



A Youth Worker's Resource: Encouraging LGBTQ+ Inclusive Practice



Who Is This Resource For?



Cara-Friend have compiled this resource to assist and guide youth workers, peer leaders and volunteers. It is designed to instruct those working with young people, in a youth club or outreach setting, in how to support young lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender young people.

It is necessary to understand and gain knowledge in this area as young people are more frequently “coming out” at younger and younger ages. Young people are more confident in their identity with an increase in relatable role models from the LGBTQ+ community in mainstream media and online. Increased access to information online also allows young people more of a chance to learn about different sexual orientations and gender identities, which they may feel more aligned with. The manner in which a youth worker reacts to someone “coming out” will have direct repercussions on young people who identify as LGBTQ+.

It is also necessary to be informed of LGBTQ+ issues so as to make the youth work environment a more

welcoming one for lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender young people - regardless of whether someone has come out or not.

This resource was developed by Cara-Friend in response to requests from youth workers for a source of information and reference with regards to working with LGBTQ+ young people. Its overall purpose is to support professionals and volunteers who work with children and young people in a youth work capacity to create an LGBTQ+ inclusive environment within a youth group or club.

It provides practical advice and examples on how to address issues specific to LGBTQ+ young people, to encourage discussion among non-LGBTQ+ young people in youth services, how to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour and attitudes among young people, raise awareness among youth workers on what LGBTQ+ means, and provide a focus on the LGBTQ+ community in Northern Ireland with emphasis on the experiences of young people in this community.

What are the aims of this resource?

The aims of this resource are dealt with across three sections:

SECTION 1

To help youth workers gain a better understanding and knowledge of the language, terminology and issues associated with LGBTQ+ young people.

SECTION 2

To provide greater context on why creating a supportive and accepting environment for LGBTQ+ young people is important.

SECTION 3

To provide youth workers with practical tips and measures on how to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of LGBTQ+ young people.

Section 1: A Better Understanding of LGBTQ+ Young People

What do we mean by LGBTQ+?

- LGBTQ+ is an acronym for the following identities: **lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer** and **questioning**.
- It refers to a community or subsection of people that are not heterosexual and/or do not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.
- It also refers to people who question their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. These people may be unsure about the specific term or label they wish to identify themselves as, but are certain they are not simply heterosexual or cisgender.
- The '+' in LGBTQ+ refers to the many other sexual orientations and gender identities which young people may identify as. These usually make up a significantly smaller proportion of the LGBTQ+ population.
- 'Queer' is a term which is growing in popularity, particularly among younger LGBTQ+ people. It is, broadly speaking, an umbrella term which, without defining a sub-identity, means that someone identifies as not being heterosexual and/or cisgender, i.e. the gender they were assigned at birth. It can also be used interchangeably with LGBTQ+, for example the queer community.

Issues faced by LGBTQ+ young people

Young people who identify as LGBTQ+ can face a range of challenges in addition to pressures already experienced by people their age. These include:



- Fear of 'coming out', i.e. telling someone they are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.
- LGBT bullying, i.e. bullying which is directed at a person because of their perceived or actual minority sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Social isolation, i.e. a lack of friends because they have been left out due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This can also be caused by not knowing anyone else their age who is also LGBTQ+.
- Unsupportive or ill-informed family environment, i.e. parents, carers or siblings have prejudices against LGBTQ+ people or do not have the awareness about LGBTQ+ identities and the support they should receive.
- Unsupportive or ill-informed school environment, i.e. teacher and other school staff not having the awareness and knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues and language, religious concerns over LGBTQ+ identities, rigid gendered uniform policies, peers anti-LGBT language going unchallenged, issues accessing toilet and changing facilities safely.
- Unsupportive or ill-informed youth work environment. Some youth clubs can be ill-prepared or ill-informed when it comes to

LGBTQ+ inclusive practice. If young people don't see themselves represented in a youth work setting then they are less likely to engage with that youth service. Of course this also means that if a youth worker demonstrates LGBT-phobic or judgemental attitudes then LGBTQ+ young people will not feel welcome in that youth club or service

- Poor educational achievement: some LGBTQ+ young people don't do as well as they should in school because they are not able to bring their whole selves to school each morning. This can lead to greater rates of truancy and dropping out.
- Increased risk of sexual exploitation, including grooming, particularly through online LGBT-specific apps on mobile phones, or websites.
- Increased risk of homelessness: some LGBTQ+ young people may be made homeless as a result of their parents or families not accepting them for who they are.
- Poorer mental health, due to social isolation and lack of acceptance for who they are, leading to self-harm and suicidal ideation.
- Risky behaviours, and unhealthy coping mechanisms, which can include unhealthy relationships, substance misuse, self-harm, and risky sexual encounters.

It is of paramount importance that this high-risk minority group have sustainable, positive and relevant support to ensure their specific needs are understood and met with the necessary support and signposting within and outside the school environment.

