

Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting



Version 1, May 2021



Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

Background

Purpose of this document

This guidance note is designed to support leaders and youth members to meaningfully include people who are transgender or gender diverse¹ within Scouting, in line with the Scouts Australia Diversity and Inclusion Standards (Aug 2020). It forms part of the National Sustainability Toolkit.

Note that some Branches have additional directives and processes for how information about gender identity is captured in membership and event forms, and guidance on supporting gender diverse members. Please read this document alongside any Branch specific guidance.

Introduction

Scouts Australia is committed to diversity and inclusion and is open to all people, including people who are transgender or gender diverse. This is reflected in our national Policy and Rules and Diversity and Inclusion Standards (see Box 1). Sex discrimination legislation in Australia also prohibits discrimination against gender diverse young people, providing us with a legal duty to ensure that gender diverse young people are meaningfully included.² There is great potential for Scouting to offer gender diverse young people support at a time when they may feel excluded from many of the social activities that their peers take for granted.

¹ See Annex 1 for definitions of commonly used terms

² Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Statement) Act 2013; anti-discrimination legislation in each state/territory.

Box 1: Commitment to gender diversity in Scouts Australia Diversity and Inclusion Standards (approved by NEC August 2020)

Scouts Australia is open to all, regardless of gender identity, and gender diversity is supported and respected. Genders are integrated for the delivery of the youth program in all sections to achieve the goal of promoting equality, mutual acceptance, understanding and respect. Some activities may be conducted in gender-specific groups, where this is necessary for cultural or spiritual reasons.

Transgender or gender diverse members should be supported to use ablutions and changing facilities in line with their affirmed gender identity, or gender-neutral facilities if available and preferred. Sleeping arrangements should align with what transgender and gender diverse members are comfortable with, in line with their affirmed gender identity. For minors, this should be in consultation with their Parent(s) or Guardian(s).

Excerpt from Scouts Australia Diversity and Inclusion Standards, August 2020

When updating/ building facilities, if financially viable, preference should be given to suitable gender-neutral bathroom facilities that provide individual privacy (rather than gender-based bathrooms).



Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

What is gender identity?

Gender identity is broadly defined in the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 (b) as 'the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth'.³

This law protects people from discrimination because of their gender identity. It does not matter what sex the person was assigned at birth, or whether the person has undergone any medical intervention. The terms 'trans', 'transgender' or 'gender diverse' are used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the anatomical sex they are assigned at birth. About 1.2 per cent of Australian school children (about 45,000 children) are thought to identify as transgender.⁴ Being transgender or gender diverse is seen as part of the natural spectrum of human diversity.

Gender diversity is different to being intersex. People who are intersex are born with natural variations in their body that differ from what we might expect to be 'typically' male or female. This can include (but is not limited to) variations in hormones, chromosomes, and sexual organs. Intersex people make up approximately 1.7 percent of the population⁵ and can be any gender and sexuality.

Research indicates that transgender and gender diverse young people experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide ideation and attempts, and that these are primarily caused by factors external to the individual (relating to experiencing discrimination and lack of support). When supported by their families, schools and social environments, their mental health outcomes are similar to that of their peers. Promoting trans inclusivity and taking a firm stance against discrimination and transphobia is vital to ensuring trans and gender diverse young people are supported.⁶

Transition or gender affirmation

Transition can also be known as 'gender affirmation'. It relates to the process that may be made in a gender diverse or transgender person's life so that they socially match their gender identity. These processes may include the use of a different name and pronouns, their gender expression, such as clothes and hair, and the use of facilities that may match their gender identity, such as toilets. Birth certificates and other documents may be changed as part of a person's gender affirmation.

Transition may also include medical care such as hormone therapy, counselling and/or surgery - these processes are a private and confidential matter for the youth, their medical team, and their parents/guardians.

Gender diverse people exist within many different cultures, and there may be different behaviour patterns, protocols, expectations, and obligations that people may undertake to affirm their gender culturally. It is important to remember that there is no 'right' way for someone to transition, and that many people do not, or are unable to, access a range of transition processes.

³ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Information%20sheet%20on%20new%20protections%20in%20the%20Sex%20Discrimination%20Act%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Gender_dysphoria/

⁵ <https://ihra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/key/Intersex-inclusion.pdf>

⁶ Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Wright Toussaint, D., Lin, A. (2017). Trans Pathways: the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people. Summary of results. Telethon Kids Institute, Perth, Australia.

Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

How do I support gender diverse youth members?

This section provides some suggested steps to go through when you become aware that a youth member is gender diverse. Further information is provided on particular topics in Section 3 (FAQs). Remember, every young person and situation will be different. It is critical that you tailor your response to each situation, and be guided by the young person and their family on their preferences.

You may be approached by an existing youth member or their parent/caregiver who tells you they are affirming their gender, or a new youth member might join the Unit who is transgender or gender diverse. Youth who join having already affirmed their gender may not wish anyone, including adult leaders, to know. In this instance start with Step 1, and discuss appropriate parts of Step 2 with them (and potentially their parent/caregiver). Other leaders should not be informed unless the youth member gives you permission to do so.

A note on toilets: gender diverse members should be supported to use whatever toilets they prefer, including those of the gender they identify with. You may need to reassure the young person that this is ok, and there is no requirement for them to use a disability/accessible toilet. If other members in the group are concerned about this, it's important to discuss these concerns whilst supporting the gender diverse member's choices and privacy. Remember that the decision on which toilets a gender diverse member uses is their decision, and not a decision for other members of the Group.

Step 1: Reassure

The first step to supporting any youth member is to listen without making any judgements or assumptions. Reassure them that Scouting is an inclusive movement and that they will always be welcome.

Step 2: Plan

Inclusion strategies Organise a time to discuss if there is anything they might need to make them feel comfortable and included. For minors (where they have the support of their parent/caregiver) this discussion should involve the parent/caregiver. Things the youth member or their parent/caregiver may discuss are:

- » What name and pronouns (he/she/they) they would like to use, and when to use it (this may not be all the time)
- » Whether, when and how they might like to share anything with other members in the Unit (often the start of a new term, or year is a good time).
- » Which toilets and changing facilities they would like to use
- » Where to find information or support outside of Scouting (see resources at Annex 1)
- » You may also like to discuss sleeping arrangements for camping and other Unit activities, or you can approach this down the track when the situation arises.

It may be useful to create a plan to record any agreed adjustments, being mindful of confidentiality. Some young people will have made similar arrangements for school trips which could be a useful starting point.



Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

Step 3: Implement inclusion strategies

After you have developed a plan with the youth member and their parent/caregiver, seek their permission to share the plan with other Adult Leaders in the group, including the Group Leader, who can assist with managing any comments or questions from other parents. Then start to implement the strategies within your Unit.

Your leadership at this stage is critical:

- » **Emphasise that Scouting is inclusive of all, and lead by example through using the person's preferred name and pronouns (If you do make a mistake, don't worry but be sure to correct yourself, briefly apologise and move on).**
- » Be alert to potential bullying or teasing and make sure the Unit knows this is not acceptable.
- » Do not draw any unwarranted attention towards the person's gender – treat them as you would any other member.
- » Depending on the young person's preference, consider organising a guest speaker from a local transgender/gender diverse advocacy group. This can provide a good opportunity for other members to ask questions openly, without directing them at the youth member.

Step 4: Check in with the youth member on their experiences

Set up a time to check in with the youth member and their parent/care giver periodically to discuss how well the strategies are working, and whether they would like to change anything. This is also a good time to discuss how well they feel they are being included in the Unit, and whether there are any concerns with bullying or harassment.

Remember: If you are unsure about a specific situation or just need further advice or guidance, contact your Branch D&I representative (see Section 4 for contact details).

Box 2: The Scouts Australia Diversity and Inclusion Standards require that:

- » Transgender or gender diverse members should be supported to use ablutions and changing facilities in line with their affirmed gender identity, or gender-neutral facilities if available and preferred.
- » Sleeping arrangements should align with what transgender and gender diverse members are comfortable with, in line with their affirmed gender identity. For minors, this should be in consultation with their Parent(s) or Guardian(s).
- » When updating/ building facilities, if financially viable, preference should be given to suitable all gender self-contained bathroom facilities that provide individual privacy (rather than gender-based bathrooms).



Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality of youth members is of utmost importance; gender diverse youth are entitled to the same confidentiality and privacy as any other youth member. Reassure the young person or their parent/caregiver that you will not share this personal information with others (including volunteers, members, parents/carers) without their permission, unless you have concerns for their welfare or safety – the same confidentiality applies for youth who are not gender diverse.

