

What is Gender Identity?

Gender identity is a way to describe how someone feels about their gender. For example, some people may identify as a boy or a girl, while others may find neither of these terms feel right for them, and identify as neither or somewhere in the middle. Although people often confuse them, gender identity is different from someone's biological sex or assigned gender at birth and from sexuality or who someone's attracted to.

Sexuality and sexual orientation is about who someone feels physically and emotionally attracted to. This can be romantic or emotional attraction, or both.

As children and young people grow up it's natural for them develop and express their sexuality in healthy ways. For example, older teenagers might start dating or having relationships, while younger children might show curiosity about sex or the changes that happen during puberty. Many young people also feel unsure about their sexuality or who they're attracted to, or find that their sexuality changes over time.

There are lots of different types of sexuality or sexual orientation, and young people may use different terms to describe how they feel. LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and more. Although people often confuse them, it's important to remember that gender identity is different from sexuality.

While many people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, for others gender is more of a spectrum, with lots of different possible identities. Gender identity is a personal feeling, and a child or young person will be the best person to know what matches how they feel. Children and young people can also question or feel unsure about their gender identity, or find that their gender identity changes over time. This is sometimes called 'gender fluid'.

Gender expression is how someone chooses to express their gender identity. This could be through the way they dress, speak or act. For example, by wearing dresses or choosing to shave. How someone looks or dresses does not always reflect their gender identity. Children and young people will feel comfortable expressing their gender identity at different ages and in different ways.

Cisgender: someone whose gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Transgender/Trans: a gender identity and umbrella term for people whose gender differs from, or does not sit comfortably within, the gender they were assigned at birth.

A trans woman is a woman who was assigned male at birth. A trans man is a man who was assigned female at birth.

Non-Binary: a gender identity and an umbrella term for people whose identity falls outside the gender binary. Some people do not identify wholly or at all with the gender they were assigned at birth – some people have no gender at all. The term non-binary comes under the trans umbrella.

Agender: a non-binary identity for people that have no gender at all. This term also falls under the trans umbrella.

FGM means that someone changes or removes parts of the female genitals which is very harmful.

It happens to some girls in some cultures and places around the world but not usually in a hospital.

It is also very scary and painful and it goes against a girl's right to be safe.

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also provides that no one shall be subjected to torture nor cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment - FGM is a direct violation of this.

Who to ask for help

If someone is concerned for themselves or someone they know, they should talk to an adult or organisation they trust, such as:



- Class teacher
- Another adult in school
- An adult at home or outside the family
- ChildLine: 0800 1111 www.childLine.org.uk
- NSPCC FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550;
Email: fgmhelp@nspccc.org.uk
- Police: 101 (emergency: 999)