



LGBT+ Guide for Parents and Carers

How *all* families can be more inclusive
and supportive



2025

"This is the guide I wish had existed when I came out to my mum." – **Rohan** (he/him), 21, trans and bisexual

"Being an ally starts at home. I want my kids to grow up in a world where they feel safe, loved, accepted for exactly who they are, knowing that love is love, and that standing up for others matters." – **Jessie Ware** (she/her), artist and parent



We all love our children and that love is only enhanced when we are able to understand them more and that is why **the work of Just Like Us is so vital.** Read the guide, give them a hug, be available to them and trust me, they will make your life more colourful and it will all turn out OK in the end." – **John Bishop** (he/him), comedian and parent

"This guide is incredibly useful and vital to help parents support their LGBT+ children. I love that it's deliberately wide in its scope when it comes to different ways of parenting and different kinds of families. There is no one size fits all, only your way and this guide helps parents to find their way." – **Annie Mac** (she/her), DJ and parent



"As parents you want the best for your children - you want them to feel safe, be confident, and thrive. Any home can welcome in a member of the LGBTQ+ community. There should be no shame in parents not understanding or knowing how best to support their LGBTQ+ children and their straight children to be allies - only shame in parents who don't endeavour to protect, nurture, and celebrate their LGBTQ+ children. **Just Like Us is doing the incredible work of offering our parents' generation an education that wasn't available to them when they were young.**" – **Jonathan Bailey** (he/him), actor and patron of Just Like Us

"I encourage all families to read Just Like Us' LGBT+ Guide for Parents and Carers. **It's so vital that talking about LGBT+ people doesn't become a taboo topic at home, and this guide helps lead the way.**" – **Sandi Toksvig** (she/her), broadcaster, comedian and parent



"As an LGBT+, disabled parent myself, **this guide is invaluable and shows that LGBT+ people come from all walks of life.** All parents can and should lead the way in teaching their children to be allies to the LGBT+ community and this guide shows you how." – **Lauren Rowles** (she/her), Paralympian and patron of Just Like Us

"An incredibly useful guide and resource for ALL parents. I know I'll definitely be coming back to the books and TV recommendations!" – **Hannah Witton** (she/her), parent and content creator



The cover features Christina, a parent, and Isaac, a Just Like Us ambassador. They are not related but are both individuals who have helped contribute to better LGBT+ representation for young people.

The production of this guide has been made possible with the kind support of **The George Michael Fund**, managed by The Talent Fund. We are extremely grateful for their support.

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Foreword

Whether or not your child is LGBT+, or they don't know yet, this guide is for *everyone*. Together, we can show the next generation that there is no shame in being LGBT+.

Many straight parents want to be allies but aren't sure where to begin, and that's OK. We most likely didn't learn about LGBT+ topics in school nor had these conversations at home before.

One LGBT+ young person we've worked with pointed out: "You have to accept the fact you don't know everything, which I know can be hard, in order to learn more. Sometimes the best thing you can do is just hold your hands up and admit you don't understand something, then there is genuine conversation to build on."

Just by reading this guide, you're already doing an amazing thing. Your allyship will help other children growing up in LGBT+ families - perhaps your child has a friend at nursery or school with two mums, like my family.

As a parent myself, I know so many of us really want to do the best for our children and make sure they grow up knowing how incredible and loved they are. Many LGBT+ young people struggle, even in families where parents aren't homophobic, because sometimes there's just a lack of knowledge of how to approach this topic.

I hope this guide helps you feel empowered to open up conversations at home and be proud allies to the LGBT+ community.

**Amy Ashenden,
Director of Comms and
Engagement at Just Like Us**



A note from our CEO

A third of British parents have never spoken to their child about what LGBT+ means, and dads are even less likely to do so. By reading this guide, you're already helping to change this.