It is helpful to talk to the young person about whether they have told anyone else (e.g. parents/carers/other members) and who else it might be helpful to speak to, to make sure they are fully supported. This could be, for example, speaking to a leader in the next section a young person is moving to or asking if the young person would like another leader to know for occasions when you are not there. It is important to agree with the young person when and with who any further conversations will happen, and to make sure that you do not share information more widely than this.

Q. What about safety and bullying?

As with all young people, it is a safety issue if a youth member is being abused, harassed or discriminated against. Being gender diverse in itself is not a risk and must not be treated in that way. If you believe that a youth member's welfare is at risk, it would be appropriate to disclose that they are transgender if it is relevant to the situation, in line with Scouts Australia code of practice and protocols. This should be dealt with in a sensitive and considered way, minimising any further distress for the young person.

Q. How do I make sure my section is inclusive?

As well as listening to the young person, there are many simple, practical things you can do to make sure current or new gender diverse members will feel welcome in your section:

- » Allow young people to express their identity freely and avoid making assumptions
- » Avoid gender stereotypes (e.g. boys like football, girls like cooking)
- » Don't split young people by gender to do activities

Q. What about camps?

All youth members should be involved in advance when planning camping/overnight stays to make sure they feel happy and comfortable with the arrangements. There are lots of reasons why young people will have different requirements on trips. For many gender diverse young people, privacy will be an important consideration. Making adjustments and being flexible will ensure that everyone feels able to join in.

- » Arrangements for trips should always be in line with Scouting's risk assessment and child protection requirements.
- » To make sure all members feel included you can:
 - » Make a range of different sleeping options available to all members.
 - » Speak to the youth member discreetly about would make them feel comfortable and included. Avoid making assumptions about what this will look like, but be aware that having access to a private space, particularly for changing, may be important.
 - » Ask who they would be happy to share accommodation with..
 - » Remember the importance of confidentiality – do not discuss the gender diversity of a youth member to other parents.

How about toilets, showers and changing facilities?

As with sleeping arrangements, transgender and gender diverse young people should be able to use the toilets or facilities of the gender they identify as. Talk to the young person about which facilities they would like to use at regular meeting places and on camps. Remember most young people would prefer privacy when using facilities. Providing a range of options to everyone will not only avoid a gender diverse person feeling singled out, uncomfortable or unsafe using facilities, but will probably make everyone else in the section feel more comfortable too.

- » These practical ideas will help you to make sure everyone feels comfortable:
 - » Providing mixed-gender (also known as 'all gender') toilets
 - » Re-labelling one set of toilets, or an accessible toilet, as all gender
 - » Using venues with self-contained or individual toilet and shower cubicles that can be used by anyone
 - » Designating a private changing space for anyone who needs to use it
 - » Creating partitions using sheets or screens in changing areas so that all members can have privacy
 - » Developing a roster so that everyone can have private bathing / bathroom time

Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

Do I need to adjust activities?

Transgender and gender diverse young people may feel particularly anxious about their physical appearance or abilities. Some may feel uncomfortable taking part in activities that require physical contact or wearing certain clothing, such as swimwear for water-based activities. The reality is that lots of young people may feel anxious around activities for different reasons, so it is helpful to routinely involve members in the planning process, giving them time and opportunities to raise any concerns in the group or privately.

As with any young person, avoid making any assumptions. Speak to the member in advance about any concerns, adjustments they might need or alternative activities that they would prefer. Offering alternative activities to all members will not only ensure the transgender young person doesn't feel singled out, but might well make other members feel more able to participate too.

What types of questions can I ask?

It's a good idea to respectfully check in with transgender and gender diverse young people on what pronouns they use, any changes to their name, and which ablutions and sleeping arrangements they prefer. It's also ok to ask about any adjustments that might need to be made to activities and to check if the young person is feeling comfortable/included and anything you can do to support this. It isn't appropriate to question why they are gender diverse, or ask about medical affirmation details, such as hormones or surgery.

How should I work with parents and carers?

If a youth member has confided in you that they are gender diverse, sensitively discuss with them whether they have told their parents or carers. If they have, then, in agreement with the young person, this could be a great opportunity to reassure their parents or carers that Scouting is a welcoming and inclusive movement. It may also be useful to discuss and agree together any needs or adjustments that might be made for the young person.

