

SEXUAL HEALTH:

Sex, ourselves and our relationships



LGBT
foundation



TRANS
PROGRAMME

In this section we focus on relationships - the relationships we have with ourselves our bodies, and the relationships we have with others. We talk about how we can explore our sexual desires, tips for keeping safe while dating and in relationships, and some of the changes we might experience in our sex lives.

The most important thing to remember is that you are enough! And that there is no right or wrong way to be trans, no right or wrong way to have a body.



Body positivity

Some of us feel confident and sexy sometimes but unconfident and dysphoric at other times.

There are no rules about how you have to feel about your body. Sometimes all the talk about “love your body” and “love yourself or no-one else will love you” can feel really alienating to trans folks when that’s often not how we experience the world. For other people the idea of proudly loving our body and ourselves feels empowering. Body positivity is about being **as happy and comfortable with your body as you can be right now.** And that’s it.



There's no right way to be trans and there's no 'right' or 'wrong' bodies.

Some trans people feel the idea of being read as cis (known as 'passing') is really important to them, while others are not bothered about being visibly trans. Plenty of us feel somewhere in between, wanting to be visible at some times and not at others. Some trans folks are nearly always read as cis while others hardly ever are. **Being read as cis is not a measure of how attractive you are or how good at being trans you are.**

You are the boss of your body, and any choices you make about it, including if you want to take hormones or have any surgeries, are up to you.

Sometimes, the negative feelings we're having about our bodies can become overwhelming. If that's the case for you, you may find it helpful to get support - visit our website for information on where you can get support and to find out about our ENOUGH campaign:

lgbt.foundation/enough

The sex you're having

Consent

Consent is when there is mutual, enthusiastic and freely made agreement to sex or to sexual activity. Consent is an ongoing and active process - which means everyone, always, has the right to change their mind about sexual activity at any time.

Nobody can consent to sex if they are threatened, frightened, drugged, coerced or asleep.

Be clear about your boundaries and expectations, for example which names and words feel right for you and



your body and which ones don't, and where you do and don't like to be touched. You deserve to have your body respected in all ways during sex.

Communication and exploration

There's only one secret to great sex - communication! Be clear about what you like, what you expect and what your boundaries are and make space for your partner/s to be clear and honest with you too.

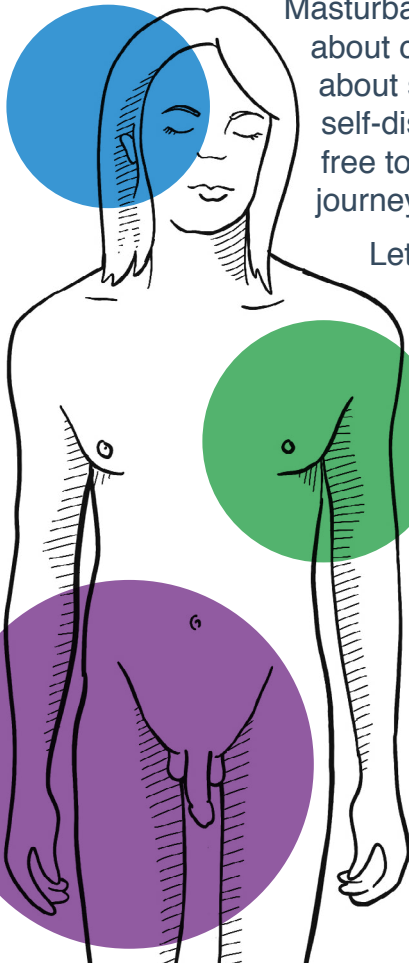
You may find that once you start talking about your wants and desires with your partner/s, it's really hot!

Having an idea about the kind of sex you want to have is great but it can be hard to know before you've tried it! Don't be afraid of a good solo routine. Wanking, fapping, playing with yourself - whatever you call it, masturbating can be a great way to stay in

tune with your body and figure out exactly what you like.

We might have internalised negative messages about masturbation (hairy palms anyone?) and feel uncomfortable about the idea of doing it. The best thing about masturbation is that it's for you and you alone, which means you get to make it whatever you want it to be. If you want to try different ways of being touched, or try out different words for yourself, lock the door and see what feels good.





