

The logo for GMB Union is centered at the top of the page. It consists of an orange square containing the letters 'GMB' in white, and a black square below it containing the word 'UNION' in white. The logo is set against a background of horizontal stripes in light blue, pink, and white, which are slightly wavy and extend across the top of the page.

GMB

UNION

GMB Trans and Non-Binary Factsheet

What is trans?

'Trans' is an umbrella term for anyone whose gender is not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. It includes not only people who have socially or medically transitioned between male and female genders, but also people who feel that their gender does not fit into this gender 'binary' – i.e. they are not either one or the other of these two genders. Sometimes people who feel this may refer to themselves as **'non-binary'** – an umbrella term for gender identities that are outside the gender binary of male/female and man/woman.

There are also many other terms people use to describe their experience, such as agender, bigender, gender fluid, gender queer, neutrois, or queer. This list is not exhaustive, and the terms people use are a personal choice.

Gender identities and how these are expressed are individual and not about conforming to stereotypes. In the same way that not all women have long hair or not all men like sports, how people present themselves is about what feels right to them. This might change throughout people's lives as they explore their own identity.

If someone feels that how they look, the body that they have, or the social expectations put on them because of the gender which other people think they are, do not match how they feel on the inside, it can sometimes lead to a disconnect. This is often referred to by the medical term of gender dysphoria, although not all trans people use this term. This disconnect can be a very distressing experience.

For some people, being trans will not involve any change at all but will be about a feeling of acceptance in how they express their gender. Other people may have transitioned or want to transition, and this may happen in multiple different ways.

Transitioning can be social. For example, changing the way you look, how you dress, or asking people to use different pronouns or names that affirm your gender.

Transitioning can also be medical, such as taking hormones or having surgery.

Affirming a person's gender identity and expression – for example, by using the name and pronouns which they have asked you to – and supporting them to live as their authentic self can have a hugely positive impact and validates that person's experience.

What is the impact of discrimination and misunderstanding on trans people as workers?

Studies show that **33% of trans people have been bullied**, 'deadnamed' (using an old name which they are no longer known by) or **misgendered** at work, with **1 in 5 trans employees stating that they have been attacked** by a colleague or customer. Harassment by colleagues and managers, and revealing a person's trans history, are all cited as common causes of work-related stress and sickness, and as contributing to the disproportionate impact on trans people's mental health. It is not surprising then, that **2 out of 3 of trans people do not feel safe being out as trans at work** and that **50% of trans people have left a job** after feeling unwelcome or unable to approach their employer for support.

Why is this a workplace issue?

Employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to protect people who 'undergo a process' of gender reassignment and to advance their inclusion and equality. In 2020, an Employment Tribunal held that the word 'process' should be understood to be a 'personal process' entailing a 'spectrum of moving away from one's birth sex' and that to be protected 'a person could be at any point on that spectrum'¹. It held that this would include persons who identified as non-binary.

Adequate policies, such as on transitioning at work, the ability to record your gender and pronouns on workplace systems, and zero tolerance policies on

discrimination, bullying, and harassment are vital to protecting and including trans people.

Employers often do not have appropriate diversity monitoring or record keeping systems in place to allow trans workers to record their gender or trans status. Many trans people do not see themselves reflected in workplace policies and do not feel able to report discrimination, bullying, and harassment. Inappropriate questioning and comments on a trans person's identity, biology, and use of facilities are common. This toxic combination leads to trans people's existence being ignored and a lack of safety, inclusion, and equality at work.

This leaves some trans people with no choice but to misgender themselves. Having to repeatedly hear hurtful comments or anti-trans slurs at work can be hugely damaging to trans people's sense of identity and can have a significant impact on their physical and mental health.

From a union perspective, tackling issues affecting trans workers is about eliminating discrimination but also about creating a culture change that benefits all workers, and creates safer and more inclusive workplaces where everyone can be themselves without fear.

What is GMB campaigning for?

GMB believes that all workplaces should be inclusive for trans workers.

This includes:

- Zero tolerance towards transphobic bullying, discrimination, and harassment
- Anonymous ways to report issues
- Creating a positive culture which is welcoming for all trans workers
- All-staff training
- Guidance on confidentiality, flexible dress codes and using facilities, with related guidance for line managers
- Establishing LGBT+ Staff Networks that are inclusive of all trans people
- Adoption of equality monitoring questions which are up to date and in line with external guidance from expert LGBT+ organisations

Find out more

Interested in finding out more about how you can get involved in the GMB's campaign for more inclusive workplaces? Speak to your rep or branch secretary.

For more information including our model trans policy go to our website <https://www.gmb.org.uk/trans-non-binary-equality-work>

