

Empowering leadership to support transgender students and staff within higher education

What works to raise awareness and effect change?

Dr Stephanie Mckendry and Dr Matson Lawrence



Contents

Executive summary	3
Background	4
Aims and objectives of the project	6
Research methodology / approach	7
Engagement with the sector through workshops and dissemination events	7
Institutional engagement and consultation	8
Training events	9
Developing the resources	9
Key findings	11
Resources and tools	12
Recommendations	13
References	14
Author biographies	15
Appendix 1: summary of TransEdu Scotland findings	16
Appendix 2: a champions approach	18

Executive summary

There is increasing evidence that trans people face significant challenges studying and working in higher education (ECU, 2009; LGBT Youth Scotland, 2018; NUS, 2014; Stonewall, 2018a,b). Research undertaken at the University of Strathclyde to explore the experiences and challenges of this diverse group discovered a far greater proportion of students considering or having left their course, and issues around learning and teaching, placements and confidentiality (Mckendry and Lawrence, 2017; Lawrence and Mckendry, forthcoming 2019). While staff were often keen to support trans students, there was a lack of awareness or training to provide background context, a wider understanding of terminology or the support requirements that might improve their student experience. Similarly, trans and gender diverse staff encountered barriers in relation to applying for roles and a range of aspects of daily working life.

Building upon the University of Strathclyde research, this project explored how to raise awareness effectively and promote change and leadership. The project worked with a sample of institutions to determine what materials would be effective in increasing awareness of the transgender population and building capacity and motivation to improve support. Engagement also focused on developing practical resources to enable positive change. The TransEDU research team – Dr Stephanie Mckendry and Dr Matson Lawrence – created and evaluated training materials, policy templates, mapping documents and multimedia resources that will inform university leaders and practitioners about the lived experiences, support needs and perspectives of trans students and staff.

The project developed the support website trans.ac.uk as a free, open-access resource for those in higher education supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse people. It includes training resources and materials, case studies of best practice, animated videos and guidance.

Background

As noted by Mckendry and Lawrence (2017, 4):

Trans is an umbrella term used to denote people whose gender identity differs from the gender and sex they were assigned at birth. This can include (trans) women, (trans) men, and non-binary and other gender diverse people. Trans people may make, or have made, social and / or physical changes to more closely align to their gender identity.

The term **gender diverse** can denote people who experience their gender identity as outside of the binary of man and woman, including non-binary, genderqueer, agender, and dual role people. We use this term in addition to 'trans' because not all those who have diverse gender identities use 'trans' to describe themselves. This term is also useful for those who are questioning or unsure about their gender identity.

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, those who are "proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex" are protected from discrimination under the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment'.

The Act proscribes both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of a person's trans status, including in education, employment, housing and the provision of services. In line with the ECHR (2015) Technical Guidance, it is established best practice to interpret the gender reassignment characteristic as "a personal process... rather than a medical process", thus extending protections to those who do not wish to or cannot access gender-related medical interventions.

However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that trans people face significant levels of harassment and bullying within education. According to the Equality Challenge Unit (2009) almost a quarter of trans students felt bullied or discriminated against since starting university and 23% of trans staff felt they had been denied a promotion as a result of their trans status. A 2016 report by the UK Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee found that about half of young trans people and a third of trans adults attempt suicide. The committee argued that 'the levels of bullying and harassment experienced by trans students in further and higher education are unacceptable'. Stonewall undertook research on the experiences of trans people the UK and found that half of trans employees have hidden their identity at work and one in eight have been physically attacked by a colleague or customer in the last year. More than a third of trans students in higher education have experienced negative comments or behaviour from staff in the last year. LGBT Youth Scotland found that 27% of trans young people had left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the learning environment, 96% of trans young people indicated mental health problems and their associated behaviours and 63% experienced suicidal thoughts and behaviours. While there is increasing recognition within the higher education sector of the potential challenges and barriers trans people face, there remains a dearth of empirical evidence to inform leadership, as well as student and staff support.

Recognising their statutory and ethical obligations to trans and non-binary people, the University of Strathclyde was supported by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to undertake a research project, TransEdu Scotland, exploring the experiences and support needs of trans and gender diverse applicants, students and staff in Scotland's colleges and universities. While this particular research project focused on the experiences of those studying and working within Scottish institutions, the findings are transferable to the rest of the UK and internationally.

Running from July 2016 until June 2017, the project uncovered a wealth of detail around the experiences of staff and students, areas in which support could be improved, such as application and induction processes for staff and learning and teaching issues for students, as well as examples of innovative practice and institutional leadership and policy.

A series of recommendations were produced for institutions, students' associations, the SFC and other bodies to improve support for trans and gender diverse people. These included the need for a named contact for applicants, students and staff, the development of a specific trans and gender diversity policy and clear, online information outlining the rights and support gender diverse people can expect from their employer or place of study. More detail on the methodology and findings of TransEdu Scotland can be found in Appendix 1.

