

Media Pack 2019



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About Allsorts Youth Project

Allsorts Youth Project listens to, supports & connects children & young people under 26 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure (LGBTU) of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

We aim to improve the lives of LGBTU young people via a two-pronged approach:

- 1. Providing specialist youth services to children & young people from the ages of 5-25 who are LGBTU**
- 2. Training the wider community and professionals so all spaces and organisations can be safer and more inclusive for LGBTU people.**

Young LGBTU people deserve to feel safe and thrive at home, at school and in their communities.

There are a number of ways that Allsorts Youth Project support young people:

- We facilitate age-appropriate workshops and activities that are fun, interactive and often aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide safe spaces for young people to develop friendships with their peers.
- Through our [advocacy service](#), we support young people who are 16+ to understand their rights should they ever face discrimination or issues as a result of their LGBTU identity.
- Support young people to feel more at ease with their gender identity and sexual orientation and in exploring and understanding who they are.
- Provide specialist LGBTU youth support and education in schools, colleges and other youth settings, with the aim to positively promote LGBTU awareness and inclusion.
- Support young people to engage with mainstream services that range from careers advice to counselling and more.
- Provide young people with positive LGBT role models of varying ages, ethnicities, faiths, backgrounds, and abilities. This develops cross-generational understanding and a better sense of community history and diverse representation.
- Offering support to parents and carers.
- Celebrate diversity in all its forms including ethnicity, background, faith and ability.

Statement From Allsorts Youth Project

Allsorts Youth Project listens to, supports & connects children & young people between the ages of 5 and 25 years old, who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure (LGBTU) of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. We provide a non-judgemental space for children and young people to feel heard, valued and safe.

We are a small charity offering support to people dealing with real life sensitive situations. We are not a lobby, campaigning or activist group or an organisation that has any say regarding the medical process when discussing transgender issues or concerns. Our approach is person-centred, meaning we are non-judgemental, non-directive (ie. we do not tell people what to do) and do not have an agenda in our work with children, young people or their families.

The current media attention regarding the issue of gender identity and how our organisation operates has been factually incorrect, misleading and distressing for service users, families and staff. As we head into our 20th year of operation, we are proud of the essential role we play in supporting children & young people who are exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation who need a supportive and safe environment to do so.

We have gained a solid and sustained reputation for working collaboratively with local authorities, schools and other aligned local and national voluntary organisations for our values, approach, expertise and innovation over the past 19 years.

We are very proud of the legacy we are creating to support a group of children and young people who are often at a crisis point in their lives, by creating the UK's first primary aged kids group where children and their families can come together to explore and question their thoughts and feelings in a fun, safe, non-clinical setting.

The national conversation around transgender issues is wide and complex however our role as a small charity is purely to listen to and support children and young people exploring who they are, and facilitate peer support for parents.

Our Comments On The Following:

Schools

- We provide support and information on best practice relating to LGBT+ inclusion to schools and colleges and deliver age appropriate workshops to students and staff on LGBTU awareness.
- Our Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit offers information & guidance for schools to help them develop their approach to trans inclusion and support. It is co-authored with the Standards & Achievement team at Brighton and Hove City Council.
- The toolkit encourages trans inclusive practise to actively challenge gender stereotypes, gender roles, sexism and sexual bullying.

- The toolkit also offers guidance to professionals to increase their confidence to support & help trans and gender questioning students whilst providing practical information and help to highlight areas to consider for development.

Safeguarding

- Allsorts Youth Project works within the jurisdiction and framework of the Pan Sussex Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures Manual and regard the safety & wellbeing of children as paramount.
- We work closely with safeguarding bodies, such as Front Door for Families, Adult Social Care, The Police and SafetyNet to ensure all safeguarding issues are reported and managed in the appropriate way.

Young Person Focused

- Allsorts offers a safe and non-judgemental space for all LGBTU children & young people. We meet the young people where they are at so that they feel listened to and heard.
- Our approach as a youth service is to work with children & young people in an age and developmentally appropriate way.
- We firmly believe that it is for the young person to discuss their feelings directly with their parents, guardians or carers when they feel happy, safe and comfortable to do so. We work with young people to explore how and when they will communicate their feelings to their parents, guardians or carers and help them to find necessary support networks should they need it.
- A child has the right to privacy until they feel ready to discuss these issues with their parents, guardians or carers, however we respect & acknowledge that in some situations it may not be in the child's best interest to inform their parents/ carers.
- When working with children & young people our approach centres on enabling young people to express their views about the things that matter to them.

Engagement with other services

- There is overwhelming evidence that LGBTU children and young people are more likely to be victims of bullying and experience isolation.
- Our approach is to work in collaboration with other services to enable our service users to engage with our wider world and not just within LGBT+ specific spaces.

Statistics

- Diversity and variance in gender identity and sexual orientation have existed throughout history and across the world for hundreds of years.
- LGBT+ identities are not a trend and are nothing new, even if the language used to describe LGBT identities has developed over time.

