

CHAPTER II

Trans Inclusive Higher Education: Strategies to Support Trans, Non-Binary and Gender Diverse Students and Staff

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INTRODUCTION

There is increasing evidence to suggest that trans and gender diverse people face significant challenges and barriers to participation in higher education (HE), both as learners and as members of staff. Our TransEDU research upon which this chapter is based, found that 86% of trans students and staff from colleges and universities in Scotland had encountered barriers to their learning or work that they directly attributed to their trans or gender diverse status (Lawrence and Mckendry 2019; Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a). Despite explicit protections from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, the systemic inequalities faced by trans students and staff are far-reaching across interpersonal, administrative and structural spheres (Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a). The ignorance, hostility and systemic alienation experienced are catalysed and compounded by wider systems of transphobia, homophobia, misogyny and gendered socio-cultural norms, and subsequently institutionally reproduced through campus cultures, systems and processes.

While the tensions of 'doing equalities' in HE are subject to invaluable critique in relation to women, to LGBTQ+ and racialised people (see Ahmed 2012, 2017; Taylor 2018), there has been less focus on the specific experiences of trans people and the measures institutions and individuals can implement to better support them. Our research suggested that doing this 'diversity work' (Ahmed 2012) to advance trans equalities and address barriers often fell to individual trans students and staff at significant personal cost; allied to the emotional labour (Hochschild 2003; Taylor 2013), time investment and 'outness' this necessitated. Meanwhile, individual practitioners and academics often lacked workload capacity and/or the knowledge, confidence, and intra- and inter-institutional connections to engage in meaningful actions to tangibly advance trans equalities¹.

This chapter will explore two strategies with the potential to subvert these current patterns in the trans equalities work: 1) to reduce isolation, raise awareness, and empower

non-trans students and staff to be allies through the creation of champion groups or networks that take forward the inclusion work across institutions and the HE sector; and 2) the designation of a trained and well-publicised named contact within institutions for trans and gender diverse people. Emerging as examples of best practice from our TransEDU empirical research in Scotland, both examples were discussed as positive solutions by individuals with lived experience and appear to mitigate or dilute a range of the barriers faced. The chapter will take a case study approach, outlining the effective employment of these networks, and examining ways in which they may be adapted for use in a variety of institutional settings within and beyond HE.

A NOTE ON TERMS

In this chapter, and in our research more broadly, we use the term ‘trans’ to denote lived experiences and identities where there are differences between gender assigned at birth and the lived and embodied gender of individuals, as subjectivities and systems that experience or recognise dissonances between gendered selfhood and embodied experience (Lawrence and Taylor 2019). We use the term ‘gender diverse’ to denote lived experiences and identities that fall outside of binary understanding of gender, encapsulating non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, and agender identities and ways of being. With ever-changing understandings and articulations of trans experience and gender diversity, our employment of these terms and the above brief definitions are not intended to be prescriptive, fixed nor definitive.

TRANSEDU: RESEARCHING THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS AND STAFF

The empirical and practice-based examples underlying this chapter are drawn from the TransEDU action research project we conducted between 2016 and 2018. Funded by the Scottish Funding Council and based at the University of Strathclyde, our research examined the experiences of and current provision for trans and gender diverse applicants, students and staff in further and higher education in Scotland. Having identified a lack of empirical evidence to assist colleges and universities to fulfil their statutory and ethical duties in relation to trans and gender diverse prospective and current students and staff, our research represented the first study to specifically gather evidence on the experiences of and barriers faced by trans and gender diverse people in the post-secondary education sectors. While the empirical research was conducted in Scotland, there are distinct resonances between the TransEDU findings, and findings from research conducted with trans and gender diverse people – and indeed LGBT+ people more broadly – in HE in England (ECU 2009; NUS 2015; Stonewall 2018) and the United States (Beemyn 2019; Nicolazzo 2017).

In 2016, we commenced empirical research with trans and gender diverse people who were prospective, current, or recent (within the preceding 5 years) students and staff in colleges and universities across Scotland. This involved an online survey and in-depth

qualitative interviews. Participants were recruited via colleges, universities, student unions, trade unions, LGBT+ and trans organisations, and social media. The online survey gathered 157 valid responses, and we interviewed 20 trans and gender diverse students and staff members. The surveys included open response questions which produced a rich data set. This, alongside transcribed interview data were coded and thematically analysed.