Aims and objectives of the project

It was clear from undertaking the SFC-funded TransEdu Scotland project that, while the higher education sector was keen to improve support for trans and gender diverse people, the lack of awareness of the general issues or how best to develop training, policies and activities was limiting action. Greater understanding of gender diversity among staff and students and more inclusive curriculum and practice are key. It was thus felt that one of the best ways to support the sector was in the creation of resources and training materials that highlight the empirical evidence gathered by the research and provide practical tools for the implementation of policies and practices.

Aim: to create a reusable suite of resources to support leadership activities and policy development in relation to transgender students and staff.

Objectives:

- 1 Create a series of videos and talking heads for use in training and to provide examples of the lived experience of students and staff.
- 2 Develop training resources and workshop materials to enable staff training.
- 3 Publish a practice guide and 'champion model' for engaging in cultural change in relation to trans students and staff.
- 4 Produce worked-through examples of real-life scenarios faced by trans students and staff as well as examples of best practice in institutional support.

Research methodology / approach

Having gathered empirical evidence on the experiences of trans and non-binary students and staff, we wished to engage with colleagues across the UK to highlight these findings, verify our assumption that the experiences and institutional approaches were similar to Scotland in other parts of the UK and seek views on what kind of resources would be helpful for institutions. In addition, we wished to explore with colleagues across our institution and others how leadership could be developed in respect of trans inclusion; both in terms of empowering individuals to take on leadership roles and in encouraging senior leaders within higher education to prioritise this important work.

Engagement with the sector through workshops and dissemination events

A number of events were held and conference papers and workshops were delivered to a range of audiences in higher education to disseminate the findings, gather feedback on the experiences of others and discuss empowering leadership. To begin the project, the team delivered a free, full-day event at the University of Strathclyde as part of the organisation's Engage Week – a series of events to facilitate engagement between researchers and external colleagues throughout the education, third and industrial sectors. The symposium, 'Trans Awareness in Education' was attended by more than 100 delegates from across UK higher education, further education and secondary schooling and involved third sector partners such as the Scottish Trans Alliance and LGBT Youth Scotland. Participants attended trans awareness education sessions and panel discussions before taking part in interactive workshops in which they discussed learner and staff journeys and the potential challenges for trans and gender diverse people.

The research findings were also shared with delegates at the Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE) Annual Conference (June 2017, Royal Conservatoire Scotland) and the NUS Scotland National Gathering (August 2017, Glasgow Caledonian University). Both were participatory sessions in which delegates were asked to reflect upon the practices and experiences within their own

institutions. These sessions proved fruitful in collecting feedback on barriers, good practice and examples of leadership. The need to engage and empower student leaders as drivers of institutional change emerged as a strong theme from all sessions.

Finally, the project team participated in conferences and symposiums specifically addressing LGBT+ issues in education. Presentations on the research project and its findings were delivered at the Annual Trans and Non-Binary Conference (July 2017, University of Brighton), the Westminster Briefing event Supporting LGBT+ Students and Staff in HE (June 2017) and the second annual LGBTQ Inclusivity in Higher Education conference (September 2017, Swansea University). These provided us with opportunities to engage with researchers, teaching staff and policymakers involved in LGBT inclusion and leadership within higher education.

As a result, we deepened our understanding of the broad, shared issues best taken forward within an LGBT umbrella approach – inclusion within the curriculum, for example – and those experiences and barriers that were specific to gender diversity or were of a magnitude that requires specific attention.

Through these engagements and from hearing the work of researchers and practitioners it became clear this project would need to attend to trans inclusion within research in particular. Researchers such as Edith England from Swansea University have spoken of the need to centre trans people in research. While acknowledging that inclusion is difficult and that amplification of trans voices can easily become exploitative if not carefully considered, England noted the cis¹-centric nature of much research. Gender diverse experiences can be absent from research design, can be dealt with in purely binary terms or

1 The term 'cis' is used within this paper and project to indicate the opposite of transgender. It is employed as a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. It is intended in this usage as a non-perjorative term that allows for discussion of gender identity and difference without using problematic language eg normal, usual. It is a Latin prefix meaning 'on this side of' in comparison to trans, which means 'on the other side of'.

completely 'othered' as a cipher to better understand cis identities, while trans and non-binary researchers can encounter barriers in their career progression. These latter themes chimed with our previous findings, where research staff could often feel marginalised and the experiences of gender diverse students remains almost entirely absent from the huge body of literature on student retention or learning, for example.

Through this approach, we were able to confirm our original finding that the experiences of trans and non-binary students and staff in higher education remain poor, little understood and largely unsupported. While there is no lack of willingness across the sector to engage on these topics, and indeed a clear acknowledgement of the ethical and statutory obligations placed on institutions, there was consensus that most lacked knowledge on gender diversity and many did not know how to engage leaders or bring about change, despite well-used guidance and support being made available through Advance HE (formerly ECU).

