



## GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF TRANS CHILDREN

We have created this guide with members of our monthly parent group in response to feedback that information can be overwhelming. Our guide is a basic introduction with links to more detailed information and further reading for those who feel ready.



- ["My daughter has just told me they are a boy"? / "My son has just told me they are a girl"?](#)
- [Why has this happened?](#)
- [LGBT terminology](#)
- Understanding the 'transition' process
  - [Social transition options](#)
  - [Medical transition options](#)
- [What, when and how do I tell family & friends?](#)
- [I always imagined I'd be a grandparent...](#)
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Additional information / further reading

- [Sexuality & gender additional information](#)
- [Gender expression resources - additional information](#)
- [Changing legal documents - additional information](#)

We have aimed to produce an introductory level guide in response to our member's feedback that they have often felt overwhelmed by too much information and terminology when their child first came out.

Produced 2019: information accurate at the time of production.

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*Please be assured, whatever you are feeling right now is ok and there is plenty of support available to help you through this journey.*

Please do get in touch if you'd like to speak to our qualified parent worker for information, advice and guidance: Nicki Ryan 07884 425408 | [Nicki@free2b-alliance.org.uk](mailto:Nicki@free2b-alliance.org.uk)

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

“My daughter has just told me they are a boy”?

“My son has just told me they are a girl”?

It can feel very confusing and distressing when your child ‘comes out’ and tells you they are transgender. *Please be assured, whatever you are feeling right now is ok and there is plenty of support available to help you through this journey.*

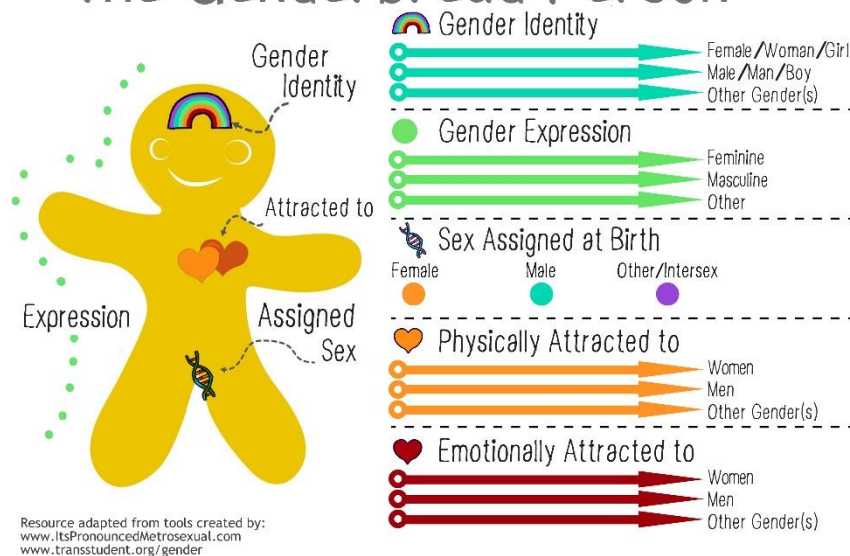
What does it mean?

When we are born, doctors make decisions about our gender based on our genitals. We now know that someone's gender is much more complex than that. Everyone has an internal sense of their own gender identity and most of the time, our internal sense will match with the assumptions made about us at birth, but it doesn't always. The assumptions made about trans people at birth were incorrect, they were always the gender they are telling us they are - it is the assumptions made about them (based on their genitals) that were wrong.



Have a look at the genderbread person below to help explore biological sex versus gender identity.

## The Genderbread Person



Don't worry if you are finding this difficult to understand: for most of us the gender we were assigned at birth and our gender identity match so it's extremely hard to imagine what it's like or what it even means when they don't match.

Proud Parent group member 2018:

*“I didn't see this coming and found it hard to believe. I have never stopped loving my child, they are still the same person inside. The challenges for me have been trying to accept that they felt they are transgender and adjusting to the differences in dress and appearance, along with remembering to use the correct pronouns.”*

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## WHY HAS THIS HAPPENED?

We often hear parents ask *"did I do something wrong...is this my fault?"*

Being transgender is just who your child is. It is not caused and cannot be 'prevented,' just like your gender 'is what it is'. Approximately 1% of the population are transgender.



*The fact that your child felt able to tell you they are trans, suggests to us that you are an amazing parent!*

If your child is very distressed or troubled about their gender identity there is help available. In the first instance contact your GP.

