



## Parents Fact Sheet

### Sexuality, orientation and gender identity

There are lots of different types of sexuality or sexual orientation, and young people may use different terms to describe how they feel. LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and more. Although people often confuse them, it's important to remember that gender identity is different from sexuality.

Sexuality and sexual orientation are about who someone feels physically and emotionally attracted to. This can be romantic or emotional attraction, or both.

Many young people feel unsure about their sexuality or who they're attracted to or find that their sexuality changes over time.

#### Gender identity

Gender is complex: It's a social and legal status, and set of expectations from society, about behaviors, characteristics, and thoughts. Gender identity is the internal perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. When we're born people must record whether we're a boy or a girl. This is usually based on looking at our sexual organs, but for some people their gender identity can be different.

- Gender identity, including:
- Your body and biological sex, for example your sexual organs
- How you feel about your gender and how you identify yourself
- Your gender expression, for example how you dress or act.

Gender identity isn't just male or female. Some people can identify as non-binary, and how people identify can change over time.

#### Gender identities

**Agender** - An umbrella term encompassing many different genders of people who commonly do not have a gender and/or have a gender that they describe as neutral. Many agender people are trans. As a new and quickly evolving term, it is best you ask how someone defines agender for themselves.

**Asexual**- experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behaviour. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different

places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see demisexual). Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”

**Bigender-** This is someone who identifies as two genders. These genders may be male and female, but may also be, for example, female and agender, or male and agender.

**Binary gender -** This is the traditional belief that there are only two real genders: “man” and “woman.” This is an outdated belief that doesn’t account for the vast range of ways that people experience gender as somewhere between man and woman, or on a completely different scale altogether.

**Bisexuality -** a romantic or sexual attraction or behaviour toward both males and females.

**Cisgender-** Being cisgender means your sex and gender very clearly match up. For example, people who were assigned male at birth and grow up to identify as a man.

**Cis-man-** A person who identifies as a man, has male biological sex characteristics, and was assigned a male sex at birth.

**Cis-woman-** A person who identifies as a woman, has female biological sex characteristics, and was assigned a female sex at birth.

**Demisexual-** little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic connection is formed with someone, often within a romantic relationship.

**Gender-fluid -**Gender-fluid refers to a person who does not identify themselves as having a fixed gender.

**Gender non-conforming -** A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

**Genderqueer-** A term that can be used to describe people whose gender falls outside of the gender binary. It might be used to describe a person who identifies as multiple genders, or no genders.

**Homosexuality -** sexual attraction, romantic attraction, or sexual behaviour between members of the same sex or gender.

**LGBTQIA+-** LGBTQIA+ is a commonly used acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex or Asexual. The + sign is to signify other categories of gender and sexual orientation that aren’t accurately described by these terms.

**Non-binary-** non-binary describes a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman and can be a specific identity or an umbrella term. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling

completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.

**Pangender-** Pangender is a term used to describe people who identify as multiple genders. Pangender people may feel like they are a combination of genders, or that their gender is constantly changing. It is often used to mean “all genders”.

**Transgender-** An umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

**Trans-** A commonly used shorthand version of transgender.

**Transsexual** -This is a term that is used to describe someone who has medically or surgically transitioned from one sex to another. Some people find this term offensive, due its medical history. Furthermore, after medically transitioning, many people cease to identify as transsexual or transgender, and simply identify as a woman or a man. It’s best to avoid this term, unless you meet someone who uses it to describe themselves.

**Trans-man-** A person who was assigned a female sex at birth, who now identifies as a man. This individual may or may not actively identify as trans. Many trans individuals prefer a space between trans and man. Other do not. Often it is good just to use man.

**Trans-woman-** A person who was assigned a male sex at birth, who now identifies as a woman. This individual may or may not actively identify as trans. Many trans individuals prefer a space between trans and woman. Other do not. Often it is good just to use woman.

**Two Spirit-** An umbrella term for various indigenous gender identities in North America.

## Sources

LGBT  
Hero



Very  
Well  
Mind



A Guide to  
Gender &  
Sexuality  
Terminology  
by Sam  
Killermann



## **Supporting your young person with coming out**

Coming out is when a young person tells other people about their sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity. It can take a lot of courage for a young person to tell family about their sexuality and/or gender identity.

- Use your empathy – you may find it difficult to fully understand what a young person is going through but realistically; you don't need to completely “get it” to be able to give support.
- Listening can be a great way to show them that you care and help them to feel accepted. Try to let them talk at their own pace and ask open questions without interrupting. If they don't want to continue the conversation, let them know that you're there for them if they want to talk again at a different time.
- Similarly, if you think your young person might be questioning their sexuality and/or gender identity., it's important not to pressure or rush them into talking to you. The best thing you can do is to create a supportive environment at home, by giving them space to share their feelings, so that they feel comfortable talking to you.
- Be mindful that some young people do not need to be out to everyone they know in order to be happy. A person's identity is personal information, and this should always be respected.
- Be willing to learn – this learning may come from some research you do to find out more or it may come from the young person directly. It's quite likely that the young person knows more than you do – and that's okay!
- Thank them for sharing this trusted information with you.
- The most important thing to a parent/carer is that your young person feels loved and safe. Offer to spend some quality time with them, like going to the cinema, or even just having some sofa time could help relieve them of any anxieties they had before coming out.
- If you are struggling to navigate your own feelings regarding your young persons' identity, it can be helpful to talk this through with a professional such as a counsellor or research on the internet for organisations that provide information and support for parents and families.

## **Source**

The Proud trust