Institutional engagement and consultation

In order to better understand the needs of particular institutions, to discuss with colleagues what might prove valuable in terms of resources and to receive feedback on those we developed, the project undertook a series of visits to institutional teams involved in leadership, student support and academic development and equality and diversity. In June 2017, a study visit to London South Bank University involved meetings with the Equality and Diversity Team, the Students' Union LGBT officer and the Skills for Learning Team. In addition, a presentation was given to invited guests on the findings of the TransEdu project. Once again, the institutional perspective mirrored our findings in terms of the need for better support, clearer and more publicised policies and general awareness, training and celebration. The team supported the initial meeting of the development group who were creating a new trans and gender diversity policy and, at draft stage,

provided a commentary and suggestions before it was published. Participating in the creation of policy was particularly beneficial in gaining insight from another institutional perspective – a large, urban university with a significant proportion of first generation and BAME students. That experience helped us create policy guidance resources that any institution's equality leaders can use to facilitate the scoping and development of a new policy or the evaluation of current ones.

In June 2017, we instigated a knowledge-exchange partnership with Trinity College Dublin. Trinity College Dublin has a comprehensive, award-winning gender identity and gender expression policy for staff and students, and has engaged in a range of programmes and initiatives to advance institutional awareness and provision, in partnership with external bodies. Funded through an ERASMUS+ staff mobility grant, Dr Matson Lawrence undertook a week-long visit to Dublin and engaged with a range of key stakeholders and leaders across and beyond Trinity College Dublin – including managers, senior academics and third sector partners (including the CEO of Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) and staff at BeLonG To LGBT Youth Services).

The work of Trinity College Dublin and our engagement with its senior staff and key stakeholders provided invaluable insight into best practice for policy development, which in turn informed the TransEDU guidance for developing policy. This included the importance of consultation across the institution, partnership with key external agencies and organisations, and the commitment to regular policy review – which is of particular import in this area, given the constant evolution in both terminology and pertinent legislation.

Finally, we met with representatives from Kingston University London who were involved in student support and had a particular research interest in trans inclusion and gender diversity. They provided insight into the practices, issues and policies at the institution and gave advice on the kind of reusable resources that would prove useful in developing an embedded approach to staff training.

Training events

To better understand the needs and issues of those involved in learning and teaching, curriculum design and learning leadership, the project undertook training sessions at the University of Strathclyde and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). They are very different organisations in Glasgow: the former a large institution of over 22,000 students, formed in 1796 with specialisms in engineering and science; the latter a world top three small specialist institution for music, drama, dance production and film. Engagement with staff in such diverse learning contexts provided us an opportunity to explore a range of issues.

The session at Strathclyde was part of a series of learning events for teaching staff arranged by the organisational development team. These are intended to be interactive sessions that introduce new and experienced staff to particular concepts, technologies or other issues in learning, teaching and assessment. Twenty members of staff from across all four faculties and professional services participated. At RCS, the project team attended the annual learning and teaching conference, which is an integral element of the annual staff development programme. Two sessions were delivered, attended by a total of 45 staff from across all programmes and disciplines.

The training events had two purposes: to pilot training materials and activities and receive feedback on their efficacy, and to explore issues of leadership in relation to trans inclusion and the potential impact of a champions model or approach. Participants were given an introduction to transgender terms and non-binary identities as a general awareness raising session before exploring the potential challenges and needs of trans and gender diverse people in the journey through their institution. Further activities explored learning and teaching issues across different curriculum and, finally, staff were asked how best to empower leadership within their particular context.

Developing the resources

We took the learning from all three elements of our approach and created a series of resources for use by institutions. These are a mix of multimedia and downloadable resources, accessible explanations and links to further guidance and support.

There had been requests for us to draft and publish template policies for institutions to download and complete but we felt that this would be inappropriate or counterproductive. The development and regular evaluation of a gender identity and gender expression policy is, we believe, key to improving support, empowering trans and non-binary people and engendering leadership. This is only the case, however, when that development and review is undertaken by key members of the institution, focusing on its specific context, mission and geography, for example. A policy appropriate to the RCS will need to consider support for applicants through the audition process, issues of gendered performance and small groups and individualised tutorial support. One for a larger institution will require a very different policy to support students and staff in large classes and may have specific elements concerned with professional placements or distance learning. After consideration therefore, we produced a guidance document to support institutions through that process, asking them to reflect upon their specific situation through the various elements of student and staff life.

The training materials we had used and refined through our engagement activities have been reproduced along with explanatory material for use by those aiming to embed training and awareness raising. All feedback suggested the training sessions were valuable but, for sustainability, they need to be undertaken by institutions themselves. Individuals or groups can, therefore, take the learning materials for their own use – reproducing sessions or taking elements and adapting them for their bespoke context.

