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Programme: BSc Hons Management Practice

Cohort: 12

Module: Dissertation / BMG 600

Title: Transition in the Workplace: a response to the rising visibility of transgender personnel

Submission date: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016

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Submitted in part fulfilment of the regulations for the  
BSc Hons Management Practice  
University of Ulster

**Transition in the Workplace: a response to  
the rising visibility of transgender  
personnel**

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May 2016

## **Abstract**

There is a dearth of academic research on trans issues within employment, particularly on experiences and attitudes of other colleagues and managers on this issue. This small piece of research attempts to redress this gap by collecting survey responses from staff, and conducting interviews with key personnel directly impacted by a gender transition within two large public sector organisations.

The existing research reveals a culture of non-acceptance of trans personnel, where negative experiences and inequality would have been common place.

This study would support previous research demonstrating there was a climate of ignorance and fear over this issue by staff and management. This had the potential to impact on close colleagues and managers but particularly and most severely on the trans person. It would show that organisations were not at all ready, and still aren't adequately prepared to accommodate the gender transition of a colleague.

Encouragingly, this research would also demonstrate that due to education and awareness on this topic, attitudes of personnel are changing positively. However, organisations have still much to do on this issue to create a more equitable working environment for trans personnel.

## Acknowledgements

The Author wishes to acknowledge the following for their assistance and support:

- Dale Ashford (Chief Fire Officer, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service) and Jill Minne (Director of Organisational Development, Belfast City Council) for giving permission to carry out staff surveys in each organisation.
- Randy McComb, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.
- Jean Oakes, Belfast City Council.
- Adele Davidson, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.
- Joy Taylor, University of Ulster.
- Philip Sharpe, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.
- Jessica Doran, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service & Fire Brigades Union.
- All participants who responded to the survey questionnaire and participated in the interviews.
- My friends and fellow directors at SAIL: Nicola, Simon & Ellen
- Not least my wife Linda and two children Kerry & Ryan for their patience and support during this project.

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# **Chapter One**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The last 12 months has seen an unprecedented level of visibility of transgender people especially within the media. Up to this point, members of this community have largely remained invisible and where there has been publicity, this has predominately been expressed in a negative and sensationalist light as per the headline by Bindel (2004) “Gender benders, beware.”

The reason for this population remaining hidden is arguably down to the very real fear of discrimination in many areas of life. The purpose of this dissertation is to critically examine where gender identity sits within the workplace, particularly in Northern Ireland, by analysing the experiences and perceptions of members of staff within two large public sector organisations.

This dissertation will take the form of a pilot research study into this topic. It is the hope of the author that this research will generate discussion around this topic area and in turn more research studies. It is also the intention of the author to follow up on its findings with further studies at a later date.

## **1.2 Background and Context**

Transgender people even in today's society are exposed to high levels of intolerance and prejudice. Jones (2013) quotes the Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarburg (2009):

*“The human rights situation of transgender persons has long been neglected, although the problems they face are serious and often specific to this group alone. Transgender people experience a high degree of discrimination, intolerance and outright violence.”* (Pg. 503)

One area in particular where transgender people encounter difficulties is in employment as per Agius & Kohler (2014):

*“Trans people’s difficulties in accessing employment and occupation, as well as problems with job retention, is acute across all of the European Union.”* (Pg. 5)

Local research and studies such as Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (2011) and McBride & Hansson (2009) would concur with these statements. Employment plays a major part in most people's lives and it provides economic security as well as a sense of achievement and satisfaction. It can also provide an environment to foster social relations which may continue outside the working environment. It is therefore imperative for members of this community to be able to access employment and avail of all the benefits that employment brings. Arguably, not only should members of the transgender community be able to readily access employment, but they should not at any stage have to suffer from the discrimination and intolerance that currently exist.

There are several pieces of legislation including The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 and The Gender Recognition

Act 2004 which provide legal protection for trans people, particularly within the workplace.

As society slowly becomes more tolerant of this group of people and information more readily available, the prevalence of transgender people is continuing to grow at an ever increasing rate. In 2009 Gender Identity, Research & Education Society (GIREs) suggested that 1 person per 5000 was on the transgender spectrum. Two years later with emerging evidence and statistics these figures were revised, and in (2011) GIREs would suggest:

*“Organisations should assume that 1% of their employees and service users may be experiencing some degree of gender variance. At some stage, about 0.2% may undergo transition.” (Pg. 2)*

These statistics are further substantiated by a survey carried out in New Zealand of 8500 students in 2013 Clarke et al. (2014). “1.2% reported being transgender, 2.5% reported being not sure about their gender” (Pg. 93)

Figures from Northern Ireland’s only Gender Identity Clinic (Brackenburn) showing number of referrals over the last 3 years would also mirror this trend.

**Fig. 1.1 Referrals to Brackenburn GIC**

Year	2013	2014	2015
Number of referrals	137	172	230

### **1.3 Rationale for Study**

There is a dearth of academic literature solely on transgender issues within employment. The majority of existing literature has been written primarily within an American context, where legislation varies from state to state. Studies carried out containing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) experiences within the workplace arguably brush over the transgender aspect. It could be argued there may be some overlap, however its absence has been evident. McFadden (2015) adds credibility to this claim when he stated in his LGBT systematic literature review:

*“A prominent problem reported within the research methodologies reviewed was the difficulty in accessing a non-purposeful representative population of LGBT participants, in particular, transgender people.” (Pg. 146)*

The author, having transitioned herself in the workplace of a large public sector organisation approximately 5 years ago, found that there was no specific transgender policy in place and there was only very limited awareness training to a small number of personnel. Although on the whole the transition appeared to be successful, this had many implications for the author and other members of staff which will be covered later in this study.

The author is also a director in a community interest company set up to provide support, acceptance, information & learning (SAIL) for members of the transgender community, friends and family. It is hoped that this study will add further real workplace experiences of this issue which will complement existing studies. It is also hoped that this small piece of research can be used as a catalyst to encourage more academic literature on this topic.

One consistency through all the academic articles was the clear recommendation and need for further research to be carried out on this topic as per Whittle et al. (2007) and Rudin et al. (2014). Collins et al. (2015) go further:

*“The absence of HRD research on trans\* issues contributes to the continued marginalization and exclusion of trans\* lives in the field.”* (Pg. 206)

It is also likely to be detrimental to an organisation not to be getting the full potential out of its entire staff, or in some cases even losing productive staff, as is argued by Cadrain (2004 cited Barclay & Scott, 2006):

*“It is in a company’s best interest to try to retain a talented employee whether or not he or she is transsexual.... Companies cannot afford to throw away some of their best workers* (Pg. 1)

The majority of workplaces will be aware of the importance of promoting diversity and in some cases like the NIFRS, it will be part of their core values (see fig.1.2).

**Fig 1.2 NIFRS Core values (NIFRS Website)**

<b>People</b>	We value keeping our people safe and well trained
<b>Leadership</b>	We value leading by example
<b>Teamwork</b>	We value working together
<b>Integrity</b>	We value the utmost integrity in everything we do
<b>Diversity</b>	We value equality and fairness and we consider the needs of our staff and the community we serve
<b>Communication</b>	We value open and honest communication with our staff and with all our stakeholders
<b>Partnership</b>	We value working in partnership
<b>Pursuit of Excellence</b>	We value continuous improvement at all levels of our organisation

As a manager within the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) and also someone who has lived experience of this issue, it is acknowledged that the researcher has a natural bias towards both the transgender community and also the organisation. This natural bias aside, it is the firm view of the author that there is a necessity for further research into this topic.

## **1.4 Terminology**

Terminology relating to the transgender population can be an issue of contention for individuals who are part of the community and therefore must be approached with sensitivity. It must also be noted that this issue is currently evolving at a rapid pace. For consistency the author has chosen the most recent guidance document issued by the Government Equalities Office (2015) (Pg. 24) for terminology.

### **Acquired gender**

The law uses the phrase 'acquired gender' to refer to the gender in which a transgender person lives and presents to the world. This is not the gender that they were assigned at birth, but it is the gender in which they should be treated.

### **Cross-dresser**

Someone who wears the clothes usually expected to be worn by someone of the 'opposite' gender. Other terms include 'transvestite' (now becoming a dated term and disliked by some) and 'dual role'. A cross-dresser is unlikely to have a full-time identity as a member of their cross-dressed gender and typically does not seek medical intervention.

## **Gender dysphoria**

Transgender people who seek medical intervention are typically diagnosed with 'gender dysphoria' as a first step. Gender dysphoria describes the sense of a strong, persistent discomfort or distress caused by the dissonance between a person's self-identified gender and the gender they were assigned at birth.

## **Gender identity**

A person's sense of self as a man, woman, non-binary person or other sense of gender. A person's gender identity is typically expected to follow directly from the sex they were assigned at birth (based on physical attributes), but this is not always the case.

## **Gender reassignment**

The process of changing or transitioning from one gender to another.

## **Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)**

A certificate issued under the Gender Recognition Act which enables trans people to be legally recognised in their acquired gender.

## **Non-binary person**

Someone who does not subscribe to the customary binary approach to gender, and who may regard themselves as neither male nor female, or both male and female, or take another approach to gender entirely.

## **Real life experience (RLE)**

Sometimes called the Real-Life Test (RLT), this is a period of time in which trans individuals live full-time in their preferred gender role. The purpose of the RLE is to confirm that the person can function in their preferred gender successfully in society, as well as to confirm that they are sure they want to live in their preferred gender for the rest of their life. A documented RLE is a requirement of some doctors before prescribing hormone replacement therapy, and a requirement of most surgeons before performing gender reassignment surgery.

## **Transgender (or trans) person**

A broad, inclusive term referring to anyone whose personal experience of gender extends beyond the typical experiences of those of their assigned sex.



Amongst others, transsexual people, non-binary people and cross-dressers may all consider themselves transgender people.

### **Transsexual person**

This term is most closely associated with the legally protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment'. A transsexual person may be a person assigned female at birth who has transitioned or is transitioning to live as a man, or a person assigned male at birth who has transitioned or is transitioning to live as a woman. The law does not require a person to undergo a medical procedure to be recognised as a transsexual person. Once a transsexual person has acquired a GRC, they should generally be treated entirely as in their acquired gender.

### **Transgender man**

A transgender man is a female-to-male transgender person who was assigned female at birth but has a male gender identity.

### **Transgender woman**

A transgender woman is a male-to-female transgender person who was assigned male at birth but has a female gender identity.

### **Transition**

Taking the journey from your assigned gender to the one you know yourself to be. This may refer to social transition (changing name, clothes etc), medical transition (hormones and/or surgery) or both.

Government Equalities Office (2015) (Pg. 24)

## **1.5 Scoping**

Once the author had settled on the general area of employment issues affecting transgender personnel, on which the study was to be based, it was evident that there was a substantial breadth to this topic and further scoping would be necessary. Given the time and resource constraints a decision was made to limit the study to cover the process of transitioning within the workplace. A further reason for this specific area, is the legal protection afforded to the transgender person if they intend to, are undergoing or have completed gender reassignment under medical supervision

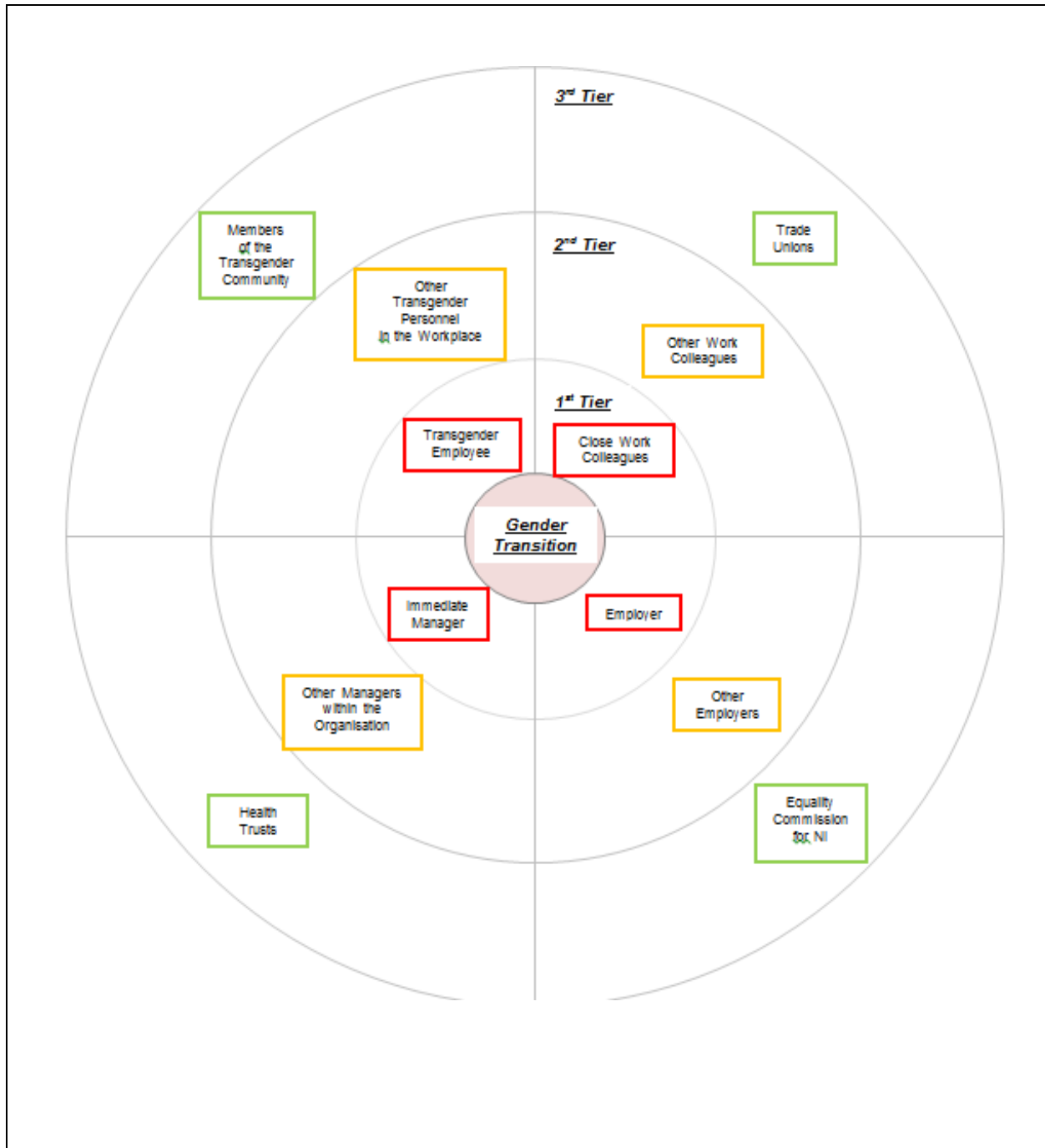
*“An important research implication of transgender theory is that no single research study can capture the totality of work life for transgender employees”  
(Rudin et al, (2014) Pg. 724)*

There are many more areas within employment with relevance to transgender people and their family members including recruitment and promotion. It is hoped and anticipated that further studies will be carried out on the full context of employment issues for members of the transgender community.

## **1.6 Stakeholders**

There are many stakeholders for which this research is pertinent. To illustrate this, the author has used Doyle's stakeholder analysis model (Fig 1.3). This model demonstrates how it will impact on various individuals and groups, with those most affected closer to the centre.

**FIG 1.3 Doyle's Stakeholder analysis**



### **1.7 Research Question**

- How does gender transition impact on the employee, colleagues and the organisation?

### **1.8 Title**

- Transition in the workplace: a response to the emerging visibility of transgender employees.

### **1.9 Aim**

- To critically examine where gender identity sits within the workplace.

### **1.10 Objectives**

- Review existing research and statistical evidence of transgender issues faced within the workplace.
- Identify the impact on all key members of staff due to a gender transition within the workplace.
- Evaluate the current status within the workplace and make recommendations to ensure management and staff are adequately prepared and trained to accommodate the gender transition of a member of staff.

(For the purpose of this research, accommodate is taken to mean treating people with dignity and respect.)

### **1.11 Hypothesis**

- Members of staff within the NIFRS and Belfast City Council are inadequately prepared to accommodate the gender transition of a colleague.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will present a review of the relevant literature around this topic. The author found that there was a dearth of academic articles specifically on this topic and that transgender issues often got grouped together with LGB research. It was also found that the majority of academic literature was based on American society which has varied legislation for the protection of transgender employees. It is hoped that in the absence of academic literature, reliable survey reports and studies will aid in closing the gaps in knowledge.

The literature review will concentrate on eight areas:

1. The Law
2. Media Portrayal
3. Negative Experience
4. Gender Transition Process
5. Positive Experience
6. Colleagues & Managers
7. Change Management
8. Equality

## **2.1 The Law**

In Northern Ireland, Transsexual people are protected by several pieces of legislation which are:

### **The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999**

Makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person for the purpose of employment or vocational training, who under medical supervision are undergoing any part of the process to reassign their sex.

There are several exceptions in this legislation, where it may not be unlawful which include:

- A person's sex is a Genuine Occupational Qualification (GOQ) for the job.
- The job involves the holder to conduct intimate searches pursuant to statutory powers.
- The job involves the holder working in a private home and reasonable objection can be shown by the employer because of the intimate contact.
- The regulations do not apply to the employment of ministers of organised religion.

### **The Gender Recognition Act 2004**

Gives additional protection to Transsexual persons. According to section 9 part (1):

*“Where a full gender recognition certificate is issued to a person, the person’s gender becomes for all purposes the acquired gender (so that, if the acquired gender is the male gender, the person’s sex becomes that of a man and, if it is the female gender, the person’s sex becomes that of a woman).”*

Despite Section 9 part (3) allowing for certain provisions made by this Act or other subordinate legislation, it undoubtedly strengthens the legal position of those who obtain this certificate, and removes several of the exceptions or restrictions from the 1999 Regulations.

### **The European Convention on Human Rights**

The Human Rights Act provides protection to trans people, principally under the right to a private life under Article 8 - ‘The Right to Respect for Private and Family Life.’ This has been interpreted by the courts in a very broad way to cover, among other things, a person’s right to express a sexual identity, to live a particular lifestyle and to choose the way they look and dress.

### **Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75)**

*“The protected characteristic of gender reassignment is subject to the duty to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. This entails more than the elimination of discrimination and requires proactive measures to be taken to ensure equality for trans people in our policies and decision-making.” The Open University Equality and Diversity Website (2015)*

These relatively new pieces of legislation provide increased protection and equality for transgender personnel. However, it must be noted that the legislation with the most comprehensive protection is not available to personnel who are embarking on the transition process, as the gender recognition certificate is only available to those who have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years.

## **2.2 Media Portrayal**

Given the scarcity of openly transgender people in the public arena and within the workplaces, it would be a reasonable assumption that media coverage would contribute to influencing people's views on this topic. Kermode (2010) states 78% of 256 transgender respondents found media portrayals to be inaccurate or highly inaccurate, with 70% finding that media portrayals were negative or highly negative. Newspaper articles such as Burchill (2013) 'Transsexuals should cut it out' which contained many negative phrases such as: *"To have your cock cut off and then plead special privileges as women – above natural-born women"* has arguably helped facilitate these negative attitudes which filter into the workplace.

