



Practical Skills Day

Confidence building workshop delivered as part of the Lothian Transgender Support Programme (LTSP)

Saturday 28th March 2015

The event

In March 2015, LGBT Health provided a day of confidence building and practical skills for anyone who self-identifies as trans* and/or non-binary.

Supported by trans youth group, Beyond Gender and LGBT Youth Scotland, we provided two confidence boosting workshops, free make-up guidance, haircuts, head massage, and a pop-up clothes shop. In amidst the planned activities, was the opportunity for individuals to meet other trans people and socialise in a safe, friendly and accessible setting.



Background

Through a range of workshops such as this, LTSP aims to help trans people build in confidence, feel less isolated, increase self-esteem and feel more able to cope with their life. These workshops are provided alongside a range of other supports for trans people, including 1:1 information and support, transition support courses, regular social events and a monthly newsletter.

Ethos and approach

Since 2008, LGBT Health and Wellbeing have been delivering services for transgender people. Through the extensive engagement these services have provided, LGBT Health recognises and embraces the importance of an inclusive and approach to supporting trans people. Ensuring the events are relevant for a broad range of trans identities is a welcomed challenge. These identities include trans women, trans men, non-binary and genderqueer identifying people, and those who are experimenting, questioning and exploring their gender identity. Our approach also includes making sure that event publicity is inclusive of these identities and is distributed widely and to relevant networks.

Recording and evaluation

Capturing the views and information shared in these workshops can be a useful way to include people who weren't able to attend on the day. Generic notes are recorded from the workshops to ensure that 'top tips' and helpful advice are shared more widely after the event, whilst safeguarding the confidentiality of the group. The Practical Skills event was also formally evaluated via feedback forms at the end of the session, along with more informal feedback gathered via social media posts and email correspondence. We hope that this feedback may also motivate anyone who is hesitant about attending any of our LTSP events, to join future events.

For anyone who identifies as trans* and/or non-binary

Boost your confidence

Practical Skills Day

Free workshops:

- 12.00: Discussion on public toilets
- 13.00: Coming out

Free hair cuts & head massage!

Skin care expert on hand!

Make-up guidance

With the support of Beyond Gender

Saturday 28th March, 11am - 3pm FREE

40 Commercial St, EH6 6JD

Book online via - <http://bit.ly/1ALSJLKK>

For more info phone: 0131 523 1104

E: jules@lgbthealth.org.uk



Along with various practical activities, the day included 2 workshops; 'Using Public Toilets' and 'Coming Out'. The following information provides details of what was discussed.

Workshop 1: Using Public Toilets

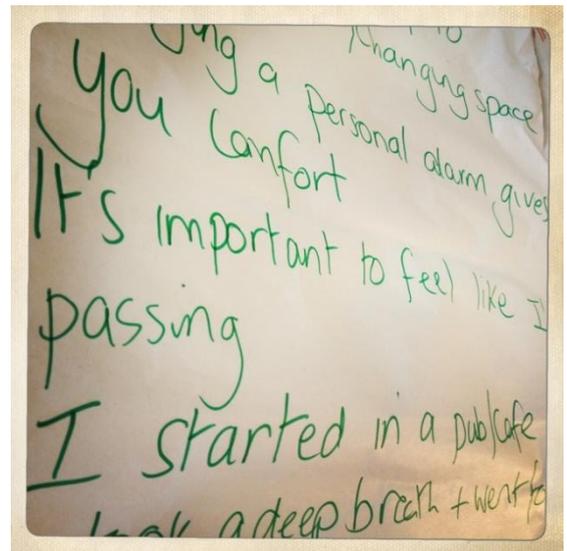
Though experiences vary, there are common themes that emerged from discussing trans people's experiences of using public toilets, that highlights the barriers, difficulties and impact that can be felt whilst navigating such publically accessed territories. The common occurrence of being faced with a binary choice, to use either 'male' or 'female' spaces, draws focus and (often unwanted) attention to a person's trans identity.

In setting the scene for the discussion, the group established that the act of using public toilets as a trans person, can attract responses from the public, both before, during and after entering facilities. This means that many people are faced with difficult conversations, being forced to 'out' themselves to assert or defend their decision to use a specific space, or encounter prejudice and transphobic reactions regularly.

We also established that **there is currently no law in Scotland preventing anybody from using the toilet of their choice**. However you may encounter different responses and levels of understanding from companies or organisations from place to place. Some organisations may have a policy on how to respond to the use of facilities, whilst others may have no policy at all. This means that trans people are often left dealing with whichever staff member happens to be working at the time of the perceived incident.

From the experiences that individuals shared, it is often the attitude and level of awareness of the first staff members that responds, that can cause the most distress, regardless of what the company policy might be. It was noted that your experience of using the same facilities on different days, could even differ greatly, depending on which members of the public/staff you encounter.

The 2010 Equalities Act provides legal protection for trans people on the basis that it is illegal to refuse to provide a service to somebody based on their transgender identity. However, we talked about how it may be difficult to prove that an establishment is refusing a service to you, if they say that they are offering you a space (albeit a gendered space that does not match your gender identity).



Your experiences

- *"I've had to out myself to access a toilet or changing space"*
- *"I carry a personal alarm as it gives me comfort"*
- *"It's important to feel like I'm passing"*
- *"I started in a pub/café – took a deep breath and went for it!"*
- *"I've used an app – 'Safe to Pee' (now renamed 'Refuge Restrooms')*

<http://www.refugerestrooms.org/>)

Top Tips for using public toilets

- Adopt a 'Go for it!' attitude
- Be yourself
- Go with a friend (easier with 'women's' toilet)
- Remember everybody goes there to pee, they're mostly not going to care about you
- Be prepared, talk to an LGBT organisation, google a floor plan!
- Try not to over-think it
- Remember you are entitled to use whichever toilet you choose
- Tell staff if you've had a bad experience. They may be able to make things better in the future

Where are there safe toilet spaces in Edinburgh?

