

LET'S
BE
QUEER:
A
YOUNG
PERSON'S
JOURNEY



A
GUIDE
FOR
PROFESSIONALS
WORKING
WITH
YOUNG
LGBTQ
PEOPLE

THIS GUIDE WAS
PRODUCED BY YOUNG
PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED
LGBT SPEAK OUT
SESSIONS. THIS GUIDE
DETAILS THEIR VIEWS
AND WHAT THEY WANT
PROFESSIONALS TO
KNOW.

INTRODUCTION

In Summer 2023 ru-ok? (Brighton and Hove Young Persons Drug and Alcohol service) met with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove to discuss getting the views of LGBTQ young people, to find out how they could better engage their community.

It was felt that LGBTQ young people often experienced barriers to accessing support services.

Through a series of feedback sessions with young people they co-designed the following toolkit for service managers, social workers, frontline workers in services working with young people.

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PART ONE:

THINGS
PROFESSIONALS
NEED TO THINK
ABOUT BEFORE
THEY START
WORKING WITH
LGBTQ YOUNG
PEOPLE



DATA

At the start of any young persons' journey into an organisation, there is likely to be a referral.

Even if a young person has simply come to your attention - you will either be sent or will need to gather some DATA.

This = people's very personal information.

For you to build trust with any young person, it is important to understand that data gathering goes hand-in-hand with transparency.

SO MANY QUESTIONS

Any data can say a lot about a person.

From date-of-birth to notes made during a private one-to-one session - it all adds up to making things that can be deeply sensitive specific to the person giving the information.

Data and records for LGBTQ young people will often reveal they are in a process of coming out and understanding their sexuality and mental, emotional and physical identity.

THE NEWS

UK plummets down the table of 'safe' LGBT countries as hate crime rises

By Steph Brawn for The National | 11th May 2023



THE UK has tumbled down a list of "safe" LGBT countries with hate crimes reaching "dramatic numbers".

Rainbow Europe now ranks the UK 17th out of 49 countries in the continent for achieved LGBT rights. Nine years ago, it was ranked 1st.

www.thenational.scot/news/23515797.uk-plummets-table-safe-lgbt-countries-hate-crime-rises/

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Being exposed as LGBTQ can be extremely risky and can lead to bullying and abuse. This is why young LGBTQ people want to stay in control of who knows what.

Homophobia and transphobia are something that can occur anywhere, including school or even at home.

The consequences can be wide ranging and include emotional and psychological harm.

Table 2.1: Hate crimes recorded by the police by monitored strand, year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2020

Numbers and percentages	England and Wales					
Hate crime strand	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	% change 2018/19 to 2019/20
Race	45,440	58,294	64,829	72,041	76,070	6
Religion	3,962	5,184	7,103	7,203	6,822	-5
Sexual orientation	6,700	8,569	10,670	13,314	15,835	19
Disability	3,393	5,254	6,787	7,786	8,469	9
Transgender	820	1,195	1,615	2,183	2,540	16

Official Statistics
Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019 to 2020
Updated 28 October 2020

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020

DATA ACTIONS



When asking personal questions and gathering data, young people need to know:

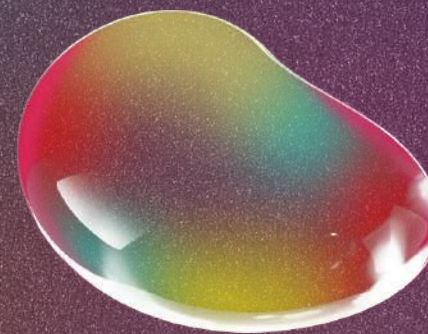
- ✓ Why you are asking for data.
- ✓ Where you're recording it.
- ✓ Who will be able to see it.
- ✓ How it will be used.



TRANSPARENCY
BUILDS TRUST

Avoid the following:

- ✗ Treating the info as just more stats.
- ✗ Being secretive about any notes.
- ✗ Overreacting to anything.
- ✗ Being dismissive.



SECRETS BUILD
BARRIERS

VISIBILITY

Knowing that an organisation is LGBTQ friendly doesn't mean that everything is perfect - but it goes a very long way to build trust.

Posters can help, but what makes a real impression is when individual members of staff put something on that signifies they are an ally.

A personal effort made by an individual member of staff is the most important and effective way making young LGBTQ people feel safe and welcome.

