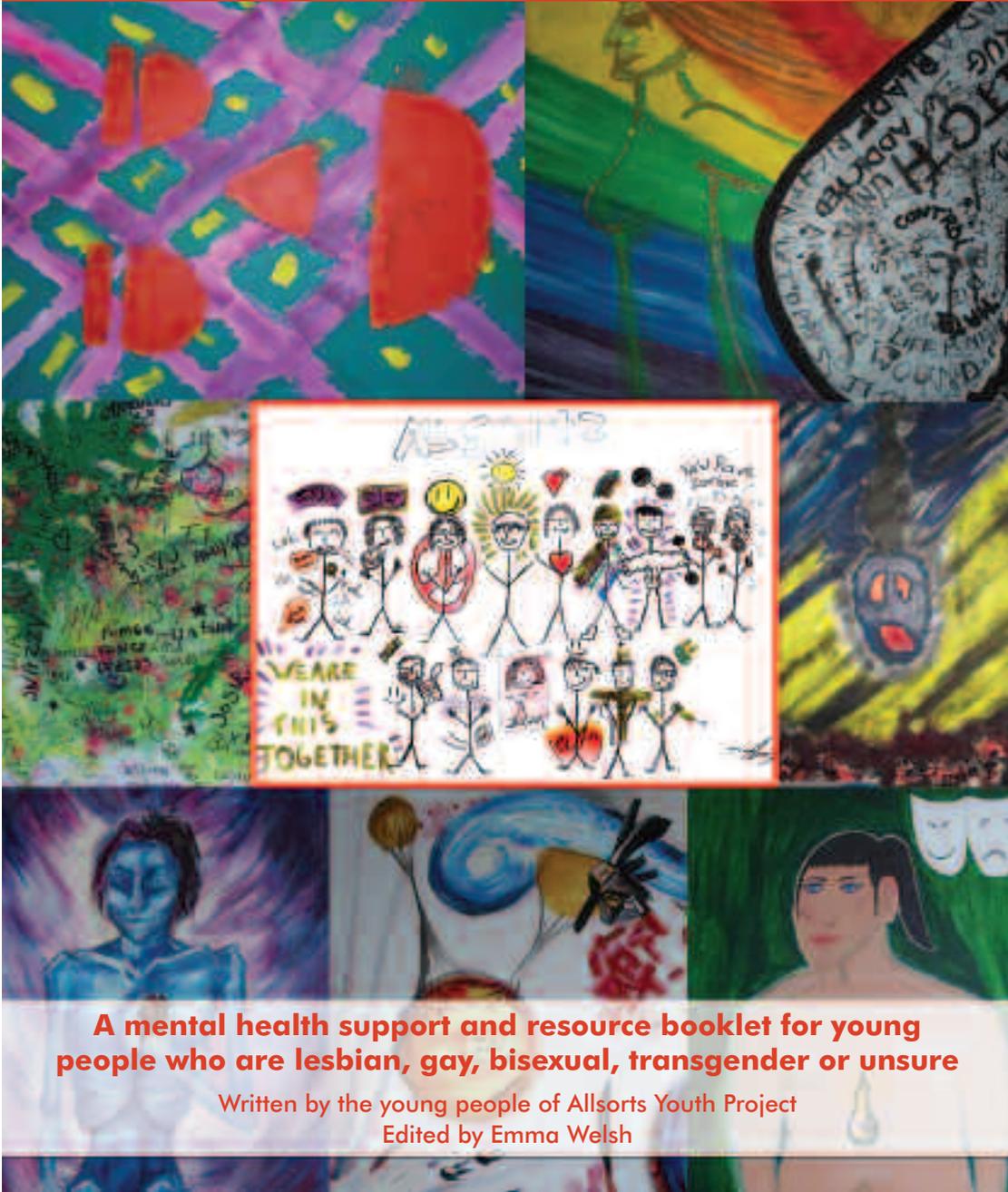


HEALTHY HEADS AND HEARTS

Difference is normal



A mental health support and resource booklet for young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or unsure

Written by the young people of Allsorts Youth Project
Edited by Emma Welsh

Healthy heads and hearts

Difference is normal

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Imagining Volcanoes

*Imagine feeling that you are unnatural
and unacceptable.*

*Imagine feeling unsafe to be seen and heard.
Imagine that all your dreams, passions, desires
and aspirations are pushed down and hidden away
deep inside, like molten lava inside a volcano.*

*Imagine one day discovering that there is nothing
wrong with who you are. Imagine realising that
it is society and not you that is at fault.*

Imagine feeling safe enough to be yourself.

Imagine experiencing belonging.

*Imagine being able to express
who you really are.*



Introduction

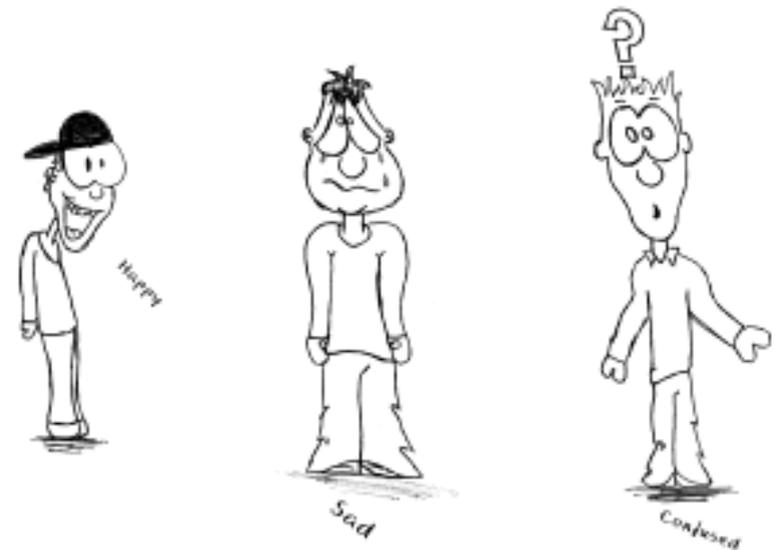
This is a resource booklet written by and for young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure. It is about our experiences, and how our inner resources and resilience has got us through difficult times in our lives.

In this booklet, we have shared our personal stories, poetry, drawings, painting and photography exploring how we have found different ways to express distress and our hopes for the future. Together, we have created a first aid box of coping mechanisms, pathways for inclusion and safe space suggestions. We have also made a Yellow Brick Road of positive stepping stones, and a gallery of self-portraits and journey photographs.

On behalf of our peers at Allsorts, we hope that through the pages of Healthy Heads and Hearts, other LGBT young people will be able to hear our voices, see our images and discover that they are not alone. We hope that their friends, families, teachers and support workers will also be able to gain more insight into the world of LGBT youth from our perspective.

