

# The Importance of Comprehensive Trans & Non-Binary Inclusion Training for Healthcare Staff



**HCT**

Healthy Communities Together

# Introduction

Healthcare should be accessible, inclusive, and equitable for everyone, regardless of gender identity. However, trans and non-binary individuals face significant disparities in accessing healthcare services due to discrimination, lack of provider knowledge, and systemic barriers. Comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training for healthcare staff is essential to addressing these disparities and ensuring trauma informed, respectful, competent, and affirming care for all patients. This report outlines the need for such training, its development, impact, and future recommendations.



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## The Urgent Need for Inclusive Healthcare

In 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declassified transgender identities as a mental and behavioural disorder. However, trans and non-binary communities continue to experience barriers to care.

- **Long Wait Times:** As of March 2025, the waiting time for a first appointment at Leeds Gender Identity Clinic was 5 years and 8 months, with 6,343 people waiting.
- **Mental Health Impact:** According to TransActual's 2022 Transition Access Survey, 86.9% of trans people reported that waiting for hormone therapy negatively impacted their mental health.
- **Mental Health Crisis:** A 2018 Stonewall report found that:
  - 67% of trans people and 70% of non-binary people experienced depression in the last year.
  - 71% of trans people and 79% of non-binary people had experienced anxiety.
  - 46% of trans people and 50% of non-binary people have considered taking their own life in the last year.
  - 12% of trans people and 11% of non-binary people made an attempt to take their own life in the last year.

This is a stark contrast compared to research for NHS Digital that said 5% adults in general reported thoughts of taking their own life in the past year and fewer than 1% said they attempted to take their own life in the last year.

- **Safety & Transphobia:** A report from Scottish Trans provides insights from 571 trans and non-binary people living across Scotland, from an online survey that ran between March and July 2023. A key theme around safety emerged:
  - 70% avoided public toilets.
  - 30% avoided public transport.
  - 50% had experienced verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments.
  - 19% had experienced sexual harassment or violence
  - 19% had experienced physical harassment or violence
  - 18% had had someone disclose their identity without their permission
- **Discriminatory Practices:** A 2016 House of Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee report stated, “The NHS is failing to ensure zero tolerance of transphobic behaviour.”
- **Healthcare Denial:** TransActual’s 2021 Trans Lives Survey found that:
  - 29% of trans people had been refused necessary NHS care due to being trans.
  - 14% were refused GP care outright.
  - 70% experienced transphobia from their primary care provider.
  - 57% avoided or delayed GP visits due to fear of discrimination.
  - 60% of disabled people that are trans reported longer wait times and ableism when accessing trans-specific healthcare.
- **Microaggressions & Mistrust:** Integration of Care for Trans Adults: ICTA a Mixed-Methods Study, published in National Institute for Health and Care Research Journal 2024) highlighted that trans patients frequently experience transphobia in healthcare settings, leading to mistrust and deteriorating health outcomes.

# Origin of Healthy Communities Together Leeds' Trans & Non-Binary Inclusion Training

Recognising the urgent need for inclusive healthcare, HCT hosted two Adaptive Action workshops to gain a shared understanding from members of trans and non-binary communities and healthcare professionals of what is happening and move towards action. These Adaptive Actions were conducted with Community Mental Health Transformation (CMHT) professionals, Primary Care Mental Health and VCSE colleagues as well as trans individuals to identify key challenges and solutions. The findings revealed:

- **Lack of Training:** Many healthcare staff felt “out of their comfort zone” when treating trans patients due to inadequate training.
- **Impact on Care:** Insufficient training led to low confidence, cultural incompetence, and negative interactions that harmed trans patients' mental health.
- **Need for Comprehensive Training:** Existing basic trans awareness sessions available had lacked depth needed to equip staff with enough knowledge and confidence to sufficiently work





# HCT's Training Program Development

**Trans led, trans developed, and trans delivered.**

HCT collaborated with **Inclusive Health** and **Trans and Non-Binary community members** to develop two training courses tailored to a range of healthcare roles.

