

Annex A

Comments posted on the Scottish Government intranet in response to the publication of poll results on the use of pronouns in email signatures.

[redacted - out of scope] 18/06/2021 09:25

I'd seen people mentioning their pronouns in email signatures, Twitter bios etc, and I understood why, but I didn't think it was something I needed to do myself. But then I went to an LGBTI allies event, and they explained that when lots of people do this, it helps normalise it and makes it easier for others to say what pronouns they use. Also, simple things like mentioning your pronouns in email signatures or, when in the office, wearing the LGBTI allies' rainbow lanyard, acts as a signal that you are actively promoting an inclusive environment. Apparently this means other people are less likely to say something hurtful, and that seems like a really easy way to make other people's lives a bit easier.

For anyone who is interested, there is an LGBTI network on Yammer which is private and for members of the LGBTI community, and there is also an LGBTI allies network which is open and anyone can join it. It's a good way to find out more.

[redacted - out of scope] 18/06/2021 09:42

Thank you [redacted - out of scope], your comment reflects my own thoughts too. I am grateful to have the opportunity to be an LGBTI ally.

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 17:33

I think it's also important to reflect that it's Pride Month during June. Pride is a time to celebrate and remember how far LGBTI+ communities have come in the past 40-50 years, but is often an acute reminder of how far we still have to go to (even within the community itself). The survey on pronouns wasn't intended to promote debate or controversy, and it's important that a range of voices and views are heard; but colleagues should be mindful that while their comments weren't intended to be taken as negative, they can still hurt or catch people off-guard. This has been true of issues surrounding race and sexuality in the past, but is pretty new for many of us around gender - I include myself in that. I think for many, sexuality and gender isn't a central or regular thought to how we work or live; but for some it is, and the experience of discrimination, secret looks and 'coming out', often on a daily basis, does take its toll and it's important we're able to bring our wholeselves to work.

Using pronouns is an important way to help lessen these challenges for trans and non-binary staff, but it can also bring a whole host of improvements like not misgendering colleagues with neutral names, or even assuming the gender of someone from their profession or title.

Many of us are happy to have discussions, but it all needs to be led with an open mind and kindness at heart, especially in the workplace and even more so on Saltire where people can't opt-in to being part of it.

Edit: changed 20-30 years to 40-50 years. I keep forgetting that 2000 was 21 years ago *sigh*

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 16:01

Really well put, thank you.

[redacted - out of scope] 18/06/2021 09:40

I also think this is a really helpful comment, thank you [redacted - out of scope].

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 09:54

Agree that having pronouns in the email signature is a great step forward for all the reasons already described here.

I wonder though, if this goes far enough in practice, as you will only see someones preferred pronouns in an email signature after they email you. By which point the horse may have already bolted in terms of unintentionally mis-gendering that person (they may even be replying to an email where you did just that).

Even once you have seen someones email signature, there is no guarantee that you will always remember what pronouns were displayed for every person who emails you.

Is there any further work being done to allow people to display their preferred pronouns (by choice, of course) in other places? Is it possible, for example, for this to make up part of your display name on Teams, so that when someone searches for you to call or chat with you, they will see your preferred pronouns? Or could it be something that can be added to the Outlook address lookup? Or Staff Directory?

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 15:45

I agree with this. It's often helpful to know people's pronouns before you've had email contact with them - e.g. you may need to say "Contact X as it looks like her/his/their team covers that area".

The staff directory would be a great place to add them - it already shows titles. I vaguely remember someone saying they can be added there.

Misgendering seems to affect a wide range of people: non-binary/trans people, assumptions based on a person's name, and the sexist practice of assuming people in certain positions are of a certain gender - when I worked in academia, Profs said they were often misgendered as male. Anything to help address this is a good thing.

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 16:22

Good idea, [redacted - out of scope]. I've added mine to my profile under 'more about me'.

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 16:43

[Redacted - out of scope] that is a really clever idea that i'd never considered. Stealing to add to my own profile.

