



Trans Voices on Trans Prison Policy

Bent Bars Project Summary Report

A report on
experiences of trans
and non-binary people
in prisons in England,
Wales, and Scotland.

October 2022

bentbarsproject.org



Trans Voices on Trans Prison Policy

A report on the experiences of
trans and non-binary people in
British Prisons

October 2022



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Summary

Background

Ministry of Justice review of ‘The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender’ Policy Framework 2019

In 2021-22 the Ministry of Justice undertook a review of its Policy Framework on ‘The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender’, which applies to prisons in England and Wales. The policy had been in operation since 2019 and the stated aim of the review was to assess how the policy was working in practice and assess whether the policy was meeting its intended outcomes. This included reviewing the extent to which the existing policy framework respects the rights of transgender individuals while balancing risks and promoting safety for all individuals in prison.

Trans survey

The Bent Bars Project felt it was important that trans and nonbinary people in prison be given an opportunity to feed into the review process. So we designed a questionnaire and distributed it to our ‘inside’ (imprisoned) members. We included all members who had explicitly shared with us that they identify as trans, nonbinary, gender nonconforming or gender-questioning. We also included a small number of inside members who have expressed interest in trans issues, but may not identify as trans per se.

We sent out a total of 70 surveys to prisoners across 37 different prisons in England and Wales, plus 4 in Scotland. We received 30 responses.

The responses included in this report are a selection from the surveys we received. This report is grouped according to the main questions we asked in the survey on: general treatment, gender identity expression, safety and well-being, access to health care, transgender case boards and suggestions for improvement.

SUMMARY

Key Findings

Trans and non-binary people reported mixed treatment in prison, ranging from supportive to abusive.

- Respondents reported mixed treatment from staff and fellow prisoners. Some talked about staff and other prisoners as being supportive, but many gave accounts that described poor and frequently abusive treatment. Many described the negative impact of such treatment even when enacted by a small number of people.
- Most respondents had significant concerns about the safety and well-being of trans and nonbinary people in prison. Many felt that abuse, harassment and assaults were not taken seriously or addressed.

There is a lack of access to healthcare, support, and personal items for trans people.

- A key concern that was raised repeatedly related to access to clothing, toiletries, and personal items to support gender expression. There was considerable frustration about limited canteen lists and restrictions or high costs of gender-specific items.
- Respondents consistently expressed concern about access to trans-specific health care, long wait times and some discriminatory attitudes from health care staff.
- Respondents had mixed views about [Transgender Case Boards](#). Some found them very helpful, some did not. Most indicated that in principle case boards were good, but in practice they needed improvement.

Member's suggestions for improvement include better training and access to resources

- Improved education and awareness for prisoners and staff around trans issues and gender identity
- Better/compulsory training for all staff
- Improved access to support around health care
- Improved access to personal items for gender expression (e.g. improved canteen lists)
- Greater support to prevent and deal with harassment and abuse
- Access to outside trans/LGBTQ+ support groups.

SUMMARY

Demographics of survey respondents

Most responses were from trans women or trans feminine people held in men's prisons. Almost all identified as white, and about half of all respondents said they have learning difficulties or disabilities.

In our view, the responses compiled here provide important insights into the experiences of trans and non-binary people currently in prison. The diversity of views and experiences speak to the varied conditions and treatment of imprisoned people.

However, these responses should not be treated as representative. We had limited responses from people housed in women's prisons and from trans masculine people. Our respondents were almost entirely from white people. Because the Bent Bars Project is limited to people who are 18+, the survey did not include young people. The responses also did not include anyone who was fully 'closeted' about their gender identity – even though we regularly hear from people in prison who are too fearful to be open about their identities.

These limits to the survey reflect a range of broader issues – including power dynamics around who feels most able to share their identities and experiences; who feels confident or safe enough to respond to a survey; who is most or least likely to receive support; and wider patterns of racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Bent Bars also frequently experiences problems with our mail not getting through to or from prisoners on our mailing list.

