



GUIDELINES
FOR
ENTERTAINMENT
PROFESSIONALS
WORKING
WITH LGBT+
PERFORMERS

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Introduction

This guide has been put together by the Equity LGBT+ Committee, in collaboration with All About Trans and Spotlight. It is intended to be a set of best practice guidelines for working with performers and industry professionals who identify as LGBT+. There is currently a lack of representation of the LGBT+ community in the arts in general, and of the trans community in particular. This guide seeks to empower the industry to begin to redress the balance so we can build on enjoying greater diversity and representation on our screens, stages and audio platforms.

A SUMMARY OF THIS GUIDE

A definition - Transgender (often abbreviated to 'trans') people are those whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. There is no right or wrong way to be trans and it is different for every person. Cisgender relates to people who are not trans, and identify with their assigned birth sex. *Page 5*

Transition - Some trans people transition socially, legally and/or medically, but not necessarily any or all of these. It may or may not involve a change in name and/or pronouns, hormone therapy and/or surgery. Trans people occupy all points of the gender spectrum and not all people transition in a binary way. *Page 9*

Pronouns and names - Use a person's correct pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them) and use their correct name. Either of these may have changed if they have transitioned. It is perfectly acceptable to ask, eg "What pronouns do you use?". If you make a mistake - apologise, correct and move on. No dramas. *Page 7*

Inclusivity - Can you cast a trans actor in a role which is not written as trans? Actively seek submissions from LGBT+ performers. You can say "We are particularly keen to receive submissions from actors who identify as..." Use Twitter to post casting calls using the hashtags in this guide. *Page 6*

Safe spaces - Make every effort to safeguard LGBT+ people auditioning or working in your setting and consider their journeys to and from the building, especially late at night. Provide gender neutral toilets if at all possible. Zero tolerance on bullying, challenge discrimination. Be a good ally!

Do Ask - What pronouns do you use? Would you play an LGBT+ character? Would you play cisgender characters? What dressing room would you prefer to use? Is there anything we can pass on to wardrobe on your behalf? Is there anything else you need, or how can I support you? Should shared information remain confidential? Some trans folks are stealth, some do not wish to disclose for a variety of reasons. *Page 8*

Don't Ask - Anything about their life pre-transition, or anything about hormones or surgeries they may have had, or are considering. Any protected characteristics - in line with the Equality Act,

you cannot ask about any actor's age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, race, religion, pregnancy or maternity, sex or sexual orientation.

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In the workplace - If you have cast a trans performer, pass this guide on to the next organisation in the chain who will work with them. Check whether a performer is 'out' before discussing their identity with colleagues, payroll, marketing, the media, the company. Enter into a dialogue with performers over which dressing rooms they would prefer to use. Involve LGBT+ creatives and communicate with them on how to make them feel at ease. *Page 7*

Take courage! This is a new area to many, and it is ok to make mistakes. Meet actors and creatives who are trans, even if you do not know much about the experience, and see how they can fit into your casting briefs.

Glossary *Page 10*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRANSGENDER?

Transgender people are those whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. 'Trans' is often used as shorthand for transgender. People who are not transgender, and identify with the sex they were assigned at birth are **cisgender** (of Latin origin meaning "on the side of"). **Non-binary** is a term for people who do not solely identify as either male or female, or may identify as both, or neither. Everyone—transgender or not—has a gender identity. Most people never think about what their gender identity is because it matches their sex at birth.

Just like cisgender people, transgender folks are represented on all points of the scale from masculine to feminine. There is a common misconception that all trans people are born as either male or female, and transition to the opposite end of the binary scale. Not all trans people will have gender reassignment surgery or transition to the opposite gender, many will only transition socially and/or to a point on the gender spectrum with which they feel fits their identity. Many do not identify with the traditional binary labels of male or female. There is no one way to be trans.

BEFORE CASTING

Consider engaging a **script consultant**, someone who has experience of working with trans folks, or someone who identifies as trans themselves. Look for...

- Ways to make scripts flexible to accommodate what a trans actor can bring to the role.
- Consideration for productions not to just focus on trans or LGB characters' narratives on coming out/transition.
- Not using characters or narratives for shock, surprise, drama and then dismissing them.
- Not just focusing trans character's narrative on trauma or tragedy. Similar factors come into play when telling gay, lesbian stories. Do not forget bisexual characters!

