



# Student Activism Guide



*Action  
for  
Trans\*  
Health*

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**About the front cover:** This image was taken during the Compton Cafeteria Riots of August 1966, one of the first transgender riots on record. The café was frequented by trans\* people who were not welcome in the local gay bars. As so-called “cross-dressing” was illegal at the time, the police would use the presence of trans\* people as justification for frequent raids and arrests. The café owners were often complicit in the police repression. In response to this the trans\* community organised pickets of the café against police repression.

On the night of the riots, a policeman attempted to arrest a trans woman and she threw her coffee in his face, starting a riot. Rioters smashed the plates, crockery, and the café windows. The police called for reinforcements and the riot broke out onto the street, where a police car had its windows smashed. The next night, the trans\* and queer community organised a picket of the café and the newly installed windows were broken.

## Whats this guide for?

This guide is for LGBT societies, feminist / queer activist collectives, and welfare officers who wish to organise for trans\* healthcare on their campuses and in their communities. It covers organising campaigns around sexual health, mental health, getting trans\* healthcare on the curriculum and supporting trans\* individuals. Whilst a lot of this guide is trans\* specific, it'll probably be a useful resource for people organising for LGB healthcare too.

This guide cover a lot of possible campaigns in a short time, in order to inspire groups to organise for trans\* healthcare. It might be worth picking and choosing a particular campaign to focus on each year, each semester, or for a one-off event. Please get in touch at [info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk) for any advice and to let us know what awesome stuff you are up to on campus!

## What is Action for Trans\* Health?

Action for Trans\* Health is a campaign founded and lead by trans\* people which seeks to improve trans\* people's access to healthcare via:

- Raising funds to give small **cash grants** which facilitate trans\* individuals' access to healthcare.
- Engaging with **medical professionals** about trans\* health; by putting together workshops on trans\* health needs, compiling lists of doctors known to be good with trans\* patients, assisting people to complain about malpractice, etc.
- Engaging the **trans\* community** about health issues; by providing sexual health workshops, harm reduction information on self-medicating, activist training, etc.

We believe that trans\* healthcare should be democratically controlled by trans\* people, and we try to ensure that our time and resources are funnelled to the most marginalised within our community.

We have chapters and affiliate groups in various cities across the UK which form a federated network of trans\* activists. Please get in touch at [affiliate@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:affiliate@actionfortranshealth.org.uk) if you want to join our network.

## Improving sexual health in and around campus

Sexual health clinics can be a daunting place for anyone, especially when you are trans\*. But regular sexual health screening is important and should be accessible to all. Here are a few things you can do on campus to ensure everyone can play safely if they want to.

- Ensure that **condoms, lube, dental dams**, and sexual health leaflets etc. are easily available for free at the social and political events that your society runs. Your Welfare Officer should be able to help you source sexual health equipment such as condoms, lube, and dental dams. **Sexual health guides** for trans men and trans women can be found on the Terrance Higgins Trust website [tht.org.uk](http://tht.org.uk)
- It might be worth organising a group trip to go get checked at a **GUM clinic** once a semester to encourage people who wouldn't go on their own. Be sure to organise this in a sensitive way.
- Sexual health clinics can be especially daunting for trans\* people. Making sure that a **trans\*-friendly person** is available to accompany trans\* members to the GUM clinic might be useful.
- Help improve your local sexual health service by completing Action for Trans\* Health's **sexual health audit** when you next go. The short questionnaire can be found [actionfortranshealth.org.uk](http://actionfortranshealth.org.uk) on the activist resources page. We will then contact your local service offering advice and training on how to improve.
- **Sexpression** is a national network of student groups which give sex and relationship workshops in communities and on campuses. If you have a sexpression group on campus, it might be worth getting them in touch with Action for Trans\* Health to ensure they have adequate trans\* sexual health training, or getting them to run a workshop for your society. Check them out at [sexpression.org.uk](http://sexpression.org.uk)
- When it comes to sex and relationships, talking about consent is very important. It might be worth looking into organising an **active consent** workshop for your society. Your Womens officer, Welfare officer, or university feminist collective might be good points of contact here.

## Improving mental health provision on campus

Trans\* students, as a result of systemic transphobia, inaccessible healthcare, and inadequate support often find themselves in need of some extra mental health support whilst at university. Here's some ideas to improve mental health provision on campus.

