

Gender identity and gender expression in schools e-resource workbook

University of Limerick & Transgender Equality Network Ireland

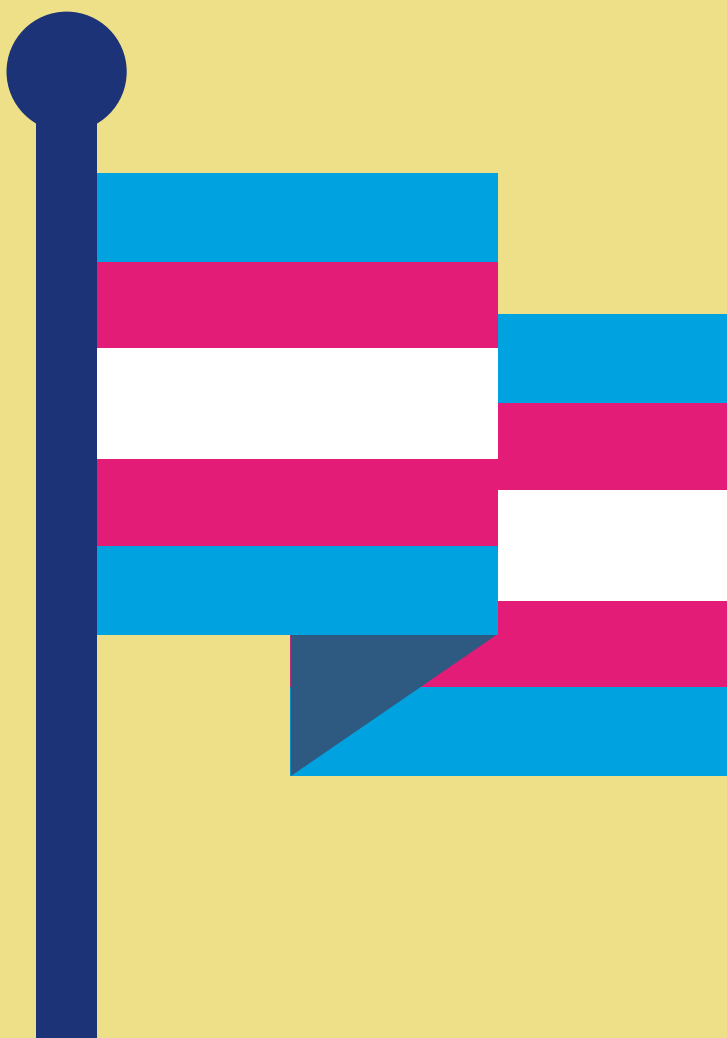


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Introduction

Welcome to the *Gender Identity and Gender Expression in Schools E-Resource* workbook.

This workbook has been developed as part of the *Achieving Equality for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth in Ireland* project, which aimed to investigate and reduce the educational inequalities encountered by transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth in Irish post-primary schools. The project was a collaboration between the [School of Education, University of Limerick](#) and the [Transgender Equality Network Ireland \(TENI\)](#). It was co-funded by the [Irish Research Council](#) and [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) as part of the “Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe” ([CAROLINE](#)) programme.

The [Gender Identity and Gender Expression in Schools E-Resource](#) was designed as an extension of the advocacy, education and support work that TENI has been conducting in Ireland since 2013. To avail of the full benefits of this e-resource, you are encouraged to complete each section sequentially. The sections have been developed to provide school staff with insight into the everyday educational

experiences of trans and gender diverse youth. With each section there is an associated worksheet. The worksheets have been designed to aid learning and self-reflection. This workbook contains each of the 13 worksheets that you need to complete the e-resource. To make the most of this e-resource please ensure you review the information in each section before completing the associated worksheet.

By completing the 13 sections you will:



Gain insight into the everyday experiences of and challenges faced by trans and gender diverse young people in schools



Reflect on how trans and gender diverse young people can be affirmed and supported in your school



Explore how your school could work proactively to ensure that it is an inclusive and welcoming place for trans and gender diverse young people

How to use this resource

We envision this e-resource as a proactive professional learning exercise that would ideally be completed by educators prior to knowingly interacting with a trans or gender diverse student and as part of a whole-school initiative.

