Tools to prevent and combat LGBT phobia in small and medium cities for professionals, local governments and NGOs.

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Why this guide?

This guide presents a set of tools resulting from research carried out to get to know the dynamics of small and medium cities across Europe as for LGBT issues. The results show that, in many cities, there is an important lack of both training and resources for stakeholders of different sectors in relation to LGBT – health, policy making, education, law enforcement authorities, media, lawyers, or NGOs, among others. The purpose of the guide is to facilitate assistance on behalf of different professionals to improve their skills in relation to LGBT issues and promote the implementation of local policies which favour LGBT people’s wellbeing.

The guide delves into ways to combat LGBTphobia as a professional, decision maker or NGO in a small or medium city. By way of example, there are some selected best practices from the different participant cities scattered throughout the guide. Also, at the end of the guide there are 10 proposals listed to apply in small and medium cities as well as an ethical code to implement in institutions.

Why small and medium cities?

Big cities have increasingly become the destination for the majority of LGBT people in Europe. These environments have been proclaimed as go-to places for the quality of life related to identity expression, community safety, associational activity, anonymity and leisure for the LGBT population. It seems that big cities are privileged places for the construction of LGBT identities and communities, where all struggles and achievements regarding LGBT rights can take place.

However, there are LGBT people who do not live in big cities. Those people’s experiences, relationships, needs and claims are also part of the LGBT community, and deserve visibility. More importantly, the needs and experiences of LGBT people living in small and medium cities may differ from those who live in big cities, and the violence and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender expression may have particular dynamics, which are usually not taken into account in research and policy-making.

In small and medium cities, the access to social and political resources for LGBT people might be more challenging because the dimension of local agencies, the associative structure, and the strength of the LGBT community are lower than in big cities. Moreover, the geographical proximity to a big city may contribute to the social dependency of the small/medium city and to the lack of targeted services as well as of political spaces for LGBT people.

In spite of these limitations, small and medium cities can offer several advantages that have to be politically strengthened. The proximity between politicians and citizens, the less complexity of the municipal structures and the ease of knowing and accessing social networks make citizen participation policies more effective and their results more visible. In addition, the lack of human and economic resources could be compensated with the creation of networks with other local governments in order to share experiences, resources and services.

In Catalonia, Spain:
The LGBTI Network of Local Councils facilitates the exchange of experiences, tools, and resources among local governments.
**Hate crime and hate speech towards LGBT**

**Hate crime** is a bias or prejudice-motivated criminal act targeting people because of their actual or perceived belonging to a particular social group. Hate speech is public expressions which spread and promote hatred discrimination towards a specific group. They contribute to intolerance which in turn makes hate crimes more probable.

Sometimes hate crimes are very easy to recognize, such as in physical attacks. However, some other times there are other kinds of aggression which are not so easy to identify. Being insulted, mocked or denied access to a service or space because of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression is also LGBTphobia and in several countries they are considered hate crimes. LGBT people continue to experience stigmatization and lack of legal protection from discrimination and hate crime, with transgender people being particularly at risk. There is a serious lack of systematic monitoring, documenting and data collection of hate and violence against LGBTI people.

LGBTI people are vulnerable against hostility from the law enforcement institutions. This situation has considerably improved in some countries, but in others there still is a lack of mutual trust and confidence between LGBTI victims and law enforcement authorities. These are just some of the reasons why too many LGBTphobic crimes remain unreported. Additionally, reporting LGBTphobic hate crimes carries a risk and fear of disclosure of one’s sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

All European states have committed to collect data and communicate it to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for its annual hate crime report entitled ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region – Incidents and Responses’. In practice, however, only a minority of states do so in the case of LGBTphobic crimes. The official data collected represents only a fraction of the real situation.

Hate speech are any kind of expressions which aim for the humiliation, contempt, and undermining of the dignity towards a specific group, such as immigrants, people of colour, people belonging to low class, or LGBT people. It is manifested through insults, production of degrading messages, defamation, mocking, gestures, mimicking camp manners, or negative stereotyping, to name a few. This kind of messages can cause several effects, such as discrimination, hostility or bigotry, which reinforces prejudices and, in general, contributes to a general climate of violence.

