



# One minute guide

## Working with lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) young people

No. 82, June 2015

### What is LGB and how does it relate to our services?

LGB is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay and bisexual people:

Lesbian - a woman who is attracted to other women

Gay - a man who is attracted to other men (though the term 'gay' is not exclusive to men, and a lesbian can be described as a gay woman)

Bisexual - a person of either gender who is attracted to both men and women

The terms described above relate to sexual orientation, which is defined as a combination of emotional, romantic, sexual or affectionate attraction to another person. In other words, it's about who you are attracted to, fall in love with and want to live your life with.

Sometimes the acronym LGBT is used, which includes transgender people. There is a separate one minute guide to working with transgender young people ([guide](#)) as there are additional things that practitioners need to be aware of in relation to gender identity, which is different to sexual orientation.

It is difficult to estimate how many LGB people there are in the UK, but the Government use the figure of between five and seven percent of the population. Many LGB young people are aware of their sexual orientation from a young age, though they may not have shared this with anybody. Any of the young people you are working with may identify as LGB, and you should not make assumptions about any young person's sexual orientation.

All young people want places to go and things to do, in an environment where they feel valued, accepted and included, and we in children's services have a moral and legal duty to provide these environments for young LGB people. The Equality Act 2010 made sexual orientation a [protected characteristic](#), which means that any service provided to young people, whether publicly funded or not, cannot lawfully discriminate against LGB people. In addition, the Act introduced the public sector Equality Duty, which means that services have to consider how they can address inequalities experienced by LGB people.

### What is 'coming out'?

The process of LGB people telling others about their sexual orientation is often referred to as 'coming out'. Coming out to somebody for the first time can be very stressful, as young people may fear rejection or discrimination. For this reason, young people will often tell someone they trust and have confidence in. If a young person comes out to you, they may simply want somebody to talk to about what can be a confusing and scary time for them, or they may want support in accessing further information - the links in this one minute guide may be helpful.

There is further information about how to talk to young people about their sexuality in the [guide](#) for practitioners produced by LGB charity Stonewall. The key thing to remember is not to share this confidential and personal information with anybody, particularly the young person's family, unless you have the young person's permission, or unless you have **additional** information that gives you reason to believe that they may be at risk of significant harm, e.g. if they are in a relationship with a much older person.

## What barriers or difficulties might LGB young people face?

A lot of LGB young people do not experience any difficulties with their sexuality, and are accepted by their family, friends and community. However, some LGB young people may have an increased risk of poor outcomes, for example:

**Homophobic bullying** - According to Stonewall's [School Report \(2012\)](#), 55% of those young people surveyed had experienced homophobic bullying (with 44% of those skipping school as a result), 96% hear homophobic remarks at school and only 10% report that their teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it;

**Homelessness** - The [Albert Kennedy Trust \(AKT\)](#), a charity which works with homeless LGBT young people estimates that around one in four homeless young people identifies as LGBT. 85% of the young people AKT work with have faced some kind of rejection from their parents because they are LGBT;

**Drug and alcohol use** - a [study](#) of LGB alcohol and drug use in England reported that LGB people aged 16-24 were two and half times more likely than other young people to have used a drug (excluding alcohol) in the last month, while the proportion binge drinking at least once a week was twice that of their heterosexual peers;

**Mental health** - Stonewall's School Report notes that 23% LGB young people have tried to take their own life (the Samaritans estimates that 7% of all young people have done so), while 56% LGB young people have deliberately harmed themselves in some way (the NSPCC estimates 7-10% of all young people self-harm);

**Sex and relationship education** - [Government figures](#) suggest that rates of sexually transmitted infections are highest amongst young people aged 15 - 24, with high rates also amongst gay men. 85% of School Report respondents said they had never been taught in school about the biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships; and

**Domestic violence** - [estimates](#) suggest that rates of domestic violence ([guide](#)) are around the same for same sex relationships as for heterosexual, but the responses of many services are focused on the experiences of heterosexual people. LGB young people who are experiencing domestic violence would need to 'come out' to services in order to report their abuse and access help, a fact which some abusers exploit when they threaten to 'out' their partner to their family and friends if they report the abuse.

## What is available for LGB young people in Leeds?

Leeds has a youth group for LGB young people aged 13 - 18, 'Out to 18'. The group meets regularly and offers both a safe space for LGB young people to socialise and 1-1 confidential support. Contact [samantha.horsfield@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.horsfield@leeds.gov.uk) for further information.

Stonewall list further groups and links under their '[What's In My Area?](#)' page for Yorkshire.

Stonewall have produced a comprehensive [guide](#) to working with LGB young people, which includes a lot of useful information and advice, e.g. on tackling homophobic bullying.

Stonewall also have a range of information on their [website](#), and an advice line: 08000 502020.

The Government Equalities Office in 2014 published a review of 'what works' in tackling [homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying](#).

The [Albert Kennedy Trust](#) can provide support in relation to LGBT young people and homelessness, and young people living in hostile environments.

The [Broken Rainbow](#) charity provide advice and support in relation to same-sex domestic violence; they also have a helpline: 0800 999 5428.

[Yorkshire MESMAC](#) is a local charity specialising in the health and social wellbeing of LGBT people, and provides services such as mental health support, counselling and sexual health advice. It also operates the [BLAST](#) project for boys and young men at risk of sexual exploitation.

The [Platform](#) service in Leeds is for young people who may need support with substance misuse.