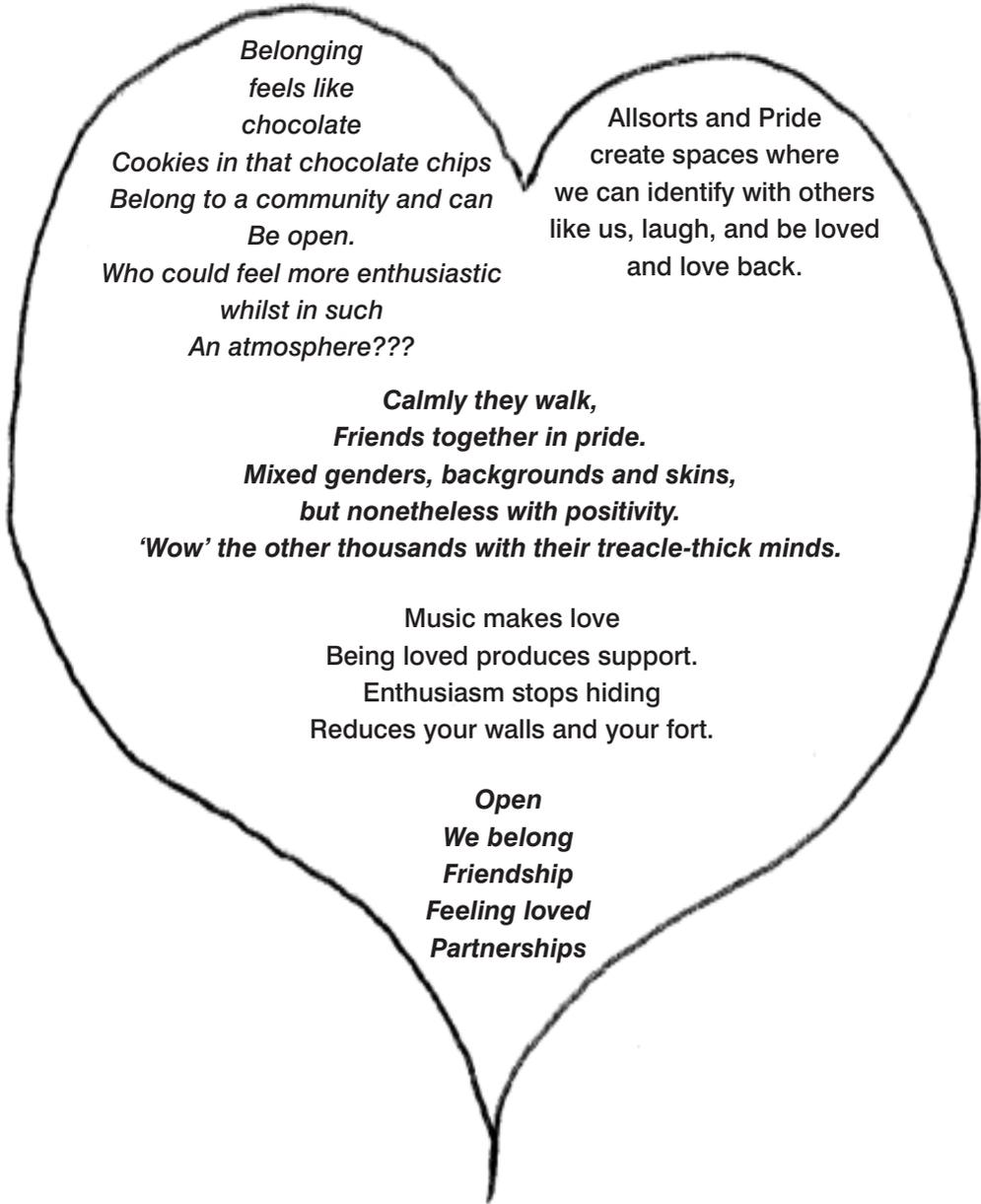


Section 1 Healthy heads and hearts



What does having a healthy head and heart mean for an LGBT young person?





Section 2 Difference is normal



Many of the young people who come to Allsorts for the first time, feel that they are different in some way. This may be because they have been told that they are different by other people, who perhaps feel threatened by someone who is not exactly like themselves. But what exactly does it mean to be 'normal'?

The seed of your uniqueness

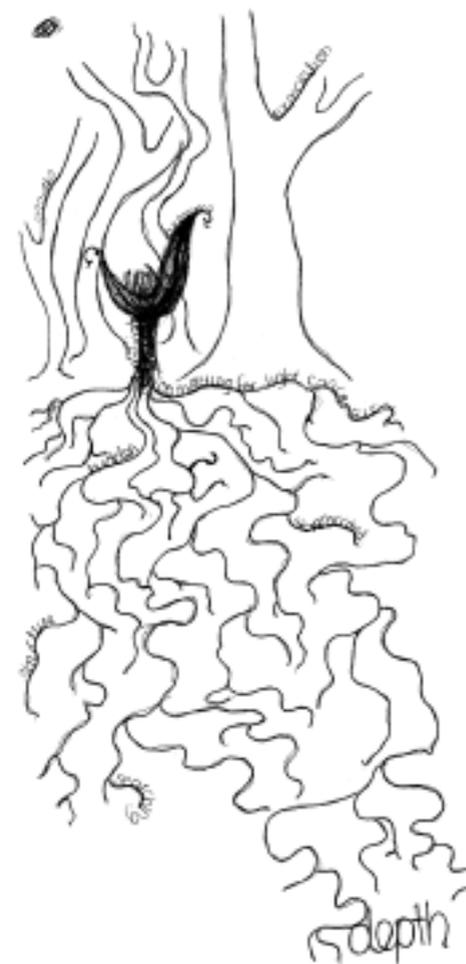
While you may be full grown, the seed of your uniqueness may still be dormant inside of you. Or it may be that there is a persistent weed in your garden that manages to come back over and over again. You try to kill it: It's weird and strange. You've been taught it doesn't belong in a proper garden, but still it returns.

If one day you discover that seed or weed and you cultivate it, clearing away all the other flowers and accumulated rubbish, you just might discover that this plant will provide for all your needs and bring your life peace and harmony.

For most, there was much agony before they finally resolved to be that which they are. As long as you are alive, that which is your uniqueness is also alive. All of the pain you are going through, all of your past mistakes are fertilizer that will make your plant bloom stronger and brighter. The great sadness is dying, never having enjoyed the happiness of being yourself.

From *Being Happy, Being Gay*, by Bert Herman. (Alamo Square Press, San Francisco 1990)

Some of the young people at Allsorts talked about how they saw the 'seed of their uniqueness.' Here are some of the drawings they made:

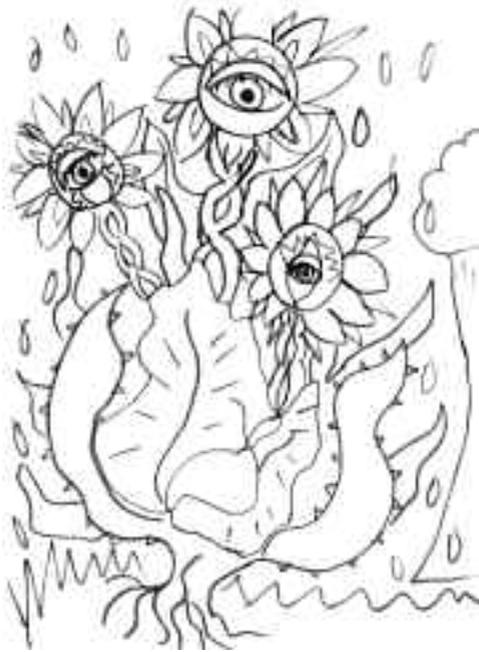


Depth with roots

②

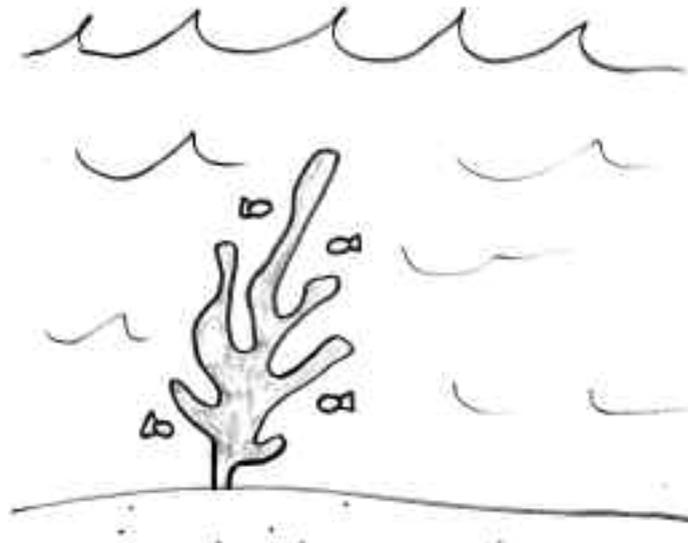


I am unique because I can survive through anything



Plant with eyes

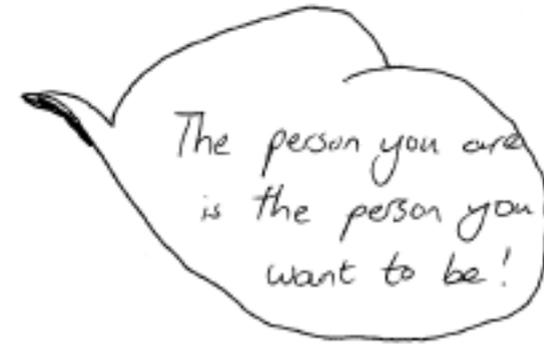
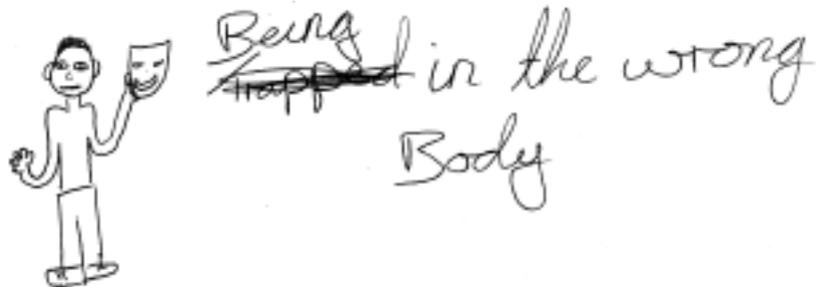
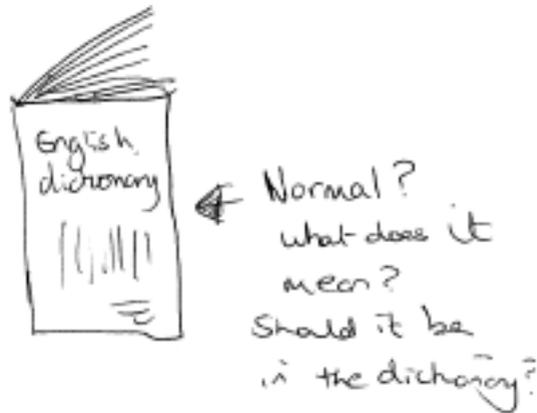
I love to be in the sea
because I can escape the
real world



