

# Stay Safe

**A practical guide to staying safe online and at events, while supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse workers' rights.**



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## The TUC

The TUC exists to make the working world a better place for everyone. We bring together more than 5.3 million working people who make up our 48 member unions. We believe all workers deserve respect, and the opportunity to make the most of their talents.

We have a long and proud history of promoting equality for all our members. We strive to end all forms of discrimination, bigotry and stereotyping. The TUC's commitment to equality is written into our constitution and into that of our member unions.

Unions play a vital role in ensuring that rights under the Equality Act are respected and upheld by way of collective bargaining, raising awareness of rights amongst employers and employees, assisting in resolution of disputes, providing support to members in pursuing claims to the employment tribunal, as well as adopting strategic litigation to clarify legal issues and establish norms to be followed in the workplace.

## Introduction

Hostile anti-trans narratives have fuelled worrying levels of hate crimes against trans and non-binary people. This in turn has fostered a febrile environment where many trans and non-binary people, and their allies, have felt unsafe and been exposed to violence, attacks and hostility both online and in person.

The trade union movement is working hard to change and challenge those conditions through organising, bargaining and campaigning for equality so that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Unions, reps, and members play a vital role in challenging all forms of discrimination, including transphobia and transphobic hate. Workplace representatives are especially important in supporting trans and non-binary members and negotiating for policies on inclusion and equality for them before issues arise.

This guidance offers practical advice on digital security, public safety, legal rights, and union protections, along with steps union reps can take to safeguard their trans and non-binary members.

Safety is a shared responsibility and no one should have to manage risk alone.

These tips are not an exhaustive list, and you should only take on the ones you feel might help you, and where it feels appropriate to do so.

# The law

## Transphobic hate incidents

A transphobic hate incident is any act perceived to be by the victim motivated by hostility or prejudice based on transgender identity. If you or someone you know has been subject to a transphobic incident then it should be recorded as such if reported.

Anyone can be a victim, including people who are not trans but are perceived to be, or those targeted because of their association with trans people. Incidents can happen online or offline, as a single act or part of ongoing harassment, and may involve verbal abuse, threats, bullying, physical violence, damage to property, or online abuse.

When a hate incident breaks the law, it becomes a hate crime. Any criminal offence such as assault, harassment, or property damage can be treated as a hate crime if motivated by hostility toward trans people. Under the *Criminal Justice Act 2003*, judges can impose tougher sentences for crimes aggravated by transphobia.

Transphobic hate incidents and crimes can occur entirely online. Posts, comments, private messages, emails, or other digital communications that threaten, harass, or incite hatred may amount to offences such as malicious communications, harassment, or incitement to violence. Online incidents are treated in the same way as offline ones and can be reported to the police. Screenshots, messages, and links can help provide evidence. If you do not wish to speak to the police, you can also use a third-party reporting agency like Galop an anti-LGBT+ abuse charity. (See below for contact details.)

**Legal Protection:** Hate speech may also amount to a hate crime. While freedom of expression protects the right to express even offensive views, it does not protect expression that seeks to incite violence, hatred, or discrimination. UK law criminalises stirring up hatred based on sexual orientation but not specifically trans identity. However, Section 4A of the *Public Order Act 1986* makes it an offence to intentionally cause harassment, alarm, or distress. If transphobic hostility can be shown, sentencing can be increased under the *Criminal Justice Act 2003*. This means that the right to freedom of expression, often cited as a defence for hate speech, does not protect expression intended to incite violence, hatred, or discrimination.

If you experience a transphobic hate incident—online or offline—report it to the police. If you are unsure or do not feel able to do so, contact your union representative for support in reporting and accessing protection.

**TIP:** Freedom of expression is not a defence from workplace disciplinary action where a worker's expression has breached their employer's policies. For example, if an employee comments on a colleague's appearance in a way which would breach the dignity at work policy. If an incident happens at work, report it to your manager, HR and your union rep.

**Remember:** Freedom of expression is not a defence from workplace disciplinary action where a worker's expression has breached an employer's policies. If an incident happens at work report it to your manager, HR or your union rep.<sup>1</sup>

### At work

Health and safety law states that it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the workplace is safe and to assess all risks to workers, arranging for the effective planning, control, and monitoring of preventive and protective measures; and consulting employees (and any recognised union safety rep).

- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare of their employees.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations also state that employers have a duty to consider the risks to workers (including the risk of reasonably foreseeable violence), assess the risks and then prevent or control them.
- The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against workers because of a protected characteristic, including Gender reassignment (Being trans), Sexual orientation, Age, Disability, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity and Race, Religion or belief.
- It states that harassment is a form of discrimination and defines harassment as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

- Under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations, any recognised union safety representative has the right to be consulted, to carry out inspections, and to investigate concerns.

## Staying Safe

While there is no absolute list of all the steps you can take to stay safe, we have compiled some steps below that you can consider taking.

### Digital and on-line security

Union activism and trans visibility can increase the risk of harassment and doxing<sup>2</sup>.

However, for many trans and non-binary people, staying safe from doxing often means balancing privacy with the need for community and visibility.

Unfortunately, the trans and non-binary community are often targeted for doxing, so extra care can help.

Example: Clare "Keffals" Sorrenti

Clara "Keffals" Sorrenti, a Canadian trans streamer, was doxed in 2022 when trolls leaked her address and deadname, then filed a false police report that led to a swatting.<sup>3</sup> She faced death threats, repeated stalking, and was forced to relocate multiple times, including fleeing Canada for Northern Ireland, where harassers again uncovered her location.<sup>4</sup>

Police in both Canada and Northern Ireland investigated, and Keffals ultimately went into protective hiding, highlighting the severe real-world dangers of online doxing.

Below are a few practical steps you can consider taking to lessen the risk of doxing.

### Practical actions

Take proactive steps to protect your digital footprint:

- Privacy settings: Regularly review privacy settings on social media (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn). Limit who can view your profile, posts, and contact information.
- Name: Don't use your real name, or identifiable information online.
- Data minimization: Avoid posting real-time travel details and remove location data (EXIF) from photos.

- Device security: Use strong, unique passwords and authenticator-based two-factor authentication. Use encrypted messaging apps such as Signal for sensitive conversations.
- Monitoring & reporting: Set up Google Alerts for your name or usernames to catch potential leaks early. Document and report harassment to platforms and your union if necessary.
- Audit old content: Delete or lock down old profiles (especially ones with deadnames).
- Be cautious with sign-ups: Don't reuse your main email for newsletters or contests.

## **If you're targeted**

- Lock down: Know how to and take steps to lock down or temporarily disable social accounts
- Document: Take screenshots of threats or leaks.
- Report: Social networks often have doxing-specific reporting tools
- Contact the police: Contact the police especially if threats include harassment or swatting

## **Public safety at union meetings, rallies, and protests**

Public events are vital to union work but can present risks. Planning and awareness are key. Here are a few practical steps you can consider taking to lessen the risks:

- Make sure the event is legitimate and organised by the group you think it is.
- Go with trusted colleagues and agree on meeting points and exit routes. Consider sticking to well-lit and busy areas at night. Apps like Citymapper or Google Maps are effective tools for plan journeys. If possible, share your live location with a trusted contact.
- If using buses or trains, wait in staffed or well-lit areas (e.g., near the ticket office or driver's cab).
- Share travel plans and check-in times with someone you trust.

- Wear neutral, comfortable clothing that avoids unique identifiers. Hats are useful for privacy. This will help reduce the risk of the risk of online harassment and doxing

## Experiencing harassment

It's important you remember to trust your instincts.

- If someone feels threatening, create distance, for example cross the street, step into a shop, or head toward staff.
- Don't engage, if it's verbal abuse, leaving or seeking witnesses is usually safer than arguing.
- If you are on public transport you can ask the driver or station staff for assistance. (British Transport Police operate a 24/7 text service (61016) or phone 0800 40 50 40)

Safety is a collective effort. By sharing knowledge, supporting one another, and using the protections available, trans and non-binary people, their allies, and trade unionists can organize, campaign, and lead with confidence.

## The role of the Union

Employers must consider and use appropriate control measures to prevent, or where this is not possible, significantly reduce the risk of violence, abuse and transphobia; verbal or physical, taking an approach which first aims to eliminate risk. Additionally, since the British government ratified the ILO's Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment at work, which came into force in March 2023, an employers' duty of care does not stop at their front door, but extends to all work-related activities including traveling to, from, or between workplaces.