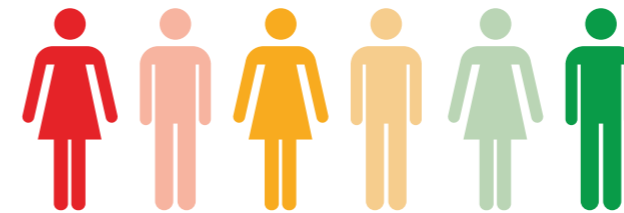
If a young person is facing isolation and discrimination at home and/or in school then it is crucial the youth club they are attending is a safe space for them, where they can be themselves

without fear of bullying by peers. It's as important that support is given to them should they be facing difficulty at home or in school for being LGBTQ+. Creating a visibly inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ young people in youth clubs is very important to let LGBTQ+ young people who are not yet members know that they can attend the youth club, and avail of support from youth workers and volunteers, without being discriminated against or judged.

What Is Sexual Orientation?

Sexuality and sexual orientation are two terms often used interchangeably, however they have very different meanings and should not be confused.

Sexuality: refers to a person's sexual drive. A person can be highly sexual or, on the opposite side of the scale, have a low sex drive or none. On this end of the scale young people may identify as asexual.



Sexual orientation usually refers to the gender/genders of the person someone is sexually attracted to, for example:

- Females attracted to females are lesbian or gay.
- Males attracted to males are gay.
- Males/females attract to both genders are bisexual.
- People attracted to other people, regardless of gender are pansexual.

What Is Gender Identity?

We often equate gender with biological sex. This is not always the case. Knowing the difference between these is an important first step to understanding young people who are transgender, including non-binary and gender fluid.

- Gender identity: refers to how a person feels about their gender. It is a deeply felt, innate, personal sense of self. People mostly identify as male and female, however there are other gender identities beyond this traditional binary, including non-binary, where someone may feel uncomfortable as either male or female. Someone is considered transgender when their gender identity does not align with their biological sex (or sex assigned at birth). Gender identity is emotional and psychological.
- Biological sex: this is the medical or biological term associated with primary sex characteristics, such as genitalia, hormones, chromosomes, etc. It is physical. When a baby is born they are

deemed to be male or female based primarily on the appearance of their genitalia. We call this sex assigned at birth. Some people who are assigned male/female at birth may develop and at some point have a different gender identity to this sex assigned at birth, and that is when the person is transgender. Transgender is concerned with how someone identifies, and does not require any medical intervention in to the biology or physicality of biological sex.

- Gender presentation refers to how an individual presents themselves to the world. They can present themselves as masculine, feminine, androgynous or anywhere in between these.

What Does Transgender Mean?

People whose personal gender identity does not align with the biological sex they were assigned at birth are called **transgender** or **trans**. People whose personal gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth are called **cisgender**.

Trans is a term often used as shorthand for transgender. Because it is based on how someone identifies differently from their assigned sex at birth it also acts as an umbrella term for specific gender identities, including gender-fluid, non-binary, trans male, trans female, etc.

Transgender is a term we use to describe someone's experience of gender, however an individual does not have to identify as transgender. Just because someone's gender identity is different to their biological sex does not mean they wish to be identified as transgender. They can simply identify as their gender identity: male, female, non-binary, etc.

Transgender people often experience gender dysphoria, which is a discomfort and distress that arises from feeling they are in the incorrect body, or from someone misgendering them.

something else entirely. So someone who identifies as non-binary may have been assigned male or female at birth (biological sex) but their gender identity is non-binary. This would bring them under the transgender umbrella term or group because their gender identity differs from their biological sex.

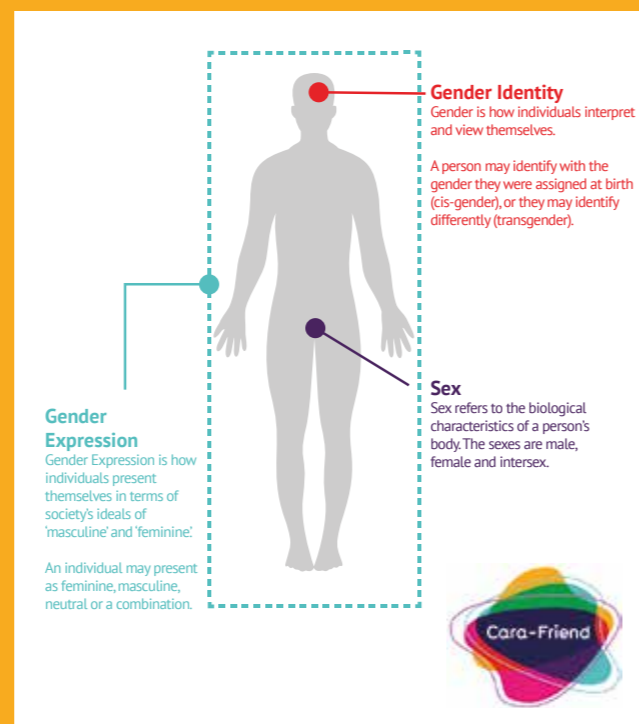
Transitioning

Transitioning is a process of changing one's assigned gender at birth to more accurately align with one's gender identity. It is a complex process which occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, legal and medical changes: telling one's family; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; changing pronouns, hormone treatment, surgery, etc.

It's important to remember that not all transgender people wish to medically transition. Being transgender is not dependent on medically transitioning, rather simply identifying differently from your sex assigned at birth.

