

LGBTQIA+

Youth Insight in Blackpool



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Introduction to Healthwatch

Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as part of the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). Healthwatch Blackpool is the independent consumer voice for health and social care, listening to the views of local people on issues that matter. Our ultimate aim is to ensure that local people have a voice, acting on feedback and driving change.

Healthwatch Blackpool: Our Approach

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Thank you

Healthwatch Blackpool extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated in our project. This includes the children and young people who actively engaged in the focus groups, sharing valuable insight, alongside teachers and education staff for allowing us to facilitate the session. Your voices are instrumental in our work.



Introduction to the project

Healthwatch Blackpool were commissioned by Public Health to undertake consultation work with young people, exploring their views on how Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education could help address stigma associated with individuals identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+).

In 2022, a survey and subsequent focus groups, conducted by Healthwatch Blackpool and Streetlife, found that some young people:

- Felt that sex education within a school setting is largely focused on heterosexual couples.
- Expressed a strong need for gay sex to be incorporated within the curriculum, to help increase awareness and reduce stigma.

In addition, a consultation with Youthwatch volunteers and Public Health Blackpool, gathering young people's views on the priorities for sexual health services locally, found:

- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools tends to focus mostly on heterosexual sex. There is a need for more education and open discussion about different sexualities and genders. Education is key to removing stigma associated with identifying as LGBTQIA+.
- Amongst young people in schools, a lot of stigma and discrimination associated with identifying as LGBTQIA+ still exists.

As a result, this feedback directly influenced Public Health's Sexual Health Strategy, resulting in the following action: Undertake consultation work with young people to explore their views on how PSHE education could help address stigma associated with identifying as LGBTQIA+.

Aims

Working in collaboration with Public Health, this project aimed to undertake consultation work with young people to explore their views on how PSHE education could help address stigma associated with identifying as LGBTQIA+, delivered via an engagement exercise. This included gathering insights from children and young people regarding their understanding surrounding this, and how they feel is best to address any stigma associated. The feedback gathered will be utilised to inform the Sexual Health Strategy.

Objectives

- To assess the extent to which young people are currently informed about LGBTQIA+ issues, including terminology, identities, historical context, and the impact of stigma on mental and emotional well-being.
- To identify areas within PSHE education where there may be gaps in addressing LGBTQIA+ related topics, and understand what specific information or discussions young people feel are lacking.
- To explore young people's perspectives on effective strategies and approaches within PSHE education that could mitigate stigma and promote acceptance and understanding of LGBTQIA+ identities.
- To gather insights into how PSHE curriculum content could be adapted or expanded to incorporate LGBTQIA+ related content in a sensitive and inclusive manner, ensuring it resonates with the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth.
- To collect feedback on any existing educational resources related to LGBTQIA+ topics used within PSHE and identify areas for improvement, as well as suggestions for new resources that could be developed.

Methodology

Design

To gain a deep understanding, Healthwatch Blackpool conducted face to face focus groups with young people within secondary schools, sixth forms and youth groups, allowing the opportunity for anonymous feedback. Through open ended questions, Healthwatch Blackpool explored themes relating to LGBTQIA+ and how PSHE education could help address any stigma.

Procedure

Between April and November 2024, Healthwatch Blackpool engaged with 142 children and young people across 7 different educational/youth group settings, in order to complete face to face focus groups. These focus groups consisted of two parts, the first part facilitated by a Pubic Health trainer to gain insight regarding Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and the second part for Healthwatch Blackpool to gather LGBTQIA+ insight. Many young people took part in this project from educational settings and the United Youth Alliance LGBTQIA+ group. We were successful in gaining feedback from 3 mainstream high schools, 1 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) college, 1 LGBTQIA+ group and 1 alternative educational provider. Along with this, we engaged with children and young people within a local youth club. These sessions varied across Key Stage 3, 4 and 5, facilitated through 10 different focus groups. Focus groups contained open ended questions facilitated by Healthwatch Blackpool staff, with children and young people working in small groups, writing their feedback on large sheets of paper.

