



**UNDRESSING
DISABILITY**

enhance the uk

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LGBT+ Terminology

It can be really difficult to figure out your sexuality and gender identity let alone deciding to come out. While we may know a few of the different definitions, some are not as well-known as others. If you've decided to pop on Grindr or visit a queer venue, then it can be really easy to feel overwhelmed with what may feel like a new language. We promise it's not as scary as it might feel.

We've made a list of all the different terms, sexualities, genders, slang, acronyms and anything we could think of to help you navigate LGBT+ life.

A guide to our guide

Sexuality and gender are complex and not the same for everyone. This guide is only intended as a brief insight and quick definition of each term or definition. There are layers to everyone's experience of sexuality and gender that make it difficult to include everything, but this is a brief guide to get you started.

If you feel we have forgotten anything or haven't included a term that you know about, please let us know at hello@enhancetheuk.org

We will be updating this guide periodically to make sure that it reflects the most up-to-date terminology. Language changes quickly and we have included some older terminology here which is not meant to offend but rather to explain and educate people on why these may be outdated and what to use instead.

Why do we need labels?

We do....and we don't. There is a strong debate about why we need labels which can get quite heated! For some, their gender and sexuality are fluid and change frequently while others may feel they don't want to define theirs. For others, a label has helped them to define their sexuality and gender, grow their confidence and belong to a community. Rather than dictating whether people should use labels or not, it's best to allow people the freedom to decide if they want one for themselves - or not!

Why do some sexualities have a flag?

Many different sexualities have a flag which helps raise awareness, visibility, and identity. Some such as the transgender or Progressive Pride flags are used as a way to let people know that a person, organisation, venue or business is friendly and a safe space. While many sexualities and genders have a flag, not all do yet or may choose not to.

How do I know what words to use?

You won't always but being respectful goes a long way. Asking someone how they would like to be referred to can help or listening to how they refer to themselves. Some people may not want a label and that's their choice to make. Other words have been reclaimed by the community and should be used with caution. Language also changes incredibly quickly so be aware that historically, some words that were used are no longer in use today or are seen as potentially offensive. If you make a mistake, don't panic, or beat yourself up about it. Just apologise, address it, and move on but make an effort to learn from it.

Where can we get help?

There are many places where you can go for help with your sexuality for everything from coming out, to going out, to dating and sex.

Our Love Lounge can help to advise disabled queer people on love, life, and relationships. To have your question answered by our sexperts, email lovelounge@enhancetheuk.org

Many cities operate LGBT+ switchboards which have different numbers and emails you can get in touch with. They will have the most up-to-date list of resources, venues, and support services in your local area.

Terminology: gender, sexuality, slang and acronyms

Ace

A shortened version of Asexual.

Asexual

Asexual is an umbrella term that includes lots of different sexualities. Some may experience no or some sexual or romantic attraction. Everyone who is Ace is different.

Here are some of the asexual definitions:

Sex-averse: Someone who is averse to or completely disinterested in sex.

Sex-favorable: A person with positive feelings toward sex occasionally.

Sex-indifferent: Someone who feels neutral about sex.

Sex-repulsed: A person who is repulsed by sex.

Graysexual: Graysexual people experience sexual attraction either infrequently or not very intensely.

Grayromantic: Grayromantic people may experience romantic attraction either rarely or not very strongly.

Cupiosexual: Someone who does not experience sexual attraction but still experiences a desire to engage in sexual behaviour. They may also have a sexual relationship.

Libidoist asexual: A person who defines themselves as asexual but may experience sexual feelings that they can satisfy with masturbation.

Androgynous

The term androgynous is an adjective and is used to describe someone who is "neither specifically feminine nor masculine" and has "characteristics or nature of both male and female."

Androsexual

People who are androsexual feel attracted to men, males, or perceived masculinity regardless of someone's assigned gender.

Alloromantic

A person who identifies as alloromantic may experience romantic attraction toward other people. Romantic attraction can involve a desire to have an emotional connection and interaction with another person. There are a lot of different types of romantic orientations that fall under the alloromantic umbrella - some of which are outlined below such as biromantic or demiromantic.

Aromantic

A person who may not feel any romantic attraction towards anyone. They may just want friendship with another person.

Ally

A person who is friendly and supportive to the queer community while describing themselves as straight.

AFAB

Assigned female at birth.

AMAB

Assigned male at birth.

