

# COMING OUT AS TRANS

Useful information, tips and advice for trans young people and those who are exploring their gender identity or gender expression...

# USEFUL INFORMATION

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This is a guide to support you if you are trans or exploring your gender identity or gender expression.

You may have known you are trans for a long time or you may be questioning your gender identity. It is normal to feel a range of emotions including feeling scared, alone, worried or anxious. These are feelings many trans young people feel – especially if they are keeping the information to themselves.

## What Is Trans?

Trans is an umbrella term that describes when someone's gender identity or gender expression is different from the sex they were given at birth. When you were born, people might have assumed you were female and would grow up to be a woman, but you may feel as though you are not a woman and may want to identify your gender in a different way. The umbrella part of the term covers a wide range of identities including trans men, trans women and non-binary folk. There are many ways to be trans and many words to describe this experience.

It can be easy to confuse sex and gender. Sex is assigned at birth as male or female related to genitalia, chromosomes and hormones. Gender is how you feel about yourself. How you chose to express your gender is your own personal choice.

## Being transgender is part of who you are.

There is no right way for a person to figure out that they are trans. Nothing can make a person transgender in the same way nothing makes a person cisgender.

Certain things may help you understand if you are trans such as feeling uncomfortable with:

- Gender-specific parts of your body.
- Being referred to as a boy/girl, man/woman.
- The development of sex characteristics such as breasts and facial hair. This may result in a heightened level of body image issues. Gender dysphoria is a term to describe this discomfort.

“TRANS PEOPLE ARE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, IN THAT YOU'RE A NORMAL PERSON, YOU JUST ALSO HAPPEN TO BE TRANS.”

**Jay**

# TRANS TERMS

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**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of their gender, including how they feel about, think about and view their own gender.

**Sex Assigned at Birth:** A person may be assigned female or male usually based on observation of external genitals. However, this does not necessarily reflect how a person will identify themselves.

**Transgender/Trans:** People whose gender identity doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Trans Man:** Someone who is a man but was assigned female at birth and identifies as trans. Some trans men socially and/or medically transition in order for their body to better reflect their gender.

**Trans Woman:** Someone who is a woman but was assigned male at birth and identifies as trans. Some trans women socially and/or medically transition in order for their body to better reflect their gender.

**Non-binary:** Someone who identifies as neither exclusively male or female or maybe identifies as both.

**Gender Expression:** How someone shows their gender through clothes, hair, behaviour etc.

**Gender Dysphoria:** Distress resulting from a difference between a person's gender identity and the person's assigned sex at birth, associated gender role, and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics.

**AFAB:** Assigned female at birth.

**AMAB:** Assigned male at birth.

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual and romantic attraction. Trans is not a sexual orientation. Trans people can have any sexual orientation.

**Cisgender:** Someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Pronouns:** Ways people refer to themselves – often related to gender e.g. he/she/they.

**Binding:** Compressing one's chest to create a more androgynous or masculine appearance. This should be done with a chest binder designed specifically for this purpose. This can have negative impacts on your physical health – we advise you to talk to your healthcare provider about it and we do not promote the use of binders.

**Tucking:** Tucking is a practice used by some transgender women and gender-nonconforming individuals to minimise or hide the bulge of their genitals, creating a flatter and more typically feminine appearance.

# COMING OUT & STAYING SAFE

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## Coming Out

*Coming out means sharing your gender identity with people in your life.*

There is no right or wrong way to come out as trans. What is important is that you do it in a way that feels right for you when it is safe for you to do so.

Some people find it easier to first come out to a close friend, or an adult that they trust. This could be a teacher, a youth worker or another trans person. Others feel it's important to come out to family members before anyone else. Coming out is different for everyone. However you choose to do it, it's important that you are happy for this person to know. Remember, you do not need to come out to everyone at once.

COMING OUT IS  
YOUR CHOICE, NOT  
AN OBLIGATION.

## Staying Safe

While many people feel a weight lifted after they come out, others can feel scared that it won't be a safe experience for them. Your safety is the most important thing. You don't need to tell anyone until you are ready. If the conversation gets too difficult for you, consider stopping and talking about it a later time.

Reflect on who you can talk to and lean on for support if you don't receive the reaction you were hoping for. It could be a friend, a teacher or a therapist that you can reach out to for support during this process.

At BeLonG To, we support LGBTI+ Youth Groups across Ireland where you can meet other trans young people who can share their coming out experiences with you. There are also trans communities online creating a safe place to share the pains and joys of coming out.

There are lots of ways you can choose to come out. If you find the thought of face-to-face communication too difficult, you can write a letter or send an email or message. We have a guide for family members which you can share with your family to help them understand trans identities. Do what feels right for you.

# COMING OUT TO YOUR FAMILY

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Coming out to your family can be scary. You may have been keeping this information to yourself for some time. You may be worried that they will reject you or not take this news well. Your family members may experience some of the same feelings you have gone through when you let them know. Remember that they need time to process these feelings and catch up. They may not yet understand trans identities or the difference between sex and gender. You have had time to think about what you wanted to say. Give your family some time to get used to it. Their first reaction may not be how they actually feel.