Every parent has an important role to play. You can help your children, their schools and your community become more aware of the harmful effects of discrimination; more inclusive and more confident to stand up for vulnerable young people. I hope this guide will help you on that journey. Please do recommend it to your peers, parent networks and local schools.

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**Laura Mackay, CEO at
Just Like Us**



About Just Like Us

Just Like Us is the LGBT+ young people's charity.

Growing up LGBT+ is still unacceptably tough.

We work right across the UK with schools and young people to change this.

Our aim is to ensure all young people know that being LGBT+ is something to be celebrated.

As a charity we rely on donations to fund our valuable work. Please scan the QR code below or [visit our website to make a donation.](#) Thank you.

Donate now:



Just Like Us is a UK Registered Charity CIO 1165194

www.justlikeus.org
[@JustLikeUsUK](https://www.instagram.com/JustLikeUsUK)

We run several programmes empowering LGBT+ young people to thrive:

- [School Diversity Week](#) - the national annual celebration of LGBT+ equality in primary and secondary schools
- [Pride Groups](#) - we support secondary schools to set up/run lunchtime or after school clubs for pupils to learn about LGBT+ topics, work together to make their school more inclusive and socialise in a safe place
- [Teacher training](#) and [resources](#) - we support teachers to make their schools more inclusive
- [School talks](#) - we bring positive representation to secondary schools by training LGBT+ young adults to share their lived experiences in talks, inspiring pupils to be allies to their peers
- [Ambassador Programme](#) - we support LGBT+ young people aged 18-25 to gain skills, use their voice and find community through opportunities such as career mentoring, skills workshops and training to speak in schools

Introduction

This guide is for *all* parents and carers to read. Everyone can and should be an LGBT+ ally, and this guide will help you in that journey.

LGBT+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (or trans, for short). The plus symbol represents other, perhaps lesser known, identities within the LGBT+ community such as non-binary, intersex and asexual people. You might sometimes see LGBT+ written as LGBT, LGBTQIA or LGBTQ; while they're all valid abbreviations, we use LGBT+ for this guide.



Find more definitions at the end of this guide

When we refer to parents in this guide, we include carers and wider family members in this too. Additionally, when we say children, we mean any child or young person aged 0-25.

We have created this guide because we know - from both our research and first-hand work with LGBT+ young people - that family breakdown and lack of closeness is much more common in families with LGBT+ children. Sadly, while laws have progressed and acceptance is largely more common, many issues and challenges remain for young people coming out in families with straight parents.

Despite the majority of straight parents considering themselves to be supportive of LGBT+ people, a third (31%) of LGBT+ young people are still not confident that their parents will accept them. In addition, many children grow up without learning about allyship as part of their family life, something that would empower all young people to navigate the diversity of the world around them, and help prevent bullying in schools and beyond.

Many parents want to be allies but are unsure how to go about this. As a result, an emotional gap can widen between LGBT+ young people and their parents as they feel a lack of support and that their families do not understand who they are. At the more extreme end, family estrangement can manifest; this is experienced by 46% of LGBT+ young adults who are estranged from at least one family member.

This guide is about bringing families together. It is a launch point to help you better understand how to create a family environment that is inclusive and openly accepting of LGBT+ people, therefore ensuring all of our children can thrive.

Laura, 20, says: "The importance of family support when growing up LGBT+ really cannot be overstated."

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for all parents and carers who want to be allies. **It is designed for everyone, and especially for those who aren't part of the LGBT community.** Wider family members may find it useful too.

At Just Like Us, we want to help parents better understand how to be LGBT+ allies to their children, whether or not they grow up to be LGBT+. Every parent can play a vital role in ensuring that the next generation grows up knowing that being LGBT+ is nothing to be ashamed of, and subsequently help to reduce future rates of anti-LGBT+ bullying in schools and workplaces; something that remains prevalent today.

