



# THE RUBICON SOCIETY

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### **CONTACT AND INTERACTION** **SIX KEY POINTS**

1. NAME / TITLE, IT'S OK TO ASK
2. RESPECT
3. BEING OUT / CONFIDENTIALITY
4. LANGUAGE
5. DOCUMENTATION
6. ASSUMPTIONS

The following is a list of definitions of the above key points.

**Key point 1. Name / Title, it's ok to ask.** When in contact with members of the *Transcommunity\**, the person should be referred to in the gender they present i.e. the gender they appear to be. If in doubt, for instance, documentation doesn't match presentation, driving licence says Mr, but the person is a woman, do not hesitate to ask. However, bear in mind the recent changes in legislation. (GRA)\*\*

**Key point 2. Respect.** No matter whether the person is Female, Male, Transgender or Intersex we are all entitled to be treated with respect. Simply because we do not fit within society's perception of 'normal', does not mean that we are anything less than human beings, with emotions and feelings that must be taken into account. For example, switchboard operators, when I have made a call and introduced myself as Rachael, I do not find it acceptable to be called 'sir'. This betrays a lack of listening skills on behalf of the operator and poor training provision by the organisation.



**Key point 3. Being Out / Confidentiality.** There are many *Transpeople\*\** who, for reasons of their own, are not 'out' to the community at large. This may be due to the fact that they are afraid of victimisation or what the revelation may do to their family. Some, for example, may only be 'out' to friends once a week and lead two lives, (transvestites), they have no desire for the other self to become widely known. Others, however, live permanently in role and are 'out'. Though, even in this group, there are those who have no desire for their past history to become public knowledge. Holders of Gender Recognition Certificates may no longer identify as 'T'. Therefore, everything reported should remain strictly confidential, only those that need to know should be informed of a person's status. Once again, bear in mind recent changes of Legislation (GRA)

**Key point 4. Language.** This is a difficult area, no one will mind genuine mistakes being made, but care must be taken when dealing with members of the Transcommunity. Many words in common usage are grossly offensive, especially for those holders of a GRC. This group will not appreciate being called 'trans'. The trans prefix should only be used for those who are in transition. They may be legitimately called 'Transgender'. If in doubt, remember that it is quite acceptable, to ask how a person would like to be addressed. Never call a TS person a 'tranny'. Bear in mind that not everyone fits neatly into boxes.

**Key point 5. Documentation.** Transgender Persons who intend to undergo gender reassignment surgery, will be living the real life test, which requires, among other things, legal change of name on all official documents. They will therefore have proof of their status and intentions for the future. Everything else will be in the new identity with correct identification numbers. However, there are others, those in early transition stage and TV people who will not have gone to this length, as, it takes a while to change all documentation, or, they are leading two lives and, therefore, their documentation must remain in their originally assigned gender. People who intend to change their gender permanently, now have the option of applying for a gender recognition certificate and new birth certificate. See the section on Gender Recognition Act.

**Key point 6. Assumptions.** It would be unwise to make snap assumptions or judgements about a persons relationships or lifestyle simply because they are or have been, Transgender. Never, in particular, assume that the person's legal partner knows what the person is doing or where they are. The family, friends and colleagues may be totally unaware of the dual life led by that person, and by inadvertently 'outing' a person, there could be catastrophic implications. It should not be assumed that the next of kin is, in fact, a person to whom they are married. It should not be assumed that gender identity is the same as sexuality, therefore do not make assumptions about the person's partner(s) or their sexuality. They may identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Heterosexual.



This list of key points has been compiled to help you, when going about your duties, to interact effectively and efficiently with members, or ex members of the transcommunity. Many of you may not have had much contact with this group but, as times change and more people gain confidence in themselves, this is likely to change.

The Rubicon Society exists, not only as a support group for transpeople, but as a training and development resource for organisations, companies and service providers, voluntary and statutory, to use to raise awareness amongst their staff, of the issues that face those living with Gender Dysphoria, their families and friends.

We aim to foster trust and respect, and in doing so shed light on a topic that society as a whole knows little about.

I hope I have been of some use to you today and that, should you have any unanswered questions, will feel free to contact me and ask.

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