

Britain Yearly Meeting Children and Young People's Work



Event & Activity Management Policy Procedures & Guidance 24 Supporting Gender Diverse young people

This procedure applies to all Britain Yearly Meeting centrally managed work with children and young people (see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/event-and-activity-management>)

Introduction

As a Quaker body we are committed to our testimony of equality and believe there is that of God in everyone. We accept everybody irrespective of how they choose to identify and present themselves. (*Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 minute 38 refers*)

In recent years at Quaker youth events there is increasing gender diversity. In order to respond to the needs of young people who attend these events it is necessary to consider the best ways to support their needs. All young Quakers have an equal right to participate in Quaker events and experience belonging in their Quaker community. It is important to ensure young people are not prevented from participating based on their gender needs.

Equality Act 2010: This act protects gender variant and trans children and young people with the protected characteristic of *gender reassignment*. This applies to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process of reassigning their sex. For this to apply, they do not have to be undergoing a medical procedure to change their sex, but are proposing to take active steps to transition socially.

So far, the law has not acknowledged non binary or genderless individuals, but the Women & Equality Committee Report (January 2015) has mentioned these identities. In the interest of best practice, it is recommended to take steps to be inclusive of all gender identities. For example, refer to "all genders" instead of "both genders".

Being trans

Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, non-binary, gender queer.

The Gender Identity Research & Education Society (GIRES) estimates that at least 1% of the whole British population are gender nonconforming to some degree. *GIRES*

Not all gender variant children will grow up to identify as trans. In the Metro Youth Chances report 2016, over half of LGBQ respondents (53%) knew they were LGBQ by the age of 13. Over half of trans respondents (58%) knew they were trans by the same age.

Just over 9 in 10 LGBTQ young people report learning nothing about trans issues at school. Nearly half of LGBTQ young people say their time at school was affected by discrimination or fear of discrimination *Metro Youth Chances 2016*

More than four in five trans young people (84%) have deliberately harmed themselves at some point and more than two in five (45%) have at some point attempted to take their own life.

Stonewall School Report 2017.

Children can realise at a young age that they don't feel comfortable with their assigned gender. It is important to listen to the child, be supportive and be guided by them. Creating an environment that celebrates diversity and avoids promoting rigid gender stereotypes enables, *all* children to feel able to express their true identity. The most important thing is for the child to feel accepted for who they are.

We have a responsibility in ensuring all those in our care are safe and supported to reach their full potential. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability may need additional support in understanding or accepting their own identity, learning about those who are different to them, and understanding that difference is to be respected and celebrated.

Creating a safe space

The Equality Act should be taken into account when supporting all participants. In terms of gender variant and trans participants, those working with children and young people must involve them in all decisions. It is important to note that these needs will vary, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach in providing support. However, the support given must be consistent. Integral to this is putting the best interests of the person at the core.

Ensure all staff and volunteers are informed about and develop confidence in understanding gender and trans presentation, terminology and vocabulary e.g. correct use of pronouns, and in challenging gender stereotypes, sexism and transphobia. Be aware of wider campaigns around gender for example Anti-Bullying Week in November, LGBT history month in February and Trans Day of Remembrance (TDOR) in November. Some useful tools that help people understand gender as a spectrum are bit.ly/GenderbreadPerson - or bit.ly/theGenderUnicorn. They can also be beneficial for supporting families and participants, particularly if they already understand autism as a spectrum for example. There are different understandings and some people see gender in a more fluid way than a spectrum or binary definition.

Those working with children and young people cannot rely on them stating that they are 'trans', as younger children may not use this term. It may become apparent through use of other language, words or behaviour that their gender identity doesn't match the gender assigned to them. Words and phrases can include "feeling different", stating that they are a boy or girl, using a different name, becoming distressed when asked to do something in line with their perceived gender, for example when using girls toilets or lining up with boys etc.

Some children and young people will have already spoken with their parents or guardians about their feelings before anyone else is made aware of their gender identity. However, sometimes the child or young person may disclose to a member of staff or volunteer prior to speaking with family members. So be prepared to respond appropriately to a wide variety of situations.