It is also important to consider these responses in the context of official 'equalities data.' The latest reports from the Ministry of Justice suggests that in 2021 there were 197 people who were officially recognised as transgender in prisons in England and Wales. Of those, 74% identify as female, 20% as male and 6% as nonbinary. Of the total 167 identify as white, 21 as BME and 9 undeclared. There are significant limits to the official Ministry numbers (see our [Trans Prisoner Info Sheets](#) for further details), but this background information is important for contextualising the demographics of those who responded to our survey.

GENERAL TREATMENT

1. General treatment

How well do staff treat transgender and nonbinary people in prison?

Survey responses were mixed on the question of staff treatment of trans and nonbinary people.

From what I've witnessed they receive no preferential treatment but as fair and balanced as with the rest of the population. ['Gender neutral' respondent in men's prison]

Transgender people have been well treated as far as I am aware. I can only speak for myself, and I have been treated with respect, asked what can be done to improve conditions for trans people and all staff and management have fully supported me and some have gone far and above and beyond to help me get what I need. [Trans woman in men's prison]

A significant number of respondents said that staff are generally good but noted a small number of problematic staff that who make life difficult or were disrespectful. For example:

Most of the time they treat us very well. But there are a few staff who have a problem with us as well as we are only inmates after all and we don't have the right to be who we are.

In this prison, staff are generally accepting and helpful. They hardly ever make comments that are below the belt, but do make every effort to be as inclusive as possible. Although it tends to be the male managers who have trouble using correct gender pronouns, and seem to have a habit of misinterpreting a new name with the old. [Trans woman in woman's prison]

Generally staff are okay, but some struggle to understand the needs of LGBTQ+ prisoners, such as showers, diet, access to cosmetics and same gender toiletries and clothing.

Most of the staff treat transgenders well but you do get one or two who don't know how to treat you they act like you are an alien.

Others felt that poor treatment was more common. Respect of trans people's names, identities and pronouns came up repeatedly as a key concern, as did lack of training, awareness and experience:

GENERAL TREATMENT

There is no respect at all. Disrespect and reason to cover up so called mistakes like calling a trans female HE when it's miss or she! Name calling and jokes behind your back.

A select few in Equalities, OMU [Offender Management Unit], and some wing staff are supportive. The rest either ignore us, judge us, and are intolerant of us. We have had staff misgender us, ignore us while we're being harassed and even deny our gender. Staff have been previously offered awareness training but very few attended.

Non-binary are invisible. In my experience, visibly trans people are subject to variable treatment by staff, ranging from good to appalling. Far too many staff are still prejudiced or uneducated on gender diversity issues.

For the most part ok. Some look disgusted and talk after you pass them. I've been referred to as IT in I.E.P [Incentives and Earned Privileges] paperwork and in person. One officer uses 'creach' (creature) in place of my name.

Prejudice and ignorance from staff and visitors.

How well do other prisoners treat transgender and nonbinary people in prison?

Survey responses were also mixed on the question of how other prisoners treat trans and nonbinary people. Some described positive treatment on the whole, but often noted that this was not universally the case.

On my wing great. Everyone is accepting but I'm wing bound as I was attacked on main location.

There are a few who treat us like shit. And say we should all be shot or put down. But there's a lot who get on with us and treat us as humans.

Again I can only speak for myself. The majority of other prisoners have treated me with respect and supported me. There have been a couple of incidents of verbal abuse which were dealt with quickly and severely. I am on a wing with 79 men and in 19 months since coming out, I have only had abuse from one person who was swiftly moved to another wing. However I think that I have had an easy journey compared to some others.

GENERAL TREATMENT

Reference to verbal abuse was common throughout the responses. Quite a few also described being threatened and/ or physically attacked:

Not very well, as I found out [recently], I got assaulted.

Most are reasonable once ignorance is broken down, but I have received threats of rape and have had personal and inappropriate comments made by the few.

Other than a very select group of men that support and care about us, most abuse, harass, target, and humiliate us because we're transgender. Men see us as easy targets to abuse knowing they would get away with it. They prevent us from accessing prison departments (work, education, healthcare, etc.). We don't feel safe enough to even leave our wings.

