



# One minute guide

## Working with Bi Young People

No. 82b, January 2025

### What do we mean by bi and how should services work with bi young people?

Bi or bisexual is an umbrella term used to describe an emotional, romantic and/ or sexual attraction towards people of more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a variety of terms including bisexual, pan, bi-curious and queer. These terms relate to sexual attraction, which is a combination of emotional, romantic, sexual or affectionate attraction to another person. Sometimes the acronym LGBT+ is used, which includes [lesbian, gay](#) and [trans](#) people.

These and other useful terms are defined by Stonewall in their [glossary](#). Terminology is updated regularly through usage and increased understanding of people's experiences, and it is important for practitioners to keep themselves informed.

Bi young people may discover their sexuality at different stages of their lives. Some young people are aware from a young age, though they may not have shared this with anybody. Any of the young people you are working with may identify as bi; you should not make assumptions about any young person's sexuality.

All young people want places to go and things to do in an environment where they feel valued, accepted and included. The [Equality Act 2010](#) made sexual orientation a protected characteristic, which means that any service provided to young people, whether publicly funded or not, cannot lawfully discriminate against any young people, including bi young people. In addition, the Act introduced the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), which means that services have to consider how they can address inequalities experienced by bi young people.

### What is 'coming out'?

The process of people telling others about their sexuality is often referred to as 'coming out'. Coming out to somebody can be very stressful, as young people may fear rejection or discrimination. For this reason, young people will often tell someone they trust and have confidence in. If a young person comes out to you, they may simply want someone to talk to about what can be a confusing and scary time for them, or they may want support in accessing further information, some of which is available through this guide.

It is important not to share information about a young person's sexuality with other family members or young people without the young person's consent. This includes sharing with other practitioners, for example on referral forms. Doing so without their consent is called 'outing' and can be very harmful. Sharing personal or sensitive information about someone without their consent could be a breach of their rights under data protection legislation. This should only be considered in exceptional circumstances, which should be discussed with your line manager and/ or safeguarding lead.

Further information about how to talk to young people about their bisexuality is provided in the [Stonewall Bi Inclusion Guide](#) for secondary schools.

## What barriers or difficulties might bi young people face?

A lot of bi young people do not experience any difficulties with their sexuality, and are accepted by their family, friends and community. However, some may experience difficulties such as bullying mental health problems, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic abuse and an increased risk of poor outcomes. These barriers are similar to those which lesbian and gay young people may experience, and are explored in more detail in the [one minute guide on working with lesbian and gay young people](#).

Young people who are bi may face biphobic bullying both in and out of school. Biphobic bullying is distinct from homophobic bullying, which affects lesbian and gay young people. Biphobic bullying is based on prejudice or negative stereotypes, such as the assumption that being bisexual is a phase, or the erasure of a person's bi identity if they are in a relationship with someone of the opposite sex. Bi young people may also face intrusive and ignorant questions, such as 'why can't you make your mind up?'

## What is available for practitioners to support bi young people?

Leeds has a youth group for all LGB young people aged 13 -18 called 'Out to 18'. The group meets regularly and offers both a safe space for LGB young people to socialise and receive 1-1 confidential support. Contact the Youth Service by phone on 0113 3786840 or via email [youth.service@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:youth.service@leeds.gov.uk) to request a leaflet or referral pack, or to request a call back. **Young people can contact this group directly – they do not need to be referred by a practitioner.**

Also in Leeds, the [School Wellbeing Service](#) has a number of resources on their website as well as an [A-Z guide](#) of LGBTQ+ resources. They also run the annual My Health My School survey which includes questions about the experiences of LGBT pupils, so that services can respond to any challenges identified.

[Diversity Role Models](#) is a charitable organisation that creates safe spaces where young people can explore difference and consider their role in creating a world where we all feel accepted. They offer student workshops that feature LGBTQ+ or ally role models who speak openly about their lived experiences, building young people's empathy so they can understand (often unintended) impact of their language and actions. They also train school governors, staff and parents/carers.

[Bi Visibility Day](#) takes place every year on 23 September to increase awareness and tackle biphobia. Their website gives more information and a list of events.

The [Albert Kennedy Trust](#) provide support in relation to LGBT young people experiencing/ at risk of homelessness or living in hostile environments.

The [Galop LGBT+](#) charity provides advice and support in relation to same-sex domestic abuse, hate crimes and sexual violence. Their domestic abuse helpline is 0800 999 5428.

[Forward Leeds](#) supports young people and adults in relation to drug and alcohol use.

The Stonewall LGBT charity has information and resources available on their [website](#).