

Always here for you.

# An Introductory Guide to Working Inclusively with Individuals who Identify as LGBTIQA+



## Our commitment

**Banyule Community Health is committed to ensuring all staff and consumers experience high levels of inclusion and access within our service. We proudly release 'An Introductory Guide to Working Inclusively with Individuals who Identify as LGBTIQA+' to help provide our staff with the knowledge and confidence to create a welcoming environment, where staff and consumers feel safe and supported to be fully themselves.**

**This guide is driven by Banyule Community Health's purpose of addressing inequity, and building healthy, inclusive and just communities. By using these guidelines, we help to reduce the barriers to participation that sexually and gender diverse people face, to ensure they feel a sense of belonging when accessing our services.**



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Banyule Community Health**



Banyule Community Health would like to thank cohealth for their valuable contributions in supporting BCH to develop this guide.

Banyule Community Health acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands where we provide our services. We pay our respects to Elders and leaders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the enduring impacts of colonisation and the sorrow of the Stolen Generations. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the First Nations' Peoples.



## Introduction

While not all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, intersex, queer (or questioning) and asexual (LGBTIQA+) people experience challenges in their lives, many do. According to La Trobe University's Private Lives Matter (2020) research on the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ Australian's "mental health challenges, suicidal thoughts and attempts, harassment and abuse, homelessness, challenges with alcohol and drug use and intimate partner and family violence are some of the areas that are disproportionately experienced by LGBTIQA+ people, with specific subgroups experiencing additional burdens". Ensuring Banyule Community Health is a safe space for disclosure is essential to help reduce these burdens.

Banyule Community Health is committed to ensuring cultural safety within our service, where people feel comfortable to be themselves without experiencing judgement or prejudice. By using inclusive language, we can demonstrate respect for LGBTIQA+ community members, and provide a safe and inclusive environment that is welcoming and accessible.

This guide is for Banyule Community Health employees. It explains how we can use language respectfully and inclusively when working with LGBTIQA+ people, and how we can work together to provide a safe and welcoming environment.

## Basic Terminology

**Cisgender:** a person who exclusively identifies with their gender assigned at birth

**Gender diverse:** an umbrella term that is used to describe gender identities that demonstrate a diversity of expression beyond the binary framework of male and female

**Gender identity:** our internal sense of self that may be masculine, feminine, either, both or moving around freely

**Gender marker:** markers that denote someone's gender identity (eg: M, F or X)

**Gender pronouns:** the pronouns used to describe gender (eg: he/him/his, they/them/theirs, she/her/hers)

**Heteronormative:** a view that promotes heterosexuality as the preferred or normal sexual orientation

**Misgendering:** the deliberate or accidental use of a pronoun, title or other gendered language that does not match a person's gender identity

**Misnaming/deadnaming:** the deliberate or accidental use of an old name or legal name instead of a person's chosen name

**Pronoun cueing:** the deliberate use of words or actions to send a 'cue' to others about someone's gender or preferred pronouns

**Non-binary:** a broad term referencing gender identities and/or experiences that aren't exclusively male or female

**Transgender/trans:** a person who does not exclusively identify with their gender assigned at birth

## Using inclusive language

It is important to remember that some people may change their pronouns, names, and/or gender markers to better reflect their gender identity, and that people express their gender and sexuality in different ways. We need to respect everyone's gender identity, and how they would like to be referred to.

Using inclusive language is a way to respect and acknowledge diversity, build trust, and reduce discrimination that trans, gender diverse and non-binary people face. It also ensures we don't leave people out of conversations and acknowledges the diversity of people we work with.

This right is protected through the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013*.

## How to greet people

Misgendering, misnaming or deadnaming can cause distress to trans, gender diverse and non-binary people. When greeting someone it's important to remember not to make assumptions about someone's gender based on their name, appearance, or mannerisms.

If you are unsure about someone's preferred name or pronoun, it is okay to ask. If you make a mistake about a person's name or pronoun, politely apologise, and continue the conversation. If your colleague uses incorrect pronouns or names, politely correct them.

No one gets it right 100% of the time with everyone, but the important thing is to keep trying.

