

# Stonewall AN INTRODUCTION TO SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A guide for schools, colleges and settings





# CONTENTS

**1. What do LGBTQ+ young people want you to know? p6**

**2. Who might be LGBTQ+? p9**

**3. The experiences of LGBTQ+ children and young people p12**

**4. What are schools, colleges and settings required to do? p18**

**5. 10 recommendations on supporting LGBTQ+ children and young people p23**

**6. Creating an inclusive environment p26**

**7. Individual support for LGBTQ+ children and young people p34**

**8. Supporting LGBTQ+ children and young people when they move to a new school, college or setting p53**

**9. Supporting LGBTQ+ children and young people with SEND p56**

**10. Working with parents, carers and the wider community p63**

**Glossary p67**

**Further support and resources p69**





**As part of growing up, all children and young people will spend time exploring their identity and developing a sense of who they are. This will include thinking about whether they experience attraction to others, who they are attracted to (their emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation), how they feel about their gender (their gender identity), and the different ways they express their gender (gender expression).**

**Some children and young people will realise that they are lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning or ace (LGBTQ+), meaning that their sexual orientation or gender identity may be different from many of their peers. There may be some learners in your school, college or setting who realise that they are asexual or aromantic and don't experience sexual and/or romantic attraction in the same way as their peers.**

**Being LGBTQ+ can feel like an extra pressure for children and young people at school, college or in their setting, depending on the extent to which staff, peers and the wider community are supportive. LGBTQ+ children and young people often worry that those around them will react negatively to who they are and they can experience high levels of bullying. This can leave children and young people feeling isolated and unable to access the support or information they need.**

**Schools, colleges and settings play a vital role in supporting LGBTQ+ children and young people – they can create an inclusive environment where these learners feel welcome and valued. This guide is designed to help education professionals understand and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ learners. It contains practical guidance and outlines where LGBTQ+ learners might require additional support, and highlights areas in which support might differ for lesbian, bi, and gay (LBG) learners, and trans learners. It also includes information on working with parents, carers and the wider community, in addition to signposting to further information and resources.**

# 1. WHAT DO LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE WANT YOU TO KNOW?

At Stonewall, we use the acronym LGBTQ+, which stands for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace. You can find definitions of these terms and other key terms [on our website](#) and in the glossary in this resource.

Other organisations may use a different acronym – for example, LGBT or LGBTI or LGBT+. Often, the acronym an organisation uses will depend on their areas of specialism or expertise, or the specific groups of people that they work with.

Our good practice guidance is developed by our team of expert teachers, trainers and education professionals and informed by the work of our School & College Champions. We're constantly developing our work and we regularly update our resources to introduce more information and advice on supporting LGBTQ+ children and young people – you can expect to see more content on supporting young people who are questioning and young people on the ace and aro spectrum coming soon.

It's important to place the voices of LGBTQ+ children and young people at the heart of your LGBTQ+ inclusive work. Children and young people offer a unique perspective on your school, college or setting's work and can help you to identify areas for improvement. Remember some children and young people may use a range of words beyond lesbian, gay, bi or trans to describe their gender identity or orientation, you'll find some of the most common ones in the glossary on page 67.

We asked some LGBTQ+ young people about their experiences at their school, college or setting – namely, what would make their life at their school, college or setting better, and what they would like education staff to know. Based on their answers, we came up with these 12 top tips.

Use them as a conversation starter in a staff meeting, discuss them with your diversity or LGBTQ+ group, and consider them when reviewing your policies, and curriculum content.



## 1. TRAIN YOUR STAFF

**'Better educate staff on the LGBTQ+ community and more strictly enforce proper pronoun usage.'** An 18-year-old with SEND at an FE college

## 2. BE SUPPORTIVE

**'Don't make a big deal about it, but keep educated and try to be supportive if/when students confide in you.'** A 17-year-old at an all boys' school

## 3. CHALLENGE HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

**'Deal with homophobes and transphobes as well as teaching the other students about LGBTQ+ people.'** A 16-year-old at secondary school

## 4. MAKE YOUR CURRICULUM LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE

**'I think LGBTQ+ should be recognised more in class and they should do an assembly about LGBTQ+. I think that would help kids feel supported and educate people about what LGBTQ+ actually is.'** A 15-year-old at secondary school

## 5. RESPECT STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

You can find more information on safeguarding and confidentiality in **Chapter 7**.

## 6. START AN LGBTQ+ CLUB

**'My secondary school had a Pride alliance that I attended and, eventually, also ran. It was a good source of support and information. It was also a good safe space as it was completely student run for the majority of the time.'** A 20-year-old at university

## 7. SUPPORT TRANS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE THEMSELVES

**'Teachers at my secondary school were not allowed to call me by my preferred name and pronouns. I was miserable because of this.'** A trans 20-year-old at university



## 8. OFFER GENDER-NEUTRAL FACILITIES

**'My college has gender-neutral restrooms and changing rooms. They are also very openly and genuinely supportive of LGBTQ+ rights.'** A 17-year-old at an FE college

## 9. TALK ABOUT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE AND TOPICS

**'You should never feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ+ topics, and even if you get questions that you are uncomfortable with, try your best to answer them – it will make all the difference.'**

**Also, even if there is only one LGBTQ+ person in that group, you have just made a massive difference in their life and journey to feeling accepted and even accepting themselves.'** A 14-year-old at secondary school

## 10. INCLUDE LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN THE CONVERSATION AND TALK ABOUT A RANGE OF SEXUALITIES

**'Instead of talking to heterosexual people about LGBTQ+ issues, talk directly to LGBTQ+ people and tell them that they are valid. Only talking to heterosexual people in an LGBTQ+ conversation can be very damaging to queer people and make them feel excluded.'** A 14-year-old at secondary school

## 11. MAKE SURE YOUR RSHE LESSONS ARE INCLUSIVE

**'I think that they should cover all forms of relationships, including LGBTQ+ ones and when talking about protection, include LGBTQ+ people in that and not just straight people.'** A 14-year-old at secondary school at secondary school

## 12. PUT LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE OF YOUR LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE WORK

**'Talk to youth workers and young people about what they need.'** A 16-year-old at secondary school

# 2. WHO MIGHT BE LGBTQ+?

Thank you to the youth workers and young people of BeYou, Free 2B Alliance, the lowdown and YC Hertfordshire (Young Pride in Herts) for their help with this chapter.

## WHAT DOES LGBTQ+ MEAN?

LGBTQ+ people are often talked about as one group, but there are important differences between the people who make up the LGBTQ+ community. **Terms such as lesbian, gay, bi and ace describe emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation**

**Lesbian** is used to refer to woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women.

**Gay** is used to refer to a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards men. It is also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality, and some women identify as gay rather than lesbian.

**Bi** is used to refer to someone who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender. Some people may use the words *pan* or *queer* to describe their identity. It's important to be led by the language the child or young person uses for themselves.

**Queer** is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

**Ace** is an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a lack of attraction. Ace people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, asexual, aromantic and demisexual.

**Asexual** is used to refer to someone that does not experience sexual attraction.

**Grey-A** is used to describe someone who identifies somewhere between sexual and asexual.

**Aromantic** is used to refer to someone that does not experience romantic attraction.

**Grey-romantic** is used to describe someone who identifies somewhere between romantic and aromantic.

**Demisexual** is used to describe someone who only experiences sexual attraction after an emotional bond has been established.

**Demiromantic** is used to describe someone who only experiences romantic attraction after an emotional bond has been established.

**Trans** is a word that describes people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Non-binary** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with '**man**' or '**woman**'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

**Cisgender** is a word used to describe people whose gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

LGBTQ+ people use a wide variety of terms to describe their sexual orientation and gender identities, and the terms people use may change over time. Some of these terms are included in the glossary on page 67. The most important thing for education professionals is to be led by the language a child or young person uses to describe themselves.

The Office for National Statistics estimates that LGB people make up two per cent of the population (1.1 million people), with trans people accounting for 0.3 to 0.8 per cent (between 200,000 and 500,000 people). However, it is important to recognise that these figures may be an underestimate, as many LGBTQ+ people feel unable to be open about their LGBTQ+ identity.

People realise they are LGBTQ+ at different stages in their lives, but many will know from an early age, so lots of schools, colleges and settings have openly LGBTQ+ children and young people. Some of the children or young people at your school, college or setting might not be out as LGBTQ+ yet, or might be questioning their orientation or gender identity. If you work with younger children, they might not yet have the language to describe their feelings.

Proactively creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive environment will support all learners in their self-discovery and will demonstrate to them that they will be supported if and when they decide to 'come out' (tell others about their orientation or gender identity). People 'come out' at different stages of their lives and in different ways. A child or young person may talk to a friend first, or tell a parent, carer or teacher. They may choose to come out in some areas of their life, but not in others. How and when someone comes out is up to them – there's no right or wrong way to do it.

People sometimes make assumptions about who is (or isn't) LGBTQ+. These assumptions are often based on stereotypes, for example that gay men dislike sports, lesbians like to wear 'masculine' clothes, or bi people are attracted to lots of people. Some assume that all trans children and young people express their gender identity by 'wearing the clothes of' or 'acting like' the 'opposite' gender.

It's also incorrectly assumed that disabled children and young people, and/or children and young people with SEN don't have a sexuality, let alone an LGBTQ+ identity. But LGBTQ+ children and young people come from different backgrounds, ethnicities and faiths, just like all children and young people. They have their own interests, and ways of dressing, acting or talking. Children and young people express who they are in different ways and it is important not to make assumptions about who is (or isn't) LGBTQ+ based on their personality or appearance.

## LGBTQ+ CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Some children realise they are LGBTQ+ at primary school, and may come out then. We generally develop a sense of our gender early in our lives, so it is not uncommon for children to question their gender identity or realise they are trans when they are young.

The principles around supporting LGBTQ+ children (outlined in Chapter 7) are the same at any age. You should talk to children about how they feel, ensure they feel welcome and included, and provide timely answers to any questions they have. However, the type of information and the way it is delivered, as with many issues, will vary depending on a child's age and their level of understanding.

## TALKING ABOUT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS:

**Coming out:** Younger pupils may tell you they are LGBTQ+ differently. Often, but not always, it will be their parents or carers that raise their child's identity with you. A trans child may say '*I feel like a girl*' or '*I don't feel like a boy*' rather than using the word '**trans**'. They may come to school wearing clothes not typically associated with their assigned sex. However, any child might change the way they look or dress for lots of reasons and this alone should not be taken as an indication a child is trans.

**Definition of lesbian for younger children:** A lesbian is a woman who falls in love with, or wants to have a relationship or partnership with, other women. For example, some people have two mums that are in love with each other.

**Definition of gay for younger children:** The word gay is used to describe someone who falls in love with, or wants to have a relationship or partnership with, people who are the same gender as them. For example, some people have two dads that are in love with each other, or two mums that are in love with each other.

**Definition of bi for younger children:** If someone is bi, it means that they might fall in love with, or want to have a relationship or partnership with someone of the same gender as them or a different gender to them. For example, a person might have had a boyfriend in the past but have a girlfriend now.

**Definition of trans for younger children:** When they are born, babies are labelled as a boy or a girl. When some people get older, they realise that the label they were given was wrong. They might say '*I'm actually a girl*', '*I'm actually a boy*' or '*I'm not a boy or a girl*'. Trans is the word used to describe people who feel like this.

**Definition of non-binary for younger children:** Non-binary is a word that people use about themselves if they don't feel like they are a boy or a girl.

These definitions may also be more suitable for some children and young people with SEND, depending on their levels of understanding.

Our Getting Started guides offer further help and support for Early Years Settings and Primary Schools, you can find them on our [website](#).

### 3. THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

LGBTQ+ children and young people, like all children and young people, are more likely to feel safe, happy and fulfil their potential if they:

- ✓ Feel able to be themselves and valued for who they are
- ✓ Feel included and part of the school, college or setting's community
- ✓ Have access to resources and information that reflect who they are
- ✓ Are shown visible role models to reassure them that LGBTQ+ people can be happy and successful
- ✓ Feel they have people to talk to and know how to access support services in school and in the local community, for example through local LGBTQ+ youth groups.

However, some LGBTQ+ children and young people can feel isolated, unaware of the support available, or unable to access the support they need. This creates barriers to their attainment and wellbeing.

## WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAY

University of Cambridge research for Stonewall in *The School Report* (2017) found that:

- **Over half** of LGBTQ+ young people (53 per cent) don't feel there is an adult at school or college they can talk to about being LGBTQ+.
- **Three in five** LGBTQ+ young people (60 per cent) don't have an adult to talk to at home.
- **Two in five** LGBTQ+ young people (40 per cent) have never been taught anything about LGBTQ+ issues at school.
- **Two thirds** of LGBTQ+ young people (66 per cent) say their school doesn't offer help to access resources that can support them.
- **One in three** trans young people (33 per cent) are not able to be known by their preferred name at school, while three in five (58 per cent) are not allowed to use the toilets they feel comfortable in.
- **Nearly half** of LGBTQ+ young people (45 per cent) – including 64 per cent of trans young people – are bullied for being LGBTQ+ at school or college.

**More than two in five** LGBTQ+ learners in sixth form colleges (44 per cent) and half of LGBTQ+ learners in FE colleges (49 per cent) 'frequently' or 'often' hear homophobic language.

It is important to recognise that different groups of LGBTQ+ children and young people may face different or additional barriers. Stonewall's *School Report* (2017) found that:

- **One in three** bi young people (35 per cent) are bullied at school for being LGBTQ+.
- **57 per cent** of non-binary young people are bullied for being LGBTQ+.
- Disabled LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to deliberately harm themselves than non-disabled LGBTQ+ young people (**80 per cent** compared to **64 per cent**).
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to have thought about taking their own life than white LGBTQ+ young people (**79 per cent** compared to **74 per cent**).
- LGBTQ+ young people of faith are more likely to have tried to take their own life than those who aren't of faith (**30 per cent** compared to **25 per cent**).

