



Transform the Conversation

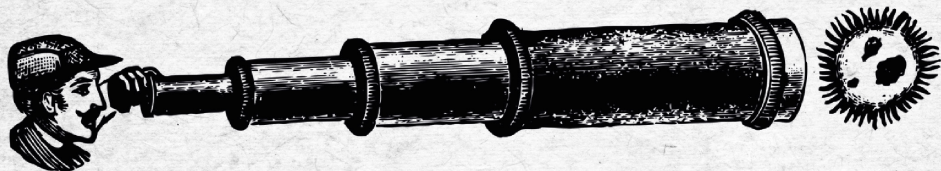


CANOLFAN
MILENIWM
CYMRU
WALES
MILLENNIUM
CENTRE



ISD

Powering new
generations
against extremism



This zine is part of a project created by **Youth Cymru and Mess Up the Mess Theatre Company** which worked with trans young people and school pupils to create '**Humanequin**', a play about what it means to be transgender.

We know that trans topics aren't always talked about in schools, contributing to misunderstandings or people feeling alone and isolated because of their identity.

We wanted to change this.

We spent time at Radyr Comprehensive School in Cardiff, working with a group of trans actors to devise **Humanequin** and exploring with pupils how everyone has the right to feel included, safe and to be themselves at school.

The questions in this zine were submitted anonymously by young people. The questions were then answered by the cast of **Humanequin** and members of **TransForm Cymru**.

Remember, everyone's identity and experiences are unique. There's no such thing as one 'correct' answer when it comes to identity.

Who is this zine for?

It's for anyone who is interested in finding out more, no matter how you identify.

If you're not trans, the zine answers questions which you might have, and also includes information about how to be a friend and ally to trans people.

If you're trans (or think you might be), hopefully this zine will show you that you are definitely not alone and that there are lots of places you can get support.



WHAT DOES **LGBT** MEAN?

LESBIAN

describes a woman who is attracted to other women

GAY

describes a man who is attracted to other men

BISEXUAL

someone who is attracted to more than one gender

TRANSGENDER

(often shortened to 'trans')
describes people whose gender is not
the same as the one they were given,
or assigned, at birth



...
Sometimes the acronym **LGBT+** is used. The + (plus) sign represents the many different identities which someone might have.

All of these identities are valid and it's totally okay to not be sure how you identify, or to change which words you use to describe your identity over time.

If you'd like to find out more, Stonewall have a glossary with lots of terms and definitions:

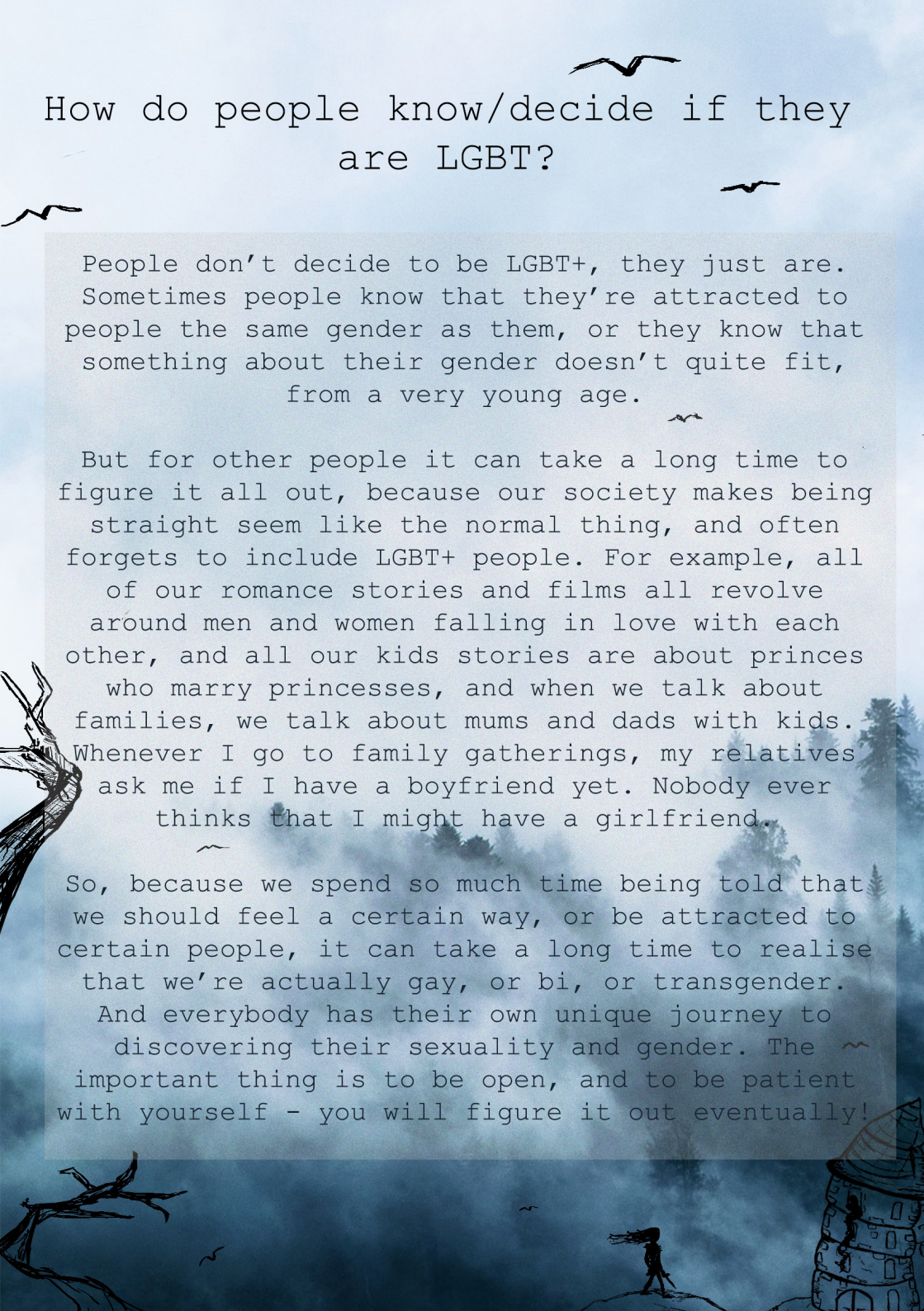
<https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms-0>



WHAT DOES TRANSGENDER MEAN? IS IT A PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OR A FEELING, OR BOTH?

BEING TRANSGENDER MEANS THAT THE GENDER YOU ARE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH IS DIFFERENT TO THE GENDER YOU IDENTIFY WITH. SO IF, FOR EXAMPLE, SOMEBODY IS BORN AND THE MIDWIFE ANNOUNCES "CONGRATULATIONS! IT'S A BOY!" BUT LATER IN LIFE THAT PERSON KNOWS THE GENDER THEY WERE GIVEN ISN'T ONE THAT REFLECTS WHO THEY REALLY ARE, THEY ARE TRANSGENDER.

Most of the time, being transgender involves transitioning. People transition socially - when they might change their name and pronouns (words like he, she, and they), and/or start wearing different clothes. People can also transition medically, although not all trans people do. This might involve taking hormones and having reconstructive surgeries so that their bodies reflect who they know they are, and what makes them comfortable.



How do people know/decide if they are LGBT?

People don't decide to be LGBT+, they just are. Sometimes people know that they're attracted to people the same gender as them, or they know that something about their gender doesn't quite fit, from a very young age.

But for other people it can take a long time to figure it all out, because our society makes being straight seem like the normal thing, and often forgets to include LGBT+ people. For example, all of our romance stories and films all revolve around men and women falling in love with each other, and all our kids stories are about princes who marry princesses, and when we talk about families, we talk about mums and dads with kids. Whenever I go to family gatherings, my relatives ask me if I have a boyfriend yet. Nobody ever thinks that I might have a girlfriend.

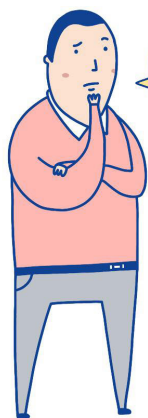
So, because we spend so much time being told that we should feel a certain way, or be attracted to certain people, it can take a long time to realise that we're actually gay, or bi, or transgender.

And everybody has their own unique journey to discovering their sexuality and gender. The important thing is to be open, and to be patient with yourself - you will figure it out eventually!

Write about your day!



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR YOUNGER SELF?



IF YOU ASKED ME
'WHAT ADVICE WOULD I
GIVE TO MY YOUNGER SELF'
I THINK I WOULD SAY
SOMETHING LIKE...



LITTLER
TIM,
MANY
YEARS
AGO...

HEY!



PEOPLE MIGHT
SAY
UNINTENTIONALLY
MEAN THINGS.



BOYS
DON'T WEAR
PINK.

YOU'RE
WEIRD.

WHY HAVE YOU
CUT YOUR HAIR
LIKE THAT?

ARE YOU
GAY?

BUT I'D SAY THAT YOU'RE
ALLOWED TO TAKE AS MANY STEPS
AS YOU NEED IN ORDER TO BE
YOURSELF.



HAPPY
TIM

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT A BOY, OR GIRL, OR EITHER?

I identify as non-binary, and I remember never feeling connected to the label of "girl" when I was younger, but never really feeling like a "boy" either. I found I felt uncomfortable being spoken to using female terms and pronouns (she/her), but felt more comfortable when the more gender neutral or masculine terms being used (they/them or he/him). I existed in this strange middle ground, but I have found that I feel comfortable in the middle, and I like presenting and putting myself forward as androgynous, someone who doesn't look like a girl or a boy.

This can, of course, differ from person to person, as it is such a personal thing! But it also differs for those who do identify as the gender they were assigned at birth. Some girls like to have short hair and wear suits, but still feel really connected to the idea of being a girl. Some boys like to wear skirts and have long hair, but they still feel they are a boy inside.



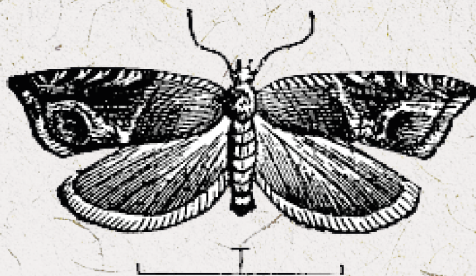
There is a feeling within yourself, much like when you just know something about yourself. For some people, it takes years and years of exploring and experimenting to find that out about themselves, but others can just know it about themselves.



I also remember feeling more comfortable in female social groups than male ones, and sometimes wishing I was allowed to dress in ways considered more feminine, but I should mention that none of these have to be signs that you're trans. It's absolutely fine to dress or act however you want regardless of your gender (please don't think if, for example, you're a boy who wants to wear makeup and have long hair that it means you have to transition!)

We're brought up to think of gender as something fixed and unchangeable, so for some people (like me!) it can take a long time to understand that the difficult feelings they're experiencing are a result of gender dysphoria. I remember having a lot of negative feelings toward my body around the time I started going through puberty and assumed that was just something that everyone felt, or that all guys went to sleep wishing they would wake up as a girl. It seems so obvious looking back, but it's only after developing the language to think about gender in more complex ways that I can look back and go, "oh, THAT's what that all meant!"

Gender identity is based on how you feel inside, not how you look, or act, or anything else. For trans people, coming to terms with our gender identity is usually a process involving experimenting with different pronouns, names, appearances etc. It's totally okay to experiment, and it's normal for that process to take time - for example, I'm totally happy with the name I chose, but for a while it didn't feel natural responding to it after everyone calling me by a different name for me for 17 years! What I'm trying to get at is that your gender identity is entirely down to you, and you don't have to 'prove' it to anyone.



If You're trans, What Gender are You
attracted to?

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Gender and Sexuality
Are + wo different
Things

The answer is different
for everyone! Even if you're
not trans, the gender you're
attracted to can vary as well



Is there an explanation for why people want to be trans?