Non-Binary Gender Identities

Gender identity is not as clear cut as male or female, some people have gender identities that are not masculine or feminine in nature. Binaries are an understandable mechanism that humans use in order to classify nature. Young people who identify as non-binary recognise that their gender is neither masculine nor feminine, nor in the middle, but



Being LGBTQ+ is NOT a choice!

Being lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender is not a choice. This point cannot be emphasised enough. A young person does not choose to be different, to seem cool or stand out from the crowd. It is not a phase they will eventually grow out of. If a young person is LGBTQ+ it is simply because that is who they are. The only choice a young person has, with regards to sexual orientation and/or gender identity, is to be themselves - openly and honestly. This is a brave step for a young person, particularly when it might involve being singled out or bullied. It is important for those supporting young people through 'coming out' or transitioning, that they do not attempt to quell someone's identity as this can have very negative effects on a person's mental and physical health.

Coming Out

Coming out is the term we use to describe the process of telling others around you that you are LGBTQ+. Someone may come out by telling friends or family that they are gay, bisexual or lesbian, and some people may also come out by telling friends or family that they are transgender, gender fluid or non-binary. Coming out is not a one-off event in someone's life, however the point when someone tells their parents, carers and/or family is considered a milestone event in an LGBTQ+ person's life. Coming out is, however, an ongoing process where clarification is needed to correct someone's perception or assumption that you may be 'straight' or cisgender, particularly when you meet new people, make new friends, start in a new class or school, etc. How someone responds to any individual's coming out will have a lasting impact on the LGBTQ+ person, particularly when it is with influential adults in their life, such as parents, carers, teachers and youth workers.

For more information on different identities under the LGBTQ+ umbrella please refer to our glossary of terms at the end of this resource. If you are unsure how a young person identifies don't be afraid to ask. There is a great power in listening to young people and allowing them to self-identify, rather than making assumptions.

If a young person is unsure you can refer them to our website (www.cara-friend.org.uk) for more information.

Fears And Feelings LGBTQ+ Young People Can Face:

Young people who identify as LGBTQ+ can have many fears and feelings around accepting who they are and how others will react. From the difficulty of telling someone for the first time, to fear of being bullied or outed to others without consent. It is often a very stressful time and these emotions and feelings can be present for extended periods which can greatly affect the mental health of the individual.

- Fear of "Coming Out" to friends, family, church, school or society.
- Fear for being misunderstood and/or rejected by those closest to them.
- Feeling they are letting their family down.
- Feeling isolated, alone or lonely as a result of a poor peer network.
- Geographical isolation.
- Fear of or being bullied by peers.
- Feeling the use of alternative coping strategies, such as self harm, are the only way they can deal with negative emotions.





Section 2: Why LGBTQ+ Young People Need Specific Support

The LGBTQ+ Community in Northern Ireland

The LGBTQ+ community, at first glance, makes up a small section of our society, however projected numbers of the population take a very different view. The population of NI that identify as LGBTQ+ is approximately 10%. This means that there are approximately 180,000 LGBTQ+ people in Northern Ireland; 18,700 aged between 11-18! Approximately 600 - 700 are availing of support from LGBTQ+ service providers (3.8% of LGBTQ+ youth in Northern Ireland), leaving 18,000 young people relying solely on home life, schools and youth clubs for support.

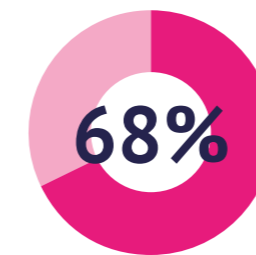
Numbers of children and young people identifying as trans or gender nonconforming are much smaller: estimated at anything between 0.1% and 1%. LGBTQ+ organisations in Northern Ireland would say that the higher end of that parameter is more accurate when we assess how many young people are currently availing of support (or on waiting lists) in NI through gender identity clinics and LGBTQ+ community organisations.

Approximately 4% of LGBTQ+ identifying young people will access information and support in regards to sexual orientation and gender identity issues from their youth club, showing a serious need for education and inclusion about LGBTQ+ identities across the youth work sector, both statutory and voluntary.

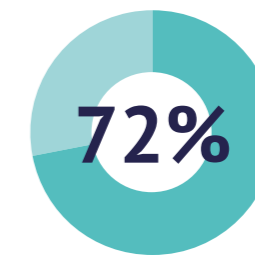
LGBTQ+ specific supports are extremely limited in NI. They are best in Belfast, Derry-Londonderry and Newry due to the presence of different LGBT community centres and the use of these centres by the more regional LGBTQ+ organisations. LGBTQ+ young people however have little no access to specific support apart from the regional Cara-Friend LGBT Youth groups, which operate in some major towns and cities across Northern Ireland. Again, this emphasises the need for LGBTQ+ inclusive practice, which adequately serves LGBTQ+ young people, in mainstream services including all youth services and clubs.