School/College/Youth Club	Date	Number of Young People
The Magic Club	23/04/2024	6
Park Community Academy Sixth Form	29/04/2024	9
Montgomery Academy	20/05/2024	28
Montgomery Academy	22/05/2024	26
Armfield Academy	23/05/2024	21
Armfield Academy	23/05/2024	27
Unity Academy	07/06/2024	12
Educational Diversity - Pegasus	17/06/2024	2
Educational Diversity - Pegasus	17/06/2024	4
United Youth Alliance - LGBTQIA+ Youth Group	28/11/2024	7

Methodology

It is worth noting that no comparisons to national data have been made throughout this report, as the focus of this work was highly localised. The analysis reflects local community voices, ensuring that the conclusions and recommendations are directly relevant to Blackpool residents.

Limitations

The project relied on focus groups, which can be susceptible to recall bias and may not always reflect objective experiences. In particular, the data collected from focus groups relies on self-reported measures which may be subject to social desirability bias. Many young people completed these sessions within an educational setting, which may have impacted how comfortable young people felt with being open and honest.

Additionally, the sample size of children and young people who took part in focus groups was small, and therefore cannot be representative of the wider population. Demographic information was not collected, therefore it is important to consider how different cultural backgrounds may affect views on this topic.



LGBTQIA+

Awareness & Education



What comes to mind when you hear the term LGBTQIA+?

All young people recognised that the letters LGBTQIA+ were related to romantic choices, sexual attraction, sexual intercourse or a person's identity.

"Gay sex and lesbian sex."

"Gay people."

"People liking men."

"It's the gay community."

"Different sexualities and genders."

"It shows different colours of the rainbow."



In addition, nearly all young people understood what the letters "L", "G" and "B" represented. They were able to comment on these different sexuality types, whilst expressing their understanding of lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships.

"Bisexual."

"Lesbian, gay, trans, bi, queer, intersex."

"Lesbian – having a girlfriend if you're a girl."

"Gay – having a boyfriend when you're a man."

"I know what some of it is."

All young people were aware that "T" stood for Transgender. Some of these individuals made further comments with regards to identity and the usage of pronouns.

"Trans."

"Transgender."

"Pronouns."

"They/them."

"When a woman wants to become a man and a man wants to become a woman."

"A trans person I know, his dad isn't comfortable with the trans thing or the bi thing his dad was like are you straight or a lesbian."

Several young people recognised that "Q" stood for Queer and/or Questioning. Some individuals questioned the terminology "queer", and if this was appropriate to use. A couple of young people stated that historically, this word had negative connotations.

"Questioning."

"Queer people."

"Queer/questioning."

"I always add the Q because the others are specific and the Q is overarching. Once you get into lgbtqia+ it gets very long and you get lots of backlash from people – people who are more on the conservative side or don't understand/know anyone in the community."

"The Q is the umbrella term and they are represented in that."

A minority of young people recognised what the letter "I" represented, highlighting a lack of knowledge.

"Intersex people."

"Intersex."

Some of the young people recognised that the letter "A" stood for asexual, however a couple of young people highlighted that they thought this meant ally. Similarly, several young people thought this stood for acceptance.

"No understanding of I and A."

"Is it ally?"

"Accepting of people."

"Acceptance."

A small minority of young people felt they had some indication of what the “+” meant, referencing other identities not encompassed within the acronym. Additionally, a couple of individuals highlighted various different identity choices in relation to this question.

“+all inclusive.”

“Don’t know what the + means.”

“Aromantic.”

“Demiromantic.”

“Agender/genderless.”

“2 spirited.”

“2s = two-spirited.”

“Non-binary.”

“Polysexual.”

In addition, some young people made reference to various symbols, movements or pop cultural events, such as the Pride movement, associated with the LGBTQIA+ community. A couple of individuals highlighted local landmarks, referring to the “rainbow zebra crossing”.

