and create a truly inclusive environment. These resources use the term trans as an umbrella term to mean people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth; this includes (but is not limited to) people who may describe themselves as mtf or male-to-female,



ftm or female-to-male, gender-questioning, cross dresser, non-binary, gender-fluid, agender or genderqueer; intersex young people may or may not identify as trans. Everyone's story is different – listen to the individual.

Special thanks to the young people involved, seen and unseen for their contribution to this project.

Dos & Don'ts

The internet has many 'dos and don'ts' articles and videos – this is what we have to say!

Do

- ✓ ...use the name I ask you to use for me
- ✓ ...use my preferred pronouns – if you're not sure of what they are, it's okay to ask
- ✓ ...say "Hi (preferred name), I love your hair today!" I.e, just be 'normal' with me!
- ✓ ...TREAT ME HOW YOU'D LIKE TO BE TREATED, SPEAK TO ME HOW YOU'D LIKE TO BE SPOKEN TO

Don't

- ✗ ...include my deadname in brackets when referring to me e.g 'Sam (Alex)'
- ✗ ...say "But you were born male/female"
- ✗ ...say "But your new name is sooo hard to remember"
- ✗ ...ask me about 'how sex works'
- ✗ ...ask me about my genitals. To be clear: DON'T ASK ME ABOUT MY GENITALS!
- ✗ ...treat us like we're somehow 'different creatures'



How to be a great ally & create safe inclusive spaces for trans people

Respect one another and the space (including in virtual spaces online)

Respect everyone's identities – names and pronouns. Using badges or starting an activity with introductions is an easy way to ensure everyone has the chance to express themselves authentically.

Respect confidentiality – maybe people feel safe using certain names, pronouns or describe themselves with labels with you that they may not use elsewhere; don't risk 'outing' people – if in doubt ask.

If you know somebody's deadname or have privileged information about their trans history this is not for you to share.

Listen to others and encourage open-mindedness.

Be sensitive in your choice of language and actions



Understand that everyone is at a different stage of their gender journey – don't make assumptions.

Be aware that others may have triggers, but also be mindful of your own – do what you need to do to keep yourself safe.

Give everyone an opportunity to express themselves.

Promote a setting where cliques don't form, this aids inclusivity.

Remember all trans people are valid, there is no such thing as not being 'trans enough'.

If running a group or activity, give people the opportunity to meet you individually first. It may help if they can meet just one peer first – joining a new group, meeting new people can be very daunting.

Keep challenging yourself, keep questioning – are you being as inclusive as you can be? Listen to those using your service.

Have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, bigotry, hatred, and violence; no level of homophobia or transphobia is acceptable.

Cultivating a happy, safe space helps us to grow.



Here are some things we'd like you to know, based on our experiences

Think about our words and why they're important. How could you show support as an ally?

Gender can be...complicated, fluid, changing.

Not everyone is what they appear to you on the outside.

"If your LGBTQIA+ employees/ service users say that something's not right – trust and believe them."

Before starting high school, my parents had to specify my sex on a form. There was so much surrounding separating boys and girls. For instance, in music, the boys and girls (or those seen as such) had to sing at different points. I was highlighted as the one that was not singing. I felt a ton of pressure to pretend to be a girl. A peer congratulated me for not being 'weird' in the locker room.

Maybe if I didn't need to go to a meeting to declare the identity I was going with at high school, I wouldn't have felt pressured into a highly inaccurate one. Also, it would have helped if my GP hadn't kept refusing to refer me to Tavistock (Gender Identity Development Services for under 18s) instead of CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) – who are not gender specialists.



**What's in a name? Letters!
But also a sense of identity,
the real you and a feeling of
warmth and joy when it sails
through the air and sends
sparks to your heart.**

**Sometimes I find it hard to be
proud of being trans, and then
at the end of the day I realise
I'm just a boy, and that's okay.**

**Be kind and try to learn –
want to learn! Learn from
younger generations. Want to
encourage people of all ages to
work together. School should
not be one-way-learning.**

**Is representation important?
Just seeing photos of trans
people being included makes me
feel good!**

**What lifts me up? When
heterosexual cisgender people
show support and come to
Pride!**

**Using the right pronoun is
important, because to me, 'she'
can be a punch in the gut. A
slap to the face, and 'they', the
final K.O."**

**Ask respectfully about
boundaries – this differs from
person to person.**

Pronouns

Including pronouns on name badges/lanyards and email signatures is very helpful as our pronouns may not always be obvious, but also this creates an environment of equality through normalising the sharing of pronouns.

to validate everyone's identity, including those who have changed the way they describe their identities.