I love to be in the sea because I can escape the real world

When what's on the outside is different from what's on the inside

Most young people at some point feel peer pressure to be the same as everyone else. They may dress or behave in a certain way, to fit in. But often these appearances can conceal what is really going on underneath. This is what some of the Allsorts young people said about their experiences when what's on the outside is different from what's on the inside.



Dont hide yourself.....
Bring the character of yourself out
Always follow your heart not your mind.



Section 3 Climbing the wall of discrimination



The process of emerging into adult identity in a complex world brings with it many challenges for all young people. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans young people have the additional challenge of living in a society that often persecutes us just for being who we are. This can have a devastating impact on our mental health.

When we think of discrimination, these are the images that come to our minds:

The invisible wall of discrimination that casts shadows so that no flowers can grow. People have these walls around them but cannot see them because they do not want to see them. But sometimes they can be visible. They are also very fragile and can be broken down.

People are afraid of the dark because they don't know what's out there. Ignorance leads to fear. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate.

Her sexuality causes her a lot of pain. She doesn't want to be rejected like she has so many times before. Her negative experiences of people have caused them to just be numbers.



Young people at Allsorts talked about the barriers they face. Some of these barriers can feel too hard to walk through and too high to climb, but sometimes staring a barrier in the face and talking about it with others can help us to realise that there may be ways over or through them.

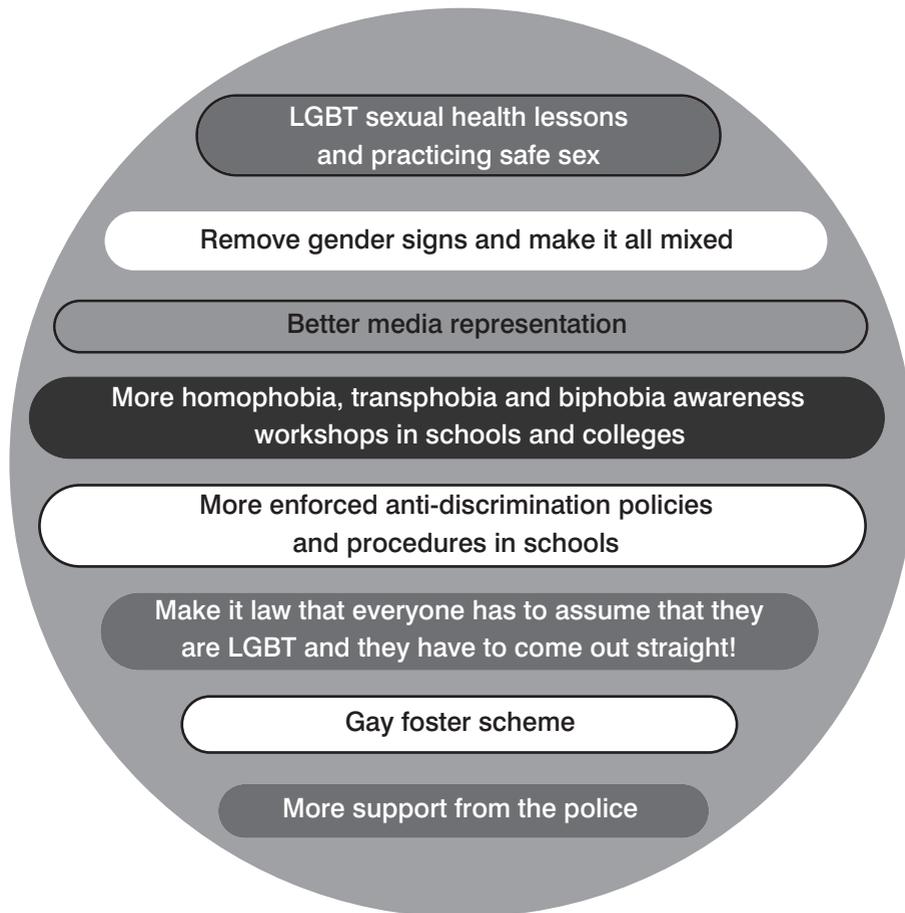
When we've identified the barriers, sometimes we need something to give us a pathway or ladder to overcome them. These are some of the personal things that have helped us to overcome some of the barriers we face.

Some of the barriers we face are:



We have concluded that although there are things that you can do to help yourself overcome some of the barriers, there is also much need for greater recognition from society of the barriers that we face, and a commitment to do something to change these.

Our ideas include:

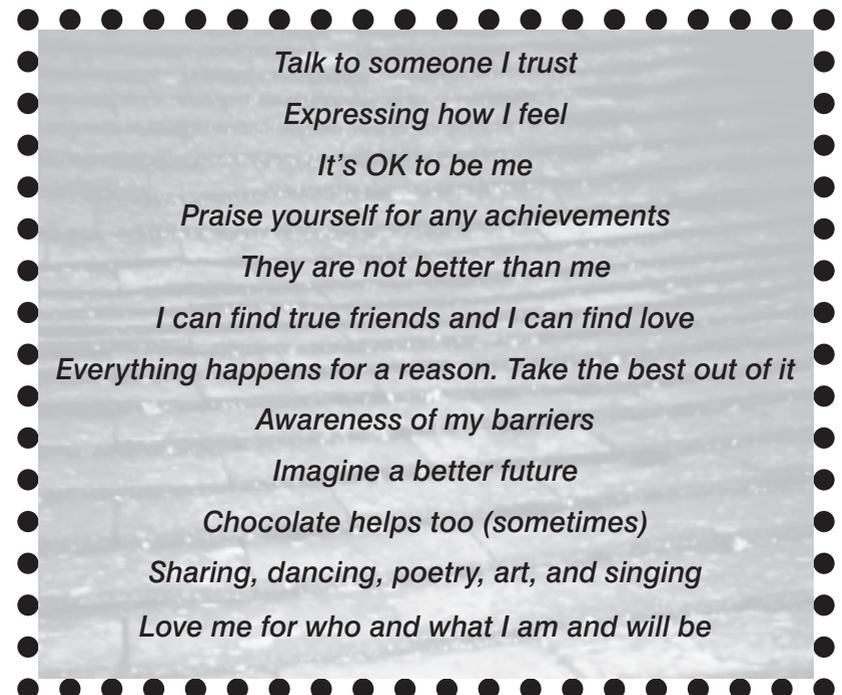


Follow the Yellow Brick Road

Sometimes we find ourselves in difficult situations that we can't necessarily change. However with hope we may be able to imagine that there may be new pathways to take us from difficult times into safer spaces. Even in the darkness there may be tiny steps or helpful ideas that can help us to begin the process of change.

We have created a yellow brick road of words and phrases that symbolised for us, positive stepping stones to bridge the gap between difficult times and a place of relative safety.

These include:





Section 4 Our voices



Some of us at Allsorts would like to share our stories, in the hope that our words may reach out to other LGBT young people who are feeling that they are the only one. These stories show how members of the project have coped with discrimination, self harming, eating disorders, depression, gender transitioning, bullying and relationships, and how they have found support along the way.

Sam's Story

I really didn't realise I was gay until I was 16, although I did know I had strong feelings towards men. To be honest, I didn't even know what the word gay meant at that age. Gay to me was just a bad word: rubbish, negative, even a swear word in some circumstances. Somehow though I knew something was different about me.

