



Combatting single-story history in education

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

This free document has been created
to support childminders, nurseries
and schools in having necessary
conversations about LGBTQ+
Inclusion.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

CONTENTS

Who are the LGBTQ+ Community?

3

Terminology: What LGBTQ+ Stands For

4

A Short History of the LGBTQ+ Community in Britain

5

Persecution and Discrimination of the LGBTQ+ Community Today

10

Strategies for Making your Setting Inclusive of LGBTQ+ People

11

Why it is Good to Create an Environment that is LGBTQ+ Inclusive

13

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

WHO ARE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY?

When you hear the words 'LGBTQ+ Community,' it is not about just one sort of person. Instead, it includes all kinds of people with different identities describing their sexuality, their gender or both.

There are big differences between these identities, but over the years people with these identities have been banded together. Each group has been persecuted and discriminated against because of their sexuality or gender identity, both in the past and today.

Many LGBTQ+ people feel that being part of the LGBTQ+ Community is important because it gives a sense of belonging, support and protection. It represents people protected by the Equality Act, 2010 (UK Government, 2010) because of their different sexual and gender identities.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

TERMINOLOGY: WHAT LGBTQ+ STANDS FOR

If you are trying to make a setting inclusive for LGBTQ+ people, you need to know and understand the words used to describe the characteristics of people in the community - the terminology. Labelling may be used when a group needs to stand out so that it can be protected from persecution and discrimination. It is also important for understanding a person's identity.

Lesbian

A woman who has a romantic and/or sexual preference for women. Some non-binary people may also use this term.

Gay

A man who has a romantic and/or sexual preference for men. Also, a general term for homosexuality; some women call themselves gay rather than lesbian and some non-binary people may also use this term.

Bisexual

A person with romantic and/or sexual preference for more than one gender. Bisexual people may also describe themselves as bi, pansexual or queer.

Trans

A person whose gender is not the same as the sex they were given at birth. Trans people may also describe themselves as transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, cross-dresser, genderless, agender, non gender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois.

Queer/Questioning

A person who does not want to be labelled by their romantic or sexual attractions and/or gender identity. People who do not like the word 'queer' may use 'questioning' instead.

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Stands for all the other less well-known identities in the LGBTQ+ Community.

To read more about this, please visit www.stonewall.org.uk/list-lgbtq-terms

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN

‘Homosexuality has existed throughout history...among all social classes and peoples... it has survived...approval, indifference and...vicious persecution.’
(Weeks, 1977)

To understand how the LGBTQ+ Community came to be a legally protected group in Britain, we must explore its history and the challenges the community has faced in the past. This helps to explain the importance of creating settings that are inclusive.

Most historical laws targeted gay males. Other identities are rarely mentioned in official documents because many of the other identities were not recognised in certain periods of history. This meant that laws could not be made against them. For example, traditional British society was very sexist and women's sexuality was rarely acknowledged, let alone mentioned officially, so lesbians have never officially been recognised in British law.

People often assume that modern prejudices are natural and have always been a part of society. This is a mistake because it forgets how prejudice and discrimination change through history. This then stops them being thought about and questioned. Actually, a quick glance at the past thousand years shows that attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people have been very different at different times.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

ROMAN BRITAIN, 43-410 BCE

‘Gay people were in a... minority, but [they were not] regarded as harmful, bizarre, immoral, or threatening... by pre-Christian Roman Society.’
(Boswell, 2009)

Attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ Community in early Roman times in Britain were tolerant. It was normal for men to have gay relationships, particularly between powerful men and their slaves. Emperor Hadrian, who ruled over Britain from 117-138 BCE, openly proclaimed his love for Antinous, his male friend. Throughout this time, same-sex relationships were legal, and gay marriages were normal across the empire, for both women and men (Boswell, 2009).

This tolerance continued until the Romans converted to Christianity in 313 BCE. Some experts say that attitudes about homosexuality and different genders became less accepting at this time because of the change from a polytheistic to a monotheistic religion. Before 313 BCE, Romans worshipped many gods, and their myths told not only of different gender identities but also of various sexual relationships between the gods and people on earth.

In contrast, Christians only worship one god. That god is never pictured as a sexual being, which gave some Christians the idea that sex outside heterosexual marriage was sinful and shameful. Also, early Christianity believed in creationism – the theory that Adam and Eve were the first humans and that they created mankind. This shaped the traditional Christian views of male and female gender roles, and of heterosexuality being the norm (Jiang, 2015).