This may not be something people are used to doing and may need support in understanding why it is important. They may also need help understanding things like neo pronouns. Valuing different gender expressions and pronoun preferences is a simple, inexpensive way

Media

Be mindful of where you get your news – always check your sources on trans issues. It can be tricky knowing what to trust, many trans people recommend Pink News and The Guardian; The BBC have produced 'BBC Voices' and 'BBC Social' which have offered objectively neutral perspectives. Organisations that include trans staff in supporting trans people e.g. Mermaids, Gendered Intelligence and Stonewall, are more likely to be trustworthy sources of information.

Check out Trans Media Watch (transmediawatch.org) – it helps people in the media to understand trans issues and produce clear, accurate, respectful material. It also helps trans

and intersex people who are interacting with the media to get results they are comfortable with.

www.thepinknews.com

www.theguardian.com

www.bbc.co.uk/voices

www.bbc.co.uk/thesocial

www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

www.genderedintelligence.co.uk

www.stonewall.org.uk

www.transmediawatch.org

Pride

The commercial/corporate nature of some Pride events – and ‘rainbow washing’ – can devalue the impact of the rainbow symbol of intersectional diversity.

This can also create non-sustainability, i.e. our allies need to be sustainable, not only standing by us at Pride but all year round. Actions are needed, not tokenistic statements.

Also, LGBT+ employees and service users are not to be paraded to promote your organisation’s equality and diversity – you can do so much more to raise awareness and support us: use

your platform to promote local and countrywide events. Instead of just rainbow cakes and flags in June, have an LGBT+ noticeboard visible year-round, showing support for local events – talk to the organisers about how you can help.



Toilets

Period products can be openly provided in any bathroom – people who menstruate may need to use the facility regardless of whether it says male, female, gender-neutral or anything else on the door. At the very least this may help towards demystifying periods and those who experience it.

Make your toilets and changing rooms etc. safe spaces for EVERYONE. Do this by making it about the space and not the person.

Gender neutral toilets are so important for EVERYONE to feel comfortable and included.

As a trans man who has lived with gender dysphoria the majority of my life, the importance of gender neutral toilets is vital. It drastically improves trans mental health and increases the safety of a group of people who are targeted for being themselves.

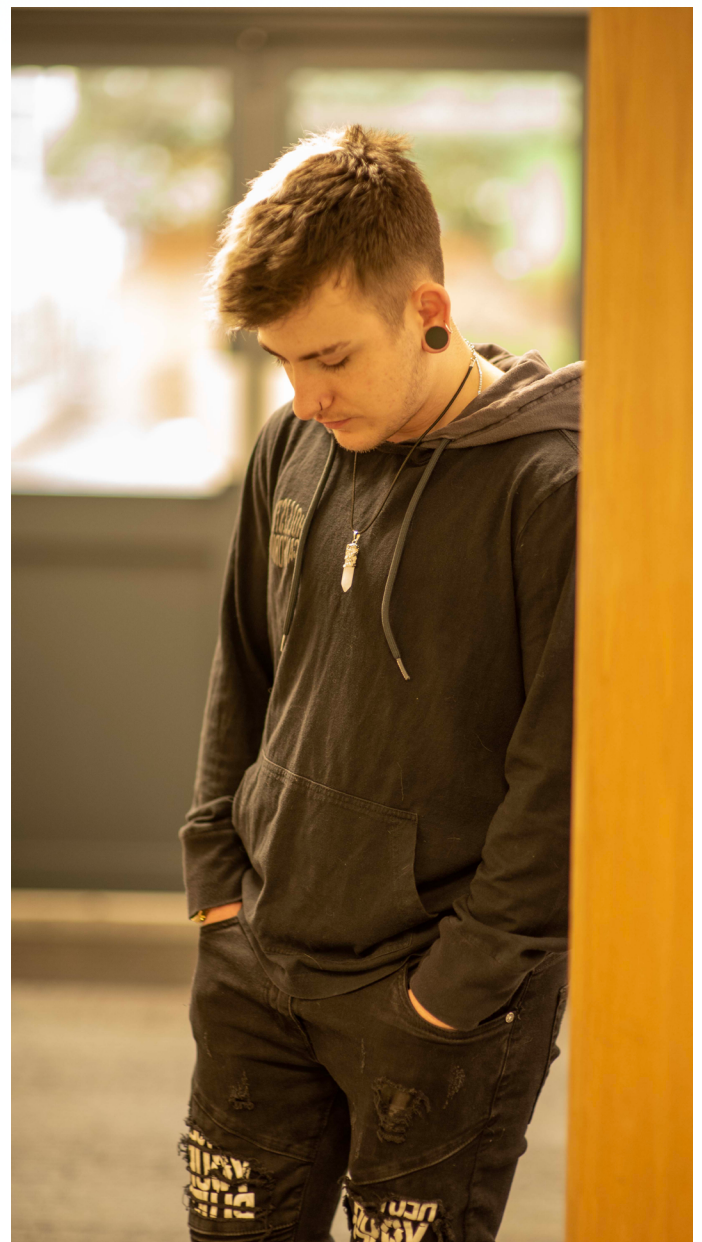
Using bathrooms in public can be intimidating. Changing signs on a bathroom door may seem minor, but it means a lot to trans and non-binary folk in feeling safe and welcome.