Below is a suggested guide for using this e-resource:

1. Access the e-resource on UL's [website](#).
2. Click into and engage with each section of the website in turn. Take notes and complete the corresponding worksheet in this workbook.
3. Once you have completed each of the sections, review your worksheets.
4. Come together as a whole-school staff exercise or as part of a team in your school (e.g. Equality & Diversity) to reflect on the questions/issues raised by your completed workbooks.
5. Contact an advocacy organisation such as TENI to organise a whole-staff education session
6. Co-construct a 'gender identity and gender expression policy and action plan' for your school.
7. Communicate the action plan to staff, students and parents.
8. Review your gender identity and gender expression action plan periodically and update as necessary.

Worksheet 1:

Self-assessment

Prior to completing the e-resource, please complete this worksheet. You will be asked to complete the same worksheet at the end of the training so that you may gauge to what extent your understanding has increased and what issues you might like to learn more about.

Topic		No understanding	Limited understanding	Good understanding	Strong understanding	Unsure
Terminology relating to sex and gender						
Terminology relating to gender identities						
Trans and gender diverse youth's experiences of silencing and invisibility						
Challenges trans and gender diverse youth encounter in relation to:	Uniforms					
	Toilets and changing rooms					
	Sports					
	Names and pronouns					
	Bullying					
	Curriculum					
How to respond to a young person who comes out as trans and gender diverse						
Steps to take facilitating a young person's transition						
The benefits of peer-support groups						
Resources available for making school environments more inclusive of trans and gender diverse youth						

Key terms

Section 2 of the e-resource deals with gender terminology, some of which may be new to educators. Key terms can be used differently by different people in different settings. It is therefore important to review key terms before using the e-resource. After reviewing Section 2, please complete this worksheet before continuing on to Section 3.

2a. Please read the following definitions and write down what key term you think they relate to. Once completed, you can check your answers in the footnote.

Definition	Term
1. A person whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth.	
2. The process of accepting and telling others about one's gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation.	
3. A person whose gender identity and gender expression aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.	
4. The fear, dislike or hatred of people who are trans or who are perceived to challenge conventional gender categories of male or female.	
5. An umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of male or female. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively male nor female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders.	
6. A process through which a person begins to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned to them at birth.	

2a. Answers: (1) Transgender/trans; (2) Coming out; (3) Cisgender; (4) Transphobia; (5) Non-binary; (6) Transition

2b. The definitions above highlight how the language we use is gendered. Look at the list of terms below and consider to what extent the language you use every day in school is gendered.

Gendered term	Gender-neutral equivalent
Girls / women / boys / men / ladies / lads / guys	Student / pupil / folks
Headmaster / headmistress	Principal
Cleaning lady	Cleaner
Groundsman	Grounds person
Mum / dad / mother / father	Parent
Husband / wife	Spouse
Boyfriend / girlfriend	Partner



Notes & reflections

Silence and invisibility

Section 3 of the e-resource deals with transgender and gender diverse youth's experiences of educational silence and feelings of invisibility within the school environment. Once you have reviewed Section 3, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 4.

3a. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

You are a history teacher discussing the impact of war, conflict, and revolution in shaping history with junior certificate students. A student makes the comment that all of the great warriors in history were men. A second student highlights that Joan of Arc was a great warrior and she was a woman. A third student states that Joan of Arc was transgender. Some students begin to giggle, others look confused. Someone asks: 'what does transgender mean?'

Questions:



- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?





3b. How would you rate the level of visibility of in your school?

Good visibility	Some visibility	No visibility	Hostility to visibility	Unsure
<p>There are posters relating to LGBTI+ youth groups and helplines up all year round. The school takes part in Stand Up Awareness Week every year. The school displays a pride flag. It is recognised that students have a diverse range of gender identities and sexualities and this is reflected in more informal aspects of everyday life at school.</p>	<p>The school has put up posters for LGBTI+ youth groups and helplines posters up at some point. However, they are not necessarily displayed all year. Pride flag is displayed for pride only. Recognition of gender and sexuality is rarely reflected in more informal aspects of everyday life at school.</p>	<p>There is no LGBTI+ youth representation in the school. E.g. posters and pride flags are not displayed. LGBTI+ students are not visible members of the school community.</p>	<p>There is active hostility and resistance among peers, parents and/or staff to LGBTI+ representation in my school. A student who came out as LGBTI+ would be in danger of bullying and violence.</p>	

3c. What steps could you take to increase the visibility of gender diversity in your school?