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

MEDIEVAL BRITAIN, 411-1485 BCE

The Medieval Era is defined as the thousand years between the end of Roman control in 411 BCE and the start of the Renaissance in 1485 BCE. Christian extremism was dominant, and Christianity influenced every aspect of people's lives. This included their ideas about sexuality and gender.

The Catholic Church had control over some parts of the law through church courts. They put people accused of 'moral crimes' on trial. That is, crimes said to be sinful by Christianity. Historians have found examples of many gay and lesbian relationships in the medieval era, but their treatment by the state and the church was harsh. Punishments for homosexual acts included being buried alive or burnt to death. But most often, people were fined by the church (Human Dignity Trust, no date).

Even if LGBTQ+ people were not put on trial, everyone in medieval Britain was forced by the state to follow Christianity and go to church. So it is likely they would have feared burning in hell, and may have felt their sexuality and religion were in direct conflict.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

THE RENAISSANCE, 1485-1660 BCE

Under King Henry VII, the Tudor family took control of Britain in 1485. This was also the beginning of the Renaissance, a time of great social, religious and cultural change. The Catholic Church kept its hold over Britain while Henry VII was king. But when Henry VIII took over, he decided to change the religion in Britain from Catholicism to a different type of Christianity, Protestantism. Henry VIII took power from the Catholic Church by taking away their control of the church courts.

This led to a new law called the Buggery Act in 1533, which meant gay men could be put on trial and executed by the state for their sexuality. The state courts were far harsher than the church courts. The first person to be executed under the Buggery Act was Tudor nobleman Walter Hungerford (English Heritage, no date). The Buggery Act was law in Britain from 1533 until 1861. During this time, hundreds of gay men were executed.

THE INDUSTRIAL ERA, 1750-1900 BCE

The Industrial Era marked the height of the British Empire. A lot of Britain's homophobic ideas and laws, like the Buggery Act, were spread around countries in the empire. Many of these countries had previously been fairly tolerant of different genders and sexualities (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

In Britain, for around 300 years, men were hanged at public gallows for being involved in gay relationships. Before 1818, gay men were also pilloried in the streets. They were chained up in stocks so that the public could throw stones and rotten fruit at them. This was humiliating, terrifying, and sometimes deadly (History England, no date). Although in 1861 the Buggery Act was outlawed by Parliament, there was not much progress for the LGBTQ+ Community. There was still a minimum prison sentence of ten years for homosexuality, and gay men were treated harshly in prison (The Week UK, 2017).

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

THE 20TH CENTURY

Gay men continued to be imprisoned and were chemically castrated throughout the first half of the 20th Century. Chemical castration is when chemicals are used to stop a person's desire to have sex.

Alan Turing – a scientist and mathematician known for his code-breaking skills that helped Britain win World War Two – was also a gay man. When the state discovered this, even though he had played a major role in winning the war, they told him he must either go to prison or be chemically castrated.

Around two decades later, in 1967, the British government finally legalised homosexual acts, but discrimination and persecution continued (PBS NewsHour, 2021).

In 1988, then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher passed Section 28, making it illegal for teachers to discuss sexuality with students or to teach about LGBTQ+ people. Section 28 was not abolished until 2003, meaning thousands of young LGBTQ+ people felt they had nowhere to turn and that there was something wrong with them (Day, 2019).

‘Section 28 damaged a generation of young people, whose school years were characterised by confusion and anxiety. Few of us had trusted adults we could speak to, and we were made to feel like outsiders in places where we should have been safe.’ (Anon LGBTQ+ person, Stonewall, 2021)

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

PERSECUTION AND DISCRIMINATION OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY

To people who are not part of the LGBTQ+ Community it may look as though there is equality these days. But there is still a lot of persecution and discrimination, especially towards trans people.

For example, 'gay conversion therapy' is still legal in Britain at the time of writing this guide (March 2023). Gay people can be sent for 'treatment' where they are taught their sexuality is sinful and disgusting, to try to change them to being straight. However, countless studies have shown that such a change is not possible. Instead, the 'therapy' makes most gay people feel worse about themselves, sometimes even suicidal (Gov.UK, no date). In 2018 the UK government said they would ban gay conversion therapy but had not done so by March 2023. In 2018, trans conversion therapy was not mentioned, so it may not be included in any new banning laws.

LGBTQ+ people continue to be the victims of violent hate crimes (Stonewall, 2022).

Stonewall (2022) also reported on other discrimination because of people's sexual attractions or gender identity in the past year, such as when trying to buy or rent a home, in cafés and bars, and at live sporting events.

