

# Supporting a Young Person who is Gay and in Scouting



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**0845 300 1818**

## Being Positive not Negative!

The Scout Association has many policies, guidelines and good practices on a number of issues. These include bullying, challenging behaviour as well as sexual orientation.

As a role model for young people you may be approached about a wide range of issues. An issue that you might encounter is a young person telling you that they are gay, directly or indirectly e.g. a young female Explorer Scout may say "I think I fancy women more than men"

If you are approached by a young person be sensitive and not judgemental. Be supportive following their approach to talk to you, rather than being dismissive.

The Association does not expect you to be an expert on this matter and provides contact details of relevant supporting organisations, which you can put young people in touch with.

## What if a Young Person discloses that they are Gay?

The young person is likely to be very nervous about speaking to someone about their sexual orientation. There are a number of things you need to consider when a young person approaches you.

- Listen! If it is not appropriate to discuss the matter there and then, be sure to fix a time that is convenient so that the young person knows when they can discuss the matter with you.
- Make sure that you are talking in the correct environment. Conversations should be confidential but with other adults within hearing or sight.

Be sure to remember to conduct conversation with young people in accordance with guidance provided on the Child Protection Yellow Card.

If you are uncomfortable to talk about this subject with the young person concerned, offer the young person the details overleaf of a relevant organisation in their area who are qualified to discuss and support the matter appropriately.

## Listen

It is a very difficult step for a young person to tell someone else that they are gay. You should feel honoured that they have decided to tell you, but you may not be able to provide relevant advice to assist with their situation. The young person obviously thinks a lot of you to tell you, they have probably been bottling it up inside for a long time and having started to tell someone they may have a lot they wish to tell. Listen, don't judge them and let them talk.

## Be sympathetic

As you listen, reassure the young person that it is OK to be Gay and a Scout. There are potentially much wider issues regarding the young person's sexual orientation and it is important that you are sympathetic and encourage them to speak to an organisation that is trusted to talk to them about their circumstances.

## Don't cast judgements

Whatever your feelings are on homosexual issues you should remember that this young person has come to you as someone they trust and someone they can confide in. For many young people, disclosing how they feel can be a very frightening experience, because they are worried that they will get a bad reaction. You may be the first person they have ever told. A bad reaction from you is not supportive to the young person's needs. It is essential that your support is positive and it is not for you to judge them.

## The Scout Association

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## Leaders are not experts

You are probably not an expert with this subject matter and the Scout Association doesn't expect you to be. A sympathetic ear and knowledge of where to direct the young person (see contacts below) is the key in supporting this issue.

**Most importantly re-assure them that it is OK to be a Gay and be a Scout.**

## Organisations to help

The Scout Association is not an authority on gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender issues but they know people who are:

### PACE

Youth work and counseling service for all lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and those questioning their sexuality, who are under 26.  
020 8348 1785  
www.outzone.org

### ChildLine

Free confidential 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK  
0800 1111  
www.childline.org.uk

### London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

Providing an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people from all backgrounds throughout the United Kingdom.  
020 7837 7324  
www.llgs.org.uk

### Strathclyde Gay & Lesbian Switchboard

Confidential telephone counseling service in the West of Scotland.  
Open every night of the week 7-10pm  
0141 847 0447

### Lothian Gay and lesbian Switchboard

Confidential helpline aimed at addressing your questions, concerns and needs.  
Open every evening of the week, 365 days of the year, 7.30-10pm  
0131 556 4049  
www.lgls.co.uk

### Swansea Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Switchboard

Tuesday 7-10pm  
01792 301855

### Belfast Cara-Friend

Mon-Wed 7.30-10pm  
028 90322 023

## Glossary of useful terms:

Bisexual	A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women
Gay	A person who is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex, more commonly refers to men.
GLBT	The acronym for Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgendered people.
Homophobic	Fear of or contempt for Lesbians or Gay men.
Homosexual	A person whose sexually orientation is to someone of the same sex.
Lesbian	A woman who is sexually attracted to other women
Sexual Orientation	The directions of a person's sex towards a person of the same, opposite or both sexes.
Sexual Status	The position relative to others relating to characteristics of Sex, including a person's sexual orientation.
Straight	A person who is sexually attracted to the opposite sex.
Transgender	Appearing as, wishing to be considered as, or having undergone surgery to become a member the opposite sex.

## Other Gay related factsheets:

- Being Gay with an Adult role in Scouting (FS185081)
- It's OK to be Gay and a Scout. Advice for young people. (FS185082)