## 1. Transforming Clinical Practice – Comprehensive Trans & Non-Binary Inclusion Training

- **Format:** Full-day training (5-16 participants) + 90-minute online reflective session.
- **Learning Objectives:**
  - Deepen understanding of trans and non-binary patient experiences.
  - Address and dispel myths about both medical and social transition.
  - Build confidence in providing respectful, inclusive care.
  - Implement actionable steps for inclusive practice.
- **Target Audience**
  - GPs, clinical leadership, team managers, psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health practitioners, nurses, medical trainees, and community healthcare workers.
- **Reflective Session:**
  - Opportunity to reflect, deepen learning and discuss experiences of putting learning into practice.
  - Ask further questions to trans experts by lived experience.
  - Aids reflection and conversations with colleagues and peers

## 2. Welcoming & Supporting Trans & Non-Binary Patients – Online Short Course

- **Format:** 2.5-hour online training (20 participants max).
- **Learning Objectives:**
  - Improve knowledge of gender identity and expression.
  - Learn best practices for creating an inclusive healthcare environment.
  - Enhance confidence in communicating with trans and non-binary patients.
- **Target Audience**
  - Non-patient facing staff, receptionists, secretaries, HR/admin staff, board members.

# Contents of our comprehensive training includes...

- **More than just Trans 101**

- Sex vs Gender identity – what's the difference?
- Overview of trans and non-binary identities – terminology activity
- Trans – legally, societally and medically
- Social & Medical Transitioning – the realities
- Trans history

- **Understanding trans & non-binary experiences**

- Transphobia – How and why it's experienced and the impact
- Gender privilege – utilising to be better allies
- Trans & Intersectionality

- **Trans Healthcare**

- Trans & Mental health
- Trans Healthcare realities in 2025 – Focus on patient experiences
- Hormones & Pathways
- Myth busting

- **Trans language – building confidence**

- Language and pronouns – activity
- Reflection on learning from the day – what are you doing to do next?



# The Impact of Co-Produced Training

HCT's comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training has had a demonstrable and positive impact on healthcare practice. By enhancing staff confidence and cultural competency, the training has empowered professionals to provide more respectful, informed, and affirming care. Attendees reported greater awareness of appropriate language and behaviours, reduced discomfort in interactions, and an increased ability to support trans patients effectively. Participants praised the authenticity and depth brought by trainers with lived experience, noting that the training not only challenged assumptions but also built trust, fostered self-reflection, and reinforced legal and ethical responsibilities.

- **Enhances Staff Confidence and Cultural Competency**
  - Training reduces discomfort and increases healthcare professionals' confidence in treating trans patients.
- **Reduces Microaggressions & Builds Trust**
  - Educates staff on appropriate language and behaviour.
  - Encourages self-reflection and sensitivity in patient interactions.
- **Meets Legal & Ethical Responsibilities**
  - Aligns with the Equality Act 2010 and NHS commitments to reducing health inequalities.

In time these reported outcomes will contribute to

- **Improves Mental Health & Patient Outcomes**
  - Reduces healthcare avoidance by trans people.
  - Leads to better treatment adherence and overall health improvements.
- **Strengthens the NHS & Healthcare Institutions**
  - Improves patient satisfaction, reduces complaints, and enhances institutional reputation with trans communities.

"Was really helpful and I think ... the HCT in person training ... just felt.. personable. Yes, it just felt you're more meaningful.... I think it felt that you got more out of it."

# The Need for Systemic Buy-in

While there has been support from Community Mental Health Transformation and GP Confederation, and a few enthusiastic general practitioners (GPs) and practice managers, the overall uptake of HCT's comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training has been somewhat limited. Several **barriers** have prevented some staff from attending and hindered wider adoption, including:

- **Time constraints on staff**
- **Competing leadership priorities**
- **Operational pressures** on staff, including day-to-day and a wide variety of training demands.

For instance, **Leeds Student Medical Practice (LSMP)**—a practice known for serving a large number of trans patients and for having some relevant expertise—expressed initial interest but was ultimately **unable to participate** due to lack of capacity.

