
Queer Families

Support and Advice for LGBTQ families





Introduction

LGBTQ families are everywhere, in all different forms. While some progress has been made for LGBTQ people in Scotland, we know that there are still areas where we are overlooked, ignored or discriminated against. As one of our community members said 'having an LGBTQ family is a wonderful thing, it's just made more difficult than it needs to be.'

Scotland has made positive steps in recent years - it will be the first country to have LGBTQ History on the curriculum in schools, and the NHS' Gender Friendly Nursery initiative was introduced in 2018 to actively work against gender stereotypes for young children.

We started the Queer Families group in Glasgow in 2018 after realising there was a gap for LGBTQ families who wanted to socialise and have friendships with other LGBTQ people, in a child-friendly space. Some felt they had lost their connection to their LGBTQ community as they couldn't attend the same events and groups that they had been part of before they had children. But at the same time, they found that the 'mum and baby' groups that were available were not always LGBTQ friendly, and that even if they were, they were often the only LGBTQ family there.

Queer Families was set up to establish a supportive social space for LGBTQ families, where no-one was 'the odd one out' and people could share their stories, experiences and meet other LGBTQ parents and children.

We want to celebrate LGBTQ families in all their diversity. This booklet will provide advice from parents, their experiences, stories and what they wish they had known.

Hints and Tips

If you're looking to start a family



These tips are for you if you're thinking about starting a family.

We spoke to families who have been through different processes of becoming a family, and asked what they would tell people who are just starting out- here's what they had to say!

- Do your research! There are so many different ways to start a family as an LGBTQ person- look at all the options and speak to people with different experiences.
- Know your rights. Reading up on your rights and becoming familiar with them can help you feel more confident in situations with health professionals and other service providers. We have included some resources on this on the Resource page of this guide.
- Find a support network. Whether it's friends, family, online groups or a local meet up, find people you can talk to and get support from when you need it.
- Get a second opinion- if you're not sure about something a health professional has told you, or you're not sure it applies to you, remember you can always get a second opinion.

- Think about how parental leave will work for you and your family. Don't rely on your employer to tell you - employers should know your rights and their obligations but this certainly is not always the case. Some employers have genuinely never had to consider how to make provision for parental leave and your return to work, especially for LGBTQ parents. Ensure you do some research around your rights and if you can, have a chat with your employer about a plan that will support your parental leave and return to work.
- Be kind to yourself- starting a family can be a long and emotionally tough experience. Don't be too hard on yourself if things aren't going the way you'd envisioned. Remember to make time for yourself to do the things you enjoy and have opportunities to relax.

“Be aware it could take a long time. Research and question what health professionals tell you as it may not always be accurate for your situation.”

- Ali

“Talk to other queer families, don't be afraid to ask questions!”

- Ellen

“Talk to your partner openly about your feelings. For most LGBT people, starting a family is a long process that can be hard on your body and your bank balance. Strong communication with your partner (if you are conceiving with one!) is so important.”

- Sonia

Our story

“My wife carried our first child and it was a really amazing experience. However I found it quite stressful not knowing what my legal rights were as the non-birth parent. I wanted to feel like I was an equal parent too. We got some legal advice and realised there was no ‘one size fits all’ solution- but getting the right advice for our situation helped put my mind at ease so I could enjoy being a new parent.” - **Nayab**

“I’m a trans man and my partner is a trans woman. We were lucky and I was able to get pregnant and carry our child. We had a mostly positive experience- while I did get some strange looks when I was more heavily pregnant, our midwife was great - really supportive and understanding of our situation.

Our little boy is 3 now and it's funny when we do go to parent and baby groups- we have to correct people who assume that Gemma carried our baby. We do enjoy the surprised looks when we tell people it's me who was pregnant- I like playing with people's expectations of what a mum and dad can look like.”

- **Luca**



“As a non-binary person I found being pregnant quite stressful - I wanted to enjoy the experience but I often felt dysphoric and all of the gendered language around pregnancy and 'motherhood' made me feel alienated. I found a facebook group for trans parents and that helped me a lot. My real life friends were great and supportive too - they helped me to focus on the baby's arrival and how joyful that would be.” - **Mo**

“As two gay men we were a bit daunted by the adoption process. We'd heard stories about how if you're gay, it's much harder to be approved for adoption. We were worried about discrimination and offensive questioning from social workers. In reality though, it couldn't have been a more positive process - we felt really supported and encouraged by our social worker - we weren't the first gay couple she'd worked with and was able to reassure us that we would still be good candidates for adoption.” - **Alex & Gregor**



Hints and Tips

For parents

We spoke to LGBTQ parents about their experiences and put together these tips for LGBTQ parents with kids. No matter where you are in your parenting journey, we hope you find these useful.

