

Everyone is included



About this guide

This guide is for staff working directly with young people like youth workers and group leaders.

It explains what a gay-friendly youth service looks like and how staff can make sure their youth group or other youth service is welcoming and safe for any gay young people who get involved.

Youth services play an important role in every community – providing young people with support; advice about their current lives and future pathways; the chance to develop skills and to make friends. Some local areas have a youth group especially for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. These groups are a vital resource for gay young people, giving them access to information and support that they are not able to get anywhere else. Like all young people though, gay young people will also join youth groups based on their hobbies and interests – this will include things like sports teams, after school clubs, dance classes, environmental projects, volunteering opportunities and holiday courses. Every type of group, service or club for young people could have gay young people who want to join or who already have.

Additionally, the 2010 Equality Act makes 'sexual orientation' a protected characteristic which means that everyone, whether they are lesbian, gay bisexual or heterosexual is protected from discrimination because of their sexual orientation. Any service provided for young people, whether funded by public money or not, provided free or for a charge cannot discriminate against gay people when providing the service – this means that refusing a young person from a service because they are gay would be unlawful. The Act also introduced the single 'public sector Equality Duty' (known as 'they duty'). For youth services the duty means that they have to consider how they can tackle the inequalities experienced by local gay young people, this may include setting up a youth group specifically for gay young people. Any youth group run by or on behalf of a local authority, school or other public organisation is covered by the duty. Stonewall has produced a simple, short plain-English guide on the Equality Act called 'Sexual Orientation: the Equality Act Made Simple'. To order a free copy of this or any of the other resources referred to in this guide visit: www.stonewall.org.uk/publications

Who are Stonewall?

Stonewall is a charity working for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people at home, at work and at school. We campaign to change laws and change peoples' attitudes. We were set up in 1989 to campaign against a law called Section 28 which prevented local councils and schools supporting gay people. This law was removed in 2003 and we have also achieved many other legal changes for gay people in Britain including the right to adopt, have civil partnerships and protections from unfair treatment. Since 2005 we have run a campaign called **Education for All** to tackle homophobia in schools. In 2011, we became an international charity so now we can work for equality for gay people across the world.

Two in five gay and lesbian young people do not take part in any activities for young people.

Stonewall, The School Report, 2007



Frequently Asked Questions

You might have some questions about why being gay-friendly is important and you might have some concerns about working with lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in your service. To get started, we've answered some of the questions professionals working with young people often ask us.

Are there any gay young people in my community and how can I tell?

- There are lesbian, gay and bisexual people in every community and gay people come from every type of cultural background – including all different ethnicities and religions. It is estimated that around 6% of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual so if you know how many young people there are in your local area then you can make a rough guess at how many of them are gay.
- Often gay young people may not be 'out' – meaning that they haven't told people they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. This means there are likely to be more gay young people in your community than you might realise.
- Making sure that your service is gay-friendly could help young people feel more able to come out and be honest about themselves.

Why is it important that our service for young people is gay-friendly?

- Homophobic bullying (bullying of people because they are, or are thought to be gay) doesn't just happen to gay young people. It can happen to any young person who is seen as different in some way.
- It is a huge problem in schools and all other spaces where young people come together. Dealing with homophobia won't just protect gay young people using your service; it will protect all young people.
- If your service feels safe and young people can be themselves, they are more likely to stay involved, to enjoy being part of the group and will work better with each other and with staff.



Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!
Our iconic slogan is available on posters, postcards, stickers and mugs

Is this important even if we have no gay service users?

- You don't know who is gay unless they tell you. Don't make the assumption that just because no young people have said they are gay, none are.
- Don't make assumptions about whether a young person is gay or not based on the way they look or act – you can't tell from this! The only way to know if a young person is gay is if they tell you.
- Homophobia doesn't just affect gay young people so yes, it is really important to make sure your service is gay-friendly even if no young people are currently out.

Why would a gay young person be less likely to get involved with our service?

