

Gay Surrey's Lifestyle Survey

Young People Report

November 2007

Introduction

Gay Surrey's strategic mission is to help our community to realise true equality and one of our primary action areas is to **RUN YOUTH PROJECTS**.

At the beginning of 2007, we launched our Lifestyle Survey. It was the first attitude and opinion survey specifically designed and targeted towards the LGBT community in Surrey. The topics range across a number of public and commercial services.

The results are published on a rolling basis to enable interested organisations and individuals track and monitor opinions.

This report takes a closer look at the results and responses surrounding young people in Surrey.

It is our intent to build a truly inclusive and supportive environment for young LGBTQ people in Surrey. We will work with authorities, educators and young people to kick homophobia out.

Gino Meriano
Chair
Gay Surrey

Executive summary

Everyone is united in the understanding that our young people are the future of our society and therefore are entitled to and should be provided with a supportive, inclusive and safe environment.

Key concerns

Why do so many young people not seek or receive support from educators?

The survey shows the majority of young people in Surrey realise their sexuality between 11 and 15 years old.

Worryingly, the respondents have also indicated that less than half of one percent gets support relating to LGBT issues from their tutors.

Given the crucial role educators play in the development of young people we must find ways to build trust and engage with LGBT young people in the education environment.

How can we reduce self-harm acts within the young LGBT community?

The survey shows the tragic impact homophobia has on our young. Even if one respondent was driven to harming themselves let alone attempt suicide, we as a society and community should be concerned.

Just under half of our young community have self-harmed or attempted suicide. It may even be more because of the shame that so often exists surrounding this.

Other reports have shown that girls attempting suicide are more likely to repeat and boys have a higher rate of success

How can we support young people to report homophobia?

We have heard time and time again that the LGBT community does not report homophobic abuse and incidents to authorities. This extends into our young community.

The vast majority have told us that they have not reported bullying or abuse. If you look at the predominantly emotional characteristic homophobic abuse takes, this is a ticking time-bomb ready to fuel the incidents of self-harm and suicide.

Surrey's resources are stretched and hence allocated and prioritised according to documented targets. Many authorities have a wish to improve the way the LGBT community are served; however, the same authorities are constrained by budgets.

By addressing the under reporting issue, we may make dramatic headway across the other key areas of concern by clearly understanding the scale of the problem and allocate resources appropriately.

How can we reduce homophobic behaviour?

Perhaps the most fundamental concern for all of us is changing people's attitudes, prejudices and misconceptions surrounding the LGBT community.

The survey produced a startling awakening that here in Surrey more young people are bullied at home than in the work place but even more are bullied at school.

This means as a community we have to look at changing the way everyone thinks about people whose sexuality just happens to mean they are attracted to those of the same sex.

"Surrey Youth Development Service are proud of their involvement in the development of Twister Youth Clubs alongside LGBTQ young people. We are grateful too for the excellent support and advice from Gay Surrey in the creation of these safe environments for young people to explore their sexuality, develop their identity and establish positive relationships.

The continuing growth and strength of the Twister network, and the outstanding achievements of their members is an outcome that we should all celebrate. I look forward to continuing our working relationship with Gay Surrey and continuing to benefit Young LGBTQ people as a result."

Keir Schiltz

Service Manager (Enterprise & Enhancement)
Surrey Youth Development Service

Recommendations

There are clear actions local authorities, educators and others who look after the interests of young people in Surrey must take to ensure a supportive, inclusive and safe community.

How can Surrey's schools, authorities and organisations help gay young people further?

These are a few of the priorities and actions suggested.

Track opinions and gather feedback

Gay Surrey's lifestyle survey provides a method to help achieve this.

We would like to extend the survey and recommend some of its metrics used within authorities to monitor progress and outcomes from initiatives.

Gay Surrey also strives to build confidence and participation within the LGBT community.

One aim for us is to secure on-going funding to continue the Lifestyle Survey and to run focus groups and independent workshops to gain further insights to inform authorities' future strategy and action plans.

Gay Surrey's young team devised a project called **YGS Speakout**. We secured initial funding for a web-based way our young LGBT community can speak out about issues that affect them.

We are actively looking for additional and continued funding to promote and develop the site. Our aim is to grow this into an effective means for authorities to hear directly on how thinking and actions aimed at young LGBT people are perceived and what should be given priority.