The following responses were given by members of the Northern Ireland public in a survey carried out by the equality commission for Northern Ireland involving over 1000 face to face interviews; Do You Mean Me? (2011)

- 35% of respondents would mind (a little or a lot) having a transgender person as a work colleague.
- 40% of respondents would mind (a little or a lot) having a transgender person as a neighbour.
- 53% of respondents would mind (a little or a lot) having a transgender person as an in-law.

These figures would suggest that many people have a negative attitude towards transgender people and exhibit a varying degree of tolerance or acceptance of



transgender people depending on the situation. This view is further supported by A: gender (2011):

*“Work colleagues, since they are not as closely involved or affected, will hopefully not feel so personally challenged and find it easier to accommodate the change. However gender reassignment is a subject about which some individuals hold hostile views based on personal conviction, out of ignorance or sometimes, prejudice”. (Pg. 16)*

It is the belief of the author that everyone should have the right to their views and opinions such as those like Sue Bohlin (2001) who quotes:

*“The “transgendered” label reflects a sexual identity confusion and not a true condition. God doesn’t create a person with the genitals of a male and the consciousness and heart of a female. In Genesis 1:26, the Bible says, “And God created man in His image, in His likeness; male and female He created them . . . and it was very good.” Maleness and femaleness are God’s choice, determined at conception.”*

It must also be acknowledged like that of the evangelical author and blogger Brian McClaren (2012) on commenting on LGBT issues, that firm theological beliefs held in the past on issues such as slavery and women’s rights, which have undoubtedly resulted in suffering and discrimination, are no longer tenable in today’s society:

*“If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished, but he is not to be punished if the slave gets up after a day or two, since the slave is his property.” Holy Bible (NIV) Exodus 21 vs 20-21*

*“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” Holy Bible (NIV) 1 Corinthians 14 vs 34-35*

With the vastly differing attitudes and opinions being expressed in the media it is even more incumbent on the researcher to provide more rich and accurate data into this topic.

## **2.3 Negative Experience**

Recent reports and surveys would suggest there is a very real issue of transgender employees having negative experiences within the workplace, as can be seen from the table below from a study carried out in the Republic of Ireland by McNeil et al. (2013)

**Fig 2.1 Negative Experiences at Work Due to Trans Identity (n=103)**

<b>Experience</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
No negative experience	57
Unsure	16
Believe they have experienced workplace harassment or discrimination	14
Believe they have been unfairly turned down for a job	14
Believe they have been unfairly fired, dismissed or laid off	9
Have left a job due to harassment or discrimination, with no other job to go to	9
Have not applied for certain jobs due to fears of workplace harassment or discrimination	8
Have not provided references from a previous job because of gender history	7
Yes (other issue)	6
Have declined a job offer due to fears of workplace harassment or discrimination	3

**Speaking From the Margins (2013)**

A Trans Mental Health Study (2012) was carried out in the UK revealing very similar findings, with 52% of respondents experiencing problems with work due to being transgender, 19% of which experienced harassment or discrimination. A further 18% believed that they had been unfairly turned down for a job and 16% did not apply for a job due to fears of harassment and discrimination.

(Collins et al., 2015) and (Witten, 2007) would claim that transgender people are, by far, the most targeted minority group when it comes to physical and psychological violence.

As previously stated there is a deficiency of academic literature on transgender employment issues. This is in some way surprising due to the prejudice and disgust which is arguably directed towards this cohort of people, as can be witnessed by Whittle et al (2007):

*“At work over 10% of trans people experienced being verbally abused and 6% were physically assaulted. As a consequence of harassment and bullying a quarter of trans people will feel obliged to change their job.”* (Pg. 15)

Within a Northern Ireland context there has been even fewer academic research projects undertaken, specifically in respect to issues faced by the transgender community. The first available research which was carried out by Hansson & Depret (2007), found a lack of knowledge and understanding on this topic within employment:

*“The main issues that were cited were a lack of knowledge and understanding about gender status and transgender issues and therefore a need for people to conceal their identity at work”.* (Pg. 14)

Three projects have been carried out in recent years (Mc Bride & Hansson, 2010; McBride, 2011; McBride; 2013). Although none of these research projects refer directly to employment issues they do clearly set the social context. McBride (2013) states: *“Transgender people face extremely high levels of prejudice, harassment and discrimination.”* (Pg.13) McBride McBride & Hansson (2010) refer to inappropriate behaviour expressed towards transgender people by a major employer within

Northern Ireland. They also make clear in their recommendations summary (2010), to reduce hate crime, trans awareness needs to be increased within the workplace:

*“There is a need to increase awareness of trans issues among statutory agencies and for statutory agencies to create practical policy and procedural guidelines relating to trans persons, both individuals undergoing transition in the workplace and persons utilising their services.”* (2010) McBride & Hansson (Pg. 6)

Within a UK context Jones (2013) makes the point:

*“Most transsexual employees do not self-identify in the workplace because fear of harassment, discrimination and losing their jobs. Often it is only when an employee is transitioning from one gender to another that they will be “out” or “made to be out” as a transsexual.”* (Pg. 503)

Research would indicate that it is the point where an employee embarks upon the transition process that triggers the discrimination and inequality. This can be evidenced by Whittle et al. (2007).

*“Our research finds that transition in a place of work is a major trigger point for experiencing inequality and discrimination. For trans people, discrimination and inequalities seem to occur from the point of transition and not before in their career.”* (Pg. 31)

Collins et al (2015) would further substantiate this claim:

*“The transition to one’s gender identity/expression can lead to undesirable issues related to changing social relationships, as others begin to see and treat trans\* people in a different way than before.”* (Pg. 208).

## **2.4 Gender Transition Process**

In Northern Ireland, following a medical diagnosis of Gender dysphoria and before consideration for surgery, the individual is expected to complete a real life experience (RLE), which involves living full time in their acquired gender. (A: gender, 2013). During this time (a minimum of one year), various medical treatments may begin. It is also the expectation that the individual will interact with society during this time including employment (Whittle et al, 2007). It must be noted however that some trans people will not elect for any medical intervention, but will still be entitled to apply for a gender recognition certificate (GRC) after two years from they begin their RLE.

## **2.5 Positive Experience**

The author recognises that although there are high numbers of transgender members of staff who receive negative experiences within the workplace, according to McNeil et al (2013) (Fig 2.1), 57% of respondents claim to have experienced no negative experience. It is not known how many of these respondents transitioned within a workplace.

Budge et al. (2010) acknowledge, whilst it is common within the transgender community to experience discrimination and rejection, many individuals were treated better than they had expected and described finding a climate of acceptance. It was also noted by one respondent, although she felt respected for what she did at work, she believed that the respect did not extend to herself as a person.

## **2.6 Colleagues & Managers**

Existing literature inclines to primarily concentrate on the issues faced solely by the trans person. An exception to this is Barclay and Scott (2006). Their case study approach included the roles and reactions of key stakeholders involved. It was also acknowledged by the author that many other pieces of literature referred to this document.

Barclay and Scott (2006) state:

*“Although Susan’s manager was not aware of legislation regarding transsexual employees within the workplace, she was adamant that the situation would be dealt with in a fair and professional manner.”* (2006) Barclay & Scott (Pg.493)

It also noted that the manager did not receive any support and the HR officer felt vulnerable due to the lack of guidance from senior management.

From the perspective of colleagues it is possible that anyone who knew the trans person well, or whom was even friends might feel that they have been deceived if they were not privy to this information prior to the transition as per Barclay & Scott (2006).

Given the levels of prejudice and negative experiences subjected on transgender individuals, it is extremely unlikely that withholding of personal information is not intended out of malice, but solely for self-protection from the perceived threat of rejection and discrimination.

It is evident from this case study that not only had the transition implications for the transgender person, but also for other members of staff. The HRCF (2004) quote Moonhawk River Stone: *“Everyone transitions when a transsexual person comes out*

*in the workplace*” Sangganjanavanich & Headley (2013) would also agree with this sentiment.

## **2.7 Change Management**

The researcher, having evidenced the disruption and negative impact experienced by many stakeholders involved in the gender transition process of an employee, combined with the very low numbers of personnel transitioning, would suggest that the culture within the majority of workplaces is still not ready to fully accept this change (Barclay & Scott, 2006; Whittle et al., 2007; Jones, 2013; Rudin et al., 2014 etc.).

Organisational culture is a crucial factor in facilitating or denying change (Baker, 2007). A Review of the NIFRS (2010) found a number of cultural issues to be addressed, one of which was gender. Rankin et al (2010) are more specific with this issue:

*“For the fire and rescue sector, the most commonly voiced concern related to the challenges of making fire services a trans-friendly employer.....where a ‘macho culture’ can be the norm.” (Pg. 32)*

With legislation in place to ensure the protection and equality of transgender personnel, it could be argued that management waiting until this situation arises in their workplace will be forced to push through change, which could prove counterproductive for the transgender person and other stakeholders.

Lick and Kaufman (2003, cited Barclay & Scott, 2006) suggest:

*“Change management is too reactive. They propose a change creation approach instead. Employers need to be prepared for when it arises. They say that: “when organisations choose to be proactive relative to change, they intentionally move from being victims of change to becoming masters of change”. This would involve, amongst other things, proactive planning and buy-in from all stakeholders”. (Pg. 11)*

The author would agree with this strategy. As per (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008)

change creation should not be limited to only one approach, but many methods such as education, communication and supporting and involving all staff in the process as adopted by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). This had the outcome of transgender members of staff demonstrating support for the MPS being an exemplary employer (Rankin et al., 2010). It should also be acknowledged that this will inevitably be in the best interest of the organisation, as per Baker (2007):

*“Those institutions that anticipate and embrace change constructively and creatively will be the ones that are most likely to develop rather than decline” Baker (Pg.1)*

Organisations should develop a policy or guidance document in consultation with transgender personnel or transgender organisations. Avon Fire & Rescue Service are an example of this (Rankin et al., 2010). This should then be championed from the very top of the organisation and communicated through various methods, including if possible humanising the issue (Rankin et al., 2010). Monitoring and reviewing the outcome of any trans inclusive initiatives should also be carried out through methods such as staff surveys. Where possible, establishing either a Transgender or LGBT staff support network (Scottish Transgender Alliance & Stonewall Scotland, 2012) would also be good practice.



Transgender personnel can also assist with a successful transition by giving adequate notice of their transition to their HR department/manager to allow for specific changes to be made (ACAS, 2015) and also allowing colleagues a reasonable adjustment time to get used to the correct pronouns etc.

## **2.8 Equality**

*“Equity theory is so damn important it’s impossible to overstate it. Human beings are wired for fairness.”* Lawrence (2013)

Some transgender employees are willing to work harder and longer for less money as a compensation for their transgender status (Budge, 2010). The question must be asked, why have personnel who have transitioned gender, been prepared to settle for an inferior psychological contract in the workplace? As Lawrence (2013) goes on to state: *“Equity is at the heart of the psychological contract.”*

Every worker has the right to be treated with respect and dignity and entitled to fairness and equality (Shaw, 2014).

It could be argued that this inferior psychological contract is an untenable situation for those who are transgender and this may well account for why so many transgender personnel fear transition or if transitioned become unemployed.

The NIFRS define equality in their policy as follows:

*“Equality in its most basic term means treating everyone fairly. It is not just about treating everyone the same, but making sure that no-one suffers or is disadvantaged when it comes to having their needs met and accessing services. It is about creating a fairer society – one in which everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential”.*

( 2020 Vision, Equality & Diversity Strategy for the NIFRS)

Simply developing a policy and guidelines will not instantly create an environment where all employees are treated as equals (Taylor et al., 2010). The author would make the point that to assist with creating true equality for members of this community, other initiatives such as Stanford's new executive leadership programme for LGBT professionals (Dishman, 2016) should also be considered. The author also acknowledges this is a very difficult position for organisations as it must remain the perception of the remainder of staff that no person or group are receiving preferential treatment.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

From the existing literature available pertaining to workplace experiences of transgender employees, there can be no doubt that trans personnel have been the subject of many negative experiences which arguably have been discriminatory. Such actions could be attributed to transphobia as per Rudin et al. (2014):

*"Transphobia is so powerful that a substantial percentage of students recommended courses of action that they believed to be illegal."* (2014) Rudin et al. (Pg. 721)

It is also possible that these actions are carried out because of ignorance around this topic. These negative experiences have been particularly acute for those who have transitioned within the workplace. It also has to be borne in mind that even those personnel who have not been subject to any form of discrimination, may have had a legitimate real sense of fear prior to transitioning and may seek to keep a low profile for fear of unfavourable attitudes developing towards them.

Even more disturbingly, the literature also suggests there are many transgender people not living in their preferred gender due to the perceived threat of discrimination in the workplace as found by Whittle et al (2007):

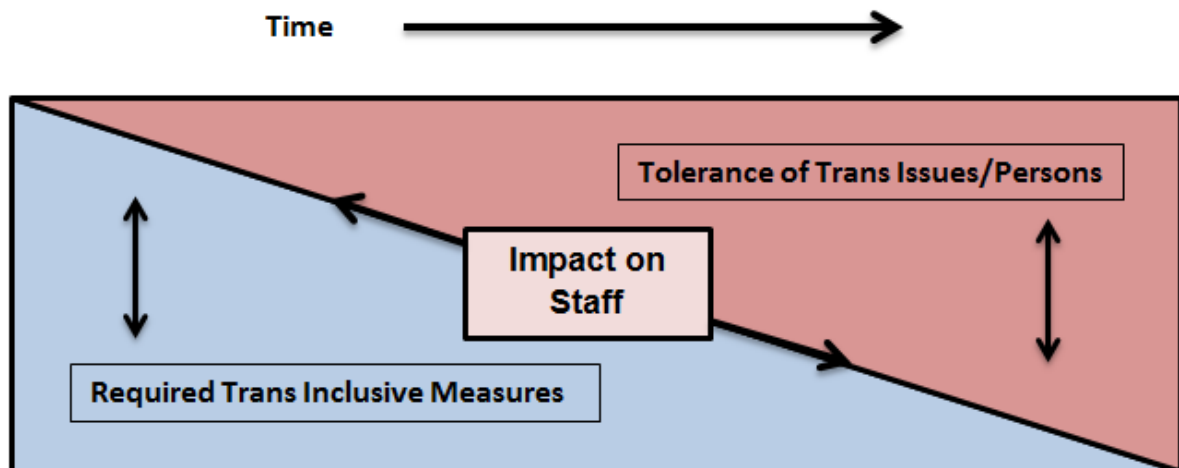
*“It is worrying to discover that 42% of trans people not living permanently in their preferred gender role were prevented from doing so because they feared it might threaten their employment status.” (Pg.15)*

Despite the paucity of research available and in turn the difficulty of comparison with other sections of the population who also face discrimination, it is clear that there is a need for workplaces to have measures in place to provide equality for this section of the community.

The author also recognises the rights of people to hold their own views and opinions on this issue; however it is the author’s belief that these views must not impinge on the rights of transgender employees, which through legislation have been put in place for the protection and promotion of equality for members of this community.

The model below (Fig 2.2) illustrates how the author believes trans inclusive measures embedded early within the organisation will impact on staff regarding transgender issues. It is also believed that many factors will influence the speed at which the organisation progresses through this model, including the size and whether or not they have an openly transgender member of staff etc. It should, however, be acknowledged that the further along the continuum the organisation is towards tolerance, the easier and more positive it is likely to be for all stakeholders when a gender transition occurs in the organisation.

**Fig (2.2) Impact of Gender Transition on Staff within the Workplace.**



The author having gained personal experience of transitioning within the workplace would also put forward the point; the further the organisation is to the left of the model, the greater the burden will be on the trans person to move the organisation towards greater tolerance.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research**

“Knowledge is Power, Information is liberating....” Kofi Annan

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. ” Zora Neale Hurston – American Civil Rights Activist and Author

As discussed in the literature review in chapter 2, there is a paucity of academic research into the topic of transgenderism let alone the process of undergoing gender transition within the workplace and resultant implications. With the prejudice and negative attitudes which arguably currently exist, this piece of research has the potential to be a powerful tool in redressing these issues.

It is incumbent upon the author to carry out this research using methods that are reliable and attempt to establish factual information. It is of critical importance to ensure that the research is not only informative, but also as robust as possible. As already established in the previous chapters, the researcher being trans and a manager within the NIFRS will have an inherent natural bias. Despite this bias it is the view of the researcher that this background will prove to be an asset rather than a liability which is supported by Silverman (2008 cited Braun & Clarke, 2013)

“The recognition that researchers bring their subjectivity (their views, perspectives, frameworks for making sense of the world; their politics, their passions) into the research process- this is seen as a strength rather than a weakness. (Pg.6)

Wilson (2014) defines research as a *“step by step process that involves the collecting, recording, analysing and interpreting of information”*.

Saunders et al. (2012) use a diagram (Fig. 3.1) of an onion to illustrate the research process. For this study, the researcher will use this process.

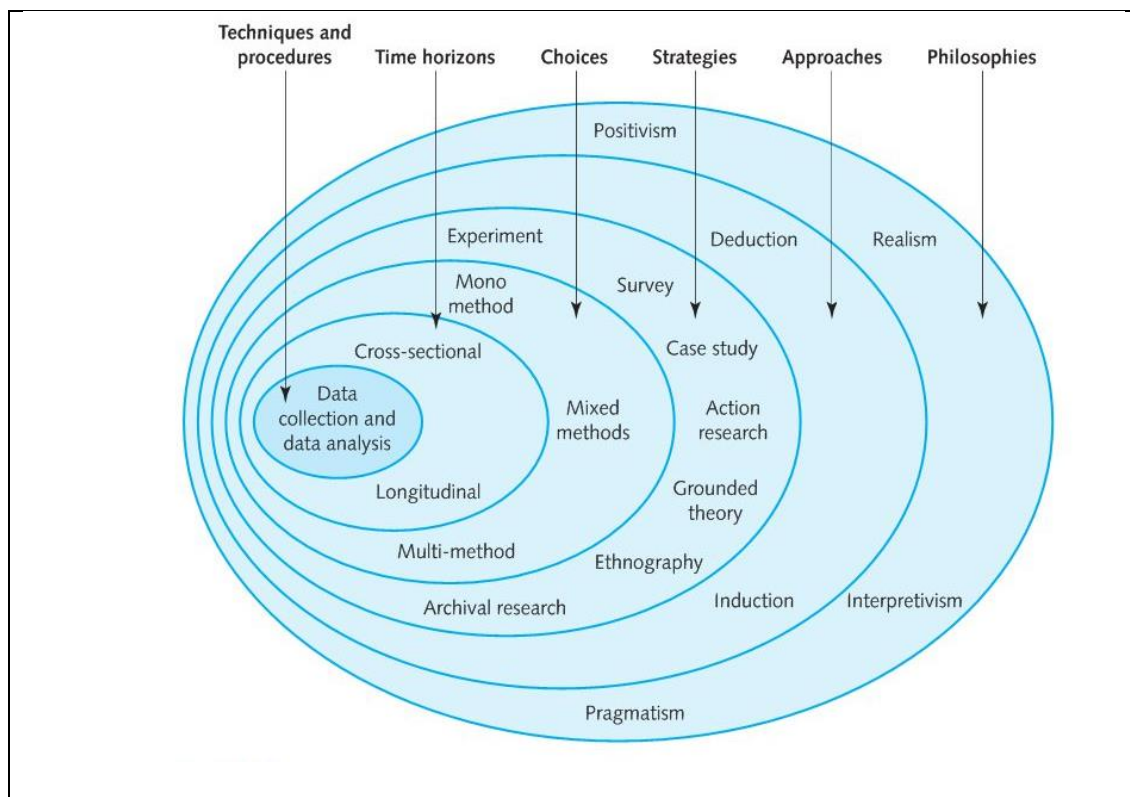
Although there is much merit to the positivist philosophy on research, not least the reliability and the ability to generalise to larger society, consideration must also be given for a more interpretivist approach. The benefits of this will be the increased detail, painting a fuller picture and adding new insights into this topic area.