Regardless of whether your child or young person is LGBT+ or not, this guide can help you empower them to be LGBT+ allies too. They may encounter homophobic language in school, they may have LGBT+ friends, or one day work with LGBT+ colleagues. By reading this guide, you can learn how to support them to navigate and celebrate a diverse and inclusive world.

If you have a child who you think might be LGBT+, or who has already come out to you, there are also resources in this guide on how to navigate the coming out process and beyond, as a family.



What does this guide cover?

This guide should be considered a way to jumpstart your journey as an LGBT+ ally. It covers the importance of having positive and open conversations about LGBT+ issues and why these should take place from an early age, how parents can foster family closeness with their LGBT+ young people, navigating school bullying and what to do if your child comes out, as well as signposting to further support and resources for parents.

It has been created by Just Like Us, the LGBT+ young people's charity, following consultation with more than 100 parents and LGBT+ young people who shared their experiences with Just Like Us. The guide reflects common scenarios faced by parents and children alike. Just Like Us also worked with [Switchboard](#) who kindly shared the common queries they receive from both straight parents and LGBT+ young people experiencing family difficulties and break down in relation to a lack of acceptance or understanding.

The guide's content has a strong evidence base, referencing independent research commissioned by Just Like Us on family life for LGBT+ young people, including our [Positive Futures](#) and [Growing up LGBT+](#) reports.

However, this guide should be considered a starting point for your journey to becoming an LGBT+ ally, rather than an end point.

Don't miss the resources at the end of this guide, too

Top tips for being an ally

We know parents are busy people! While we'd love you to read this whole guide and enjoy the resources in our directory at the end, we hope these top tips provide some quick insight.

Five tips for *all* parents

1) Talk openly about LGBT+ topics

Start conversations from a young age, with inclusive books for example, and be vocal about your support for the LGBT+ community. LGBT+ people exist - don't be afraid to talk about this!

2) Let your child know you're an ally

Talk about how it's OK to be LGBT+, that it's accepted in your family, and that you don't use 'gay' as an insult, for example.

3) Don't assume your child will be straight and cisgender

There's no one way to be LGBT+ so keep an open mind and don't make assumptions. And you should still be an ally even if your child isn't LGBT+!

4) Learn about the LGBT+ community

Podcasts, books, blogs, documentaries... The options are endless! Learn about the wider LGBT+ community too, not just gay men.

5) Encourage your child's school to be inclusive

Tell your child's teachers that you support your child learning about different kinds of families and the diversity of the world around them.

Five tips for parents of LGBT+ children

1) Tell your child you're proud of them

It takes a lot of courage to come out as LGBT+ in a world that is often unaccepting - be regularly vocal of your love and pride.

2) Acknowledge who they are

Make sure you keep an open dialogue beyond their coming out moment and acknowledge this part of them they've shared with you.

3) Ask what support they need

Every child and family is different - ask them what support *they* need, including how they may or may not be ready to come out to wider family members.

4) Be your child's best ally

Show an interest in LGBT+ topics, offer to go to Pride together, be curious and a great listener. Own your mistakes but remember trying is more important than perfection!

5) Get your own support, too

Parents need support too! Switchboard, Pink Therapy, Naz and Matt Foundation and FFLAG are great resources - find more in our directory.



Having open conversations at home

If you take away just one thing from this guide, we'd like it to be this:

having positive, open conversations about LGBT+ topics with your child from an early age is vital to creating a supportive and accepting family environment where children grow up knowing that it's OK to be LGBT+ and that it's important to be an ally.

Without these conversations, the onus is on the child to begin the dialogue - a huge burden and responsibility for a young person who may fear rejection or discrimination when bringing up the topic for the first time with their parents.

Where there is silence, there is shame. If LGBT+ young people don't hear from their parents that it's OK to be LGBT+ consistently throughout their childhood, they will likely internalise being LGBT+ as something shameful. So it's really important that parents make sure there is open communication about LGBT+ people from the start. You can start embedding these conversations into your family life no matter the age of your child and the next section of this guide explains how.

