

**UCU**

University and College Union

**UCU'S VISION FOR TRANS  
AND NON-BINARY MEMBERS  
EQUALITY AND INCLUSION**

**A TRANS AND NON-BINARY  
GUIDE ON DISCOURSE**



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# FOREWORD

**I am proud to be the general secretary of a union that unequivocally stands with trans and non-binary people. I am proud too that our members - time after time – have returned strong policy on trans and non-binary inclusion. Across the trade union movement, UCU is one of, if not the most, vocal supporter of the trans and non-binary community.**

Our role is to understand the challenges to inclusion some of our trans and non-binary members face and to advise local branches on how best they can offer support and solidarity, doing so in a way that is aligned with our democratically agreed policy and our values. This guidance will help our members talk about and share UCU's positive vision for our trans and non-binary members.

Our trans and non-binary members have told us they are concerned about their everyday safety. They want a life free from violence and to be treated with dignity and respect - at work, in the classroom, in virtual environments and in other areas of their lives. They highlighted the many issues they face including securing and staying in employment as well as access to progression and promotion.

These issues are clearly ones our union cannot and must not ignore, just as we must support trans and non-binary people to access health care and facilities many of us take for granted. As a union we will act to eliminate the discrimination our trans and non-binary members face in the workplace, and in society more broadly.

While trans and non-binary people continue to experience violence at work, in public and at home - including threats of physical and sexual harassment, verbal abuse, threatening behaviour and online abuse - we have a role in building a better future for them. We will continue to pursue positive change for our members in these areas, now and in the future. We will continue to stand up to bullies, whether they are in our workplaces, our communities, Westminster, or in the media.



**Dr Jo Grady**  
*UCU General Secretary*



*This guidance on, and around, advocating for trans and non-binary rights has been drawn up in line with UCU Congress Policy. That is policy voted for by members and so is democratically agreed.*

*It foregrounds UCU values - that diversity is good and that people should be treated with dignity and respect.*

*To live our values we must understand and discuss them.*

*This document aims to help make conversations on our values productive.*

*Together we can create a future where trans and non-binary people can live their lives in safety with dignity and respect like the rest of society.*

# UCU'S VISION

**UCU believes in building an inclusive culture, in words and deeds, that supports its trans and non-binary members to live their lives in safety with dignity and respect like the rest of our society.**

We will act to eliminate the discrimination our trans and non-binary members face in the workplace, and in society more broadly.

To achieve this vision we will use our collective strength and influence to bring about wider societal change so trans and non-binary people can live their lives in dignity, not only in the workplaces where we have branches, but within the UK as a whole.

Underpinning this is our democratically agreed policy which is committed to an intersectional approach within all its equality work, and affirms our women's structures within the union belong to all self-identifying women. Indeed, all our equality structures are open to those who self-identify as a member of that group.

This is further affirmed by our NEC in a statement reiterating UCU's commitment to trans inclusion. We want to highlight UCU as champions of equality, where we welcome the increased visibility and empowerment of trans and non-binary people in our society.

Our movement must be a safe space for all women and all people with diverse genders.

It is our responsibility to promote equality and ensure the provisions of the Equality Act are implemented and adhered to by our members and in the sectors where we organise. This is also written into our rules. Our rules commit us to ending all forms of discrimination, bigotry and stereotyping.

# BIG PICTURE

## Together we can make the future better for trans and non-binary people.

Trans and non-binary people want what everyone wants; to be treated with respect, to have equal access to employment, to be treated fairly in employment, and to have timely access to health care.

This means being safe from violence at work, in public and at home, and having access to public services and support that can be trusted and depended on while being recognised for who they are in all of these different settings.

Living your life in safety with dignity and respect is a basic right and something we should all expect in a democratic and progressive society because they are values at its foundation.

Unfortunately, this is not something trans and non-binary people can always expect to experience.

The best estimate at the moment is that around 1% of the population might identify as trans and / or non-binary. That would mean about 600,000 trans and non-binary people in Britain, out of a population of over 60 million.<sup>1</sup>

Even though this group is small we know that:

- hate crimes against trans people have risen year on year with a three percent (3%) increase between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to over 2,000 hate crimes.<sup>2</sup>
- trans and non-binary hate crimes are severely underreported, with 88% of trans people not reporting incidents of the hate crime they had been subject to.<sup>3</sup>

Sadly, hate crimes against trans and non-binary people have always existed.

