




Navigating the Gender Questioning Guidance with Confidence and Care for SEND settings

Please register your attendance using the link in the chat

Rachael Baker
24th September 2026

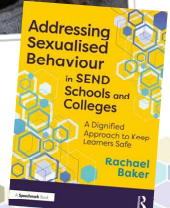


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Rachael Baker

- Qualified teacher
- RSE trainer and educator since 2007
- Author of Addressing Sexualised behaviours in SEND Schools and Colleges
- Governor of a primary school
- Offers training and support around relationships and sex education, specialising in sexualised behaviours
- Associate trainer for Bodysense Education


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Aims for today

- To explore the updated KCSIE guidance around children who question their gender, and how schools should best support and protect all children in their care.
- To create a safer space for colleagues to explore the guidance, allowing you time to consider the practical applications and possible challenges of implementing the guidance in your setting.
- To support teachers and leaders in schools to feel confident and safe to work within the guidance to ensure a safe and inclusive learning space for all learners

Please register your attendance using the link in the chat



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Setting the scene

- Taking a rights-based, evidence-based approach
- Bringing together key pieces of legislation and guidance
- Not here to debate the guidance – instead we are identifying practical applications and best practice
- Learners and learning at the heart









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Housekeeping

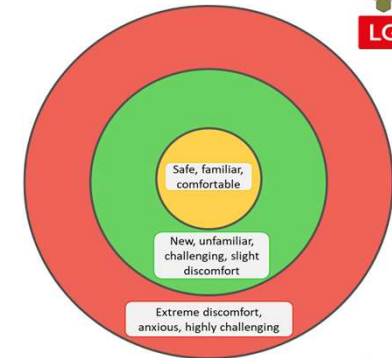
- Please register your attendance: <https://forms.gle/o6kVLn63eP3JrxjV8>
- Please keep your camera on and your microphone off
- There will be opportunities to speak aloud in the whole group and in break outs
- Please do ask questions – in the chat or raise your hand. We may ask to ‘park’ a question if there is a section coming up which will answer it, or if it is more appropriate to answer elsewhere
- Manage your experience and comfort – take a moment if you need it. We will have a short comfort break halfway through
- You are welcome to take notes – but you will get a copy of the slides afterwards



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Working together

- Be mindful of our different lived experiences and starting points
- Try to hear everyone's voice
- Learners at the heart
- Expect to leave with questions and thinking to do
- Hold space for discomfort and worry
- Participate as much as you are comfortable to
- Ask questions – park if necessary
- Respect our common goal
- Try to avoid jargon. Ask for clarification if you don't understand.
- Do cascade your learning, but respect the confidentiality of the training space
- No personal questions, comments or sharing please



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Some key terms

- **Assigned female / male at birth** – describes the sex assumed when a baby is born, usually based on the appearance of the genitals
- **Biological sex** – whether a person is biologically male or female, or intersex
- **Cisgender** – when someone describes their gender as the same as their biological sex
- **Femme** – presenting in a traditionally feminine way
- **Gender** – how someone describes or expresses themselves in terms of masculinity or femininity
- **Gender expression / identity** – how someone chooses to present or describe themselves in terms of gender
- **Gender stereotype** – assumptions made about someone based on their sex or gender e.g. women are pretty, men are tough etc
- **Gender reassignment** – a legal term used in the UK to describe the process of changing one's legal gender. It can also be used more broadly to describe steps someone takes to live in their affirmed gender. It does not have to involve medical treatment or surgery
- **Intersex** – someone who has male and female sexual characteristics
- **Man** – a biological male
- **Masc** – presenting in a traditionally masculine way
- **Non-binary** – A person who doesn't fall under the traditional male-female binary. A non-binary person may identify as both male and female, or neither.
- **Passing** – when a trans person is seen as the gender they describe themselves as, without being identified as trans
- **Questioning** – when someone is unsure of or is exploring their gender identity, sexuality or both
- **Sex** – being male or female; related to the physical characteristics of biological sex e.g. hormones and reproductive organs.
- **Social transition** – changes a person makes to how they live to better reflect their gender
- **Stealth** – when someone chooses not to divulge that they are trans
- **Trans / transgender (trans man / trans woman)** – someone whose gender is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Being trans does not depend on medical treatment, legal recognition, or how someone looks.
- **Woman** – a biological female



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Some statistics and background

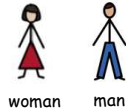
- Many young people experience some questioning of their gender or sexuality at some point, usually during adolescence.
- Estimated by numerous sources that around 1% of people worldwide identify as transgender, non-binary or gender fluid
- Many people describe themselves as gender non-conforming, or may present in a way that is not typical of gender stereotypes without questioning their gender or describing themselves as trans.
- Some people are born 'intersex' meaning that have female and male sexual characteristics. Estimations are somewhere between 0.01% and 1.7% depending on the definition.



