

## **Gender and Gender Reassignment FAQs – Lodges**

These FAQs are intended to provide some practical guidance to Lodges about how to comply with the law and how to implement UGLE's gender reassignment policy. Freemasons are expected to act with sympathy, compassion and courtesy to other people and this guidance should be read in that light.

### **One of our members is living as a woman – what should we do?**

Nothing.

### **One of our members has become a woman – what should we do?**

Nothing.

### **One of our members has declared that they are not a man but are gender neutral – what should we do?**

Nothing.

### **One of our members has started wearing a skirt – what should we do?**

Lodges must where applicable permit appropriate female alternatives to their dress code. A dress code which requires a dark suit will for example accommodate a smart dark skirt and top.

### **One of our members has asked to be called “Mrs Smith”, “Sister Smith” and “Jane” in correspondence and conversation.**

As a matter of courtesy, a person should be addressed by the name and title he/she has chosen (except for titles which are restricted such as “Sir” or “Lord”).

The only correct way to refer formally to a member in Lodge is as “Brother Smith” or “Brother Jane” regardless of gender.

### **Some members are unhappy that a member of the Lodge has become a woman. Can I have a quiet word with her, suggesting that she might wish to consider her position?**

No. She should not be subjected to any pressure or suggestion, or perceived pressure or suggestion, that she should resign from the Lodge because of her change of gender.

It would be appropriate to have a quiet word with the unhappy members to remind them of their Masonic obligations.

If she asks questions about joining a female Freemasonry organisation then ask your Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Secretary for contact details for female Freemasonry organisations so that you can pass the details on to her.

### **Our Lodge wishes to exclude a female member. Are there any specific considerations that arise?**

Rule 181 permits a Lodge to exclude any member for sufficient cause. Female members can be excluded for all of the same reasons, but only the same reasons, as male members. In this context an allegation of disharmony or potential disharmony on the grounds of a member's gender, perceived gender, gender reassignment status or perceived gender reassignment status is not sufficient cause for exclusion.

As always when applying Rule 181, all of the requirements of the procedure set out in the Rule must be followed and great care should be taken when drafting the particulars of complaint so that it is clear what the grounds for exclusion are.

**A member of our Lodge is no longer male and wishes to resign from the Craft.**

No member should be pressured to resign from the Craft because they are no longer male.

Any member who resigns from their Lodge will remain a member of the Craft and will remain eligible for some of the reliefs currently offered by Masonic charities. A member who resigns from the Craft as well as all their Lodges may lose eligibility for some of those charitable reliefs. Members who are considering resignation from the Craft should be advised to have regard to the potential loss of charitable reliefs before resigning.

**One of our members has obtained a gender recognition certificate – do we need to record this or notify anybody?**

No, a certificate is a private document and nobody should request sight of it. We do not record members' genders and there is no need to notify anybody if a member changes their gender.

**One of our members has complained about comments made by other members relating to his/her gender, perceived gender or gender reassignment. The comments were part of the normal jokes of members and were not unusual or objectively offensive.**

If the comments had a sufficient impact on your member that they felt the need to complain then the situation should be taken seriously. This is the case even if the comments seemed innocuous to you and others. It is important to keep in mind that harassment may lie in the complainant's perception.

Lodges must not victimise a member for bringing discrimination claims or complaints against the Lodge or its members. That member must be treated in the same way as a member who had not brought the claims or complaints. Nobody should be penalised merely for making an unsuccessful discrimination claim or complaint unless it was clearly vexatious or malicious.

The members who made the comments should receive an explanation that their comments caused offence, however inadvertently, so that they know to avoid comments of that nature at future Lodge events. If a member who has received an explanation repeats his behaviour this is likely to be unmasonic behaviour which is subject to the usual sanctions.

**One of our members has indicated that he will blackball a male candidate because the candidate lives as a woman/ wears female clothing/ is perceived by that member to be female/ has stated that he will transition to become a woman.**

These are not legitimate reasons for blackballing and would constitute unmasonic behaviour which is subject to the usual sanctions.

**A member proposes to bring a female visitor to the Lodge meeting – what should we do?**

A visitor must be a member in good standing of this or another recognised Grand Lodge. Rules 125 and 126 govern who may be admitted as a visitor and the by-laws of the Lodge may contain additional requirements. The Master of the Lodge may refuse admission in accordance with Rule 126 if the visitor is of known bad character. He may also refuse admission if he has reasons to rule that the visitor's presence would disturb the harmony of the Lodge. He may not refuse admission if his reasons for believing that the harmony of the Lodge would be disturbed are related to the visitor's gender, perceived gender, gender assignment or perceived gender assignment.

**My question is not answered here.**

There will plainly be other questions which arise when applying the gender assignment policy. If your question is not answered in the latest version of the FAQs on this issue then please contact your Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Secretary.

**These FAQs are intended to help share knowledge and guidance but are not legal advice and are not a substitute for independent legal advice on compliance, if you consider that necessary. Lodges which are not based in the UK will need to consider the impact of any local laws concerning gender and gender reassignment.**

United Grand Lodge of England

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