However, recent media attention and the toxic discourses it has encouraged have intensified the hate. The newspaper regulator, the Independent Press Standards Association, reported there had been a 400% increase in the coverage of trans issues between 2014 and 2019.<sup>4</sup>

Hope Not Hate have highlighted, in their recent report State of HATE 2022: On The March Again, that this increase, combined with the consistently toxic and negative coverage of trans and non-binary issues has contributed to a wider societal division on trans issues and is likely to have led to a higher level of hate crimes being perpetrated in the past year. They have also highlighted there is evidence that the far-right have been using support for trans and non-binary rights as an issue to access new audiences and that it is 'a potential slip road into far-right politics.' A fear also highlighted in an Institute of Race Relations article which highlights that 'the erosion of transgender and LGBT rights go hand-in-hand for a far Right that demonises anyone who disrupts the heteronormative vision of the family.'

While trans and non-binary people continue to experience violence at work, in public and at home there is a role for our union, branches and members.

Together we can make a difference.

There are many ways we can support trans and non-binary members.

One is by speaking about our vision, a future where trans and non-binary people live in safety with dignity and respect like the rest of our society.

This guidance aims to give you the tools to communicate our vision for trans and non-binary rights.

There are many other ways you can support trans and non-binary members as well as the wider LGBT+ community.

You can find additional ways on the UCU website.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.stophateuk.org/about-hate-crime/transgender-hate/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipso.co.uk/news-press-releases/press-releases/new-research-on-reporting-of-trans-issues-shows-400-increase-in-coverage-and-varying-perceptions-on-broader-editorial-standards/>

# WHAT CAN BRANCHES PROACTIVELY DO TO SUPPORT TRANS AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE

- Checklists
- Statements of support for trans and non-binary rights
- Model motions
- Run an event
- Listen to and speak with trans and non-binary members
- LGBT+ Language in use training
- Ally CPD

## WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO UCU TRANS AND NON-BINARY MEMBERS?

**Right now much of the discourse on and around trans and non-binary rights in the wider environment is hostile. However, UCU has taken a stand, led by our members and our democracy, to be vocal advocates for these rights.**

As a part of our ongoing advocacy we have listened to what our trans and non-binary members tell us is important and what their priorities are.

They told us that UCU should:

- continue to explicitly to support trans liberation and embed it into progressive politics
- help educate members on LGBT+ issues to support UCU LGBT+ members and their LGBT+ students effectively
- continue to include LGBT+ issues in policy development and consultations so these issues are not left out
- develop guidance to help trans and non-binary allies be confident in the support they offer so trans and non-binary members are confident to raise issues with their branch
- Highlight that trans and non-binary issues must be solved collectively
- highlight trans and non-binary individuals have diverse identities that are intersectional
- identify and remove any barriers to participation that trans and non-binary members face
- Promote inclusive language as standard from the start

# POINT 1: THE FACTS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Experts in communications, from every political background, tell us that the facts are not enough to persuade someone to change their position or reexamine it. They are clear that to convince people of the validity of your position you need to speak to shared values.<sup>5</sup>

They are also clear that 'progressives' overly rely on facts at the expense of speaking to those shared values.

While it is important to know the facts and to use that knowledge judiciously, it is equally important to speak to those common shared values when talking about our vision for trans and non-binary inclusion.

It is, however, comforting that many people share our values and have a common set of core values that resonate with our vision. Our goal is to point out and remind others of our common strongly held beliefs.

It is also important to avoid using the language and argument/debate framing of, and from, groups which seek to exclude trans and non-binary people. Repeating this framing helps engrain it as the vernacular of the debate when discussing trans and non-binary rights and this in turn further entrenches narratives that seek to exclude. If we speak to exclusionary narratives, we are not able to as effectively argue for our vision of a future where trans and non-binary people, and members, live in safety with dignity and respect like the rest of society.

## When talking about trans and non-binary rights and our shared values we should draw on what those values are.

At UCU, when considering trans and non-binary rights, we draw on our values including that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect, have the freedom to be and live authentically, have bodily autonomy i.e., the right to choose what to do with their body, even if that includes individuals changing their minds later, and that we value our democracy.

There are other values which underpin trans and non-binary rights which are integral to progressive democratic countries like the UK.