Posters and visual signs help, but only people have the skills to show they know and care - whether they have come to that through training and learning or through lived experience.

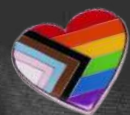


LGBTQ STAFF

Lots of people talk about having a 'gaydar', and young LGBTQ people are no different.

Being able to be in an environment where professionals are openly and sometimes obviously queer will make a big difference to making LGBTQ young people feeling safe.

Obviously, not all staff can have lived experience of being gay, bi, lesbian or trans - so where it is not possible to recruit LGBTQ staff, training from people with lived experience becomes highly important.



STAFF FORUMS

For staff who are not LGBTQ - and for effective allyship - it is important to be able to ask questions.

With this in mind, young people would encourage organisations to create safe LGBTQ staff forums where non-LGBTQ staff can ask questions and gay, bi, lesbian and trans staff can safely share knowledge and experience.

Provided they do not put too much burden on one, or one small group of people, services should have safe spaces for staff to ask questions, learn and grow.

PRONOUNS

Pronouns are an important part of how people express their identity and refer to themselves and others.

They can form an essential part of someone's exploration of themselves because gender is fluid.

How someone feels and is experiencing the world around them is internal and sometimes impossible for others to recognise unless someone says: "my pronouns are _____".

And what makes this even easier for young people to be able to communicate is being asked.

DEADNAMING & MISGENDERING

Deadnaming is when someone refers to a person who is transgender by the name they used before they transitioned. Along with misgendering, this is something that commonly affects people who are trans.

Changing gender - socially and legally, as well as physically - can be incredibly stressful and emotionally demanding.

Being regularly misgendered or deadnamed can have a huge impact on a young person's mental health and wellbeing.

VISIBILITY ACTIONS



✔ Posters



- ✔ Rainbow lanyards
- ✔ LGBTQ pins and badges
- ✔ Photo boards identifying staff



- ✔ Asking pronouns as standard
- ✔ LGBTQ staff



OKAY



GOOD

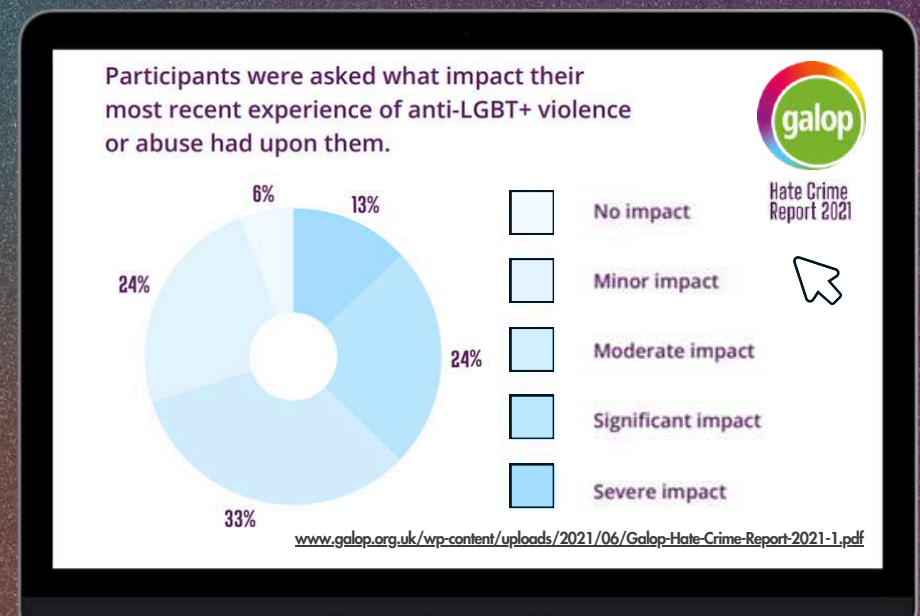
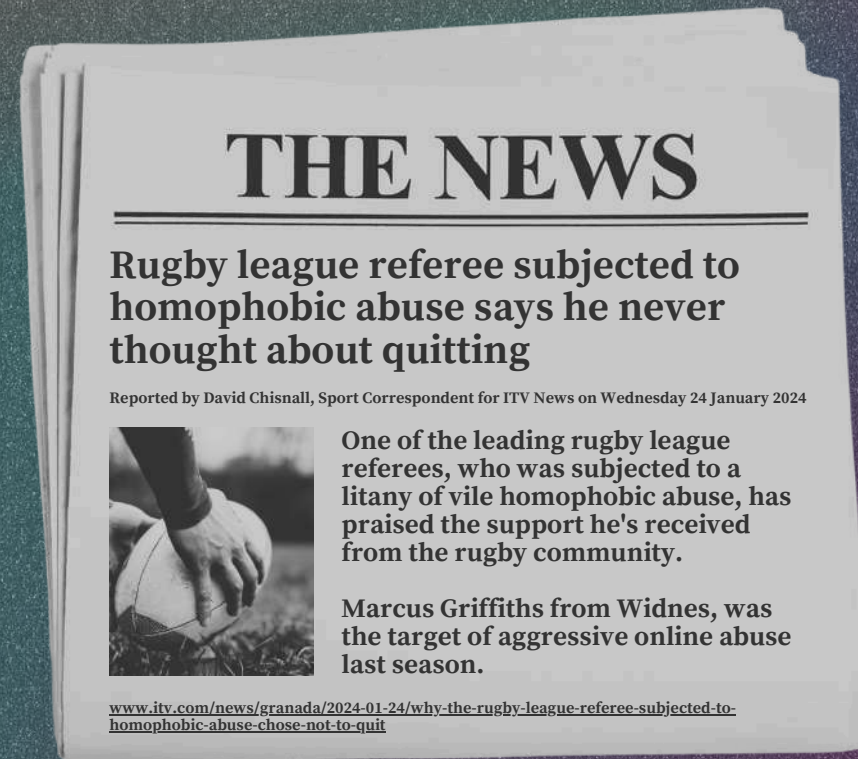