Resources that centre the lived experience of those with particular characteristics or backgrounds have been proven effective in empowering allies and individuals, raising awareness and, ultimately, improving outcomes. For example, the last decade has seen increasing attention paid to the needs, experiences and outcomes of learners with experience of local authority care. The work of Buttle UK, *Become* and *Who Cares?* Scotland has helped raise awareness through the higher education sector. In a large part, this is because they facilitated people with experience of care sharing their stories, amplifying their voices in a safe and constructive manner. Previously there was a lack of awareness about the challenges posed by experience of care or the reality of many people's experiences. On hearing first-hand accounts, it is much easier to empathise and proactively take steps to support improvements. We wished to do something similar through our project by centring resources on trans and non-binary voices and lived experiences. Given the small number of people and their potential vulnerability this is not an easy task, however. Also, a key finding of our TransEdu research was that the burden of responsibility was too often placed on trans and non-binary people.

Our innovative solution to the challenge of centring lived experiences and creating authentic stories for training and awareness raising while preserving anonymity was to create a series of multimedia animations of different aspects of gender diverse experiences, such as personal safety, being misgendered and accessing facilities. These short videos are narrated by trans and non-binary people using scripts taken from the TransEdu Scotland survey and interviews with applicants, students and staff. Several have now been published and can be used by anyone within higher education to raise awareness, train staff and students or as part of inclusion campaigns. The videos are freely accessible online via the TransEDU YouTube Channel.

These video resources have English subtitles to ensure accessibility for a range of audiences.

Key findings

In line with the findings of the earlier TransEDU Scotland project, we found that support for this group of students and staff is too often reactive and relies on individuals with lived experience coming forward to request action or take on a liberation role. Much of the provision and awareness of trans and gender diversity issues was as part of the broader umbrella of LGBT+ support. While there is strength in this approach, in many cases it means that the specific experiences of trans and non-binary people were not considered.

Universally, colleagues and institutions were keen to enhance support and do work in this area but the vast majority did not feel sufficiently confident in their knowledge or experience. The need for embedded approaches to support and training, a senior champion and a bespoke policy are clear and the web resources that have been produced will, we hope, support institutions with these tasks. There is also a need across the sector to pay particular attention to gender identity in research and to facilitate the training, and support the needs, of trans and non-binary researchers. In all of these cases, those who would play a role in trans and gender diversity inclusion must be empowered to lead, whether they work in human resources, student services or are a member of academic staff. Given the small numbers and potential vulnerability, this leadership must come from allies rather than those with lived experience.

The inclusion of gender diversity within Athena SWAN applications has been important in asking departments and institutions to focus on the needs of trans and non-binary people, but a specific charter mark that explicitly considers trans and gender diversity inclusion would encourage leadership and attention to this very important area of work. The LGBT Youth Scotland Charter Mark is a good example of an initiative that centres trans and non-binary people in the programme. We believe that a charter mark or award to encourage and recognise achievements in trans and gender diverse inclusion would stimulate activity. Existing awards could increase trans visibility or make success contingent upon inclusion of trans and non-binary experiences within wider diversity work. The champions approach we have developed attempts to provide a structured way for institutions to reflect on their particular context and plan their activity but an external body that was able to provide support and objectively judge if progress had been made would likely increase motivation and awareness.

Resources and tools

A suite of reusable, open-access resources have been developed through the project and made available to the sector on the trans.ac.uk website. Launched at an event at the University of Strathclyde in December 2017, the site aims to provide resources and information for supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse applicants, students and staff in further and higher education. It hosts the training material and animations described above as well as case studies, guidance on identity terms, intersections and facilities. There are sections that consider issues when supporting students – such as barriers to admission, learning and teaching, EU and international students – and one that includes information relevant to staff.

A thorough analysis of web analytics, feedback from the site and a user survey are planned as part of the ongoing evaluation strategy. Initial feedback about the efficacy of the site via an online survey has been overwhelmingly positive. There were calls for more animations and training activities that could be used alongside the current ones. Comments included:



These appear to be a brilliant way to present the views of trans people. I'm not trans but it helped me consider aspects of a trans person's day to day life that I might not have envisaged before. The videos are brilliant. I hope you can make more of them."



Excellent training resources. Very clear and accessible. Will be making use of these in my institution!"



One of the underlying problems is lack of empathy, often not intentional. If it is not something we have to deal with personally, that something is a problem for someone else, and how, may not occur to us. The videos are really compelling."



HEA Scotland @HEA_Scotland – 20 Dec 2017

Fantastic new resource with research, videos, workshop materials and further information for supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse students and staff #TransEDU



Scottish Funding Council @ScotFundCouncil – 14 Dec 2017

Scottish colleges and universities are “uniquely positioned” to champion the rights of #trans and #nonbinary people. New report and website launched today #TransEDU

Further resources are planned.

A Scotland-wide Community of Practice for those supporting trans and non-binary people in further and higher education was launched in February 2018. The group brings together sector staff and key partners (such as ECU and LGBT Youth Scotland) to share expertise, develop practice and gain peer support in advancing trans equality. The Community of Practice will provide detailed feedback on the website and will help plan and create further resources.