“Rainbows.”

“The flag.”

“There are flags around Blackpool.”

“Floats.”

“Pride month/movement.”

“Parades and flags.”

“Drag queens/kings.”

“Drags shows.”

Similarly, some young people expressed statements about equality, respect and love, using positive and celebratory language when asked about LGBTQIA+.

“Sexuality doesn’t define you, love is love.”

“Respect to different cultures.”

“Equality.”

“Peace and love.”

“Happiness.”

Despite this, a couple of young people expressed a slight hesitancy to engage, voicing a small number of critical comments in relation to this question.

“I know bits but don’t really speak about it.”

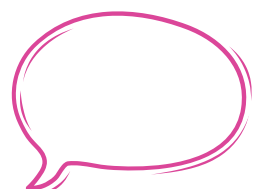
“They use their sexuality as an excuse to get away with stuff.”

“All the sexuality should be gay, lesbian or straight as I don’t believe you can be anything else.”

“Can be in your face, pushy.”

One participant also highlighted that the letters may not be someone’s elected choice.

“I’m ok with a label but I know people who aren’t ok with a label. I know someone who is completely gender non-conforming. They are just like “I am me”... there’s more openness in the younger generation.”



How would you describe LGBTQIA+ awareness and education in schools?

Although education surrounding LGBTQIA+ is delivered within schools, nearly all young people felt this can sometimes appear rushed, lacking in frequency and substance, with some key areas not being discussed or taught thoroughly enough. Some individuals expressed a need for this to be incorporated into the curriculum via methods other than assemblies, to make this more appealing and interesting for young people.

"We did a couple of lessons in year 8."

"Our PSHE consisted of 1 20 minute lesson a week during school time

– I never heard anything LGBTQ."

"There's not a lot of education."

"It was taught in lessons but felt like it was rushed."

"Make sure everyone understands what all the letters mean."

"It's sometimes talked about."

"HIV, queer, sexual health not spoken about much."

"They go over the same thing."

"Just waffle."

"They do it in assemblies. It's just waffle."

"Repetitive."

"The awareness is quite high, the education is minimal."

"They don't make it interesting so we want to know more."

"It is a lot of peer to peer education rather than educator to student."

"A lot of learning is on social media TikTok etc."

"I don't think the way the curriculum currently is enough. It is 5-6 lessons over a couple of weeks. It needs to be spread over the whole term, semester or year."



Some young people recalled previous lesson content with regards to historical moments and the LGBTQIA+ community. There were also discussions surrounding their knowledge on differing sexualities and genders.

"Had PowerPoints of the history and a Stonewall group."

"In year eight, we had a teacher that went through a few lessons about it."

"They covered sexualities and genders such as intersex and transgender."

"Good but you can't remember what each letter stands for and it's hard to understand."

A limited number of young people expressed concerns about the perceived emphasis of LGBTQIA+ education within schools, although it is important to acknowledge that this viewpoint was not widely shared. Some individuals felt that LGBTQIA+ education is being "pushed" on individuals, feeling there is too much importance on LGBTQIA+ themes within schools. Despite this, it is important to note that this was only reflected by a small minority of the young people engaged with.

"A bit over the top to be honest."

"The continuous representation of the LGBTQIA+ community can be quite pushy and sometimes is more negative than positive."

"Brainwashing because all teachers always mention it, making it seem like you have to be gay."

"They shove it down my throat like I care!"

"Overrated, boring and confusing."

"There's lots of representation. Good for the ones who feel unappreciated. However, there's too much information at this age. I can't keep up. The majority have straight relationships."

"Have separate rooms. If some want to learn about it they can. If you don't, learn something else."



Have you witnessed or experienced any stigma or discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals? If comfortable, please can you share your experiences?

Some participants shared their personal experiences, ranging from bullying and name calling to insights into school and wider societal culture, noting the effects of “slurs” (a word for any discriminatory and degrading language).

