

**During Transgender Awareness Week 2020, xx (she/her), from Social Security Scotland, discusses why she includes her pronouns in her Scottish Government email signature.**

I learn a lot from my 16-year-old son.

Over the past four years, listening, watching and walking alongside my younger one on his journey of transition has made me more aware of my own unconscious biases, as well as some of the painful challenges and barriers that trans people face.

One night while cooking, I turned to him while he was retrieving something from the fridge:

'How do you feel about people putting pronouns in their email signatures?'

He looked at me, deep in thought for a few moments, and replied: 'It depends...'

Not surprised by this helpful response, I waited.

'It should be a choice,' he continued and took another long pause. Too impatient to wait, I asked him to elaborate a bit.

'Well,' he said: 'People may not want to put their pronouns in their signatures for different reasons....'

More waiting.

'Some people may not have transitioned yet or don't want people at work to know yet, but don't want to put down one that is not them... Others may have different reasons, like they don't know what it is all about or they may feel strongly about it.'

Then he concluded: 'For me, just now, it would be good.'

As he transitioned, I saw my son speaking quieter and quieter and eventually not making calls or ordering food in a restaurant because of his voice.

I saw him not drinking when he is out and about as whichever toilet he goes to he may receive looks or comments.

I see his worry as we near security at the airport and his pain and discomfort every time he has to explain and justify who he is to people.

I also saw a huge grin on his face when the bus driver called him 'mate'. I have a photo of him with thumbs up in front of a gender-neutral loo. And I have great photos and memories of him and his friends having a completely carefree day full of joy at a Pride event, and where he even sneaked a photo with the First Minister!

These are some of the reasons why I put the pronouns in my signature, and why it is helpful for my son.

I take my pronouns for granted. I am not mis-gendered: my presentation, my voice and my name align with people's expectations of a female.

XX examinations of straight lines has helped my understanding of the issues facing my son and others. She proposes that the world and the spaces we inhabit are organised along dominant, majority, privileged understandings and arrangements, which she refers to as straight lines.

When these understandings are challenged, we can feel 'disorientated' and try to fit what we see and hear to what we 'understand' the world to be.

For people who do not fit along the straight lines, the whole world can be disorientating, as they try to find their place while the world is applying 'straight' understandings to them.

I can't even begin to imagine what it is like, I can only listen and learn. But I hope that as a cisgender person I can level the field a bit by making the environment more inclusive and, in turn, this can help take the pressure and an expectation from people to have to educate and inform the comfortable majority.

That is why I have pronouns in my email signature.