An Exploration into the Provision and Support for Transgender Children in a Mainstream Primary School: A Case Study.

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BA Education Studies

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Declaration

DECLARATION: This dissertation is the product of my own work and does not infringe the ethical principles set out in the University’s Guidelines for Research Ethics. I agree that it may be made available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of the University.

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Abstract

The term Transgender is an umbrella term for those whose gender identity differs from their biological sex (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2017). Children can know from a young age that they feel uncomfortable in their body but can be confused as to why (BBC, 2017). Therefore, this case study aims to ascertain the current level of support and provision available to children in the Primary phase of education and will aim to determine the flaws and successes in the setting.

This ethically compliant research consisted of a case study that comprised of inviting 20 members of staff to complete a questionnaire that would ascertain their personal knowledge and awareness of the general term Transgender and also in relation to primary education. From this, 3 interviews were conducted after carefully selecting staff members based on their questionnaire responses in which enhanced questions were asked. An interview was also undertaken with an individual who identifies as Transgender, now adult but who attended the case study school.

The concluding findings are that although there is the compassion and desire to support these individuals, there is a significant lack of guidance for best practice together with a desire for but deficit of the necessary training to adequately support children who may have concerns regarding their gender identity.
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Definitions of ‘Transgender’ Produced by the Case Study School...

‘Someone trapped in the wrong body’

‘An individual who associates themselves with a gender different to that to which they were born’

‘A person who doesn’t feel their birth gender relates to who they are. They are not defined by that gender’

‘Personal identity and gender is different to their birth sex’

‘Someone who believes they are/identifies with a gender other than their birth gender’

‘Believing you have the wrong sexual body for your mind’

‘A girl/boy trapped in the wrong gender’

‘Someone born of one gender but feels they are the other’

‘Someone who knows they are psychologically and physically in the wrong body for their gender’
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1. Introduction

1.1 – Rationale

Israel and Tarver (1997) define being Transgender as when an individual's gender identity contrasts with their biological sex. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 is an act of parliament that was introduced to allow people to change their legal gender. Based upon the year this act was introduced, the legality of being able to reassign gender has only become a recent matter. Section 7 of the Equality Act 2010 refers to gender reassignment as being a protected characteristic when the individual plans to, is undergoing or has undergone the process of transitioning. The Transgender population has been increasing and individuals are becoming more recognised (Zucker et al. 2008). As a result of this, an interest has been generated in the support and provision available to these individuals, in particular in the Primary phase of education.

DePalma and Atkinson (2009) state that, ‘transgender and queer identities are perceived as being too much for the primary school…[it is] forbidden territory…’ p. 64. This poses a key debate in itself: in agreement with Peto (2011), schools seem to ignore transgender identities as they are considered to be too traitorous to the primary school environment. This suggests a need for the adaptation of educators’ mindsets and social attitudes as in agreement with Burgess (2016), intolerance and prejudice often stems from the unknown: not having the appropriate, accurate information on the matter.
Interpreting this, due to the lack of knowledge, society develops opinions more so based upon a lack of knowledge than informed knowledge, sometimes resulting in prejudice. Consequently, the rationale for this study is based upon the need for a change in attitude across society and how educators play a key role in supporting individuals who identify as Transgender in the critical phase of primary education.

Public Health England (2014) suggests that the promotion of health and wellbeing can improve children’s educational outcomes. Schooling is vital to making a difference to children’s wellbeing but it is children’s individual characteristics that provide them with a unique experience within the same setting (Gutman and Feinstein, 2008). Taking a whole school approach extends beyond that of formal teaching and focuses upon children’s wellbeing, culture, health and attitudes. This is further supported by Scott and Melhuish (2016) who inform that the Equality Act 2010 and The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (ISSR’s) (2014) highlight the need for schools to be fully inclusive irrespective of pupils’ gender and that their welfare, health and safety are safeguarded.

1.2 - Aims and Objectives of the Study

At present, there is little research into children who identify as Transgender and the case often seems rare (Hellen and Kennedy, 2010) and it is regarded that children are unlikely to develop this realisation until their late teens, a debate in itself, as challenged by Stewart (2009 cited in DePalma
and Atkinson, 2008, pp. 91-94). There has been a rapid rise in child referrals to the National Health Service (NHS) with 90% of both primary and secondary school teachers indicating they have had no training to be able to best support individuals who identify as Transgender (Diversity Group, 2015). Therefore, the aim of the study is to ascertain the current knowledge and perception and provision and support available for Transgender children in UK Primary Schools. Within this I have devised a selection of smaller objectives to assist in reaching this aim:

- To discover the current knowledge and perception of staff regarding this subject.
- The support provision available for children within the case study school.
- Current policy and procedures.
- To ascertain if training is available to educators.
- To understand if there is a need to embed this subject into the curriculum.

1.3- Structure of the Study

This study will comprise of a literature review; methodology; data analysis; discussion and conclusion. Within the literature review, I intend to explore definitions, historical contexts, implications and legislation surrounding Transgender to provide background information on the subject together with implications for the individual, what it means for education and how other
countries are dealing with this matter across the world. I then pose within my methodology to indicate the triangulation of methods selected in order to carry out my research and providing justification for the approach. The data collection and analysis will highlight the findings and this will be discussed further in the discussion section where the writer will make comparisons with the literature in relation to the findings. A conclusion will be drawn, encapsulating the findings and making recommendations for the future together with the limitations found whilst conducting the study. Appendices will follow, comprising of questionnaire results, permissions letters and further evidence that has enhanced the study.

1.4 – Ethical Considerations

In agreement with Dawson (2009), we would be unable to generate successful studies without the help of others. It is key to provide respect and honesty and to ensure anonymity and confidentiality within research studies. There are, therefore, restrictions within the study due to the appropriateness of collating primary research and the sensitivity of the subject. In addition, it is deemed there is a deficit of available UK based secondary research. Due to this, I have also chosen to use secondary research in the U.S to obtain guiding information for my own UK-based study. With regards to primary research, in order to remain ethical I have used the ideal of Dawson (2009) who promotes the need for providing a Code of Ethics to participants prior to completing the questionnaire and also of indicating intentions of the information gathered.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Hart (1998) emphasises the importance of carrying out a literature review, informing that without it, you yourself will not gauge an understanding of the topic in order to demonstrate expertise in the field. It is important to note that some of the literature obtained for this study is based upon findings and research external to the UK due to a deficit of available information. Despite this, data provided is relevant in providing an in depth understanding of the topic.

2.2 Definitions of Relevant Terms

As understood by Stryker (2008), Transgender is a term that has only been more frequently used in the past few decades and its definition is still thought over. Despite this, there is an abundance of terminology used in relation to people who identify as Transgender. In order to provide clarity of the information gathered, it is key to define the commonly used terminology. As noted previously, being Transgender is referred to by Israel and Tarver (1997) as when an individual’s gender identity contrasts with their biological sex.

