



off the record

You talk. We listen support for young people

**Supporting LGBT+ Young People:
Frequently Asked Questions for
schools and young people's settings.**



Foreword: This document has been put together based on feedback from LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and + is inclusive of other sexual or gender identities) young people (13-21¹) in Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) sharing their experiences. Many of the difficulties young people shared have been largely in relation to gender identity, names and pronouns. This document has been developed by Harriet Rose, LGBT+ Development worker and SPACE young people at Off the Record, in partnership with The Diversity Trust, Stonewall and Bath and North East Somerset Council. This document is intended to support secondary age people and increase professionals' confidence in understanding and providing support to young people with whom they work.

We hope it can be a quick go to guide to supporting all LGBT+ young people, but particularly transgender, non-binary and gender questioning individuals within your settings and allow you to access the relevant resources to develop your knowledge and support.

The Context and overall approach:

What does The Equality Act (2010) mean for LGBT+ young people in our setting?

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous legal equality obligations in relation to disability, gender and race. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly or through harassment or victimisation. The Equality Act is there to promote equal access to services, equal opportunities for and foster good relationships between those with protected characteristics including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This means settings are breaking the law if they discriminate against a protected group.

Gender reassignment in the Equality Act is defined as applying to someone who is undergoing, has undergone or proposing to undergo a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex, by changing physiological or other attributes. This definition means that young people do not necessarily have to be undertaking medical procedures to be protected, but are proposing to make steps or making steps to live in the opposite gender.

¹ For Primary and Early Years Guidance

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/getting_started_early_years.pdf
http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/getting_started_toolkit_-_primary.pdf
[Trans Inclusion School Toolkit](#)

Ofsted and LGBT+ inclusion.

Ofsted as part of their inspections will look at how schools are complying with their legal duties laid out by the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1988. During inspection Ofsted will seek to assess “how well leaders and governors promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (and those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics)², through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community³”. Including challenging bullying and all forms of discrimination.

Ofsted has an increasing focus on mental well-being, recent statistics locally and nationally, identify stark differences in the mental wellbeing of LGBT+ students compared to their non-LGBT+ counterparts. Young people explained that, “school education is challenging in itself but being LGBT+ in that situation, the experience is worse and can be horrendous due to a lack of understanding and homophobia.” This reflects the findings of ‘The Stonewall School Report 2017’ that identifies nearly half of LGBT pupils (45 per cent), including 64 per cent of transgender pupils, are bullied for being LGBT at school. With local data collected by BaNES showing 54% of LGB compared to 18% of heterosexual students in year 8 and 10 having medium- low self-esteem.

[Equality Act 2010 Advice for Schools](#): Protected characteristics page 8

[Trans Inclusion School Toolkit](#): page 15

[Guidance on Tackling Transphobic Bullying in Schools](#): Self-Checklist for schools: page 72-3

How can we support LGBT+ inclusion in our setting?

Staff knowledge and confidence in supporting LGBT+ young people can help ensure LGBT+ inclusion is happening in your setting. Staff understanding the importance of not assuming that young people or staff are cisgender⁴ or heterosexual and adapting practice to reflect this.

Below are some ways to include LGBT+ young people:

- Use of language to include LGBT+ people when discussing relationships i.e. refer to equal marriage and partners, which can apply to all orientations and be aware of LGBT+ terminology and meanings.
- Inclusive uniform policies state 'students will wear', and include a list of suitable items including skirt and trouser options for all, rather than splitting uniform by gender. Examples of gender neutral uniform policies in BaNES schools include [Threeways School](#) and [Long Vernal Primary School](#).
- Avoid gender segregation or terminology such as 'girl/boy' seating plans or groups, or gender stereotyped assumptions or activities.

² As defined by section 4 of the Equality Act 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15.

³ From school inspection handbook 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

⁴ Someone whose gender identity and sex are the same, some people use 'non-trans' instead of cisgender.

Young people, particularly those who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming, have shared with us that gendered divisions make them feel uncomfortable and reinforces a lack of support or understanding for their identity, and feeling that they are not represented or understood.

[Good Practice in Working with Trans Young People- Gendered Intelligence Checklist](#)
[Stonewall: Glossary of Terms](#)

What can I do in practice?

A young person tells me they are LGBT+, what should I do?

If a young person comes out to you it is because you have signaled that you are a safe person to talk to. It can be helpful to reassure the young person and it is important not to dismiss due to age or your own experience. Allow space for the individual to talk. A young person's gender identity or sexual orientation itself is not a safeguarding risk unless there are other concerns. Use the [Bath and NES Threshold document](#) to assess this.

In this initial conversation, it is important to listen, validate the individual's identity and adapt your response or support offer to the needs of the individual. Find out if they would like support from local LGBT+ services, if they feel they are supported by peers and people at home and school or would like help with this.⁵

Data protection laws protect personal and sensitive information including sexual orientation and gender identity, it is essential that this is not shared without consent. It is very important that the disclosure of information is not at the detriment of the young person. You can try to involve parents/carers and other appropriate agencies as much as possible in supporting the young person, however in the instance that parents/carers are not supportive; you should work with the requests of the young person. This is to ensure they are safeguarded and supported and to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the young person. If you or the young person would like more information or support, you can contact or signpost them to relevant LGBT+ information and sources of support.