Visit the site at www.ygsspeakout.org

Help our educators support young LGBT people

Young people within the LGBT community are especially vulnerable to homophobia whether hidden or overt. One area Gay Surrey is focussing on is eliminating homophobic bullying in schools. **Learn – Teach – Grow**

We are actively seeking funding to run a project to inform educators and then help them teach the topic with the hope to grow a more inclusive society.

www.stophatenow.org.uk/learn

Among our objectives for this initiative, are:

- raise awareness and provide support within schools
- gain a real picture of anti-bullying policies in relation to homophobia
- learn the best ways to help tutors to support LGB pupils

We would also like to work towards an informed and proactive network of councillors and advisers easily accessible to both young people and educators at schools throughout Surrey.

Improve reporting

We recommend all schools and youth groups across Surrey are encouraged to report incidents of homophobia safely and anonymously if preferred. Gay Surrey has already worked with Surrey Police to provide third party reporting access to the LGBTQ community. We will strive to build awareness and confidence in this form of reporting.

Visit www.stophatenow.org.uk

Gay Surrey is a Registered Charity staffed entirely by volunteers.

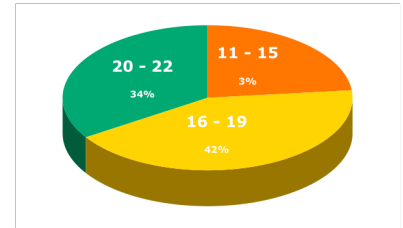
Without our volunteers, Trustees and supporters we would not be able to continue to make a difference in our local community.

If you would like to donate or volunteer your time to help us achieve our mission, please visit www.gaysurrey.org/supportus.htm

Survey results

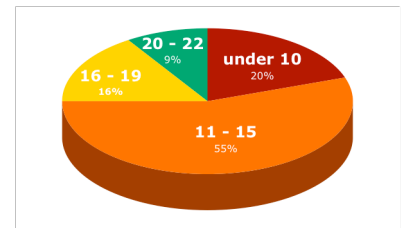
Let us know your age?

The age ranges used by most authorities are well represented among the respondents to this survey. So far over 600 young people have completed the survey giving a firm base on which to now grow the survey for future reports.



When did you first realise your sexuality?

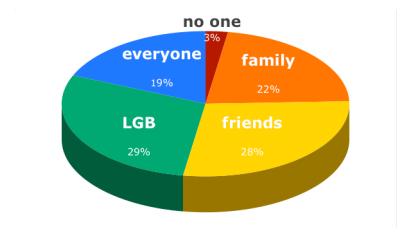
There is much controversy surrounding when do people realise their sexuality. Gay Surrey is not making any claims regarding the psychological, physiological or environmental circumstances that lead to a person's sexuality.



What is interesting from these results is that there appears to be a large majority of young people who become aware of their sexuality while in the school system.

Who are you out to?

The overwhelming number of young people is more comfortable being open about their sexuality to either their friends or other members of the Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual community.

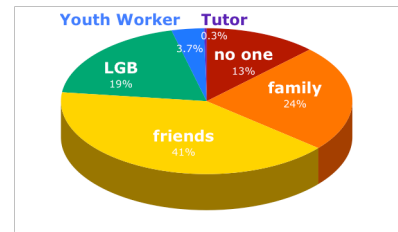


It is encouraging that a relatively small percentage, 3%, of young people is not 'out' to anyone. This is likely to be result of the many changes in legislation together with media coverage that reflects well on gay and lesbian life.

Who gives you support?

Unsurprisingly, 60% of respondents approach peer groups for support. Friends and the LGB community have a crucial role to play.

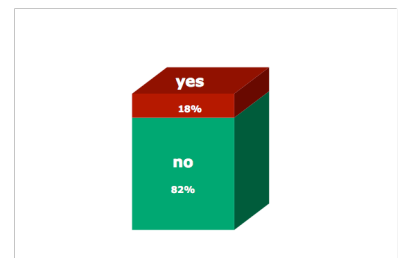
Disappointingly only 4% of young people either feel comfortable to approach or receive support from youth workers or professionals. Breaking down that percentage reveals less than half a percent (0.3%) gain support from tutors or educators.



Have you experienced homophobic bullying at work?

Around one-fifth of young people still experience homophobia in the workplace. Despite legislation now in place to protect against discrimination based on sexuality, this is a worrying number.

Could this be a result of poor awareness and training within employers surrounding the law?