**"I have been bullied since Year 2 for being gay. People called me names like 'gay' and 'faggot' before I even knew what they really meant."**  
- Kieran, 18, private sixth form college (East of England)

**"People say words like 'faggot' and 'tranny' without any background knowledge. People use it carelessly and without thinking how it can affect people, even if it wasn't targeted at you individually."**  
- Leah, 14, secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

**"In school people yell 'there are only two genders' and when I go to the park people have jumped in front of my bike and called me a dyke and a faggot."**  
- Bailey, 14, secondary school (North West)

## WHAT TEACHERS SAY

Many teachers report high levels of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) language and bullying and feel unequipped to tackle it, or to provide adequate support for LGBTQ+ children and young people.

YouGov polling for Stonewall of 2,000 primary and secondary school teachers in *The Teachers' Report* (2014) found that children and young people perceived to be 'different' in some way, for example those who don't conform to gender stereotypes, are likely to experience HBT bullying. More than one in five secondary school teachers said they would not be confident to support young people who came out to them, and three in ten don't know if they are allowed to teach LGBTQ+ issues. Only eight per cent of primary school teachers and 17 per cent of secondary school teachers had received specific training on tackling HBT bullying.

**"It isn't really addressed in primary schools, but that allows negative views taught at home to become deeply seated."**  
- Priya, primary school teacher



## THE IMPACT

The results of the *School Report* (2017) illustrate how these experiences can have a devastating impact on the mental health, wellbeing and attainment of LGBTQ+ children and young people. Two in five bullied LGBTQ+ young people – including half of bullied trans young people – have skipped school because of bullying about being LGBTQ+. More than half of bullied LGBTQ+ young people feel that HBT bullying has had a negative effect on their plans for future education, and more than two in three bullied trans young people feel this way.

Find out more about the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in Stonewall's report with Britain Thinks *Shut Out: The Experiences of LGBTQ+ Young People Not in Education, Training and Work* (2020).

Nearly half of bullied LGBTQ+ learners in sixth form colleges (47 per cent) and nearly two in three bullied LGBTQ+ learners in FE colleges (63 per cent) said this bullying had a negative effect on their plans for future education. Stonewall School Report (2017)

Staff from local authority Children's Services and Public Health, as well as those who work for children and young people's organisations, can attend Stonewall's Improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTQ+ children and young people train the trainer course. Contact us at [cyps@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:cyps@stonewall.org.uk) for more information.

**"I lost confidence and the power to succeed and get the best qualifications. I left because I was scared and I didn't belong in that environment."**

- George, 16, faith secondary school

**"I don't feel safe in my school for being who I am. I don't feel as though my school is doing enough to prevent the bullying."**

- Hannah, 14, secondary school (Greater London)

**"The bullying went on for over five consecutive years. I ended up developing severe mental health issues and being sectioned twice."**

- Ben, 17, FE college (North West)

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

LGBTQ+ children and young people experience particularly high rates of poor mental health. Three in five LGB young people have deliberately harmed themselves at some point. For trans young people, this figure is 84 per cent. More than one in five LGB young people and more than two in five trans young people have attempted to take their own life. One in three non-binary young people and nearly half of disabled LGBTQ+ young people have tried to take their own life.

By providing the right support, schools and colleges can help LGBTQ+ children and young people grow up safe, happy and able to fulfil their true potential.



# 4. WHAT ARE SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND SETTINGS REQUIRED TO DO?

The law makes it clear that schools, colleges and settings must meet the needs of all LGBTQ+ children and young people and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying.

## EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 outlines nine protected characteristics:

- AGE
- DISABILITY
- GENDER REASSIGNMENT
- MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP
- PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY
- RACE
- RELIGION OR BELIEF
- SEX
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The Act protects people from unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act on the basis of any protected characteristic.

## THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Public Sector Equality Duty (s149(1) of the Equality Act 2010) places a duty on bodies carrying out public functions, in the exercise of those functions, to have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act – including because of the protected characteristic of sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

Advance equality of opportunity – which may include the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by those who are LGBTQ+ that are connected to their LGBTQ+ identity
- Taking steps to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ people that are different to those who are not LGBTQ+
- Encouraging LGBTQ+ people to participate in public life or any other activity where participation is disproportionately low

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it – e.g. between LGBTQ+ pupils and those who are not LGBTQ+.

## ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES

In England, the [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties and Public Authorities\) Regulations 2017/353](#) include specific duties such as publishing equality information at least once a year to show how you have complied with the duty (regulation 4), as well as setting specific and measurable equality objectives which should be prepared and published at least every four years (regulation 5). An example of this might include tackling homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying.

Similar requirements apply to governing bodies of educational institutions in Wales see [The Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#).

In Scotland, the [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) place specific duties on listed authorities.

This includes duties to publish a set of equality outcomes to enable it to better perform the equality duty at least every four years (regulation 4(1)). An example of this might include tackling homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying. Regulations also includes duties to report on progress made to achieve the equality outcomes at least every two years (regulation 4(4)), and to report at least every two years on progress made to make the equality duty integral to the exercise of its functions (regulation 3).

Our work with schools, colleges and children and young people's services doesn't currently extend to Northern Ireland so this resource won't reflect the law or context there. If you're in Northern Ireland and seeking advice or guidance please contact [The Rainbow Project](#) or [Cara-Friend](#).

It is worth noting that if a set of equality outcomes published by a listed authority does not seek to further the needs under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 Act in relation to every relevant protected characteristic, there is a duty to publish reasons for proceeding in this way (regulation 4(3)).

## IMPLEMENTING THE DUTY

The Public Sector Equality Duty is a continuing duty of process rather than an obligation to achieve a particular outcome. The duty can be used to challenge a school, college or local authority's policies or decisions if, in coming to that decision, or formulating or implementing the policy, the body has not adequately taken into account the potential for discrimination or disadvantage based on a protected characteristic such as sexual orientation or gender re-assignment.

In thinking about implementing the duty, it may be useful to consider:

- What do you know about the needs of LGBTQ+ communities in your school or college?
- How would you demonstrate what steps you are taking to engage with the LGBTQ+ communities in your school or college to understand their needs and experiences?
- How do these needs differ based on intersections with other protected characteristics, such as your children and young people or staff who are LGBTQ+ and of a particular faith?
- How far did you take into account the needs of your LGBTQ+ communities when you last developed or reviewed your bullying, uniform or behaviour policies?
- How far did you take into account the needs of your LGBTQ+ communities when you developed your co-curricular offers or admin processes?



## OFSTED

In schools, colleges and settings, the Ofsted Inspection Framework (2021) directs inspectors to:

- Ensure that the school, college or setting complies with the legal duties set out in the Equality Act (2010)
- Evaluate the school, college or setting's efforts to create an environment where harassment and discrimination are not tolerated.
- Assess the personal development of learners, to see that they are equipped to understand and appreciate diversity, in particular the protected characteristics detailed in the Equality Act (2010).
- Look at policies and practice to assess senior leaders' vision with respect to providing a high-quality and inclusive education.
- Look to see that learners have access to a broad curriculum.

As well as the points listed above, the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (2021) asks inspectors to:

- Check that staff as well as learners are protected from bullying and harassment and that any incidents of this are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Ensure that all HBT bullying is challenged, logged and monitored.
- Assess the quality of pastoral support available to learners.
- Ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted.
- Look for evidence that difference is valued and nurtured, and that good mental health and well-being are promoted.
- Seek evidence that learners have a good understanding of healthy relationships.
- Assess how well the school equips learners to become responsible, respectful, active citizens.

In addition to the points listed in the Ofsted Inspection Framework (2019), the Ofsted Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook (2019) states that inspectors in colleges and post-16 settings will:

- Check that staff as well as learners are protected from bullying and harassment and that any incidents of this are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Look for evidence that learners feel safe and confident and safe to report bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- Look for evidence that difference is valued and nurtured.
- Ensure that learners have access to a wide range of experience which help them to make positive contributions to society.
- Assess how well the college equips learners to become responsible, respectful, active citizens.

Ofsted's *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* (2015) and for Residential Schools (2015) make specific reference to the Equality Act (2010). The standards state these schools must ensure that children and young people

**'are not discriminated against, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 or because of their cultural background, linguistic background, special educational need, or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs.'**

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) check that independent schools provide a range of opportunities which meet the individual needs of learners, helping them to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience. They look for evidence that personal development is assured for all learners. Inspectors assess the extent to which learners are taught to be socially aware and to contribute positively to the lives of others in the school or college and beyond. They also ensure that learners are taught to respect and value diversity, and to demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance.

## RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION (RSHE) AND LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

All secondary schools in England are required to teach Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) from September 2020. Primary schools will be required to teach Relationships Education and Health Education. Sex Education will not be mandatory in primary schools, but the Government recommends that it is taught. While parents and carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from Relationships Education or Health Education, they may withdraw them from Sex Education.

The statutory guidance states that schools should ensure that their RSHE teaching meets the needs of all learners, and that all learners are able to understand the importance of equality and respect. It also states that LGBTQ+ inclusive content should be embedded throughout the curriculum.

The statutory guidance states that children of primary school age should learn about:

- Different types of families (the Government has 'strongly encouraged' schools to include families with LGBTQ+ parents or carers in this teaching)
- Friendships and family relationships
- How to be kind, considerate and respectful
- The features of healthy relationships
- How to form strong and positive relationships
- Positive emotional and mental wellbeing
- How to recognise and report inappropriate behaviour



The statutory guidance states that young people of secondary school age should learn about:

- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- How to respect themselves and others
- The features of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Safer sex, sexual health and contraception
- A range of relationships, including friendships, family relationships and intimate friendships
- Stable and healthy same-sex relationships
- How to recognise and report inappropriate behaviour and situations, such as grooming

If a young person's parents or carers have withdrawn them from sex education, they are entitled to opt back in 3 terms before they turn 16 (or at any stage after that).

### THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Many schools, colleges and settings find it useful to link their LGBTQ+ inclusive work to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Articles 2, 12 and 29 are particularly relevant to your LGBTQ+ inclusive approach.

Article 2 states that every child and young person should be protected against discrimination and Article 29 highlights that education should prepare children and young people to live life in the spirit of peace and tolerance among people from all groups. In Article 12 it states that children and young people should be able to express their views on matters that affect them and that their views should be taken seriously. For more information, look at Stonewall and Unicef's *Framing inclusion through rights* resource.

## 5. 10 RECOMMENDATIONS ON SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



## 1. KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Don't make assumptions about who is (or isn't) LGBT, and don't assume that all your learners experience emotional, romantic or sexual attraction. Let each child or young person use words of their choice to describe their orientation or gender identity and remember that every child or young person will express who they are in their own way.

## 2. LISTEN AND BE POSITIVE

Be positive when a child or young person comes out as LGBTQ+. Listen, offer reassurance and talk to them about how they'd like to proceed. Only share information about their identity with their consent or if it is relevant to a safeguarding concern.

## 3. WORK WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

Make sure all parents and carers know that LGBTQ+ issues are covered in school, but only discuss a child or young person's identity with their parents or carers with the child or young person's permission. A child or young person might not yet be ready for their parents or carers to know that they're trans, be afraid about how they will react, or feel that they will not receive the support they need.

When parents and carers are receptive, work with them to ensure the best support for the child or young person, and make sure you know where to signpost should they want information, advice or support.

## 4. TACKLE BULLYING AND CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

Take an organisation-wide approach to working to eliminate homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and language, and challenge gender stereotypes from an early age. Make sure that learners understand your anti-bullying policy – it is helpful to have a version that's child- or young person-friendly.

## 5. SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO FIND AN LGBTQ+ YOUTH GROUP

Use local networks and Stonewall's *What's in my area?* database and *Info Service* to find out what's running in the local community. You could also support your children and young people to set up diversity, equality or peer support groups in your school, college or setting.

## 6. PROVIDE ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Relevant, timely information and resources will help LGBTQ+ children and young people make safe choices. Make information available around the school, college or setting and provide links to accurate and appropriate information online. Ensure that learners are able to access information in an anonymous or confidential way, for example with displays in corridors, leaflets in common rooms or on the school website.

## 7. HELP LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAY SAFE

Help your children and young people stay safe online and when out and about. Make sure children and young people know their rights and how to report discrimination. Ensure children and young people know how they can access counselling and mental health services, or offer them support to access them if they are unable to do so themselves.

## 8 INCREASE VISIBILITY

Make sure LGBTQ+ people, families and lives are reflected throughout the curriculum, including in RSHE. Ensure the library contains a range of books with LGBTQ+ characters and different families and celebrate special events such as LGBTQ+ History Month. Ensure that a wide range of LGBTQ+ people are represented, including those with other protected characteristics such as LGBTQ+ people of colour, LGBTQ+ disabled people, and LGBTQ+ people of faith. Be sure to check that the representation includes bi and non-binary people.

## 9. EQUIP STAFF TO STEP UP

Help all staff act as role models to children and young people by equipping them to talk about different families and issues affecting LGBTQ+ people, and to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia effectively.

## 10. WORK TOGETHER

Work collaboratively with local authorities, schools, settings, youth services and the wider community to provide the best support possible to LGBTQ+ children and young people.

# 6. CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

LGBTQ+ children and young people are more likely to feel happy and able to be themselves if they are learning in an environment where LGBTQ+ people, alongside people of all different identities, are valued. This chapter outlines ways to create an inclusive environment that will benefit everyone in your school, college or setting's community.