Talking openly, in an age appropriate way, about the LGBT+ community with children is vital to ensuring they don't grow up worrying they won't be accepted.

When an LGBT+ young person doesn't grow up in a supportive environment where positive, open conversations take place, they are four times more likely to become adults who feel ashamed of who they are (41% vs 9%), more than twice as likely to experience panic attacks (60% vs 28%) and nearly twice as likely to have depression (82% vs 42%).

Conversely, talking with your child about LGBT+ topics - such as why you're an ally, or how some people have two dads - has an enormously positive impact on all young people. In schools where these positive conversations take place, research has shown that children are less likely to suffer from mental health problems (whether or not they're LGBT+).

Talking with your child about LGBT+ topics will show them that being LGBT+ is an ordinary part of life. It will show them that everyone can and should be an ally, and that you would love, accept and support them if they were to realise they are LGBT+ themselves - rather than struggling alone.

Matty, 21, says: Please normalise talking about LGBT+ issues even if you feel like 'it's not my place'.

Imi, a 25-year-old lesbian, added: "My parents would never talk negatively about LGBT+ people, and whenever I raised them, they would speak positively. But I did often have to raise it myself, and I think it would have been beneficial to hear about LGBT+ topics frequently and casually so it felt very natural. **I was terrified to let my family know, and didn't come out until I was 19. This was despite knowing they were generally accepting people and would likely react positively or neutrally, but if you always have to bring up the topic yourself, then there is a huge amount of fear of the chance that they may react badly.**"

Matty, 21, told us: "Despite my parents having a relaxed attitude towards anything LGBT+, it was never anything explicitly spoken about. We had family friends that were an openly gay couple, but that was about it - we didn't have open conversations about LGBT+ topics. The impact it had on me was having to find everything out about myself on the internet and not feeling confident or comfortable to come out. Please normalise talking about LGBT+ issues even if you feel like 'it's not my place'."

A third of British parents have never spoken to their child about what LGBT+ means and 10% say they never would. **Dads are less likely than mums to have had a conversation with their child about what LGBT+ means.** We really hope this guide can help change this for you and your family.

Ashton, 22, says: "My family didn't ever discuss LGBT+ people - I think if they did, I may have felt like it was easier to come out earlier."



Feeling nervous or worried?

It's really understandable to feel nervous, unsure, uncomfortable or worried about starting up conversations on LGBT+ topics with your child. Historically, this is not something many families have done and many parents today grew up with silence around LGBT+ topics due to legislation such as Section 28, which prevented discussion on LGBT+ people in schools. It was repealed just over 20 years ago but has had a long-lasting impact.

When we consulted parents for this guide, some said they hadn't spoken with their children about LGBT+ topics yet, even if they wanted to. **Below are some of the reasons parents gave that had held them back, alongside responses from LGBT+ young people:**

My fear: "I don't want to gossip about others by talking about who is LGBT+"

'If another child's parents are visibly out, like at the school gates, then that's OK to talk about it. It's just as normal as talking about another child's mum and dad' - Ruth

'It's a good idea to chat to your child about how everyone has different families. It's better to be up front so you teach your child that some people have same-sex parents, and you'll be helping your child's friend by encouraging acceptance too.' - Rohan

'Being straight is so assumed, and it's not insulting if you accidentally assume someone is gay or LGBT+. Obviously best not to gossip but remember being LGBT+ is not a negative thing.' - Jenna

My fear: "I'm worried about saying the wrong thing"

'I'm not looking for political correctness from my family - if they say the wrong word, I'm not going to judge their entire character. Them trying to talk about these topics is the most important thing. You can also preface what you say with 'I might not word this right but I'm trying'.' - Rush

'Even a parent admitting to a child that they don't know everything and they want to learn more and being OK with being corrected is an amazing thing to show a child. It's great role modelling! It might feel vulnerable but that's such an empowering thing to show your child and a great skill for them to learn.' - Rohan