Have you experienced homophobic bullying at home?

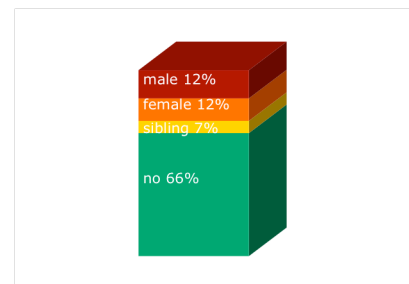
It is never a pleasant thought that a young person's home is not warm, safe and supportive.

For many within society, being gay or lesbian is still totally unacceptable.

Over one third of young people experience homophobia within their home or family environment. One in four have experienced an incident by an adult family member.

It should be recognised that authorities walk a tightrope whenever family or private life is a factor.

That said public authorities have an obligation and duty to uphold an individual's Human Rights when they are being violated.

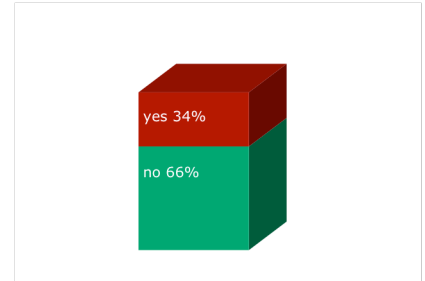


Have you experienced homophobic bullying at school or college?

34% of young people within the education system experience some form of homophobia.

The research also shows that very few LGB young people are 'out' to an education professional.

This may mean that more could be done to help tutors and managers **spot and stop** homophobic behaviour.

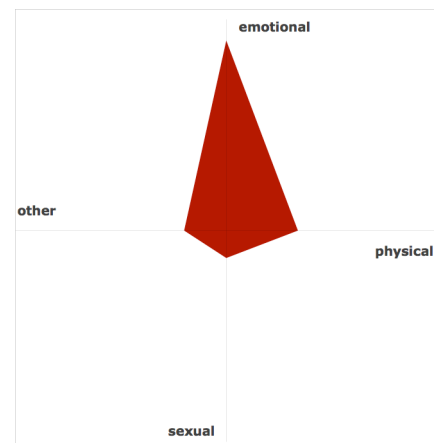


What kind of bullying was it?

Most incidents resulted in emotional distress. Some young people characterised 'name calling' and 'mimicking' as 'other'.

Should this be simply interpreted as harmless school-ground banter?

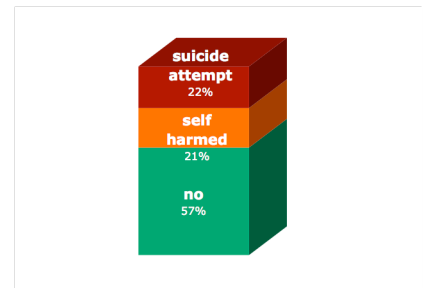
This is really a question for specialists and behaviour experts to comment on.



Did you harm yourself as a result?

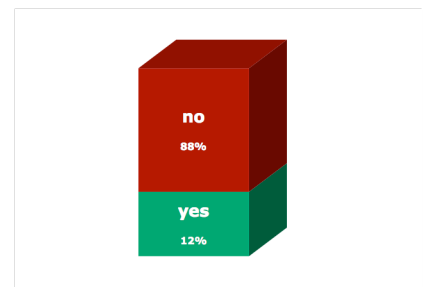
This is something that simply has to be a priority for everyone who comes into contact with young people in Surrey.

43% of respondents who suffered some sort of homophobic incident – harmed themselves. Over half of those attempted suicide.



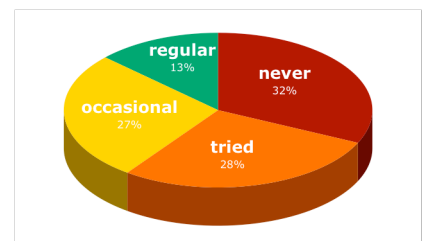
Did you report it?

This result really should ring alarm bells. It will no doubt have an impact on the real number of incidents that occur.



Have you taken non-prescription drugs?

This will become a method to monitor and measure drug awareness and support projects across the county. Specifically those targeted towards the LGB community, which appears to have a different usage pattern to the general.



Which drugs have you taken?

This is the break down of drugs that young LGB people in Surrey take recreationally or regularly

