How to Engage with Interest Holders in Gender Healthcare
Starting as you mean to go on.

Introduction

Gender healthcare is a space where people can encounter challenges in engagement and communication.

In Ireland, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is developing a new Model of Care for Gender Healthcare. Details on the process can be found at ww.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/gender.

A core part of this process is developing an 'Experience Base' that captures the views and experiences of a wide range of interest holders, including but not limited to, those with lived experience and healthcare professionals.

To ensure meaningful involvement of those with lived experience, the HSE National Clinical Programme on Gender Healthcare convened a dedicated Consulting and Advisory Group of transgender advocacy group members to provide expert input on the most effective approaches for engaging those with lived experience as part of the Model of Care development process. This group completed their work in September 2025, resulting in the formulation of a number of suggestions, key aspects of which are presented here.

Reaching the Right People.

Include people with lived experience of all ages and demographics, and from all parts of Ireland.

Pay attention to the needs of neurodiverse people and consider the need to reach out via relevant national organisations like As I Am

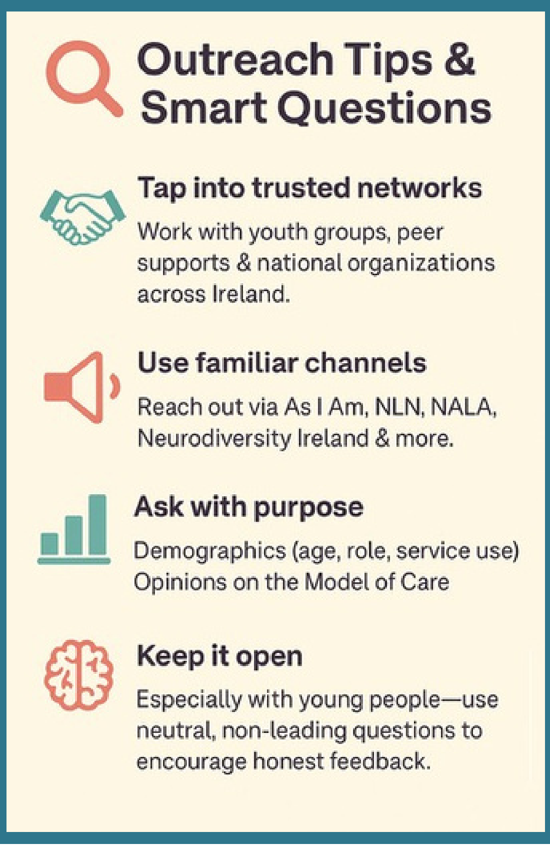
Many people use hormones and medicines sourced via unprescribed routes: their voices should be included.

Consider the need to include families (parents, guardians, wider family members) as well as youth workers and carers, when gathering the Experience Base.

Create a mechanism for advocacy groups to contribute to the Experience Base review..

Design.

- Develop strategies with those with lived experience.
- Establish validation mechanisms to ensure contributions are authentic and meaningful.
- Adopt a rigorous qualitative research approach to the experience base as much as possible.
- Deliver an Experience Base process that offers several methods of including respondent's voices, considering which method works best for each specific groups.



Outreach Tips & Smart Questions

Tap into trusted networks
Work with youth groups, peer supports & national organizations across Ireland.

Use familiar channels
Reach out via As I Am, NLN, NALA, Neurodiversity Ireland & more.

Ask with purpose
Demographics (age, role, service use)
Opinions on the Model of Care

Keep it open
Especially with young people—use neutral, non-leading questions to encourage honest feedback.

Remember:not all people have access to the internet.

Considering methods.

Town Hall type settings may not feel safe - these should be avoided in this piece of work.

Online surveys can offer depth and breadth, but can compromise authenticity and accuracy.

Focus groups can be effective, but need to be to carefully considered to avoid selection bias.

Taking Care of People.

- Plan for visible, accessible support before, during, and after in-person events (such as trained personnel and clear signposting to guide and assist participants).
- Respect participants' privacy and be clear about participant exposure to others prior to engagement.
- Recognise the bravery it takes to speak up.
- Ensure all engagement with children and young people is age-appropriate and includes robust safeguarding measures.
- Choose formats and venues that accommodate neurodiverse needs, with tailored scaffolding to support inclusive participation.

More information:

www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/gender