The information may come as a surprise and this may be the first time they have thought of you in this way. They may look for a reason or someone to blame. It is important to help them understand that being trans is not a part of you that anyone can change, and that you are being true to your real self.

Some trans young people write a letter and give it to their parents to allow them time to process the news. You could also give it them a copy of this booklet or our guide for families available at [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

# THINGS TO CONSIDER

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Before you come out, give yourself some time to reflect on all or some of the following:



**Time:**

There may never be “the perfect time” but choose a moment when you have enough time to say what you need to say. Try not to tell someone in the middle of an argument or during a big family occasion such as Christmas Day.



**Location:**

Choose somewhere that will give you privacy and somewhere you feel comfortable and safe.



**Words:**

Decide what you are going to say and the right way to do it for you. Some people simply say “I’m trans,” “I’ve known for some time that I am trans” or “I’m not sure of my gender identity”.



**Reactions:**

You may not get the reaction you expected or hoped for. Give people time to get used to this – their first reaction may not be how they actually feel.



**Be Prepared:**

Educate yourself on what being trans is as the person you tell may have lots of questions. Bring resources to help them learn more about trans identities.



**Feeling Ready:**

You don’t have to come out, it is a choice. Be sure you want to come out at this time rather than feeling that you have to.



**Support Systems:**

Consider who you can lean on if things get bad when you come out – friends, a teacher, a youth worker, BeLonG To or other support services.

# THINGS I WISH I KNEW...

## Words of Solidarity

We asked young people in IndividualiTy our Dublin based youth group for trans, non-binary and questioning folk what they wish they had known before they came out. Here, we share their words of support.



I wish I knew that there will always be support. A youth group can be a good place to find support and make friends going through similar things as you.



I wish I knew it would get better, and that I could choose my family instead of suffering in the closet for years.



I wish I knew to try and get to a support group ASAP. Safe spaces are amazing for the trans community.



I wish I knew that I was not alone and that I was going to make so many new friends.



I wish I knew it was OK to be how I am, and that there are supports were available.

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

**Youth Groups:** IndividualiTy is a weekly group for trans, non-binary and questioning young people that takes place from 5.30-7.30pm in the Office of the Ombudsman for Children in Dublin. We also support LGBTI+ youth groups across Ireland. Visit [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org) for more info.

**Crisis Counselling:** In partnership with Pieta, we offer free counselling for those who are self-harming or thinking of suicide. To book an appointment, email [belongto@pieta.ie](mailto:belongto@pieta.ie) or call Pieta Dublin South on 01 462 4792.

**TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland)** offer a range of support services including peer support and family resources. Visit [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie) for more information.

# TRANSITIONING

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Transitioning is a process through which trans people change their gender expression to match their gender identity.

## Transitioning

Transitioning is a totally unique process for everyone and can range from minor changes (such as names and pronouns) to more long-term changes (such as surgery and hormones).

There is no one way to live your life as a trans young person. Start with trying out some of the smaller changes and see how it feels for you. As you decide which, if any, steps to take, it can help to talk about these feelings with others.

“TO ME, BEING  
TRANS IS BEING MY  
TRUE SELF AFTER  
HIDING FOR YEARS.”

## Social Transitioning

This may involve changing your appearance such as how you dress, your hair or your make-up. It can also involve the use of bathrooms and changing rooms that suit your gender identity.

Part of coming out can be asking people to call you by a different name or use a different pronoun. Some trans people refer to the name they were given at birth as their “birthname” or “deadname”. Pronouns are words you use to talk about someone when you don’t use their name for example he/him/his, her/she/hers or they/them/theirs.

When you first come out, people may struggle with your pronouns and name and make genuine mistakes. Let them know why changing your name and pronoun is important to you and reflects who you truly are.



# LEGALLY TRANSITIONING

Some steps that may be taken to legally transition to better reflect your gender identity include:

## Legally Changing your Name

A deed poll must be executed to legally change a name from a birthname to a new name. A deed poll is a signed declaration by a person. The person who signs it is held to whatever the statement contains from that point on. For example, a deed poll for a change of name means you are then legally only known by your new name and declaring that you are abandoning your old name. If you are between 14 and 17 years, you need the consent for both of your parents/guardians to execute a deed poll. To find out how to execute a deed poll visit [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) or get in touch and we can offer you support.

## Applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate

The Gender Recognition Act 2015 allows individuals over the age of 18 to self-declare their own gender identity by applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate. Where a certificate is issued, a person's gender becomes their gender on legal documents going forward. With a Gender Recognition Certificate, a person can apply to change their gender marker on documents including a passport and birth certificate. The application form is available from [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

For 16 and 17-year-olds, it is possible to apply for legal recognition, however the process is more complicated. Parental/guardian consent is required, alongside a certificate from two medical practitioners and then a person must then apply to the Circuit Family Court with this consent and an application form. More information is available from [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)

## REMEMBER!

You can decide to change your name at any time. There is no legal procedure for changing your name with friends and family. Be true to yourself and go down the path that feels right for you!