According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans And Intersex Association (ILGA) these include:<sup>6</sup>

- **Human rights:** Which says violence or discrimination against any group is wrong.
- **Liberal society:** Draws on 'enlightenment' type values (rationality, intelligence, openness) similar to human rights. It's connected to ideas of a changing society, and of progress.
- **Diversity is really good:** Is based on the assumption that individuals and families don't all look the same: rather, we already have diverse populations with multiple configurations of families (with different migration origins, different numbers of parents, different faces and different gender roles and identities).
- **Common humanity and love:** Similar to the above but is based on an acceptance of the reality of human difference yet built on a belief of common humanity that 'they' are 'us': LGBTI people are you, me, your cousin, your grandma. It's visible in 'it could be you / your family' -type campaigns and draws on compassion and the emotions. It's perhaps also connected to campaigns based on 'love' as an argument ('we all love' / shared experience).
- **Self-made people:** Rather than identity, family structure or other elements of life being dictated by traditional social norms, this assumes many traditions to be outdated, including those around family, marriage and gender roles. It suggests people make their own versions of these.

<sup>5</sup> <https://commonslibrary.org/frame-the-debate-insights-from-dont-think-of-an-elephant/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/framing\\_equality\\_toolkit\\_ilga-europe\\_pirc\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/framing_equality_toolkit_ilga-europe_pirc_-_final.pdf)



# POINT 2: WHEN TO ENGAGE

**If you are reading this, it is likely you want to support trans and non-binary people and are looking for tools to help you do that through discussion and engagement.**

If you are not trans or non-binary it is important to remember that being a visible ally to this group is important, and part of that is speaking up for trans and non-binary people. Even, and especially, when they are not present.

Your voice and your actions have weight and can change hearts and minds.

However, there are also times when engaging in discussions can have a negative effect. This is true where they:

- unintentionally reinforce trans exclusionary narratives
- empower and embolden individuals who want to exclude trans and non-binary people
- promote trans exclusionary voices to a wider audience
- expose trans and non-binary people to additional hurt and harm because of the toxic nature of the discussion

So, knowing when to use your voice is important. To do this we need to:

- Understand when engagement is good/bad
- Understand how to highlight positives to build a movement on social media and where that strengthens or further promotes trans exclusionary voices
- Utilize indirect engagement

# POINT 2: WHEN TO ENGAGE (cont)

## Conversation decision checklist<sup>7</sup>

*It's important to be considered when deciding on if you should engage in a conversation on this topic.*

Here are some questions to ask yourself before engaging in a discussion.

- Who is the conversation with? Are there people involved who are genuinely interested or confused?
- What is the premise of the discussion?
- Whose agenda is this discussion serving?
- Is this an opportunity to discuss or pivot to a substantive issue that needs the spotlight?
- Is there someone else who is better placed than me to do this?
- Do you have mental and emotional time and space to do this today? And do you have access to support after the discussion?
- Will there be any progressive voice if you don't do it?
- Is an influential person involved in the discussion? Are they genuinely interested or confused?

Remember you are not obliged to continue a conversation if, for example, it has become hostile, or you aren't allowed to express yourself. It is okay to withdraw from the discussion.

## Public discussions decision checklist<sup>8</sup>

*It's important to be considered when deciding on if you should say yes or no to taking part in a public discussion on this issue.*

Here are some questions to ask yourself before engaging in a discussion.

Here are some questions to ask yourself (and those involved) before agreeing to take part. Remember, it is okay to decline or pass on an opportunity.

- What is the premise of the discussion?
- Whose agenda is this discussion serving?
- If there is a panel, who is on it?
- Is this an opportunity to discuss or pivot to a substantive issue that needs the spotlight?
- Is there someone else who is better placed than me to do this?
- Do you have the time to prepare?
- Are you willing to give the mental and emotional time and space to this today? And do you have access to support after the interview?
- Will there be any progressive voice if you don't do it?
- Is the audience for this discussion large or influential?

<sup>7</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17SEJrelhJ-o\\_rqWH57jOC9yZZUqfor4K/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17SEJrelhJ-o_rqWH57jOC9yZZUqfor4K/view)

<sup>8</sup> If you have been contacted with a media request, contact UCU's press team on xxx for handling advice.

