

TOP TIPS

for Working with Trans & Gender-Exploring Young People



Written by the Young People of Transformers, Allsorts' Trans Youth Group, with support from staff

allsorts youth
project

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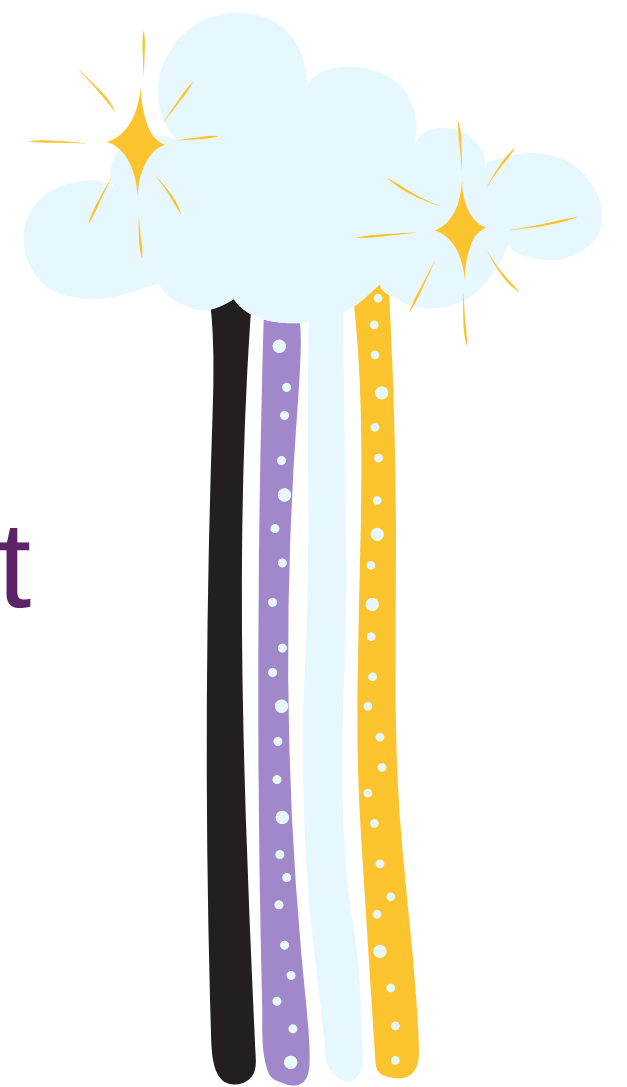
When we use the word '**trans**' (short for transgender), we understand it as an umbrella term for people whose gender identity **does not** line up with the sex they were **assigned at birth**.

Examples



Sarah is a **trans woman** and uses the pronoun, she/her. She was **assigned male at birth** but came out as a woman and describes herself as trans.

Jo is a **non-binary person** and uses the pronoun, they/them. They were **assigned female at birth** but came out as non-binary and also identify with the term trans.



Remember!

The sex a trans person was assigned at birth may be something they do not want to disclose, so you probably won't find yourself using this term much (**sex assigned at birth**). However, it's important that we use this terminology when giving definitions of 'trans' (instead of '*a man who used to be a ...*')

Names & Pronouns

For a young person who is exploring their gender identity, a **name change** or the decision to use a **pronoun** which is in keeping with their gender identity can be hugely empowering and validating.

Remember that not all young people identify as male/man/boy or female/woman/girl (**gender binary**). They may identify as non-binary, gender fluid, non-gendered or in other ways, and may use gender neutral pronouns (**They/Them**), neo-pronouns (eg. **Ze/Hir, Ey/Em**) or no pronouns at all.

Always try your best to use the correct pronouns and name and give young people space to experiment with their name or pronoun in order to reflect what might be a changing or developing identity. **Do not worry** if you make a mistake when referring to someone's name or pronouns, it happens and can be rectified with a quick **apology** and **correction**...



I think that's his phone... sorry, their phone

Some trans young people may wish to change their name in line with their true gender identity. Although they may not have changed their name legally, individuals have the right to choose the name by which they are known to staff, friends and family. This will include making changes to a preferred name on any records that a service holds about the young person if they have not changed it legally and it is what the young person asks for.

