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## Guidance for the Media - A Brief Glossary

### *Transgender (adj)*

An umbrella term describing people who feel the need to present themselves to the world in a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. Transgender people may describe themselves as transsexual, transvestite, crossdressers, intersex or by a number of other terms (including, simply, man or woman). Transgender is an imprecise term best used only used in a collective sense (ie "Transgender people have joined together to protest..."). "Transgendered" or use as a noun ("Transgenders were all writing in") are both incorrect, as is the use of *to transgender* as a verb (see *Transition*).

### *Gender Dysphoria (n)*

An underlying and incessant disquiet or anxiety centred on the understanding that who you are is not reflected by the gender of your body. Gender Dysphoria can exist in a range of intensities, from the more mild and intermittent, to the permanent, demanding and disabling. Transsexual people who transition typically suffer very deeply from it, and a successful transition can alleviate it entirely. People can be said to be *gender dysphoric* or *suffering from gender dysphoria*.

### *GID/Gender Identity Disorder (n)*

Another term for gender dysphoria. Widely disliked by trans people as the word 'disorder' marginalises and pathologises rather than simply recognises difference (in the same way, no journalist would now describe someone as having 'homosexual disorder'.) Use 'gender dysphoria', or - more accurately still - 'gender incongruence'.

### *Transvestite (adj, occ n)*

A person who wears the clothing of the gender opposite to the one they were assigned at birth, but does not feel the requirement to live permanently in that role, and does not fundamentally question the gender they were assigned at birth. In the United States, transvestite carries with it pejorative or even fetishistic connotations (see *Crossdresser*) and should be avoided.

### *Crossdresser (n)*

A person who wears the clothing of the gender opposite to the one they were assigned at birth, but does not feel the requirement to live permanently in that role, and does not fundamentally question the gender they were assigned at birth. More acceptable than *transvestite* in the United States.

### *Transsexual (adj)*

A person who holds the belief that they should be living full time in the gender role opposite to that assigned them at birth may be said to be transsexual (NB note used, not 'a transsexual'). Transsexual people often (though not always) take steps to change their bodies to reflect their deeply held understanding of their inner gender (see *Transition*).

### *Trans (adj)*

Shortened version of transgender. Widely used as a general term to describe people of many kinds who suffer from gender dysphoria.

### *Tranny (n, adj)*

Whilst it is used occasionally within the trans community, use of this term by others is usually taken as insulting and abusive. Avoid it.

### *Drag Queen/King (n)*

A person who dresses in the clothes of the gender opposite to the one in which they live for much of the time, usually for performance reasons. People who use these terms as the primary way of describing themselves may be less likely to be gender dysphoric, and are often entirely content to live in their assigned gender role.

### *Intersex (adj)*

A medical term covering a range of recognised conditions, which create an ambiguity around the physical sex of an individual. Chromosomal differences, or hormonal action, may have prompted the development of physical characteristics which are not clearly either male or female, and/or prompted an understanding within the person that he/she is truly of neither gender. When describing a person who has a condition of this sort it is particularly vital to ask them how they would wish to be described. *(continued)* Many intersex...

this sort it is particularly vital to ask them how they would wish to be described /gendered. Many intersex people do not identify as transgender but it is common for intersex people to be the targets of transphobic prejudice. The term *intersexual* should be avoided because it leads to confusion between physical sex and sexuality.

*MtF (adj)*

Male to Female. Describes a person who is transitioning from having lived as a male to living as a woman.

*FtM (adj)*

Female to Male. As above, but transitioning from female to male.

*GIC (n)*

Gender Identity Clinic. A specialist clinic to which transgender people may eventually be referred by their PCT after presenting at their GP's surgery with the symptoms of gender dysphoria. The best known is at Charing Cross Hospital in West London, though several others around the UK see patients too. GICs diagnose and supervise the treatment of transsexual people, up to and including referral for GCS.

*SRS/GRS (n)*

Sex Reassignment Surgery/ Gender Reassignment Surgery. Increasingly obsolete terms to describe the surgical procedures that give the transitioning individual the bodily characteristics that they feel are congruent with their inner identity (see GCS). Most references to this surgery (misleadingly) mean procedures on the genitalia, but it also embraces other surgeries, including facial work, breast augmentation or mastectomy etc. Society's obsession with genital surgery ("The Op") is intrusive and debasing for many trans people (who are often asked about it entirely inappropriately), reducing their journey to become themselves to little more than a sniggering discussion of the status of their genitalia.

*GCS (n)*

Gender Confirmation Surgery. The best term to use to cover the range of medical interventions a transitioning person may undertake. Preferred to SRS or GRS.

*Sex Change (n, adj)*

Transitioning individuals are confirming their gender not changing their sex (with its connotations of sexual identity). This now obsolescent term emerged in the medical community as an ill informed observation of transitioning people, and was never based upon the experience of the individuals themselves. Still in wide use in the media, it is now regarded by many trans people as offensive, inaccurate and cheap. Avoid.

*Transition (n, vi)*

The process of moving from living in one gender to living in the other. This involves very major social and emotional adjustment, and can be a period of great stress and vulnerability for the trans person. It is often a time when they are abandoned by family, friends or colleagues, and are singled out for abuse and discrimination as they transgress society's expectation of gender presentation. The media plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes to transitioning people, and casual bigotry in the press can lead to increased hostility towards the transitioning person and hurt for those around them. Transition often (though not always) includes surgery of various kinds.

*RLE/RLT (n)*

Real Life Experience/Real Life Test. Clinical protocols recommend that a person transitioning should live for one year in their 'new' gender, full time and uninterrupted, before being referred for GCS. In England, the NHS has adopted a two year system; in Scotland it is one year.

*GRA (n)*

Gender Recognition Act. 2004 legislation which gives a transsexual person full legal rights as a member of the gender in which they are living post transition, including the right to have their birth certificate revised, and to marry. The GRA established the Gender Recognition Panel which issues Gender Recognition Certificates (GRCs). Acquisition of a GRC allows the holder to apply for a new birth certificate. It is an offence in law for an individual working for a public body to reveal that an individual has a GRC, or to reveal their personal gender history. It is also unlawful for an employer to demand to see it as 'proof' of gender (just as it is not required of non trans people to 'prove' their gender).

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- **Common misunderstandings**

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