## TACKLING BULLYING

Children and young people are likely to feel worried about being open about their orientation or gender identity if they are in an environment where homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying and language are not challenged. They are also more likely to experience bullying if they come out.

Not only LGBTQ+ children and young people experience HBT bullying. Stonewall's Teachers' Report (2014) found that any children or young people perceived to be 'different' in any way, for example children and young people that don't conform to gender stereotypes, may experience HBT bullying.

When HBT bullying is tackled effectively, all children and young people benefit. All staff should be trained to confidently tackle HBT bullying and any inappropriate comments or perceived 'banter' which may be hurtful to LGBTQ+ children and young people. Residential and boarding schools, colleges and settings should ensure that residential and boarding staff have training on tackling HBT language and bullying, not just classroom-based staff.

It is essential that children and young people see HBT language and bullying being consistently challenged by all staff. However, schools, colleges and settings should take a 'whole-school approach' and should also support young people to recognise and challenge HBT language and bullying themselves.

The Stonewall School Report (2017) found that:

- **45 per cent** of LGBTQ+ young people – including **64 per cent** of trans young people and **35 per cent** of bi young people – are bullied at school or college.
- LGBTQ+ disabled young people are more likely to experience HBT bullying than their non-disabled LGBTQ+ peers (**60 per cent** compared to **43 per cent**).
- **65 per cent** of LGBTQ+ young people in sixth form colleges and **67 per cent** of LGBTQ+ young people in further education say that staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenge HBT language when they hear it.

**"I was pushed and taunted for being bisexual, and my best friend was shoved for being gay."**  
- Hannah, 14, secondary school (Greater London)



WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING?

**Homophobic bullying** is bullying that is based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about, or behaviours towards, lesbian or gay people. Bi people can also be targeted by homophobic bullying if somebody thinks that they are lesbian or gay. Homophobic bullying can also include denying somebody’s lesbian, gay or bi identity or refusing to accept it.

Homophobic bullying may be targeted at children or young people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bi. It can also suggest that someone or something is less worthy because they are lesbian, gay or bi.

Homophobic bullying can be targeted at children and young people who have lesbian, gay or bi family members, and those who do not conform to gender stereotypes or are seen to be ‘different’ in some way, regardless of whether the person is actually lesbian gay or bi.

**Biphobic bullying** is bullying based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about, or behaviours towards, bi people. This can also include denying somebody’s bi identity or refusing to accept it.

Biphobic bullying may be targeted at children and young people who are openly bi, those who are questioning their sexual orientation, or who are suspected of being bi. Biphobic bullying is also often targeted at children and young people who have bi family members.

Biphobic bullying may target children and young people with negative stereotyping (for example suggesting that they are greedy) or imply that being bi is a phase.

**Transphobic bullying** is bullying based on prejudice or negative attitudes, views or beliefs about, or behaviours towards, trans people, including non-binary people. This can also include denying somebody’s gender identity or refusing to accept it.

Transphobic bullying affects children and young people who are trans, including non-binary young people. It can also affect those who are questioning their gender identity as well as children or young people who are not trans but do not conform to gender stereotypes.

Transphobic bullying can also be targeted at children or young people who have trans or non-binary family members.

Like other forms of bullying, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying behaviours:

- Are intentional
- Are repeated over time
- Cause physical and/or emotional harm to the victim
- Can happen online as well as in person
- Can take lots of different forms, including but not limited to, physical, verbal or emotional actions

For more information, see this page of [our website](#).

Our expert team of teachers and trainers have developed a range of e-learning modules, available now for schools and colleges in England, Scotland and Wales.

Each module is specific to your national context and will help you provide better support for LGBTQ+ children and young people. We also have Welsh language versions available.

Browse the full range of modules and [book your place today](#).

CASE STUDY: A MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

This multi-academy trust (MAT) ensures that all the academies in the trust work in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner by issuing clear guidance on their expectations. The MAT-wide policies are LGBTQ+ inclusive and all the academies have an LGBTQ+ lead. All academies are expected to log and monitor homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and bullying. The MAT expects all academies in the trust to include LGBTQ+ themes within the curriculum. Each academy has LGBT-specific displays which show students where they can access further support if they need it. All the secondary academies within the MAT offer gender-neutral toilet provision.

The LGBTQ+ lead in each academy has attended training from Stonewall and uses Stonewall resources to deliver training to their colleagues. One of the academies in the MAT achieved the Stonewall School & College Champions Silver award and their LGBTQ+ lead supports other academies within the MAT to further develop their LGBTQ+ inclusive approach.

Academies within the MAT have LGBTQ+ groups, so that LGBTQ+ students can meet and receive peer support. Some academies in the MAT have led the way with best practice in trans inclusion, offering trans students a ‘transitioning log’, mentoring, and parent/carers meetings. This ensures that the needs of individual trans students are met.

CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES

HBT bullying is often based on gender stereotypes. A child or young person who does not conform to a stereotypical idea of what a ‘boy is’ (for example strong, sporty) or ‘girl is’ (for example kind, responsible) may be bullied for being LGBT, whether they are or not. Challenging gender stereotypes in your school, college or setting will help prevent bullying and ensure all children and young people feel comfortable expressing themselves.

WHERE TO START:

- In class, ask children and young people to discuss stereotypes of boys or girls and talk about how there is no such thing as a ‘typical girl’ or ‘typical boy’.
- Use these discussions as a starting point to explore the different ways we express our gender (for example through our clothes, hair, or the way we walk), what ‘gender identity’ means and that not everyone identifies as a boy or a girl.
- Support these discussions by challenging gender stereotypes in the wider school environment. Avoid stereotyping, for example ‘I need a strong boy to help me’ or ‘Jane, that is not very ladylike.’
- Avoid dividing learners by gender, whether in the classroom (you could divide them by their favourite colour, month of birth or something else) or through uniform, sports activities or other aspects of school life. This emphasises the idea that a person’s gender is not the most important thing about them.
- Ensure that your uniform policy is non-gendered, for example giving all children and young people the option of trousers or skirts, tights or socks, a shirt or a blouse. Our Getting Started and Next Steps in Inclusive Education resources offer more guidance around LGBTQ+ inclusive policies.
- Use your curriculum and displays to provide children and young people with visible role models who challenge gender stereotypes. Ensure that people of all genders are represented, that the role models come from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds, and that disabled role models are represented.

## CASE STUDY: A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH EAST

This primary school created an annual Diversity Week where children took part in a range of LGBTQ+ inclusive activities. As their inclusion work has progressed, they have found simple ways to embed LGBTQ+ issues into their everyday curriculum.

To celebrate the Women's World Cup, each class completed a task from the Make Sport Everyone's Game Stonewall resource sheet. In Year 6, children learn about LGBTQ+ sports people including Justin Fashanu, Nicola Adams and Gareth Thomas. Year 6 children also learn about Andy Warhol's life and his works. In Years 5 and 6, children watch the Stonewall DVD which shows the stories of four children and explores gender stereotypes, homophobia and different families. In Year 4, children learn about the gay author Harvey Fierstein and read his book, *The Sissy Duckling*. In Year 3, children read *Hello Sailor* by André Sollie and Ingrid Godon, which is about a gay couple. They also look at photos of same-sex families in their PSHE unit, along with reading and discussing *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson.

This school has made good use of visiting speakers to help their work in challenging gender stereotypes. Visitors have included women who are footballers, firefighters and kickboxers. All staff have been trained to be mindful of how words can reinforce stereotypes and they no longer group children by gender, or refer to gender when giving praise or consequences. They have used Stonewall's 'Gender Stereotypes Won't Hold Us Back' posters in assemblies and continue to display them in school.

The school's work on challenging gender stereotypes has had a visible impact on students. One girl who liked to play football and enjoyed playing more with boys than girls was often told she wasn't good enough to play football because she's a girl. After encouraging all the children to respect everybody and challenge gender stereotypes, some of the children who had been unkind to the girl started to identify and correct this behaviour, and she has enjoyed much more acceptance since.

## MAKE LGBTQ+ PEOPLE VISIBLE

It can be easy to feel invisible as an LGBTQ+ child or young person if there are no other visible LGBTQ+ people in your school, college or setting, or if LGBTQ+ people are not mentioned. Talking to learners from a young age about LGBTQ+ people and different types of families will make a difference to your school, college or setting's environment and reassure children and young people that it's OK to be LGBTQ+ or have LGBTQ+ family and friends.

In schools and colleges that teach about LGBTQ+ issues, LGBTQ+ learners are less likely to experience HBT bullying than in settings that don't. LGBTQ+ learners in these settings are also more likely to report feeling safe, welcome and happy.  
Stonewall School Report, 2017

There are many ways staff can help LGBTQ+ children and young people feel visible in their school, college or setting:

- Discuss different sexual, emotional and romantic orientations, gender identities and issues that affect LGBTQ+ people in RSHE and PSHE (in a manner appropriate to their age and levels of understanding).
- Ensure LGBTQ+ people and experiences are reflected across the curriculum. For example, maths questions and problem-solving activities can easily be made LGBTQ+ inclusive – 'Julia and Louise are getting married and have invited 126 people. They aren't sure how many people to sit at each table during the wedding reception – what are the different possible sizes of table they could have?'. There's more information about creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum in our *Creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive primary curriculum* and *Creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum: a guide for secondary schools* resources.
- Ensure the library contains fiction featuring LGBTQ+ characters and different families. Stonewall has a list of recommended primary and secondary school books and films at: <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/educationresources>
- Display diverse images of people and families which include LGBTQ+ people and families with LGBTQ+ parents or carers. Ensure that those images include LGBTQ+ people of colour, LGBTQ+ disabled people, LGBTQ+ people of faith, and that you have included bi people and non-binary people. Stonewall has created a wide range of role model posters for use in schools, colleges and settings. They can be found at: <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/educationresources>
- Encourage open discussions about orientation and gender identity with learners, staff and parents/carers, and ensure prospectuses, newsletters, websites and communication with learners and parents/carers clearly reflect diversity.
- Celebrate special events (such as LGBTQ+ History Month, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, and Bi Visibility Day) and invite members of the local community.
- Invite LGBTQ+ role models or a local LGBTQ+ youth group to talk to learners.

**"In the BBC documentary "Muslims Like Us" everybody around me was watching it and there was an openly gay Muslim man. For the first time my heart felt a bit calmer. I cried because I knew we existed."**  
- Fatima, 18, secondary school (West Midlands)

**“No one I’ve spoken to at school has ever knowingly met a trans person before or been taught anything about trans people and what we might need,”**  
- Reece, 18, now in employment (Yorkshire and the Humber)

## CASE STUDY: A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN LONDON

Teachers at this secondary school offer their students multiple opportunities to see LGBTQ+ people represented. They have a dedicated LGBTQ+ display, use posters of LGBTQ+ role models around the school and celebrate special events – such as LGBTQ+ History Month – on their big screens. The school have arranged for LGBTQ+ people to visit their school and talk to students, helping to build empathy and understanding towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Students have had opportunities to go on theatre trips to see plays with LGBTQ+ inclusive content and to other events such as book launches and picnics. There is a well-attended LGBTQ+ group which offers peer support to LGBTQ+ students. Prospective parents and carers have commented that the school’s LGBTQ+ inclusive approach influenced their decision to apply for a place at the school for their child.

## THE ROLE OF LGBTQ+ STAFF

Openly LGBTQ+ staff can be important role models for LGBTQ+ learners and are a good indicator of an inclusive environment. If LGBTQ+ children and young people see that staff are comfortable to be openly LGBTQ+ at work without experiencing harassment or discrimination, they will be more likely to be comfortable enough to come out in your setting.

LGBTQ+ staff are sometimes unsure how much they’re allowed to share about their personal life or identity at school, in college or in their setting, but the same rules should apply to all staff. For instance, if a straight teacher is open about their relationship status, LGBTQ+ teachers should be able to be as well. Equally, a trans member of staff ought to be able to talk openly about their experience growing up as trans, just as a non-trans member of staff might talk about their experiences growing up.

However, no member of staff should feel under pressure to share personal information, and children and young people should be aware of what is appropriate to ask staff, regardless of their orientation or gender identity. Your policies should make it clear that your LGBTQ+ inclusive approach applies to staff as well as learners. Our *Getting Started* and *Next Steps in Inclusive Education* resources offer more guidance around LGBTQ+ inclusive policies.

All staff, not just LGBTQ+ staff, can be important role models for all children and young people by talking openly and positively about LGBTQ+ people and challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Your anti-bullying policy and staff code of conduct should make it clear that all staff are expected to challenge HBT language and bullying when they see it.

**‘My English teacher is the only openly gay teacher at my school. He really helped me come to terms with myself and he inspired me to be my best self.’**  
Anushka, 12, secondary school

**‘We have currently have an openly trans teacher, and we’ve had one in the past, too. This means students are better aware of trans issues than sexuality issues, as uncommon as that may be.’**  
- Shannon, 19, now at university

**‘My teachers at sixth form always tried to include LGBTQ+ people and issues. In English Literature lessons my teacher included work by Audre Lorde and Oscar Wilde and discussed the ways that they presented their sexuality in their poems or novels. We watched films such as *Pride and Prejudice* to learn about LGBTQ+ history. I think that a lot of my confidence and acceptance around my sexual orientation is because of the way my A-Level teachers celebrated LGBTQ+ history and the achievements of LGBTQ+ people.’**  
- Bailey, 14, secondary school (North West)

## WORKING WITH OTHERS

The best schools, colleges and settings work with other organisations, such as local authorities, other settings, youth services and NHS services to make sure they are meeting the needs of their LGBTQ+ learners. Sometimes this involves inviting an LGBTQ+ group to speak, working with a local authority to develop guidance, or working with local schools, colleges or settings to celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month. Please contact [Stonewall](#) if you would like help finding other organisations in your local area.