Evidence-Based Need for Specific Support

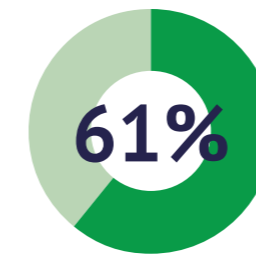
In December 2017 Cara-Friend and Youth Action published 'Still Shouting' (O'Neill & Meehan, 2017). This was a report based on a survey of 260 LGBTQ+ young people in Northern Ireland, aged 12-25. As well as exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in our secondary schools, it also looked at their experiences in youth clubs, and the mental health implications of these experiences:



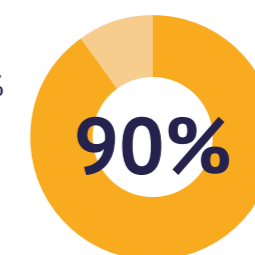
68% of LGBTQ+ youth had experienced bullying in school because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity



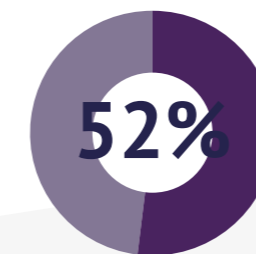
72% of LGBTQ+ young people experienced negative attitudes in school around their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



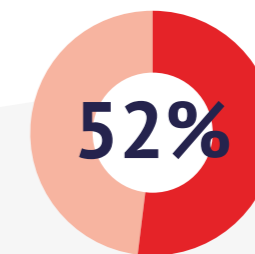
61% of lesbian, bisexual and gay young people reported contemplating suicide, with 25% of all respondents saying they had attempted suicide because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



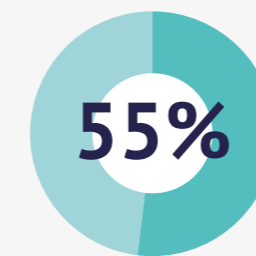
90% of transgender young people reported contemplating suicide with 49% of all transgender young people having attempted suicide.



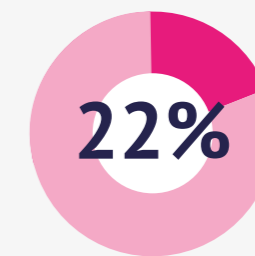
52% of young people noted self-harming as a result of how they were treated due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



52% of LGBTQ+ young people have never been a member of a youth club.



55% of LGBTQ+ young people (who are members of youth clubs) do not receive any information, education or support around LGBTQ+ identities or issues.



22% of LGBTQ+ young people have experienced negative responses within youth clubs because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

When we take all the above research into consideration we can see how important it is that youth clubs and youth service providers make an effort to be a more open and accepting place for LGBTQ+ young people. There are many ways in which youth workers, management and volunteers can do this.

Section 3: Practical Ways to be an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Youth Worker

Youth workers have a duty of care for each and every young person availing of their support and attending their youth club. A good youth service or club is one which puts its young people and their wellbeing first. The youth club environment is not an appropriate place for an employee to work out their personal beliefs on whether they think a particular sexual orientation or gender identity is moral or not. Every young person deserves a safe, welcoming and accepting environment for them to come and be supported and encouraged in every day. Youth clubs

are one of the places where young people spend a significant amount of their time. For some young people it is a refuge from home and/or school, or the place they feel most comfortable away from home. Youth services and youth workers, therefore, have a responsibility to ensure they do their best for all young people, including LGBTQ+ young people. They also have a responsibility to make their youth service accessible to LGBTQ+ young people who are not yet members, i.e. that it is a visibly welcoming place for LGBTQ+ young people.

Visibility

We often hear from some youth services or youth workers that their clubs don't have LGBTQ+ young people in them. This is extremely unlikely. The general proportion of the population accepted to be LGBTQ+ is 10%, with up to 1% identifying as transgender. Just because youth workers aren't aware of a young person or young people openly identifying as LGBTQ+ does not mean that this isn't the case. Perhaps the youth club environment is not one where they feel comfortable being open about who they are. If that is the case then something needs to change.

Responding well to an LGBTQ+ young person is very important, but being proactive is even better! Visibility of LGBTQ+ identities is an important factor in how comfortable a young person who is LGBTQ+ feels in that setting. Visibility is an easy one to improve upon. Here are some tips:

- The use and inclusion of LGBTQ+ emblems and symbols in a youth club or centre is a great and easy way to give visibility to those identities. It makes LGBTQ+ young people feel safe and included.

- Marking or taking part in various events throughout the year aimed at highlighting LGBTQ+ issues and identities, such as Pride (which currently takes part in Derry-Londonderry, Belfast and Newry over the summer months), LGBT Awareness Week (which is co-organised across NI by Cara-Friend in May each year) and Trans Visibility Day (which takes place annually in November).
- Use of LGBTQ+ inclusive posters announcing that the youth club or centre is a safe space for everyone, including LGBTQ+ young people. Cara-Friend have these freely available for all schools upon request.
- Running workshops which cover LGBTQ+ topics, issues or stories. For example, why not run an LGBTQ+ awareness workshop which covers some of the information included in this resource?
- Refer to different types of relationships (such as gay or lesbian) in the context of examples given in workshops and sessions, rather than only referring to heteronormative examples, i.e. only using male-female examples of sexual relationships in a sexual health workshop.

