

# Employer Toolkit: Inclusive Recruitment of Trans & Non-Binary Candidates

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# Background

Transgender and non-binary people are integral members of Irish society, however, they still experience many everyday challenges, including barriers to accessing employment (TENI, 2017). Some of those barriers include a lack of inclusive employment policies, gaps in advertisements for positions, non-inclusive application forms, un-trained interview panels, scant gender-neutral services, and non-welcoming workplace environments. While trans and non-binary people experience these real inequities, they still continue to be motivated to contribute their talents and experience to the Irish workplace. Increasingly, Irish organisations aim to overcome these inequities through their Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) teams, as organisations see the benefits of being trans and non-binary inclusive. Indeed, various Irish-based companies have developed trans-inclusive policies, striving to attain the best available candidates for recruitment, though it must be said, gaps still remain in understanding trans and non-binary individuals experiences and needs. With this in mind, the trans and non-binary employment toolkit aims to support employers attain the essential skills to help develop their recruitment strategies in order to be meaningfully inclusive of trans and non-binary candidates in the recruitment process.

This toolkit was commissioned by the Open Doors Initiative (ODI) to provide accessible, insightful, and clear information to aid employers in developing trans and non-binary inclusive practices in their organisation. The toolkit draws on research findings from people with a range of backgrounds. Trans and non-binary peoples recruitment experiences provide vital knowledge regarding the barriers they face when accessing employment, thus providing crucial insights into developing this resource.

Employers and human resources professionals are essential in creating a workplace attractive to potential employees from all areas of life. Here, LGBTQIA+ organisations play a key role in ensuring their communities are not discriminated against and provide training and knowledge to organisations to enable them to develop inclusive and safe workplaces. As such, ODI is hugely grateful to all the participants who contributed their lived experiences and professional knowledge to create this current resource. The overall findings in the research contribute important knowledge in the area of recruitment from the perspective of trans and non-binary people, with emergent key themes suggesting that an inclusive trans and non-binary culture is at the forefront of positive change for organisations. To achieve culture change, the need to embed and promote an inclusive policy is at the heart of this journey. Leadership plays a vital role in driving these changes and achieving these goals.

The scope of the toolkit is broad and includes the intersectional experiences of Irish societies. As people's gender identities only contribute to a part of who they are, we must understand their diverse backgrounds in order to grasp the challenges they face when accessing the workplace. The Open Doors Initiative provide pathways to education, employment and entrepreneurship to a wide variety of marginalised groups, including Travellers, people with disabilities and marginalised youth, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, LGBTQIA+ individuals and people with a criminal history and any intersectionality therein.

# What is Diversity and Inclusion?

In recent decades, an increased focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace has increased the potential for individuals from marginalised communities to enter the workplace and feel a better sense of safety and belonging in their jobs. Tackling discrimination and inequalities has created working environments where each individual feels safe, included, and has a better sense of reaching their full potential in the workplace. Acknowledging and cherishing diversity amongst employees allows organisations to be better placed to bolster their teams with diverse and intersectional ideas, which hugely promote and strengthen businesses and organisations.

An effective EDI strategy goes beyond legal compliance. It seeks an intersectional approach to adding value to an organisation, contributing to the well-being and equality of outcomes for all employees. This includes age, caring responsibilities, colour, culture, disability, gender identity and expression, mental health, neurodiversity, physical appearance, pregnancy and maternity/paternity, family status, and socioeconomic circumstances, amongst other personal characteristics and experiences.

Without having comprehensive EDI strategies to address the needs of their trans and non-binary employees, businesses and organisations may face a threat of legal action. Moreover, having an inclusive and welcoming approach to trans and non-binary people can be vital for ensuring employers have the best human capital selection options available during the recruitment process. As such, workplaces that incorporate cultural competency and awareness of diversity and inclusion are more inclined to build loyalty and better team productivity.

This toolkit provides employers with the tools to promote workplace equity, inclusion, and diversity (EDI). It sets out essential tips for ensuring effective strategies for businesses and organisations to help achieve this. It looks at the rationale for action and outlines steps organisations can take to implement and manage a successful EDI strategy; from recruitment, selection, retention, communication, and training, to address trans and non-binary inequities in the workplace.

# Becoming an Inclusive Employer

Diversity and inclusion often go hand in hand and where inclusion is fundamentally about individuals experience, by allowing everyone at work to contribute and feel a part of an organisation. Diversity provides a real impact and drive toward a world of work, one where all employees are empowered to thrive in the workplace.

The Trans and Non-Binary Employers Toolkit platforms the voices of a marginalised community who historically, have endured negative experiences in various aspects of life and, specifically for this resource, engaging with the recruitment process. The trans and non-binary voices in this toolkit reside in both rural and urban areas. They had a variety of similar experiences and differing individual ones. Some had transitioned in the workplace, with some undertaking gender transition well before entering the workplace, and, thus, living in stealth, with colleagues unaware they had transitioned. Therefore, this toolkit provides knowledge-rich information to provide a robust background to help employers better understand these experiences.

The employers and human resource professionals who contributed their experiences of EDI in the workplace enhance this toolkit by providing potential solutions to some of the barriers experienced by trans and non-binary people. Moreover, the LGBTQIA+ organisations and services that participated in the research provide a wealth of knowledge concerning the experiences of trans and non-binary people, with a particular focus on solutions, in terms of providing insights and training to organisations. Understanding these three different perspectives provides meaningful information that will support employers by giving them easily accessible information to understand some of the dilemmas faced by all participants in this research and provide clear and accessible material to help employers develop strategies to help them make their organisations trans and non-binary inclusive.

# Glossary of terms

We may use certain terms you are unfamiliar with throughout the toolkit. These terms may describe particular demographics of LGBTQIA+ people, social phenomena, or specific forms of inclusive policy. If you do not already know all of these terms, it is advisable that you make sure you understand them before delving into the more practice-related content of this toolkit.

\*This glossary of terms was adapted from the Transgender Network Netherland (TNN) Inclusion4All Training toolkit for transgender, intersex, and non-binary employees.

**Sexual orientation:** whether a person is sexually or romantically attracted to persons of the same gender, to persons of a different gender, or persons of any gender.

**Gender identity:** refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex that person was assigned at birth.

**Gender expression:** refers to a person's outward presentation of their gender identity (e.g. behaviour, mannerisms, dress). Gender expression may or may not be in line with a person's gender identity. Gender expression also includes a person's choice of pronouns.

**Sex characteristics:** a person's physical traits, indicative of their biological sex; they include primary sex characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, genitalia) and secondary sex characteristics (breasts, body hair, body form etc.).

**The gender binary:** refers to the 'traditional' classification of gender as consisting only of masculine and feminine, whether by a social system or cultural belief. Most cultures use a gender binary, recognising two genders (men/women). However, this is often a glaring oversimplification of both gender and biological diversity, as it often ignores the existence of intersex and non-binary people.

**Intersex:** a variation on the (reductive) norms that determine whether someone is from the male or female sex. People with an intersex status do not fit these norms, since their sex characteristics (chromosomes, genitalia, sex hormones, etc.) differ from the binary norm. However, being intersex does not necessarily mean that you do not identify as 'man' or 'woman'.

**Transgender/trans:** is an umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Cisgender:** a term referring to people whose gender identity corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Non-binary:** an umbrella term for all who do not identify as (just) female or male. Though there are many kinds of non-binary identities, some people identify as "non-binary" only.

**Transition:** the process of changing one's gender expression or sex characteristics to be in accordance with one's gender identity. This may or may not include medical interventions such as hormone replacement therapy or surgery. Each transition is different; just as people are.

**Outed:** to reveal the sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status of another person, usually without their consent.

**LGBTQIA+:** stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and others. The "plus" represents other sexual and gender identities.

**Transition leave:** a transition leave is granted to people who are absent during (parts of) their transition. Due to medical appointments, psychological support, or personal reasons, people can be temporarily absent. To make sure that they have access to time off without the unnecessary use of sick leave (since they are in fact not sick), special leave can cover their absence.

**Old name [or deadname]:** a name used by someone prior to their gender transition, for example by being given to them at birth, which is now no longer in use. The use of an old name can evoke powerful negative emotions in the person who has gone to lengths to leave it behind them. It is sometimes referred to as a 'deadname'.

**Gender dysphoria:** a term used to describe the feeling of unease or discomfort one might feel stemming from a mismatch between aspects of one's body (such as sex characteristics) and their gender identity. Gender dysphoria comes in many forms and levels of severity. Though often equated to being transgender, not all transgender people necessarily experience severe gender dysphoria.

# Methodology

To attain an understanding of the barriers and obstacles experienced by trans and non-binary individuals in the recruitment process, it was essential to explore their lived experiences to inform the toolkit. To ascertain how to navigate these barriers, it was necessary to engage with human resource professionals, employers, union leaders, Trans and LGBTQIA+ representatives, and services, along with transgender and non-binary people themselves.

The first step in this process was applying for ethics approval to conduct the research with vulnerable participants; considering that trans and non-binary individuals are perceived as a vulnerable group. Protections needed to be put in place to ensure ethics was adhered to. In the various other focus groups with employers, human resources professionals, union leaders, and Trans and LGBTQIA+ representatives, trans and non-binary people could also form part of these groups.

The Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit published by ODI in 2022 provided a template for this current publication, including the framed questions regarding the stages: advertised vacancies; completing applications; attending interviews; and starting work. Although, these questions were a helpful source, the method used during both focus groups and individual interviews in this project was co-constructed, and the researcher was led by the participants.

Five focus groups and eight individual interviews were conducted, which included a total of 38 people involved in this research, which is deemed appropriate for a small-scale piece of research such as this project. Some participants were either unavailable to attend focus groups or preferred to be interviewed separately, and a space was provided in order to attain good insights into the experiences of all 38 respondents.

A review of literature was also conducted in the sphere of workplace experiences of trans and non-binary people, which provided a data rich background. Developing a robust and safe methodology was crucial in developing a toolkit for employers, and we would like to thank all participants who contributed their time, experiences, and expertise in helping to develop this toolkit.

*\*Please see the Appendices for further information on the focus groups and individual interviews.*

# Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit aims to provide employers with an understanding of the barriers that trans and non-binary people may experience while engaging in the recruitment process, and in the workplace itself. It aims to provide users of this toolkit with the tools to navigate the process of developing inclusive and diverse strategies in employment. Trans and non-binary employees can contribute essential skills and experience when they form part of the workplace.

## **It aims to help employers:**

- understand the lived experience of trans, non-binary, and intersex people concerning the recruitment process for accessing the workplace;
- develop an awareness of equitable practices for supporting these marginalised communities;
- identify strategies to overcome existing barriers and essential insights to support the development of inclusive environments for trans and non-binary people;
- continue to promote an inclusive, supportive, and respectful work environment, where all staff feel included and motivated to bolster your service or organisation;
- access further informational resources and tools, with links to Trans and LGBTQIA+ organisations.

This toolkit has been developed to provide easy-to-follow language, free from jargon. It lays out the background evidence of trans and non-binary people accessing employment in order to provide an insight into why resources like this are needed in the first place. It breaks down the different themed experiences of individuals in these marginalised communities. It provides tips throughout the toolkit for overcoming the barriers experienced by trans and non-binary people.

The appendices contain various useful templates that have been provided to help trans and non-binary allies have better knowledge of providing support. It also provides email templates that can be adapted to suit the unique needs, and which may be helpful for both employers and trans and non-binary individuals.

# Why is the Toolkit Needed?

Avoiding the risk of legal liability is critical for employers when addressing gender identity and expression based discrimination in the workplace. Employers can benefit hugely by fostering an inclusive workplace culture, as they attract and retain the best talent and create a highly productive workplace (HRCF, 2016). Transgender and non-binary individuals are more engaged, loyal, and have a better sense of belonging, once these protections are in place (Mennicke-Seeber, 2016).

Current data highlights the many barriers trans and non-binary people face when engaging in the recruitment process. These barriers often emerge from the stigma that trans people have experienced in life (McNeill et al., 2013). A United Nations report, from 2017, stated that trans individuals endure the highest discrimination in employment (ILO, 2017). Trans people have a significantly higher risk than cisgender people of experiencing negative psychological health implications, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal intentions (Bockting et al., 2016). Trans and non-binary individuals face various barriers and significant waiting lists for accessing specific gender affirming treatments (Arcelus et al., 2016), risk of homelessness (Fraser et al., 2019), and family fragmentation (McGuire et al., 2016). These experiences can be intersectional in nature, overwhelming to experience on a daily basis, and add extra challenges when trying to access employment (Crissman et al., 2017).

Trans people's lives are constantly under scrutiny, in a world where misinformation and disinformation are rife, and contribute to negative attitudes towards trans people. Negative attitudes towards trans and non-binary people also find their way into the workplace and can lead to resistance from other members of the workplace to accept trans and non-binary people (Thoroughgood et al., 2020). A study conducted in the United States found that only 40% of employees responded favourably to having a transgender colleague in the workplace, with only half of this number reporting they would feel comfortable having a manager or supervisor that was trans (Johnson, 2011). Relationships can also be impacted when workplace changes are initiated, whereby colleagues may themselves require support during this process (Mennicke & Cutler-Seeber, 2016).

Trans women experience increased difficulties compared to trans males, including enhanced opposition to their transition (Schilt, 2010). Trans and non-binary people face continuous microaggressions, leading to absenteeism (Billing et al., 2020). McNeill and colleagues reported that 81% of trans people experience silent harassment, including being openly talked about in hushed voices, with 38% experiencing actual physical abuse (McNeill et al., 2012). Trans and non-binary workers face resistance to them using bathrooms and often experience attacks from customers (Beauregard et al., 2021). These barriers and challenges can contribute to the trans person leading two lives; living authentically outside work and as a façade within (Rudin et al., 2020).

In a survey published by the Irish Trans NGO Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) in 2017, it highlighted statistics on the experiences of trans people in the workplace. It suggested that:

- one in four trans people were unemployed;
- 51% had an annual income of less than €15,000;
- 55% had experienced or witnessed transphobic bullying in the workplace, 25% from managers, 29% from colleagues, and 32% from customers.

