

Introduction:

Every young person deserves to feel safe, seen, and supported in who they are. If your young person is exploring or expressing an LGBTQIA+ identity, your understanding and love can make a world of difference.

What LGBTQIA+ Means

LGBTQIA+ stands for:

Lesbian (a woman who is sexually or romantically attracted to a woman)

Gay (sexually or romantically attracted to people of one's own sex; commonly used to describe a man who is attracted to a man)

Bisexual (sexually or romantically attracted to both men and women, or to more than one sex or gender)

Transgender (denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex registered for them at birth)

Queer or questioning (queer is an umbrella term for people who are non-heterosexual or non-cisgender).

Intersex (people who are born with sex characteristics such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies)

Asexual/aromantic/agender (experiencing no sexual feelings or desires; not feeling sexual attraction to anyone)

Support:

Why Support Matters

LGBTQIA+ youth who feel accepted by their families are less likely to experience depression, anxiety, and self-harm. They are more likely to thrive socially and emotionally and will be better protected against bullying and exclusion. Your love and acceptance can make a life-changing difference. Where possible, affirm your love for them, even if you don't fully understand. 'I'm here, I love you, and I'm learning' is powerful. Give them space to speak when they're ready - don't rush their process or demand labels. Where possible, try to stay informed by learning appropriate language and identities. This helps build trust and respect.

Helpful Resources:

- Mermaids (UK): for gender-diverse youth and families
- Stonewall: info, rights, and support services
- The Proud Trust: LGBTQIA+ youth resources
- Young Minds: mental health support
- Childline: (0800) 1111 - free, confidential advice for young people
- Just Like Us: information for LGBTQ+ teens which features a useful parent guide

<https://justlikeus.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/LGBT-Guide-for-Parents-and-Carers.pdf>

Mental Health Support

Leaflet 8



Information about supporting children who identify as LGBTQIA+

Offering support:

To further support your young person you could try the following;

- **Listen without judgement:** Let them speak openly. You don't need to have all the answers - your calm and curiosity matter most.
- **Affirm their identity:** Use their chosen name and pronouns. Small acts of respect send a big message: You are safe with me.
- **Educate yourself:** Learn about LGBTQIA+ identities from reliable sources. This takes the burden off your young person to explain everything.
- **Challenge bias:** Speak up against homophobic, transphobic, or exclusionary language, even in casual conversation. It sets a powerful example.
- **Create a safe space at home:** Let them know they're unconditionally loved. Feeling safe at home protects mental health and builds resilience.
- **Support social connection:** Encourage friendships, safe online spaces, or LGBTQIA+ youth groups if available. Connection reduces isolation.
- **Protect their privacy:** Let your young person guide you on who they want to share their identity with. 'Outing' them without permission can be deeply harmful.

Challenges:

As your young person navigates their way through a potential change in identity, they will be facing a number of challenges. These could include;

- Confusion or questioning their identity
- Worry about being accepted at home, school, or among peers
- Isolation or loneliness
- Fear of discrimination or bullying or rejection in school, online, or even within extended family.
- Relief and joy at being able to express themselves more fully
- Internal struggles such as shame, fear, or confusion. These can take a toll on self-esteem and mental health.
- Periods of poor mental health. Some LGBTQIA+ youth may experience higher risk of anxiety, depression, or self-harming behaviours.
- For trans or gender-diverse children, access to affirming healthcare or support can be especially difficult and emotionally charged.

Parents may also face their own feelings, including shock, fear, or confusion. It is important to note that these are normal reactions, but they are best worked through *without* placing that emotional burden on the child.

Common questions:

Further definitions of terms:

The + in LGBTQIA+ includes other diverse identities like pansexual, non-binary, genderfluid, and more.

Pansexual means being sexually or romantically attracted to people regardless of their sex or gender.

Non-binary is a gender identity that is neither male or female.

Gender fluid is an identity where a person's gender identity or expression shifts and changes over time, rather than being fixed as male or female.

Cisgender is a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth.

Common questions parents ask:

- 'Is this just a phase?'
Some children experiment as part of exploring their identity, but for many, this is a core part of who they are. Trust them to know themselves over time.
- 'What if I say the wrong thing?'
It's okay to make mistakes. Apologise, correct yourself, and try again. Your willingness to keep learning matters more than perfection.
- 'Should I tell others?'
Only with your young person's consent. Respecting their pace builds trust and safety.