Verbal abuse, sexualised remarks about clothing such like using words (He-She), (cock in a frock)(Girl with a dick) (smirking) (looks of disappointment)(dismissed or isolation from conversation.

Name calling, rape, bullying.

Several trans people described being explicitly sexualised.

Name calling, some prisoners hit on me or want sex or other things. It would be helpful if there was a prison that deals with trans female and trans men.

I talk to 4 inmates. Others only talk of sexual things and if they don't start with that then it always leads to that. Others avoid me through fear of being accused of having sex.

Indirect abuse takes place but they never discriminate directly to such community. Negativity usually is via a third party. Psychological abuse is more common. Such as grinning, mocking or making jokes containing discriminatory or sexualised comments making reporting difficult to prove.

I get referred to as a slag in greetings, for e.g. "Alright slag?". Staff do not intervene. People mimic my voice to insult me as I'm walking passed very loud, shouting 'yah' just at the sight of me. Only one officer shouts 'bang up, ladies and gentlemen.'

GENERAL TREATMENT

Some described treatment as dependent on other prisoners' prior exposure to trans people and awareness about trans issues.

It all depends on whether others have been around another trans person, as to whether they have some understanding, and education about the process and ongoing treatment, before a trans person feels safe and treated well by others. Generally if there's honesty and the trans persons themselves, then there's no issue.

Out of ear shot of a TG [transgender] resident there are often rude, snide, mocking, defamatory comments. These are due to ignorance and not knowing or associating with the TG resident. Often not understanding that they'd prefer 'she' or 'her' but instead talk about 'it' wearing a skirt, etc.

I think the key problem for trans and nonbinary people in prison is that people are afraid or wary of anything that they don't understand, and it makes them feel threatened. I have found that once they have been educated and they realise that you don't want to jump in bed them and you are no threat, that people accept you and even before inquisitive. I have no problem answering any questions, how can you expect someone to accept something they know nothing about and don't understand?

Some respondents also noted that treatment reflected a hierarchy around perceptions of 'legitimate' trans identities.

If a transgender is always in role [always presenting in their self-determined identity] they get treated much better than sometimes-in-role transgenders. Nonbinary get treated the same way as 'the guy next door.'

Personally I have encountered a mix of good and bad treatment in the last 3 years- but overall, even negative people change their treatment of me once they get to know me and know my transition is genuine and not a form of manipulation.

2. Gender identity expression

Do you think transgender and nonbinary people are able to fully express their gender identity in prison?

Respondents reported mixed experiences when asked if they could fully express their identity in prison.

Some respondents had broadly positive answers, but aside from three who simply said 'Yes', most gave some qualification or noted that this was not always the case. The majority of respondents gave more broadly negative answers.

This is due in large part to restrictive prison policy and practice that limits trans people's access to resources.

Of those who gave negative answers, most attributed these problems to official prison policies and practices. Many prisons restrict access to things like gender affirming clothing, underwear, wigs, toiletries, etc. For example, prison 'canteen lists' (the lists where prisoners can buy things if they have money on their account) are highly gendered. So, if you are trans women held in a men's prison, it can be difficult to access items that would be available in women's prisons.

If we were [allowed to express our gender] then we would find it much easier and be able to live our life accordingly and not having to put comp 1's [complaints] in every other. I had to stop my [transition] journey due to inadequate failings. No appropriate clothing, wrong sized clothes, messed around with the GIC [Gender Identity Clinic] appointments and not enough staff to understand trans individuals.

No. This is due to constant changes in surgery requirements as they refuse to do it in custody, which impacts severely mentally on transgender individuals. No - prison governors won't allow access to savings for transgender individuals to fully express their gender identity and to help trans people actually shop for female attire.

No. Many do not feel safe or free to do so, and it is often very difficult to obtain the necessary feminine items required to do so if located in the 'wrong' gender prison. Non-binary prisoners cannot obtain feminine items to appear how they wish, unless they are registered as trans. There is no information about this anywhere, not even in the Policy Document.

