

TRANS- INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Resources to support trans-inclusive practice for museums, galleries, archives and heritage organisations

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INCLUSION IN THE
WORKPLACE:** a tool
for team leaders and
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This resource has been developed by the University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) through a partnership of leading UK museums, galleries and heritage organisations and a team of experts in trans inclusion, equalities, law and ethics. The resources have been created to support a step change in the capacity and confidence of the UK's culture sector to advance trans inclusion as part of their commitments to inclusion for all.

More information about the partnership – supported by Art Fund, the national charity for museums and galleries, and the Economic and Social Research Council – can be found at transinclusiveculture.le.ac.uk

Disclaimer

Please note that this guidance is intended only as a starting point to assist relevant organisations in enhancing trans inclusion. Every effort has been made to ensure that it is correct from a legal standpoint. Readers must, however, be aware that it is pitched at a general level and it does not purport to offer a full account of the law. Readers are advised to, where necessary, take legal advice on the specific facts of their situation.

Note

Where the word “trans” is used in relation to legal duties, it is used synonymously with the term “gender reassignment” in section 7 of the Equality Act 2010.

Discussing trans inclusion in the workplace: a tool for team leaders and managers

Across the cultural sector, the importance of fostering organisational cultures in which diversity and inclusion are valued, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect, has long been recognised and is widely practiced. By law, organisations must ensure that work environments are free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment, intimidation or bullying, and commit to providing equitable treatment to everyone they deal with as an organisation.

Integral to maintaining this diverse and supportive culture is ensuring that staff who hold different views and beliefs can have respectful and inclusive discussions, and work together. Most cultural organisations are experienced in doing this. The vast majority of staff and volunteers are comfortable contributing together in a constructive way to create a culture in which everyone is respected. Even in organisations where individuals might hold views or beliefs that are potentially in conflict with their employer's stated commitment to inclusion for all (for example, sexist, homophobic, ableist or racist views), they also generally recognise the importance of behaving in ways that consistently uphold the organisation's dignity and respect at work policies.

Trans people are historically underrepresented in public life and continue to be subjected to unlawful discrimination. They may feel uncertain about how they will be welcomed by organisations, or whether they will be included and treated in a respectful way. This tool offers **practical advice for holding discussions around trans inclusion amongst staff, volunteers and boards of trustees.**

It identifies **6 key principles** and provides guidance relevant to each that can help leaders and managers hold discussions around their organisation's commitment to trans inclusion, in ways that, at the same time, respect individual freedom of belief and expression, aiming to build and improve mutual understanding and respect.

Our aim is to support and encourage diversity, equity and inclusion, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and actively promote a culture that values difference, which of course means it should also be trans-inclusive. That requires having an organisational environment that is also sensitive to the different perspectives and needs of staff with differing beliefs, religions, identities and cultures. Creating an empathetic, diverse, respectful and supportive work culture seldom happens organically. Positive engagement at all levels, involving clear communication, are essential to achieve this.

1. Prepare well and communicate clearly

- In both pre-meeting communications, and at the outset of any session or meeting to discuss trans inclusion, clearly state the purpose of the gathering.
- Establish expectations around respectful participation. You might explain that this is an opportunity for everyone to learn more about your organisation's commitments to both trans inclusion and diversity, equity and inclusion generally. Make clear your objective is to nurture a supportive and inclusive working environment, regardless of gender identity or views about this.
- Consider explaining this, and providing information, in accessible ways. For example, in pre-meeting communications, you might distribute information in writing about the meeting, and any 'ground rules' or 'boundaries' for open discussion, along with a copy of relevant policies in place within your organisation (e.g. DEI).