This situation highlights the need for **deeper institutional commitment** and system-wide support for such training initiatives.

Additionally, HCT learned that the **Leeds Mental Well-being Service (LMWS)** had already implemented some form of mandatory **Gender Identity awareness training** under their **Health Equity Action Plan (HEAP) for 2023/24**. However:

- HCT was not **involved or consulted** in the creation or delivery of this training.
- The LMWS Gender Identity awareness training **was not co-designed with trans community members and was not delivered by a trans trainer**.
- A few staff members did attend both the LMWS and HCT training sessions.

**These developments emphasize key systemic issues:**

- Lack of communication between services and providers
- Poor integration and coordination of training efforts
- The critical importance of meaningful, system-wide buy-in to ensure inclusive, representative, and effective training delivery.



# Feedback from Healthcare Professionals

As the landscape of healthcare continues to evolve toward greater inclusivity and cultural competence, the necessity for comprehensive trans inclusion training becomes ever more critical. This report draws from the feedback provided by healthcare professionals who attended our recent trans and non-binary inclusion training. Their reflections offer invaluable insight into the training's effectiveness, impact, and areas for potential development. This testimony, from a broad spectrum of roles across the health and care sector, substantiates the training's role as a catalyst for transformation in practice and perspective.

## Previous Training Experience

Approximately 50% of participants had previously attended some form of short trans or non-binary training not delivered through our programme. This indicates a varied baseline of prior knowledge and suggests a professional landscape where there is such a wide mix of competence and confidence when working with trans patients.

Despite prior exposure the overwhelming majority of attendees stated that this session was “better than any previous training” they’d previously received. The reasons given included greater depth, more meaningful engagement, and notably, the authenticity brought by trainers with lived experience.

## Depth, Detail, & Relevance

Participants consistently described the trans-led training as “in-depth”, “comprehensive”, and “informative”. Unlike prior training people had undertaken that may have skimmed the surface, this training was appreciated for its updated content, practical applicability, and wide-ranging scope—from current political and medical debates to everyday interactions in clinical environments.

One attendee highlighted:

“This training covered more stuff, and the videos included were fit for purpose and from people with lived experience. Plus, the discussions amongst participants were also very fruitful.”

# Tangible Impact on Learning & Practice

The training session provided an environment for examining assumptions and adopting new approaches. One attendee commented that the training “created a space for critical thinking” and allowed people to “change their thoughts” through group discussion.

The training demonstrably equipped staff with greater knowledge and confidence. Many commented that they felt better able to support both patients and colleagues from trans and non-binary communities. Even participants who themselves identified as trans or non-binary reported learning new information, particularly around current legal or healthcare developments.

## Key learning points identified by participants included:

- Importance of correct pronoun usage, terminology and inclusive language
- Recognition of systemic discrimination within healthcare settings
- Historical context of trans rights, legislation and visibility
- Insights into daily lived experiences and barriers faced by trans people

One participant summed it up:

“I feel more equipped to be an ally.”



# Improved Training & Increased Competence

Participants overwhelmingly stated that this training surpassed any previous trans-related training they had completed, distinguishing itself through its depth, relevance, and interactive approach. Key feedback included:

"Accessible and engaging. It provided historical context and explored current challenges faced by the trans community, including the role of healthcare in discrimination and ways to offer support."

"It covered more content, and the videos were fit for purpose, featuring trans people with lived experience. The participant discussions were also very fruitful."

"The training provided more up-to-date knowledge. All facts and resources were sourced and linked, enhancing validity and reliability. The real-life footage of trans experiences was both moving and eye-opening."

"Relevant, up-to-date, practical, and usable information and advice."

"Much more comprehensive and in-depth than any previous training."

"More informative and interactive—answered many questions about lived experiences, the service journey, and the daily impacts on trans and non-binary people."

"More detailed and in-depth, which was highly beneficial."