Hate speech can take place in many different spaces, like media, online networks, public discourses or everyday life. Anybody can produce hate speech in proximity spaces, such as workplace, family or friend circles. Sometimes, discourses by media or public personalities are more visible, and we have to confront them. However, we should also focus on eliminating discourses produced in these proximity spaces.

When hate speech is targeted at LGBT people there are several tools which can help.

A good way to confront discourses from media or public personalities can be through social organizations, NGOs, citizenship pressure and some public bodies. Civil society organizations have ways of addressing complaints and collectively resist hate speech. On the other hand, to confront hate speech at proximity level the first step is recognizing it as hate speech, even if it is addressed to someone else. Also, alliances with other people, such as workmates, classmates or family members can be very useful in producing new discourses capable of burying hate speech in everyday life. Finally, getting together with other people interested in fighting discrimination can help with both personal wellbeing through safe spaces and communal reflections and resistances to LGBTphobia.

More than 1 of 4 LGBT individuals has either experienced physical/sexual violence or threats, according to the 2013 survey conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

**In Thessaloniki, Greece:**
The Ombudsman Office department has been the main body promoting the principle of equal treatment in the public sector, in cases where it is violated for any reason of discrimination.

**In Catalonia, Spain:**
Prosecutors specializing in hate crimes and discrimination take on LGBT-based cases, amongst others.

Since 1950, the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees rights and freedoms without discrimination on any grounds.

**In Nottingham, United Kingdom:**
Nottinghamshire Police has been at the forefront of engaging with hate crime and developing innovative measures such as a new hate crime perpetrator programme with local authority partners.
There are some guidelines and good practices that public bodies, law enforcement, and the media should adhere to when interacting with trans people. Delivering a professional response to trans persons should be a priority to counter high rates of institutionalised discrimination, criminal victimisation, and social stigma.

Some trans people face discrimination in daily life because the legal gender on their documents does not match their gender identity or because of their gender expression. This can cause problems in work or when looking for work, accessing healthcare, and in other areas.

**Public bodies should:**
- Train healthcare workers, teachers, judges, prison officials, immigration officers, and others on respect and equal treatment of trans people;
- Use people’s preferred names and pronouns, even when these do not reflect official documents.

Trans people disproportionately suffer high levels of victimisation across a range of crime areas, many trans people fear transphobic reactions from law enforcement, which keeps them from reporting incidents of discrimination, hate speech, and hate crimes.

**Law enforcement should:**
- Only ask questions that are relevant to the investigation;
- Maintain confidentiality and not release personal information to third parties;
- Ask the trans victim of crime if they would like to have a friend or family member present;
- Not request documents to prove gender unless legally necessary;
- Acknowledge and use the preferred name and pronouns, and indicate in reports that a person might be referred to differently than their legal name.

Awareness levels of the discrimination trans people face in different areas of their lives varies across Europe. The media has an important role to play in not perpetuating negative and harmful stereotypes about trans people.

**The media should:**
- Refer to people using their preferred pronouns, gender, and name;
- Use only the terms and language used by trans organisations and trans people themselves;
- Refrain from using before and after photos of a trans person.

These recommendations do not claim to be exhaustive, and the authors encourage interested stakeholders to also look at guidelines by Transgender Europe, UN Free & Equal, and other organisations.

**Transgender Europe’s Know Your Rights! Guide for Trans people in the European Union is available in English, Italian and Polish.**

It provides an overview and summary of EU law that is relevant for trans people living, working, visiting or claiming asylum in the EU.

http://tgeu.org/tgeu-guides-eu-law/

**In Charleroi, Belgium:**
A good practice in the police was noted. They ask transgender people to indicate by whom (a man or a woman) they would prefer to be dealt with in the police station.
Despite the implementation of a European legal framework against LGBTphobia, LGBT people are still victims of violence and hate crimes and direct or indirect discrimination in several areas of daily life. Public services and policies can play an important role at the local level to prevent and combat LGBTphobia. In all the cities covered by the project, awareness-raising activities or campaigns are implemented at the local level, although not always by public bodies.

However, in almost all the cities, there is a lack of professional training on LGBT issues at all levels of the local government. In health services, lesbians are often overlooked by sex education and STD prevention campaigns. Trans people have difficult relationships with public services, in particular, health services, and feel excluded from social interaction. In the education sector, there is a strong need to improve information and awareness raising of sexual and gender diversity and prevention of LGBTphobia.