Masturbation isn't always about cumming, it can be about self-exploration and self-discovery too so feel free to let yourself enjoy the journey.

Let yourself try out different ways of getting turned on too. Want to watch porn? Go for it! Like creating fantasies in your head? Go wild! More of a slashfic kind of person? Great!

Some people find the way they masturbate and the way they want to have sex changes

when they transition. Don't be afraid to try new things and to talk to your partner/s if something you used to love isn't working for you anymore. If it's all going great, make sure you tell your partner/s that too!

Desire and drive

Everybody's relationship to their sex drive and desire is different. Some of us experience a lot sexual attraction and desire in our lives, while others experience none at all. Some of us only experience sexual attraction to someone after forming emotional connections, while others experience sexual attraction without emotional or romantic connection.

People who do not experience sexual attraction are asexual, or 'ace' for short. Some aces choose to have sex or sexual relationships throughout their lives while others choose not to. The only thing that matters is that you get to make that choice for yourself.

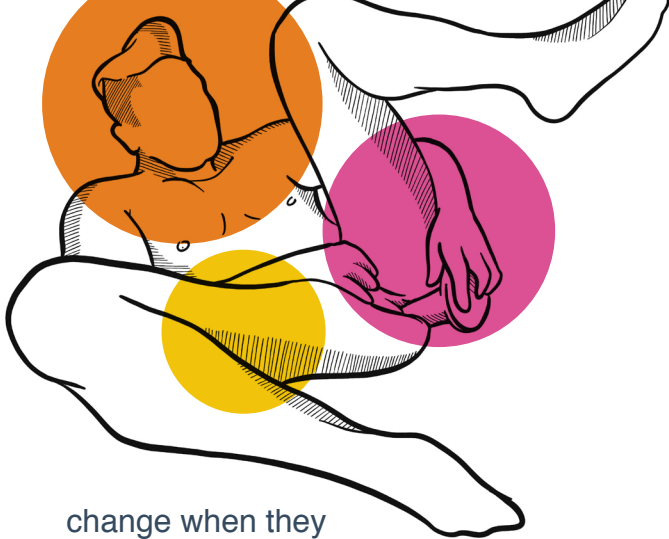
Changing Desires

There are specific things that trans people experience that can affect our sex drives and our feelings about sex.

People who take **oestrogen** can find that they have a lower sex drive than they had before taking it. People who take **testosterone** sometimes find they have a higher sex drive than they did before, especially in the first couple of years. However, people taking oestrogen or testosterone might also find that their sex drive stays exactly the same or even decreases.

Sometimes these changes are welcome, but any change can take a while to get used to. It's a good idea to check in with partners and also with yourself about how you feel about any changes to your sex drive.

Some people also find that their **sexual orientation** or understanding of what they want from sexual or romantic relationships



change when they transition. For some they stay the same throughout their whole lives.

There's no such thing as a 'male' or 'female' sex drive and there's no 'male' or 'female' way to experience sex or desire. There are as many ways to experience desire and sex as there are people in the world so there's no need to worry about getting it wrong!

If you have any worries about your sex drive and desire, you might find it helpful to talk to a trusted friend or seek support.

Relationships

New Relationships

New relationships can be scary whether we're trans or not! The Big Fear for many trans folks is when do we tell a partner or potential partner that we're trans. Some of us want to tell our partners right away and some of us never tell.

- Tips for telling someone you're dating that you're trans:
- Trust your instincts! If the person seems like a good'un, go ahead, if not - hold off and consider if this person is right for you
- Choose somewhere you can easily leave if you need to
- Choose a public place where there will be people around if you need support
- Tell a friend where you're going and what you're going to do

Some of us prefer dating other trans people, while others have no preference about dating cis or trans people. Whether we are

dating people who are cis or trans, every relationship will have its own dynamics.

Existing relationships

If we are already dating someone when we come out as trans, it may provoke questions for them about their own identity and sexual orientation, which they may need to explore. They might find our helpline or peer support groups such as those for lesbian, bisexual and queer women, or gay, bisexual and queer men helpful, or specific support for partners of trans people.



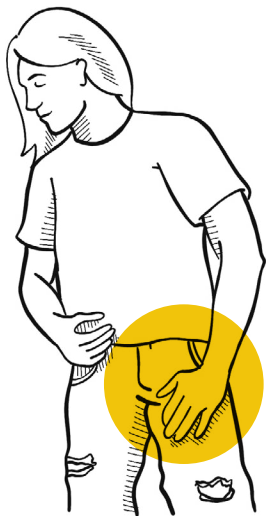
Hook-ups, dates and cruising

Lots of us choose to meet people online nowadays. This can give us the option to disclose that we're trans before meeting someone in person.

If you are meeting someone you have talked to online it's a

good idea to let someone know where you're going, and to go meet at a public place.

Sometimes you can let bar staff know if you're planning to meet someone you met online so they can keep an eye on you and help if things don't go to plan.



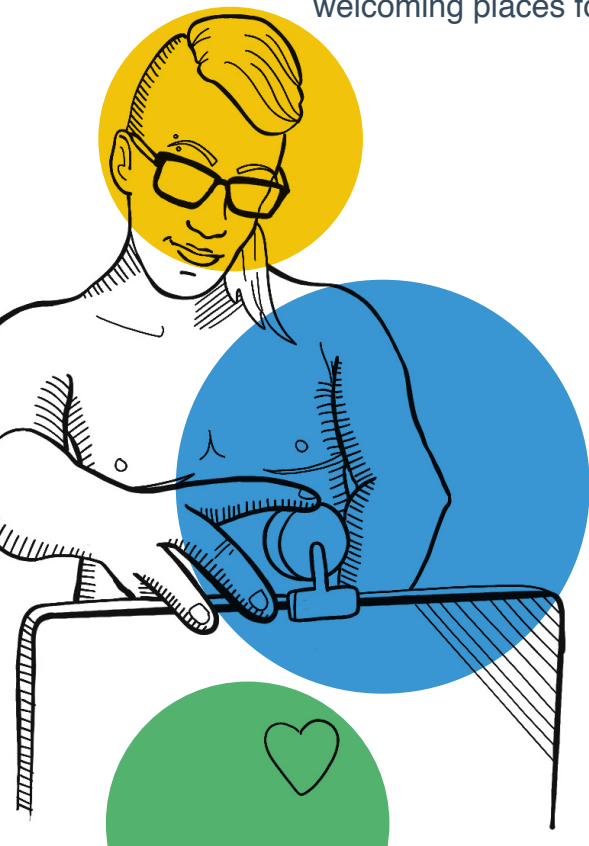
Some bar's participate in the #askforangela campaign, where you are able to ask bar staff for 'Angela' to let them know you are feeling threatened or feel unsafe on your date and they will try to help exit safely. You can also use an app on your phone which generates an automated call at a time of your choosing, giving you a reason to leave if you need it.

If you want to meet people in bars and clubs, check online for nearby places that are trans friendly.

Some of us might be into **cruising** - looking for sexual partners in public places for casual hook ups. If that's you, make sure you take condoms and lube, leave necessary valuables at home, and be clear about what you want and what you don't. Don't take it to heart if you experience rejection while cruising, it happens to everyone sometimes.

If you want to a sauna to hook up do bear in mind some saunas have policies that restrict

which trans people can use them. These policies might be outdated (and illegal!) but it can mean they're not always the most welcoming places for us.



Sex work

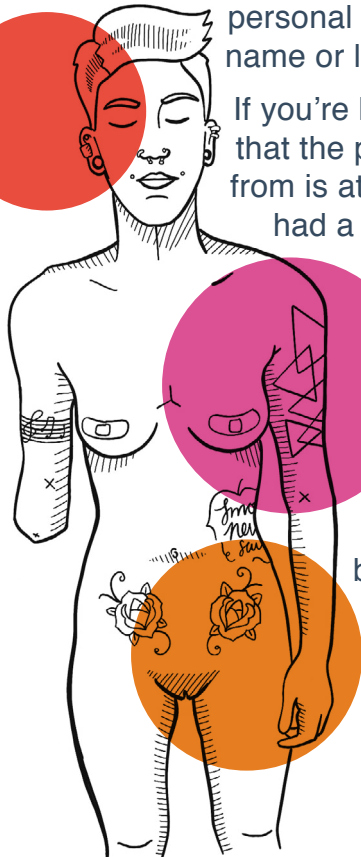
Sex work, sometimes called transactional sex, is sex in exchange for money or goods. Remember to practice safer sex - if you're working on the streets or in bars or hotels, always carry condoms and lube and insist on using them. Get money upfront and make sure you can get away if you need to.