Holmes (2007) informs that our gender is different to that of our sex. In simple terms, our sex is biologically determined whereas our gender is
socially constructed. Shastri (2014) furthers this notion of gender being socially constructed within society. White and Goldberg (2006) refer to society as being the construct of gender norms, biological or natural regardless of these potential individual circumstances, Connell and Pearse (2014) informing that 'we instantly recognise a person as a man or woman, girl or boy' p. 3. This could suggest therefore, that being Transgender is not conforming to the social constructs that define us through our gender.

The term gender dysphoria is commonly used in close relation to the umbrella term Transgender. Berlin (2016) refers to gender dysphoria as 'a discomfiting mental state associated with a disparity between one’s internal sense of being either male or female and one’s external anatomical sexual characteristics' p. 246. This definition suggests those with gender dysphoria have an internal sense of gender identity that does not conform to the body into which they were born. Berlin (2016), who refers to gender dysphoria as a mental state could be critiqued by academics such as Thornton (2016) who challenges the idea that it could be categorised in this way, indicating that for years Transgender identities were considered a psychological disorder that could be cured though is now referred to as biologically determined.

Reed et al. (2009) informs that there has been a rise in the number of people who identify as Transgender. In 1998, this was suggested to be 8 in every 100,000 people. In 2009 when the report was published, this was said to have risen to 20 per 100,000 people. This current growth is around 15% per annum. A potential reason for the increase in the number of people who
identify as Transgender may be due to the introduction of legislation such as the Gender Recognition Act 2004 whereby people are able to have their gender reassigned in an official capacity. Suggestions indicated by Reed et al. (2009) have inferred that the increase may also be due to a greater general knowledge and awareness as individuals are influenced by the media and the internet; an increase in the provision from the NHS; a growing number of support groups who encourage inclusion and also a stronger community ethos.

2.3 Historical Contexts

The term Transgender is a modern term and it would therefore be inappropriate to refer to individuals using this terminology who were gender non-conforming in history as the developing understanding has differed over time (Beemyn, 2013). Despite this, it is important to ascertain where the term originated and how understanding has developed over time.

Despite only being thought to be a recent matter in society, people were known to be transitioning as early as the 1960’s (Townsend, 2012). A timeline constructed by Townsend (2012) indicates that Sweden was the first country in 1972 to legalise transitioning. The National Center for Transgender Equality (2017) was founded in 2003 and supports individuals against discrimination and violence through acts of education, aiming to empower individuals. Based upon this timeline it has become more and more apparent that support is being offered and discrimination has been highlighted as a
major issue. These issues will be discussed at a latter stage but legislation is now in place to support individuals against discrimination and to legalise their acquired gender, namely the Equality Act 2010 and the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

2.4 Legislation and Acceptance

Within supporting legislation, there are two major acts: the Equality Act 2010 and the Gender Recognition Act 2004. The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals wishing to undergo/in the process of/having undergone gender reassignment against discrimination in society from acts of harassment and victimisation. In addition, as provided by the Department for Education (2014) advice on gender reassignment emphasises not to single out individuals and highlights the evidence of the increasing number of cases and therefore the need for inclusive legislation to be in place.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 provides people with legal recognition of their acquired gender. Once individuals are 18, applications can be made for a Gender Recognition Certificate that can be granted when an individual is experiencing severe gender variance. According to the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (Gieres) (2017), more than 4000 certificates have been issued and this figure is rising.

Based upon the nature of this study, it is questionable as to whether or not 18 is a fair age to judge whether an individual believes that they have been
born into the wrong body. Parliament, House of Commons (2015/16) indicate that the decision to transition should be based upon self-declaration rather than medical assessment, further stating that there has been consideration to lower the age from 18 to 16. The report emphasises the need for more training for educators in order to support individuals. At present, much of the school environment highlights gender divisions in education. According to research carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (no date, cited in Parliament, House of Commons (2015/16, p. 73), 91% of transgender boys and 66% of transgender girls wish to leave education as early as possible to due experiencing bullying and other forms of victimisation that affects their mental health, hindering their ability to learn.

2.5 Implications for the Individual

There are potentially immense impacts on individuals who identify as Transgender, affecting an individual’s social and emotional wellbeing through prejudice, stigma and even violence (White and Goldberg, 2006). This, in turn impacts an individual’s self-esteem. In agreement with Zimmerman and Shuhaiber (2013), the Transgender community are often ostracised, dividing them within society. Stryker (2008) notes that those who identify as Transgender have a minority community status and experience discrimination due to society tending to favour majority groups that are considered to be the norm.
The media plays a significant role in the awareness individuals have of the term Transgender. In agreement with Jobe (2013) this awareness can lead to assumptions and as a result, prejudice. Trans Media Watch (2010) indicate that 78% of those who identify as Transgender refer to media portrayals as inaccurate/highly inaccurate due to the matter being poorly researched and understood. These negative portrayals can have a negative affect, not just on the individual but also their families. By providing a positive media representation, individuals can be supported and many feel it helps them to cope and to come to terms with their identity (Trans Media Watch, 2010). Over the years, icons such as music artists, athletes and authors have spoken out about being Transgender (Townsend, 2012) that can in turn encourage or help individuals to speak out.

In the past, same-sex parent children’s books were heavily criticised. Education for All (no date) emphasises how introducing different families at an early age allows children to perceive it as normal. Benecke (2014) suggests children need to be provided with cultural and social visibility through incorporating characters into books, films and advertising in order to portray this as ‘normal’.

In relation to Transgender characters in books, this is slowly becoming more apparent with recently published books such as ‘George’ by Alex Gino (Gino, 2015). The book is designed for children and tells the story of a boy who knows he is a girl and wants to play the role of a girl in the school play but also addresses how he can deal with the issues that a Transgender
individual must face in their daily lives and of how critical it is to have support. If this is incorporated into children’s learning early on, the argument could be that these children would not see this as anything but the norm. It is interesting to note here that once, same-sex marriages in the UK were widely unaccepted and are now normalised in society. Based upon this, there is no reason to suggest Transgender identities cannot be ‘normalised’.

2.6 What Does it Mean for Education?

2.6.1 Support

Peto (2011) highlights that educators need to examine their own attitudes and reflect on the way they view things. Official guidance is provided by the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) (2008) regarding anti-bullying in schools and although teachers need to be aware of this, they must be able to develop effective strategies for its delivery and practise in order to provide effective support for these individuals. It is important to highlight that educators are an essential link between the support offered by organisations such as GiRES (2008) and children’s attitudes and behaviours.

The role of social networks is key in providing support for individuals. The ideology of Bronfenbrenner (1979) is supported by Wilson (2007), emphasising the importance of social support and the quality of relationships in helping to support individuals who identify as Transgender. From a young age children can often feel unable to express themselves due to societal
norms and primary school staff may be unaware of the extent of damage to these children due to their own lack of knowledge and consequential skills to support individuals, highlighting the need for educators to be supportive (Hellen, 2009).

