

## The Mic Drop - Season Two, Episode Five: Gender Identity, Conversation 1

**Mo** [00:00:00] Hello again, it's Mohammed. Here again, welcome to The Mic Drop, drop. Today, we've got two guests here. We're going to talk about the gender identity. And one is there Arthur Britney, who is the first refugee in Britain who's got the status based on being a non binary and the second person here. Our guest is Kath Charters, who works for the Sahir House. I just let Kath talk a little bit about that and what she does in Sahir House and what Sahir House is.

**Mo** [00:00:32] Hello, everyone. you know, you ok, you're having a chat just about the issue that you introduce yourself, Kath and tell us, So tell us what you do and what is your role.

**Kath** [00:00:41] Thank you for inviting me on to record, it's very nice to be here. My name's Kath Charters. I'm the wellbeing practitioner in Sahir House, which just to say what's the Sahir does? And then I'll say what I do. So Sahir House is merseryside's kind of HIV open community. And we provide information about HIV to anybody who might need updated information. We provide information across organisations so that people understand stigma and we can reduce discrimination and address stigma in organisations and schools and places like that. So we do training around that.

**Kath** [00:01:20] We also do HIV prevention work and we support people who are living with HIV and with any kind of problems that they may be facing, be that same social benefits and medical, or be around feeling lonely or isolated.

**Kath** [00:01:40] And we provide peer group support for things like that, that we provide social and emotional support and counselling. We're also a bit broader, so we have some organisations that we have that meet at Sahir House as that part of the Sahir House family, as it were. And so one of them is Many Hands One Heart, which is facilitated by Shereen Cowley and yourself Mo. And so that is for people who are seeking asylum to identify in the LGBTQI umbrella. And I facilitate the Trans Health Merseyside group, which is for people who identify in the trans umbrella, who also may identify as non binary or intersex as well, or just gender nonconforming or questioning or queery. And we provide peer groups of people in that group and information sessions around health and wellbeing.

**Mo** [00:02:39] Thanks very much, Kath. Just one of the things in regards to me is I'm originally from Iran and I left Iran when I was 17. And I have to admit, you know, confessed shamefully that when I was in Iran, I had some homophobic views. And thankfully, you know, after coming to Europe, you know, I'm meeting my wife and other people. I sort of re-educate myself. But there is a lot of questions in regard to the gender identity that I still need to answer some answers. And I may ask some question today from both of you that they come across very stupid questions. But there are questions that sometimes I think a lot of people have or they're too scared to ask in case they offend anyone. So beforehand, I just going to apologise for that. And hopefully we can clear some confusions and give the answers. So Arthur Britney and I call you Britney, if you don't mind, is OK with you.

**Britney** [00:03:35] It's perfect. Totally fine,.

**Mo** [00:03:37] Because I know you like Britney Singer and we've known each other for a couple of years now.

**Mo** [00:03:46] But I just wanted to if you could just talk a little bit about your case, how you know, in regard to how you got the refugee status and what actually the transformation in regard to your identity, in regards to the gender identity, when you sort of realise about your gender identity, you know, is OK with you.

**Britney** [00:04:07] Sure, in fact, Mo, you and I, we got an episode from first season that people might want to look it at that. That will be great catch up, with just to make it shorter, the thing has changed since then. And, you know, in that episode, I, I was still identifying myself as a gay person, a gay man. But things has changed since then. And I would say this is why one of the reasons we are having this episode is because Now, I identify myself as someone that it's a non binary person. This means I don't identify myself as the typical genders that the society gives. So it means I don't define myself as a man or a female. So I not conforming with those labels with me. So my gender, expresion or identity, it's non binary. And so, yeah, in terms of of that and like you say of my case. It was not like. I knew all the time I was non binary, you know, it was a long process. I have across therapy that I came to the conclusion that I felt like I fit in this category is being non binary you know, I started to do therapy not because I got I was questioning my gender identity. I started therapy because I felt depressed for all the consequences of the asylum process. that was taking my well-being away from me. So and part of the question that I was trying to get to know me a little bit more, my therapist started to ask me. So when my therapist asked me if I feel that I wanted to do the transition or I wanted to a became a transgender person, I said no, because I don't feel I need that. But at the same time, I say I don't feel like I belong to the stereotype of a man. So I neither belong to the to the stereotype of being a man. So she has started to tell me. So, you know, there's a lot more people like you that they don't feel like that they don't feel they don't fit in this pattern and they are called non binary or gender nonconforming. And she started explaining a little bit that she gave me some information. And after reading that and after all a little bit of research by myself, I say, you know what, I fit here. I think I am this kind of person.

