

**Stonewall**

# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

**This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.**

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

**Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)**

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.

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**STONEWALL  
YOUNG FUTURES**

**Themes and insights from  
the youth focus groups**

## Project background

[Stonewall Young Futures](#) has been developed in response to our [Shut Out report](#). Co-production with LGBTQ+ young people is central to the project.

To begin, we launched a [social media campaign](#) and gathered a pool of 120 LGBTQ+ young people across the UK, all keen to be involved in this project.

So far, a total of 21 LGBTQ+ young people have taken part in two separate focus groups in November 2021 and January 2022.

We're committed to offering payment or gift vouchers to all focus group participants in return for their participation.



## Youth focus groups

### Participants

Recognising the disproportionate barriers faced by certain LGBTQ+ young people when entering or re-entering education, training or work, we prioritised LGBTQ+ young disabled people, trans young people, and LGBTQ+ young people of colour when putting together our focus groups.

Our aim was for the most marginalised LGBTQ+ young people to have their voices heard so that we can adequately address the complex challenges they face via our new platform.

As a result, out of the participants in our focus groups so far, 42% of the participants have been LGBTQ+ young people of colour; 63% have been trans young people; and 42% were LGBTQ+ young disabled people.



**“Really like the wellbeing sessions, like the small size of the group, the whole vibe/atmosphere of the session was great and welcoming. Excited to see where it goes down the line!” - youth focus group participant**

## Format

Each focus group ran for two hours, including breaks. All participants were asked to complete a 1 hour pre-activity.

Focus groups were co-facilitated by two members of Stonewall staff with other members of staff offering additional support on tech, safeguarding, and note taking.

The focus group activities, running order and pre-activity were all reviewed by an external SEND accessibility consultant to ensure they were accessible.

The SEND accessibility consultant and an external wellbeing lead were both present in the youth focus groups to provide support for any young people during the sessions. The wellbeing lead also ran short wellbeing exercises with the whole group at the beginning and end of each session.

**“It was great being able to listen to the opinions of other young people. [The co-facilitators] were attentive to our thoughts and the process. The activities were also really thought out.” - youth focus group participant**



## Focus group questions

Both sessions focused on the following key areas:

What content do LGBTQ+ young people need on new platform?

- What should the name for the new platform be?
- How should the new platform look and sound, and how can we make sure it's youth friendly?
- What long term plans should we make for the new platform?

Through group activities and facilitated discussions around these questions, we gained key insights on LGBTQ+ young people's thoughts and feelings about their future, as well as what support is needed to help them take the next step into education, training or work.

**“Really great session - I felt very comfortable talking and really enjoyed the wellbeing exercises” - youth focus group participant**

## Key Insights and Themes

Many of the barriers preventing LGBTQ+ young people from entering or re-entering education, training, or work are explored in the [Shut Out Report](#).

In the youth focus groups, participants reflected on similar themes and experiences. The following themes highlight the barriers that LGBTQ+ young people face as well as the support and resources that can help them to overcome those barriers.

### Fear

- Expectations and past experience of discrimination during the application process and in work, education and training settings means many young people are fearful of pursuing new opportunities
- Young people are particularly worried about coming out in the workplace
- For trans young people, fears center around a lack of understanding and acceptance of trans people's medical needs and of not being able to use a name or gender markers which might be different to those on identity documents

**“It can be really hard to build up self-esteem after lots of knock-backs” - youth focus group participant**

### Uncertainty

- Uncertainty about the future can prevent LGBTQ+ young people from taking concrete steps
- Uncertainty can also become more entrenched the longer young people remain not in education, training or work
- These feelings of uncertainty cause severe impacts on self-esteem and mental health. Signposting to mental health support for LGBTQ+ young people is therefore crucial



**“We’re told things like, ‘be confident’, but we’re never told how to do it” - youth focus group participant**

## Visibility

- Seeing and hearing from LGBTQ+ people who have overcome similar barriers and challenges would give LGBTQ+ young people hope for the future
- Testimonies from LGBTQ+ people can provide a boost to confidence and self-esteem
- Resources which specifically mention LGBTQ+ people and their challenges can also increase confidence and improve visibility

## Community

- Young people would trust and be reassured by other LGBTQ+ people's testimonies about different career paths and workplaces
- Young people want the support of their peers, who would best understand the concerns they have and the challenges they're up against
- Youth groups can be a valuable resource for LGBTQ+ young people not in education, training or work

**“I think hearing older people’s perspectives helps you think about the future, and hearing people your age helps you realise that you can do something now” - youth focus group participant**



## Diversity and intersectionality

- LGBTQ+ young people's challenges need to be addressed holistically and with consideration of their intersecting identities, particularly in regard to race, disability, and of the care system or criminal justice system
- Qualifications and opportunities should be put on equal footing, without hierarchy, and advice should be offered on the basis of a person's needs rather than the perceived 'correct' path



## Reassurance and honesty

- LGBTQ+ young people need a safe space to explore the uncertainty they feel about their future
- This means reassuring them that it's okay not to know what they want to do, showing empathy for their challenges, and reserving judgement
- LGBTQ+ young people need to know what to expect when entering education or the workplace so that they're better prepared and can develop strategies to deal with issues such as discrimination



**“A great job for anyone else may not be ideal for queer young people entering employment. Seeing real queer young people’s opinions would be hugely helpful!” - youth focus group participant**

## Support

- LGBTQ+ young people are at increased risk of experiencing homelessness, living in hostile environments, and experiencing poor mental health
- LGBTQ+ young people may need specific support to overcome these challenges before they can start making plans for a future in education, training or work
- Support should be accessible to disabled and/or neurodivergent young people and offered via a range of methods
- Resources and information need to be practical and actionable. Examples of resources that LGBTQ+ young people would find helpful include information about LGBTQ+ staff networks, specific skill-building resources, information on legal rights in the workplace and how to exercise them, self-advocacy resources such as salary negotiation advice and conflict resolution skills

**“I think I would click on this website purely with it being associated with Stonewall and knowing they have my best interests in mind.” - youth focus group participant**