The visibility of trans masculine characters is currently even less than trans feminine characters.

Trans performers should be invited into the casting process to play trans roles, to give them →

a platform to develop in these trans-specific roles. Consider the possibilities of what such an individual can bring to a role and the richness of a production.

Can you cast a trans actor in a cis role? Some trans actors are better suited to these roles. The fact that they are trans may be completely invisible in the role or production, but it powerfully represents diversity in the industry. This ‘invisible’ diversity is just as important as more physically recognisable forms of diversity. It is hard for trans actors to build a career out of the very small amount of trans-specific roles, if these are the only roles for which they are actively sought.

Be aware that every trans person has had a different journey, no two stories will be the same. Therefore it is important to let the character follow the actor when casting trans characters and to be flexible with performers regarding their stage of transition.

In light of the structural disadvantages experienced by LGBT+ performers, as with other minorities, we advocate actively seeking out LGBT+ performers for LGBT+ parts. Not only is this a first vital step towards levelling the playing field, it also acknowledges and values the lived experience LGBT+ actors can bring to those characters.

When casting characters who are written as LGBT+...

- Actively encourage submissions from actors who identify as LGBT+, transgender, intersex, non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual.
- An idea of how to ask for these submissions... “We are particularly keen to receive submissions from actors who identify as...”
- Do not forget people of colour and those with disabilities - these actors are often not sought out for trans roles. LGBT+ actors are as diverse as cis actors.
- Try to give quality information about the character in a breakdown, more than just their gender or sexual identity.
- Be aware of the wide spectrum in the LGBT community. Just as there are infinite ways of being straight, there are infinite ways of presenting non-straight sexual identities. No LGBT actor can ever be “too gay” or “not gay enough” - LGBT actors, just like straight actors,

usually have a range of colours on their acting palette that reach further than how they present in the audition room.

FINDING LGBT+ PERFORMERS

Place casting notices on Twitter and other social media platforms with encouragement for users to retweet and share to their networks. Use popular hashtags such as...

#trans
#Actors
#lgbt
#LGBTQ
#transgender
#genderqueer
#transisbeautiful
#transman
#transwoman
#ftm
#mtf
#transinclusive
#nonbinary
#qtpoc (for folks of colour)
#WheelchairLife
#wheelchair
#deaf
#Ddeaf
#disabled
#disability
#disabilityart
#DeafTalent
#blind
#SightLoss
#VisuallyImpaired (for those identifying as D/ deaf and disabled.)

Use Equity’s Job Information Service www.equity.org.uk/looking-for-work/advertise-a-job and Spotlight www.spotlight.com. Lots of transgender performers are making their own work, as they are being consistently overlooked in mainstream and commercial work. There are theatre companies and venues - both more mainstream and off the beaten track - that champion or specialise in queer-led work. Fringe theatre and festivals are also good places to look for these performers. Many have not had formal drama school training and therefore miss the usual entry routes to the profession.

DURING THE CASTING/AUDITION/WORKSHOP

Pronouns:

Pronouns can never be assumed. Please do use the performer's correct pronouns. Can you find out what pronouns the performer uses before you meet them? This removes the need for this to be done in front of everyone. Eg: She/Her, He/Him, They/Them, or the performer's name. Agents can be asked to assist in providing this information, or ask the performer directly.

If you have forgotten or do not know which pronouns to use, it is perfectly acceptable to ask:

"Can I just check what pronouns you use?"

or

"What pronouns do you use?"

In turn, tell them what pronouns you use! It has become increasingly good practice to put your pronouns as part of your email signature. For example:

Joe Bloggs

Senior Agent

My pronouns are he/him

If you make a mistake...

Apologise, correct and move on. No dramas.

Use the correct name and pronouns when discussing the character you are casting.

Consider casting in a venue with good access, street-lighting, footfall, etc rather than a dark back alley in an unsafe or remote location. Transgender people can easily become the victims of transphobia and hate crime.

Make every effort to provide gender neutral toilets. This can be done simply by adding signage to existing toilet locations. 'Gender Neutral' or 'All Genders'. In workshop situations, avoid dividing candidates up into male/female gender groups.

