

How to be trans inclusive: A guide for pubs, clubs and bars in Cambridge

This guidance is produced by the CUSU LGBT+ Trans campaign as part of the Make No Assumptions campaign. It is partially in response to comments by transgender students about their experience in Cambridge pubs, clubs and bars.

Summary:

The following would minimise disadvantage to and make transgender people feel safer and more welcome in Cambridge pubs, clubs and bars.

- Provide gender-neutral toilet facilities.
- If that's not possible, at least do not police which bathroom patrons use.
- Check ID sensitively.
- Avoid using insensitive language amongst yourselves.
- Be vigilant for harassment of trans people and transphobic and transmisogynistic behaviour amongst your patrons. Be prepared to act if necessary.

Questions and feedback relating to this advice should be addressed to the Make No Assumptions campaign, by email at cusutranscampaign@gmail.com

Toilet Facilities

Like anyone else, trans people usually prefer to use the facilities assigned to their self-determined gender. Using the facilities of the wrong gender – regardless of matching their sex assigned at birth – causes a lot of internal discomfort. People who identify in a non-binary way often have to pick a gendered facility, which can be very uncomfortable. Regardless of which option they pick, trans people are often at risk of harassment or even attack from others in the bathroom, particularly if their appearance does not classically match that of either binary gender. Trans people are not out to cause trouble when they use the bathroom they're most comfortable in, and there is no need to stop them from doing so. Some establishments have challenged trans students for ID when using the bathroom; this is deeply disrespectful and borders on illegal discrimination ("Gender Reassignment" - or expressing the wish to live as a different gender - is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010).

Providing non-gendered toilet facilities is perfectly legal, and allows trans people who require it an option to use the facilities without having to make a difficult choice or put themselves at risk. Trans people should still be able to use any of the facilities provided, but having a gender-neutral option would make a lot of us more comfortable – and probably increase the amount of time we spend in the venue. (Word tends to circulate about which venues have suitable facilities, and patronage increases accordingly.) Single-occupant toilets can very easily be designated as gender-neutral by removing 'male' and 'female' signage and replacing with 'Toilet' or 'WC'.

We understand, though, that it's not always feasible to provide a separate or single-occupant facility. A perfectly workable option is to re-designate men's and women's toilets as 'toilets with urinals' and 'toilets without urinals', or to keep signage as it is but make clear that management will not be policing who uses which facility. We have included some posters from our campaign which you are welcome to use for this purpose.

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Checking ID Sensitively

Trans people often start to present in a differently gendered way before changing their documentation and ID to reflect their self-determined gender – for example, a trans woman might be using a female name and pronouns and presenting in a feminine way, but her ID still shows her previous, male name and genders her as male. Trans people can also look a very different age from what they are; this tends to particularly affect trans men or other trans people who were female assigned at birth. If someone looks young or their ID doesn't match their presentation, be aware that this might be why. If possible (and it usually is) don't ask any questions and certainly don't comment! Comments on appearance – even intended as a friendly joke – can be deeply hurtful to trans people. Remember also that the people they're with might not know they're trans. If you absolutely must ask for more information, do so quietly and sensitively.

Watch Your Language

Overhearing transphobic language or insensitive joking amongst staff and management is sure to make trans people feel unsafe in your venue – and unlikely to return. Transphobia is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as the following:

“The fear of or a dislike directed towards trans people, or a fear of or dislike directed towards their perceived lifestyle, culture or characteristics, whether or not any specific trans person has that lifestyle or characteristic. The dislike does not have to be so severe as hatred. It is enough that people do something or abstain from doing something because they do not like trans people.”

Examples of insensitivity and transphobia include:

- Joking or insensitive comments about:
 - The gendered aspects of someone's appearance.
 - Transgender figures in the media
 - Insensitive and uninformed comments about what it means to be transgender and what transgender people do.
- Telling a trans person how much they look like a typical example of their gender. ('I would never know you're trans' might feel like a compliment to you, but it implies trans people should have to try to look a particular way for other people's benefit.)

Transmisogyny is prejudice specifically directed at transgender women because of both being transgender and being women. It tends to centre around the assertion that trans women, and other male assigned at birth trans people, are men. Disgust at trans women's bodies is an integral part of transmisogyny. Trans women, particularly trans women of colour, are subject to a disproportionate level of violence worldwide from police and civilian sources alike – and this is the mindset that underlies it. Examples of transmisogyny include:

- Making jokes about “men in women's clothing”, or parodying trans women.
- Denying trans women access to spaces where cisgender (non-transgender) women are allowed.
- Using comparison to a trans woman as an insult to a cis woman (insinuating that both are unattractive.)

There are some words and phrases which (while used in the media) trans people find offensive. You should avoid using these, even in private. The following list is not exhaustive but contains some of the more common phrases:

- 'Tranny', 'He-She', or 'Shemale' (It's perfectly fine to say 'Transgender person' or 'Trans person')
- 'Sex Change' or 'The Operation' – While some trans people choose to have gender confirmation surgery (also called sex reassignment surgery), the medical procedures involved in some people's transitions are varied and it is a deeply personal choice to

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undergo them. Please avoid asking whether someone is 'pre-op' or 'post-op'; this is unnecessarily invasive.

- Referring to a trans person as their sex assigned at birth. (A trans woman should not be referred to as a 'male', nor a trans man as a 'female', nor a non-binary person as either. This is unnecessary and causes hurt.)

Not all trans people are out, or present as their self-determined gender. Using gendered language can make all trans people feel uncomfortable, whether or not they are out – and makes quite a lot of cisgender (non-trans) people uncomfortable too! It is much better to try and use non-gendered alternatives where possible. For example, 'Ladies and Gentlemen' can be replaced with 'Everyone'; 'Sir' and 'Madam' can usually be omitted altogether; 'folks' or 'friends' are quite good terms for addressing a group of people informally. Remember some terms are implicitly gendered as well – such as 'Mate', or 'Love'.

Some venues may occasionally want to host drag or crossdressing events. These can be good occasions, however it is very important that they are managed sensitively. A good way of doing this is to encourage people to dress in ways that are new or different for them, and maintain a positive atmosphere around this. Crossdressing events where the emphasis is on making fun of people, particularly men wearing dresses, tend to encourage prejudice and we would advise you to avoid this approach. Remember also that transgender women are **not** the same as crossdressers or men in drag – trans women are women, while crossdressers or drag queens do not necessarily identify in this way.

Be Vigilant

Trans people can occasionally experience harassment from other patrons, or overhear transphobic or transmisogynistic language being used behind their back. Many trans people live in constant vigilance for this, knowing how dangerous it can be. Knowing that the management are on their side is a great comfort to any trans person. If you notice any patron using transphobic or transmisogynistic language, it's really helpful if you're prepared to call them out on it – either gently and informally if they're just using insensitive language, or more firmly if there's risk of harassment or violence. A zero-tolerance approach should always be taken to transphobia and transmisogyny because of the violence it can entail.

More Information

For more information about what it means to be transgender, please see the enclosed leaflet from CUSU LGBT+: 'Transgender: The Basics'.

Further information, more posters and other resources can be found on the Make No Assumptions campaign website: www.makenoassumptions.org.uk

If you have questions, or would like to get more involved, you can get in touch with the campaign by email at cusutranscampaign@gmail.com