Worksheet 4:

Uniforms

Section 4 of the e-resource deals with school uniforms, which were a major issue of concern among trans and gender diverse youth. After reviewing Section 4, please complete this worksheet before moving on to Section 5.

4a. Please read the questions about your school's uniform policy and tick the most relevant box.

Question	Yes	No	Not applicable
Must boys and girls wear separately gendered uniforms in your school?			
Are trans girls allowed to wear skirts?			
Are trans boys allowed to wear trousers?			
If there is a haircut and jewellery policy, is it the same for everyone?			
Does your school have a gender-neutral uniform option?			
Is your school's sports uniform gender-neutral? (Choose 'no' if the sports uniform requires 'fitted' clothing or is different for boys/girls).			
Has your school ever consulted students, parents and school staff about how they feel about the school uniform?			

If you chose 'no' for any of the above questions, it is likely that your school uniform policy will be problematic for many students at school.

4b. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

You are the principal of a co-educational school with a uniform policy that requires boys to wear trousers and girls to wear a kilt. Furthermore, the boys wear a red jumper, while the girls wear a green jumper because the school formed as a result of an 'all-boy' and 'all-girl' school merging. As part of a class project, a student writes you a letter that says many students have a problem with the school's uniform policy and want it to be gender-neutral. You know that some teachers and members of the board of management would be opposed to any changes to the uniform.

Questions:



- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?



Worksheet 5:

Bathrooms

Section 5 of the e-resource deals with trans and gender diverse youth's experiences of school bathrooms. After reviewing Section 5, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 6.

5a. Please read the question about your school's bathrooms and tick the box you feel is most relevant.

Question	Yes	No	Not applicable
Does your school have a single-stall, gender-neutral bathroom?			
If yes, is there more than one gender-neutral bathroom?			
Does/would your school provide trans and gender diverse students with access to the toilets that align with their gender identity?			

If you chose 'no' for any of these questions it is likely that trans and gender diverse youth will encounter difficulties using a bathroom that they feel comfortable using.

5b. Please take some time to reflect on the steps you will take to ensure that trans and gender diverse students feel comfortable and respected and have access to a bathroom that aligns with their gender identity.



Sports

Section 6 of the e-resource highlights how many trans and gender diverse youth encounter barriers in relation to participating in sports. Once you have reviewed Section 6, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 7.

6a. Please read the questions about your school's changing rooms and tick the box you feel is most relevant.

Question	Yes	No	Not applicable
Are/would trans and gender diverse students be treated the same as all other students in respect of their participation in P.E. and sports?			
Do/would trans and gender diverse students have access to a gender-neutral changing room in your school?			
Is your school's P.E. uniform gender-neutral? (Choose 'no' if the P.E. uniform is gendered or for boys and girls).			

If you chose 'no' for any of these questions it is likely that trans and gender diverse youth will encounter difficulties.

6b. There is very often a high status associated with being on a school sports team, but these teams are gender segregated. Do you think trans and gender diverse students feel excluded from participating in P.E. and/or sports in your school? Why do you think that is? What steps could be taken to reduce trans and gender diverse youth from feeling excluded from sports in your school?



Names and pronouns

Section 7 of the e-resource discusses the challenges trans and gender diverse youth experience in relation to their names and pronouns. After reviewing Section 7, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 8.

7a. Please read the scenarios and choose how you would respond. Check your answers in the footnote.

