**Sexual Orientation Glossary**

**+ (plus)**  
**‍**The ‘+’ at the end of LGBTQ+ is used to acknowledge the many terms to describe those that have a minority sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as not all of these identities are specified in the LGBTQ initialism, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans, questioning/queer. There is no universally accepted term for the LGBTQ community. Therefore, you might see variances such as LGBT, LGBTQIA (I for intersex and A for asexual), LGBTQIAP (I for intersex, A for asexual, and P for pansexual).

**Abro (sexual and romantic)**

This term is used to describe those who have a fluid sexual and/or romantic orientation which can change over time, or during their life. They also may use different terms to describe themselves overtime too.

**Allo (sexual and romantic)**

This term is used when people experience sexual and romantic attraction, and do not identify as on the ace or aro spectrum. It’s essential to use words that explains people’s experiences, so that opposites to ace and aro doesn’t become ‘normal’ which is untrue and stigmatising to those with ace or aro identities.

**Aro**

This is an umbrella term that is used to describe a lack of, varying or occasional experiences of romantic attraction. This includes those who identify as aromantic, demiromantic and grey-romantic. Those with aro identities that experience sexual attraction or varying romantic attraction may describe themselves as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer as well as asexuality to describe their attraction.

‍**Aromantic**  
This term is used to describe a person that does not experience romantic attraction. An aromantic person might still experience sexual attraction or desire and describe their sexual orientation in a particular way, for example, ‘aromantic lesbian’ (*see ‘Lesbian’*).

**Asexual, Asexuality, (Ace)**  
A sexual orientation that is generally understood to be a lack of sexual attraction to others or desire for sexual activity. Asexual people may or may not experience romantic attraction, and some asexual people do have sex. Ace may also be used as an umbrella term to include a broad spectrum of asexual identities.

*Other Ace identities include:*

**Ace flux**

This describes someone whose sexual attraction varies over time. Someone who is ace flux, for example may feel very strongly asexual one day (definitely not feeling any sexual attraction to anyone), but less strongly asexual (maybe feeling weak sexual attraction) another day.

**Demisexual, Demiromantic, Demi**

This is a sexual/romantic orientation characterized by only experiencing sexual/romantic attraction after making a strong emotional connection with a specific person.

**Grey-asexual/Grey-romantic**

This is a term which refers to people who experience limited sexual/romantic attraction. In other words, they experience sexual/romantic attraction very rarely, or with very low intensity.

**Reciprosexual/recipromantic**

A sexual/romantic orientation on the ace spectrum meaning someone who does not experience sexual or romantic attraction unless they know the other person is sexually/romantically into them first.

**Akio sexual/Akio romantic**

This refers to a person who experiences sexual/romantic attraction, but their feelings fade if this is reciprocated.   
‍  
**Bisexual, Bisexuality (Bi)**  
This term is used when an individual is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to more than one gender. This can mean being attracted to two genders (e.g., men and women) but bisexual attraction is not limited to two genders.

**Gay**  
This term is used to describe people whose physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same gender (e.g. a gay man is attracted to men / a gay woman is attracted to women).

**Heterosexual, Heterosexuality (Straight)**  
This term is used to describe an individual who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to people of the opposite (binary) gender (e.g. a straight/heterosexual woman is attracted to men).   
‍  
‍**Lesbian**  
This term is used to describe a woman whose physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians also refer to themselves as gay.

**Pansexual, Pansexuality (Pan)**  
This term is used for an individual who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to people regardless of gender.

**Romantic orientation**

This term is used to describe a person’s romantic attraction to others, or lack thereof. This forms a person’s orientation identity alongside with sexual orientation.

Some people use the term ‘orientation’ as an umbrella term to cover sexual and romantic orientations.

**Sexual orientation**

This term is used to describe a person’s sexual attraction, or lack thereof. Alongside romantic orientation, this forms a person’s orientation identity.

Some people use the term ‘orientation’ as an umbrella term to cover both sexual and romantic orientations.

**QTIPOC/ QTIIBIPOC**

This acronym stands for queer, trans, intersex, person of colour.  The acronym QTIBIPOC stands for queer, trans, intersex, black, indigenous people of colour.