If a client seems dodgy, don't doubt your instincts, end the interaction or get out of there. Working in pairs or groups can help keep you safe. Tell a trusted friend where you are, where you're going, and what to do if you're not back when they expected you. Check your local sex worker organisation's 'ugly mugs' book or board, which keeps a record of people who have recently attacked sex workers in your area.

If you're camming (a form of sex work done live online) remember to keep yourself emotionally safe. Think about your limits and what you want before speaking to a

client. Be clear about what you are and are not going to do, and what you don't want clients to know about you. Don't share personal information like your name or location.

If you're buying sex, remember that the person you're buying from is at work. They may have had a long day so be polite, be respectful and let them be the expert. Don't be embarrassed to talk about what you want and what your limits are, this will make the time better for both of you.



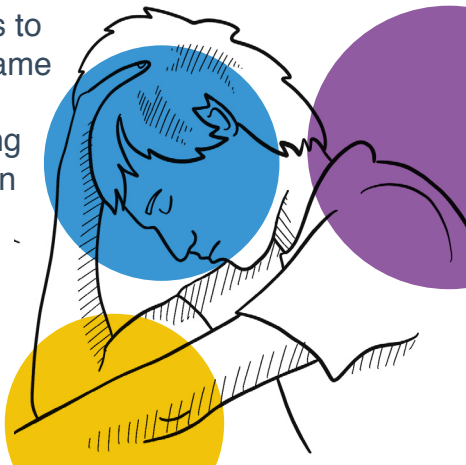
Abuse and assault

Abusive relationships

Anyone - trans or cis - can experience abuse in a relationship. Sometimes it can be hard to recognise the signs of when a relationship has become abusive.

Research tells us that coming out to a partner as trans or undergoing physical changes, like surgeries, is often when abuse can emerge in an intimate relationship.

Abuse can be threats to 'out' you, attempts to make you feel shame about your body and gender, forcing sexual activities on you that focuses on parts of your body you that make you feel dysphoric.





Abuse in relationships is about having power and control over somebody - and it is never justified or deserved.

If you are in an abusive relationship or are unsure if your relationship

has become abusive, there is support out there. For emotional and practical support can get in

touch with your local domestic violence service, or call the National LGBT Domestic Abuse+ Helpline 0800 999 5428. You can also access support through the LGBT Foundation: **[lgbtfoundation/how-we-can-help-you/domestic-abuse](https://lgbtfoundation.org.uk/how-we-can-help-you/domestic-abuse)**

Rape and Sexual Assault

As trans people we can find that sometimes other people are curious about or even feel entitled to our bodies. Nobody is allowed to touch you without your permission.

Rape is defined as forced sexual penetration. Sexual assault is any kind of sexual contact which is against another persons' will, which includes rape.