In several cities, victims of LGBTphobia are sometimes partially deprived of support due to the absence of a solid network between different actors, such as the police, justice services and NGOs. However, in some cities there is a specific and efficient protocol to deal with LGBTphobia. Nevertheless, in all the cities, there is a clear need to be more aware of diverse needs within the LGBT population, particularly by paying more attention to trans, older people and being more inclusive.

In Wroclaw, Poland:
The Festival of Equal Rights, culminating in the Equality March, is organized yearly by the Culture of Equality Association to foster acceptance of diversity and a sense of community among LGBT people in the city.

In Girona, Spain:
There is a Municipal LGBT Committee that relays the demands of LGBT people to the city council.

In Sabadell, Spain:
The Commission of Coexistence, created by the city council and civil society organizations, has a protocol through which it offers legal, social and psychological support to victims of hate crimes.
Social interactions and internalised experiences of LGBT expressions

Personal experiences of LGBT people are influenced by several interrelated factors such as family and intimate environment, education system, professional life, or community and social networks, to name a few. However, social interactions of these people are often characterized by violence and discrimination, issues that negatively affect their social life as well as the construction of personal identity and self-esteem.

LGBTphobia tends to be associated with the exercise of violence and discrimination by people (e.g. physical or verbal aggressions). Nonetheless, there are other types of LGBTphobia that could have a more harmful impact, even though they are not often conceptualised as such. It is important to take into account: institutional LGBTphobia, when institutions do not guarantee—and even hinder—sexual and gender diversity and equality; and 'internalised LGBTphobia', which has cognitive effects on the person who suffers it, such as self-incrimination and shame.

Whilst having the support of the intimate environment is crucial to sexual and gender development, the existence of positive LGBT role models is also a determining factor for combating feelings of estrangement, isolation and shame. Therefore, policies aimed at promoting sexual and gender diversity should increase the visibility of LGBT role models in educational curricula and in the media.

For many LGBT people, LGBT spaces (associations, community centres, leisure areas, online networks) are relevant to the process of sexual and/or gender development, and to deal with potential discriminations and violence. Especially during the 'coming out' process, LGBT environments are appreciated as spaces of socialisation, identification, safety, and affectivity. Therefore, local governments should promote the creation of these spaces as well as give support to existing initiatives, and to the prevention of other types of discrimination that might be experienced within the LGBT community, such as discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age and appearance.

LGBTphobia is a manifestation of a sex and gender system regulated by heteronormativity (genders must be sexually complementary) and cisnormativity (biological sex must match gender identity). Hence, next to assisting those who have experienced LGBTphobia and next to combating this kind of violence and discriminations in all social spheres, policies have to take one step further by fostering educative and awareness-raising measures aimed at challenging these hegemonic normativities.

In Nottingham, United Kingdom:
LGBT+ Network produces an annual report with an analysis of contacts (email and telephone) by category. Largest number involves general information then problems/chat.

In Thessaloniki, Greece:
On World AIDS Day awareness campaigns are organised at central parts of the city with the collaboration of public institutions along with LGBT organisations.

In Charleroi, Belgium:
A student NGO, Les CHEFF, has developed a course designed especially for schools, in collaboration with GRIS Wallonia, a volunteer group of gays and bisexuals. They offer to meet young people at schools and other community groups to answer questions about their sexual orientation. The goal is to make young people more aware of LGBT issues through the testimony of two young LGBT community members (a woman and a man).
LGBT people are a heterogeneous group where axes of identification and inequality, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, education level, religion, ethnicity, legal status, age and disability coexist, overlap and intersect. This gives rise to the interaction between social identities and related systems of oppression and discrimination and a multitude of individual and collective experiences and narratives which should be taken into account. In some cities, there is increasing realisation of the need to bring about a more inclusive LGBT community both within it and in relation to other forms of social division and identity and that these differences should be addressed by the local authorities and the police who should give more support to ethnic minorities, migrants and those with disabilities. Thus all these intersecting axes may have implications for accessing services and infrastructures, such as health.