Under 18s: The GP will refer to the highly specialist Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust who will work with the whole family. It is often also beneficial (and advised by the Tavistock) for GPs to also refer to a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to ensure your child receives emotional support to look after their wellbeing.

Over 18s: The GP will refer to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust: Gender Identity Clinic for Adults. To ensure your child receives appropriate support to look after their emotional wellbeing, you can ask your GP for guidance on referring to local adult psychological services.

It's vital that trans young people feel supported and are seen as individuals when they seek help. Unfortunately, not all GPs are understanding and some of our youth group members have told us some very dismissive and discriminatory responses they received when they first came out to their doctor.

Remember you have every right to request a different GP if you find your child is not receiving the support they need and deserve.

*Proud Parent group member 2018:*

*"I have struggled to see them as a different gender to the one they were born with. I am getting better, it seems to come together in your head as time goes by."*

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# LGBT TERMINOLOGY

## Basic definitions relating to sexualities and genders

There are a lot of acronyms and terms relating to sexuality and gender which can be very confusing. If you search LGBT terminology online you can come across lists with so many new words it can feel overwhelming.

We have listed some of the most commonly used terms below. If you'd like to explore this further, we have included links to more detailed information.

## SEXUALITY

This refers to who you find attractive. On the Genderbread person it is represented by the 'heart'.

**Lesbian:** a female who finds females attractive.

**Gay:** a male who finds males attractive (but just to confuse matters, it is sometimes used instead of the term lesbian and can describe a gay woman).

**Bisexual:** a person who finds both males and females attractive. This does not mean that they date two people at the same time, but simply that they may date either a man or a woman, as they find both attractive.

**Straight:** a person who finds the opposite sex attractive. E.g. a female who likes males and vice versa.

## GENDER IDENTITY TERMINOLOGY

Our biological sex refers to our reproductive organs, hormones and chromosomes. Gender identity is how we think in our heads about ourselves.

**\*Cis Male:** a person whose gender identity (male) matches the assumptions made about them at birth (male)

**\*Cis Female:** a person whose gender identity (female) matches the assumptions made about them at birth (female)

**Trans Male:** a person whose gender identity (male) does not match the assumptions made about them at birth (female)

**Trans Female:** a person whose gender identity (female) does not match the assumptions made about them at birth (male)

**Intersex:** a person who is born with a combination of both male & female biological sex organs / chromosomes. Between 1.7% and 4% of the population are intersex.

**Non-binary:** a person who does not identify as either a man or a woman – sometimes the term gender neutral is used. Instead of using terms like she/her or he/him (pronouns) a non-binary person might prefer neutral terms such as they/them.

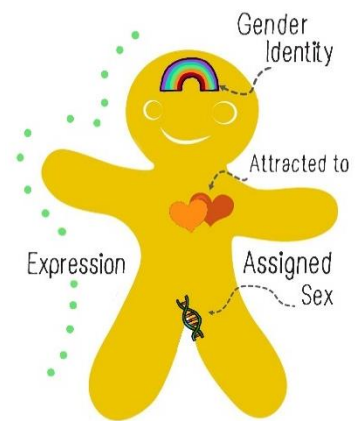
\*Often people ask "why not just say male and female? Why do we need to add the term cis?" The reason it is being more commonly used, is to differentiate and therefore show respect for the other gender identities. Whilst cis men and women are statistically the majority of the population, it doesn't mean other gender identities have any less value.

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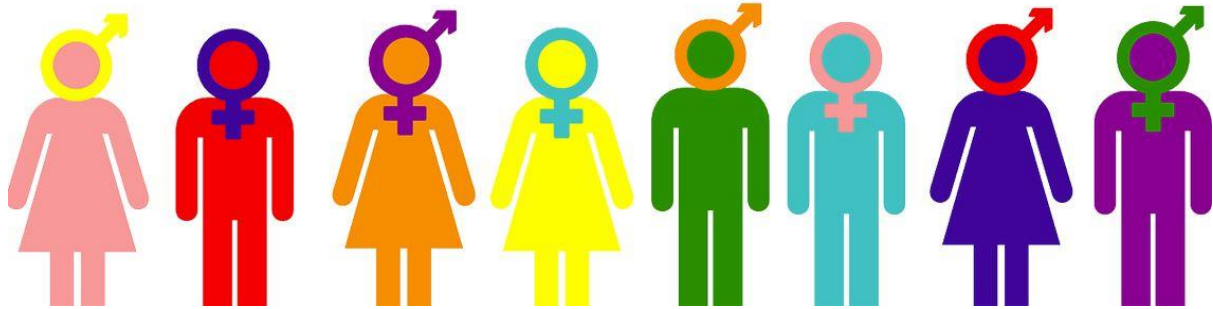
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## The Genderbread Person



## UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION PROCESS

When your child first comes out it is likely that they will be at the very beginning or early stages of their 'transition'. Transition refers to the process a person goes through to bring their biological sex in line with their gender identity.