Responding to Coming Out

If a young person in your youth group comes out to you as being lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender it usually means that they hold you in high regard and have placed a lot of trust in you. If they haven't come out to you but you are aware that they are LGBTQ+ because of an incident or their being outed by someone else, then the same guidance below is applicable. It's all about creating a responsive, respectful and caring environment for the young person to talk about it. A good reaction to someone disclosing that they are LGBTQ+ to a youth worker, peer leader or volunteer would involve:

- Signposting to other organisations for additional or more specialised support. This is particularly important if you feel out of your depth. It's okay to not be able to offer all the support and information necessary. There is a list of external organisations towards the end of this resource.
- Listening to what the young person is saying. Allow them to express themselves and to self-identify. If you don't understand what the young person is saying then just ask them what it means. It is better to ask and listen, rather than assume or dismiss. Listening to the young person will empower them. Remember: you may be the first adult they have ever spoken to about their identity.
- Asking supportive questions, but not interrogating the young person.
- Giving the young person time to think and speak. Talking about these issues can often be emotionally difficult and even embarrassing for the young person. Time and space are just as important as a supportive and willing advocate.
- Respect their confidentiality. A young person identifying as LGBTQ+ is not a child protection concern in and of itself. Outing them to parents, carers or other group members may put them and their wellbeing at risk. If there are additional issues related to the young person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity then these must, of course, be addressed appropriately.
- Thank you for telling me.
- I understand talking about this is difficult but I'm here to listen.
- I want to understand how you are feeling.
- You can talk to me about this anytime.
- I'm proud of you for telling me.
- I'm happy you felt you could talk to me about how you feel.
- I will help in any way I can.

Here are some questions you may want to think about when speaking to a young person who has just come out to you.

- Do you have a supportive and understanding peer network?
- Do you feel isolated in any way?
- Are you being bullied?
- Are you out to your parents?
- How have your parents taken the news?
- What would you like me to do next?
- Would you like me to contact outside organisations on your behalf?

It is very important for young people to hear positive and supporting comments. Try to use compassionate and encouraging language. Your initial reaction is extremely important and will set the tone for future interactions. Here is some helpful language you can use. This could also be helpful for someone who is struggling with their identity or is facing discrimination and/or bullying because of their being LGBTQ+:



Signposting

If you feel unable to support the young person beyond the initial conversation then signposting to an external organisation is a good idea. We encourage all youth services to signpost to Cara-Friend for any advice, guidance or support, should they feel unsure about how best to support the young person. The same advice, guidance and support is also available from Cara-Friend to youth workers too.

As social isolation is a big problem among LGBTQ+ youth, LGBTQ+ specific youth groups can provide a great safe, support for the young people to avail of. There are a number of them all around Northern Ireland run by the Education Authority and Youth Action NI. Cara-Friend run LGBTQ+ youth groups in the following areas:

- Belfast
- Derry/Londonderry
- Ballymena
- Cookstown
- Armagh
- Newry

Sometimes a group setting is not the most appropriate place for a young person to avail of support, and may need more confidential and targeted support from one of our youth officers. Cara-Friend staff travel to any location in Northern Ireland to speak to young people who are having difficulties with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Cara-Friend staff are always at hand to speak to youth workers, peer leaders and volunteers who would like more information or support in person or by phone. We also respond to queries by email. Check out our website (www.cara-friend.org.uk) for more information. You can also check out our training page on the website to see a full range of training available to youth clubs across Northern Ireland.

How To Make Your Youth Club LGBTQ+ Inclusive:

- Use inclusive signs and symbols like posters, flyers, flags and notice boards. Creating a noticeboard with visible information will communicate to the young person their youth club is more inclusive than they might have thought.
- Encourage debate and talk about LGBTQ+ issues in the workshops - awareness creates acceptance.
- Does your youth service have a uniform? Can it be more inclusive, or are you forcing young people to 'out' themselves so they can wear a specific uniform? Having a flexible uniform policy future-proofs your youth club and youth service in accommodating a transgender young person.
- Think about changing facilities within the youth club if you have them - how could you make a young person feel more comfortable in this environment, particularly if they are non-binary or are transitioning?
- Think about toilet facilities - create at least one gender neutral toilet that can be accessed by anyone. Young people may not feel comfortable in same-sex toilets for a variety of reasons that can be linked to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Youth service policies and procedures - amend these now to ensure there are clear paths to follow when issues potentially arise in the future.
- Use and record preferred names of transgender young people to make them feel accepted for who they are. If it is youth club policy only to record legal names, then think about how staff can still use preferred names on a day-to-day basis in the youth group.
- Try to understand and use the correct pronouns for those young people transitioning in your youth service.

How To Deal With LGBT-Phobic Bullying

LGBT-phobic bullying is bullying behaviours targeted towards people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. It can include verbal abuse, physical abuse or cyber-bullying. LGBT-phobic bullying can also be directed towards those who are perceived as being LGBTQ+ though the target of this bullying may not identify as LGBTQ+ themselves, either because they are not LGBTQ+ or because they have not fully 'come out' yet. An environment that allows the root cause of bullying to go unchallenged is an unsafe one - not just for the target of the bullying behaviour, but also for other LGBTQ+ who may not be the target in one particular incident.

Remember bullying doesn't just happen in school! It can happen anywhere and can often take place in youth clubs.