**Mo** [00:06:52] You probably were always that person, but you just sort of, like, realise that is that is a name for you,.

**Britney** [00:07:02] I'm being really honest. When I told people I am non binary, you people say we knew. I mean, it totally makes sense for them in their minds, you know, because as some people say, some people all the time say, you know, you're really girlie to define yourself as a man, you're, too gurl, to to to define yourself as a man, you're not also that masculine to say you're a man.

**Britney** [00:07:29] And it's it's true. It's like any so probably I would say this I was a little bit confused in that sense I was a little bit lost. And but when I knew the time in when I started to receive this help, that helped me to cope and say, you know, yes, actually I fit here.

**Mo** [00:07:50] Mhm. And that's was just basically about a year ago. Is that right.

**Britney** [00:07:55] Um no. In fact I just started to define myself as non binary in 2018 around. September, August, something like that, which was when I started to to define myself, as you know,.

**Mo** [00:08:17] And you just mentioned that some of many of your friends were not surprised by. I just actually in the last two years, I wanted to see if you have any challenges in any sort of barriers or any issues that you've sort of like. I don't know if you wanted to open a bank account or certain, you know, anything that's happened that, you

know, you sort of felt that the people are not accepting you for what you are or they can really do that. They don't take you seriously because that's another thing is sometimes people sort of thing is a joke sort of thing, you know.

**Mo** [00:08:50] So have you had that sort of stereotyping, prejudice and and.

**Britney** [00:08:57] Yeah, you know, in fact, it's kind of interesting that people think it's my nickname or think it's like you say, it is a joke to be called Arthur Britney. And you say to people that you say that's not their real name, that's fake and deceitful. And, you know, people might be at some moments probably asking you to show me your I.D. to check if that's actually your name. But the truth is, that's actually my name's Arthur Britney. And, you know, it makes sense for me as a nonconforming person and queer person, non binary to have a masculine and feminine and labeled name. I was just surprised a little bit. I try to open a bank account. I didn't get much trouble with them because I was also receiving help with a recommendation from crisis. But I think you see what's curious, the attitude of the agent we should look at as my reference, the reference letter they wrote that it says Arthur Britney was like Arthur Britney and they just need to check the ID is like, yeah, actually their name. And she even called her manager to check. You know, it looks like this name is male and female at the same. It doesn't matter if the name is like that is the same as the I.D., you should take that name.

**Britney** [00:10:26] So it's like people really don't get sometimes that kind of identity, but at the same time is curious, is curious, because when you feel the form, which is a life form, they ask you if you are men, female or non binary, and I thicked non binary. So it's interesting that they got that on the application form that I was non binary. They were surprised with the name.

**Mo** [00:10:54] OK, but they confirm. What about the experience that you have with the supporting groups that you've got? You know, do you think there are similar challenges or barriers for the people who sort of like to confirm themselves as a man or a woman? You know, I'm talking about the British in general.

**Kath** [00:11:12] Yeah, I was just talking to somebody yesterday who is a trans man and the GP surgery, although they would like to have the title, if that's the right word, mister.

**Kath** [00:11:29] And they want to call Mr and then their name. So it's it's a I can't remember what a title, but it is a word for what it is and I'm sorry about what I see today. And so they said GP surgery is saying that they can't do that and they want to play MX . Now some people might like to have a Mx, that person specifically wants to be called Mister and that it's not happening and you quite often get stuck names as well. And so the GP surgery is saying that they haven't got that on their system or their equality and diversity monitoring form. And I've suggested that that's not the case. And I've put them in touch with Healthwatch in their area. So the Healthwatch, it's kind of thing health. What you do, you've got a problem similar to that with your GP or dentist or NHS, but you can go to Healthwatch and and they can follow them through on the report because they and I divesture opportunity and monitoring phone so that that kind of thing can be ironed out. It should be there, it should be on the monitoring forms. They should be able to someone should be able to ask them what they want to have and how they want to be addressed.