*Every trans person is different and there is no 'fixed path'. Below are some of the different ways a trans person may choose to transition.*

### SOCIAL TRANSITION

**Informal name change:** Anyone can ask people to refer to them by a chosen name and many people, regardless of gender, use nicknames or abbreviations, or middle names etc. This does not however have any 'legal' status and the name on their birth certificate would still be valid and required for formal situations.

**Legal name change:** Over the age of 16 a young person can choose to change their name legally by deed poll without parental consent.

Under the age of 16, parental consent is required from each person with Parental Responsibility.

This can be difficult for parents because it is likely you chose your child's birth name and they are now asking to be called something different.

You may be able to be involved in helping your child choose a new name, though this very much depends on the stage your child is at when they come out as they may have already chosen a new name.

It will take time to get used to and you may find it difficult to use your child's new name to begin with. Some parents avoid it by saying things like "come on love, dinner's ready...". This can give you some breathing space to try and adjust without upsetting your child by using their birthname or upsetting yourself by using their new chosen name.

*Proud Parent group member 2018:*

*"Initially this wasn't a problem for me because I reasoned it could just as easy be a nickname. It wasn't a name of my choice, not one I would have chosen, so that made it harder all round. When this was changed by deed poll, it was hard again because it was then official and made me feel sad again for a time."*

*Youth club member 2019:*

*"My mum didn't really like the name I'd chosen at first, so we decided she would help me choose a new middle name which was great! She's happy with my name now too – it just took her a little while to get used to!"*

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### Pronouns and gender labels:

Just like a name change, anyone can ask others to use specific pronouns when speaking about them (she/her, he/him) but this would not have any legal status.

It will again take time to get used to, especially as our family structures have lots of gendered labels: son/daughter, aunt/uncle, sister/brother etc.

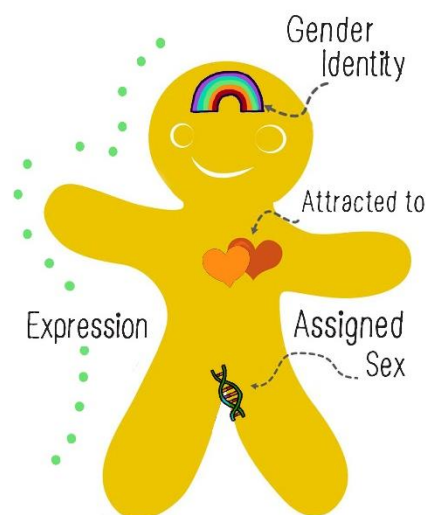
Having to describe the child who was your son now as your daughter (or vice versa) can be very hard, even more so because you would only usually use such language when talking to others about your child. See our section on 'what, when & how do I tell family & friends.'

Appearance: Our clothes, hair and make-up choices are a way for each of us to express ourselves as individuals. For trans individuals these are often *relatively simple* changes they can make to help express their gender identity.

Take another look at the Genderbread person where this is shown as 'gender expression' and is represented by a dotted line around the outside of the Gender Unicorn.

It can feel difficult to watch your child's appearance change – but if possible, you may be able to get involved such as with a shopping trip together, which can help strengthen your relationship.

### The Genderbread Person



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# UNDERSTANDING MEDICAL TRANSITION OPTIONS

*Every trans person is different and there is no 'fixed path'. Below are some of the different ways a trans person may choose to transition.*

## Hormone blockers

These suppress the body's natural sex hormones:

For trans women (people with a female gender identity who were assigned male at birth) blockers will suppress the testosterone that their body would normally produce.

For trans men (people with a male gender identity who were assigned female at birth), blockers will suppress the oestrogen that their body would normally produce.