Most cities have tensions existing within the LGBT community itself. There may be a lack of lesbian spaces in a city compared to gay bars and socialising spaces which is reflected in less specific services including health services and less advocacy although it may be because women tend to socialise more in private and semi-private spaces. In some cities, there is intergenerational discrimination when it comes to gay men who report forms of mutual exclusions between younger and older gay male mainly due to their physical appearance. The role of social media may be contributing to the shrinking of spaces of face-to-face encounters in the LGBT community. This fact has implications for older gay men’s ability to socialise. In all cities it was reported by some interviewees that certain faith and racialised groups were sometimes less accepting of non-heterosexual sexualities.

Class is also significant in stratifying the experience of LGBT life. For wealthy LGBT people the city might feel more LGBT friendly compared to poorer LGBT people living in the outskirts. Economic wealth also allows LGBT people to travel and attend specific LGBT events in different cities. The centrality of socio-economic status, cultural and economic capital in being able to confront violence and discrimination and enable social acceptance is also evident across all the cities.

**In Thessaloniki, Greece:**
Thessaloniki Pride festival is organised every June, since 2012 with the official support of the City of Thessaloniki. On the days of the Pride Festival, the city’s symbol – monument, the White Tower, is lighted with the colours of the rainbow flag.

**In Wroclaw, Poland:**
A Human Library project conducted by the Diversja Association, includes LGBT people among the “human books” to be borrowed, and aims to counter stereotypes and prejudices.
Public spaces, visibility and the new media

Visibility of sexual and gender diversity is a key tool in combating discrimination towards LGBT people. That is why the public space deserves special attention to the extent that it becomes one of the most important socialization scenarios of urban life. The public space has three basic dimensions: as a physical space that organizes the distribution of cities, leisure centres, businesses, public centres, streets, squares, and socialization scenes as bars and shops, as a discourse place crossed by power relations, discourses, and practices, and as a virtual space where meanings and discourses are easily spread on social networks and websites and they contribute to create a collective consciousness about many aspects of the social life.

The way in which LGBT people perceive and use public space change according to each city, sense of safety, area, time of day or other personal issues. Likewise, we cannot forget that there are also differences between lesbians, gays, transgender and bisexual experiences. For instance, lesbians tend to use the Internet more for networking, whereas gay men use them a lot for hook ups.

Small and medium-sized cities often have fewer spaces for socialization and representation of LGBT people than large cities, less visibility, public recognition, resources or security spaces. That is why professional organizations, NGOs and administrations can promote acceptance of diversity, awareness raising, promotion of positive messages and the fight against discrimination and anti-LGBT crimes in the public space. How can it be done?

• Supporting initiatives to promote the visibility of diversity in the city: cultural activities, the celebration of commemorative events or the development of public awareness campaigns.

• Recognizing the positive value of sexual and gender diversity and their contributions to building a more open and inclusive city. Using non-discriminatory language, showing sexual and gender diversity in the public information such as health leaflets, family services or didactic materials.

• Repairing the abandonment and absence of representation of diversity in cities through mechanisms that include the viewpoint of LGBT people in policies related to public space and urban life.

In Wrocław, Poland:
The LGBT Film Festival, hosted by New Horizons Cinema, presents thematically and formally differentiated pictures to promote diversified LGBT culture.

In Nottingham, United Kingdom:
The city council flies the rainbow flag quite regularly. They support the local PRIDE and promotes International Day against homophobia, transphobia and biphobia (IDAHO).

In Thessaloniki, Greece:
The “Thessaloniki International LGBTIQ Film Festival” is co-organized by the “SYMPRAXI – Partnership for Gender issues” and the Thessaloniki International Film Festival Organisation since 1999.

Tools for social and psychological assistance to LGBT people

Appropriate assistance to LGBT people is about choosing good communicative tools. We must bear in mind that in the communicative process non-verbal language takes vital importance, and human communication consists of both verbal and non-verbal elements. Non-verbal skills are of vital importance in the assistance process.

The communicative tools that favour adequate assistance are:

• Being specific but asking open questions;
• Addressing problems one by one;
• Favouring the manifestation of the objectives, opinions, feelings, etc;
• Adapting the content to the needs, the objectives and the situation of each person;
• Providing consistent and clear messages and making sure they are understandable (repeating several times important aspects, asking key questions, etc.);
• Showing a positive attitude (eye contact, a facial expression of kindness, fluent but calm speech, good vocalization, open and relaxed posture, adequate interpersonal space, appropriate time and place for quiet dialogue).