# POINT 3: TIPS ON HOW TO ENGAGE

- 1. When you engage, set out our vision where** trans and non-binary people and members are free to live their lives in safety with dignity and respect like the rest of our society.<sup>9</sup>
- 2. Stay calm** - an emotional or angry response weakens your point.
- 3. Move the conversation to trans and non-binary people's lived experience** and UCU's values and the commonly shared values most people hold as set out on page 8.
- 4. Remember who you are trying to sway** which will depend on the engagement type
  - if it's a one on one you are convincing the other person
  - in a branch meeting or wider/public discussion you are trying to sway or convince the audience not the interviewer or other panel members. It is not the individual posing trans exclusionary policies/ideas
- 5. When addressing exclusionary arguments** remember to always **take the discussion back to UCU's vision.**

## SMALL CONVERSATIONS

### Managed Discussions<sup>10</sup>

Managed discussions are an important way of helping someone to explore their opinions, where they've come from and what they mean. So having a planned approach and strategy to facilitate these kinds of conversations is important.

Your aim is to encourage the person to explore their own reasoning behind an opinion.

Instead, try to steer them to reflect on their own views and what is driving any concerns they may have, and where possible provide counter arguments which support our vision of inclusion

However, it is not appropriate to engage in a discussion around trans or non-binary people's right to exist.

## THE ONE TO ONE OR SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION

### Start

#### Create a safe space

Begin your conversation with someone by making clear there are no taboos, and they can speak their mind without fear of being judged or labelled. You want them to open up, voice their concerns, and reflect upon their reasoning.

#### Ask the right questions

Ask questions in a way that lets people express themselves and doesn't make them feel they're being cornered. Good ways to begin a question include:

- "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you..."
- "Can you give me one reason for and one reason against..."

#### Separate the person and the view

You may find what they say offensive but try to **distinguish between the person and their view** – they're not a bad person, they've just taken on some opinions UCU does not agree with. Try to find out how and why.

For further advice on this approach see the TUC's resource 'Challenging conversations'.

## PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS: THE INTERVIEW/BRANCH MEETING/PANEL DISCUSSION

If you have been invited to take part in a public discussion and, having considered the questions in our 'Public discussions decision checklist,' (page 10) and have decided to take part the next step is to ensure you are prepared.

Are you:

- Prepared to talk about UCU's positive vision.
- Prepared to bring the discussion back to what our trans and non-binary members tell us about their lived experience and what we want to see change.

<sup>9</sup> All engagement should start with our vision no matter what question has been asked.

<sup>10</sup> Challenging conversations | TUC

# POINT 3: TIPS ON HOW TO ENGAGE (cont)

Key to that is to understand what questions you might be asked. These tend to be drawn from a limited set. There are some pointers below on what might work as a response.

Once you've responded, bring the discussion back to UCU's vision.

## TIPS FROM NEON

**Flip the Script:** You can 'flip the script' by naming the more substantive issue, or by naming who is stirring up the debate and why.

- A fantastic example of this is when Emily Thornberry when asked on LBC, 'Can a woman have a penis?' she said, "Women who are trans deserve to be recognized and yes some of them will have penises. Frankly, I'm not looking up their skirts, I don't care. What I care about is that they are looked after properly and that they are not used as a political football by a Prime Minister who ought to know better.'

**Know your stuff:** Introducing and using key statistics and facts judiciously that challenge other narratives.

- For example, trans people make up around 1% of the UK population of which about half, so 0.5%, are trans women. The media has had an intense focus on them since around 2016. This highlights the absurdity of the outsized focus that conservative commentators and institutions spend focused on trans and non-binary people.
- A fantastic example of using statistics to your advantage is Akala speaking about knife crime on Good Morning Britain in March 2019.

**Talk to the audience:** Don't worry if you are not persuading the commentator or panel in front of you; they are likely to be on the panel because they have a more entrenched viewpoint. Instead, your job is to persuade the people in the audience who are watching and not involved in the debate or are open to changing their position and rally trans and non-binary people and their allies.

- Appeal to common social moral language that meets people where they are using the values we've named on page 8.

- Move conversations from the theoretical to real life examples. Give real-life examples that the audience will connect with and bring in a human element. Dissolve people's fear by using real life examples of the people conservative commentators are telling others to be afraid of.

**Key tip: Often the questions are designed to have a narrow focus that stops people seeing the bigger picture. Broaden out that picture when you respond. Then bring the answer back to UCU's vision.**

Example: *Too many young people who medically transition, regret it and detransition.*

This is a really big question.

An answer to this could run as follows -

It's bigger than this conversation on transitioning and the trans population, which in the UK is estimated to be about 1 percent.