GENDER IDENTITY EXPRESSION

This will depend on the confidence of the individual and whether they have family and friends supporting them on the outside. Overall, I feel the prison service is out of touch with the community and a true picture of the trans community is not fully appreciated inside.

Too many hoops to jump through to obtain feminine items, which in this day and age should be available to all prisoners as per the outside world. Non-binary and trans who only want to maintain a more androgynous or feminine appearance through clothing and make up/cosmetics - no medical interventions - should not need to engage the trans case boards process in order to gain access to relevant products.

Individual risk assessments and restrictions applying across the board despite PSI [Prison Service Instruction] stating must be on a case by case basis. Most male prisons refuse trans female clothing especially dresses / skirts/blouses saying the prison uniform is unisex and only allowing trans prisoners to wear prison clothes.

3. Safety and well-being

Are you concerned about the safety and well-being of trans and nonbinary prisoners?

A few respondents said they were not concerned about the safety and well-being of trans and nonbinary people, but several qualified this as more of an exception.

No not at this prisons but at other prisons I have been at yes.

I have no concerns, but I may be the exception.

This depends on situations placed in and attitudes of staff and other prisoners.

Most expressed significant concerns. Six respondents answered only with 'Yes' or 'Yes!' Others gave more explanation. For example:

Absolutely. I am a very strong and confident individual who is viewed as quite aggressive (I am very assertive) - and even I have felt like harming myself or contemplating suicide whilst in here. My concern is that others who are not so strong and/or confident may not feel they are supported and protected - and may end up taking their lives unnecessarily.

I am [concerned] for others. Trans girls who don't 'pass' for female do get abuse. Whereas mine is presented as a 'joke'.

Myself and others I know here, no we can all handle ourselves. However a tranzmanz I know and a tranzwoman has self-harmed as got into depression - snide comments and this - and our local nick. Also not been able to start the tablets n gel without waiting for 2-5 yr NHS op clinic appointment. Ain't fair a lot of people ain't clued up with tranz info. Taking months to wait to be able shower on own or with fellow tranz.

Safety of themselves- not worried of safety from others [self harm fears]. Majority of the trans community I am aware of fears the isolation rather than the physical abuse. Its more distressing to mock gender rather than attack their gender. Trans community are viewed as vulnerable, meaning they must be on the VPU [Vulnerable prisoners unit – which segregates 'vulnerable' prisoners from the general population] even if they are not sexual or vulnerable offenders. The more you isolate such a person the less work can be done for positive change.

Unfortunately some people will find something to pick on you no matter who you are, you just need to stand up to them. Yes walking around in a dress and make up could

SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

make you a target for verbal or physical abuse, but no more than any other reason they could find to have a go of you. Since doing the interview on prison TV, I have been approached by young lads who you would think would mug you [but they] asked if I'm okay and said good morning to.

Yes 100% - my safety included. I am constantly scared all over this jail on every wing, plus I always get death and assault threats all the time.

Yes, because the policy doesn't enforce the law enough to protect those who wish to come out, hence why some trans prisoners look at moving to other establishments. Back in 2015 two prisoners left here, went to another prison and began their [transition there] because of the way they saw a current trans prisoner here being treated.

Several expressed concerns that reporting of assaults was not taken seriously. Some also raised concerns about false allegations being made against them.

Yes, I know lots of trans people that have been sexually abused or assaulted and nothing is done. (I was hot watered by another prisoner after months transphobic abuse from him. He got away with the abuse and the assault). I'm currently writing a booklet on trans support with research docs etc, because of how unsafe I have felt, along with other trans women.

Yes as when you report it, a lot of staff don't want to rock the boat.

Yes, there's been occasions when others have made threatening comments that a trans person's genitals will be cut off, or sexual advances will be made to put blame on the trans person and be charged with rape, and removed from the female estate. This puts too much pressure on other trans people who haven't done anything wrong.

