

Case Study:

Inclusive Sex and Relationships Education for LGBT+ and LGBT+ SEND Young People

OUR VISION

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

8,541

PROFESSIONALS TRAINED

HEALTHY REL

Our mission is to equip people for life's challenges

Being a young person can be tough. Through innovative clinical services, digital support, counselling and inspiring relationships education, young people are able to take control of their sexual health and wellbeing.

2 MILLION

YOUNG WOMEN ENGAGED THROUGH OUR DIFFERENT

IS NORMAL CAMPAIGN WITH CANESTEN

YOUNG WOMEN ENGAGED THROUGH OUR DIFFERENT IS NORMAL CAMPAIGN WITH CANESTEN

1.4 MILLION

REFERENCE IN 2019/20

YOUNG PEOPLE

HELPED THROUGH OUR FACE-TO-FACE AND ONLINE SERVICES

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

ARE FREE FROM INEQUALITY,

RICI HELPED THROUGH OUR OPPORTUNITY

EDUCATION & WELLBEING WORK

AND ENRICHED BY HAPPY,

QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS

1,271

VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH

COMPLEX NEEDS SAFEGUARDED YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS SAFEGUARDED

3,600

ONLINE HOME TESTING KITS ADMINISTERED DURING THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF OUR DIGITALLY DELIVERED SERVICE IN CORNWALL

69,526

CLINICAL CLIENT VISITS

EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

DELIVERED IN

36%

OF ENGLISH LOCAL

AUTHORITIES

36%

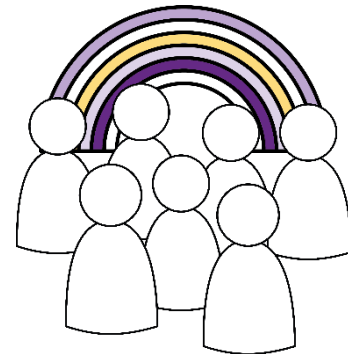
OF ENGLISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

What Challenges Do Current Schools' Provision Pose to LGBT+ Young People?

Challenges for LGBT+ Young People in Education

Both the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty provide a strong underpinning for **fully inclusive** policy and practice within education.

Despite this, young people within the LGBT+ community continue to feel **let down** by their education providers. This seems to be especially so for those who experience **multiple protected characteristics**.



Challenges for LGBT+ Young People in Education

There are 3 main areas in which LGBT+ young people feel they face challenges within education:

- **Physical Spaces**
 - The day-to-day experience of navigating a school or other educational setting.
- **Representation**
 - The reflection and integration of the LGBT+ community within the wider school community, its ethos, policies and practices.
- **Curriculum Provision**
 - The delivery of relationships and sex education (RSE) and the content of schools' RSE curriculums.

Physical Spaces

The day-to-day experience of existing within an educational space can itself be a challenge for LGBT+ young people as they are often faced with:

- **A lack of accessible, gender-neutral facilities**
 - Non-cisgender young people are having to use gendered facilities they do not feel comfortable or safe using.
- **Restrictive, gendered uniform policies**
 - Young people finding themselves prevented from wearing uniform that supports their gender expression.
- **Resistance to social transitioning**
 - Students who wish to change the name and pronouns that are used for them within school are being met with opposition.
- **Anti-LGBT bullying**
 - At least 45% of LGBT+ students face bullying because of their identity, including 64% of trans students.

Representation

All young people should **feel seen and listened to** within their educational settings, however LGBT+ young peoples' experience can often leave them feeling isolated and invisible.

The experiences of many young people tell us that schools' policies, practices and curriculums are often **cisnormative and heteronormative**, and there are very rarely any identifiable LGBT+ people amongst school staff.

As a result:

- LGBT+ young people often **do not feel comfortable disclosing** their gender or sexuality or 'coming out' at school.
- Anti-LGBT bullying is **not sufficiently challenged**.

Curriculum Provision

Brook works closely with thousands of young people and education professionals each year, to improve relationships and sex education (RSE) across the board.

Through this work we have found that:

- Many LGBT+ young people feel that existing RSE is **not relevant to them**, and does not provide the information they feel they need.
- LGBT+ young people's questions around RSE have often been dismissed as inappropriate and **remained unanswered** by their teachers.
- Teachers and other educational professionals have also reported feeling concerned that LGBT+ young people require provision **which is different**, additional or even separate to their heterosexual and cis-gender peers.

