

PRONOUNS IN THE WORKPLACE

It is likely that you have seen colleagues state their pronouns in their email signature, but you may be unsure of the reason why. The topic "pronouns and using pronouns in the workplace" was a common theme that appeared as an area people wanted to know more about.

What do we mean by pronouns?

Pronouns are how we distinguish ourselves and others apart from using names, it affirms our identity and, it can be a way to introduce gender pronouns into the workplace conversation. Examples of pronouns could include she/her, they/them, he/him or xe/xir.

While adding them to your email signature or social media account may be a more recent concept, according to the Oxford English Dictionary the first recorded pronoun dates back the 14th century.

Why is using the right pronouns important?

People can often subconsciously interpret an individual's gender based on their outward appearance and expression, and 'auto-assign' a pronoun however, the correct use of an individual's pronouns is a signal of considerate, affirmative, and respectful communication.

Pronouns connect to the issues of equality and recognition of nonbinary and transgender people along with challenges to their human rights. These concerns can often involve words, views and identities that are new to some. Using the correct pronouns for an individual is a way to let them know you see their identity.

It is a personal choice as whether you add your pronouns to an email signature, or in online profiles such as LinkedIn. It may be something that you don't reflect on if you align with the gender you were assigned at birth also, referred to as cisgender. It is important to acknowledge that using the wrong pronoun and being misgendered can be very invalidating.

Consideration when using pronouns can build a higher level of awareness throughout the workforce,



and supports an inclusive environment and workplace for non-binary colleagues. **If you are unsure of a person's pronouns, don't assume or auto-assign simply, ask them, and when someone gives you pronouns to use when addressing them, use those pronouns. A person's gender identity isn't up for debate.** Avoid asking someone to give explanation to their reasoning behind their pronouns as this can appear intrusive and imposing.

*pronoun, n. meanings,
etymology and more / Oxford
English Dictionary*

[Click here to find out more](#)

Why language is important

Language is a powerful tool. To continue to build a culture which is inclusive of all genders, we need to be aware of the language we use. If you aren't transgender or non-binary it is unlikely you will be aware of how many times someone auto assigns your gender and uses the subsequent gendered language. Using inclusive language does not have to be laboured or awkward. There are lots of universal non gendered terms that you could use.

We have a couple of examples below:

- Instead of "ladies and gentlemen", say "everybody", "colleagues", or "folks".
- Instead of "he/she" (when referring to someone unknown), use "they" or "the person".
- Instead of beginning emails to an unnamed individual with "Dear Sir or Madam", address the person by "Dear Colleague".

Top tips when communicating

A recommendation would be to start with gender neutral language until you know what gender terms an individual would prefer you to use; this means that all colleagues can be acknowledged. As we adapt our language it is only natural that we will make mistakes along the way. Entrenching new habits takes time and it is okay to make mistakes simply apologise, correct yourself and work to communicate more inclusively in the future. There's always more to be done to foster an inclusive world of work, but the most difficult obstacle is often getting started.

For those interested in learning more: [A beginner's guide to pronouns and using pronouns in the workplace | Stonewall](#)



EDI news update

We have been running a number of engagement sessions across Fife, led by the Fife Centre for Equalities to understand and learn more from those working in health and social care and the barriers they face and what we can do to support them and wider workforce awareness around Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

For those who can't manage to an engagement session there is also the option of completing the [online form](#) to share views.

The feedback received so far has informed the three campaigns that we are going to focus on this year.

- Pronouns
- Neurodiversity
- Whistleblowing



Calendar of inclusive awareness days – there are lots of awareness days that we can support to celebrate and acknowledge the diverse workforce working across health and social care in Fife. To check out what's happening in 2024 [click here](#).

[Why Gender Pronouns Matter - YouTube](#)

[What Are Pronouns? - YouTube](#)

[Pronouns / Trans / One Word / Cut - YouTube](#)

[The University of Wilwaukee's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual.](#)

['Here's Why Gender Pronouns Are So Important'](#)

['Why it makes sense for cis people to state their pronouns'](#)

['Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Gender-Neutral Pronouns'](#)



Get In Touch

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Supporting the people of Fife together