Recommendations

This project confirmed the main findings of our earlier, TransEdu Scotland, empirical research: the experiences of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people studying and working in higher education are poor. There is a general lack of awareness of gender diversity among students and staff and, where there is support provision or inclusive practice, this is too often reactive, ad hoc and instigated by trans people. The most important recommendation is, therefore, that university leaders should recognise this situation and take steps to evaluate and improve their provision for this group of people.

In particular, we would recommend that a senior leader within the organisation is named as trans and gender diversity equality champion. They should be tasked with understanding the current experiences and needs of trans and non-binary people within the organisation before establishing and leading a plan of improvement. While there may be suitable committees or processes that can take forward the work, such as equality and diversity committees or gender equality groups and LGBT+ networks, it is essential that trans equality is fully attended to. Ideally, a separate gender diversity group should be established which can feed into current processes but remains empowered to focus exclusively on these issues. The champions approach we have created should support these groups in considering the full range of staff and students' experiences when planning activities.

As key sites of engagement, knowledge production, critique and the pursuit of social justice, universities are uniquely positioned to continue to drive change for trans and gender diverse people across and beyond their campus communities.

We are very grateful to colleagues at all of the institutions who worked with us during this project and for those we engaged with during conferences, seminars, workshops, presentations, and knowledge-exchange partnerships. Their insight, feedback and innovative ideas have been gratefully received and incorporated into the resources available on the website.

References

ECU (2009) Experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans staff and students in higher education: research report 2009. Available at <http://ecu.ac.uk/publications/lgbt-staff-and-students-in-he> [accessed 28 November 2018].

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015) Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/equality-act-2010-technical-guidance-further-and-higher-education> [accessed 25 November 2018].

Lawrence, M and Mckendry, S (2019) Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students and Staff in Further and Higher Education. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

LGBT Youth Scotland (2018) Life in Scotland for LGBT young people. Available at: <http://lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people.pdf> [accessed 28 November 2018].

Mckendry, S and Lawrence, M (2017) TransEdu Scotland: Researching the experience of trans and gender diverse applicants, students and staff in Scotland's colleges and universities. Available at: <http://trans.ac.uk/Portals/88/TransEdu-Scotland-Report-2017.pdf?ver=2017-10-31-142716-560> [accessed 8 November 2018].

NUS (2014) Education beyond the straight and narrow. Available at: http://nus.org.uk/Global/LGBT%20research%20report_web.pdf [accessed 8 November 2018].

Stonewall (2018a) LGBT in Britain. Trans Report. Available at: <http://stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt-in-britain-trans.pdf> [accessed 8 November 2018].

Stonewall (2018a) LGBT in Britain. University Report. Available at: http://stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt_in_britain_universities_report.pdf [accessed 8 November 2018].

UK Parliament (2016) Women and Equalities Committee Transgender equality inquiry. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/transgender-equality/> [accessed 8 November 2018].

Author biographies

Dr Stephanie Mckendry

Stephanie Mckendry is Widening Access Manager at the University of Strathclyde. She leads the team responsible for increasing opportunities and removing barriers to study and success for those from widening access backgrounds. Stephanie manages outreach projects as well as transition and retention initiatives designed to support access students whilst on their programmes of study. Prior to this, Stephanie gained over ten years' experience teaching and researching in higher education. More recently her work has involved the closer alignment of widening participation and equality and diversity. For example, she led the award-winning TransEDU research project at Strathclyde, which explored the experiences of trans and gender diverse students and staff in Scottish colleges and universities. She also acts as Implementation Advisor for Scotland's Commissioner for Fair Access, sits on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning and is the publication lead for the Forum for Access and Continuing Education.

Dr Matson Lawrence

Matson Lawrence is a Research Associate at the University of Strathclyde. He previously worked on the TransEDU action research, and is currently researching intersectional lifecourse inequalities among LGBTQI+ people with CILIA-LGBTQI+. Matson holds an interdisciplinary Doctorate in law and applied social sciences from Durham University, and his research interests include gender, sexualities and educational policy and practice. He is co-author of the book 'Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students and Staff in Further and Higher Education: Practical Advice for Colleges and Universities' (2019). Matson has been seconded to the Scottish Funding Council as a Senior Policy Analysis Officer with responsibility for the Gender Action Plan. He has also worked extensively with intersectional LGBTQI+ communities in the third and arts sectors.

Appendix 1: summary of TransEdu Scotland findings

The SFC TransEdu Scotland project used a mixed method, action-orientated approach to provide empirical evidence to inform institutional statutory and ethical obligations and to assist the sector in developing Gender Action Plans.

The project explored three research questions using an online survey and follow-up, semi-structured interviews. These were:

- 1 What barriers were faced by trans applicants, students and staff in Scotland's colleges and universities.
- 2 What were the support needs of trans applicants, students and staff.
- 3 What monitoring practices, guidance and support protocols pertaining to trans people did Scottish further education and higher education institutions have in place.