My fear: "It's just never come up"

'It might feel quite contrived for a parent to bring up this topic and the first time you chat about it, it might feel a bit forced but it's not likely to feel such a big deal to your child. Plus, if they turn out to be LGBT+, they'll be so grateful you did talk about this with them.' - Ruth

'It's such a big topic - LGBT+ people are everywhere, we're in the news, on TV shows, in films, within our local community. I think reflect on that and make sure you're not avoiding it.' - Rush

'Even if everyone in your general life is straight and cisgender, it's kind of on you as a parent to find a way to bring this topic up so your children know it's OK to be LGBT+. This can be so easily rectified! Talk about TV shows, books, diverse families, and so on' - Rohan

My fear: "I was worried it's not age appropriate"

'When I was younger, I used to love the Disney Princess stories and every story is so heterosexual with a princess and a prince. So if you can show that to a 5 year old, why can't they see a princess who likes a princess?' - Jenna

'Being LGBT+ is not a sexual topic. Some people have two mums, that is completely age appropriate for a child to hear.' - Rush

'Most things you talk about with your child, you're going to filter to make it appropriate for them to understand - this topic is exactly the same! You can tell a child about how someone they know or a TV character is trans, without talking about surgery or medical transition. It's not a reason to never talk about LGBT+ topics.' - Rohan

In order for us to break the cycle of young people growing up feeling that being straight and cisgender (i.e. not trans - see our definitions list towards the end of this guide to learn more about terminology) is the 'default' and that being LGBT+ is 'less than', it's vital to have open conversations at home that show this isn't the case.

Demonstrate to your child that you are a safe, supportive person they can speak to if they ever need.

By taking the initiative to speak about LGBT+ topics with your child, you'll also become a positive role model for being an ally. You'll show your child that you're happy to talk about the topic and stand up for others, inspiring them to be allies to their peers too.

Bringing your partner and/or wider family on the journey

To make sure acceptance becomes a family-wide attitude, we really recommend talking about this with your partner, if you have one, and wider family members. Sadly, dads are less likely than mums to have had a conversation with their child about what LGBT+ means. Four in 10 dads (38%) have never spoken to their child about LGBT+ topics, compared to three in 10 mums (28%).

If challenging homophobia, for example, is difficult with others in the family, try to approach this from a family values perspective. For example, if as a couple you have always hoped to create a family where your children are happy and healthy, then think about what 'happy and healthy' looks like for a child who may grow up to be LGBT+ in your home.

What is age appropriate?

Firstly, knowing that LGBT+ people exist and talking about this is always age appropriate. A child is never too young to know that some of their peers have two mums, for example.

Unfortunately, when some people hear about the LGBT+ community their mind immediately goes to sex and dating, but being LGBT+ is about so much more than this and that's not a conversation anyone expects you to have with a young child.

Instead, talk to your child about diverse families. Explaining that some people grow up with lesbian mums or gay dads, or that a friend uses they/them pronouns because they're non-binary, is educational. It's age appropriate and it's teaching young people about the diversity of the world around them.

Every family and every child is different - some might be more curious and have more questions at a younger age than others. You will know your child best and when is the best moment for them to learn about certain topics, such as talking about sex. But when you do, make sure you include LGBT+ people and relationships in those conversations too.

It is worth considering that young people will likely already be aware of LGBT+ people from an early age - this could be from the media, their school playground, or a person they've met in your wider social circle. However, when young people learn about the LGBT+ community from outside the family, there is a risk that they will hear unchallenged homophobic or transphobic comments before they have the opportunity for open, positive conversations about the topic at home.

As Rush, 22, explains: "They're going to hear and see things in the news and will be interested in what's happening, it could be a chance to open up to each other about what's going on."

Our research has also found that LGBT+ young adults say, on average, that they had figured out they were LGBT+ by age 14. Coming to that realisation often takes several years too, so it's really important that young people have a safe, open dialogue about LGBT+ topics at home.