Facts & Stats

Evidence shows that LGBTU children and young people are more likely to face discrimination compared to their non-LGBTU peers.

The [Stonewall School Report from 2017](#) measured the experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools. It made the following key findings:

- Nearly half of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils (45%) – including 64% of trans pupils – are bullied for being LGBT at school
- Half of LGBT pupils (52%) hear homophobic slurs 'frequently' or 'often' at school
- The majority of LGBT pupils (86%) regularly hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school
- Seven in ten LGBT pupils (68%) report that teachers or school staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenge homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic language when they hear it
- Two in five LGBT pupils (40%) are never taught anything about LGBT issues at school
- More than two in five trans pupils (44%) say that staff at their school are not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means
- One in three trans pupils (33%) are not able to be known by their preferred name at school while three in five (58%) are not allowed to use the toilets they feel comfortable in

In order to address isolation and low self-esteem and meet the well-being needs of LGBTU children and young people, Allsorts provides support groups, emotional one-to-one support and activities. Over the last financial year (17/18) our services have benefitted many people:

- **169** different young people attended our **weekly LGBTU** group for **16-25 year olds**.
- **66** different young people attended our **monthly Transformers** group for trans, non-binary & gender questioning young people aged **16-25**.
- **76** different young people attended our **fortnightly LGBTU** group for **11-15 year olds**.
- **27** different children attended the **monthly Kids Group** for gender exploring and trans children of primary schools age and their parents.
- **67** different **parents and carers** received peer support.

Allsorts has evidence of the positive impact of the support and activities delivered in reducing distress in LGBTU children and young people.

Our most recent survey of participants (September 2018) found that:

- 100% of young people felt that Allsorts had been helpful to them
- 100% said that the emotional one-to-one support had been of particular help to them
- 68% of our young people felt more at ease with who they are.
- 68% said Allsorts had helped them feel more part of the LGBTU community.
- 55% of our young people felt more comfortable with their sexual orientation/gender identity.

Testimonials

Allsorts Youth Project works with children & young people under 26 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure (LGBTU) of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and their parents. Our work has hugely benefitted the quality of life for those we support.

Here are some anonymous testimonials from our participants about the very real impact Allsorts Youth Project has had for them:

- *“Allsorts has taught me resilience, and self love, and that there are so many people around me experiencing the same things. I’ve also learned a lot of practical real world skills; I’ve developed a love of public speaking, I’ve learned how to talk professionally to adults, and I’ve become better at chatting to new people and making new friends.”*
- *“I have made new friends and have become more confident with everything including my sexuality. I have had people to talk to and that has really helped me, I’ve been distracted and distraught about my life so far however coming to Allsorts has improved my well-being and my life overall.”*
- *“Allsorts as has allowed me to meet people like me, I don't feel like I am alone and different, I have met some people like me in here which has actually helped me to boost my confidence level.”*
- *“Allsorts has given me a new group of friends who have enabled me to cope with difficult situations and has made my life a lot happier. It has given me a safe space to make friends and talk about anything bothering me.”*
- *“Allsorts has helped me with my social anxiety and to develop new friendships with LGBT people It has made me feel more positive about life.”*
- *“Allsorts has helped me with realising it's okay to be who I am and that I don't have to hide all the time.”*
- *“I wanted to say how valuable the Allsorts Group is, not just to the kids, but to us parents as well. After my meeting with school this week, I’ve been feeling quite low and have been questioning whether we’re doing the right thing, and after speaking to the other parents today, I know that we are. If the group wasn’t there I wouldn’t have had anyone to speak to about this and compare stories. It reaffirms our journey and has empowered me to be stronger when confronting those unnecessary hurdles.”*

A Case Study

A parent's experience by a Mum of a trans child in Brighton & Hove:

"Everyone knows there's no such thing as a Parents' Handbook. When we have children we take a leap of faith and rely on the support of friends and family to guide us and support us as they grow.

"When my child told me he was trans everything changed. Suddenly my friends and family had no relevant experience, instead they had questions and challenged us on our supportive approach. We knew next to nothing about being trans and worked hard to educate ourselves on what it meant, how it can happen, and how we should be.

"We often felt lonely, isolated and under intense scrutiny from our community. We were fiercely protective of our child, but didn't really know how to protect them, what was the most loving approach, or what was legal.

"Coming out to friends and family was a necessary step and although most people were supportive the challenging questions rocked our wavering confidence. It was emotionally exhausting, but we had a child who was certain and excited about their future and showed no fear in pushing ahead.

"When we approached school to let them know he was ready to socially transition at school they were supportive, but full of questions. Our child was their first trans pupil and they wanted us to let them know how they could help us. Quite honestly at this point we did not have the strength or certainty to know what was best for our child. We were lost at a time when we needed to be the ones with the answers.