Seeing the value in both of these philosophies for this study, the author believes a pragmatic approach to be the best way to carry out the research on this topic, as it can combine the advantages of both, as per Wilson (2014):

*“Pragmatism is generally viewed as the most popular paradigm for mixed methods social enquiry.”* (Pg. 11)

This study will be a cross-sectional study as it will only take a snap shot of what the participants think at the time of the survey.

**Fig 3.1 Saunders et al (2008) Research Onion**



A deductive approach has been utilised by the author, based on the existing theory. It is the intention of the author to test this theory within the setting of 2 large workplaces. A hypothesis has been developed based on current literature (see below from pg. 14) and it is proposed to use a survey method to collect primary data from personnel throughout the organisations and to follow this up with interviews of several key stakeholders.

### **Hypothesis**

- Members of staff within the NIFRS and Belfast City Council are inadequately prepared to accommodate the gender transition of a colleague.

### **3.1 Primary Data**

Primary data is information collected first hand by the researcher using a number of tools such as a survey, interview and observation. (Wilson, 2015) The use of primary data is of great benefit where there is dearth of existing research, or when the researcher is looking into a specific area, as are both the case with this study. An intrinsic disadvantage with primary data is that it is not readily available and takes time to collect. Access restrictions to this type of information could also apply and permissions may have to be sought and approved.

### **3.2 Secondary Data**

Secondary data is information already collected by other researchers and encompasses a range of many different sources such as general reports, academic journals, textbooks etc. (Wilson, 2014). A major advantage with secondary data is that it is usually readily available and straightforward to collect. Drawbacks with this type of data are that it could be dated, unreliable and an imperfect fit for the intended study.

### **3.3 Quantitative research methods**

Quantitative research has the pre-eminence of a 'scientific approach' which measures numeric values. It can easily be quantifiable and also generalizable to a



larger demographic than that of the actual study (Robertson & Dearling, 2004). Specific focus is directed towards the survey and experimental modes of inquiry (Creswell, 2003). According to (Selltitz et al., 1965) this method of research is more likely than any other to produce relevant, reliable and unbiased information.

### **3.4 Qualitative research methods**

Creswell (1998) makes comment:

*“Qualitative research shares good company with the most rigorous quantitative research, and it should not be viewed as an easy substitute for a ‘statistical’ or quantitative study”. (Pg. 143)*

Indeed, given that there has, in recent years been several pulse surveys carried out on this topic, such as the Equality commission for Northern Ireland: Do you mean me? (2011) and Speaking from the margins (2013), it could be argued that deeper investigation into the causation of both negative attitudes towards and negative experiences by the trans person is warranted. Naslund (2002 cited Wilson, 2014) comments:

*“Qualitative researchers tend to believe that rich descriptions are valuable while quantitative researchers are less concerned with such detail (Pg. 16)*

The below response from a survey respondent gives good cause to not only generalise but also to find the rich details on experiences both positive and negative, that these may be shared and used as a tool to help dispel prejudice and promote equality in the workplace.

*“I find trans equality work really compelling, because the discrimination is so extreme. The numbers may be small but the impact is absolutely massive”.  
Central government respondent – Rankin et al (2010) (Pg. 10)*

**Fig 3.2 Braun & Clarke (2014) (Pg. 4) Differences between qualitative and quantitative research**

<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
Numbers used as data	Words – written and spoken language (and images used as data)
Seeks to identify relationships between variables, to explain or predict – with the aim of generalising the findings to a wider population	Seeks to understand and interpret more local meanings; recognises data as gathered in context; sometimes produces knowledge that contributes to more general understandings
Generates ‘shallow’ but broad data – not a lot of complex detail obtained from each participant, but lots of participants take part (to generate the necessary statistical power)	Generates ‘narrow’ but rich data, ‘thick descriptions’ – detailed and complex accounts from each participant; not many take part
Seeks consensus, norms, or general patterns; often aims to reduce diversity of responses to an average response	Tends to seek patterns, but accommodates and explores difference and divergence within data
Tends to be theory-testing, and deductive	Tends to be theory generating, and inductive (working up from the data)
Values detachment and impartiality (objectivity)	Values personal involvement and partiality (subjectivity, reflexivity)
Has a fixed method (harder to change focus once data collection has begun)	Method is less fixed (can accommodate a shift in focus in the same study)
Can be completed quickly	Tends to take longer to complete because it is interpretive and there is no formula

### **3.5 Mixed methods**

Wilson (2014) notes:

*“Some scholars are critical of this approach. First, it can be argued that qualitative and quantitative methods rest on different paradigm assumptions and cannot be easily combined. Second carrying out multi-strategy research is time consuming and likely to be expensive.” (Pg. 17)*

According to Creswell (2014):

*“Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of enquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either of them alone.” (Pg. 68)*

### **3.6 Research methodology**

Rudin et al. (2014) make the point:

*“Empirical studies of transgender issues have been dominated by the qualitative approach, so there is a need for more quantitative research on this topic” (2014) Rudin et al. (Pg. 721)*

The author would agree in part with this statement, although with the degree of prejudice arguably still existing towards this cohort, combining a survey method with a structured interview of several key stakeholders to uncover the rich stories, may provide a deeper understanding. This may also assist to provoke a change in attitudes, particularly within organisations where change can debatably be slow.

The first step in the process is to identify and evaluate which data collection methods are most appropriate for this topic.

The most common method is a survey or questionnaire which can be unstructured, semi-structured or totally structured. Creating a structured questionnaire can be initially time consuming, but allows for easier analysis of the results. The questionnaire has to be piloted to ensure it is simple to complete and provides the appropriate data. Online surveys like survey monkey and google drive can be used.

Bell (2014) makes the point on interviews:

*“One major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do” (Pg. 178)*

Given the highly emotive feelings on this subject matter, this method is very likely to yield rich data, however it has an inherent risk of bias attached. A further weakness with this method is its time consuming nature, so a study of this size will be limited to only several key stakeholders. This would include personnel who have been most affected by a gender transition e.g. the transgender person, immediate line manager, HR manager, close colleagues and any other personnel with a vested interest in this topic.

Focus groups would undoubtedly yield rich qualitative information, and with its increased participation lend itself to increased validity. However, difficulties could occur with stronger personalities taking over from quieter participants and also problems might occur with control and direction of the group. Further issues with utilising a focus group would be that stakeholders may not provide full and honest data, as they may not wish to offend the interviewer who is transgender.

The methodology for this project will be a multi strategy approach adopting mixed methods.

Questionnaires will be distributed within two large employers. The target group of the research is all staff members. With the exception of the workplace of the researcher, it is not known if there are other openly transgender personnel.

Both sets of questionnaires will be piloted by a selection of personnel from interested parties eg. FBU LGBT section, who will provide feedback on the survey to ensure relevance and clarity before being released on-line. There will be a three week window for completion. It is anticipated that LGBT groups, unions and HR departments will actively support and promote the questionnaires to aid a higher rate of response.

### **3.7 Research Design**

It is acknowledged by the author, who being a trans woman herself, is embedded within this topic. Therefore to ensure a subjective, robust and fair study, must not only look from the point of view of the trans person, but also that of other key stakeholders. It was also recognised during the literature review that this was a glaring limitation in other studies.

To enhance the robustness of the research it is the author's intention to use a mixed methods approach, using a survey distributed electronically throughout two large

public sector organisations giving all staff (Which would include all 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier stakeholders (Fig 1.3, pg. 13)) the opportunity to contribute towards this research. This will be followed by interviewing several key personnel from all 1<sup>st</sup> tier (Fig 1.3) stakeholder groups and also any relevant personnel identified from the questionnaire results willing to contribute further to this research.

Approval was sought and given from the HR directorates of the NIFRS and Belfast City Council (BCC) to distribute online questionnaires throughout the organisations. The questionnaire was available to all 2600 BCC staff on their intranet system for three weeks during April 2016. As the NIFRS does not have an intranet system the survey was emailed to 300 personnel throughout the whole service ensuring all categories of employees and roles are proportionately represented. The questionnaires clearly set out the purpose and how the information will be used. As per Bell (2014):

*“Before the research begins, everyone involved must know why the investigation is to take place, who will see the final report, and who will have the responsibility for implementing any recommended changes.” (Pg. 11)*

Below is a table demonstrating alignment between the literature review and the survey questions. (Fig 3.3)

A copy of the survey can also be found in the appendix. (Fig. a)

**Fig 3.3 Linkage between Literature and Research Instrument**

<b>Survey Question Nos. See Appendix (fig. a)</b>	<b>Description of research content and rationale for Survey question</b>	<b>Source including Author's experience</b>
1	Allows for the collection of data within two large workplaces on this topic and enables comparison between organisations, one of which having an openly trans employee.	Author
2	NIFRS only – To identify any gaps in knowledge or training needs, based on geographical location.	Author & NIFRS HR Department
3	NIFRS only – To identify training received in relation to length of service.	Author & NIFRS HR Department
4	NIFRS only – To identify the category of employment within the NIFRS.	Author & NIFRS HR Department
5	Will enable researcher to identify any gaps in knowledge within various groups and spheres of influence.	Author
6	Will enable comparison of knowledge and attitude on this topic relative to age and generational demographic. eg. Traditionalist, Baby boomer etc.	Author
7 & 8	May aid with verification of prevalence percentages (Due to size of survey, this will be extremely limited).	GIRES (2011), Clarke et al. (2014)
9, 10 & 11	Transgender people fear harassment at work and very few organisations are prepared for a gender transition of an employee. This will establish if certain measures have been implemented and if staff are aware of them and have participated in any training.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Budge et al. (2010), Collins et al. (2015), McBride (2013), McBride & Hansson (2010), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007), Jones (2013)
12	Transgender people fear harassment at work and very few organisations are prepared for a gender transition of an employee. These questions are personal opinions but allow for feedback to management to influence future measures to aid integrating this community.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Budge et al. (2010), Collins et al. (2015), McBride (2013), McBride & Hansson (2010), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007), Jones (2013),

13	Carrying out training with insufficient information can increase stereotypes. Training is best carried out with input from the transgender community.	Barclay & Scott (2006)
14 & 15	Despite measures implemented by the organisation, if the culture is not conducive there will remain issues for the trans person. This will provide feedback from the staff on their perception of the culture.	Baker (2007), Jones (2013), Rankin et al. (2010)
16 & 17	There is perceived negative attitudes and prejudice directed towards this community. These questions attempt to verify these attitudes or acknowledge improving attitudes.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Budge et al. (2010), Collins et al. (2015), Equality Commission of NI. (2011), McBride (2013), McBride & Hansson (2010), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007), Jones (2013)
18	To identify areas of concern from stakeholders and identify training requirements.	The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment Regs. (NI) (1999), The Gender Recognition Act (2004), Barclay & Scott (2006), Rudin et al. (2014)
19	There is perceived negative attitudes and prejudice directed towards this community. For those who are supportive this will hopefully measure their confidence in the environment to openly show this support.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Jones (2013)
20	Provides feedback to the researcher as to the current attitudes towards this community.	Author
21	Provides feedback on what measures or other factors is impacting change of attitude.	Author
22, 23 & 24	These questions will only appear to those who have said they are trans in Q.5 as they are only applicable to trans employees. They seek to identify if they are openly out at work and identify any reasons for not being out.	Hansson & Depret (2007), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007)
25	Provides further limited qualitative information to help the researcher. These details may add further knowledge to the research even if it is only from a small group of people.	Creswell (1998), Rankin et al. (2010), Wilson (2014)



26	Provides further opportunity for the researcher to gain qualitative information (rich details) and further knowledge on this topic possibly through an interview.	Bell (2014), Creswell (1998), Rankin et al. (2010), Wilson (2014)
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### **3.8 Values and limitations**

It is the hope of the author that the review of the literature combined with the further investigation into this specific area, will help to highlight this topical but under researched area, where there has arguably been very real negative experiences particularly by the trans person. It is anticipated NIFRS and BCC will adopt the recommendations and demonstrate good practice on this issue. They will hopefully then be used as a benchmark for other employers.

The limitations impacting on the research will include personal capability affecting data collection and also personal workload, family commitments and timescales. It is also acknowledged that the research population includes just two organisations, both of which were chosen due to the prospect of access to staff for survey completion. According to the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (ECNI) both workplaces are among the very few organisations to have implemented positive trans inclusive measures. This is likely to give a more positive outcome than if the research had been across a wider range of employers. This is a small-scale preliminary study with limited time and resources available.

It should also be recognised that because of measures already adopted such as trans guidance booklets and training sessions for staff in the NIFRS and a Trans

memorial day with trans guest speakers in Belfast City Council, there is a likelihood of better response rate to the questionnaires and in turn a greater opportunity to develop a 'good practice model'.

Another reason the NIFRS was chosen was because the author has openly undergone gender transition as a member of staff several years ago and this may impact on the responses compared to an organisation where this may not knowingly have happened to date.

### **3.9 Ethics, confidentiality and consent.**

The following ethical issues pertaining to this research are:

- Organisational consent, which has been achieved by meeting with the relevant HR departments and explaining the purpose of the research, discussing the survey as well as the expectations of their staff.
- Purpose and use of information clearly given to all participants.
- Consent forms to be completed for all interviewees.
- Participant's privacy and anonymity to remain confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, unless explicit permission is given by all relevant parties.

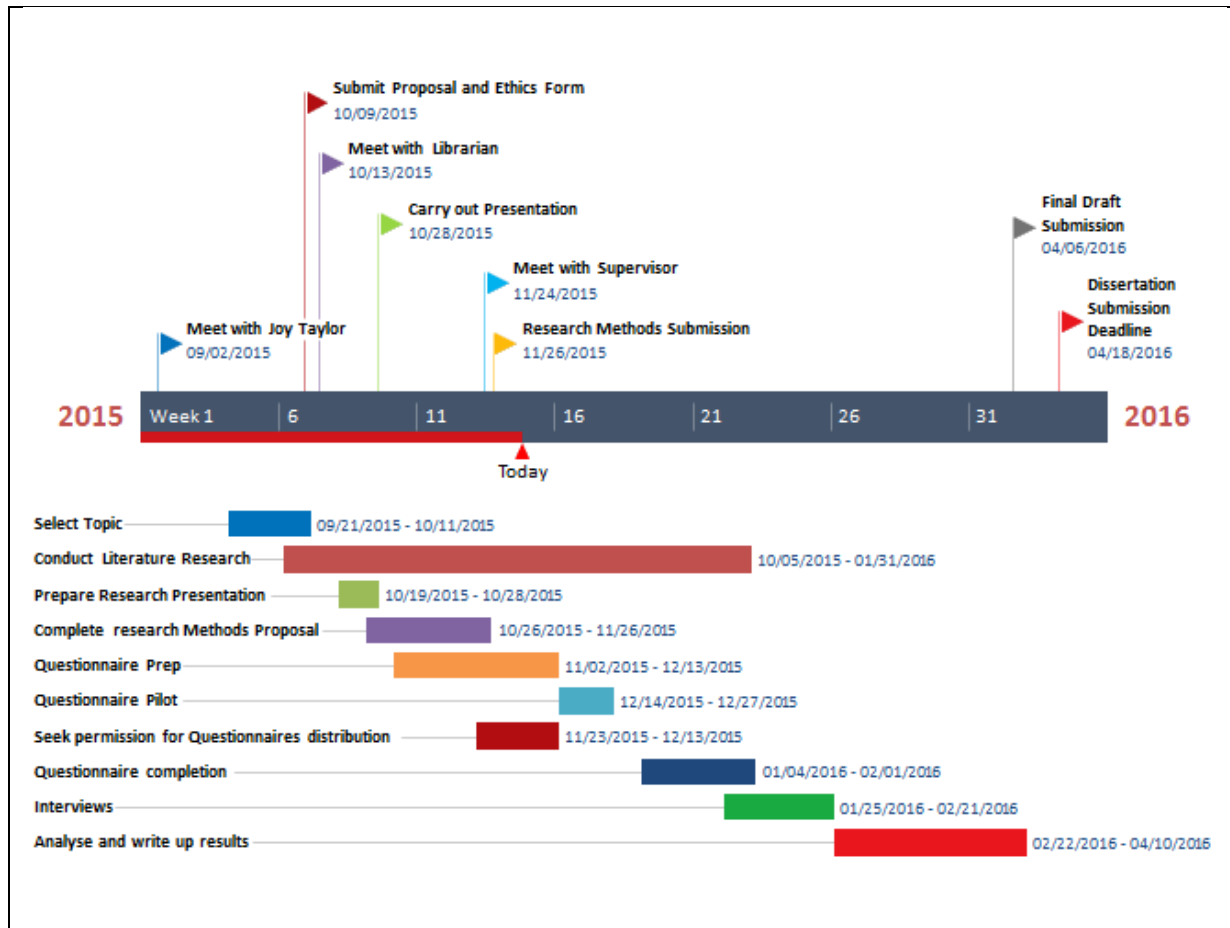
### **3.10 Analysis of Responses**

Survey responses will be collected electronically using Survey Monkey. This software will enable responses to be formatted into various charts to allow for summarising or further detailed analysis of the responses. It will also allow for comparisons between many aspects such as age, position and also how the staff from each organisation feel prepared for a gender transition. It is also the expectation through various questions to prove the hypothesis from chapter one.

Interviews with the several key (Tier 1) stakeholders will be transcribed and thoroughly read, scrutinising for themes or patterns emerging and any key information that will add further valuable information to this topic. The findings will then be written up, interpreted and it will then be possible to compare this study with existing literature.

### 3.11 Gantt Chart

A timeline chart has been created by the author, to aid with the planning and completion of the various stages of this research project.



## Chapter Four

### Transition in the Workplace – Survey Results & Analysis



The survey was distributed within two large public sector organisations in Northern Ireland as a pilot study to identify the impact that a gender transition may have on personnel within the organisation and to ascertain if the organisations are adequately prepared, given specific legislation is in place (Chapter 2) for the protection of trans personnel.

The two organisations chosen were the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) as the author is an employee, and Belfast City Council (BCC) which is currently implementing a trans protocol.