## CASE STUDY: YC HERTFORDSHIRE, HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YC Hertfordshire, part of Hertfordshire County Council’s Services for Young People, helped to form the ‘Who Not What’ project (now known as Young Pride in Herts) in 2014 which for the last four years has helped to inform and shape services for LGBT+ young people across the county. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund the project has since expanded across the county and has led to there now being 14 weekly youth projects alongside trans specific projects, 18+ and a soon to be launched BAME project all of which offer social and personal development through informal education and support to young people living, working or educated in Hertfordshire who identify as LGBT+. Positive changes in self-esteem, self-confidence and general emotional wellbeing are notable outcomes for group members and on average the service is working with 500 young people a year.



# 7. INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

While staff want to make sure all children and young people are happy and able to fulfil their potential, some are unsure how to support LGBTQ+ learners. This chapter is designed to help staff meet the individual needs of LGBTQ+ children and young people.

The first part introduces common areas of support, such as how to make a child or young person feel comfortable talking about their orientation or gender identity. The second part discusses unique areas of supporting trans children and young people, such as how to help a child or young person feel supported to transition at your school, college or setting.

While most of the guidance is relevant to children and young people with SEND as well as those without, sometimes a different approach is needed. You will find SEND-specific guidance in Chapter 9.

## COMING OUT

When a child or young person tells someone they are LGBT, it's usually an indication that they trust the person and feel confident they will respond appropriately. Remember that you may be the first person the child or young person has discussed their orientation or gender identity with. In the case of primary aged children, their parent or carer might be the first person to approach you about their child's identity.

Children and young people coming out may worry about different things. For example, one person may be worried about the reactions of those around them, and another that their life will change as a result of being LGBTQ+. A bi young person may have different worries to a young gay or lesbian person, for example that others wrongly think being bi is just a phase. A trans young person may worry about whether people will use their correct name and pronoun, or whether they'll be allowed to change their uniform.

For a trans child or young person, coming out may be the first step of their 'transition'. A transition describes the steps a trans person may take to live in a way that fits with the gender they identify as (or their 'gender identity'). As part of their social transition a person may change their name and pronoun, or their appearance, but each person's transition is unique. It is important not to make assumptions about what it will involve.

You should always maintain a child or young person's confidentiality relating to their LGBTQ+ identity, unless there is a safeguarding concern. Some children or young people will already have 'come out' to their parents or carers, or the parent or carer might have raised their child's identity with you. Other children or young people may not be ready to 'come out' to their parents or carers and it is important to respect this wish. Offer them support in talking to their parents or carers, if they would like it.

If a trans child or young person has already transitioned – perhaps at a previous school, college or setting – they might not feel a need to 'come out' as trans. For some people, being trans is a part of their history rather than part of who they are now. It's important to respect and protect the confidentiality of a child or young person who does not want to be identified as trans to others.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFEGUARDING

Being LGBTQ+ is not a problem or a safeguarding concern in itself, but children and young people can find it difficult when other people around them – such as teachers, doctors, parents/carers, family, friends, youth workers, faith leaders and other children and young people – respond negatively or don't provide the support they need.

Children and young people should know that they can talk to staff in confidence if, for example:

- They're LGBTQ+ or unsure of their orientation or gender identity
- They would like to, or have started to, take steps as part of their transition in school
- They have feelings towards, or are having a relationship with, someone of a similar age
- They're chatting with other children or young people (of a similar age) online on age-appropriate websites or are attending a youth group

However, if a young person is at risk of significant harm, staff have an obligation to report a safeguarding concern. It may constitute a safeguarding risk if, for example:

- They're experiencing abuse at home or are at risk of homelessness
- They're self-harming or putting themselves at physical risk

- They're in a relationship with someone considerably older or younger, chatting with adults online or using dating apps for adults
- If they are experiencing significant HBT bullying
- If there is a concern about sexual exploitation or grooming

If you are in any doubt as to whether something constitutes a safeguarding concern, consult with your designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

For children and young people with SEND, you will need to take additional factors into account, such as whether they are able to make their own decision about being in a relationship or whether they might have been pressured into one. However, having SEND does not automatically mean that a child or young person should not be in a relationship and it is important not to assume that this is not something they would want for themselves.

## WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

Not all children and young people will want their parents or carers to know they are LGBTQ+. For staff to discuss this with parents or carers without the child or young person's consent would be a breach of confidentiality.

However, it is important to discuss with a child or young person whether they've told their parents or carers they are LGBTQ+. They may be anxious about how their parents or carers will respond and this could be affecting how they feel about their orientation or gender identity. More information on working with parents and carers can be found in Chapter 10.

## MEETING OTHER LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A child or young person who has come out, or who is unsure of their orientation or gender identity, may like a space outside school, college or your setting to socialise with other children and young people with similar experiences. Youth services for LGBTQ+ children and young people – such as groups, volunteer schemes and youth-led projects – can be a great way for LGBTQ+ children and young people to meet others.

Through these services, children and young people have the opportunity to make friends, build their confidence and self-esteem, and access important information and guidance from youth professionals. Youth services can be particularly beneficial for trans children and young people, who are less likely to have trans peers at school. Some children and young people, for example those who are autistic, might prefer to get in touch with a group by email first. As always, don't assume how they will behave.

Staff can search for local services for LGBTQ+ children and young people by using Stonewall's *What's in my area?* database or by contacting Stonewall's *Info Service* (details listed on p67). When investigating a local service, find out where it's based, what age group it's for, who runs it, and what their safeguarding procedures are. If possible, talk to the adult running the service and feed back to the child or young person – it will help them feel more confident if they know what to expect.

Some activities and services may be for a specific group of children or young people, such as bi young people, or trans young people, but others will be open to all LGBTQ+ children and young people. It is important to consider whether the child or young person might require additional support (such as a support worker or BSL interpreter) to access a group.

Unfortunately, not every local area will have suitable youth services available. Staff can support children and young people to set up equality, diversity or peer support groups in school to enable children and young people, including LGBTQ+ children and young people, to lead their own projects and talk about LGBTQ+ people and experiences. In primary schools or settings this may take the form of an 'equality ambassadors' group or similar.

## PROVIDING RELEVANT INFORMATION

When children and young people realise or think they might be LGBTQ+ they often have a lot of questions. Providing accurate and reliable information will help your learners to make safe choices. All staff should feel confident providing timely information on a range of topics, such as coming out, sexual health, and staying safe online, and in pointing LGBTQ+ children and young people or their parents/carers to resources or organisations that can provide additional support.

In secondary schools and settings and in colleges, information should be made available in a range of ways, for example through leaflets on noticeboards, magazines, resource points and the school, college or setting website, so that all children and young people have an opportunity to access it. In primary schools and settings, as well as in special schools and settings, you are more likely to offer that support on a one-to-one basis. Make sure that your computer network's firewall settings ensure that children and young people are able to access age-appropriate websites which could offer support. In particular you should check that the terms 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bi' and 'trans' are not blocked.

## HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE STAY SAFE

All children and young people should understand the risks of sharing personal details online, whether that's through email, in a forum, blog, on social media or through apps. They should also understand the risks of meeting up with people they get to know online. Schools, colleges and settings can support LGBTQ+ children and young people by providing online safety tips and links to recommended websites.

Children and young people should also know what to do if they experience homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying online, such as reporting it to a member of school staff or, in extreme circumstances, to the police. They should know that if adult behaves inappropriately towards them online, they should tell their parents, carers or a member of staff and report it to CEOP.

See our *Staying Safe Online* resource for further guidance.

Children and young people should know that they can report harassment or discrimination in the community to the police, whether they experience it themselves or whether they witness it. Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult about it too. Make it clear this includes HBT abuse and ensure staff know how to signpost to relevant community support organisations.

Make sure all children and young people know how they can access services offering face-to-face, phone or online counselling and/or support in the local area. Consider whether they may need additional support (such as a support worker or BSL interpreter) to access these.

**"Seeing healthy and positive LGBTQ+ people on the internet saved my life. Seeing people being genuinely happy with their life and being LGBTQ+ gave me hope."**  
- Zach, 16, secondary school (Scotland)

**"In Liverpool it's difficult to come out as gay. At least for me anyway. The LGBTQ+ community isn't large, well known or accessible. Tinder is sadly the only way to meet other gay people my age."**  
- Dylan, 17, sixth form college (North West)

## CASE STUDY: A SIXTH FORM COLLEGE IN THE NORTH WEST

At this sixth form college in North West England, LGBTQ+ inclusion work is led by students and supported by all staff. The college has an active LGBTQ+ society which meets monthly and is supported by a member of the Senior Management team. The group plan events across the college, such as fundraising and awareness raising for Stonewall's Rainbow Laces campaign, and plans the college presence at local Pride events. The group offers a safe space for students to discuss issues they feel are important.

Across the college, whole-cohort assemblies focus on equality and inclusion and are followed up by group tutorials to tackle issues of prejudice and discrimination. Parents and carers receive a letter about how to support students with a variety of issues, including mental and emotional wellbeing, and they are reminded of how to report concerns to a member of college staff.

## CASE STUDY: A SECONDARY ACADEMY IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

This school's work on LGBTQ+ inclusion is informed by the results of anonymous staff and student surveys, which allows staff to tailor the school's approach to the needs of students. There is an LGBTQ+ lead who has attended training with Stonewall and who shares best practice on LGBTQ+ inclusion within the school, as well as with other schools in the multi-academy trust. The LGBTQ+ lead supports students through email, face-to-face, drop-in sessions and via the school's LGBTQ+ support group.

Students have access to the school counsellor if they need additional support, and the school works closely with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) when those needs cannot be met in-house. Regular training and information-sharing sessions ensure that staff are up to date on best practice around LGBTQ+ inclusion, with additional mentoring and guidance available for staff who need help supporting specific students or developing their LGBTQ+ inclusive practice.

Through the school's curriculum, displays and special events, students see a range of LGBTQ+ role models represented. Students also benefitted from a visit from a Stonewall School & College Role Model, who gave an assembly about her experiences as an LGBTQ+ person.

## HOW TO RESPOND WHEN A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON TELLS YOU THEY ARE LGBT

Every person's experience of coming out is different – some children and young people will have lots more worries than others. This chart is designed to help you feel confident having some of the more challenging conversations you might come across. Adapt your language and the resources you recommend to suit the age and needs of the child or young person.

Children and young people with SEND might require a different approach – Chapter 9 has more detail on this. In primary settings, you may find that the parents of an LGBTQ+ child will raise their identity with you before their child does.

**YP: I think I might be lesbian, gay, bi, trans.**

Staff: Okay, I'm glad you've come to talk to me about it. How do you feel?

**YP: Scared, alone. I'm not sure exactly. I don't know anyone else who is lesbian, gay, bi, trans. I feel like a girl, but I'm a boy / I feel like a boy, but I'm a girl / I don't really feel like I'm a boy or a girl**

*Staff: Well, lots of people are lesbian, gay, bi, trans, you aren't the first person to feel like this. It is okay to be lesbian, gay, bi, trans you know, or to be questioning your sexual orientation, gender identity. Have you discussed how you feel with your parents/carers?*

**No I don't want to talk to them because i'm worried how they'll react.**

*Okay. We can talk about that and think about some ways to approach it if you want to.*

**No, but i'm going to talk to them soon.**

*Good. Most parents/carers will want to know something this important about how you're feeling. Also depending on what you want to do about how you feel, it could be really helpful to have them involved. It is a good idea to take time to think about what you want to say. Have you thought about how they might react?*

**Yes, but they're not supportive - my mum / dad / carer won't speak to me about it.**

*Well we can try and help you with that. Is there anyone else in your family who you can talk to? There are organisations that can help - I can give you their details.*



Staff: Do you know anyone **lesbian, gay, bi, trans**? Or have you joined a youth group or ready any information about being **lesbian, gay, bi, trans** either on the internet or anywhere else?

**No I haven't, I don't really know where to start. It would be good to talk to some lesbian, gay, bi, trans people or people who have had some of the same feelings.**

*Well there may be a local youth group for other LGBTQ+ young people, or young people who feel unsure - I can find out for you. There are some good youth sites and forums. I'll give you the details and some tips to stay safe online.*

**Yes, I have Googled a few things and had a look on the internet. I follow some lesbian, gay, bi, trans people on Twitter. I've read some blogs by older lesbian, gay, bi, trans people on Tumblr. I've thought about it but I don't want to go to a youth group.**

*There are some good youth sites and forums. I'll give you the details and some tips to stay safe online. If you find that you are being contacted by adults be very cautious and tell a parent/carer immediately. Not everyone feels comfortable going to a youth group, but let me know if you change your mind.*

**Yes, I've been using a dating/ social app and also been to a LGBTQ+ bar/club when I've been able to get in.**

*I understand that you might want to meet LGBTQ+ people, but using dating apps puts you at risk of harm from people who might not be who they say they are. You also have to be 18 to use dating apps. There are some good youth sites and forums, I can give you the details and some tips to help you stay safe online.*

*You're under age and shouldn't be going to bars and clubs.*

*Not only is it against the law, it's also really important that your parents or carers know where you are so that they can help make sure that you are safe. Going to an LGBTQ+ youth group would be a safer way of meeting other LGBTQ+ people or people who are questioning their identity. I can help you find a local group.*

Staff: Does anyone at school/college/[name of setting] know that you are **lesbian, gay, bi, trans** / questioning how you feel about your sexual orientation or gender identity? Has anyone treated you differently?