Don't Assume

Try not make assumptions about someone's **gender identity** based on their appearance. Just because a young person may present in a certain way does not mean that they are what you assume them to be. For example, a trans woman may not be presenting in a typically feminine way at the point you meet her (or ever) but still very much identifies as a woman.

Try to look past appearances and let the young person show you who they are.

Remember!

It's great practice to include your own pronouns when you introduce yourself to people, whether you are trans or not. We all make assumptions sometimes, but by sharing your pronouns, you give the person you are talking to an opportunity to share theirs too, and minimise the risk of **misgendering** them (misgendering means using the wrong pronouns).

Nice to meet you.
I'm Jay, and my
pronouns are
she/her.
What about you?

Hi Jay, nice to meet
you too. My name's
Piper and I take
Ey/Em pronouns

Clothes & Appearance

Trans or gender-exploring young people have the right to dress in ways that are consistent with their **gender identity**. The choice to begin dressing in clothes associated with your true gender can be a very big and



potentially daunting step for some young people. It is important to realise the significance of this step for the young person and to recognise that in dressing differently a young person may become vulnerable to transphobic bullying or discrimination.

Care should be taken to ensure that trans young people are given the support they need at this time. **Staff training** is useful in ensuring that all staff have an understanding of what it means to be trans and how young people might explore their gender identity.



By supporting a trans young person to dress in clothes which they feel comfortable with, you are empowering them to express themselves by bringing their outward appearance in line with that of their internal gender identity.



Toilets & Changing Facilities

Under the definition of 'Gender Reassignment' in the **Equality Act** (2010), trans young people have a right to access the toilet that reflects their gender identity. This can be a very challenging area for people who are trans. They may feel unsupported in using a facility that reflects their gender identity or unsafe when they do.

Ideally, mixed gender or gender neutral toilet facilities would be available. However, a young trans person should not be required to take this option. Using **trans safe space stickers** are a good way to highlight trans inclusion at your organisation.