**Mo** [00:12:45] And are there any website to give any sort of information about advice?

**Kath** [00:12:49] Websites that I always follow are either Stonewall or a website called Jirus. And Jirus are really good for people who might need to get access to that information or people who might need to give that information to services. So, Gires, it's [www.gires.org.uk](http://www.gires.org.uk) and it's funded intelligence research and education said,.

**Mo** [00:13:15] OK, Britney, just you know, we've known each other for many, many years, couple of years at least, you know, and it when you came to Many Hands One Heart you came out as a gay man, you know, and we didn't really discuss anything about your gender, we always assumed that as a gay man, you're a man, you know. So have you had any sort of issues or problems or with the with people in the Many Hands One Heart other LGBT people and migrants mainly, or people that, you know, they're not from Britain. They find it difficult to find, although they understand what's the situation with you?

**Britney** [00:13:58] You know, in terms of my closer knowns, I would like I said before, they know me and for they make sense, this definition of non binary and whoever that was not the case with the Home Office. And, you know, even when I was on the asylum process and when I put it as part of my evidence, I identify now as a non binary and I wanted to be addressed with they/them. They the Home Office was continually claiming they gay men and using the pronouns he. But I was like like something that they completely skipped that that bit of me that I was trying to raise, you know. I got a different gender expression right now, identify myself with different pronouns that we're not respecting. That was until I went to the upper tribunal and when the judge the first thing she done is like which pronouns you want to be address? Because I've seen people call you all the time. He the gay man, would you say you're non binary? And so it's totally a completely different stuff and we need to start by that. So, yeah, I would say in the term I'm not having issues with like close people. They usually it when they meet, they start to meet me. When they realised I was non binary, they say, which probably you want me to to address you because I didn't knew in the past and I say, don't worry. But you can say that if you feel comfortable and I was I was I'm a little bit tolerant in that sense, that with close friends that probably we don't meet really often, that they can get confused with pronouns because some people, they try to try to change that. You know, they say, OK, I know I should use they then sometimes they use she or they use he. And it's like, OK, it's OK. But like in the sense, like I know they're not doing because they want to put a label ,they're doing because they are trying they are still working on that. And I'm a little bit flexible in that sense that I don't mind really. I'm on the daily life, you and me talking. You can say she, he, they them. But like in more formal stuff. Yeah I, I totally, I mean to the they/them but like in real life I'm more flexible. But that's my case. Yes of course that's my my, my own a form of handle the things. But they are other people that for them they are really important. You respect their pronouns

**Mo** [00:16:49] Yeah. Because I have to be. Yeah. I have to be honest with you. I mean English is not my first language. I get my pronouns wrong all the time.

**Mo** [00:16:58] I called she/he and he/she and sometimes it's been cases that, you know, that has happened. But I sort of have to get used to you know, if someone asked me to use another pronoun, then I have to basically really sort of like watch what I'm saying. You know, it's just it is a habit, you know, just goes hopefully as you get more accustomed to it, you know, it's just kind of pass it on. And as I said before, I, you know, as a person will come from Iran. I'm quite ignorant in a lot of issues that I have to educate myself. And it's sort of like one of the things I've come across. And I just want to see if Kath, you know, I've seen that as well, that a lot of times people, heterosexual people, white people, actually sort of confuse the gender identity and sexuality. So I don't know if you come across that

and, you know, I sort of like, you know, ask someone who is OK, you're non binary, but are you lesbian or are you gay, man, you know, and that sort of thing is that's got nothing to do with it, you know? And obviously, you don't ask people's sexuality. That's just you made someone up. Have you come across that sort of a I just wanted to see what are the any sort of examples for both of you that you come across that, you know, not just politically incorrect, but also totally offensive? Offensive. People say things that sometimes they don't really unconsciously, they say things that they don't realise. So if you could give us some of those examples, I really appreciate the stuff with Kath first, you know.