It is hypocritical to decorate your offices with pride flags and celebrate your organisation's inclusivity if you are not providing gender-neutral toilets – an action (or inaction) that directly targets trans people.

Toilets are a trans person's nightmare. It's embarrassing, humiliating and anxiety-inducing. By making toilets more inclusive you do us all a favour.

At the beginning of my transition I was very uncomfortable using public toilets. Knowing gender-neutral toilets are provided helps me feel much more comfortable using them.

As someone who identifies as male, I feel that gender neutral toilets are a lot more inclusive and make men, women and non-binary people much more comfortable. To add to this, it makes spaces much more comfortable for pre-transition people.



Services and resources we've used that we trust

Local

MAP | Free advice, youth work, and mental health support for young people aged 11-25

map.uk.net

Evolve | MAP's peer-support group in Norwich for young people who are trans, non-binary, intersex and/or questioning their gender. Evolve is open to young people aged 11-16 and 16-25.

map.uk.net/here-you/activities-groups/evolve

Norwich Pride | A celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community for everyone. Our mission is to live in a city where everyone can feel safe and proud to be themselves.

norwichpride.org.uk

Willows | Support for trans women, non-binary individuals, and those who are questioning, and who were assigned male at birth, or individuals that are intersex and feel the group fits their needs.

Facebook | [Gender Identity Support Norfolk & Waveney Willows](#)

Oaks | Support for transgender and non-binary individuals as well as those questioning and who were assigned female at birth, or individuals that are intersex and feel the group fits their needs.

Facebook | [Gender Identity Support Norfolk Oaks](#)

Norfolk LGBT+ Project | LGBT+ health and wellbeing service provider, providing early intervention and prevention support, services, and information to all age groups so we can help empower individuals to improve their mental and emotional wellbeing and to reduce social isolation of LGBT+ individuals living in Norfolk and Waveney. (including: BLAH LGBTQ+ Youth Groups).

norfolklgbtproject.org.uk

Norfolk & Waveney Mind |

LGBT+ health and wellbeing service
A local mental health charity offering an extensive range of mental health services, along with associated training, advice and information.

mind.org.uk

OASIS Norfolk | A self help and support group for trans-people and their partners, family and friends.
oasis norfolk – For the trans community in East Anglia
(oasisnorfolk.com)

Norfolk and Waveney Mind: A local mental health charity offering an extensive range of mental health services, along with associated training, advice and information.

oasisnorfolk.com

National

Switchboard | A one-stop listening service for LGBT+ people on the phone, by email and through instant messaging. A safe space for anyone to discuss anything, including sexuality, gender identity, sexual health and emotional well-being.

0800 0119 100
switchboard.lgbt

Mermaids | Supporting trans, non-binary and gender-diverse children, young people and their families since 1995 (information and support for young people, parents/guardians and professionals).

mermaids.org.uk

Gendered Intelligence | A registered charity that works to increase understandings of gender diversity and improve the lives of trans people.

genderedintelligence.co.uk

Stonewall | UK LGBT+ rights charity in the United Kingdom. It is the largest LGBT+ rights organisation in Europe, named after the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York.

stonewall.org.uk

GIRES | (Gender Identity Research & Education Society): A UK charity whose purpose is to improve the lives of trans and gender diverse people of all ages, including those who are non-binary and non-gender.

gires.org.uk

GALOP | UK LGBT+ anti-abuse charity, working with and for LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse and violence.

galop.org.uk

Evolve

evolve@map.uk.net
www.map.uk.net/here-you/
activities-groups/evolve



MAP

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Charity number: 1107927