How do I start the conversation?

Starting the conversation will look different depending on the age of your child.

While it may feel daunting, it's likely even more daunting for your child to bring up the topic with you. As Sky, a non-binary young person we work with, explained: **"My parents didn't talk about it at all so it made it terrifying whenever I brought the topic up as I had no idea how they were going to react."**

Once you start these conversations, you may find your child is keen to learn more about particular topics or identities (e.g. a historical LGBT+ figure, or how LGBT+ people can start a family). **You won't have all the answers, so consider this an opportunity to learn together as a family.** Your leadership in these situations will teach them how to be great allies and that being LGBT+ is something to be celebrated.

In addition, many Pride events around the UK have family areas, and a family day out to Pride can be a great way of incorporating your allyship into family life. Emily, a 23-year-old lesbian, says: **"My parents coming to Pride showed me how much they love and care about me because they put themselves outside of their comfort zone.** They went out of their way to educate themselves and learn about the community. It made it easier to talk about things with them and helped them appreciate all the amazing people in the LGBT+ community."

Emily also found that watching TV shows with LGBT+ characters as a family helped open up conversations at home.

Emily explains: "When I first came out it was only awkward because we never talked about [it]. That has changed over time and now we are way more open as a family. What did help was watching programmes on TV together, like Rosa on *Brooklyn 99* being bisexual and *It's a Sin* as this is easier to discuss than my life itself. Now we talk openly and they're the biggest supporters any LGBT+ kid could ask for."

Jenna, a 24-year-old lesbian, says: "We didn't have these conversations so I found out what a lesbian was through inappropriate Google searches."

By instigating the topic with your child, you'll also show them that you are a safe person for them to talk to about these topics. Plus, they'll learn in a safe and informed way with you.

LGBT+ inclusive books

Having LGBT+ inclusive books at home is an ideal way to usualise being LGBT+ as an ordinary part of life. **Books are a great way for children to learn about the diversity of the world around them, and can help you start conversations about LGBT+ topics in an easy way.**

Sadly, the majority of UK families (67%) don't have any LGBT+ inclusive books at home for their children to read. However, our research found that most parents believe that LGBT+ inclusive children's books, such as those with gay parents included, would be helpful in aiding conversations with their child about LGBT+ topics.



Find examples of LGBT+ inclusive books for different age groups at the end of this guide.

Conversation starters

To help you start these conversations at home, we asked LGBT+ young people to share some ways they appreciated their family members bringing LGBT+ topics into conversation - or ways they wished they had.

Talking with under 5s

"Oh you know your friend Dylan, he's got two dads, isn't that lovely."

"You have a mum and dad who love you very much, some families have two mums or two dads who love them very much!"

"Let's watch Peppa Pig - that's the polar bear who has two mums."

Talking with under 10s

"Has your school been celebrating Pride?"

"Shall we go to Pride together as a family?"

"Do you ever hear 'gay' used as an insult at school? Do you know that we don't use that word negatively in our family? It's OK to be gay, it's not an insult."

Rush, 22, says: "I'd heard the word gay by age 10 so don't worry that this is a new topic for kids, they just might not have heard it in a positive way from you before."



Talking with teens

"Does your school do anything to celebrate Pride?"

"Is there anyone you like?" (Rather than making any assumptions about gender)

"I read in the news that another country has legalised same-sex marriage, I'm so pleased."

"There's a new drama on TV about something huge from LGBT history that I didn't know about it. Shall we watch it?"

"They're going to hear and see things in the news and will be interested in what's happening, it could be a chance to open up to each other about what's going on," explains Rush.

As Jenna explains: "Teenagers now have a lot more access to information online these days, so they might be exploring or questioning things but not know how to bring it up with you. They might not even be LGBT+ but just need a safe space at home to talk and explore their gender expression or how they feel about themselves."