TENI's findings suggested that a lack of awareness and understanding of the issues trans and non-binary candidates experience during the recruitment process and retaining their jobs contributed to their negative experiences (TENI, 2017). The McKinsey Quarterly report in 2014 suggested that transgender employees make 32% less money a year than cisgender colleagues, are less supported by their managers, and less likely to be promoted in the workplace (Baboolall et al., 2014). These findings highlight the need for transgender awareness training to ensure employers have cultural competency when hiring and retaining trans and non-binary people. While many services contain equality at the foundation of their services, equity needs to be understood, given the many obstacles that trans and non-binary people experience in the workplace (Davis, 2022). The concept of equity refers to treating persons according to their unique needs. An equitable environment is vital for transgender individuals to thrive in the workplace.

Considering that trans people experience unique challenges in the workplace, focusing on overcoming these challenges can provide a clearer picture on how to create a more safe and welcoming workplace, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing productivity (Ladwig, 2021). Beauregard and colleagues (2021) reported that, whilst trans people explore company websites to see how other trans people experienced gender transition in the workplace, only 17% of FTSE 100 company websites refer to trans people. As such, companies potentially miss out on trans talent.

Employers can facilitate an inclusive environment for their trans and non-binary employees by using and promoting gender affirming language in trans inclusive policies and procedures (Davis et al., 2022). Gender transition policies are often at the forefront of what is required to develop that inclusive and diverse culture. Bozani and colleagues suggest that visible trans-inclusive policies reassure trans people, increase their psychological wellbeing, and create a space that is inclusive and worthy of their talents. They suggest that increasing visibility and inclusion can lead to improved wellbeing and, therefore, improved productivity and a decrease in absenteeism and litigation (Bozani et al., 2020). Senior management and leaders play a pivotal role in achieving such inclusive workplace environments and thus it is crucial that they have a 'walk the walk' approach (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019). Whilst much of the current research focuses on some of the actions that need to be taken, underlying all these actions requires a commitment to integrated training programmes (Human Rights Campaign, 2016).

# Employment Equality Acts

The Gender Recognition Act 2015<sup>1</sup> provides a process for people to change their legal gender identity and attain full legal recognition, with the legal gender change reflected in their new birth certificate. However, there are still some vital gaps in this legislation, concerning children under 16, and non-binary identities that need urgent attention, especially considering the exponential rise in people identifying in non-binary identities who are accessing third-level institutions and employment.

The Employment Equality Act of 1998-2015<sup>2</sup> prohibits discrimination in the recruitment process and in the workplace on the grounds of:

- Gender
- Marital status;
- Family status;
- Age;
- Disability;
- Sexual orientation;
- Religion;
- Race;
- Traveller ethnicity.

Whilst gender-identity is not specifically included in the nine grounds, advocacy groups continuously voice concerns about this omission. In fact, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC, 2023) argued recently that the list of discriminatory grounds in the equality act should be broadened, and further, that the Equality Act should explicitly prohibit discrimination against transgender, non-binary, and intersex people. Considering that GRL legislation does not recognise non-binary individuals, this omission provides further challenges to non-binary people and employers alike. As stated by IHREC ‘The position is less clear regarding non-binary or gender fluid people, and the legal position of intersex people has not been clarified’. IHREC recommends that the gender ground in the Equality Act be amended to explicitly include reference to, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, but that the gender ground remain intact.

The Employment Equality Acts, of 1998-2016<sup>3</sup> and the Equal Status Act 2000-2016<sup>4</sup> provide protections against discrimination of people in the provision of, employment, collective agreements, vocational training, advertising, and goods and services. Whilst the EEA does not explicitly include transgender, non-binary, and intersex people, they were used in a landmark case taken in 2011 by an Irish transgender woman (TENI, 2017). Under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, public bodies have a statutory duty to protect all employees and users from all forms of discrimination and to promote equality (IHREC, 2023).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2015/en.act.2015.0025.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/1998/en.act.1998.0021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/1998/en.act.1998.0021.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2000/en.act.2000.0008.pdf>

# What are Reasonable Accommodations?

Under the Employment Equality Act, employers are obliged to ensure reasonable accommodations are available for people with disabilities. These accommodations shift responsibility to employers, who must take ‘appropriate measures’ to provide a workplace that assists employees regardless of disability, language, marital status, etc. Some of these include providing assistive technologies, appropriate furniture, and suitable workplaces regarding lighting or noise levels or bad smells. It may include differing work tasks or flexibility around start and finish times. Companies may also choose to liaise with organisations that specialise in supporting people with disabilities to enter employment. Whilst employers may claim that providing reasonable accommodation may put them under a disproportionate burden, the employer can explore the option of attaining public grants, which could facilitate them in providing flexible work arrangements (IHREC, 2016). The Congress of Trade Unions and IBEC in partnership with Employers for Change, published a Reasonable Accommodation Passport in 2019<sup>5</sup>. This passport provides essential information to employees, employers and trade unions in recognising the importance of providing reasonable accommodation to people with disabilities, substantial disadvantage due to an impairment or medical condition.

For trans, non-binary, and/or intersex people, reasonable accommodations may include:

- changing the persons social name and pronoun;
- creating gender inclusive bathrooms;
- having gender neutral uniforms options available;
- allowing time off for healthcare appointments, if required;
- offering work from home or hybrid options.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ibec.ie/-/media/documents/influencing-for-business/diversity-and-inclusion/reasonable-accommodation-passport-2022\\_v4.pdf](https://www.ibec.ie/-/media/documents/influencing-for-business/diversity-and-inclusion/reasonable-accommodation-passport-2022_v4.pdf)

# Trans and Non-binary Recruitment and Employment Barriers

Some of the barriers experienced by trans and non-binary people can be unique to this community. Whilst some of these barriers have been or will be mentioned throughout this toolkit, for ease of understanding, some of the barriers are included here:

- language in job advertisements are often binary gender focussed and not inclusive;
- application forms not inclusive of all gender identities;
- CV may include information pertaining to a previous gender role and can 'out' the candidate against their wishes;
- presenting for a job interview in appropriate interview clothes may cause extra stress, due to ill-fitting clothes (especially in early stages of gender transition);
- interview panellists misgendering the candidate based on their assumptions;
- interview panellists asking inappropriate questions to the candidate;
- lack of gender neutral spaces (bathrooms, changing rooms) in the workplace;
- constant transphobic content in workplace discussion ;
- being excluded from work events due to trans or non-binary identity;
- being overlooked for promotion opportunities in the workplace;
- lack of acceptance by work colleagues due to trans or non-binary identity.

The barriers are just a sample of what trans and non-binary people may experience. Underlying these barriers can be the psychological impact of gender transition, which may include; homelessness; family fragmentation; ambiguous loss; ongoing harassment in daily life, and, barriers to accessing gender affirming healthcare.

# Learning from Experiences

This section covers the trans and non-binary individuals' experience of the recruitment process and employment retention. It also includes the experiences of employers, human resource workers, and professionals who work to support trans, non-binary, and intersex people. Therefore, this section will highlight the recruitment and retention process from different perspectives, with the aim of providing lived and professional experiences of recruitment.

This section of the toolkit highlights the themes that emerged in the research concerning the journey of the recruitment process from the differing perspectives of participants. The objective is to provide information sequentially to facilitate reading. The section also includes key tips at the end of each section.

Collecting data from the focus groups and individual interviews was loosely framed around five questions, but mainly it was a co-constructed conversation, and participants' comments led the researcher.

# Trans and non-binary experiences



*Like one of the misconceptions I heard all the time from employers was, oh, we'll need to come up with like special kind of sick leave or absent leave for trans people. Like trans people need loads of time off because of all the surgeries and health care stuff they need to do. Like none of them ever had to come up with a new type of sick leave or surgical leave or medical leave for anyone. Nobody needed any extra leave. So I think that was one of those like really insidious kind of myths you know, it was just like this terrible pervasive kind of lie that was out there that really needs to be kind of unpacked and unpicked.*



When, in reality, from a trans person's perspective and the impact that the perception of fear can have when they are either contemplating gender transition while applying for a job or during their current employment:



*People were forward facing with customers, and one person was told you can't transition in public like that. So there was a lot of those types of stories happening. So there was legitimate concern in terms of how trans people would be, depending on what stage they were at. That kind of narrative still remains with trans people who are contemplating transitioning.*



The comment above highlights the perspective of a trans person who speaks to other trans people and understands that the environment needs to be feared. In terms of the current climate regarding the perception of trans people, which has been rife in the media and on social media platforms, it sends further shock waves into already frightened individuals who are even fearful of a recruitment process when seeking employment.

The comment below also highlights the fear that exists. Similarly, these fears emanate from their previous experiences of identifying as trans earlier in their lives and feeling that they had to constantly check that they were 'passing' as a cisgender woman in order to not be seen differently by society. While this lady felt comfortable within herself, she portrays the fear of being seen differently by others. It is a societal problem and not a problem with trans people:



*So checking myself is like, it's hard for people to, like, come forward. I think it's really difficult for trans people to have that attention or that spotlight on themselves, to actually be advocates or like to speak up for what they need or speak up for what they want.*





*Or even to have the confidence to feel worthy enough of walking into an interview, and it's all just because of what the journey is like. It's a painful process, you know, from a societal point it is a difficult transition. It's difficult to, you know, adjust socially, it's difficult to adjust with your family, it's difficult to adjust medically, psychologically, physically into this new life. It's like you are trying to match the outsides to your inside to your soul, but just the reality, the sheer physical, brutal reality of the transition.*

*It can be daunting, and I remember like early days when I first came into the office, you know, like, I was putting this crazy makeup on all the time and trying, like feeling so uncomfortable, and always checking myself and like, making myself small... I always just walked around in headphones because I was I just wanted to like have a wall between me and the world around me.*



These comments by trans participants showcase the internalised chronic anxiety endured by trans and non-binary individuals preparing themselves for entering a recruitment process. While the chronic nature of these experiences can create self-debilitating barriers, a supportive network can provide the key to unlocking confidence and great workplace potential.

The following section highlights some of the barriers that trans and non-binary people erect themselves, based on previous negative experiences, by perceiving a situation as negative and, consequently, believing that they will face rejection when engaging in the recruitment process.

# Expecting rejection when applying for employment

The main objective for employers when embarking on the recruitment process is to ensure that the person can do the job. From the perspective of the trans person, this, however, can be somewhat overwhelming, given what they understand trans people are perceived as by some. This comment from an employer sets the scene for this section of the research:



*It doesn't matter whether they're trans or non-binary or intersex, it doesn't matter whether they're purple with pink spots, you're hiring them to do the job. Can they do the job? Are they gonna work with your colleagues? Is everyone gonna mesh together? Is everyone gonna work? And you know, of course, putting the support in as I would do for any member of the team, any employee is essential. But at the end of the day, they are a person, so it wouldn't certainly keep me up at night going, oh my god, they're trans. I'm not being facetious, but it shouldn't make a difference.*



While the main objective is the candidate's suitability for the job, it may be helpful to employers to have an understanding as to what barriers are experienced, to enable employers to facilitate their needs and attain the best skillset available to their business. The comments below platform their experiences of the recruitment process and the means that employers can utilise in order to overcome those obstacles:



*Most people find interviews nerve racking, typically, on top of that for trans and non-binary people doing interviews, in addition to worrying about their performance, or like they might be slightly insecure about their work or education history, but then also just in person presentation aspect of things and having to present not just in general, but then maybe more formal attire for that (interview).*

*I've supported one or two people recently, where for their interviews have gone back to being in person (not virtual). But they were online and I think that was much easier for the person, because you could just see this much of them and they felt like they could present themselves the way they wanted, but going into an actual premises in more formal attire, it was kind of I guess, maybe they didn't have the clothes in their wardrobes already.*

*Will the panellists react in a certain way when I come in? I haven't had an opportunity to share that. Is it weird if I kind of ring beforehand and I shared that about myself? You know so I don't know would that be maybe another cause for person to kind of pull back and say actually I don't know, do I wanna put myself through that?*





*I think it's the fear of being judged is really the issue. Particularly if somebody has a challenge in terms of their appearance and that kind of thing, and that they have a fear of, you know, being just being judged negatively, of people assuming stereotypes. And I think that brings a huge amount of anxiety with it.*



The comment below highlights the associated anxiety that trans and non-binary individuals endure when applying for work, considering the CV that the recruitment team has received and some of the mismatches that may cause some confusion. In some instances, the candidate may not have changed their name legally as yet, and addressing these situations sensitively does require that the recruitment team receives related trans training in advance. In addition, it is important to note that a CV is not a legal document, thus using their identified name in their CV is not a crime:



*I think applying for a job is stressful for anybody, but it becomes more stressful if you've got this additional layer of stress around perhaps your appearance or your presentation and feeling that they that may cause questions or comment. Your stress around the interview process itself, in terms of what questions you might be asked and how you might have to answer them. Like you might have to talk about, you know, your cv may say that you went to a school that everyone knows as an all-girls school and yet you're here interviewing as a man, and you worried that that may come up. So that's in the back of your mind as how you're going to handle that question.*

*I think I mean fundamentally one of the, the barriers is that unfortunately, trans people are not treated as well as they should be by society as a whole. So I think as a trans person, my understanding is your expectation is going to be lower than, you know, someone in mainstream society because you expect kind of negative outcomes, because unfortunately that is the reality for a lot of trans people.*



The comments above highlight the pressure that trans people may experience regarding presenting in appropriate interview attire, especially if the person is in the early process of gender transition and only has limited clothes available to them and possibly limited funds to buy appropriate interview attire. Choosing appropriate interview attire may contribute to extra anxiety for trans women, and they may not feel confident dressing in female clothing, traveling on public transport to the interview, and facing a surprised reaction from the interview panel when they present for the interview, all contribute to increased anxiety. The comment below alludes to a potential solution to this issue, given that the interview panel sets the tone by introducing the panel and highlighting the inclusive culture of the organisation. These actions can go a long way to alleviate some of the anxiety experienced and facilitate an authentic and positive interview:



*So that moment of taking the time to introduce people, introduce programs, set the tone and the scene about inclusion at that moment. I think there's that element of a fear of judgment from others, particularly where gender expression may not match with stereotypical norms and then people feeling quite on edge. That comes down to the training of the panellists, knowing what you're allowed ask, what you're not allowed to, what you need to discount or ignore, even if a candidate discloses, you know, all of those little things.*

*I've never actually needed to come out in a job (as trans), I haven't had that experience. My documents are changed and actually you're just handing your documents. But then in the back of my mind is if I do go for surgery in the future, how do I go about telling. That adds an extra barrier. So that's at the back of your mind even though you're at a job.*



The comment directly above shines a spotlight on the experience of trans people in stealth. While living in their authentic gender in the workplace, underlying concerns are also present. Additionally, trans people are becoming more resilient, they talk to others, get tips for attending interviews, deal with some of the various societal stressors, and learn to avoid or cope with them. The comments below allude to the multiple ways that trans people and employers can facilitate the process of the early stages of recruitment:



*I don't have to tell you my life story, because people respond in different ways and it's also not your obligation to have to explain yourself. The point of this legislation (Gender Recognition Legislation) is that you're not guilty of anything and you don't have to explain yourself to nobody, you have the same rights as everyone else.*



The comment above suggests a means of entering into the interview process as a trans person in terms of approaching it confidently. It also alludes to the nature of not having to explain the person's personal background. Historically, and often due to the stigma that exists towards trans people, the trans person may feel the need to explain themselves to all and sundry.