# Effectiveness of the Training

The comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training received high praise for its well-researched, structured, and interactive format. Participants appreciated the well-sourced, evidence-based nature of the training materials. Many commented positively on the links and signposts for further reading and watching, which allowed continued learning beyond the session. Attendees also felt the training provided actionable steps for improving clinical inclusivity including using correct pronouns, avoiding assumptions, and making clinic spaces more welcoming.

## Participants appreciated the engaging approach and practical application. Feedback included:

"The content was well-researched, up-to-date, and sourced. The real-life experiences shared were moving and eye-opening."

"The trainer was approachable and made asking questions comfortable. Their passion was infectious, fostering a safe and brave space for discussion."

"The interactive format kept my attention all day, which is rare!"

"Brilliant—welcoming and open to discussion."

"Very engaging, well-presented, and made me feel safe to contribute."

"Amazing! Fantastic training that kept my attention all day, which is hard to achieve!"

"This training should be mandatory for all NHS clinicians and leadership."

"Fantastic and much-needed training for health and social care professionals."

## Participants found that firsthand insights enriched their understanding. Notable comments included:

"The trainer was very understanding and explained things clearly. I really appreciated their willingness to share personal experiences."

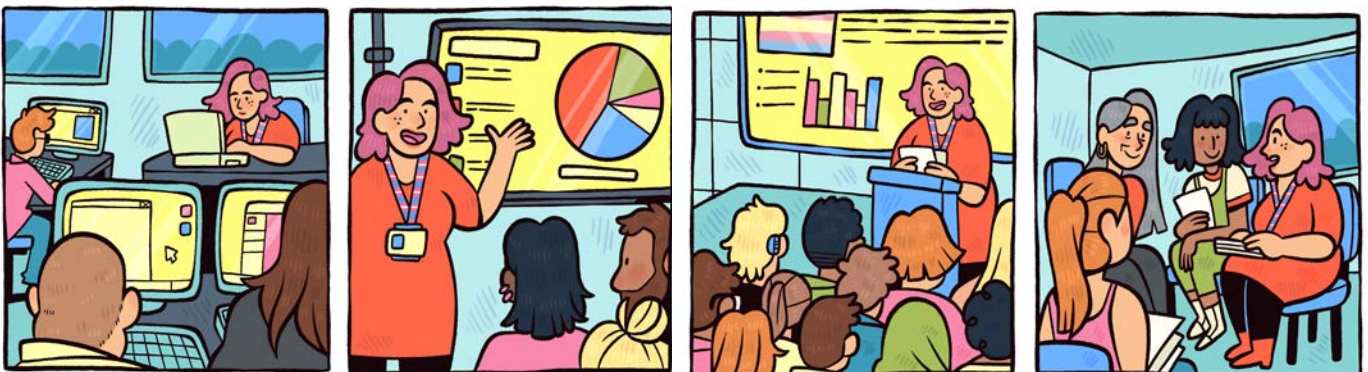
"Having a trans trainer made a huge difference. Their insights were invaluable."

"The trainer's personal experience helped massively to make it relatable and impactful."

"The trainer had very positive energy and an engaging voice. Connecting personal experiences to the content made it more relatable and impactful."

"Really engaging—I valued the trainer's openness in sharing their experiences. Their professional and approachable attitude made discussing health topics comfortable."

"Outstanding—they created a kind and safe space while being incredibly informative. I really valued the trainer's insights."





## A Space to Reflect

Following the delivery of our day-long training programme, we invited participants to attend a 90-minute online reflective session one month later. The aim was to create a virtual space where healthcare professionals could reconvene to reflect on their practice and explore how they had implemented the knowledge and skills gained during the training. This allowed attendees to consolidate their learning, reflect on real-world application, trouble shoot in a safe space and discuss experiences implementing inclusive practices in their professional roles. By offering a structured yet informal forum for reflection, we hoped to reinforce the impact of the initial training and support longer-term behavioural and systemic change.

