

the lads, pulling girls to 'fit in' on nights out – and I remember, as the end of the night approached, running away or making excuses to get away from the aforementioned girls!

These recollections, of moments of my life involving my family, friends, school, college, work, and socialising, have helped me understand who I am – helped me put the jigsaw together. I believe in what I am doing and can see that the jigsaw is a lot closer to being completed than it ever has been.

That's my opinion – and I have accepted that, no matter what I do to myself, I can never be one hundred per cent 'physically female', because I was born in a male body. This is controversial to other transsexuals, who argue that after the final operation you are then a hundred per cent female – a complete woman. I disagree, and the only thing that would change my view on this would be some miraculous scientific advancement that meant a post-op transsexual could 'produce' a family (or have a physical chance of doing same).

### The op – or not...

I myself do not wish to have the final operation. I'm comfortable with the thought of living life as a transsexual who has not had the final operation – a 'non-op transsexual' on the slider scale. I have often sat and worried about growing old – as we all do. Life and death are the biggest dreams and fears for most of humanity. However, I made the decision that I want to grow old being perceived as a woman, not a man.

In comparison, other girls on a different part of the transgender spectrum simply feel they cannot live much longer without having the operation, and I can fully appreciate where they are coming from. On the other hand, the thought has never crossed some girls' minds and they are happy with what they do. And they are just as drained as everyone else dealing with the problems they encounter on their own journeys. Who am I to judge anyone on this spectrum, let alone to try to label people?

The whole aspect of turning into a woman – for me or anyone else – has a huge Achilles heel. The whole process relies, unfortunately, very heavily upon the root of all evil – money!

This is probably going to sound selfish and greedy – maybe quite shallow – but most of my money over the past X number of years, for the near future and more than likely the rest of my life, is going to be spent on me, me and ... me! Spent on the things that will give me a chance to live a happy life, grow old *peacefully* and exist in the modern world as a woman. I am talking serious money here – thousands and thousands upon thousands of pounds – for facial surgery, my hair, breast implants, hormone therapy, speech therapy, hair-removal, shaving my Adam's apple. These changes are all things that need my

immediate attention, so that my physical appearance and how other people perceive me can be on a par with my mental sense of my gender and how my mind works. This costs a whole lot of money!

### A lifetime's commitment

The journey so far has not been easy for me, and I can assure you that it's equally difficult for all of us, no matter where we find

ourselves on the transgender spectrum. Just picture junction 18-14 on the M6 south-bound around rush-hour – it speaks volumes!

My advice for anyone who feels stuck on the transgender spectrum and is struggling to discover – or even accept – who he or she is, is quite ironic. My advice is to not seek specific advice or answers from people in the scene, because what is right for one person is not necessarily right for you. We are all individuals, and peer pressure can be a dangerous thing – especially when it involves big risks. I don't just mean risks such as changing your body permanently and your health – you must also consider your friends,

family, wives, girlfriends, children and your working colleagues.

I have always been wary of advice from girls in a similar position to me – or, indeed, from girls who have been 'in my shoes' in the years gone by. I am relieved that I have dealt with things myself and have found answers myself. It's vital that decisions about the future, that can affect your life forever, must be yours and yours alone.

Admittedly, I have been pointed in the right direction to get the help that I have needed from people such as doctors, counsellors and beauticians etc. I am also fortunate enough to have some great friends that are trans, male and female.

Everybody needs friends and these people have listened to me, given me endless support, encouragement and, most importantly, a few strong words which were necessary when I have started to feel sorry for myself or begun to let little things drag me down (another bad pun alert!). The last thing anyone foundering on the transgender spectrum needs is people telling them who or what they are, and what they should or should not do. Only you know these answers.

### Your own conclusions

It took me an extraordinarily long time to come to terms with who I am and where I'm heading – to understand myself and to begin to change my life.

I hope this has helped you understand a little more about the diversity of the

transgender world – and a little bit more about me. To be quite honest, writing this article has been quite heavy for me, considering I am nine stone wet!

In the future I'd like to share my experiences and knowledge of pubs and clubs all around the UK. I would also love to answer any questions people might have for me about the scene or transgender issues in general – or for tips and advice.



If there are issues you would like Sammi to address, you can submit them via the SH Magazine mailbox: [swingingheavenpics@googlemail.com](mailto:swingingheavenpics@googlemail.com) – and we'll pass them on to her for consideration in future issues.