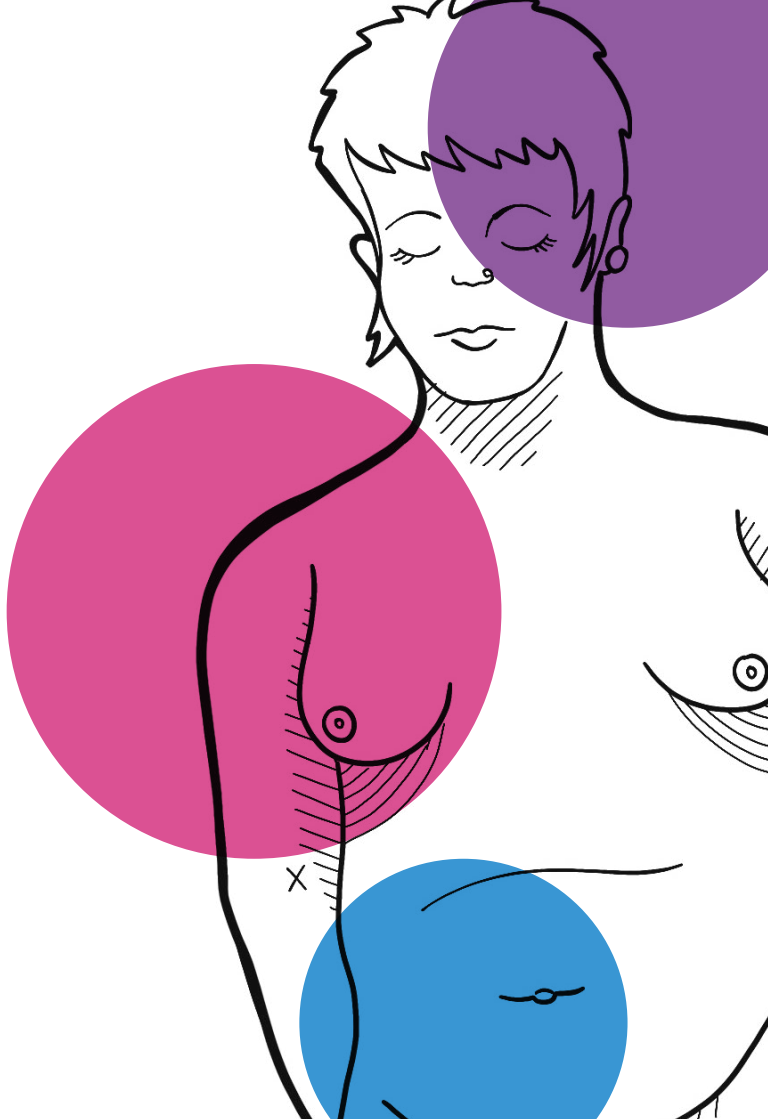
If you have been raped or sexually assaulted remember that it's not your fault. Absolutely nobody deserves to be raped or sexually assaulted, no matter what they are wearing, who they are with, if they are drunk or high, or whether they are trans or not.

You might feel shame or blame yourself if you have have been sexually assaulted - but remember that you are not responsible.

If you have been sexually assaulted, you don't have to struggle alone. You can reach out to friends or call the Trans Survivors Switchboard.

Sexual assault is a crime and you may choose to report it to the police - but you don't have to if you don't want to. The most important thing is what feels right for you. If you do choose to report a sexual assault, you have the right to have your name, gender, and pronouns respected by the police. You can also seek support from Sexual Assault Reporting Centre (SARC) who will be able to help with your emotional and medical needs, and with reporting the assault.

See our guide for trans people who have been affected by sexual violence for more information and details about support locally and nationally: **lgbt.foundation/downloads/transguidesexualviolence**



Further resources

Trans health

Action for Trans Health

The UK's largest campaign for democratic trans healthcare.

They give small grants to trans people to enable them to access healthcare, deliver training to medical professionals, provide healthcare advocacy, and support and deliver local trans health initiatives.

They have groups in Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Brighton. Please contact them to find a meeting near you.

Website: www.actionfortranshealth.org.uk

Email: info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk



Drug and alcohol

LGBT Foundation Substance Misuse Programme

LGBT Foundation is part of Manchester Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service and offers support to LGBT individuals affected by drugs, alcohol and chemsex.

Visit our website to find out the times and locations of our services and support groups.

Website: lgbt.foundation/substancemisuse

Telephone: **0345 3 30 30 30**

Sexual health

LGBT Foundation STI testing

LGBT Foundation offers a range of sexual health services, including screenings and rapid HIV testing. Visit our website to find out the times and locations of our services

Website: www.lgbt.foundation/testing

Domestic abuse

Galop

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

Emotional and practical support for LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse.

Website: www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse

Telephone: 0800 999 5428

Email: help@galop.org.uk

Support helplines

LGBT Foundation advice, support and information line

We offer advice, support and information for LGBT people through our helpline.

website: lgbt.foundation/helpline

Telephone: 0345 3 30 30 30

MindLine Trans+

Bristol MindLine has launched a helpline looking to support trans and non-binary individuals, and those questioning their gender. It is also available for family and allies of trans people. Lines are open Mondays and Fridays, 8pm to 12am.

Telephone:
0300 330 5468