“When I was in high school there for a year before I transitioned and I was relentlessly bullied. I got put on a 6 month placement at a college and when I came back they were nicer to me. It confused the hell out of me. There was the odd person who would shout slurs at me.”

“I play football every Wednesday and Sunday, they were confused about what the difference is between gay and queer. For the majority of straight people, they are ignorant to learning it our don't know the difference between the Q and the G.”

“I have lesbian parents and I was always put in this thing of people immediately assuming I was gay and making fun of me for that. My dad is also gay and I told a friend and she spread it around everyone and I got bullied for that as well. I was in the locker room at swimming and they would make me turn around. Because of my parents, they associated this with me.”

“The LGBT kids aren't necessarily bullied for that exactly. The boys would be bullied for being “gay” if they were slightly feminine or not toxically masculine but weren't actually gay, this happened more in general than happening to the actually gay people. It was used as a slur. “Manosphere” influencers like Andrew Tate are increasing this issue.”

“Insults like “oh you're so “gay”. I know a lot of people try to reclaim those things. One of my friends transitioned in the last 2 years, he is very activist on social media. He says he finds it difficult to try and reclaim these words, but feels people are understanding it better.”

“One of my best friends was openly trans, my friend group were always the freak group. We went to safeguarding people but there wasn't enough education. There wasn't any education. There should be awareness groups for this.”



LGBTQIA+ & PSHE



What topics related to LGBTQIA+ issues do you think should be included in PSHE curriculum, if not already included?

There were a variety of responses relating to what young people wanted to see from their lessons. Most young people mentioned that an increased understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community history would be beneficial to their learning, allowing individuals the ability to understand the community's heritage, including challenges and victories. This was reinforced by those young people who mentioned that they enjoyed learning about Alan Turing, in both history and IT classes. young people explained that including LGBTQIA+ history throughout the curriculum gives a more complete picture of people's identities and contributions to society.

"How the movement has progressed over the years, so like laws etc."

"Who came up with it and why?"

"How LGBTQIA+ was created."

"What was it like for people in the 1900s?"

"More history on progress and rights."

"People were persecuted for being gay in the past and still to this day, for example Alan Turing."

"In world war two, he (Alan Turing) cracked the enigma code leading to a victory in the war."

However, he was arrested after the war due to homosexual behaviour with other men."

"Why they protest."

"Lgbt history is a big thing – why people are trying to reclaim certain words. Getting to understand that and people could find it interesting."

"For sport it's a big one. Educating in sports about derogatory abuse."

"When delivering PSHE, actually having the ability to talk not just about penis and vagina sex and that the term sex doesn't just mean penis and vagina sex. Saying sex can be all these different things and its whatever you define it is."

Similarly, some young people highlighted their desire for more general education around LGBTQIA+ themes, including revisiting some of the topics mentioned in their PSHE lessons for further learning. young people also suggested incorporating creative projects like posters and having student-led discussions, sharing their knowledge and understanding.

"How to understand it."

"Do posters."

"Talk more about it and do more lessons."

"Educate so people don't be misconnected."

"More education in general."

"More student led knowledge."

"I think the topics need to be covered more than once and in more detail – give the lessons purpose."

"Return to topics mentioned, again."

In addition, many young people expressed a strong desire to learn about LGBTQIA+ topics through real-life experiences. Individuals expressed an interest in meeting those from the community, enabling them to understand the realities of LGBTQIA+ lived experiences, including the challenges and positive aspects.

"Harassment of the LGBTQIA+ community, learn more about peoples experiences we want to learn more about it."

"Have conversations with people that aren't just in our age range about it."

"How people feel about it."

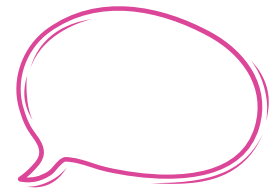
"Problems transgender people may face -> gender-neutral toilets?"

"Real life examples."

"Hate towards gay/LGBTQI."