Scenario	Response A	Response B	Response C	Response D	
1. You overhear students referring to a trans and gender diverse student by their birth name, how would you respond?	Report the students for transphobic bullying.	Stop the conversation and inform the students of the student's name; and that to continue calling the student by their birth name is a form of transphobic bullying and will be treated as such.	Nothing.	Organise an information session on the importance of using the right name and pronoun for trans and gender diverse youth for the students in question.	
2. A student is trans, how do you know which pronoun to use?	Decide based on what they look like.	Decide based on the young person's assigned-birth sex.	Ask the person what pronoun they prefer.	Ask the person's friend what pronouns the person in question uses.	
3. What pronouns should be used for a student who identifies as non-binary?	He/him	She/her	Alternate between using he/him and she/her	They/them	
4. If you use the wrong pronoun for a trans young person class you should...	Wait to the class is over and apologise to the young person discreetly.	Apologise immediately in front of the class, correct the mistake and move on.	Wait until an appropriate moment arises and say sorry.	Nothing.	
5. A student changed name from Mary to Michael, and then a few months later asks to change it to Josh....	Ask if he is confused and suggest he takes some time to think about it.	Agree to it, but ask why he wants to change it to see if it is due to bullying.	Ask if it is really necessary because it might confuse people.	Agree to change it.	

7a. Answers: (1) B; (2) C; (3) D; (4) E; (5) B.

7b. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

You are the teacher of a first year class who has just completed an exam. You notice that Samantha, one of the students in the class, has put a line through her name and wrote 'Samuel' beside it.

Questions:



- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?



Bullying

Section 8 of the e-resource deals with trans and gender diverse youth’s experiences of harassment and violence. After reviewing Section 8, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 9.

8a. Please read the scenarios and state whether you feel transphobic bullying might be occurring or not. Once completed check your answers in the footnote.

Scenario	Yes	No
1. Students keep asking a student whether they ‘are a boy or a girl?’		
2. A student asks a trans student their preferred pronoun.		
3. Students make comments on a trans students social media posts calling them a ‘he/she’		
4. During P.E a trans girl has her clothes thrown out of the girls’ changing room.		
5. A teacher says ‘gay people are going to hell.’		
6. During a fight between two students, one of the students calls the other a ‘tranny.’		

8a. Answers:
(1) Yes, repeatedly questioning a person’s gender identity is offensive and hurtful.;
(2) No, trans and gender diverse youth generally prefer to be asked their preferred pronoun.;
(3) Yes, referring to a trans and gender diverse person as a ‘he/she’ is transphobic.;
(4) Yes, this is a sign that students are excluding the young person because of their gender identity.;
(5) No, this is a homophobic comment. However, a trans and gender diverse student might still find this offensive.;
(6) Yes, ‘tranny’ is a transphobic term.

8b. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

Jane, a student in your class, comes to you upset. She tells you how Patrick, a boy in your class, was making fun of Sam, another student in the class who was assigned female at birth, but identifies as a boy. Jane explains how Patrick told the whole class that Sam thinks 'she' is a boy and threatened to beat 'her' up if 'she' uses the boy's toilets. You talk to Sam and he says he doesn't want you to do anything.

Questions:



- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?



8c. Has your school ever taken part in a campaign to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying? If no, why do you think that is? And, do you think there would be any barriers to your school participating in such a campaign? If yes, what worked well? And, what would you do differently if your school was to take part in a campaign again?



Worksheet 9:


Curriculum

Section 9 of the e-resource explores trans and gender diverse youth's experiences of curricular exclusion. After reviewing Section 9, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 10.

9a. How present are topics of gender identity and gender expression in your subject area?

Fully inclusive	Partially inclusive	Exclusive	Explicitly exclusive	Unsure
Gender identity and gender expression are fully integrated into the subject area for each age group.	Gender identity and gender expression are included to some extent.	Gender identity and gender are not included	There is active hostility and resistance among staff in my subject area to include discussions about gender identity and gender expression.	

9b. How do you think you could make your subject area more inclusive of trans and gender diverse youth?



9a. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

You are an RSE teacher. You discuss gender identity and gender expression with your third year class. You hand out a sheet with a list of terms and definitions on it and read them out. You ask the class to discuss the terms in small groups. Nobody has any questions. You think the class goes well, but at the end a student stays behind and says he feels the class was a missed opportunity. He tells you that there should have been more time to discuss the definitions and the experiences of trans and gender diverse people because people in his group don't really get it.

Questions:



- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?



Anxieties about coming out

Section 10 of the e-resource considers trans and gender diverse youth’s feelings of anxiety about ‘coming out.’ After reviewing Section 10, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 11.

10a. Please choose how you would respond to a young person coming out to you. Once completed, you can check your answers in the footnote.