Additionally, in the comment above, the participant mentions Gender Recognition Legislation in Ireland and how it provides legal protections for trans people. However, as the statement from a stakeholder suggests below, there should not be pressure applied to the person to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate in advance. The person may be at an exploration stage of their gender identity and may need more time to contemplate and to consolidate their authentic self and their legal documentation. Therefore, the employer should allow that space, use the name and pronoun that the person prefers to be known as, and interview them for their skills.

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*Legal transition, it's a hugely meaningful step and people have to be ready for it. And you know, often some of the conversations I have is like, you know, what opportunities are arrived to if you're not ready for legal transition, what are their opportunities or possibilities are there to navigate entering the workspace without feeling the need to do something in a performative way for somebody else rather than it being part of a meaningful step and that can be tricky, because bureaucracy, of course. But I think, again, for employers to just be cognisant that it's not simply a piece of paperwork, that there is a lot of meaning behind the legal transition and that it should be seen as equal to any other stage of transition.*

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The comment below, on the other hand, showcases a situation where the trans person feels confident to allude to their skills. Those skills may have been within the trans community in many different aspects, but due to highlighting these skills, they may have outed themselves as a trans or non-binary individual. As a result, the rest of the interview is dominated by their volunteer background with a trans organisation; if it is not relevant to the position on offer, perhaps the interview panel might take the opportunity to appreciate the skills the person has attained and move on to focus on the other relevant skills for the position in question:

“

*I think for some people, who were gone through recruitment processes, like it felt empowering to be able to say I'm trans or it could be really relevant. Because, maybe you've done a lot of work with the community or in a community organisation and so you would need to talk about that or say, that I was on a board, I was part of a group, or facilitated this peer support group and I did this project and it could be really, really relevant and good to show your skills. But if you bring it up, are you going to go down this kind of like different track of the interview when, when you should be talking about your skills and what you did in the group or how you contributed. So there's that thing about disclosure, that anxiety around that as well and decisions around whether you do that or not. So I think understanding as a trans person, there is a lot more to think about and a lot more anxiety there than you might have as a cis gender person going to an interview.*

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The final comment in this section focuses on the experiences of a trans person coming out to colleagues and who had a positive and supportive reaction. Their comment provides some insights and suggestions:

“

*So when I came out in my last place, I sent an email, I spoke to HR, I spoke to my own manager and because it was small enough place, the CEO as well. And I drafted an email and sent it around to everybody. And in the email I included link to TENI and some other information. I'm not giving you a huge pile of info. But here's somewhere you can look, and a couple of people came back to me and I had a fantastic response, everyone responding, wishing me luck, congratulating me, which was great. And a couple of people came out and said thank you for sharing those links. So for some people there was extra reading I can do here to make sure I do understand this properly, but it's not being forced on me. The information you give them needs to be something that's easy to digest as part of their working day. They then have the tools that they needed. And I think that's kind of for smaller organisations, I think that's really important, that people don't feel, I suppose, overwhelmed with information, but also do know where to go if they want it.*

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This section focused on some of the challenges and potential solutions pertinent to the trans person when they contemplate joining a company. It highlights many different aspects that you may not have realised. This section was provided to ensure that you have a real insight into some of the adverse background situations that are experienced and hopefully provide some food for thought. The tips in this section are based on the aspects discussed here and will help you develop strategies to address some of the challenges contained within.

## **Tips and Takeaways**

- **Provide unconscious bias and other relevant trans training for management and staff;**
- **Develop trans-inclusive anti-bullying policies to ensure protection for all staff, including protections for customer front-facing staff, need to be robust and visible;**
- **Offer a hybrid, or a work at home option to potential, or existing trans and non-binary employees experiencing excessive anxiety;**
- **Offer the candidate an option to connect in advance of the interview in order to avail of reasonable accommodations;**
- **Address sensitively if it is evident that a disconnect exists between the person's CV in terms of previous gendered school or employment roles, as the person may have previously gender transitioned;**
- **Company leaders can play an essential role in ensuring the trans person feels welcome in the organisation;**
- **Be mindful not to push the trans person to avail of legal gender change, as they may not be ready to do so yet;**
- **Be mindful that some trans and non-binary may not yet have legally changed documentation. Their chosen name and pronoun can be organised between HR, the line manager, and the trans person. If the trans person does not want to reveal these details to other staff members, they should not be communicated to others;**
- **Understand that trans, non-binary, and intersex may be navigating many obstacles while they attend the interview and may appear anxious. Please be kind and supportive.**

# From an organisation perspective

The previous section focused specifically on the trans and non-binary individuals' experience of the recruitment process to provide context. This section will now focus on the experiences of trans and non-binary people, human resource professionals, employers, LGBTQIA+ workers, and services. Primarily, in this section, the superordinate theme that emerged was 'Culture'. Various subordinate themes flowed from the central theme, including: policy; visibility; gender inclusive environment; leadership; reasonable accommodations; tokenistic or meaningful; interview process; confidentiality; negative narrative and resistance, and belonging. The need for relevant training was expressed robustly throughout each theme and, whilst ensuring that organisations had a visible and meaningful culture played a central role, training was essential for achieving this goal.

The structure of this section platforms the themes which contain a mixture of challenges that were experienced by trans and non-binary individuals, with potential solutions for overcoming these challenges. Similar to the previous section the comments are summarised and contained in an easy-to-follow section labelled 'tips and takeaways'.

# Culture

The first comment in this section sets the scene, alluding to organisations needing to remove hurdles that bar trans and non-binary individuals from entering the recruitment process. From the start, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be front and centre and clearly visible in order to show an organisation is welcoming and inclusive for trans and non-binary people to apply:

*“ That without the culture and the leadership having it right from the beginning, so my view would be that in order to not have those hurdles (to trans people applying for the jobs). ”*

Creating a culture that has previously been seen as non-inclusive or historically conservative may be challenging, as stated by the comment and example below:

*“ So I think that’s about the culture in an organisation and it’s can be very difficult to change a culture. I mean when I think about [organisation] for example, if you want to take a real challenge, but like they have a very, I would say, quite conservative culture, quite old fashioned. Of course, there are individual [branches] and there are individual [representatives] who are great. But I think as an organisation, as an institution, there’s a lot of work that needs to be done and the work is around change in that culture. ”*

The benefits can be enormous for organisations when a company has a diverse, equal, inclusive, and holistic culture. EDI is at the heart of developing inclusive cultures. This comment speaks to the development of this particular toolkit for employers because it has the potential to guide and provide roadmaps to create inclusive cultures that utilise meaningful policies:

*“ I think sometimes when we’re talking about EDI, and we’re talking particularly around this toolkit for transgender people, that has to happen as well in a context. And sometimes culture change needs to be broader than just this particular issue. So I think if you’re looking at somewhere where those remarks (negative comments about trans people) are made, what else is happening in that organisation, What kind of culture is being fostered there, What examples are being set by leadership in that organisation. ”*

The majority of comments consistently suggested that it was of ultimate importance that culture should be front and centre to achieve a truly inclusive organisation:

*“ That from day one, people can be themselves at work without needing to explain, needing to tell people who they are, you know. There should be from day one, a cultural norm in an organisation that really practices it’s inclusion. ”*

Similarly, in terms of the drivers of EDI in the workplace, the comment below highlights the importance of good leadership. Throughout the focus groups and individual interviews, the participants spoke robustly and clearly that leaders had a very important contribution in creating, maintaining, and sustaining EDI at the heart of their organisation or business:

*I do think that a starting point in that is really making sure that the leadership of the organisation are aligned to that. That value base in the first place. I'd almost say that you know whether it's informal whether it's conversational or 'whatever, I'd want to know that the leadership or the owners of those businesses are 'absolutely aligned to those value principles and then if they are, I genuinely think that the output of that is that these things flow from it.*

Similarly, the comment below, concerning the meaningful interview process, highlights creating visibility and inclusivity within the recruitment process by the interview panel stating their pronouns at the start of each interview. This action would assure the trans person that the interview space is a welcoming environment for trans people:

*If there are even, let's say, there's five people on the interview panel and three of them decided to share their pronouns. If I'm a trans person and I'm interviewing for this company, I already know there's a culture there of acceptance and that people care about this topic even if it's the bare minimum.*

Of course, most, if not all, of these changes may only be attainable with proper training. There is a need for consistency in communicating that your organisation is visibly meaningful, inclusive, and welcoming of applications from from trans and non-binary people into their organisations or businesses:

*It's also mentioned in the training (culture). So it's like consistent throughout the communication and people get the message as they're coming into the organisation. It's not just a tagline on an advertisement, it's actually culturally included in the organisation. That's what needs to happen. It's consistent across all organisations. Not the tick box exercise where they're 'an equal opportunities employer'.*

Tick box exercises were mentioned consistently throughout the data collection process, and a section later will focus on tokenistic behaviour. It was also noted, especially by the trans people in the process, that those tick box exercises can be initially helpful and can be built upon to become more meaningfully inclusive for all people. The following section flows from the superordinate theme of culture, where developing and having a good EDI policy is an essential building block of a culturally competent organisation.

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- Provide trans training for management, initially, and then for staff, relevant to their position in the organisation;
- Understand the importance of embedding a living policy that includes the needs of trans and non-binary individuals in the organisation;
- Contact relevant organisations or services which can help you develop or review the policy to be trans and non-binary inclusive;
- Be mindful of tokenistic gestures. While they might be done to avoid legal challenges, it would be hugely beneficial for the trans person and the organisation if these gestures were meaningful and sustainable;
- It is hugely beneficial for leaders in organisations to understand the experiences of trans and non-binary people and to be driven to ensure that the inclusive culture of the organisation is meaningful and authentic.

# Policy

This section provides insight into how businesses or services can develop an inclusive culture to include all potential trans and non-binary employees. Policy flows directly from the central theme of culture, and it allows companies and services to be inclusive and protect themselves against litigation in terms of actions taken against them by individuals who feel aggrieved. The following comments will speak to actions made to develop an inclusive gender transition in the workplace policy.

The comment below speaks to the importance of having the policy visible to all, whereby people viewing the companies or services websites can clearly see that they are inclusive and, specifically regarding recruitment, are flexible to meet the diverse needs of candidates. It is also important to note that bullying and harassment policies are evident, and candidates are reassured that if they succeed in the recruitment process, they will have protections in their employment:



*I think people will be able to see that, and it means that you're taking that stand, to stand with the community and that will ease any kind of issues that you might have, that if that culture is or isn't there. And that'll ideally be aligned with the policies that will be in place that you'll have your EAP (Employee Assistance Programmes) programmes put in place, but you'll also have your bullying and harassment policies.*



The above comment is elaborated further in the comment below and further highlights the importance of policies:



*So, we hope the work will be done ahead of time and that is, that you know what you're going to do with your record keeping, your title protection, you know the kind of confidentiality pieces for HR. Around all of that, that you have a policy for dress code, the badges that are in place, the HR system, that you'll have trans awareness training done, that you'll have bullying and harassment policies in place so that your organisation should be prepared.*

*It's the only way to be grounded in good policy, but not overly restrictive policy. I think the best form of policy or procedure is the warning that is the greatest enabler to the individual in front of you. I think a lot of HR policy in my experience is written with a 'cover your ass mindset' to keep on the side of the law, as opposed to enable someone and I think it's that level of value.*



Tokenistic exercises are not intended to be harmful, but they must also be more meaningful. Current staff and potential employees will be able to see through whether policies are meaningful or tokenistic and base their decision on whether to apply on that basis. Therefore, the comment below speaks to the salience of having a meaningful living policy:



*Embedding that knowledge and embedding whatever policy you have and making sure that it's a living document within an organisation. And then I suppose the other thing is, if someone is joining, it's an opportunity for their line manager or their direct report to show leadership, and so you know, someone may join and them being trans is like no issue, like it doesn't matter, it's irrelevant. They are there to do their job really.*



Throughout the data collection process, participants emphasised the need for training. If a policy exists, staff must know why, what actions they should take or avoid to ensure respect, and the consequences that may ensue. As the comment below suggests, smaller businesses may have increased challenges to achieving this, given their high staff turnover:



*I believe the fix is to have really good policy, to have that policy embedded in a living way within an organisation. And that means education and training on that policy and making sure that people understand that it's there and it's supportive. But very hard to do that if you've got someone with high turnover where there's no continuity, there's a lack of, institutional knowledge and it's very difficult to kind of embed that somewhere.*



The critical point to be made here regarding challenges to small organisations that experience high staff turnover, is that there is help available to develop and review policies (information in resource section), these organisations may be trans specific or LGBTQIA+, they can also provide training. This point is made here by a spokesperson for one of these organisations:



*So developing policy, writing policy, policy review, with different organisations who might need a bit of a hand with that. We've (prominent LGBTQIA+ organisation) gotten this funding to do a project on encouraging women and trans people and non-binary folk into the workplace and how we can work on making that a less challenging thing for them and kind of to like develop champions within workplaces and all that kind of stuff. So it's kind of deepening the work that we do with workplaces. So it's pretty exciting.*



Earlier in this section, one of the comments spoke to embedding a living policy that will allow some scope to ensure that there is some flexibility within the policy, as alluded to here by a service provider:



*I think easily accessible resources for every organisation, to highlight that individual approach to transitioning in the workplace. That plan is put in place because I think having all the policies in place is so important, but also that you're able to be flexible within that and I think that you as an organisation can give all the supports you like, but actually there are layers to it, where a person may need support...and that conversation with the person themselves that can be offered or explored.*



Participants mentioned layering or sequencing on various occasions during the data collection phase, which concerned developing trans-inclusive policies and the need to understand that trans people, like most people, have individual and intersectional needs. Some policies are gendered in a binary manner and not inclusive of people who identify outside of the binary, as mentioned earlier in this section. Ensuring customer-facing employees that there are protections in policies is vital for the trans person to know.

The comments below highlight some of the items and actions that should be embedded in your policy to ensure that all gender identities are included:



*I think one of the challenges that we have, I think even from the practicalities of policies and things like that, that our binary policies are female and male oriented and all the rest of which I think, I'd love to see organisations kind of scrubbing their policies and trying to resolve any of those challenges in relation to that.*

*I think the policy is key, particularly if you're in a customer facing world and that again you're telling them that there's an understanding of what's going on and what supports are there.*

*So, the rules relations code of conduct relates to your Christmas party. It relates to those things as well, you know. So it needs to fit into that whole code of conduct, narrative as well as everything else you know.*

*So it's like consistent throughout the policy and people get the message as they're coming into the organisation. That is a part of the culture. Like it's not just a tagline on an advertisement, it's actually culturally included in the organisation. That's what needs to happen. It's consistent across all organisations. Not the tick box exercise.*

*Maybe you're an organisation that's a little bit more progressive. Maybe you have gender neutral facilities that actually could offer people a more comfortable work environment and like you might feel much more hopeful going to work in that office. So I think be as explicit as possible around what's on offer.*





*So we've made a full section on a statement of our belief in diversity, but we've also published our policies that we have internally. Externally, would be the EDI policy, reasonable accommodation policy and recruitment policy. So before you enter the company, if you're really interested to see what our ethos is, if you can, without relying on knowing somebody in the company, which I think historically that, might have been the way.*



This section highlights the importance of embedding living policies within organisations. While the challenges to small organisations and companies are valid and emphasised later in this document, some of the tips included may help attain a better understanding of addressing these challenges.

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- Promote your positive trans and non-binary inclusive culture;
- Ensure that your policies include inclusive bathrooms, restrooms, changing facilities, and dress code for trans and non-binary people to feel included in your organisation;
- It is hugely beneficial that your organisation has a Transition in the Workplace policy or that Transition in the Workplace is included in your policies;
- Ensure that your policies are inclusive of all gender identities;
- Consider what members of your team would benefit from transgender training and link with trans or LGBTQIA+ organisations regarding accessing training;
- Smaller organisations can include trans-related content in their induction training for new staff;
- Ensure there is zero tolerance for transphobic bullying in your workplace;
- Ensure that customer-facing trans and non-binary individuals have maximum protections within the policies;
- Be explicit with your policies, including showcasing your reasonable accommodation and recruitment policies.

The following section focuses on how an organisation can be more visible as an inclusive employer of trans and non-binary individuals.

# Visibility

Although the previous section has platformed the importance of embedding a living policy for ensuring that trans and non-binary people are included and feel welcome in your organisation, this section will highlight the importance of promoting your inclusive policies and culture by being visible, as alluded to below:



*Visibility, that's it, visibility is key. Like you need to be visible as an inclusive employer if you want to get more diverse people applying.*



One of the stakeholder participants made an interesting point about being visibly meaningful in the organisation's culture by accessing proper knowledge-based training and facilitating staff members to volunteer within the LGBTQIA+ community. There is also the potential to provide funding to community organisations or to fund specific workshops:



*Doing those like meaningful things with the community, whether that's like funding them or giving people time paid time to go and volunteer with an organisation, kind of giving people options to work with the community makes it very meaningful for people. And again, who do you bring in as an outside speaker, who do you have in talking to your employees? Are they role models in your organisation?*



It flows directly from the policy documents, ensuring all forms are inclusive and portray a welcoming environment. While inclusive policies exist in your organisation, it is crucial that they are front and centre on your website and any communications that go out from your company. The following comments provide further insights concerning the importance of including specific EDI information within your policy:



*Things, like just simple things on forms like your gender having like a box for non-binary or other or whatever really just helps with that as well. It's all those kind of like little things that just help the trans candidates perceive things in a in a less anxious way. That kind of lowers, de-escalates things and makes things seem like a bit simpler as a process to go through. But a lot of that you can't get there without education, like you have to (have training). These inclusive actions can provide that feeling of safety from trans candidates who maybe feeling a little extra overwhelmed due to expectations of rejection.*

*In the application process I think there can also be barriers or maybe presumed barriers where employers or workplaces advertising any inclusion policies that they have or they're not advertising maybe like what their workplace is like, what if it's inclusive workplace, you know, if they are not advertising to prospective candidates that they have inclusion policies or they have universal access bathrooms or they have, you know, good kind of culture around gender expression, whatever it might be.*



A simple action to ensure a visible welcoming and inclusive interview space is alluded to in this comment:



*And just an idea what we have in our company, is that pronouns can be on your internet profile, because it might be tiring if you have to keep explaining to people like my pronouns are this and every single conversation might get a bit tiring. So just be able to have something public where if we always can see when the new started comes up, their profile is the most viewed profile in the company. So in a way, people are self-educating.*



This comment specifies the need to visibly promote your pronoun in your online status, whether at the end of your email signature or on online forums, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. You don't need to be trans to action this, and it shows the trans person that you know the importance of pronouns to trans people and can mean a lot in terms of a welcoming environment.

Promoting the organisation's culture is vital, and these comments below state why that may be:



*So, I think sometimes employers miss a trick by not actually promoting some of the stuff that they have, those great policies that they have online, and I think that can be a real missed opportunity. I would always encourage employers to work with the community but work in a meaningful way. I've seen that work really well, it's been in places like [company] who held the, 'telling my story', trans leadership weekend.*

*I think it will be very easy for organisations, when they're doing their recruitment advertising, a lot of companies have campaigns and things like that, as they would show a variety of employees, be they people of colour or be they in wheelchairs. Great to see some trans faces there so that the message is getting out there straight away.*



Another valid point made throughout the data collection process was decoupling big tech organisations with a visibly inclusive culture to smaller organisations with a significant staff turnover and limited capacity in order to promote inclusiveness. The comments below suggest some options for addressing this challenge:



*So I do think you know, even in cafes if they (candidate) do a visit to the cafe and there's a flag or little symbol available, suggestive of inclusivity. I do think it has huge meaning for taking those next steps and feeling confident then in moving towards an application or a CV stage.*





*But I think for smaller jobs, like as in a smaller company, it's hard to find that stuff online. I don't know that people that are going to apply for a job if they can't find anything online, but it's probably an enhancement or an added benefit. Simply find something online that it's always there. It's either policies in place or some kind of demonstration.*



In this section, we showcased some benefits of having your company's inclusive policies visible and available to candidates when they explore which organisation they would like to work with. Additionally, it shows the difficulties that some of the smaller organisations may experience, given the possible high staff turnover in your company. Some of the tips below may be useful to provide support in these endeavours.

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- It is important that your policy is a living and visible document;
- Offer paid leave time for staff to volunteer in their community organisation, as a means for companies to show their commitment and meaningful investment in the community;
- Provide funding to a Trans or an LGBTQIA+ organisation;
- It is important that all documentation and language used in communications be inclusive of all gender identities;
- Promote your pronoun in your email, Zoom or Microsoft Teams account, or other to ensure you enhance your support for trans people;
- Smaller companies and businesses can visibly portray your inclusiveness of trans people. This may be online in terms of pronouns in your email or elsewhere. It may be as simple as having a rainbow flag in your shop or service;
- Promote that your organisation has undertaken various levels of trans training.

# Gender Inclusive Environment

It is important to ensure a meaningful living policy and diverse and inclusive culture is visible in the organisation, one that starts in the environment in which employees exist. Trans people's bathroom arrangements are often spoken about in a derogatory fashion, as if trans people were a threat in this environment. Trans people, just like everyone else, need to use bathroom facilities. These comments below from a stakeholder speak of their frustration that gender-inclusive bathrooms are still being considered:



*Oh, isn't it so ridiculous. Like people just want to be able to pee. Like, why is it such a big issue? I suppose again, I'm thinking about non binary people really, in that having some gender neutral facilities was really helpful for non-binary people. But also for lots of other people, if it's a single stall bathroom, everyone can use that, that's grand, it doesn't matter.*

*Maybe you have gender neutral facilities and things that actually could offer people a more comfortable work environment and like you might feel like actually, I feel much more hopeful going to work in that office.*

*But if there's kind of like multiple cubicles within a bathroom or, you know, maybe some people might need a bit of extra privacy or it might take them a little more time to go to (toilet) or whatever. And so a single, or gender neutral facility can really help with that as well as helping non binary people too.*

*If you have got someone joining who's non binary, where do they have facilities, if there's changing facilities, or if you've like showers or whatever, you're big organisation might have those and then what does that look like for somebody?*

*It's relatively easy to create a HR policy and it's relatively difficult to put in place a gender-neutral bathroom, but materially that is the thing that people need a lot of the time.*



Similarly, for the recruitment process, the comment below suggests that all communications, whether in hard copy or online should use inclusive language throughout:



*Because it's more than our own documentation or assessment forms and things like that. It's also an opportunity to demonstrate inclusivity and awareness. So having additional questions on the job application...like any of those questions for more flexible options for someone.*

*I think where options are available that highlight an inclusive approach by a company can be very helpful in that stage, but also having support services around you and support people around you to kind of have some of these really important conversations.*



Using and communicating inclusive language is vital for having a meaningful, diverse, and gender-inclusive culture. These comments speak to the importance of ensuring that the language used in broadcasts and the workplace setting is consistently inclusive of trans people.



*So simple things again, like having pronouns in your email signature if you're a recruiter or sending out that email about the interview or whatever. So the person sees that and goes, okay, I can relax a little bit because this person understands pronouns.*

*Other simple things like making sure that if you have any forms or anything, that they're not like just male and female that you think about, if you need to ask someone's gender, I don't know why, but if you need to, that you're not just asking for a male and female. And then simple things as well, like if you're a recruiter and you're sending an email, you should have your pronouns in your email signature because that just sends a really simple signal to trans people and to their allies and friends and family that you at least understand the importance of pronouns.*

*For me it goes back to the beginning, if a company is intentionally visible about being an inclusive workplace then in theory, none of that should matter. And I get that in practice it often maybe is but if the starting point is this is an inclusive place, it tells me as a trans person or whatever, that this is a safe place for me to apply to because they are visibly advocating an inclusive workplace.*

*There's a piece that I've always wanted to do because I would like to see what it changes, what administratively we've never had a capacity and you're always up against at the time, but like such larger organisations who have Hr departments, this should be possible, but gender nullifying the language in applications and the removal of names and the short-listing process.*

*I know there are some, for like making sure that job descriptions are like gender-coded, but I think those are quite binary, but maybe, you know, long term thinking. That could be also a solution of having something that's more scalable and instead of asking a team member or hiring someone to do something if it's not you know a large project, maybe technology could help here. It has helped in terms of, you know, making job descriptions and other things less gender coded.*



The importance of the need to embed the need for different levels of transgender related training within your policy runs throughout these findings. One thing that is very clear in the interviews, is the fear that people have of saying the wrong thing. The participant below, who represents a trans NGO, states an important point in relation to have trans or non-binary folk providing the training:

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*I found a lot of the training that I do, that the big thing is just trying to break down some of the fear and the anxiety that people have around the stuff and they don't know what to say and they don't want to say the wrong thing. And don't know how to use trans in a sentence and like they've never met a trans person and like they're just freaked and just be like, let some of that go. And I think that kind of person, like that kind of face-to-face interaction is really important for that piece.*

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This comment below could not make it any clearer regarding zero tolerance or resistance to trans people's identities. While there is an understanding that training is available to people who do not understand trans people's identities, it may also have a cultural component attached to it. Making it clear that your organisation and services are an inclusive employer and that there is an explicit zero-tolerance policy means precisely that:

“

*We've set it up clearly when they're joining us. We have our pledge, it is to be inclusive it is to be welcoming. If anyone had a problem with that. We have a problem with them.*

*I'm coming from a communications perspective, making sure that everything your company puts out there, whether it's on their website, on their policies, on their social media, that everything has come through that lens of making sure that we're talking in an inclusive voice all the time, and that you can't be saying one thing in your policies and then putting stuff out that counteracts that you know.*

*So you know you need to look at a holistic thing and make sure you're actually living up to the things that you promise in your policies. Because policies are great but they need to be followed through with all of your actions as an organisation.*

”

”

The final comment in this section above powerfully illustrates the need to ensure that the culture, policy, and leadership align and that a consistent message of inclusivity and mixed messaging does not exist. Visibility is vital, in that it promotes your organisation's inclusive culture. As a result, candidates are aware of this, with this information shared throughout the trans and LGBTQIA+ community that your organisation is a good place to work. Therefore, having your culture visible front and centre provides your organisation with an increased pool of talent to choose from, ensuring that you get the best that is available.

## **Tips and Takeaways**

- **Having gender-inclusive options, including uniforms, bathrooms, and changing facilities can attract more candidates to your organisation;**
- **Revise previous application forms and other forms of documentation to be inclusive of a gender-neutral option/s;**
- **Suggest to all staff members the benefits of including pronouns in their email signature;**
- **Ensure that your workplace is devoid of transphobic comments or actions by promoting your service as trans-inclusive. Also, have zero tolerance for intentional transphobic comments.**

# Leadership

The following section focuses on the importance of leadership in driving an inclusive and diverse culture.

Participants viewed leadership as vital in ensuring that an inclusive and diverse culture was promoted and was a sustainable action. With the leadership drive, it may be easier to have people onboard, look out for other vulnerable colleagues, and create diverse and inclusive organisations of the future. As mentioned earlier in the section that focussed on some of the anxieties that trans and non-binary individuals may experience when exploring recruitment options, a leader needs to show empathy and understanding towards a trans employee who may be dealing with high-stress levels due to their gender transition or other gender identity-related issues. Leaders can facilitate the individual to have a positive transformative experience within the workplace:

“

*I think that's an element of leading with empathy. If you have leadership teams and management teams who really pull that front and centre. I think the chances that you would make the right calls for the individual who's in front of you when you have to make a decision.*

*That value base is in the first place. I'd almost say that you know whether it's informal whether it's conversational or whatever. I'd want to know that the leadership, or the owners of those businesses are absolutely aligned to those value principles and then if they are I genuinely think that the output of that is that these things flow from it.*

”

Many leaders within the organisation may be someone other than senior management but are in leadership roles nonetheless. These leaders, who may have that high level of social capital, can show other team members that all of the team needs to align with the principles of the organisation. These particular drivers are an essential component for holding the structure of the culture securely in place, as mentioned below:

“

*I think we need to bring along what we call the early adopters. They have a number of like huge champions there who are really championing the EDI agenda and bringing along people for the journey. And so I think it would be remiss if we thought of leadership as just the people on the top table as opposed to people who hold real genuine social capital within an organisation.*

*So it's like they have a leadership role in that and if they can influence however many staff they have, whether it be a small business or larger organisation and they can influence the broad society to their tolerance in the workplace.*

”

“

*It's about, particularly educating the leaders in the organisation and the people managers in the organisation and ensuring that, you know, the negative talk is not tolerated. I think I've been unpopular myself in terms of being very politically correct. And I think in this day and age you can get a negative feeling sometimes if you do take that very strict, politically correct perspective. Whereas actually I think it's really, really important to do so.*

”

”

The final comment in this section comes from a senior management figure, who diligently puts herself forward to ensure that negative talk in the company is not tolerated, and while she may not be popular for her meaningful, inclusive approach, nobody is in any doubt that the inclusive culture of the organisation is withstanding. From a training perspective, senior management must receive proper trans training in advance of the rest of the staff in order to understand why an inclusive culture is essential and why zero tolerance to transphobic incidents is unacceptable within their organisations.

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- Provide trans training for senior managers in your team to attain an understanding of trans people's experiences;
- Provide relevant trans training to all staff in your team/s;
- Promoting your organisation's gender-inclusive policy can be hugely advantageous to your organisation and to the trans person in your organisation;
- Ensure that you take a tough stance on any transphobic talk within your organisation;
- Promote your organisation's gender-inclusive stance to other leaders and, possibly, smaller companies;
- Taking the lead (as a manager) on celebrating diversity encourages others to be inclusive.

# Reasonable Accommodations

Providing options or alternatives to help marginalised people in the recruitment process promotes your inclusive culture in a meaningful way. Trans people's experiences of anxiety and expectation of rejection are evident in previous sections, but these underlying factors that can lead to these obstacles can be debilitating. Therefore, in this section, we try and attain strategies to help trans communities navigate these obstacles, by employers providing them with a equitable approach to recruitment and retention. The comments below emerge from a trans individual, a human resource worker, an employer, and stakeholder participant. The initial comment is from a trans participant and speaks to the anxieties of entering a workplace as a trans woman:



*Yeah, so it can be daunting, because obviously, like you're especially going into a large office, where there's a lot of people. That's why, for me, I love working from home, because I don't have to interact with nobody. I can pull out my extrovertism and wear it like a glove, but it does tire me out. It can be daunting and I remember like early days, when I first came into the office, I was putting this crazy makeup on all the time and feeling so uncomfortable and always checking myself and making myself small. I will always just walk around in headphones because I was I just wanted to like have a wall between me and the world around me.*



The comment above alludes to the early stages of gender transition and starting work in a new place. The reasonable accommodations that were available to her allowed the trans woman work at home at times to reduce some of the anxiety that she felt. In time her confidence grew as she got to know others in the workplace:



*So, you know, every person has different things in life that you have to miss work for. And if a trans candidate would say that I can't start work in the next few weeks because I have surgery or I have doctors' appointments or something like that. Maybe some people wouldn't have the same kind of line of thought as they would, if someone who has a disability said the same thing because for disability you quickly say this is a health issue, but for trans people, maybe some people don't make that connection.*



While earlier comments alluded to trans and non-binary people having to take time off for medical reasons, it may need to be stated again that trans people will not constantly need time off for medical treatments or surgeries. They are rare, but if and when this arises, the time off is essential, and paid medical leave for trans and non-binary people in the workplace could be a great incentive to them wanting to apply for certain positions, and promoting this in policy could be fruitful for organisations. Trans people's medical needs are similar to cisgender people's needs. Moreover, as the comment below alludes to, trans people may also experience co-occurring conditions, and, similar to cisgender people, supports should be in place to help them through these, by availing of reasonable accommodations:



*Maybe it's also not just gender that this person has going on and needs special considerations, the person themselves might be more concerned or anxious and also autism affects social interactions in the workplace.*

*There's an email there for reasonable accommodation to see if there is anything you would like us to know or anything we need to know. And then I think as well, that's the time to communicate as well. That's the time to communicate, to say our recruitment team have received recruitment training just so you know there is a standard to which we expect your recruitment interview will go. Let us know if you need anything from us. So yeah, that kind of final line of reassurance when you get that. That interview letter, maybe that's something that's a little bit of work that can be done on the corporate side as well, I think.*



Communicating to the candidate that reasonable accommodations will be considered and that the recruitment team wants to support the candidate can be a vital factor in the trans person feeling a sense of safety and motivation to apply for the advertised position. The comment below suggests providing the interview questions in advance to the candidate, considering that they may find it difficult not to have time to prepare their answers in advance of the interview:



*But actually for those who are neuro diverse or those anxiety or depression or otherwise having to perform peak performance level in an interview in the moment that assimilate everything and that can be overwhelming. So actually an enabler to allow someone to bring their best selves into that space and for them to give an equal opportunity is to give them the questions (in advance) and allow them time to prepare.*



It is important to ensure that there is a provision of reasonable accommodations in employment and the recruitment process for marginalised communities. The comment below concerns women's experiences accessing employment in more male-dominated professions. It allows them to forge a pathway for other women. It is similar for trans people, in that having that equitable approach enables them to be able to help others in the future:



*There was a woman speaker, and it was a women's event. She was high up in the excellences of the company and she's like, I got my foot in the door, because they wanted the diversity, they need a gender diversity because it was too heavily bound for the men in the company. She got a foot in the door. She proved herself, and she also could influence bringing more women into position, adjacent to her, because she now had more power than she had. So if there's an opening and it had some form of gender diversity, step into it because you can use position to influence.*



The comment below alludes to time-off for accessing trans related healthcare appointments that the trans person might have, and ensuring that taking that time won't impact on their promotion options in the future:



*But you know, in places where sick leave is counted towards promotion and that, I think it needs to be very clear that surgery for trans people should not be counted because there's certain types of sick leave, like the one I'm thinking of now is a civil service, they have a discounting certain sick leave policy... I'm just thinking organisations that have that policy where they kind of go, well, let's look at this person sick leave or we're not promoting them if they had too much sick leave in the past year. Did they have gender affirming surgery? Because that could be discounted, should be discounted.*



Incorporating Reasonable Accommodations into your organisation may be an essential addition in your organisation to provide that equitable step for marginalised communities to navigate. They are simple considerations but could be extremely meaningful and helpful to enable trans and non-binary individuals to feel more comfortable during the recruitment process and in the workplace.

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- Provide a working-from-home or hybrid option, especially at the beginning of a person's gender transition;
- Be conscious that, similar to cisgender individuals, trans workers may also need time off to attend medical appointments;
- In your recruitment communication to a candidate, include the names and pronouns of the interview panel members.
- In your recruitment communication to an interviewee, offer the interviewee an opportunity to have a conversation before the interview, in case they need to explain their trans background in advance;
- Share interview questions in advance of the interview with the candidate;
- It is hugely beneficial if the recruitment team has had relevant trans training.

## Tokenistic or meaningful

The themes of ‘tokenistic’ and ‘tick box’ arose regularly throughout this research. However, tokenistic gestures were not always viewed as negative by respondents. Organisations often ask a member of the LGBTQIA+ community about all things LGBTQIA+ and then make decisions based on their feedback. This information may not always be correct, even though the person is well meaning. In addition, the person who may be continuously asked questions by their peers may not be comfortable being asked these questions. The comments below highlight some of the issues that might arise when using tokenistic or tick box gestures to be inclusive, and will include some tips for appropriately addressing LGBTQIA+ queries:

“

*I'd love to be able to pick the phone and ask somebody, is that really lazy because I'm not from the community? We've got a queer member of our team you know and he must be sick to death with it.*

*I think we're guilty of that as well, of asking the LGBT plus members of our organisation, because again, you don't want to get it wrong. You want to be guided by them. And you want to be inclusive. But it's probably an unfair burden. But it's with intent to get it right.*

”

The comments above speak to management or HR staff needing to become more aware of the needs of certain members of staff who possibly identify as LGBTQIA+ or are seen by management/HR in that way. While their actions to inform themselves is positive, the direction of the method could be questionable. The comment below speaks to this issue and is provided by a member of the LGBTQIA+ community:

“

*I've been there, I've been that person that people have called up when they're changing policies and my own perspective on it is, I don't mind it if I actually think that you're gonna change something or you're gonna do something about it. I do mind it if it's yet again another conversation that's going in one ear and out the other.*

”

While LGBTQIA+ people may be happy to help, the comment above alludes to the advice provided, needing to be more meaningfully taken on board and changes made to reflect the advice provided by them:

“

*It's a massive international organisation, and they do these staff surveys, and the HR person rang me and said I'd like to figure out what options to give in terms of pronouns for people to choose. And so I talked it through and I said this... and I'm not the outright experience on this and I said, listen, I can point you to a couple of people, but here's some things that I could suggest.*

”

“

*I have a real problem with the ally kind of space. I think it can be quite toxic. I get very weary when I see people using it because often people use it as a shield. I'm an ally so I couldn't have done anything wrong or I couldn't have said anything wrong or I couldn't have made anyone feel uncomfortable because I care about this. Actually, you can care about this and still get things wrong.*

”

”

The comments above highlight the concerns that allies can have when being called on to provide advice. They often come from subjective experience and may not be the best person to get more balanced and correct advice on managing a sensitive situation.

While it can be positive to be proactive when a trans person comes out in the workplace, there also needs to be a conversation with the trans person with regard to what actions have been proposed concerning their gender transition. The comment below highlights some of the challenges that may arise when they are not included in this conversation:

“

*I've had workplaces who have implemented training for every single staff member across the whole company, which is lovely, but it's also they are doing this because there is one person that is trans and it really puts them in the spotlight, I think, in a way that may or may not be comfortable for them. So, I think it would be better to have those kinds of practices in place and building in elements of trans awareness into induction training and that kind of stuff so that you're kind of ready from when someone does come out or from when you have a trans employee.*

”

”

On the other hand, the comment below alludes to an organisation platforming a person from the LGBTQIA+ community as a role model. While some might see this action as a tokenistic or tick box exercise, on the other hand it is creating that visibility for others in similar situations who are possibly just joining the organisation or contemplating coming out in the workplace:

“

*I know that this is a bit of a cheesy one, but it's so true. Like if you can't see people like you doing well in an organisation, it's not going to feel like you have a future there, is it? You're not going to feel like, oh, I could really reach my potential in this organisation, because I don't see anyone else doing it. So I think as long as someone's happy to be a role model, I hate that people feel like they have to be. But like, you know, if people can be kind of celebrated for doing well, you know, in particular, like people from different minorities.*

”

”

The comments below were provided by a stakeholder regarding their experience of working with an LGBTQIA+ organisation in meaningful collaboration for making positive and sustainable changes:



*Somewhere like the [Academic Institution] in Ireland who did really great work with TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) and kind of worked with TENI on pride and were being more inclusive in lots of different ways. So I think if you do that kind of stuff as an employer, you need to advertise that. So you need to get that out there and show people that you are inclusive and like the inclusion doesn't just stop at pride, that it kind of carries on throughout the year and that's kind of threaded through what you do and things.*

*Do you help with volunteering? Is pride the only thing you do? Because if it is, that's not enough. You need to do more than that. Or maybe just don't do pride and give that money that you're gonna spend on walking in pride to doing something else, to a project. Maybe get suggestions from your employee resource group and see what they might be interested in doing. And maybe that drag brunch you're gonna have is not really the thing that everybody wants to be doing... People want to find meaning if they're going to be at work for, you know, a big percentage of their day, then they want to work somewhere they feel like it's a good place to work and it's doing something good.*



Organisations benefiting financially from diversity and inclusion have been alluded to several times during the focus groups and individual interviews in this research. The following comments speak to some of the variety of comments received:



*It's a bit tokenistic because I mean, yeah, it's, like, it's great that it's happening, that the attention is drawn towards it, but it can be wrong level of attention sometimes. Because sometimes, the way that companies could use their inclusivity campaigns could be to boost their own profits and their own popularity, rather than actually help people who are, you know, are maybe excluded in some way.*

*I look at this as a spectrum, and I see that there are organisations that will go on journeys, and they start with a tick box and they start to learn and unravel and rethink. They can reinvent and it grows in miles and they can become very great allies.*



The final comment in this section speaks to the positive direction that an initial tokenistic or tickbox gesture might motivate them to be more proactive from an organisational perspective. It may initially set out as tokenistic but, as it grows over time, it becomes more sustainable and meaningful, and the organisation may be deserving of the praise for being a very positive LGBTQIA+ friendly place to work. It needs to start from somewhere...