Yes. This relates to non-transgender prisoners who can make false accusations [against trans people] due to fact they are being made to wait for surgery. This is an urgent issue to look at doing surgery within jails, which could improve wellbeing and safety of all trans prisoners in custody.

Yes, from both male and female prison and are just as at risk of rape in either male or female prisons. I myself refuse to go to a female prison as female prisons are very violent especially towards trans women or at risk of false allegations and in this day of automatic believe for the accuser, the trans has no protection, they merely just have to be present at the time to be found guilty. There should be a trans prison so trans can progress and live in peace and safety.

Discrimination, abuse, attacks and bullying by some staff and prisoners. If they go to a certain officer than sometimes they are met with a very negative response

4. Health Care

Do transgender and nonbinary people have access to adequate trans-related health care?

Access to healthcare is poor and inconsistent across prisons.

Only 4 out of 30 respondents felt that trans and nonbinary people had adequate access to trans-related health care. Of those, one said that she did have access in her current prison, but qualified that this was not consistent across prisons (“Not in all establishments. But I do at [my current prison]”).

All other respondents had some or significant concerns about access to trans-related health care. Five said “no” with no other comments (although some included an exclamation mark).

Other comments included:

No as staff just treats us as our biological gender and not our legal/preferred gender.

In my own experience no, as GIC [Gender Identity Clinic] appointments are promised, wait 3 months, sorry wait 6 months, yes its August, oh sorry you have to wait til December, which comes and goes, so No is the answer.

2 months prior to my detention, I was due to attend Tavistock hospital for gender assessment referral. Now, 4 prisons later, 6 years further into sentence, I'm still yet to have assessment. Until my TG [transgender] status is recognised then no hormone/medical intervention is allowed.

No. It has taken 2 1/2 years to get one email to my specialist. We don't get any information about our medical needs. Healthcare don't want to treat us for fear of litigation. Even after external clinic's advice, it takes a lot of effort to get healthcare to support my medical needs and allow me access to treatment.

Yes, but there is a clear bias by GICs [Gender Identity Clinics] in giving treatment to prisoners. Someone maintaining innocence of offences cannot do offending behaviour courses- yet the likes of Tavistock [Gender Clinic] have been known to refuse treatment to such prisoners.

I have had to do two hunger strikes to get contact with the clinic I'm under. Here if you want answers, the message is: 'cause paperwork if you want action'. One of my appointments was cancelled one hour into my journey to London and there were no mental health checks after.

5. Transgender Case Boards

Under the 2019 Ministry of Justice policy framework, if a prisoner informs staff that they are transgender (or if they are known to be transgender), the prison is required to convene a ‘transgender case board’ within two weeks. The case board is a panel of staff members, which may include a Safer Custody Manager, prison healthcare, an equality officer, a prison psychologist, etc, who make decisions about the day-to-day care and management for trans people. (For further details see, the [Prisoners’ Advice Service – A Prisoners Guide to Trans Rights](#) available on the Bent Bars Website). For this reason, we asked survey respondents to let us know if they had told anyone about their trans identify and if they had a case board.

If you are a trans or non-binary person, have you told anyone else in prison about your gender identity?

Most respondents had disclosed that they are trans to a member of staff and had sat a Transgender Case Board. Satisfaction with boards was mixed.

Most respondents had told at least one member of staff that they were transgender (see table below). About half had told at least one other prisoners. Of those who answered, ‘doesn’t apply to me’, three were from non-trans respondents, and one was from a trans person who had had a case board. Several also indicated that ‘everyone already knows’ or it was obvious.

TOLD ANYONE ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY	
Yes, I have told at least one member of staff	21
Yes, I have told at least one other prisoner	14
No, I haven’t told anyone	0
Prefer not to say	0
Doesn’t apply to me	5
Other comments	10

Other comments included:

- *"I have had an easy journey due to people standing up for their rights in the past, so I have no problem in doing the same to help others."*

TRANSGENDER CASE BOARDS

- *"Came out in a therapeutic community. Gossip around prison also outed me."*
- *"Everyone knows, as I wear women's clothes that I buy myself, prison does not help with women's clothing"*

If you are a trans or non-binary person, have you had a transgender case board?

