

Interviews: Part 2

These interviews were carried out with young trans and non-binary people in a series of Saturday afternoon youth sessions with Gendered Intelligence.

Trans Girl

Can I ask how old you are and what pronouns you use?

Trans girl: I'm eleven and my pronouns are 'she' and 'her'.

Have you always been this fabulously confident?

Trans girl: Yep.

If you could talk to someone who is also eleven and trans and struggling to find their confidence, what advice might you give them?

Trans girl: Just sing it out. When I sing, I feel happy, proud and excited about my life. I can't really describe it, but it's a really strong feeling inside.

You're doing a great job of describing it. Is being trans a happy place for you?

Trans girl: Yeah.

Same here. What have been the things that have helped you be this happy?

Trans girl: My mum. She's been a really big support.

How have school been?

Trans girl: Yeah, they've been great. We have a really great assistant head in our school and she's been great, really helpful.

If you could talk to other teachers, headteachers and assistant headteachers in other schools, perhaps where trans pupils are having a tough time, what would you say?

Trans girl: I would say, 'Hi, I'm trans and I don't think you are being helpful AT ALL. You need to get your "A game" on.'

Sometimes I speak with young people in schools who are having a really tough time because the staff don't have their 'A game' on

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and perhaps don't understand or believe the young person when they talk about their gender. What would you say to them if you had the chance?

Trans girl: I would say, 'You're wrong, you're DEFINITELY wrong. Everyone knows their own minds even if they don't know anything else. Even five-year-olds, they know what they're thinking inside and you don't, especially without your "A game" attitude on.'

How old were you when you definitely knew your own mind?

Trans girl: I was five years old.

Did you tell people when you were five?

Trans girl: No, I waited until I was nine. I waited four years.

*Can you remember those years of waiting before you told anyone?
How did you feel in those years?*

Trans girl: I still felt pretty happy but now I feel double or triple that happiness.

What's it like to be living your life now? What's the first thing you think about when you wake up?

Trans girl: Cupcakes and rainbows.

And your last thought at night?

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Trans girl: The bright moon shining making a beautiful essence across the sky.

If you could reach out and speak out to other young trans people, what would you say?

Trans girl: You're perfect just the way you are.

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Trans Teen

Do you come to this group regularly and why is it important to you?

Trans teen: I started coming to GI [Gendered Intelligence] groups about a year ago. I've only been to this one a couple of times as I usually go to the older group. It's very different to other places. Here I can use whatever name I am using at the time and whatever pronoun I want. People use the names and titles you want and it's like you can let out a breath you've been holding in for ages.

What's it like to hold a breath in?

Trans teen: It's kind of like I don't notice holding it in unless it's a bad time or something bad happens. But it's like you don't notice how much stuff you're carrying around until you breathe out and you can just stop.

How long have you felt like you have been doing that?

Trans teen: A long time. A really long time.

Did you feel like you were carrying all this stuff through your school years and holding your breath?

Trans teen: It was exhausting. Really exhausting. My school was incredibly gendered. Girls and boys had separate PE tops and the girls' tops didn't have buttons but big, deep

V-necks. Girls had to wear skirts like old-fashioned tennis players wore.

Other people wouldn't notice those things. If you could talk to other people to let them know what it was like, what would you say?

Trans teen: I think before I knew stuff about myself, I didn't think about the small everyday things that were making me unhappy. Only after I knew more about me did I understand. It almost made me feel worse because I knew why. Things made sense, so I could put them into a context – the supposedly little things like the shape of a neckline. I realised that for years I'd put up with so much stuff that for me felt wrong, like the gendered clothing and people thinking I was someone I wasn't. I'd been down on myself for so long that knowing it wasn't my fault allowed me to breathe.

What would you say to schools to allow it to be a little easier for us trans folk?

Trans teen: Please try not to gender divide – like separate boys' lines and girls' lines. Have private changing options that respect all of us – trans or anyone. Not many people felt comfortable getting changed together. Respect us more and listen.

Did you do well at school academically?

Trans teen: Yes, I got good grades but I never enjoyed my school years at all. I only had a very few people I could share

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my suffering with. But we never talked on a deeper level about how stuff was making us feel. I had a few close friends who are still friends now.

What are you doing now you've left school?

Trans teen: I'm just trying to figure everything out; trying to make sense of it. My future seems too big to think about now. I need to just understand me now.

If you could give advice to you seven years ago, what advice would you give?

Trans teen: Just because other people have positions of power and authority over you doesn't mean that they know more than you do about you and what you need and what will make you happy. Only you know that.

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Trans Teen

Can you tell me your age and the pronouns you use?

Trans teen: I'm nineteen years old and I use 'she' and 'her' pronouns.

When did you come out?

Trans teen: I came out twice, or many times in a way. I came out to my friends in February last year. They all thought I was trans, but I was in denial and described myself as gay.

What was it like before you came out and what is it like now?

Trans teen: It was a really weird and confusing time. I must be honest and say that I wasn't sure what 'transgender' meant or was. Actually, I didn't even really know what 'gender' meant. When I came here, I had loads of realisations about myself. I knew I was trans. I told my parents and they said they'd rather have a happy daughter than an upset son. I'm much happier now. I just enjoy being me more. I like the way I fit into society now, the clothes I can wear, the image I can have, the way all that makes me feel. Maybe I'll have surgery, maybe not. Who cares? I'm still me and I'm still trans.

What does coming to a space like this mean to you and your happiness?

Trans teen: Oh my goodness... I can't think of a word for it... Yes, I can: 'hope'. Hope for me, hope for society, hope for

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young trans people like me. It's a really safe space. You can be having an awful time outside or in school and you come here, share your name and pronoun and then just relax, join in or go and sit in a quiet space; speak to other young trans people who understand; see friends or mentors or youth workers; be with people I can look up to and people who can look up to me. It feels like a small community.

Like a family?

Trans teen: Yes, but of friends. A brilliant trans-only space.

When you think about people who haven't accessed spaces like this for one reason or another, what would you say to them?

Trans teen: Don't give up. Have hope. See if there is a trans youth group near to you and try to get to it. Be your true self and try to find people who will just accept you without question.

What do you want to do with your future?

Trans teen: Modelling. I definitely want to be a model and also maybe do some youth work with a group like GI [Gendered Intelligence]. Even though I identify as a binary woman, I want people to see how different I am as that. Not everyone needs to look the same, even if they identify the same. Modelling would allow me to do that, to be my own kind of woman.

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