Survey respondents were aged between 16 and 60 years with the largest group (71%, n=88) in the 16-25 years of age category. Respondents demonstrated having a range of intersecting experiences and characteristics in addition to their trans or gender diverse status. Over 90% (n=113) of respondents identified their sexual and/or romantic identity as non-heterosexual, including queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual and asexual. 7% of participants (n=9) were Black, Asian, of dual heritage or of another minority ethnic heritage, which is a higher proportion of respondents from minoritised ethnic groups than the general Scottish population (4% in the 2011 Scotland Census). 45% of participants (n=55) declared a disability or long term health condition, which is again higher than the general Scottish adult population (19%). 30% of respondents (n=37) identified as working class; and a small number of respondents were also carers, care experienced, D/deaf, and intersex. Total of 26% of participants self-identified as non-binary (n=32), 25% as men (n=31), 21% as women (n=26), 12% as 'fluid or variable' (n=15), 7% as 'other' (n=9), and 2% as 'none' (n=3) in the gender diverse category. Thus, in order to be comprehensive in policy and implementation, the broadest spectrum of gender diversity must be considered. While still essential, focusing work solely on trans women and trans men to the exclusion of gender diverse people is likely to be ineffective in advancing trans equalities and gender equalities more broadly.

Our survey found that 86% of students and staff surveyed faced barriers to their learning or work in direct relation to their trans and/or gender diverse status:

The biggest challenge concerned peer relationships with colleagues and fellow students, with many experiencing ignorance and hostility. There were also numerous issues around the provision of gender neutral facilities, and navigating administrative processes. Research participants often had very low expectations and many felt unsafe or unwelcome within classroom and wider campus environments. The survey indicated that 35% (n=44) of survey respondents had withdrawn from a course at college or university before completion. 24% (n=27) of those answering the survey from a university perspective had withdrawn – this is a higher proportion than general withdrawal rates for undergraduate study in Scotland, which was 7.9% in 2014/15. The most common reason given for both withdrawal from study and extended absences from study or work was mental health issues (57%; n=33). Disclosure of trans status to institutions, such as for the purpose of seeking advice or support, emerged as significant issue. The survey indicated that 23% (n=29) of students and staff feel entirely unable to speak to their institution about matters relating to their trans status, with

a further 33% (n=41) feeling only 'a little' able to do so. (Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a, p. 1-2).

In addition to empirical research with trans and gender diverse people, we engaged with a broad range of academics and education practitioners across the UK and Ireland through hosting of open meetings, delivering workshops and training, conference presentations and knowledge-exchange activities in order to gain insight into current practice and to further understand the mechanisms of institutional (in)equalities from the perspectives of those 'on the ground'.

Alongside generation of empirical evidence, the aim of the TransEDU project was to develop outputs and practical tools to assist individual staff members and institutions more broadly in enhancing their understanding of and provision for trans and gender diverse students and colleagues. Accordingly, we developed the TransEDU website (www.trans.ac.uk) to host open-access guidance, training materials, videos, case studies, research findings, and recommendations for improving policy, provision and practice. The empirical research concluded in 2017, and the resource development concluded in spring 2018.

LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

As public bodies, UK higher education institutions are subject to the Equality Act 2010. The Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of nine 'protected characteristics', which includes the characteristic of 'gender reassignment', described as:

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

This legal definitional category of 'gender reassignment' is not without its controversies, however, as the focus on 'physiological aspects of sex' is argued to be overly biologically determinist and overlooks trans and gender diverse people who do not – or indeed cannot – access medical interventions (Hines 2010). As such, technical guidance for the further and higher education sectors issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission states that 'gender reassignment' should be understood as a 'personal process... rather than a medical process' (EHRC 2014, p. 22), meaning that trans and gender diverse people not engaged in medical interventions ought to be covered by the Act and within institutional equalities work. These interpretations are important for students and staff in HE, as institutions seek to determine to whom the legal protections set out by the Equality Act 2010 apply (or not), particularly – as evidenced in our respondent sample – as many identify as gender diverse. It is our argument that statutory duties must be just one aspect of institutional responses and that, particularly considering

the empirical evidence that points to uneven and negative experiences, institutions must also consider their ethical duties toward trans and gender diverse learners and staff.

UK HE institutions are also subject to Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) aligned with the Equality Act 2010, with Specific Duties applicable to the devolved UK states subject to the Act (i.e. Scotland, England and Wales). The PSED mandates public sector bodies to: 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not' (EHRC 2019). In Scotland, where our research took place, the Specific Duties mandate public bodies including universities to publish reports on compliance with the Equality Act 2010, including work to 'mainstream' equalities across all areas of the institution. However, in practice, the Equality and Human Rights Commission for Scotland (EHRC) has expressed concern about the current function and effectiveness of the PSED and Specific Duties, noting 'limited evidence of change for people with protected characteristics' between 2013 and 2017 (EHRC 2018, p. 52).