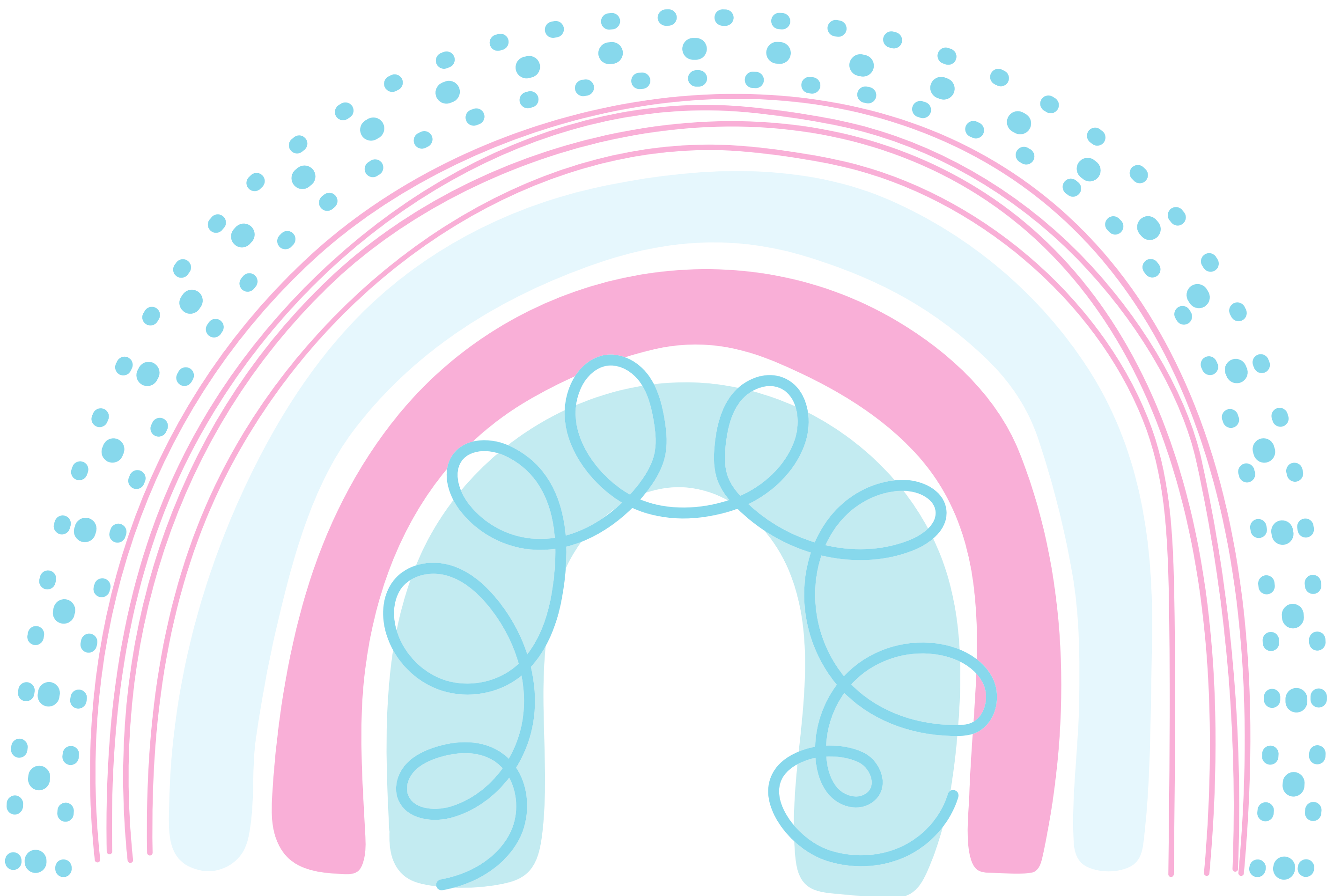


Listening & Communication

Trust that what a young person presents to you is the **reality of their situation** at the time.

They may be presenting you with ideas and feelings with which you are not familiar but you can support them by giving them **space** to talk and explore.

There is nothing constructive or supportive about assuming that someone may be in a phase. Even if this turns out to be the case, this is still a valid form of **self-expression** and **development**.



Confidentiality

Everyone has a right to **privacy**, this includes the right to keep one's trans status private. A trans person's previous name, assigned sex at birth or anything else regarding their transition constitutes as **private information**, and to share this information without the knowledge or consent of the young person (unless required to do so) is a breach of their confidentiality.

Workers should not discuss trans young people out of work, even when making no particular reference to their name or personal details. The trans community is incredibly small and even a casual remark may inadvertently out them. When a young person discloses their trans status, it is important to **discuss confidentiality with them** and who they would like information to be shared with. This is particularly important for multi-agency working.



Transitioning

Transitioning can broadly be described in two ways; **social** and **medical**.

A **social transition** is generally the first step for a trans person. It is different for everyone and may include a name and/or pronoun change, using toilets/changing facilities appropriate to their gender, or changing the way they dress or present themselves. A social transition may or may not be part of a gender reassignment process and it's important to recognise that a young person may just be experimenting with their gender identity and/or gender expression rather than making a decision to transition. In any case, a **non-judgemental attitude**, **support** and **advice** for the young person will be vital.



A **medical transition** is generally done through a **Gender Identity Clinic (GIC)**. Medical treatment is provided in a series of phases that include: a psychological assessment, medical treatment that could include hormone blockers and/or hormones, and **gender affirming surgeries** - which are not usually carried out until a person is 18 or over. **Not all trans people** have the same medical treatment (or have medical treatment at all) and it is important to remember and consider this when young people express their intentions of a medical transition.



Tackling Transphobia: A Whole-Service Approach

All services should work towards a robust, organisational approach in developing an understanding of trans issues and prevention of transphobia. This not only provides a **safe space** for the young person but also shows **unity** and **consistency** for all. When a young person's trans identity is known, organisations need to comply with the **Equality Act** and internal **Equality Policies** to counteract any prejudice expressed or concerns raised. Some approaches could include; an anti bullying policy specifically naming transphobia, celebrating LGBT+ history month and providing resources, information and signposting.

If your organisation needs support with this, Allsorts offers a range of **training services** and **inclusion awards** to ensure safer and more inclusive spaces for all LGBT+ children and young people:

Schools &
Colleges



Youth
Services



Businesses &
Organisations



The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 protects children, young people and adults against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to housing, education, clubs, the provision of services and work.