At my secondary school I was bullied. I was a bit geeky and was teased for it, but as time went on it got worse and took a homophobic turn. I was quite effeminate in my appearance, and when my voice broke it was squeaky, which didn't help. I was quite the gay stereotype. I was called names like 'batty boy' and 'puffer' on a regular basis.

I suppose I internalised things and became very shut off from the world around me. I rarely spoke at school and was always very depressed. It became common for me to not turn up for lessons at

all. I think the worst time was when I was punched in the school yard and given a black eye simply for being gay. After that I used to walk around school in constant fear and felt like I was in some sort of prison. There was always the worry about who you might bump into or who might be around the next corner. I was on edge all the time.

As the bullying grew worse and more kids joined in, I would run out of lessons to escape the abuse. I hid in the boy's toilets where I knew I wouldn't be found. There I would comfort eat things like sweets and chocolate to ease the tension and anxiety that had built



up inside me throughout the day. Over time, it became a habit and evolved into me making myself sick. I'd go home and binge on anything I could find and make myself throw up there too. The release of tension made me feel better and became my way of coping with the bullying.

When I first started making myself sick, I didn't know what the word bulimia meant. I only realised it was a problem through reading an Agony Aunt's column in my mum's magazine. I'd heard of eating disorders, but thought it was just starving yourself. I didn't think men could have eating disorders, either. For a while, I was in denial about it. I thought: 'I'm a boy. There's no way I am bulimic.' It was never about weight or even body image for me, only about emotional stress. It became a way to punish myself, because I began to believe that I deserved the bullying.

I didn't tell anyone about anything at the time, and the teachers did incredibly little about the bullying. I think they realised why I was

being picked on, but I think they were in an awkward situation where they didn't feel capable of tackling it. This was the time of Section 28 - staff just didn't want to talk about it. In fact they were very ignorant, and I think that's as bad as the bullying itself. Let's face it, ignorance is where homophobia stems from in the first place.

My grades decreased really quickly and I didn't do as well in my GCSEs as I was supposed to. I should have been a grade A student, so that surely shows you the impact homophobic bullying has on your education. The day after my exams I went to see the doctor, and confessed that I was making myself sick and the depression was becoming overwhelming. I was referred to a youth service, but because I was 16 my mum would have to be told. I didn't want her to know, so I didn't go.

I was at my lowest weight when I was 17, weighing just under 6 stone. By then, I was starving myself as well. I went through a delusional stage of what healthy eating was - I'd eat nothing but lean chicken and leaves for days, or chew on food and split it out - although I don't think I ever got to the anorexia stage.

I went to the doctor's, but I wasn't honest about the problem, so nothing was done. It was only after I moved to Worthing when I was 18 and went to Connexions, the young people's service, that my life started to change. I was beginning to acknowledge the fact that I had a problem and it all stemmed from the bullying. I was put on anti-depressants and began having counselling and getting involved in voluntary work. I was asked to go on a life skills course as a way of staying in the education system, which meant I could go on to college. I started running a lot to relieve the tension. That encouraged me to eat more healthy, too.

Now I'm involved in youth projects and stuff to do with Stonewall, which are both highly positive things, and I wouldn't be doing them

if I hadn't gone through what I went through. My experiences have enabled me to turn a lot of negative things into positive things; it's made me more life aware. I identify with other people's issues now, regardless of whether they're similar to my own; it's made me much more receptive to people's feelings. That can only be a good thing. If it's happening to you, try and talk to a teacher. You'll do yourself a lot less damage if you tell someone.

I'm not bulimic any more - I haven't made myself sick for at least two and a half years. There have been times in extreme circumstances where it's crossed my mind, but I've done so many positive things with my life now that I can't go back. Now I've recovered I've launched a website for men with eating disorders. The site will raise awareness of anorexia and bulimia in men so they can seek support. Talking about it helps, and I hope by setting up this website it will encourage many more men to begin their road to recovery.



Hannah's Story

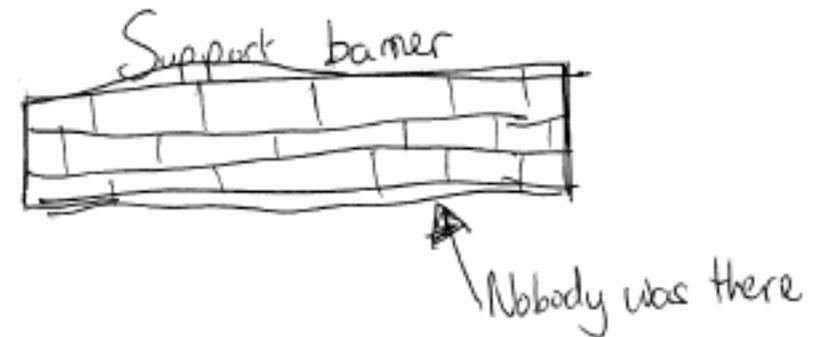
I started cutting when I was 18, shortly after I started University. I had never heard of self-harm and the first time I did it I couldn't understand why I had done it, I just blamed it on being drunk. I didn't regret it, however, I was really stressed at the time and somehow feeling the sting of the cut for days after made me feel calm. The next time I was drunk, I did it again but worse and I remember sitting in class the next day feeling 'proud' that I had done that to myself, it was my secret.

It became more frequent and soon I didn't need to be drunk to do it but it wasn't till I read an article about self-harm in a magazine that I realised that what I was doing was something that had a name and something that other people did too. It was scary to realise that I had a problem, but it couldn't stop me, the feeling I got from harming myself couldn't compare to anything. But it didn't take long before I was dependent on it and my girlfriend at the time convinced me to get help.

I went to the GP, who put me on anti-depressants and referred me for counselling. Counselling helped me to explore the reasons why I did it. My self-esteem had been low for a long time, mainly due to events in my past and because I hated who I was. At school it was bearable because I buried myself in my books and it resulted in achieving something academically. When I started University, however, I was no longer the 'best in the class' and I couldn't cope with that, I felt like I had nothing going for me. I was continually putting on weight from binge eating and I hated myself for being gay, I thought I was a total freak.

Self-harming became a complete addiction, I couldn't go a day without it. Soon it wasn't enough for me to just cut myself, I had to do it worse and explore other methods of harming such as burning and overdosing. I became a frequent visitor at A&E and although the

staff would often treat me really nastily, it didn't change anything, I just hated myself more.



It felt like nobody understood me. Medical professionals thought I was attention seeking and a waste of time. Friends and family thought I was manipulative and just trying to hurt them. None of these attitudes helped, they just made me feel worse and I didn't want to live any longer.

The extent of my problems hit reality when I had to suspend from University because I wasn't well enough to attend my year abroad. But I still couldn't dig myself out of the hole and instead just tried to pretend that I was getting better. I was later allowed to attend my year abroad but then my problems spiralled out of control again because there was nobody there watching me.

Five weeks later I had to leave and move back to my parents' house. It was so difficult but with my parents watching my every move, I was unable to self-destruct. Of course I was still very depressed but my addiction to harm was weakening and this gave me some space to really get better. A course of computer aided CBT provided by the Mental Health Service proved fairly useless but fortunately I didn't give up because after that, I joined Allsorts and my life slowly turned around completely.

For the first time I had found an environment where I could be completely accepted for how I was. The other young people at Allsorts are so diverse and have had so many problems themselves and they are not freaks at all, so there is no way that I am! Instantly I was looking forward all week to that evening when I could be in this environment. Soon my self-esteem improved dramatically through the regular mental health and well-being orientated workshops and programmes.

I've made the best friends I've ever had and met the most decent people in my whole life! The volunteering opportunities have probably helped me the most because they've improved my confidence and given a reason to be really proud of myself. I have since moved to Brighton, returned to University and am also volunteering with a mental health youth project as well as at Allsorts. I have a clear focus in life again and am far better equipped to overcome obstacles without the need to fall back into my old life.



Alexandra's Story

Identity

Despite the number of times I have been asked, I've never decided that I wanted to be a woman. You can't choose in life who you are. You can either accept it and be yourself or deny it and hide away from it and be a faker, living your life as a lie. Whether it's as a chameleon, wearing different guises to blend into your background or a scary mask you use as protection, sooner or later, it will catch up with you! I spent a lot of time trying to find out who I was and then finding the courage to be myself, regardless of consequences. It got to the point where I couldn't continue any more and so when I did find the courage, I was relieved. I found freedom, freedom that I've enjoyed ever since.

