

Quakers in Yorkshire

Policy and Guidelines for Supporting Gender Diverse Young People

Agreed by Trustees on 19 February 2022

To be reviewed: annually starting June 2023

This policy is based on Britain Yearly Meeting's Event & Activity Management Policy Procedures & Guidance 24 'Supporting Gender Diverse young people'. (This procedure applies to all Britain Yearly Meeting centrally managed work with children and young people).

1. Introduction

As a Quaker body we are committed to our testimony of equality and believe there is that of God in everyone. We accept everybody irrespective of how they choose to identify and present themselves. (Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 minute 38 refers)

In recent years at Quaker youth events there is increasing gender diversity. In order to respond to the needs of young people who attend these events it is necessary to consider the best ways to support their needs. All young Quakers have an equal right to participate in Quaker events and experience belonging in their Quaker community. It is important to ensure young people are not prevented from participating based on their gender needs.

Equality Act 2010: This act protects gender variant and trans children and young people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. This applies to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process of reassigning their sex. For this to apply, they do not have to be undergoing a medical procedure to change their sex, but are proposing to take active steps to transition socially.

So far, the law has not acknowledged non-binary or genderless individuals, but the Women & Equality Committee Report (UK Parliament House of Commons - January 2015) has mentioned these identities. In the interest of best practice, it is recommended to take steps to be inclusive of all gender identities. For example, refer to "all genders" instead of "both genders".

1.1. Being trans

"Trans" is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, non-binary, gender queer.

The Gender Identity Research & Education Society (GIRES) estimate that at least 1% of the whole British population are gender nonconforming to some degree.

Not all gender variant children will grow up to identify as trans. In the Metro Youth Chances report of 2016, over half of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) respondents (53%) knew they were LGBTQ by the age of 13. Over half of trans respondents

(58%) knew they were trans by the same age. Just over 9 in 10 LGBTQ young people report learning nothing about trans issues at school. Nearly half of LGBTQ young people say their time at school was affected by discrimination or fear of discrimination. (Metro Youth Chances 2016). More than four in five trans young people (84%) have deliberately harmed themselves at some point and more than two in five (45%) have at some point attempted to take their own life. (Stonewall School Report 2017).

Children can realise at a young age that they don't feel comfortable with their assigned gender. It is important to listen to the child, be supportive and be guided by them. Creating an environment that celebrates diversity and avoids promoting rigid gender stereotypes enables all children to feel able to express their true identity. The most important thing is for the child to feel accepted for who they are.

We have a responsibility in ensuring all those in our care are safe and supported to reach their full potential.

2. Creating a Safe Space

The Equality Act should be taken into account when supporting all participants. In terms of gender variant and trans participants, those working with children and young people must involve them in all decisions. It is important to note that these needs will vary, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach in providing support. However, the support given must be consistent.

Integral to this is putting the best interests of the person at the core. Ensure all staff and volunteers are informed about and develop confidence in understanding gender and trans presentation, terminology and vocabulary e.g. correct use of pronouns, and in challenging gender stereotypes, sexism and transphobia.

Some useful tools that help people understand gender as a spectrum are <https://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/03/the-genderbread-person-v2-0/> or <http://www.transstudent.org/gender>.

The tools can also be beneficial for supporting families and participants, particularly if the families and participants already understand autism as a spectrum. There are different understandings and some people see gender in a more fluid way than a spectrum or binary definition.

Those working with children and young people cannot rely on the children and young people stating that they are 'trans', as younger children may not use this term. It may become apparent through use of other language, words or behaviour that their gender identity doesn't match the gender assigned to them. Words and phrases can include "feeling different"; stating that they are a boy or girl; using a different name; becoming distressed when asked to do something in line with their perceived gender; for example, when using girls' toilets or lining up with boys etc.

Some children and young people will have already spoken with their parents or guardians about their feelings before anyone else is made aware of their gender identity. However, sometimes the child or young person may disclose to a member of staff or volunteer prior

to speaking with family members. So be prepared to respond appropriately to a wide variety of situations.

All discussions with parents or guardians should be carried out with the young person's knowledge and consent. The young person's needs should be central with a view to supporting them during any proposed transition. Every family is different and within a family each individual will have their own personal experiences. There may be very different responses from family members. Be aware that there may be a wide range of knowledge, understanding and feelings. You may encounter attitudes or beliefs which you find personally challenging. In each situation it is important to stay focused on the needs of the young person without being judgemental or confrontational. Families may need signposting to sources of support, you might direct them to the organisations who work with families.

Do not inform other parents or guardians about a participant's transition as this is confidential information. However, it is best practice to prepare a response to use for parents or guardians who do get in contact with concerns or questions. At no point should the young person be named nor should any information be shared which might identify them.