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Additional considerations for learners with SEND

- People with autism and other neurodivergent conditions are 3 times as likely to describe themselves in this way ([University of Cambridge](#))
- Many learners with SEND rely heavily on stereotypes to understand the world
- Learners' understanding of their physicality or concept of sex or gender may be inconsistent
- Not being viewed as a sexual being is a frequent criticism in research around sexual health services and RSE from people with learning disabilities.
- Risk of attributing behaviours or preferences as part of learner's condition
- Infantilisation, social isolation and heteronormalising is very common
- Lack of independence and autonomy e.g. clothing, friends, activities



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Sitting with discomfort - what is it that worries us?

Take a moment to think about your own feelings about attending this workshop, and about delivering on this guidance.

Share your thoughts confidentially on Menti.

What is it that worries us as educators?

Is this based on prior experiences, anxiety about potential, or something else?

Do your colleagues have a shared view or are you aware of discourse?

What would it look like if we did this well?
What would it look like if it went badly?

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KCSIE - what do we have to do?

- Framing gender questioning in terms of safeguarding
 - Who are we safeguarding? Who is at risk, and from what or whom?
- Human rights act 1998 – the right to freedom from degradation, the right to privacy, the right to education
- Equality act 2010 – the right to not experience unlawful discrimination

"All staff to read Part One of the updated document"
No reference to gender questioning or transitioning in this part

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Sports

- Sports may be played in single sex groups without being considered discriminatory to avoid putting one sex at disadvantage, or compromising safety
- Where there are no safety concerns, schools to consider the request in light of social transitioning guidance



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Toilets

- Separate toilets must be provided for boys and girls over 8 years old (year 3)
- Schools must not allow students of one biological sex to use the designated toilets of another
- If a gender-questioning child does not wish to use the toilet designated for their biological sex, they should be offered a gender-neutral toilet
- If a school chooses to provide mixed-sex toilet in addition to single sex toilets, they should be individual lockable rooms opening directly onto public areas e.g. a corridor



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Changing rooms and showers

- Schools must not allow a child, aged 11 years or older at the start of the school year, to undress in front of a child of the opposite biological sex.
- When responding to a request to support any degree of social transition, a school must not allow a child access to changing rooms designated for the opposite sex.
- If a gender-questioning child does not want to use the changing rooms and showers designated for their sex, schools and colleges should consider whether they can provide an alternative changing or washing facility without compromising the provision of single-sex facilities. This could be a fully enclosed room



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Residential accommodation

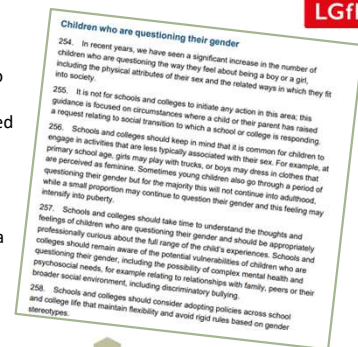
- To comply with their safeguarding duties, schools and colleges must not allow a child to share overnight accommodation with a child of the opposite biological sex. Responding to a request to support any degree of social transition must not include allowing access to boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex.
- If a child does not want to share a room with another child of the same biological sex, alternative arrangements should be sought where possible. Alternative arrangements should not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child. They might include, for instance, finding a suitable separate room for the child.



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Children who are questioning their gender

- Not for schools to initiate any action – guidance relates to requests from children or their family
- States that engaging with activities less typically associated with their sex is common in boys and girls
- Exploring gender as a child does not necessarily mean a child will continue to question their gender in adulthood. For a small proportion this may intensify in puberty
- Schools should take time to understand the emotions of a child who is questioning their gender and be aware of potential vulnerabilities, including mental health and psychosocial needs
- School-wide policies should maintain flexibility and avoid rigid rules based on gender stereotypes



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Considering requests for support with social transition

- Schools should not initiate action around social transition – requests come from child or parents
- Schools and colleges should consider whether pupils would be best supported by a policy on social transition which explains the steps that a school or college will go through when a child requests support.
- Records to be kept.
- In making decisions about supporting social transition, schools and colleges must comply with their distinct but interacting obligations under safeguarding legislation and equality and human rights law, ensuring that any assessment of discrimination is informed by their evaluation of the welfare and best interests of the child and other children.
- Regardless of social transitioning, schools must not allow children to use toilets or changing rooms of opposite sex, or participate in single sex sports of opposite sex

Considering requests for support with social transition

260. Schools and colleges should not initiate any action regarding social transition; this guidance applies where a child or their parent has requested that the school make changes or put support in place in order to facilitate the child presenting as the opposite biological sex ('social transition'). Members of staff should not adopt any changes relating to social transition unless a decision has been made by a school or college and a child's parents or carers have been involved as set out in this guidance.