The Gender Recognition Act (GRA) 2004 provides the legal pathway for trans people to change their gender marker on official documents such as their birth certificate and tax records via the issuing of a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). However, the gender marker can be changed on many other forms of formal documentation such as UK passports, driving licences, work records and student records *without* a GRC (Lawrence and Mckendry 2019). The GRA 2004 is currently subject to review in England, Wales and Scotland, as the process for obtaining a GRC has been characterised as unduly burdensome, costly, invasive and pathologising by the Scottish Government (2018), UK Government (GEO 2018), academics (Hines 2010; Lawrence and Taylor 2019), and LGBT+ activists (Stonewall 2018). Under the GRA 2004, there is also currently no legal provision for gender diverse people as there is no third gender category, unlike in countries such as India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia, and select states/provinces in the US and Canada. Despite the lack of legal recognition, in response to evidenced need among student and staff groups, increasing numbers of UK HE institutions are providing third gender categories in student and staff records, as is the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

In terms of policy and practice in UK higher education, despite the legal obligations outlined above, the mainstay of trans equality work is led and undertaken by individual students and staff members with lived experience, individual staff members who are allies, individual students and student groups, LGBT+ networks, LGBT+ and trans charities, and third sector organisations. In Scotland, the LGBT Charter Mark administered by third-sector organisation LGBT Youth Scotland is gaining traction in HE, and increasing numbers of individual departments and institutions are seeking to gain 'Bronze', 'Silver' and 'Gold' status achieved via programmes of staff training, policy development, events, and awareness-raising. Based on recommendations of the TransEDU research, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) introduced new requirements for Scottish colleges and universities (see Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a) that included measures to advance

equality for trans and gender diverse students and staff via its Outcome Agreement process (see SFC 2018a; SFC 2018b).

The majority of HE institutions across the UK are engaged in the Athena SWAN programme designed to advance gender equality and women's equality, the application for which as of 2018 included a compulsory reporting section on advancing trans equality (Tzanakou and Pearce 2019). Critique can be directed toward the opt-in nature of many of these activities, and toward the reality that such (unrewarded) labour is often undertaken by those already marginalised in academia – women, trans and gender diverse people, people of colour, disabled people, LGB+ people, precarious and early career colleagues, and so on.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS AND STAFF

As with other under-represented and systemically disadvantaged groups, it is vital that those with lived experience are at the centre of discussions and decisions about support strategies. The voices and views of trans and gender diverse people should be sought out and amplified by institutions. However, our TransEDU research demonstrated that often individuals were expected or even relied upon to champion their cause and to undertake the trans equality work that is the responsibility of the institution, for example, via policy development, events, training, and by changing processes and practices (again not dissimilar to other equality strands). This was unfair and burdensome; for some, such a public role could even be dangerous. Furthermore, many trans and gender diverse students and staff members felt they could not disclose their trans status and gender diverse identities, let alone take on such a role to advocate for the inclusion of themselves and others. For example, Sebastian, one of our interviewees, felt entirely unable to speak about his trans status at college: *'It feels rather like something that should be hidden. So no, I feel like I have no one at college I can talk to about this'*. Taylor was similarly unable to speak to their employer about their non-binary status: *'I never spoke about the fact that I don't necessarily identify with my gender assigned at birth, or if there was any other gender that I'd rather identify with, publicly; I never even broached this topic'*. Indeed, as we wrote in the project findings (Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a, p. 13).

Many participants had been actively involved in campaigns and educational activities to raise awareness of trans issues and support needs but felt that this should not rely on individuals from within the community. Joshua, for example, had a positive experience coming out to his fellow nursing students and was encouraged to give a lecture to raise awareness for health professionals after having identified issues with the course content – this was not embedded within future curricula, however, and he felt the onus remained on him as a trans student: *'It was just so draining, and I kept trying to make more stuff happen and felt like it was all on me to do it... I*

just can't get up and do this all the time. I need someone else to take responsibility because it shouldn't be my responsibility'.

This was mirrored in staff experiences, *'My organisation had no idea how to deal with my situation and had to learn through me as to how things should be done'* (survey respondent). Many respondents were happy to be part of campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness and educate, but did not wish to necessarily lead these, and wanted such activities to be embedded within general policies and training provision (Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a, p. 13).

