



**CHANGING PLACES**  
**CHANGING LIVES**

Groundwork East L.B.  
LGBTQ Youth Club

It's not a  
Phase!

**YOUNG**  
**healthwatch**  
Central Bedfordshire



# It's not a phase!

We are a group of Young People in Leighton Buzzard aged between 12-18 Years old.

We are the only LGBTQ+ group in Leighton Buzzard and offer a range of activities and services to those who attend.

We meet twice a month and look at different topics each time of current issues, health issues and days of recognition.

## Aim

We met and discussed what we do within the LGBTQ+ group and heard about what Young Healthwatch aims to do, and how we can work together.

We discussed various issues that affect young people within the LGBTQ+ community and the issue that we are most passionate about, within a school setting, is words and Phrases that offend us, although may not be intentional.

This group is a safe place for those who attend and gives them an opportunity to be who they want to be, without preconceived ideas or barriers that other settings may provide.

We have teamed up with Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to work on a joint project to explore and improve attitudes and presentations to the LGBTQ+ community within the school/college setting.

It is felt that teachers and school staff may not realise that what they are saying at times can cause upset and confusion. There is also the belief that sometimes they try too hard to be politically correct.

We want to promote and provide an information card that contains quotes, information and suggestions to those within the school environment and encourage them to think about words and phrases they use on a day to day basis and the impact it may have on a member of our community.

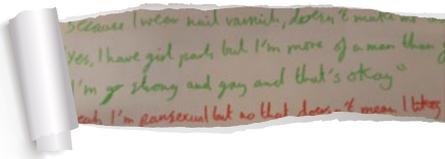


What shall I call you today?

To a member of the LGBTQ Youth Group

No one I've spoken to at school has ever knowingly met a trans person before or been taught anything about trans people and what we might need.

Reece, 18, now in employment, Yorkshire and The Humber, Stonewall School Report 2017



“Some teachers reported feeling uncomfortable talking to their students about sexuality due to their beliefs or perceptions about what’s appropriate — often conflating sexual orientation with sex — while others felt pressure from administrators or parents to keep tight-lipped.”

George Lucas Educational Foundation 2018

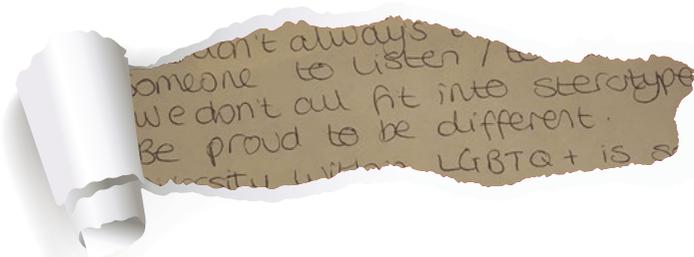
“Over 300 teachers filled out a survey, which found that one quarter of respondents said no training on the LGBTQ+ community was offered by their local authority” Pink News 2019

“Teachers in my school were actively transphobic towards an FTM boy. He overheard two teachers talking about how ‘freaks’ like him shouldn’t be ‘allowed to mix with normal children.’” BBC News 2018

## Objective

This project aims to raise awareness of the LGBTQ+ community within schools and build resilience levels of school staff when engaging and speaking with members of that community.

1. We want to produce a credit card sized booklet, that is eye catching with photographs and animations.
2. We want to include up to 10 phrases or situations that we have personally experienced within the schools setting and offer alternatives that can be used instead.
3. We want to provide links to information sharing sites to assist with further research
4. We want to present this to the Education Authority of Central Bedfordshire for recommendation to be distributed with schools across the county.
5. We want everyone to understand that when someone comes out, they are still who they are but being more true to themselves, and are still perfectly normal.



## What we did

To gather the information on the project, as we only met once a month with Young Healthwatch, we thought it would be best to do our own research and draw from our own personal experiences.

We had group discussions over a period of 3 meetings, where we looked at what sort of things were causing the most amount of issues for us, how they made us feel and what was the cause of this. These topics ranged from peers, parents, friends, family, teachers and school staff. These discussions were all led by the group leader and we all abided by group rules, to listen, respect and know that we spoke in confidence to the group.

At times the discussions were quite emotional as we re-visited past events. These are the types of feelings and emotions that really inspire and motivate us to get to what we want to achieve from this project and enable us to produce a report that is not based on Internet research alone, this comes from the heart.



At the third session we summarised all the ideas that had been discussed and decided on how we wanted to tackle the situation and what we believed we could do to challenge and change ethics and attitudes at school.

If the teachers and staff were with us, rather than against or unknown to us, it would begin to make a real difference to the LGBTQ+ community within the school and help the school staff to understand a little bit more.

Sometimes, it's the little things that can make the biggest difference. We are not aware of anything being produced before, for staff, by the students themselves in their own voices!!



# Outcome

From our discussions and brain storming, we were inundated with draft notes and scribbles of thoughts and feelings.

As we wanted to keep it small and punchy, we decided to pick out 8-10 of the thoughts/situations we wanted to really challenge. We feel this is a good starting point in making that big difference to our community.

There is so much that can be done to assist and promote a better 'educational setting', we didn't want to be unrealistic in the recommendations that we made or in the advice that we were giving.

We want this to be read and acted on, and for the readers to think "yes we can do that".

The significance of our findings is that, the smallest of gestures can sometimes be the ones that have the biggest impact!!

They are all realistic tasks, such as the one about setting up a group within the school/college where the students have a designated teacher(s) and email address.

This does not take up a lot of time, and this teacher(s) does not have to be from the LGBTQ+ community (we don't mind that). Just knowing we have that safety net and point of contact reassures us that we are valued and builds our confidence, should we need assistance or to talk. If we have ideas or want to share how other conflicts within the school could be improved, knowing that facilitator is there can have a massive impact.

Amy attended the group and brought along the booklet for us to have a look at.

To say we were overwhelmed, was an understatement. We can't wait to share this with our own schools and other schools and educational settings within Central Bedfordshire.

Stephen Swain, Groundwork East Leader said "I really am lost for words and quite emotional at seeing this. I am so proud of this work the group have done and to see everything that was discussed over the weeks, to come together, is amazing.

It really is inspiring, to any member of the LGBTQ+ community, that you aren't alone and we are trying to make that difference for you".

## Resources

For further reading and research, the following websites are full of information, especially for staff within the educational setting:

<https://www.glsen.org/blog/lgbtq-educators-what-we-know-and-what-they-need>

<https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/education-teaching-degree/lgbtq-youth/>  
<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/supporting-schools>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/tts-new-lgbtq-best-practices-guide>

# YOUNG healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

Our Young Healthwatch volunteers have been busy working on a number of projects since they came together almost a year ago.

They have also recently received appropriate 'Enter & View' training and are keen to put their learning into practice by visiting health and social care services such as hospital wards, surgeries and care homes. The young people will then be able to report their findings from their unique perspective. If you would like a group of young Healthwatch volunteers to visit your service please contact [Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk).

There is a lot more information on the Young Healthwatch website, <https://younghealthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk>, including the great achievement of one of our volunteers who has secured a fantastic apprenticeship with Cancer Research UK.

If you are under 25, why not consider becoming a member of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire? Get in touch for more information, email [Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:Amy.Eymor@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk) or call 0300 303 8554.





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