

Adding personal pronouns to signatures and profiles

21 February 2022



Our position

Personal pronouns are the words we use every day to refer to ourselves and each other, both in conversation and in writing. The most common relevant examples are 'he', 'she' and 'they'. We encourage everyone to take the simple step of adding their personal pronouns to their signatures and profiles. Adding pronouns to your signature helps foster an inclusive working environment.

We encourage people to include their personal pronouns in their signatures and profiles as a matter of personal choice; this is not required by Civil Service policy.

Why add pronouns?

Including pronouns is a highly cost-effective action that brings an immediate inclusivity benefit for a wide range of people where their name or the names of others cannot be readily or correctly associated with gender. This includes BAME, LGBTI+, and neurodivergent colleagues and customers.

It is no longer customary to use gendered titles such as 'Mrs', 'Miss' 'Ms' or 'Mr' in either written or spoken English language. Whilst this has removed an element of embedded misogyny, it also means there are fewer cues to help us know which pronouns to use when addressing new contacts. The introduction of hybrid working patterns also means we are increasingly making new contacts remotely rather than in person.

Knowing someone's pronouns in advance reduces anxiety when it comes to meeting or addressing them for the first time. It avoids having to make assumptions based on name, voice or appearance which, if incorrect, might cause embarrassment or offence.

Adding personal pronouns is a measure that can help us all feel more confident of addressing each other appropriately.

Who Benefits?

This straightforward action benefits everyone. The Civil Service prides itself on including and serving people with a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as BAME, LGBTI+ and neurodivergent people.

How is this done?

Pronouns can be added to some digital profiles on video conferencing and social media platforms: "[Username] (she/her)". It is not possible to add personal pronouns to profiles that are prepopulated from departmental employee databases, currently this includes staff MS Teams profiles.

Personal pronouns can be added unobtrusively to signature templates, as demonstrated by the Government Chief People Officer:



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