



**Burnley's Lesbian Liberator**  
by Abi Hynes  
Director Helen Parry

**The Burnley Buggers' Ball**  
by Stephen M Hornby  
Director Matt Hassall

**Burnley Central Library:**  
18 & 25 February - 12 noon and 2pm

**Martin Harris Centre, Manchester:**  
24 February - 7.30pm

**The Bluecoat, Liverpool:**  
4 March - 5.30pm  
Details #burnleyplays @inkbrew

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LESBIAN LIBERATION

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## ARE YOU SOCIALLY TRANSITIONED INTO YOUR GENDER ROLE?

**T**here isn't a lot out there about agender people. The only openly agender person I know of is rapper Angel Haze. A lot of trans people aren't even familiar with 'agender'. It's a difficult place to be. How am I supposed to convince cis people that agender is a real thing if I can barely convince trans people?

It shouldn't be a surprise then that, after two years awaiting treatment, I was discharged from the gender identity clinic (GIC) for not being convincing enough. My discharge letter listed the reason for them rejecting my surgery as me not being able to: 'demonstrably consolidate a social transition including name change to the preferred gender role.'

It's not enough that I've been out as agender for years. It's not enough that I had tried to get my chest corrected for six years, even unsuccessfully fundraising – that my nickname is Lola means I'm apparently not serious about how I experience my body.

I was born with a brain malformation that's resulted in blindness in one eye and an inability to produce oestrogen and testosterone. I looked very androgynous growing up. That meant teasing and bullying. It meant people taking it upon themselves to discover my gender through harassment. I doubt much would change in my adult life.

Picking a gender-neutral name won't convince anyone to see me as agender. It wouldn't change the pronouns people use for me. I was honest with the GIC that I didn't plan to change my nickname. I was honest that I don't live in a society that sees me for who I am. To them that meant I was 'okay' with it – but I'm not okay with not being seen for who I am. I just accept I can't control that. I also know that as a disabled bisexual who grew up working class and who isn't thin, my gender is merely one aspect of me that will be derided or ignored. Even if I was seen as agender, it would not change the other aspects of me society doesn't like.

Still, I'm meant to 'demonstrably consolidate a social transition'. Legally, I can't refuse to give my gender on forms. I can't even use gender neutral titles half the time. What exactly am I supposed to demonstrate?

I showed up to my last GIC appointment wearing jeans and a t-shirt. They described me as 'presenting as female', noting my shoulder-length

hair. I guess only women have long hair? I've heard many who call themselves feminists say they think trans people reinforce gender roles – that we believe all it means to be a woman is wearing a dress or that being a man is sitting with your legs obnoxiously wide. But the truth is that many trans people – even agender people – are forced to perform gender and meet archaic 'social' roles in order to get the medical help we need. I never felt having longer hair meant being a woman, but the GIC certainly did.

When I expressed how much my chest distressed me, a lot of friends told me to pretend I was transitioning into a man to get surgery. But I just couldn't – I'm autistic and very bad at lying. I've never wanted a 'male chest' – just a little bit off my G cup, a serious physical obstacle regardless of gender.

I suppose the cost of not playing the game is that you can't win the prize – but this shouldn't be a game. I don't want to be forced to play. Maybe if more people are aware of how much trans people have to bend to fit social roles just to get help, they won't assume we're the ones perpetuating the idea only women have long hair.

When Avery Jackson graced the cover of *National Geographic's* issue on trans kids, many noted how she and other trans women express happiness that they're able to wear dresses and make-up – apparently reaffirming that trans people think gender is just a costume. But transgender people appreciate that, after society sees them for who they are, they are finally free to do these little things without fear of abuse and mistreatment.

Trans people don't reinforce archaic gender roles, cis doctors do when they demand we perform the right gender to get treatment. Cis bullies do when they assault and harass people whose genders are not obvious or 'correct'. Gendered behaviours are only a problem when they're expected and enforced.

If a clear and binary gender wasn't expected, this world would be very different.



By Lola Phoenix

## Follow one of our carers, Hanora, on the fast track to fostering



My name is Hanora McCool, I am 62 years old and a mother of five children and ten grandchildren, the youngest being two weeks old and the eldest being 22.

I have been a Foster Carer for 29 years and have fostered 205 children. I have been approved to care for three children from 0 to 11 years.

It is the most rewarding job I have ever done, and even though it can be hard work and often challenging, I couldn't imagine doing any other job.

I have attended many training courses and have completed my Level 3 Diploma in Childcare. I have also received excellent support from my supervising social worker and my extended family. I would say that having a good support network is essential.

**Fostering information event:**  
**Thursday 23 February 2017**  
6pm–8pm  
Hammersmith Town Hall  
King Street W6 9JU

**All the support you need to be a foster carer**

- You have a network of fostering peers and professionals is always there to help and advise you.
- You get free training in fostering skills and the opportunity to train for additional qualifications.
- You are paid a weekly financial allowance for the child(ren), a fee for yourself plus additional rewards like a retention bonus.
- You need a spare room in your home, and parenting or childcare experience.

Freephone 0800 169 3497

Telephone 020 8753 1057

fostering@rbkc.gov.uk

For more events visit

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