- Young people tend to take part in opportunities that their friends are taking part in. Often gay young people can be isolated from their peers so they might not hear about your service or might not have any friends encouraging them to get involved.
- 65% of gay young people have experienced homophobic bullying at school. They might be afraid that if they join your group they will be bullied there too by the other young people or they might be afraid that the people who bully them at school will be part of the group.
- Bullying has a negative effect on gay young people's self-confidence making them feel they have little to offer and wouldn't be welcome at local youth groups. Also, many gay young people don't feel a part of their community, they feel different to other young people and feel that things like the activities your service offers are for young people who 'fit in' and not for them so they might not get involved.

If a young person comes out as lesbian, gay or bisexual to staff do we need to do anything?

- When a young person comes out to you it shows they trust you and often they will be looking to you for reassurance. The most important thing is to be supportive – as you would with any young person who shared something important with you.



FIT: DVD for young people, covering issues including homophobia, coming out and fitting in

- You should treat the information about their sexual orientation confidentially and you should only share it with others if they specifically ask you to, for example if they request your help with coming out to other staff who work at the service. **You do not need to tell their parents.**
- A young person being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not in itself a safeguarding concern and you don't need to take any action by law unless they additionally disclose information that you would treat as a safeguarding concern were any young person to share it with you. Such as that they are self-harming or have been abused. In such a case you should follow your service's standard procedure for handling disclosures.
- See the flowchart 'How to support a young person with coming out' on page 12 for more information.

What can I do if there are young people in our service who have homophobic views?

- You may have young people in your service who express homophobic views – these views may be related to things they have learnt at home or within their communities, including faith communities or they might be repeating things they have heard other young people say. Many young people won't have been taught about gay issues and homophobia at school so they might never have had such views challenged.
- When you encounter young people with homophobic views explain why such views are offensive and how they could impact and offend other people. Explain that homophobia is against the rules of the group they are in and that in the group everybody is expected to show respect to one another and this includes not saying things which could be hurtful to other people. Adopting a zero-tolerance stance on homophobic language and making young people aware of this when they join any services you run will be helpful.
- Staff need to take a proactive approach to tackling homophobia amongst young people and should challenge it on every occasion they witness it, rather than waiting for a young person to report it.



Guides: Guides for professionals on a range of issues. View the full range at www.stonewall.org.uk/educationresources

Some of the activities we run for young people involve residential. How can we manage having gay young people in groups during overnight stays?

- Gay young people do not need to be treated differently to other young people when it comes to making arrangements for overnight stays. If you generally have young people sleep in groups divided by sex for privacy then it is fine for gay young people to share a bedroom with young people of the same sex.
- If other young people in the group are concerned about sharing a bedroom with a gay young person then speak to them about their attitudes and fears. Explore any stereotypes they might have about gay people. A gay young person should not be isolated during a residential stay simply because of their sexual orientation.
- Make sure all young people in the group are made aware of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour including sexual behaviour. Make it clear the rules apply in the same way to everyone and that young people can speak to a member of staff if they have concerns.

How can our service help gay young people in our community?

- Lesbian, gay and bisexual young people can often feel isolated from other young people. Getting involved with your local groups will give them the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.
- Gay young people have said that homophobic bullying affects their school work and half of gay young people have skipped school because of bullying. Getting involved with projects for young people outside of school can provide the chance to develop skills they might miss out on at school where their learning might be impacted by bullying.
- Homophobic bullying can have a negative impact on gay young people's self-esteem and mental health. Making a positive contribution to their community and taking part in youth groups can help improve how positive young people feel about themselves.



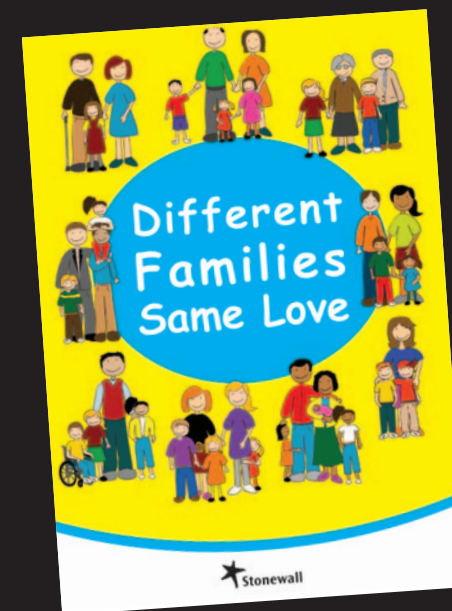
Spell It Out: Training DVD for professionals on how to support LGB young people and address homophobia

How gay friendly is your service?

