



Transgender Men and / or Non Binary People (with a Cervix) – Cervical Screening Guidance Document for Primary Care Staff:

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Contents:

- Key Terminology: Page 1
- Context & Background: Page 2
- Barriers & Recommendations: Pages 2 - 5
- Other Ideas and Considerations for Primary Care Staff: Pages 5 - 6
- Links to further support and/or guidance: Pages 6 - 7

Key Terminology:

- A *Transgender* person has a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- A *Transgender (Trans) Man* is a term used to describe someone who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man.
- *Non-Binary* is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'.
- *Cisgender* is a term used for people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.
- *Microaggressions* are brief and commonplace verbal, behavioural or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory or negative prejudicial slights and insults towards any marginalised group.
- *Transphobia* is a collection of ideas and phenomena that encompass a range of negative attitudes, feelings, or actions towards Transgender people.
- *Misgendering* is a term used when somebody refers to someone, including a Transgender and/or Non-Binary person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.
- *LGBTQ+ Community* - The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (or Questioning) Community

Context & Background

Accessing health care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (or Questioning) (LGBTQ+) community has a number of historic and sensitive complexities. The UK Government's National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Survey (launched by the Government Equalities Office in 2017) demonstrated that 21% of Transgender respondents said their specific needs were ignored or not taken into account when they accessed, or tried to access, healthcare services in the 12 months preceding the survey. 18% of Transgender respondents said they were subject to inappropriate curiosity and 18% said that they avoided treatment for fear of discrimination or intolerant reactions.¹ On the basis of findings from the National LGBT Survey the LGBT Action Plan² was created. This document looked at government services, across the board, setting out the key steps the government would take to tackle the issues highlighted in the survey findings. The report stated that the government wanted to ensure that, *"...LGBT people's needs are at the heart of the National Health Service..."* and they would like, *"LGBT people to easily access healthcare when they need it most, and feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity so that they get the best possible care."*

Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people assigned female at birth, who have not had surgery to remove the cervix, are recommended to undertake cervical screening with the same frequency as cisgender women, but evidence suggests that they have lower odds of lifetime and up-to-date cervical screening uptake³. Cervical screening rates within this community are generally lower than the cisgender community⁴. Whilst both Public Health England and NHS England recognise that Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people, with a cervix, require cervical screening, the guidance document available leaves this responsibility up to the GP Practice or Health Care team to organise and ensure fail safe systems are in place.

Barriers & Recommendations:

In addition to many of the barriers faced by the cisgender community, research demonstrates that there are additional and specific barriers to cervical screening for Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people, with a cervix. Below are some of the barriers that have been noted (please be aware, this is not an exhaustive list):

- **Invitations to Cervical Screening:** Invitations to cervical screenings from the national call/recall system are only sent to patients registered as 'Female' with their GP Practice or Clinic. This means that a Transgender Man and/or Non Binary person, with a cervix, registered as 'Male' will not be invited to participate.

Recommendation(s):

¹ National LGBT Survey: Summary Report (2018) - [National LGBT Survey: Summary report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681212/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report-2018.pdf)

² [LGBT Action Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681212/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report-2018.pdf)

³ Alison M Berner et al, 'Attitudes of Transgender Men and Non-Binary people to Cervical Screening' (2020)

⁴ Tara Kiran et al, 'Cancer Screening Rates Amongst Transgender Adults' (2019)

1. All GP Practice Staff should be supported to understand and made aware of the cervical screening eligibility criteria, especially when it concerns a Transgender Man and/or Non-Binary person, with a cervix. They should be aware that a patient registered as 'Male', with a cervix, will not be invited as part of the national cervical screening programme and therefore understand their responsibility in ensuring appointments are offered.
 2. Consider, only with the patient's permission, adding a reminder to the patient's medical record to alert / prompt when a patient is due their cervical screening at the appropriate time. Ensure that there is an identified person within the GP Practice who is responsible for monitoring these alert / prompts and who is then able to invite these patients to book a cervical screening. It would be best to consider the way in which these patients are invited, ideally agreeing communication preferences with the patient directly – text, telephone call, letter, email etc.
- **Processing of cervical screening samples:** Following a cervical screening, rates of recall for Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people, with a cervix, are high due to labelling issues on the sample.⁵ If a cervical screening sample is rejected by the laboratory, this is inconvenient and likely upsetting for the patient, as well as being a waste of time and money for the services involved.

Recommendation(s):

1. The GP Practice should clearly identify and record a system for processing cervical screening samples for Transgender Men and/or Non Binary, with a cervix. Consideration of the following is encouraged:
 - Following the sample being taken, the GP Practice should clearly communicate with the screening laboratory to make sure that samples are processed appropriately and that results are returned to the GP Practice rather than the call and recall service.
 - It would be useful to let the laboratory know that a sample marked as 'male' will be sent for testing ahead of time.
 - Ideally, the sample should include information that the sample is from a Transgender Man and/or Non-Binary person, with a cervix, in the clinical details section of the cervical screening request form.
 - The GP Practice is responsible for communicating Cervical Screening test results to a Transgender Man and/or Non-Binary patient. **This includes making referrals for colposcopy where required.** Due to this, it is crucial that during the screening appointment, the patient is asked to confirm the address where their results should be sent, as well as confirming the name the patient would like their results letter addressed to.
- **Disclosure:** A Transgender Man and/or Non-Binary person, with a cervix, may not have disclosed their sex assigned at birth to their GP Practice or Clinic. This may mean that Practice Staff are not aware that the patient is eligible for cervical screening.