It is, therefore, necessary to find means to promote inclusion, improve general awareness and knowledge of gender diversity, combat isolation, and create and empower allies without reliance on individuals. Ownership of that agenda and activity must be embedded, with leadership from the top downwards, and responsibility extending beyond professional Equality and Diversity staff. We created a 'champions approach' to trans inclusion in HE as part of a development project funded by AdvanceHE, which focuses on possible actions across different elements of an institution. The model proposes development of action plans in the five key areas of learning and teaching, research, student experience, human resources and student unions; and across the five themes of policy; people, processes, celebration, visibility, and awareness raising (Mckendry and Lawrence 2018).

NETWORKS/ CHAMPION GROUPS/ COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Networks or Champions Groups have been established effectively within institutions across the UK and globally to support any number of specific groups, such as disabled people, women and LGBT+ people. Networks can provide supportive spaces for colleagues who share particular experiences or characteristics to come together to support one another, and to challenge exclusionary practices within their organisation. Stonewall (2019) has long advocated for the impact of LGBT+ networks as transformative within workplaces and institutions; arguing they can provide peer support, raise awareness of inclusion, and act as a critical friend to the organisation – thus creating a more inclusive environment. Networks can thus be an effective strategy to support the inclusion of trans people in higher education, both as members of staff and as learners.

We discovered vibrant examples of networks during our research, initially through desk-based searches of support for LGBT+ staff and students in higher education with follow-up email contacts to confirm details. For example, the University of Glasgow (2019) established its LGBT+ Network for staff and postgraduate students in 2007. The group meet regularly for networking and social events, inform the university with respect to equality and diversity, and provide a safe space for peers to discuss LGBT+ issues. The LGBT+ Staff Network at the University of Bristol is one of several within the institution. Led by a committee of ten volunteers, the network publishes a monthly newsletter, arranges monthly social events and advocates for enhanced inclusion for trans and gender diverse people (University of Bristol LGBT+ Staff Network 2019). As with many student

unions or student associations, the University of Bristol Students' Union (2016) manages a Trans Students' Network to provide support and contact for trans and gender diverse learners in the institution in a similar way to staff networks. Led by a network chair, the group aims to provide a safe space for individuals to socialise and discuss issues, encourages and facilitates community action and student campaigns.

The advantages of participation for trans and gender diverse individuals are manifold. Networks provide a safe and supportive community to socialise and engage with in what could be perceived as a potentially hostile environment. They can be a sanctuary where people are able to be themselves, offer insight and support to others, receive professional advice and guidance from colleagues who may have relevant experience. As a collective, networks can provide a stronger voice than individuals, advocating for change within organisations. For trans people, they offer safety and the potential amplification of trans and gender diverse voices within the broader umbrella of LGBT+ organisations, thus avoiding some of the visibility and burden described by our research participants, who felt they were expected to champion their cause alone. In order to be effective, however, LGBT+ networks must be genuinely supportive, aware and inclusive of trans and non-binary people. There is strength within the wider community and an overlap in needs, experiences and identities; but without careful consideration, the T+ element can feel somewhat tacked on or ignored. As Thomas, one of our research participants expressed it:

I think it would be helpful if a lot more LGBT+ societies did focus on the T, not exclusively, but didn't make trans people feel like they have to be like, can we steer the conversation back to us... I think LGBT+ societies need to do a bit more, cater to everyone who comes under that spectrum.
(Lawrence and Mckendry 2019, p. 118)

Another challenge is to avoid the burden of organisation falling on those with lived experience. It is obviously important that networks are owned and led by their members, but sufficient resourcing and institutional support must be available to ensure those involved gain as much as they invest.

Additionally to networks for those with lived experience, successful support can be developed through the creation of champions groups or communities of practice for allies, and those who work in student or staff support, or equality and diversity. These networks can be particularly effective when they reach beyond individual institutions, empowering people who often work alone or in small teams within their own organisation or lead change as an individual. The ability to compare notes, share challenges and victories, unburden frustrations with others in similar roles or with a shared advocacy goal can be rejuvenating.