Binding

The act of wrapping tight fabric around the chest to minimise the appearance of breasts. This can be done to alter the appearance for multiple reasons from cosmetics to gender identity to drag costumes.

Binder

An item of clothing, usually a cropped top or vest that binds the breasts to give the impression of a flatter area.

Butch

A lesbian who identifies as butch may have a more masculine appearance or behaviours. Butch culture has a long history stretching back to, at least, the 1940s and 50s. The look may have changed over the years, but the term is returning to the scene along with club nights aimed at butch women across the UK.

Bath/Bathhouses

More prominently used in the US, this refers to saunas used by queer men for sex.

Bottom

A person who prefers receiving rather than giving during sex.

Bear

A larger, often hairier queer man. This is one of the oldest subcultures of the queer community and is thought to date back to the early 1980s. The bear flag was designed in 1995 and bear nights are still held across the country along with Bear Pride. Events are usually for bears to meet others and their admirers. A cub usually means a younger bear.

Bent

A slang, usually a derogatory and offensive term for gay.

Bender

An offensive term for gay men

Baby dyke

An older term to refer to a younger, recently out lesbian.

Boi

A slightly boyish lesbian.

Butch queen

Popularised in ballroom culture as documented in the iconic film, Paris is Burning. Butch queen usually means a gay male who presents as such and is neither overly masculine nor camp. Ballrooms were usually African-American and Latino underground gatherings of LGBT+ people who would "walk" or compete by performing or lip-syncing and modelling in different categories.

Beard

A straight person acting as a date as part of a cover-up for a queer person.

Biphobia

The term to describe negative feelings, behaviour or actions towards bisexual people as a result of their sexuality. Biphobia can occur among straight people or members of the LGBT+ community.

Bi-erasure

Deliberately or subconsciously not including bisexual people in queer places, support services or communities. Historically, bisexual people have experienced being mislabeled as gay or straight depending on their relationships. Bisexual people are still bisexual regardless of their current relationship. This has led to bisexual people feeling unwelcome, unrecognised and invisible on the queer scene.

Bi-curious

A bicurious person may define themselves as straight but have a curiosity about having a relationship or sex with the same sex. This does not mean they are automatically bisexual but open and interested in trying it.

Camp/ campy

A fun, light-hearted and exaggerated person, or thing. For example, a film could be camp/campy or a man could also be camp.

Cottaging

The act of visiting public toilets for sex.

Cottage

A public toilet.

Cruising

Having casual sex encounters or looking for encounters.

Coming out

The term often used to describe someone announcing their sexuality or gender to others.

The closet

The metaphorical place where someone who is not out resides! It is unclear where this started but it has become a part of everyday queer terminology ever since! Hence the term, coming out....of the closet.

Closeted

Someone who is not publicly out in terms of their sexuality. It is a personal choice if and when you disclose. No one should feel under pressure to reveal their sexuality or gender to anyone.

Chicken

An older term that refers to younger gay men usually new to the gay scene.

Cisgender

A person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Cis het

A cisgender, straight person.

Crossdressing

An older term that refers to someone who enjoys dressing in another gender's clothing. Crossdressing may be completely different from a person's sexuality, and they may not consider themselves part of the transgender community. For some, the term may be offensive.

Daddy

An older gentleman of any sexuality.

Dead naming

The practice of using someone's name that they may have been assigned at birth which no longer aligns with their gender. It is considered a horrible and politically incorrect thing to do.

Demiromantic

A person who does not experience romantic feelings for someone unless they have a strong emotional connection to a person.

Demisexual

A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they have a strong emotional connection which can be either romantic or a friendship.

Drag queens

A person who dresses in usually flamboyant costumes that are either the opposite gender or gender fluid. The Drag community usually has a lot of terminology and slang of its own which refers to costumes, performances and more. Not every drag queen/king performs as some enjoy just dressing up. There are lots of different types of drag from pageant queens to gore/horror to sci-fi inspired.

Dyke

A historical term dating back to the 1920s which refers to gay women that have been reclaimed over the years. Some people may find the term offensive so use it with caution. Similarly, other terms such as babydyke may also be seen the same way. Others may feel differently and there has been a movement to reclaim the word in recent years.

Dykicon

A woman or lesbian that has risen to 'icon' status within the queer woman community. A bicon is a bisexual icon.

Dolphin

A hairless queer male.

Enby

A non-binary person.