For a while I felt stuck; I had reached a fork in the road and I had to decide which branch to take, the one on the left or the one on the right. So I stayed where I was looking down each route to see what may lie ahead of me. Nowhere did they seem to cross paths, both going their separate ways. And all the while that I had stopped, time was still ticking and everything around me was carrying on without me. I was being left behind whilst I was trying to figure out where to go. Everybody else seemed to know where they were going. What was the place that I stopped at? What were these paths placed before me? Well let me tell you, by briefly taking you back to this journey's beginning.

In January 1984, in Britain, my mother gave birth to her third and final child. This child was born with male anatomy and so was registered as such. Accepted and raised as a son like the two older brothers were before, quite possibly the apple of their father's eye. I knew I was interested in girls from a very early age and to be perfectly honest, looking back, I would say that it was somewhat expected of me.

So down this one path where I am a man, I may find the woman of my dreams and have children. But I am bitterly unhappy, as there is something fundamentally wrong with me. I'm opposing my core identity and it's destroying my otherwise blissful and perfect life. Down the other path, I am a woman, having had a sex change, and may have found a man with whom I can't have our own children with.

Either way I am truly unhappy and feel totally alone. Yet again I'm opposing my core identity, but this time for completely different reasons. And why were both options so bleak for me? Because, unfortunately, individuals like myself were refused healthcare if we identified as homosexual transsexuals! These are individuals who are sexually attracted to the sex with which they identify as and feel that perhaps they should have been born as.



Eventually I couldn't go on staying where the road split. Fortunately I found the courage to be myself, whether that

scared, angered, offended, or confused people, made them laugh at me, smile or cry. I was for the first time, having found myself, going to be me, no matter what. And if I had to, in order to get a sex change when the time came, lie about my sexuality to the healthcare professionals. Nobody was going to stop me. I wasn't going to allow them.

And so using my strength, I forged a third and new path for myself, down the middle of the two, taking what I liked from each and discarding what I didn't. Sometimes I could see that this new path would cross the others, when I looked up ahead. Although I could not tell the route or what I may encounter on the way, it headed in

the right direction, and the sun was shining and there were blue skies with white puffy clouds on the horizon.

Now this journey has been bumpy, and I expect that may continue to occur with an unpredictable nature. But I knew it would be, for I had carved this path anew for myself. It was going to be a little rough hewn in places and unpaved, but in a way as odd as it may sound, sometimes that's been the fun. You can ask anybody who goes away travelling and they'll tell you that they want to get off the beaten track, discover something unique and find something that no-one else has found before, and possibly will never find again.

I have recently fully transitioned, and had not previously considered myself to have done so. As one of my best friends said to me, in the short time since surgery I have changed so much, for the better. I've become happier in myself and more confident. Having surgery didn't finish my transition, but made me feel complete, which in turn brought me to the end. I still have a few bits of paperwork to sort out like G.R.C, but that's an expense I can't currently afford. It is just another piece of documentation within our bureaucratic and big brother state like government, and not me.

If there is something I can tell you about Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic (G.I.C) and my healthcare pathway, it is that they are not the monsters that they are sometimes made out to be. Having said that, it's not fun and games either. They can seem strange. A doctor asked me why I was there, within moments of me sitting down to my first appointment with him. His long quiff would flop about from side to side as he wrote down his notes on my answer. You might be thrown off centre and question their methods, but don't worry about them. Just relax, be honest and yourself.

Maybe I didn't have a problem because I was lucky or because I intended to go the whole way and have genital reconstructive

surgery (G.R.S). Luck or not, I decided to be bold and honest about my sexuality to the psychiatrists. This did not affect my healthcare because times have changed. Sexuality does not define gender identity but your sexuality is related to your gender identity.

I appreciate that surgery is not for every transgendered person out there. Gender is not bi-linear, and you don't have to be either male or female. It's more like a three-dimensional sphere. It is not fixed, but fluid, and as with anything in life, can change. Perhaps the G.I.Cs don't view it that way. Perhaps they are more oppressive towards people who feel they fit somewhere else in the sphere. I don't know. I can only say from my own personal experiences.

I am writing this piece for someone like myself, someone who is struggling, having difficulty in some way. Maybe you are not out yet, or you can't come to Allsorts. But imagine this as a little piece of Allsorts coming to you instead. If I went back to myself ten years ago, I would take my younger self by the hand and hold it firmly in mine and say 'yes you are, and it is okay. You are allowed to be yourself.' And I would give myself a big re-assuring hug. I wouldn't change a thing in my past. That's not to say I don't have any regrets, but I wouldn't be the same person I am today if I did. And I love me just the way I am. And I love being me even more.

As for myself, without putting myself into boxes, and it can be argued until you're blue in the face that I am not a woman, but I will tell you this; I am not a man. I never have been and I never will be, even if I did try to be a gentleman. I used to think of myself as a transsexual lesbian. I thought that there was something wrong with my D.N.A, that I had some kind of genetic disorder where my sex chromosomes were damaged, that I should have had healthy XX chromosomes, thus be a biological lesbian woman. But I don't. Now though, I accept that this is the way I am meant to be. This is who and what I am. I describe myself as a two-spirit lesbian. But as I mentioned earlier about gender, that in time may change.

If there is one last piece of advice I can give, it would be this. Whatever journey in life you take, if it is one that will affect your reproductive organs, consider having some of your reproductive cells cryogenically frozen, if it is possible. Then, should in your future, you wish to be able to have your own biological children, you have the potential and possibility to do so.



Poetry corner

Here is some poetry written by some of the young people of Allsorts:

*Wild horses you run free. You're at one with nature.
Teach me how to be, wild horses. Horses, you are my god, my
flesh and bone, my soul, my brothers,
my sisters, my mothers, and fathers. I am your foal.*

*Wild horses come near, I am as you are, there is no
need to fear. I trust you, my gods, my family, with my life.
Horses, talk to me. I am listening. Let me help.
Let me be where I belong, with my herd.
I can't wait to be reunited to be reunited with my family.
It is with them that I will be at peace.
My herd, my family, I miss you.
Please help me find you.*

By Tony Chacksfield
9th February 1989 - 26th February 2008



*No matter how far away you are
I always want to be with you.
No matter how cold the wind is
I keep growing until I see you again.*

*No matter how long I've been waiting for you
I am here to wait for you
My loneliness grows with my branches
I am growing towards the sky -
The faraway sky*

*Soon white tickets will
Fall down from the sky
- the tickets for Spring.*

By Tai

Faces

*I wear two faces.
One is plain and simple,
The other truly me.*

*One is a blank canvas,
The other, a symphony.*

*One is better,
Which one could it be.*

*Pick between the two,
To conclude on an epiphany.*

By Zack



Hidden behind a mask
Hidden agenda

Screaming at a Lifeless Sky

*The monotonous rhythm of life,
Drawing you in like the pages of a book,
Insisting on being read over and over again.*

*Its mood never changing, never shifting.
The times of happiness few and far between,
My heart wishing there could be more.*

*To see the joy of life, unfortunately,
Is a sight rare seen by mine eyes?
But hope of such things,
Stops me from ending my time,
In this cold unforgiving land and time.*

*As the final chapter is read,
Tears and sadness fill the air,
But I know,
That I have brought some
Happiness into others minds,
And I now move on to clouds on high.*

By Zack

Why?

Why is this happening to me?

Why don't they understand?

Why do they stare at me?

Why do they hate me?

Why am I different?

What don't they understand?

What are these new feelings?

What do they mean?

Now they understand,

And so do I,

Thankyou.

By Zack



Section 5 Finding strength



Everyone is different. We all have different ways of coping. We all have resources inside of us, even when we're not aware that we have them. What is it that helps us to get through the hard times in our lives? Where does our strength and courage come from? The young people of Allsorts have some suggestions.

First aid box

Play loud music on head phones	Talk to support worker or counsellor	<i>Get a new tattoo</i>
Visit a friend	<i>Go to movies with friends</i>	Paint
<i>Hang out with my cats</i>		<i>Take dog for a walk or play with animals</i>
Talk to close ones		Go for a walk
<i>Go second hand clothes shopping</i>		<i>Treat myself</i>
Computer games	Cry	<i>Don't give myself a hard time about feeling bad</i>
<i>Go somewhere new</i>	<i>Tell myself that I love me</i>	Have a nice meal
Get some fresh air	Post on NSHN (National self-harm network) forum	Laugh
Watch Will & Grace box set (light hearted comedy)		<i>Reading books that are spiritually enlightening</i>

Safe spaces

Young people from Allsorts describe how spending time in our favourite spaces and places where we feel safe and comfortable can help us to reconnect with our inner resources.