If the young person has not told their parents or carers, you should not breach their confidentiality by doing so without their consent. Some young people may feel anxious about telling their parents or carers, and may appreciate your support in finding a way to do so. However this should be led by them.

It is also important to note that some gender diverse young people are not able to affirm their gender in other settings, such as home. It is important that Scouting is a supportive place for them, and any affirmation of their gender (such as names and pronouns) is respected.

What about parents and carers of other Scouts in my section?

Parents and carers may have general questions about gender diverse people, or if there is a transgender or gender diverse member in your group. You must not disclose confidential information about a young person's identity to other parents and carers without that young person's consent. Even if a young member is openly transgender or gender diverse it is important that their identity does not become a talking point in the section. Let them know that as a leader your priority is to make sure that all members feel welcome, comfortable and included in Scouting, and that we often make adjustments for different young people as part of this.



Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

Further information and support Scouts Australia Diversity and Inclusion Team

Branch	Contact Person	Email
Queensland	Branch Commissioner Diversity and Inclusion	bc.diversity@qldhq.scouts.com.au
NSW	State Commissioner Inclusion	mark.burfield@nsw.scouts.com.au
ACT	Assistant Chief Commissioner Health and Wellbeing	acchealthandwellbeing@scoutsact.com.au
Victoria	State Commissioner Diversity & Inclusion	sc.diversity@scoutsvictoria.com.au
Tasmania	Project Officer Diversity and Inclusion	emily.r.ezzy@gmail.com
South Australia	Branch Commissioner Diversity & Inclusion	bc.inclusion@sa.scouts.com.au
Western Australia	Branch Leader – Diversity LGBTQ+	bl.diversitylgbt@gmail.com
Northern Territory	N/A	
National	National Adviser Diversity and Inclusion	d&i@scouts.com.au

Further information

Guide to Using Pronouns – A guide explaining pronouns and supporting gender diverse people.

Minus 18 - Australia's largest youth-led network for gay, bi, lesbian and trans teens. Access to resources for young people and merchandise.

Indigblackgold - Online portal with links to materials that prioritise the diversity of Australia's Indigenous LGBTIQ, Sistergirl, and Brotherboy communities.

The Rainbow Owl - Resources for embracing & supporting trans and gender diverse children

A Gender Agenda – An ACT based organisation supporting trans, intersex and gender diverse people

Telethon Kids Institute – links to further info, research and state-based supports for gender diverse young people.

This resource was prepared by Kelly Treloar, Assistant Branch Commissioner – Diversity and Inclusion, Scouts SA, in collaboration with Clare Hanley, National Adviser Diversity and Inclusion, Scouts Australia. It was developed with input from gender diverse youth members.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact d&i@scouts.com.au for any feedback or recommendations regarding this resource.

Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting

Annex 1: Definitions of commonly used terms

Cis (cis-gender)	A person whose gender identity is aligned with that which they were assigned at birth.
Gender diversity	An umbrella term that includes all the different ways gender can be experienced and perceived. It can include people questioning their gender, those who identify as trans/transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, and many more.
Gender expression	The way in which a person expresses their gender identity, can include clothing, hair styles, nail painting
Gender identity	Gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation. Gender is different from sex. It is a very personal sense of who we are, and how we see ourselves.
Intersex	Individuals born with sex characteristics (genitals, gonads, chromosomes) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female. They may identify as any gender.
Non-binary	A person whose gender sits outside of the social binary genders of girl/woman and boy/man. They may identify as neither, both, or something else entirely.
Queer	An umbrella term to refer to LGBTIQ+ people. It is also used as a political statement which advocates breaking binary thinking, and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as fluid and diverse.
Sex	The biological/anatomical characteristics of a person when they are born, including their genitalia, chromosomes, and gonads
Sexuality	A person's sexual/romantic attraction to other people
Transgender	An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. It may mean someone who mentally and emotionally identifies as a different gender to the one they have been assigned by society, often living their lives as that gender, and who may or may not choose to undergo any form of medical transition (hormones, surgery etc). Or it could be a person whose gender is outside of, or between, the binary gender system altogether.

Adapted from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/webinars/working-gender-diverse-young-people-and-their-families> and <https://genderrights.org.au/resources/glossary/>