AFTER THE CASTING AND IN THE WORKPLACE

We wish this guide to be widely available throughout the industry. If you have cast a trans performer, please pass this guide on to the next person in the chain who will work with your

casting choice. If you are a trans performer who is about to start work, take this guide with you or ask your agent, Equity, or your casting director to send on a copy in advance.

Consider the **safety** of trans performers, eg when travelling home at night after performances. Being an 'out' trans performer, visible in a production, can be a vulnerable position to occupy. A buddy system, or taxi travel, is a possible solution. Consider safeguarding and strategy on social media platforms to minimise the effects of trolling and online abuse.

We would like it to be standard industry practice for everyone to introduce themselves with name and pronouns when meeting a new group of people, such as a new company meet and greet, workshop, team/venue meeting, when not everyone knows each other. If everyone in the circle is encouraged to say their name and pronouns, it takes the pressure off trans folks to 'out' themselves, or to be the only ones disclosing. It also gives an opportunity to people who do not identify as trans but prefer the gender neutral pronoun they/them to be included.

Allow time and space for **Stage Management** to clarify preferred names and pronouns, so these can be applied to rehearsal calls, backstage calls, schedules and show reports.

Consider adopting gender neutral terminology for collective calls, both Front of House and backstage.

Enter into a discussion about which dressing room trans folk will prefer to use. It is best not to assume this. Similarly, toilet facilities should be accessible to all genders. If your existing toilets are single gender, can you make them gender neutral for the duration of the production, or in perpetuity?

Payroll, marketing, and other relevant departments who may come into contact with the performer should be made aware of correct names, pronouns and titles.

Ensure all media and press packs contain correct names/pronouns for trans actors and characters, and emphasise the importance of getting this right, to the **Press**.

Include content and trigger warnings for



homophobic/transphobic language, violence, themes of suicide, etc front of house, on marketing material, websites and in press packs.

Does your venue or place of work have a **Trans inclusivity policy**?

Have staff at your setting had **Trans Awareness Training**? This can be provided by Gendered Intelligence, Gires, Global Butterflies.

Workplace Interactions or meetings with trans performers and industry professionals can be facilitated in conjunction with All About Trans or Equity. These guidelines were formed after such an Interaction.

Performers - consider creating your own 'workplace adjustment passport', bring a list of appropriate needs and information you want an employer to be aware of. This can be passed on via a third party if necessary - an agent or Equity.

Use Equity's **Safe Spaces Campaign** resources and posters to allow actors access to information to report incidents or concerns.

Challenge discrimination whenever you see it. Report to managers, Equity or the police, depending on severity. Be a good ally!

Familiarise yourself with problematic or discriminatory language or behaviour. It is everyone's job to call things out. Communicate with the affected company member(s) to find out how you can support and defend them.

A GUIDE TO WHAT YOU CAN ASK OR SAY TO LGBT+ PERFORMERS

Pronouns - "What pronouns do you use?" or "Please remind me of your pronouns."

Roles - "Would you play cisgender roles?"

"Would you play trans (or LGBT+) roles?"

"We are particularly keen to receive submissions from actors who identify as... (LGBT+, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, trans*, intersex, non-binary, genderqueer, gender fluid, androgynous. This list is not exhaustive.)"

Dressing rooms - "Which dressing room would you like to use?"

"Would you prefer your own dressing room?" (if practically possible).

Workplace adjustments - "If you have any requirements, which we haven't covered, please let

us know."

Wardrobe - "Is there anything we can tell Wardrobe/dressers, to make things easier for you?"

Confidentiality - "Should shared information remain confidential?"

"Please let us know if it's OK to divulge your identity to those people, and only those people, whose work would necessitate them to know."

(Some trans folks are stealth and some do not wish to divulge their trans identity for a variety of reasons. The same applies to LGB folks.)

Do not be afraid of not knowing something, just say it is outside your current understanding, and aim to find out.

A GUIDE TO WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT ASK OR SAY TO LGBT+ PERFORMERS

Transition

"Where are you at in your transition?"

"What surgeries have you had/are you planning?"

"Are you on hormones?"

"Are you going to fully transition?"

Asking about gaps in CVs - Actors may have taken career breaks to support transition or for surgeries. Be sensitive to this.