In the bath

Away from everyone. I can think and I can deal with feelings. When the air hits you, you feel fresh and clean. It feels like a weight has been lifted off your shoulders. Escapism and getting away

Meditation CDs

It feels like you've been talking to someone.

Travelling

A new place with a new feeling. The place has to change. You see people you've never seen before. New places. Soaking up the whole experience and culture and surroundings and taking in all that's going on around me. The different lifestyles people have. Something completely different. As you cross the border between two countries, the whole outlook varies. Open-minded people are really amazing.

My bed

I feel most secure within myself. Where you dream how your life could be. Because you're not awake, you're reflecting in a different way. I can snuggle in my duvet and be completely alone, and sleep off anything that's happened. In the dark in my room, everything fades into nothing. It's just my own thoughts. When I feel bad, sometimes I just want to be somewhere quiet, and run away to the land of dreams. The dark is a very spiritual place. You can hide away, like when you're young. You can run away and be by yourself.

In the shower

A safe place where I can sing without being heard

Being creative

When I'm singing I relieve lots of the emotions that I feel. It's easier to write than express in spoken words.

Painting - everything becomes colour and liquid and fluid, taking me somewhere magical.

Acting - the feeling after I've opened out and let all that out. I don't want it to end. I feel so full and intense and empty all at the same time.

My dragon ornaments

I feel safe with them. They are protection for me.

My dad's grave

I was blown away. I was sad. But I also felt like I was there. I felt complete because he is a part of me. When someone dies, you can learn from that person, and repeat their dreams and wishes over and over.

Allsorts

I feel really comfortable. There's a couple of people in my class at college - I always have to be careful what I say. Here I can make jokes, and talk about it if I fancy women. All my friends are here.

Nature

The woods in Spring or Autumn. Where I love is a place that you can see all the greenery. You sit there and look around, and think 'this is a really nice place'. You do a lot of thinking. I feel safe and emotional, because I couldn't share that feeling.

The sunset. I become completely speechless and just stare at it, and start crying.

Underwater when I'm diving. It's the best feeling ever for me. It really is escaping the world and entering something completely different, like you're flying. It's really silent, apart from your breathing.

In the countryside, you're there with your thoughts and the wildlife. It's calming. I feel at one when I'm somewhere isolated.

Section 6 Back in the picture - re-imagining ourselves



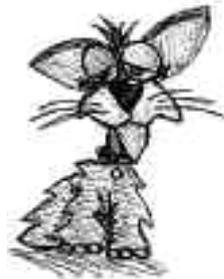
As LGBT youth begin to find ways of expressing who they are, their silenced voices and hidden faces begin to re-emerge. So too does their talent, creativity, resilience, skills and aspirations for the future.

This section explores some of the different ways that we as young people of Allsorts have used art and other creative activities to put ourselves back in our pictures by expressing something of who we are.

Why do we make images?

How can images impact on our moods? What is it that images can tell us about ourselves? When the young people at Allsorts discussed why we make images, ideas that we came up with included:

- * To tell us something about ourselves
- * To change our mood
- * Communication
- * To make memories
- * Self-expression
- * Story telling
- * Seeing things that we don't see in general
- * To feel good about yourself
- * For pleasure



- * To feel comfortable in society
- * To make an interpretation of our lives
- * To mask something
- * To reveal something
- * To use colours to represent moods and feelings
- * To capture the soul
- * To create an illusion of reality

Ideas for ways of using nature to visually represent an LGBT young person included

An acorn or sapling to represent the potential to grow and be something great

A single flower in a field that is individual and beautiful

An autumn leaf to show the colourful diversity on the tree of life

Ideas for representing the LGBT community included

An unlit fire to reveal the different elements that make it what it is

A tree of leaves

Rippling water

A prancing horse

The group discussed how different images can mean different things for different people. We thought about what makes us who we are, our likes and dislikes, hobbies, hopes and fears, and also what it means to us to be LGBT young people.

Photographing journeys

LGBT young people on an Allsorts residential trip took photographs of images to represent some aspects of their own journeys.



Barrier of fence



Pathway up

-50-



Something small grew to something big,
part of the forest together with other trees



Look on the other side, something to help you over

-51-

The art of making a visual journal

What is a visual journal?

A visual journal is whatever you would like it to be. It might be a mixture between a diary and a sketchbook. It is a place for you to record ideas, images and dreams that may come to you in the day and the night. You might want to keep a collection of inspiring quotations and images, funny stories, emotions, poems, drawings and sketches to capture passing moments in your day to day life. Using art materials can be a fun way to explore and express the mess and confusion of life; a celebration of the ways in which life can be messy!

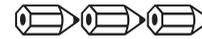
This extract from the published visual journal of a young woman called Sabrina, inspired some of the young people of Allsorts to make their own visual journals.

Can't being just as I am be enough for me? I don't like doubting my 'me-ish-ness' because it's all I have. And I don't have time to keep searching to be someone else . . . When did I start doubting who I am?

We are all facing choices that define us. No choice, however messy is without importance. In the overall picture of our lives, we all at our own age have to claim something, even if it is only our own confusion. I am in the middle of growing up and into myself. This book is my life in progress. A growing expedition through the tangled and unfilled in parts of understanding. my life, my truth, and myself. I want to share it. Welcome inside.

From Spilling open: the art of becoming yourself,
by Sabrina Ward-Harrison (New World Library, California, 1999)

Art Materials



Some suggestions of things you could use:

cardboard, coloured paper, hole punch, coloured string or ribbon, paper fasteners, glue, scissors, cloth, felt, feathers, glitter, fabric, ink, a small stick, acrylic paints, palettes and brushes, oil pastels

Method



- Make two covers out of pieces of cardboard
- Using a hole punch, make a hole at the top and the bottom
- Using paper fasteners or coloured string or ribbon, tie sheets of plain and coloured paper into your journal
- Decorate your journal

Things to consider



- What do you like about your visual journal?
- What would you like to use it for?
- What kind of observations will you most likely include?
- When is good for you to write and sketch? First thing in the morning? Last thing at night? Weekends?
- Where do you most like to write and sketch? In your room? Outdoors? In a café? With other people? By yourself? On a train?
- When do ideas usually come to you?
- What kind of details will you want to remember?
- What kind of art materials will you want to use?
- Who might you want to show share your journal with, or will it be private and just for you?

Self-portrait painting

What is a self-portrait?

Making a self-portrait can be another way of expressing aspects of ourselves, which may be difficult to communicate in other ways.

A SELF-PORTRAIT
CAN BE **MUCH**
MORE THAN A
M I R R O R
REFLECTION

IT CAN BE AN EXACT
LIKENESS LIKE A
PHOTOGRAPH OR
A B S T R A C T
W H I R L S O F
COLOUR TO EXPRESS
T H O U G H T S A N D
FEELINGS

IT CAN TELL MANY **STORIES**

L I K E O U R
IMAGINATIONS,
A SELF-PORTRAIT HAS
NO LIMITS

A SELF-PORTRAIT IS A
PERSON'S VERSION
OF **THEMSELVES**

Things to think about

- How do you feel today?
- Do you feel like painting intricate details or broad sweeping brush strokes?
- Will you include objects in your picture?
- What are your favourite objects?
- What kind of objects do you like in your surroundings?
- Will you include images suggesting particular places?
- What places are special to you in your life?
- Will you include text?
- Do you have favourite poems or quotations?
- Will you use collage material?
- Will you use feathers, sequins, textured paper?
- Will you experiment with abstract images?
(sometimes a colour, shape or idea of something can offer more insight into the life and mind of an artist, than the likeness of a face could provide).

WHAT ARE THE **STORIES INSIDE YOU**
THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL?

Gallery

In a recent A-Sorted Health and Well-Being programme, a group of young people painted self-portraits on canvas. This was a way of expressing feelings and experiences that can be more difficult to communicate verbally. Some of the themes explored in the paintings include gender transitioning, relationships, self-harm, anorexia, isolation, suicide and hope.

The outcome of this project was the inclusion of Allsorts young people's artwork in an international art exhibition fundraiser for Allsorts. We hope that our artwork will help to educate people about some of the issues affecting the mental health of LGBT young people.

Here are some of the stories the LGBT young people of Allsorts have to tell.