**No I, they don't know. I don't want them to either. Everyone says something is gay when they mean something is rubbish. I'm afraid people wouldn't understand. I just don't want to get bullied.**

*Bullying and hurtful language is not acceptable here and the other children/learners know that. I hope that you won't have any issues with bullying, but if you do please tell a member of staff straight away so that we can deal with it.*

*Coming out is a personal experience and you don't need to do it until you're ready. If or when you do, we'll be here to support you. If you do want to talk to someone, you could perhaps choose a friend you trust to talk to first.*

*Would it be helpful if we did some more work as a school/ college/setting to help other children/learners understand LGBTQ+ issues?*

**Some know and they are okay with it, but I don't want others to find out. I've talked to a couple of my friends, and I think other students know as I've begun to change my clothes.**

*That's good that you've been able to talk to others, and I hope they've been supportive. If other learners find it difficult, come and talk to me. Bullying isn't tolerated here. This is a place where everyone should be able to be themselves. As you've begun to make some changes it might be a good idea at some point for us to have a chat about anything else you would like to happen so we can make sure you have the support you need from us and others. What do you think?*

**Yes, they all know. Lots of people know - I think it's probably quite obvious. Some have given me a hard time about it.**

*I'm glad you've told me. I'll be able to help you sort this out. Do you feel able to give me any names/times when incidents have occurred? Bullying isn't tolerated here. We can talk together about how to approach others in the school/college/setting so it won't be difficult going forwards.*

*Staff: Is there anything we can support you with in school? Are there anything you would like more information on? Are there any changes we can support you with?*

**I don't know what to do and I think I need some more information about what it means to be LGBTQ+. I just know that I'm not happy with the way things are at the moment.**

*That's okay and it's good to take some time to take things over. If it would help, I will point you in the direction of some information that might be useful.*

*There are some good youth sites and forums. I'll give you the details and some tips to stay safe online. If you find that you are being contacted by adults be very cautious and tell a parent/carer immediately.*

*There may be a local youth group for other LGBTQ+ children and young people, or young people who are questioning their identity - I can find out for you. You can come back to me and talk about this at any time.*

**I think I want to take steps to live as the gender I know I am but I'm worried about how it will work at school/college/setting.**

*The school/college/setting is here to make sure things feel right for you. We can arrange a time to sit down and talk through all the options and different ways that we can support you. What do you think? There are lots of people who have come out of trans at school/college/setting - it is possible!*

*See the next page for more specific guidance on supporting trans children and young people.*

**I want to take steps to transition and be know by my new name and pronoun at school/college/setting.**

*Okay, let's arrange a time to talk through what you'd like to do next and when. Would you be comfortable with your parents or carers being there? Would you be comfortable with another member of staff being there?*

*See the next page for more specific guidance on supporting trans children and young people.*

*I'm glad you've come to talk to me. Most people feel much better when they feel they can be open about their sexual orientation/gender identity. How you feel about your sexual orientation/gender identity is a really important part of who you are. We will support you to be you.*

## SUPPORTING TRANS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Alongside the areas of support outlined above, children and young people coming out as trans, and those unsure whether they might be trans, will require additional support in areas specific to gender identity.

### WHAT DOES TRANS MEAN?

Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, non-binary, or genderqueer.

### WHAT DOES TRANSITIONING MEAN?

A trans child or young person may make changes so they can look and feel the way that makes them comfortable and helps them be understood by others in their correct gender. The initial steps a trans person takes to live in the gender they identify as are often referred to as their 'social transition'. These steps may include changing names and pronouns, telling friends and family, dressing differently, or changing official documents.

There is no 'best time' for a trans child or young person to transition – they should be supported to do so if and when they are ready. They may take steps to transition gradually over a period of time, or choose a specific time to make several changes at once (for example to coincide with moving to a new school, college, or setting). All schools, colleges and settings (including single-sex schools) have a responsibility to support trans children or young people through a transition. You must enable them to remain and participate fully at their school, college or setting, in line with the provisions in the Equality Act (2010).

If they want access to it, the [Gender Identity Development Service \(GIDS\)](#) offers social and medical support to trans children and young people. GIDS accept referrals from education professionals, health and social care professionals, and from support groups for any child or young person under 17 who is experiencing difficulties relating to their gender identity. Parental consent for any treatment is needed for under 16s.

Children and young people may need support from school, college or setting staff while waiting for their initial appointment with GIDS, as there is a long waiting list. After the initial appointment, children and young people need to attend a number of assessment appointments with a multi-agency team. If appropriate, puberty blockers may then be offered to some trans young people. It is important to note that cross-sex hormone treatment is not offered until the age of 16, and gender reassignment surgery is not available to under 18s.

It is important to remember:

- Trans identities are diverse. Trans children and young people may identify in lots of different ways.
- Each child or young person's transition is different and unique. Staff should be led by them and avoid making assumptions.
- Not everyone identifies as 'male' or 'female'. Sometimes, people assume that being trans is about feeling you are the 'opposite' gender. This is true for some trans people, but not for others. This assumption makes things difficult for those who identify outside of 'male' or 'female', for example non-binary people. A non-binary child or young person may need different support to help them feel comfortable than, for example, a trans boy.
- Not every trans child or young person will want to make visible or practical changes, but may still like, or benefit from, ongoing support of some kind.

- Not every child or young person that is questioning their identity will be trans, but it is still important to support them. Accept them for who they tell you they are, and let them know that it's OK if their feelings change.
- Language is important. Staff sometimes worry about using the correct language when talking about gender identity and are often concerned about 'getting it wrong'. Offering training on trans inclusion will help them to develop understanding and confidence.

The glossary on page 67 includes a list of common terms and can also be used to build staff confidence around trans terminology. A child or young person may change the term they use to describe their identity, or use a new term which is unfamiliar to staff. It's important to make sure that the words a child or young person uses to describe their identity are respected by others. If you're unsure about any of the words a child or young person uses to describe themselves, just ask them to explain.

## WHAT MIGHT A TRANS CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT?

Children and young people wishing to transition at school, college or in a setting may have concerns such as:

- What will my transition look like?
- How long will my transition take?
- Will I fit in and be accepted?
- Will I need to leave if I'm in a single-sex school, college or setting?
- Where will I sleep if I attend a residential or boarding school, college or setting?

It's important to talk through any concerns a child or young person has about their transition and to signpost to information that can help. It may help if you assign them a support member of staff who they can approach with any worries or concerns before, during or after their transition.

Gendered Intelligence's *Knowledge is Power* website is a useful source of support and information for trans young people.

## SPECIFIC AREAS OF SUPPORT

### NAMES AND PRONOUNS

One of the steps a trans child or young person may take is to change their name and the pronouns. Some may wish to change their pronoun from 'he' to 'she' or vice versa, while others, for example a non-binary young person, may prefer a pronoun that doesn't relate to being male or female, such as 'they' or 'zir'.

A child or young person may want to be known by their new name and pronoun at school, college or in your setting. You should ensure that this is clearly communicated to, and used consistently by, others. It is important to note how a child or young person wants their name and pronoun shared, and with whom. For instance, they might want to tell their friends first, or prefer a teacher to tell the year group all together.

Schools, colleges and settings can update SIMS records to reflect a child or young person's preferred name. A trans child or young person does not need to go through a legal process to be known by their preferred name and/or pronoun. However, some children and young people may want to change their name on other documentation, such as their bus pass, passport or bank statements. Any person can evidence a change of name by deed poll, but parental consent is required for under 16s. Once changed, passports and bank statements can be amended, and exam certificates will reflect their new name.

A child or young person who wishes to change the gender on their passport can do so with a supporting letter from a health practitioner. However, their sex assigned at birth will remain on some things, including exam certificates. Under UK law, trans people under 18 are unable to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate or change their birth certificate. The **DfE's guidance** for completing the school census states that children and young people's gender should be recorded according to their wishes. Individuals may have their gender recorded on their school records in line with their gender identity – a Gender Recognition Certificate is not needed for this.

If a trans young person hasn't legally changed their name at the point of sitting formal examinations, contact the exam board to discuss what options there may be. For example, some exam boards might agree to issue certificates using the initial of the young person's legal first name rather than their full name.

### UNIFORM AND DRESS

A trans child or young person may take steps to change how they dress or the uniform they wear to school, college or setting. They are much more likely to feel comfortable when all approved uniform items are available to all children and young people, regardless of gender. This is something that benefits all children and young people, not just those who are trans. However, if there are different uniforms or dress codes for boys and girls, a child or young person should be able to wear the uniform items that they feel reflect their gender.

### TOILETS AND CHANGING ROOMS

It is important to ask a trans child or young person which facilities they would feel most comfortable using.

Schools, colleges and settings should ensure that a trans child or young person is supported to use the toilets and changing rooms they feel most comfortable with, including the facilities matching their gender.



Under the Equality Act a trans child or young person can use the toilets and changing rooms that match their gender.

Under the Act, a school can only prevent a trans child or young person from using the facilities matching their gender if they can demonstrate that doing so is a ‘proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim’, which is a high legal bar to clear.

Schools, colleges and settings should also support trans children and young people to use gender-neutral facilities or a private space, if that is what they prefer. The most important thing is to talk to the child or young person rather than making assumptions about the facilities they would like to use.

## SPORTS AND PE

It is important a trans child or young person can fully participate in PE lessons and sports activities, including those that match their gender identity, unless there are reasonable safety concerns. This is unlikely for most sports and age groups under 18, although staff may wish to ask advice from relevant sporting bodies for extra-curricular competitions.

It is good practice to offer all children and young people the chance to participate in mixed PE lessons and sporting activities. As with all work that challenges gender stereotypes, the introduction of mixed PE sessions opens up broader opportunities for, and offers benefits to, all learners. Joining a different PE group, playing in a different sports team or deciding which team to play in may be a daunting step for a child or young person, so staff should consider this area with sensitivity and care, particularly when supporting a non-binary child or young person.

## RESIDENTIAL OR BOARDING SETTINGS

Ensure that trans children and young people are able to access residential or boarding accommodation they feel most comfortable in, which could be accommodation aligned with their gender identity, or gender-neutral or private space. Make sure that residential or boarding staff attend the same training on trans inclusion as classroom-based staff.

Ofsted’s *National Minimum Standards* for Residential Special Schools (2015) and for Boarding Schools (2015) specify that:

- children and young people should not be discriminated against based on the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act (2010) and;
- that their protected characteristics (for example, gender reassignment) should be considered so that care is sensitive to their needs.

## RESIDENTIAL AND OVERSEAS TRIPS

Ahead of any residential trip, talk to trans children and young people to discuss practical arrangements and to identify whether they have any concerns. Ensure that trans children and young people can access the sleeping accommodation they feel most comfortable in, which could be accommodation aligned with their gender identity, or a gender-neutral or private space.

Trips overseas may need some thought in advance. Some aspects may cause worry for a trans child or young person, such as their documentation not corresponding to their gender identity or how they look. Staff should discuss this with the child or young person, and be aware of legal protections afforded to LGBTQ+ people in the country they are visiting. It is also important that your risk assessments consider any additional steps to ensure the child or young person’s safety, for example in relation to harassment or discrimination.

## BODY ANXIETIES

Some trans children or young people feel unhappy or distressed about living with a body they don’t feel reflects their gender identity. Schools, colleges and settings can help by: ensuring that children and young people know how to access support services, that they can talk to others, using inclusive language in RSHE, and teaching about self-esteem and body confidence.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A child or young person’s needs may change, either as a result of their transition or because new situations arise. Staff will need to take a flexible approach to support.
- A child or young person who has already transitioned may still need support – ask them about their needs.
- Lots of things in schools, colleges and settings are often separated by gender, including toilets, changing rooms and, sometimes, uniforms. You may need to make changes in these areas to ensure that a trans child or young person feels safe and comfortable. However, it is best practice to provide facilities that aren’t gender-specific, regardless of whether you have any openly trans learners. Remember that some children or young people, especially if they are non-binary, may not feel happy using either ‘male’ or ‘female’ facilities. Many schools, colleges and settings already provide ‘gender-neutral’ facilities to foster an inclusive environment for all learners.

## SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS

The Equality Act 2010 allows for the provision of single-sex schools.

Trans children and young people attending single-sex schools, colleges or settings are not legally required to move to a different school, college or setting upon transition, so trans girls may continue to attend a boys’ school if they wish to, and trans boys may continue to attend a girls’ school if they wish to.

Under the Equality Act 2010, a trans child or young person is also able to attend a single-sex school, college or setting that matches their gender identity (unless the school, college or setting demonstrates that denying them access is a ‘proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim’, which is a high legal bar to clear). This means that a trans boy can attend a boys’ school, and a trans girl can attend a girls’ school.

## PARENTS, CARERS AND THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY

### PARENTS/CARERS AND FAMILIES

Resources for parents/carers and families of trans children and young people can address specific concerns, such as a lack of understanding about what being trans means, or what a trans child or young person might be experiencing.

Support services for families of trans children and young people enable parents/carers to talk to others and share experiences online and face-to-face. An introduction to working with the parents or carers of LGBTQ+ children and young people is provided in Chapter 10.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Regardless of their age, a person’s status as trans is private. Schools and colleges should not disclose information – such as details about a transition – that could reveal somebody’s trans status to others, including parents or carers, staff, and anyone outside the school, college or setting.

You may only share this information where there is a safeguarding risk, or if a child or young person has given their permission for specific details to be shared. For example, a child or young person may wish to be known by a different name and pronoun and request for staff and peers to be told.

Respecting a trans child or young person’s confidentiality may require staff to use their legal name and their sex assigned at birth when contacting parents, carers or others. It is important to discuss this with the learner so that they understand why this is the case.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Being trans isn’t a mental health issue. However, worries about discrimination or difficult feelings relating to their gender identity mean that some trans children and young people may experience mental distress. A trans child or young person may want to talk to someone if they have started to transition, or if they feel confused or unhappy about their gender identity.