In relation to educational settings, Maslow (1962) informs through his Hierarchy of Needs that learning is not simply subject to an individual’s basic needs being met and Rahmani (2011) furthers this notion, suggesting that self-esteem is a key component of good mental health. It has been noted by Hellen and Kennedy (2010) that ‘the internalisation of self-hatred, guilt, self-doubt and low self-esteem in childhood affects transgender people throughout their lives’ p. 41. This suggests that childhood is key in generating a positive self-esteem, confidence and resilience in order to equip these individuals with the skills and qualities for fulfilling their social and academic potential in life. According to Hellen (2009), inadequate support can result in underachievement in schools and children can often conceal confusion about their gender/gender identity due to their social context. This is further supported by Whittle, Turner and Al-Alami (2007) who suggest children often hide their gender identity in the school environment for fear of being harassed/bullied.
2.6.2 Curriculum/Policy

Parliament, House of Commons (2015/16) suggest more needs to be done in school to support individuals who identify as Transgender and also their families. Schools have a legal responsibility to ensure members of staff are compliant in supporting protected characteristics. Despite there being no formal guidelines, good practice has been indicated by supportive charities such as Action for Children (2016) regarding a disclosure of gender variance. Educators and members of staff are encouraged to explain to the child how the disclosure may be an issue in relation to confidentiality but to reassure them and stay calm.

Educators can take simple action within day-to-day school life, avoiding stereotypical attitudes such as; referring to toys, books and activities for a specific gender. This is a societal stereotype that makes it particularly difficult for children who are confused about their gender identity (Cochrane, 2014). Hellen and Kennedy (2010) support the notion that schools need to introduce the concept of Transgender into the curriculum in order to encourage acceptance and inclusion. In 2009, just 84 children/adolescents were referred with gender dysphoria annually in the UK but this is known to be doubling every 5 years (Reed et al., 2009) and has the potential to grow more rapidly, emphasising the increasing need for support from UK Primary schools. Transgender children themselves, as reported by Children’s Rights Alliance for England (no date), indicate a need for gender identity to be addressed in schools’ PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic
Education) sessions and that training is key for school staff in order to be provided with better support. Organisations such as Gendered Intelligence (2009-17) offer workshops for children to gain understanding of gender diversity.

**2.6.3 Training/Knowledge**

Peto (2011) notes that often ‘Transgender identities are literally unmentionable in the classroom’ [online], emphasising the need to fundamentally change the attitudes within education. Burgess (2016) suggests that there is a lack of training in schools and this correlates with the lack of understanding of gender dysphoria. Educators should be trained on the issue of gender identity regardless of whether or not there is believed to be any children dealing with any form of gender dysphoria in their care. It has been highlighted that there is training available though schools are required to actively seek this provision themselves. As mentioned previously, Gendered Intelligence (2009-17) promotes child-centred workshops. In addition to this, they also offer training packages for schools on transgender issues and to help each individual school develop a policy. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2016) highlight that when children do not have enough to eat or are known to be lacking in sleep at home, there are steps in place to deal with this matter, though many educators are unaware of the appropriate steps to take when a child presents confusion regarding their gender.
2.7 What is Going on Elsewhere?

External to the United Kingdom, countries such as the United States have local laws within individual states to support and prohibit discrimination against those who identify as Transgender and similarly to the United Kingdom, more and more schools are protecting children from harassment and bullying (America Civil Liberties Union, 2017). Depending on the state, however, different rules and laws apply which may or may not protect individuals from particular forms of discrimination, rights or public access and can therefore result in the feeling of a lack of freedom of movement (Transgender Law Center, no date).

There is an understanding that primary schools in the US have begun to teach children about gender identity and fluidity, though this has caused much controversy with parents, according to Starnes (2015). Similarly in Australia, children have been taught in primary school about ‘Trans experiences’ (Li, 2015). Its delivery is intended to be good practice though societal views and acceptance have hindered its ability to begin to dissipate discrimination and prejudice which at present, remains the main issue of resistance.

Similarly, much controversy was caused in the UK when a primary school wanted to have a ‘Transgender day’ to raise awareness and understanding for children (Willgress, 2016). Many parents indicated they did not think children should be exposed to this matter, others expressing concerns about
their children’s welfare. This underlines the necessity for accurate education and knowledge if society is to become truly inclusive.

2.8 Conclusion

Collating the information gathered, the literature sourced has suggested that gender is socially constructed. There has been a rise in the number of people who are ‘coming out’ and the potential reasons why have been identified. This section of the research has also indicated how individuals are affected socially, cognitively and emotionally and how relatable theorists such as Bronfenbrenner (1979) are relevant in providing understanding of the importance of social networks. When referring to education, three themes were discovered in relation to the research objectives; support, training/knowledge and policy/curriculum and each should be considered when identifying provision for Transgender individuals. Attitudes have been sought after and the training offered to support individuals on a national level with attempts to ‘normalise’ through means such as literature. The research has identified what steps other countries such as the United States of America and Australia are taking as indicators of good practice based on western perspectives, though these could be regarded as unsuccessful or hindered attempts.
3. Methodology

3.1 – Introduction

The purpose of a methodology section in research is to provide a clear rationale, explaining how the research is to be carried out (Kallet, 2004). Kallet (2004) explains that the purpose of a methodology is to ‘provide(s) the information by which a study’s validity is judged’ p. 1229.

3.2 – Chosen Methods

Data collection is referred to by Bryman (2016) as being a key component within research projects. For the purpose of the study, an easily accessible target population has been selected in a primary school (that is currently a volunteering setting) in order to have ease of access to participants with whom positive, trusting relationships have already been generated.

A predominantly qualitative approach has been selected in order to obtain thorough, analytical results, using an interpretivist paradigm that deems the world is socially constructed and highlights qualitative research does not need to be used exclusively (Silverman, 2011; Ling and Ling, 2017). The use of quantitative data has also been a key form of data collection as Bogdan and Biklen (1998 cited in Castellan, 2010, p. 5) inform that it helps to show relationships between variables and provides factual evidence. In accordance with Ritchie et al. (2014), qualitative research is naturalistic and
interpretative that seeks a deeper understanding of data. Furthermore, Patton (2001 quoted in Golafshani, 2003, p. 600) believes in qualitative research as ‘the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest’ p. 600. Zainal (2007) considers quantitative research to be limiting when trying to understand more in-depth, complex ideas hence the collaborative methods for this type of study in order to obtain thorough results. Therefore, in order to obtain the most appropriate, useful results, a case study approach has been selected. Zainal (2007) states that case studies ‘allow(s) the exploration and understanding of complex issues’ p. 1.