261. Schools and colleges should consider whether pupils would be best supported by a policy on social transition which explains the steps that a school request for support with social transition, schools and colleges should ensure that their decision-making process is documented and records are kept.

262. In making decisions about supporting social transition, schools and colleges must comply with their distinct but interacting obligations under safeguarding



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Considering requests for support with social transition

- References to children 'living in stealth' meaning being trans but other children and staff not being aware, and potential impact on safeguarding
- References the importance of maintaining flexibility will help to avoid a child feeling they are under pressure to commit to a potentially irrevocable pathway when they are young.
- In majority of cases school should work with parents to determine what is in the child's best interests, as well as considering external clinical or non-clinical advice, including wider health issues and neurodiversity
- If a child confides their feelings but does not ask for social transitioning, there is no need to break confidence unless there is a related safeguarding risk
- In respect of other policies, school should consider whether any child is being disadvantaged, and what the gains or risks would be



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Things the guidance doesn't say

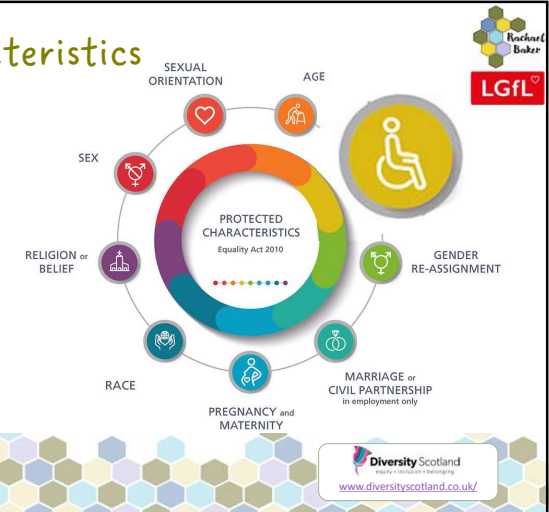
- A clear line on whether or not schools are allowed to use a child's preferred name or nickname, including if this preference is related to their gender identity
- Anything about uniform
- Doesn't specifically say whether a single sex school could offer a place to a transgender child – only the references to sport, toilets etc
- Any specific reference to learners with SEND in respect of gender questioning



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Protected characteristics

- 9 characteristics that are protected from discrimination in the Equality Act 2010
- People have several, and they overlap
- Each characteristic, and the options within them should be considered of equal importance
- Consider intersectionality and how a person's experience might differ depending on their protected characteristics



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stretch break



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Who is at risk - and what from?

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Risk Register

A year 9 pupil asks to go on the year 7 trip to Stratford as they are interested in English Literature for GCSE



What might happen?	Likelihood High, medium, low	What and how serious could the consequences be if it happened?	How many people could it impact?	Risk rating Red amber green	What could be done to mitigate the risk?	What would the risk rating be then?
Y9 learner doesn't know anyone						
Y7s might feel intimidated with older learner						
Y9 student travels independently so would need arrangements made for late collection						

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Some risks to consider

What might happen?	Likelihood High, medium, low	What and how serious could the consequences be if it happened?	How many people could it impact?	Risk rating Red amber green	What could be done to mitigate the risk?	What would the risk rating be then?
1. Male student wears skirt and tights to school		2. Female student wants to join boys football team		3. Male student wants to participate in residential textiles trip with all female class	4. Male student's parents ask for them to socially transition	5. Female student wants to join boys' choir
6. Female student asks to use they / them pronouns and be known as Milo		7. Male student wants to use she / her pronouns and be known as Zhaan		8. Female student wears trousers and blazer to school	9. Male student wants to join girls' yoga club	10. Male student wants to join girls' rugby club
				11. Female student wishes to socially transition without parents' knowledge	12. Female student wants to use boys toilets	

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Parents

In small groups:

- Share your experiences of working with parents around gender – or if you do not have real examples, think of hypothetical situations to reflect on
- Consider parents who know and are positive, or negative, and parents who don't know, and why that might be the case

Parents and carers should be actively involved and their views treated with importance

268. Parents and carers have the leading role in the lives of their children, and this area should be no exception. Therefore, where a child who is questioning their gender asks for support from a school or college, schools and colleges should engage parents/carers as a matter of priority. It is important that the views of the child's parents or carers should carry great weight and be properly considered. However, in the rare circumstances where involving parents or carers would constitute a greater risk to the child than not involving them, the school or college should involve their designated safeguarding lead⁶⁰ to determine what action is needed to safeguard the child, before the parents or carers are contacted or any decisions are taken.