STRONG

HOMOPHOBIA

Galop – an organisation supporting LGBTQ people who've experienced hate crime, domestic abuse or sexual violence – have carried out surveys on the impact of hate crime and found:

- 94% of LGBTQ people were negatively impacted by experiences of homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, acephobic and interphobic abuse and violence.
- Only 1 in 3 LGBTQ victims surveyed who needed support – of any form – were able to access it.



TRANSPHOBIA

In order to explain transphobia, organisations like Galop provide the analogy of two islands people can live on - one being male and the other female, and where you have to be on one island or the other and swimming from one to the other or staying in the sea between them is strictly prohibited.

Transphobia can be described as behaviour where someone is pressuring someone or a group of people to conform to strict gender rules - or penalising them from not conforming.

People might think of transphobia being perpetrated by judgemental strangers - it can also come from a partner or ex-partner, family member or someone a young person lives with. This can manifest itself in several ways:

- Preventing you from seeing family or friend.
- Stopping you from leaving home.
- Pressurising you into forced relationships.
- Financial control.
- Disclosing information about you without your consent.
- Taking away documents or possessions belonging to you.
- Using someone's trans status as an additional abusive tactic.

HOMOPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA ACTIONS



Things to do ...

- ✔ Actively call out any homophobia or transphobia.
- ✔ This should be a policy that is held by the organisation and clear to all staff and clients.
- ✔ Pronouns should be asked as standard to all young people.

Things to avoid ...

- ✘ Bystanding.
- ✘ Deadnaming.
- ✘ Misgendering.



AUTISM & GENDER DYSPHORIA

In recent years there has been growing evidence showing a link between autism and gender dysphoria.

Gender dysphoria is when people experience discomfort or distress when their assigned sex is different from the gender they identify with.

It is important to remember that autism can help facilitate a person's understanding of gender and self. Also, autism and gender can both be experienced on a spectrum - not confined to a binary.

PART TWO:

THINGS
PROFESSIONALS
NEED TO THINK
ABOUT WHILE
THEY ARE
WORKING
WITH LGBTQ
YOUNG PEOPLE

LISTENING

Feeling heard is important.

When accessing services it is very important that a young LGBTQ person's identity is acknowledged.

However, it may not be the main reason they want to access a service.

Or it might not be the underlying reason they feel that they need help.

Having identified someone as LGBTQ it is important to keep asking a broad range of questions - that might include things around their experiences outside of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or trans.

BELIEVING

To young people adults can seem sceptical.

In recent years, young people have lived through covid lockdowns and experienced complex and stressful living arrangements - from which there was no easy relief or escape.