Discrimination is, broadly, unfair treatment related to:

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender Reassignment**
- **Marriage / Civil Partnership**
- **Pregnancy & Maternity**
- **Race**
- **Religion or Belief**
- **Sex**
- **Sexual orientation**

The Equality Act provides protection from discrimination because of **gender reassignment**. It is unlawful to treat young people less favourably because of their gender reassignment. Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process, or part of a process of reassigning their sex by changing physiological **or** other attributes.

This includes **medical** or **social transition**. A person does not have to be undertaking a medical procedure but must be taking steps to live openly as another gender, or proposing to do so.



Useful Definitions

AFAB

Assigned female at birth (pronounced 'ey-fab').

AMAB

Assigned male at birth (pronounced 'ey-mab')

Assigned Sex

The sex someone is assigned at birth based on physical characteristics.

Cisgender

(*adjective*) Describes a match between a person's assigned sex and their gender identity (ie. not transgender). For example, a person who was assigned female at birth, and identifies as a girl / woman / female.

Coming Out

A process by which a trans person will tell friends / family / co-workers about their trans identity (is also used for LGB+ identities).

Deed Poll

The means by which a person can legally change their name.

Gender Identity

The internal sense of gender. How a person feels in regards to male / female / neither / both.

Gender Affirming Surgeries

A term used in place of 'Gender/Sex Reassignment Surgery' (which is widely seen as outdated). Encompasses a variety of surgeries/procedures available to trans people which may affirm their gender identity.

Gender Dysphoria

A recognised medical term which refers to the physical, mental and/or social discomfort of being perceived and living as one's assigned sex.

GIC

Gender Identity Clinic

HRT

Hormone Replacement Therapy (sometimes referred to as cross-sex hormone therapy) is the medical process of adapting a person's body's hormone production in line with their gender identity. For example, an AMAB trans woman may have HRT to develop female secondary sex characteristics (see also, *Oestrogen* and *Testosterone*).

Useful Definitions

Lower Surgery

(colloquial) Surgical process by which an individual's genitals can be altered to come in line with their gender identity.

Misgender

(verb) To make reference to someone using language that does not correlate with their gender identity (e.g. using the wrong pronouns).

Non-Binary

(adjective) Umbrella term which means to not identify with a binary gender identity (male / female). Example: "I am a non-binary person / I am non-binary".

Oestrogen

Oestrogen is the female hormone which some trans women / trans-feminine people use in order to develop female secondary sex characteristics (e.g. breasts, thinner facial/body hair, rounder hips/figure etc)

Passing

Being seen or read as the gender you present yourself as e.g. a male identifying person being read as male. The term 'passing' may not be something all trans people use and so is best avoided unless a trans person is explicitly discussing 'passing' with you.

Pronouns

The words we use instead of repeating a person or object's name repeatedly in conversation. Pronouns can be gendered (He/Him & She/Her), gender-neutral (They/Them), or relate to non-binary identities (Xe/Xem, Ze/Hir, Ey/Em, and more).

Sexual Orientation

Attraction to people i.e. gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual etc.

Testosterone

Testosterone (often shortened to 'T') is the male hormone which some trans men / transmasculine people use in order to develop male secondary sex characteristics (e.g. facial hair, deeper voice, increased muscle mass, etc).

Useful Definitions

To Gender

(*verb*) To assign someone else a gender by noticing behaviour and body presentation.

Top Surgery

Known term that trans men / transmasculine people often use when referring to chest surgery which produces a male contoured chest.

Trans

(*adjective*) Short for transgender, describing a person who's gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

Trans Man

Someone who was assigned female at birth but is a man.

