

Living Gender in Diverse Times: Young People's Understandings and Experiences of Gender Diversity in the UK

A briefing for schools, youth service, charities and other third sector organisations working with young people

A note on terminology

Throughout this document we use the term 'gender diverse' as an inclusive term for anyone whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth. This would include those who identify as, for example, transgender, non-binary, agender or genderfluid and recognises that these terms are not always consistently understood or interpreted. For further information about terminology, please also see the glossary at the end of the document.

Introduction

Newspapers, television, and online media often report that young people are increasingly rejecting traditional gender labels and embracing gender diversity. The popularity of gender diverse celebrities such as Miley Cyrus and Sam Smith and TV shows like RuPaul's Drag Race are often cited in the media to suggest that young people are discarding gender norms. Academic research also indicates that traditional gender identities and expressions are being less rigidly experienced by young people. These cultural shifts are accompanied by an increasing social awareness of gender diversity and greater legal protections for gender diverse people in many countries.

Yet, young people's experiences continue to be characterized by regulatory gender norms and a rigid gender binary structured around the categories of male and female. This means that young people's perceptions and life choices are still strongly influenced by persistent stereotypes about what it means to be a 'girl' or 'boy'. Gender stereotypes influence and constrain us at every stage of our lives – often in ways of which we are unaware – and transphobic and sexist bullying remain commonplace. While many who work with young people are striving to support them to explore their own gender identities and understand those of others, negative assumptions about transgender continue to be pervasive. Worryingly, 'gender critical' assumptions about gender that stress the 'naturalness' of a male/female binary model have also found their way into schools under the guise of relationship and sex education materials.

Methodology

This report is based on data gathered as part of the project 'Living Gender in Diverse Times: young people's understandings and experiences of gender in the UK', which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The project was led by Professor Sally Hines at the University of Sheffield in collaboration with Dr Sharon Elley and Dr Kim Allen (University of Leeds), Dr Karen Cuthbert (University of Glasgow), and Dr Joe Hall (University of Hertfordshire). Mark Jennet worked on the report as educational consultant.

The project was interested in exploring how young people (aged between 16-25) in the UK today understand and experience gender at a time when the meaning of 'gender' is undergoing significant change. We were interested in the thoughts and feelings of young people who identified as cis gendered, trans and non-binary, and of young people from diverse sexualities. The project was framed in order to engage a diverse range of young people from different backgrounds. Participants were of different ages and ethnicities, held various religious beliefs, declared a range of disabilities, and identified as different social classes. They were recruited through educational and youth settings, leisure spaces, and online through social media and various interest groups.

We carried out 19 focus groups in education and youth settings with 136 young people, and 42 in-depth semi-structured interviews (20 with focus group participants). Focus groups were held in a range of Sixth Form and Further Education colleges, Universities, youth groups and youth programmes in Greater London, Glasgow, Greater Manchester, North Wales and West Yorkshire, and individual interviews took place in wider urban/rural UK locations. Topics covered included education/school, home/family, work, leisure, cyberspace and social media, and friendship/peer groups and intimate relationships. We additionally gathered data through multimedia diaries with a small group of participants.

Findings

A number of key themes related to young people's understandings of gender diversity emerged from the research and these are summarised in this section. These have implications for the wider inclusion of gender diverse young people along with the promotion of positive discussion around gender that benefits everyone. The next section includes a range of recommendations and suggestions for practitioners based on these findings.

Need for greater conversation and education

Many of those who engaged with the research expressed a desire for more opportunities to talk about gender diversity. One young person, for example, said:

“We should teach about it in schools. There should be a topic where you learn about the different genders because you're learning about all sorts of other things so you should be able to learn about that too. I think that if people knew about it and understood it then there won't be as much conflict and hostility.”

Some young people noted that information is available online – although as one respondent said, much of this is focused on the experience of celebrities:

“Social media actually plays a massive part in all of this because that's where you get your sources of information, that's where you get to see your icons. More and more celebrities are coming out as genderqueer and non-binary and trans.”

Online information can also be biased and inaccurate – and we know that many young people lack access to it anyway. Many also cited the need for youth groups and supported spaces in which to discuss gender. Some were drawn to becoming involved in the research precisely because of the lack of opportunity they experienced for meaningful discussion about gender diversity and welcomed the opportunity to learn more about it, as these quotations suggest:

“Most of my mates' experiment with gender and gender roles and are very much into fluidity of genders. So, I just thought I might as well learn more about it because I feel like I'm kind of on the outside at the minute, but I want to learn.”