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 16:57

Good place to put them [redacted - out of scope]! I was thinking of the separate staff directory, but this works well. Added them.

[redacted - out of scope] 16/06/2021 10:26

I think it is extremely interesting that a Saltire article that discusses inclusion for both people in same-sex relationships and non-binary / trans colleagues, has the highest number of comments currently pulled for moderation that I have seen in many years.

Conversations with colleagues and line managers would be really helpful here perhaps, so people understand very clearly why certain comments are unacceptable. As the Perm Sec reminded us in this week's vlog, kindness is one of our new core principles, and we work in the service of all people in Scotland - not just some of them. Everyone deserves respect.

[REDACTED – SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT] 16/06/2021 11:33

Absolutely agree [redacted - out of scope]. I see an important role for Allies here in helping everyone understand why these issues are so important and the impact that they can inadvertently have on colleagues. Which leads me into a shameless plug for the REN Allies event on 24 June and the DG Education and Justice event on 30. If other parts of SG would like similar events, just give us a shout.

[redacted - out of scope] 16/06/2021 11:55

I agree wholeheartedly that we must take great care on how we communicate about issues such as these. I also think that the bar should be set higher in staff conversations and forums than it clearly is in other conversations on social media, or in legislation. We have standards to uphold, a duty of care to each other here, and a duty to treat each other with respect. I think though that should include being very careful not to ascribe attributes like kindness or unkindness, or presence (or lack) of thought to one set of viewpoints or another, especially when we don't really know much about each other, or where we're coming from.

[redacted - out of scope] 16/06/2021 13:23

I'm glad I'm not on the naughty step this time. Actually it's been a while. On pronouns It's a choice thing, like many things in life and I think people generally accept this.

[redacted - out of scope] 16/06/2021 15:13

'Kindness is one of our new core principles' suggests we have not shown or been kind in the past. I've never known anyone in the office to have not ever shown kindness in some way or another. It's not a principle it's a common courtesy and a simple competency of any public servant.

[redacted - out of scope] 16/06/2021 16:18

Indeed [redacted - out of scope]! I guess no one can ignore topics like these are prone to trigger different opinions, and sometimes, in public discourse, open dialogue is not easy... It would be good to see what reported comments make it back and which ones doesn't and, even more interesting, the reasons why...

[redacted] 17/06/2021 07:21

[redacted]

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 15:06

Hi [redacted - out of scope] - unfortunately I can't comment directly as I didn't see all the comments in question, but as far I am aware moderation on Saltire is driven by colleagues who read comments and report them, rather than a central role that reviews everything.

What is concerning is that you perceive that a comment might have to be considered 'abuse, heated language, swearing or threats' to be considered offensive? In much of my experience, homophobia, for example can be presented in the most polite way - which doesn't make it acceptable. You need to be in the shoes of the person who feels offended. Lack of intent is never an excuse.

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 18:10

Hey [redacted - out of scope]

Just to say that the comment you referred to, with over 90 likes, I found highly offensive and I was very concerned about the number of staff that liked it. It essentially denied the fact that our non-binary and trans colleagues find pronoun sharing essential for their own wellbeing and performance at work, in a very basic way so they are simply treated with respect and not misgendered, which some colleagues have explained very politely - I am sure you can't have missed that our Perm Sec (head of the organisation) says that we should feel confident to bring our whole selves to work. I would suggest that anyone who disagrees with her should email her directly and challenge / discuss with her the opinions she has of the organisation she leads. If not, what would you suggest is an alternative appropriate action, under the Civil Service Code we are all bound by? I am genuinely interested to have this conversation so please do get in touch.

I hope to talk to you soon.

[redacted - out of scope] 18/06/2021 07:33

Hi [redacted - out of scope]. I totally agree with all the important points you make. While there are of course standards that we should all meet in our discourse, and some things will be obviously offensive, one person's offensive can be different to another person's offensive - for example, terminology that one person deems to be fair or factual, can be viewed very differently by another person (and that applies to a number of different viewpoints). It would therefore be very helpful to know what the organisation itself deemed to be breaking the rules.