\* Some of this information may change due to a review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015. Check out our website for updated information.

# MEDICALLY TRANSITIONING

Making the decision to medically transition can be scary and most people have no idea where to start.

Below are the first steps to take if you've decided to medically transition which may include the use of hormone blockers, hormone replacement therapy or surgery. If you are considering medically transitioning, talk to an adult you trust like your parents/guardians, a teacher or a youth worker.

If you are under 18*	If you are over 18*
<p>You will need adult support, preferably from a parent, guardian or caregiver. You can also talk to your school's guidance counsellor or pastoral care team.</p>	<p>Ask your GP To refer you to St. Columcille's Hospital in Loughlinstown, Dublin. This is the designated 'National Gender Services' and they provide a service to those over 18.</p>
<p>Your local LGBTI+ service will be able to support you and help your family and school if needed.</p>	<p>You will be placed on a waiting list for a Team Assessment from the National Gender Services. Please note the waiting list can take over 12 months.</p>
<p>At the GP, ask for a referral to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and a referral to the Tavistock satellite clinic (hosted in Crumlin's Our Lady's Hospital).</p>	<p>Following this you will be referred to the liaison psychiatry service for diagnosis of gender dysphoria - this is required to medically transition.</p>
<p>Your GP can refer you to Tavistock, hosted in Crumlin, however an application to the Treatment Abroad Scheme (needed to access Tavistock in Ireland) must be signed by a consultant. This may be a consultant from CAMHS or a pediatric consultant seen privately.</p>	<p>You will then be referred on to the endocrinology unit for treatment.</p>
<p>Trans young people under 18 may get access to hormone blockers to pause puberty, but they cannot access surgery.</p>	<p>There are two other HSE Endocrinologists that provide treatment options for trans individuals in University Hospital, Galway and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda.</p>

\* This information may change with time, so please check in BeLonG To for more up-to-date details if needed.

# BEING TRANS AT SCHOOL

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If you are still at school and transitioning, take some time to think about whether you want to come out at school.

Talk to your guidance counsellor, year head or principal about how they can support you – if you feel safe to share this information with them. Think about bringing a family member or friend along for this conversation to offer your support. Together create a plan about how to go forward – remember you are the expert on your identity. Listen to your gut and make decisions that are right for you.

## **Names and Pronouns**

Let your school know how important it is to call you by your preferred name and pronouns in day-to-day interactions. Changing your name or gender on the school register is a decision the Board of Management makes, but this should not impact everyday use of your name of choice.

## **Uniforms**

Many schools have gendered uniforms which can cause challenges for trans students. You should be allowed to wear a uniform that is consistent with your gender identity. If your school does not have variations in the uniform e.g. skirts and trousers, you may need to ask for specific accommodations like a gender-neutral option. If you aren't happy with how your school handles the uniform policy, talk to your principal. If this isn't

helpful, write to the Board of Management and let them know what changes you would like to see in the uniform policy.

## **Bathrooms and Changing Rooms**

You should be able to access toilets and changing facilities that correspond with your gender identity. Being able to access gender neutral toilets can be particularly important as someone transitions. Talk to the school about your needs relating to feeling safe in spaces such as bathrooms and changing rooms.

## **Transphobic Bullying**

Some trans people experience bullying because they are trans. This is known as transphobic bullying and it is never acceptable. Transphobic bullying must be named on your school's bullying policy according to the Government of Ireland's 2013 Action Plan on Bullying. If you experience transphobic bullying at school, talk to your year head or principal. If this is not helpful, write a letter to the Board of Management letting them know about your experiences. If you have exhausted all these avenues and are still not happy with the response from the school, you have the authority to go to the Ombudsman for Children ([www.oco.ie](http://www.oco.ie)) with your complaint.

# WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

## BeLonG To provides



Free Crisis Counselling  
in partnership with Pieta



Monday Chats - information  
service for LGBTI+ young people



LGBTI+ Youth Groups - safe,  
welcoming spaces for peer support

info@belongto.org  
01 670 6223  
www.belongto.org

## Useful Support Services

### TENI

(Transgender Equality Network Ireland)  
www.teni.ie

### Gender Identity Family Support Line

01 907 3707

### LGBT Helpline

1890 929 539

### Crisis Textline:

Text LGBTI+ to 086 1800 280  
for 24/7 support

### LGBTI+ Ireland

www.lgbt.ie

### Gay Project

www.gayproject.ie

### Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

### Pieta

www.pieta.ie

Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual &  
Trans Young People in Ireland

belong<sup>TO</sup>

Charity Registration Number: 20059798 CHY # 16534



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthai Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs



Rialtas na hÉireann  
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Connecting for Life