In addition, Gulsecen and Kubat (2006) indicate that case studies are often prominent in educational research, further supported by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). Based upon this research, a case study will aid obtaining richer, more in depth detail regarding the present support and provision.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) refer to using triangulation to support the validity of data in research and this is further supported by Patton (2001 cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 603) who inform that triangulation strengthens a study. Based upon this, both questionnaires and interviews have been selected as the chosen methods of data collection. Questionnaires will be completed by all willing staff members who will be advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time. This method has been selected as it provides analytical results that can be explored further. Greetham (2014) refers to questionnaires as being a ‘reliable, objective source of data’ p. 212. The structure of the questionnaire is important to consider, including that of question styles. Literature has suggested the consideration of elements such
as open/closed, multiple choice and contingency questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). This has been taken into account prior to generating the questionnaires and has resulted in a diverse range of questions to provide differing question styles and to allow for further explanation where deemed appropriate and necessary.

Greetham (2014) indicates that open questions are valuable as responses are unpredicted and can provide a richer understanding. When processing this information in the analysis section, connections can be made between similar responses. Closed questions are highly valued in research as they are generally easy to analyse and can be easily administered (Brace, 2008). As an option within the closed questions, there is the choice to circle ‘don’t know’ that often receives some scepticism. Brace (2008) informs that although it has the generalisation to be of little use, there is little harm in not knowing the response and this information in itself can be useful. A mix of both open and closed questions has been selected as Brace (2008) informs that in order to maintain involvement from participants, questionnaires should comprise of a mixture of both open and closed questions. A particular form of closed question is the use of Likert (1932) scales that appears in the questionnaire, often used to measure attitudes towards something (Kumar, 2014). In agreement with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), ‘they build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response whilst still generating numbers’ p. 386. It has been noted that the number of points on a Likert (1932) scale has an affect on the reliability and validity of the results (Chang,
1994). For the purpose of this study, the scale has been kept on a 1-5 scale, creating recordable and measureable results.

A potential flaw for consideration when conducting questionnaire-based research is the difficulty in generating responses. This has been overcome based upon the carefully selected case study setting whereby personal relationships have been built upon for the duration of volunteering over the last three years and consequently there has been abundant enthusiasm and interest in the study. However, Greetham (2014) indicates that simple questions can limit responses, though through selecting a triangulation approach, greater detail can be expanded upon using the interview process for enhancement of answers where appropriate.

The second form of data collection within the triangulation approach is that of interviews. Kendall (2008 cited in Coiro et al., 2008, pp. 133-149) emphasises that questionnaires can be used to identify patterns in responses though interviews are able to gather more in-depth thoughts. This is an important element within the study as any results from questionnaires that could potentially require further explanation can be sought later within the interviews. Harris and Brown (2010) inform that a pitfall regarding interview approaches is that the interviewer can unintentionally use leading questions that generate particular, directed responses. In addition, the context of interviews are likely to influence the interviewees response as they aim to respond in a socially desirable/appropriate manner (Richman et al., 1999; Yin, 2009). Based upon this, complimentary interview questions have been
carefully selected, unique to the interviewees role along with additional questions to be delivered in a way that does not lead or give bias to the question being asked. Patton (2001 cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 601) informs that maintaining validity and reliability are key in qualitative research throughout the entire process and caution has been taken to ensure responses are as valid and reliable as possible.

Not all participants will be invited for interview as the interviewees will be selected based on results and responses to particular questions within the questionnaire. The interview questions will be unique and based upon the individual’s response and specific role within the school system.

The data for this research will be collected over a one month period whereby questionnaires will have been distributed and returned for analysis prior to conducting the interview questions. All members of staff will be invited to complete the questionnaire, in order to generate a variety of responses and viewpoints based upon each individual member of staff’s role but will be assured they are under no obligation to do so. A pilot survey has been carried out to test the questionnaire and to detect any flaws. This has been successful as it has indicated areas that needed clarification or changes to the terminology used.

The desired outcome of the research is to ascertain whether there is sufficient support and provision for children who potentially identify as Transgender or have issues with their gender in the case study primary
school setting and will consequently, identify recommendations moving forward.

3.3 - Ethical Considerations

There is an abundant range of ethical considerations with which to comply in order to maintain ethical practice. Crow et al. (2006 cited in Kaiser, 2009, p. 4) informs that ‘discussing confidentiality at the outset is necessary for acquiring informed consent and building trust with respondents’ p. 4 and thus the starting point is to have permission granted by the gatekeeper (the head teacher). With permission granted (see appendix I), participants have been informed that they are under no obligation to complete the questionnaires or participate in the interview process but gratitude and appreciation has been offered to those who have chosen to participate. Although the researcher has been provided with names of staff to aid the interview process, these remain anonymous throughout and participants are referred to only by job role within the school system in order to maintain confidentiality. In addition, members of staff have been informed verbally that the data collected will be destroyed after the study has been completed. As indicated by Konza (2012), it is important to seek consent on an ongoing basis, reminding participants they can withdraw from participating in the study at any time. Howe and Moses (1999) indicate that ‘informed consent is the most central of such ethical principles’ p.24, noting how participants must be informed of all the necessary and appropriate information, prior to agreeing whether or not to take part.
4. Data Analysis

4.1 – Introduction

This chapter will encapsulate the data collated through conducting research. The triangulation approach of using both questionnaires and interviews as data collection methods presented very clear, common responses and will be explored in the next chapter ‘discussion’. The primary data collected was questionnaire results from 20 respondents, interviews with 3 key members of the staff team and an interview with a Transgender individual who attended the case study school.

4.2 – Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire results presented a number of common responses. 20 responses were received from a range of role types and years of service as presented below.

A summary of the responses have been presented below:

○ 100% of respondents were aware of the term Transgender and were able to provide an accurate definition that matched somewhat to the definitions provided within the literature.

○ 0% of respondents felt there was sufficient support in the UK for people who identify as Transgender as a whole. 50% of the members of staff asked were unaware of what support was available. The other
50% highlighted counseling, GP’s, medical support, funding and toilet facilities. One person specified they felt specific support groups tended to be city or large town based.

- 100% of respondents felt they did not have adequate knowledge of Transgenderism for their role.
- 100% of respondents felt there wasn’t enough information and support for children who may have concerns about their gender.
- 95% of staff members had not been offered guidance or had training on supporting children. The only staff member who had, had somebody with potential gender issues in their class.
- 70% of respondents answered either ‘no’ or don’t know’ as to whether they were aware of a school policy in place that included the needs of Transgender pupils.
- 95% of staff members felt there was not enough training or information available regarding the matter. When asked what training they felt should be available 60% felt awareness training was needed as to how best to support the child and their families. Others mentioned guidance from authorities, communication with other schools and how to inform other children.
Below are further results presented through the use of pie charts in order to provide a visual representation of the collated results.

**Figure 1:**

![Pie chart showing the distribution of years worked in education]

**How long have you worked in education for?**

- In Training - 1
- Less than five years - 2
- 5-10 years - 4
- 11-15 years - 5
- 16+ years - 8

**Figure 1:** Collating responses from a range of participants has provided a broad range of experiences in the education system, ranging from those who have been involved for many years with expansive experience and those who are new to the education profession.
Figure 2: 90% of respondents answered no. The two respondents who answered yes had underlying reasons. One member of staff had first hand experience, knowing somebody close to them who was Transgender and the other had somebody who has potential gender issues in their class, displaying reactionary rather than informed actions.
In your current setting, have you ever been offered guidance or undertaken training on how to support a child who identifies as Transgender or who is confused about their gender?