[redacted - out of scope] 18/06/2021 09:28

Hi [redacted - out of scope],

I found that comment expressed the personal opinion of a colleague, not on what all colleagues should do, but on her individual, personal choice. At no point the comment suggested that pronouns should not be used by colleagues, just that she won't be using them.

Of course this might cause offence to some, and we're all entitled to disagree and to express that disagreement, but it's difficult to have a discussion if some of the voices are - even if only temporarily- silenced.

My main point, though, was on how we deal with comments: I can understand a comment is pulled if it breaches the rules but I don't think comments should be pulled just because they offend us; of course we all should be able to report what we think has broken the rules but I wonder if we shouldn't apply some sort of presumption of innocence and leave that comment on until a decision has been made, therefore my suggestion to have a poll about it

Just to clarify, this is happening to comments across the spectrum of different opinions: [redacted - out of scope] made a comment expressing a different opinion and that comment, again puzzlingly, was reported and removed.

Regarding this:

our Perm Sec (head of the organisation) says that we should feel confident to bring our whole selves to work

I couldn't agree more: as a member of two minority groups, I find my workplace a very welcoming place. It is precisely the ability to bring our whole selves to work that encourages diversity and, consequently, diversity of opinion

[redacted - out of scope] 18/06/2021 10:23

[redacted - out of scope],

"Regarding this: *our Perm Sec (head of the organisation) says that we should feel confident to bring our whole selves to work.* I couldn't agree more: as a member of two minority groups, I find my workplace a very welcoming place. It is precisely the ability to bring our whole selves to work that encourages diversity and, consequently, diversity of opinion"

I'm happy that you find the workplace to be welcoming, and that you can be your whole self even while being from two minority groups. But what [redacted - out of scope] and so many others are saying, is that trans colleagues (and others that this issue is affecting, such as people with non-European names, people with gender neutral names etc) do not feel the same.

As trans activist and Stonewall Inn Riot veteran Marsha P Johnson said, 'No pride for any of us until liberation for all of us'. That means that the fight for inclusion doesn't stop when your group achieves equality - the fight is done when everyone is able to bring their whole selves to work, and at this point (and the comments demonstrate that) a lot of people cannot.

Nicky Richards 15/06/2021 18:04

On the pronouns poll - it seems to me that any action that makes people feel included and respected in our organisation is a good thing. Not everyone may wish to take this particular action and that is fine. Either way it is good if we can be open to listening, learning and reflecting on what it might be like to walk in someone else's shoes.

[redacted] 15/06/2021 10:17

[redacted]

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 11:27

[redacted]

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 12:01

"Surely what we need is a more substantive commitment to equality that doesn't leave anyone out."

Can you expand upon what (presumably marginalised) groups you feel might be losing out on equality by increased awareness/focus of gender diversity? It is obviously a very contentious topic in some circles so I am very much open to being educated on the views of all sides.

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 09:31

I'm a little sad that most people in the poll don't want to include pronouns. I would be interested to know a bit more as to why.

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 10:01

Hi [redacted - out of scope], I commissioned this poll as part of a project I'm leading, with the aim of raising awareness of pronoun use within SG over the next few months!

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 10:03

I need to find out what they actually mean but am certainly open to including them once I do.

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 11:21

I doubt I would ever use them as personally I think it's irrelevant to the matter I'm emailing about. If I'm emailing someone from my work account, whatever I may regard myself as in terms of gender/sexuality should have no bearing on that matter, or on how the person receiving my email should respond to me/think of me - in exactly the same way that whatever race or religion I am or my marital status should make no difference - I'm a person emailing from the Scottish Government on official business that is all they need to know. If I was emailing a potential date from my personal account and there was some potential confusion, then fine, I'd clarify my pronouns...

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 11:37

Like others I just wonder why is it necessary.