Fag/faggot

An often-derogatory term for a queer man. In recent years, there has been a movement to reclaim this word among gay men to refer to themselves or jokingly to others. It should never be used by straight people or with people you don't know as it can offend.

Fag hag

An older term for a straight woman who has a lot of gay male friends. This can be seen as an offensive term by some so be careful about using it.

Femme

A lesbian who identifies as femme may have a more feminine appearance or behaviour. This may be expressed through their clothing, interactions, or behaviour.

Folx

A gender-neutral version of 'folks.'

Friend of Dorothy

A historical term that refers to gay men and is likely to be a reference to Judy Garland. Garland had a huge gay fan base.

Gay man

A man who is interested in other men.

Gaydar

A rumoured ability to tell if someone is gay or not. No one knows if this exists or not, but people often say they have good (or bad!) gaydar because they instantly know if someone is gay. Similarly, queerdar, pan-scan and bi-fi are used about queer, pansexuality and bisexuality.

G / GHB / GHL

Also known as liquid ecstasy or the 'date rape' drug. It is usually sold in liquid form. GHB/L is a drug with a sedative and anaesthetic effect. GBL is converted into GHB in the body. GHB has a very strong chemical smell and taste, but GBL has no smell but a soapy taste. It is usually taken orally although it is possible to sniff the powder form, but this is rare. There are huge risks to taking GHB/L including the potential for overdose and addiction.

Gender binary

The system of two distinct genders: male and female. This is a social construct, and many genders exist outside of these two.

Gender dysphoria

Refers to the uneasiness or feeling of discomfort that a person may have because their gender identity doesn't match their biological sex. This may become so intense that it causes depression or anxiety.

Gender identity

The sense of one's own gender identity. This can be a long and arduous process for some people and one that can start from childhood. Some children may adopt early identity markers or know their gender identity very early on. Other people may wait until adulthood due to many factors. Gender is fluid.

Gender neutral

Used to describe something or a person who does not conform to society's idea of gender expression.

Gender expression

How someone presents their gender identity which can include their appearance, pronouns, or behaviours.

Genderqueer

A person whose gender is beyond gender or is a combination of many, often challenging the binary systems.

Gender roles

The expected behaviour for men and women which is usually a social construct that varies in different cultures.

Gender reassignment

A decision made by an individual who feels their gender at birth does not match their gender identity. They may decide to undergo surgery or take hormones. Alternatively, some may not want to undergo surgery but live permanently in the gender that matches their gender identity. *Also see transition/ing.

Genderfuck

Someone who uses their gender presentation or identity as a potential means of political protest or commentary.

Gender confirming surgery

Surgery that can align someone's body with their gender identity. For example, top surgery where a person's breasts are removed.

Gold star

A homosexual who has never had sex with a person of the opposite sex.

Greyromantic

The grey area between being aromantic and feeling romantic attraction towards another.

Grey-a

An area between asexuality and sexuality. Graysexual people may feel minor sexual attraction or identify as being close to the Asexual scale.

Grindr

A notorious dating app aimed at queer men.

Heteroflexible

A person who describes themselves as straight but has occasional queer encounters.

Hermaphrodite

An offensive, and outdated term for an intersex person.

Heteromantic

A person who is romantically attracted to members of the opposite sex. This doesn't refer to sexual attraction.

Heterosexual

A person who is sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex.

Homosexual

A person who is sexually attracted to members of the same sex

Homoflexible

A person who is mostly attracted to the same sex or gender but on occasion can switch to the opposite sex if they find someone attractive.

Homoromantic

A person who is romantically attracted to members of the same sex. This does not refer to sexual attraction.

HIV / AIDS

Human immune deficiency Disease (HIV) and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). HIV is a virus that damages the cells in the immune system, weakening their ability to fight infections and diseases. AIDS is the name for the potentially life-threatening infections or diseases that a person may acquire as a result of a damaged immune system. While there is no cure for HIV / AIDS, there are several medications that can help someone with either condition to live a healthy long life.

Homophobia

Refers to the conscious or subconscious act of disliking, being afraid of or hating queer people for their sexual identity. People may act in a homophobic manner towards gay people in many different ways including verbally and physically.

Internalised homophobia

Internalised homophobia can happen to LGBT+ people and even heterosexuals. This occurs as a result of being taught that heterosexuality is the “norm” and the “correct way to be.” Hearing repeated negative depictions of LGBT+ people can lead queer and trans people to internalise these feelings and struggle with things such as their mental health, confidence or coming out as a result.