	Would do	Would not do
1. I would ask them if they are sure and how they know.		
2. Offer reassurance and ask them if there is anything they need support with.		
3. Ask them what their preferred pronoun is.		
4. Ask them what their sexual orientation is.		
5. Tell them it is okay because you were expecting it.		
6. Provide them with the contact details of TENI and local LGBTI+ youth support groups.		
7. Immediately contact the students’ parents.		

(1) Would not do, A young person will not disclose their gender identity unless they are sure of their feelings. Be prepared to affirm, accept and listen; (2) Would do, it is important that trans and gender diverse youth know that there is a member of staff they can come out to if they experience difficulties; (3) Would do, trans and gender diverse youth are frequently misgendered (i.e. referred to be a pronoun that is incongruent with their gender identity). This can be extremely hurtful. Most trans and gender diverse youth prefer to be asked their preferred pronoun rather than be misgendered; (4) Would not do, Gender identity is separate from sexual orientation. If a student comes out to you as trans and gender diverse do not conflate discussion around their gender identity with their sexual orientation. If a trans and gender diverse student wishes to discuss their sexual orientation or sexuality with you they will raise the matter on their own accord; (5) Would not do, trans and gender diverse youth will be anxious about disclosing their identity. Telling them you were expecting it can downplay the significance of the young person’s disclosure and the struggle they may have experienced to get to that point; (6) Would do, many trans and gender diverse youth experience peer alienation and social isolation. TENI and LGBTI+ youth groups provide trans and gender diverse youth with access to peer-support groups that can ameliorate feelings of alienation and isolation; (7) Would not do, trans and gender diverse youth have a right to privacy. Trans and gender diverse youth may not want to disclose their gender identity to their parents due to a fear of rejection. Cutting a trans and gender diverse student against their will is a form of transphobia and deeply damaging for trans and gender diverse youth.

10a. Answers:

10b. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

At the end of the class, a student that you know as a boy says that they identify as non-binary, wants to be called Riley and referred to by gender-neutral pronouns. Riley tells you that they are out to some friends, but not to their parents. Riley fears their parents will not understand and reject them. Riley asks you not to tell their parents because they might kick them out of their home.

Questions:



- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?



Steps to take in facilitating a young person's transition

Section 11 of the e-resource details the ways in which post-primary schools can facilitate a young person's transition. After reviewing Section 11, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 12.

Each individual will have a different approach to their transition and, thus, some of the questions below may not apply. The process outlined is merely a guideline and every student ought to be treated individually. The student should be consulted before any changes or arrangements are made.

11a. Summary of Steps to Take in Facilitating a Young Person's Transition

1.	The student decides to transition at school.
2.	The student or parent/s or guardian/s approach/es the designated support person in the school.
3.	A meeting is scheduled between the student, the designated support person and the student's parent/s or guardian/s. At this meeting, the prompt questions list below can be used to develop a transition action plan.
4.	Agreed actions are taken, updated and reviewed with the student and their parent/s or guardian/s. No actions are taken without prior permission from the student.
5.	Check-ins and on-going supports are facilitated with the student and their parent/s or guardian/s where necessary.

11b. Prompt Questions to Facilitate a Young Person's Transition at School

	Prompt Questions	Planned Timeframe	Notes
Student Details	What is the student's preferred name and pronoun?		
	Is there any other relevant background information that the student wants noted?		
Communication & Admin	Who does the student want to inform of their transition?		
	If peers are to be informed, how will this be done?		
	How will staff be informed of the student's transition?		
	What school records and documentation need to be changed?		
Toilets and Changing Facilities	Which toilet does the student wish to use? And how can this be facilitated?		
	What changing facilities does the student wish to use? And how can this be facilitated?		
	Has it been made clear to the student that they may use the toilet and changing facilities with which they feel most comfortable?		
	If the student's choice is a universal access toilet/changing facility, the student should have full access to this toilet at all times.		
	Have any worries or concerns of the student and/or parent/guardian regarding bathrooms or changing facilities been heard?		
	What is the plan for any preventative measures and safeguards required?		

