

**LGBT Speak Out: The co-design of tools that
can enable professionals to better
understand and serve this community of
people**

April 2024

REPORT DATE	PROJECT NAME	PREPARED BY
March 2024	LGBTQ Speak Out	James Murphy – Manager of Ru-ok? Alex Stanbury – Participation Worker – Ru-ok? Funded by Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

PROJECT SUMMARY

In Summer 2023 James Murphy (Manager of Ru-ok? Brighton and Hove Young Persons Drug and Alcohol Team based with the Adolescent Service), Alan Boyd (Chief Executive, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove) and Lester Coleman (Head of Research, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove) agreed that the Ru-ok? Participation Worker would seek to engage a group of LGBTQ young people; gathering their views about how substance misuse services, sexual health services and therapeutic support services could better engage this often marginalised community. Surveys of young people within schools (e.g. School Safe and Well wellbeing survey) in Brighton and Hove have consistently identified that LGBTQ young people under the age of 18 have often felt there are barriers to accessing support from support services such as drug and alcohol services.

The aim of the sessions was to encourage co-design of tools that can enable service managers, social workers, frontline workers in drug, alcohol and sexual health services and commissioners of local health and social care services to better understand and serve this community of people. This project has been made possible with funding from Health Watch Brighton and Hove.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

A total of twelve group sessions took place in 2023 and 2024 in which the Ru-ok? Participations Worker, a Social Worker based in the Adolescent Service and a Youth Justice Worker engaged young people in co-producing a guide that seeks to help services better engage and serve LGBTQ young people. Some of the young people who attended these sessions are continuing to work with the Participations worker to create more detailed audio-visual presentations which offer more comprehensive insights into issues facing LGBTQ young people such as substance misuse and trans identity being respected by services. These audio-visual resources will be available later this year. Although the aim of the sessions were to focus on substance misuse services, sexual health services and support services, it became clear when listening to the feedback of the young people attending that they want professionals to understand the wider experiences of LGBTQ people; including their views on how other services (such as mental health services) have supported them. The young people attending these sessions felt this needed to be explored within the sessions and in the finalized guide and supplementary report. They have highlighted that problematic drug and alcohol use is often symptomatic of wider issues or problems and therefore it is relevant to talk about their experiences of getting support for those wider problems.

More details about the twelve sessions are listed below. Session subjects were suggested by those attending the sessions.

SESSION SUBJECT	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES	FEEDBACK
1. LGBTQ Identity	Two	<p>Some services don't ask about young peoples' identity.</p> <p>Lack of support and responsiveness from CAMHS.</p> <p>Some professionals sound patronising or condescending when young people tell them they are non binary.</p> <p>Trans young people continue to be "deadnamed" by professionals after changing their name.</p>
2. How services can be more welcoming to LGBTQ people	Four	<p>Workers should share their LGBTQ identity.</p> <p>Some LGBTQ young people had no sense of identity until they found drugs.</p> <p>Rainbow lanyards are an important sign of allyship.</p> <p>LGBTQ Young people want to hear testimonies from other young people.</p>
3. How services can engage LGBTQ people	Five	<p>LGBTQ young people shouldn't have to educate staff around being LGBTQ – especially being Trans.</p> <p>Workers need to create a 'safe space' before they start asking lots of personal questions around identity.</p> <p>Having a wall of pictures of staff with their pronouns is a good thing.</p> <p>Drug and alcohol workers should promote fellowship meetings in the city.</p>
4. LGBTQ people and their drug and alcohol use	Four	<p>LGBTQ people are more experimental.</p> <p>LGBTQ people feel a lack of community outside of partying and drugs.</p> <p>Queer people are cool!</p>

		<p>The gay scene is very hedonistic – maybe because its emotionally much easier to ignore your problems and have fun.</p>
5. Substances and Sex Education	Seven	<p>Felt there is “discrimination” by CAMHS if people using drugs or alcohol.</p> <p>There should be a dedicated LGBTQ safe space late at night – a place with no alcohol or drugs and a neuro diverse friendly space.</p> <p>Schools don’t understand harm reduction.</p> <p>Teaching in school does not cover things specifically related to LGBTQ young people e.g. Chemsex.</p> <p>Accessing services can mean a fear of being outed as a substance abuser especially to parents.</p> <p>Lack of awareness of healthy relationships especially in online LGBTQ community (dating apps).</p>
6. Substances, Sex Education	Five	<p>There needs to be a more open culture around substances in schools and colleges.</p> <p>Lack of awareness about what substance misuse looks like and if “I am bad enough to need support”.</p>
7. LGBTQ Speakout members met with Ru-ok? managers	Four	<p>Ru-ok transitions worker should support 17 and 18 year old LGBTQ people to access fellowship meetings.</p> <p>LGBTQ young people should co-design social media content for Ru-ok?</p> <p>The group agreed to create a best practice guide for workers in services.</p>
8. Update and Moving Forward	Seven	<p>The group proposed a guide covering different topics to include in their guide.</p>
9. Developing the guide	Three	<p>The group discussed the look and presentation of the guide and discussed appropriate LGBTQ friendly language and images.</p>

10. Review of guide	Two	Group decided there should be additional content around gender and autism.
11. Review of guide and discussion regarding audio visual materials	Three	Group planned audio visual presentation.
12. Review of toolkit and discussion re: audio/visual material	Three	Group reviewed guide and audio visual presentation.

OUTCOMES

To date, a guide has been produced that highlights the issues facing LGBTQ young people and acts as a guide for people working in and managing services that offer support.

One audio visual presentation has been produced in which young person shares their views about how services can understand support trans people.

A lengthier report outlining the content of the above sessions has been produced.

FUTURE WORK

The Ru-ok? Participation worker is currently working with LGBTQ young people (who attended the above sessions) one to one and in small breakout groups to create more audio visual presentations relating to various issues faced by LGBTQ young people. These issues relate to substance misuse, sexual health and education and mental health. These audio-visual products will be completed by end of May 2024.

It is hoped that the young people who took part in this co-design and co-production work will be able to present their work to:

- To managers of health and social care services across the city.
- To commissioners of drug, alcohol, sexual health and support services in the city.
- To the executive team within Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

Young people involved in this work are keen to understand how their views and suggestions will be utilised in the future to make services more responsive and supportive to LGBTQ young people.