The survey was available on electronic format via Survey Monkey and was distributed as follows:

**NIFRS:** The HR Director gave permission to distribute the survey via email to a sample population within the organisation. To improve impartiality the author picked two random stations from each of the four areas within the NIFRS and sent out the survey via email to all personnel within these stations. It was also sent to random

personnel within headquarters and the training school to ensure all departments and roles had an opportunity to have an input. The survey was sent out to a total of 300 personnel during February 2016, of which 78 personnel responded (response rate of 26%). Personnel had a timeframe of approximately 3 weeks to complete the survey.

**BCC:** Permission was given by the director of organisational development to place the survey on a staff intranet which was accessible to all 2600 staff. The survey was available for 3 weeks during February 2016. A total of 116 responses were given (response rate of 4.46%).

The questionnaire was split up into five main sections.

**Section 1 (Qs 1 – 8):** To gather general information on the respondents which would allow for further in depth study of the results and allow for comparisons on age and position within the organisation etc. It was also an opportunity for any respondents to divulge if they were transgender, or if they were aware of transgender colleagues. Questions 2 – 4 were available only to NIFRS personnel and designed to ascertain respondent's workplace location, length of service and category of employment.

**Section 2 (Qs 9 - 12):** To obtain the respondents opinion on how well prepared and conducive the organisation is to accommodate a trans colleague.

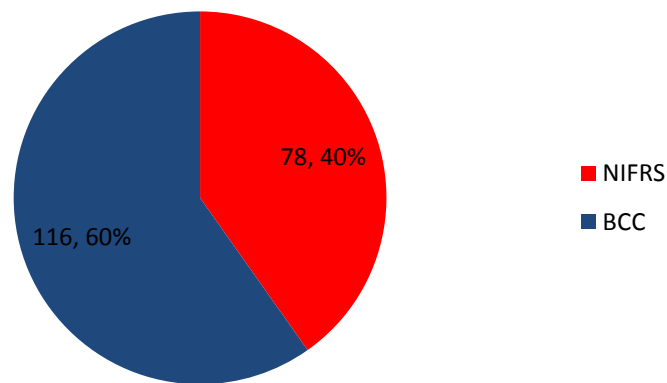
**Section 3 (Qs 13 – 21):** To obtain the respondents opinions on trans employees.

**Section 4 (Qs 22 – 24):** To source further information from any personnel who stated they were transgender. In this survey no one claimed to be trans, however one respondent did say they have a child who was transitioning from female to male.

**Section 5 (Qs 25 – 26):** This gave the opportunity for the respondents to add further comments and also provide contact details to the researcher in the event of further information being required.

## Section 1 – General Information

### Q 1: Please select your employer



Organisation	Total Employees	Total no. of employees survey was available	No. of responses	Response rate
NIFRS	2250	300	78	26%
BCC	2600	2600	116	4.46%

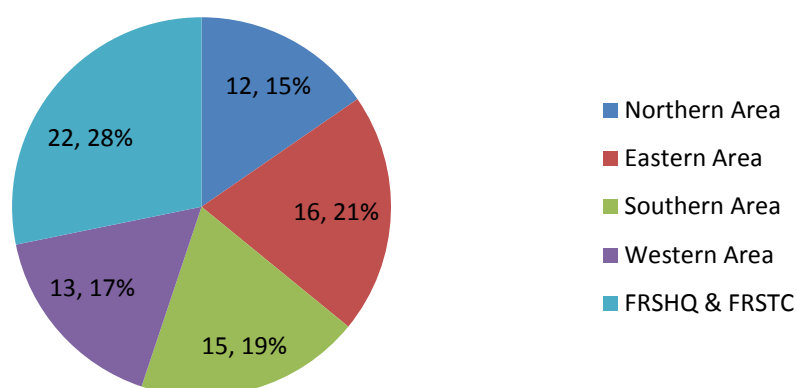
#### Commentary:

Having two sets of results from different organisations was an opportunity to make comparisons and also note any significant differences in attitudes of personnel, as it was openly known that the researcher has undergone gender transition approximately five years ago in the NIFRS, whereas it was not known if there were any openly trans personnel within BCC. Due to a technical issue with the NIFRS IT system, the internet and by default Survey Monkey became unavailable within the workplace to all personnel for the last week of the survey. The survey was still available through their home computers. This is likely to have negatively impacted on the response rate as it coincided with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) branch reps promoting the survey to their members.



The following 3 questions were only available to personnel from the NIFRS and were asked to ascertain further information to identify any specific gaps in training or knowledge.

## Q 2: Please select your workplace location



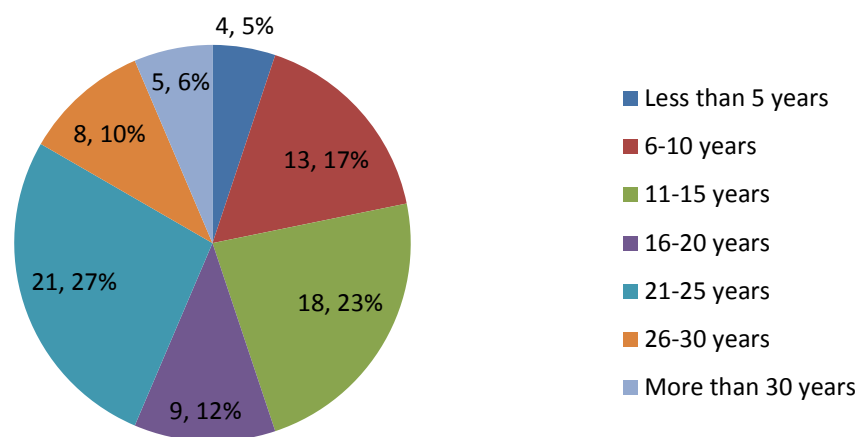
	No of survey participants e-mailed	No of personnel in each area	No of respondents	Percentage of returns per area / dept.
NAC	61	850	12	20 %
EAC	63	994	16	25 %
SAC	63	54	15	24 %
WAC	61	245	13	21 %
SHQ & STC	52	N/A	22	42 %
Total	300	2143	78	26 %

### Commentary:

The response rate was very similar across the 4 areas with an average of 22.5 % rate of response. The best response was from SHQ and STC, this in part may be due to most of these personnel having more access time to a PC and also a larger proportion of personnel would be supervisory or management level who may be more likely to voice their opinion on this issue. Further investigation of the survey data indicated that no respondents received training on this issue within Western

area. Western area also had the highest percentage of responses (46%) stating that they didn't think the organisation was conducive to coming out as trans, and only one respondent stated they were very comfortable working with a trans colleague.

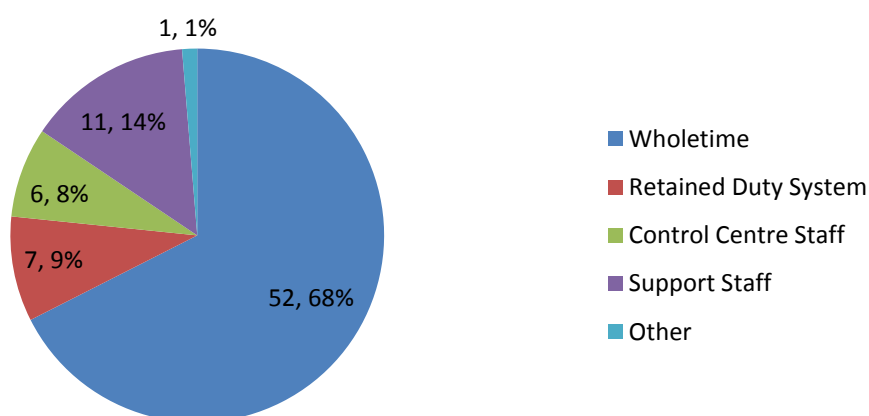
### Q 3: Please select your length of service



#### Commentary:

Responses were received from all categories, however the vast majority (90%), came from those between 6 and 30 years of service with the organisation.

#### Q 4: Please select your category of employment within the NIFRS



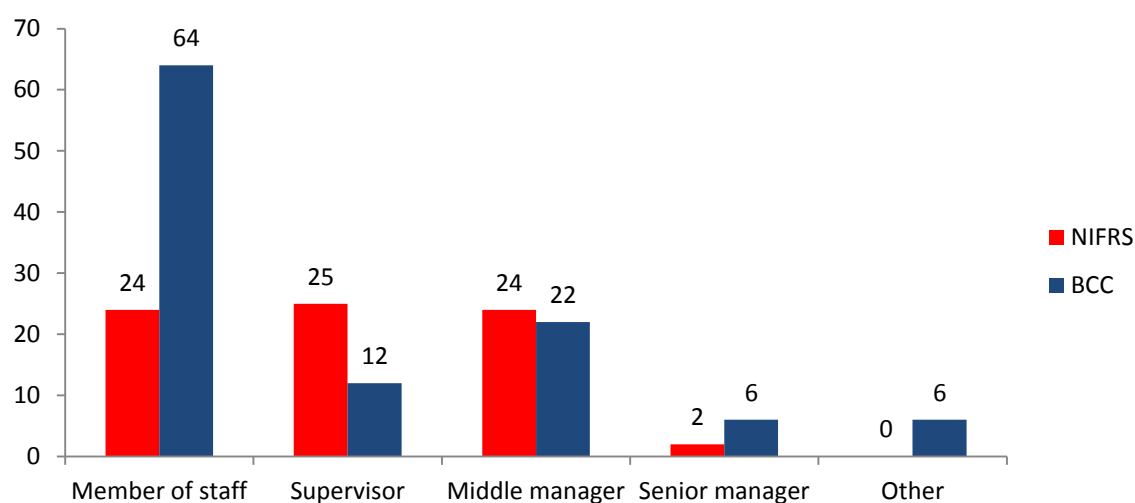
1 respondent skipped this question

	No of survey participants e-mailed	No of personnel in each category	No of respondents	Percentage of returns per category emailed.
Whole-time	177	850	52	29%
Retained	84	994	7	8%
Controls	10	54	6	60%
Support	29	245	11	38%
Other	0	N/A	1	N/A
Total	300	2143	77	26%

#### Commentary:

One respondent answered this question by selecting other and commenting that he was employed on a whole-time and retained contract. The highest response rate was from controls with 60%, followed by support staff and then whole-time personnel who although provided the most responses, had a response rate of 29%. Only 8% of retained personnel responded, which brought the overall response rate down considerably. Possible reasons for the low retained response was: limited access to PC's on station, impacting on retained personnel checking their emails on a regular basis and the IT technical issue coinciding with FBU branch reps promoting the survey.

## Q 5: Please select your position within your organisation



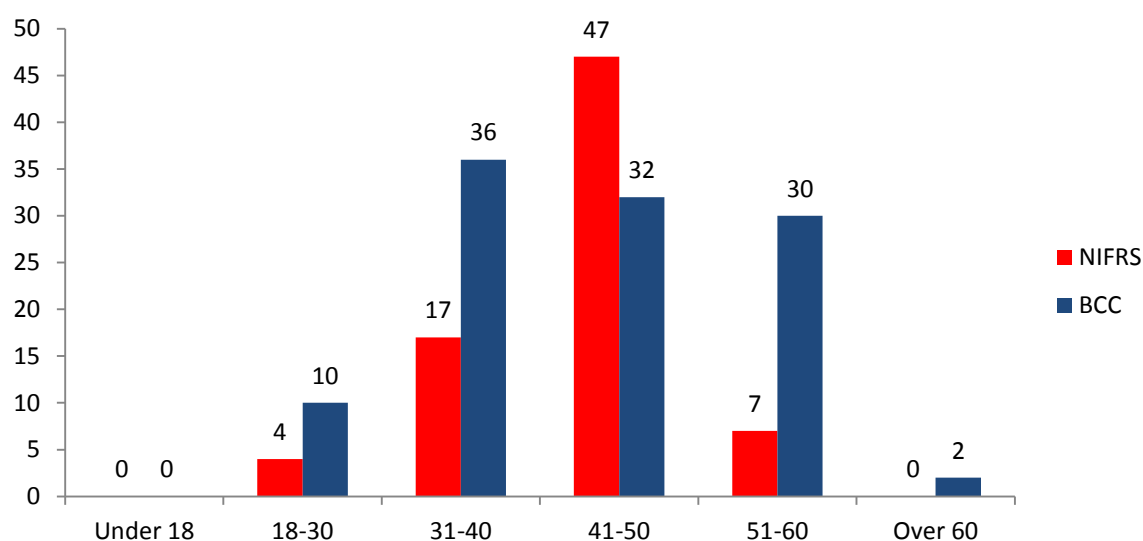
9 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Member of staff	24	32 %	64	58 %	88	48 %
Supervisor	25	33 %	12	11 %	37	20 %
Middle manager	24	32 %	22	20 %	46	25 %
Senior Manager	2	3 %	6	6 %	8	4 %
Other	0	0 %	6	5 %	6	3 %
Total	75	100 %	108	100 %	185	100 %

### Commentary:

The response rate from BCC was more reflective of the breakdown of their workforce with over 58% of their responses coming from non-supervisory staff which compared to 32% of the same group responding from NIFRS. This may in part be due to firefighters having limited access to computers especially within the retained sector. Upon further data analysis, most responses were similar despite position and organisation. One obvious exception was 67% of BCC senior managers believed their organisation was conducive to employees coming out as trans, compared to neither of the two NIFRS senior management respondents believing their organisation to be conducive to coming out as trans.

## Q 6: Please indicate your age



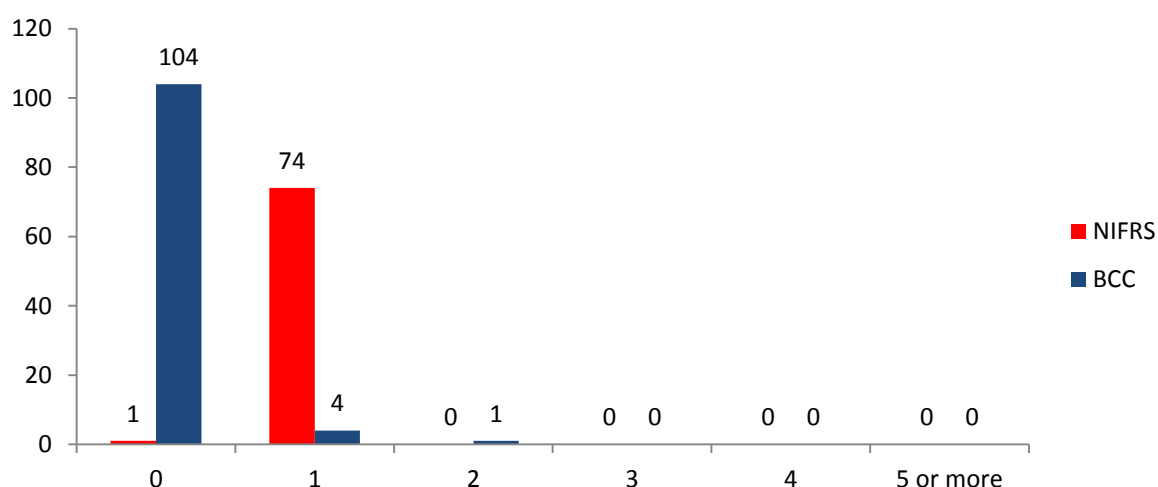
9 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Under 18	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
18 - 30	4	5 %	10	9 %	14	8 %
31 - 40	17	23 %	36	33 %	53	28 %
41 - 50	47	63 %	32	29 %	79	43 %
51 - 60	7	9 %	30	27 %	37	20 %
Over 60	0	0 %	2	2 %	2	1 %
Total	75	100 %	110	100 %	185	100 %

### Commentary:

BCC respondent's age range was greater than that of the NIFRS, which had 86% of respondents fall into the 31 – 50 years of age categories. This in part could be due to the earlier retirement age of operational fire service personnel. Further investigation of the data demonstrated a pattern, with the percentage of each category who stated they were very comfortable working with a trans colleague declining as the age group category increased (18-30 = 64%, 31-40 = 53%, 41-50 = 48% & 51-60 = 49%). Response's from other questions such as: would you be supportive of a trans colleague, did not replicate this pattern.

## Q 7: How many transgender employees are you aware of in your organisation?



9 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
0	1	1 %	104	95 %	105	57 %
1	74	99 %	4	4 %	78	42 %
2	0	0 %	1	1 %	1	1 %
3	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
4	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
5 or more	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
Total	75	100 %	109	100 %	184	100 %

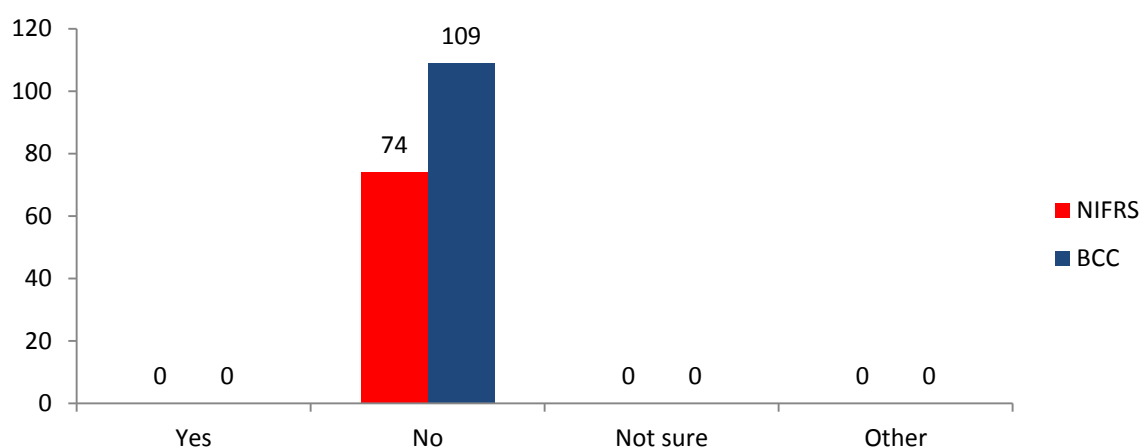
### Commentary:

It was very clear from the responses that virtually all personnel (99%) within the NIFRS are aware of the author's transgender status even though this was not disclosed as part of the survey. This may also be due to the fact that the transition took place whilst being employed in this organisation. This response highlights this as a significant issue which personnel are likely to remember.

It was also noted that at least 5 personnel within BCC were aware of a transgender colleague; however the vast majority of personnel (95%) were not aware of any transgender colleagues within their organisation. This may be due to the geographic

dispersal of staff, smaller teams or departments within BCC compared with that of NIFRS. It could also possibly be due to the fact that the trans person did not transition in the workplace, and has chosen not to divulge their trans status to other workers. This would support Jones (2013, pg. 19, chapter 2).