*"Day to day life being gay."
"Depression in gay people."
"Witness what they have gone through – lived experience – make it real."
"How many times they get bullied or how many times people have been called a name or battered."*



Some young people indicated that they would like to know more about what all the letters of LGBTQIA+ mean, as well as symbolic representations for the community, such as flags.

*"Learn about the I, the A and the + in LGTBQIA+."
"The different areas of the LGBTQ community."
"All the letters of LGBTQIA+?"
"What all the flags mean."
"Why add more?"
"Definitions of some sexualities."
"What each letter stands for and what it means".*

Beyond the curriculum, several young people were curious about Blackpool's LGBTQIA+ community. They expressed an interest in learning about the local 'gay village' and upcoming Pride events. Some young people mentioned wanting to visit landmarks like the new zebra crossings, suggesting a desire to see LGBTQIA+ history and culture in their environment.

*"Know about the zebra crossings."
"Gay bars/ village in town, places in the local town where the LGBTQIA+ community are present."
"Info about the zebra crossing."*

A few young people highlighted specific information they felt may be missing from PSHE.

*"How would a gay person have a baby – adoption – same sex relationships and children – artificial insemination."
"Learn more detail about the community and not just labels for them."
"Learnt about AIDS."
"Awareness of unique/ uncommon sexualities."
"How to prevent AIDS."*

In addition, a few young people also mentioned integrating contemporary examples from pop culture, such as TV shows or celebrities.

*"TV shows like Rupauls drag race."
"Celebrate cultural TV shows and films like pride and Ru Pauls drag race, some not as good, Deadpool plays on gay humour as a joke."
"Famous celebrities that are LGBTQIA+."*

A small minority of young people also wanted lessons to address social harms and discrimination faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, both in and out of the classroom, and online.

*"Discrimination online, in school and behind peoples back and the impact of this."
"Festivals and online awareness – not all positive."
"Discrimination in and out of the classroom and also online."*

In what ways do you think PSHE education can contribute to reducing stigma against LGBTQIA+ individuals?

In response to this question, all young people mentioned making posters as a key part of how individuals can get involved in reducing stigma, working together on positive messaging. Furthermore, several young people mentioned the importance of discussions in assemblies and raising awareness of Pride month, as ways to actively promote inclusivity and understanding.

"Make posters explaining and sharing experiences (if comfortable)."

"Do assemblies on the topic more often."

"Posters around school."

"Projects."

"Celebrate pride month."

"One lesson or event a week."

"Flags."

"Massive posters."

"More awareness of pride month."

"Within lessons there should be some type of activity e.g. creating posters or having an activity based off what it means to be gay/ lesbian etc. Make the activities interactive. Something free – how do you feel?"



The majority of young people expressed a desire to learn about important figures and events from LGBTQIA+ history and culture in all their classes, not just PSHE. One student mentioned the "Give Racism the Red Card" movement in football, and seeing players take the knee sparked good discussions. This shows how including real-world examples can lead to broader conversations about LGBTQIA+.

"Awareness of cultural figures, we learned about Alan Turing in history."

"Can use cultural references and celebrate."

"Cultural icons – Queen – Freddie Mercury, Alan Turing (learning in other lessons i.e. history rather than singling out), Lady Gaga – ally."

"Show cultural and historical examples of members of the LGBTQIA+ community doing great things – Alan Turing – Ru Pauls Drag Race – Elliot Page."

"Discuss other examples that may be more known – such as football players taking the knee and the ban the red card."

When exploring stigma and its negative effects more deeply, most young people responded by saying they would like to be able to better support LGBTQIA+ individuals, wanting to know how best to help and be a good friend on their journey.

"Tell us how to support someone when they tell you they are part of the LGBTQIA+ community."

"Teaching people that not everything about LGBTQIA+ identities is sexual when someone says they are gay or bisexual don't instantly think about sexual differences."

"Education leads to not putting people in boxes."

"How to help them."

"Representation is quite stereotypical."