**Queer**   
This term was traditionally used as a homophobic slur. The word queer has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted by all LGBTQ people. Therefore, this term should only be used if someone self-identifies as queer.   
‍  
**Questioning**  
A term often used to describe the process of considering or exploring one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Gender identity glossary**

**Cisgender, Cis**

This term is used to describe someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

**Gender fluid**

This term is used to describe someone who moves between genders or has a fluctuating gender identity.

**Gender non-confirming**

This term is used to describe someone who does not conform to socially accepted or stereotypical gender norms.

**Gender queer**

This term is used when a person does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders.

**Intersex**

This term is used when a person has biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

**Non-binary, NB, enby**

This is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn’t sit comfortably with ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

**Person with a trans history**

This term is used when someone who identifies as male or female or man or woman, but was assigned the opposite sex at birth. This is increasingly used by people to acknowledge a trans past.

**Transgender, 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.

Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois.

**Transfeminine**

This is an umbrella term for describing an individual who was assigned male at birth but identify on the female side of the gender spectrum. A transfeminine individual may identify with many aspects of femininity but not wish to describe themselves as “a woman”

**Transgender man**

This term is used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.

**Transmasculine**

This is an umbrella term describing individuals who were assigned female at birth but identify on the male side of the gender spectrum. A transmasculine individual may identify with many aspects of masculinity but not wish to describe themselves as “a man.”

**Transgender woman**

This term is used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman, or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.

**Transitioning**

The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person’s transition will differ. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this.

Transitioning also might involve telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

**Transsexual**

This term was previously used as a medical term (similarly to homosexual) to refer to someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. This term is still used by some although many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

**Other LGBTQ terminologies**

**Ally** (e.g. an LGBTQ ally / a trans ally)   
This term is used to describe someone who actively supports and advocates for LGBTQ people.

**Assigned gender/sex**

The gender/sex assigned to someone at birth and recorded on one’s birth certificate, based on their physical characteristics.

**Assigned male or female at birth, also written amab or afab**

This refers to the sex/gender as categorised at birth and recorded on one’s birth certificate.

**Binding**

This is used by some (but not all) trans masculine people to compress their chests and create a more conventionally masculine shape.

**Birth name**

This is the name given to someone at birth, used to distinguish from a ‘chosen’ or ‘preferred’ name that a trans or gender diverse person may choose to ensure their name aligns with theirone’s gender identity. You may also hear ‘dead name’ rather than ‘birth name’.

**Biphobia**  
The discrimination, prejudice or bullying of a person because they are bisexual or perceived to be bisexual by others.

**Blockers, hormone blockers or puberty blockers**

This is a type of medication which temporarily stops the production of the natural hormones which progress puberty. They are considered by the NHS Gender Identity Development Service and a body of international research to be a physically reversible intervention: if the young person stops taking the blocker their body will begin developing as it would have done without medical intervention.

**Butch**

Butch is a term used in LGBT culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically masculine way. There are other identities within the scope of butch, such as ‘soft butch’ and ‘stone butch’. You shouldn’t use these terms about someone unless you know they identify with them.

**Cisnormativity**

This is the assumption that all, or almost all, individuals are cisgender.

**Cissexism**

This term is used to describe the belief that transgender people are inherently inferior to cisgender people. Examples of cissexist behaviours include dismissing transgenderism as a phase, mental illness, or cry for attention, or considering transgender people to be “freaks,” delusional, or sexual deviants.

**Coming Out**  
The process of telling others (family, friends, peers) about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Crossdresser, or transvestite**

Someone who chooses to wear clothes not conventionally associated with their assigned sex/gender. “Cross dresser” is now used in preference to the term “transvestite”, which is considered to be outdated and can cause offence. Someone who cross dresses is not necessarily transgender.

**Deadnaming**

This term is used when a person calls someone by their birth name after they have changed their name and is considered a microaggression. This term is often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.

**Dyke**

The word dyke originated as a derogatory, homophobic and misogynistic slur for a masculine, butch or androgynous woman or lesbian. Since then, the word dyke has been reclaimed by many lesbians.

**Exploring**  
This term is used to describe the process an individual goes through as their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is emerging and evolving.

**Femme**

Femme is a term used in LGBT culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way. There are other identities within the scope of femme, such as ‘low femme’, ‘high femme’, and ‘hard femme’. You shouldn’t use these terms about someone unless you know they identify with them.

