

Not labelled but understood: Transgender Equality in Later Life



Key messages for health, social care and supported housing providers

Transgender people are people who share the joys, anxieties and illnesses common to everyone. Older Trans people are like other older people: they fear frailty, dependency and loss of their identity¹. In our diverse and ageing society, it is important that care provision is fully inclusive of everyone's needs. It is the duty of any Care Provider to achieve and demonstrate 'good practice' by:

Helping staff to understand, behave and care appropriately

- All staff who have contact with patients, residents or tenants in a care or supported environment should to be given training in transgender awareness. This should be based on sound evidence, and should include:
 - Relevant clinical evidence, and information about gender dysphoria
 - Evidence from Trans people themselves about the issues that affect their health and well-being, dignity and self-esteem.
 - Familiarisation with this guidance and sources of further information
- Staff providing direct support and/or personal care for Trans individuals will need specific training relating to that individual's needs, and their own legal obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, Gender Recognition Act 2004, and Equality Act 2010.

Establishing Trans aware policies and practices

Make it clear in your publicity that you are 'Trans friendly' and that you operate policies which are fully inclusive and comply with the guidance for 'The provision of care for Older Trans people'.

- Incorporate a zero tolerance approach to Transphobia from staff, other residents/ tenants and visitors into your public information, rules and staff handbooks.
- Transphobic discrimination, abuse or assaults should be reported, as these may constitute hate crime.
- Any staff members who object to caring for Trans people on religious grounds are likely to be in breach of the law.
- Care should be taken to ensure that Trans people (and any others who wish to opt out) can choose whether to attend any religious ceremonies on the premises.

¹ Whittle, S and Turner, L (2007) Bereavement: A guide for transsexual, transgender people and their loved ones. http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_074259

Maintaining confidentiality

- Nothing regarding a person's gender history must be disclosed without their consent. Trans people receiving care have a legal right to confidentiality in this regard. Any documents that reveal a past name should be inaccessible except to named people.
- Disclosure to any member of staff must be authorised by the Trans person themselves or by a nominated spokesperson in the case of mental incapacity.
- All staff must respect confidentiality and not discuss with others either a person's gender history or their own thoughts about a person's gender history.

Achieving dignity and respect in service provision

- Everyone receiving care needs to be respected and treated with dignity.
- Always address directly, and refer to a transgender person in the gender in which they present themselves, and by the name they give you.
- Always accommodate people in the gender they present, for example, in the use of gender specific toilets.
- When speaking to a person on the telephone, do not assume gender from the sound of a voice. If you think the person has given a name that does not seem to match their voice, ask them to repeat it. If in doubt ask how they like to be addressed.

Understanding physical care needs and medical issues

- Receiving intimate personal care can be distressing, and this can be especially true for Trans people. This is why staff providing such care need to be properly briefed about the individual's needs and preferences.
- All Trans people need to have their hormone levels carefully monitored since they will require hormone therapy for life. The details need to be checked with their GP.
- Trans people require regular cervical, prostate and breast checks that are relevant to their physiology rather than their outward appearance.

Supporting mental health and wellbeing

- A lack of research into the effects of dementia causes anxiety for many Trans people. It needs to be recognised that because of early patterning, a person may fear exhibiting behaviours associated with the gender assigned to them at birth, which might give rise to some staff making incorrect gender assumptions.
- Trans people often lose contact with their families but gain vital support from contact with other Trans people. It is important to facilitate contact with Trans external support groups and/or trusted friends wherever possible².
- Care providers need to consider social networking opportunities with other members of the Trans community.
- Any mental health issues should be referred to mental health services in the same way as other patients.

² www.Tranzwiki.net gives local support groups by geographical area