	Prompt Questions	Planned Timeframe	Notes
Uniform	What are the student's preferences regarding their uniform and how will this be facilitated?		
	Is there a gender-neutral uniform option if this is what the student wants?		
Education	Have staff had adequate education to ensure the student feels respected and supported and that discrimination is proactively prevented?		
	If staff have not had this education, how will this happen?		
	Have peers had adequate education to ensure the student feels respected and supported and that discrimination is proactively prevented?		
	If peers have not had this education, how will this happen?		
On-Going Supports	Who is the designated support person/people that will maintain on-going check-ins with the student and their parents/guardians?		
	How will these check-ins/reviews work and how often?		
Policy Change	Who will review and, if necessary, amend school policies? E.g. school admission policy, uniform policy, anti-bullying policy, RSE, health & safety.		
	Who will review and start the process of ensuring that bathrooms and changing facilities are inclusive of everyone?		
	Is there an equality & diversity policy that contains explicit instruction about gender identity and gender expression? If not, how will such a policy be developed and who will be responsible?		

Support groups

Section 12 explores how trans and gender diverse youth's school often lacked an LGBTI+ group and the ramifications of this. After reviewing Section 12, please complete this worksheet before continuing to Section 13.

12a. How would you rate the provision of LGBTI+ supportive space in your school?

The provision of LGBTI+ supportive space in my school is...

Fully inclusive	Partially inclusive	Exclusive	Explicitly exclusive	Unsure
<p>There is a LGBTI+ club at the school, which is provided with adequate levels of staff support. The club is active, has parity with other school clubs, and participants are safe from harassment.</p>	<p>There is a LGBTI+ group. However, it receives limited staff support and is inactive at times. Participation in the group may be stigmatised. Students might feel unsafe attending.</p>	<p>There is no LGBTI+ club at the school.</p>	<p>There is active hostility and resistance among peers, parents and/or staff to the establishment of an LGBTI+ group.</p>	

12b. Please read the following scenario and write down your answers to the questions that follow.

You are having lunch in the staff room. Deirdre, the Geography teacher, mentions that third year students have raised the issue of setting up an LGBTI+ group in the school to tackle the isolation LGBTI+ youth experience and to take part in anti-bullying campaigns. Sandra, the Maths teacher, says that she doesn't think it would be appropriate for the school to have an LGBTI+ group because of the school's ethos and single-gender status. She says that parents would object and the students who participate in the group would be bullied.

Questions:

- A.** What is your initial reaction?
- B.** How would you feel if you were in this situation? Why?
- C.** How would you respond to the situation?



Self-assessment

To gauge how much you have learnt please complete the self-assessment tool once more. Once you have completed this self-assessment, compare against your answers in Worksheet 1 so that you may assess your learning and identify future areas of study.

Topic		No understanding	Limited understanding	Good understanding	Strong understanding	Unsure
Terminology relating to sex and gender						
Terminology relating to gender identities						
Trans and gender diverse youth's experiences of silencing and invisibility						
Challenges trans and gender diverse youth encounter in relation to:	Uniforms					
	Toilets and changing rooms					
	Sports					
	Names and pronouns					
	Bullying					
	Curriculum					
How to respond to a young person who comes out as trans and gender diverse						
Steps to take facilitating a young person's transition						
The benefits of peer-support groups						
Resources available for making school environments more inclusive of trans and gender diverse youth						

Next Steps

Thank you for completing this e-resource. We hope that you have found it insightful and now feel more confident in your ability to work with trans and gender diverse youth.

This e-resource was designed to complement the education, support and policy work provided by TENI. Please contact TENI should you require a whole-staff education session to ensure staff at your school have the necessary knowledge, skills and comfort levels to educate and support trans and gender diverse students.

Please return to section 1 to consider the next steps that you might take.

The content of this workbook was developed by Dr Ruari-Santiago McBride (Research Fellow, School of Education, University of Limerick), Dr Aoife Neary (Principal Investigator and Academic Mentor, School of Education, University of Limerick); and Hannah Solley (Family Support and Education Officer, TENI). The e-resource was produced by Roísín Buckley (Producer & Project Manager, Piquant Media) and Victoria Brunetta (Graphic Designer, Piquant Media). Technical support was provided by Brendan Vaughan (Web Manager, Marketing and Communications, University of Limerick). Additional support was received by Dr Breda Gray (Consultative Academic Mentor, School of Sociology, University of Limerick) and Dr Vanessa Lacey (Placement Mentor, TENI).

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