I'm from Kent and have been fortunate to have travelled a lot as I grew up, which is one of my favourite pastimes. I used to consider myself to not be particularly artistic but know now that to be otherwise and art tends to be a matter of perspective, as I thoroughly enjoy acting. I think that the world is one of the most beautiful and yet overlooked & under appreciated gifts that we have. I have been out for over 3 ½ years now and the world wouldn't be the same without Allsorts. In that time that I have been out, I think the words (mis)attributed to Kurt Cobain ring true to me now as they did when I first opened the closet door, "I'd rather be hated for who I am than loved for who I'm not." What is more, when I am myself, I actually enjoy it if people find me to be controversial, and would rather I be quiet, because to me, it proves that I'm probably right and they don't like the fact that they are being undermined by someone being true to themselves - Lady Harmony



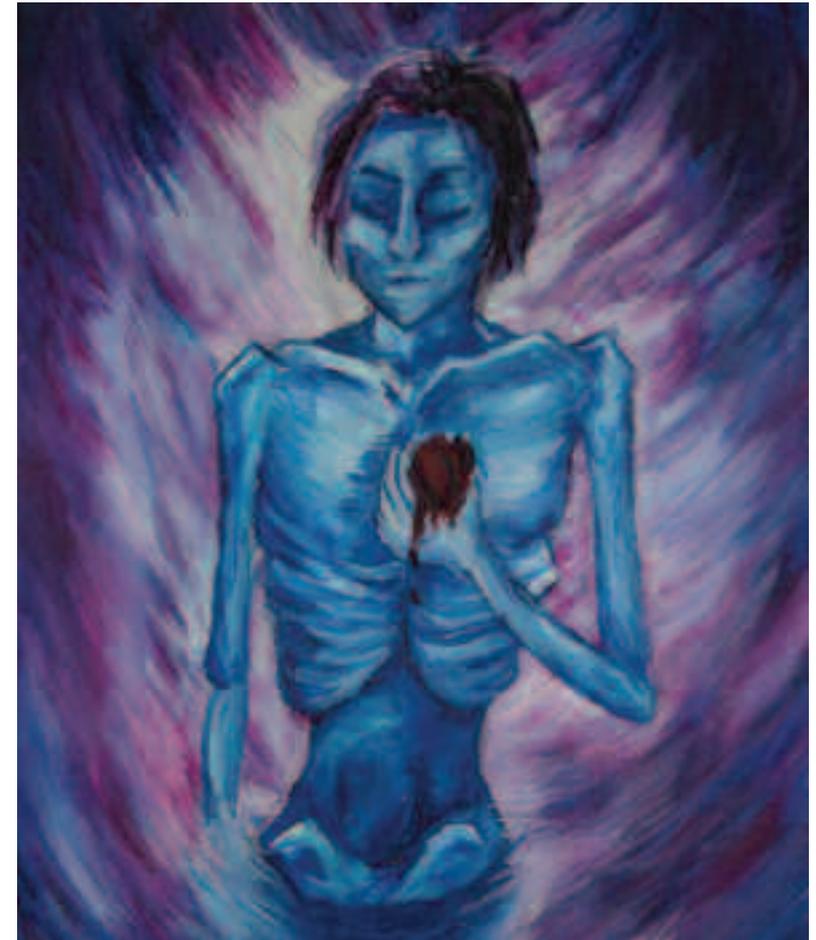
Painting by Lady Harmony

I'm Hannah, I'm 22 and I'm a language student. I'm at my happiest when I'm scuba diving, listening to good music, or spending time with my girlfriend, my friends, my family and my animals. I have been at Allsorts for a year now and it has changed my life for the better. My artwork reflects my transition from having sunk to rock bottom to becoming a happy, confident and proud person who wants to live life to the full. I hope that others can also realise that there really is light at the end of the tunnel.



Painting by Hannah

I like art because it is the way I feel, and the way I express myself, rather than through words. My painting is from a drawing I did a year ago when I split up with my ex-girlfriend. The colours represent my sorrow. I have a fascination with drawing skeletal figures as I am recovering from anorexia. I believe that there is no such thing as good or bad art. If it's done for the right reasons, it's unique for the individual. Art is in the eye of the beholder - Cole



Painting by Cole

My name is Carl and I've been coming to Allsorts for a couple of months now. I like to cycle and just stay active. I like to draw and paint because I find it hard to communicate to people but with paint I can express myself openly without people misunderstanding me. My favourite song that helps me is "You're not the only one" by Evanescence.



Painting by Carl

My painting is called the fence and I painted it to represent an obstacle in life to get over. I'm 24 and I live in Bognor Regis. At the moment I am studying information technology at Bognor Regis College. My hobbies are roller skating, gardening and eating! - Michael



Painting by Michael

Hiya! My name is Christy and I'm 23 and a lesbian from Allsorts Youth group. I love to mix up things. I find that art is a release and a portal to travel to different worlds. I gain inspiration from Dali and the Cubists for their extroverted use of colour and vivid imagination.



Painting by Christy



Painting by Flo

Resources



Painting by Flo



Helplines

The Samaritans for people who are suicidal or in despair
24 hour helpline 08457 90 90 90

Childline for young people in distress, troubled or in danger
24 hour helpline 0800 1111

NHS Direct nurse for medical enquiries
0845 46 47

Saneline for people in mental health crisis
Daily 1pm – 11pm 0845 767 8000

Gender Trust Helpline to give information and support to anyone affected by gender identity issues
Mon-Fri 10am-10pm, Sat and Sun 1pm-10pm 0845 231 0505

FTMnet Telephone Support telephone helpline operated by unpaid volunteers from their own homes
Wednesday evenings 8 - 10.30pm 0161 432 1915

LGBT Switchboard lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans information, support and counselling service
Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard - Every day from 5pm, voice, email and minicom 01273 202384
London LGB Switchboard - Every day 10am – 11pm 020 7837 7324

Websites

The National Self-Harm Network resources, information and message board for people who self-harm
www.nshn.co.uk

The Basement Project info on self-injury
<http://freespace.virgin.net/basement.project/>

Beat for Young People information on eating disorders, how to get help and how you can help someone who has an eating disorder
www.b-eat.co.uk/YoungPeople/Home

Men Get Eating Disorders Too information and advice for men who have been affected by any eating or exercise disorder
www.mengetedstoo.co.uk

Papyrus prevention of young suicide information for young people, families and workers
www.papyrus-uk.org

MIND information on mental health issues
www.mind.org.uk

Young Minds information on young people related mental health issues
<http://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

The UK Alliance of LGBT Young People
www.queeryouth.org.uk

FTM is an international help site for transitioning female to males, offering support for trans health, changing your name, support groups and counselling

<http://www.ftmi.org/> and <http://ftm.org.uk/support>

FTM and MTF - an international help site for both FTM and MTF, links, stories and pictures can be found of other transsexuals
<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSuccesses/TSuccesses.html>

Queer Youth is a national organisation that is run by LGBT young people.

www.queeryouth.org.uk

FFLAG provides information and support for families and friends of lesbians and gay men
www.fflag.org.uk

UK Blackout offers information and discussions on issues that are relevant to black LGBT people
www.ukblackout.com

REGARD is a national organisation of disabled LGBT people
www.regard.org.uk

True Vision hate crime reporting
www.report-it.org.uk.

Spectrum is Brighton & Hove's LGBT community forum
www.spectrum-lgbt.org

Terrence Higgins Trust's Young Gay Men's website
www.ygm.org.uk

UK lesbian and gay immigration group provides information and advice on immigration rights and support for lesbian and gay asylum seekers
www.uklgig.org.uk

Broken Rainbow offers support for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence
www.broken-rainbow.org.uk



Local support organisations

Allsorts Youth Project

Support project for young people under 26 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or unsure. Weekly drop, 121 support, volunteering project, A-Sorted health and well-being group and men's group, under 16s group.

Contact us on 01273 721211, info@allsortsyouth.org.uk

Clare Project

A self help group for people dealing with issues surrounding gender. Safe and confidential drop-in Tuesday afternoon 2.30pm - 5.30pm at Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Dorset Gardens (off St. James's Street), Brighton. On the first Tuesday of the month the drop-in runs 4pm -7pm.

www.clareproject.org.uk

Brighton LGBT Switchboard and Counselling Project

Confidential telephone helpline (as above). Also very low cost counselling (£5 per session) to those age 16 and over, contact the counselling project co-ordinator on 01273 202384,

www.switchboard.org.uk/brighton/

Mindout LGBT Mental Health Project

Support groups and social activities for people age 16 and over.