Some children or young people might not feel able to volunteer this information or be able to articulate it, so it is important to be aware of signs of distress. Staff can help by providing pastoral support or counselling within the school, college or setting, or signposting to external counselling or therapy services. It’s important to find a mental health professional equipped to understand and talk about gender identity, and with some knowledge about the experiences of trans children and young people.

GETTING IT WRONG

It is important to acknowledge if mistakes are made by staff and peers, such as accidentally using the wrong name or pronoun of a trans child or young person. If you make a mistake, the best thing to do is apologise to the child or young person, correct yourself and move on.

It is also important to gently correct colleagues if they make a mistake. If all staff use the preferred name and pronoun of the trans child or young person all the time, rather than only when in the presence of the trans child or young person, it will help everyone get into a new routine.

WHAT MIGHT A JOURNEY FOR A TRANS CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IN EDUCATION LOOK LIKE?

Every trans child or young person’s journey in education will be unique – you should always place them at the centre of decision-making.

Trans children and young people with SEND might require a different approach, and Chapter 9 has more detail on this. Staff in primary settings may find that the parents or carers of a trans child will be the first to raise their child’s gender identity.

While there is no typical journey, a trans child or young person’s journey might involve the following:

Coming out to a member of staff

Members of staff talking through with the child or young person what their needs and wishes are.



You may discuss with a child or young person whether they:

- are happy with how things are at the moment or whether they would like to talk about taking steps to live in their self-identified gender.
- would like any information about what a social transition might involve, or like to access any support outside of the school/college/setting.
- would like others to be involved when planning the transition (if relevant) e.g. parents/carers, staff.
- would like ongoing support from an assigned member of staff.
- have told their parents/carers or their friends. If not whether they would like support to do so.

For staff to consider:

- who might be involved in planning a transition and/or the ongoing support of the child or young person.
- what practical adjustments might need to be made to prepare for the transition, for example updating class registers so as to reflect a preferred name (and where possible, pronoun).
- how changes will be communicated with the staff and other learners (if relevant).

**Child or young person and school/ college/setting planning a social transition**

**This could involve working with the child or young person and relevant staff (and parents/ carers if appropriate) to make a timeline detailing the changes, when they will happen and how they will be communicated**



### Peers

In an environment where transphobic bullying is challenged and young people have the opportunity to discuss the gender identity in a positive way. Learners are unlikely to be unkind to a trans peer. A child or young person transitioning is a good opportunity to remind learners how to ask questions in a respectful way, such as 'which pronouns do you prefer' or 'how do you identify', if they are unsure. It is also a good opportunity to remind learners what is inappropriate to say to a trans person or a person who is transitioning, such as asking what their 'real name' or 'real gender' is, or asking about a young person's body and what it looks like. This should be handled sensitively and after discussion with the trans child or young person. It may be appropriate to communicate the child or young person's name and pronoun change at this point, as well as other changes the child or young person will make which are relevant to peers (in consultation with the trans child or young person).

### Staff

This should include refresher training for all staff on the school policies around trans children and young people and transitioning, and on the school's approach to working to eliminate transphobic bullying and challenging inappropriate and hurtful comments, for example about a trans person's body or appearance.

Staff can support the trans child or young person by discussing what they could do or say if they are misgendered or asked inappropriate questions. For example by working together to write a script of answers to any questions they are worried about being asked.

**Social transitioning at school/college/setting**



### Child or young person

The child or young person wears uniform that they feel comfortable in and that they feel reflects their gender identity, and is able to use the facilities they have asked to use. If single-sex groups are used, either within a lesson for PE, the child or young person is included in the group that most closely reflects their gender identity or that they feel most comfortable with. Talk to them about which group they might want to be a part of.

If they have asked for it, the child or young person has access to additional support within the school, college or setting. They have a trusted adult for them to talk to if there is a difficulty with their social transition or if they are experiencing harassment or bullying.

### Staff

If the child or young person has given their consent, any changes in name and pronouns, uniform and use of toilets and changing rooms needs to be communicated with all relevant members of staff. It is important to remember to communicate this with the wider staff team, for example midday meals supervisors.

Staff consistently use the correct name and pronouns for the trans child or young person.



**You may discuss with a child or young person:**

- how they are finding things in school/college/setting.
- whether there is anything else they need to make them feel better at school/college/setting or anything else staff may be able to help with.

**For staff to consider:**

- does the child or young person have the right support around them? are they experiencing problems with peers?
- would they like to access a youth group or contact any organisations that could be helpful?
- how are the parents/carers and any siblings feeling?
- is the child or young person seeking medical intervention and will they need time off for this?
- does more work need to be done in the school/college/setting to promote awareness around trans issues?
- are all staff treating the child or young person as the gender they identify as?
- have you considered any support that might be needed around residential trips?
- is there a plan in place to support the child or young person when they move to a new school/college/setting?

## 8. SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN THEY MOVE TO A NEW SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR SETTING

Many children and young people find the transition to a new school, college or setting daunting or difficult. However, LGBTQ+ children and young people might have additional specific concerns relating to their LGBTQ+ identity. For example, a gay boy might be anxious about being bullied because of his orientation, or a girl might worry that none of the other girls will want to be her friend if they find out she's a lesbian. If they're moving to a school, college or setting where school uniform requirements are gendered, lots of LGBTQ+ young people might be anxious about having to wear clothes that they feel uncomfortable in.

For trans children and young people, concerns might include whether they'll have access to toilets and changing rooms they feel comfortable in, or that staff or their peers might use the wrong pronouns for them. Some trans children and young people might wish to be 'stealth' at their new school, college or setting, meaning that they don't want anyone to know that they're trans. With this may come anxiety that people might find out that they are trans, and treat them differently as a result. It's important to recognise that even though a child or young person has been openly LGBTQ+ in your setting, they will face decisions about whether or not to come out as LGBTQ+ in a new school, college or setting. They will need to consider how to come out, who to and when.

## LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING YOUR SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR SETTING

Check in with your LGBTQ+ children and young people well in advance of any move to a new school, college or setting. Find out how they are feeling about the move and find out if they have particular worries. Let them take the lead in the conversation. Ask them if they would like you to let the new school, college or setting know that they are LGBTQ+ and if so, what they would like you to share with the new setting. LGBTQ+ children and young people might benefit from being able to attend extra transition days or summer school sessions, and some may benefit from Social Stories to ease their anxiety about the move.

Trans children and young people, and quite possibly their parents or carers, might appreciate a meeting with a member of staff from the school, college or setting to discuss the arrangements in place and what arrangements will need to be in place moving forwards. You can refer the staff from the new school, college or setting to Chapter 7 of this resource to support those conversations.

Sharing information about children and young people is an important part of promoting a smooth transition from one school, college or setting to the next. However, you should be mindful of confidentiality when sharing information about a child or young person. Seek advice from your Local Authority or Trust on GDPR before sharing information about a child or young person's sexual orientation or gender identity, including before transferring any electronic records.

### MOVING ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION OR INTO THE WORKPLACE

There are several things you can do to support a young LGBTQ+ person as they move on to higher education or into the world of work. You can encourage them to find out if their university or workplace has an LGBTQ+ network or help them to find a local LGBTQ+ group for young adults.

Make sure they know their rights: sexual orientation and gender reassignment are both protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010). Help them find out who they would report discrimination or harassment to – for example, student services or their workplace's HR department.

Make sure LGBTQ+ young people on work experience placements know who they can contact to at the school, college or setting if they experience discrimination, harassment or victimisation while on placement. Ensure your careers guidance is LGBTQ+ inclusive by highlighting LGBTQ+ people in different careers, signposting to LGBTQ+ inclusive employers, and proactively challenging stereotypes.

'I worry about going to university and being placed in accommodation with homophobic people.' **Oliver, 16, secondary school (Scotland)**

## LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE JOINING YOUR SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR SETTING

It is important to avoid making assumptions about any new children or young people that join your school, college or setting. If a previous setting has not mentioned that a child or young person is LGBT, that might be because they were asked to maintain confidentiality around their identity. It is a good idea to give clear signals to all children, young people and their parents or carers that you are an LGBTQ+ inclusive setting.

They will almost certainly visit your website, so it is helpful to celebrate your LGBTQ+ inclusive work, to display the Stonewall School & College Champion logo if you are a Stonewall School & College Champion member, and share to your anti-bullying and equality policies. Having LGBTQ+ inclusive and anti-HBT bullying displays around the building will be reassuring for LGBTQ+ children and young people when they visit for open evenings or transition days, as well as sending a clear signal to parents and carers that your school is LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Liaise with your feeder schools, colleges or settings to ensure they know that you will offer extra support to any LGBTQ+ children or young people that need it. For children or young people transferring at a non-standard transition point, you should always mention that you can offer extra support for LGBTQ+ children or young people, regardless of whether you are aware that the child or young person is LGBTQ+ or not.

Extra support could include:

- Meeting the child or young person ahead of the move to see if they have any concerns. Offer them reassurance and discuss possible solutions.
- Offering LGBTQ+ children and young people the chance to attend extra transition sessions along with non-LGBTQ+ children and young people.
- Arranging for the child or young person to have a trusted adult or mentor to speak to at their new school, college or setting.
- Telling the child or young person about your LGBTQ+ inclusive work, mentioning your LGBTQ+ group if you have one.
- Creating Social Stories or transition books to help children or young people cope with a move to a new environment with different rules, norms and expectations.
- Working through the school, college or setting's transitioning at school/college/setting checklist or policy with a trans child or young person and their parents/carers (if relevant).

Remember to maintain confidentiality about a new child or young person's orientation or gender identity. Don't assume that they want other members of staff to know, and ask before

sharing any information.

# 9. SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND

Schools, colleges and settings have a responsibility to ensure all the children and young people in their care are safe,

supported, and able to reach their full potential. Some children and young people with SEND, including those who have neurodivergent learning styles, may need additional support in understanding their own identity.

Some may need support in learning about those who are different to them, and in understanding and accepting that difference is to be respected and celebrated. This section highlights potential additional considerations to help LGBTQ+ learners with SEND.

## LISTEN TO THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

It is important to listen to what children and young people are saying – with their actions as well as their words. Observe, listen to and understand how each child or young person expresses themselves. This is especially important for pre- or non-verbal children or young people. Make sure that each child or young person has opportunities to express their gender identity and orientation and feel 'heard'. It is important to not make assumptions that a child is LGBTQ+ because they do not conform to gender stereotypes, but it is vital to accept their individuality without judgement. It is important to not make assumptions that a child is LGBTQ+ because they do not conform to gender stereotypes.

It can be hard for any child or young person to understand and express emotions relating to gender identity or orientation. For those with communication and interaction difficulties it might be even tougher, since they may have a lack of tools, language, education, or a fear of the reactions of others. Schools, colleges and settings should ensure that they equip children and young people with the means, reasons and opportunities to express their voice, and the ability to celebrate their identity in all aspects of their lives. Staff may need to reassure learners that their feelings are OK, and remind other people, such as parents, carers or other professionals, of the importance of the child or young person feeling listened to and accepted. This is more important than fear of saying the wrong thing.

Some children and young people with SEND, especially those who are autistic, may not see the need to communicate about their feelings, or may not understand that others don't already see them in the same way they see or know themselves to be. If the people around them don't understand their LGBTQ+ identity, this could lead to increased frustration, and impact negatively on their mental health and wellbeing.

It is important to be aware that some LGBTQ+ children and young people with SEND may have a fragile sense of self and a limited understanding of who they are in relation to other people. Ensure the child or young person has opportunities for regular one-to-one time with a trusted adult who will listen empathetically and help them explore their developing identity. It can be useful to use a blank outline of a person to help visually build up aspects of their orientation, gender identity and/or how they choose to express themselves.

Be aware that the term 'questioning' can be confusing and inappropriate for some LGBTQ+ children and young people with SEND. Some children and young people may have done all their 'questioning' before telling anyone, others may feel that there is no 'question' about it.

## SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHOICE AND ADVOCACY

Many children and young people with SEND may have less freedom than their peers to make choices for themselves. This might include what clothes they wear, their hairstyle or what groups, activities and toys they have access to. School, college or setting staff should support parents, carers and personal assistants to develop and promote the child or young person's independence and advocacy skills from an early age.

In special schools, colleges or settings, uniform codes may already be more relaxed due to the consideration given to sensory or physical needs. Ensuring that uniform options are not segregated by gender will help create a more inclusive environment for everyone. Be sensitive to the additional difficulties faced by some children and young people with sensory differences – some may not be able to tolerate wearing certain types of clothing and this may limit their clothing choices. Many trans children and young people, regardless of any sensory differences, will not be able to tolerate wearing the clothing of a different gender



to their gender identity. For these reasons, it's important to be especially attentive to the clothes and accessories that are available to trans children and young people with SEND.

For LGBTQ+ children and young people with SEND who rely on a personal assistant to support their needs across different environments (for example home, travel, education and potentially short breaks care), the experience of 'coming out' may be different. An LGBTQ+ child or young person may need to come out to a personal assistant before they come out to the people they might otherwise choose to come out to first, or before they are ready to.

Your school, college or setting should try to enable the child or young person to choose the most appropriate person to support them with their gender identity or orientation, rather than assuming a personal assistant can provide all their support needs. It is important that anybody supporting the child or young person is included in training around LGBTQ+ awareness. Including parents and carers in this is especially beneficial, but if home is not supportive this makes a supportive environment at school, college or setting even more crucial.

Some LGBTQ+ children and young people with SEND may be more likely to access short break provisions and some may be looked after children. As a result of this, they might have to 'come out' repeatedly to different people and seek understanding and acceptance from a wide range of carers and peers. Where a child or young person wants to, and is safe to, share information about their gender identity or orientation across different settings, One Page Profiles and Communication Passports may be beneficial. Relationship Circles might include friends from an LGBTQ+ youth group or a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner as people of importance. This can be a visual way of a young person sharing information without it needing to be an announcement.

Only where there is a safeguarding risk should a school, college or setting share personal information about a learner. Safeguarding decisions should be taken in line with your policies and procedures, as well as with the key safeguarding legislation for schools, colleges or your setting. More information on confidentiality can be found in Chapter 7.

## PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR TRANS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Trans children and young people with SEND should be supported to use the toilets and changing rooms of their choice – whether this is a single-sex or gender-neutral facility. This includes learners who need support with their personal care, or who require hoists and other specialist equipment. Wherever possible, ensure that gender-neutral facilities extend beyond only the accessible facilities – if they don't, it can reinforce the idea that SEND children and young people are different in multiple ways. Some trans children and young people will not feel able to use the accessible facilities as they may assume they need to have a physical disability to use them, or they may fear being challenged by others for using them.

It is important to be aware that some trans children and young people may feel distress at seeing or touching their bodies when showering, washing or going to the toilet. For children and young people that use shower facilities at your school, college or setting, be mindful of reflective shower cubicle screens or mirrors. Provide ways to mitigate this difficulty while continuing to prioritise the child or young person's need for good health, hygiene and developing independence skills.

Children and young people should have access to underwear choices, changes of clothes and toiletry products in line with their preferences. Be sensitive to the fact that puberty can be a particularly challenging time for both trans children and young people, and those with SEND. It is also important to be mindful that puberty can begin much earlier or later for some children and young people with SEND. Make sure that those who need visual support to aid communication and choice-making can access these tools across all areas of the school, college or setting, including in toilets and changing rooms.

## SIGNPOST TO FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

It is important to signpost children and young people and their families to sources of wider support. Be sensitive to the fears of parents, carers and siblings about their family member being potentially more vulnerable due to their gender identity or orientation, or because they have SEND. Try to build links with local LGBTQ+ youth groups and co-deliver or exchange experiences, training and strategies. If they feel the wider agencies have knowledge and understanding, children or young people and their families will feel more reassured about accessing support.

It may be useful for an LGBTQ+ child or young person with SEND to talk to someone else who is LGBTQ+. Local LGBTQ+ youth groups are a great starting point. The child or young person might find it easier to email or speak on the phone at first, rather than meeting face-to-face with a representative from the external organisation. You could also suggest they meet at your school, college or setting, since this will be a familiar place.

The internet is a useful place for many LGBTQ+ children and young people, including those with SEND, to find information and interact with other LGBTQ+ people. If you signpost the child or young person to good sources of information (see page 69 for details of further support and resources), this can be extremely beneficial.

Be aware of the potential increased vulnerabilities of a child or young person with SEND, and ensure they are given increased support as needed. Talk to them about the risks they might face, including around online safety and child sexual exploitation (CSE). If you have established a link for them, make it clear that this person is safe, trusted, informed and understanding. It is important to warn all children and young people, but especially those with SEND, that other people, even those who claim to be friends, may not be safe people to talk to – online or otherwise.

## DEVELOP STAFF CONFIDENCE

Ensure that you offer support to all staff who are trying to increase LGBTQ+ inclusion. The Gender Unicorn is a useful tool for aiding conversation and understanding, and for challenging stereotypes and misconceptions. It may be useful when working directly with some families and/or some children and young people with SEND and could help them understand the differences between gender identity, gender expression, sex, and orientation.

Alternatively, or additionally, you could ask them to label a blank outline (or a photograph) of a person with information about orientation and gender identity to reinforce that the discussion is about real people. These approaches have proved especially useful with some autistic children and young people and their families. If they already have some understanding of autism as a spectrum, it can help them to understand gender as a spectrum too.

## SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTQ+ CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON AND THEIR PEERS

LGBTQ+ children and young people should be encouraged to understand that there are different ways to be any gender or orientation. You can do this by proactively challenging stereotypes and using an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum.

When they are ready to come out, some children or young people may need support from their school, college or setting. The support will need to be individualised, but coming out is likely to be easier in a school, college or setting where the culture, curriculum and values have consistently celebrated difference and raised awareness around LGBTQ+ people. Remember that every child or young person's emotions, journey and needs will be unique to them, and the help you give should promote and reflect this.

Some LGBTQ+ children or young people with SEND might need explicit teaching around hidden social rules. They may benefit from scripts to explore what is safe/OK or unsafe/not OK to say or do in different contexts. You could roleplay different scenarios if needed. Bear in mind that these rules or expectations may be different for different genders or orientations, depending on the context. Some things that had to be taught to the child or young person originally – for example, the unwritten rules of using public toilets – may need to be taught again to help them as they transition.

Some children and young people with SEND may not feel pressure around, or awareness of, 'fitting in' socially. Empathy differences may mean a child or young person needs support to understand another's perspective, or alternatively they might become overly anxious about what others may be thinking and feeling. Once they have come out to one person, they may have unrealistic ideas or timeframes about how their journey will progress.

Support plans should include how to address difficulties arising as a result of their internal plan 'going wrong' or not moving as quickly as they want. You may need to support those with difficulties in imagination to understand the future and their potential journey, as well as sensitively managing their expectations. They might only be able to focus on how they are currently feeling and what needs to change right now. Social Stories, Comic Strip Conversations, Talking Mats and mind-mapping could help children and young people to think about the future.

When a child or young person at a special school, college or setting comes out as LGBT, especially where a trans child or young person is socially transitioning, there may be a greater need to support the other children and young people to understand what this means. The trans child or young person may (or may not) have changed their physical appearance, their name and/or their pronouns. This will need careful planning and delivery based on the needs of individual learners.

A trans child or young person with SEND may need additional support to understand that others might ask questions or take a while to understand their identity. Explain that peers and staff may make genuine mistakes and get their name and/or pronouns wrong at times. Some children and young people with SEND may genuinely make mistakes about gender and pronouns and the trans child or young person may need support to understand the difference between this and deliberate misgendering, misnaming or other bullying. Some children and young people with SEND can find understanding and using pronouns difficult and may get their own pronouns and those of others wrong. This might prove to be an additional challenge for a trans child or young person, if they or those around them struggle with pronouns.

All children and young people need a safe, accessible and reliable route to report concerns (using signs and symbols as needed). Child- and young people-friendly versions of anti-bullying policies, complaints procedures, and values documents can help with this. Social Stories and individualised visual/symbol resources can further support LGBTQ+ children and young people with SEND, as well as their peers. Parents and carers can also use these resources at home to support the work done in your school, college or setting.

## GIVE POSITIVE MESSAGES

Children and young people with SEND should have access to positive messages in PSHE and RSHE. LGBTQ+ awareness should be included throughout this work and as a golden thread running throughout the whole curriculum. Some children and young people with SEND may need personalised, targeted, repeated and ongoing support around safe and healthy friendships and relationships, including LGBTQ+ relationships. Make sure your teaching covers laws around consent.

For some children or young people with SEND, existing resources (such as picture books) may need to be adapted or simplified. Sometimes photo banks featuring real people are more useful than books featuring animals or inanimate objects. If you use picture books aimed at younger children to explore LGBTQ+ themes with older learners, make it clear that they're written for young children and that they're being used to introduce a theme to support them in creating artwork, stories or other resources.

It can be helpful to use profiles or fact files featuring real LGBTQ+ people. Make sure that a range of LGBTQ+ people are represented and that the profiles used will not lead to overgeneralisation – for example thinking that all gay men have brown hair. Stonewall have worked with SEND Support and Widgit to create LGBTQ+ symbols, posters and resources that can be downloaded from the our [website](#). These promote an understanding that being lesbian, gay, bi, trans, non-binary, cis or straight are all 'OK'.

Consider the way that language, symbols and signage are used in your school, college or setting. Reflect on whether it is necessary to use gender-specific language and be conscious of language that reinforces gender stereotypes. Identify whether your use of pictures, signs and symbols might further reinforce stereotypes – for example girls having long hair and always wearing skirts and boys having short hair and always wearing trousers.

Use Stonewall's lesson resources and posters to help you challenge gender stereotypes and teach that there is no right or wrong way to be or express any gender. Be sure to celebrate disabled people, including disabled LGBTQ+ people, as positive role models.



## OVERCOMING POTENTIAL BARRIERS

Some individuals may not accept that a child or young person with SEND knows their own mind when it comes to orientation or gender identity. Children and young people with SEND are more likely to experience others thinking their gender identity or orientation is a phase or confusion, or that they are too susceptible to outside influences. If staff truly listen to both the words and actions of the child or young person, often they demonstrate a very clear understanding and sense of self.

Arguments may be presented around the LGBTQ+ child or young person lacking capacity, especially if members of their family are struggling to accept their identity. However, many parents will be their child's strongest advocate. If this is the case, still be sensitive to the fact that they may have fears for their child because they are different in an additional way. It is important to support and advocate for the needs of the child or young person and to educate others involved in the child or young person's life. Where needed, seek support and advice from your Local Authority, along with local and national groups.

Often a child or young person's words or actions are automatically attributed to their SEND without considerations of other factors, such as their orientation or gender identity. This might include: preferences for clothing types or hair length being seen as a sensory need; fear of change at puberty; behaviours described as a new special interest, fascination, curiosity or phase.

You can support staff, parents, carers, families and wider professionals to understand that a child or young person with SEND is just as likely to be LGBTQ+ as any other person. It is essential that the child or young person is accepted for who they communicate they are, and that support is given (if needed) for them to explore what they are experiencing. Not all children and young people will go on to identify as LGBTQ+. It is important that they know it is OK to change their minds, but it is equally important that gender identity or orientation differences are not dismissed.

### CASE STUDY: A RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH WEST

This special school in the South West has embedded LGBTQ+ inclusion throughout the school, making sure that there are LGBTQ+ inclusive displays and posters in the school's residential areas as well as in classrooms and corridors. The LGBTQ+ lead regularly shares examples of good practice by email, as well as supporting members of staff with queries.

School staff are trained to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and bullying and they understand their role in reporting and recording it. Any incidents involving prejudice are addressed as a topic in home base or PSHE, so that all students have an opportunity to learn why prejudice-based language and bullying is wrong. This supplements the school's wider work, which includes celebrations of diversity throughout the year, both in the curriculum and through assemblies. Students at this school are proud to celebrate difference and enjoyed wearing Rainbow Laces at sports day.

Being a Stonewall School & College Champion has helped staff at this school to feel confident in getting support right for young people or staff at their school, creating a safe environment for everyone. Staff and students are now more aware of how the way they speak can affect the LGBTQ+ community, as well as other minority groups.

# 10. WORKING WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY



WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS OF LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some parents or carers may have worries about their child being LGBTQ+. They could be concerned their child will be bullied because of their orientation or gender identity, or that their child won't have the adulthood they'd anticipated. They may be angry or disappointed, or not know what to do next.

Sometimes parents or carers can be unsupportive because of misconceptions about what it means to be LGBTQ+. They may benefit from accessing support – if possible, direct them towards relevant organisations, local groups, or family services (suggestions are listed on p67).

It's important not to assume that a parent or carer will be either supportive or unsupportive based on their faith or cultural background. Where parents or carers are unsupportive, LGBTQ+ children and young people will need extra support from others. Schools, colleges, settings, charities and youth groups can play a vital role in providing this support.

'I want to come out to my family and live with someone I love. I want to be a doctor and meet other LGBTQ+ people.' *Angela, 16, faith sixth form college (East Midlands)*

WORKING WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

It is important to ensure that you communicate your LGBTQ+ inclusive approach with all parents and carers, as well as with the wider community. Make your anti-bullying policy and equality policy easily accessible so that all parents and carers understand that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying is not tolerated and that all learners are welcome, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Try to involve parents or carers in your policy development by inviting them to be part of a policy working group. Use your website, social media channels and displays to celebrate your LGBTQ+ inclusive work and special events such as LGBTQ+ History Month. Share curriculum outlines and resources so that parents and carers can see what the curriculum does (and doesn't) include. Refer to your LGBTQ+ inclusive work at parent and carer information sessions.

Consider how to remove barriers for parents or carers who might struggle to access information, for example ensuring that sign language interpreters or community language interpreters are available at your information sessions. If you are a faith school, college or setting, involve the local faith leader in your LGBTQ+ inclusive work.

Let parents and carers know that they can come to you with questions about any aspects of your school, college or setting's work, including the LGBTQ+ inclusive aspects. It is important to offer parents and carers guidelines about the use of social media – in particular, the guidelines should specify that it is unacceptable to share personal information about other people's children or about any member of staff.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IF A PARENT, CARER OR COMMUNITY MEMBER OBJECTS TO OUR LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE APPROACH?

Ask them what their specific concerns are and offer them reassurance by showing them your curriculum resources (for example, giving them the opportunity to look at your LGBTQ+ inclusive books). Explain why an LGBTQ+ inclusive approach is important and how it benefits everybody, and refer to the fact that the work is an important part of your anti-bullying strategy. Share your anti-bullying and equality policy, explain your obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and make reference to Ofsted's requirements.

WHAT IF A PARENT OR CARER WANTS TO WITHDRAW THEIR CHILD FROM LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE LESSONS?

Parents and carers are entitled to withdraw their child from Sex Education and Religious Education, but are not entitled to withdraw them from Relationships Education, Health Education any other curriculum subject. If they have concerns about your LGBTQ+ inclusive teaching, give them an opportunity to ask questions, see lesson materials and take the time to offer them reassurance.

Some parents or carers worry that their child will become LGBTQ+ if they learn about it at school. Remind them that a whole generation of LGBTQ+ people grew up in the 14 years that Section 28 was in place, when it was illegal to learn about LGBTQ+ people at school or college. Explain that an LGBTQ+ inclusive education will help their child to understand people's differences, preparing them to be part of a diverse workforce and society in their adult life.