### **The reflective session added substantial value by:**

- **Fostering systems thinking:** Participants were prompted to consider service-level improvements and reflect beyond their individual caseloads. Healthcare professionals noted:
- **Reinforcing learning through dialogue:** Sharing real-life examples and hearing from colleagues led to deeper reflection and inspiration. Participants found value in “hearing how colleagues have been trying to make changes within the service,” noting that such conversations would not typically arise in clinical supervision.
- **Surfacing underrepresented issues:** Topics such as the recording of pronouns, intersex healthcare experiences, and patient safety during gender transition were raised organically—issues that are often absent from standard supervision or procedural training.

"It helped me step back a bit and think on a service-level... how can I make changes?"

"I have reflected how our systems are limited and do not allow for an accurate reflection i.e through M and F markers. But appreciating we do have the option to change title to Mx etc."

"The training has also aided in my reflection re service users I work with and their journey including the hardships which has enabled me to provide even more inclusive trauma informed care."

## Unmet Training Needs

The responses from participants reinforce the necessity of comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training and highlight the importance of lived experience in educational settings. This trans-led training created not only a powerful learning experience but also a safe space in which questions could be asked without judgment – something lacking in many conventional, cisgender-led diversity training formats. Additionally, the feedback underscores a strong demand for broader implementation of this training, particularly in healthcare and leadership roles.

Several participants expressed a desire for this trans and non-binary inclusion training to be rolled out more widely, especially to leadership and frontline clinical staff. Several participants identified gaps in previous training opportunities.

One attendee noted:

"I've never had trans training, although I have been asking for it in senior leadership meetings."

# Challenges & Areas for Growth

Despite the positive reception HCT received and the incredible feedback from participants, challenges still remain:

- **Digital & Print Media:** Disinformation and transphobia online and in media fuels bias, shapes attitudes based on falsehoods, leads to mistakes in judgment, and highlights the critical need for myth-busting to ensure informed decision-making.
- **Resistance to Change:** Some staff are hesitant to engage with gender-affirming practices of care.
- **Prioritising Learning:** A single training session is insufficient for long-term cultural competency. More comprehensive training is needed to build confidence, knowledge and deeper understanding, this requires prioritisation and time commitment.
- **Opportunities for Reflection:** The online reflective sessions demonstrated that creating space for structured group reflection enhances not only individual learning, but also supports broader cultural and systemic change within healthcare services. Based on this success, future programmes should consider incorporating reflective follow-ups as a standard component of inclusive and relational training models.
- **Time & Funding Constraints:** Many healthcare providers struggle to allocate time and resources to trans and non-binary inclusion training. It was also highlighted to us that operational pressures remain a barrier to widespread

“As at the moment operationally a half day or day session is challenging for the system to accommodate.”

# Conclusion

HCT's comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training programme was a powerful learning experience for many healthcare professionals, surpassing expectations and setting a new benchmark for comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training in healthcare settings. By centring lived experience, grounding content in evidence, and fostering open discussion, the session succeeded in not only conveying knowledge but shifting perspectives.

The feedback indicates strong demand for continued, compulsory, and expanded access to such training, particularly within leadership tiers. As healthcare institutions strive to create equitable and affirming environments for all, this comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training stands out as a crucial step forward—and a model of best practice worth replicating.

## Call to Action

Healthcare providers must:

- 1. Implement Comprehensive Training for Staff at all Levels** – A brief hour-long trans awareness session is insufficient for those in decision making positions of leadership and care delivery.
- 2. Prioritise Ongoing Education** – True competency requires continuous learning and reflection.
- 3. Ensure Leadership Commitment** – Institutional support is critical for systemic change.
- 4. Collaborate with Trans Community Members** – Training and policies must remain relevant and impactful.

## Lasting Legacy

Comprehensive trans and non-binary inclusion training is not optional—it is essential for ethical, equitable, and effective healthcare. By prioritising in-depth education, healthcare institutions can bridge the gap in trans healthcare, foster trust, and ultimately save lives.

Moving forward HCT will be continuing to develop this co-produced training work. If you are interested in booking or discussing trans and non-binary inclusion training further please contact **[transtraining@mesmac.co.uk](mailto:transtraining@mesmac.co.uk)**





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