

# The Anti- Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying Alliance

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## Parents of LGBT+ children

This fact sheet is aimed at how best to work with those parents who are *supportive* of their LGBT+ child and those possibly 'struggling' but open to receiving support.

If the parent(s) / carer(s) are refusing to accept or acknowledge their child's sexuality & / or gender identity this may be a safeguarding issue and schools should follow their safeguarding procedures.

*Ensure you have the young person's consent to speak with their parent(s)/carer(s). The following information is based on the principle you have obtained consent.*

### Engaging with parents of LGBT+ children

When a pupil comes out as LGBT+ there is no specific reason to contact parents. It is not in itself a safeguarding concern and the pupil may simply have chosen to share the information with their peers and trusted school staff.

However, if the pupil is experiencing difficulties it may be helpful to work with the family to explore support options. Difficulties may include a disclosure that their parent(s) are struggling to come to terms with their sexuality / gender, the pupil themselves may be struggling to come to terms with their sexuality / gender, they may have disclosed bullying, issues may relate to their transition at school and so on.

- Include the parent(s)/carer(s) in relevant meetings so they can be part of the decision process impacting on their child. As with any school matter involving pupil and parent input, this may require negotiation to find options that work for everyone.
- Follow the standard school procedures for working with parent(s), which will be guided by the nature of the presenting issues: for example, initial telephone communications, arranging an informal meeting, inviting parents to a formal Team Around the Child meeting etc
- Avoid making assumptions and ask directly to find out what support the parent(s)/carer(s) want from the school.
- Reassure the parent(s)/carer(s) as to what positive action the school is taking to support their child.
- Share your school Equalities policy and Anti-bullying policy with the parents(s)/carer(s).
- Take the time to talk through the policies with the parent(s)/carer(s) so they can feel confident in the school's approach. This process may highlight areas for policy development.

Support parent(s)/carer(s) by signposting them to relevant groups where they can meet other parents and find out information to help them gain a better understanding of their child's sexuality and/or gender. This may be particularly relevant where a parent is struggling and may feel upset. For example, some parents feel sad that their child will not lead the 'life they had expected' them to, parents may worry that their child will be bullied and some parents feel sad that their child may face more barriers in life.

Parents may have limited knowledge of LGBT+ matters or inaccurate and incorrect information leading to anxieties. For example, some parents express concerns about their child's safety and have specific fears about the risks of HIV, based on misconceptions (the largest population in the UK currently living with HIV were exposed through heterosexual sex: National Aids Trust 2015 figures).

Some parents report feeling sad as they think they may not be grandparents (many LGBT+ people have children so this is not the case).

Parents of trans children often struggle with using the correct pronouns and chosen name even if they are fully supportive, because they have spent so many years using a different name and pronouns. Parents of trans children have also reported a period of 'mourning' in saying goodbye to their daughter before they can welcome their new son or vice versa and with this there are often feelings of guilt.

There is often a lack of understanding of the transition process and options, particularly regarding the time

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This fact sheet was produced by Free2B Alliance and their Proud Parents group

The Anti-Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying Alliance is a nationally driven, locally delivered project  
LGBT Consortium | 2BU Somerset | ELOP | Free 2B Alliance | Mermaids | MESMAC | Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre |  
North East Federation | Proud2Be | Schools Out UK | SPACE Youth Project | Intercom Trust

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frames involved. Many parents seek peer guidance around practicalities such as where to purchase suitable clothing and other items to support the transition of their child.

Meeting other parents who share these common responses and experiences can be hugely beneficial to parents which in turn will benefit their child. Many parents find it immensely reassuring to know they are not alone as well as being able to share practical advice and information with their peers. This may be particularly important for families from different faith backgrounds

If the parent(s)/carer(s) are limited in their time and capacity to attend physical support meetings, they can be signposted to appropriate information websites and online support groups.

## Signposting parents for support

- FFLAG – National network of parent support groups plus online resources
  - [www.fflag.org.uk](http://www.fflag.org.uk)
- LGBT Consortium – National Service Directory. Search facility by service area including LGBT+ faith groups
  - [www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk/directory](http://www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk/directory)
- Mermaids – National organisation supporting families of gender non-conforming children
  - [www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk)

## Support links by project area

|            |                            |  |
|------------|----------------------------|--|
| Somerset   | 2BU Somerset               | <a href="http://www.2bu-somerset.co.uk">www.2bu-somerset.co.uk</a>             |
| Yorkshire  | MESMAC                     | <a href="http://www.mesmac.co.uk">www.mesmac.co.uk</a>                         |
| North East | North East LGBT Federation | <a href="http://www.lgbtfed.com">www.lgbtfed.com</a>                           |
| Devon      | Proud2Be                   | <a href="http://www.proud2be.co.uk">www.proud2be.co.uk</a>                     |
| Dorset     | SPACE Youth Project        | <a href="http://www.spaceyouthproject.co.uk">www.spaceyouthproject.co.uk</a>   |
| Cornwall   | YAY Cornwall               | <a href="http://www.lgbtqyouthcornwall.co.uk">www.lgbtqyouthcornwall.co.uk</a> |

## London Boroughs

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|--------------------------|--|---|
| ELOP                     | <a href="http://www.elop.org">www.elop.org</a>                             | Waltham Forest   East London   North East London   Haringey   Brentwood   Thurrock   Epping |
| Free2B                   | <a href="http://www.free2b-alliance.org.uk">www.free2b-alliance.org.uk</a> | Wandsworth   Merton   Richmond   Kensington & Chelsea   Hammersmith & Fulham                |
| Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre | <a href="http://www.mosaicyouth.org.uk">www.mosaicyouth.org.uk</a>         | Camden   Hillingdon   Harrow   Brent   Islington   Hounslow   Ealing   Westminster   City   |

## Feedback from parents of LGBT+ children

*“My son’s school was amazingly helpful and supportive from the outset. My tip to schools would be to listen to the parent, find out what support they/the child need, if necessary point them in the direction of useful resources and most importantly support them through their transition by e.g. Being flexible about uniform etc. It would be great if all schools were already ‘gemmed up’ on LBTQ issues and the support that’s available before they were faced with their first LGBTQ pupil! One thing I’ve learned is that ALL staff (even peripatetic staff) need to be on board and be sensitive to pronouns etc.”*

Louise

*“That there was someone at the school my child could go to if they felt vulnerable or bullied. That the school had all staff trained how to deal with homophobic bullying and comments”.*

Kim

*“I would have wanted their secondary school to have said that they will fully support our child & to signpost us to the local LGBT youth club”.*

Helen