# Gender Identity

## Supporting Gender Identity in Practice: A Multi-Agency Guide for Working with Young People, Adults and Families

Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board

WARWICKSHIRE Safeguarding Children PARTNERSHIP

### What is Gender Identity?

Gender identity is how someone feels and understands their gender. This may be the same as the sex they were given at birth, or it might be different. Individuals may identify as male, female, non-binary, transgender, genderfluid, or another way. Gender identity is not the same as biological sex, which relates to physical traits such as chromosomes and reproductive organs.

It is important for practitioners to recognise and respect children, young person and adult's gender identity. Doing so supports their mental health, wellbeing, and resilience. Every individual's experience is unique, so it is essential for practitioners to listen, be open and respond with respect.

### Further information

- Warwickshire Pride
- LGBTQIA+ Healthcare Glossary
- Mermaids
- Stonewall – school resources
- NHS Gender identity service
- Gendered intelligence
- Galop
- Dear life

### Supporting Mental Health

Gender identity-related distress can significantly impact mental health. Misgendering or invalidating someone's identity can be deeply harmful. Practitioners should:

- Use inclusive language
- Create safe spaces
- Challenge bullying or discrimination
- Promote peer support (e.g. LGBTQIA+ youth groups)

### Signs a Young Person or Adult is struggling

Look out for:

- Withdrawal or isolation
- Low mood or depression
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Anxiety about school or social settings

**Action:** Encourage the young person or adult to speak with their GP, who can refer them to CAMHS or gender identity services.

### Working with Young People and Adults

Young people and adults may need support navigating:

- Gender identity pathways (e.g. NHS Gender Identity Development Service)
- Legal name and gender marker changes
- Access to safe housing or placements for children in care
- Mental health services

### Working with Parents & Families

Parents, families and carers may experience a range of emotions, including confusion, anxiety, or fear. Practitioners should:

- Offer clear, factual information about gender identity.
- Signpost to local and national support services.
- Encourage open, non-judgemental conversations.
- Promote acceptance and understanding within the family.

### Working with Young People and Adults cont.

Important Considerations:

- Always ask how the young person or adult wishes to be addressed.
- Respect their pronouns and chosen name.
- Go at their pace and avoid making assumptions.
- Be aware of unique risks in LGBTQIA+ relationships (e.g. threats of 'outing', withholding medication).