Turning elsewhere...

The consequences of these challenges are that young people in the LGBT+ community are **turning to other sources of information** to fill in the gaps they feel they have in their relationships and sex education.

We have found that LGBT+ young people often draw upon:

TV and Film

Pornography

Dating apps

**Social media
'influencers'**

**Peers, Friends
and Partners**

Internet forums

Search engines

Each of these sources present their own concerns around their accuracy, reliability and safety for young people.

Turning elsewhere...

Brook's Digital Romance Report found that online communication **opened up access to and connection** with other members of LGBT communities that might not exist at school or where they live, countering feelings of isolation or stigma.

“ you can just look up ‘LGBTQ Group’ and it’s there’ (Facebook)

Almost one in five LGBT under-18s (**18 per cent**) have used adult dating apps such as Tinder, Grindr and Her.

The School Report (Stonewall, 2017);

LGBT+ Young People Who Also Experience a Label of SEND

The challenges we have already outlined here are significantly **heightened** for those young people who might also be identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- A wealth of academic research shows that challenging attitudes towards the gender and sexuality of disabled and neurodivergent people are pervasive in wider society.
- There is evidence that some schools and practitioners have deemed LGBT+ inclusive education 'inappropriate' or 'too complicated' for students with SEND.
- Young people feel that their RSE is even more insufficient and exclusionary for those who have a physical or neurological disability or difference.

What Does Inclusivity Look Like in an RSE curriculum?

LGBT+ Inclusivity

With all of these challenges in mind, it should come as no surprise that LGBT+ young people are at higher risk of becoming **disenfranchised**, or even removed from education altogether.

It is essential that we are able to **share best practice** from successfully LGBT+ inclusive services, practices and environments with our education colleagues if we are going to **protect the health and wellbeing of all LGBT+ young people**.

We feel the key to developing LGBT+ inclusive education is:

- Taking a proactive, intersectional approach
- Collaborative working with young people
- Quality training for professionals
- Ensuring broad representation
- Providing meaningful support

LGBT+ Inclusivity

We suggest the following is best practice when planning and delivering an inclusive RSE curriculum:

- Use of clear, inclusive, gender-neutral **language**
- Information about **all types of sex** (anal, manual, oral and vaginal) given freely in an age and developmentally appropriate way
- **Meaningful representation of LGBT+ people** and their relationships within any literature, examples and scenarios used
- Including content that educates young people about gender, sexuality and the **LGBT+ community**
- Information about **sources of support** for LGBT+ young people (including locally)

LGBT+ Inclusivity

In Brook's Digital Romance report the solution to challenge heteronormative assumptions in RSE and related education was simply a desire for **specific reference to LGBT + experiences** in support and guidance.

'Cover LGBT+ relationships as well as heterosexual!'

'I started to realise that only one half of the sex-ed curriculum was interesting to me.'

Meaningful RSE should **reach everyone in the room**, they should be able to **see themselves** in what they are learning about.

This simply **represents the diversity** of the world we live in

'Mechanics' of sex

- If we are going to educate about vaginal sex, we need to provide information about **different types of sex**
- Ultimately this is framed in a **sex positive way**, including conversations about pleasure, consent, safety and how it should be fun!

"There was no notion that sex could be for anything other than procreation. Sex for its own sake, gay or otherwise, was never mentioned. Pleasure? Fun? Connection? None of those came into it"

Real experiences

- Not just examples of different types of families and friendships but actual real life experiences
- What is it like to be gay, lesbian, trans, asexual?
- Real lived experiences of relationships and dating

From a young age, probably as young as 11, I have been attracted to girls.

As I got older, I downloaded a few well-known dating apps

It is taking a while, but I'm glad to say I feel like my parents are slowly becoming more accepting.

Conclusions

- All young people stand to **benefit from LGBT+ inclusive education.**
- LGBT+ inclusive education challenges and **reduces prejudice** against the LGBT+ community
- All educational **settings are capable** of becoming inclusive spaces and should be supported in doing this as a matter of priority.
- Taking an intersectional approach to relationships and sex education enables us to meet the needs of all young people – especially **those with SEND.**

Thank you & Questions