

LGBT+ : Information for Parents/Carers

Growing up and developing one's own sexuality can be a difficult process for many young people, and it can be **even harder when a young person's developing sexual orientation or gender identity is different from expectations.**

A survey by LGBT Youth Scotland found that on average the gap between a young person first thinking they might be LGB or T and being able to tell someone about it is **3.5 years**. This constitutes a substantial proportion of a young person's life where **they are experiencing some degree of isolation and pressure.**

“Coming out” as LGB or T can be daunting, and many young people prefer to remain silent because of **fear of rejection at home or at school**. This is a realistic fear due to prejudice and homophobia, and some have even been made homeless by parents or carers, though this is thankfully less likely than in the past.

Although people may choose to keep silent to protect themselves, this can itself leave them **feeling isolated, unsupported and ill at ease with who they are.**

“Help us cope with difficult family situations. Families react or cope differently; sometimes they disown us” (LGBT young person)

There are connections between **early school leaving, poor educational attainment** and **homophobic bullying** at school.

Pupils who are constantly worried about bullying have less motivation to study.

Homophobia can make it difficult for “straight” pupils to be friends or stay friends with those perceived to be LGBT, further **increasing problems of isolation**

Scottish Government legislation states all bullying must be challenged, and **all pupils have an entitlement to be safe and secure.**

There will be young people who have **parents, carers, family and friends** who are LGB or T.
They may also have issues and need support.

Challenging homophobic language and homophobic bullying
benefits the whole school community

According to UK Government figures, between **5 and 7% of the population is LGB or T**. Due to those who feel the need to conceal their sexuality the real number is likely to be higher. At least **1 or 2 people out of 20** could therefore be LGBT+.

While being LGB or T is not the norm, it is normal.

1 in 4 of us will experience **mental health** issues in our lives. This figure is higher amongst LGBT+ people due to **prejudice, negative responses, rejection, pressure to conform and repression of self.**

44% of LGBT+ people have considered suicide.

The *“Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report”* showed that **almost 70% of LGB young people and 77% of Transgender respondents had experienced bullying in school.** Bullying is a contributory factor to poor mental health, as are fear and negative messages.

LGBT+ young people’s poor mental health is a result of ongoing discrimination, **not** of their sexual orientations or gender identities.

SUPPORTING YOUR TRANSGENDER CHILD MATTERS

Without parental support:

75% of trans young people suffer depression

57% attempt suicide

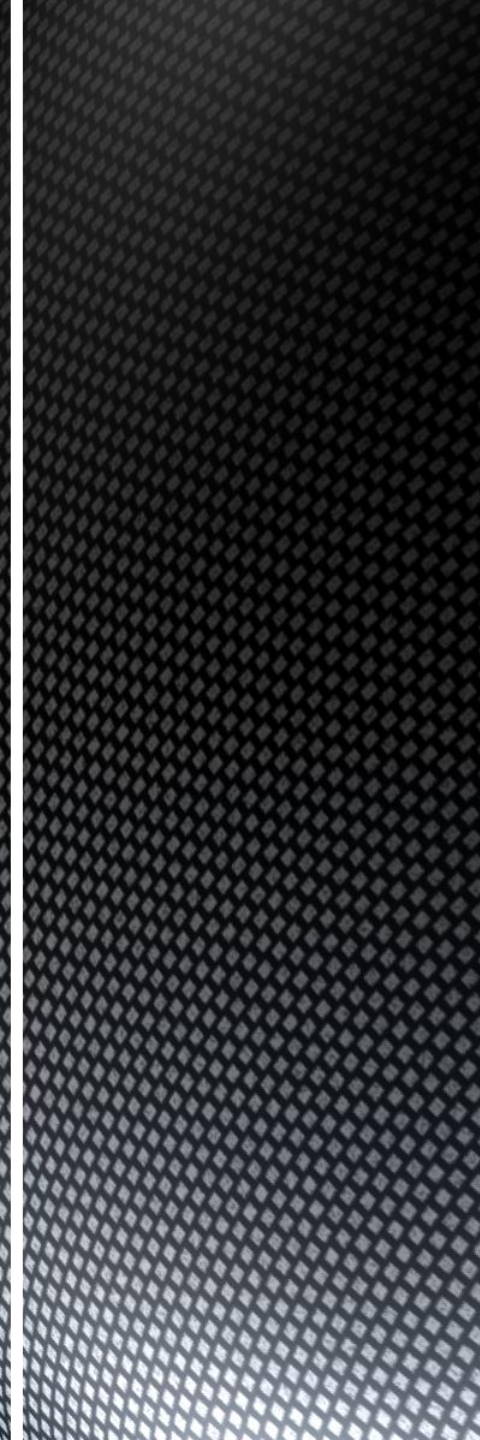
With parental support:

23% suffer depression

4% attempt suicide

Based on 2012 study for the TransPULSE project, Canada

How will we support
LGBT+ young people in
Dumfries Academy?



Research shows there is
a lack of positive portrayals of LGBT+ people
Being LGB or T is, however, often raised in film and TV as
being **a source of anxiety or abuse**

*We will find and include people in lessons who are significant
in a subject area and are also LGB or T. **LGBT History Month**
can help promote **inclusion**, and events will be organised
which
celebrate diversity.*

*When discussing families, we will remember there is a **diverse
range in modern society** whose existence can be
acknowledged positively*

*We will use terms that should be becoming comfortable throughout society to discuss sexuality and gender openly and without prejudice - **lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, coming out, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, homophobia and transphobia***

*The most important thing is an **understanding of the issues** faced by LGBT+ young people and of **respectful and appropriate language** with which to address these issues.*

Transgender issues are less understood, though this is slowly changing.

Trans pupils may not want to be “out” due to transphobia in society.

They may still be unsure themselves what their gender is.

There are things we will do to include pupils who are “**non-binary**” (who do not identify as either male or female) or who are a different gender from that assigned to them at birth

*Avoid binary groups – boys versus girls etc
Instead of saying “boys and girls” or “ladies and gentlemen”,
we will use “folks” or “people”*

*If a young person requests a different name or pronoun we
should follow their request*

If a young person “**comes out**” to a teacher, that teacher should

*Be open and **non-judgemental***

***Be honest.** If they can't answer a question, they will say so, then
promise to try to find out*

*Reinforce the idea that **being LGB or T is normal and nothing to
be ashamed of***

*Be prepared to **provide relevant and up-to-date information
and resources***

***Reassure them of confidentiality** (unless they believe them to
be at risk of harm, in which case follow the school's Child
Protection procedures).*

Pupils have a **Personal and Social Education** course and a **Health and Wellbeing** course, and these should cover LGBT+ issues as follows:

*S1: the **diversity** of human gender and sexuality; gender **stereotypes** and different genders; sexual orientation; issues that might face people who don't fit so-called "societal norms", such as **coming out, cyberbullying** etc*

*S2: the Equality Act; sexual and gender **discrimination** in our society; **homophobia and transphobia**; **transgender issues** and discrimination faced by transgender people; ways to **support** LGBT+ people in our communities*

*S3: the **diversity of families** in the UK, and how we should not make **assumptions** about each other; **discrimination** can be faced by families which are different from the traditional model; what makes a good friendship; how we can all support members of our school community who are LGBT+ or have families with LGBT+ members*

*S4: how people know what their sexual orientation or gender is; **what it means to “come out”**, and the barriers to acceptance that might exist; **being safe with a partner** through communication and respect for each other, and **what is meant by consent**; **contraception to avoid pregnancy and transmission of diseases**; family life for LGBT+ people*

*S5 & 6: what we mean by diversity and how **awareness and positivity** can help us to be happy in our own skin; how society and the media can lead us to have **unrealistic expectations** of ourselves and others; **societal prejudices** and how we can challenge them; how society is becoming more accepting, and what still needs to be done*

At all stages pupils will be signposted to local agencies which can help and support. We also deliver programmes on Mental Health and include LGBT+ issues within that as there can be difficulties with mental health due to rejection, bullying etc.

TRANSGENDER YOUNG PEOPLE

We will respect their right to **change their names and pronouns**.

If this change is to be made official on seemis we need parental consent up to age 16.

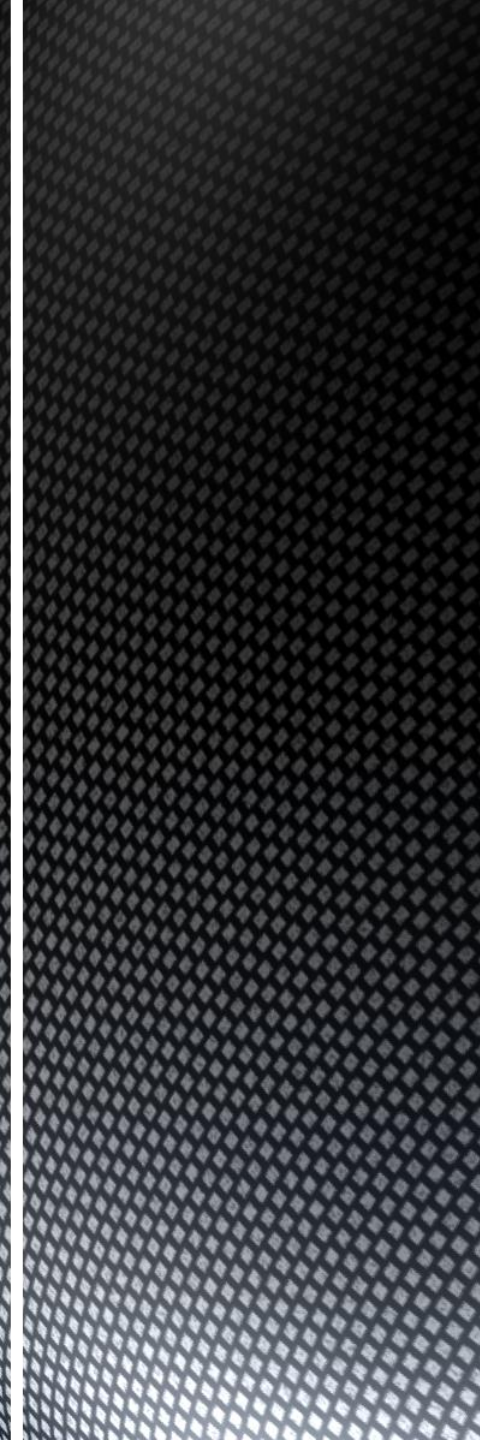
Pupils will be allowed to use **gender-neutral toilets** if available.

They can choose to use the toilets for the gender which they identify as.

Changing rooms are difficult, but we will ask the young person's opinion and try to accommodate them if possible eg with a curtained area, or access 5 minutes early or later. Hooded towels can be useful at swimming pools, and t-shirts will be allowed over swimsuits. **Binders** are fine as long as they don't restrict breathing

On **trips** young people will be allocated rooms according to the gender they identify as, but can also be offered a single room if they feel more comfortable.

Conversations with LGBT+ Young People



*“You need to focus on LGBT young people not hating themselves.
Don’t brush things under the carpet as if it doesn’t matter”*
(LGBT+ young person)

Thanks for telling
me that.

How are you
feeling about
all of this?

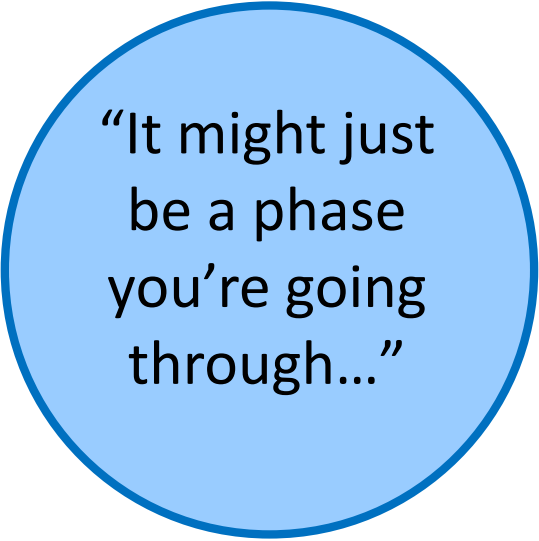
To be honest
I’m not sure –
would you like
me to find out?

Do you want to tell
me a bit more about
what is going on for
you?

With all of this
happening to you,
how’s school going?

I know that was difficult to say.
That is a really brave thing you’ve
done

The effects of **language** are powerful. We must be careful not to use language that is **dismissive of young people's feelings and emerging identities.**



“It might just be a phase you’re going through...”

...or it might not. How would you know? This is something they have probably built up for a long time to say. Suggesting it is a phase will diminish its importance at a time when it feels very important indeed.

“When did you decide you were gay?”

“When did you decide you were straight?” Sexuality and gender are innate, and realisation can be gradual.

“Don’t worry what they say – we know you’re not gay”

Anyone can be a victim of homophobic bullying, but what if they **are** LGB or T? You can still make clear the unacceptability of homophobia and the acceptability of identifying as LGBT+.

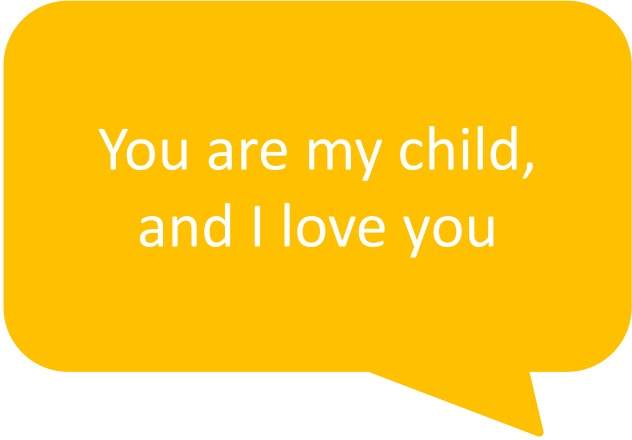
“If you were less obvious about it, it might make things better”

“Why should I have to change who I am just because people won’t accept it?”

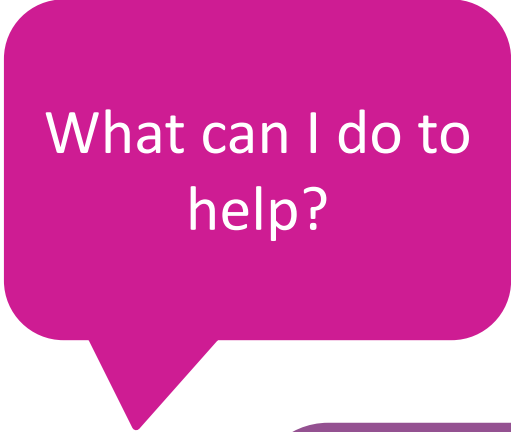
Girl, 16

Some young people are “out”, and some challenge gender roles and gender norms. This may put them at more risk of bullying. *However a suggestion like this implies the bullying is their fault.*

For anyone, repressing who they are is not sustainable, is not good for their mental health, and is likely to effect attainment. *It is the homophobia that needs to change, not the way young people choose to express themselves*



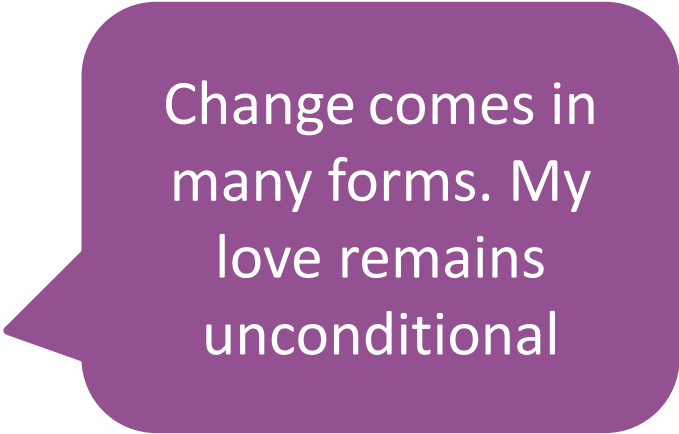
You are my child,
and I love you



What can I do to
help?



I believe you



Change comes in
many forms. My
love remains
unconditional

Posted by a parent of a trans young
person on Instagram

Legislation

Happy, Safe and Achieving Their Potential: A Standard of Support for Children and Young People in Scottish Schools

Standard 9: Respects Confidentiality

“School staff, children, young people and parents are clear that the majority of concerns can be discussed in confidence with any member of staff, and the school will involve children and young people in giving informed consent to share information with other services where this will help them. The school is also clear what staff will do where there are concerns about risk of harm, while communicating a commitment to support and involve the child or young person when information must be shared”

The school's standard policies and procedures around Child Protection will apply whenever a young person appears to be at risk. In these cases it should be made clear that it is the child protection issue which is leading you to breach confidentiality rather than the young person's sexual orientation or gender identity. **Identifying as LGBT+ and coming out as LGBT+ are not in themselves child protection concerns.**

Also...

The Equality Act 2010; The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; CfE; GIRFEC; Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009

With parents and carers, the importance of handling homophobic incidents sensitively cannot be stressed enough. **It cannot be assumed that young people have discussed these issues with parents and carers.**

Homophobic bullying is treated as bullying, so school calls your parents and discloses to them that it is homophobic bullying, so outs you to your parents

Male, 15 years old

Where there are no child protection concerns, information about a homophobic incident should only be shared with those with whom the young person feel comfortable, and only with their permission.

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR LGBT+ YOUNG PEOPLE

LGBT Youth Scotland, Laurieknowe, Dumfries DG2 7AJ. **01387 255058**

<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/dumfries>

<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/groups-and-support/find-local-youth-groups/spectrum/>

NHS - Sexual Health D&G, Nithbank, Dumfries DG1 2SD. **0345 702 3687**

Nurse helpline - 07736 955 219 (Monday to Friday 1pm to 2pm)

[http://www.nhsdg.scot.nhs.uk/Departments and Services/Sexual Health/Sexual Health Home](http://www.nhsdg.scot.nhs.uk/Departments_and_Services/Sexual_Health/Sexual_Health_Home)

Support for transgender young people

<https://www.sandyford.org/sandyford-sexual-health-services/>

<https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/>

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

<http://www.parentsenquiryscotland.org/>

<https://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk/find-a-local-service/counselling-services/dumfries-galloway>

<https://www.sandyford.org/parents-sandyford/>

[https://en-gb.facebook.com/pg/transparentsees2/about/?ref=page internal](https://en-gb.facebook.com/pg/transparentsees2/about/?ref=page_internal)

<https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/>