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- Contact a Trans or LGBTQIA+ organisation to provide training, to write or review your policy, or to provide consultation to your organisation;
- Be mindful that trans people or allies in your organisation may not want to be the person asked about all things LGBTQIA+;
- It is important that the feedback from LGBTQIA+ or trans advisor organisations is not just taken on board but also embedded in your policy in order to avoid further challenges;
- Be aware that, while the willingness to provide information is positive, not all allies are experts;
- Organise trans-related storytelling workshops in your organisation as part of Pride or on other LGBTQIA+ meaningful occasions;
- Donate funding to Trans or LGBTQIA+ organisations;
- Provide time off for Trans volunteering work with staff.

# Big Tech vs Smaller Business

Often, it does need to start somewhere, and many of those big organisations with inclusive and visible cultures had to start from somewhere. This toolkit has been designed to facilitate the needs of the more considerable organisations and the smaller enterprises. While there are extra challenges for smaller organisations, the comments below may provide some insights. Smaller firms are often family run and have less than 50 people employed and may have a higher turnover of staff. The initial comments speaks to some of the challenges that smaller organisations with a high turnover of staff experience when it comes to working with trans people:



*So I'm thinking like retail, I'm thinking restaurants where there isn't really a HR there or if there is a HR system, it's off site. You've got people maybe in management roles who like haven't had a massive amount of management experience and they're kind of managing their peers and that is when things could go very badly wrong.*

*You've got a young trans people coming into work and I heard so many stories where things have gone very badly wrong in, say, like (service) or in a (cinema) or, you know, in, in a restaurant because of uniforms or because of miss gendering or people not using the right names. It's this high turnover of staff.*

*But if they have a bad experience in those workplaces, that stays with you and that's really negative. And I'm sure like, you know, (chainstore) don't want to be like a negative employer. I don't know how you fix that, to be honest, because I believe the fix is to have that policy embedded in a living way within an organisation. And that means education and training on that policy and making sure that people understand that it's there and it's supportive. But very hard to do that if you've got somewhere with high turnover where there's no continuity, when there's a lack of institutional knowledge.*



However, smaller firms often do not have the capacity or means to focus on some of the EDI or HR matters that bigger firms, organisations or services have. The comment below provides a reality check concerning small firms:



*You have to remember that the business owner is the CEO, he is the HR, she or he are the HR manager... they are the delivery driver... But you also have to remember that Mary who's running the cafe, like I said, she is just doing everything. Like, so you know, it's how can she actually take the time and the step back to be like, oh okay, this is a trans person.*

*And whilst those challenges are real for owners of small firms, it can still lead to challenging experiences for both the employer and employee and support is also vital for small firms to enable them to be inclusive to diversity.*



However, the comments below provide some suggestions on how other smaller organisations or services have addressed this issue:



*But I think for smaller jobs, like as a smaller company, it's hard to find that stuff online. I don't know that people who are going to apply for a job, if they can't find anything online, but it's probably an enhancement or an added benefit. Simply find something online that is always there. It's either policies in place or some kind of demonstration.*

*I think that's a lot to expect from every single workplace that there's already a predefined pathway for how you transition in the job. I think, some kind of one to one chat, I sit down in a very personal way, so one can talk it through on their very individual basis as opposed to the blanket approach and ask them, I guess what that person needs for that timeline to get to a stage, and if they think it's a helpful thing to say like okay, what is the timeline that you'd like us to go out as an employer support, as opposed to here's our timeline sometimes it's very simple thing.*



This comment below speaks to the need to ensure that an element of trans content is embedded in induction training. This can be as simple as including the need to respectfully use pronouns and names and not be transphobic in the workplace:



*I spoke to someone there in a HR capacity, someone who works in Hr, and they were saying they thought it would be wonderful if people could do a little training video in induction and they were working in the hospitality industry. I'm assuming as well, they have summer staff, they have a high turnover. So if you can say, well, part of your induction is to watch this video and maybe you have to answer a question.*



The next couple of comments speak to Networking Groups in smaller businesses. How they may be able to link together in terms of EDI to ensure that they are supported and not isolated will have a potentially positive and long-lasting impact on their service and on the lives of the trans people who apply for positions and possibly stay for a prolonged time:



*I think you know as much as smaller businesses do, they work in networking groups, in terms of entrepreneurship and that type of thing. It would be really interesting if there could be some sort of a, you know, a small company to company networking groups. Whereas they, may not have people who have experience in one organisation, but if they could connect with somebody in another supermarket that had been here, it's kind of like what we've done with schools and that type of thing where you're sharing the learning from one school to the other school and kind of what works and what doesn't work and how they can be supported and that type of thing.*



But there is hope and help on the horizon and these actions may take a while to manifest in better conditions for marginalised and often misunderstood communities who are going through the recruitment process or already in the workplace. The Small Business Association have been taken steps to ensure that support is provided to their members, as mentioned in this comment from SBA:



*We're having a diversity and inclusion event on the twelfth (September), that's looking at travellers, looking at long term unemployed people with disabilities, refugees but having those conversations with employers for change to understand. So people to come to that and be like, okay people have accommodations in the workplace and people are looking for jobs who need an accommodation so we need to understand that so having those first conversations and that's really important that we are doing this as a small business community. We're also advocating in budget 2024 for LEO's. So, LEO's are that's the real training centre for small businesses, that's where you get the training. We've asked them to do inclusivity training for small business owners to really understand (inclusivity).*



The comment above suggests that there is hope on the horizon for small business and firms to have a better insight into diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and the hope is that in a short time this will translate into better experiences not just for trans and non-binary people, but for all.



*So it, you know, I can completely understand it will be the same thing coming into a workplace. And you, you know, and individuals may be nervous about working in particular industries. It's as much as, you know, years ago women were concerned about working in male dominated industries.*



The comment above alludes to small businesses starting somewhere, just as many of the big tech organisations have done. It would benefit small companies to explore teaming up in a networking capacity to share knowledge between smaller businesses. Some funding may be available at some stage to see how this idea could come to fruition.

The final comment in this section encourages trans and non-binary people to become entrepreneurs themselves and become future employers themselves. But, of course, supports need to be in place for them to enable them to do so:



*But also we need to look at making sure that trans people can become entrepreneurs. So, you know, and that's not just trans people, that's everybody...So what we want to do is make it easier to start a business in Ireland. So if you're from a disadvantaged background, if you're a refugee or if you're a transitioned person. I think this is the conversation that we really have to start having. We really have to focus on this idea of everyone has the ability to be an entrepreneur and I think that's really important.*



### **Tips and Takeaways**

- Link with other networking groups that promote diversity and inclusion in their workplace and forming relationships with these groups;
- It is important that you access training or that your induction training is inclusive of trans-related content and that it promotes a zero-tolerance policy on transphobic-related comments in your service;
- Connect with Trans or LGBTQIA+ organisations if you are unsure of aspects of your recruitment policy, a staff member gender transitioning in your workplace, or retaining trans staff in your company;
- Develop a diverse and inclusive online presence by perhaps highlighting Pride events or Trans-related events;
- Use pronouns in your email signature;
- Funding to be provided for Local Enterprise Office for small firms to access EDI training to better understand the experiences of marginalised potential employees;
- Funding made available to support and encourage marginalised communities to become entrepreneurs;
- Fund relevant organisation, or provide specific funding towards a trans and non-binary workshop.

# Interview Process

The following section will highlight some of the barriers that trans and non-binary people have to endure when exploring recruitment options and going through the process of recruitment. This section also provides various tips and takeaways that will support your business in overcoming some of these barriers. The initial comments highlight the need for general awareness of the anxiety that a trans person experiences during an interview and how one might support them to sell themselves to the panel:

“

*When I think of interviews I think of the panel. That's my main experience, but also my clients experiences, usually there's more than one person and one person may have an awareness how to manage a situation. And to be gentle and give plenty of time to also take account of the fact that gender may not be the only thing coming into this room that there are other co-occurring things that may also be present for a person.*

*Actually for those who are neuro diverse or those who experience anxiety or depression or otherwise, having to perform to a peak performance level in an interview in the moment that they assimilate everything and that can be overwhelming. So actually an enabler to allow someone to bring their best selves into that space and for them to give a quality interview, to give them the questions and allow them time to prepare.*

”

The comment above alludes to the potential that the trans or non-binary candidate may also be autistic. The research suggests that there is a significant correlation between gender incongruence and autism. Therefore, the candidate entering the interview room may need extra supports prior and during the interview process, including sharing questions and information concerning panellists, including to share the panellists their pronouns:

“

*Maybe it would be good for companies when they share with the person that they're being invited to interview and they give information about the interview panellists, but they could share their pronouns or any other information with them in advance of the interview. And that might create that sort of open environment where you're not under any obligation to share information. It's I think normalising it probably is the best way to say like just normalising these conversations and to give people that opportunity.*

”

The need for training are blended throughout the research, with this comment below coming from a representative of a LGBTQIA+ NGO. It alludes to the need to have unconscious bias trans related training:

**“** *Even if the employer is very open, will it go against without them even knowing it, will it be a kind of an unconscious bias. They don't even know they're doing it, that they could be the most positive transformed people in the world and they could still have unconscious bias and that might affect your chances being able to be offered the post.* **”**

The comment below highlights one of the challenges that organisations experience during the recruitment process. The second comment provides a potential solution:

**“** *I think that for everything like we talk a lot about having a diverse panel so that people feel comfortable. I think in some cases, you know, it's difficult if you're gonna have a panel of 3 or 4 people and you want to have a gender balance, you want to have trans and non-binary people you want to have migrants, refugees and so on.*

*But I think depending on the situation and depending on the organisation and the internal diversity of the employees. That is possible and also usually recruitment processes are quite long. You're gonna have two, three, four interviews with that company. So that also kind of opens that up to having diverse people in the different panels. I know because it's such a small team, I know that they are invited. At the time if they invited people from outside from member companies, from supporting partners to participate in a panel. So that's also, I think, inviting people externally, can also help.* **”**

The comments below focus on the data protection issue concerning trans people's privacy. While there may be a need for Garda vetting, the organisation does not hold this information, it is Garda Siochana:

**“** *Depending on the work situation, you know, there may need to be a discussion about how these issues will be managed sensitively in terms of, you know, references in previous names, garda checks and criminal history and all that are very relevant issues. But it's about having that discussion so that the candidate doesn't feel, you know, victimised in any way that this is unique to them. This conversation is about recognising the complexity that their history might have.*

*So, we hope the work will be done ahead of time and that is that, you know what you're going to do with your record keeping, your data protection, you know the kind of confidentiality pieces for HR. As you're talking whether that person is transgender you're, having that conversation around all of that. You have a policy for what might be the dress code, the badges that are in place, the HR system will be set up. You'll have awareness training done, you'll have bullying and harassment policies in place.* **”**

The final comments in this section speak to the central underlying situation in the interview process to get the best person for the job. However, training is essential for interview panels to support their understanding of trans people's experiences, what not to say, and what can be reassuring to say or to do during the interview itself. The ultimate objective is that there is a good match and that your organisation thrives because that trans person wants to be part of your business:



*The only business you have in the interview process is can they do the job? And are you creating an environment that is welcoming to them and makes them think, if I work for that organisation. I imagine anyone who's applying for a job would do the background research, you know, what is the culture of the organisation? I think that's really important. But also you've got to create that culture.*

*If you're matching a person with an organisation and especially if the organisation is small you want to make sure there its a good match, you know, that they're gonna work out. They're gonna like you, you're gonna like them. You know, besides doing the work and being there on merit and all of those myriad of things that go into it.*



Although the interview process can contribute to heightened anxiety in most people, when you are trans or non-binary that anxiety can go to quite another level. The comments included in this section highlight some of the stressors that are evident in this process and potentially some solutions that may be helpful in addressing these challenges during the interview stage of recruitment. The section below provides further insights and helpful knowledge.

### Tips and Takeaways

- It can be helpful if the interview panel were transgender informed before the interview process;
- Undertake trans related training. These can be accessed by contacting a Trans or LGBTQIA+ organisation (details in the resource section);
- Share interview questions, panellist names, and pronouns in advance of the interview;
- Think about reaching out to other networks or organisations, with the aim of recruiting diverse panellists for your interview panel;
- Ensure that GDPR protections are in place in terms of employment references. The candidate may have been known in previous roles in their assigned gender and may not want you to know this information.

# Garda Vetting and GDPR

On commencing employment in an organisation, the next move for employers might be to seek references from the trans or non-binary individual. If security clearance is needed, the trans or non-binary may need to be Garda vetted<sup>6</sup>. This can raise further anxieties and expectations of rejection for candidates, especially, if they are living in stealth in their authentic gender. Therefore, they don't want people to know they are trans, they want to be perceived in the gender they present in. That is who they are.

The first comment in this section is provided by a trans participant in one of the focus group, and she voices her concerns and a reluctance to allow her employers having access to her personal information by way of Garda Vetting. The process of Garda Vetting is between An Garda and the person applying for Garda Vetting. As mentioned by this participant, the employer does not need to know. If there is an issue with the Garda Vetting, the employer will be contacted by An Garda Siochana:



*Your employer doesn't need to know and that as I remember is the way it works. I don't want this information to go back to the employer, just let them know that I'm Garda vetted that's all they need to know.*

*I don't want them (employers) to know my information. I don't want them to know about my name change because it will become clear than then they know that I was a transgender individual, and I didn't want them to know that. They didn't need to know that. So I contacted the guards directly via this special link.*



In terms of people not having applied, or are awaiting a Gender Recognition Certificate and passport which reflects their gender identity, the comment below highlights how HR can address the issue of name change respectfully:



*Generally, in terms of the work that I have been doing around trying to create space for, like, social name, if it's distinct from a legal name and trying to make sure that that legal name is held confidentially and securely and only people who would need to know it. Which really would be depending on the line manager or like a Hr partner, whoever is managing the issue typically, that only those people know that name and, and it doesn't travel within the organisation.*



<sup>6</sup> <https://vetting.garda.ie/Application/Paper>

In terms of seeking references, the comments below speak to the issue of GDPR and employers seeking references:



*I think there's a there's a small thing in my mind around how do we do things like reference checks for people who may have changed their name and may not be using the same name that their referees might know them through. It's a small little piece, but like something that could be closed in terms of solving that.*

*I do think in some ways references have become probably a little less in part as time has gone on. And probably moving into various, you know, between probably, a more litigative culture and GDPR and stuff. I think references now pretty much extend to whether the person was functional and as did they work here and probably don't go beyond that.*



While the Garda Vetting seems easier to navigate, as it is a link between the trans person and an Garda Siochana, the reference system may be a little more complex to navigate.