Living with family members who aren't supportive can cause a lot of emotional strain, stress, anxiety and potential trauma for young LGBTQ people. Believing in whatever impact this will have had will be important to gaining their trust.

CHECKING IN

Navigating a new gender identity or sexuality is a lot to process. Sometimes things can change in a short space of time.

If a professional has noted or recorded data when starting work with a young person, it is important to check in regularly and ask if they are using the same pronouns or still identifying as LGBTQ.

This can give a young person an opportunity to talk about something they might be struggling with.

DUAL DIAGNOSES

It is important to be aware that it can be very common for LGBTQ young people to try to manage their emotions with the aid of substances.

If a young person is using substances and trying to access mental health support, they can be required to stop using drugs before they can engage in therapy.

As such, there is a danger that substance use could become a barrier to getting the help they need.

Accessing mental health services isn't an easy step to take - and neither is talking to a stranger about using illegal substances.

The idea of having to make an entirely new referral to another service is something that can also require emotional support.



SIGNPOSTING

Around Brighton and Hove there are services that can offer therapeutic support to young LGBTQ people - which in turn could help them get to a better place if they are struggling with mental health and/or substances.

Applications can be daunting and waiting lists can be long. Offering some support to young people accessing other services can make a huge positive impact.



LISTENING, BELIEVING & ACTIONS



Things to do ...

- ✔ Remember that young people are experts in their own lives - and their care should be focussed on the needs they've expressed.
- ✔ Remember that LGBTQ young people are very susceptible to homophobia and transphobia.
- ✔ Acknowledge young people's LGBTQ identity in order to help them feel validated and accepted.

Things to avoid ...

- ✘ Assuming young people just need help around being LGBTQ.
- ✘ Deciding what the problem is for them.
- ✘ Leaving LGBTQ young people to refer themselves into other services without any support or assistance.

PART THREE:

SUBSTANCES
SEX
ONLINE
LIFE



PARTY SCENE

LGBTQ young people will experience sex and substances differently to cis, heterosexual people.

For LGBTQ people to go out and find other people from the gay, lesbian, bi or trans community, the most likely way they will do this is through nightlife or places where substances and sex are prevalent - often together (chemsex).

With this in mind, substance support and sex education needs to be able to understand LGBTQ circumstances.

SUBSTANCES

LGBTQ people are more likely to encounter alcohol and drugs as they are a huge part of a gay scene that revolves around night life.

Whether it's part of the 'up' of taking party drugs like MDMA or poppers - or the dissociative experience of ketamine (ket) - to the experience of 'downers' like xanax or other benzos.

All of these can spill over into a way of coping with physical, social and emotional anxieties associated with being LGBTQ.

CHEMSEX

Chemsex means sexual activity while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

A lot of LGBTQ people take part in chemsex for different reasons - either to feel less inhibited and enhance pleasure or because of feelings of shame or low self-esteem.

A lot of young LGBTQ people don't know what chemsex is or that it will be very common for them to be invited to take part in it on the gay scene.

SEX EDUCATION

For young LGBTQ people, their experience of sex education in school could be described as 'vanilla' - i.e. plain.

LGBTQ young people's experience of sex tends to be something no one teaches them about or prepares them for - potentially making it all the more confusing and complicated.

As well as having to discover it for themselves, it is something that cis heterosexual people sometimes show little respect for - the reality that some people have sex differently to them.

SUBSTANCES & SEX- ED ACTIONS



Schools and services should consider ...

- ✓ Age appropriate LGBTQ sex education for all students.
- ✓ Teaching cis heterosexual young people to show respect for LGBTQ people - that they are not obliged to explain their sexual preferences or how their sex lives work.
- ✓ Teach that sex should be pleasurable whatever your sexual preference or body type.
- ✓ Provide education around risks of combining substances and sex.

Avoid ...

- ✗ Glossing over LGBTQ sex ed.
- ✗ Leaving LGBTQ young people to educate themselves or other people.
- ✗ Leaving LGBTQ young people in situations in sex ed classes where they feel uncomfortable.

ONLINE LIFE

If young people can't get access the LGBTQ community in nightclubs or bars, the one place they will be able to meet other gay, bi, lesbian and trans people is through social media and dating apps - where it is easy to get around age restrictions.

Social media can open up a very alluring world of sex and substances.

More than ever, young LGBTQ people need education around the risks and the dangers as part of their sex education and safe spaces to talk about their online experiences.