



Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender Members

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Overall responsibility: IGG's Executive committee
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Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender people in IGG

Irish Girl Guides' Equality and Inclusion Policy states that "IGG respects and values the diversity of its members and of society. As an organisation we believe in being fair, open and inclusive, while still being committed to the concept of a girl-only organisation. IGG believes that valuing and managing diversity is about recognising and appreciating individual needs and differences and treating everyone with dignity and respect." Irish Girl Guides' Membership Policy states that "membership is voluntary and open to all who live their lives as female and accept the Guide Law and Promise". This means that membership is based on gender identity and IGG remains a space for all who live as girls and women, regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth.

The Equality and Equal Status Acts 1998 – 2004 provide guidance on how all people should be treated fairly and not discriminated against. In 2015, the Irish Government passed the Gender Recognition Act which provides a process enabling trans people to achieve full legal recognition of their preferred gender and allows for the acquisition of a new birth certificate that reflects this change. The Gender Recognition Act allows all individuals over the age of 18 to self-declare their own gender identity. Young people aged 16-17 can also apply to be legally recognised, though the process is more onerous. Further details are available from www.teni.ie

In relation to transgender, Irish Girl Guides accepts any person who lives their life as female. This means people who may be born as male but are living their life as a girl or woman. There are no figures available in Ireland but in the UK, they believe about 1% of people are transgender, often referred to as being trans. A trans person is someone who feels that the sex they were assigned at birth does not match or sit easily with their sense of their own gender. Trans people include:

- those who were assigned male at birth whose gender is female are trans women or trans girls if under 18 years
- those who were assigned female at birth whose gender is male are trans men or trans boys if under 18 years
- those who do not identify exclusively as male or female are non-binary people.

Children as young as 5 years old can be aware of their gender identity though this awareness often comes to the fore as teenagers and adults.

These Guidelines aim to help Leaders, staff and volunteers to ensure they do not discriminate, intentionally or otherwise, against potential or current members of IGG.

10 Guidelines on How to Support all Members

1. Living their Life as Female

This phrase was deemed most appropriate for IGG after consultation with TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) and members of IGG with experience of transgender issues. It was felt that when a person is 'out' with their family/school/workplace, they have decided to live as a female and at that point Irish Girl Guides is an ideal organisation for them as we can be supportive and provide a strong identity for them.

2. Confidentiality & Disclosure

Under the Equal Status Acts, a person does not have to disclose if they are transgender. The only way to know if a member is transgender is if they or their parent informs you. If they do, you should respect their confidentiality. As with all our members, we would encourage parents to inform the Leaders of any matters which could result in a girl needing extra support or help.

Some girls/women will want to share information about being transgender with their Unit and should be supported to do so in a positive affirming manner.

The trans status of a person is sensitive personal information and is protected by data protection legislation. **Unless explicitly directed by the member/parent, the information must be treated as confidential.**

3. Pronouns

When a person transitions from male to female, the pronouns (he/she/her/his) used to describe them usually change. This can be an important part of the process. In Guiding, as all our members are female, Leaders can continue to refer to all with the female pronouns 'her' or 'she'.

4. Uniform

As a uniformed organisation, all members wear identical clothing so the differences between male and female attire is not a concern for Irish Girl Guides.

5. Toilet Facilities

In most settings, female toilets are cubicles and each individual's privacy is respected. Trans girls should be allowed to use the same facilities as others and not assigned specific facilities unless they/their parents request it.

6. Activities

It is important to work with trans people when organising accommodation rather than making assumptions or arrangements without consultation. Good planning and provision of options will make this easier. Ideally if an alternative activity is being provided for someone who doesn't want to do a specific activity (for example if the activity was a water activity and involved changing clothes in the company of others), then the alternative activity should be an option for all members of the Unit. For many of our members especially during the teenage years, girls prefer not to change clothes in the company of others anyway so if taking part in certain activities is an issue for some trans people, it can be easily managed in the same way as Leaders manage it for other girls.

7. Overnight

As a member of a Unit, all girls will participate in the same activities as all members of your Unit. For trans members, this includes sleeping in the same area as the other members if the trans girl/woman herself is comfortable.

For overnight events, the Leader should discuss with the member who is trans what their preference is. If they are under 18 and have a group of friends, they may feel most comfortable sharing with them. At no point should they be separated in a stigmatised way.

8. Garda Vetting and IGG Screening Process

An adult who applies to be a Leader does not need to declare if they are transgender. If they have gone through the process of obtaining a change of gender on their record and getting a Gender Recognition Certificate, the Garda Vetting Unit will already have a record of this. Either way, their application to be a Leader with IGG is done the same as any other and confidentiality prevails.

9. Travelling Abroad

When choosing a destination abroad, Leaders should consider the local laws, attitudes and customs towards members of the LGBTI community. The Department of Foreign Affairs provides advice for LGBTI people on travelling abroad on their website.

Transgender people may or may not have passports that reflect the gender they identify as. This might make taking a trip abroad more stressful for them as they may be worried about going through passport control. The passport office can provide more information.

