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Trans-aware customer service

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Why “trans-aware”?

- Trans customers should not be an afterthought
- Proactively create trans-inclusive library services
- Signal to trans customers that they are valued

Outline

- **The basics:**
 - sex and gender
 - the gender binary
 - common terminology
- **Trans-aware library services:**
 - library management systems
 - confidentiality
 - interpersonal interactions

The basics: sex and gender

"Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

World Health Organisation

(<http://apps.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/>)

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The basics: binary gender

- We are **assigned** male or female at birth – not “born male” or “born female”
- These are **binary genders**: we are generally taught that someone can only be one or the other

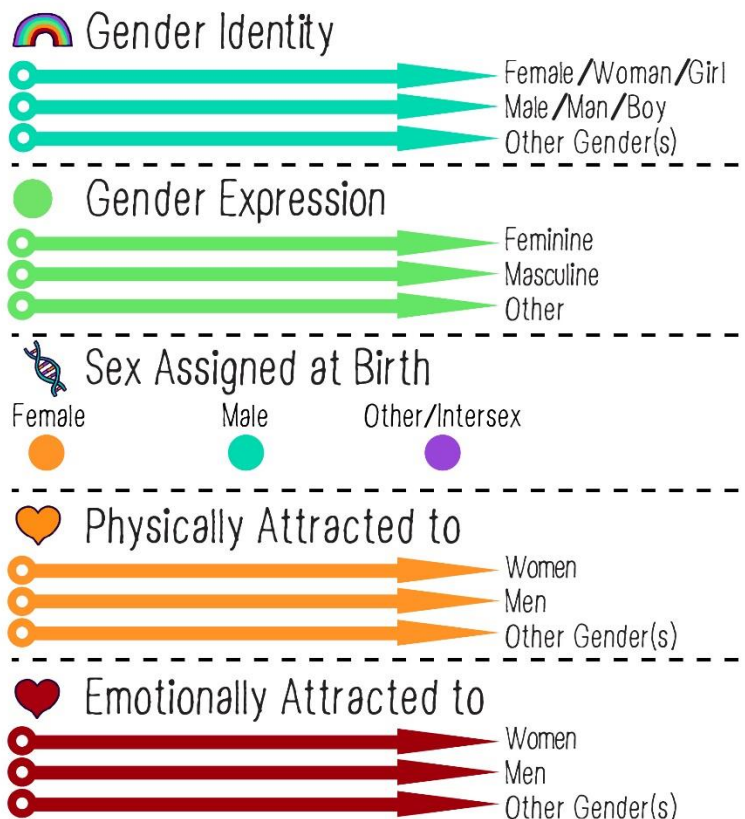
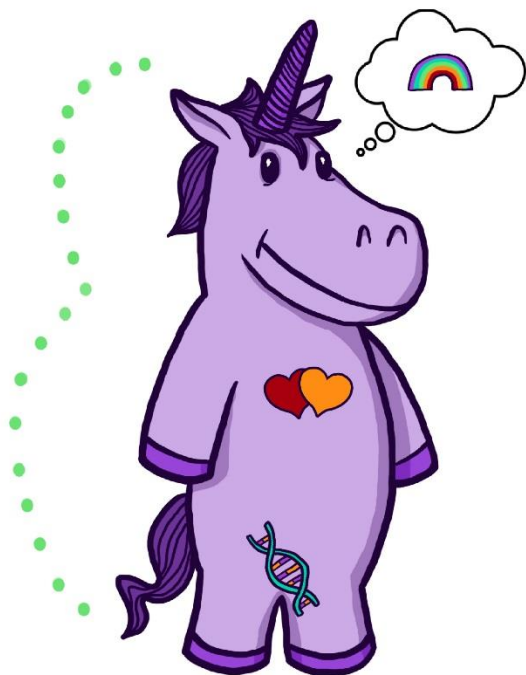
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The basics: multifaceted identities