"Use the lessons to understand the negative effects of stereotyping."

"Needs to be more normalised."

"Helps people learn that terms shouldn't be used in a hurtful way as can be insulting and make some people sad and suicidal."

"Reiterate think before you speak."

"People don't think they are wrong because it is not happening to them."

Some young people highlighted that PSHE could be used to show the effects of stigma towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. Several young people stated bullying specifically, noting that PHSE lessons could be used to make people feel more comfortable to discuss LGBTQIA+ topics. This could be done by educating people on right or wrong, as well as appropriate questioning.

"More awareness of bullying, what is bullying and what is appropriate questions."

"We don't want to see bullying."

"Lessen the effects of bullying."

"Make people more comfortable to talk about the topic."

"Stigma – People need to feel like they can talk and open up first."

"Some people aren't as cultured so they don't know what they are saying is right or wrong."

"It's partly talked about but not enough. There's still some stigma and it's not normalised".

"The understanding that you're in a safe place and are safe to discuss your feelings in relation to the topic."

"Talk more about it and do more lessons on stigma."

"We are seeing a big rise in misogynistic content – addressing this and why it isn't helpful. Why these people are dangerous to anyone of any gender. Trying to steer them away from this will help with the transphobia."

Several young people highlighted their desire for lived experience to inform PSHE lessons and reduce stigma.

"Understand what they have gone through."

"Try to help people understand why they are a part of the LGBTQI community."

"Use real examples that are meaningful to young people (Brianna Ghey)."

"Lived experience and lived student experience ask questions to young people."

"Ask if anyone has been through experiences."

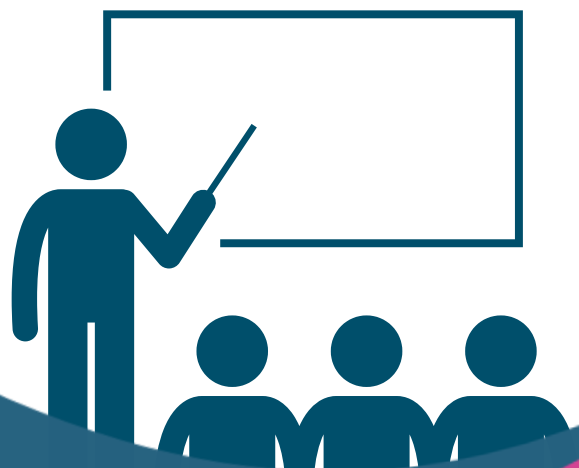
"More things that relate to real life."

"What it is like for young people, not all aware of the effects of being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community."



LGBTQIA+

in Educational Settings



Do you believe there are any barriers or challenges that might prevent teachers from adequately addressing LGBTQIA+ topics in the classroom?

Most young people sensed an awkwardness or hesitancy from their teacher, whether this be nervousness, a lack of confidence when discussing certain LGBTQIA+ themes, or teachers appearing to avoid certain LGBTQIA+ topics they feel hesitant to deliver.

"Awkwardness when discussing topics."

"Some teachers avoid certain topics."

"Feel relaxed and comfortable to discuss the themes."

"Feel more comfortable to ask questions about sex."

"Nervous, don't want to feel embarrassed."

"Might feel scared – they might be part of that group but don't want to speak openly. Don't feel comfortable."

"Teachers aren't confident enough."

"My teacher always feels uncomfortable."

"They brush over topics they are uncomfortable speaking about."

"Because teachers aren't trained in it, its like it is a second hand thing and comes across like its not important."

"One teacher I know said she wouldn't teach PSHE because she didn't feel adequately trained enough to be able to deliver it."

Further to this, several young people responded by highlighting the need for increased content on LGBTQIA+ topics and the need for more effective and frequent dialogue. This, paired with the responses above surrounding teachers potentially avoiding certain topics, suggests a clear barrier to learning noted by young people.

"They do speak about it but it's just not enough."

"Teachers don't want to offend people."

