How Law Firms can Support Transgender Colleagues, Clients and Contacts

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Stonewall say that 'trans people in the UK face huge levels of abuse and inequality right now. Two in five trans people have had a hate crime committed against them in the last year, and two in five trans young people have attempted suicide. One in eight trans people have been physically attacked by colleagues or customers at work'.

I am sure we would all agree that is shocking to read. It needs to change, and we can all help do our bit to make our colleagues, clients and contacts feel welcome and supported.

Terminology, and our choice of words, are important in allowing us all to feel respected and valued for who we are. We all want to feel that we are being addressed and referred to correctly.

Words can be hurtful, even when they are not intended to be so.

We have used the terms 'trans' and 'transgender' in our article, following the terminology most often used throughout the range of articles, research and guidance that we have reviewed, but we acknowledge how important using each person's preferred terminology is. We have provided links to articles explaining appropriate terminology and the use of pronouns below.

Stonewall estimate that around 1 per cent of the population identify as trans, including people who identify as non-binary (that's about 600,000 trans and non-binary people in Britain).

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) collect diversity data from law firms in England and Wales every two years. The most recent data collection was in the summer of 2019.

For the first time in 2017, they asked about gender identity that was different from sex registered at birth.

The response showed 2% of solicitors, 1% of partners and 2% of other staff confirming their gender identity as different to that assigned to them at birth (this is 1% overall for lawyers).

Although the SRA saw some variation in their results depending on firm size, in firms with six to nine partners, 3% of solicitors are trans and in firms with 10 to 50 partners, 3% of other staff are trans.

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We have provided some further information below which you may find useful.

Guidance on using appropriate terminology and pronouns

- SEE Change Happen specialise in providing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion advice and services to organisations and businesses and they have provided a helpful list of terminology.
- The Law Society have also prepared a guide to using pronouns in the workplace, which can be found here

Advice and Support

There are many sources of support and guidance for individuals and their families and friends:

- The LGBT+ Lawyers Division is the community for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) lawyers and allies
- Mind
- Chrysalis are a charity supporting transgender, non-binary and questioning people, their families and close friends
- TransUnite is a resource for people in the UK searching for support in the transgender community.
- The organisation Global Butterflies was created by a transgender lawyer, Rachel Reese, to bring awareness of trans and non-binary issues to the business sector.

Global Butterflies now provides training and tips to firms to help them become more trans-inclusive.

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