



Transitioning in Parliament: A personal account

I joined Parliament in October 2009. I felt comfortable enough to approach my HR manager about my transition approximately a month after my arrival. I'd attended a Diversity and Inclusion training session and knew that Parliament was the place for me to transition.

During my conversation with HR we talked about what gender reassignment was and what processes were involved. I explained that I was now in the phase of the process that required me to live a 'Real Life Test' – a period of two years for me to adjust living in my correct gender. We also discussed how to let colleagues and managers know.

HR at first were very procedural in the way that they decided to inform other members of staff. They wanted to tell people that they must call me by new name immediately; that there would be no questions and any harassment would be dealt with sternly. I said that I needed to own the process and suggested that I work out a way of telling colleagues so that they were coming on the journey with me rather than being told they had no choice. I also said that questions should be allowed. Providing this opportunity would enable people to understand the transition better.

The HR manager told my supervisor in a private meeting in which I was not present. My supervisor was very sympathetic and together, the three of us developed a plan for telling colleagues, and when.

I spoke to a senior manager who said she would be willing to tell my colleagues. I prepared a document that she would read out. I said that it would be better for me not to be present at the meeting, but be present at work to answer with any immediate questions.

We decided to tell people during the period between Boxing Day and the New Year, as it was a quiet time for the business, yet almost everyone in my team would be in work.

I set a date to transition to begin in May 2010 to give colleagues and me time to adjust to what would be happening. It also gave me time to change my work-related documentation such as my payslips, HAIS details and parliamentary network account username and email address. It gave the hormones five months to kick in and make subtle changes to my physical appearance. It also gave me some time to put into practice my voice coaching that I had been receiving as part of my gender reassignment process.

Colleagues were formally informed, as planned. It did feel strange that everyone coming out of the meeting would know my most intimate secret. However I had some really nice comments and many of my team were very sympathetic and understanding. I'd like to point out that I did not experience any harassment.

During the time between telling colleagues and my transition date, I made very tiny changes to my appearance to reflect my chosen gender.

My transition date arrived and I was able to simply slip my name change in as planned. Parliament was in a busy General Election period and so staff were more interested in helping our customers than my transition, which was a good thing.

There were issues: some colleagues used the incorrect pronouns to begin with, however eventually they corrected themselves.

Overall, colleagues have been fantastic. My first time going to the toilet of my correct gender, a colleague went with me to make sure I was OK.

I am living the change and enjoying the journey.

Further Information

Parliagender

Parliagender works on behalf of our members to raise awareness of gender inequality at every level and to work to achieve positive change. We identify and challenge structures and practices that lead to gender inequality or discrimination. We campaign for improvements, and provide training and support for our members.

- [Email Parliagender](#)
- www.parliament.uk/parliagender

ParliOUT

ParliOUT is a Workplace Equality Network (WEN) in support of LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, and questioning) people in Parliament. A principal aim of ParliOUT is to make LGBTIQ role models more visible and accessible.

- [Email ParliOUT](#)
- www.parliament.uk/parliout