- Many student unions offer a confidential **peer listening service** (sometimes called Nightline). Most universities and some unions also offer a counselling service for students. It might be worth ensuring that your local services has adequate trans\* training. If your group doesn't feel comfortable giving this training, Action for Trans\* Health would be happy to be put in touch with your local service if they need training up. Email [info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk) for more info.
- Ensure that your members are **signposted** to appropriate services. These could include listening services such as Nightline and university and union counselling services, but also specialist NHS services in your local area.
- In the age of education cuts, university counsellors and advice services are increasingly at risk of being cut. Why not get in touch with the **anti-cuts** campaign on campus and see how you can work together on a joint campaign?

## Queering the curriculum

There is currently a wholesale lack of understanding regarding the needs of trans\* patients within most of the medical establishment, and unfortunately most med schools do not cover trans\* healthcare needs on the curriculum. For LGBT societies and groups which share a campus with student nurses, doctors, and other healthcare related courses, working towards **queering the curriculum** can be a great way of ensuring the future of trans\* healthcare is bright.

- If you don't ask you don't get: make sure the med school knows there is a **demand** for a more trans\* inclusive curriculum by sending email inquiries about the current state of trans\* provision and how they intend to improve it.
- Medical school course convenors are often hard to get in touch with. However, societies for Medical Students can be much more accessible. Get in touch with your local **MedSoc** or **Nursing Students Society** to see if they would like to collaborate on any projects. Some larger MedSchools even have an LGBT Medics Society who would be perfect to work with.
- **MedSin**, a medical students' activist group, might also be a useful contact on campus. See if they have a branch near you at: <http://medsin.org/get-involved/our-branches>

- Think about handing out leaflets and **information** on trans\* healthcare in the medical school (you might want to signpost people to our user-friendly guide to the interim protocol which governs trans\* healthcare)
- Consider organising short **lectures** and **seminars** for medical students in conjunction with the MedSchool or a student society
- Get in touch with the MedSoc and **student liaison committee** to ensure that trans\* healthcare keeps being raised at meetings with the MedSchool
- Some healthcare students have to participate in the organisation of **student conferences** as part of their course. Ensuring that trans\* healthcare workshops are on the agenda for these conferences can be an excellent way of influencing course convenors.

## Supporting trans\* students with transition related healthcare

We get a lot of emails asking us how student societies and groups can support individual trans\* students with their transition related healthcare. Here are some of our ideas:

- Often trans\* people can be kept on waiting lists with their Gender Identity Clinics for a long time, which often feels like your life is on hold. This can be a distressing situation, so signposting trans\* students in need to appropriate listening services and organisations might be useful idea. It would be worth checking how trans\*-friendly those services are first.
- If trans\* students have any questions about the process of transitioning on the NHS, consider signposting them to our guide on the Interim Protocol which is the current document which governs transition related healthcare (which should be changing at some point in 2015).
- Action for Trans\* Health has an online list of GPs that our members can recommend as being trans\* friendly. We also keep a list of GPs that our members have had bad experiences with. It might be worth posting these lists on your group's facebook or twitter occasionally to ensure your members know about them. If you have had good or bad experiences with GPs in your area, please tell us about them via the lists. We always offer training to services which have been reported as needing improvement. Check out our lists at: <http://actionfortranshealth.org.uk/resources/for-trans-people/>
- Know how to support your students in making complaints about health professionals if things do go wrong. If the health professional works for the NHS, the first port of call is the Patient Adult Liaison Service (PALS). They

should be able to guide people through the complaints process. Be sure to request that they undergo trans\* training (see below). If you need extra support in making a complaint, please get in touch at [info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk)

- Ensure your campus health centre and local GP surgeries are adequately trained on trans\* issues. You might want to invite them along to a Trans\*101 ran by your trans\* students, or put them in touch with us for trans\* healthcare training. Email [info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk) for more information.

