

# Position statement

## A call on all healthcare employers to develop transgender-inclusive and friendly workplaces

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) is proud to stand with and support LGBTQ nurses and midwives, as well as members of the wider LGBTQ community both in Ireland and internationally. In light of Dublin LGBTQ Pride Week 2019, the INMO believes that it is important to recognise and affirm its support for transgender nurses, midwives and other healthcare workers. This support includes joining the campaign to end transphobia, including stigma, discrimination and inequality.

The Irish Equality Authority estimates that 10% of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual. However the size of the transgender population in Ireland is unknown but expected to be significantly lower. On the May 25, 2019 the World Health Organization changed the categorisation of transgender from a 'gender identity disorder' to 'gender incongruence'. This is a significant change to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11). Being transgender will no longer be seen as a 'mental disorder' and will now be considered as part of 'sexual health'.

Transgender people are not a recent phenomenon; they have been evident and have contributed to society throughout human history. In more recent times the transgender community has played a key role in the struggle for LGBTQ rights and the fight to end discrimination, most notably the Cooper Do-nuts Riot (1959), the Compton's Cafeteria riot (1966) and the Stonewall rebellion (1969). The events that occurred on Christopher Street, New York on the June 28, 1969 in response to a police raid at the Stonewall Inn, are the foundation of the global LGBTQ Pride celebrations held each year in June.

Transgender people in Ireland experience discrimination and violence, causing fear and anxiety that can lead to exclusion and social isolation. The Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) defines transphobia as "the fear, dislike or hatred of people who are trans or are perceived to challenge conventional gender categories or 'norms' of male or female."<sup>1</sup> Between 2014 and 2016, 79 incidents or crimes against transgender people were recorded. These included fifty reports of hate crimes; rape, aggravated sexual assault, assaults causing harm, threats to kill and public order offences.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that these figures do not show the full extent of the discrimination and violence experienced by transgender people. It is important to recognise the often insidious nature of discrimination that is manifest as everyday hostility and can include being 'fired' from employment upon 'coming out' as transgender.

It is also important to recognise that employers have a legal responsibility to support and protect transgender employees and prevent workplace harassment. This obligation is mandated by a variety of legislation including:

- Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2015
- Equal Status Act 2000-2004
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014
- Gender Recognition Act 2015.

The INMO believes in listening to the transgender community and its representative organisations in Ireland. This is fundamental to enabling societies to understand the experience and needs of transgender people. TENI is a non-profit organisation that provides a powerful voice and support for the transgender community in Ireland, and has welcomed this INMO position statement. TENI is the leading organisation that campaigns to improve conditions and advance the rights and equality of trans people and their families through support, advocacy and education. TENI provides a range of resources to help people to make positive change by creating environments and encouraging discourses that are respectful and trans-inclusive. The TENI 2017 'Supporting Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace' guidance is the most comprehensive resource for supporting employers and employees. These guidelines assist employers, co-workers and trans employees to manage and sustain an open, inclusive and diverse workplace environment. Dublin Bus, as part of its Equality, Diversity and Non-Discrimination Strategy has led the way in establishing the most comprehensive and advanced practices for supporting workers transitioning in the workplace. The leadership and experience of Dublin Bus provides a model for other organisations to follow. Dublin Bus is not alone; other organisations including Dublin City Council and the RCSI have been at the forefront of creating friendly, transgender-inclusive workplaces.

Healthcare employers in Ireland already recognise and are committed to creating inclusive, positive working environments supported by dignity at work policies. This is evident in the HSE Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2015-2018, which has promoted and encouraged the development of 'LGBT Champions', increasing awareness and establishing a HSE LGBTI and Allies Network. This support and inclusion of LGBTQ workers is welcomed and reflects the broader positive changes in Irish society. However there remains further opportunity to build on this foundation, particularly in supporting transgender employees in the workplace.

**The INMO calls on all healthcare employers, in both the public and private sectors, to develop transgender-inclusive and friendly workplaces that include clear guidance on supporting employees transitioning in the workplace**

Endorsed by:

#### References

1. STAD: Stop Transphobia and Discrimination Report 2014-2016
2. Haynes A, Schweppe J. The Disappearing of Hate Crime in the Irish Criminal Justice Process. *Critical Perspectives on Hate Crime 2017*; pp17-44