Figure 3: Only one staff member answered yes (95%). Having explored this, this was because she had been presented with a child in her class who was experiencing gender issues. This is a reoccurring theme from the result above, reactionary rather than informed instances.
Figure 4: 90% of the respondents agreed to the ideal of promoting and including learning about gender identity within the wider curriculum. When asked to expand on their answers, those who answered yes presented two common themes. One theme was that it should be specifically incorporated into the PSHE curriculum and the other theme was to create a better understanding and awareness for children, indicating the need for this to be addressed sooner rather than later.
**Figure 5:** 12 out of the 20 respondents knew of someone who was transgender. 12 of the 12 were all known on a personal basis. 11 of the 12 knew of someone in the media also. The general consensus of media representation was that Transgender people were portrayed more positively and with greater acceptance now but are also considered to be significantly more accepted or even sensationalized when celebrities are the focus.
Figure 6: As displayed above, all respondents answered from 3-5, implying 60% felt less than adequately informed to support a child who raised concerns about their gender. From this, 70% of respondents were unaware of the correct procedure to begin supporting a child.
4.3 – Interview Results

The results below have been highlighted to distinguish between the three different themes that have emerged, as indicated below (see appendix III):

- **Training/knowledge**
- **Support**
- **Policy/curriculum**

**Interview 1** – The first interviewee emphasised a need for training in order to support and guide individuals and their families in an effective and positive manner. The participant also highlighted that the case study school was at a disadvantage as it has the potential to isolate individuals as they are unable to get the desirable help and support when compared with schools in larger towns/cities. The respondent felt they were able to signpost children if presenting concerns about their gender but would not necessarily feel confident in their own ability to begin supporting. The interviewee finally concluded on a recommendation for moving forward, suggesting a formulation of policy in conjunction with other policies to better support individuals specifically.

**Interview 2** – The second interview respondent knew somebody close to them who identified as Transgender. The interviewee highlighted that they felt they would not have the knowledge that they have without researching the topic in order to understand and be able to support the individual, relying
upon Internet sources. Despite knowing how best to support this individual, the respondent felt they would not know the correct procedure to begin supporting a child within the case study school in a systematic, formal manner, emphasizing feeling a lack of training has been offered. The interviewee also highlighted they felt learning about gender identity should be lightly implemented into PSHE sessions as the terminology and awareness is essential at this age.

**Interview 3 –** The respondent felt the correct terminology and knowledge is needed for members of staff in order to not cause confusion or make matters worse for children who may be confused about their gender identity. The respondent also highlighted the need for coverage within the curriculum, emphasising a need of exposure to the term to ensure children are informed, particularly for children who may need terminology confirming in order to potentially understand themselves and their peers. The class teacher emphasised a need for support not only for children but their families also, using age appropriate resources to aid this. Having a potential gender issue in their class, the class teacher felt that the right terminology would have been highly valuable to them in order to feel confident and to maintain professionalism for fear of saying the wrong thing that could potentially confuse the child. The respondent also highlighted the key external support systems that have been involved with the school to share the matter.
4.4 – Summary of Interview Findings

From the three interviews conducted, common themes emerged (see appendix III). Despite the interview questions being different for each interviewee, all of the respondents felt they had a lack of training to feel confident in supporting a child and emphasised a need for incorporating teaching of the matter into the curriculum in order to generate awareness and for children to act as potential supporters of their peers. Respondents also highlighted a need for policies to be conducted to formally support individuals who may have concerns regarding their gender identity in order for staff members to feel confident in their role.
4.5 – Individual Interview Results

The same applies as section 4.3 (interview results); the results have been highlighted beneath in order to distinguish between the three different themes that have emerged:

- **Training/knowledge**
- **Support**
- **Policy/curriculum**

Within the individual interview (see appendix IV), the interviewee was asked 9 questions that were felt to be valuable to the study. The respondent felt they were aware something was wrong at around 10 or 11 years old, in their final year of Primary school (Year 6). They felt they could not approach a member of staff regarding the matter at the time as they did not know clearly themselves what was wrong, they simply felt they did not fit into either category: male or female. Looking back, they emphasised they did not want to have felt able to approach a member of staff anyway as they were concerned about opening up as a result of lacking in confidence. The respondent indicated that had this have been discussed in PSHE sessions they would have been more likely to have made the connection as something would likely to have ‘clicked’. Had this have been the case, the respondent feels they would have sought guidance from a member of staff who had connections with a school nurse or a member of the pastoral team for support. When asked why they did not want to disclose this to the class
teacher they indicated that they did not feel it was something teachers would have known how to deal with and would not expect them to either. It became apparent at the age of 13 that the respondent had gender dysphoria, around year 9 of secondary school. When asked how they came to the conclusion they indicated they initially felt that they were bisexual and looked further into this for self-exploration. They specified that if they did not seek this information themselves, they believe they would not have known what was wrong. The respondent also indicated that if they were heterosexual, it would have taken longer to come to the conclusion as they would not have researched this in the first place. On conclusion, the respondent was asked how they felt the media represents Transgender people. They indicated that they felt the media tends to act on the matter for the financial incentive and that they are not interested or supportive of Transgender people, it is simply something to generate a story from.
5. Discussion

5.1 – Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse and discuss the findings in relation to the research questions and themes that began to emerge in the literature review. These themes are; support, knowledge/training and policy/curriculum. The responses provided in the questionnaires and interviews will be drawn upon in order to consolidate the support and provision available. Strong reference to the literature review will be made, combining the knowledge from previous research with the results established. The themes are often inter-relatable but have been categorized in order to provide a thorough analysis.

5.2 – Discussion of Results

5.2.1 - Support

Research Objective:

- The support provision available for children within the case study school.

When referring to the support for Transgender individuals, no respondent deemed there was sufficient support in the UK for people who identify as transgender and this was also reflected in their considered ability to offer support in the primary school setting. 60% of staff felt less than adequately
informed to begin supporting a transgender child and 100% of staff deemed there also wasn’t enough school support available for the child’s consequential needs. The methods of support currently available and highlighted in both the literature and primary data heavily consisted of external support methods from education such as that of social networks, doctors, counselors and other medical support. Many respondents were unable to suggest knowledge of any support or provision for people who identify as Transgender and this correlated also with their knowledge of in-school policies and guidance where no members of staff regarded that sufficient support was available. In addition, those who were able to identify policies were in reality, misinformed, highlighting policies such as safeguarding which are not specific to all of the issues this group of individuals may encounter.