On the other hand, during the assistance some issues should be avoided:

• Interpreting and adjudicating personality traits based on stereotypes, prejudices, attributions, inferences, etc. (Such as “she’s hysterical” or “He’s exaggerating”);
• Making imposition demands (“You must report to the police”), accusations (“Why didn’t you come sooner?”) or “generalizations” (always, never);
• Conveying inconsistent messages;
• Ignoring and/or judging the other person’s important messages;
• Interrupt conversations.

European Level Organizations
• ILGA Europe http://www.ilga-europe.org/
• Transgender Europe http://tgeu.org/
• IGLYO www.iglyo.com
• NELFA www.nelfa.org
First hand experiences

“There are screams that gay men are trying to get some rights. But these are ordinary human rights.” (Gay man, 35, Wroclaw, Poland)

“I generally do not believe that identifying oneself through sexual orientation is something that ultimately defines us.” (Lesbian, 20, Wroclaw, Poland)

“When I was a teenager, I did not exist. Trans-identities did not exist. It was not possible to conceive that a man could be a woman at his birth. When I was in Charleroi in my teenage, I was in a conscious masculinization phase but not very assumed. I then went through re-feminization phases because it was more comfortable. I then went out with a boy because I found it so much easier at home, in the street, everywhere.” (Transgender man, 28, Charleroi, Belgium)

“I do not feel that in Charleroi there is a LGBT community, defined as people who are united around a common identity and looking to being together. People are quite open and LGB people do not feel the need to join and be apart.” (Gay man, 34, Charleroi, Belgium)

“I don’t understand why I have to speak to a psychiatrist when it’s not an illness.” (Transgender woman, 30, Sabadell, Spain)

“Nowadays, there are laws and institutions that protect the rights of LGBT people, but at the same time many people do not accept the LGBT expressions”. (Gay man, 64, Sabadell, Spain)

“The gynaecologist told me that I did not need cytology because I hadn’t had sex. But I did have had sex, with another woman”. (Lesbian, 40, Girona, Spain)

“There are not friendly or unfriendly areas in one city, but people friendly or unfriendly to LGBTs”. (Transgender, 25, male, Thessaloniki, Greece)

“Even though the education services are aware of sexual and gender diversity issues, I think that they are not devoted to these issues”. (Lesbian, 38, female, Thessaloniki, Greece)

“Nottingham is seriously very white... it is not intersectional, we cannot speak about race and ethnicity. Being LGBT and foreign is an occupational hazard... There is no attention to equality and diversity”. (Gay men, 36, Nottingham, United Kingdom)

“I moved to Nottingham due to my sexuality, this was a considerable reason. I needed to live in the city... There are more services in Nottingham, it also had a gay scene and decent population of gay men”. (Gay men, 27, Nottingham, United Kingdom)

“For me having lesbian friends saves many therapy hours! It’s like, I’m normal, nothing is wrong”. (Lesbian, 31, woman, Girona, Spain)

“Nottingham is seriously very white... it is not intersectional, we cannot speak about race and ethnicity. Being LGBT and foreign is an occupational hazard... There is no attention to equality and diversity”. (Gay men, 36, Nottingham, United Kingdom)
Ten proposals to apply in your city

- Develop a local LGBT action plan where LGBT and human rights NGOs are included and consulted in the decision-making which covers the main spheres of people’s life – education, health, family, work, etc.
- Include an LCTB perspective transversally in all policies and intervention plans, the same way that other intervention needs should be transversal in LGBT policies and plans.
- Promote the integration of LGBT and Human Rights NGOs in the reporting process of hate crime.
- Strengthen training for enforcement authorities, prosecutors, judges, and victim service providers in order to understand LGBT particularities and needs.
- Foster positive discourses and visibility of sexual and gender expression diversity on behalf of the public bodies, such as celebrating key dates, publicly rejecting LGBTphobic acts, and other symbolic actions.
- Actively encourage and support LGBT associations and socialization spaces through creating safe spaces and allocating budget on it.
- Provide education centres with training and educational materials for both staff and students in which LGBT issues have a relevant presence.
- Design awareness campaigns aimed at preventing and combating LGBTphobia at proximity spaces – such as family, work, or education centres.
- Sensitize health workers to break with prejudices and stereotypes on LGBT people.
- Explore online networks as spaces where to promote sexual and gender diversity and combat LGBTphobia, especially hate speech.