All discussions with parents or guardians should be carried out with the young person's knowledge and consent (as per confidentiality statement). The young person's needs should be central with a view to supporting them during any proposed transition. Every family is different and within them each individual will have their own personal experiences. There may be very different responses from family members – be aware that there may be a wide range of knowledge, understanding and feelings. You may encounter attitudes or beliefs which you find personally challenging. In each situation it is important to stay focused on the needs of the

young person without being judgemental or confrontational. Families may need signposting to sources of support, you might direct them to the organisations under 'referrals' who work with families.

Do *not* inform other parents or guardians about a participant's transition as this is confidential information. However it is best practice to prepare a response to use for parents or guardians who do get in contact with concerns or questions. At no point should the young person be named nor should any information be shared which might identify them.

If parents or guardians raise concerns about their child using a shared toilet or communal accommodation with a gender diverse participant, the purpose of the conversation should be to seek positive outcomes for all the children / young people affected. Perhaps exploring with those involved the first two paragraphs of this document, using the paragraph below:

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Good practice guidance

Residential events:

- When identifying venues take into consideration the accessibility of the accommodation and facilities. Where it is not possible to provide accommodation by sex and gender identity - think through the possible adjustments that might be made to seek to provide for both gender diverse and cis gendered participants (for example by dividing spaces).
- Before the event ensure that you speak to the child or young person who is gender diverse or exploring their gender about sleeping arrangements and toilet facilities. Check in advance the provisions at the residential venue for sanitary bins and accessible toilet/s.
- Have a member of staff or volunteer to whom the child or young person who is gender diverse or exploring their gender can go to provide support where required.
- If travelling abroad identify any additional risk factors if going to a country with different legislation or staying with a host family.

Toilets:

- A young person should be able to use the facilities that they have chosen and feel comfortable using. If a participant is uncomfortable sharing, then they should be provided with alternative individual facilities or arrangements. Ensure there are suitable toilets available that have menstruation management facilities such as bins and spare products in individual facilities or by making arrangements.

Names and pronouns:

- Ask the young person which name and pronoun they would prefer and respect their wishes. Many Trans/Non Binary people choose to use a gender neutral pronoun such as "they". It is important to respect the person's choice. Be aware that this might change over time, so keep checking back. The name and pronoun that the young person uses may vary in different situations e.g. if they are only 'out' to specific people. Again, check with the young person and respect their wishes.
- On any forms or records ask for both the legal name and a preferred name.

How should I respond?

...to someone who 'comes out'?

It's really important that you recognise the significance of this conversation. Your initial verbal and non-verbal response (e.g. body language, tone of voice and facial expression) will have a lasting impact on the individual.

This disclosure maybe a big step for the young person and you should feel trusted and valued that they have chosen to speak to you. Acknowledge this and thank them for feeling that they can talk to you. You may not feel confident or experienced but the important thing is that you are empathic, sensitive and respect what the young person is sharing.

If the young person wants to 'come out' to the group, reassure them that they will have an active role in this and this will be done at a pace that they are comfortable with. For example they may wish to use a different name or pronouns, or make changes to their appearance (e.g. haircut, style of dress) or may wish to use a bathroom and accommodation that reflects their gender identity.

...to someone who identifies as trans?

You should respond to a trans person in the same way that you would any person. You might ask them if they have a chosen pronoun or name and to let you know if it changes.

Referrals:

If there are concerns about the safety of a child or young person the organisation's safeguarding policy should be followed.

If there are concerns about their wellbeing where they might benefit from further support the following organisations are experienced in supporting trans people:

- Depend: Provides support, advice and information for anyone who knows, or is related to, a trans person of any age www.depend.org.uk
- Gendered Intelligence: A not-for-profit organisation which provides support for young trans people aged 8-25; a broad portfolio of services for educational settings including workshops, assemblies and staff training; and training and consultancy for professionals across all sectors. www.genderedintelligence.co.uk
- Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES): Works to improve the lives of trans and gender non-conforming people and has lots of useful information on its website, including several e-learning modules www.gires.org.uk
- Mermaids: Offers support to children and young people with gender issues and their families www.mermaidsuk.org.uk
- Stonewall: The national LGBT charity which provides information and resources for young people, their families and schools www.stonewall.org.uk

Related documents

- Pastoral care
- Anti-bullying
- Equal Opportunities Statement
- Equal Opportunities Checklist
- Disclosure procedures and guidance