



Policy | Transgender and Gender Identity

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STRATEGY

West Midlands Fire Service is fully committed to meeting the diverse needs of the communities it serves and recognises that having an inclusive and diverse workplace is a vital part of achieving this.

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PURPOSE

The personal commitment of every employee, contractor, partner agency and stakeholder of West Midlands Fire Service to trans inclusion and the application of its principles are key to its success in ending unlawful discrimination, promoting inclusion and cohesion and advancing equality of opportunity. To ensure we further these goals we have a set of clear equality objectives.

West Midlands Fire Service recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce; transgender staff contribute a variety of valuable experience to the organisation and working with the community has a positive impact on the organisational priorities and values.

West Midlands Fire Service has a zero tolerance towards discrimination. The Service is committed to valuing the diversity of our employees and to respecting the individual's needs wherever possible.

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of West Midlands Fire Service.

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RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 Line manager guidance

Transitioning impacts a person's whole life. A key part of your role as manager is to ensure they are supported in the workplace.

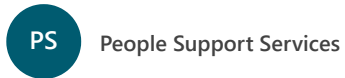
Following any disclosure from an employee, advice should be sought from your Business Partner in People Support Services and DICE team. A plan will be formulated, being led by the employee and their wishes. It is essential that discussions take place with the individual at an early stage, with any challenges and concerns that are likely to arise being explored.

It is never appropriate to inform colleagues, partners, the public etc. that an employee is intending to transition without the individual's permission being clear in how this will be done. This is also true if you become aware that an employee has transitioned in the past. To do so, could be regarded as transphobic discrimination, a breach of confidentiality, a breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 and contrary to the Service's Core Values and Code of Ethics.

It can be a big step for an individual to disclose they are transgender, and this should be considered during discussions. How an employee feels during this time at work can largely be down to how they are treated by their line manager. If an employee speaks to you regarding transitioning or anything around transitioning, you should be sensitive to the individual's needs and the language that is used. The person should be put at ease and made to feel comfortable. Individuals need to feel supported, during initial conversations, throughout whatever process they choose to take and beyond. The DICE team and People Support Services will be proactively involved to ensure a smooth transition for the individual and the teams they work with in creating an inclusive and non-judgmental environment for all during this process. Additional training and support are available on request for the manager, and any individuals impacted.

Considered, sensitive and well-documented discussions which should be treated in the strictest confidence, should make the workplace transition as smooth as possible. Nothing should be done without the consent/ knowledge of the individual. Managers should not make assumptions and decisions based on their perception of what is best for the individual.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to transition – avoid making assumptions and get your information directly from the employee.



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4.1 DEFINITIONS

Trans – 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, language around this area is rapidly evolving.

A female to male person will have been assigned a female sex at birth yet identifies their gender as male; a male to female person will have been assigned as male at birth yet identify their gender as female.

Transitioning – the steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone and speech therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

Being transgender is not a lifestyle choice nor a facet of sexual orientation. Many transgender people wish to change their name and personal details and live as a member of the gender with which they identify.

The start or intent to transition will be different for everyone and is a unique process for each individual. It is about the individual and may include any number of changes to a person's life. After an individual transitions, they may not identify as transgender; they may simply see the process as being part of their past and not current identity. For example, an individual who has transitioned and identifies as female, may refer to herself as a woman, or a trans woman. This personal decision should be respected at all times.

Many people falsely believe that, in order to transition a person must undergo a medical intervention, such as hormone treatment or surgery, or gain a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). It should not be assumed that the goal of every individual's transition is to change their physiology or legal gender. If a transgender person chooses not to undergo any medical intervention or gain a GRC, they are still entitled to dignity and respect along their chosen path of transition, whatever that may consist of. Therefore all transgender people should be treated as the gender in which they live, whether or not they have applied for such legal recognition.

If an employee is in possession of a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) it is unlawful to disclose their transgender status without their consent. Regardless of whether an individual possesses a GRC their gender at birth will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

It is extremely important, as a matter of fairness, respect and inclusion, to ensure that the correct gender, name and pronouns are used uniformly to address trans people. WMFS fully supports those individuals who are transitioning when and if they wish to change their name to better reflect their chosen gender. Furthermore, to deliberately use the wrong name or pronoun is a form of transphobic discrimination that will not be tolerated.

