All About Trans: Tips for Writing and Editing Transgender News Stories

These are helpful, simple and friendly tips designed to encourage better and more accurate writing and editing of news stories involving trans people.

**Pronouns**

Use the pronouns your subject prefers. If it’s not obvious, and you have the opportunity, don’t be afraid to ask.

Try not to be tempted to use ‘he’ when referring to Jane’s former life. Remember, she has always been Jane inside.

Some trans people don’t identify as male or female and only use the pronoun “they”

**People are born babies**

*Preferred Terms*

“...Who is transgender”
“...Born male/born female”
“...Who transitioned from male to female to male”
“...Assigned male at birth/assigned female at birth”

Some people prefer not to have their birth assigned sex made public and prefer to be known as trans – always ask permission.

**How does the person you are writing about describe their history? Everyone’s experience is different but think about using:**

*Preferred Terms*

“...Before Jane transitioned (to female)”
“...Before Peter transitioned (to male)”
“...When Jane still presented as male/Peter still presented as female”

**“Was a man”**

“When she was a man”

“Before she became a woman”

“Jane is pre-op / post-op”

“John is having the op to ‘become’ Jane”

Genital surgery is a private, medical matter and is rarely relevant.

**“John, now called Jane / calls herself Jane / changed her name to Jane”**

She’s called Jane now. Call her that.

**Sex Change**

Sex Swap

Best to avoid these terms. They’re considered inaccurate and potentially offensive shorthand for the process of gender reassignment by surgical and other medical procedures. Remember, not all trans people have surgery or undergo hormone treatment.

**Transgendered**

You wouldn’t write ‘lesbianed’ or ‘gayed’ so it’s ‘transgender person’ or ‘trans person’ please. Or even just ‘person’.

**Sexuality**

Being transgender is not a sexuality. Sexuality is about whom you go to bed with – trans is whom you go to bed as.

**Transsexual, transgender**

Adjectives, never nouns. They are used to describe someone’s identity rather than labelling the person.

**If your story boils down to**

"Jane is transgender"

There are thousands of trans people in Britain; doctors, lawyers, politicians, artists, musicians, teachers...etc. Is this really newsworthy? Surely there’s more to the story!

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