Most respondents indicated that they had had a transgender case board. Two respondents (one trans woman and a person who identified at 'gender neutral') did not know what a case board was, even though both indicated that they had told a member of staff about their gender identity.

Do you think the case board process is helpful for trans and non-binary prisoners?

Many respondents felt that case boards were helpful but had mixed experiences about the consistency and follow-through.

Yes, most definitely. I think that it is important so that management and healthcare etc can see where transgender people are on their journey, rules and regulations can be discussed, and both parties can talk about what is required and how to achieve it. I have been told of my meetings that they are still learning also, so having the case board facilitates this and more.

Most of the time, but you have to always keep asking for things to be sorted out i.e. clothes and make[up] that inmates can afford to buy on their wages.

When the process is used correctly then yes it is extremely helpful for the trans person. Especially the advance disclosure required as this means the individual can challenge and question anything written and disclosed to them at the case board meeting. However, in my experience, the process is rarely followed.

Yes for cases that are complicated or have security risks attached to them, however, they generally don't move treatment or education of trans issues along, and sometimes too many people are involved.

Other respondents were more critical of case boards, particularly what they perceived as lack of meaningful action.

TRANSGENDER CASE BOARDS

Absolutely not, our views are heard at the board and so are our needs, assurances are made that "we will look into this" and then nothing ever gets done. It's more about what is expected of the prisoner and not what the prison can do to help.

It depends on who the care manager is, I have had one that has ignored my input and recommendations that he had to address. I found only my keyworker, POM (OMU) [Prison Offender Manager, Offender Management Unit (probation service in custody)] and certain equalities and healthcare representatives supportive and willing to address the issues I face. I found that all this meeting does is cover the prison manager from legal repercussions.

Only for those who are medically transitioning to ensure coordinated processes. Otherwise they are a waste of time and resources just to be able to do what is your legal and natural right outside prison - to appear as you choose.

No. Case board here aren't at all. I feel if it wasn't for charity orgs and projects, groups outside community we'd rot especially when ya have no family support. Most of us come from towns, villages and countries where coming out being who we're meant to be is wrong. Y'ad think having ya prison case board is helpful it falls on deaf ears here at dis jail!

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

6. Suggestions for improvement

In what ways could the experiences of transgender and nonbinary people be improved in prison?

Many respondents provided comprehensive recommendations around a range of issues, including access to personal items, health care, support around harassment, bullying and assault, staff training and general support.

Many respondents specifically focussed on improved access to clothing, toiletries and personal products:

Sticking to approval for clothing & products.

To introduce [in the men's prisons] a national supplier for female products, especially for the large female (I am size 22-24 and size 11 footwear)

Automatically approve suppliers like Amazon and eBay for access to make up/clothing due to competitive prices and accurate ordering

Consider offering trans prisoners the opportunity to earn extra money to help pay for items that will help their gender expression, make up, wigs, etc. prosthetics

A gender specific canteen list, or one main list for all prisoners that sell all male, female, gender neutral products in one place. Better access to gender affirming products, by way of approved suppliers for your acquired gender. More protection from staff and stiffer penalties for wrong doers.

Better access to binders and support for the cost.

Access to haircuts / choice of hair styles.

Other respondents spoke about the need for better health care:

Prison governors and equality's to push for surgeries in female estate for trans women. Massive issue to deal with.

Set up a health care forum.

Trained healthcare staff.

Support and access to medication needed recommended by gender clinics

Support or access to email system to contact gender clinics (they only respond to emails)

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Information on medical and legal process that applies to us, e.g. healthcare- what we medically face.

Several noted the importance of support around violence, harassment and assault:

Support for sexual abuse and rape.

More action against discriminatory persons. Increase in trans and nonbinary personal at any given time. Have a trans or nonbinary person as a listener or mental health support worker whom can help trans/nonbinary persons better. Have such trans/nonbinary person as a peer support, helping such community with direct experience.

