

WONDERING ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY AND /OR GENDER?

Information and sources to help at Abertay University from LGBTQ+ Society, Students' Association and Counselling Service

PRIDE MARCH

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We live in a hetero and cis-normative society – cisgender describes a person with the same gender identity as was assigned to them at birth. So having a sexual orientation and/or gender identity that differs from the mainstream can be difficult. You may not have had many opportunities to talk to others about how you feel about this.

It is not just about coming out; it is also about ‘what then?’ Everyday kinds of issues that we all have to deal with can be made more complicated by being LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer +). We want you to know that you are not alone during this time. There are resources available in the form of other students, student services and your union. Mostly, it is important for you to know that it is okay to be part of the LGBTQ+ community.





WORTH THINKING ABOUT



Coming Out

The process of telling others about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity is often called ‘coming out’. Coming out is not necessarily a one-off event; LGBTQ+ people may have to come out many times during their lives. Someone may change their identity as they learn more about different definitions under the LGBTQ+ umbrella.

There is no one prescribed way to come out. It is a very personal process and needs to happen on an individual’s own terms. Some people never feel fully ready to come out, while others are ready to accept their identity very quickly. Others may feel comfortable being open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity with some people but not with others. This does not invalidate any part of your LGBTQ+ identity.

Coming out to certain people such as family, friends or colleagues may be challenging. It may help you to talk to someone who has gone through the process. They may be able to relate what it really means to be LGBTQ+ in today’s society. They may identify with some people but not with others. This does not invalidate any part of your LGBTQ+ identity.

Support with Coming Out

The [lgbt.foundation/comingout](https://www.lgbt.foundation/comingout) website has coming out stories from people of all ages and backgrounds. If you are considering coming out it might be helpful to look at the website to read about other peoples’ experiences.

They have a helpline which offers support and advice on a range of topics: **0345 3303 030**.

Why Come Out?

Whether or not you have come to terms with your sexual orientation and/or gender identity, it can be difficult dealing with that on your own. You may get to a point where you need to talk about it with someone. Do not feel under pressure to come out - take your time. Only you will know when you feel comfortable and ready to do it.

You may be surprised by how positive the experience of coming out can be. Very few people regret coming out even if it is difficult at the time. Often, they feel a weight removed even if they are only out to certain people. The strain of being 'in the closet' can be stressful to many people. It can cause them to withdraw from friends and family, leaving them feeling alone with their fears. This strain can result in mental health difficulties for some LGBTQ+ people.

If you decide to come out but are unsure how others might react, you could consider making contact with a support group first. There are helplines, community groups and agencies that are there to support and advise you. See below for more details. It could also be good to start by telling one or two trusted friends before coming out to other people.

If you do come out and get a negative reaction, do not despair. Talk to someone for more support. Abertay and Dundee Universities have thriving LGBTQ+ communities. You may be surprised just how many of your course mates or friends are going through a similar process. Try reaching out; it is very likely that there is at least one.





DIFFICULTIES WITH BEING LGBTQ+



Not everything is easy once you have come out. Some people believe that your sexual orientation and/or gender identity is wrong. Sometimes this comes from having grown up with certain attitudes. Other times, they are simply ignorant to what it means to be anything other than heterosexual and cisgender. Some of these people simply need to be educated. However, others will take a more aggressive stance and use slurs and sometimes threats.

These behaviours are homophobia and transphobia. However, it is wrong and you should be aware of this. If you receive homophobic or transphobic comments, it is advisable to report it. Often these are lone individuals who will desist without support from others.

If you encounter this behaviour in the early stages of questioning your identity, it is important to know that people may not realise that you are LGBTQ+. “That’s so gay” is an everyday saying. However, this does not mean that everyone is homophobic or that coming out to a friend who has used this term will end badly. Most people are supportive or simply accept LGBTQ+ people as part of society. The downside is that some homophobic people do exist.

One issue facing the LGBTQ+ community is its portrayal in society. LGBTQ+ people lack representation in politics, positions of influence and mainstream media. This is an influential factor in LGBTQ+ people’s image as being abnormal, feeding homophobic and transphobic attitudes.



WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA



Homophobia is the irrational hatred, intolerance, and/or fear of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Transphobia is this same hatred, intolerance and/or fear of transgender people.

LGBTQ+ people brought up in a homo/transphobic society can often internalise these negative stereotypes. As a result, they can develop varying degrees of low self-esteem and self-hatred, often described as ‘internalised homophobia/transphobia’.

Stonewall’s The School Report 2012 asked young people about their experiences at school and their current mental health. It found that more than half of LGBTQ+ young people experience homophobic/transphobic bullying in Britain’s schools.

This kind of bullying can increase the risk of depression, anxiety and self-harming behaviour. Remember, this bullying is not your fault and should not be tolerated. If you encounter it, do not feel that you have done something wrong by simply being yourself. **Report it.**

MENTAL HEALTH



There is evidence that LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and/or suicidal thoughts than the population in general. For young LGBTQ+ people who have experienced homophobic/transphobic bullying, levels of suicidal thoughts and depression are far higher than amongst those who have not. This is not something we condone, and not something you have to suffer through alone.