“I haven't really understood it, I'm a bit out of the loop with it but I just felt going to the meeting would be good for hearing what other people had to say as well. And it was quite interesting actually because other people had similar ideas to me where they didn't quite understand it, so I think that's why I'm quite up for exploring a bit more, particularly with my own experiences.”

Our research found that young people actively sought out information about gender diversity and took it upon themselves to learn as much as they could. Yet, many were unsure of where to get educational resources from or what information to trust:

“I can understand people being transgender, but I don't understand how in a sense. I don't understand where this is coming from, and where this is generated from. I think it also comes back to knowledge and education because they've just sprung up without any education around it.”

“I felt like I was getting penalised for not understanding it, because it felt like a very new concept. [...] I mean school never really explored anything further than just being male or female.”

Our research shows that young people recognise the need for greater knowledge about gender diversity and are keen to be involved in educational programmes that enable further understanding. Away from the media and internet, though, they were often unsure about where to go to find this. There is a need for schools, youth service and other third sector organisations to promote greater awareness and inclusion around gender diversity, and to create space for discussion around gender with all young people. One young person, for example, said:

“I think that’s the thing that we’re missing, to be honest. People aren’t talking about stuff, people are just labelling it and they’re still putting people into boxes. I think the only way we’re going to get to grips with it is people talking and having conversations like this and doing activities in school because people lack substance by relying on social media.”

Our conversations with young people demonstrated an openness and wish amongst many young people to understand more about gender and to better appreciate its complexities. Respondents were concerned not to cause distress to gender diverse people through a lack of knowledge. Crucially, the research found that young people would welcome more discussion around gender diversity and are actively calling for gender diversity education.

Age and generation

Most of the young people we worked with perceived themselves to be more ‘open minded’ about gender diversity than earlier generations. For example, respondents said:

“Younger generations don’t really care, we’re like ‘you are who you are...”

“If someone said ‘I’m trans’ I’d brush it off, but my grandad would think about it more...”

The majority of young people – on the surface at least – reflected this acceptance of different gender identities. Social media was frequently identified as the source of much of the information that had brought about this shift in perceptions:

“We’ve grown up with social media, the internet, stuff on TV, we’ve grown up with, okay, it is normal, and there are lots of different genders.”

Our research found that while there is an openness amongst young people about the fluidity of gender and an acceptance that people have varied gender identities, digging a little deeper reveals more complexity and nuance. The research found that the themes of age and generation were significant in young people's understandings of gender. This links more broadly to the intersectional nature of gendered understandings and practices and thus other social categories and structures such as social class, and race and ethnicity which also impacted on young people's understandings and practices. While it is often assumed that young people are at the forefront of changing understandings and practices around gender, we suggest that it is important not to assume what young people know or to expect that they have knowledge about gender fluidity.

Confusion around gender fluidity

While most young people recognised that some people lived their gender differently to that which was assigned to them at birth, so for example, they were knowledgeable about trans men and women, at times there was confusion and a lack of knowledge about gender fluidity and the language used to describe it. One respondent, for example, said:

"If someone says "Oh, I'm non-binary." I have no clue what that means. I have absolutely no idea."

Despite expressing a greater acceptance of gender diversity, then, young people's responses were often expressed in terms of a binary view of gender. For example, gender fluidity was sometimes discussed in relation to 'changing' identity as if on a whim.

"You can't wake up one day, like, I fancy being a woman today. The next day, no, now I'm a man ... you can't do that."

"I guess people wouldn't take you as seriously if you kept going back and forth [they] might think you're lying or something."

We suggest that often prevailing assumptions that young people are unfazed by gender diversity, confident to reject traditional gender norms and happy to accept those whose identities challenge them undermines efforts to support the recognition and integration of gender diverse people. Furthermore, it also limits the ability of all young people to explore and recognise their own gender identities.

However, those expressing less-flexible views were frequently countered by other young people who readily accepted that, for some people, gender was not fixed or binary. For

example, a focus group discussion around the number of options relating to gender identity on Facebook provoked the following exchange:

“Yeah, but obviously, if there's 72 genders out there, then that's what there is.”

“It might be mind-boggling, or hard to get your mind round, but there is, there's a reason behind every one of them. And if you get to know them, then I'm sure it wouldn't be that confusing.”