## Q 8: Do you consider yourself to be transgender?



11 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
No	74	100 %	109	100 %	183	100 %
Not sure	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
Other	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
Total	74	100 %	109	100 %	183	100 %

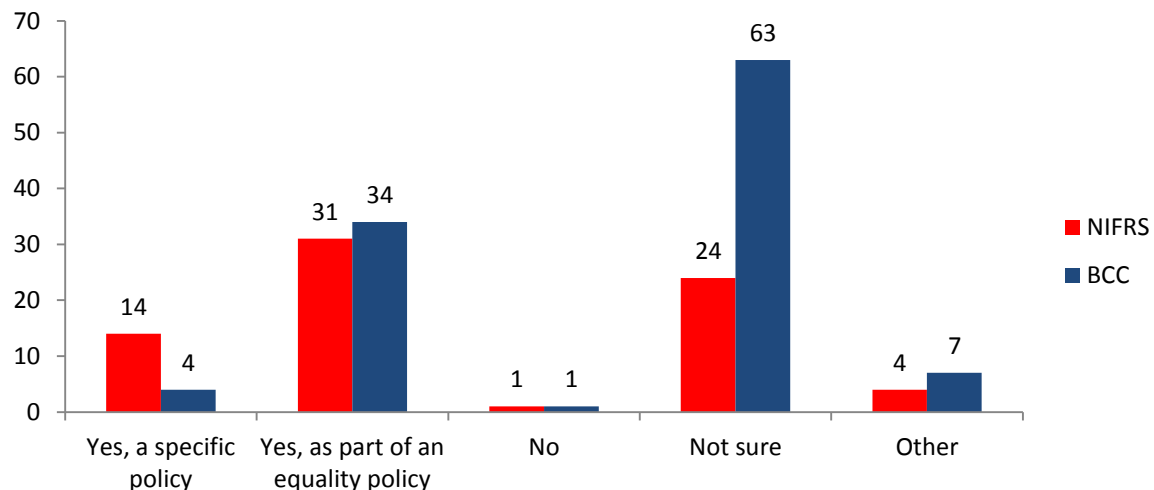
### Commentary:

As per GIRES (2011, pg. 3, chapter 1) suggesting that employers should assume that 1% of their workforce are likely to be on the transgender spectrum, it was optimistic with just under 200 respondents anyone would identify as transgender, although one respondent did state they had a child who was trans. With no respondents claiming to be trans, the survey was unable to help substantiate Whittle et al (2007, pg. 26, chapter 2) claim that 42% of trans people are not living in their preferred gender role for fear that it may threaten their employment status. However, the author, being trans, notes that due to the massive negative implications that coming out could have, would not have admitted to anyone her trans status until totally ready and prepared to transition for fear of this news getting out. This would also support Jones (2013, pg.19, chapter 2).



## Section 2 - You're Opinions on Your Organisation

### Q 9: Does your organisation have a policy for transgender inclusion?



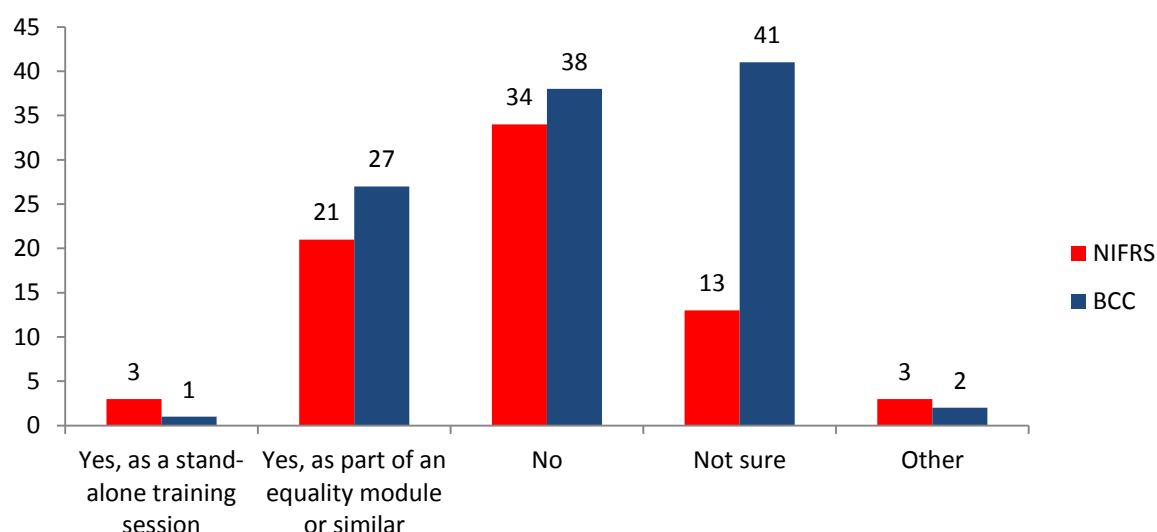
### 11 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes, a specific policy	14	19 %	4	4 %	18	10 %
Yes, as part of an equality policy	31	42 %	34	31 %	65	35 %
No	1	1 %	1	1 %	2	1 %
Not sure	24	33 %	63	58 %	87	48 %
Other	4	5 %	7	6 %	11	6 %
Total	74	100 %	109	100 %	183	100 %

### Commentary:

Respondents from the NIFRS were more confident of a policy for transgender inclusion with 61% believing there to be either a specific policy or it to be part of the equality policy. This compares with only 35% of BCC staff believing there to be a policy in place and 58% not sure. Only one respondent from each organisation stated there was no policy in place. The reason for the different figures could be due to the NIFRS having a high profile gender transition alerting staff to this issue. Several respondents from BCC made comment that they knew a policy was currently out for consultation, which was the case at the time the survey was available.

**Q 10: Has your organisation provided any formal training on transgender issues?**



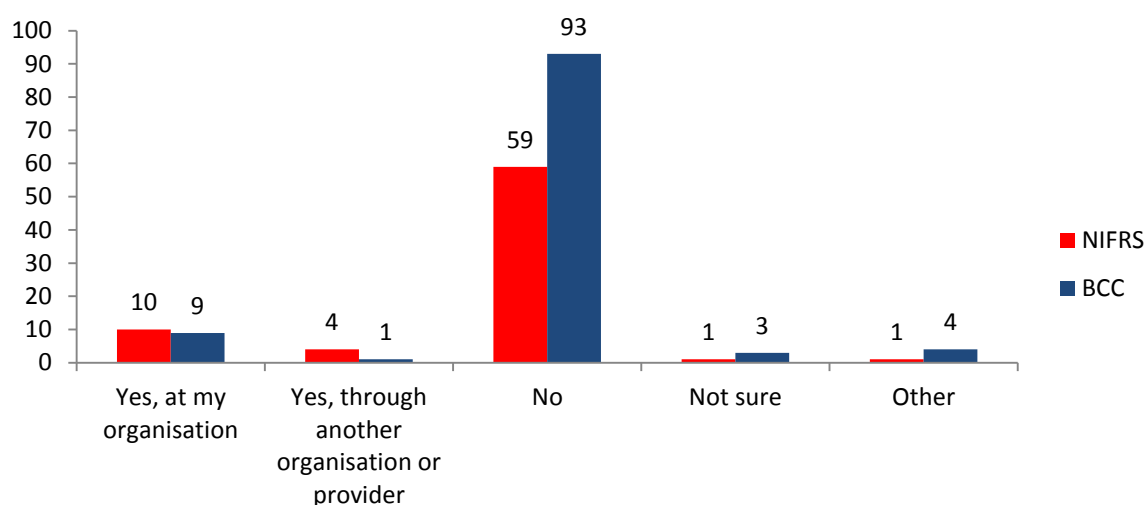
11 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes, as a stand-alone training session	3	4 %	1	1 %	4	2 %
Yes, as part of an equality module or similar	21	28 %	27	25 %	48	26 %
No	34	46 %	38	35 %	72	39 %
Not sure	13	18 %	41	37 %	54	30 %
Other	2	4 %	2	2 %	5	3 %
	74	100 %	109	100 %	183	100 %

**Commentary:**

Nearly half of NIFRS respondents (46%) believed that the organisation did not provide training on this issue with a further 18% being unsure. BCC had a higher percentage of respondents not sure with 37%, and 35% saying their organisation did not provide training on this issue. Only three respondents from NIFRS and one respondent from BCC believed it had been covered as a stand a stand-alone training event.

## Q 11: Have you undergone formal training on transgender issues?



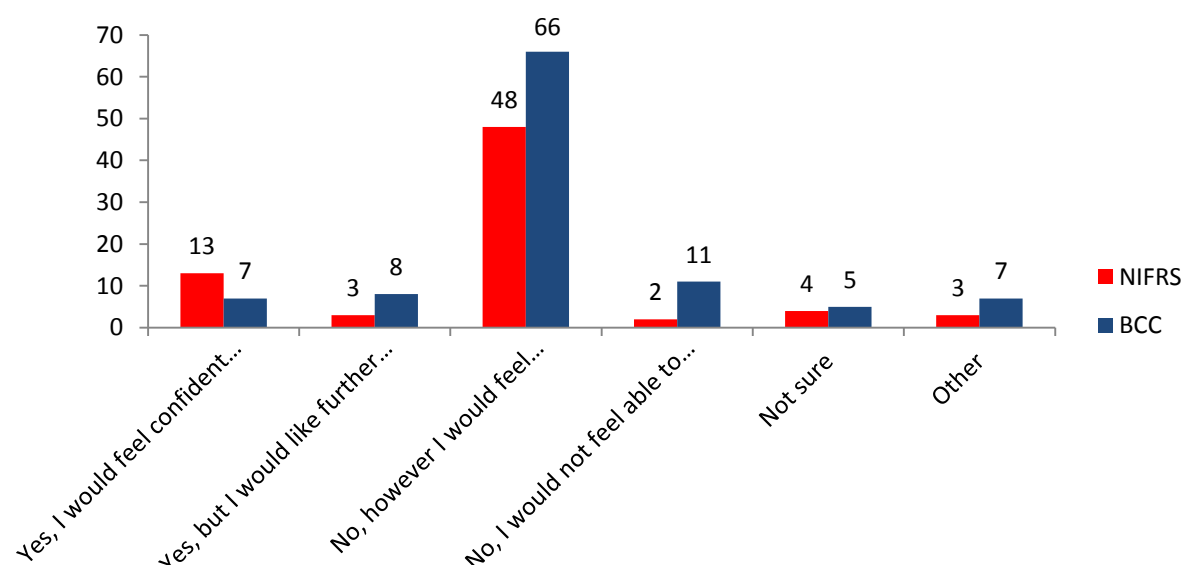
9 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes, at my organisation	10	14 %	9	8 %	19	10 %
Yes, through another organisation	4	5 %	1	1 %	5	3 %
No	59	79 %	93	84 %	152	82 %
Not sure	1	1 %	3	3 %	4	2 %
Other	1	1 %	4	4 %	5	3 %
Total	75	100 %	110	100 %	185	100 %

### Commentary:

14% of the NIFRS respondents had received training on this topic through their own organisation compared to 8% of BCC respondents, however the biggest category with 79% of NIFRS and 84% of BCC respondents have not received any training on this topic at all. These results would support Hansson & Depret (2007, pg. 18, chapter 2) research, that found there was a lack of knowledge and understanding about transgender issues, with 82% of personnel having received no training on this issue.

**Q 12: Has your organisation provided sufficient training for you to deal with a colleague coming out as transgender?**



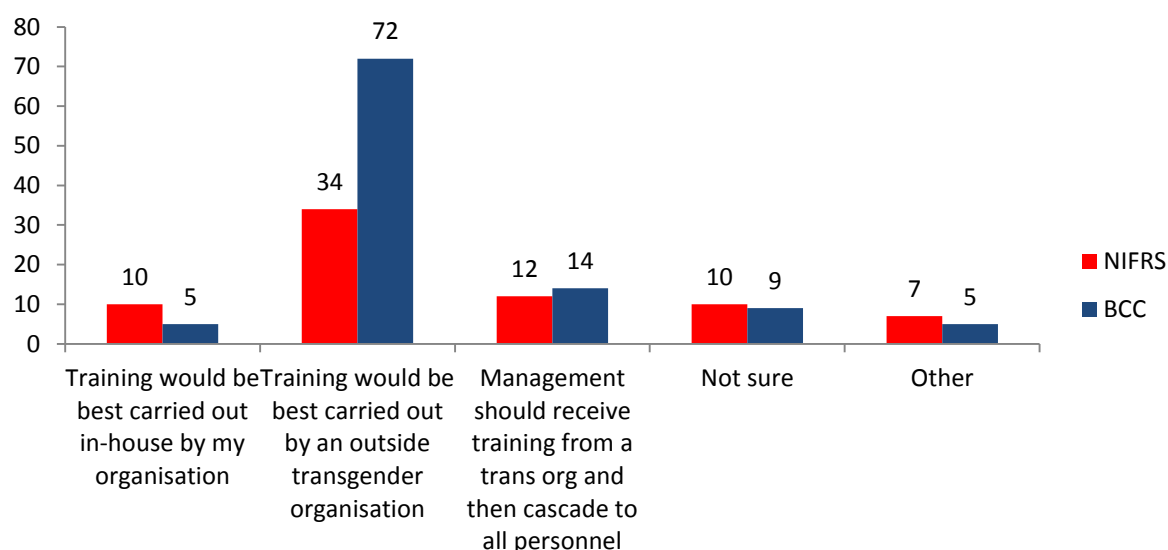
17 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes, I would feel confident accommodating a trans colleague	13	18 %	7	7 %	20	11 %
Yes, but I would like further guidance on accommodating trans colleagues	3	4 %	8	8 %	11	6 %
No, however I would feel confident accommodating a trans person	48	66 %	66	63 %	114	65 %
No, I would not feel able to accommodate a trans colleague	2	3 %	11	10 %	13	7 %
Not sure	4	5 %	5	5 %	9	5 %
Other	3	4 %	7	7 %	10	6 %
Total	73	100 %	104	100 %	177	100 %

**Commentary:**

Very similar responses were given by both the NIFRS (66%) and BCC (63%) respondents claiming they had not received training, however they would feel confident accommodating a trans colleague. It is also noted that 3% of NIFRS respondents wouldn't feel able to accommodate a trans person with a further 5% not sure. 10% of BCC respondents do not feel able to accommodate a trans colleague with a further 8% saying they would like further guidance.

### Q 13: Who would be best placed to carry out training on transgender issues?



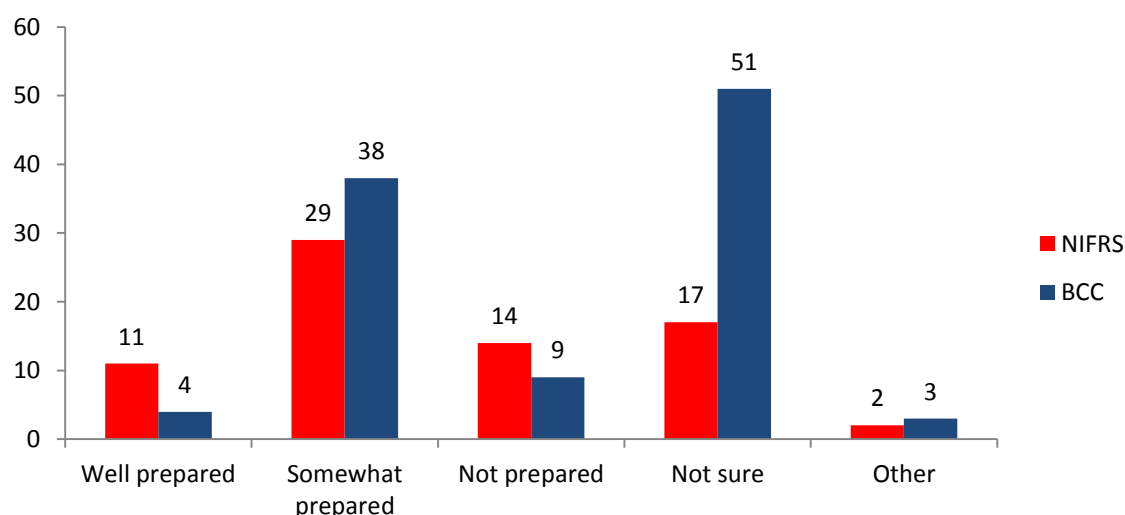
16 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Training would be best carried out in-house by my organisation	10	14 %	5	5 %	15	9 %
Training would be best carried out by an outside transgender organisation	34	46 %	72	68 %	106	60 %
Management should receive specific training from a transgender organisation and then cascade to all personnel	12	16 %	14	13 %	26	15 %
Not sure	10	14 %	9	9 %	19	10 %
Other	7	10 %	5	5 %	12	6 %
Total	73	100 %	105	100 %	178	100 %

#### Commentary:

Respondents from both organisations responded in a broadly similar manor with most saying that training would be best carried out by an outside transgender organisation with the next most popular category being; management should receive input from a trans organisation and then cascade to all personnel. Six respondents in total commented in the other section stating that they felt training on this issue was unnecessary. One respondent commented “I don’t want to be told how to feel about this issue”. This would demonstrate ignorance as the training would provide guidance and knowledge and not tell people how to feel on this issue.

# **Q 14: How prepared is your organisation to accommodate transgender employees?**



16 respondents skipped this question

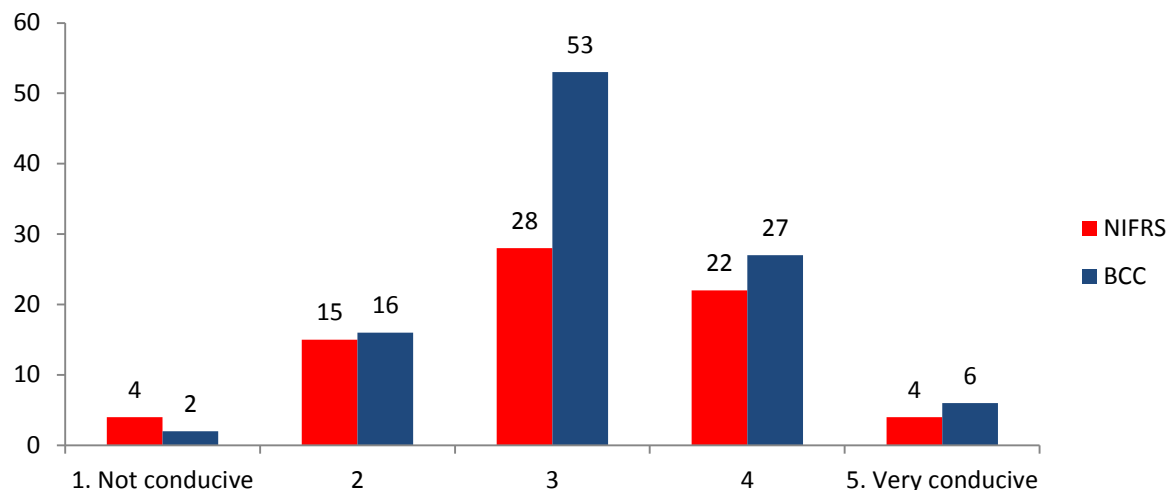
	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Well prepared	11	15 %	4	4 %	15	8 %
Somewhat prepared	29	40 %	38	36 %	67	38 %
Not prepared	14	19 %	9	9 %	23	13 %
Not sure	17	23 %	51	48 %	68	38 %
Other	2	3 %	3	3 %	5	3 %
Total	73	100 %	105	100 %	178	100 %

## **Commentary:**

Only 15% of respondents from NIFRS and 4% from BCC believe their organisation to be well prepared to accommodate transgender employees. A similar percentage of 40% (NIFRS) and 36% (BCC) believe their organisation to be somewhat prepared, however 19% of NIFRS respondents said that the organisation was not prepared and a further 23% weren't sure. Nearly half (48%) of BCC respondents said they were not sure. One respondent commented that there had been a transgender placement employee, which resulted in a lot of ignorant questions and laughing about her, which would strengthen the need for training on this issue.