If parents or guardians raise concerns about their child using a shared toilet or communal accommodation with a gender diverse participant, the purpose of the conversation should be to seek positive outcomes for all the children and young people affected. Perhaps exploring with those involved the first two paragraphs of Section 1 of this document and using this statement:

We accept everybody irrespective of how they choose to identify and present themselves. All young Quakers have an equal right to participate in Quaker events and experience belonging in their Quaker community. It is important to ensure young people are not prevented from participating based on their gender needs.

To ensure that the needs of any trans participant are met, the organisers will ensure that a support plan is carried out, if appropriate. This must be recorded and stored securely in accordance with the Quakers in Yorkshire safeguarding and data protection policies.

3. Good practice guidelines

3.1 Residential Accommodation Arrangements

Accommodation provision can vary depending on the venue being used. It is broadly split by gender. Quakers in Yorkshire will seek to provide for both gender diverse and cis gendered participants. Discussions will be had with participants on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the accommodation the participants are most comfortable with can be provided, and if the participants are sharing a room with others that the participants feel safe and comfortable with the sharing.

Before the event a young person who is gender diverse or exploring their gender may approach the staff to discuss sleeping arrangements. If a participant is under 16 and wishes to share a room with participants of a different sex to that they were assigned at birth we will seek permission from the participant to confirm this arrangement with their parent/guardian before the event. If the young person does not give consent the

participants will sleep in the accommodation for the gender stated on the application form, or be offered an individual room.

The safeguarding organisation 31:8, from whom advice was sought, states that “it would not be suitable to place someone in a position where they are physically exposing themselves to peers of the opposite physical gender.” This should also apply to the presence of adult helpers unless providing intimate care in agreement with the participant and their family.

The reason for guidelines is to protect young people from potential embarrassment or distress if they are inadvertently exposed to the genitals of the opposite sex and to meet socially acceptable norms.

3.2 Toilets:

A young person should be able to use the facilities that they have chosen and feel comfortable using. If a participant is uncomfortable sharing, then they should be provided with alternative individual facilities or arrangements. Ensure there are suitable toilets available that have menstruation management facilities such as bins, and spare products in individual facilities or by making alternative arrangements.

3.3 Support plan

Young people who have special needs which require personal intimate care will have a support plan arranged prior to the holiday. Where intimate care is needed in an unexpected circumstance, this will be given by two members of staff.

3.4 Names and pronouns

Ask the young person which name and pronoun they would prefer and respect their wishes. Many Trans and Non-Binary people choose to use a gender-neutral pronoun such as “they”. It is important to respect the person’s choice.

Space will be left on name badges for participants to identify their preferred pronoun so that this can be easily communicated to others.

On application forms we will ask for both the legal name and preferred name.

3.5 How should I respond to someone who ‘comes out’?

It is really important that you recognise the significance of a conversation with someone who ‘comes out’. Your initial verbal and non-verbal response (e.g. body language, tone of voice and facial expression) will have a lasting impact on the individual.

The disclosure maybe a big step for the young person and you should feel trusted and valued that they have chosen to speak to you. Acknowledge this and thank them for feeling that they can talk to you. You may not feel confident or experienced but the important thing is that you are empathetic, sensitive and respect what the young person is sharing.

If the young person wants to ‘come out’ to the group, reassure the young person that they will have an active role in this and this will be done at a pace that they are comfortable with. For example, the young person may wish to use a different name or pronouns, or make

changes to their appearance (e.g. Haircut, style of dress) or may wish to use a bathroom and accommodation that reflects their gender identity.

4. Some sources of support

If there are concerns about the safety of a child or young person the Quakers in Yorkshire Safeguarding Policy should be followed (<https://quakersinyorkshire.org.uk/safeguarding/>).

If there are concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person and they might benefit from further support, the following organisations are experienced in supporting trans people:

- **Depend:** Provides support, advice and information for anyone who knows, or is related to, a trans person of any age www.depend.org.uk
- **Gendered Intelligence:** A not-for-profit organisation which provides support for young trans people aged 8-25; a broad portfolio of services for educational settings including workshops, assemblies and staff training; and training and consultancy for professionals across all sectors. www.genderedintelligence.co.uk
- **Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES):** Works to improve the lives of trans and gender non-conforming people and has lots of useful information on its website, including several e-learning modules www.gires.org.uk
- **Mermaids:** Offers support to children and young people with gender issues and their families www.mermaidsuk.org.uk
- **Stonewall:** The national LGBT charity which provides information and resources for young people, their families and schools www.stonewall.org.uk

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