Here we see that many young people accept that the lived gendered experiences of others may be different to their own and are willing to respect this difference. Importantly, we see again the continued ways that young people endorse the value of gender diversity education. Additionally, our research demonstrated that, while young people are more aware of gender diversity, the increased visibility of gender diverse people does not, on its own, necessarily lead to greater acceptance. As one participant said:

“There's a lot more awareness about gender diversity. There's a lot more information. But with that comes quite a bit of abuse, because people ... they know about it, but they still can't get their head around it.”

It is clear from our research that young people want to understand more about gender diversity – and to be both respectful and inclusive of gender diverse peers – even though many also feel that they lack the knowledge and understanding to do this. Just as increased visibility does not necessarily lead to greater acceptance, the history of civil rights shows that greater inclusion does not just occur naturally over time. It takes education and understanding. The following recommendations are intended to support practitioners to create space for the discussions about gender and gender diversity that young people want to have.

Implications

- Most of the young people involved in the Living Gender research felt that **they did not know enough about gender diversity** and would welcome opportunities to learn more both at educational programmes facilitated by schools, colleges, universities, and youth services.
- The research **reveals significant diversity** in young people's understanding and knowledge around gender diversity.
- While the research was conducted with young people from the ages of 16 to 25, the findings have **implications for practitioners working with children and young people of all ages**. Children learn about gender at a young age and are highly influenced by the language and attitudes of adults, particularly those in positions of authority. All young people can be encouraged and supported to talk about gender diversity within the context of wider debates around gender and how this affects us all.
- The young trans and non-binary people that we worked with spoke about the **detrimental impact on their self-esteem, educational progress, and physical and mental health** and of the often-**negative media portrayal** of gender diversity.
- Non-binary young people were concerned that they were **marginalised** in terms of representations of trans and that this meant that their individual voices went unheard.
- The research found that there remained much **negative 'banter'** related to sex and gender that frequently goes unnoticed by many and remains unchallenged by educational providers and youth service workers. Alongside, this, we found a failure to appreciate the significance of non-inclusive language on young trans and non-binary people and the importance for all young people of developing inclusive language.
- The research indicated a complex and uneven terrain in terms of young people's understandings and practices of gender. Young people's gendered understandings and practices are formed **intersectionally and, in this way, are tied up with other social positions and experiences such as social class, race and ethnicity, sexuality and disability**.
- Despite a greater increase in the social and cultural visibility and awareness of gender diversity, **sexual harassment, and homophobic and transphobic bullying** continued to have significant detrimental effects on many young people.
- For young cis, trans and non-binary people the persistent and **damaging effects of regulatory gender norms** in the UK stills leads to a narrowing of choices and opportunities and impacts negatively on their health and wellbeing.

Recommendations

Some of the following recommendations will be more applicable in some settings than others but all focus on how organisations can help to increase children and young people's understanding of gender diversity.

All settings in which young people are present should clearly and regularly state that bullying or discrimination around gender diversity is never acceptable. **This would include, for example, always using and respecting preferred pronouns.** This is the very least that is needed in order for young gender diverse people to feel safe – **however, on its own, this will not sufficiently develop knowledge and understanding or increase acceptance of gender diversity. In what follows, we offer further recommended steps to take.**

- **First principles**

Avoid adopting a generalised 'anyone can be who they like' approach which fails to actively acknowledge gender diversity or challenge prevailing gender biases. This is common, particularly in settings for younger children, and often results in gender diverse people being marginalised or not mentioned at all unless negative comments are made – which in turn are sometimes challenged but rarely explored. For example, while behaviour perceived as bullying will often be addressed, language and attitudes that affirm binary views of gender might not.

This does not help young people to understand more about gender diversity or address the discomfort felt by many involved in the research around, for example, gender fluid or non-binary identities. Neither will it help young people who do identify as gender diverse to accept and explore their identities while binary gender expression is perceived as the 'norm'. At best, it places the onus on gender diverse young people to act as 'torchbearers' for their own inclusion, at worst it stifles discussion and leaves misinformation unchallenged. Effective inclusion requires that diverse gender identities and non-stereotypical choices are celebrated and endorsed.

A range of support and training is available for those working with young people, both in schools and elsewhere, and practitioners are strongly encouraged to access suitable opportunities – see the Resources section for examples and links.

The following suggestions are intended to support practitioners to do this, using a variety of approaches appropriate to different settings.