Intersex

Intersex is an umbrella term that describes bodies that are outside the male or female binary. There are lots of ways someone can be intersex. Being intersex is not the same as being transgender although some people may feel both terms apply to them.

Kiki

This is a term used by the queer community to describe meeting up for gossip or catch-up. It is thought to have originated on the ballroom scene and as part of drag culture. It was later used in a song by Scissor Sisters and is used on Ru Paul's Drag Race.

Lesbian

A woman who is attracted to other women.

Lipstick lesbian

A slang term for a lesbian who is more femme in appearance.

Lesbophobia

The term to describe negative feelings, behaviour, or actions towards lesbians as a result of their sexuality. Lesbophobia can occur among straight people or members of the LGBT+ community.

LGBTQIA+

The acronym that spans the various sexualities and genders. It is a long line of letters but often abbreviated with a + sign to denote more letters. Some people prefer using the word queer as they feel there are too many letters. Some people may include different letters or just add the + after the T.

LGB

Lesbian, gay and bisexual. This is a deliberate exclusion of the T for transgender. It usually means that a person or organisation does not welcome or include transgender people. Historically, some organisations didn't include the T but now do.

Leather

A subculture that exists across genders. It focuses on the wearing of leather garments, masks or using different sex toys made of leather. It is associated, but not always, with BDSM. (Bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, Sadoomasochism)

Men who have sex with men

A term that can mean men who ordinarily would not define themselves as queer or gay but have sex with other men.

Motorsports clubs

A historical term for clubs that were a front for men who were into men and leather, uniforms, PVC and fetishes. Lots of cities had MS clubs that met in local pubs or organised weekends away.

Molly

An 18th-century term for gay men

Molly house

An 18th-century term for a place where gay men frequented.

Monosexual

A person who feels an attraction to only one gender.

Multi-sexual

A person who is attracted to multiple genders.

Non-binary

Refers to someone whose gender cannot be defined within the gender binary and goes beyond the description of man or woman. Some non-binary people adopt pronouns such as they/them or she/they, he/they or X. Each person is individual, and their journeys will be different. If you are not sure what someone prefers to be referred to as then ask - don't assume based on how someone looks. Sometimes people consider non-binary people as part of the transgender umbrella.

Neuroqueer

A new term that is often used by queer people who describe themselves as neurodivergent. This means someone who is diagnosed or self-diagnosed with Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Tourette's Syndrome, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia or Dyspraxia. They feel their neurodivergence and queerness intersect and are a huge part of how they live and experience life and love.

Outed

Outing someone occurs when you tell others about a person's gender or sexuality without the information being public knowledge. It is considered not okay to do this to someone without their consent.

Omnisexual

A person who is attracted to all sexes and genders.

Othered

The process of making someone feel not included or less than as a result of their sexuality, race, gender or disability.

Otter

Usually describes a somewhat hairy, lean, average, or athletic queer, male-identifying person.

Packing

Adding padding to the crotch to give the impression that you have a penis.

Pansexual

A person who is romantically, sexually, and emotionally attracted to all genders.

Panromantic

A person who is romantically attracted to all genders.

Passing

This usually means passing as a particular gender so that someone isn't identified as the gender or sexuality they are usually considered. For example: this could be a drag queen passing as a woman/man when in drag costume.

Polyamory

The practice of having more than one partner in a sexual or romantic relationship. This only works if all parties involved consent and have open communication with each other.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to someone in conversation or a text such as 'he said, she said, ' etc. Pronouns may change for people throughout their lives. This can sometimes be a big part of a person's gender identity and coming out. Alternatively, some non-binary or transgender people may adopt gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them, it, X or XE. Sometimes people may use She/He they/them as they don't mind using either. If you are unsure what to refer to someone as, listen to what pronouns they introduce themselves as, observe pronoun badges/stickers and just ask. Never assume someone's pronouns on how they look or behave. If you make a mistake, correct yourself, apologise, and move on.

Polari

Polari is a historical LGBT+ language which originated in London but spread to other parts of the country as people travelled. It is a mixture of different words some of which are Romani, Irish, Scottish, and Italian with rhyming slang incorporated. It was used as an almost code by queer men in an era where homosexuality was illegal and after the law change in 1967 which only partially decriminalised homosexuality. Although Polari is not commonly used, there are members of the older generation who remember and use words in conversation.