157 participants completed the survey after partial completions had been removed. Responses were received from applicants, students and staff from 28 out of a total 33 institutions in Scotland. This included respondents from every higher education institution. A wide range of discipline areas and levels of study were represented, including the high demand professions such as medicine. In total, 71% ($n=111$) of respondents were engaged in the higher education sector as either applicants, students or staff.

The headline findings from the survey were:

- + 86% ($n=123$) of participants had experienced barriers to their learning or work in relation to their trans identity or gender diversity. Participants pointed to peer relationships with colleagues and fellow students as particularly problematic, alongside concerns about gender neutral facilities and difficult administrative processes.
- + Almost a quarter of respondents (23%, $n=29$) felt entirely unable to discuss their trans status or identity with their institution and a further 33% ($n=41$) felt only a 'a little' able to do so. Almost 50% ($n=60$) did not know if their institution had a policy to support trans people.
- + 35% ($n=44$) of respondents had withdrawn from their studies before completion. Of those, 57% ($n=33$) cited mental health issues, 19% ($n=11$) disability or health condition, 22% ($n=13$) bullying, harassment or prejudice.
- + Over half of the survey respondents (54%, $n=67$) did not identify within a binary gender identity. Thus, support that focuses solely on binary trans experiences to the exclusion of gender diversity and non-binary identities will not be effective.
- + Over 80% ($n=97$) of participants had, are currently or plan to access a gender identity clinic.
- + For staff and postgraduate students, major barriers were experienced in relation to professional relationships and networking.

Follow-up interviews were undertaken with 20 people who had agreed to participate following completion of the survey. They were asked to reflect on their experiences studying and working in colleges and universities, their support needs and any barriers they had encountered in relation to their gender identity. The interviews, alongside the substantial free text responses within the original survey, represented a rich source of empirical data. Textual analysis was undertaken and eight dominant themes emerged. These were:

- 1 **Transitions** – beginning a new course or place of work as an opportunity to make gender-related transitions and the obstacles people faced when attempting to transition in relation to administrative processes in particular.
- 2 **Safety** – with a significant number of people concerned about their personal safety on campus, experiencing hostility and overt transphobia.
- 3 **Learning and teaching issues** – particularly in relation to classroom experiences with groupwork, attitudes of staff and the perceived 'laddishness' of certain disciplines, the dearth of curriculum pertaining to trans and gender diversity issues in many healthcare and professional programmes and negative experiences on placement.

- 4 **Gender diversity** – issues of ‘passing’ or ‘standing out’ as visibly trans were significant for participants and speak to the diversity of individual circumstances. For non-binary people, in particular, the lack of awareness around gender diversity from peers and staff could be overwhelming.
- 5 **Complexities and intersections** – the need to attend to the specific experiences of those with mental health conditions or disabilities, which are more prevalent among this group than the wider population. Issues of estrangement, isolation and financial precarity were common.
- 6 **Having to be educators** – the vast majority of interviewees and survey respondents expressed frustration and disappointment around the lack of trans awareness or understanding of gender diversity. Individuals, particularly staff members, had to educate those around them in order to receive support and any sense of understanding. While some were happy to participate in campaigns and instigate activities, all agreed primary responsibility for change and training had to be led by the institution.
- 7 **Self-advocacy** – while some trans and non-binary participants felt able to advocate for themselves and others, many felt entirely unable to seek the support they required and were entitled to. Reactive provision is, therefore, insufficient.
- 8 **Otherring** – administrative difficulties, a lack of gender-neutral facilities and sports opportunities, and misgendering (using the incorrect pronoun, for example) may all individually be small issues. Taken together, however, they create a hostile and unwelcoming environment for trans and gender diverse people. Conversely, even minor efforts to promote inclusion made a real difference to people’s experiences.

A series of recommendations were produced for institutions, students’ associations, the funding council and other bodies to improve support for trans and gender diverse people. These included the need for a named contact for applicants, students and staff – a friendly, trans aware member of staff to provide one to one support and act as a first point of contact – the development of a specific trans and gender diversity policy and clear, online information outlining the rights and support gender diverse people can expect from their employer or place of study.