There are certain steps that your service for young people can take to make sure that it is both welcoming to gay young people and safe and supportive of gay young people when they join. We suggest you go through this section and complete the checklists to see how gay-friendly your service already is.

It would be helpful if all staff working at your service could take part – either by each going through the checklists or by completing them collectively in a staff meeting. The benefit of staff completing the checklist individually is that it may better indicate where action is needed. For example if your service does have an anti-bullying policy that refers to homophobic bullying but some staff say it doesn't, this would indicate that you need to promote the policy more effectively.

If you discover that you are not doing many of the things suggested, don't worry. You have taken the important step of identifying where there is an opportunity for you to take action and you can now begin to do so.



Different Families: Posters and postcards celebrating difference and family diversity

1. Staff

	YES	NO	WHAT YOU CAN DO
Have all staff in your service had training in tackling homophobic bullying?	Y	N	Ensure every member of staff working with young people has watched Stonewall's Spell It Out staff training DVD. This is free and available from www.stonewall.org.uk/resources
Do all staff know how to identify and challenge homophobic language?	Y	N	Ensure all staff have read a copy of Stonewall's Education Guide Challenging Homophobic Language. This is free and available from www.stonewall.org.uk/resources
Do all staff know what local and national services they could signpost young people to for support with lesbian, gay and bisexual issues?	Y	N	Visit the What's in my area? section (www.stonewall.org.uk/whatsinmyarea) on the Stonewall website to see what LGB groups there are in your area. Keep a list of local groups and national groups like Stonewall for staff and young people to refer to.
Would all staff feel comfortable talking to a young person about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues?	Y	N	Ensure all staff have read a copy of Stonewall's Education Guide Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. This is free and available from www.stonewall.org.uk/resources

2. Tackling homophobic bullying

	YES	NO	WHAT YOU CAN DO
Does your service have an anti-bullying policy which clearly includes homophobic bullying?	Y	N	Ensure your anti-bullying policy clearly includes homophobic bullying. Make sure all staff and young people are aware of the policy and display youth-friendly versions of the policy within any spaces young people use to remind them.
Do young people know how to report homophobic bullying and who to speak to if they experience or witness homophobic bullying?	Y	N	When young people join any local youth group tell them the procedure for reporting all forms of bullying. Ensure a member of staff has responsibility for following up reports of bullying and that young people know who they are and how to contact them.
Does your service take a zero tolerance approach to homophobia with staff challenging homophobic language (including 'That's so gay' and 'You're so gay') every time young people use it?	Y	N	Ensure all staff have read Stonewall's Education Guide Challenging Homophobic Language and are familiar with the flowchart for responding to homophobic language (page 11 of this guide). This is free and available from www.stonewall.org.uk/resources

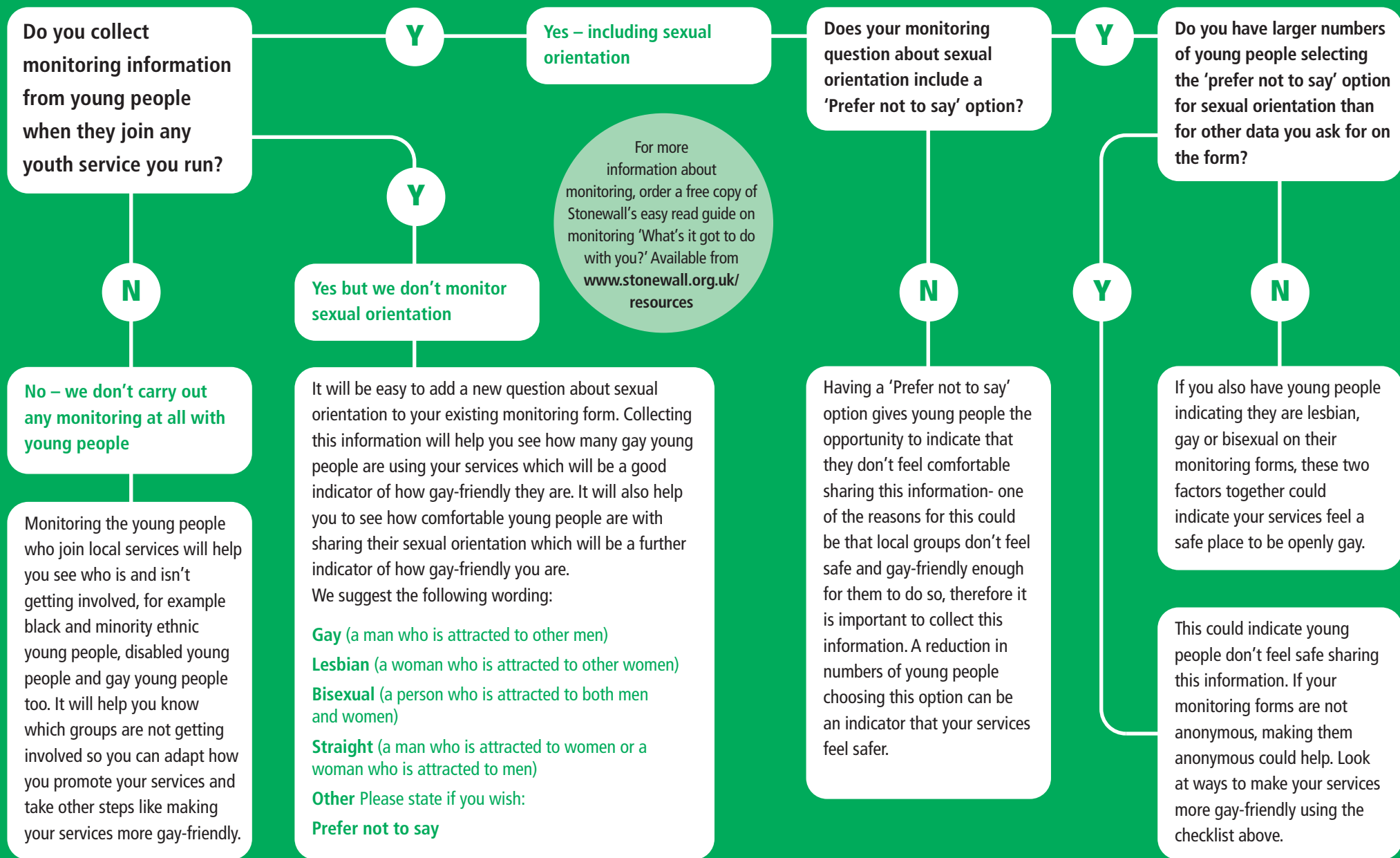
3. A gay-friendly environment

	YES	NO	WHAT YOU CAN DO
Do you display posters advertising local lesbian, gay and bisexual support organisations?	Y	N	Visit the What's in my area section (www.stonewall.org.uk/whatsinmyarea) of the Stonewall website to find out if there are any local LGB youth groups. If so, ask them for marketing materials.
Do you display posters with gay-friendly and anti-homophobia messages?	Y	N	Stonewall can provide you with free posters including our 'Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!' posters – you can order them on our website (www.stonewall.org.uk).
Do you have leaflets and other free resources with helpful information for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people?	Y	N	Make sure young people are able to access Stonewall's website for young people (www.youngstonewall.org.uk) through any computers at local youth centres. Visit the Info Bank on the Stonewall website for details of other organisations that could send you resources with helpful information for gay young people.
Have young people taken part in a session about homophobia and lesbian, gay and bisexual issues?	Y	N	Show all young people Stonewall's film FIT as part of their induction. The accompanying booklet guides you through key discussion topics to cover when they have watched each section of the film. You can find more information about the film at www.stonewall.org.uk/fit .

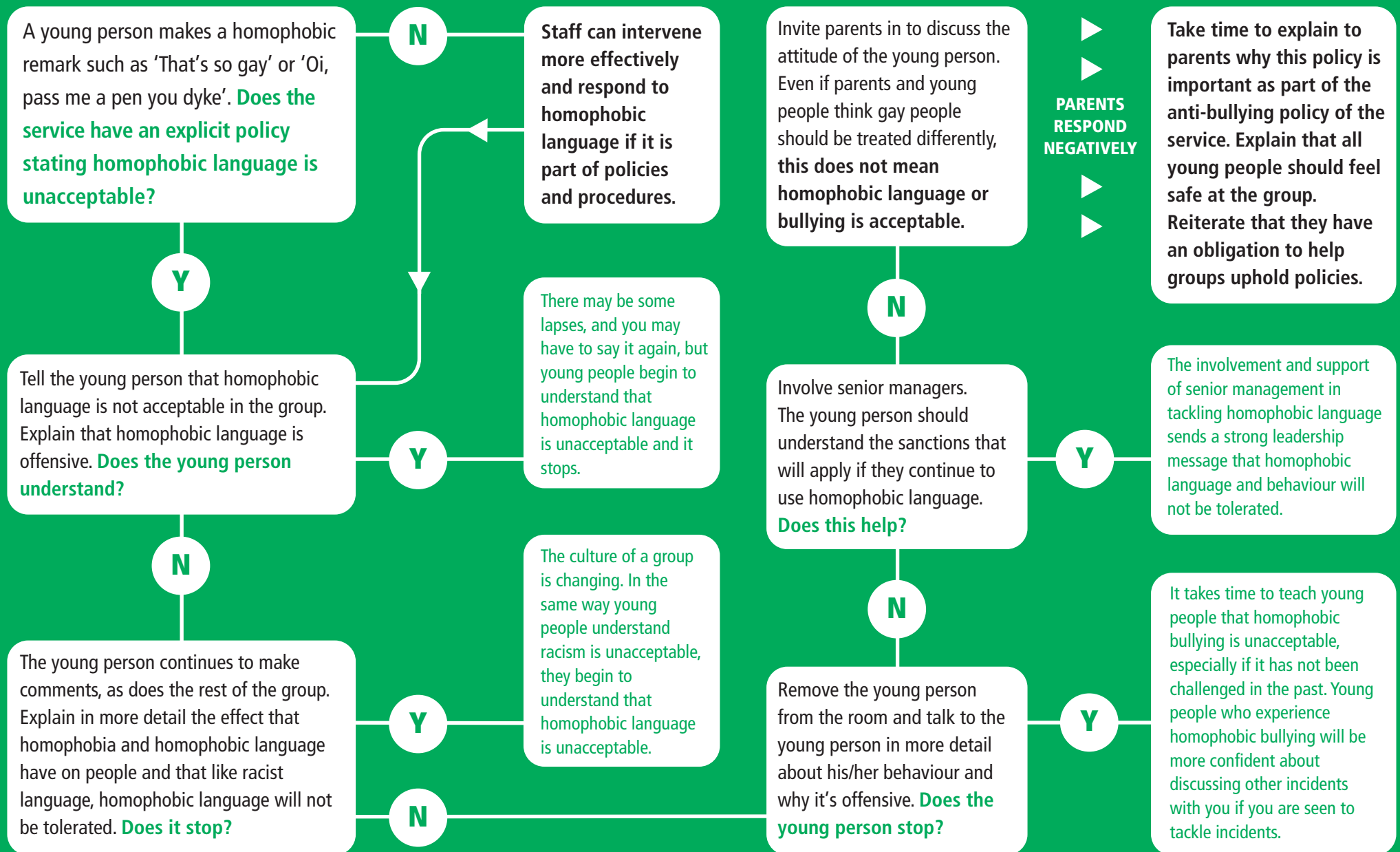
4. Gay young people are part of your project

	YES	NO	WHAT YOU CAN DO
Do you monitor the sexual orientation of all young people who join your service?	Y	N	Use the flowchart on page 10 to introduce sexual orientation monitoring within your youth services.
Do you promote the activities you offer to the local gay youth group, if there is one?	Y	N	Visit the What's in my area section of the Stonewall website (www.stonewall.org.uk/whatsinmyarea) to find out if there are any local LGB youth groups. If so, ask staff to promote the youth services you run and be clear that young people of all sexual orientations are welcome at all of them.
Do you involve gay young people where possible in promoting your service to other young people?	Y	N	If they want to, gay young people can act as ambassadors for youth groups they are part of, for example by visiting the local LGB youth group and telling members about it. Ensure that a member of staff accompanies them to offer support.
Do you use diverse images in any posters promoting your service to show that all young people are welcome?	Y	N	Stonewall has images of young people wearing Some People Are Gay. Get Over It! t-shirts which we can provide to help you make sure some of your promotional materials are gay-friendly. We also have a campaign celebrating different families and can provide posters and images from this campaign too. Contact stonewallyouth@stonewall.org.uk for details.