Pup

A person who is into role play and wants to be treated with love and affection by a handler. Often this may include masks, leads and submissive/dominant roleplay.

PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention. It is a medication which prevents HIV from getting into the body and replicating. A person is only protected if they have high enough levels of PrEP in the system so taking it properly is essential. It comes as tablets that contain two medicines called tenofovir disoproxil and emtricitabine. It is important to note that PrEP does NOT protect you from other STDS.

Pillow queen/princess

A person who is usually a bottom during sex.

Positive / Negative (poz / neg)

Usually refers to a person's HIV/AIDS status.

Pride (event)

A celebration or protest that aims to raise awareness and increase visibility while celebrating the LGBT+ community. Pride month is usually held in June although Pride celebrations/protests/marches can be held throughout the summer and early autumn. It can be a day, week or month-long series of events that highlight and bring together the diversity of the community.

Progressive Pride flag

The traditional Pride flag had six colours but it was felt that the flag needed to be updated to include transgender colours of pink, blue and white. The brown and black stripes represent people of colour within the community. The most up-to-date flag has a yellow triangle with a purple circle denoting intersex.

Queen

A flamboyant queen, an affectionate or playful term used to refer to gay men or a drag artist.

Queer

A term for someone who identifies as LGBT+. Sometimes people use the term queer to avoid using other labels that may denote a gender or sex. Historically, the term has been an insult, so some people dislike the term for this reason. Although, there has been a move in recent years to reclaim it.

Questioning

Refers to the process that a person goes through when trying to determine their gender or sexuality.

Red ribbon

The ribbon has become a universal symbol for HIV / AIDS awareness since 1991. The ribbon marks awareness and education while remembering those who have died or are living with HIV / AIDS.

Rainbow/flag

The iconic rainbow flag was adopted in 1979 and highlights the diversity within the community.

Sapiosexual

A person who is attracted to intelligence.

Soft butch

A woman who is a cross between a butch lesbian and a femme.

Sapphic

A woman who loves women or something that refers to the relationship between women. For example, a book may have a sapphic storyline which is either romantic or refers to friendship.

Sexual orientation

A person's attraction to other people and how that attraction is expressed.

Straight acting

A term that refers to gay men who pass as heterosexual. The term can cause some offence as it implies that there is one way or a stereotypical way to be gay.

Top

A person who prefers giving rather than receiving during sex. A power top would be a person who actively prefers to dominate during sex.

Transitioning

When someone changes their gender from one they don't feel connected with to another that aligns with how they feel. Often, this is a lengthy process that may or may not involve doctors, medication, clinics or a change of dress or pronouns. Everyone's journey is different and unique to them.

Transgender

Transgender people are people whose gender identity is different from what gender they were thought to be at birth. An umbrella term that encompasses all identities within the gender identity spectrum. Everyone has a different journey and understanding of what their trans identity means to them. People can realise they are transgender at any age and begin transitioning if/when they feel comfortable and ready to do so. Trans is the shortened version of the word transgender. Transgender people may be gay, straight, bisexual or any sexuality.

Transphobia

The term to describe negative feelings, behaviour, or actions towards transgender people as a result of their trans-identity. Transphobia can occur among straight people or members of the LGBT+ community.

Transmasc/uline

An identity label adopted by some female-to-male transgender people.

Transfemme/feminine

An identity label adopted by some male-to-female transgender people.

T-girls/boys

A term that encompasses the different words for transgender. It can be seen as derogatory due to its association with porn but some people on the scene still use the term.

Transsexual

A term that refers to trans people who have had transitional surgery or hormones. The term can be seen as outdated, and some may take offence to it being used. However, some members of the trans-community still use it today.

TERF

A trans-exclusionary radical feminist. Someone who describes themselves as a radical feminist but does not welcome, support, or want to include transgender women in the fight for women's rights. This can take the form of campaigning, protesting, and opposing transgender rights both at a local and international level. It can be deeply upsetting to trans-women who experience the campaigns, sentiments, and protests. Some people also use the term 'gender critical or GC.'

Third-Gender

A term for people who belong to a third gender category outside female or male. It is usually used in certain cultures such as Native American Two-spirit people.

Twink

A term to describe a young or young-looking queer man with no body hair.

Two/2 Spirit

A term used by native American people to describe someone who has both male and female gender identities.