Hearing people use 'him' or 'her' incorrectly can be uncomfortable or seriously detrimental for a trans person to hear, especially when they are trying hard to confirm people's awareness of their true identity. The key here is "Deliberately " employees who have known an individual as one gender for some time may accidentally revert to using an old name or gender, this is a time for education not reprimand.

4.2 Recruitment

In most cases, the gender of an employee is of no relevance to their ability to do their job. West Midlands Fire Service is committed to the employment, development and promotion of all, regardless of sex, marital status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity. As such, West Midlands Fire Service are committed to ensuring potential employees are not discriminated against in the recruitment process.

A trans applicant has no duty to inform of their gender identity/history. The normal recruitment and selection procedure will be followed in relation to trans applicants. However, consideration must be given throughout the process to ensure that the wishes of the applicant are taken into account.

4.3 First steps

Considering how to navigate the impact that their personal decision to transition will have on their role and experience within the workplace, they should first approach their line manager who will provide absolute confidentiality until such time as the individual is content to be more open. If an individual doesn't feel comfortable having the initial conversation with their line manager then People Support Services' Business partners or the DICE team can be contacted in the first instance.

4.4 Changing names, gender, use of pronouns and dress code

At some point the individual may start to live full time as a member of their new sex, and changing name and gender identity is a pivotal point for many transgender people. The individual will decide the appropriate time for this to take place.

If a transgender employee wishes to have their personal data recognised on HR Management Systems, this needs supporting and will feature on all future correspondence. The change of name and associated gender identity will be respected and accommodated in the workplace.

If any individual wishes to add preferred pronouns to their email signature to make gender identity clear, WMFS *will* support this, but understand it is an individual choice and not compulsory.

Employees can wear the uniform or work wear appropriate to the gender they identify with, including Green Book employees. This should be in accordance with Code of Conduct policy.

4.5 Facilities

As part of the discussion process with the individual transitioning, line managers will conduct an appropriate risk assessment and audit of facilities. The discussions will include agreeing the point at which the use of facilities such as changing rooms and toilets should change gender to the other. Following discussions with the individual, a transgender person should then be granted access to the relevant facilities.

It is not acceptable, in the long-term, to expect a transgender employee to use separate facilities, such as a disabled person's toilet. However, this can be offered as a practical and acceptable short-term option. However, trans people will never be required to use accessible toilets unless they wish to do so. This may require some additional security to toilet facilities to protect everyone's privacy.

4.6 Time required off work

Trans people undergoing medical and surgical procedures related to transitioning may require time off work and this may vary depending on the individual. Following this stage there is typically a period of one or more years before the individual is accepted for surgery and the time taken for this will vary greatly from two to around twelve weeks, depending on the nature of the surgery undertaken. Absences will be managed and monitored in line with Attendance Management Policy

4.7 Informing others

Part of the discussions with the line manager will include how colleagues will be informed. Again, this will be led by the individual and their wishes. It is good practice for line managers to take responsibility, unless the individual would prefer to do this. If so, the manager will just need to know when the disclosure is to take place and in what detail, so that they can agree and provide appropriate support.

4.8 Keeping Records

West Midlands Fire Service will ensure all documents and employment details reflect the affirmed gender of the person, where possible without a GRC. Where documents have been sent and copies taken at the point of starting employment then every effort will be made to replace those with equivalent documents in the new name and gender. In some instances, it may be necessary to retain documents relating to an individual's identity at birth prior to obtaining GRC. However, once a person has obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate these will be replaced with the new details. The Gender Recognition Act gives anyone applying for or holding a Gender Recognition Certificate particular privacy rights. It is a criminal offence to pass on information acquired 'in the course of official duties' about someone's gender recognition, without the consent of the individual affected. 'Official duties' include employment, trade union representation or supply of business or professional services.

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This policy has no appendices

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Audit	
Responsible Head of Function	Development and Inclusion
Authorised by	
Direct enquiries to	
EIA (Date Completed & Name)	Complete TBC
PIA (Date Completed & Name)	Complete TBC

Review History		
Version #	Date	Reviewed By
1.0	1/10/2018	
2.0	11/04/2023	

Amendment History					
Version #	Date	Amended By	Section Amended	Amendment	Reason for change
2.0	11/04/2023		4.4	Added paragraph on use of pronouns in email signature	In line with modern trends To emphasis education rather than discipline Strengthen policy
			4.1	Clarity around what happens if someone misgenders	
			4.8	Additional text around privacy	
			Throughout	General improvements to clarity of language following consultation	

Version 2.0

Risk Rating: Low

