

## ***Counselling Psychological Approaches to Gender and Sexuality***

Gender and sexuality are a part of the human condition. Even those people who are agender or asexual live in a world saturated in gender and sexuality and must necessarily relate to them. Historically, psychology's philosophical and clinical approaches to these matters have been rooted in normative ideas drawn from [Western] religious morality - not uncommonly only seeing the gender dyad of male or female, and heterosexuality between them, as being 'Normal' with all outside of that being 'Abnormal' or pathological. Modern approaches, however, understand that gender and consensual sexual practices and identities are simply a part of human diversity – with all the wonderful heterogeneity that that implies.

Counselling Psychology holds as central to its philosophy the interconnected human person. All philosophical and other considerations must be secondary to this. Thus for the Counselling Psychologists a consideration of sexuality and gender involves a consideration of what sexuality and gender means for a particular person, or group of people – whatever their practice or identity is. This allows for the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual, asexual, kink and BDSM people as well as trans, cisgender, neutrois, and non-binary people to name only a few.

It is not enough, however, simply to be 'Open' or to 'Listen' or create 'Space' when engaging with sexuality or gender. In many instances action must be taken to effect change. This may include assessing trans and non-binary people for hormones or surgeries and so holding the requisite knowledge of the effects of these interventions, as well as acceptance of the exercise of power. It may be that diagnosis must be used alongside formulation so as to access resources, but without the procrustean processes that too often accompany that. It may be that political action to support asylum seekers or oppressed people is needed. In seeing people as people therefore – whatever their sexuality or gender - we must often match silence with words, and stillness with action.



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Professor Richards is Visiting Full Professor of Gender and Mental Health at [Regent's University London School of Psychotherapy and Psychology](#).

Prof. Richards is Lead Consultant Psychologist/Head of Psychology at the [London Gender Identity Clinic \(Charing Cross\)](#) within the [Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust](#). This role involves strategic planning and management on a national and international level; supervising senior staff; assessing people with highly complex needs for hormones and surgeries, and supervision of individual and group therapies from a number of different modalities.

Prof. Richards is also Head of Research at the NHS [London Gender Identity Clinic \(Charing Cross\)](#) within the [Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust](#). This role involves responsibility for the strategy and implementation of the research programme at the clinic. Professor Richards also lectures and [publishes](#) internationally on gender, sexualities, and critical mental health – both within clinical academia and also to third sector and statutory bodies.

Prof. Richards was selected by the executive board of the [World Professional Association for Transgender Health \(WPATH\)](#) to be Lead Chapter Author for Adult Assessment in the [Standards of Care Version 8 \(SoC v8\)](#) revision. She also represents the East Midlands to NHS England's [Clinical Reference Group \(CRG\) on Gender Identity Services](#); and is listed as an expert in gender diversity by the [BPS](#) on the [Gender Diversity Specialist Register](#) (whose criteria she co-drafted). She is one of the few psychologists recognised by HM Courts and Tribunals Service as a [Specialist in the field of Gender Dysphoria](#), thus allowing her to prepare medical reports for the [Gender Recognition Panel](#).

Prof. Richards is a Trustee of the National [LGBT Foundation](#); a Co-Founder of [BiUK](#) and co-author of the [Bisexuality Report](#).

Prof. Richards is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal of the British Psychological Society's [Division of Counselling Psychology: \*Counselling Psychology Review\*](#). Her own publications consist of various [papers, reports, and book chapters](#). She is first author of a clinical guidebook on sexuality and gender published by Sage – [Richards, C., & Barker, M. \(2013\). \*Sexuality and gender for mental health professionals: A practical guide\*. London: Sage](#); First editor of the [Palgrave Handbook of the Psychology of Sexuality and Gender](#); First editor of a multidisciplinary book about people who identify outside of the gender binary of male or female – [Richards, C., Bouman, W. P., & Barker, M. J. \(2018\). \*Genderqueer and non-binary genders\*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan](#); Sole author of the monograph: [Richards, C. \(2017\). \[Monograph\]. \*Trans and sexuality – An existentially-informed ethical enquiry with implications for counselling psychology\*. London: Routledge](#); And has an upcoming co-authored book on clinical work with trans and non-binary people for the [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) – Richards, C., & Barrett, J. (forthcoming 2019). *Trans and non-binary gender healthcare for psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals*. London: Royal College of Psychiatrists/Cambridge University Press.