Individuals shared their experience of using specific locations in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and came up with the following list of places they considered to be safe and helpful:

Edinburgh

- Summerhall
- Starbucks (Waverley)
- Brass Monkey pub on Leith Walk
- Forest Café
- Ocean Terminal parenting suite
- Teviot: Edinburgh University
- St James Centre parenting space
- Ikea (provide access to adult changing spaces with use of a [Radar key](#))



Glasgow

- Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA main floor) on Sauchihall Street
- Stereo Bar/Café (gender neutral spaces)
- Mono (not neutral but trans supportive)

Workshop 2: Coming Out

We learned that there were several people present at this workshop who had recently come out or were planning to come out. So we began by establishing how to define 'coming out' and what to expect from this often life-long process.

We also spent some time thinking about the different ways in which a person can come out to people they know. We discussed that how useful or 'right' these different methods would feel, could be very subjective and we acknowledged that it's good to consider your options, depending on the circumstances.

HOW could I 'come out'?

- In person
- In a letter/email/text
- By telephone/skype
- By hinting; e.g. poems, songs, art, language, conversational subject matters or by being part of a community that others affiliate you with
- Via a friend/supporter/ally
- By accident/unintentionally
- By being 'outed'

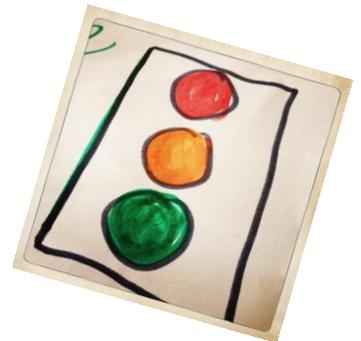
The discussion developed into an engaging dialogue around '**when is the right time**' to come out. We agreed that the matter of 'when' is different for everybody and there was a shared sense of understanding, that there often isn't a 'perfect time'. The discussion did highlight however, examples of good and bad timing, from individual's experiences of coming out:

Bad timing examples

- In the middle of arguments (especially in public)
- When you're having a mental health crisis
- When using alcohol or drugs
- If you have over planned/have high expectations
- When you are then going to be on your own with no support

'Coming out'...

- Everybody's coming out is different
- Coming out is a process
- Coming out is often emotional
- Coming out is sharing information about your identity and who you are
- It gives others the opportunities to learn more about who you are
- It enables you to live your life as authentically as possible
- It gives people the opportunity to know how you would like to be treated



Good timing tips

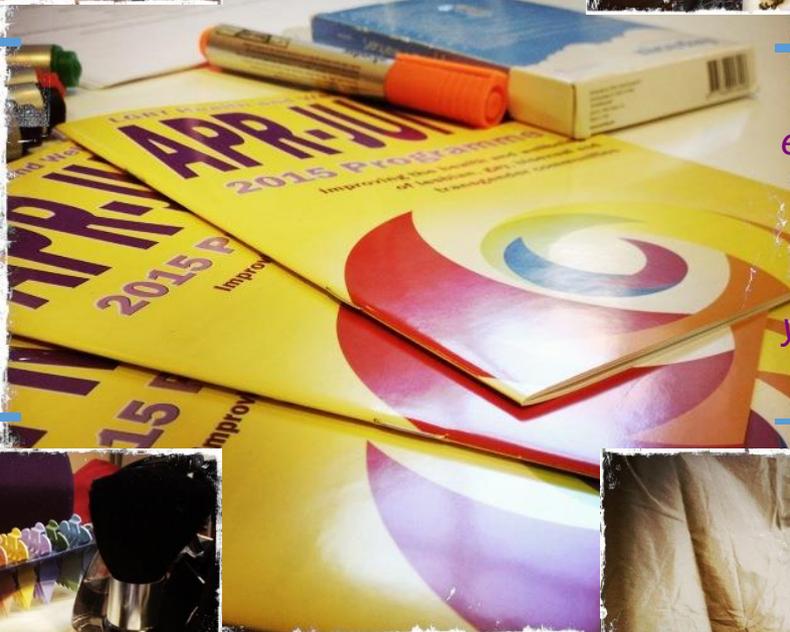
- Don't apologise for who you are
- Do it when you have support/an ally - safety
- Do it once you've had time to explore for yourself / come out to yourself
- Listen to the person you're coming out too
- Be patient; remember people may need time to think and reflect, just as you did
- Remember that if there's a negative reaction – it's not your fault
- Learn about your rights and how to access them
- Reach out to people who care



*“Confidence,
new friends,
NEW HAIR!”*



*I've gained
Affirmation that
it is OK to be,
oneself,
respectful of
others and less
fearful.”*



*“I have most
enjoyed being in a
safe space to be
myself and hear
from a mix of
younger and older
folks”*



*“It was a good
day, well run by
Jules, Lawrence
and others.
Thank you!”*



Useful contacts and information

Lothian Transgender Support Programme

Jules Stapleton Barnes, Development Worker

Social events, Confidence building workshops, Transition Support Courses & Newsletter

Email: jules@lgbtheath.org.uk Phone: 0131 523 1104

George Burrows, Development Worker

Information and 1:1 support and new referral appointments

Email: george@lgbthealth.org.uk Phone: 0131 652 3281