**Kath** [00:18:30] OK, so, um, yeah, I think that can happen. And I think some people. So it's quite hard for some people, it's difficult to separate gender expression and sexual orientation, and then I think that can be fair that people can get. So I'm I guess I'm talking about people in a health care setting. Um. For example, in service provision, if you like, and and so then if somebody comes to them, for example, and says that they're identifying as transwoman.

**Kath** [00:19:11] But they're married and the marriage is a heterosexual marriage, and that can really confuse people and actually the person who is transitioning and their partner may be really fluid and and. Discovering the new if it is new sexual. Sexuality with one another. So does someone who formerly identified. As a man in a in a marriage situation, who is now transitioning,.

[00:19:51] Is that relationship now, has they become a relationship between two women and all the lesbian, so people get really curious about these things and really want to know and and in fact. Not everybody knows themselves, they're in transition and, you know, part of your transition. It can just mean, you know, you yourself.

**Kath** [00:20:16] All exploring your your sexual preferences, your sexual orientation, what have you come to that service for? Why is the point of that question? Is it just curiosity in which case that's potentially offensive or or is this something you need to know to provide that person with a service that is life threatening? So, for example, some kind of screening like breast screening or for the screening programme in cancers or things like that. So I think people need to just be very mindful about, yes, you might need some information and you might need some clear medical history, but to be curious and start asking people about certain things and.

**Kath** [00:21:02] It is, is it is it is it relevant, has that person invited you to ask that? Has it got a context and that sort of thing?

**Kath** [00:21:12] I don't know whether that answers your question,.

**Mo** [00:21:16] what about, what do you want to add anything to that Britney is interested in?

**Britney** [00:21:20] So this is another example or I second thing I have in my life, and I know it's not the best thing to talk about. I know it's not the best example. What is important to raise up is, you know, it is about my sexual life on Grindr, you know, and I know Grindr is a wild place. You know, Grindr is like a jungle. You know, that is two options you eat or you'll be eaten. And I'm not talking about mans there, I'm talking about in the sense of of all of it, it's like a chase game or something like that. But it's it's interesting that I identify, I identify myself as non binary on Grindr. You know, I even put non binary on my gender and even I got my I got a picture of me like looking like gorgeous

girly with the curly hair sometimes or wearing lipstick in the next picture you see of me is with a beer, with tied hair, you know, looking like a guy. But that's me. That's what means for me to be non binary. And so people they came to me like, oh, you look gorgeous, but only as a girl do you want to dress for me? Do you want to use this dress or sexily or something like that? And I just said, I'm not here to be your fetish, you know, because I'm not a trans woman.

**Britney** [00:22:39] And it's important to raise this because, you know, it's important to give the space to trans woman because it's totally different to be a trans woman that non binary. I don't want to wear a dress in my daily basis. I mean, I feel the freedom to do it if I want it. I know people wouldn't care about that. I don't feel I need to do that because I wouldn't feel it fits on me. So I don't wear woman stuffs for that because I, I feel I don't need that. And in that sense, it's important a. Like in that in that kind of aspect of sexual life, I like to say, you know, this is me, this is what I wanted to do. And if I want to go to another place or cross my boundaries because I want to, not because you want to.

**Kath** [00:23:32] I just wanted to say thanks for saying about fetishism or some of prejudice, prejudicing you , can't say the word. I think that can happen very often, and that's why it's very clear as to how. That's why it's very good to have professional boundaries because. We have to be very careful that people aren't criticising, criticising people's well-being, life and sexual preferences and private life, you know, it's you have to be. Really careful about that people people may have a curiosity, but our curiosity can be filled in a different way. And so that's why we really if I'm really so glad you said that, because that's that's why people need to have professional boundaries. And and I just wanted to comment on that because that that does get to me quite a lot. And so thanks for saying that. Yeah.

**Mo** [00:24:29] That's that's been actually a really fantastic session. And I really think that we should carry on this. We're going to have a second session regarding the same issue and maybe also exploring to more about the trans men and trans women and the issues that they also face that I thank Kath and also thank you Arthur Britney

**Mo** [00:24:47] And we have the second session. Thanks very much.