How to: monitor



How to: respond to homophobic language



PARENTS RESPOND NEGATIVELY

How to: respond to a young person coming out

Young Person: I think I might be gay.

Staff: Ok. I'm glad you've come to talk to me about it. How do you feel?

YP: Scared, alone, I don't know anyone else who is gay.

Staff: There are gay young people in every community, I can help you make contact with others. It is ok to be gay you know. Have you discussed this with your parents?

YP: No. I don't want to tell them because I'm worried about how they'll react.

Staff: Ok, we can talk about that later and think about some ways to approach it.

YP: No, but I'm going to tell them soon.

Staff: Good. Have you thought about how they might react?

YP: Yes. My dad refuses to speak to me.

Staff: Ok, well we can help you with that. What does your mum say? Is there anyone else in your family who can help? There are organisations that can help – I can give you their details.

Staff: As well as this group there are also groups for gay young people in some areas. We'll give you as much support as possible here but going to a gay group as well will help you meet more gay people of your age. There are also websites for gay young people, I can help you find some.

Staff: There are some good youth sites. I'll give you the details, but you need to be very careful on the web. If you find that you are being contacted by adults be very cautious and alert a parent/carer or youth worker immediately.

Staff: You are underage and shouldn't be going to clubs. If you want to meet other gay young people in particular, I'll help you find a gay youth group – that's safer than going to clubs. We'll support you and make sure you are included in this group too.

Staff: Do any other young people know? Has anyone treated you any differently because you are gay?

YP: No, they don't know, and I don't want them to either. Everyone says something is 'gay' when they mean something is crap. I just don't want to get bullied.

Staff: We won't let that happen. Homophobic bullying is not tolerated in this group, and we will respond effectively to any incidents and perhaps we should have a workshop on the derogative use of the word 'gay'.

YP: Some know and they are ok with it, but I don't want the others to find out.

Staff: What do your friends think? Will they be supportive? And if other young people find it difficult come and talk to me. I can assure you we won't tolerate homophobic bullying in this group.

YP: Yes, they all know and some have given me a hard time about it.

Staff: I'm glad you've told me. I'll be able to help you sort this out. Do you feel able to give me any names/times when incidents have occurred?

Staff: Have you met anybody else who is gay? Or looked at any helpful resources or websites?

YP: No. I don't really know where to start. It would be good to know some other gay people.

YP: Yes, I went on some websites but I haven't met anyone my age yet.

YP: Yes. I've been to a gay bar and a club a few times – when I've been able to get in.

Staff: I'm glad you've told me. You have nothing to be ashamed of – lots of people are gay. I will find you the details of a group for gay young people – that's better than going to pubs and clubs. I will also make sure we give you as much support as we can in this group and find details of groups that your parents might want to contact. I also want you to tell me if anybody bullies you in this group. I can't stop it if you don't tell me.

Further Information

Resources

To download and order free copies of our resources visit www.stonewall.org.uk/resources

- **Spell It Out** – originally designed for use in secondary schools, this DVD is a helpful training tool for staff. It covers how to challenge homophobic language and how to react when a young person comes out.
- **FIT** – interactive DVD which can be used to raise awareness amongst young people of homophobia and sexual orientation in a fun and accessible way.
- **Challenging homophobic language and Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people guides** – these were written for a school setting but could also apply to youth services.
- **Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!** – materials including posters, postcards, stickers, t-shirts and mugs.
- **We believe in equality. What do you believe in?** – posters and postcards.

Links and information

- **What's in my area?** Database for local LGB community and youth groups
www.stonewall.org.uk/whatsinmyarea
- **Stonewall website for young people** – Information for young people on a range of LGB issues
www.youngstonewall.org.uk

Any questions?

Contact us: stonewallyouth@stonewall.org.uk 020 7593 1882