- **Creating a safe environment for all**

Consider how implicit social messages are conveyed. For example, model the use of language that does not reinforce a binary view of gender – using terms like 'children' instead of 'boys and girls' and including 'they' and 'them' pronouns.

Explore attitudes and knowledge about diversity by encouraging open conversations about, for example, whether and how attitudes to gender are changing, how gender is used as a marketing tool, differing cultural and historical perspectives and celebrity identities.

Other areas for discussion include the 'spectrum' of gender and the difference between gender identity and gender expression (widely available resources such as the Genderbread Person or Gender Unicorn – see 'Resources' below – can support this). All settings can actively challenge gender norms and stereotypes and involve young people in conversations around how these manifest themselves while also clarifying their questions about language and terminology. As noted above, practitioners may welcome further training to help them support these conversations and the resources highlighted below may also provide useful starting points for discussion.

Even the youngest children can engage with issues such as whether certain toys and activities are 'only' for one gender and be encouraged to notice stereotypical depictions of gender.

Avoid arbitrary divisions of children and young people by gender whenever possible, actively challenge the idea that certain interests are appropriate for certain genders and ensure that young people don't feel constrained to make choices based on their sex or gender identity.

Signpost to useful online materials (see Resources) and practitioners as appropriate. Conversations about how things like body image are 'policed' on social media can also naturally include discussions of how this also narrows and defines the 'acceptable' boundaries of gender identity.

Ensure that any resources used with young people – including Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) materials – are inclusive of gender diverse people. For example, consider the notes about language below – and check, for example, that puberty resources do not assert that 'all girls' or 'all boys' bodies are the same or change in the same way. Specific support around puberty discussions can be found in some of the resources listed below.

Carefully audit resources and be mindful that some are produced with the intention of critiquing rather than endorsing gender diverse identities.

- **Avoiding debate about the validity of gender diverse identities and fostering respect**

All settings need to be clear that all gender identities are equally welcome.

No one should be obliged to take part in these conversations and practitioners need to ensure that personal information is shared safely.

Listen to the voices of gender diverse young people but do not require or expect them to act as 'experts' or representatives for gender diversity or to answer personal questions about their own experiences.

Remind participants to consider the feelings of others, that it is not appropriate to express negative views that might make gender diverse people feel excluded and that everyone has the right to have their identity accepted (for example, using preferred pronouns).

Some practitioners may have concerns about the ‘silencing’ of alternative, so-called ‘gender critical’ views. However, schools, youth groups and other services should be safe spaces for everyone and, just as, for example, religious ‘objections’ to homosexuality or negative views about immigration are likely to leave young people with those identities feeling excluded, denying the validity of gender diverse identities can cause some young people to feel afraid to share and explore their identities in ways that others take for granted.

Remind practitioners and young people that we cannot ‘know’ someone else’s identity and, if necessary, encourage empathy by asking how it might feel to have others deny or challenge the validity of who you are.

Encourage young people and practitioners to approach media – and particularly online – discussions of gender diversity critically. Commentators and websites that refer to trans women as ‘men’ or assert that ‘only women have a vulva’ should not be regarded as sources of unbiased factual information.

- **Developing shared understandings**

Clarify what is expected of all practitioners around the use of inclusive language and challenging binary, stereotypical assumptions about gender.

Review policies to ensure they are inclusive and consider developing a specific gender inclusion policy. The ‘Allsorts Trans Inclusion Toolkit’ (see ‘Resources’ below) contains a ‘good practice’ template that could be adapted to a range of settings.

As well as ensuring that RSHE is inclusive of gender diverse identities (see above), schools should also make sure that such identities are integrated across the wider curriculum. Some of the resources listed below include suggestions on how to achieve this.

All settings should consider how they can create safe spaces for gender diverse young people and be mindful of the principles outlined elsewhere in this document around respecting names and pronouns.

Ensure that language used does not promote a binary view of gender and is inclusive of all identities. Examples might include:

- ‘parents/people who care for you’ (instead of ‘mums and dads’)
- ‘children’, ‘young people’, ‘Year 9’ or ‘pupils’ (instead of ‘boys and girls’)
- ‘partner’ instead of ‘husband’ or ‘wife’
- ‘siblings’ instead of ‘brothers and sisters’
- using ‘they’ and ‘them’ pronouns or terms like ‘all genders’ in general communications
- avoiding statements that promote stereotypes about gender or generalisations such as ‘most boys like’ or ‘girls prefer’.