"Then along came the Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit. It was such a relief to read some clearly thought out advice on how to handle situations such as changing for PE, using the toilet and behaviour. Our child has been in three different schools and each time the school has used the Toolkit extremely effectively to understand how they can support not only our child, but other students.

"In his most recent school the effect of this has been that he has felt fully included and safe in school and is now accessing education after many months of school refusal. The whole process has been quicker and I cannot emphasise what a relief it is to feel like we are all in the hands of experts across many different organisations who have many years of experience in both education and in supporting young LGBT+ people.

"The Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit has enabled parents and educators to quickly, simply and legally see how all children can be supported in schools. Without it I suspect our son would be unable to access mainstream education. With it he is thriving and accessing his lessons which is incredibly important for vulnerable students.

"His experiences of being trans combined with the gift of education means he is determined to use all of his talents as a working adult to make his community a better place. We are very grateful to everyone at Allsorts and Brighton & Hove City Council for their part in writing and producing the Toolkit."

Frequently Asked Questions

How long has Allsorts been around?

Allsorts Youth Project was co-founded by Jess Wood and James Newton in 1999 and Jess continues to lead the project to this day. To learn more about how Allsorts has developed over the years, please [click here](#).

Who works at Allsorts Youth Project?

All of our staff and volunteers identify as LGBT and our trustees are made up of LGBT people, parents with LGBTU children and allies from the wider community. Importantly, everyone that works or volunteers with our children and young people are DBS checked, receive regular safeguarding training and follow our safeguarding procedures at all times.

Why do LGBTU young people need a specialist service?

There is overwhelming evidence that LGBTU children and young people are more likely to be victims of bullying in educational settings, at home and in their communities compared to their non-LGBTU peers.

At Allsorts, we believe that providing a LGBTU safer space, as well as positive role modelling and targeted, issue-based support goes a long way to improving the lives of our young people. LGBTU young people are also more likely to experience mental health issues, unstable housing, substance abuse problems and a lack of LGBT inclusive Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) - all of which are explored within age-appropriate activities and workshops during our group sessions.

Our approach is to work in collaboration with other services to enable our service users to engage with our wider world and not just within LGBT+ specific spaces.

I have heard that LGBT identities are a 'new thing'. Is this true?

Diversity and variance in gender identity and sexual orientation have existed in history and across the world for hundreds of years. LGBT identities are not a trend and is nothing new, even if the language to describe LGBT identities have developed over time.

Is it right to be discussing sexual orientation and gender with children and young people? Won't that influence them?

Everything that we do from delivering workshops to facilitating guests, in and outside of our space, is age & developmentally appropriate. We don't believe that there's an age limit for young people to explore who they are and that it's important that young people feel listened to.

Is it right to be discussing sexual orientation and gender with children and young people? Won't that influence them?

Allsorts, our staff and volunteers have no desire to lead young people to question their sexual orientation and/or gender identity - we know that young people will do this anyway!

What we aim to do is support children and young people to feel more at ease with where they are on their journey of self-discovery, no matter if they are sure that they are LGBT or not.

Our work is not limited to children and young people that are LGBTU, we also facilitate workshops on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, colleges and youth settings. There is strong evidence that shows LGBTU children and young people are vulnerable to bullying, and we feel that positive education is key in making our world a safer place for everyone.

For more information on LGBT bullying in schools, click here to read [Stonewall Schools Report, 2017](#).

Is Allsorts Youth Project a campaigning/ political/ lobby group?

Allsorts Youth Project is not a campaigning, political or lobby group.

We offer support to any child or young person who is LGBT or unsure of their sexuality and/ or gender identity through our youth groups, emotional one-to-one support or our advocacy service. We support our young people to raise awareness of issues that matter to them.

We also offer training & education around LGBT inclusion & awareness to schools, colleges, organisations and professionals working with children & young people and use the Equality Act (2010), the law and best practice guidelines from organisations like Ofsted and the NHS to inform our own ways of working and our training for professionals.

We share anonymised statistics and data about our young people with relevant services, such as the police and the Government Equality Office to help inform change in legislation that leads to better protection for LGBTU young people from discrimination and bullying.

As a LGBTU youth service and charity, we exist in a political climate as our organisation and service users are impacted by decisions made by the government, but we are not aligned with any political party. We believe that all people, no matter their personal politics, should want equality and acceptance for LGBTU children and young people.

What support do you offer schools and colleges?

Allsorts delivers workshops for students and staff, addressing issues particular to the setting wherever possible. We also provide support and information on best practice to schools and colleges over the phone and via email if we aren't able to get to them in person.

Our training and workshops come with a fee, but any profits go right back in to our service, helping us to continue our vital work. Remember that supporting LGBTU students supports all students.

Contact

Allsorts Youth Project
E: media@allsortsyouth.org.uk

Tracey Allen at SEA PR – 01273 608 455
E: tracey@sea-pr.com

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