PEOPLE DON'T REALLY "WANT" TO BE TRANSGENDER, ANYMORE THAN PEOPLE WANT TO BE GAY. THEY JUST ARE.

THE REASON WHY MANY PEOPLE WANT TO TRANSITION, AND START LIVING AS THE GENDER THEY KNOW THEY ARE, RATHER THAN THE GENDER THEY WERE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH, IS BECAUSE IT MAKES THEM MORE COMFORTABLE.

GIRLS - IMAGINE THAT NOBODY COULD SEE THAT YOU WERE A GIRL. IMAGINE IF PEOPLE KEPT CONSTANTLY MISTAKING YOU FOR A BOY, KEPT CALLING YOU "HE" BY MISTAKE WHEN THEY MET YOU. IMAGINE THAT WHEN YOU TRIED TO TELL PEOPLE THAT THEY'RE WRONG AND THAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY A GIRL, THEY WOULD GET REALLY AGGRESSIVE AND INSIST THAT THEY'RE RIGHT AND THEY KNOW YOU'RE A BOY AND YOU'RE JUST PRETENDING TO BE A GIRL.



OR BOYS, IMAGINE THE OPPOSITE - IMAGINE THAT NOBODY COULD SEE THAT YOU WERE A BOY. IMAGINE IF PEOPLE KEPT CONSTANTLY MISTAKING YOU FOR A GIRL, KEPT CALLING YOU "SHE" BY MISTAKE WHEN THEY MET YOU.



THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE TRANS. IF YOU HAD THE OPTION TO CHANGE YOUR BODY SO THAT PEOPLE STOPPED MISTAKING YOU FOR THE WRONG GENDER, WOULD YOU TAKE IT? WOULD YOU WANT TO LIVE PRETENDING TO BE SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT, OR WOULD YOU DRESS IN A WAY, AND USE PRONOUNS AND A NAME THAT REFLECTS WHO YOU KNOW YOU ARE?

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING TRANS?

When you have the confidence to explore the idea of gender and ask the really tough questions, you find a new freedom in letting go of all of the ideas about gender that have been put on you that you never knew existed. Also the community is pretty rad.

The sense of community! When I go to Trans Pride in Brighton every July, I'm struck by how even though there's a lot of hostility to trans people from certain parts of society, we remain an amazingly vibrant, creative and beautiful community who can come together in amazing ways to do amazing things.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOCIETY KNEW ABOUT TRANS YOUNG PEOPLE?

RESPONSE 1: THAT YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AND IT ISN'T JUST A PHASE - NOBODY SAYS THAT CIS YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW THEIR GENDER, SO WHY SHOULD IT BE ANY DIFFERENT FOR TRANS YOUNG PEOPLE?

BUT I ALSO WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD THAT IT'S OKAY IF YOU GET IT WRONG - ALLOWING PEOPLE THE FREEDOM TO EXPLORE AND DISCOVER THINGS ABOUT THEMSELVES WILL ALWAYS BE A POSITIVE THING. IT'S BETTER THAT WE ALLOW PEOPLE THE FREEDOM TO EXPLORE AND EXPRESS NEW PARTS OF THEMSELVES AND THEY REALISE THEY'RE NOT TRANS, BUT THEY KNOW THEY HAVE YOUR SUPPORT AND ACCEPTANCE, THAN FORCING PEOPLE TO CONFORM TO OUR IDEAS ABOUT WHO THEY SHOULD BE, AND MAKING THEM FEEL LIKE THEY CAN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES OR EXPLORE OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES WE'VE DEFINED FOR THEM.

RESPONSE 2: THAT BEING UPSET BECAUSE OF THE NAME THAT PEOPLE ARE CALLING YOU BY, OR PEOPLE GENDERING YOU IN A WAY THAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE, IS VALID AND EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.



HOW DID YOU TELL YOUR PARENTS THAT YOU WERE TRANS OR NON-BINARY?

Response 1: I told my parents a few months after I realised that I was non-binary and came out to my friends. I was living away at University at the time, so it was almost like I had two totally separate lives - my life in Wales with all my new friends, where I could be myself and use my new name and be my authentic self, and my life at home where everyone I had grown up with, who knew me by my birth name and thought I was a girl.



