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Trans-aware library services: inspiring frontline staff

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Outline

- **Trans-aware library services**
  - trans identities: the basics
  - being a trans library user
- **Inspiring frontline staff**
  - sharing my expertise at Leeds Beckett
  - what made this possible
  - how frontline staff can inspire others
  - points for reflection

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Trans identities: the basics

"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 (apps.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/)

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Trans identities: the basics

- 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
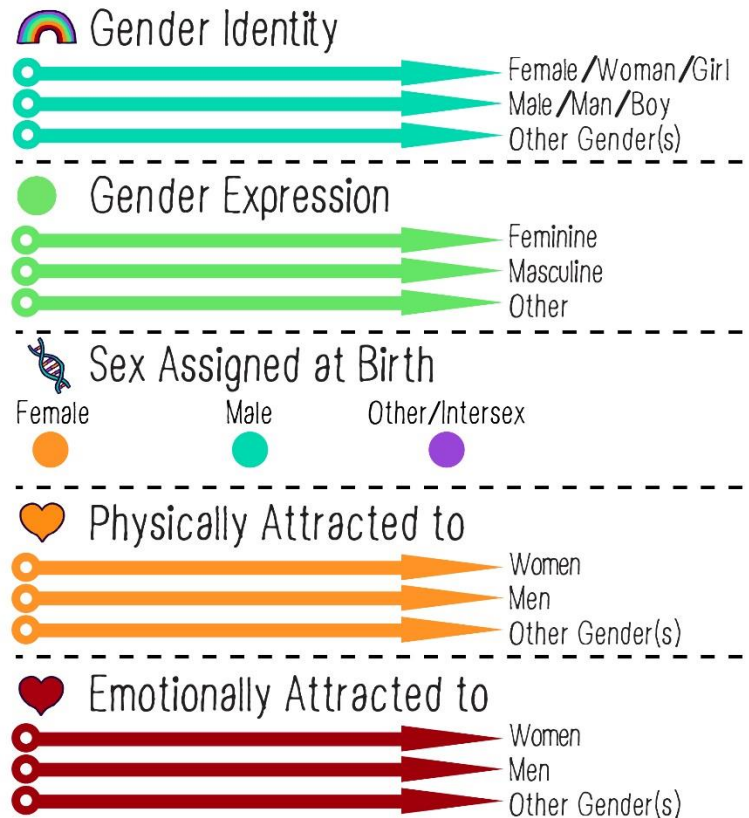
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Trans identities: the basics

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by: **TSER** — Trans Student Educational Resources

Gender Identity
- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)
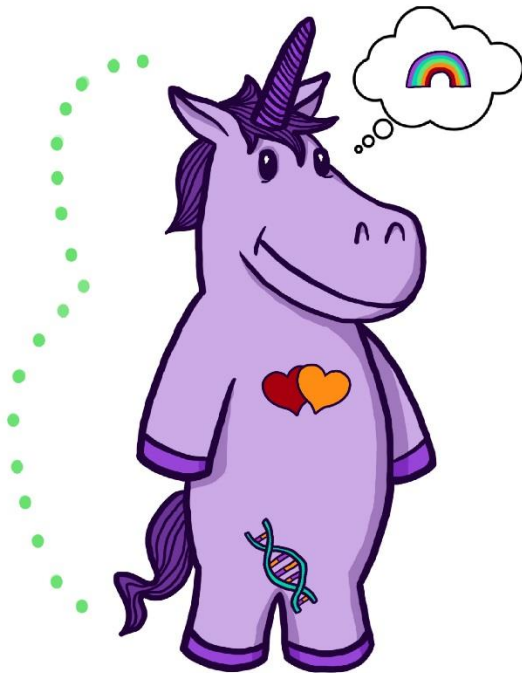
To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

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Being a trans library user

- Interpersonal interactions
  - describing customers in the third person: use gender-neutral language
  - avoid 'Ladies and gentlemen'
  - manage initial reactions: build **confidence** and **familiarity**

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Being a trans library user

- Updating personal details: where do we hold data that relates to a customer's gender?
  - think beyond name and gender
  - title: do you offer gender-neutral options (Mx)?
  - notes on borrower records/old documents
- Think **widely** and **comprehensively** to protect confidentiality

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Signals of inclusion

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

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

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Sharing my expertise at Leeds Beckett

- "How can I support you?"
- Contributed to trans policy
- Delivered training sessions
- Asked for advice on trans-inclusive event management
- Spoke at CSGUK conference and made contacts

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What made this possible?

- Consistently asking new staff for advice

- Seeing the whole person

- Being receptive to offers

- Flexibility and trust: making time for activities outside of core responsibilities

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Why inspire frontline staff?

- Make staff feel empowered/valued

- They can inspire others:
  - realistic, concrete suggestions
  - speaking from experience

- Bridge gap between frontline staff and other colleagues

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Points for reflection

- What untapped expertise might your frontline staff members have?
  - different user groups
  - different work environments

- How can you create an environment where they are **willing** and **able** to use that expertise?

- How might you use what you've learned today to support your trans customers?

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Questions?

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