- Just like coming out, you will probably have to explain your family set-up over again many times in your life. Get a quick explanation down.
- Find a support network- even once you've started your family having a support network is important for your wellbeing. Having other LGBTQ families to talk to can be invaluable.
- Finding an inclusive school or nursery is something that most LGBTQ families worry about. Research the options in your local area- think of questions to ask them about their equality policies and how they educate children about different types of families. Speak to other parents about their experiences if you can.
- Events like 'Mothers Day' or 'Fathers Day' can feel tricky if your child doesn't have a typical father or mother. There will be lots of children in the same position for various reasons - have a chat with the teacher beforehand and suggest that your child can make a card for a grandparent or a friend (or they can just make one for you- there are no rules!)
- A lot of LGBTQ families we spoke to were worried about potential bullying or their child feeling different compared to their peers. Children are generally curious and it's often not negative- talking to your child about how to respond to questions can help you both feel prepared.

- There is no roadmap for parenting, whether you're an LGBTQ family or not. There's no one 'right' way of doing things - do what works for you and don't compare yourself to other families.
- Remember to look after yourself too - being a parent is hard and can feel all consuming. Try to make time for yourself to do the things you like to do and have space to relax.



“We were worried about our wee boy going to school and explaining he has two mums and if he'd get picked on for that. In reality everyone thought it was 'so cool'- mums are great so having two mums is even better! We were surprised at how open and accepting his classmates were” - **Hannah & Alison**

“When we were looking at nurseries we asked about how they supported LGBT families. A lot of them wanted to be supportive but didn't know how- we ended up making a list of children's books centred around LGBT families and gave it to the nursery we went with. They were really receptive and now even do Pride themed activities with the kids.” - **Alex & Gregor**

“Having a good relationship with the teachers at the school was really important. My son's dad wasn't happy that I was now in a relationship with another woman and would try to intervene with any LGBT-friendly classroom activities. Knowing the school had our back helped a lot.” - **Ellen**

We hope that these tips and the stories we have shared have been useful for you. If you have any tips or stories of your own that you'd like to share with us, please get in touch by emailing ciara@otbds.org. We'd love to hear from you.

Glossary

LGBTQI

Refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex people.

Trans/transgender

Someone whose gender identity is different from the one they were given at birth.

Cisgender

Someone who's gender identity is the same as the one they were given at birth.

Non-binary

Someone who doesn't identify within the gender binary of man/woman. Often non binary people will use they/them pronouns but this isn't always the case.

**For more information about Queer Families Glasgow,
you can follow us on instagram @queerfamsglasgow or
contact ciara@otbds.org. You can also visit the Outside the Box
website www.otbds.org, follow @OTBcommunities on Twitter
or call 0141 419 0451**

Outside the Box Development Support Ltd.
Registered Office: The Old Toll,
Harestanes, West Linton, EH46 7AH
Company number 265077 Scottish charity: SC035317

Services + Support

There are many resources and support available for LGBTQ families.

The Donor Conception Network (<https://www.dcnetwork.org>)

The Donor Conception Network provides support and advice for people using donor conception to start their families. They have specific advice and resources for LGBTQ families.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing (<https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk>)

LGBT Health and Wellbeing provide a wide range of services and support for LGBTQ people, including a Rainbow Families group.

One Parent Families Scotland (<https://opfs.org.uk>)

One Parent Families Scotland offer support and advice for single parent families in Scotland, as well as campaigning on a range of issues.

Scottish Trans Alliance (<https://www.scottishtrans.org>)

The Scottish Trans Alliance provides a range of information and support for trans people in Scotland.

Equality Network (<https://www.equality-network.org>)

The Equality Network is an LGBTQI organisation campaigning for LGBTQI rights. They have specific information on parenting and your rights.

Scottish Adoption (<https://www.scottishadoption.org>)

Scottish Adoption provides support and adoption services in Scotland. They provide specific information and support for LGBTQ families.

Stonewall Scotland (<https://www.stonewallscotland.org.uk>)

Stonewall Scotland are an LGBTQ charity offering support and resources across a range of issues. They have a good range of legal information and support on parenting rights for LGBTQ families.

Mermaids (<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk>)

Mermaids is a UK wide charity supporting trans and gender-diverse young people and their families.

LGBT Youth Scotland (<http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk>)

LGBT Youth offer support and services for young LGBT people and their families.