The concept of communities of practice was developed by Lave and Wenger (Lave 1991; Lave and Wenger 1998) and refers to groups of people who share a concern for something they do and, through regular interaction, learn to do it better (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015). The TransEdu research project was always intended to be

action-orientated, with tangible and practical outcomes. One such outcome, indeed an explicit goal of the project, was the establishment of a community of practice for those who are involved in the provision of support for trans and gender diverse people within further and higher education or who wish to enhance support as an ally. The group has volunteer members from colleges and universities across Scotland; the funding body and related organisations with co-chairs and secretarial support is drawn from participants. Meetings are held three times a year for which venue and catering is provided by a different institution each time. Attendance fluctuates, with a core group of around ten individuals, and a wider mailing list of close to fifty members.

The group has been effective in discussing, devising and implementing support strategies in a number of ways. The first strategy has been to create a forum to share practice; where new institutional policies are subject to peer feedback, queries and difficulties are discussed, and contemporary issues related to trans inclusion considered. Further activities are planned in the coming academic year: each meeting will focus on a specific theme and include presentations by invited speakers and organisations. Discussions will include the intersection of faith and gender identity, sports and sports facilities, and trans inclusion within the curriculum. The group is also keen to use its collective voice to amplify shared or sector-wide issues, respond to public consultations on gender recognition processes, and, for example, advocate for more inclusive gender options on shared application systems.

Organising the community of practice has been relatively straightforward, and attracts members from all levels of institutions. However, not all members have access to funding to support their travel and hosting costs. It has, therefore, been important to vary the location of meetings to allow as many people to attend as possible and to facilitate remote access using technology.

Networks have the potential to provide impactful peer support and advocacy for those with lived experience, and for staff members and allies who wish to enhance trans inclusion. Networks can empower individuals and facilitate collective action, create safe spaces for discussion, and encourage collaborative campaigns and research.

NAMED CONTACT

Higher education institutions can often seem large and daunting places. While there may be effective support mechanisms in place supported by friendly and empathic staff members and strong institutional knowledge of the needs of diverse groups of learners, it can still be difficult to navigate that system from the outside. Learners or applicants can be passed from department to department, not knowing where to turn for help with a particular query, they can be fearful of making themselves known. This is especially true for trans and gender diverse people. Our research found that 23% of participants felt entirely unable to discuss issues related to their trans status or gender identity with their college or university officials, and a further 33% felt able to discuss it only 'a little' (Mckendry and Lawrence 2017a). Moreover, 50% of respondents did not know whether their institution had an existing policy to support trans people. It seems likely there would

be great reluctance to approach staff within an institution given these circumstances. Students may be concerned about the awareness of gender diversity held by the staff member they contact; anxious, perhaps, of their reaction or worried about confidentiality. A named individual who can support people to navigate university processes and act as a friendly first point of contact would likely overcome many of the barriers that prevent people coming forward for the support to which they are entitled.

The provision of named contacts has been successful in supporting other groups, most noticeably learners with experience of the care system. Those who have spent time in local authority care, whether foster care, adoption or some other form of supervision, predominantly as a result of neglect or abuse, are currently under-represented in HE. As Harrison (2019a) points out, care experienced people have potentially the lowest participation of any identifiable group. Current estimates suggest just 6% of care leavers (a subset of care experienced individuals defined by having spent three years in care and remaining so on their 16th birthday) enter HE in England by their 19th birthday; and around 25% engage with HE at some point over their whole life course (Harrison 2019b); with no reliable data for the wider care experienced group available. The equivalent figure for the broader population of young people across the UK is 43% (UCAS 2017).

Care experienced people are more likely to have faced educational disruption and may lack the family and social networks that support many other individuals into and through university. In order to raise awareness of the issues and improve outcomes for care experienced people, the charity Buttle UK launched its Quality Mark for universities in 2016 (Buttle UK 2019). To gain the award, institutions had to offer a minimum level of support which included the provision of a named contact. By 2014, when Buttle UK discontinued the scheme in recognition of the mainstreaming of provision, 199 universities and colleges were holders of the Quality Mark. Since then, Become, the charity for children in care and care leavers, has developed the Propel website (<https://propel.org.uk/UK>) for care experienced applicants, detailing the named contact and support available at institutions throughout the UK.

Within our own institution, the two named contacts for care experienced people liaise with those who declare care experience during application to offer individualised advice and support through the application process and during their studies. They also promote their support as a named contact for those who are estranged from their families; a group not officially entitled to local authority support but who are likely to suffer the same barriers to HE. Whilst retention has remained an issue for both groups, close contact, support and advocacy by the named contact has facilitated students to remain on their courses, access support from disability and learning support departments, obtain additional funding and tap into mentoring, tutoring and employability support.