⁵ Alison M Berner et al, 'Attitudes of Transgender Men and Non-Binary people to Cervical Screening' (2020)

Recommendation(s):

1. The Gender Recognition Act (2004) makes disclosing a person's gender history, without their consent, an offence. Consider the way information about cervical screening, for Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people, with a cervix, can be accessed by patients. Including information about cervical screening for this community onto the GP Practice website and / or social media sites can help to ensure that all eligible patients are made aware of their right to access one. The GP Practice website and/or social media site could also suggest that patients can put a reminder in their phone / diary / calendar to book a cervical screening appointment themselves, if they would prefer, at the appropriate time interval.
 2. Consider awareness raising training sessions amongst all GP Practice staff, both clinical and non-clinical. Consideration should be given as to the way a patient may wish to book a cervical screening appointment. Is there an online option for those patients who may wish to book an appointment discreetly? Have Reception staff been made aware that some eligible patients for cervical screening will be male and therefore an appropriate response should be given to the patient when booking?
- **Fear of prejudice and/or discrimination by Health Care Professionals (including misgendering and/or microaggressions):** Although significant progress has been made, prejudice and discrimination against Transgender and/or Non-Binary people can still occur within health care settings in the form of transphobia, misgendering and microaggressions.

Recommendation(s):

1. Consider as a GP Practice the way misgendering could be avoided and/or better managed by sensitively asking questions about anything you are unsure of and mirroring the language used by the patient. Genuine mistakes can happen. If misgendering does occur when interacting with a patient, you can acknowledge them, correct yourself and learn from the experience to prevent it happening again.
2. Consider the training and educational opportunities provided to all GP Practice staff (both clinical and non-clinical) in relation to the LGBTQ+ community. Some members of staff may not feel confident or have an understanding of how best to support Transgender Men and/or Non Binary people. As an example, The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) hosts a free e-learning LGBT Hub⁶ which can be accessed by all GP Practice staff to aid professional development. One of the modules available reflects on how best to support Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people, with a cervix, to access cervical screening. The Pride in Practice⁷ programme, run by the LGBT Foundation, can be accessed for any service wanting to increase their knowledge and confidence of LGBT inclusion at home, at work and in the community.

⁶ [Home: LGBT Health Hub \(rcgp.org.uk\)](https://www.rcgp.org.uk/lgbt-health-hub)

⁷ [LGBT Foundation - LGBT Foundation's Training Academy](https://www.lgbt.foundation/training-academy)

3. Consider an environmental audit of the Practice. Are LGBTQ+ voices visible? Would a Transgender or Non-Binary patient feel welcome and safe in the GP Practice / health care environment? You could consider the use of posters in waiting areas / clinical rooms – are there LGBTQ+ or Trans specific posters / leaflets available? Consider whether staff could wear an NHS Rainbow badge, or similar, as a way in which to illustrate that the GP Practice is committed to offering inclusive support and care for all, regardless of how people identify themselves.
 4. As aforementioned, consider the way the GP Practice website and/or social media sites can be used to ensure there is inclusive and key information for the LGBTQ+ community available. A section of the website, for example, could include information on a range of health issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community, including cervical screening for Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people, with a cervix. Examples of how this could be achieved can be found here: [LGBTQ - Burley Park Medical Centre](#) and [LGBTQ+ Information For You – Park Road Medical Practice \(parkroadpracticewallsend.nhs.uk\)](#).
- **Gender Dysphoria** - Gender dysphoria is a term that describes a sense of unease that a person may have because of a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity⁸. A cervical screening could possibly trigger a negative or distressing reaction.

Recommendation(s):

1. Consider what reasonable adjustments could be put in place to support a Transgender Man and/or Non Binary person, with a cervix, during a cervical screening. Could these reasonable adjustments be recorded onto the GP Practice website and/or social media sites so patients are clear of their options prior to booking their appointment? Reasonable adjustments could include; allowing the patient to bring a trusted person to the appointment, providing the opportunity for the patient to play music during the process to feel at ease, extending the appointment time so the patient doesn't feel rushed, providing the option of booking a pre-appointment with a health care professional to talk about the process, enable the opportunity to ask questions, agree on the language that will be used to refer to things such as body parts and to look at/touch the equipment.
2. Consider where patients can be signposted to if they require further support in relation to cervical screening and feelings of dysphoria e.g. Jo's Trust - [Get Support | Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust \(jostrust.org.uk\)](#), Cancer Research UK - [Information and support | Cancer Research UK](#) and the LGBT Foundation - [LGBT Foundation - How we can help you](#). It may be helpful to include useful links on the GP Practice's website and/or social media sites.