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 11:54

I don't find it necessary. The content of my work emails aren't or shouldn't be impacted by mine or anyone else's gender.

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 14:38

Much like it being nice to see folk who have added photos to Outlook (putting a face to a name!), I've found colleagues and stakeholders having their pronouns up useful since we moved to majority home-based working. With less casual contact, I'm less likely to have had made contact face-to-face or have been introduced to someone. Particularly when interacting with people with less traditionally gendered names, it just means I'm able to use the correct pronouns if I'm referring to them later. It's just a helpful wee bit of information, rather than relying on me making an assumption.

In a similar point, I recently saw someone suggest adding your working pattern to your signature. I'd thought it wasn't relevant to me because I work full time, Monday to Friday. However, a friend remarked that I also use flexibility in my working hours, just not via the compressed hours they do, so it might be helpful for me to set that out, particularly for externals. Plus it makes it stand out a bit less for other colleagues working flexibly, part time or compressed. Because of that conversation, I added: "I work flexibly, however, my standard availability is Mon-Fri 0730 to 1530."

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 14:51

I include my pronouns in my email signature for a number of reasons.

The first is that people, for some reason, assume my name is feminine. They then spend the rest of written communication referring to me as she/her until we speak in person or on a call and they realise they've misgendered me throughout. Whilst this doesn't cause me any great offence it can be annoying and is then something I have to clarify (often repeatedly).

The second is that normalising the correct use of pronouns for those who identify differently to how they may present is something I support. For example, if someone would prefer to be referred to as 'they/them' because that is how they identify then I am happy to do that and seeing this in their email signature is an easy way to show this.

Whilst for many it may seem like an unnecessary inclusion and not relevant to their day-to-day work, the more we normalise it the less those who identify differently have to 'out' themselves each time as different.

[Redacted] who explains more about this if people are interested.

[redacted - out of scope] 14/06/2021 16:26

I think pronouns are really useful - the more international and cosmopolitan we become, the more we will see names for which a gender isn't immediately obvious. And also, for those amongst us that don't identify with the binary, being able to specify that they use they/them, is helpful. I had thought in the past that I didn't need to specify pronouns as I was happy to be 'assumed' as female, but the more I have learned and given that is not the case for everyone, I'm happy to do so, in an attempt to normalise the practice. After all, it doesn't hurt me to do a simple thing to help others.

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 07:29

I was initially hesitant as I thought it was stealing voice from others closer to the subject if I added them to my signature.

I have since come to feel is about normalising it so that that colleagues who do have to clarify their pronouns aren't having to out themselves just to have the correct pronouns used in daily communication.

All it is costing me is a digital line in a email but it might result in someone else having an easier time which seems worth it to me.

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 07:47

As a cisgender person I am happy to include my pronouns in my email signature (he/him, for the record!) to help contribute to normalising it as a standard rather than leaving other colleagues, for example those who are non-binary and exclusively use they/them, having to stand out as the ones needing to clarify.

To people stating that pronoun preferences hold no relevance to work emails - would you not correct someone if they were continually referring to you by an incorrect pronoun in email conversations? I know I would!

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 11:28

Now added (he/him). Easy to do and a basic courtesy really.

[redacted] 15/06/2021 12:29

[redacted]

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 12:49

As someone who uses "they/them" pronouns seeing colleagues' pronouns is great and really important.

From colleagues who are cisgender (i.e. your gender is the same as your sex assigned at birth, you're not trans or non-binary) and who are including their pronouns in their email signature, this has given me a feeling of safety and acceptance and has allowed me to be myself at work without fear of discrimination.

It shows me that those colleagues are aware of the fact that for some people, their pronouns might not align with their name, appearance, or sex assigned at birth. To me, the addition of pronouns in email signatures is a promise that people will spare me repeated personal questions with the expectation of elaborate answers that distract from me as a professional, will use my correct pronouns even if I'm not there, and will respect me for who I am.

These are fundamentals to a positive atmosphere at work and a workplace that allows people to thrive, build meaningful connections, and produce relevant work.

