

Demi Lawrie



I am currently a 1st-year undergraduate student studying Social Work at the [University of Stirling](#). As part of one of my modules, it was an essential requirement to attend a community practice-based placement, I was placed at [Fife Centre for Equalities](#) (FCE) based in Kirkcaldy. I had to complete 30 hours with FCE and decided to attend 3 hours a week every Tuesday.

On my arrival at my FCE, I was asked to carry out a mini community-based health and equality project, on an area, I wasn't familiar with or I had an interest for. From being given this opportunity from my mentor (Nina), I intended to focus my research on the social stigma of transgender individuals within a workplace. I knew little knowledge about this specific area, and I was interested

to know what organisations have available to support trans-individuals in workplaces and to see what trans-individuals experience are within a workplace. Additionally, I felt gaining this experience of researching this topic would be relevant in my future practice of a Social Worker.

Before starting off my mini project, I decided it would be beneficial for myself to create an action plan so I was able to keep a time-scale of what I wanted/needed to be done each week. However, this did change a few times. Afterwards, I needed to decide how I was going to gather all this information for my project and what would be the most effective way of gathering all this information. I decided I would create a questionnaire which I would send to organisations, this was also a new experience to me as I had never conducted a questionnaire before. Then I decided I would attend the local trans support group to conduct an informal interview with some members. Therefore, the Aims and project outline for my research were based on:

Project Outline:

Promote Inclusive practice for transgender individuals in employment.

Project Aims:

- To conduct a questionnaire among employers/organisations re: policy and practice to include trans-individuals within a workplace.
- To engage with the trans-group to understand their employment history and experience.
- To make recommendations and highlight good practice.

The questionnaire included 10 questions altogether and had a range of open and closed questions, which allowed me to see more in-depth comments on what policies they have in place for supporting employees. The closed questions allowed me to identify the information I needed from comparing the questionnaires together

to see how many organisations agreed with each other or disagreed. Some examples of the questions I asked were:

- Has there been any changes made to policies since the [Equality Act 2010](#) became a part of Scottish Law.
- Does your company provide any kind of Equality training?
- Does your company have gender-neutral toilets available to staff?

However, I faced some difficulties trying to distribute my questionnaires as I wasn't sure who to contact or what organisations to contact. I tried to contact specific business around Fife to see if they would help me contact different organisations they are in contact with but this was not allowed on their behalf. I then didn't know what to do, so spoke to Nina and Pat who were able to give me some advice. I then started contacting organisations myself through email communication and sending my questionnaire electronically. Over the next few weeks, I wasn't getting any further forward with my questionnaires, I was receiving emails back from organisations saying they couldn't participate due to confidentiality or they weren't allowed to give me policies they have in place. So overall I only received 4 questionnaires back, which was quite disappointing.

From the 4 questionnaires I received back they were all very positive in supporting employees within a workplace. However, they were quite different from specific questions, for example for question 2 which was 'If yes, do you have an option for Transgender or Prefer not to say in your application process?' 2 of the companies said yes and 2 of them said no which was interesting. Also, on question 7 "Does your company have gender-neutral toilets available to staff" only 1 company said yes to this which I found surprising. Other than these 2 questions the questionnaires were quite similar. Overall, I feel that there are still some changes to be made to make for all individuals to feel fully included and respected within a workplace.

Once I started to receive some of the questionnaires back I started to prepare for my informal interview with the trans support group. I arranged with Diane Florence, of [LGBT Health and Wellbeing](#), to attend the support group on Saturday 25th March. When I attended the group I was able to get involved with their discussions and this developed onto speaking about work experience history. From attending this support group, I was able to gather informative data on factual experiences from trans-individuals on their work experiences. I was able to create a case study with their permission and the case studies represent 2 completely different experiences within a workplace:

Rubin, 22

I started at my workplace known as SH in Kirkcaldy when I was 19 years old. I went to my manager when I was ready to let him know I was thinking about transitioning, and my manager was fully supportive of me progressing onto this stage. My manager set up a meeting with LGBT Health for himself so he could find out relevant information and advice to support me through my process of transitioning. I feel very supported and included within my work place, and I know that my workplace has policies in place to support

me. When I did have to go to the other workplace in Dunfermline, I felt nervous as I wasn't sure if everyone was going to be as friendly as everyone from Kirkcaldy, but I felt at ease when I arrived. SH have been fully understandable if I have had any appointments for my hormones, and so has all the other staff. My manager has unfortunately left the organisation, but my manager has spoken with my new manager and he is being really good with me and making me feel just as supported as my previous manager. I transitioned 2 years ago, and I feel fully respected within my workplace.

Kyle

I started working in a local pizza Shop in Dunfermline, and I was really excited to start working here as this was allowing me to earn my own money. From the 1st day I walked in, I did not feel supported or included. Jokes were directed at me, they would ask me what my 'previous' name was, it was just a horrible experience. I was treated different from the others who worked there, and I just felt really hurt about getting treated this way. I ended up getting fired one night as I was just so upset and angry at getting jokes directed at me, and just feeling marginalised within the workplace. It has made me really self-conscious about returning back to a work from this experience

The findings of my research indicated the final outcome was that the 4 organisations who responded to my questionnaires have applicable policies in place to support all their employees. However, I only received 4 back which never allowed myself to compare questionnaires effectively and get a rough insight if policy and practice are effective in protecting and supporting all employees within different workplaces. My interview allowed me to gather factual evidence, which highlighted there are a few workplaces that are allowing all individuals to feel fully included within a team but as stated before I think some changes are still needing to be made within workplaces to protect all employees.

From my contribution of taking part as an Equality Researcher and carrying out my mini project, I was able to promote FCE by liaising with companies that FCE have not engaged with yet. FCE have also developed my experience extremely by allowing me to develop new skills of research, organisational and communication. These skills have developed throughout my experience by engaging with the community, being organised each week to meet targets I had set myself and being able to develop my research skills from creating and conducting a questionnaire for the first time.

FCE allowed me to gain more knowledge about the Equality Act 2010 which they work closely on giving advice and training on. Being aware of what the Equality Act 2010 protects and what the act was set up for will help me in my academic journey of becoming a Social Worker. Additionally, I feel it has grown my experience by making me more aware of the importance to continue promoting equality and diversity which I believe is important in my future career as a Social Worker.

Keywords

#equalityact #employment #barriers #trans #inclusion

Further Information

More information about Inclusive Communication or other equality, diversity or inclusion matters, please contact Fife Centre for Equalities by email info@centreforequalities.org.uk or telephone 01592 645 310.

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