Young LGBT+ people have the right to be involved in decisions about them. The Equalities Act (2010) provides the legal basis for this and places an Equality Duty on public sector bodies and those organisations performing a public function. This means that services must capture demographic data relating to sexuality and gender reassignment. Without this data, a service will not be able to make evidence-based decisions regarding how to improve access to services for LGBT+ young people.

**IN OUR RESEARCH:**

Young people felt that questions asked of them should not assume their gender or sexuality; should be inclusive; and should reflect the intersectional elements of an individual’s identity. They felt professionals should be equipped with forms and methods to accurately ask and record LGBT+ identity markers, and young people should be able to change these markers quickly and easily. LGBT+ young people want to feel welcome in services; see visible signs affirming LGBT+ identities; and interact with experienced professionals who are LGBT+ aware.

- ‘Access to help and support’ was identified as what matters most to LGBT+ young people (67%).
- The majority of young people are clear that they will access non-LGBT+ specific services if they need help, but 36% said they would not access services that were not LGBT+ specific, often because of staff knowledge or attitudes. It is essential for LGBT+ young people that in social care and early help services, ‘professionals [are] confident with LGBT+ stuff’
- Young people responded with quite wide variation about how helpful they felt services are in helping with a range of issues. Young people felt that services were most helpful in addressing issues around sexual health and finding social networks/friends. Only 12% respondents felt services were helpful in the area of homelessness/housing advice and only 16% of services were helpful with unemployment support. 37% found support around self-harm unhelpful and 40% found support around gender transition unhelpful
- When accessing support, the largest number of responses identified friends, family, LGBT+ youth groups, counselling and GPs as key sources of support
- Of the types of potential support they would like to access ‘LGBT+ mental health group’ and ‘LGBT+ group at school / college’ were rated highest
- Overall, young people viewed services to be more LGBT+ inclusive than specifically trans inclusive, suggestive of the need to further develop trans awareness and trans inclusive practice in mainstream services
TOP TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO:

1. Celebrate LGBT+ calendar dates and use these as a catalyst to raise awareness amongst young people, staff and visitors.

2. Ensure your environment is LGBT+ inclusive. For example, providing accessible, high quality information leaflets and flyers for local LGBT+ services which offer support around a range of issues. Visible leaflets and information enables young people to access self-help resources and to make informed decisions about other services they access.

3. Ensure that all referral, assessment, support and monitoring forms affirm LGBT+ identities. Enable young people to identify their own pronoun and make sure any changes to gender or sexuality markers are quick and easy to amend, at the request of the young person.

4. Always challenge discrimination and prejudice.

5. Ensure that professionals have access to an induction and ongoing training which explicitly focuses on LGBT+ identities, refreshes knowledge and enables professionals to feel confident and skilled in supporting LGBT+ young people. Access training opportunities from LGBT+ organisations in your sector and share good practice.

6. Ensure that your staff team are aware of the appropriate referral pathways for specialist support, and wider early help services, including those which are LGBT+ specific. Appropriate information sharing, effective exit plans and support to engage with the onward services enable young people to make positive transitions when exiting your service.

7. As an individual practitioner, ensure that your practice is LGBT+ aware and that you understand the mental health research and statistics around LGBT+ young people. Previous experiences of discrimination or prejudice by individuals, family or services may impact on a young person's ability to trust you straight away.

8. Be an ally; champion best practice in your service by ensuring LGBT+ identities are visible in policy and practice. This might include forming a working group to audit your service using the ‘You’re Welcome’ quality standards; supporting colleagues to feel confident in their practice, leading an event or inviting a speaker in to deliver a workshop.

9. Be clear with young people, service users, staff and visitors about what you expect from them and what they should expect from you. You should be clear about boundaries and how young people, staff and visitors can take action if they feel they need to.

10. Create a culture of inclusion and participation. Involve LGBT+ young people in decision-making across all levels of your service.

• Young people identified using a range of online platforms. The reasons why young people access online support suggest that LGBT+ young people value ‘anonymity’ (64%) or find online spaces make it easier to talk (68%). Early help behaviour is happening online when young people are ‘not sure where to find support elsewhere’ (34%).