Here are some tips for tackling bullying behaviours targeted towards an LGBTQ+ young person:

- Don't tolerate homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or use of LGBTQ-phobic language - challenge it right away even if that means stopping a workshop, game or match.
- Educate the person demonstrating bullying behaviour - they may come from a homophobic family background or they may simply not have the awareness to know what language they are using.
- Provide tailored support for the target of the bullying behaviour, which directly addresses the motivational factor for the bullying behaviour, i.e. don't sweep the fact that were called a homophobic or transphobic slur under the carpet: this could be your only chance to provide support to someone who is struggling with their identity.
- If LGBTQ-phobic bullying is widespread or has become a problem within a group then address it by naming it and condemning it. Consider also doing some group-based work with the group to raise their awareness of LGBTQ+ identities and the implications of bullying someone because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. (See [Cara-Friend's resource on tackling LGBT-phobic bullying on our website](#), or consider [booking a ShoutOut workshop with us](#)).
- Remember that using homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language in any context is a type of untargeted bullying behaviour and should be challenged. It is unacceptable for young people to use words such as 'faggot', 'dyke', 'tranny', etc.
- Using 'gay' as a negative or pejorative term is also isolating for those who may - openly or not - identify as LGBTQ+. This should also be challenged.

LGBTQ+ Groups in Your Youth Centre

This can usually only apply to larger youth services, who would have sufficient numbers to allow an LGBTQ+ specific group to run alongside their regular groups. It can be treated in the same way as a young men's or young women's project group, for example Running one of these groups allows you to focus directly on the issues facing LGBTQ+ young people, and gives them a specific space in order to be themselves without fear of judgement. Including allies into this structure is another dimension of inclusion, bringing the opportunity for LGBTQ+ youth to educate them and for the allies to bring that learning into their respective lives and peer groups.

Also, adding the word 'trans-inclusive' onto young men and women's project groups brings a layer of visible inclusivity for young transgender people. You must ensure that your young men's or young women's group is actually inclusive before doing this, of course. If you require advice on how to do this you can contact us for help, including booking trans awareness training for members of these groups either from ourselves or one of the transgender organisations in NI.

Workshops

You will find two workshops in this section which you can facilitate with young people in your youth club or group, which will help them understand LGBTQ+ identities by creating a dialogue and safe space where these can be discussed.

WORKSHOP I Understanding LGBTQ+ Identities and Language

AIM

To raise awareness among participants of LGBTQ+ identities and terminology.

METHOD

Copy the required number of sheets from the worksheet below. Pass around to the participants and ask them, in groups or individually, to complete the worksheet by matching the definitions (in the right column) to each word (in the left column). When everyone has completed their worksheet facilitate a discussion around each word and its meaning to ensure the young people have fully understood them. Use the Glossary of Terms at the end of this resource for help/guidance.

MATERIALS

Copies of worksheets, flipchart, markers.

TIME 30-45 minutes.

Workshop I: Understanding LGBTQ+ Identities and Language

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|----|---|
| 1. Gay | _____ | A. | A person who is physically, romantically and emotionally attracted to both males and females. |
| 2. Lesbian | _____ | B. | People who naturally (without medical intervention) develop primary and/or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into society's definitions of male or female. |
| 3. Coming Out | _____ | C. | A term used to describe people who, for the most part, identify as the gender they were assigned at birth. |
| 4. Bisexual | _____ | D. | Someone who is not limited in sexual orientation with regard to biological sex, gender or gender identity. |
| 5. Transition | _____ | E. | A word used to describe someone of either gender who is physically, romantically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same gender. |
| 6. Queer | _____ | F. | A term used to describe a cisgender and heterosexual individual who is aware of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and actively challenges it. |
| 7. Transgender | _____ | G. | The process of telling someone about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity. |
| 8. Intersex | _____ | H. | A sexuality characterised by lack of sexual attraction or lack of a desire for partnered sexuality. |
| 9. Ally | _____ | I. | A gender identity which does not fall into the traditional gender binary of 'male' and 'female'. |
| 10. Non-Binary | _____ | J. | Traditionally a pejorative/derogatory term, this word has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ+ people to describe themselves and their community. |
| 11. Asexual | _____ | K. | A viewpoint or approach which assumes heterosexuality as the default, 'normal' or preferred sexual orientation. |
| 12. Heteronormative | _____ | L. | A woman or girl whose physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to other women or girls. |
| 13. LGBTQ+ Pride | _____ | M. | Transitioning is a process of changing one's birth sex (or gender expression) to more accurately align with one's gender identity. |
| 14. Pansexual | _____ | N. | A celebration of diversity within the LGBTQ+ community which is marked in thousands of cities every year. |
| 15. Cisgender | _____ | O. | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth |

Workshop II: Walking Debate

AIM

To explore and challenge the participants' viewpoints on a number of LGBTQ+ issues.

METHOD

Gather the participants in the middle of a room. Instruct them that when you read out a statement they must move to a designated section of the room which will represent that they 'agree', 'disagree' or 'don't know'. The right hand side of the room could be 'agree', the middle 'don't know' and the left 'disagree', for example.

Read a number of statements - one at a time - and allow the participants to vote with their feet. Ask participants in each section to explain why they are standing there and allow participants to try and convince others to come to their section.

