TRANS-INCLUSIVE CULTURE

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

SUPPORTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE TEAMS

to provide a warm welcome to – and ensure the safety of – trans visitors

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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.

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Supporting Visitor Experience teams to provide a warm welcome to – and ensure the safety of – trans visitors

During our research, cultural organisations repeatedly highlighted the central role that visitor experience and other front of house teams play in ensuring that our cultural venues are increasingly recognised as being welcoming, safe and inclusive for trans visitors. This resource outlines 5 interrelated areas that organisations should consider in building the capacity and confidence of visitor experience teams to take this work forward.

Training

Provide accessible and up-to-date trans-inclusion training for all staff. Foster a culture of reflection and ongoing discussion around how all aspects of a trans-inclusive welcome can be nurtured. Visitor experience teams have a wealth of expertise in welcoming all kinds of visitors so make space and time for team members to share their own experience and to jointly develop ideas and strategies for a trans-inclusive welcome.

Ensure teams are fully aware of relevant organisational policies to build understanding of the importance of safety, respect and dignity for all. Support teams to understand the importance of using visitors' and colleagues' correct, stated pronouns. Share de-escalation techniques that team members can use if they encounter poor behaviour towards others. Support staff to challenge inappropriate language and explain its potential to impact negatively on others.

Allyship

As is the case for any marginalised group, demonstrating allyship – your organisation's commitment to inclusion and recognition of the discrimination and prejudice that trans communities are facing – is an important part of making trans visitors and their friends and families feel welcome.

Work with your Visitor Experience teams to explore how to make the organisation's commitment to generating a safe, inclusive and respectful space visible to all visitors – for example through public statements, inclusive facilities, signs and symbols.

Cultural organisations are increasingly exploring the value of setting out – for visitors as well as staff and volunteers – their expectations for respectful behaviour that can help to create an open, safe and inclusive space for all. These codes of conduct or visitor charters – sometimes online and increasingly found in reception or gallery spaces – can support Visitor Experience teams by making clear that the organisation will not tolerate harassment of any kind or discrimination towards staff or visitors, including those who are trans.

Warm Welcome

Build an understanding amongst visitor experience teams of the wider landscape of exclusion and discrimination that many trans people are experiencing. Although there is widespread public support for trans inclusion, increasing anti-trans rhetoric in the media and social media is contributing to a climate of increasing uncertainty for trans people around the use of public spaces. Warmly welcoming all visitors with respect and empathy is an important way to communicate to trans visitors that your venue is a safe and inclusive place to be.

Ensure that marketing materials, ticketing and membership schemes use inclusive language and that they recognise families of all kinds.

Avoid making assumptions about someone's gender identity or someone's pronouns. Visitor Experience teams have a wealth of expertise in welcoming all visitors but, inevitably, mistakes can be made. When this happens, apologising and moving on is usually the best approach to take.

Procedural and Policy Support

Ensure that your organisation has clear, up-to-date policies, procedures and protocols in place to support Visitor Experience teams. These might include:

- Dignity and Respect at Work, EDI and safeguarding policies;
- protocols in the event of behaviour from visitors or colleagues which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them;
- clear procedures for reporting incidents, disclosing concerns about unacceptable behaviour, as well as reporting and dealing with offensive content (e.g., stickers or graffiti) or hate crimes;
- support for staff who may be transitioning (or have family members who may be transitioning)

Setting out how individuals will be supported by your organisation benefits existing staff, including trans staff. It also sends a clear message, not only that your organisation welcomes potential trans staff, but that you proactively support and encourage diversity, equity and inclusion, and promote a culture that values difference.

Learning Culture

Recognise the challenging, sometimes emotionally charged aspects of doing this work. Foster a supportive culture where members of the team can get things wrong and learn from their mistakes. Encourage staff to discuss issues openly and with curiosity about how to foster a warm welcome for everyone.

Create opportunities for visitor experience teams to discuss trans inclusion and share their successful strategies for fostering a warm welcome with other teams across the organisation.