While asking about someone's pronouns or gender identity can feel uncomfortable, it is more uncomfortable to misgender someone. The following can be used as a guide to ask someone about their pronouns or gender identity:

Try asking: **"What pronouns do you use?"** or **"How would you describe your gender identity?"** Avoid asking what terms they 'prefer' as this sounds as if it's a choice, and we are not talking about preferences or choices. We are just talking about how people are.

Some people introduce their own pronoun first. For example:

**"Hello, I'm Jayda, I'll be your GP today and my pronouns are they, them, theirs. Would you like me to record what pronouns or titles you would like to use at our service?"**

If you make a mistake, you could say: **"I'm sorry for using the wrong pronoun/name. I didn't mean to disrespect you. Let me try again"**.

When addressing someone you don't know, one way to avoid misgendering is to avoid using terms that indicate gender. For example, you can simply ask **"How may I help you?"** instead of **"How may I help you, sir?"** or use their chosen name instead of **"Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms"**.

If you are talking about someone who you don't yet know, you can avoid misgendering by using the term "they" instead of "he/she".

For example, **"They are here for their appointment"** or **"The client is here for their appointment"**.

Once someone has disclosed their chosen name and pronouns it is important to use their preferences, even when they are not around. This includes all future direct correspondence and documentation.

## How to record personal details

To help provide an inclusive service, Banyule Community Health consumers are invited to include optional information about their gender identity, sexuality, and intersex variation status. This gives people an opportunity to self-identify how they would like their gender identity and pronouns to be recorded.

If someone's identification (such as their Medicare card) does not match the one on Banyule Community Health's system, you may need to ask for clarification upon first contact.

In these instances, you could ask **“Could your records be under a different name?”**, or **“What is the name on your Medicare card?”**, and then cross check with other identifiers such as date of birth and address. Don't ask what their “real” or “legal” name is as this may cause offence and make the person feel their chosen name is not valid.

## What questions can I ask?

It is important not to ask unnecessary questions. Many LGBTIQ+ people get asked a lot of questions about their experiences. You need to ensure there is a valid reason for your questioning.

Questioning a person about their surgical status, medical and sexual history without a valid reason may be considered sexual harassment under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

Before asking a question, ask yourself: **“Is my question necessary for their care?”** and **“How can I ask for this information in a sensitive way?”**

## How can we support safe disclosure?

When you ask questions about someone's pronouns or gender identity it should be in a respectful and affirming way that allows the person to feel valued.

It is important to explain why this information is being asked, and how it can help our service to better meet their needs. However, the consumer needs to know that it is their choice whether they choose to disclose.

**We need to ensure we are providing a safe space for disclosure, while also respecting a person's right to privacy.**

Sometimes people aren't “out” with their gender identity in all settings, so maintaining confidentiality is integral to a Trans, gender diverse or non-binary person's experience within a service. Consumers should be made aware that any information they provide will be stored securely and will remain confidential. This will help to reassure the person that it is safe to disclose their gender identity within our service. Advising that any correspondence with other health providers or agencies will only occur with their consent will provide further reassurance.

Additionally, consumers should be made aware of their right to remove or alter any information, at any time.

When asking someone whether they consent to sharing information, you could ask **“Would you like me to use your affirmed name and pronoun in the referral letter I write?”** or **“Would you like information on your affirmed name and pronouns shared to other staff members?”**

## Providing a safe environment

It is important to provide a safe environment where people feel welcome. Visual signs of support can demonstrate Banyule Community Health's commitment to providing an inclusive service and acknowledge the barriers that LGBTIQ+ people face.

Some examples include wearing pronoun badges and rainbow lanyards to show support for the LGBTIQ+ community.

It is also important to ask consumers how we can help them to feel safe within our service, so we can address these needs.

Banyule Community Health acknowledges that our systems are many and varied. We will continue to review our practices, to assist us in providing a safe environment for all community members.

## Bathrooms

It is important not to make assumptions about which bathroom someone should use, even if there is a gender-neutral bathroom. Instead of directing someone to a specific bathroom, you should advise of all available bathrooms. If someone asks you to use the bathroom, you could say:

**“We have three bathrooms on site- the men’s and women’s bathrooms are over there to the right, and the gender-neutral bathroom is just over there to the left.”**

Banyule Community Health supports the rights of Trans, gender diverse and non-binary people to use the toilets they feel most comfortable with.