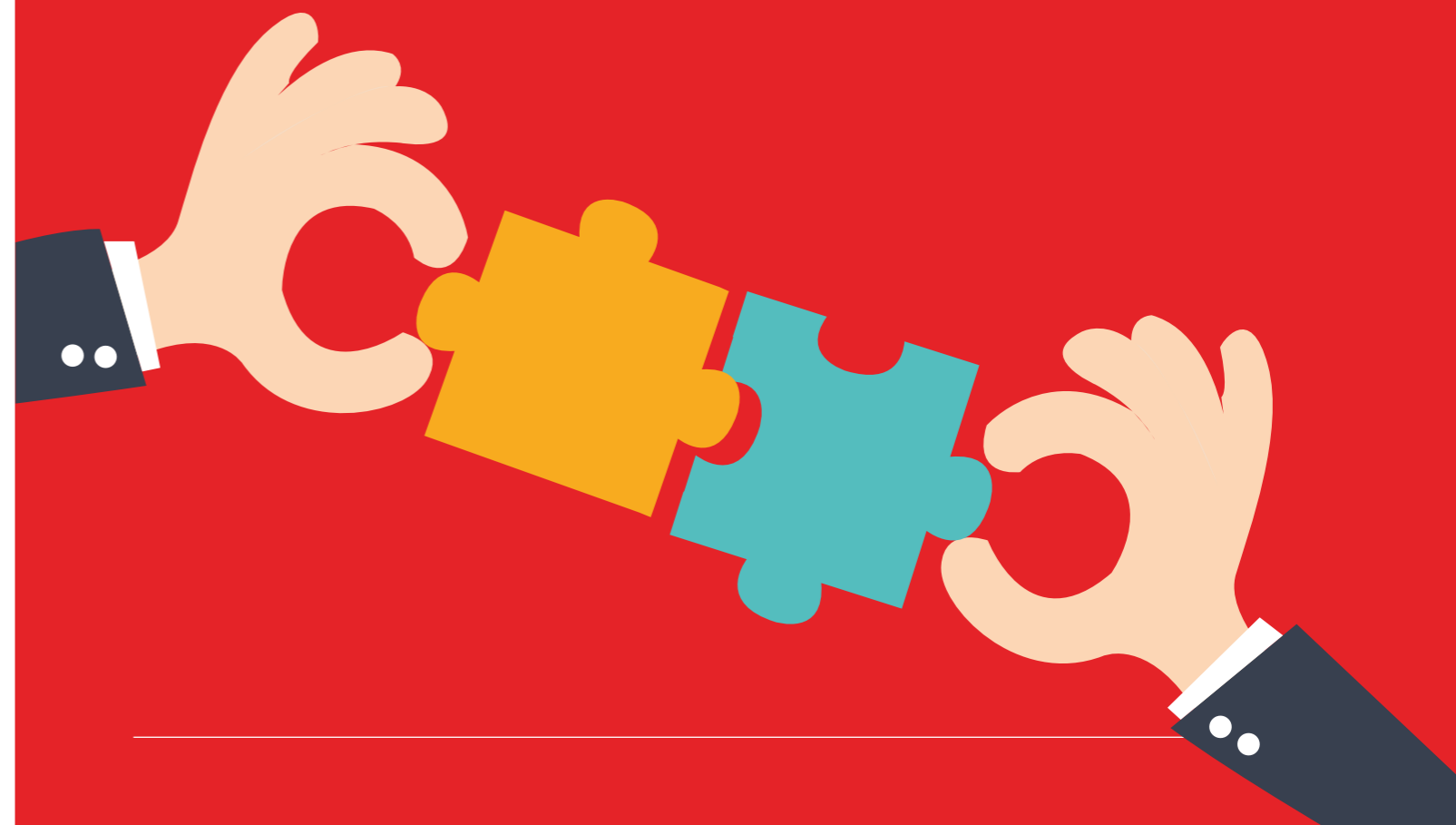
MATERIALS

A room with enough space to allow participants to move around in.

TIME 30 minutes.

Statements

1. I don't mind gay people but I don't want to see them kissing or holding hands in public.
2. Being bisexual isn't real, it's just a phase.
3. I believe a person should be allowed to marry whoever they want, regardless of sexual orientation or gender.
4. Schools should be a more welcoming place for LGBTQ+ young people.
5. Our youth club could do more to make LGBTQ+ young people feel more welcome and accepted.
6. All toilets should be gender-neutral.
7. Trans people should be allowed wear whatever uniform makes them feel most comfortable.



External Support From LGBTQ+ Organisations:

Cara-Friend

Cara-Friend is the LGBTQ+ youth service for Northern Ireland. They work with LGBTQ+ young people aged 12-25 and offer a variety of supports, including LGBTQ+ youth groups and one-to-one support. They also deliver the LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools Programme (see brochure on website) which offers organisational support and guidance for schools; one-to-one support for LGBTQ+ young people; Gay-Straight Alliance support; and ShoutOut anti-bullying workshops, which tackle negative attitudes among young people towards LGBTQ+ identities. Cara-Friend is any individual or organisation's one-stop shop for support, guidance and signposting when wishing to better support LGBTQ+ young people.

www.cara-friend.org.uk

Belfast LGBT Centre Office: (028) 9089 0202

Foyle LGBT Centre Office: (028) 7128 3030

The Rainbow Project:

The Rainbow Project: is an LGBTQ+ health organisation that works to improve the physical, sexual, mental & emotional health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people in Northern Ireland. One of their core services is free counselling for LGBTQ+ people.

www.rainbow-project.org

Belfast LGBT Centre Office: (028) 9031 9030

Foyle LGBT Centre Office: (028) 7128 3030



SAIL NI:

SAIL NI is a support organisation for the families of transgender and gender variant people in Northern Ireland. They directly support families across the region, as well as advocating for trans people and their families at a regional, national and European level.

www.sailni.com

Belfast Trans Resource Centre: (028) 9532 0023

GenderJam:

GenderJam support and advocate for the young trans community in Northern Ireland. They are working to make the region better for trans, non-binary, questioning and intersex people. They also run trans-specific social drop-in groups for those aged under 25 in Belfast and Newry.

www.genderjam.org.uk

Belfast Trans Resource Centre: (028) 9099 6819



MORE INFORMATION

Cara-Friend's website is a wealth of information with numerous resources available for free download:

- A Young Person's Guide to Coming Out
- A Parent & Carer's Resource: Supporting Your LGBTQ+ Child
- A Teacher's Resource: Encouraging LGBTQ+ Inclusive Practice
- A Youth Worker's Resource: Encouraging LGBTQ+ Inclusive Practice
- Guide to Tackling LGBT-Phobic Bullying
- Guide to Transitioning in Education and Youth Services
- LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools Programme
- Gay-Straight Alliance Toolkit

Glossary of Terms

Ally

A term used to describe a cisgender and heterosexual individual who is aware of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and actively challenges it.

Androgynous

A term used to describe an individual whose gender expression and/or identity may be neither distinctly 'female' nor 'male', usually based on appearance.

Asexual

A sexuality characterised by lack of sexual attraction or lack of a desire for partnered sexuality.

Biphobia

The fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are bisexual.

Bisexual (Bi)

A person who is physically, romantically and emotionally attracted to both males and females.

Cisgender

A term used to describe people who, for the most part, identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Closeted

Describes a person who has yet to 'come out of the closet', i.e. they are not open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Coming Out

The process of telling someone about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It is not a one-time event as an individual must come out countless times over the course of their lifetime.

Gay

A word used to describe someone of either gender who is physically, romantically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same gender. More often used for males attracted to males.

Gender Expression

Refers to how someone expresses their gender. This may refer to how an individual dresses, their general appearance, the way they speak, and/or the way they carry themselves.

Gender Identity

An individual may have a gender identity which is different to or the same as their biological sex. Gender identity is a personal, deeply felt sense of one's own gender. It is important to note that an individual's gender identity is completely separate from their sexual orientation. Everyone has a gender identity, regardless of whether someone is transgender or otherwise.

Gender Neutral

A term used to describe facilities that any individual can use regardless of their gender (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms).

This term can also be used to describe an individual who does not subscribe to any gender (sometimes referred to as 'Gender Queer').

Gender Non Conforming

A person who is, or is perceived to have gender characteristics that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations.

Gender Role

A societal expectation of how an individual should act, think and/or feel based upon their biological sex.

Heteronormative

A viewpoint or approach which assumes heterosexuality as the default, 'normal' or preferred sexual orientation, as opposed to one of many possibilities.

Heterosexual

People whose physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex (also known as 'straight').

Homosexual

People whose physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to people of the same sex (see also 'gay' and 'lesbian').

Homophobia	The fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are gay or lesbian.
HBT	Acronym for 'Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic', generally used by those working with these attitudes as an abbreviation.
Intersex	People who naturally (without medical intervention) develop primary and/or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into society's definitions of male or female.
Lesbian	A woman or girl whose physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to other women or girls. Some lesbians identify as gay women.
Non-binary	A gender identity which does not fall into the traditional gender binary of 'male' and 'female'. Non-binary is an umbrella term and can describe a wide range of identities and experiences.
Outing	The act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumour and/or speculation, but often based on disclosures made) or revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent. This is considered inappropriate.
Out	When someone is 'out' their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is not secret, and is disclosed comfortably by an individual.
Pansexual	Not limited in sexual orientation with regard to biological sex, gender or gender identity.
Pronouns	Pronouns are how we refer to someone in the third person, e.g. 'he', 'she' or 'they'. If someone is transgender then their gender identity is different to the sex assigned at birth, so an individual may choose to be referred to using different pronouns to that of their legal biological sex.

Queer	Traditionally a pejorative term, queer has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. It is not universally accepted within the LGBT community and should be avoided unless someone self-identifies that way.
Questioning	The process of considering or exploring one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
Trans or Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Someone who was assigned male at birth may identify as female and therefore would be considered transgender. Note it does not have anything to do with alterations made to bodies, it relates to gender identity.
Transition	Transitioning is a process of changing one's birth sex to more accurately align with one's gender identity. It is a complex process which occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, legal and medical changes: telling one's family; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; changing pronouns, hormone treatment, surgery, etc.
Transphobia	The fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are transgender.

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