



Support & guidance for kinship carer's raising a young person who may be exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Introduction

We have recently observed a rise in calls from our kinship carers requesting information and support around gender identity and sexual orientation. We have put this fact sheet together to help answer some of the questions you may have.

We have also provided information in this fact sheet about where you can go for further help and advice.

Sexuality & Gender Identity

What is your sexuality or sexual orientation?

Sexuality often refers to a person's sexual orientation or preference. Your sexual orientation is who you are emotionally, mentally, and physically attracted to. This may be same-sex (homosexual), male-female (heterosexual), bisexual (both genders) or pansexual (both genders, nonbinary people, and any other gender identity).

What is gender identity?

Firstly, it is important to remember that gender identity is different from a person's gender at birth. It is also different from someone's sexuality or who they may be attracted to. Gender identity is a person's personal sense of their own gender. For example, some people may identify as a boy or a girl, however, others may feel that they do not fit into either of these terms, they may feel they fit somewhere between genders.

[This factsheet is for information only and should not be taken as a full statement of the law. Last updated March 2021.](#)

What is gender fluidity?

Gender fluidity is when a person moves between gender identities or expressions. Such fluidity may not be permanent.

What is non-binary?

Non-binary is where a person feels they don't fit into either gender. They neither identify as man or woman, but somewhere in between. Additionally, some people may identify as a mix of man and woman.

There are many terms which describe gender identity, it's important not to be too hard on yourself if you are not aware of all of them. You can obtain a full list of terms and meaning here: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms>.

Whatever a young person's gender identity or sexual orientation, whether they identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or non-binary, they should be able to have a positive experience and not feel judged or be made to feel different. The most important thing is to let the young person know that they can talk to you and can be open about how they are feeling without being judged.

Below are some tips on how you may respond to a young person disclosing their gender or sexual orientation you.

- Recognise that this isn't something that is going to go away, don't ignore the matter.
- Accept that this is their decision and give them unconditional love and support.
- Let them know that you will be there for them and that you want them to be open about any feelings or decisions they wish to make.
- Take time to learn and understand about gender identity and sexual orientation. There lots of organisations you can contact for support (see list below).
- Help the young person feel accepted by using the name or pronoun that they prefer, for example, 'he or she', 'they or them' or other pronoun of choice. Also try to use the correct term when the young person isn't present. If you make a mistake and get it wrong, apologies and correct yourself.
- Accept that you are not to blame - many carers blame themselves and believe it's something they have done wrong whilst raising the child they are caring for. It's important to realise that you are in no way responsible for your loved one's decision.

Support Services

Young Minds

What is gender identity – a guide for parents and carers

Web: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/gender-identity/>

Young Minds

Sexuality and Mental Health – a guide for young people

Web: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/sexuality-and-mental-health/>

Stonewall

Provides information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people. Information on confidentiality [here](#).

Specialised information for young people available [here](#).

Opening times: 9:30am - 4:30pm, Monday - Friday

Tel: [0800 050 2020](tel:08000502020)

e-mail: info@stonewall.org.uk

Stonewall has a section on their website called '[What's in my area](#)'. Here you can find local groups and organisations near you.

Mermaids is a support group for gender variant children and teenagers, and their families. Their goal is to relieve the mental and emotional stress of young people under 19 who are affected by gender identity issues. Mermaids also helps families and educates the public.

Find out more: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Tel: 0808 801 0400 (Monday to Friday, 9am–9pm)

e-mail: info@mermaidsuk.org.uk

The Mix

Offers support to anyone under 25 about anything that's troubling them.

Email support available via their: [online contact form](#).

Free [1-2-1 webchat service](#) available.

Free short-term [counselling service](#) available.

Opening times: 4pm - 11pm, seven days a week

Tel: [0808 808 4994](tel:08088084994)

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LGBT+YouthScotland

Resources, posters and guidance can be found at: www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

This is Scotland's national charity for LGBT+ young people, working with 13 to 25-year-olds across the country. The charity also delivers the LGBT+ Charter programme in schools, organisations and businesses.

LGBT+ CYMRU Helpline

Providing general information, advice and confidential support in many areas of life and various issues that LGBT+ people, their family, and friends may experience.

Helpline and Counselling Service: 0800 917 9996

Website: <https://lgbtcymru.org.uk/>

Other resources

There are a multitude of useful research resources in the UK, including:

The Stonewall School Report 2017.

- The LGBT Youth Scotland [Report](#).
- International evidence, including the following reported in this recent GayStar News [article](#).
- LGBT+ [Action Plan](#) for Wales
- [The Samaritans](#).

CEOP

Child Exploitation online: www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/our-views/how-to-support-lgbt-young-people-to-stay-safe-online/.

Childline

Really helpful guidance and video chats.

[The Childline message](#) boards are also a good way to get support. They show how other young people are dealing with similar situations.

Other resources to support transgender young people: www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/sexual-identity/transgender-identity/

NSPCC

Provides services and resources to support all children.

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Resources of interest that cover issues relating to the abuse of young women and girls, and the experiences of transgender young people:

"Is this sexual abuse?" A report about children's experiences of peer sexual abuse:
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2018/is-this-sexual-abuse>

Butterfly – an ITV drama – embraces the story of a three-generational family and exposes the truly extraordinary demands made by everyone. Across three episodes, viewers see how they all prosper or fall as challenges unfold over time.

Find out more: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/butterfly.html

SEND Support – special educational needs and disability consultant and trainer, explores how best to support trans or gender questioning autistic pupils in schools and gives advice and practical support.

Find out more: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism/autism-and-gender-identity>
Email: joebutler@sendsupport.co.uk

Support in Northern Ireland

<https://nonbinaryni.wordpress.com/resources-links/>

For more information, advice and support:

Visit us at - <https://kinship.org.uk/for-kinship-carers/advice-and-support/>

Email us at - advice@kinship.org.uk

Call our advice line - on 0300 123 7015