[redacted] 15/06/2021 13:00

[redacted]

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 13:54

I am not really sure why people are opposed to including their pronouns in their e-mail signatures, it is a five minute job at best.

While your gender does not have an impact on your ability to do your work, by supporting our trans and non-binary colleagues, we are supporting them in being able to do their work, without facing challenges around educating others. While mis-gendering a person once or twice may be frustrating, when it happens over and over again it must be exhausting constantly having to remind and correct people.

I am by no means an expert, but I am happy to support colleagues in this small request, which realistically has a minimal, at best, impact on cis people, while supporting inclusion for those who are not.

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 14:43

I personally choose to include my pronouns in my email signature – it has no impact on my own work, and helps others to gender me correctly (it should be noted too that I am fortunate to have a common and traditionally female name which aligns with gender assumptions that might be made about me). By doing so, I'm also helping to normalise the practice, clarifying pronouns is something that needn't happen if they are already there for you to see.

Pronouns are not something exclusive to one or more minority groups, *everyone* has and uses pronouns in everyday language, be that when talking about other people or when other people talk about you. It is not always clear from someone's name what gender they are (perhaps they have a gender neutral name or they have a name that you are unfamiliar with), and it is sometimes the case that people don't use the pronouns that you would automatically assume.

The idea that it isn't important or that we don't use them is unhelpful and untrue – take “Sophie was tying her shoes” as an example – “Sophie was tying Sophie's shoes” is just not the natural way in which language is used; the pronoun “her” exists to be used, just as “his” and “their” are.

When it comes to diversity, equality and inclusion across the board, while there are larger issues and changes that can and should be made, we all have responsibility on an individual level to do what we can and are comfortable with. This is an example of something that we can each take personal responsibility for.

At the end of the day – no one is going to make you include your own pronouns. It is simply a suggestion of an active way that we as individuals can contribute to creating a more inclusive workplace. It is a personal choice whether or not to include them, and no one should be judged or pulled up for doing so, or indeed not doing so.

You might choose to not include them – and that's fine. You might be comfortable with people making assumptions of your own gender and that's also fine, but it's important to remember that not everyone will be fine with that and that everyone should be respectful of that.

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 15:04

As others have said, whether or not to add pronouns to email signatures is a personal choice. People will have many reasons for doing so, or not doing so, some of which they will be willing to share, some not, and some of which will be carefully considered, some not. We should avoid assuming that we know what is motivating people, or judging them for it.

[redacted] 15/06/2021 15:23

[redacted]

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 15:51

As someone who is a cisgender woman and generally femme-presenting, I am consistently misgendered in emails and other written communications because I have a gender neutral name. It's been an annoyance to me throughout my life so adding my pronouns helps to mitigate that annoyance.

That's my selfish side of my reasoning. I also know that if it's annoying and frustrating for me to be misgendered then it must be even more annoying, frustrating and upsetting for trans and non-binary colleagues to be misgendered in the current environment where trans and non-binary people are regularly under attack.

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 17:10

It's helpful to see people pointing out that including your pronouns when writing to people is useful for anyone with a gender-neutral or unfamiliar name - how often have you looked at replying to a letter from "Pat" or similar, and wondered how to address it? I don't usually have any problems in Scotland, but in France (and our favourite French restaurant) people generally assume the booking is in my husband's name!