Even so, there has been a lot of progress in the UK, when compared with the last thousand years. You can be a part of the campaign for equality by making your setting LGBTQ+ inclusive.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

STRATEGIES FOR MAKING YOUR SETTING INCLUSIVE OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

The persecution of the LGBTQ+ Community across British history has led to the group being protected by law. But they are still in need of further support and allies who are not in the community. You may be in the community yourself, or you may be an ally wanting to support young LGBTQ+ people, or those from LGBTQ+ families. Below are some ways that you can begin making your setting or school more LGBTQ+ inclusive.

- Be able to explain to parents and staff that teaching about LGBTQ+ issues is not about sex. Instead, it teaches about relationships and the achievements of LGBTQ+ people.
- Be able to explain to parents, other staff and children that you are giving the LGBTQ+ Community special attention now because they have been persecuted throughout history.
- Be able to explain that a person's gender identity or sexuality is not a choice, in the same way that a person's race is not their choice.
- Explain to students that because the LGBTQ+ Community has been persecuted, they need allies. Being an ally means looking out for LGBTQ+ children and supporting them even though you are not in the community yourself.
- Reach out to parents who are LGBTQ+ and hear their ideas for making your specific setting or school more inclusive.
- For very young children, teaching about LGBTQ+ people and their issues does not need to be explicit. It can simply mean teaching about being inclusive and non-judgmental.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

STRATEGIES FOR MAKING YOUR SETTING INCLUSIVE OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE CONTINUED

- Teach children from a young age to talk about their families with you and each other. You will probably find that there is a wide variety of family setups, such as nuclear families, single-parent families, families with LGBTQ+ parents, and adoptive families. Allowing students to be safely exposed to these differences from a young age will encourage them to be inclusive. It is often fear of the unknown that causes prejudice and discrimination.
- Bring in a range of LGBTQ+ people to speak to your children about their lives and personal experiences.
- Attend continuous professional development and reach out to groups, such as Diverse History UK, who are experts in LGBTQ+ inclusion, so that you can feel more confident in these discussions.
- Make your setting a safe space where all views and questions are valid. For example, if you hear a homophobic or transphobic view, calmly question their views and explain how they might look at it differently. For example, if their reasons are religious, explain that love and tolerance are considered the most important part of all religions.
- If you do criticise a damaging idea presented by a child, make sure the criticism is of the idea rather than the person.
- Consider having a 'rainbow zone,' in your setting. This is a safe space for LGBTQ+ children or those who have LGBTQ+ families.

Remember: Any discussion about a sensitive issue should have the purpose of bringing more harmony and unity into society. It is important that no child feel singled-out, ashamed or guilty. If you have any concerns about children's responses when discussing sensitive topics, make sure you raise this with your safeguarding lead.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

WHY IT IS GOOD TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE

Creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive setting is not only good for LGBTQ+ children or those from LGBTQ+ families. It benefits everyone. If we can show children a kinder, and less judgmental approach from their earliest educational years by teaching about equality, inclusion and diversity, we are reducing the likelihood of these children becoming prejudiced adults.

An inclusive setting can give children and staff better problem-solving abilities as they are exposed to a wider range of views and perspectives.

Having an inclusive educational setting shows that you value all children equally and your setting is one where all children can feel safe, and be able to learn and flourish.

Children will be better equipped to deal with the real world, because they will have an understanding of the diversity in the UK. They are likely to be more empathetic, to make friends across the board, and gain worthwhile employment in the future.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

GLOSSARY: HELP WITH SOME OF THE SPECIALIST WORDS IN THIS GUIDE

Conversion Therapy

A so-called 'treatment' to change the sexuality or gender identity of an LGBTQ+ person.

Discrimination/Persecution

Being unfairly judged and treated differently because of a group you belong to.

Gender Identity

The gender someone feels that they are, even if it is not the same sex as they were given at birth. Some people's identity shifts between the genders.

Hate Crimes

Crimes against a person because of their disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality or gender identity.

Homosexual

Gay or lesbian.

Inclusive

When a place or person supports people regardless of their background and works towards creating as much equality as possible.

Labelling

When people have a particular title because of their physical appearance, background or lifestyle.

Non-binary

People whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with either 'man' or 'woman'.

Prejudice

Judging and mistreating somebody simply because of a group they belong to.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

GLOSSARY: HELP WITH SOME OF THE SPECIALIST WORDS IN THIS GUIDE CONTINUED

Protected Group

Groups of people who it is illegal to discriminate against. This applies to groups that have been historically persecuted and discriminated against. In Britain, people are in legally protected groups because of their:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Sexism

A belief that one sex is better and more capable than the other.

Sexual Orientation

Describes who you are attracted to and want to have relationships with.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

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