Depending on the age a person starts receiving support with their transition, blockers can be prescribed with parental consent to delay / prevent their natural puberty. This can be extremely positive as it stops body changes that would be deeply upsetting. For example, a trans girl would not want her (male) biological hormones to cause her voice to break. Likewise, trans boys would not want their (female) biological hormones to cause their breasts to start developing and periods to start.

If blockers are started after puberty has taken place, they cannot 'reverse' all of the body's changes.

For example, once a voice has broken it cannot be restored.

*The GP and Gender Identity Clinic will work very closely with the family to ensure it is the correct path for the child.*

Blockers can be stopped at any stage and the body's biological hormones will start to function again.



## Hormones

Cross-sex hormones are prescribed to individuals where appropriate to enable their body to develop in line with their gender identity.

*The GP and Gender Identity Clinic will work very closely with the individual to ensure it is the correct path. Hormone levels are also monitored regularly to ensure the treatment is effective.*

***It is essential that individuals taking cross-sex hormones are carefully monitored and supported by a GP.***

In trans women, oestrogen may cause the following effects:

- Fat may be distributed on the hips
- The size of the penis and testicles may be slightly reduced
- Some trans women find that erections and orgasm are harder to achieve

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In trans men, testosterone may cause the following effects:

- It promotes beard and body hair growth
- Male pattern baldness may develop
- The clitoris increases slightly in size
- Libido may be heightened
- Muscle bulk increases
- The voice deepens, but not usually to the pitch of other men.
- Periods will stop, although there may be some breakthrough bleeding requiring adjustment of dosage
- Some individuals develop acne

Cross-sex hormones can be stopped at any time, though some changes to the body will remain. For example, trans men have successfully become pregnant by pausing their hormone treatment and allowing their (female) biological body to function. However, changes such as a deeper voice, facial and body hair will remain.

For full details on hormone therapy and the impact of blockers / hormones see our useful websites page which includes the NHS guide to Hormone Therapy.

### [Surgery options](#)

Some of the key surgery options for trans men (people with a male gender identity who were assigned female at birth):

- Breast removal
- Hysterectomy
- Penis construction

Other plastic surgery options can be considered as with any individual wishing to alter their appearance, such as muscle enhancers.

Some of the key surgery options for trans women (people with a female gender identity who were assigned male at birth):

- Breast enhancement – though often trans women find that breasts develop naturally as a result of hormone treatment
- Vagina construction

Other plastic surgery options can be considered as with any individual wishing to alter their appearance, such as Adam's apple reduction and facial feminisation.

**There is a common misconception that all trans people will undergo ALL relevant surgery, but this is not the case.**

Each person is different and unique and many trans people are comfortable with making a social transition (name change, appearance etc). Every surgery carries potential risks and so it is a big decision to make. For example, we have worked with many trans men who have chosen to have breast removal surgery, but they choose not to proceed with a hysterectomy (as the hormone treatment prevents monthly periods) and many choose not to proceed with penis construction surgery.

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## HOW DO I TELL FAMILY & FRIENDS?

What, when and how do I tell family & friends

This can be a challenging topic and there are no right or wrong answers. We cannot control the reactions of others and so ultimately a well-planned disclosure can go far better than you predicted, but likewise responses may be upsetting.

Ideally, it is best if possible, to talk it through with your child and agree how they would like their news to be shared and with whom. This may take some time and require detailed discussion, as often children may not consider all factors and may have unrealistic plans.

For example, a child may wish to tell only certain family members but not others, but they may not have considered how this will practically work as family members are likely to talk to each other. Even if those informed agree not to share the information, this is unlikely to work if there is a large family gathering such as a wedding.

With this in mind it can be helpful to talk things through in as much detail as possible and consider consequences. It is also helpful to think about the way information is shared and what this means to different generations. For example, teens are far more likely to think it is acceptable to share such news via social media, but for older family members this may seem extremely insensitive.

*Free2B worked with a family whose child posted a disclosure statement and updated their gender on Facebook. Whilst the parents were supportive of their child's gender identity, they were very upset by the way their child shared their news.*

*Proud Parent group member 2019:*

*"All my friends were supportive but very taken aback...I felt some people were intrigued and perhaps not in a good way!"*

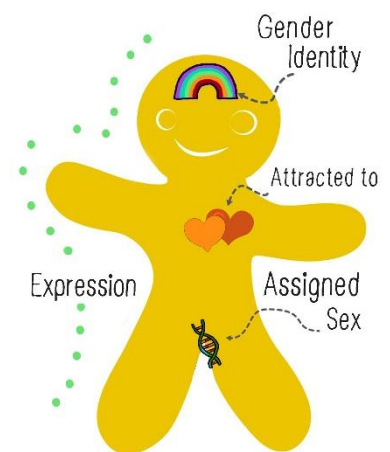
You may find it helpful to invite family members to join you if you attend a support group as they may benefit from meeting other families.

