

Early mental health intervention and supported self-care for LGBTQ+ young people in the UK: a mixed-methods study

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people are more likely to suffer from depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and poor mental health than cisgendered heterosexual young people. We also know that despite having more mental health problems, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people are reluctant to seek help from mental health services, and when they do, they often find health services unhelpful. There is very little research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people and mental health services and as a result, we do not understand their mental health support needs.

The aim of our study was to produce research that will improve the provision of mental health early intervention services and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people in the United Kingdom. Our research study had three stages. First, we searched for, and examined, all the international research on mental health services and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people. Second, we searched for and located mental health early intervention support services in United Kingdom that were aimed at, or had developed their service for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people. Third, we chose 12 of the services we found and asked lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people, their family/carers, and staff from these services about what works and what does not in improving lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people's mental health support.

The study found that a youth-rights approach should underpin the delivery of mental health support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people to address the multiple marginalisation, isolation, and stigmatisation that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people may experience. This enables them to make informed independent decisions about their own bodies and lives, and for the right to freedom of safe self-expression to be upheld. We produced a model of 13 principles that can guide mental health support. This provides the means to improving access to, navigation of, and engagement with mental health support, to improve lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, plus young people's mental health.

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