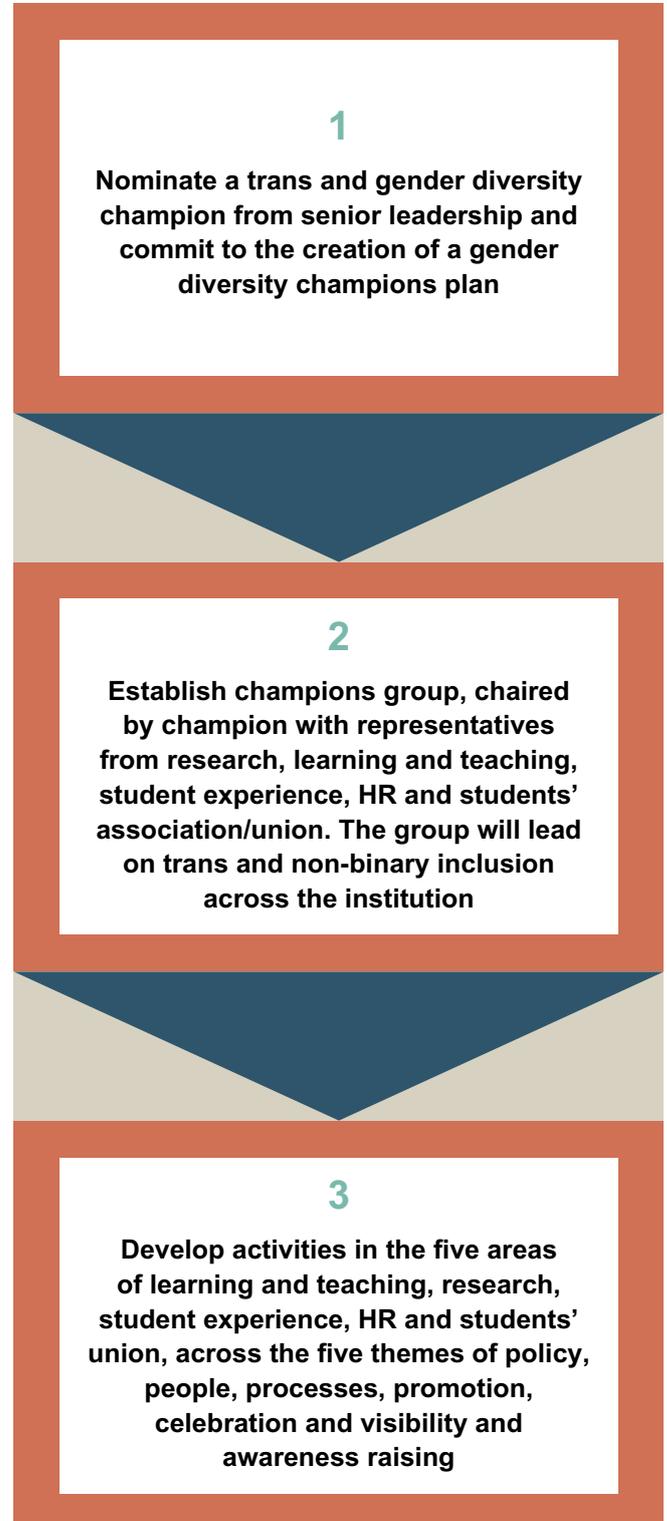
While this particular research project focused on the experiences of those studying and working within Scottish institutions, the findings are transferable to the rest of the UK and internationally.

Appendix 2: a champions approach

We know that, in the past, institutions have too often relied on individuals with lived experience to take forward work around support for trans and non-binary applicants, student and staff. This is problematic for a number of reasons:

- 1 Support remains reactive rather than proactive, anticipatory, embedded and mainstreamed.
- 2 The burden of responsibility remains with individuals, many of whom may not feel safe or comfortable articulating their needs and are particularly vulnerable to challenging circumstances.
- 3 The general student and staff population remain lacking in awareness of gender diversity increasing the minority stress and hostility or ignorance encountered by trans and non-binary people.

In order to take more active, positive steps towards improved awareness and support for trans and gender diverse people, we recommend employing a champions approach. By following the structure of the model and undertaking and embedding several activities in each area of institutional leadership, all elements of university life for trans and gender diverse applicants, students and staff can be considered and improved. A strategy that aims to address several points each academic year will ensure a realistic and sustained improvement plan across the areas of research, learning and teaching, student experience, human resources and infrastructure and students' union.



The table below outlines some examples of the kind of activities that should be undertaken to promote trans equality and inclusion. There are many other activities and some will be specific to the institutional context.

Policy

Learning and teaching	Research	Student experience	Human resources and infrastructure	Students' union
Policy on placement support and additional safeguarding.	<p>Schemes and activities designed to support early career researchers and women should have clear policies on eligibility for trans and non-binary people.</p> <p>Policy on grant funding for those requiring absences for gender affirming healthcare.</p>	All department and student-led exchanges and international opportunities should be considered for potential issues and barriers that may arise for trans and gender diverse participants.	<p>Provision of gender neutral facilities throughout campuses and buildings including bathrooms, changing rooms and student residences.</p> <p>The development of a specific policy for trans students and staff, incorporating issues such as leave entitlement for medical procedures and appointments.</p> <p>Consider appropriate signage and provision of facilities for non-binary students and staff.</p>	<p>Policy on trans and gender diverse inclusion within clubs and societies, especially those that are gendered.</p> <p>Consider whether LGBTQI clubs and societies are genuinely 'T' and ensure trans-specific policies, activities, etc are developed.</p>