Of course, it is fine to use gendered pronouns (‘he’, ‘her’, ‘his’ etc) or terms like mum, brother or grandmother when referring to specific people.

It should be noted that many young people who took part in the research raised the issue of a lack of opportunity to talk about gender diversity in school. Unfortunately, current government guidance provides little useful support for this and settings are encouraged to access training and additional guidance including the examples below. Settings could note, for example, that the Department for Education guidance makes reference to education in relation to sexuality and gender being 'age-appropriate' without suggesting what an appropriate age might be. Given that children of any age could have gender diverse family members or be exploring their own identity – and that all children are influenced and constrained by gender stereotypes – gender inclusive practice should be the norm throughout all settings including those that work with the youngest children.

- **Raising Awareness**

Many of the young people involved in the research expressed confusion about terms like genderfluid or non-binary. Using celebrity examples can be a good starting point for this. However, to counter impressions that gender diversity is only associated with celebrity culture, make sure to include other more 'everyday' images as well.

Ensure that images and examples are diverse in terms of social factors such as race, age, disability and sexuality, and include examples such as gender diverse parents.

Contrasting different historical attitudes towards gender and including examples from a range of cultures (for example 'two-spirit' people) can help to counter the idea that gender diversity is a modern or 'western' concept and that questioning gender norms is 'new' or common only to specific groups. This is important for showing that gender diversity has a long history and in many cultures gender diverse people have been long accepted.

It may also be helpful to discuss the broader context of objections to 'identity politics' from across the political spectrum – for example, why do minorities, including gender diverse people, need 'safe spaces' and should their voices take priority and their needs be specifically considered when designing mainstream services? Reflect on related areas such as the social model of disability (which argues that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference) or the impact of heterosexism on sexual minorities to help inform these conversations. Try to include discussion of social class and status, and how some groups of people may be differently positioned to access certain gendered identities or experiences.

Talk about how sex, like gender, is not binary but exists on a spectrum. There are a number of differently sexed bodies and many people's bodies possess a combination of physical characteristics typically thought of as 'male' or 'female'. There are a variety of possible combinations of sex chromosomes – other than just XX or XY – which can result in a variety of sex characteristics. Furthermore, people with XX chromosomes may develop 'male' reproductive systems and vice versa. Some but not all of these people may identify as intersex.

- **Discussing ‘Transition’**

Clarify that ‘transition’ may be social and/or medical and that not every gender diverse person wants or needs (or is able) to change their body surgically.

Talk about how a range of other factors such as, for example, how some people find that rigid gender norms cannot accommodate their identity so they may feel more comfortable rejecting binary identities and pronouns; that gender identity (like much else about us) is not fixed; that many people who don’t identify as gender diverse also sometimes feel constrained by stereotypes and socially constructed and policed ‘rules’ about gender.

Remember that, as mentioned above, it would not usually be appropriate to ask gender diverse individuals to discuss their own experiences of transition.

- **Encouraging empathy and allyship**

Some of the young people involved in our research spoke about their difficulties in identifying with gender diverse and, particularly, non-binary identities. Empathy can be encouraged by asking **whether this is any different from the fact that we can’t ‘understand’ how it is to have a different religious identity or a disability** – but we can still accept these identities and also act as allies (see below).

Point out that viewing different gender identities positively, whether or not we can fully comprehend them, is empowering – accepting that we don’t, and can’t, ‘know’ everything is productive.

Many young people also shared the assumption that greater visibility alone leads to inclusion – and that acceptance develops ‘naturally’ over time, rather than requiring commitment, activism and education. In fact, as previously noted, the recent increase in visibility of gender diverse people has also coincided with a rise in opposition to full equality from a number of sources. **Encourage young people to consider how they can act both as allies and, more actively, advocates for gender diverse people.** Remind them that one of the ways that we can be an ally for minorities is to listen to their views and involve them in planning how this can be achieved in their own settings.

The authors of this resource are keen to acknowledge that much excellent work is taking place in educational settings and youth services to support young people in having meaningful discussions about gender diversity. A number of trans organisations provide excellent training and resources for education institutions and youth services. Examples of organisations delivering this work are included in the ‘Resources’ section at the end of this document. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations included here will help to both endorse and support the further development of these initiatives.

Resources and Further Support

The following organisations and resources provide support and advice for gender diverse young people as well as tools and information to help practitioners facilitate discussions about gender diversity.

Gendered Intelligence support young trans people aged 8 – 25, delivering trans youth programmes, support for parents and carers, professional development for all sectors and educational workshops.