Local services: [Off the Record – Bath and North East Somerset](#)
[Bath and North East Somerset Council Equality and Diversity](#)
[Stonewall Guidance for young people on coming out](#)
[Stonewall an Introduction to supporting LGBT young people](#)
[Trans Inclusion School Toolkit](#)
[EACH: 10 things you can do to support a gay or gender questioning person](#)

⁵ Some young people have reported avoiding sharing their experiences for fears of being 'outed' to others or people not taking their identity seriously.

How do I respond to young people who are being bullied for being LGBT+ and challenge HBT* language / behaviour in our setting? (*homophobic, biphobic and transphobic)

Firstly, take it seriously (follow internal procedure or Ofsted guidance). As a setting, using a zero tolerance approach to this kind of bullying, e.g. challenging language when it is heard, and recording incidents, using BaNES report forms to accurately monitor homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

For individuals, it is important to consider confidentiality in supporting LGBT+ young people to tackle bullying. Make sure you are able to understand who the young person is out to (has openly told about their identity) and who they may not want to know. It is not acceptable to 'out' a young person through the course of dealing with a bullying incident.

It is most effective to adopt a whole setting approach, provide LGBT+ awareness sessions, training and support to students and staff on LGBT+ inclusion. Raising awareness and attending training can create an LGBT+ inclusive culture where all young people and all staff feel comfortable to challenge HBT language and bullying⁶, know where to report equalities incidents and people are able to be comfortable and open about who they are.

It can be useful to create set responses to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language, these can be based on school or group ethos and principles. **Example:** 'We value respect as a core principle, using the word gay/bi/trans in a negative way is homo/bi/transphobic and disrespectful to gay/bi/trans people, and not acceptable' (see Trans inclusion toolkit appendix 3 for a number of different responses).

How do I report an equalities incident?

If there is a serious equality incident this can be reported to BaNES. What constitutes serious incident, as stated in BaNES Local Authority guidance.

A school or setting will need to use its discretion to decide which incidents are serious enough to report to BaNES Local Authority and which need to be logged only internally (at least in the first instance). If any of the following apply, it is likely to indicate that a serious equality incident form should be completed if:

- "The incident appears to be motivated out of a deliberate attempt to cause hurt or distress to an individual or group."
- "The incident appears to be motivated out of a general prejudice or hatred of a group of people based upon a protected characteristic even when there is no apparent immediate 'target'. For example, racist language or terminology being used within an all-white group."
- "The incident has had a severe impact upon an individual or group of people (even where the motivation for the incident did not seem to be to cause offence or distress)."

⁶ This includes verbal, physical, cyber, indirect e.g. spreading rumours, mental or emotional, such as 'outing' someone. http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/lgbtq/professionals/hbt-bullying.htm

- “The incident is not isolated but has happened before, and the person (or people) responsible has continued to behave in an unacceptable manner or use unacceptable terminology in spite of being asked not to do so.”

[BaNES Equality Incident Report Form and Guidance](#)

[Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit \(see Appendix 3\)](#)

[Guidance on Tackling Transphobic Bullying in Schools:](#)

[EACH: 10 things your school can do the challenge homophobic bullying in school](#)

Attend or organise in house whole staff training courses provided by Off the Record, email

Space@offtherecord-banes.co.uk or call 01225 312481

A young person wants to change their name, pronouns and gender marker, how can I help them?

Name changes and use of pronouns is protected under the Equalities Act, under the area of gender reassignment. This is defined in the above section on Equality Act.

Name changes do not have to be legally changed in order to be updated on school or database systems. A chosen name can be entered on ‘SIMS’ or ‘CPOMS’ school systems. The preferred name option should be used, where the student requests this. In other settings you can update a database or recording system at the request of young person using the service, to ensure they are referred to in the preferred name.

Section 5.2.9 of the [School Census 2017 to 2018](#) (2017) Department for Education guidance indicates that the gender of a pupil is recorded in the format of male or female. However, “In exceptional circumstances, a school may be unsure as to which gender should be recorded for a particular pupil. Where this occurs, gender is recorded according to the wishes of the pupil and/or parent.” As a result this guidance allows students to use a gender marker in line with their identity, including if this is beyond the traditional markers of ‘male’ and ‘female’.

Young people’s experiences:

“I have recently gone back to college after spending some time away from education, I was attending SPACE and I was able to ask for my preferred name and pronouns to be used and that’s been supported from day one. I have worked with CAMHS who were open about having LGBT+ training from Off the Record and afterwards were more confident to support me in the way I needed them to.”

Young person at college age 18

“The good thing about here is that they challenge homophobic comments. They actually take it seriously. I don’t always tell a teacher about what comments people make or using the word ‘gay’ but when I do they actually do something about it.”

Young person in secondary school age 14

“I came out as transgender to a teacher and they didn’t keep it confidential, they called my parents to tell them straight away without telling me. I was referred to CAMHS and the Tavistock, my parents weren’t supportive, so I never made the appointment at Tavistock. School will not let me use my name and pronouns because my parents won’t consent. I am still trying to get the support I need and want. “

Young person in secondary school, age 15

“Just two in five LGBT young people (40 per cent) have an adult at home they can talk to about being LGBT. For black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT young people, this falls to 28 per cent.”

The Stonewall School Report 2017.

Working in partnership with:

