



One minute guide

Working with Bi Young People

No. 82b, September 2021

What is bi and how does it relate to our services?

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.

Young people who are bi 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, so you should not make assumptions about any young person's sexual identity.

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 lesbian and gay 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, young people or practitioners without the young person's consent. Doing so without their consent is called 'outing' and can be very harmful to young people. 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?

Young people who are bi will not necessarily experience any difficulties with their sexuality, and many are accepted by their family, friends and community. However, some bi young people may experience difficulties such as bullying, mental health problems in addition to an increased risk of poor outcomes. Other issues could include drug and alcohol misuse and domestic violence. 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.

According to [Stonewall's School Report \(2017\)](#), three quarters of lesbian, gay bisexual and trans (LGBT) young people have never learned about bisexuality in school, which could mean that pupils do not have a full understanding of what 'bi' means.

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 idea that bi people are 'greedy', 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 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 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.

The Leeds [School Wellbeing Service](#) have a number of resources on their website.

[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.

Stonewall have produced [a range of resources](#) for schools and settings on supporting LGBT young people, which include useful information and advice for all practitioners who work with young people. Stonewall have also produced a guide for schools on designing LGBT-inclusive relationship, sex and health education.

For young people directly, Stonewall have a range of information on their [website](#), which includes a section entitled 'What's in My Area', a help and advice section and the phone number for Stonewall's Information Service: 0800 0502020.

The [Albert Kennedy Trust](#) can provide support in relation to LGBT young people and homelessness or living in hostile environments.

The [Galop LGBT+](#) charity provides advice and support in relation to same-sex domestic violence, 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 misuse.