Mermaids support transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse children and young people, as well as their families and professionals involved in their care.

Allsorts Youth Project supports children and young people who are LGBT+ or exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Resources include a Trans Inclusion School Toolkit and a range of material for young people.

The Black Trans Alliance is a black queer and trans led organization that supports black trans and non-binary people in London and the wider community. It also provides information and campaigns for the rights of transgender people.

Advice and support for schools from the National Education Union including supporting trans and gender questioning students.

Sex Education Forum elearning courses on trans inclusion and LGBT+ inclusive Relationships and Sex Education.

The Genderbread Person and Gender Unicorn – educational tools which help to explain the difference between gender identity, gender expression, biological sex and sexuality.

NEU Breaking The Mould resources – support for primary schools and Early Years around promoting LGBT+ inclusion and challenging gender stereotypes. Includes Every Child, Every Family, a resource on using children's books to promote LGBT+ inclusion.

The Proud Trust helps LGBT+ young people empower themselves to make a positive change through youth groups, coordinating national and regional LGBT+ youth work networks, delivering training and creating resources.

AGENDA is a gender diversity-inclusive relationships resources for 7 – 18 year olds.

BishUK is an online sex and relationships resource for everyone over 14 of all genders and sexualities.

LGBT+ History Month – information about LGBT+ history resources including posters, wallcharts, lesson plans etc.

Young Minds – Advice for parents of gender diverse young people.

Glossary

Words that appear in italics have a corresponding glossary entry

Agender: A person who doesn't identify with any *gender*.

Allies/ Advocates: An ally to gender diverse people is a *cisgender* person who supports gender equality and believes that gender diverse people face discrimination. They may show their support by, for example, demonstrating active acceptance of gender diverse people, challenging other's discriminatory language, supporting community events, wearing badges or displaying posters.

Advocates may take a more active role by getting involved in activities including media campaigns, public speaking, or lobbying on behalf of gender diverse people.

Cis/cisgender: When someone's *gender* is the same or mostly the same as they were declared to be at birth.

Gender: Refers to someone's identity - for example, how masculine or feminine, or both or neither, a person feels (see *gender expression* and *gender identity*) and also to the social and cultural 'rules' about how men and women should act and appear.

Genderfluid: When someone feels like their gender isn't fixed and is capable of changing at different intervals of time.

Genderqueer: Can mean different things to different people, but often a *gender identity* or *gender expression* that blurs the lines between masculine or feminine, or moves between masculine or feminine, or is neither masculine nor feminine. It may be seen as similar to *non-binary*.

Gender expression: How a person outwardly 'shows' their *gender*. This may be through clothes, appearance, behaviour etc.

Gender identity: A person's inner sense of their own *gender*.

Heterosexism / Heteronormativity: The assumption that all human beings are either male or female, both in sex and in gender, and that sexual and romantic thoughts and relations are only normal and natural when between people of different sexes.

Intersex: A person may be assigned intersex at birth if their sex characteristics don't align with medical definitions of "female" or "male". A person's external and internal body, as well as chromosomes and hormones, can all be factors when assigning sex.

LGBT: An acronym standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and *Transgender*.

Non-binary: A broad term that can mean different things to different people but usually refers to someone whose *gender identity* or *gender expression* doesn't align with either 'man' or 'woman'.

Queer: A broad term used in different ways by different people. Often used as a catch-all term for *LGBT* people but also as a self-identity for people who don't fit easily into sexuality or gender categories, or don't agree that people can be categorised like this.

Sex: A person is categorised into a sex (usually either male or female) depending on the reproductive organs (uterus, testes) and genitalia (vulva, penis) they are thought to have when born.

Trans/transgender: When someone's gender is different to what it was declared to be at birth.

Transition: The various steps a person may take to live in the gender with which they identify where that differs from the one they were assigned at birth. For some this involves **medical/surgical** interventions such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all gender diverse people want or are able to have this. **Social** transitioning might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing names, pronouns and official documents.

Two-spirit people: "Two-spirit" refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous north-American people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity.

Acknowledgments

The research informing this briefing would not have been possible without funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). We are grateful for this support, and the support of colleagues at the University of Sheffield and the University of Leeds where the *Living Gender in Diverse Times* project was undertaken between 2018-2021. We would also like to extend our gratitude to all the young people who took part in this research and the many organisations who facilitated access. Thank you also to our Advisory Board members.