### Tips and Takeaways

- Be aware that Garda vetting applications are between the trans person and An Garda Siochana only, and only if there is a security issue do you need to be informed;
- Be cognisant of the person's previous references being of another gender. Be respectful and emphatic in these situations.
- Do not request references from the candidate and potentially use an employment passport<sup>7</sup> instead.

<sup>7</sup> <https://employersforchange.ie/Employer-Specific-Information>

# Negative Narrative and Resistance

In the section on trans and non-binary experiences, the participants' comments highlight some of their fears in terms of the negative narrative aimed at trans and non-binary individuals that has become more prominent over the last decade. This section will focus on some of those specific fears that contribute to their expectation of rejection, especially when they may be offered a new job or plan to gender transition in their existing employment. The contributions below also speak to the experiences of trans people who are living in stealth and dread having to listen to transphobic conversations and jokes on a daily basis. These experiences are not just contained to trans workers, as trans people have families, who are also enduring these negative narratives on a daily basis in the workplace. The first comments allude to how safe trans and non-binary people feel in the workplace:



*There has been quite a lot of negativity in the media around different incidences that have happened, particularly in Dublin, and around the city, and I think the trans and the broader LGBT plus community as well. So, I would imagine that there can be that worry around, like you know, applying for a role. Well, is this a safe environment, and not just physical safety but emotional safety. And when I go there, what am I going to feel like. I mean do any of us really want to have to go to work, day in day out, and feel like we're totally on the periphery and excluded. And I think that feeds very much into the need for more external communication about what's happening internally.*



The following comments speak to the vulnerability of trans people in the workplace due to the constant negative narrative that has been generated over the last decade, especially in some media and social media sources:



*It's a hard one to react to, I don't know whether I should call it out or then I fear if I do, that they probably will know what the trans situation is with me. It makes me feel all uneasy. Like when I say I'm in a situation, like, it wouldn't be like a horrible situation, like people talking about the way trans people are in the media now, like it would be stuff like that, but like just little kind of comments and maybe can I say anything or would people know I'm trans also.*

*But in the last few years with like all the sort of right-wing path that's been out there, I have a position, it's with a voluntary organisation (working in a sensitive area) and I don't want people really to know. It's like working a high profile in the city, and I have a fear that if this got out there, that they're (protestors) going to come up to where I'm operating and start taking pictures (of the trans person) calling me names and all kinds of stuff. Given what's happening at the moment, I would fear about that all ending up all over social media or whatever it is.*



“

*I guess I'm just trying to live my life and I don't want that kind of attention. I'm not sure how we handle it, it's a concern. The organisations said they wouldn't have any problem standing behind me. Human beings, you know, we're all just diverse people and they, don't like what we stand for, they don't want us to exist in society. You have that fear of just being eroded from the earth. I'm thinking in a bigger picture, not just me as an individual. I think it's just a general fear of somebody showing up at the workplace or your hobby and taking pictures of you.*

”

The comments above highlight the daily fears and concerns that trans people endure by existing in a toxic environment, where even going to work is not perceived as being a safe space. The comment below speaks to the experiences of a trans person having to endure the ongoing transphobic narrative in the workplace, and then having to navigate a very sensitive environment when they make a decision to gender transition:

“

*I suppose if you're in a job and you're not out as yourself. And if someone is making comments that are transphobic, either intentionally or unintentionally, you don't know if you call them out, or you're risking outing yourself. So it would be great if you felt there was colleagues who would say actually we don't talk about that here, we don't talk about that in this organisation, that's not respectful. Rather than you always having to be the one, because if you are the one, then you're kind of going, oh have they read me now do they know?... And then when time comes to come out, if it's something you decide you want to do. You remember every single one of those remarks and go, well, this person said that that time and this person said that this time and they all build up until you kind of have this dossier of like all these terrible things people said.*

”

On the other hand, the comment below from an employer shows the supportive message that trans people hugely welcome and would like to see more of:

“

*You know with a lot of the vitriol and diminishment that's occurring in general, I see very little companies and their brands aligning to a defence strategy which says we're not accepting this. We have trans people within our workplaces and what you say about them is not true you know.*

”

The comments below focuses on the need for bystander training to create a space where colleagues have the capacity to stand up for marginalised communities:

“

*We've just been taking part in the space to create training, which involves bystander training and for us, because we got public interface we're seeing a little bit of pushback, because we have exhibitions and bookshops and all that.*

”



*And just when we're experiencing a little bit of pushback, for public facing organisations. Where people reacting to what they consider to be liberal content, you know, that people are looking for points of conflict. So I think it is bystander training, I think if we did have a trans member onside, just kind of being ready to be a bystander.*

*I mean, under health and safety obligations, there's a risk assessment that needs to be done there, as you're seeing the kind of impact of the far right and the far left and whatever there might be in between. Combating that hate, that you do have people trained, that managers know what to do, that employees know what to do if there is a public facing issue, as it's your business that you know how to respond and that you are protecting your employees.*

*Well, I suppose clarity about what sort of workplace it is, because there's so much horribleness going on at the moment. It must be really scary going into a new workplace and not knowing do they think this, do they think that. And just really sort of impressing on people that they know this is a safe space and creating a safe space. And I think opening up this two-way communication, where the organisation is saying this is what we currently do, this is what we aspire to do. But what do you need? How can we support you as an individual as well?*



The final comments above speak clearly about what employers must do to protect their employees, both within the organisation and customer facing trans and non-binary employees. Trans and non-binary people are entitled to feel safe in the workplace, and their employer has a responsibility to ensure they are. While there is a zero tolerance within the workplace, for customer facing trans and non-binary employees the company also needs to stand firmly with their employee and be explicit in reassuring them that this is the case.

### **Tips and Takeaways**

- It is important that your organisation has an inclusive and meaningful policy that welcomes trans people and provides support and protections internally and for customer-facing staff to provide a sense of safety and belonging in your organisation;
- Be a trans ally to show that your inclusive attitude is embedded in your company's culture;
- Call out transphobic content in all areas of your life, whether it's at work, at home, or when meeting with other leaders or companies;
- Promote trans visibility during Pride and other trans days of celebration or remembrance;
- It is important that your interview panel does not have individuals that have a conscious and visible opposition to trans people;
- Organise bystander training and various other trans-related training for staff.

# Retention and Promotion

The previous sections in this research have platformed the experiences of trans and non-binary individuals; employers, human resource workers and unions, as well as representatives of trans and LGBTQIA+ organisations in Ireland. It has highlighted some of the barriers that trans and non-binary people face when engaging with the recruitment process. The final section paints mainly a positive picture of how organisations can overcome some of the barriers mentioned within this toolkit and provides tips to ensure trans and non-binary individuals are cherished within the workplace:



*To grow and improve as an organisation and look at all of your communications throughout, whether it's internal, external, everything that's you're putting out as an organisation and what message are you sending because a lot of potential employees are gonna be looking at that.*

*They're gonna be looking at your social media. They're gonna be looking at, you know, those websites that rank places to work and different things like that, so there can be a lot of different sources that potential employees are looking at. So you have to consider the whole picture of what your organisation is putting out.*

*Your organisation to take responsibility for training, education, EDI stuff, celebrations, all of that. So, for the organisation, to take responsibility for that and to have general buy into this, so that it's not limited maybe to an actual group. I think quite often it's like the willingness to maybe get involved and stuff. But I think it's a very positive message to send just even in terms of visibility and recognition.*

*And I think sometimes when we focus on EDI, and we're talking particularly around this toolkit for transgender people, that has to happen as well in a context and culture change needs be broader than just this particular issue. So I think if you're looking at somewhere where those remarks are made, what else is happening in that organisation, What kind of culture is being fostered there, What examples are being set by leadership in that organisation?*

*But if we come, if we have kind of like our social capital leaders and our managers coming out, going around and putting in that effort to ensure that this is, you know, from the outset, from the very first day.*



The comments above highlight some of the general comments from research respondents when retention of trans and non-binary employees were discussed in the focus groups and individual interviews. Their comments allude to the previous themes of inclusive culture, visibility, and especially the need to have trans related training.

Retention often relies on the employee having a sense of belonging, and, as mentioned earlier in this toolkit, absenteeism decreases and productivity increases when there is a sense of belonging in the organisation. To facilitate that process, it can be very helpful to have Employee Resource Groups or Affinity Groups, or both. The comments below highlight the benefits that these groups can provide to your organisation:



*So that can be really helpful to have an employee resource group. I think people really like feeling that they work for an organisation that's doing good. I think if you do something meaningful with the LGBT community or with the trans community specifically, that makes it a very attractive place to work.*

*And basically, the affinity groups where their aim, I think it was to foster a sense of belonging and connection within the company. Because it's such a massive office and people are going to try and foster smaller connections to smaller groups.*

*Having a network of people to ensuring that, that they're getting the networking opportunities and the mentoring and the supports they need to actually progress their career, and giving them a voice as well. I think for me, being able to advocate for trans colleagues is something that I feel very strongly about, but it makes me feel strongly aligned to the organisation.*

*So I think having a kind of an organisation that really encourages that type of thing (developing affinity groups) is also great because that encourages and makes people feel free that they can speak up and point out where the organisation may be getting something wrong, you know, and have their voice heard. So those sorts of things are very important.*



The comments above positively highlight the benefits of having an ERG or affinity groups, to foster a sense of belonging in the organisation. However, the comment below, while it speaks positive about the ERG, does provides some words of caution:



*The employee resource groups are amazing organisations but sometimes we can make the assumption that the resource groups are experts in all areas. And I think that kind of external piece of going out externally is really important for the education side of things sometimes. The ERG should not be double punishment for underrepresented groups.*



Another aspect that arose during the data collection process in terms of retention of trans and non-binary employees, was trans healthcare. Currently in Ireland, there are many delays and barriers in service provision, where accessing gender affirmative therapy can contribute extra anxiety to the trans and non-binary employee. The comments below suggest that organisations or Employee Assistance Programmes provide some assistance to help trans and non-binary people access Gender Affirmative Treatment (GAT):



*I suppose, apart from the more general things that you would do around the retention. I do think it's making sure that our employee assistance program, specifically you know, provide unique offerings for healthcare cover. But we ensure that we have healthcare benefits that have relevance for trans people.*

*That has to be covered (trans healthcare) and an understanding what the caps available on that are for people. And I think if you're really want to become an employer of choice, it's a must have. It's not in the same way that I would say insuring health insurance providers provide gender care, it's standard benefit because you're not actually providing that benefit to change.*

*I recently came across an employer that has that (supports for trans healthcare) in their employee assistance program, that have a specific funding basically that trans employees could avail of to support their transition. I felt like that was a real commitment from the employer to the ongoing wellbeing of their employees.*

*I guess, in engaging with the medical transition, versus not doing that, and the material costs associated with that. That certainly in a country that does not have a robust public health system around this. The mental health costs, and how that will impact on the employees wellbeing and how that will impact on the employees productivity at work and their ability to work. I would love to see it implemented in more places, in the same way that we have other elements of employee assistance programs. Because as it stands, like there's a real financial, material difference in trying to be try to medically transition.*



The final comments in this section focus on a theme that emerged throughout the research process, that of humanity towards others. Whether that was being empathic towards a trans or non-binary candidate during their interview or just being conscious that the trans or non-binary person is a little bit more vulnerable than other employees and reaching out to them on occasions. The comments below allude to that humanity that can be shown in various ways, with the first alluding to members of staff with leadership and social capital who might be in a position to lend a hand:

“

*When we talk to employers, employees who start in an organisation with disabilities, we often suggest the idea of a buddy system. And I think that actually would also work really, really well. And you know, somebody who's starting their transition, if you have people in the organisation who are really strong allies who will be able to help the person, you know, get started in that role.*

*But from an employer's perspective, it's really important to create, an environment where you are always checking in as a manager with the people that work for you, You have a culture that is based on compassion and it's very human centric. I've always believed that a happy employee is the most productive employee.*

*Increase your compassion because especially big companies which are leading the world, we have to lead by example, and we have to lead to our humanity. We can't be following this cold pattern of profit and supply and demand. It has to have humanity at its core, you know, rather than profits. So I think just educating yourself, having compassion and creating opportunities for people to come together and be in a safe space and feel encouraged is the way to go.*

”

And to ensure that the person wants to stay in your company and thrive and possibly one day be a leader, senior manager, or CEO:

“

*I think retention is the big thing right now because again, it's a competitive workplace, like a captive market out there. So like retention is what all employers are talking about at the minute. It's like, how do we retain, how do we retain? And I think again, people want to work in an inclusive, diverse workplace. They want to work somewhere where they feel their friends could work, their family could work there, where everyone is kind of accepted.*

”

This section provided various ways organisations could possibly create a workplace that feels inclusive, safe, and welcoming, as suggested by the comment above. These actions will potentially help in increasing productivity, as all staff members will potentially feel they have a sense of belonging in their employment.