2. State or reiterate your organisational commitment to trans inclusion

- It will be reassuring and beneficial to inform attendees from the outset, both in advance communications and with a reminder at the start of the meeting, that trans people are protected by law and their legal rights are not '*up for debate*'. But also reassure everyone that your organisation respects and values freedom of belief and expression, aiming to support respectful discussion on a topic about which people may have limited personal experience and understanding, and different or conflicting views.
- Share your organisation's values and refer to your trans-inclusive and other relevant policies, protocols and procedures in place. Consider providing a succinct written summary of legal protections for trans people before your discussions begin (attached).
- It might also be helpful to refer to the sector-wide support for trans inclusion, reflected in the many organisations that have been involved in developing and sharing guidance and resources. This will help trans colleagues – as well as individuals with trans friends and family – to feel safer and better supported in participating in the discussion.

3. Model inclusive behaviours

- Work to establish a setting in which everyone feels able to contribute. You might warmly welcome all attendees, invite people to introduce themselves and – if they are comfortable doing so – to share their pronouns. "When managers and team leaders include their pronouns in the introductions at the start of a meeting, this can send a powerful message to everyone and help foster a culture of trans inclusivity. Stating pronouns provides clarity for all" (RCMG 2025: 22).
- It is good practice not to assume all attendees will have read and understood all pre-meeting communications distributed in advance. Reiterate key information in person at the start of your meeting.
- Consider also whether beneficial to ensure applicable 'ground rules' or 'boundaries' are visually displayed, after having explained them in person at the start of your meeting. This helps provide a useful reminder to help steer

appropriate discussion and behaviour during the session. It also helps if there are unexpected latecomers to your meeting.

- It can be helpful to acknowledge that the topic might be unfamiliar or can be uncomfortable for some. You might recognise that some people are nervous about using the right language and reassure them around this.
- Consider sharing an information sheet to explain, in summary, some words often used when discussing trans inclusion (when appropriate, recognising that these are not exhaustive or universally accepted). Not all attendees might be familiar with that vocabulary or language. Individuals might not feel comfortable asking for that additional information, particularly in a public setting, such as a workplace meeting.
- Remind attendees how a term, such as ‘transphobic’ or ‘sexist’ or ‘homophobic’, can have different meanings for people with different views and beliefs. In practice, there is often agreement or consensus when discussing an ‘extreme’ example of behaviour that is transphobic or sexist, such as physical threats or violence. However, there will also be examples where not everyone agrees that a specific behaviour or use of language is ‘phobic’. (For example, a person whose religious belief is that marriage is only between a man and woman might not view that as ‘homophobic’, while other people do).
- Encourage attendees to reflect on how it can feel if told that your personal views or beliefs are ‘wrong’, or ‘transphobic’, or ‘discriminatory’. It can be upsetting, difficult and challenging.
- We all communicate differently and people might inadvertently present personal experience or views, or react to the views or experience of others, in a way that can seem or be dismissive or disrespectful. Sometimes, unfortunately, that is deliberate. But it can also happen without an individual intending to do so. They might not have communicated well, or they might not appreciate how their personal views or behaviours might impact hurtfully on others. Consider openly acknowledging that risk at the start of your discussion. Perhaps share, or invite participants to voluntarily share, a brief personal experience of a situation where another person (in a work or personal setting) inadvertently made them feel marginalised, disrespected, not seen, or not listened to. This may help better facilitate a constructive, mutually respectful and open discussion.

4. Listen

- Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of inclusive practice. Make space for everyone who wants to participate, including people with views that are different to your own. This can be challenging, but it is an important route to mutual understanding, new learning on all sides, opening up dialogue, and building a practical understanding about (and support for) your organisation’s commitment to trans inclusion. *“If you can stay calm and listen patiently, this can make people feel heard and they will be more likely to listen to you, without immediately shutting down”* (Good Law Project 2025).
- Encourage everyone to ask questions in a respectful manner, with openness and curiosity, and contribute in ways that gives time and opportunities for other people to share contributions too. Politely remind – and interject if needed – about the importance of resisting the temptation to interrupt or dictate direction or focus of a group discussion.

- Remind everyone to have realistic expectations of their colleagues: not everyone is going to agree, and view everything in the same way.

5. De-escalate conflict and when appropriate intervene

- Monitor the room, for example to see if anyone is struggling. For this reason, it can be beneficial for more than one individual to collaborate when facilitating the meeting, sharing that responsibility since, at times, a presenter will need to focus primarily on giving a presentation or engaging in a dialogue or discussion. While doing so, their colleague can 'read the room'.
- If and when appropriate, remind everyone of the importance of respectful exchange, in line with ground rules explained at the outset.
- If needed, also remind about your organisation's internal policies (such as a Dignity and Respect at Work Policy) and what standards of behaviour are expected.
- If concerned about the safety and wellbeing of others in the room, take appropriate action. This can be as simple as reminding everyone that they can take a break if they need to. In some situations, it may be necessary to conclude discussion of a specific issue and move the discussion on.
- Whilst it is important to make space for diverse views and beliefs, there is no place for speech that constitutes harassment. If participants behave in this way, make clear it is unacceptable. Refer to your workplace policies, such as your Dignity and Respect at Work policy.
- If unacceptable behaviour persists, end the meeting and take appropriate action, such as reporting the incident(s) in line with organisational procedures.

6. Follow up

- End the session by restating your organisation's commitment to advancing trans inclusion in all aspects of its work.
- Keep an internal record of the meeting, to the extent it is appropriate to do so. (If attendees were invited to disclose and share private personal experience, that should not be noted, of course). But in situations where a meeting concluded with action points, or issues to research and discuss further, it is important to note those.
- Make sure and reflect any majority views or consensus reached during the meeting and keep note of alternative suggestions or disagreement shared by others.
- Consider whether it is beneficial to follow-up on the meeting with a written communication shared to those who attended (and those unable to attend). This is appropriate, for example, if proposing that further specific steps will be taken to improve trans inclusion. It is also good practice to invite any further suggestions or views, recognising that some participants might not feel comfortable doing so in the meeting, or may develop views later upon reflection on the discussion that they wish to share.
- Remember: taking action on agreed steps and keeping to any timeframes agreed in the meeting shows your organisational commitment. Not doing so, or omitting to communicate when there are legitimate reasons for delay, risks

undermining your positive messaging and creating distrust in your commitment to diversity.

- It is important to recognise that some people may find discussions during the meeting upsetting for a variety of personal or professional reasons. Remind participants about the support available for staff in your organisation, and when appropriate if you or colleagues are available to meet with them for further discussion or support on a one-to-one basis.

Summary of legal protections for trans people

The Equality Act 2010 protects trans people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation during all stages of the employment relationship, including in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, and training. A person is also protected under the Equality Act 2010 if they are perceived to be trans or associate with a trans person.

As an organisation, we aim to provide equitable and fair treatment to all those we deal with as an organisation, including applicants for work, staff, visitors, customers and suppliers. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with visitors, suppliers or other work-related contacts), and on work-related trips or events including social events. We do so regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. We are committed to promoting equal opportunities and creating a workplace culture in which diversity and inclusion is valued, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation based on gender identity, or other protected characteristics, will not be tolerated.

Discrimination includes:

- Treating a person less favourably than others because of gender reassignment.
- Harassment, such as:
 - engaging in unwanted conduct relating to gender reassignment or of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
 - treating a person less favourably because they submitted to or rejected harassment relating to gender reassignment or sexual harassment.
- In practice, examples of harassment in the context of gender identity can include:
 - Unwanted questioning about a person's gender identity, gender history or transition.
 - Verbal or written jokes or abuse based on gender identity.
 - Repeatedly calling someone by their previous name or incorrect pronouns or otherwise misgendering them.

A trans person may also be protected under further provisions of the Equality Act 2010: this is just an overview or summary of key protections.

Under the Gender Recognition Act 2004, a person can apply for legal recognition of their acquired gender through the issue of a gender recognition certificate (GRC). But a trans person does not require a GRC to be protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and should not be asked to produce a GRC as evidence of their legal gender.