269. The Cass Review is clear that outcomes for children and adolescents are best if they have a supportive relationship with their families and, in the vast majority of cases, we would expect schools/colleges and parents/carers to work together to establish what is best for the child. Involving a child's parents/carers in this way will enable schools and colleges to promote a child's wellbeing and protect them from harm.

270. Schools and colleges should explore how best to support these conversations, including offering a staff member to be present or to speak to parents or carers on the child's behalf.

271. The advice above applies in cases where a child has requested support with social transition. In cases where a child confides in a member of staff about their feelings but does not ask the school or college to make changes to how they are treated, there is no reason to break any confidence unless there is a related safeguarding risk. Schools and colleges should follow their usual procedures where a conversation with a child raises concerns about the child's wellbeing or safety, including involving parents or carers where appropriate.



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Working with parents – what went well? Even better if...?

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Relational practice

Building stronger relationships to safeguard children



Relational Practice is an approach that strives to build and maintain meaningful connections and strong relationships with parents, to help safeguard children. This approach should influence a school's ethos, systems, policies and everyday practice. It involves:



Empathy

Understanding (not necessarily agreement) of another person's thoughts or feelings in a given situation from their own perspective



Curiosity

Genuinely wanting to learn more about the challenges and strengths of families.



Authenticity

Staying true to your own personality, values, and spirit, including at times being vulnerable.



Unconditional positive regard

Genuine respect for someone with all their flaws and strengths. Avoiding judgement.



relationalpractice.lgfl.net



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Supporting the child who is questioning



- Space to talk
- Asking them how they would like things to be – although not guaranteeing you can make that happen
- Offer to support them to talk to their parents if they haven't already, and if they feel that would help
- Keeping appropriate records
- Protecting their learning and right to education

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Where next?



Train all your staff, even though they may only have read part 1 of the new KCSIE document – aware of prejudice abuse too?

Consider writing a policy for your school around gender inclusion or supporting children who are questioning their gender

Consider related policies, e.g. RSE, offsite trips, uniform

Carry out an inclusion walk to objectively view the school through different lenses – governors, small group of students, teachers?

Do you have a named governor with responsibility for inclusion / diversity / RSE / wellbeing?

Create a risk register for a selection of possible scenarios

Consider creating a register of experiences – not safeguarding or serious incidents, but the low level incidents or experiences that occur on the periphery.

Tell your learners – a display about inclusion, or incorporate into PSHE?

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LGFL resources and links



- **Social:** @lgflsafeguarded (LinkedIn/Facebook/X)
- **Newsletter:** safenewsletter.lgfl.net
- **Main portal:** safeguarding.lgfl.net
- **Blog:** safeblog.lgfl.net
- **Training:** safetraining.lgfl.net
- **Resources:** saferesources.lgfl.net
- **Email:** safeguarding@lgfl.net

LGFL slides: KCSIE 2026
- Key Updates to the
Statutory Safeguarding
Guidance: [kcsie.lgfl.net](https://www.lgfl.net/kcsie)

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NEXT: 01 Oct
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Further reading and resources

- Global organisations
 - [UNICEF gender equality action plan](#)
 - [UNESCO: Gender equality and education](#)
- On developing gender-inclusion policies
 - [Teacher Created Materials blog: How to build gender inclusive schools practices and policies that support every student](#)
 - [Welcoming Schools: framework for developing a gender inclusive school](#)
 - [Welcoming Schools: Gender & Children: A Place to Begin](#)
 - [Gender Identity Research and Education Society: Inclusive Schools Policy Guidance](#)
- Legal interpretations
 - [Farrer & Co: Gender-questioning children and KCSIE 2026: a practical framework for schools](#)
 - [Lexology: KCSIE 2026: New guidance on gender-questioning children](#)

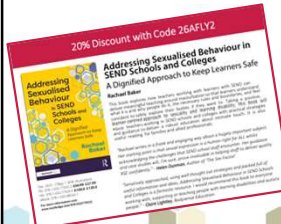


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What will you take away from today?

Where will you go with it?



Keep in touch
RSE consultation, training, support
around sexualised behaviour

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