Sexuality - "So are you gay or straight?"

Transgender folks are as diverse as cisgender folks when it comes to their sexual identity. This is one of the Protected Characteristics which you may not ask about.

Disclosure - Be wary of 'outing' an actor, unless you know the individual is out. Consider who really needs to know. It is a criminal offence for anyone acquiring this protected information in an 'official capacity' to disclose it to a third party without the transgender person's consent.

Protected Characteristics - In line with the Equality Act, you cannot ask about an actor's age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, race, religion, pregnancy or maternity, sex or sexual orientation.

Avoid backhanded compliments or 'advice' regarding appearance, clothing, voice quality, identity or the performer being "brave". Saying to a trans performer that they could pass for cis or a non-straight actor that they could pass for/look straight is not necessarily a compliment.

FURTHER WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HELP

Take courage! This is a new area to many, and it is ok to make mistakes. Meet actors who are trans, even if you do not know much about the experience, and see how they can fit into your casting briefs. Use this guide to help.

Useful websites:

Gendered Intelligence

genderedintelligence.co.uk

All About Trans

<https://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/>

Gires

<https://www.gires.org.uk>

Stonewall

www.stonewall.org.uk

We would like to encourage **directors** to consider casting trans performers in both trans and cis roles. Widen your understanding of what trans means. The spectrum is as wide as that of cisgender people.

Are you a **casting director, venue or company** who can hold a general casting event, meet and greet or networking event in order to meet LGBT+ performers? Equity can assist with this.

Performers, in their eagerness to be easy to work with, and being keen to get asked back, sometimes find it hard to ask for what they need.

Casting directors, producers, directors, stage managers and company managers can ease this passage by making the first move to ask what trans workers need.

Agents can play a really important role in supporting their transgender clients. They can share actors' new name, pronouns, what roles they will play, what needs they have in the casting or workplace, with industry professionals. They should feel empowered to take a position between an actor and job provider.

Actors - tell your agent who you are so they can market you. Tell them your pronouns, your aspirations for role types, and anything you may need in the workplace or casting room. Actors without agents can create a small document for themselves to convey these details to industry personnel. If aspiring transgender actors see the

industry changing to accommodate and include trans performers, there is more chance they will consider entering a course of education.

Where to go for more advice? Equity.

www.equity.org.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION ON TRANSITION

What does it mean to transition?

Transitioning is the process of changing the way you look and how people see and treat you so that you become the gender you feel on the inside. Transitioning can mean lots of different things. It can be a long and ongoing process. Or it can be something that happens over a short period of time.

How do transgender people transition?

Social transitioning may include:

- Coming out to your friends and family as transgender
- Asking people to use pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them) that match your gender identity
- Going by a different name
- Dressing/grooming in ways that match your gender identity

For trans men, or FTM (female to male), medical transition may include any of the following:

- Hormone therapy (to create masculine characteristics such as a deeper voice, facial hair growth, muscle growth, redistribution of body fat away from hips and breasts, not getting a period, etc)
- Male chest reconstruction, or 'top surgery' (removal of breasts and breast tissue)
- Hysterectomy (removal of internal female reproductive organs such as the ovaries and uterus)
- Phalloplasty (construction of a penis using skin from other parts of your body)
- Metoidioplasty (surgery that causes your clitoris to work more like a penis, along with hormone treatment to make your clitoris grow larger)



For trans women, or MTF (male to female), medical transition may include any of the following:

- Hormone therapy (to create feminine characteristics such as less body hair, breasts, redistribution of body fat toward hips and breasts, etc)
- Breast augmentation (implants)
- Orchiectomy (removal of testes)
- Laser hair removal (to remove hair from your face or other parts of your body)
- Tracheal shave (making your Adam's apple smaller)
- Facial feminisation surgery (create smaller, more feminine facial features)
- Penile inversion vaginoplasty (creation of a vagina by inverting penile skin)

Does everyone who is transgender decide to transition?

Not all transgender people transition. Not all transition in the same way. Some may transition socially and not medically. Some may transition medically by doing one or only a few of the procedures listed above. Some may take hormones and decide not to have any surgeries, or just choose one kind of surgery and none of the others.