## **Tips and Takeaways**

- It is important that your organisation has a visibly inclusive culture that welcomes trans and non-binary people;
- Take responsibility for organising trans-related training for various areas of your company, depending on relevance;
- Be an ally for trans, non-binary, and intersex people and speak openly about your inclusive attitude;
- Organise a celebration of trans and non-binary people event, or workshop, including ‘telling your story days’, possibly having outside speakers, to create role models for the future;
- Participate in Pride or Trans Pride;
- Develop a buddy system or affinity groups in your organisation;
- Check in with the trans person, who you may be aware is dealing with many challenges in life;
- Take responsibility for reaching out to trans organisations for trans-related training;
- Develop an Employee Resource Group;
- Develop opportunities to progress the career opportunities for trans, non-binary, and intersex individuals in the workplace in order to give them a leg up in life. In turn, they may do the same for others;
- Understand that an ERG may have limitations in their understanding of trans and non-binary areas. Connect with Trans or LGBTIQ+ organisations for advice, support, and training;
- Contribute funding to trans-affirmative healthcare through your Employment Assistance Programmes. This would be a significant action and promote your organisation as meaningfully inclusive.

# Conclusion and Future Direction

The research findings have provided insightful experiences from trans and non-binary people in order to highlight some of the inequities they may experience when engaging in the recruitment process. The respondent comments have highlighted some of the barriers faced in all areas of recruitment. The respondents have also provided vital information to help organisations, employers and small and large firms for your organisation to be more inclusive and welcoming for trans and non-binary candidates. The research findings have provided insights from some of the top human resource, employment, and Trans and LGBTIQ+ professionals in Ireland, concerning the obstacles that trans and non-binary people endure and that have caused them many challenges to overcome to be able to access safe and welcoming workplaces. Moreover, these professionals have provided key insights into how your organisation can be more inclusive and welcoming for trans and non-binary people to increase that sense of belonging. The final research respondent comment focuses on the UN report on Global Sustainable Goals concerning the provision of decent work:

*“All of us aspire to have decent work, the world governments have committed to providing decent work for all by 2024 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. And there’s a whole lot of different elements... one is the freedom for people to express their concerns, to organise and participate in the decisions that affect their life”.*

The Sustainable Development Goals 8, promote sustained, inclusive and economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all by 2024<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, we would like to thank you, for providing the time, attention and motivation to creating a space to ensure your organisation is a safe and welcoming place for trans and non-binary people. Without you, this may not have been possible.

## LIMITATIONS TO THIS TOOLKIT

Whilst this project initially set out to explore the employment experiences of trans, non-binary and intersex people. These communities can experience similar barriers to employment. However, the researchers were conscious that intersex peoples experiences can be unique to them and, therefore, would benefit greatly if future resources could focus on intersex individuals experiences of engaging in the recruitment process and employment. We did not want to include the term ‘intersex’ as it might be perceived as tokenistic.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023\\_0.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023_0.pdf)

# Checklist

It might be useful to consider the following checklist and to think about areas such as policy, training, physical/sensory accessibility, and workplace culture.

1. Does your organisation have a Gender Transition in the Workplace, or a Gender Identity and Expression Policy?

If your organisation have the above policies, are the following included in the policy:

- gender neutral spaces (bathrooms/changing facilities);
  - gender neutral uniforms;
  - gender neutral language included in documents;
  - zero tolerance to transphobic bullying and harassment;
  - gender identity and expression training for employees and management;
  - is gender identity and expression content included in the induction training;
  - specific trans and non-binary training for your recruitment and team
2. Does your organisation visibly promote your trans and non-binary inclusive policies on your website?
  3. Do you display your pronouns on your email, or on other sources (e.g. zoom or Microsoft teams)?
  4. Does the organisation have a Reasonable Accommodations Policy?
  5. Does the organisation currently employ people who identify as trans or non-binary, or are you aware they have previously gender transitioned?
  6. Does the organisation have information about the specific requirements of trans and non-binary individuals?
  7. Does the organisation monitor for equality and/or survey employees on their perceptions of the organisational culture?
  8. Does your organisation have an Employee Resource Group or an Affinity Group?
  9. Does your organisation provide funding or staff hours for them to volunteer with Trans or Non-binary organisations?
  10. During Pride month and/or on other occasions, does your organisation celebrate Trans and Non-binary identities?
  11. Does your Employment Assistance Programmes provide support to Trans and Non-binary people for trans healthcare?

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## USEFUL RESOURCES

### Organisations

Open Doors Initiative - [www.opendoorsinitiative.ie](http://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie)

Gendercare - [www.gendercare.ie](http://www.gendercare.ie)

AsIAM - [www.asiam.ie](http://www.asiam.ie)

Transgender Equality Network Ireland - [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)

LGBT Ireland - [www.lgbtireland.ie](http://www.lgbtireland.ie)

ShoutOut - [www.shoutout.ie](http://www.shoutout.ie)

Outhouse - [www.outhouse.ie](http://www.outhouse.ie)

National Gender Service - [www.nationalgenderserviceireland.ie](http://www.nationalgenderserviceireland.ie)

### Publications

Inclusivity Employment Toolkit: <https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/userfiles/files/InclusivityEmploymenttoolkit.pdf>

Employers for Change Toolkit: <https://www.employersforchange.ie/userfiles/files/EFCEmployerToolkitFinal.pdf>

Reasonable Accommodation Passport Scheme: <https://www.employersforchange.ie/Reasonable-Accommodation-Passport-Scheme>

Employers for Change and The Open Doors Initiative: The Future of Work and Disability - A Remote Opportunity: [https://employersforchange.ie/userfiles/files/EFCE%20Remote%20Working%20Report%202021\\_WebFinal.pdf](https://employersforchange.ie/userfiles/files/EFCE%20Remote%20Working%20Report%202021_WebFinal.pdf)

The Same Chance Toolkit: A step by step guide to becoming an autism-friendly employer <https://www.irishjobs.ie/recruiters/the-same-chance-toolkit-guide-to-becoming-an-autism-friendly-employer/>

Supporting Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace: Guidelines for Employers and Employees: <https://www.teni.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Supporting-Transgender-Inclusion-in-the-Workplace-Guidelines-for-Employers.pdf>

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# Appendix 1: Focus Group and Interview Information

Ethical Approval was granted via University College Dublin (UCD) Research Ethics Committee (HS-23-42-Bramham: LGBT+ Research Inclusive Employment Practices).

## Participants

Focus Group 1: Employers and Human Resource professionals - 7 participants (virtual)

Focus Group 2: LGBT Organisation Representatives - 1 (in person)

Focus Group 3: Trans and non-binary individuals - 4 participants (in-person)

Focus Group 4: Employer and Human Resource Professionals - 6 participants (virtual)

Focus Group 5: LGBTIQ+ individuals: 10 participants (in-person)

Focus Group 6: Stakeholder Service: 2 participants (virtual)

Individual Interview 1: LGBTIQ+ organisation representative - (in-person)

Individual Interview 2: LGBTIQ+ organisation representative - (in-person)

Individual Interview 3: Employer representative - (virtual)

Individual Interview 4: Trans person - (virtual)

Individual Interview 5: LGBTIQ+ representative - (virtual)

Individual Interview 6: LGBTIQ+ representative - (virtual)

Individual Interview 7: Employer representative - (virtual)

Individual Interview 8: Employer representative - (virtual).

Total participants - 38

## Facilitator Introduction (Two mins)

### Purpose of the discussion: (Two mins)

This focus group is part of a piece of research for Open Doors Initiative, aimed at making recruitment practices more inclusive. We would like to learn about any areas of concern you have noticed around recruitment and employment concerning trans and non-binary people; and about how you think things could be improved. We will be bringing together these observations and recommendations in a toolkit for employers. Reminder - this session will be recorded, and what is said will be transcribed by the researchers and used to help us write a report. No names will be used in the report. If you change your mind about participation during the focus group, or afterwards any time before the report is finished, just let us know, and your information will not be used.

## **Ground rules (Five mins)**

As part of the consent process, the researchers have guaranteed that focus group participants will not be identified in the report, and anything discussed will be confidential. Can we also ask for everyone's agreement within the focus group that what is discussed here is not shared with others?

## **Large Group discussion (60 minutes)**

While there were 5 questions that formed the background of the discussion, the conversation was co-constructed, and the facilitator was led by the participants. The five questions were:

1. What are some of the main difficulties that trans and non-binary people may experience during the application process. What are some solutions to this?
2. What are some of the main difficulties that trans and non-binary people experience at application stage of recruitment? What are some solutions to this?
3. What are some of the main difficulties that trans and non-binary people experience at interview stage of recruitment? What are some solutions to this?
4. What are some of the main difficulties that trans and non-binary people experience when starting a new job? What are some solutions to this?
5. What are some of the main difficulties that organisations have when hoping to retain trans and non-binary people in the workplace?

## **Final Comments (10 minutes).**

## Appendix 2: Helpful tips for Allies

When a friend, loved one, colleague, or acquaintance makes the decision to ‘come out’ as transgender, they may be apprehensive about your response. Understand that when someone ‘comes out’ to you, it is an act of trust – and that person deems you trustworthy. There is no one “right” way to demonstrate your support – and being supportive does not require you to march in parades or become an activist (Although you are welcome to!)

An ally is someone who does not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA+) but who is supportive of LGBTQIA+ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Allies to the LGB community typically identify as “straight”. A straight or LGB cisgender person – cisgender refers to someone whose gender identity or expression aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth – can be an ally to the transgender community.

Here are some tips for being an ally to transgender people:

1. **Be open.** You may not know a lot about transgender people but be open to learning.
2. **Educate yourself.** Take responsibility for learning about the transgender community and the issues they experience. You can find resources at [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie).
3. **Know the vocabulary.** Understand definitions of gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as other key concepts and vocabulary. Knowing the language signals your support and allows you to speak comfortably with transgender people and knowledgeably advocate on their behalf.
4. **Challenge yourself.** We all have conscious and unconscious biases. Take a personal assessment of your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards transgender people. Cultivate self-awareness even if it’s uncomfortable.
5. **Be supportive.** Let your transgender colleagues know you are there to support them. If you aren’t sure how to be supportive, just ask. Say: “I consider myself an ally and would like to support you but I am not sure how. Can you tell me how I can help or where I can go to learn more?”
6. **Be inclusive.** Don’t assume that all your friends and co-workers are cisgender. Or that their children are cisgender. Someone close to you could be looking for support – not making assumptions will give them the space they need.
7. **Mentor and sponsor transgender employees.** Many leaders tend to mentor those who are “like” them. Branch out – be a mentor to a transgender colleague and foster their professional development.
8. **Speak up.** If you overhear an unfriendly comment or joke about transgender people in your workplace, let others know that it’s not ok with you personally, and that it is against company policy.

9. Advocate for change. Transgender people face social and legal challenges such as lack of employment protections. Know the issues and how you can help create change.
10. Lead with your ally-ness. Storytelling is powerful. Share your story – tell people why you are an ally and why this conversation is important to you.
11. We all know the ability to comfortably talk about the issues is necessary to break down bias against transgender and gender non-conforming people. That's why we urge you to start the conversation about transgender inclusion in your workplace. To begin, assess your starting point.

## Appendix 3: Sample Workplace Transition Plan and Guiding Questions

This sample Workplace Transition Plan addresses some of the processes that you might consider discussing with your supervisor. It can be customized to fit your needs and vision for your transition.

1. You could first choose to share the news of your upcoming transition with a trusted ally. This person could be a colleague, someone in HR, or a supervisor.
2. You could then contact someone in HR to discuss your plans for transitioning. This would be an opportunity to learn about all policies related to inclusion, coverage for medical transition, if you are comfortable telling your supervisor, etc.
3. A meeting could be planned between you and your supervisor, as well as anyone else you would like to be present.
4. You, the HR Rep, and your supervisor could consider discussing how the announcement will be made. Will it just be sent to your immediate colleagues? Will it be department wide? Division wide? All three? What format? Who should employees with questions contact?  
*Note: Depending on how widely communication about your transition will be shared, management staff beyond your supervisor should be made aware early so they can be prepared to support once the announcement is made.*
5. Consider a timeline for your transition. However, you may not know what this looks like right away. These are some questions to consider as you are planning:
  - A) When will you begin using a new name, if you choose to do so?
  - B) When will you begin to use your affirming gender pronouns?
  - C) If you choose to, when will you begin making changes to your gender expression?
  - D) If you choose to, when will you begin transitioning medically?
  - E) How long will you need to be away from work? What dates?
  - F) When will colleagues be made aware of your transition?
    - i. Do you plan to tell certain colleagues one-on-one? What date?
    - ii. What date should the department announcement be made?
    - iii. What date should the division be made aware?
  - G) By what date should your email address, employee ID, and name change go live?
6. Consider what bathroom you will use and communicate your needs to your supervisor. (Do you need a gender neutral bathroom?)
7. For Managers to consider: Will any bathroom signs need to be changed?
8. For Managers to consider: If training will be implemented, when will this take place?
9. For you to consider: If training will be implemented, would you like to be present for it?

*Note: This timeline can be changed, because it is YOUR process. Please remember that certain parts of your transition will take longer than others. Create a timeline that attempts to realistically and accurately predict how long each step might take.*

## Sample Transition Email

Sent: Monday, January XX, XXXX 9:00 AM

To: XXXXXXXXXXX@toolkit.ie

Subject: Staff change

Dear [INSERT NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR UNIT], I am writing to notify you of a change regarding one of our staff members in [NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR UNIT].

On [ENTER MONTH] XX, [ENTER NAME OF EMPLOYEE] will have a new preferred name, thus moving forward would like to be addressed as [ENTER AFFIRMING NAME]. [ENTER AFFIRMING NAME] will be using [ENTER AFFIRMING PRONOUNS] as pronouns.

Leadership is working to support [ENTER AFFIRMING NAME] during [ENTER PRONOUN] transition period, as well as with the performance of [ENTER PRONOUN] job. You may address any questions or concerns to [ENTER NAME OF SUPERVISOR] at [ENTER EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER] or to [ENTER NAME OF YOUR UNIT'S HR REPRESENTATIVE] at [ENTER EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER].


Thank you for your understanding and consideration in keeping [ORGANISATION] and [ENTER NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR UNIT] a productive and safe working environment for everyone.

Sincerely,

[ENTER NAME OF PERSON SENDING EMAIL]



 [www.opendoorsinitiative.ie](http://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie)

 [info@opendoorsinitiative.ie](mailto:info@opendoorsinitiative.ie)

 @OpenDoorsToWork

 /OpenDoorsInitiative



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth