FACT SHEET: EDUCATION SERVICES

Young LGBT+ people have the right to see LGBT+ lives visible in the curriculum, PHSEe, SRE and wider educational life, including having “out” LGBT+ professionals who work with them. This includes openly gay support staff or openly trans teachers. They also have the right to support if they are questioning sexuality or gender, or want to come out.

IN OUR RESEARCH:

Participants said that educational spaces should be safe, informed and up-to-date with LGBT+ knowledge and attitudes.

Many young people want and need someone to talk to, e.g. a teacher, about their gender and/or sexuality. Barriers to seeking this support include embarrassment and worry that it will not be kept confidential. Coming out is NOT a safeguarding issue, and where it was treated as a safeguarding issue, it created problems.

Many young people had negative experiences of PE and extracurricular sports groups at school. They felt these spaces were unwelcoming and hostile towards LGBT+ young people. Young people said they were made to feel as if this was their fault, rather than an institutional problem.

Trans young people had good experiences when their gender was respected e.g. being referred to by the name and pronoun of their choosing; where they were able to use the toilet and changing room of their choice; and where they had the freedom to wear the uniform that best matched their gender.

The focus groups revealed a need for more relationship and sex education (SRE) at earlier ages in schools. The respondents said this would safeguard children and young people, reduce harm and promote self-advocacy. Young people felt this should focus on: healthy relationships (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, sexual and romantic situations, and family relationships); gender identities; recognising abuse; pleasure; consent and sexual education. They said sex education needs to move away from a focus only on penetrative acts and sexually transmitted infections, to a broader education. There was consensus that raising awareness of LGBT+ diversity and LGBT+ healthy relationships, starting from primary school, would likely prevent issues in the future. Various experiences of SRE at school highlighted a lack of inclusive SRE, or if LGBT+ identities were mentioned, young people felt conversations about it were minimal young people were concerned as to whether LGBT+ related information was correct and up-to-date. They also described a lack of leaflets at schools about LGBT+ specific sexual health. They felt all young people should have access to SRE that was correct, representative and informative.
TOP TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO:

1. Mention the words ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’ and ‘trans’ in every day conversations with adults and young people.
2. Celebrate key dates in the LGBT+ calendar through events or displays.
3. Undertake staff training so that you are equipped with terminology, knowledge and skill to understand LGBT+ young people’s experiences.
4. Provide information about support and advice for LGBT+ people, including signposting to local agencies for specialist advice or services e.g. through leaflets, assemblies and links from your website.
5. Engage wider stakeholders e.g. parents and governors, in how to make your institution inclusive.
6. ‘Youth-proof’ your policies and make these LGBT+ inclusive e.g. Anti-Bullying, Uniform, SRE an Equality and Diversity Policies.
7. Access and use free online LGBT+ inclusive lesson plans across all curriculum subjects.
8. Make sure pastoral staff advertise their support, explicitly mentioning gender and sexuality as areas pupils can ask for help about.
9. Involve LGBT+ people through consultations to help design services and initiatives.
10. Support the design and delivery of LGBT+ youth groups in education settings, or LGBT+ and Allies (LGBTA) groups.

- School was rated below average or poor more than any other service we asked young people about.
- 58% of young people rated their education institutions as ‘not doing very well’ at challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic comments and language.
- Many pupils valued the support given by teachers around coming out, and being able to have one-to-one support.
- 91% want to be able to have gender neutral toilets in education settings so they can use the toilet they want to use. Those who have these, find them very valuable.
- 85% of young LGBT+ people felt it important that educational establishments celebrate LGBT+ calendar dates (e.g. LGBT+ History Month, Pride, IDAHO) and have staff trained on LGBT+ topics.
- 80% of respondents would value LGBT+ identities being talked about with all pupils, including from an early age, e.g. at primary school.