## Section 3 – Your Opinions on Transgender Employees

**Q 15: On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate if the culture in your organisation is conducive or welcoming, to employees coming out as transgender?**



17 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
1 Not conducive/welcoming at all	4	6 %	2	2 %	6	3 %
2	15	21 %	16	15 %	31	17 %
3	28	38 %	53	51 %	81	46 %
4	22	30 %	27	26 %	49	28 %
5 Very conducive/welcoming	4	5 %	6	6 %	10	6 %
Total	73	100 %	104	100 %	177	100 %

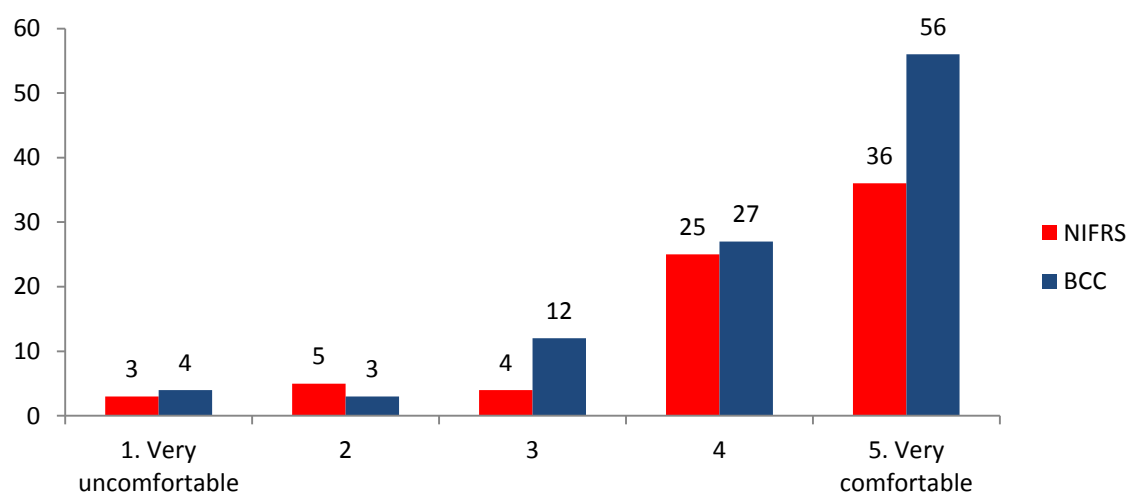
Commentary:

Despite having an openly trans employee, 6% of NIFRS respondents believed that the organisation was not conducive to coming out as transgender with a further 21% selecting the next least conducive category. With 38%, the largest category was the middle ground with a further 35% believing the NIFRS was conducive or very conducive to coming out as transgender. BCC results were very similar with a slightly smaller percentage believing their organisation not to be conducive; however the largest category with the BCC respondents was also the middle ground with 51%. Survey results would support previous research by Rankin et al (2010, pg. 22, chapter 2) suggesting culture within fire services was not conducive to being trans,

however it can also be seen that a larger proportion of respondents believe that both organisations are conducive as opposed to not conducive.



**Q 16: On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how comfortable you would feel working with a transgender colleague?**



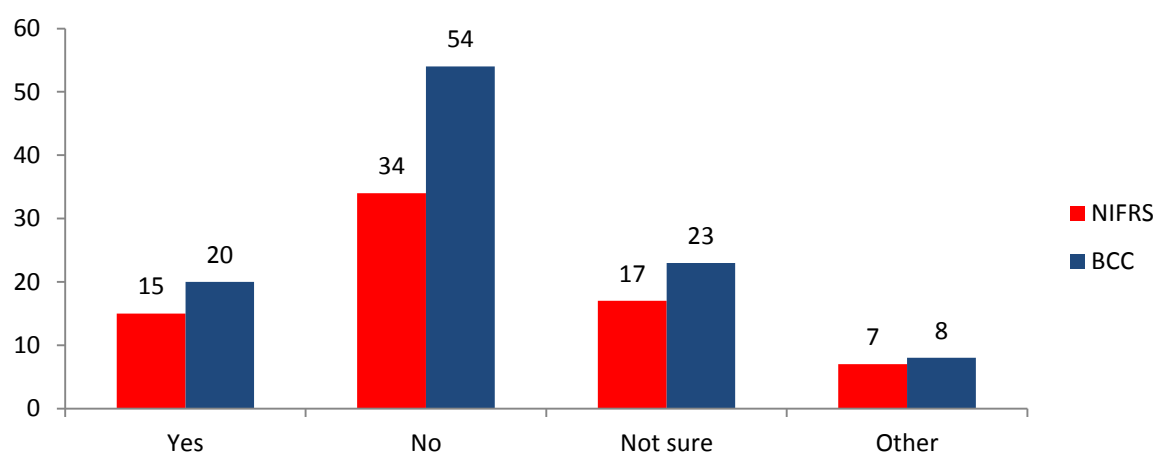
19 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
1 Very uncomfortable	3	4 %	4	4 %	7	4 %
2	5	7 %	3	3 %	8	5 %
3	4	6 %	12	12 %	16	9 %
4	25	34 %	27	26 %	52	30 %
5 Very comfortable	36	49 %	56	55 %	92	52 %
Total	73	100 %	102	100 %	175	100 %

Commentary:

The responses from both organisations were very similar, with the majority of respondents from the NIFRS and BCC stating that they would feel very comfortable working with a transgender colleague with 49% and 55% respectively. The next largest category for both organisations was also positive for transgender staff, whereas only 11% of NIFRS and 7% of BCC respondents state that they would not feel comfortable working with a transgender colleague. These results show a marked improvement in attitude towards working with a trans colleague, as the equality Commission for NI survey (2011, pg. 15, chapter 2) showed that 35% of respondents would mind working with a transgender person.

**Q 17: Do you think trans women need to “look like women”, and trans men need to “look like men” to be accepted in the workplace?**



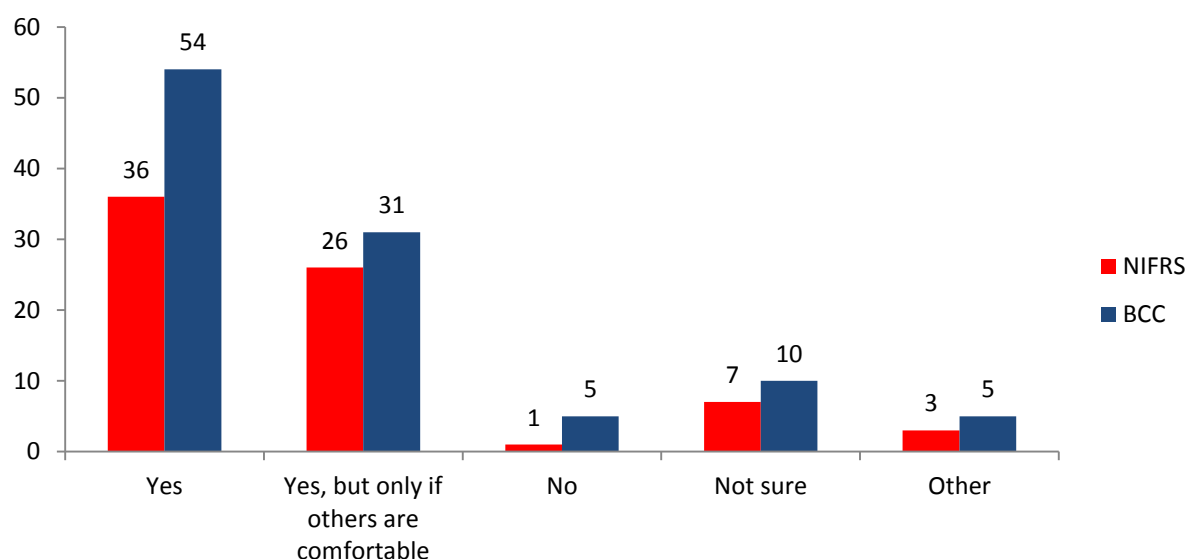
16 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes	15	20 %	20	19 %	35	20 %
No	34	47 %	54	51 %	88	49 %
Not sure	17	23 %	23	22 %	40	23 %
Other	7	10 %	8	8 %	15	8 %
Total	73	100 %	105	100 %	178	100 %

**Commentary:**

This question again generated very similar responses from both organisations with the largest number of respondents for each organisation (47%, NIFRS and 51%, BCC) stating that it was not necessary for the trans person to look like their acquired gender in order to be accepted in the workplace. Approximately a quarter of respondents from each organisation were not sure, with approx. 20% from both NIFRS and BCC stating that they should look like their acquired gender to be accepted in the workplace. The vast majority of comments given by those who selected ‘other’ also didn’t believe it was necessary to “pass” to be accepted in the workplace. Several respondents make comment that, although it’s not necessary for them; it would be to others they work with.

**Q 18: Should transgender employees be allowed to use gender-specific toilet facilities?**



16 respondents skipped this question

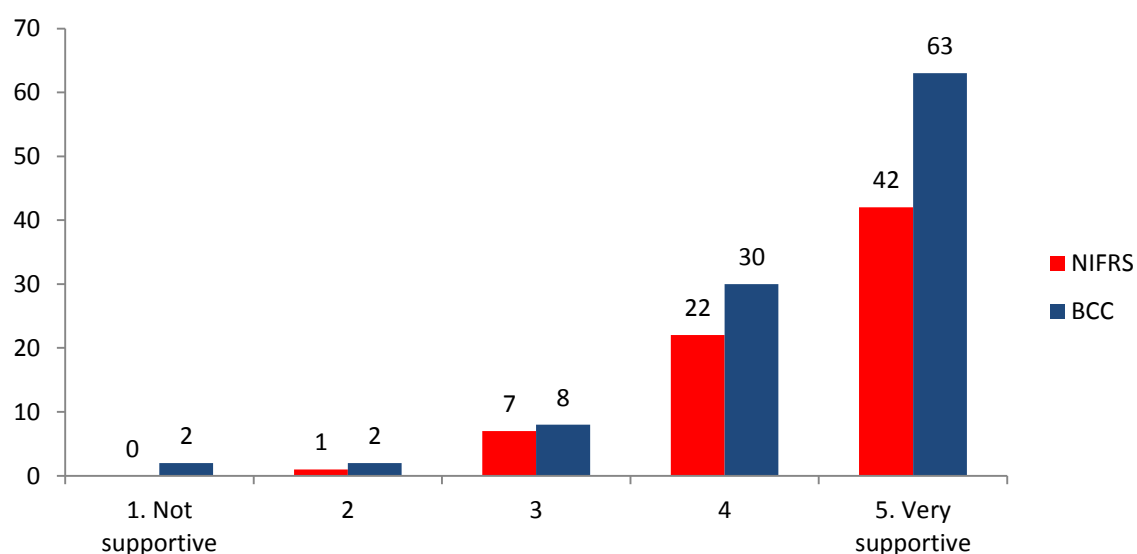
	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
Yes	36	49 %	54	51 %	90	51 %
Yes, but only if others are comfortable	26	36 %	31	30 %	57	32 %
No	1	1 %	5	5 %	6	3 %
Not sure	7	10 %	10	9 %	17	10 %
Other	3	4 %	5	5 %	8	4 %
	<b>73</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Commentary:**

Again this question generated very similar responses from each of the organisations with approximately half of the respondents from each organisation stating that transgender employees should be able to use gender specific toilets with a further 36% from NIFRS and 30% from BCC saying they should be able to use gender specific toilets as long as others are comfortable. Taking account of the respondents who made a comment, only 2 from the NIFRS and 5 from BCC believed that they should not be able to use gender specific toilets with one commenting that transgender personnel “should have their own facility”. A BCC respondent also

makes a derogatory comment based on ignorance, again demonstrating a training need. It should also be noted in many cases legislation enforces the rights of trans persons to use the gender specific toilet of their acquired gender and it should not be dependent on others feeling comfortable, although ultimately the author believes this is the desirable outcome for all staff. The combined percentage of 32% between both organisations, who stated that it was ok to use the gender specific toilet, providing others were comfortable, arguably demonstrates a hierarchy of rights and suggests reluctance by a high percentage of staff, to treat transgender personnel with total equity.

**Q 19: On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate if you would be openly supportive of a transgender colleague in the workplace?**



17 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
1 Not supportive	0	0 %	2	2 %	2	1 %
2	1	1 %	2	2 %	3	2 %
3	7	10 %	8	8 %	15	9 %
4	22	31 %	30	28 %	52	29 %
5 Very supportive	42	58 %	63	60 %	105	59 %
Total	72	100 %	105	100 %	177	100 %

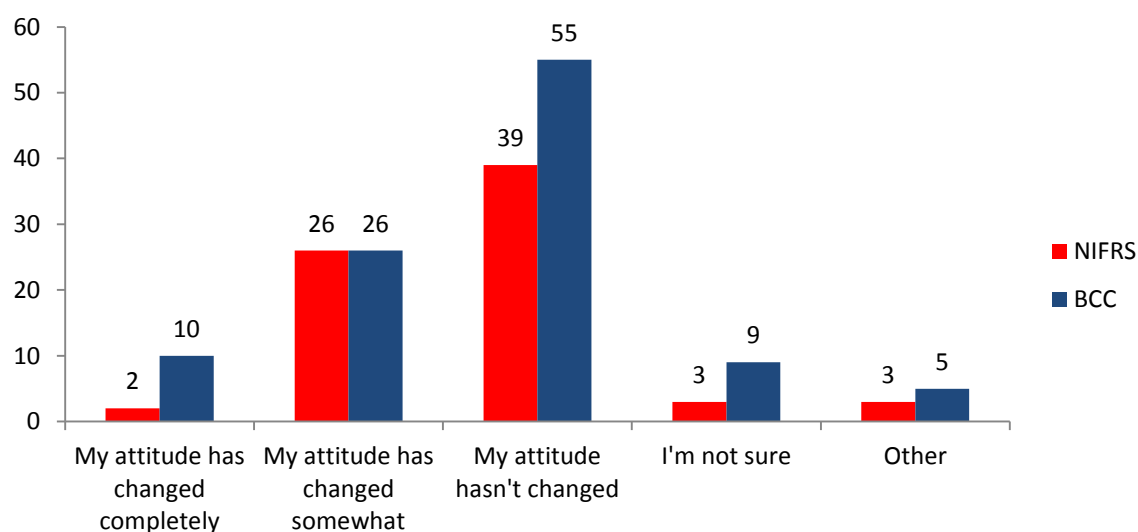
Commentary:

Once again this question generated very similar responses from both organisations.

The most popular response at 59% between the organisations indicated that they would be very supportive with a further 29% being supportive. Only 1 respondent from the NIFRS and five from BCC indicated that they would not be supportive.

These results would indicate a marked improvement in attitudes towards trans personnel compared with findings from McNeil et al (2013, pg. 17, chapter 2) and McBride (2013, pg. 18, chapter 2).

**Q 20: Has your attitude towards transgender issues changed within the last 5 years?**



16 respondents skipped this question

	NIFRS		BCC		Total	
My attitude has changed completely	2	3 %	10	9 %	12	7 %
My attitude has changed somewhat	26	36 %	26	25 %	52	29 %
My attitude hasn't changed	39	53 %	55	52 %	94	53 %
I'm not sure	3	4 %	9	9 %	12	7 %
Other	3	4 %	5	5 %	8	4 %
Total	73	100 %	105	100 %	178	100 %

**Commentary:**

With just over half the respondents from each organisation stating that their attitude had not changed, this was the most popular response. However, it was clear that a large number of respondent's attitudes had changed, with 39% from the NIFRS and 34% from BCC saying that it has changed somewhat or completely. This combined with positive responses in questions 16 – 19 would demonstrate that more knowledge on this topic is having a positive impact. A further derogatory comment was made by a respondent in the 'other' section, which again would demonstrate the

necessity of training to create a more equal working environment for transgender staff.

**Q 21: If your attitude towards transgender issues has changed, can you please be specific as to what has brought about this change?**

131 respondents skipped this question.

Commentary:

61 out of the 63 (97%) respondents to this question showed a positive change in attitude. 54% made comment that education or awareness had brought about this change, with a further 22% stating that direct contact with a trans person had changed their attitude, as per the following response which also highlights the potential impact of being trans:

*"I worked with a transgender person. She said she was so unhappy as a man and was going to take her life. So she went through gender realignment. It was a tough decision as she gave up a great job, house and wife and the children wouldn't speak to her. Thankfully, after a number of years her children came around and she can now see her grandkids. She is so happy now - found a new life and partner and I am so glad for her. So getting to know her changed my mind. My sister has also studied physiology and has explained some scientific facts around transgender issues that's taught me not to judge and be accepting of people." (BCC respondent)*

No respondent makes any comments on a negative change in attitude. This information makes a compelling case that as visibility and knowledge increase, attitudes towards transgender people is improving, but it also reveals that there was and arguably still is existing prejudice. With numbers of openly transgender personnel still very low, these figures demonstrate the importance and also the necessity for the education of employees, to promote equality within the workplace for trans members of staff.

## **Section 4 - Questions for Trans Employees**

**Q 22: Are you out in the workplace?**

**Q 23: If you are not out to all staff, please indicate why?**

**Q 24: Please add a comment if you have ever felt, or feared being discriminated against in the workplace due to being trans.**

194 respondents skipped all these questions

Commentary:

No one acknowledged to be trans in question 8, therefore this section of the survey would not have been open to any of the respondents.



## Section 5 – One last thing.....

**Q 25: Please add any other comments you would like to contribute to this research**

146 respondents skipped this question

Commentary:

48 (25% of total respondents) added a comment in this section. Out of these responses, 27 (14% of total respondents) made comment that further awareness in this topic would be beneficial. 6 of the respondents who are themselves supportive, also made the following comments:

*“When I was a lot younger, a transgender lady worked in the offices near mine. I regret that when I was told I stared at her. I was only curious but I can see now that I may have contributed to upset.”* (BCC respondent)

*“I’m not sure BCC would be as accepting of transgender as it would like to be.”* (BCC respondent)

*“I am aware that female colleagues have discussed this and feel somewhat uncomfortable in sharing toilets and shower areas. I am aware that other sections and departments might not be so accommodating, due to pre-conceived attitudes”* (NIFRS respondent)

*“I think the workplace has a long way to go to be accepting and accommodating of transgender staff.”* (BCC respondent)

*“In previous employment I worked with a transgender women; she ended up leaving that employer as she said she felt she was in goldfish bowl with people staring at her.”* (BCC respondent)

*“Still a lot needs to be done. There would be too many silly jokes at the expense of TG.”* (BCC respondent)

These comments and language used by some of the respondents such as *“working with one”* and *“I never knew one personally until recently”* would also add weight to the argument for more training/awareness on this topic. They also arguably

demonstrate the potential consequences of being transgender in the workplace and reveal the immense impact even subtle forms of discrimination can have.