TRANSGENDER ISSUES

People often mistake transgender people as being solely a group of people who wish to transition from one gender to another. For instance, someone who is born male that transitions – using hormone treatment and surgery – to become female. However, this is a narrow definition of what is a diverse group.

Trans is an umbrella term to mean any person whose gender identity is not consistently the same as the one assigned to them at birth. This includes those transitioning fully or partly from male to female (trans women) and vice versa (trans men). However, it also includes those who are a-gender (do not have a gender identity), gender fluid (fluctuate between identifying with two or more genders) and non-binary/gender queer (identify as a gender that is outside of the binary spectrum of male/female).

While discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is a criminal offence, discrimination on the grounds of gender identity has yet to receive the same legal status. As such, transgender people are a marginalised group in society. Individuals wishing to transition in the UK are unable to do so until age 18 without parental consent. Stigmatising attitudes as to whether transgender identity is the result of mental health problems also pervade.

Transgender people can experience much of the prejudice that LGB people can, with perhaps less public recognition and support. Factored into this is that a person's sexual orientation can change as their gender identity does. For instance, a straight man may transition and become a homosexual trans woman.



NEED SOME MORE SUPPORT?

Listed on the following pages are a number of resources you may find helpful. Please also be aware of our on-campus help services.

The Facebook page for Abertay's LGBTQ+ society – for meeting others who are LGBTQ+ or simply questioning their identity – is accessible at the URL [@abertaylgbt](#). There is an option to join the secure members' page for additional support.

The LGBTQ+ society offers a befriending scheme that matches you with a student mentor to talk through any concerns you may have. They can introduce you to others within the society or around campus to help integrate you into the LGBTQ+ community.

Abertay also has a number of openly LGBTQ+ lecturers if you need advice that is more senior.

The Counselling & Mental Health Service operates all year for those students experiencing emotional or psychological distress due to issues around being LGBTQ+. Of course, LGBTQ+ students face the same challenges that all students experience. You will find that the counsellors will support you with whatever your concerns are.

The University offers the peer-to peer (P2P) scheme for those students who may require additional support in general. You can request support from the scheme by emailing P2P@abertay.ac.uk

BiScotland

Support and social network for people who are bisexual or questioning their sexual identity. BiScotland holds monthly meetings and social events in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Tel: 0796 396 0321 | **Web:** biscotland.org | **Email:** info@biscotland.org

Equality Network Scotland

The Equality Network campaigns in Scotland for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. They seek to work at national level with the Scottish parliament and national bodies, but they also work with local LGBTQ+ communities and individuals.

Postal Address: 30 Bernard Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6PR

Tel: 07020 933 952 | **Email:** en@equality-network.org

Web: quality-network.org

Gay Outdoor Club

GOC consists of about 40 groups which are either geographically based or specialise in a type of activity (e.g. climbing), and all events are organised through one of those groups. Please visit their website for more information and event schedule.

Postal Address: BM GOC, London, WC1N 3XX

Tel: 08448 700462 | **Email:** info@goc.org.uk | **Web:** goc.org.uk

Glasgow Woman's Library

Library service specifically for women offering a range of reading materials, including the Lesbian Archive.

Postal Address: 15 Berkeley Street, Glasgow, G3 7BW

Tel: 0141 552 8345 | **Email:** info@womenslibrary.org.uk

Web: womenslibrary.org.uk

MindOut

MindOut is a mental health service run by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) people.

Web: mindout.org.uk | **Instagram:** [instagram.com/mindoutlgbtq](https://www.instagram.com/mindoutlgbtq)

LGBT Youth Scotland

LGBT Youth Scotland is the largest youth and community-based organisation for LGBTQ+ people in Scotland. The charity's mission is to empower LGBTQ+ young people so that they are embraced as full members of the Scottish family at home, school and in every community.

Postal Address: 40 Commercial Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6JD

Tel: 0131 555 3940 | **Web:** lgbtyouth.org.uk

Abertay University LGBTQ+ Society

This society offers a network of support for members of the LGBTQ+ community on Campus. It organises weekly meetups and special events; dates for socials are available on its website or Facebook page. school and in every community.

Web: abertay.ac.uk/life/student-support-and-services/lgbt

Facebook: facebook.com/abertaylgbt





Abertay LGBT exists to support LGBT students, their friends and family, and supporters at Abertay University. The Society organises events throughout the year for all its members.



Abertay University, 40 Bell Street, Dundee, DD1 1HP

 uadsa.com

 UADSA

 @ UADSA

Abertay Counselling Service

The Counselling Service is part of Student Services. An appointment can be made either by speaking to one of the reception staff at the Student Enquiry Zone (SEZ) on level 1 of the library building, or by phoning (01382) 308 805.

Alternatively you can email: counselling@abertay.ac.uk
Appointments are scheduled between 9am and 4pm.



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ENQUIRIES:

Student Enquiry Zone (SEZ)

Level 1, The Library Building,
Abertay University,

Bell Street, Dundee DD1 1HG

T: 01382 308805/01382 308833

E: counselling@abertay.ac.uk

EQUALITY STATEMENT:

The University Equality Policy
can be found at:

abertay.ac.uk/about/theuni/diversity