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

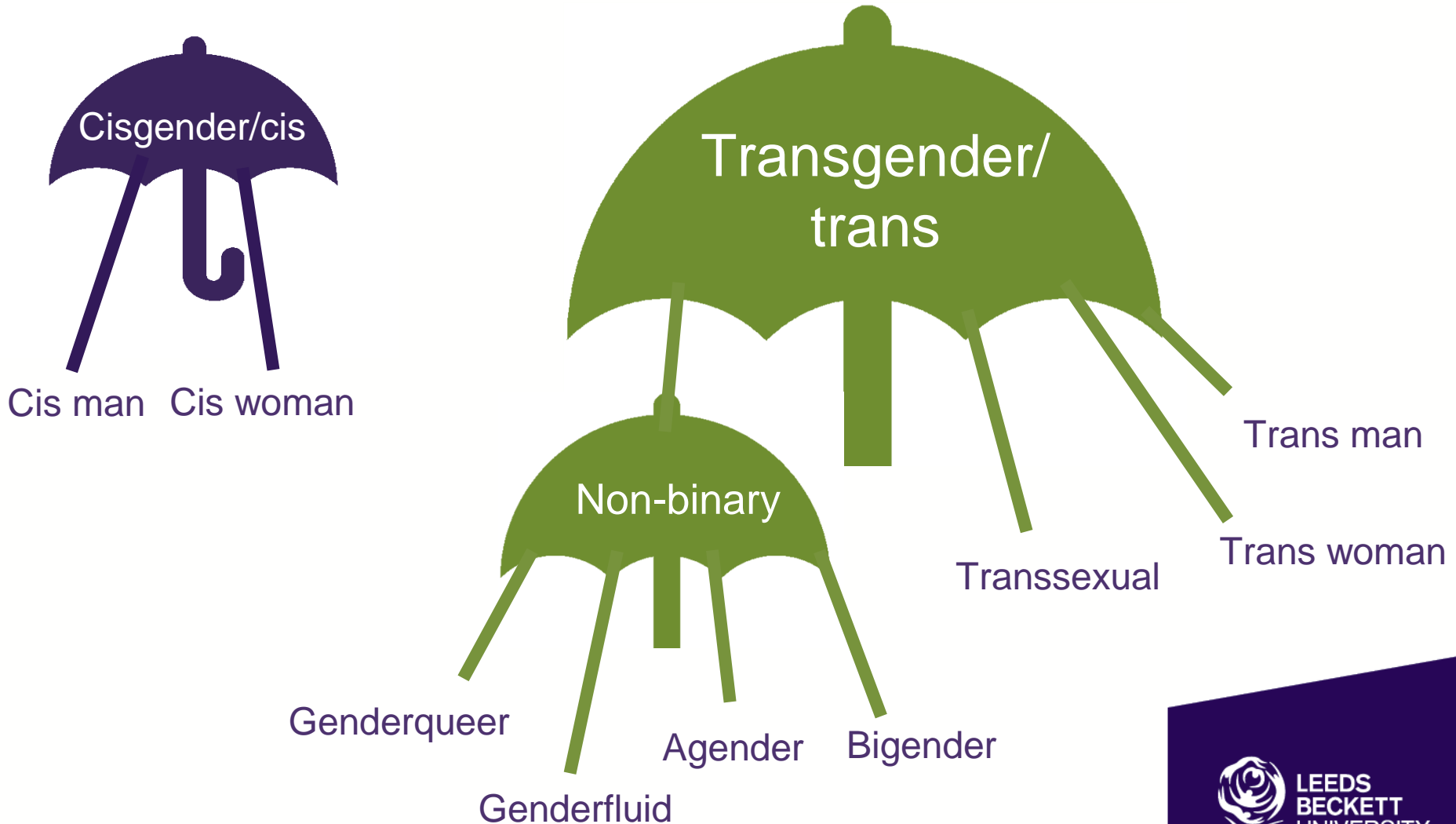
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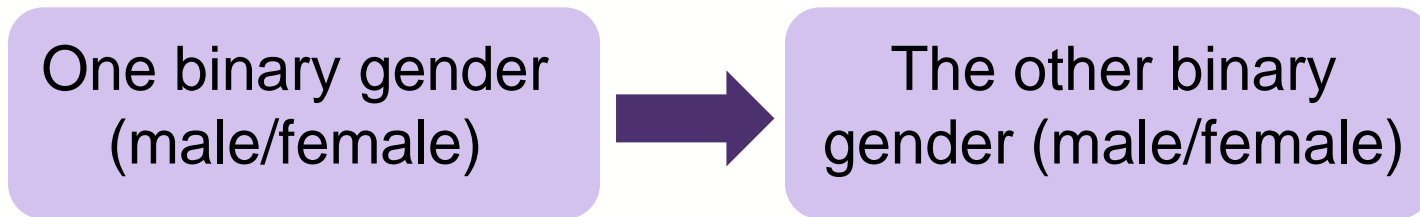
The basics: terminology



The basics: terminology



not



Applying the basics

- Where do we hold data that relates to a customer's gender?
 - Think beyond “gender” fields
 - Take confidentiality seriously
- When do we refer to a customer's gender?
 - Direct address
 - Third-person reference: pronouns (he/she/they etc.)

Library management systems

- How can a customer update the personal details on their library record?
 - Staff interface
 - Self-service interface
 - Library website
- Can library staff give confident and accurate advice on this?

Library management systems

- Non-binary inclusion for existing customers and new applicants:
 - Gender field
 - Title field } relevant/necessary?



Confidentiality

How can you prevent trans customers from being 'outed'? Think about:

- Old documents showing previous names or titles (invoice letters, notes relating to previous incidents, photocopies of guest users' identity documents...)
- Staff asking colleagues for advice
- Handling complaints or feedback

Do you have procedures in place?

Interpersonal situations

- Confidence and familiarity
- Describing/addressing customers
 - Use gender-neutral language/descriptors
 - Avoid ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam’
- Toilets
 - Make no assumptions
 - Responding to complaints:
 1. Establish basis of complaint
 2. If no harassment has occurred, stand up for trans customers
 3. Signpost complainer elsewhere – don’t penalise trans customers

Signals of inclusion

- Normalise pronoun requests
- Include all letters of LGBT
- Inclusive documentation, policies, forms etc. ('they' rather than 'he/she')
- Toilets



T-shirt courtesy of Action for Trans Health:
<http://www.ebay.co.uk/usr/act4transhealth>

Further resources

- [Stonewall workplace resources](#)
- [Government Equalities Office, *Recruiting and retaining transgender staff: a guide for employers*](#)
- [Equality Act 2010: overview and definitions of harassment](#)
- [GIRES \(Gender Identity Research & Education Society\)](#)
- [Gendered Intelligence](#)

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