Launch of the Defra group policy for Supporting Trans and Non-binary Employees

This is relevant to Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Rural Payments Agency and VMD.

Building a workplace where everyone feels supported, respected and included remains an important part of our culture within Defra group.

A new Defra group policy, Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Employees, comes into effect today (15 October 2026). This policy replaces several legacy policies and toolkits and provides consistency across the department and its ALBs.

These changes are to ensure our policies reflect the law clearly, while keeping our commitment to inclusion at the centre of how we work together.

Why we're making this change

The update follows the Supreme Court ruling of April 2025, that confirmed that "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 refers to biological sex, and subsequent case law including the Good Law Project ruling in February 2026. The Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Employees policy brings our guidance in line with the law and brings our policy and guidance into one clear, consistent approach across Defra group.

What's changing

The policy introduces some important changes, including:

- clarity that references to "male" or "female" in our policies and processes mean biological male or biological female, which may affect access to facilities or provisions designated for a particular sex.
- a change to arrangements in leave for colleagues undergoing gender reassignment. (not applicable to Natural England)
- updates to facilities in some locations, which may take time to implement fully, with interim arrangements in place where needed.

In a limited number of locations, interim facilities arrangements have been put in place while longer term facilities provision is arranged. If anyone has any concerns about facilities, you should speak to your Line Manager or contact your site-specific Defra Facilities Management contacts.

The safety, dignity, and wellbeing of all our colleagues, including our trans and non-binary colleagues, is a paramount concern. We have specific policies and support mechanisms in place, which are being continually reviewed and strengthened, to ensure a safe, inclusive, and respectful working environment, free from discrimination or harassment, and in line with legal requirements. That means being considerate, respectful, and sensitive towards colleagues whose views differ from your own, in line with the Civil Service Code and other organisational codes of conduct.

Getting support

An Employee Resource Kit has been developed to help trans and non-binary employees understand the support available, make informed decisions about transitioning at work, plan their own transition journey where required, and access practical help, wellbeing support and organisational resources. In addition, there is a complementary Manager Response Kit to support understanding and implementation of the policy. These kits have been developed with input from both line managers and employees with lived experience.

Wellbeing

Defra group has a range of wellbeing support, including the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Employees can request to speak with an EAP Clinician who has a similar lived experience or shares aspects of their identity, such as a protected characteristic, where a suitable match is available.

All colleagues and managers have access to the Occupational Health Service, which is an independent, confidential health service, including for those with mental health conditions or disabilities.

Defra group also has Mental Health First Aiders who can support colleagues experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.

Frequently Asked Questions

An FAQ document has been developed to support with any questions. Please read these or speak to your line manager in the first instance.

Further information

Defra group Property have undertaken a comprehensive estate-wide review to establish the current position across its portfolio of buildings and produced a position statement. If you would like to discuss further, or have any concerns please contact the local FM lead for your site, which can be found on the Defra group Property Hub.

Supporting Trans and Non-binary Employees Policy & Guidance

Please note: All comments should adhere to our intranet comments policy and our Principles of Communication.