Ethical code of good practice to combat LGBT-phobia

Proposal to ensure respect towards sexual and gender diversity

We, as members of public and private services, are aware of the role that we can play in combating discrimination, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia against LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) people.

The signatories of this ethical code commit themselves to the following five principles:

- To treat everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity equally
  - To take into account the diversity of the public at a large;
  - To counter heteronormativity and cisnormativity by not assuming that everyone around us is either straight or cisgender (not trans).
- To guarantee fair and respectful treatment of transgender people
  - To respect the self-defined gender of transgender people and use the personal pronouns, name, and denomination that is requested by the transgender persons themselves;
  - Not to reduce trans identities and experiences to medical procedures;
  - To avoid clichés and any demeaning reference to transgender people;
  - To avoid using offensive expressions towards transgender people.
- To promote diversity and take into account the plurality of LGBT communities
  - To promote and provide access to services that are inclusive of the needs and demands of LGBT population;
  - To take into account all ages, disabilities, ethnic origins, genders, religions and legal status within the LGBT population.
- To create a LGBT Discrimination-Free environment
  - To implement measures to prevent and combat discrimination against LGBT population;
  - To take appropriate actions against any LGBT-phobic attitude;
  - To identify LGBT-phobic acts and regularly refer them to the equality body;
  - To measure progress and share good practices to improve conditions in the general working environment.
- To ensure equality among all employees in the organisation
  - To create an inclusive environment for LGBT employees;
  - To ensure equality of rights and treatment of all employees regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression;
  - To support employees who have been discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender expression, and/or gender identity.
Words we use

- **Cisgender** is a person whose gender identity matches the one assigned at birth.
- **Cisnormativity** refers to the cultural and social system where the norm is that individuals live according to the gender that they were assigned at birth, and everything that falls outside of this norm is to be censored.
- **Coming-out** is the process of revealing the identification of a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person.
- **Gender Expression** relates to the external manifestations of gender, expressed through a person’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice or body characteristics. Society generally identifies such cues as either masculine or feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture.
- **Gender Identity** is a person’s inner sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own personal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people’s gender identity is that of a man or woman (or boy or girl), but for some people it does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.
- **Gender reassignment** refers to the process through which people re-define the gender in which they live in order to better express their gender identity. This process may, but does not have to, involve medical assistance including hormone therapies and any surgical procedures that transgender people undergo to align their body with their gender.
- **Heteronormative** refers to cultural and social practices where men and women are being led into believing – and behaving as if – heterosexuality is the only conceivable sexuality. It also implies the positioning of heterosexuality as the only way of being “normal”, which makes it the key source of social reward.
- **Homonormative** refers to a set of hierarchies, privileges, social norms and expectations that cause oppression within the LGBT community by result in the other members of the same community knowingly or unknowingly.

- **LGBT**: Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. There may be other formulations that include other identities, for example LGBTI, LGBT+, LGBT*, LGBTQ, etc.
- **Homophobia/Transphobia/LGBTphobia** is a matrix of cultural and personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes and aggressive behaviours based on prejudice, disgust, fear and/or hatred directed against individuals or groups who do not conform to, or who transgress societal norms and expectations on gender and/or sexuality.
- **Queer** is now used as an academic term for people who are not heterosexual, cisgender people – the term includes lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people. Queer theory aims to challenge heteronormative social norms concerning gender and sexuality, and claims that gender roles are social constructions. Traditionally the term “queer” was an abusive term and therefore, for some, still has negative connotations. Many LGBT persons however have reclaimed the term as a symbol of pride, some using it as a synonym for LGBT, and many others use it as a term that helps to transcend such labelling.
- **Sexual Orientation** describes an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. For example transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
- **Transgender** is an umbrella term which includes those people who have a gender identity which is different to the gender assigned at birth, and those people who wish to portray their gender identity in a different way to the gender assigned at birth.
- **Transition** includes some or all of the following personal, medical and legal steps: telling one’s family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person.