

# Transgender Myth Busting Facts

## EAST SIDE CONSORTIUM

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### Introduction

#### ***What is this myth-busting pack about?***

Every day people are targeted or picked on because they are seen as “different” in some way – it may be because of their race, religion, gender, disability or their sexuality.

One group that is often the target of abuse or discrimination is “Transgender” people.

This pack aims to dispel some of the myths about transgender, provide you with the facts and hopefully increase understanding. It is part of a series of myth-busting packs produced by the East Side Consortium.

Other myth-busting packs currently available from the East Side Consortium include:

- Islamaphobia
- Homophobia
- New Arrivals
- Africa
- Mental Health
- Learning Difficulties
- Disability

Barking & Dagenham Racial Equality Council, Redbridge Equalities & Community Council and Waltham Forest Race Equality Council came together to form the East Side Consortium so that they could work together on projects across the three boroughs.

***MYTH: “Transgender is just a phase”***

***THE FACTS:*** People who are transgender are expressing their true gender identity which is an intrinsic part of them.

**What does transgender mean?**

Transgender includes a wide diversity of people. 'Transgender' is a term often used to refer to people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.

However, people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth may not self-identify as transgender; some may identify as transsexual, trans, a person of transgender experience, etc.

***MYTH: “ There is no difference between gender identity and sexual orientation ”***

***THE FACTS:*** **Sexual orientation** describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic, emotional attraction to another person for example: heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual.

**Gender identity** is someone's personal sense of their own gender for example: male, female. Transgender people may also identify their sexual orientation as, heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual in just the same way as people who are not transgender.

***MYTH: Transgender women are not “real” women and transgender men are not “real” men.***

***THE FACTS:*** People's “true” gender is not defined by the sex they were assigned at birth. Our true gender is based on our gender identity. When a person who is transgender expresses an identity different from the one they were assigned at birth, the gender they are expressing is their “real” gender.

**People may identify as transgender if their gender is different in any way from what people normally expect.**

People usually try to appear the way others expect them to be, to fit in, for fear of ridicule, or for safety and security reasons.

Many different types of people identify as transgender including:

**Male to female (MTF) transsexual** – a person born with a male body, who feels she is actually a woman (totally or partially.)

**Female to male (FTM) transsexual** – a person born with a female body, who feels he is actually a man (totally or partially.)

**Intersex** – a person born with a body that is not clearly male or female.

***MYTH: “Most transgender people have gender-reassignment surgery?”***

***THE FACTS:*** No. Most transgender people do not undergo surgery, primarily for health or financial reasons [although some health plans do cover it]. Female-to-male surgery may require many surgeries and is very expensive. (This may include a hysterectomy, radical mastectomy and chest contouring.) Male-to-female surgery is far better developed and easier. One surgery may be all that is needed and therefore even though expensive may still be cheaper than female to male surgery. Some transgender people who have the desire to have surgery may never do and may take hormones. Estrogen, for example, creates breasts, softer skin and the loss of body hair, although it does nothing to alter a deep voice. Testosterone creates facial and body hair, a drop in voice, muscle mass and some balding, if there is male-pattern baldness in the family.

***MYTH: “Transgender people have unstable and chaotic lives”***

***THE FACTS:*** This is probably the most common misconception about trans people. Many people incorrectly associate being transgender with automatically living a chaotic lifestyle based on television and films. This may involve drag performance, hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine behaviour, drugs, or prostitution. Transgender people do the everyday things that are a part of life. They go to work, buy groceries, have a social life with friends and look after their family.

## Transgender awareness

Transgender people may know their bodies are wrong for their gender from a very early age, or it may take them until middle age or later to figure it out.

Eventually, many transgender men and women find the conflict of living in the wrong gender to be so painful, that they must either transition to their true gender or die. As part of their transition process, trans people may choose to use hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery – to change their bodies to conform to their true gender. Others live in their true gender without changing their bodies. After transition, trans men and women usually blend into society, looking and acting just like any other man or woman.

### **MYTH: “Transgender people can’t have families”**

**THE FACTS:** Whether they come out before a relationship or while in one, countless transgender people find love and happiness in their lives. In fact, most transgender people will tell you that after coming out, they feel a new sense of wholeness and happiness that makes them a better partner and parent.

### **MYTH: “It’s ok to refer to transgender people by offensive names.**

**THE FACTS:** Words that are offensive to transgender people and should not be used are: ‘transvestite,’ ‘she-male,’ ‘he-she,’ ‘it,’ ‘trannie,’ ‘tranny,’ and ‘shim.’

These words are dehumanising, and using them to refer to any person is similar to using racist or anti-gay terminology. When referring to a trans gender person, one should always use he/she/his/hers and name as they prefer. If unsure it is better to ask that person rather than make an assumption. When writing about transgender people, please use “transgender”, not “transgendered”--which is considered to be incorrect.

Male to female transgender people (MTF) generally outnumber female to male transgender people (FTM) by about three to one, and the statistics vary. Current estimates are about 1 in 10,000 for biological males and 1 in 30,000 for biological females. Worldwide it may be as common as 1 in 5,000 people.

**MYTH: “Transgender people always change their first names to suit their gender identity”**

**THE FACTS:** Some Transgender people use a different name than the one they were assigned at birth and some choose to keep their name.

**MYTH: “Transgender people are mentally unwell”**

**THE FACTS:** Being a transgender person does not mean that person is mentally unwell. As with anyone who is not transgender, some people experience mental illness and some do not. However, being the victim of any sort of discrimination or bullying can lead to depression and other forms of mental illness.

**MYTH: “Cross-dressing and Transgender are the same”**

**THE FACTS:** This is incorrect. Cross-dressing refers to a person who derives pleasure from dressing in clothes generally considered appropriate to the opposite sex, but who does not wish to change gender permanently.

## **EAST SIDE CONSORTIUM**

### ***The aims of East Side Consortium are:***

- To work towards the elimination of racial, religious and other forms of discrimination;
- To promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

### **We provide:**

- Help and support to people who are victims of harassment or discrimination
- Advice and training on equality issues
- A range of myth-busting packs and briefings
- Information on Equality and Human Rights

***The East Side Consortium consists of three organisations working in partnership:***

### ***Barking & Dagenham Racial Equality Council***

Unit 2, 30 Thames Road, Barking IG11 0HZ

Tel: 0208 594 2773

Email: **bardag\_rec@yahoo.co.uk**

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday

11 am – 3 pm

### ***Redbridge Equalities & Community Council***

United Reformed Church

39 Woodford Avenue, Gants Hill,

Ilford, IG2 6UH

Tel: 0208 551 8178

Email: **office1@redbridgeequalities.org**

Opening hours: Monday to Friday

11 am – 3 pm

Hate Crime Hotline daily 6 pm until midnight

Tel No: 0208 551 8178

### ***Waltham Forest Race Equality Council***

Community Place, 806 High Road Leyton,

London E10 6AE Tel: 0208 279 2425

Email: **info@wfrec.org.uk**

Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday and

Thursday 10 am – 3 pm







