



COVID Conversations with LGBT+ Young People

Engaging on the impact of COVID '19 on emotional health and well being

What We Did

- We worked with 12 young people who identified as LGBT+ Young People.
- 2 through Bolton Councils LGBT group meeting at Farnworth Youth Club.
- 8 through The Proud Trust's Bolton young person group - online workshop.
- 2 through local networks - online workshop
- We used zine making as the engagement and consultation tool as this is a creative approach to reflect and discuss how young people have been impacted through the COVID pandemic. **Zines** provide a safe, independent platform of expression for underrepresented and marginalized voices:
- We asked the young people how Covid had affected them, their mental, physical and emotional health?
- We asked what services or support would help them to cope?
- We asked them for their views on Sexual Health Services in Bolton and what a great Sexual Health Service would look like?

Participants

Participant A - 17, Female, Queer, White British

Participant B - 18 Trans man, Queer, White British

Participant C - 17 Male, Gay, White British

Participant D - 15 Female, Lesbian, Dual heritage (White/African)

Participant E - 18 Trans man, Asexual, White British

Participant F - 19 Trans woman, lesbian, White British

Participant G - 17 Male, Gay, White British

Participant H - 18 Male, Gay, White British

Participant I - 18 Trans woman, sexuality not disclosed, White British.

Participants J/K & L used anime avatars during workshop and the chat function rather than speaking. They would not disclose any personal information barring one mentioning in the chat they were asexual or ACE.



Delivery

We provided all the materials needed for the zine making physical sessions and sent big packs with all materials in and magazines to cut out from to those involved in the online workshops, although only 4 of the Proud trust group were happy for their names and addresses to be shared. To combat this, we sent a list of necessary materials to the project facilitator in preparation for the workshop to be disseminated within the group.

Findings

- Most felt they hadn't struggled with not being able to go out to a great extent as they were in general home loving, although boredom had become a major theme as lockdowns progressed.
- Some however reported sharp feelings of isolation.
- Those who were shielding felt isolation the most as they hadn't left the house properly in the best part of a year.
- Phones and devices had become even more important in terms of feeling connected and accessing information.
- Most felt being LGBT+ hadn't made any difference during Covid but that they missed the social activities that often made them feel part of a community.
- Greater awareness of helplines for those struggling and specifically helplines aimed at teenagers would be beneficial.
- The cancellation of Exams caused worry for some and left them feeling disappointed in their results.
- Most reported less exercise and some weight gain.
- One reported increased drinking.
- Several reported increased anxieties.
- The constant negativity in the news increased their feelings of anxiety.
- Not sure where help could be accessed or when to contact doctors.
- There was a lack of knowledge of what sexual services were available in Bolton.
- Most reported never using the sexual health services.
- All thought there was a lack of useful sexual education in schools and thought more promotion of The Parallel etc was important.
- Two found Sex education at school was triggering as it focussed on gender not sexual orientation.



What would help you and make a Positive Difference?

- Most had found relaxation through familiar activities, for example, game playing online and TV, but some had taken up new hobbies such as baking.
- Most thought drop ins at youth centres and other community buildings would be a good idea and would make it less awkward for some to attend specialist services.
- Groups and activities where they could socialise post lockdown were important.
- Some suggested using snapchat and Instagram to advertise the services.
- Bright, eye catching Pop Art type posters were suggested.
- An online facility to answer young people's queries and provide support was popular with most.
- More help for anxiety would be helpful.
- A virtual space was suggested with a variety of online services and resources.
- Info from previous appointments should be stored to save you going over your preferences and pro nouns the next time.
- Services should be aware of the variety of sexual orientations and gender presentations.
- Some thought people believed Autistic people didn't need sexual health services when they do.
- Awareness of sexual coercion was a topic that should be tackled more.
- Explicitly inclusive language should be used, pronouns etc.
- Some thought it should be extended to up to 25 year olds.
- Some felt it was important to make it clear not everyone is ready for sex or even has sexual feelings. Two identified as Asexual.
- Have visuals on the walls of a diverse range of people and identities.
- Work needed to be done on removing stigma around accessing sexual health services.
- A central location near buses was ideal for the main hub but satellites were suggested.
- The services should use social media more.
- Some didn't like too much rainbow branding, others wanted rainbow and trans flags visible. This reiterates that one approach doesn't fit everyone's needs and it's important to tailor services to individuals and to provide different offers to meet different needs.



Issues we faced.

The number of young people engaging with local LGBT+ groups during this period was severely reduced. The Council group only had two young people currently engaged and the Proud Trust had lower numbers than usual. We could identify no other LGBT+ young people groups locally. Although Raise the Youth are looking at restarting theirs soon, hopefully.

Examples of the Zines Produced

The young people each produced a zine which was then printed and will be shared in youth venues and with health professionals when restrictions allow, with online copies also being available.