Transitioning engages with the subject of bodily autonomy, which, living in a liberal society, is a right for people to make their own choices with all that involves. A right that can in some circumstances lead to regret. It's a question about where the limits in our society are as a whole and the state obligations to step in when those limits are breached.

I am open to having that wider conversation. It's a legitimate discussion but it must be held at its widest points as the decisions made will bind us all and impact on a whole range of things we take for granted now.

And so, the issue here, is when you frame it as a trans person's issue, we lose sight of the bigger picture. We frame it in terms of regret, and really the regret rate for medical transition is around 0.5 per cent. It's very small.<sup>11</sup>

Any decision here will impact on a whole host of other body issues so we need to be considered about how we talk about this issue.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gendergp.com/detransition-facts/#:-:text=For%20instance%2C%20in%20the%20UK,went%20on%20to%20actually%20detransition.>

# POINT 4: WHAT ARE TRANS AND NON-BINARY MEMBERS REAL CONCERNS?

**Too often in public discourse the real concerns of trans and non-binary people are missed or not addressed with media coverage directing the topics to be discussed.**

To ensure UCU spoke to the real concerns of its trans and non-binary members we asked them what their everyday real concerns were.

What members have highlighted as their genuine concerns, listed below, help to contextualise any discussion you might have with others on

They told us they were concerned about:

- everyday safety, living a life free from violence and being treated with dignity and respect - at work, in the classroom, in virtual environments and more broadly within their lives
- getting and staying in work with access to progression and promotion
- having timely and efficient access to health care - including, but not solely, timely access to gender recognition clinics and support for mental health issues
- having safe access to toilets/changing rooms and being able to access them without fear
- the government created climate of hostility and transphobia directed at them
- Mis-gendering and dead naming by colleagues, customers and clients as well as by antiquated IT systems that don't synchronise across an organisation's systems, often leading to these incidents in relation to themselves and students
- Sexual violence and domestic abuse policies that do not include them
- Addressing gender based oppression
- Having appropriate reporting and escalation lines for complaints of transphobia and violence
- being and feeling safe within UCU meetings and events

# POINT 5: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## UCU MATERIALS

### **UCU Guide to gender identity**

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8600/Guide-to-Gender-Identity-May-17/pdf/Guide\\_to\\_gender\\_identity\\_may\\_17.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8600/Guide-to-Gender-Identity-May-17/pdf/Guide_to_gender_identity_may_17.pdf)

### **UCU Position on trans inclusion**

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10564/UCUs-position-on-Trans-inclusion/pdf/Trans\\_inclusion\\_November\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10564/UCUs-position-on-Trans-inclusion/pdf/Trans_inclusion_November_2019.pdf)

### **UCU Gender identity: awareness and actions for equality**

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8128/Gender-identity-awareness-and-actions-for-equality-May-20/pdf/ucu\\_genderidentityawareness\\_may201.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8128/Gender-identity-awareness-and-actions-for-equality-May-20/pdf/ucu_genderidentityawareness_may201.pdf)

### **UCU GRA Overview**

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/13210/UCU-guide-to-the-Gender-Recognition-Act/pdf/UCU\\_GRA\\_guide\\_Oct22.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/13210/UCU-guide-to-the-Gender-Recognition-Act/pdf/UCU_GRA_guide_Oct22.pdf)

### **UCU LGBT+ Charter**

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/LGBT+charter>

### **UCU's - Non-binary Gender: Information and Inclusion**

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8824/Non-binary-gender-identity-guide/pdf/Non-binary\\_gender\\_identity\\_guide.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8824/Non-binary-gender-identity-guide/pdf/Non-binary_gender_identity_guide.pdf)

## OTHER MATERIALS

### **Stonewall - The truth about trans: A Q&A for people who are hungry for real info**

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/the-truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain>

### **Stonewall – LGBT in Britain – Trans Report**

[https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt\\_in\\_britain\\_-\\_trans\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_-_trans_report_final.pdf)

### **TUC's – Sexual harassment of LGBT people in the workplace report**

[https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/LGBT\\_Sexual\\_Harassment\\_Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/LGBT_Sexual_Harassment_Report_0.pdf)

### **TUC's – The Cost of Being Out at Work: LGBT+ workers' experiences of harassment and discrimination report**

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/cost-being-out-work>

### **Gender GP – Resources: list of important documents**

<https://www.gendergp.com/important-documents/>

### **Trans EDU**

<https://www.trans.ac.uk/ResourcesInformation/Resources/tabid/7133/Default.aspx>



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