WHAT IF A PARENT OR CARER OBJECTS TO YOUR TRANS INCLUSIVE APPROACH?

Highlight your inclusive ethos and legal duties to ensure that all learners, including trans children and young people, can fully participate in school life, free from discrimination. Ask them to explain their concerns and offer them some information and signposting to resources you think would be helpful.

WHAT IF PARENTS, CARERS OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION ABOUT LGBTQ+ STAFF OR LEARNERS ON SOCIAL MEDIAL PLATFORMS?

Like any other members of the community, LGBTQ+ people have a right to privacy. If you become aware of this happening, it is important that you inform governors and senior leadership and either the school's trade union rep or the child or young person's parents or carers. Warn all parents and carers that harassment, discrimination and defamation is unacceptable and remind them that anti-LGBTQ+ hate speech can be a criminal offence.

Let parents and carers know what action the school, college or setting will take in the case of an incident occurring, and remind parents or carers that they should follow your complaints procedure if they have a concern or a complaint relating to your school, college or setting.

## CASE STUDY: A CHURCH OF ENGLAND FIRST SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH WEST

This Church of England First School is proactive in communicating their LGBTQ+ inclusive approach. Their vision statement clearly explains that they are an inclusive learning community and that everyone is welcome and valued. There is a 'Different Families, Same Love' poster in the school foyer, and they use the Stonewall School & College Champion logo on their website and offer an explanation alongside it, linking to the school's anti-bullying policy and Relationships, Sex and Health Education policy.

Staff at this school have created their own anti-discrimination poster, which makes it clear that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language will not be tolerated on school premises. When this school first became a Stonewall School & College Champion, they shared the news with parents and carers in the school's weekly newsletter. They are clear on their commitment to placing inclusion and equality – and the promotion of dignity, diversity, respect and tolerance – at the centre of everything within the school.

The parish church and the local community have been supportive of the school's inclusive vision and willingness to demonstrate 'courageous advocacy'. Visitors have commented that it is 'refreshing' and 'very progressive' to see LGBTQ+ inclusive posters on the school fence, on display to the world. Beyond their local community, staff at the school are keen to share best practice in LGBTQ+ inclusion with the schools they have links with in Zambia and Australia.

## CASE STUDY: A PRIMARY ACADEMY IN YORKSHIRE

Most pupils at this primary academy in Yorkshire come from Muslim or Eastern European backgrounds, and the majority of parents and carers have been supportive of the school's LGBTQ+ inclusive work. The senior leadership team began by gaining commitment from the governing body that they would work towards an inclusive education, covering all aspects of the Equality Act. They then identified potential barriers and took time to work with parents, carers, staff and advisors to create a 'potential barrier audit' and identify what steps would be taken to address them.

To launch their more inclusive approach, the whole school produced artwork and poetry around the theme of diversity. They used photographs and children's books to inspire children and to stimulate discussion. The children's work was showcased at the local town hall for more than four weeks. Since then, the school has introduced new policies and updated existing ones to ensure that they are LGBTQ+ inclusive, and they have made it clear that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia will not be tolerated. This is reiterated in Home School agreements.

The school has committed to an ongoing conversation with parents and carers. They have had numerous workshops and continually listen to what parents need in order for them to feel comfortable with the school's approach. For example, a discussion with parents and carers identified a need to invite them into some of the school's diversity lessons. This helped them to understand how picture books are used to stimulate discussion. By sharing resources with parents, they keep them informed about what their children are learning. The school have always had an open-door policy – issues are always addressed quickly and in person.

# GLOSSARY

**ACE** is an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a lack of attraction. Ace people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, asexual, aromantic and demisexual.

**ASEXUAL** is used to refer to someone that does not experience sexual attraction.

**GREY-A** is used to describe someone who identifies somewhere between sexual and asexual.

**AROMANTIC** is used to refer to someone that does not experience romantic attraction.

**GREY-ROMANTIC** is used to describe someone who identifies somewhere between romantic and aromantic.

**DEMISEXUAL** is used to describe someone who only experiences sexual attraction after an emotional bond has been established.

**DEMIROMANTIC** is used to describe someone who only experiences romantic attraction after an emotional bond has been established.

**BI** is an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, queer, and some other non-monosexual and non-monoromantic identities.

**BIPHOBIA** is the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people. Biphobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

**CISGENDER (OR CIS)** is the term for people whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

**COMING OUT** is when a person first tells someone/others about their orientation and/or gender identity.

**GAY** refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. It is also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality – some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

**GENDER DYSPHORIA** is a term used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**GENDER IDENTITY** is a person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

**GENDER REASSIGNMENT** is the protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010) which refers to a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

**GENDER RECOGNITION CERTIFICATE (GRC)** is the document which enables trans people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and you currently have to be over 18 to apply. You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

**GENDER STEREOTYPES** are the ways that people are commonly expected to behave in society according to their gender.

**HOMOPHOBIA** is the fear or dislike of lesbian, gay or bi people based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views. Homophobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bi.

**HOMOSEXUAL** might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

**INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH** refers to an approach to inclusion that takes into account the multiple aspects of a person's identity and how these can impact on one another. For example, intersectional feminism recognises that black women, disabled women and LGBTQ+ women may have gender in common, but their lives will likely be different due to race, disability, and orientation. In turn, it also acknowledges that a black, disabled, LGBTQ+ woman will face unique barriers because of her multiple identities.



**LESBIAN** refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

**LGBTQ+** is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bi and trans.

**NON-BINARY** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

**ORIENTATION** is an umbrella term describing a person's attraction to other people. This attraction may be sexual (sexual orientation) and/or romantic (romantic orientation). These terms refer to a person's sense of identity based on their attractions, or lack thereof.

Orientations include, but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bi, ace and straight.

**OUTED** is when a lesbian, gay, bi or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent.

**PAN** is a word which refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

**PRONOUNS** are words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation – for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender-neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir.

**QUEER** is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBTQ+ community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBTQ+ people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

**QUESTIONING** is the process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**ROMANTIC ORIENTATION** is a person's romantic attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with sexual orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity.

Stonewall uses the term 'orientation' as an umbrella term covering sexual and romantic orientations.

**SEX** is assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are interchanged to mean 'male' or 'female'.

**SEXISM** is the belief that one sex or gender is superior to another, or actions or attitudes that stereotype, prejudice or discriminate against people based solely on their perceived sex or gender.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** is a person's sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity.

Stonewall uses the term 'orientation' as an umbrella term covering sexual and romantic orientations.

**TRANS** is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, non-binary, gender queer.

**TRANS BOY/MAN** is a term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a boy/man. This is sometimes shortened to FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.

**TRANS GIRL/WOMAN** is used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a girl/woman. This is sometimes shortened to MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.

**TRANSITIONING** refers to the steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this.

**TRANSITIONING** also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

**TRANSPHOBIA** is the fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including denying their gender identity or refusing to accept it. Transphobia may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, trans.

**TRANSSEXUAL** is a word which was used in the past as a more medical term (similarly to homosexual) to refer to someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. This term is still used by some, although many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

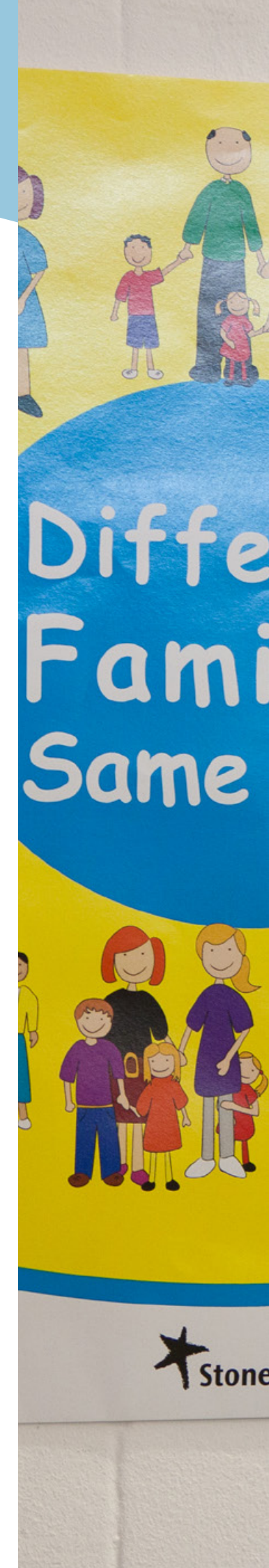
# FURTHER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

## RESOURCES AND RESEARCH FROM STONEWALL

You'll find a range of guidance and resources for schools and colleges on our website. In particular, you might wish to look at:

- [CELEBRATING BI INCLUSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS](#)
- [CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE AND BUILDING BELONGING: MAKING SURE NON-BINARY STUDENTS FEEL VALUED AT SCHOOL AND COLLEGE](#)
- [CELEBRATING DIVERSITY THROUGH PUPIL VOICE](#)
- [COME OUT FUNDRAISING: SCHOOLS GUIDE](#)
- [CREATING AN LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE PRIMARY CURRICULUM](#)
- [CREATING AN LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM: A GUIDE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS](#)
- [DELIVERING LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE FURTHER EDUCATION](#)
- [GETTING STARTED TOOLKIT – EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE](#)
- [GETTING STARTED TOOLKIT – PRIMARY](#)
- [GETTING STARTED TOOLKIT – SECONDARY](#)
- [NEXT STEPS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION](#)
- [PRIMARY BEST PRACTICE](#)
- [SCHOOL REPORT \(2017\)](#)
- [SHUT OUT: THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, TRAINING OR WORK \(2020\)](#)
- [STUDENT VOICE: SETTING UP A STUDENT LGBTQ+ GROUP IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS & COLLEGES](#)
- [STAYING SAFE ONLINE](#)
- [THE TEACHERS' REPORT \(2014\)](#)

Be sure to look on the [Stonewall website](#) to find a growing range of posters depicting LGBTQ+ role models, celebrating different families and challenging gender stereotypes. We regularly add new lesson plans and resources to our collection which can also be accessed on our website.





## STONEWALL PROGRAMMES

**Stonewall's School & College Champions programme** is a network of primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and settings across the country working together and with Stonewall to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and to work in a more LGBT-inclusive way. Find out more about [membership here](#).

We have a range of [e-learning courses](#) available for schools, colleges and Children and Young People's Services. If you have any questions or would like to know more, please visit [our website](#). Can't find what you're looking for? Drop us an email at [education@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:education@stonewall.org.uk)

**Stonewall's Children and Young People's Services Champions programme** supports local authority Children and Young People's Services and Public Health, as well as children and young people's organisations, to put LGBT inclusion at the heart of their work. For more information visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/cyps](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/cyps) or email [cyps@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:cyps@stonewall.org.uk)



## FURTHER RESOURCES

The following organisations may be helpful for staff and LGBTQ+ children and young people and their parents or carers.

**Albert Kennedy Trust** – an organisation supporting LGBTQ+ 16-25 year olds who are made homeless or are living in a hostile environment

**Bi Community News** – a news website for the bi community, which also includes a guide for people who are newly exploring or questioning their bi identity.

**British Asian LGBTI** – an organisation providing support and information for the British Asian LGBTI community.

**Brook** – an organisation which provides free and confidential sexual health and wellbeing services for young people nationwide.

**ChildLine** – a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of 19. Young people can contact ChildLine via email, message boards or phone and access advice and information online.

**ChildNet** – an organisation which provides support and information on internet safety.

**CEOP** – the department of the National Crime Agency is which responsible for preventing and investigating online child exploitation.

**Diverse Church** – an organisation providing support and information to LGBTQ+ Christians.

**Families and friends of lesbian, gay and bisexual people (FFLAG)** – an organisation which provides support for parents and their LGB children.

**Gendered Intelligence** – an organisation that works to increase the quality of trans people's lives and to raise awareness of trans people's needs.

**Hidayah** – an organisation providing support and information for LGBTQI+ Muslims.

**House of Rainbow** – an organisation which supports BAME LGBTQ+ individuals and LGBTQ+ people of faith.

**Imaan** – an organisation providing support and information for LGBTQ Muslims.

**Keshet** – an organisation that works across the Jewish community to ensure that no one has to choose between their LGBT+ and Jewish identity.

**Mermaids** – an organisation which offers support to trans children and young people up to 19 years old and their families, friends and schools.

**One Body, One Faith** – an organisation providing support and information to LGBTQ+ Christians.

**Papyrus** – a national charity dedicated to the prevention of youth suicide. They offer support to young people, as well as offering training in suicide prevention.

**Quest** – an organisation providing support and information to LGBTQ+ Catholics.

**Rainbow Noir** – a group established for and by queer people of colour in Manchester.

**Sarbat LGBTQ+ Sikhs** – a social support group for LGBTQ+ Sikhs.

**Sex Education Forum** – a group of partners working together to promote best practice in Relationships and Sex Education. They offer guidance on teaching Relationships and Sex Education, as well as a wide range of teaching resources.

**Switchboard – the LGBT+ helpline** – this organisation provides an information, support and referral service for LGBTQ+ people, including online messaging and a phone service.

**The Mix** – this is an organisation which offers information and support for under 25s on a range of topics including mental health, sex and relationships, drugs and work.

**UK Black Pride** – the organisation which arranges the annual UK Black Pride event. Their website and social networks also share news and information.

**UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools** – offers guidance, resources and an award scheme which helps schools to link their practices to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**YoungMinds** – an organisation which offers mental health support for children and young people, as well as offering support to their parents and carers and to professionals working with young people.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**A guide for schools,  
colleges and settings**

Written by Stonewall with consultancy from SEND Support (@SENDsupportuk)

Stonewall, 192 St John Street, London EC1V 4JY

[info@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:info@stonewall.org.uk)

[www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

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