Union reps have a legal right to raise concerns with their employer where they feel their management of the risks to workers has fallen short or has not been adequately assessed and controlled.

Remember: a risk assessment is a live document. Assessments and control measures must be kept under review and changed accordingly, in consultation with workers and unions.

## Transphobic hate crime

There are also things union reps can do if they witness a transphobic hate crime. For more information on the law and what to do if you witness a hate crime see the TUC's '[Transphobic hate incidents and crimes' guidance](#) which focuses on defining and reporting transphobic hate incidents and the law.

## Be a good trans ally

Remember everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness at work.

Unfortunately, this isn't the case for all workers. Our research has found on every measure, that trans respondents experienced higher levels of bullying, harassment and discrimination at work than the rest of the LGBT+ Community. It revealed that around eight in 10 (79%) trans respondents had experienced at least one form of bullying, harassment or discrimination at work in the last five years this compares to just under half (48%) of the full sample.<sup>5</sup>

The trade union movement is built on solidarity among workers in an explicit acknowledgement that we are stronger together. This is why it's important all working people, union members and trade union representatives are trans allies.

To learn more about being a good ally see our guidance, '[How to be a good trans ally at work.](#)'

## Trade union rep actions

Below are some of things trade union reps can and should ensure employers are doing:

1. Ensure employers carry out targeted risk assessments for trans and non-binary members, including site-specific and journey-related risks, and put in place safer working arrangements so duties and visits are conducted in controlled environments.
2. Demand robust reporting and response systems for work-related violence, with all members able to report incidents quickly, given time to do so, and with managers required to act promptly in line with agreed policies. The TUC has produced a [model form](#) which reps and employers are welcome to use and adapt.
3. Press employers to adapt working practices to reduce risk—ending lone working where necessary, introducing team-based approaches, adjusting shifts and staffing, enabling remote working, and maintaining safe staffing levels during higher-risk situations such as public disturbances.
4. Ensure members are properly protected through training on managing confrontation and civil unrest, clear first aid provision, access to emergency contacts, and the deployment of security staff where risks are heightened.
5. Secure safer travel arrangements for members, including risk assessments for journeys and employer-funded options such as taxis where needed, alongside joint visits or police support in higher-risk situations.
6. Require employers to make workplaces safer through practical measures such as improved visibility, CCTV and alarms, increased staffing at peak times, and clear procedures for dealing with perpetrators, including removal and escalation.
7. Insist that employers recognise and address psychological risk, including updating stress risk assessments, providing wellbeing support, and ensuring regular check-ins for members in higher-risk roles.
8. Establish clear protections and agreements, including pay where members are stood down for safety reasons, and press for workplaces to register as third-party hate crime reporting sites.

9. Work collectively with employers and partners to promote zero tolerance of abuse, including public campaigns, clear signage, and messaging that reinforces respect and dignity for all workers.

# Where to get help

## Support organisations

### Galop

Galop is the LGBT+ anti-violence charity, offering advice and support to people facing hate crime domestic abuse, or sexual violence.

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

<http://www.galop.org.uk/report/>

020 7704 2040

[advice@galop.org.uk](mailto:advice@galop.org.uk)

### Stop Hate UK

Stop Hate UK offers independent and confidential information, advice and support to anybody affected by LGB&T hate crime.

<https://www.stophateuk.org/report-lgb-and-t-hate-crime/>

0808 801 0661

[talk@stophateuk.org](mailto:talk@stophateuk.org)

### True Vision

True Vision is a police website for reporting hate crime online without visiting a police station.

[www.report-it.org.uk/your\\_police\\_force](http://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force)

### TransActual

TransActual are working towards a world where trans people can live safely, in dignity and with access to the healthcare that they need. They're a national, trans led and run organisation focussed specifically on working for trans adults in the UK. Their work is broad ranging, but they have a particular focus on healthcare and trans people's legal protections.

<https://transactual.org.uk/>

<https://transactual.org.uk/downloadable-resources/>

## **Victim Support**

Victim Support is a charity that works with all people affected by crime, including victims, witnesses, their family, and friends.

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

08 08 16 89 111