As reviewed previously in the literature review, Parliament, House of Commons (2015/16) indicates that schools have a legal responsibility to ensure members of staff are compliant with supporting protected characteristics. The report further suggests that when teacher training takes place, schools should be provided with training for staff on this matter. Despite a clear need this has not yet been addressed by schools, also replicated in the findings of the case study school. The interview process also highlighted this deficit, indicating that there was more support on offer in larger towns and cities resulting in children feeling potentially isolated or lacking the support they may need in order to move forward positively. As indicated by Sutherland and Sokal (2003), Transgender individuals are said
to be more prevalent in inner city communities and that teacher awareness is key here. When compared with small towns and rural areas, there is suggested to be a lack of prevalence and that these areas are referred to as ‘monocultural’. This notion implies a degree of prejudice, suggesting people are Transgender as a result of their environment despite it being cited in literature as being biologically determined (Thornton, 2016). As indicated by the interview and questionnaire results, with the correct awareness training and guidance, educators will feel more informed to support children displaying potential gender identity issues. Over 50% of respondents knew of someone who was transgender on a personal basis. This potentially contradicts the ideal that there is a lack of prevalence in rural areas as studies by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (no date) support that health services for Transgender individuals are urgently needed in more rural locations as the rural community is often overlooked and at a disadvantage. Both the study and the questionnaire results indicate a lack of awareness of services and general support available. A larger than average primary school, as indicated by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (no date) study have demonstrated success by updating policies and the report suggested that ‘as a result, LGBT pupils felt protected and safe and improved their achievement’ p.45 (Ofsted, 2012). The report could be argued to not consider diverse enough locations. The case study school represents a potential minority group as it is a small, rural school and thus its location could have hindered pupil access to the support and training that is available to larger schools in more accessible locations.
It has been highlighted in the primary data that much of the present support is external such as parent support advisors and online support. Within the questionnaires, 60% of staff indicated the importance of class teachers showing awareness and being able to support individuals, as one teacher specified ‘we are heavily involved and influence children’s lives from an early age’. Oswald (2016) states that teachers can be an asset to children who may be Transgender, encouraging a safe and supportive environment: in order to do this successfully educators need to have an awareness of the terminology and procedures in supporting, as indicated within the questionnaire responses.

5.2.2 - Policy/Curriculum

Research Objectives:

- Current policy and procedures
- To understand if there is a need to embed this subject into the curriculum.

70% of respondents answered either ‘no’ or don’t know’ when asked about awareness of a school policy in place that included the needs of Transgender pupils. Those who answered yes referred to safeguarding policies, not specifically the needs of transgender children. Regulations by Ofsted (2012) outlined the need for updating policies and procedures to be inclusive of Transgender identities. Although this has been highlighted and implemented within anti-bullying and safeguarding policies, it was not emphasised as a
matter of its own. During the interview with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) (see appendix III), it was suggested a policy was formulated in conjunction with the equality policy and inclusion policy as a means of moving forward. The Intercom Trust and Devon and Cornwall Police (2015) have produced a school Transgender guide, specifying training is put in place when a need is identified. This suggests that at present, training and support is reactionary rather than on an informed basis, as mentioned previously in the analysis. Burns, Leitch and Hughes (2016) inform that policy is a barrier for Transgender children and further suggests teachers have been concerned over legal action being taken as there is no policy to follow for guidance; these concerns are also replicated in the results of the case study school as, at present there is no such guidance of policy for schools across this region.

90% of the respondents agreed to the ideal of promoting and including learning about gender identity within the wider curriculum. In accordance with Terrence Higgins Trust (2016), the current Department for Education (2000) guidance for Sex and Relationships Education is out of date, having been written in 2000. In Wales, this has been updated to a revised 2010 version whereby students are learning about sexual orientation, inclusive of the Transgender identity. A recommendation from Terrence Higgins Trust (2016) suggested that England’s Sex and Relationship’s Education needs to be updated to be LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) inclusive. Suggestions were made within a report conducted by Children’s Rights Alliance for England (no date) to incorporate learning about Transgender
identities within PSHE sessions in order for children to be able to gain an understanding for themselves. The individual interview (see appendix IV) respondent deemed that had the terminology been implemented within sessions such as PSHE, it might have enabled them to forge a connection with the dysphoria they were experiencing. It became clear through the individual interview responses that they were unable to determine ‘what was wrong’ for almost three years. It is possible that the poor mental health and wellbeing experienced by the individual during these three years may have been improved if the correct support strategies had been in place. Terrence Higgins Trust (2016) predicts that by teaching young people about sex and relationships education, inclusion of Transgender identities is likely to bring more successful outcomes for individuals, being able to potentially understand themselves better and their peers. This correlates with a number of questionnaire responses including ‘the earlier these conversations take place, the better’.

5.2.3 - Training and Knowledge

Research Objectives:

- To discover the current knowledge and perception of staff regarding this subject.
- To ascertain if training is available to educators.

All members of staff stated they had never been offered guidance or undertaken training as to how to support a child who identifies as
Transgender or is confused about their gender. On a national scale, 8% of teachers in Primary schools say they have had training specifically to support issues such as bullying against Transgender children (Guasp, Ellison and Satara, 2014). This suggests a distinct majority have never been offered training, as indicated by the questionnaire results presented by the case study school. This is further supported by the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) (2017) who indicated that 86% of teachers asked at a teachers union conference felt the Government is not communicating to schools the importance of LGBT equality.

All members of staff felt there was not enough information/training available regarding the matter. When asked what training they felt should be offered, the general consensus was awareness training regarding how to support individuals and their families. An anonymised respondent within a report conducted by Burns, Leitch and Hughes (2016) indicated the barriers faced at primary school due to a lack of training. The respondent indicated that because there are no guidelines, the educator’s opinion begins to come forward and there have been known cases where due to a lack of understanding, teachers are often unable to support children effectively and this can have a potential detrimental impact on the child and their learning (Burns, Leitch and Hughes, 2016). As indicated in the individual interview, the respondent reflected that they felt teachers lacked knowledge in this subject, fearing they would not have known how to deal with a case such as this. In addition to this, the interviewee highlighted a reluctance to confide in
a member of staff due to their lack of confidence, possibly attributable to their self-concept.

90% of questionnaire respondents answered “no” to being aware of the correct procedure to begin supporting a child when raising concerns about their gender. The two respondents who answered yes had underlying reasons. One member of staff was the school’s Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and felt informed to be able to signpost individuals. The other member of staff declared to have somebody who was displaying potential gender issues in their class, however, both were reactionary rather than informed instances. This agrees with the ideal of both Dewey (1933) and Scales (2013) who inform that people are often reactive rather than proactive in their actions. Educators can be faced with situations where they are unsure of how to act and it is important to reflect on the action taken in order to make change and overcome potential barriers in the future. Action for Children (2016) inform of good practice for these types of disclosures but despite this guidance being available to all online, educators must actively seek these procedures of good practice, reiterating a need for training in readiness.