Only 3 out of the 48 respondents made comment against the need for training on this issue as per the 2 comments below:

*"I don't like the fact that I'm meant to be ok with this... no amount of 'training' or social conditioning (which is what it really is) will make me think that this is ok.... I believe it would be more appropriate to love these people enough to help rather than let them deform themselves with an operation which is only feeding their mental state."* (BCC respondent)

*"I do feel all of these LGBT issues take centre stage when there are far more pressing issues in the world. It's very much like making a mountain out of a molehill type stuff."* (BCC respondent) The same respondent also makes the following comment

*"Although it's a totally unnatural thing going through with these scientific experiments I do have some sympathy with their plight."*

Despite stating that training was unnecessary, the author is of the opinion that these two responses help to strengthen the case for more training on this issue, as it demonstrates the importance of first hand accurate information on this topic.

*"I believe that as an organisation NIFRS has made significant progress on LGBT issues, although there can be no doubt that further progress must be made."* (NIFRS respondent)

It is the opinion of the author that this quote would sum up the findings of this survey and validate the very real issues and fears of trans personnel within the workplace. It also acknowledges that despite the evident progress, there is much more to be done in order to make workplaces a more equitable and pleasant location where everyone can fulfil their full potential and in turn enrich the organisation.

## **Interviews of Key Stakeholders**

As discussed in chapter three it was the intention of the author to follow up the survey with interviews of the first tier of key stakeholders. Structured interviews were held during April 2016 with the following personnel:

- HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal - NIFRS
- Direct line manager during transition
- Close work colleague at time of transition
- It was also decided to insert a statement from the author to give balance and provide the perspective of a trans person

### **Summary of Interviews**

The interviews would show that a gender transition within the NIFRS was not on anyone's radar and very little specific actions had taken place to address this issue despite the enormous impact it was likely to have on a trans employee. It was even the expectation of another large public sector organisation, that the transition would have negative consequences. The NIFRS reacted quickly on this issue by developing guidance notes for staff and managers, but it was evident there was a climate of ignorance and fear and the culture was not conducive to undergoing a gender transition. This would also be supported by the survey results and previous research.

Without clear protocols, the attitude and capability of line managers played a very significant part in the success or failure of a gender transition. There was no assurance for the trans employee that they would be treated with equity.

It was also acknowledged that this issue had far reaching implications for the trans employee outside the workplace. Social issues could affect family members, as well as potential pension rights impacted upon, both of which are outside the direct control of the organisation.

All first tier stakeholders agree that more needs to be done on this issue. This would include putting in clear protocols, raising awareness not only on legislation but also providing a better understanding of trans issues, to raising the visibility and ensuring each individual is supported in an equitable manner. It was also agreed that trans specific organisations would be best placed to deliver any awareness/training on this issue.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary of Results

This research set out to ascertain how a gender transition within the workplace would impact on the trans employee, colleagues and the organisation. Following the literature review it was also anticipated by the author to prove the following hypothesis:

- Members of staff within the NIFRS and Belfast City Council are inadequately prepared to accommodate the gender transition of a colleague.

The following table shows findings from previous research on this topic and how responses from this survey support or refute previous research.

**Fig 5.1      Linkage between Literature and Survey Results**

Survey Question Nos. See Appendix (fig. a)	Description of research content and rationale for Survey question	Source including Authors experience	Survey Results
1	Allows for the collection of data within two large workplaces on this topic and enables comparison between organisations, one of which having an openly trans employee. Having two organisations strengthens the research data.	Author	<b>A significant number of responses including qualitative data was obtained from this survey.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 78 responses from NIFRS</li><li>• 116 responses from BCC</li></ul> It was hoped to gain around 100 responses from each organisation. Due partially to an IT issue with the NIFRS, this target was not fully achieved, however it was still a substantial response which provided rich data on this topic.
2	NIFRS only – To identify any gaps in knowledge or training needs based on geographical location	Author & HR Department	<b>This question was successful in identifying areas where there was gaps in the knowledge.</b> Only 14% of respondents had received in house training on this issue. The only area where no respondents received training was

			Western. 46% of WAC respondents stated the NIFRS was not conducive to employees coming out as trans. Only 1 person answered very comfortable to working with a trans colleague. 61% answered only if others are comfortable or not sure to trans colleagues using gender specific toilets. It was also the area with the greatest % of respondents who would not be openly supportive of a trans colleague with 23%.
3	NIFRS only – To identify training received in relation to length of service	Author & HR Department	<b>No significant issues were identified due to length of service.</b> Only 14% of respondents had received in house training on this issue. This was evenly split over the different categories of length of service
4	NIFRS only – To identify the category of employment within NIFRS	Author & HR Department	<b>This question identified RCC as a specific group where there is a lack of knowledge on this topic.</b> The largest response was from whole-time operational personnel which also makes up the largest proportion of the workforce. No RCC staff had received training and 1 x RCC would not feel able to accommodate a trans colleague. 67 % of RCC felt NIFRS was not prepared or not sure to accommodate a trans employee. 81% of support staff felt NIFRS was well or somewhat prepared to accommodate a trans employee. 71% of RDS felt NIFRS was not prepared or not sure to accommodate a trans employee. W/T was evenly split to this question. Only 33% of RCC staff would feel very comfortable working with a trans colleague compared to 71% of RDS staff
5	Will enable researcher to identify any gaps in knowledge within various groups and spheres of influence.	Author	<b>This question identified that senior management within the NIFRS were not confident that the organisation was conducive to coming out as trans.</b> Most of the responses were evenly distributed despite position in the organisation. Exceptions to this was 67% of senior management within BCC believed that the organisation was conducive to employees coming out as trans compared with neither of the senior managers from NIFRS believing their organisation was conducive to coming out as transgender.
6	Will enable comparison of knowledge and attitude on this topic relative to age and generational demographic. eg. Traditionalist, Baby boomer etc.	Author	<b>Patterns were identified based on age of respondent and this could be further investigated.</b> The author chose to compare results of Q.16 – How comfortable you would feel working with a trans colleague. The % of each category who stated they were very comfortable declined as the age group rose: 18-30 64%, 31-40 53%, 41-50 48% & 51-60 was similar at 49%. Another question analysed by age group was Q.19 – Would you be openly supportive of a transgender colleague in the workplace. The

			percentage of respondents who selected they would be very supportive did not follow the previous pattern with 18-30 64%, 31-40 51%, 41-50 56% but the highest percentage was the 51-60 with 67%. This may be due to the older personnel being in a management or supervisory role and also more confident to stand up for their trans colleague.
7 & 8	May aid with verification of prevalence percentages (Due to size of survey, this will be extremely limited).	GIRES (2011), Clarke et al. (2014)	<b>With fewer than 200 responses it was difficult to either help verify or refute previous research.</b> 99% of NIFRS personnel were aware of the author trans status however in BCC only 4% stated that they were aware of a trans colleague.
9, 10 & 11	Transgender people fear harassment at work and very few organisations are prepared for a gender transition of an employee. This will establish if certain measures have been implemented and if staff are aware of them and have participated in any training.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Budge et al. (2010), Collins et al. (2015), McBride (2013), McBride & Hansson (2010), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007), Jones (2013)	<b>These findings would substantiate previous research that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding on this issue as only 13% of personnel have received training on this topic.</b> 49% of all respondents were not sure if a policy existed for transgender inclusion within their organisation. 69% of respondents believed their organisation didn't provide training on this issue or were unsure. Only 28% of respondents said their organisation did provide this training in some form. 82% of the total respondents have never received training on this issue.
12	Transgender people fear harassment at work and very few organisations are prepared for a gender transition of an employee. These questions are personal opinions but allow for feedback to management to aid integrating this community.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Budge et al. (2010), Collins et al. (2015), McBride (2013), McBride & Hansson (2010), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007), Jones (2013),	<b>These responses would indicate an improvement in attitudes compared to previous research, but still indicate a significant proportion of the workforce still don't feel equipped to accommodate a trans person.</b> The largest response was 65% of total respondents had not received training on this issue, however they believed that they would still feel confident accommodating a trans person. 18% of respondents either were not sure, don't feel able or would like further guidance on accommodating a trans person.
13	Carrying out training with insufficient information can increase stereotypes. Training is best carried out with input from the transgender community.	Barclay & Scott (2006)	<b>Findings from this survey supports previous research, with 60% of respondents stating they believe training should be conducted by a specific trans organisation and a further 15% stating that at least management should receive training from a trans organisation.</b>

			The vast majority of personnel believed that an outside trans organisation would be better placed to deliver this training.
14 & 15	Despite measures implemented by the organisation, if the culture is not conducive there will remain issues for the trans person. This will provide feedback from the staff on their perception of the culture.	Baker (2007), Jones (2013), Rankin et al. (2010)	These findings would be consistent with previous research but could also show that culture is slowly improving with 34% of respondents believing the culture to be conducive or welcoming to trans colleagues. Only 8% of respondents believe their organisation to be well prepared to accommodate a transgender colleague. 20% of respondents don't believe their organisation to have a conducive culture to coming out as trans.
16 & 17	There is still a lot of negative attitude and prejudice directed towards this community. These questions attempt to verify these attitudes or acknowledge improving attitudes.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Budge et al. (2010), Collins et al. (2015), Equality Commission of NI. (2011), McBride (2013), McBride & Hansson (2010), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007), Jones (2013)	These results would show a marked improvement in attitude of colleagues towards trans staff compared with previous research. 82% of respondents indicate they would feel comfortable working with a trans colleague compared to 9% who would feel uncomfortable, however it still does indicate that working with a trans colleague is still an issue for some staff. Less than half the respondents believe that being able to "pass" is not necessary to being accepted in the workplace which demonstrates that how a trans person looks especially early in their transition will have a major effect on their acceptance. This would support earlier research regarding negative attitudes towards trans people and indicate that it still exists.
18	To identify areas of concern from stakeholders and identify training requirements.	The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regs. (NI) (1999), The Gender Recognition Act (2004), Barclay & Scott (2006), Rudin et al. (2014)	51% of respondents stating an unequivocal yes to trans persons using gender specific toilets indicate a clear shift in attitudes from previous research. 3% of respondents don't think that trans colleagues should be able to use gender specific toilets with 10% unsure. These figures are relatively low but still highlight a specific area for discussion and training. With 32% of respondents stating yes as long as others are comfortable demonstrates that trans persons rights to use the toilet facility is superseded by others right to feel comfortable. This identifies a lack of knowledge on legislation or ignorance on this issue.
19	There is perceived negative attitudes and prejudice directed towards this community. For those who are supportive this will hopefully measure their confidence in the environment to openly show this support.	Agius & Kohler (2014), Jones (2013)	With 88% of respondents either supportive or very supportive, these results would differ from previous research and indicate a positive shift in attitudes towards transgender personnel



20	Provides feedback to the researcher as to the current attitudes towards this community.	Author	36% of the respondents indicated a positive change in attitude towards this issue, which is a very significant number of personnel.
21	Provides feedback on what measures or other factors is impacting change of attitude.	Author	More knowledge and understanding of this issue has been cited as the biggest reason for this change. This demonstrates the significance of training.
22, 23 & 24	These questions will only appear to those who have said they are trans in Q.5 as they are only applicable to trans employees. They seek to identify if they are openly out at work and identify any reasons for not being out.	Hansson & Depret (2007), McNeil et al. (2012), McNeil et al. (2013), Whittle et al. (2007)	No respondents claimed to be trans, so unfortunately this survey was unable to validate or refute previous research and responses from trans personnel.
25	Provides further limited qualitative information to help the researcher. These details may add further knowledge to the research even if it is only from a small group of people.	Creswell (1998), Rankin et al. (2010), Wilson (2014)	25% of the respondents made comment on this issue with the majority 13% stating that further awareness on this topic would be beneficial. Less than 2% of respondents don't believe there is a need for this training in the workplace.
26	Provides further opportunity for the researcher to gain qualitative information (rich details) and further knowledge on this topic possibly through an interview.	Bell (2014), Creswell (1998), Rankin et al. (2010), Wilson (2014)	Due to the limited capacity of this research and rich qualitative data already collected, further follow up with respondents was not required at this time.

Responses from the survey and interviews have provided the following data on the previous eight areas covered in the literature review from chapter two:

## **5.1 The Law**

The survey does not specifically mention the law; however the low number of respondents who have received training on this issue and the responses to question 18 regarding the use of the toilet and other comments such as “*New employees that have already completed the process and are now the correct gender should not have*

*to inform anyone outside HR unless they want them to know.”* Would suggest that a large number of personnel would not be fully familiar with the law in respect of trans issues.

## **5.2 Media Portrayal**

Past research arguably demonstrates media portrayal as both inaccurate and negative. This new research would indicate that media portrayal is becoming more positive and frequent, as 28% of those whose attitudes had changed positively on this issue, was because of media portrayal.

## **5.3 Negative Experience**

Previous research would show that significant numbers of trans employees have suffered negative experiences in the workplace. Despite no direct feedback from openly trans personnel, comments made in section 5 of the survey would confirm the negative experiences suffered by previously employed trans staff from within BCC and other organisations. The negative outlook received by the author's immediate manager from another organisation demonstrated their belief that it was inevitable for something to go wrong. The statement from the author describing the continued isolation and marginalisation would also support the prior research.

## **5.4 Gender Transition Process**

This survey did not expect to gain further insight into the gender transition process.

## **5.5 Positive Experience**

Similar to that of negative experience, due to no trans respondents, this small piece of research was primarily reliant on the statement from the author who makes the claim that the majority of the workforce would be tolerant towards her and in some cases has even found acceptance.

## **5.6 Colleagues & Managers**

With at least 82% of respondents indicating they would be comfortable or very comfortable working with a trans colleague, this demonstrates that contrary to earlier research, the majority of staff have no issues with a trans colleague. 88% of respondents stating they would be supportive or very supportive adds further weight to the viewpoint that having a trans colleague is not a big issue for personnel.

The exception to this would be the direct managers of those undergoing transition, as they may feel a huge sense of responsibility and therefore need to have protocols in place that could assist on this issue.

## **5.7 Change Management**

20% of the respondents still don't believe the organisation's culture to be conducive to employees coming out as trans. This combined with the magnitude of the transition on the trans person, initial ignorance and fear from staff/management around this issue, as evidenced from the interviews demonstrates a need for further change. It can also be evidenced that the primary vehicles for this change are the

media and trans persons. Greater visibility and leadership on this issue would arguably speed up the change process. Comments from respondents requesting more awareness on this issue, would also help to promote this change. Consideration should also be given to having visible trans allies at senior management level which would promote leadership in this area as identified by the personal statement.

## **5.8 Equality**

It is acknowledged that with no respondents claiming to be trans, this research can only provide limited data towards any inequality experienced by trans personnel. The survey does however provide implicit evidence of inequality for trans personnel with only 76% of respondents feeling comfortable accommodating a trans person. With 20% of respondents stating the culture is not conducive to coming out as trans and 42% of respondents demonstrating a hierarchy of rights towards using a gender specific toilet, would also be evidence of inequality. The personal statement also describes isolation and marginalisation as common place for a trans person. It would be reasonable to assume with no measures put in place to counter this discrimination, trans personnel still don't have equity in the workplace and therefore an inferior psychological contract. The author would agree with Ragins et al (1998), believing mentoring to be a useful tool to assist minority groups achieve equality.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This research demonstrates how the following personnel may be impacted by gender transition within the workplace:

### **Employee**

Unfortunately due to the limited size of this survey, there were no responses from other trans members of staff giving first-hand information, with the exception of the author. Despite this, other evidence obtained from the survey on issues such as culture, feeling comfortable working with a trans person, needing to look like the acquired gender and use of gender specific toilets would arguably demonstrate that although headway has been made, organisations have more progress to make on this issue.

The many comments given by respondents such as, *“I think the workplace has a long way to go, to be accepting of transgender staff”* and *“Still a lot needs to be done. There would be too many silly jokes at the expense of TG.”* also demonstrate the need for further change. These comments also indicate that even despite legislation, the consequences of this discrimination can lead to the trans personnel leaving their job.

These findings would also corroborate the statement from the author, stating that despite there being little overt discrimination directed towards her, there are still many occasions of isolation, marginalisation and compartmentation which make it more difficult to carry out her job and reach her full potential.

Encouragingly, a key finding of this research is 88% of respondent's state that they would be openly supportive or very supportive of a trans colleague in the workplace,

which would indicate a very significant improvement in attitudes compared with earlier research. This is backed up by the 36% of respondents stating their attitude has changed on this issue over the last 5 years.

## **Colleagues**

With 82% of respondents indicating they would be comfortable or very comfortable working with a trans colleague and 88% indicating they would be supportive, would demonstrate that contrary to earlier research, the majority of staff have no issues with a trans colleague.

The survey indicates that 36% of respondent's attitudes have changed in a positive direction over the course of the last five years, due to a greater knowledge on this topic. 18% of respondents would like further guidance on this issue or don't feel able to accommodate a trans colleague. This reveals there is still a requirement for training or awareness on this issue, to give the staff more knowledge and a better understanding. Comments from the survey and the interviews would also support this viewpoint.

It could be concluded that with the exception of the immediate managers, who may feel a huge burden of responsibility, the impact of a gender transition in the workplace will be considerably less for colleagues than the trans person.

## **Organisation**

Although responses from staff are encouraging, comments stating that the organisations still had much to do on this topic, would indicate training and policies should be developed further. This viewpoint is supported with nearly half (48%) of

respondents unaware if their organisation had a specific policy relating to trans personnel.

With the majority of respondents stating that they have not received training, but would feel confident accommodating a trans person, would demonstrate an improvement in knowledge from previous research. It must be noted however, that there were still a significant number of respondents who wouldn't feel confident accommodating a trans colleague. This combined with feedback from the interviews and statement, would very clearly indicate both of these organisations have much more to do on this issue. With the immediate manager stating that he felt inadequately prepared and unsupported given the magnitude of this issue, would demonstrate a clear requirement for organisations to better prepare for this occurring.

In support of earlier research these findings would suggest that employers are still not getting the best out of their trans employees, as conditions and attitudes although evidentially much improved, are still not providing full equity. This in turn leaves the potential for legal action being taken against them.