"Some teachers might not feel comfortable speaking about it because it could be about faith or they could just not like it."

Another barrier highlighted by several young people was the behaviour within the classroom displayed by some individuals. young people noted mild to severe bullying is present in schools, specifically referencing name-calling and teasing.

"Bullying is common (extremely)."

"Some people don't care."

"People making fun of others."

"Pick up on micro-aggressions, tell people off for saying "that's gay"."

Feedback suggests young people would benefit from more class discussions and group learning, particularly feeling that their generation has lots to contribute in conversations. One table of young people also noted that when learning about LGBTQIA+ topics in groups, being more selective or offering choices to young people surrounding this would be beneficial.

"They just don't teach it as well as the young people could as it wasn't part of their generation."

"Group things and writing things down, sharing opinions (group learning)."

"Open up more class discussion and let people have their opinion and speak about it."

"Some people feel more comfortable in groups of just girls or boys but some should be mixed."

"Society is changing over time. The more people come out, the more kids growing up will think it's the norm."

"I was homeschooled for 6 months and the PSHE lessons were online and they were probably the best PSHE lessons I was taught."

A couple of young people also noted other points of contact within the school system that they felt themselves or their peers may be more comfortable speaking to about LGBTQIA+ topics. This is a potential area for exploration when considering how comfortable staff are in delivering the session, as well as how receptive the young people are in engaging with that staff member.

“People might feel more comfortable going to student mentors.”

“High school hub mentor from the football club is a good contact.”



In what ways do you think schools can create a supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ young people and how can open-mindedness and acceptance be encouraged?

Most student responses highlighted the need for increased dialogue within schools, whether this be in an assembly or increased learning through displays.

"Posters."

"Explain flags and letters."

"Talk about it more."

"More assemblies about it."

"Visual representation posters."

"Usually with posters for young people who aren't as nice."

"An assembly about including people for who they are and not their appearances."

"1 to 2 lessons a year so far, need more."

Furthermore, some young people also responded by highlighting the need for more education between right and wrong in the school environment. Some individuals believe there is a need to be reminding people how to act and communicate appropriately towards others in order to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

"Be respectful of others."

"I feel my teachers struggles to teach these things as when teaching simple topics people in my class are rude, disrespectful and offensive to others."

"Make the class more mature because if we do speak about it people make fun of people."

"By consequencing people who are mean to gay people..."

"Write on walls to not be rude to people as a constant reminder."

"Make it clear that harassment is not acceptable."

"There is a 0 tolerance of bullying in schools but it doesn't extend to LGBTQIA+. It seems only when it gets to violence that it is brought in. Having that example shown and being very much establishing those boundaries and being firm with it."

Alongside this, the use of contemporary and historical LGBTQIA+ figures has featured heavily throughout many student responses. In response to this question, several young people mentioned various 'icons' and implementing the learning into lessons to encourage acceptance.

"Freddie Mercury – challenge stigma."

"Icons."

"LGBT icons in lessons."

"Alan Turing."

Another key area highlighted was the need for gender neutral bathrooms and changing rooms.

"Gender neutral bathrooms. Every time I had to get the key to the medical room."

"I had to use the staff bathroom and I felt really uncomfortable with that."

"Gender neutral changing rooms."



LGBTQIA+

Conclusion & Recommendations



Conclusion

In conclusion, feedback relating to how PSHE education can help address stigma associated with identifying as LGBTQIA+ is consistent, with those young people from educational settings and those from LGBTQIA+ groups providing similar suggestions. There was very little difference in attitude, with young people largely embracing diversity and championing differences.

Young people associated the term LGBTQIA+ with various aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity, demonstrating an understanding of the letters “L”, “G”, “B” and “T”. Despite this, student knowledge regarding the meaning of the letters “Q”, “I” and “A” was uncommon, with the meaning of the “+” symbol also being unclear, highlighting a gap in knowledge.

