

# Transgender People

in South Tyneside

By Bea Groves-McDaniel,  
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## Key issues:

- 01 Alienation and Isolation**

There is still a lack of local networking and support organisations for transgender and gender-variant people in South Tyneside.
- 02 Fear and exclusion**

Transpeople still often feel afraid of being out in public, with the possibility of harassment or violence still a major issue
- 03 Lack of control**

When institutions step in to provide help with (1) and (2) above, they tend to be over-paternalistic, and fail to empower autonomy
- 04 Purpose and Needs**

Friendship and social networking do not evolve spontaneously. They need facilitation, with a very 'light touch' approach



# Alienation & Isolation

What is to be done?

Even though things have improved (due to the contact offered by the Internet over the last two decades) there is still a sense that trans' people are isolated from each other in the socio-physical sense. Though we can meet at festivals (Sparkle, Leeds First Friday, etc.), we rarely get a chance to get to talk to each other about everyday life. Our sense of self is never 'normalised' and we fail to come out of the 'second-closet' of only associating with other transfolk in very specific circumstances. Finding our own feet in the majority-cisgender world comes out of creating supportive communities that welcome diversity, and have protective systems in place that allow local people to 'just be themselves'

**Creation of a facilitated group. Meets every month (?). Informal, but each meeting has a formal section where issues of relevance are discussed. This gives focus, and encourages activism skills. These events need a 'Chair' and a small organising group.**



# Fear and Exclusion

What is to be done?

Sometimes trans' people are fearful for their own safety when out in public. This includes possible and actual violence, but also includes harassment and abuse. The latter is far more prominent than the former. There is also the nature of being potentially or actually excluded from public and private facilities (NHS systems, toilets, shops, pubs, voluntary bodies, etc.). This needs to be a priority for action in any group agenda.

**Building much better (and credible!) links and networks with public institutions (e.g. the police) and with voluntary/public bodies. Gaining better knowledge of our rights under the law, and how to combat unfair exclusion when it is encountered. We need training to do this!**



# Lack of control

What is to be done?

It is a common strategy for regional and national organisations to wade in with 'answers' to trans' issues in local areas such as South Tyneside. Such approaches have the benefit of funding, structural organisation, and political credibility. But they often create one-size-fits-all strategies, and are not around for the very long-term needs that trans' people have. In addition, their paternal/maternalism has a habit of extinguishing individual growth, autonomy, confidence, and social development.

**The initial need is facilitation and resourcing. Then, when an organisation has found its feet and can act independently, to create long-term resourcing to sustain the community-of-practice over time. Large organisations need to know when to step back. Transgender people need to be the solution to their own issues, rather than have them 'cured' by those outside, however well meaning.**





# Purpose and Needs

What is to be done?

For any group, however small or large, to have a long term chance of life it needs a purpose that can engage transpeople, and draw in new 'blood' from both the closeted and 'out' communities. As people learn, gain experience and confidence, they often move on to other things: we then need others to take their place. Though a group can be mainly social and supportive, it also needs a purpose that is more substantial than simple friendship alone. At the end, a group that has a limited purpose always dies.

**The group needs to constantly work on its activities, its culture, it's sense of inclusion, openness and safety. It needs to be aware of how these elements work, and how to combat disruption. It needs a sense of pride in itself, identity, strength, and self-respect. Out of this comes the capacity to make legitimate demands on the majority cisgender world: to be seriously listened to due to its moral stand on autonomy and inclusion.**

# Potential Actions



## Create

A prototype framework for this new group..



## Communicate

Communicate its existence across South Tyneside via the NRGDS, social media, Inspire, etc.



## Act

Meet. Have a first social event (food, refreshments...) in a relaxed environment



## Develop

At the event, discuss how we want to be structured: how formal, etc.



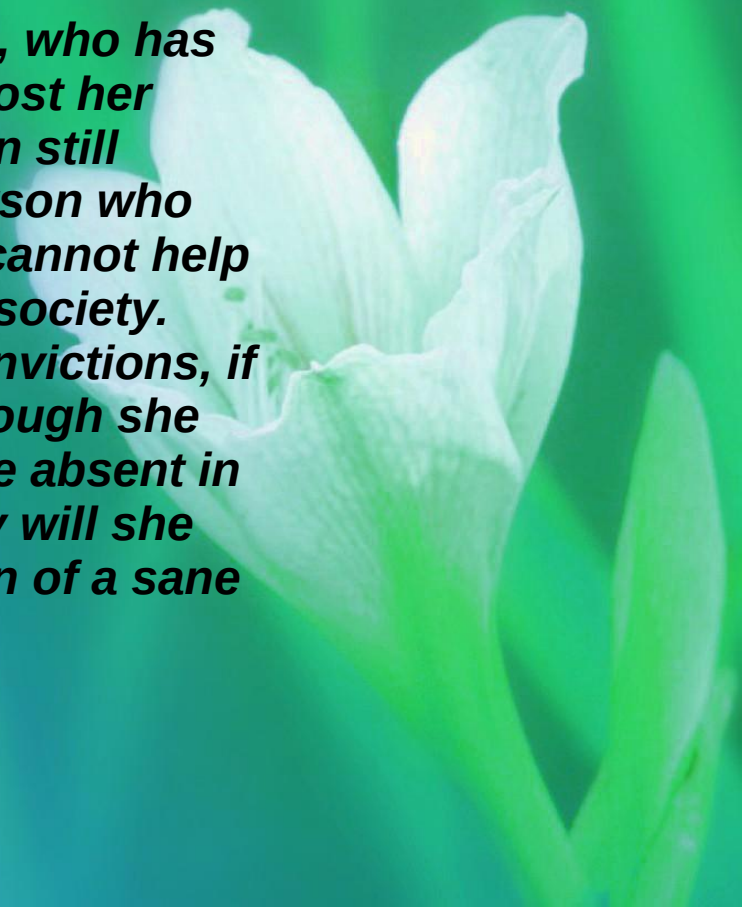
## Promote

Continually promote the new group,

# A final quote:

***“A person who has not been completely alienated, who has remained sensitive and able to feel, who has not lost her sense of dignity, who is not yet "for sale", who can still suffer over the suffering of others... - briefly, a person who has remained a person and not become a thing - cannot help feeling lonely, powerless, isolated in present-day society. She cannot help doubting herself and her own convictions, if not her sanity. She cannot help suffering, even though she can experience moments of joy and clarity that are absent in the life of her "normal" contemporaries. Not rarely will she suffer from neurosis that results from the situation of a sane person living in an insane society..”***

Erich Fromm, psychologist, (1876)



# Context:



Bea Groves-McDaniel was born on Tyneside in 1955. She has taught/facilitated in the post-compulsory education sector since 1984. She was General Secretary of the Association of Part-Time Tutors for fifteen years, and twice-elected National President of the Institute for Learning.

She founded TyneTrans, the region's first support group for transgender folk in 2011. She is currently Development Worker for the Inspire Voluntary Skills Programme, She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and of the Society for Education and Training. She is a member of Chatham House. She holds QTLS.

And she happens to be transgender,

# Notes

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# Thank you!

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