Of the 20 people asked in the questionnaire, 95% of respondents knew someone in the media who identified as Transgender. The general consensus in the questionnaire of media representation was that Transgender people were portrayed more positively and more accepted today but are thought to be more significantly accepted and even
sensationalized when celebrities are the focus. When discussed in the individual interview, the respondent felt the media portrays an inaccurate representation of Transgender people and that it is presented in a certain way as a money making incentive. The literature supports this, suggesting 78% of Trans people feel the media is either inaccurate or highly inaccurate and 70% also highlight this as being in a negative way (Trans Media Watch, 2010). There is a stark difference between how Transgender people feel the media represents them and how the staff members asked within the questionnaire feels they are portrayed. This displays an issue in itself, demonstrating a need for the potential misconceptions to be eradicated. One respondent in the questionnaire felt the news and newspapers often generate judgmental viewpoints whereas documentaries are informative and encourage acceptance due to the factual content. Despite not being directly relatable, this can impact young children as the prejudice and misconceptions can impact their attitudes and viewpoints at a young age. According to Livingstone (2007), children are very susceptible to media influences. If a child is made to feel like they are ‘not normal’, this can cause psychological damage and can impact their esteem and well-being. This highlights the need for education surrounding the subject to be included early on within the curriculum, even in a brief capacity in order to ‘normalise’ this matter.

Everybody asked in the questionnaire felt they did not have adequate knowledge of Transgenderism for their role. A study conducted by Children’s Rights Alliance for England (no date) highlighted that there was a lack of
support from school staff due to their insufficient knowledge regarding the matter and it had been felt that children themselves felt educators needed sufficient training to provide the appropriate level of support.
6. Conclusion

6.1 – Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the current provision and support for Transgender children in the case study mainstream primary school. The intent of the study and thus research objectives were; to discover the current knowledge and perception of staff regarding this subject; the support provision available for children within the case study school; current policy and procedures; to ascertain if training is available to educators and to understand if there is a need to embed this subject into the curriculum. Three themes emerged through conducting the literature review that then generated a further focus to the study. The three themes were; policy/curriculum, training/knowledge and support and these themes were vastly relatable to the research objectives and were used interchangeably.

6.2 - Summary of Findings

The overall finding generated from the support aspect of the study was that staff did not feel adequately trained for their role, many indicating that there is a need for raising awareness and for written policy in order for educators to be confident in the subject, avoiding the potential of providing children with inaccurate support and guidance. It was highlighted in many ways throughout the study both from the literature and primary data results that Trans issues need to be embedded into the curriculum, discussing the matter from an
earlier age and encouraging acceptance. Specifically in relation to support, more support is needed for these children and also their families. It is evident from the research that there is an ultimate desire from educators to offer support but this is not reinforced due to a lack of guidance with no formal strategy/procedure specific to this matter. It has become evident from the literature review, questionnaire responses and interviews that there is concern over a lack of support in more rural, isolated schools which do not benefit from the urban based support groups and this lack of knowledge and support may have resulted in misconceptions in rural areas. This reinforces a need for more support in these areas including the case study school.

Teacher awareness is key in order to provide successful support as teachers are important figures in children’s lives and can provide an essential link to their wellbeing when facing potentially difficult, confusing times.

Further findings have suggested there is a clear need for the formulation of a policy to be prepared in readiness rather than on a reactionary basis. Lack of policy has created a cause for concern for educators who feel ill prepared and fear its absence may potentially impact negatively on children. It has been noted that there is a strong sense of desire for gender identity to be implemented into the curriculum as this will help to not only inform children but will also generate a positive, inclusive attitude for the future generation.

Had the correct training, adequate support, knowledge, inclusive policy and informative curriculum been in place at the time the individual interviewee was at the setting, they may have felt more empowered and supported by
peers and teachers to cope with the confusion experienced at such a young age which consequently may have lead to a more positive outcome.

6.3 - Implications for Education

As an implication for education, due to the lack of knowledge, training and policy, educators can feel potentially unable to fulfill their role effectively and can feel disempowered by the lack of professional guidance and support they can offer. Suggestions made through questionnaire and interview responses to remedy this issue include an overwhelming desire for whole school training, guidance and development of policy and curriculum.

6.4 - Limitations of the Study

- The case study produced a relatively small sample size although a good cross section of staff members participated in relation to the size of the school.

- A case study only allows for exploration into one particular school though as Coe et al. (2017) suggests, case study research is not restricted to understanding one specific case.

- Though it may have been interesting to receive parent’s opinions regarding the support and provision they feel is available/necessary, it would have not been ethical due to the sensitivity of the subject.
• If there were no time constraints, I would carry out a comparative study with another school in an entirely different setting such as a large, inner city primary school to explore and compare the differences of support and provision between the two schools.

A quote from the Terrence Higgins Trust (2016) encapsulates the overarching themes presented in this study and the necessity of implementing the findings if schools are to remain inclusive for all:

‘Unless a broad range of topics with regard to LGBT-inclusive SRE are covered at school, young people’s physical, sexual and mental health will continue to fall through the gaps. We want to see all young people treated as equals, no matter what their sexuality or gender. This starts with knowledge and education.’
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8. Appendices Contents

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Appendix I – Permissions Letter

Dear xxxxxxxxxxxxx,

I am currently in the process of preparing my Dissertation for my final year at University and am writing to request permission to invite all staff members to complete a brief questionnaire on the topic of Transgenderism. I would like to assure you that no staff member is under any obligation to participate and that any data generated will remain totally anonymous, as will the name and identity of the school. After analysis, the information gathered may then be used to generate short interviews with selected consenting staff members where further explanation will be requested in order to gain a richer understanding of the level of staff knowledge around this issue together with the current provision and support in place at the school.

My study title is yet to be perfected but at present is:

**An Exploration into the Provision and Support for Transgender Children in a Mainstream Primary School: A Case Study.**

I have enclosed a copy of the questionnaire for your information.

Your prompt decision granting permission would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Annabelle Townsend
Appendix II – Questionnaire and Individual Consent

I am currently in my third year of study for a BA in Education Studies at the University of Gloucestershire and am in the process of gathering research for my Dissertation.

I have chosen to explore the current knowledge, provision and support in place for children who identify as Transgender in the Primary School phase of education. xxxxxxxxxxx Primary School will be focused on as a case study. You are under no obligation to participate in this research but all contributions are very much appreciated.

In order for the research to be accurate, it is important that you complete the questionnaire independently and without discussion in order to ascertain a true representation of your current knowledge and personal opinion. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: general knowledge of the subject and in relation to primary education. I would like to reassure you that this questionnaire will remain entirely confidential and feedback will be kept in a secure place for the entirety of the study.

I …………………………………………………... agree to complete this questionnaire in order to provide results for this dissertation study.

Signed:…………………………………………………………
General Knowledge

1. How long have you worked in education?

In training   Less than 5 years   5-10 years   11-15 years   16 years+

2. Are you aware of the term Transgender?

Yes   No

3. If yes, how would you define being Transgender?

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4. Do you know of someone who identifies as Transgender? Please circle.