Other Ideas and Considerations for Primary Care Staff:

The New Cervical Screening Management System

⁸ [Gender dysphoria - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

- NHS Digital, commissioned by NHSX, are developing a new NHS Cervical Screening Management System to replace the current call/recall system⁹; the new system has been recently delayed and will now be introduced at some point during 2022. The current system is old and can no longer be developed so cervical screening needs to move to a new system to enable the introduction of new developments. The new system has been designed to have an improved user interface and it is expected to be simpler and easier to use. NHS Digital have expressed that the new system will be inclusive of Transgender Men and/or Non-Binary people with a cervix and therefore it is advised that GP Practice staff continue to keep up to date with alerts and/or training offered from the service.

Consideration of Sexual Orientation, Gender & Trans Status Monitoring – “If we’re not counted, we don’t count!”¹⁰

- Understanding the make-up of a community, and what their needs are, is fundamental in order to provide effective and high-quality health services.¹¹ One of the aims within the LGBT Action Plan (2017) was to support, ‘*...improved monitoring of sexual orientation and gender throughout healthcare services, to provide greater data to enable enhanced care.*’ In partnership with the LGBT Foundation, NHS England introduced a Sexual Orientation Information Standard (2017), outlining how health care services should record data. Monitoring sexual orientation is not mandatory under the standard, but any services that do monitor, must use the guidelines provided.¹² **It is hoped that by recording sexual orientation health care providers will be able to better identify health risks and will help support targeted preventative and early intervention work to address the health inequalities for people in the LGBTQ+ community.**
- Sexual Orientation Monitoring could be extended further to include Gender and Trans Status Monitoring. However, please note Gender and Trans Status are different characteristics and should be monitored separately. Sexual Orientation, Gender and Trans Status Monitoring are reported to work best and are most meaningful when done together. LGBTQ+ community members said all three characteristics should be recorded in conjunction in order for any one of these individual characteristics to be meaningfully understood: personally, demographically and clinically.¹³ **By including Trans Status Monitoring on new patient questionnaires, for example, new patients can be given the opportunity to disclose this information, within a safe space, if they so wish to. Trans Status Monitoring can be used in a number of ways to support patients, such as ensuring that all people with a cervix are offered cervical screenings appropriately.**

Discrimination and heteronormativity within Primary Care:

⁹ [New NHS Cervical Screening Management System - NHS Digital](#)

¹⁰ [LGBT Foundation - Sexual Orientation Monitoring: If we’re not counted, we don’t count!](#)

¹¹ [edc1-lgbt-equal-pap-20-10-15.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

¹² [NHS England » Sexual Orientation Monitoring Information Standard](#)

¹³ [LGBT-HIP-Monitoring-Report-April-2018.pdf \(switchboard.org.uk\)](#)

Discrimination can reinforce the sense of being invisible or unwelcome which can be experienced by people within the LGBTQ+ community when accessing health care services. Common barriers to be considered as a GP Practice can include:

- Failing to acknowledge or involve a same sex partner during consultations or a decision making process;
- Making heteronormative assumptions regarding a patient's sexual orientation and gender identity e.g. assuming somebody is in a heterosexual relationship.
- Posters / health literature available in health care settings which only depict heterosexual relationships.

Links to further support and/or guidance:

Contact Natalie Edmunson (Burley Park Medical Centre) for staff support with regards to best practice in managing LGBTQ+ cervical screening recall list natalie.edmundson@nhs.net .

- [NHS population screening: information for trans and non-binary people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Topic 4: equality of access to cervical screening - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Trans health - GMC \(gmc-uk.org\)](https://www.gmc-uk.org)
- [LGBT Foundation - Home](https://www.lgbt.foundation)
- [Home - Live Through This](https://www.livethroughthis.org)
- [Stonewall statement on LGBT health inequalities](https://www.stonewall.org)
- [Cervical screening for transgender men | NHS – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [Microsoft PowerPoint - 10800 Cervical Screening Online ToolkitFINAL](https://www.microsoft.com)
- [Birmingham LGBT \(blgbt.org\)](https://www.blgbt.org)
- [Trans and non-binary cancer screening | Cancer Research UK](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org)
- [Research shows one size doesn't fit all for cervical screening in the trans and non-binary community - Cancer Research UK - Cancer news](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org)
- [Trans men and non-binary people 'discouraged' from cervical screenings \(pinknews.co.uk\)](https://www.pinknews.co.uk)
- [Attitudes of transgender men and non-binary people to cervical screening: a cross-sectional mixed-methods study in the UK | British Journal of General Practice \(bjgp.org\)](https://www.bjgp.org)
- [Reducing cervical screening inequalities for trans people - PHE Screening \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk)
- [Cervical Screening for Transgender, Non-binary and Intersex Communities | Primary Care Women's Health Forum \(pcwhf.co.uk\)](https://www.pcwhf.co.uk)
- [A study of the attitudes of trans men and non-binary people to screening for cervical cancer | Cancer Research UK](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org)
- [Barriers to cervical screening for trans men and/or non-binary people | Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust \(jostrust.org.uk\)](https://www.jostrust.org.uk)