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# Queer Families

Hints and Tips for Services  
working with LGBTQ families.

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# Introduction

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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.

Speaking to LGBTQ families, one of the main issues that came up was the discrimination they faced when accessing services. From healthcare, to schools and nurseries, to ante-natal groups- many of our families experienced ignorant comments and exclusion. We asked them what they would like services to know and what would help them feel more confident accessing services..

We hope that this resource will help to inform services responses to LGBTQ families, so that they can provide inclusive support for everyone.

## Here is what LGBTQ families told us about their experiences accessing services.

“The big gap I've found is in hospitals - both maternity/post-natal care, and when the doctor was taking a family medical history for my daughter in A&E - they were completely taken aback by me giving her sperm donor's medical history.” - **Kira**

“They shouldn't automatically gender parents or children. I wish they would understand that not everyone is cisgender and heterosexual.” - **Mo**



“I would just like more acceptance! Ask for details only when necessary, don't make assumptions (e.g. during smear tests and postnatal examinations) that all women have heterosexual relationships.” - **Jenny**

“Remember that you don't know whether a single parent is straight or not - my partner had a teacher say that there were 'no families like that' in their school and therefore they didn't need to teach the kids about different types of families...” - **Nayab**

“Not all LGBT families are easily identifiable as two mums or two dads- trans and non binary parents exist- don't assume and remember it's okay to ask for pronouns!” - **Ryan**

“Diversity training in terms of language to use is important, especially when describing the non-bio parent.” - **Mo**

“During my maternity and post-natal care, no health professional mentioned sex to me (e.g. how long to wait before having sex after giving birth, after a c-section, etc). It was like they were all too scared so they just skipped it out!” - **Kira**



“We won't bite your head off if you ask us a question- as long as you are respectful we don't mind! We'd rather you asked and knew the answer than skirting around the issue.” - Alex

“Look at any forms you ask families to fill out- are there options for LGBTQ families?” - Elena

“The info from the NHS re conception options wasn't very clear, we were given different info by different members of staff about whether we were eligible for support to conceive another child. There is also hardly any info about miscarriage and stillbirth aimed at queer families - the main info out there is someones personal blog.” - Luca

“We exist far more commonly than you think.” - Matthew

## Tips and advice for supporting LGBTQ families

- Don't assume - you can't tell who is and isn't LGBTQ just by looking at them - don't automatically assume everyone you meet is straight or cisgender.
- **Use gender neutral language. An easy way to be more inclusive is to not use gendered language. Some examples can be saying 'hello everyone' instead of 'hello boys and girls', and referring to 'parents' rather than 'mums and dads'.**
- Don't wait for an LGBTQ family to come along before you introduce LGBTQ friendly policies- if you're openly LGBTQ friendly people will feel more comfortable coming out to you.
- **Include pictures of different kinds of families in any promotional material or resources you have. Consider having rainbow flags in your space and flyers/information about LGBTQ organisations available.**

- If you're a nursery or school, include LGBTQ friendly childrens books in your library. Think about celebrating Pride with some fun activities.
- Remember that all family structures can look different. Events like 'Mothers Day' or 'Fathers Day' can feel tricky if a child doesn't have a typical father or mother. There will be lots of children in the same position for various reasons- have a range of options available to include everyone in activities.
- Treat everyone as individuals! LGBTQ people are diverse and have different experiences and preferences. Talk to them and find out how they like to be referred to and what needs they would like you to consider.



- Do your research- sometimes health or legal information is different for LGBTQ people. Do your research and make sure you are giving the right information.
- If you're not sure about the right language or terms to use, just ask. As long as you are polite and respectful, people will be happy to give you the information.
- Think about using gender neutral pronouns- don't assume someone's gender or their partners gender. Using gender neutral pronouns like 'they/them' instead of 'he/him' or 'she/her' can be a more inclusive way of referring to people.

We hope that the stories we have shared and the tips in this resource have been helpful to you. If you would like more information or to find out more about Queer Families, please get in touch at [ciara@otbds.org](mailto: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 who's 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](https://www.instagram.com/queerfamsglasgow) or contact [ciara@otbds.org](mailto:ciara@otbds.org).**

**You can also visit the Outside the Box website [www.otbds.org](http://www.otbds.org), follow [@OTBcommunities](https://twitter.com/OTBcommunities) on Twitter or call 0141 419 0451**

## Resources

### **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.

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