

## Guidance for colleagues to support someone who is transitioning

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### **1 Introduction**

We encourage colleagues reading this policy to first read the Trans Staff Policy and familiarise themselves with the College's commitment as this guidance is a supplementary document which should be used alongside the policy.

If you have a colleague who is transitioning, the most important thing is to be supportive and maintain confidentiality. Imperial fosters an inclusive environment for all staff and you are contributing to this by being a supportive colleague to ensure that they feel welcome and able to be themselves fully in the workplace.

### **2 Definitions of key terms**

#### **Trans**

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as or does not sit comfortably with the sex they were assigned at birth.

#### **Transitioning**

The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify with. This may involve medical treatment for some people such as hormone therapy or surgery etc. but not all trans people will want or be able to have this.

Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and/or family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

#### **Cis or cisgender**

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

#### **Deadnaming**

Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.

### **Misgendering**

Referring to a trans person using a pronoun or other forms of address that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

## **3 Names and pronouns**

Use the correct name and pronoun to address your colleague.

**Pronouns** are the words we use to refer to a person when not using their name, e.g. “he”, “she”, “they”, “ze”. If you are not sure what pronouns to use to address an individual, simply ask. If you make a mistake, say sorry and try to use the right words from then on. You should also gently correct other members of staff or anyone else who uses the incorrect pronoun.

In order to foster a more inclusive culture where people of all gender identities feel comfortable sharing their pronouns, it is a good idea to share your own pronouns in your email signature after your name, or to introduce yourself at a meeting with, for example, “My name is X. My pronouns are she/her,” and ask others to go around and introduce themselves in the same way if you are chairing a meeting.

Please refer to [the College's guidance on personal pronouns](#) for more information.

## **4 Ways to support your colleagues**

- Be an Active Bystander by intervening and challenging any inappropriate behaviour you see directed towards trans and non-binary colleagues. Imperial provides [Active Bystander training](#).
- Do not ask intrusive questions. It is never appropriate to ask whether someone has had, will have or is considering any form of medical transition. Even if you know that someone is transitioning, it is inappropriate to ask personal questions about their transition. Always take their lead if talking to them regarding their transition. If you genuinely want to know more, do your own research.
- Remember that the process of transitioning will be different for each individual and consequently, their needs will differ too.
- Trans and cis people have the right to use the toilets they feel most comfortable using and which matches their gender identity. Do not be alarmed by your colleague now using the same facilities that you are using, once they start living in their affirmed gender. Do not single them out for doing so. If you are not comfortable with them doing so, then you may use another facility. Under no circumstances should that individual be asked to use another facility.

- If a trans individual needs support, be non-judgemental, listen and show openness and empathy towards them. Give information on where they might get help or further support at the College and outside (see Section 5 of the Trans Staff Policy).
- Read more suggestions on [how to be a trans ally](#).

## 5 Frequently asked questions

### **A colleague has told me they are thinking of transitioning, how can I support them?**

Listen to them without judging or making assumptions about them. Guide them to sources of support within and outside the College.

### **I know that my colleague is trans and there are so many questions I want to ask them about the whole experience and process etc. Is it all right for me to ask questions and let other people know about my colleague being trans?**

It is important to educate oneself using online resources. The College has developed resources for people who wish to learn more about [how to be a trans ally](#). The [Imperial 600](#) staff network may also be able to signpost individuals to other resources.

While one trans person may be open about their experiences and identity, it does not mean everyone is and it does not give you a right to ask obtrusive questions such as what their “real” or “birth” name is etc. You should take the lead of the individual and respect their privacy and boundaries.

It is the right of the individual to choose whether they wish to be open about their gender identity. Do not tell others about a person’s trans status. To ‘out’ someone, without their permission is a form of harassment and, possibly, a criminal offence.

### **How do I stop someone teasing or ignoring a trans individual?**

The College has a zero-tolerance approach to transphobia and all acts of transphobia will be punished. As well as deadnaming, misgendering, teasing or ignoring someone, there are [other behaviours that can be recognised as inappropriate and should be stopped](#).

Be an Active Bystander and intervene through one of [these four intervention strategies](#) (4 D’s).

If someone unintentionally uses the wrong or previous name, pronoun or other form of address, then you should help to gently correct them or remind them, and they should apologise and use the correct name, pronoun or other form of address going forward.

All incidences, or continued incidences, of harassment/bullying towards the trans person needs to be reported. You may wish to discuss this with the trans individual to try and support them.

Once you have discussed with the individual, you may wish to report it to your manager, HR, your trade union, [Confidential Care](#) (CiC) (external), or using the [Report and Support](#) tool. [Harassment Support Contacts](#) can also help you explore your options.

## **6 External organisations / Resources**

[Stonewall](#)

[Gires](#)

[The Gender Trust](#)

[Press for Change](#)

[a:gender](#)

[Gendered Intelligence](#)