A trained, supportive, and experienced staff team [to address assaults].

A working complaints/DIRF [Discrimination Incident Reporting Form] system.

There were also several respondents who spoke about the need for more general support, such as specialist services either in prisons or through external charities/other agencies:

To have a specialist board on arrival into any establishment. To assess needs + support from the off. I am still waiting for one.

More outside agencies coming into prisons to support trans/nonbinary people and be present at trans case conferences and to give us a better insight into what the prison medical centre should and can do for us. Support groups within the prison would be helpful run by staff who really want to help us and not just as a job.

More support and better communication between prisoners and staff.

I think a national support helpline could be introduced for trans prisoners to call for advice, guidance and generally as a go to point of call when helps in HMPPS for any issues.

Do what all other HMPS [public sector prisons] and private prisons are doing i.e. more org's charity's people 4 LQBGT come in do talks, also attend our focus group. Have a trans nonformal so all trans can have least 1 afternoon a fortnight for us lads to chill have chats watch LGBTQ short movie. get binders in right sizes, get gender meds, 4 prison GP and pride days, BBQs, music fashion shows etc. Like other jails more access 2 masculine clothes, male hair dresser allow to order male toiletries.

A national HMPPS lead for LGBT Staff and Prisoners.

Options for us to contribute to Prison and HMPPS for any good work they do for us.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Calls for improved education and training was also a common suggestion:

A lot more education about the process of treatment, the changes in body development, emotional transition management and the need to recognise that transphobia is a hate crime.

There needs to be more education on the subject. The same approach towards racism needs to be taken. Posters on all wings as there are with race issues. Trans specific equalities mentors. Mandatory training for staff. People need to be desensitised to the point where you don't get a gathering when arriving on the wing through these avenues.

Compulsory staff training on gender diversity.

Education - staff training and legal responsibilities. Staff training on difficulties we face (sex, assault, rape, violence, etc).

There were mixed views on whether separate prisons or wings for trans people would be helpful. For example, one respondent, suggested that it would be helpful to have a:

Wing or prison for transgender prisoners that are not a risk to others but face dangers.

However, others opposed this stating that:

Separate trans wings causes segregation. The whole point is to integrate trans people into their gender related wings, not putting them altogether. That becomes ludicrous.

Not sticking trans prisoners all on one wing - that's like putting everyone who identifies as gay on a wing out of the way.

Other points included:

You could let trans women who have been [trans] for over a year be allowed to transfer to trans wings in the female estate from the male estates rather than having to wait 6 months and I am still waiting. Plus allow us to get gender affirming things.

By PSI's [Prison Service Instructions] being enforced by law. By the government and leaving trans unchecked or monitored by inspectors allowing prison governors to ignore the rights and PSI of trans and make up their own rules as they go along based on their own opinions without risk assessments and allowed to enforce there own authority as being final. Governors would be enforcing the PSI not choosing the ones it agrees with and doesn't.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Published information that there are real transgender females who aren't a risk to women.

Although we have diversity and inclusion events, with so few TG residents there is no 'weight' of numbers and with bigotry the biggest issue, I still wonder why prison and society in general are often so intolerant of TG people.

Access to some form of work/education.

Regular in-depth studies of the transgender population.

Our input and experiences taken seriously.

CONCLUSION

7. Conclusion

The responses in this report convey a clear picture of the range of pressing issues faced by trans and nonbinary people in prison in Britain. The responses reveal a diversity of experiences and perspectives, but also common themes and concerns. In this report, we have not included overall recommendations beyond those conveyed by our members, as we want our members to speak for themselves. We have urged the Ministry of Justice to take this feedback on board and make every effort to address these concerns in both policy and practice.



About Bent Bars

Bent Bars is a letter-writing project for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, gender-variant, intersex, and queer prisoners in Britain and Northern Ireland.

We aim to build connections and foster solidarity between LGBTQ+ communities inside and outside prison walls. We also collect and distribute resources on LGBTQ+ prison issues.

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