Our monthly support group welcomes any family member who may wish to come along.

*You may find it helpful to show people the Genderbread person and the initial section of this guide to help explain what being transgender means.*



### The Genderbread Person



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## I ALWAYS IMAGINED I'D BE A GRANDPARENT...

It can be difficult to accept when things don't turn out the way we planned. The fact that your child is transgender does not necessarily mean you won't still be a grandparent...any more than the fact that a cisgender child may choose that they don't want to have children, or may not be able to have children.

### TRANS PARENTING OPTIONS

Trans women (people with a female gender identity who were assigned male at birth), may choose to have sperm frozen prior to any hormone and / or surgery treatment, to give them parenting options in the future.

Likewise, trans men (people with a male gender identity who were assigned female at birth), may choose to have their eggs frozen prior to any hormone and / or surgery treatment, to give them parenting options in the future.

Trans men may also choose to put their hormone treatment on hold to allow their body's female hormones to start functioning again in order to become pregnant. Assuming the individual still has their female reproductive organs (i.e. they have not undergone a hysterectomy) this is viable. There are emotional factors to consider in that a trans man would be dealing with the psychological impact of carrying a child, which is widely recognised as a 'female' role.

There are also the same options available as would be offered to any individual with fertility issues. Trans individuals may choose to foster or adopt, or consider surrogacy options.



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# USEFUL WEBSITES

## SEXUALITY AND GENDER USEFUL SITES

[Biological sex and gender identity further details](#)

[LGBT glossary of terms](#)



## GENDER EXPRESSION USEFUL SITES

[Trans friendly hairdressers](#)

[Large size women's shoes / clothes \(n.b. Amazon is a good source\)](#)

[Long Tall Sally](#)

[EMP \(rock/goth\)](#)

[FREE Binder Scheme](#)

[Applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate](#)

[NHS guide](#)

## FURTHER SUPPORT / INFORMATION

[Mermaids - parent resources](#)

[Gendered Intelligence - family resources](#)

[FFLAG Trans Support](#)

With huge thanks to our Proud Parent group members who contributed their personal experiences to help develop this guide. And to [Proud2be](#) who kindly provided invaluable advice on the language and terminology used.

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# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## SEXUALITY & GENDER - AREN'T THEY THE SAME THING?

Often people get sexuality and gender muddled up.

They are quite separate: who we find attractive and how we identify as a person.

The confusion often comes from the fact that your sexuality is 'labelled' based on your gender and the gender of the person you find attractive.

For example:



A woman who finds other women attractive is referred to as a lesbian

BUT, if that female subsequently came out as transgender and identifies as a man...it changes the way we *label their sexuality*.



They identify as a man, but they would still find women attractive, so they would be described as straight.

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# GENDER EXPRESSION RESOURCES

There is a range of equipment that has been developed to help trans individuals with their gender expressions. They often have a hugely positive impact on the person's emotional wellbeing as they help to change their body in line with their gender identity.



## Binders

These are a bit like a sports bra or vest – designed to flatten the bust. They are used by trans men (people with a male gender identity who were assigned female at birth)

Sometimes young people use bandages or other strapping if they can't afford or can't access proper binders which can unfortunately cause health issues such as breathing difficulties.

[FREE binder scheme info](#)



## Packers

This is a prosthetic penis and it is used to fill out the crotch area in trousers.

They are used by trans men. Other items can be used to fill out the crotch area such as a pair of socks.



## Stand-to-pee

This is a device that allows trans men to use urinals and stand to pee – sometimes abbreviated to STP.

They are similar to the packers, but are hollow and have to be positioned carefully to enable peeing without accidents.

It is advised to practice before using in public as it takes some getting used to.



## Breast forms

These are used by trans women (people with a female gender identity who were assigned male at birth). They are silicone breasts which can be placed in a bra cup or you can purchase bras with special pockets to hold the forms more securely.