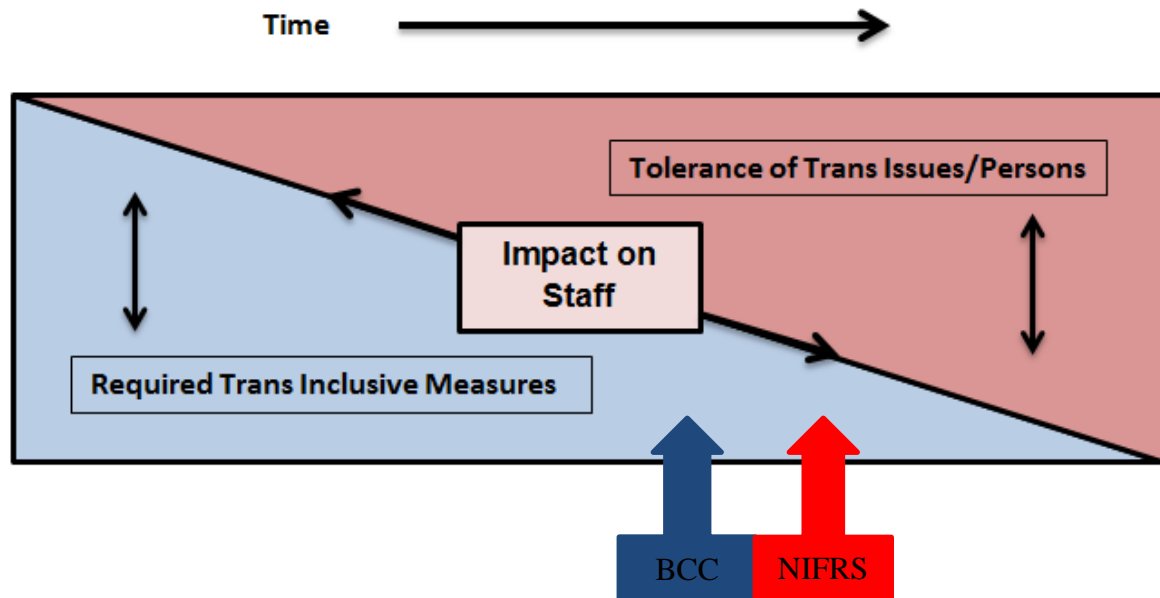
It was also anticipated by the author to prove the following hypothesis:

- **Members of staff within the NIFRS and Belfast City Council are inadequately prepared to accommodate the gender transition of a colleague.**

**From the information obtained from this small piece of research, the author would firmly believe that she has proved this hypothesis to be true.**

The model below is used to visually depict, where the evidence would currently put both organisations in relation to trans issues.

**Fig (5.2) Approximate current position of NIFRS and BCC on trans issues**





## **5.10 Recommendations**

From the research the author believes that organisations should adopt the following recommendations, not only to comply with legislation, but also to foster a better environment for trans personnel.

No.	Recommendation	Applicable Organisation	Reference
1	A specific transgender policy should be created and all staff made aware of its existence. (This should be done as soon as possible and not reactive).	All workplaces	Appendix Interviews Pg. 99
2	Training or awareness should be given to personnel on this topic (Input should be given by a specific transgender organisation to humanise this issue and to provide greater knowledge).	All workplaces	Q12 pg.59 Q13 pg. 60 Q25 pg. 72
3	Organisations should provide a suitable visible champion for this issue.	All workplaces	Change management Pg. 22 Pg.82
4	Organisations should make it visible that they are a trans friendly organisation (statements/articles on website etc.).	All workplaces	Change management Pg. 22 Pg.82
5	Transgender or LGBT staff support network should be introduced.	All workplaces	Change management Pg. 22 Pg.82
6	MOU created between the trans employee pre transition and the employer.	All workplaces	Appendix Interviews Pg. 99
7	Specific internal support/ mentoring made available for trans employee for as long as required to ensure equality of opportunity.	All workplaces	Equality pg. 83 Appendix Interviews Pg. 99
8	Monitoring effectiveness of trans inclusive initiatives through staff surveys and consultation with internal and external trans (LGBT organisations).	All workplaces	Change management Pg. 22 Pg.82
9	Introduction of equal marriage to NI as per the rest of the UK and Ireland	Local Government	Equality pg. 83 Appendix Interviews Pg. 99

### **5.11 Reflection**

Being transgender, this was at times a difficult and emotional topic for the author due to the inherent difficulties with gaining acceptance as a human being from family, friends and colleagues, particularly in the past, as is partially demonstrated within this research. This combined with family commitments and temporary promotions in work made the time frame very difficult to adhere to. Other issues noted during the research included respondents favouring the word 'confident' rather than comfortable which may show discrepancy with the wording of question 16. It is also acknowledged that the response rate within both organisations was quite, low and those who have very negative attitudes towards trans people may have ignored the survey giving a more positive response.

### **5.12 Further study**

It is hoped that this research can be built upon in the near future. Having gained rich information from colleagues, it would be beneficial to get a much greater input from a number of trans people employed in a range of various workplaces. This would allow for further comparison and to ascertain if trans colleagues feel that tolerance towards them is improving and possibly even finding acceptance. It is also the intention of the author to follow up on these findings with further studies at a later date.

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## **Appendix**

**(Fig. a)**

### **Transition in the Workplace**

Introduction

Dear Employee/Manager

I would be very grateful if you would take 5 minutes to complete the survey below. Your response will contribute to the research informing my dissertation. The dissertation is the final requirement of the BSc Hons Management Practice at Ulster University.

This research investigates the extent to which organisations and/or managers have been prepared for the increasing number of transgender employees.

Your responses will be treated as confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research and will not be attributed to you without your permission.

Yours faithfully

Karen

### **General Information**

1. Please select your employer

- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service
- Belfast City Council

2. Please select your workplace location (NIFRS only)

- NAC
- EAC
- SAC
- WAC
- SHQ or STC

3. Please select your length of service (NIFRS only)

- Less than 5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- More than 30 years

4. Please select your category of employment (NIFRS only)

- Wholetime
- Retained Duty System
- Control Centre Staff
- Support Staff
- Other

5. Please select your position within your organisation

- Member of staff
  - Supervisor
  - Middle Manager
  - Senior Manager
  - Other (please specify)
- 

6. Please indicate your age

- Under 18
- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- Over 60

7. How many transgender employees are you aware of in your organisation?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

8. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

9. Has your organisation a policy for transgender inclusion?

- Yes, a specific policy
- Yes, as part of an equality policy
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

10. Has your organisation provided any formal training on transgender issues?

- Yes, as a stand-alone training session
- Yes, as part of an equality module or similar
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

11. Have you undergone formal training on transgender issues?

- Yes, at my organisation
- Yes, through another organisation or provider
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

## **Your opinions on you organisation**

12. Has your organisation provided sufficient training for you to deal with a colleague coming out as transgender?

- Yes, I would feel confident accommodating a trans colleague
- Yes, but I would like further guidance on accommodating trans colleagues



- No, I would not feel able to accommodate a trans colleague
  - Not sure
  - Other (please specify)
- 

13. Who would be best placed to carry out training on transgender issues?

- Training would be best carried out in-house by my organisation
  - Training would be best carried out by an outside transgender organisation
  - Management should receive specific training from a transgender organisation and then cascade to all personnel
  - Not sure
  - Other (please specify)
- 

14. How prepared is your organisation to accommodate transgender employees?

- Well prepared
  - Somewhat prepared
  - Not prepared
  - Not sure
  - Other (please specify)
- 

15. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate if the culture in your organisation is conducive or welcoming, to employees coming out as transgender?

1. Not conducive/ welcoming at all	2.	3.	4.	5. Very conducive/ welcoming
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## Your opinions on transgender employees

16. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how comfortable you would feel working with a transgender colleague?

1. Very uncomfortable	2.	3.	4.	5. Very comfortable
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17. Do you think that trans women need to “look like women” and trans men need to “look like men” to be accepted in the workplace?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

18. Should transgender employees be allowed to use gender-specific toilet facilities?

- Yes
- Yes, but only if others are comfortable
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

19. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate if you would be openly supportive of a transgender colleague in the workplace?

1. Not at all supportive	2.	3.	4.	5. Very supportive
				in all
				circumstances

20. Has your attitude towards transgender issues changed within the last 5 years?

- My attitude has changed completely
- My attitude has changed somewhat
- My attitude hasn't changed
- I'm not sure
- Other (please specify)

---

21. If your attitude towards transgender issues has changed, can you please be specific as to what has brought about this change?

---

## Questions for Trans Employees

22. Are you out in the workplace?

- Yes
- No
- To selected members of staff
- Other (please specify)

---

23. If you are not out to all staff, please indicate why?

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24. Please add a comment if you have ever felt, or feared being discriminated against in the workplace due to being trans.

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## One last thing.....

25. Please add any other comments you would like to contribute to this research

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26. If you are happy to contribute further to this research please provide your contact details below.  
Your personal data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name 

---

Company 

---

Email Address 

---

Phone Number 

---

Thank you for taking the time to complete my survey. If you wish to contact me, my email address is:

Karen.mcdowell@nifrs.org

**(Fig b.)**

## **Interview Transcripts**

### **HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal - NIFRS**

- Do you feel that the NIFRS was adequately prepared for a gender transition in the workplace?

*"I personally already had contact and awareness training with the Civil Service trans group a:gender. I also was in contact with GIRES and received regular email updates from them. In terms of the organisation being prepared, we had our Equality Scheme and also our Equal Opportunities Policy in place, along with a ten year Equality & Diversity Strategy. What was lacking was a specific guidance or protocol on supporting employees in transition. The equality policies did give the commitment to protecting employees from discrimination but that was all. Therefore, trans individuals had no reference point or assurance that their needs would be appropriately met or managed.*

*Gender reassignment was included in equality, fairness and dignity at work training before a gender transition took place. This element was focused specifically on the requirements of the legislation."*

- What support mechanisms were put in place for other staff including line managers?

*"An Information Guide for staff was developed in conjunction with the member of staff in transition. This work also extended to development of a Managers Guide. In terms of support mechanisms, I also met with the colleagues of the member of staff in small groups to discuss transition, what it means for all concerned and to communicate the expectations of them.*

*The Chief Fire Officer at the time was also involved in endorsing a confidential and supportive environment for both the member of staff and colleagues. I was involved in updating him on developments and also liaising with Corporate Communications colleagues on a media plan in the event of any press articles arising and how these would be managed."*

- What support mechanisms were put in place for the trans person and how do you know they were adequate?

*“In the absence of a NIFRS trans protocol, efforts were made to establish confidence and trust from the outset and I was directly involved with the individual and her line manager in agreeing and implementing support mechanisms at that time. I actively researched good practice transition arrangements and sought advice from GIREs and a:Gender. I also attended meetings, along with the member of staff’s line manager, with PSNI to identify learning points from the PSNI experience. Support also extended to meeting with the member of staff’s wife, sharing research and details of contacts. The support was underpinned by an agreed ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ and also through the provision of special leave and updates to the attendance management process. I also facilitated record changes where possible.”*

- What advice would you give to other organisations reference this topic?

*“It is fundamental to develop and have in place a clear protocol on gender transition so that employees are able to refer to this and understand what to do and whom to contact when they are preparing for and undergoing transition. Organisations should have this in place even if they have not yet had an employee transition.*

*I would also recommend that organisations share their learning, research and experience of gender transition in the workplace. Where an organisation has not had an employee transition, they can still be of influence in terms of having good practice policies and systems in place.*

*Since the NIFRS member of staff transitioned I have been asked to support Councils and Health & Social Care Trusts as they develop their own frameworks to prepare for a gender transition in their workplaces. These organisations have been keen to learn from the NIFRS experience and our lesson learned.”*

- Are there any other comments that you would like to make on this issue?

*“I have not been asked about the organisations mechanisms to support me, as a HR Manager, in working with and supporting an employee undergoing gender transition. At the time my colleague disclosed she would be transitioning, I was looking forward to the prospect of supporting her and being involved in what can be a complex issue to deal with. There are many factors to consider, most importantly the duty of care first and foremost to the employee and also how to manage the impacts locally and more widely. There were areas that we could not change, such as circumstances around spousal pension entitlement and this was frustrating, not least for the member of staff herself.*

*I also had a sense that criticism at the absence of a defined protocol in the organisation was levelled to a degree at me and that I was somehow responsible for this deficit. This was in despite having developed the corporate equality policies and designed and delivered the in-house equality training courses which included*

*gender-reassignment. The situation highlighted to me that trans-awareness in general was not on the radar of either the Corporate Management Team or the Board at the time, nor at HQ or Area Command level and it was not considered an area of priority by anyone, including me. The emphasis was on outreach to under-represented groups and meeting targets in relation to community background, gender, disability and race equality. That said, when I advised the Chief Fire Officer that a colleague was transitioning he was fully on board in terms of what the line manager and I needed to do and supported both of us in taking actions forward. It still meant that the organisation was 'reacting' rather than having been 'proactive'."*

### **Direct line manager during transition**

- Did you feel adequately prepared as a manager for an employee informing you that they were going to undergo gender transition?

*"Not at all, this was the biggest thing and most responsibility ever put on me, this was somebody's life and I felt this was the first time I was ever really caught on the hop. At first I actually thought this was a wind up. It was the sheer magnitude of it. I wasn't sure where I was going to go or who I was going to talk to. It was only on the direction of you, that I started to research from websites. The way you articulated it set the tone and also really helped with the understanding of this issue."*

- What were your main concerns and how were these dealt with?

*"The magnitude, I wanted to get to the stage where you were treated as any other female and I had no idea how long this was going to take. I possibly thought we were there before we were, as given my role I wasn't going to see what was really going on. I don't think our organisation or department was prepared for this although the Equality officer was very supportive along with other key roles in the organisation."*

*I went to see the PSNI as they had already dealt with a gender transition and they focused more on the negative and made me think our journey to date was too good to be true. They said that something was going to go wrong at some stage."*

*I was concerned about my line manager and his differing views as to how this issue was to be handled, especially in respect of breaking the news to the rest of the immediate personnel. I was persistently straight and open with him providing rational for the decisions which were taken."*

*I hadn't anybody to speak to and I wasn't sure how it was going to go for either you or other members of staff. I had nobody to bounce things off. Confidentiality by all parties as they became aware provided some reassurance with this aspect."*

- What advice would you give to another manager who was in a similar situation?

*"Do your research, have a full understanding, maintain confidentiality and have empathy. I had a responsibility to strike a balance between looking after you and also the organisation. You made this easy and so did the organisation with the Chief and others like the Area Commander, Training School, and Corporate Communications being so good. I also thought the people in Portadown were supportive."*

- Did you feel well enough supported by the organisation? What support was administered?

*"No I didn't, however I knew it was not impacting on me anywhere near how this transition was going to impact on you. A key time for me, which made me realise just how big this was, was when I visited your house and saw your wife and kids, and recognised your work was only one part of the much bigger picture. This put things into perspective. It felt easy for me compared to what I knew you were going to have to deal with.*

*Knowing what to say was one of the hardest things for me. I always tried to be positive, but at times did feel helpless."*

- Are there any other comments that you would like to make on this issue?

*"I don't think I would have paid much attention to any training as I never thought it was going to happen to me or even the organisation. I thought it was one in a million, now I know this to be different.*

*It is important that we give people awareness around this issue. People don't appreciate how difficult it is for the trans person and its more of an issue for them than the rest of the workforce. I probably believed that everything was ok before it really was."*

## Close Colleague

- Do you believe you were given sufficient and timely information and training on the issue of an imminent gender transition of a close colleague? If so what did this consist of?

*“Any training and information I received at the start was in-house and felt very much like a case of lets only do what we need to do to cover ourselves for equality legislation etc., later on there was some more slightly in-depth training given in-house but probably mainly to do with were we stood in relation to relevant legislation etc., nothing really on understanding transgender issues.”*

- Were any issues or concerns adequately addressed by management if applicable?

*“To be honest the management in my building (with the exception of one) gave the impression that they were afraid to talk about the issue. Perhaps because they were uninformed or it was something unfamiliar to the organisation and in this climate of political correctness they just didn’t know what to say.”*

- Has working with a transgender person changed your views on this issue? If so, in what way?

*“Again being honest I have to say that I would have been a bit sceptical towards the transgender issue, but now having worked with a transgender person who I have known at both stages in their life to be a very level headed genuine person I now have a greater understanding of the issue and problems they face in their transition etc. I can now say that I have lost any scepticism I may have had before.”*

- What advice would you give to another organisation regarding this issue?

*“Educate your staff using an experienced outside body were possible, as in-house courses can often be run by staff who are only interested in bulking up their CVs.”*

- Are there any other comments that you would like to make on this issue?

*“Public sector organisations seem to be making an effort to accommodate transgender employees by introducing policies and making staff aware of people’s rights in general, but I personally think that a much greater campaign will need to be introduced in the private sector to educate employees especially in the smaller firms.”*



## Personal Statement

### Pre Transition

*I was fearful and very apprehensive of transitioning as there was no policy, guidance, or any specific visual references or personnel within the organisation particularly at senior management level to provide assurance on this issue. There was also no precedent anywhere in the UK of a successful transition within a similar organisation.*

*Due to the disciplined nature of the organisation and current legislation, I was not overly fearful of losing my job or even of overt discrimination as I was confident the organisation would try to protect itself from legal action. I was not confident of ever being promoted again once transitioned due to the culture, hence taking a promotion into a day duty job prior to coming out.*

*I prepared myself mentally for years of isolation and exclusion in the workplace as I was not confident of acceptance, but was determined to keep my job, as my first priority was to provide the same financial income for my family. I also felt it was more important to be a successful role model to others, rather than to leave the organisation and take legal action to remedy any discrimination if applicable.*

*I was prepared to go at a pace that gave the organisation time to put sufficient training packages and procedures in place to ensure the best possible chance of a successful transition.*

### Transition Phase

*After disclosing my intentions to management and through the initial stages of transition I generally felt supported and the following measures helped to ensure a more positive transition:*

- Line management and key personnel were trustworthy and kept this issue confidential until I was ready to break the news.*
- Both my line manager and HR department made themselves aware of good practice both nationally and locally by networking and also from resources online eg. GIRES (Gender Identity Research and Education Society) & a:gender (Civil Service Support Network for Trans Employees).*
- In the early stages of planning we drew up a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which highlighted all the possible issues/problems*

*which might arise due to my transition – and how/who would be best placed to deal with them. This document was signed off by the Chief Executive/Chief Fire Officer of the organisation.*

- As the most knowledgeable person on this issue I was allowed to remain in control of the process. I ensured that the organisation was fully briefed through my manager at every stage in the process.*
- Training packages were put together for management and staff. This was communicated to all relevant personnel at the time the news of my transition was breaking out.*
- I was given the opportunity to speak to upwards of 20 of my closest colleagues in work on a one to one basis, before breaking the news out to the organisation as a whole.*

## **Post Transition**

*After the transition it became more evident that although there was little overt discrimination, the culture within the organisation was not conducive to being transgender as isolation, marginalisation and compartmentation was common. This was not something I had ever experienced prior to coming out.*

*It was evident on speaking with some close colleagues that despite few overt issues, a lot of personnel were reluctant to work with me. Another common experience was for some colleagues to be fine with me on a one to one basis, but in different company or larger groups they would be considerably more detached.*

*My own experiences would lead me to currently describe the culture within the NIFRS as predominately tolerant with smaller sections on either side of this from accepting to reluctantly tolerant. I have noticed a slow change in a positive direction towards this issue.*

*For me the most difficult issues to deal with are not the episodes of discrimination, but the reluctance of the organisation to acknowledge the inequalities which exist for trans persons. The marginalisation and compartmentation also make it difficult to place trust in other personnel at all levels.*