Some consumers may have concerns about using toilets that are signed for all genders. If someone raises concerns, it is recommended that you:

- Acknowledge their complaint, and ask them to clearly explain their concern
- Explain that Banyule Community Health has all gender bathrooms to ensure everyone feels safe and welcome within our service.

If you feel comfortable doing so, you can also explain that it is illegal to ask trans, gender diverse and non-binary people to use a bathroom that does not reflect their gender identity.

Additionally, you can refer the person to our complaints process and policy, as well as our consumers' rights and responsibilities policy.

Inform the person that Banyule Community Health has a zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment and abuse of LGBTIQ+ people.

If a situation escalates, please refer the person to a senior manager on site and report the incident.



## Best practices for a gender-affirming environment

Best Practice	Examples	Best Practice	Examples
When talking about a person whose gender identity and pronouns you do not know, avoid gendered terms. Use gender-neutral words such as “they” or their chosen name.	<p>“Paige is here for their appointment”</p> <p>“It’s Jo’s first day of work, they will be working in the allied health team”.</p>	Ask respectfully about consumer names if they don’t match our records. Always ask if someone has a name they would prefer we use.	<p>“Could your file be under another name?”</p> <p>“Maybe the name we have on our system is the same as the one on your Medicare card. Would you like me to add another name to our file?”</p>
Don’t assume gender and pronouns. Always ask, with discretion.	<p>“How do you currently describe your gender identity?”</p> <p>“What pronouns do you use?”</p> <p>“Hi, I’m Tommy, and I use he/him pronouns. What pronouns do you use?”</p>	Apologise if you make a mistake.	“I’m sorry for using the wrong pronoun. I didn’t mean to disrespect you. Let me try again”
Educate people who need more information about why we ask about gender identity.	<p>“Consumer “Why are you asking this question?”</p> <p>Response “We don’t like to make assumptions about people’s gender identities; Banyule Community Health is inclusive of trans and gender diverse consumers. While we ask this of everyone, it may not be relevant to you”.</p>	Only ask for information that is required to provide the service.	Ask yourself: What do I need to know? How can I ask in a sensitive way?
		If someone asks to use the bathroom, don’t make assumptions about which one they would prefer.	Point to all available bathrooms
		When addressing groups of people, don’t use gendered terms like “ladies and gentlemen”.	“Good morning, everyone, thanks for coming”.





## How to be an ally

**Respect** that people have the right to define their gender, and affirm people's gender identities, pronouns and chosen names.

**Listen** to the experiences of trans, gender diverse and non-binary people, and avoid speaking on their behalf.

**Challenge** transphobic jokes and comments, to create an environment of accountability. Don't be a bystander.

**Do your research** about LGBTIQ+ issues and current affairs. Stay informed by looking at books, blogs, and reliable websites.

**Consult** with trans, gender diverse and non-binary people to ensure services are effective and inclusive.

**Share** that you're an ally, and why. This will help to educate others and promote inclusion.

## Resources

There are a range of excellent resources available if you would like to learn more. If you would like to know more about training options, please get in touch with Banyule Community Health Workplace Wellbeing, Inclusion & Diversity Lead:  
[jo.southwell@bchs.org.au](mailto:jo.southwell@bchs.org.au)

Further resources include

**Zoe Belle Gender Collective:** [www.zbgc.org.au](http://www.zbgc.org.au)

**YGender:** [www.ygender.org.au](http://www.ygender.org.au)

**Transgender Victoria:** [www.transgendervictoria.com](http://www.transgendervictoria.com)

**Q Life:** <https://www qlife.org.au/>

**Minus18:** [www.minus18.org.au](http://www.minus18.org.au)

**Equinox Gender Diverse Health Centre:** [www.equinox.org.au](http://www.equinox.org.au)

**Churchill Recommendations on Best Practice in Trans and Gender Diverse Health:**  
[www.leaphq.org](http://www.leaphq.org)

**Transgender Victoria:** <https://transgendervictoria.com/>

**Private Lives Matter:**

[https://www.latrobe.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf](https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf)

### Reference:

Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.