10. Transitioning from female to male

If a member of IGG is transitioning to male, they will be leaving the organisation and it is important that they are supported through this process. At an appropriate time, you may wish to discuss with them and their parents finding another organisation that better suits their needs. If a Leader is transitioning to male, they must leave their role as a Leader but may become a Unit Helper supporting the work of the organisation.

Further supports:

Safeguarding Officer Irish Girl Guides

National Office
27 Pembroke Park
Dublin 4.

Tel: 01-6683898

Email: safeguarding@irishgirlguides.ie

TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland)

www.teni.ie

Tel: 01-8733575

Email: info@teni.ie

BeLonGTo

www.belongto.org

Tel: 01 670 6223 (office hours)

Shout Out

www.shoutout.ie

Department of Foreign Affairs

<https://www.dfa.ie/travel/assistance-abroad/lgbt/>

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if a member is transgender?

It is not the role of a Leader to judge who is and who is not transgender. It is not appropriate to ask a member if they are or aren't. Hair length, interest or lack thereof in sports, make-up or jewellery does not identify who is and who is not male or female.

How do I answer questions from other parents/adults about a trans gender member?

In order to protect the privacy of our members, it is important that Leaders do not discuss personal information about the girls/women in your Unit. If other parents have an issue with your Unit accepting a transgender girl/woman, a parent's meeting can be held to discuss the issue of inclusiveness without naming any individuals. TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) have offered to come and meet with any parents/group who may have questions around the issue. They also have a Family Support Group.

What if someone is bullied about being transgender?

IGG has a zero-tolerance of transphobia and members must be protected from bullying of any form. The usual procedures should be followed as with any type of bullying. 'Shout Out' is an Irish anti-phobic training support group which will work with Units to eliminate any forms of bullying based on gender or sexuality. Their contact details are on www.shoutout.ie

What if a non-binary person wants to join IGG?

To join IGG a person must be living their life as female. A non-binary person does not identify exclusively as male or female and therefore a non-binary person cannot be a member of IGG.

Is someone who is transgender also homosexual?

Sexual orientation and gender identity are separate characteristics. Trans people can be straight, gay, bisexual, lesbian or asexual.

What about the person's name?

A transgender person is not obliged to tell anyone their birth name and should be referred to as the name they have provided. Even if a Leader knows the name the person used in the past, they should not ask or tell others about it. We must respect the person's privacy at all times.

What do I do if someone tells me they are transitioning?

Transitioning is a process, not a single movement. For many people, it is something they do over a period of time. Leaders are often trusted by young people and a member may feel comfortable telling you and to reach out to you. It is appropriate for you to listen and believe them and encourage them to talk to their parents about transitioning.

Definitions

It is important to clarify the distinctions between sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. **These definitions are available on TENI's website.**

TENI advocates the use of transgender or trans as an umbrella term as it is currently the most inclusive and respectful term to describe diverse identities. However, they acknowledge and respect each individual's right to self-identify as they choose.

- **Cisgender:** A non-trans person (i.e. a person whose gender identity and gender expression are aligned with the sex assigned at birth). The term cisgender acknowledges that everyone has a gender identity (i.e. a non-trans identity is not presented as normal or natural which stigmatises a trans identity as abnormal or unnatural). It is often used in the same way as heterosexual means non-homosexual.
- **Coming Out:** The process of accepting and telling others about one's gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. Many trans people will 'come out' as a different gender to the sex assigned at birth and may begin a social or physical transition. Some trans people choose to 'come out' or be 'out' about their trans identities to raise visibility or acknowledge their experiences. Others do not want to 'come out' as they feel this implies that their gender identity is not valid or authentic (e.g. a trans woman who comes out as trans may be perceived to be less of a woman). **It is important to never out someone as trans without their permission.** Forced outing – whether intentional or unintentional – is a form of transphobia.
- **Gender Expression:** The external manifestation of a person's gender identity. Gender can be expressed through mannerisms, grooming, physical characteristics, social interactions and speech patterns.
- **Gender Identity:** Refers to a person's deeply felt identification as male, female, or some other gender. This may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Non-binary:** An umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of male or female. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively male nor female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders.
- **Sex:** The designation of a person at birth as male or female based on their anatomy (genitalia and/or reproductive organs) or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones).
- **Sexual Orientation:** Refers to a person's physical, emotional or romantic attraction to another person. Sexual orientation is distinct from sex, gender identity and gender expression. Transgender people may identify as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer or asexual.

- **Trans:** Commonly used shorthand for transgender. Avoid using this term as a noun: a person is not 'a trans'; they may be a trans person.

- **Trans girl or trans woman:** A person who was assigned male at birth but who lives as a woman or identifies as female. Some trans women make physical changes through hormones or surgery; others do not.

- **Transgender:** Refers to a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. This term can include diverse gender identities.

- **Transition:** A process through which some transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned at birth. Transition might include social, physical or legal changes such as coming out to family, friends, co-workers and others; changing one's appearance; changing one's name, pronoun and sex designation on legal documents (e.g. driving licence or passport); and medical intervention (e.g. through hormones or surgery).

- **Transphobia:** The fear, dislike or hatred of people who are trans or are perceived to challenge conventional gender categories or 'norms' of male or female. Transphobia can result in individual and institutional discrimination, prejudice and violence against trans or gender variant people.