Trans Woman

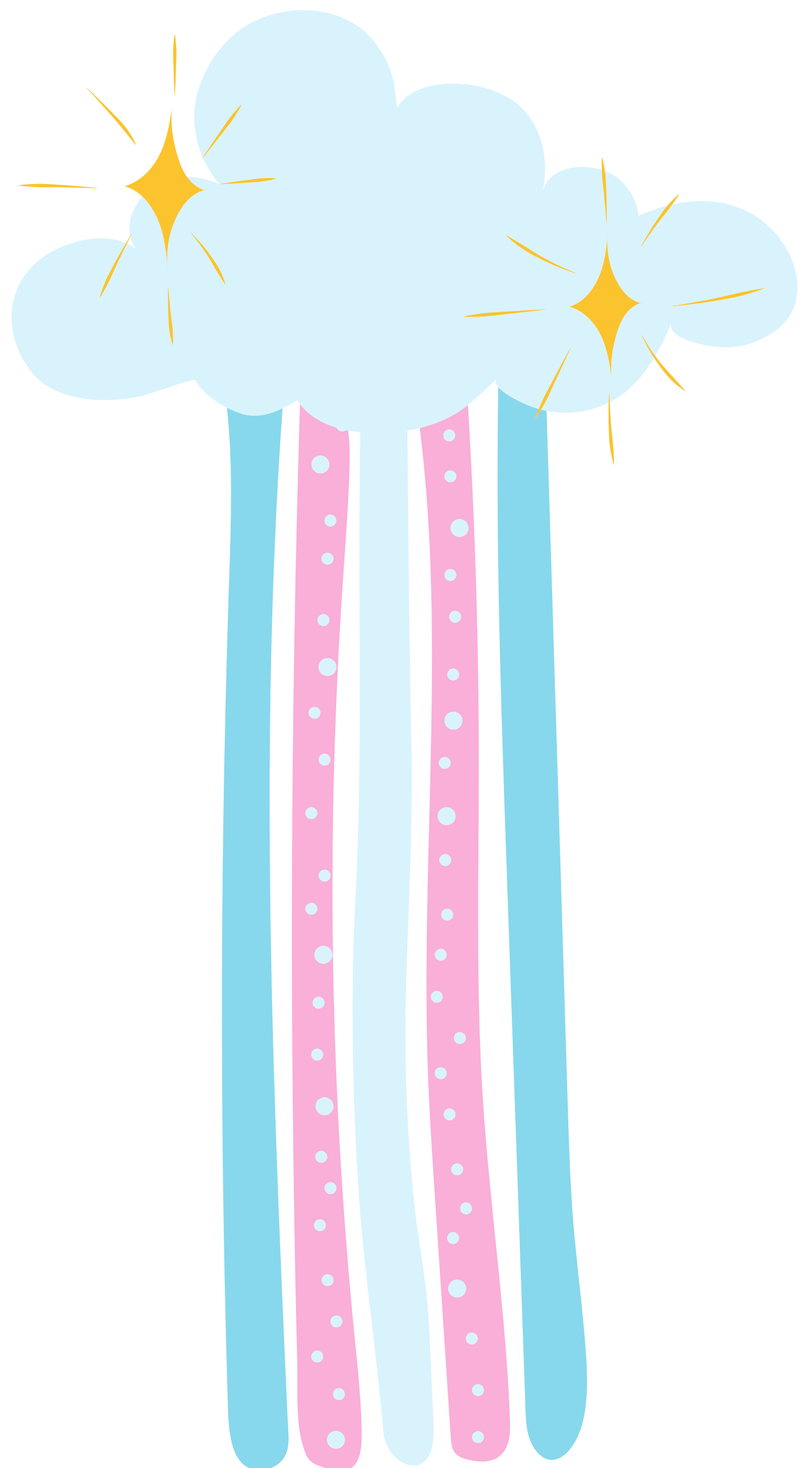
Someone who was assigned as male at birth but is a woman.

Transition (Social/Medical)

Transition is a process which is personal to each individual and can take many forms, from simply changing the pronoun which one uses, to changing the style of one's dress, to taking hormones and/ or undergoing surgery.

Transphobia

Irrational fear, hatred, abuse etc. of trans people and people who do not conform to traditionally Western gender norms.



Support Services

Allsorts Youth Project

Sussex Sussex based youth project that offers a range of support services for LGBTU+ children & young people (5-25), including youth groups, one-to-one support and advocacy.

www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

The Clare Project

Brighton based organisation offering weekly drop-in groups and socials for trans adults.

www.clareproject.org.uk

Mermaids

National service for trans children and their families.

www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Gendered Intelligence

Based in London and working with young trans people across England. Provides a range of services including art projects, peer support and training for professionals.

<http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>



This resource has been created in collaboration with the young people at Allsorts' Transformers Group. We thank everyone involved for their contributions and hard work.

youth@allsortsyouth.org.uk

www.allsortsyouth.org.uk



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01273 721211



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