**FTM or MTF**

These acronyms stand for ‘female-to-male’ and ‘male to female’, respectively, to indicate people assigned female at birth who transition to be a man, and vice versa. Many trans people still use these terms to describe themselves, although these terms have also been criticised for implying that trans people ‘change’ from one sex into another.

**Gender**

Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.

**Gillick competence**

A term used in medical law to decide whether a child (under 16 years of age) is able to consent to their own medical treatment, without the need for parental permission or knowledge.

**Gender-diverse**

This term describes anyone with a non-cis gender identity; an inclusive term covering non-binary as well as trans identities.

**Gender dysphoria**

This term is used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn’t feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender expression**

This is how a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender. A person who does not conform to societal expectations of gender may not, however, identify as trans

**Gender Identity Clinics, or GIC**

NHS clinics that provide support around gender identity to people over 18. (People may be referred from the age of 17.) They are able to provide speech and language therapy, counselling and hormones. They will also make referrals for some affirmative surgeries.

**Gender Identity Development Service, or GIDS**

This is also known as The Tavistock: NHS service in England and Wales that provides support around gender identity for people under 18. Run by psychotherapists, they explore a young person’s gender, offer support for emotional and relationship difficulties and may refer young people on for affirmative healthcare. It is also referred to as ‘the Tavistock’ as the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust are the providers of GIDS.

**Gender identity**

This is a person’s innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary above), which may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender reassignment**

This term is used to describe a person’s transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected by the Equality Act 2010.

**Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)**

This enables trans people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and you currently have to be over 18 to apply. You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

**GRSD**

This acronym stands for gender, sexual, and relationship diversity

**Heteronormativity**

The belief or assumption that all people are heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is the default or “normal” state of human being

**Heterosexism**

The idea that heterosexuality is a normal, natural, or superior state of human sexual orientation, and the system of oppression based on that belief. It is very closely related to homophobia and the two ideas tend to coexist.

**Homophobia**  
The discrimination, prejudice or bullying of a person because they are gay or lesbian or perceived to be gay or lesbian by others

**Homosexual**  
This is an outdated term that is now generally seen as derogatory and offensive by many gay and lesbian people. This is because of the pathologised history of the word “homosexual,” and it is often aggressively used by anti-gay individuals and groups to suggest that gay people are psychologically/emotionally disordered.  Gay or lesbian are the preferable terms to describe people attracted to members of the same sex.

**Lesbophobia**

The fear or dislike of someone because they are or are perceived to be a lesbian.

**Medical or physical transition**

This is the physical medical pathway that may include changes (puberty blockers, hormones and/or surgery) which may be used to alleviate gender dysphoria. There are age and stage restrictions in relation to each option, for example one has to be ‘around 16’ to access cross hormone therapy. Not all trans people will medically transition.

**Microaggression**

This term describes comments or actions that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalised group.

**Misgender, or mispronoun**

This means using a pronoun or other language which is different to someone’s way of describing themselves. Understood to mean someone’s identity has not been recognised.

**Outing**  
This is the act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumour and/or speculation) or revealing another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and/or trans status without that person’s consent.

**Passing**

This term is used if someone is regarded, at a glance, to be a cisgender man or cisgender woman.

Cisgender refers to someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were ‘assigned’ at birth. This might include physical gender cues (hair or clothing) and/or behaviour which is historically or culturally associated with a particular gender.

**Platonic partnerships**

People who are on the ace and/or aro spectrum may have platonic partnerships. These are relationships where there is a high level of mutual commitment which can include shared life decisions, shared living arrangements, and co-parenting of children. These partnerships can include more than two people. Ace and aro spectrum people may be monogamous or polyamorous.

**Polyamory**This is the practice of, or desire for, intimate relationships with more than one partner, with the informed consent of all partners involved.

**Pronoun**

Words we use to refer to people’s gender in conversation – for example, ‘he’ or ‘she’. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/them or ze/zir.

**Sexual Orientation**  
The term is used to describe an individual’s physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to others, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual (straight).

**Social transition**

This is the social changes that someone may choose as part of their transition; may include coming out, changing one’s names and pronouns, using differently gendered facilities, changing one’s gender performance and presentation. Does not include physical transition

**Spectrum**

A term used to cover a variety of identities that have a root commonality or shared experience.

**Transphobia**

The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including denying their gender identity or refusing to accept it. Transphobia may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, trans.