They are also used by women who have undergone mastectomy surgery and may be advertised as such. Any soft filler item (such as socks, tissue, tights etc) can also be used to pad out a bra though it is less likely to create a good shape.



## Wigs

These may be worn by trans women – especially if they transition in later life and have a receding hair line, or they may be used temporarily whilst growing the natural hair to a longer length or into a new style.



## Panty girdle

These are used by trans women to flatten out the crotch area and provide some waist shaping.

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## CHANGING LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Individuals can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate if they want their acquired gender to be legally recognised in the UK – though many trans people choose not to apply as the process can be quite lengthy.

Currently in the UK, the law says that everyone is either legally male or legally female and that this is determined by what it says on your birth certificate. This means that for certain things that are controlled by law (*such as pensions, marriage and prisons,*) individuals may be treated as the gender on their birth certificate regardless of their gender identity and regardless of whether they hold other documents in their acquired gender.

Currently only male and female are recognised as legal genders in the UK – non-binary individuals are not legally recognised.



Individuals can only obtain a new birth certificate once they have received their Gender Recognition Certificate.

Individuals can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate if all the following are true:

- They are 18 or over
- They have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria (discomfort with their birth gender) - this is also called gender identity disorder, gender incongruence or transsexualism
- They have lived in their acquired gender for at least 2 years
- They intend to live in their acquired gender for the rest of their life

See Government guidance for more information and an alternative application route.

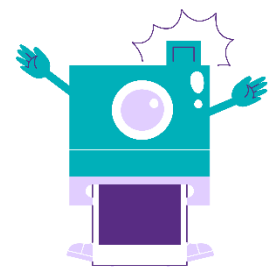
Please see our useful websites page which includes details on applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate

It is possible to change documents WITHOUT a Gender Recognition Certificate

### Obtaining a new passport or amending an existing passport

- Passport form
- Passport sized photograph
- Original change of name document (not a copy)
- Doctor's letter stating change of gender\*
- Original birth certificate if this is your first passport

\*The doctor's letter must contain specific language - it must say that the change of gender is 'permanent'. [Gendered Intelligence](#) have provided a useful template detailed below.



Complete the application for a new passport and send this with a copy of the health professional's letter and a copy of the Statutory Declaration or deed poll.

Individuals must also send their old passport back if they have one. If they have not held a passport before, then they must also send their original birth certificate to the passport office.

If the individual is 16 or over, this can be done without parental consent.

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If the individual is under 16, their parents will need to sign the letter. However, there is no minimum age restriction on when a person can change the gender on their passport if they have the appropriate documentation.

*This is a template letter for your doctor to write. This can be a GP or a gender specialist. You do not have to have started medical transition to receive this letter. It should be on headed paper with the name and address of the person who is writing it.*

*Medical Reference No. xxxxxxxxxxxxxx Date.*

*To whom it may concern,*

*This is to confirm that my patient [Full Name] has been diagnosed as having gender dysphoria and is currently undergoing gender reassignment. This change is to be permanent. As part of this process they have changed their name by Statutory Declaration from [old Full Name] to [Full Name].*

*Your assistance in making the relevant changes to your records and in preserving full confidentiality would be appreciated.*

*Doctor, GP or Consultants signature*

## Changing the name or gender on a driving licence

- Form D1 'Application for a driving licence' for a car or motorbike licence
- Form D2 'Application for a lorry/bus licence' for a lorry or bus licence

Available from the post office or online.

Provide one of the following documents with your application:

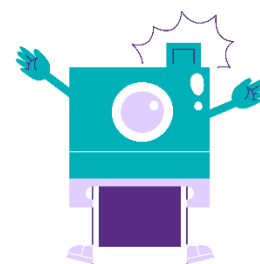
- a deed poll
- a statutory declaration \*
- gender recognition certificate

\*You can get an official statement confirming that you've changed name or gender (called a 'statutory declaration') from:

- a solicitor
- a magistrate
- a commissioner of oaths

To change the photo at the same time, send:

- a recent passport-style photo
- a cheque or postal order for £17, payable to DVLA (there's no fee if you're over 70 or have a medical short period licence)



*Proud Parent group member 2019:*

*"My child changed their driving licence (photo ID) - this was very easy to do and did not cost anything. The deed poll was used to change their name with the GP, however, this is still not always so straightforward in terms of how they and other medical agencies address them or refer to them."*

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