Phone 01273 739847. www.lgbtmind.com

Brighton & Hove Disabled Dykes Club

Group for disabled dykes, their partners, friends and supporters - 01273 20 40 50

Terrence Higgins Trust and Street Outreach Service

Offers support services to LGBTU young people, promotes sexual health and provides HIV services across Sussex. www.tht.org.uk

Brighton Office: Drop-in Mondays 2-6pm and Thursdays 6-10pm. Free 1 hour HIV testing service Mondays 6.30-8.30pm. 61 Ship Street, Brighton. Phone 01273 764200.

Eastbourne Office: phone 01323 649927. For information and referrals phone 01323 649927. Provides 1-2-1 support to young LGBT and unsure young people, under 26.

Hastings Office: provides Anything But, a drop-in social group for young LGBT and unsure young people, under 26 years. Meets every fortnight. For information and referrals phone 01323 649927 or email anythingbut@tht.org.uk. Also provide a free 1 hour HIV testing service on 1st Monday of the month at the Voluntary Action Centre 5.30-7.30pm.

Zest GUM Clinic, Eastbourne

Free and confidential sexual health clinic. Avenue House, The Avenue, Eastbourne. Phone 01323 416100 to arrange an appointment. Mondays 3-5pm for those aged under 18. Walk in Clinic on Wednesday and Thursday 2 - 4.30pm, Friday 9 - 11.30am.

Claude Nicol GUM Clinic, Brighton

Confidential sexual health clinic. Self-referral - no need to go through a GP. Phone 01273 664721 between 9 and 4.30pm. Young person's clinic (under 19) is Thursday's 3.30 - 5.30pm. Do not need to make an appointment. www.brightonsexualhealth.com

Experience in Mind

An innovative volunteering project led by young people who have come together to design and deliver training for professionals, parents and other young people using their own experiences of mental health.

9am-5pm Monday - Friday. To find out more about the project contact the Experience in Mind Co-ordinator on 01273 889292 or 07712 881056.

Ru-ok?

Brighton and Hove's under 19's specialists tier 3 substance misuse service. We aim to offer a family and young person-friendly service, reducing the harm caused by alcohol and drug use. We offer free confidential advice and information to young people about their drug and/or alcohol use. 01273 293966 e-mail: ru-ok@brighton-hove.gov.uk

YAC Housing Services

For young people in Brighton and Hove has a free and confidential service to help 16-25 year olds who are in housing need or have problems with their housing in the Brighton and Hove area. 01273 828828. yachousing@hoveymca.org.uk

Brighton and Hove Police Anti-Victimization Initiative

For victims of hate crimes to report incidents to the police without fear of police prejudice. Young people under 18 wanting to report a crime do not have to be accompanied by a parent. An 'appropriate adult' can be present avoiding outing to parents.

Police LGBT Community liaison Officer: Nick Antjoule, tel: 01273 665657

Victim Support

Offers practical & emotional support for victims of crime
tel: Brighton 01273 234009 Hove 01273 439942

Partnership and Community Safety Team

Offers advice and support to survivors of homophobia and transphobia tel: 01273 294646

Allsorts publications

Blue deep sea anthology is a collection of writings and drawing by young people who are members of Allsorts. Despite extreme diversity, the one thing they share with each other is a common experience of living as young people in a society, which is dominated by homophobic prejudice and heterosexist assumptions. (Tornado Collective 2001)

Voices of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people contains selected writings from Blue Deep Sea, an anthology of writings by lesbian, gay and bisexual young people from Allsorts. The selection has been chosen by members of the Brighton & Hove Education Authority PSHE Advisory Team to support work in the PSHE Curriculum Framework and Scheme of Work. It is suitable for use at Key Stage three, four or five. (2001)

Challenging homophobia in schools and colleges is a resource for teachers and tutors, exploring issues faced by LGBU young people, and how they can be addressed in schools. It results from collaborative work between Allsorts Youth Project and Brighton & Hove Education Authority PSHE Advisory Team. (Gold and Newton 2002)

Zero tolerance is a toolkit for challenging homophobia for people who work with young people. It is designed to enable individuals and organisations to set up and run workshops or discussion sessions with staff and volunteers to help them to develop ways of working with young people that offer LGB youth effective support. (Wood 2004)

Coming in is a support resource written by the young people of Allsorts to help young people and people working with them to work with issues around coming out. In a collection of stories, poems and drawings, the young people give tips and advice around coming out and finding support, based on their own experiences. (Apted and Welsh 2005)

Clear night sky is written by an LGB young person representative of Allsorts Youth Project, who has been lobbying locally and nationally, regarding LGB youth and social exclusion. This is a report into the need for Connexions national policy and target setting to meet the needs of young gay, lesbian and bisexual people. (Proctor 2004)

LGB youth out of focus addresses the issue of LGB Youth and non-decision making. A follow up to Clear Night Sky, this paper uses research and interviews to investigate the strategies which lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth as an outsider group in British politics can employ to overcome policy non-decision making in the area of social exclusion. (Proctor 2005)

Books to help with creativity

Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, by Betty Edwards
(HarperCollins, London 2001)

The Artist's Way, by Julia Cameron (Pan Books, London 1995)

Spilling Open – the art of becoming yourself, by Sabrina Ward Harrison (New World Library, California 1999)

Contributors

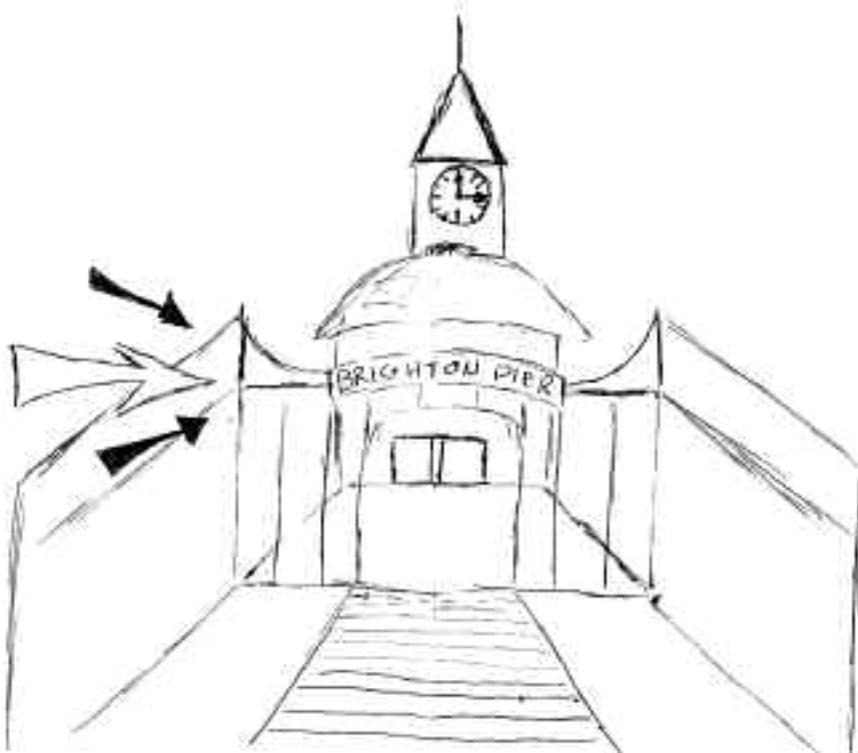
Alexandra
Amy
Ben
Carl
Christy
Cole
Daniel
Danielle
Delphine
Emma
Emma
Flo
Gen
George
George
Georgia
Hannah
Jaime
Jess
Jim
Jo
Kate
Kerry
Lewis
Lisa
Liv
Mark
Michael
Phillip
Rich
Sam
Steven
Tai
Tick-Tock
Tony
Will
Zack



Acknowledgements

Being Happy, Being Gay, by Bert Herman.
(Alamo Square Press, San Francisco 1990)

Spilling open: the art of becoming yourself,
by Sabrina Ward-Harrison (New World Library, California, 1999)





allsorts
youth project

Registered Charity in England and
Wales (No: 1123014)

Allsorts Youth Project
Young People's Centre
69 Ship Street
Brighton
BN1 1AE

Tel: 01273 721211

Email: info@allsortsyouth.org.uk

Web: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk



**COMIC
RELIEF**



NHS
Brighton and Hove