Versatile

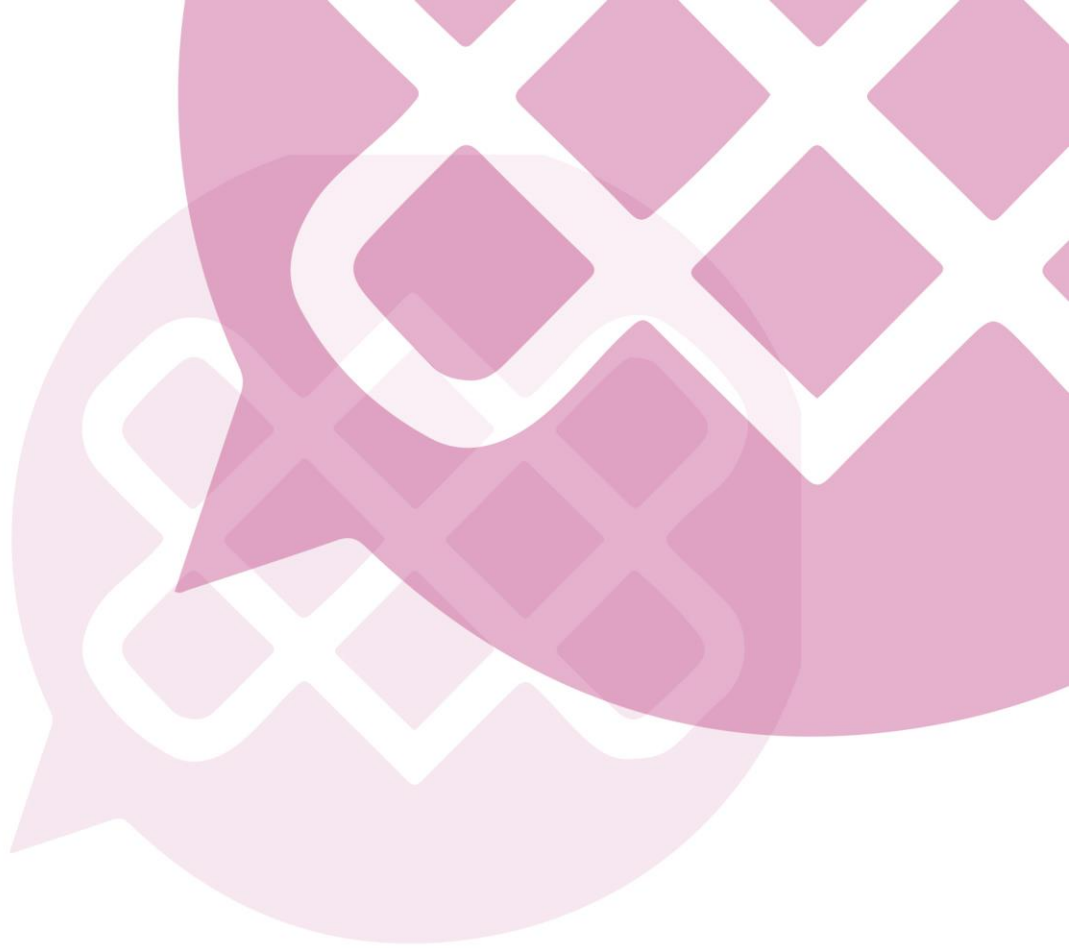
A person who would not describe themselves as a top or bottom but doesn't mind switching between the two. Also referred to as a switch.

Wolf

A less hairy, smaller queer man with a lean, muscular build.

World AIDS Day (WAD)

A global day to mark and remember those who have died from AIDS. It is recognised in many different ways including fundraising and vigils on December 1st worldwide since 1988.



About us

Undressing Disability' is a global campaign which aims to raise standards in sexual health and sexual awareness for disabled people. Issues around sexuality and sexual frustration are frequently raised by disabled people who feel that they have less opportunity and ability to explore their sexuality than others. Through a lack of understanding, education and a general lack of services, disabled people frequently cannot access the support that would make it possible for them to make the sorts of choices about their lifestyles that most of us take for granted.

As part of our campaign, we run the Love Lounge, an online forum providing free advice on all things sex, love and disability. We also have free downloadable resources. As a user-led charity, our aim is to change the way people view disability, which often involves removing the 'fear factor' that so often surrounds the subject. We support businesses to be more inclusive by providing disability awareness training, British Sign Language workshops and accessibility audits, amongst other things.

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**UNDRESSING
DISABILITY**

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CHANGING SOCIETY'S VIEWS ON DISABILITY