



**ENGAGING
YOUNG PEOPLE**

Contents

Introduction	2
Taking a youth work approach to engagement	3
What will engagement bring to public services?	4
What are LGBT young people saying about it?	6
Barriers for public services	9
How can I reach LGBT young people?	12
Tools for support	13



Introduction

LGBT young people are certainly part of the wider LGBT community, so why do we promote that you consider their specific needs rather than taking a whole community approach?

Well, in short, we know that LGBT young people often have compounded issues due to the intersection between their gender identity or sexuality and their age which makes them particularly vulnerable.

Commonly, LGBT young people can face higher rates of suicide, self-harm, school dropout and family breakdown¹.

Due to significant barriers, these young people may not only need higher levels of support to actively and positively engage with local communities, they will also have individual experiences to contribute during the development of services and policy in their area.

¹ LGBT Youth Scotland and Gay Men's Health, *live to tell: findings from a study of suicidal thoughts, feelings and behaviours amongst young gay and bisexual men in Edinburgh*; Edinburgh LGBT Youth Scotland and Gay men's Health, 2003.

Taking a youth work approach to engagement

Engaging with young people has significant differences than engaging with the wider community.

Effective engagement with young people requires planning, time, effort and sustained support. This is magnified in the case of young people from hard to reach communities such as LGBT young people².

We believe there are key principles to engaging with young people that should be taking into consideration before beginning.

- 1** Young people need longer to build up trust and feel confident to have their voices heard; effective planning will ensure you have adequate time.
- 2** Young people have a higher need for engagement which is more intense and provides support first and foremost.
- 3** Consultation does not work as a one off method; it can leave young people feeling disillusioned and under-valued.

² Scottish Executive, *engaging children & young people in community planning*; Edinburgh, Scottish Executive, 2006.

- 4 Young people respond more positively if they are included in planning from the beginning of the process, engaging a group of young people in peer research is a good example of this.
- 5 Young people respond more positively if they are included in planning from the beginning of the process; Engaging a group of young people in peer research is a good example of this.
- 6 Relying on LGBT organisations to facilitate work comes with a cost associated. Few voluntary organisations will have the resources to develop projects on your behalf without extra support in place.

What will engagement bring to public services?

We believe that public services should engage with LGBT young people because they want to and because they are required to.

There are a number of benefits for public services who engage meaningfully with LGBT young people, including: »

Taking a youth work approach to engagement

- » ◆ Providing services that meet the needs of a wider range of community members.
- ◆ Achieving better service design and improving existing services.
- ◆ Increasing and promoting youth citizenship.
- ◆ Fulfilling requirements of equality legislation.
- ◆ Demonstrating to young people that their voices count and feedback is welcome.

Consultation is a valuable step in engagement; however, engagement with LGBT young people is about much more than simply gathering views.

Engagement describes an on-going relationship between LGBT young people and public services where the aim is to ensure that LGBT young people are fully included and have access to relevant services that respond to their needs.

This may involve consultation, small group planning and focus groups, partnership work with equality organisations, commissioning services through specialist agencies and advertising and promoting mainstream services in targeted ways.

What are LGBT young people saying about it?

LGBT Youth Scotland has successfully developed LGBT inclusive initiatives in several geographic areas of Scotland. Although no two areas are the same, we have found a set of common themes.

In general, LGBT young people describe feeling isolated and disengaged with the wider community³. This is mainly around the issues highlighted earlier in this guide, such as:

- ◆ Fear of rejections and homophobia.
- ◆ Bullying and harassment.
- ◆ Lack of information on LGBT issues.
- ◆ Lack of visible, positive role models.
- ◆ Lack of places to go and access to support.



³ LGBT Youth Scotland, *stakeholder survey 2008-09*; Edinburgh, LGBT Youth Scotland, 2009.

» **What LGBT young people say they would like to see in their area is:**

An improved **range of activities** for them to take part in.

More effort to **reach out** to where they're at, particularly for individuals from more excluded groups.

Access to services that build their confidence, engage them with LGBT cultural events and **connect them to other young people** who identify as LGBT.

People in public service who understand the issues they might be facing and able to **provide support**.

A confidential service, without fear that parents or carers will be involved just because of a young person's gender identity or sexuality.

Improved ways to **influence decision making** in their own communities.

Barriers for public services

There are a number of common beliefs about LGBT young people that we hear regularly from public services. These are myths that build barriers to successful engagement.

1 Young people are not old enough to know if they are LGBT – if we provide information and services it could be confusing for them.

Reality: People come out to themselves when they are ready and this can be at any age. Some young people tell us they knew they were different from a very young age. When young people are given negative messages or no message about being LGBT it can have a lasting negative impact on their wellbeing and development.

2 There are no LGBT young people living in this area anyway – so what's the big deal?

Reality: LGBT people live all over Scotland, in every area of the country. They may choose to stay hidden in their community due to concerns about negative reactions and bullying. This does not mean that they do not exist. By tackling homophobia in a wider community sense you can address some of these concerns and begin to build a more open and diverse community.

3 We treat everyone equally; therefore homophobia is not a problem in our service.

Reality: The term equality can be confused and misinterpreted. There is a tendency to think that mainstream services demonstrate a commitment to equality as they are non-specific and open to anyone. Although on the surface this may seem like it is working, unless prior work has been done to ensure that more vulnerable groups are confident and able to access mainstream services, you cannot be sure that you are providing an equality of service to all.

4 Parents will complain if we begin talking about gay issues to children.

Reality: Homophobia & homophobic bullying are serious threats to a young person's wellbeing and development. Supporting all young people is an expectation for public services, no matter who the young person is. We know that no public service in Scotland wants to see any young person bullied or excluded for any reason. Often parents and carers will be interested and happy to see issues of diversity taken seriously by public services. Don't forget that many young people may also have an LGBT parent or family member. »

Barriers for public services

- » The above beliefs are problematic as they demonstrate a failure to acknowledge
 - a** The hidden nature of LGBT young people within local communities.
 - b** The unique experiences and needs of LGBT young people.
 - c** The real meaning of equality within service provision.

Public services must take their role seriously to learn about the whole community that they serve. This may firstly involve delivering needs assessments to build knowledge of the issues.

You may want to deliver this yourself, or you may want to group together with other public services and contract this work to an LGBT or equalities organisation.

How can I reach LGBT young people?

Getting in touch with local or national organisations working with LGBT young people can support you to reach out to LGBT youth communities. LGBT Youth Scotland can provide information about groups and partners across Scotland.

If there are no LGBT youth services operating in your area then you might want to think about the other ways you can be proactive.

- ◆ Set up a development group of interested professionals from a range of sectors to begin discussing an action plan to raise awareness of LGBT identities.
- ◆ Go along to an LGBT event that is already happening to promote your desire to engage with LGBT young people.
- ◆ Develop a survey to gather views of LGBT young people in an anonymous way.
- ◆ Design promotional material for youth groups and schools to promote your services, consultation or needs assessment.

Tools for support

LGBT Youth Scotland has a range of programmes and tools to offer that can begin your journey to engagement with LGBT young people.

LGBT National Youth Council (NYC)

The (LGBT) National Youth Council (NYC) is a network of young people from across Scotland, supported by LGBT Youth Scotland. Members represent LGBT young people from their local youth group or local authority area.

You can support young people from your area to take part in the NYC* which can be a great starting point to support you to develop engagement methods, reach out to young people in your area and find out what current issues are.

To find out more and to discuss a partnership with the NYC you can email nyc@lgbtyouth.org.uk and check out their webpages www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/nyc

* Cost associated with NYC membership

The National Gathering

LGBT Youth Scotland delivers this annual event in partnership with a different local authority each year.

The event brings together over 120 LGBT young people from around Scotland for a weekend residential to focus on thematic issues, current priorities and address social isolation.

Local partners have told us that they benefit from:

- ◆ The opportunity to feed-in local priorities and need to the planning of the event.
- ◆ The opportunity to meet with the youth planning team, and involve local young people in this structure.
- ◆ The opportunity to showcase work in that local area and demonstrate commitment to the equality agenda.
- ◆ The opportunity to raise awareness and tackle homophobia in the local area.
- ◆ The opportunity to launch services, projects and consultations.

If you are interested and would like to find out more, please contact **info@lgbtyouth.org.uk** with the subject line National Gathering. »



» **LGBT History Month**

LGBT History Month takes place in Scotland every February. It is an opportunity to celebrate LGBT lives and culture by exploring our own and others' histories in an LGBT context.

Every year a range of arts, cultural and educational events take place across the country. Public bodies that use LGBT History Month can raise awareness within communities, build interest and momentum around LGBT and equalities work and develop partnerships with local youth groups and agencies.

To find out more, go to **www.lgbthistory.org.uk**.



The LGBT Charter of Rights

The LGBT Charter of Rights is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

We have developed a toolkit which goes with this charter and makes it easy for you to see how you can mainstream LGBT issues into your service.

By working through the charter mark scheme you can ensure that LGBT people who access your service(s) can feel confident that they will be included, valued and supported.

You can find out more and register for this scheme online at www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/charter or email info@lgbtyouth.org.uk with the subject line 'LGBT Charter Mark'. »

» **LGBT Service Development**

LGBT Youth Scotland has a successful history of providing support, consultation and partnership to local authorities and public bodies who wish to develop LGBT specific services.

Each area is different and we have a range of models that you can consider, including:

- ◆ Advice and consultation for managers, about setting up specific groups and responding to local need.
- ◆ Training and development for youth workers and volunteers.
- ◆ Full delivery of youth groups, including staff recruitment, support and line management.
- ◆ Bespoke resources for youth workers, including thematic workshop plans, group recording sheets and guidance about providing appropriate sexual health services.

All of these models have costs associated.

For more information and for an informal meeting about how we can help you, contact **info@lgbtyouth.org.uk** with the subject line National Development.

CHALLENGING HOMOPHOBIA TOGETHER

Challenging Homophobia in Education

Working in schools is a key element of LGBT Youth Scotland's work. Ensuring homophobia and homophobic bullying is challenged consistently in schools is one of the most successful methods of reducing homophobic bullying and increasing awareness of diversity among young people.

LGBT Youth Scotland can work with you to develop a bespoke package of youth sessions for all ages of school pupils, both primary and secondary. In addition we also offer training for teachers. Our schools work will:

- ◆ Work within the curriculum for excellence and be age appropriate.
- ◆ Offer support for individual pupils if needed and promote local services for LGBT young people.
- ◆ Give practical guidance and resources to teachers.
- ◆ Support schools to develop LGBT inclusive policies.

Schools work has a cost associated, for more information and an informal discussion email info@lgbtyouth.org.uk with the subject line: Schools Work.

EQUALITYNETWORK

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights in Scotland



Stonewall
S C O T L A N D

Community Connections

has been developed in partnership by Equality Network, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland in order to achieve meaningful engagement with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

- 1 Engaging LGBT People**
- 2 Engaging Public Bodies**
- 3 Engaging Young People**
- 4 Engaging Transgender People**
- 5 Best Practice**
- 6 Publicity**