Yes   No
5. If yes, do you know of them personally or through media sources (such as television or magazines?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally</th>
<th>Media Sources</th>
</tr>
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6. How do you feel the media represents those who identify as Transgender?

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7. Do you feel there is sufficient support in the UK for people who identify as Transgender?

Yes  No  Don’t know
8. Please list the support/provision you are aware of for people who identify as Transgender.

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In Relation to Primary Education

9. Do you feel you have adequate knowledge of Transgenderism for your role?

Yes          No

10. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being well informed and 5 being poorly informed) how well informed would you feel to support a child who raised concerns about their gender?

    1      2      3      4      5
11. If a child raised concerns regarding their gender, are you aware of the correct procedure to begin supporting this child?

Yes

No

12. Do you think there is enough information and support for children who might have concerns about their gender?

Yes

No

13. Is there a school policy in place that includes the needs of Transgender pupils that you are currently aware of?

Yes

No

Don’t know

14. In your current setting, have you ever been offered guidance or undertaken training on how to support a child who identifies as Transgender or who is confused about their gender?

Yes

No
15. In your opinion, do you feel there is enough information/training available regarding this matter?

Yes  No

16. If you circled no, what type of training do you feel would be appropriate?

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17. Do you feel that learning about gender identities should be promoted and included within the wider school curriculum?

Yes  No

18. Could you explain your answer?

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19. Please note below any additional comments you have that may be beneficial to the study.

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Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Annabelle Townsend
Appendix III – Interview Questions and Responses

Interview with Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)

1) In reference to question 14, if you were offered training, how do you feel this would benefit the child?

*If professionals had training we would be able to help, guide and support the child in a more productive, effective and positive manner, making things easier and less confusing for individual children.*

2) In question 8 you suggested support groups are based in larger towns/cities, what impact do you feel this has had on rural-based individuals that you are aware of?

*I think it makes individuals in rural areas feel even more isolated and consequently not get the help they need early enough leading to more confusion and difficulties for them.*

3) In question 10 you say you feel adequately informed to support a child who raised concerns about their gender, how do you feel this has affected your ability to support these children?

*Knowing where to signpost children and where to go for support means I am confident in my ability to support these children - without that knowledge I would be concerned that any misinformation would add to the difficulties already faced by individual children and therefore add to their confusion.*
4) As the SENCo, what do you think the next steps for the school should be?

I think that schools should ensure their staff are better informed and know what procedure to follow if they feel a child maybe struggling with gender issues. The formulation of a policy - maybe in conjunction with the equality policy and inclusion policy - should be written.

Interview with Interventions Assistant

1) Do you feel if you didn’t know this person on such a personal level that you would be aware of the support and provision available?

No I wouldn’t be at all. I am a very liberal minded person but I didn’t understand what Gender Dysphoria was until I had a child who presented as transgender. I researched it off my own back in order to understand and support and went on forums in order to find out how other parents felt and learnt from other people how their children were feeling and what they wanted. I didn’t understand the kind of support that they needed and it wasn’t until I went on those forums where I clicked on links that eventually took me to official sites where support was available. I found it very difficult to find out about it and this made it harder for me.
2) You say you are very familiar and well informed with the matter, you suggested in the results you felt very poorly informed to support a child who approached you. Why is this?

I don't know the correct procedure/what to say, what might do harm as the child is so young. I would be mindful that although I have confronted this topic in a lot of detail, I don't know the correct terminology to use. I know I don't need to ask any leading questions but I don't know the correct way to deal with it except referring it on to the SENCo.

3) You say you think learning about gender identity should be implemented into the curriculum. Based on your experience, how do you think this should be done?

I feel it shouldn't be taught in detail, ‘encouraging’ as some may say. The term should be included in sessions such as PSHE where heterosexual and homosexual relationships are discussed. I believe the vocabulary is important to make children aware of the term just like ‘gay’ relationships.
Interview with Class Teacher of Child with Potential Gender Issues

1) In Q10 you scored 3 on the Likert scale that indicates you feel averagely informed to support a child who raises concerns about their gender. What in particular do you feel you need to know to adequately support a child?

The correct terminology and knowledge to support rather than confuse, influence or hinder the child.

2) To what depth do you feel this should be covered in the curriculum?

Exposure to the term and it being a possibility that some children feel they are born a different gender to what they feel inside, emotionally and physically. This would then be enlightening to a child who may be confused about their gender and may instigate the child asking for help. It also sows the initial seed for the individuals peers so they can become informed in the present and into adulthood.

3) What kind of information and support for children who may have concerns about their gender do you feel is necessary?

Support group information for children and their families, age appropriate resources to assist personal understanding that can then be used to explain to others how they are feeling or regard themselves, toilets.
4) As you have a child with gender identity issues in your class, what information would you like to have had in order to be equipped to effectively support the child?

*The right terminology for fear of saying the wrong thing in case of putting ideas into a child’s head. I feel I have had to tread carefully and learn on my feet. Fortunately, we have a Parent Support Advisor who has been involved with and supported the family and this has helped share the issue. It concerns me that initially, my demeanor may not have come across confidently or positively which may not have had a positive impact on the child.*
Appendix IV – Individual Interview and Consent

I give permission for the answers to these questions to be used for research purposes.

Signed:................................................. Date:........................................

1) How old were you when you first started to have concerns about your gender/identity?

   *I would say around 10 or 11, I was in year 6 at Primary School.*

2) Did you feel you could approach a member of staff or another adult to discuss these concerns?

   *No because at the time I didn’t know what it was, I just knew something was wrong. I didn’t feel I fitted in with either ‘category’ that was available.*

3) Would you have liked to have been able to?

   *No because I was worried about opening up to an adult because I was a very private person and lacked confidence in myself.*
4) Do you think if this issue had been included within the PSHE curriculum you may have been able to relate it to yourself at that time?

*Probably yeah, I think having it explained to me would have enabled me to click.*

5) Would it have encouraged you to ask for help/guidance if you had known about the term?

*Yeah, I think looking back now I would have asked to speak to a pastoral member of staff who had connections with a school nurse.*

6) Why not the teacher themselves?

*I didn’t think it was something the teachers would have known how to deal with and wouldn’t have expected to know what to do with something like that.*

7) How old were you when it became apparent you had Gender Dysphoria?

*About 13, I was in year 9 at secondary school.*
8) How did you come to the conclusion?

I initially felt I was bi-sexual and looked more into it for self-exploration, using the internet, TV etc. I looked for the information myself as I knew I wouldn’t just get given it. If I was heterosexual, I think it would have taken much longer for me to realise as I wouldn’t have researched in the first place.

9) How do you feel the media represents people who identify as Transgender?

I feel the media really like to play on anything new for the financial incentive, for example the Caitlin Jenner exposure. I feel the media aren’t actually interested or are supporting of Transgender people, it’s just a money-making thing.