During interviews with our research participants, we explicitly asked if they thought a named contact for trans and gender diverse staff and students would be useful. The response was universally positive; all interviewees believed such provision would enhance the experience of individuals and promote inclusion in education. Liam, for example, spoke of the 'Trans Advisor' at his institution being a source of information and support:

'Am I allowed to use the guy's toilet – because at high school I wasn't?' I'd be shooting from the sixth floor to the second because I had to use the toilet – I don't know if I can use the man's one yet. And he was like 'They're all cubicles anyway – crack on... just whatever you feel comfortable with, use that'. 'Thank you!'

Michael felt his institution was on the 'right track' with increased training and awareness amongst staff but it could improve by letting people know:

...that there are people that they can talk to about the issues that they face. And then provide clear guidance: If you have this issue, this is the person you can talk to, and this is where you can find them...

There are examples of such provision in universities and colleges in the UK. City of Glasgow College, for example, introduced a named contact for trans and gender diverse students in 2016-17 within Student Services, after becoming aware such students had a higher risk of withdrawal (City of Glasgow College 2017; Mckendry and Lawrence 2017b). Alongside provision for all students, the named contact has increased knowledge of issues and challenges faced by trans students, offering personalised, one-to-one support to help individuals build confidence and navigate the academic, emotional and social challenges of their college life. This, alongside guidance on more administrative and practical issues, such as changing names on student records systems, has proven effective in humanising a vast, urban college for trans students.

At the University of Strathclyde, we will be launching our version of a named contact for students in the 2019/20 academic year. An overwhelming positive response to our request for volunteers amongst those working within student-facing services means that we will have as named contacts representatives from the library, student business, disability and wellbeing, international student support and the careers service. A generic email address, website with photos and biographies, and promotional materials will advertise the named contacts to all students. With a staff member from the Equality and Diversity Office responsible for monitoring the email account and initially meeting with people, queries will be passed to the most relevant person to take forward. Impact will be evaluated in several ways: firstly, by monitoring the level of interest and engagement from students; secondly, by feedback from those who use the service by way of anonymous online surveys and more formal interviews. One concern regarding the arrangements is whether the friendly, informal nature of named contacts is lost where more than one person is involved in support. It is hoped, however, that such an approach allows an interconnection between services, raised awareness of the need for trans inclusion across the institution, and better support for individuals with lived experience.

There are challenges to implementation that are worth consideration at the outset. The role of named contact is likely to be appended to an existing, and thus expanded, remit; potentially adding time and emotional pressure to busy workloads. Sufficient resourcing, workload allocation and training must be offered to the named contact to avoid burnout.

The burden of support is placed on individuals, which can risk the sense that the work of those individuals is enough to meet the need; that the institution is doing all it can and should do to facilitate inclusion for trans and gender diverse people by that alone. The provision of a named contact should only ever be part of a broader package of support, training and awareness raising. Finally, thought should be given to the most appropriate model for each institution. For smaller institutions, it may be best to recruit and train one named contact, for larger ones or those with multiple campuses, a network may be more effective. Separate named contacts for staff and prospective staff may be required, since their needs, challenges, circumstances and entitlements are likely to differ from those of students.

Done well, named contacts are effective champions and allies. This has been the case with named contact support for care experienced students, which recent research from Scotland suggests is of particular significance to them (O’Neil et al. 2019). Named contacts promote inclusion and diversity, facilitate activity throughout the wider institution, and provide tailored support to trans and gender diverse individuals. Through the experience, they can become passionate and knowledgeable advocates for trans inclusion, able to collate and use real-life examples and case studies to develop training, and champion improved support for students and staff.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has taken a case study approach to discuss effective strategies to support trans and gender diverse students and staff in higher education. Both strategies considered are currently in place in institutions in the UK, with a wealth of anecdotal evidence of their impact and successful implementation in relation to other diversity groups. Empirical evidence from the TransEDU research project also points to the efficacy: research participants described engaging with networks to better integrate into HE, and those who had experience of named contacts spoke warmly of the difference it made to their time at college or university. Robust evaluation of impact is lacking, however, and should be taken forward by universities or organisations supporting inclusion and diversity. Investigation of their effect will allow better understanding of the ways in which trans and gender diverse people can be supported, and the barriers and challenges in implementing strategies. Such insight can help those wishing to institute support strategies to influence stakeholders and persuade senior management of the value, import and impact of developing embedded support for trans and gender diverse members of university communities.

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¹ This of course applies only to students and staff who *wish to be* allies; a proportion are disengaged from many forms of 'equalities' and 'diversity' work, such as gender equality, ethnicity equality, etc.