Medical procedures can be very expensive, if done privately. Waiting lists on the NHS are very long - around two to three years for a first consultation. Regardless of whether a transgender person chooses to transition and how they choose to do it, they are no more 'real' than other trans people who do not transition. Someone's gender identity should always be respected no matter how they decide to transition socially or medically.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AFAB or AMAB - Assigned Female at Birth. Assigned Male at Birth.

Androgynous - A person who has both masculine and feminine qualities.

Ally - A straight and/or cisgender person who supports or advocates for LGBT+ people.

Binary - The classification of gender into two distinct, opposite, and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine whether by social system or cultural belief.

Cis or Cisgender - a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.

Cross-dresser - A term typically used to refer to men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup and accessories culturally associated with women.

Their tends to be a form of gender expression; cross-dressers do not usually wish to change their sex or live full-time as women. This term replaces the old word, 'transvestite'.

Deadname - The name given to a trans person at birth, which they often change during transition. Use their preferred name.

Drag Queen/Drag King - A man who performs as a woman for an audience. A woman who performs as a man for an audience.

FTM or MTF - Female to Male, or Male to Female.

Gender Dysphoria - A condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity.

Gender Expression - External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice, physical mannerisms, body characteristics.

Gender Identity - A person's gender identity is their internal sense of themselves as male, female, or another gender.

Gender Spectrum or Spectrum Identities - a range of gender identities between and outside of the traditional categories of male and female.

Genderfluid - A person who does not confine themselves to one gender. May fluctuate between masculine, feminine, neither or both.

Gender non-conforming - Describes those whose gender expression is different from conventional

expectations of masculinity and femininity.

Non-Binary - People who experience their gender identity as outside the traditional definitions of male or female. They may identify as falling somewhere in between man and woman or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. Sometimes shortened to enby or NB. Other terms include **genderqueer**, **agender**, **bigender**, **pangender**, and more. None of these terms mean exactly the same thing – but all speak to an experience of gender that is not simply male or female.

More descriptions of gender identities can be found here:

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms>

Intersex - An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that cannot be classified as male or female.

Misgender - When someone uses the wrong pronoun or term to refer to a person.

Out/Outing - Out refers to someone who self-identifies as LGBT+ in their personal, public and/or professional life. Outing is the act of disclosing an LGBT+ person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent. Always check that someone is out before you pass on this information.

Pass/Passing - The ability of an LGBT+ person to go out in society and be assumed to be straight/cisgender. Individuals will have different opinions on how important this is to them.

Pronouns - How a person wishes to be referred to if, for example, they are not in the room. Usually She/Her, He/Him, They/Them, or their name (also xe/ze/hir/hirs, which are gender neutral pronouns that are less common).

Queer - Once considered a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some LGBT+ people to describe themselves, though it is not universally accepted. It describes sexual identities which are not wholly heterosexual. It is a term which stands outside of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual identities, which queer people feel are too limiting and/or fraught with cultural connotations which do not apply to

them. An umbrella term.

Trans, Transgender - denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

Trans* - an umbrella term that refers to a number of the identities within the gender identity spectrum. The asterisk denotes this is an umbrella term, including other trans identities. It is a good word to use if you wish to encompass a broad spectrum of trans identities.

Transition - The exact steps involved in transitioning vary from person to person.

Transition can include some or all of the following: personal, medical, legal, social. It may or may not involve using a different name and pronouns, dressing differently, changing legal documents, hormone therapy, and possibly (but not always) one or more types of surgery.

Transexual - An outdated term originated in the medical profession to refer to trans folk who change - or seek to change - their bodies through medical procedures. Still used by some older members of the community, but has largely been replaced by 'transgender'.

Transphobia - Negative feelings, attitudes or actions towards transgender people.

Sexuality identities

Lesbian - A woman who is attracted to other women.

Gay - A person who is attracted to people of the same sex. Can apply to males or females.

Bisexual - Somebody who is attracted, physically and romantically, to persons of both male and female gender.

Asexual - Used to describe people who do not feel sexual attraction.

Pansexual - A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical/romantic attractions to any person, regardless of their gender identity.

Homosexual - Being attracted to people of one's own sex.

Heterosexual - People whose enduring physical and/or romantic attraction is to people of the opposite sex (also 'Straight').



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