[redacted - out of scope] 15/06/2021 17:29

I wonder if some people think along the lines of "it's obvious - I have a female name, I was born female and I have the outward attributes of being female. Why would I want to broadcast that I use female pronouns". This is not me speaking personally, by the way. The times I think that knowing the correct/appropriate pronouns are more important include when a person is transitioning to their opposite sex, or if they have a name that is used by both females and males (e.g: Hilary, Robin, Lesley). Although with the spellings of names like these usually being different for males and females, it's not always known which is which. The other time when I think that knowing the appropriate/correct pronouns could be important, is if someone is/identifies as non-binary. Speaking of knowing/using correct pronouns, I also wonder if there is an element of confusion involved. A "for instance" might be a social situation in mixed company. If you know someone is non-binary, do you ask the person "would they like a drink?" or is it okay to use the 'you' pronoun as this does not (at least to me) have any indication of a person's sex. I think that including pronouns in your email signature should remain a personal choice. I also think that you should not feel embarrassed to ask someone which pronouns they use/prefer. For my own part, I don't plan to include my pronouns - but that's only because I have a couple of lines from one of my favourite songs which I found inspiring during the current situation ("and if you feel that you can't go on; and your will's sinking low; Just believe and you can't go wrong; in the light you will find the road"). No prizes (sadly) for knowing which song/group this is from.

[redacted - out of scope] 16/06/2021 17:13

Hi [redacted - out of scope], in your reply you mentioned about how you regard yourself in terms of 'gender/sexuality' - just to clarify that adding your pronouns doesn't tell people your sexual orientation.

[redacted - out of scope] 17/06/2021 15:21

[redacted - out of scope], You is still considered to be a gender neutral pronoun appropriate for use for when directly referring to another person, much as me is a gender neutral pronoun appropriate for use for oneself. It's pretty much always third person pronouns which are in question (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs or sometimes others such as ze/zir/zirs). It's rarely as complicated as people fear and accidentally getting someone's pronouns wrong isn't a huge deal as long as you endeavour not to do it again.

Annex B

Scottish Government intranet comments and moderation policy

You can have your say on Saltire news articles, features and blogs. Your comments are welcome - they make our intranet more interactive and interesting.

Saltire comments encourage healthy discussion and debate. If you don't agree with a comment, or believe it is factually wrong or inaccurate, you can post your own viewpoint by way of reply.

Before posting a comment, be aware that:

- comments are not moderated prior to publication - make sure your comment follows the guidance set out below
- your name and business area details will be posted automatically
- all comments should be succinct and relevant (no more than 3,000 characters)
- submitted comments will publish instantly
- the system won't recognise your details if you access Saltire via the extranet site (used by some agencies, departments and non-departmental public bodies)
- comments are subject to FOI rules

Comments guidance

It's your responsibility to ensure that all comments submitted are appropriate, accurate, relevant and lawful. Please refrain from posting comments that are hostile, heated or potentially divisive. Don't say anything online that you wouldn't say in a work context in person.

In particular, do not submit comments that are:

- inappropriate, or may provoke or offend others
- racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, biphobic, abusive or otherwise objectionable
- contain language likely to offend
- a personal criticism or attack on others, including colleagues and/or their work
- inaccurate and likely to mislead colleagues - you should provide sources and/or links to any data or statistics cited
- unrelated to the specific article under discussion
- libellous or defamatory, breach copyright or break the law
- about Scottish Government terms and conditions of employment if you are not a Scottish Government employee (user numbers prefixed by Z6)

You should also be mindful of the [Civil Service Code](#), the [IT Code of Conduct](#), our [expected standards of behaviour](#) and our [equality and diversity guidance](#).

Comments may be removed at the discretion of the Saltire moderation team or on the advice of People Directorate because they breach this guidance or relate to a sensitive and confidential personal staffing matter. Inappropriate comments that are removed for any of the above reasons may be passed to your manager for information.

If a comment is removed because it is considered a disciplinary/serious matter, your manager will be contacted and made aware of this. Further action may be taken in line with the established [disciplinary procedures](#) or [fairness at work policy](#).

Complaints

If you believe a published comment is in breach of this guidance, you should report it to the [Saltire moderation team](#) using the 'report' button which can be found at the side of the published comment. Your complaint will be reviewed and consideration given as to whether the comment should be removed.

The Saltire moderation team includes representatives from internal communications and People Directorate. Due to resource and time implications, there is no opportunity to appeal if you are not in agreement with a decision taken following a Saltire comment complaint.

If you think a comment is wrong or inaccurate you are welcome to post a factual correction by way of reply.