



LGBT Youth Borders Consultation Results: Professional report

Background

LGBT Youth Borders is part of LGBT Youth Scotland, a national charity which is committed to the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people in the life of Scotland.

Locally we provide a range of services and opportunities for young people, families and professionals, and we work to integrate LGBT equality into mainstream services like youth organisations and schools. Through this work we aim to increase awareness of LGBT issues and build confidence in others to include LGBT young people, and to reduce the isolation and discrimination that LGBT young people face.

To identify key areas of development and a solid evidence base for our future work, we recently engaged with young people from the Scottish Borders through a consultation on LGBT issues. This report presents the results of the consultation.

Introduction

In March and April 2007, LGBT Youth Borders undertook a consultation in the Scottish Borders to determine young people's knowledge of LGBT issues and their attitudes to people who identify as L, G, B or T. We know that a lot of LGBT young people are bullied and discriminated against because of their sexuality or gender identity¹, but we also wanted to know what a generic population of young people thought about issues like homophobic bullying.

All the information was collected from young people from the Borders, so the results also show us what LGBT young people can experience as they grow up in the area.

Consultation process

501 young people aged 11-25 completed paper questionnaires, and 12 young people aged 12-25 completed online questionnaires via the YoungScot website. We also collected the thoughts and opinions of young people aged 8-25 during local outreach events.

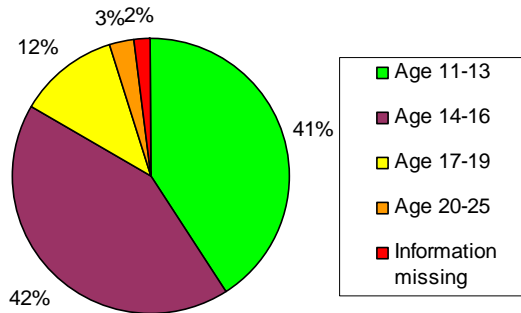
¹ LGBT Youth Scotland (2006). *Promoting Equal Opportunities in Education. Project Two: Guidance on Dealing with Homophobic Incidents.*

NSPCC (2006). *Childline casenotes: Calls to ChildLine about sexual orientation, homophobia and homophobic bullying.*

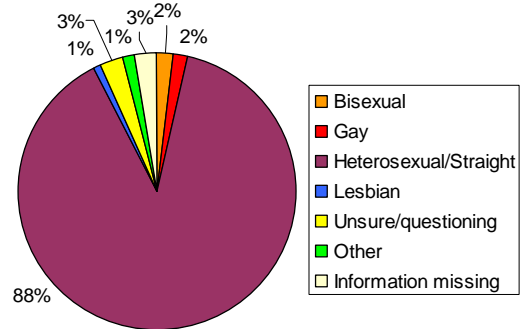


Respondent profile

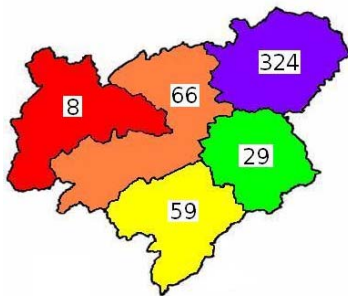
Age



Sexual orientation



Location



Berwickshire: 324, 62%
 Eildon: 66, 13%
 Teviot & Liddesdale: 59, 12%
 Cheviot: 29, 6%
 Tweeddale: 8, 2%
 Information missing: 27, 5%

Results

- At least 86% of young people had heard the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and homophobia before. 99% had heard the word gay.
- 74% of young people said that they had heard about LGBT people at school. For a limited number of young people in the Borders this will have been through a formal educational input, but for the majority, LGBT people are more likely to be talked about with friends at school and heard about outside the classroom setting. Others said their sources of information about LGBT people included friends, family and the media.
- 53% of young people said that they had heard mainly negative things about LGBT people.
- 13% of young people said they wanted to find out about LGBT issues at school. This was top of the list ahead of sources like friends, family and the internet.
- 67% of young people said they knew someone who was L, G, B or T.



- When asked what they would do if a friend or family member told them they were L, G, B or T, some young people were very supportive:

"I would stand by them because it doesn't matter if they are, they are still the same person they were before" female, 17

Some gave a negative response:

"Be very upset I don't think it is right!! I won't like them anymore" female, 14

- From a choice of horrible, bad, okay, good or great, 58% of young people said that school would be horrible or bad for LGBT young people. When asked why they thought this some of their comments included:

"Some people may choose not to be friends with them" male, 17

"...'gay' is used as an insult" female, 16

"because they get bullied, left out, beaten up" female, 14

- Only 38% of young people said they would do something if they saw an LGBT young person being bullied. Some young people said they would be worried about being bullied themselves if they did anything to help:

"If I stood up for them the bullies might come after me" male, 13

Some were also worried about being labelled as LGBT themselves if they helped:

"...obviously I'd feel bad for the person and want to help but then the bullies may turn on me and call me a lesbian when I'm not, just because I was helping someone who is an LGBT" female, 14

- 22% of young people said they would go to a family member for help and support if they or a friend were L, G, B or T, with other young people saying they would get help and support from sources like friends, school staff or a medical professional like their school nurse. However, 21% of young people did not know where they would get help and support.



Key points

Young people's awareness of LGBT terms and issues is high, but the messages they are hearing about LGBT people are mainly negative. Young people acquire these messages from sources like their friends, family and the media, and without access and exposure to positive messages these negative messages could affect their opinions and actions towards LGBT people.

There is a stigma attached to being LGBT. Some young people said this would prevent them from helping someone who was being homophobicly bullied, and it will also make it difficult for some young people to accept a friend or relative who is LGBT. If this stigma continues to go unchallenged it will also prevent LGBT young people from 'coming out' at an earlier age and accessing the services and support that they need.

Homophobia exists in the Borders. Nearly 60% of young people said that school would be horrible or bad for LGBT young people. Some have seen homophobic bullying, and some have experience of being homophobicly bullied themselves. The term 'gay' is widely used as a general insult, not necessarily directed towards LGBT people or those who are perceived to be LGBT, but some young people said that it was used offensively and one stated that *"bullies especially call other people gay and lesbian when they are not and they get worried"* female, 13. This again emphasises the stigma attached to being LGBT as the terms are also used to bully young people who identify as heterosexual.

Recommendations

Further awareness raising and mainstream outreach. The largest number of young people said that they wanted to learn about LGBT issues at school, and LGBT Youth Borders would like to continue and develop the work that is already done with local schools and youth organisations to ensure that these places are inclusive of LGBT young people.

We will also raise awareness of our services by widely distributing the consultation results through local contacts and media resources, and we will continue to share positive messages about LGBT people through mainstream work, distribution of our publicity materials and attendance at local events.

If you would like more information about the consultation or the results, please contact Christine Hamilton at:
borders@lgbtyouth.org.uk or 07931 458 155