

# HE / SHE / THEY

---

How to support a child exploring their gender identity

## Useful Apps:



SAM



MoodTools



What's Up?



Fabulous - Daily Routine Planner



In Hand

Unless stated otherwise, apps are not supplied by the NHS and the NHS is not liable for their use.

# HE / SHE / THEY

---

How to support a child exploring their gender identity

## WHEN TO BE CONCERNED?

For some people, they know and feel certain about their gender whereas for others it may not be as clear, particularly for teens as this is a period of significant physical, emotional and mental change and development. It can take time to fully understand thoughts and feelings. For others it will be clear but may still cause worry or stress. Whilst we hope that the world is becoming a more understanding and accepting place, we know that coming out or sharing thoughts and feelings about gender identity may be a source of real worry, doubt, confusion or stress.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Not all young people will be certain about their gender. Normalise that it's OK not to be sure or to be curious
- Understand that coming out can be highly anxiety provoking, try to be open to hearing a young person's thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Validate their thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Every young person's experience will be different so try not to compare to others
- Even if you are unsure of what to say, there is power in just listening
- Allow the young person time and space to share what they feel comfortable to share
- Respect and use a young person's choice of personal pronouns
- Help facilitate your young person's access to information, advice and support if wanted/ needed
- There is a lot of information on the Sussex CAMHS website: [sussexcamhs.nhs.uk/help-support/young-people/sexuality-and-gender-identity/](https://sussexcamhs.nhs.uk/help-support/young-people/sexuality-and-gender-identity/)

## WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

- Appearing withdrawn and less communicative
- Disrupted sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep)
- Resistance to doing things; appearing unmotivated and disinterested; avoidance of seeing friends or doing activities they ordinarily enjoy
- For girls, acute distress around menstruation
- Difficulties or distress around clothes shopping and gender expression (the way in which a person expresses their gender identity, typically through their appearance, dress, and behaviour)
- Discomfort with using biological sex pronouns
- Discomfort around gender based school uniform
- Distress around PE and changing in front of others
- Questions and curiosity about hypothetical situations to gauge reactions
- Frequent changes of emotion, more sensitive (e.g. irritable, upset, anxious, low)
- Thoughts or urges to harm self or some thoughts to end life; some infrequent or superficial (not requiring medical attention) self-harm may occur
- Substance misuse

#Recipes4wellbeing



[sussexcamhs.nhs.uk](https://sussexcamhs.nhs.uk)