People

Learning and teaching	Research	Student experience	Human resources and infrastructure	Students' union
<p>Consider introducing pronouns alongside names within introductory and icebreaking teaching contexts.</p> <p>Curriculum and teaching content pertaining to trans and non-binary people across all subject areas.</p>	<p>The establishment of a staff research network or peer-mentoring scheme if none in existence.</p> <p>Support and advocacy should be provided to staff and students who face barriers in changing their names on publications, by for example providing institutional request for policy changes.</p>	<p>A well-publicised named contact for students.</p> <p>Embedded and sustained programme of trans awareness training for professional services and academic staff.</p>	<p>A well-publicised named contact for staff.</p> <p>Establish an LGBT+ Staff Network (if not already in existence) and provide material, practical support to its activities and foster sustainability.</p> <p>Embedded and sustained programme of trans awareness training for staff.</p>	<p>Engage with national and regional LGBT+ and Trans students' union officers.</p> <p>Celebrate and support national and regional student's union trans and LGBT+ campaigns.</p> <p>Engage with local trans and non-binary people, and relevant organisations. Provide material support by offering free use of facilities and spaces in students' union premises, for events and community workshops.</p>

Process

Learning and teaching	Research	Student experience	Human resources and infrastructure	Students' union
<p>Establish coherent process for people to indicate their preferred name and pronouns on class registers.</p>	<p>Ethics committees should scrutinise issues of gender in relation to: participant inclusion and exclusion criteria; how gender information is collected; the representativeness of samples involved in terms of gender identity; theoretical and methodological assumptions around gender and non-binary perspectives.</p>	<p>Trans awareness training and CPD opportunities should be essential for counsellors.</p> <p>When recruiting new counsellors or seeking external provision, demonstrable expertise in LGBTQI identities should be a factor in that recruitment process.</p> <p>Development and promotion of clear harassment and reporting strategies.</p>	<p>Consider issues of time off for, and pay during, leave for medical procedures and appointments related to their gender identity for research students and staff receiving grants and stipends.</p> <p>Processes for changing names and gender that cascade across all systems and for outgoing employer references.</p> <p>Consider whether it is necessary to include gender options and titles on forms and processes. Where this is required, provide an explanation to those completing it.</p> <p>Consider carefully if evidence is required before a change can be implemented. In many cases, it is not needed.</p>	<p>Introduce a specific trans officer role within the students' union.</p> <p>Provide pathways by which students can report issues or concerns relating to the students' union, or to specific clubs and societies, and ensure these reports are responded to.</p>

Promotion, celebration and visibility

Learning and teaching	Research	Student experience	Human resources and infrastructure	Students' union
<p>Establish and facilitate allies groups among students.</p> <p>Include gender diversity within the curriculum wherever possible.</p> <p>Harness LGBTQI and Pride events to engender discussion within classroom contexts.</p>	<p>Inclusion of pronouns in conference introductions and name badges.</p> <p>Promote publications and good practice examples of research that effectively and ethically engages with trans and gender diverse populations.</p>	<p>Publication of easily found webpages on 'trans and gender diversity' with links to named contact and signposting to policy and provision.</p> <p>Incorporate official institutional involvement in LGBT History Month, LGBTQI+ Pride events, Trans Day of Visibility, and Trans Day of Remembrance within annual calendar.</p> <p>Affirmative posters and relevant information placed in strategic student- and staff-facing areas around campus.</p>	<p>Fly the trans flag on campus.</p> <p>Consider appropriate signage and provision for non-binary students and staff.</p> <p>Provision of counselling formats other than via telephones for trans staff and students.</p>	<p>Acknowledge and celebrate key events, including LGBT History Month, LGBTQI+ Pride events, Trans Day of Visibility, and Trans Day of Remembrance.</p>

Awareness raising

Learning and teaching	Research	Student experience	Human resources and infrastructure	Students' union
<p>Campaign to evaluate and update trans and gender diversity inclusion in professional programmes to raise awareness among future professionals.</p>	<p>Inclusion of experiences of trans and gender diverse people in research projects, and reporting on any relevant data collected.</p>	<p>Awareness training for academic and professional services staff.</p>	<p>Awareness training and compliance should be incorporated into policies for all contractors and within procurement practices.</p>	<p>Support affiliated clubs and societies to increase their understanding of trans experiences, and to ensure their club is overtly welcoming to trans students.</p> <p>Provide trans awareness training to students' union staff, executive and officers on an annual basis.</p>



Contact us

+44 (0)20 7438 1010

publications@advance-he.ac.uk

www.advance-he.ac.uk

@AdvanceHE

© 2018 Advance HE. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advance HE. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owner. Such permission will normally be granted for non-commercial, educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE: +44 (0) 3300 416201 or publications@advance-he.ac.uk.

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031.

Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607.

Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946.

Advance HE words and logo should not be used without our permission.

VAT registered no. GB 152 1219 50.