Eventually, I decided it was time to tell them, so I spoke to them both separately, and I explained as best I could why my partner was using a different name for me, and why. My mum asked me a lot of questions and we talked a lot, but my dad didn't really say anything. I don't think they really understand it, but I haven't talked to them about it much since I first came out, because even though they still use the wrong name and pronouns for me and that is upsetting, I'm scared to start family conflict, or to face the fact my parents might not accept me at all.

Response 2: I have told my mum's side of the family that I'm non-binary, and they seem to understand what I'm saying to them. They occasionally slip up, but they've known me for just about 20 years now!

Unfortunately, it isn't safe for me to be out as trans to my dad's side of the family. But because I am living away from them, I don't really feel sad about it.

It has helped me a lot to be able to surround myself with people who do see me for who I am, as well as cutting out those who actively seek to hurt me, and I'm overall living a happier life!

Response 3: I planned on writing a long and thought-out explanation of my identity and what being trans meant and sending it to my parents, as I felt like that would be easier than having the conversation in person. Unfortunately, before I managed to do that I had one particularly rough night where I was feeling sad and panicky, and ended up phoning my mum at 4am, waking her up and yelling, "HI I'M TRANS OK I LOVE YOU BYE". In my experience this is maybe not the best way to come out! When I've come out to other people since, I've always found that the best way is just communicating as openly as possible, regardless of how you actually do it.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST PART ABOUT "COMING OUT?"

FOR ME THE HARDEST THING ABOUT COMING OUT IS THE PEOPLE WHO REALLY MATTER TO YOU. JUST NOT GETTING IT OR NOT ACCEPTING YOU. IF STRANGERS DON'T UNDERSTAND, OR ARE CRUEL TO ME, IT DOESN'T REALLY BOTHER ME VERY MUCH BECAUSE THEIR OPINION DOESN'T MATTER TO ME. BUT THE PEOPLE I REALLY CARE ABOUT, WHO ARE REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME... IF THEY DON'T ACCEPT ME FOR WHO I AM, THE IDEA THAT THEY MIGHT REJECT THIS REALLY IMPORTANT PART OF ME, IS VERY PAINFUL.

BEFORE COMING OUT I IMAGINED IT WOULD BE THIS HUGE MAGICAL MOMENT FOR ME, AND IN A LOT OF WAYS IT WAS! BUT IN A LOT OF OTHER WAYS IT WAS THE START OF A PROCESS AND LED TO A LOT OF DIFFICULT BUT IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE CLOSE TO ME. IT TOOK QUITE A LONG TIME FOR MY FAMILY TO ADJUST TO USING THE RIGHT NAME/PRONOUNS FOR ME - NOT BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T CARE, BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE SO USED TO CALLING ME SOMETHING ELSE. AND I PROBABLY DIDN'T DO A GREAT JOB OF EXPLAINING TO THEM WHY IT WAS SO IMPORTANT TO ME! HOPEFULLY AS TRANS PEOPLE BECOME MORE VISIBLE IN SOCIETY AND TRANS ISSUES BECOME MORE WIDELY DISCUSSED, THIS PROCESS WILL BECOME EASIER FOR PEOPLE.

THAT IT'S NOT JUST A ONE TIME THING, BECAUSE OF HOW SOCIETY JUDGES AND MAKES ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON THINGS LIKE HOW WE DRESS, HOW WE TALK, AND HOW WE WALK. I AM OFTEN MISTAKEN TO BE THE GENDER THAT I AM NOT. I AM CONSTANTLY CORRECTING PEOPLE TO SEE THAT I AM THE GENDER THAT I AM!

HOW CAN I HELP TRANS PEOPLE IN MY SCHOOL



LISTEN AND DON'T JUDGE THEM AND BE THERE
FOR THEM IF THEY NEED YOU.

REMEMBER JUST BECAUSE THEIR NAME OR
APPEARANCE MIGHT HAVE CHANGED, THEY'RE
STILL THE SAME PERSON.

IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS CHANGED
THE NAME AND PRONOUNS THEY USE, DO
YOUR BEST TO USE THEIR NEW NAME AND
PRONOUNS. YOU MIGHT MAKE MISTAKES TO
BEGIN WITH -IF YOU DO, JUST APOLOGISE
AND MOVE ON.

IF SOMEONE CONFIDES IN YOU THAT THEY'RE
TRANS DON'T TELL OTHER PEOPLE WITHOUT
THEIR PERMISSION. HOWEVER IF YOU'RE
WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE AND THINK THEY
MIGHT BE IN DANGER, SPEAK TO A TEACHER
OR ANOTHER ADULT YOU CAN TRUST.



ARE THERE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE QUESTIONING THEIR SEXUALITY OR GENDER CAN GO AND GET SUPPORT AND ADVICE?

YES! IF YOU FEEL ABLE TO, YOU CAN SPEAK TO A TEACHER, YOUTH WORKER OR OTHER ADULT YOU TRUST WHO SHOULD BE ABLE TO SIGNPOST YOU TO SUPPORT AND ADVICE. THERE MAY BE LOCAL TRANS OR LGBT+ YOUTH GROUPS IN YOUR AREA TOO.

THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES ALSO HAVE HELPFUL INFORMATION:

GENDERED INTELLIGENCE – [HTTP://GENDEREDINTELLIGENCE.CO.UK/](http://genderedintelligence.co.uk/)

STONEWALL – [HTTPS://WWW.STONEWALL.ORG.UK/](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/)

MERMAIDS – [HTTPS://WWW.MERMAIDSUK.ORG.UK/](https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/)

MY GENDERATION – [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/USER/MYGENDERATION](https://www.youtube.com/user/mygenderation)

THE ALBERT KENNEDY TRUST – [HTTPS://WWW.AKT.ORG.UK/](https://www.akt.org.uk/)

CHILDLINE – [HTTPS://WWW.CHILDLINE.ORG.UK/](https://www.childline.org.uk/)

SAMARITANS – [HTTPS://WWW.SAMARITANS.ORG/](https://www.samaritans.org/)

ALL ABOUT TRANS – [HTTPS://WWW.ALLABOUTTRANS.ORG.UK/](https://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/)

LGBT SWITCHBOARD – [HTTPS://SWITCHBOARD.LGBT](https://switchboard.lgbt)

SOME ACCESSIBLE BOOKS WITH SOME HELPFUL INFORMATION AS WELL:

THE ABC'S OF LGBT+ – ASH HARDELL (PUBLISHED UNDER ASHLEY MARDELL)

THIS BOOK IS GAY – JUNO DAWSON

TRANS TEEN SURVIVAL GUIDE – OWL AND FOX FISHER

WHO ARE YOU?: THE KID'S GUIDE TO GENDER IDENTITY – BROOK PESSIN – WHEDBEE

ARE YOU A BOY OR ARE YOU A GIRL? – FOX FISHER AND SARAH SAVAGE

TRANS MISSION: MY QUEST TO A BEARD – ALEX BERTIE

SOME USEFUL HELPLINES AND OTHER AVAILABLE SUPPORT:

SWITCHBOARD LGBT+ HELPLINE: 0300 330 0630 (10AM–10PM EVERYDAY)

SAMARITANS: 116 123 (24 HOURS, 7 DAYS A WEEK)

CHILDLINE 0800 1111 (24 HOURS, 7 DAYS A WEEK. YOU CAN ALSO CHAT ONLINE TO A COUNSELLOR)

MIND'S INFOLINE: 0300 123 3393 (INFORMATION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WHERE TO GET HELP. OPEN MONDAY–FRIDAY, 9AM–6PM)

MINDLINE TRANS+ 0300 330 5468 (OPEN MONDAYS AND FRIDAYS FROM 8PM–MIDNIGHT)

MERMAIDS UK HELPLINE: 0344 334 0550 (OPEN MONDAY–FRIDAY, 9AM–9PM)