

Tips for Engaging with Government Civil Servants

As part of creating this toolkit, trans* activists developed contacts with members of the **Governmental Network of LGBT Focal Points**, which is the European network of civil servants working on sexual orientation and gender identity equality policy. They welcome the development of this toolkit and are keen to help foster better engagement between trans* activists and civil servants. Hilary Third, who represented the Scottish Government within the Governmental Network of LGBT Focal Points, has worked with us to develop some tips for trans* activists about engaging with government civil servants:

1) Make sure that you are talking to the right people to look at the issue you want to work on. If you are not sure who would be best to talk to about a particular issue, try asking other equality and human rights activists for contact suggestions.



2) Be as informative, practical and friendly as possible so that the civil servants find meeting with you useful and productive and want to keep the dialogue going. Keep your points clear and easy to follow. Too much complex trans* terminology and queer theory will most likely just stop civil servants from understanding what you actually want.

3) Choose your words and phrasings carefully to remain constructive and positive. Remain calm and assertive and in control of your emotions.

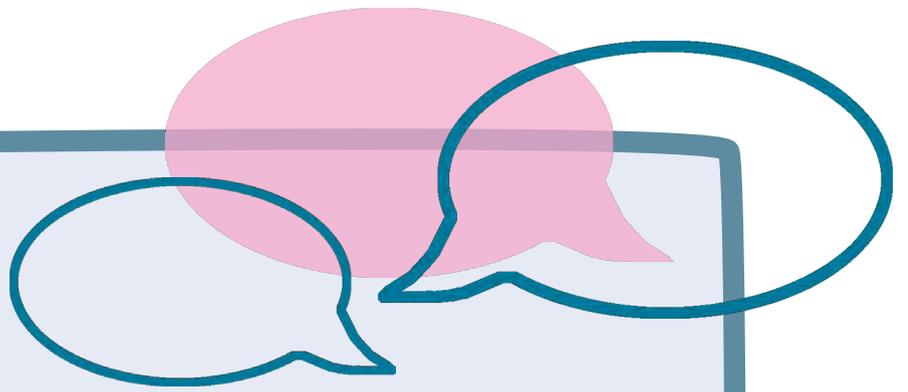
4) Be realistic, and try to focus on a small number of main priorities. Try to highlight how these priorities fit within and contribute to mainstream

objectives that the civil servants are already working on. Help the civil servants to think about what they can do to help achieve what you want, and what is in it for them.



5) If you just describe the current problems, the civil servants won't necessarily know what to do to resolve those problems. Make sure you suggest what you think would be good practical solutions too. Where possible, highlight how the ideas you are suggesting will also benefit other sections of society as well as trans* people.

6) Use the best evidence available to prove the need for the improvements you want to see. Telling them about trans* people's experiences is a good way of engaging their interest and helping them understand the relevance of trans* issues to their policy areas. You might not have much hard data but simple descriptions of real-life experiences are really powerful.



7) Make an effort to understand the constraints that the civil servants are working within. It may not be in their power to implement your suggestions straight away. Listen to them about the challenges they are experiencing in implementing changes and try to work constructively with them to overcome these challenges. Try to develop realistic timelines and targets for changes and keep track of your progress.

8) Think about the range of trans* activists and groups in your country and try to coordinate who is best placed to do various different tasks to influence change. You could jointly agree a priority objective to work on and then play to your individual strengths and interests with some doing research, others doing public campaigning, and others educating civil servants and developing detailed policy suggestions.

9) Help civil servants to feel confident that you have wide support from other trans* people. Show that you have consulted other trans* people and groups and reached points of agreement. Try to resolve any major disagreements with other trans* activists before you meet with civil servants rather than risk a public argument in front of the civil servants.

10) In group consultations where there are representatives from other equality and human rights groups, be aware that although those other representatives might not have much trans* awareness we all still share many general human rights and equality objectives. You can back up each other's points and highlight how some actions and approaches can have benefits for various different people at the same time. Be careful not to say offensive, ignorant or negative things about any other groups of people. Concentrate on making positive statements about trans* priorities and do not undermine anyone else's human rights and equality.



Do not assume that civil servants are transphobic, but do recognise that they are likely to have little or no understanding of the issues at first. You will need to be persistent and develop strong relationships over time to achieve tangible results.