



Representing Us:

What Dorset's LGBT+ Youth Need
From Their Elected Politicians
2025

About

Designed by Space Youth Project young people to draw attention to issues facing LGBT+ young people, and the reasons why we need our Members of Parliament to act.

Contents

1. About Space Youth Project	1
2. What We Do	1
3. Challenges Faced by LGBT+ Youth	1
4. Why MPs Must Act	3
5. What We Need From You	3
6. References	4
7. Acknowledgements	4

1) About Space Youth Project

- Space Youth Project is a registered charity, supporting young LGBT+ people around Dorset.
- Founded in 2001, we have remained a strong voice for young LGBT+ people in Dorset for over 20 years.
- We originated in the BCP area and have since branched out further West of Dorset. We actively operate in multiple locations across the Dorset area.

2) What We Do

- We operate youth groups across Dorset, enabling young people to feel a sense of community and inclusion.
- We offer one-to-one support for young people in need of it, with youth workers trained to deal with a number of scenarios.
- We provide young people with the opportunity to get involved in volunteering, and run a peer leadership programme called Supernovas.
- We offer activities catered to a wide range of young people, aimed at being as inclusive as possible. This can range from arts and crafts within groups and gaining valuable cooking skills, to trips around Dorset to locations such as Kingston Lacy and Bournemouth Pride.
- We advertise opportunities external from Space Youth Project to our young people, supporting them in branching out and accessing other organisations.
- We offer school-based workshops, assemblies and training for professionals delivered by our experienced and qualified team.
- We offer professional advice and training for schools, colleges, youth workers, social/health workers or anyone wanting to support LGBT+ young people.

3) Challenges Faced by LGBT+ Youth

3.1 Hostility & Discrimination:

- LGBT+ young people continue to face hostility within social environments such as in schools and colleges. The charity Just Like Us reported (2021) that LGBT+ school pupils are twice as likely to have been bullied and 91% have heard negative language about being LGBT+ in the past year¹.
- A high number of young people from within Space Youth Project report experiencing verbal, physical and online harassment and bullying due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- Often, teachers continue to fail to intervene in incidents of homophobia or transphobia in the classroom, leading young people to consider it to be normalised.
- While social media can be a source of community, it also exposes LGBT+ youth to trolling and further harassment.
- Trans and non-binary youth face long waiting times and inadequate care when seeking gender-affirming services through the NHS.
- While the UK has many legal protections, non-binary identities are not officially recognised, and conversion therapy has not yet been banned.
- There is a lack of strong guidance provided by the government for schools as to how to deal with issues relating to LGBT+ young people, and discrimination.
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (2017/18) indicated that people aged 16 to 24 are at a higher risk of being victims of personal hate crimes, with the risk decreasing with age².
- The influence of anti-transgender groups on formulating transgender policy is of concern for many of our young people who feel as if their views and perspectives are not being considered equally.

3.2 Healthcare & Mental Wellbeing:

- Young transgender and non-binary people face long waiting times for counselling and support, as well as an uncertain future for the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS).
- There is a lack of clear communication with regards to the proposed new transgender youth clinic.
- The ban on Puberty Blockers comes with a justification from the Department for Health and Social Care but fails to indicate a substantial means of support in its place.
- NHS care for trans and non-binary young people is especially inaccessible for people living in Dorset, and rural areas more generally, due to its concentration around London.
- There is a disparity between the quality and reliability of care provided by the NHS and private gender-based healthcare providers, creating an inequality between trans and non-binary young people that can afford care, and those who rely on the NHS.
- Lack of government funding for research that is aimed at advancing healthcare support for LGBT+ people.

3.3 Poor Publicity:

- Space Youth Project as an organisation has come under fire for the service it provides, increasingly in recent years.
- This has been from various sources, including both politicians and gender critical activist groups.

- Last year, Space Youth Project had to withdraw from Twitter (now X) out of concern for the wellbeing of our social media team having to constantly receive and remove abuse from the comments sections of posts on the platform including hateful and untrue slurs against our team.

4) Why MPs Must Act

- Our young people feel as if the challenges they face are often overlooked and ignored, when it is clear that solutions are needed to many of these problems.
- For too long, the issue of mental well-being for young people – especially LGBT+ young people – hasn't been considered a priority. Local MPs have the power and influence necessary to change this.
- Following the general election, Dorset's MPs are predominantly from much more progressive backgrounds meaning we have a much greater opportunity to engage with them to make meaningful change which will impact the lives of our young people.
- MPs can influence decisions made in terms of funding allocation for research into trans and non-binary identities and healthcare.
- Discontent with politics in the UK is growing amongst the younger generations, largely as a result of young people feeling ignored and their issues dismissed.
- Much more in recent years, LGBT+ young people have been scapegoated and used to score political points by our elected officials. This is unacceptable, and it is the responsibility of other elected officials such as MPs to elevate our voices as opposed to leaving young people more disenfranchised.

5) What We Need From You

- We need you to lobby for greater funding to be put into researching transgender and non-binary identities to improve the existing state of healthcare provision for us.
- We need you to advocate for the availability and accessibility of mental health support for young people to be improved, as well as the quality of care that it provides.
- We need cross-party support to aim to meet a consensus, free from culture wars. MPs should exist to legislate and represent their constituents, not use minority groups within their constituency as political pawns.
- We need our local MPs within Dorset and beyond to stop using us to score political points and strive to make real progress.
- We want our local MPs to feel encouraged to come to our groups and events, to meet the young people and to gauge an understanding of our experiences first hand, as well as of the work of the organisation, so that you can make decisions that don't just benefit those of a majority but rather engaging with minorities too.

References

(1) Just Like Us (2021) *Growing Up LGBT+* Available at: <https://justlikeus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Just-Like-Us-2021-report-Growing-Up-LGBT.pdf>

(2) Home Office (2018) 'Hate Crime, England and Wales' 2017/18. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bc5b1feed915d0ada79f3fa/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018.pdf>

Acknowledgements

'Representing Us: What LGBT+ Youth Need from their Elected Politicians' was produced and contributed to by Space Youth Project young people.

Document authored and formatted by Sacha Staal, Chair of the Space Youth Project peer leadership committee 'Supernovas'.

Testimonies and feedback taken from Space Youth Project young people within our groups by members of the Supernovas team.

Testimonies and feedback also taken from parents of young people through Space Youth Project family days.

Reviewed and edited by Space Youth Project leadership.