While LGBTQIA+ education is present in schools, many young people feel this is often rushed, repetitive and lacking in depth. Young people expressed a need for a comprehensive and engaging PSHE curriculum on LGBTQIA+ topics. They specifically hoped for the inclusion of topics such as LGBTQIA+ history, real-life experiences and community heritage, enhancing learning and understanding. In order to do this, some individuals desired more interactive and varied methods of learning, such as creative projects and discussions with community members. Additionally, some young people mentioned integrating contemporary examples from pop culture, such as TV shows or celebrities, to enhance understanding.

Similarly, young people felt that PSHE education can significantly reduce stigma against LGBTQIA+ individuals by incorporating collaborative activities with positive messaging, such as poster-making and tailored assemblies, promoting inclusivity and understanding. In addition, young people felt that education regarding how best to support LGBTQIA+ peers and addressing the negative effects of bullying are crucial to be incorporated.

Young people identified several barriers preventing teachers from effectively addressing LGBTQIA+ topics in the classroom. These included teacher awkwardness or lack of confidence, fear of offending and avoidance of certain topics. Feedback suggests that young people would benefit from more class discussions and group learning, particularly feeling that their generation has lots to contribute in conversations. Additionally, some young people felt that having one point of contact within the school that they felt comfortable speaking to about LGBTQIA+ topics would be beneficial.

Young people suggested that schools could create a supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ young people by increasing dialogue through assemblies, posters and more frequent lessons on LGBTQIA+ topics. Emphasising education on respectful behaviour and appropriate communication was deemed as crucial for young people, alongside incorporating contemporary and historical LGBTQIA+ figures into the curriculum, promoting acceptance.



Recommendations

This report provides a valuable starting point for action to support LGBTQIA+ youths in Blackpool, through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). These recommendations are aimed at addressing and reducing stigma towards children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+, as well as addressing where there may be existing gaps in PSHE. Therefore, this piece of work and its recommendations provide an overview of the key issues identified.

The costs and resources required to implement recommendations have not been identified. The measure of success of any recommendations will observe positive impacts on the content and effectiveness of PSHE education, evidenced by self-reported reductions in bullying, or increase in knowledge and confidence surrounding a particular topic.

When looking at actions or recommendations, consideration should be given as to whether universal or targeted interventions are appropriate. For many of the areas discussed in the focus groups and the available evidence, change in the form of universal intervention as opposed to targeting individuals or small groups appears more beneficial, through PSHE education.

As a result, the following recommendations have been identified:

- Ensure all parts of the LGBTQIA+ acronym is covered and understood by students according to their age and development level, as there are identified knowledge gaps around the 'I' 'A' and '+' and the different meanings. This should be consistent across curricula within schools (although individual schools may have different content for PSHE education), and methods used should also take into account pupils current knowledge and future need, again relevant to their age and development.
- Expand on PSHE/RSE sessions by integrating LGBTQIA history more widely into the curriculum. Sessions could aim to explore the history of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement, including the challenges faced and victories achieved. They may also include famous figures, both historical and contemporary, showcasing real-life examples. Some young people highlighted that this is taking place within their respective school, however this is not consistent. When delivered in this way, student feedback was extremely positive, reciting learning about figures such as Alan Turing in Computing or History, and Oscar Wilde in English.
- Further expand on young people's knowledge by incorporating lived experience into learning, such as guest speakers from the LGBTQIA community.
- Embed the principles of diversity and inclusion into the curriculum and the school culture. This could help young people become more open-minded, empathetic and respectful. Engagement methods may include open discussions and facilitating tailored assemblies, celebrating diversity and inclusion e.g. during Pride month.
- Ensure teachers are equipped to effectively address diversity and inclusion, as young people sometimes feel those teaching sessions lack confidence or feel uncomfortable discussing this topic, hindering learning. Teachers have a critical role to play in shaping attitudes and ensuring young people feel valued, respected and supported.
- Ensure the PSHE curriculum includes diversity structures of families. This will help to ensure that culture, beliefs and values are respected.