## Direct action and protests

Trans\* people have had a long history of making our voices heard. Transwomen of colour taking a stand against police repression at the Stonewall Inn was a turning point in the LGBT movement, and since then protest and direct action have been played a hugely important part in our fight for liberation. Here are our ideas for protests and direct action:

- It is worth complaining when healthcare professionals do not treat trans\* patients with the respect we deserve and are legally entitled to. We find that letters of complaint are usually dealt with more promptly when accompanied with a small **protest**. Get together a group of people, make some **placards** or signs, and go hang outside the GP surgery / office for half an hour or so whilst someone goes in to **deliver** your letter of complaint. Be sure to take photos and get student / local media involved (if you feel comfortable doing so). It is very important that you have the active **consent** of the individual affected before taking this sort of action. Please get in touch with us if you need any help or advice with organising or to send us photos from your action: [info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:info@actionfortranshealth.org.uk)
- At Action for Trans\* Health, we recognise that the working conditions of health professionals make up our healthcare conditions. Rested and well paid healthcare staff provide a better service. It is worth getting in touch with the **union** reps at your local hospital to see how your group can support any current campaigns they have running or to head down to the picket lines with coffee and cake for the doctors, nurses, and admin staff at the next **strike action**. Joining a strike is always a really great opportunity to meet other healthcare activists to network and potentially work together on campaigns or training in the future.
- Whilst it is common practice for people undergoing health treatment (ie. hysterectomy or chemotherapy, etc.) which may affect that persons' fertility to have access to free gamete (sperm and egg) storage on the NHS, trans\* people are routinely denied this right. Organising a protest or action around **reproductive justice** might be a great way of getting trans\* health on the agenda in your area. Working with a trans-inclusive **feminist** society or group on this project might be a great way of building up links.
- Organising a trans\* block for other demonstrations such as **Reclaim the Night** marches (where trans\*-inclusive), education demos, or anti-cuts mobilisations is a great way of ensuring that trans\* people remain **visible** within progressive movements and coalitions of solidarity and mutual aid can form.



## **Affiliating your society to Action for Trans\* Health**

Does your trans\* social group, university LGBT Society, queer / feminist group, or health collective want to affiliate to the Action for Trans\* Health Network?

Affiliation is free and easy, and gives you access to the following benefits:

- a delegate place at our national conference;
- ability to be consulted and to comment on our upcoming research before it is released;
- a vote at our Annual General Meeting so your group can help direct what we do;
- support in your trans\* healthcare related campaigns;
- ability for your members to get involved in Action for Trans\* Health's upcoming campaigns

What we expect from affiliate groups:

- that you support the aims of Action for Trans\* Health
- that you organise at least one fundraiser, action, or joint event with or for us each year, which we can support you in organising

How do we affiliate?

If you want to affiliate your group to the Action for Trans\* Health Network, please email [affiliate@actionfortranshealth.org.uk](mailto:affiliate@actionfortranshealth.org.uk) with the following details:

- the name and aims of your group or society
- up to date contact details
- the date of the meeting where your group decided to affiliate

If you want to affiliate your students union, see below for an example affiliation motion adapted from one that got passed at the University of Oxford's Student Union.

## Example motion to affiliate your students union

### [Student Union] NOTES:

1. That the university has policy committing itself to “an inclusive trans friendly culture, workplace and learning environment” [or similar, this information should be available on your institutions equality and diversity
2. That this policy also commits the university to “support trans students and staff living in their affirmed gender role” with respect to transitioning.
3. That a recent NUS survey found that 1 in 7 trans students had to interrupt their studies because of their transition<sup>1</sup>.
4. The same study found that 54% of students felt their institution did not provide the necessary support to safely transition<sup>2</sup>
5. That Action for Trans\* Health provides one of the few centres for trans-related resources concerning medication, administrative changes, housing, and the role of the NHS in transitioning.

### [Student Union] BELIEVES:

6. That trans students in the university should be supported in accordance with university policy
7. That Action for Trans\* Health offers resources that will be of use to trans students in the university

### [Student Union] RESOLVES:

8. To affiliate to Action for Trans\* Health at the cost of one fundraiser per annum
9. To mandate [Welfare Officer / equivalent] to notify Action for Trans\* Health of our affiliation.
10. To send one delegate to their national conference.
11. To lobby the university health centre / counselling service / medical school [delete as appropriate] to undergo training with Action for Trans\* Health.

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<sup>1</sup> See the NUS LGBT report: “Education beyond the straight and narrow” Available: <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/lgbt-research.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See above footnote