Ruth adds: "When LGBT+ issues are big in the news, don't avoid the topic at home - show that as a family, you are an inclusive household and communicate where you sit on those issues so your children know you're supportive."



Talking with young adults

"I walked past a rainbow flag today in the cafe and it was so nice to see that."

"Hey, look, I know we've never had any kind of conversation about this topic before, and that's on me - I never did growing up. But if you have any questions I'm always here. Would you like to talk about this?"

"Would you like to watch the new series of Queer Eye with me?"

"Are you dating anyone at the moment?"
(Without assuming the person's gender)

What if I make a mistake or I've said the wrong thing?

Firstly, no LGBT+ young person is expecting perfection! **Seeing that you are trying your best to be a proactive ally, that you acknowledge any mistakes and say sorry, will mean much more to them than a parent who ignores or speaks negatively about LGBT+ people.**

Many LGBT+ young people we consulted during the creation of this guide said their parents had made negative, throwaway comments about LGBT+ people that left them feeling isolated and ashamed. However, for those whose parents had acknowledged their mistakes, apologised and made it clear that they believe being LGBT+ is something to be proud of, their relationships strengthened and they felt closer than ever.

Showing a willingness to learn can be incredibly powerful and many LGBT+ young people have told us that this parental approach transformed their relationships with their families.

Erin, 20, told us: "It's OK if it's a process and you don't understand right away, it's about trying and learning." Kai, 24, added: "My dad hasn't necessarily had the means or privilege to learn all the things that I have, so for him to do research, to talk to people, and to really go out of his comfort zone to fully embrace such a big change - I don't know, I can't really put into words how much it means."

Perfection isn't what LGBT+ young people need - they need to see that their parents care enough about them to learn, including from their mistakes.

Rohan, 21, who is trans and bisexual, added: "A few of my friends use they/them pronouns and my mum finds this very difficult to remember and to feel natural, but she is so willing to be corrected and to keep trying. You have to accept the fact you don't know everything, which I know can be hard, in order to learn more. Sometimes the best thing you can do is just hold your hands up and admit you don't understand something, at least then there is a genuine conversation to build on."

It's also important to acknowledge past mistakes. Young people will usually remember any references made to LGBT+ topics, including negative jokes or comments, long after you've forgotten them or moved on.

Libby, who is now 20 and has come out to her family as a lesbian, told us: "I remember vividly when gay marriage was legalised. I was 8. My dad told me he was against gay marriage and that it shouldn't have happened. That conversation is burned into my memory, I don't think I'll ever forget it."

It is worth revisiting these conversations at a later date and acknowledging your mistake to show that your views have changed or that you've since learnt more and feel differently. That way, your child will see that you are keen to be an ally and support them even if you struggled to do this in the past.

Ren, who is queer and non-binary, says: **"Your child hears everything you say or imply about LGBT+ people and they feel the expectations that you put on them to be cisgender and heterosexual.** Your home should be a space in which LGBT+ identities are talked about and normalised the same way that non-LGBT+ identities are. If your child knows that they can be whoever they are, they will be happier, more at peace with themselves and feel safe in their own home - you as a parent have the power to give that or take it away."



Talk about the LGBT+ community, not just gay men

Some LGBT+ young people we spoke to said that while their parents talked about gay people growing up, they avoided talking about other LGBT+ identities. This can be particularly isolating for lesbian, bisexual and trans young people who can worry that who they are is less acceptable or palatable than gay men; something many LGBT+ young people told us they feel strongly about.

Kai, 19, is trans masculine and non-binary. They explain: "My family did talk a bit about being gay and about gay people in mainly a good way, but never talked about other identities. This left me with internalised transphobia and shame, which I'm still working through today.

"You don't need to know every single LGBT+ identity, but knowing a few does help."

Reilly, 20, is non-binary and told us: "It wasn't really discussed beyond gay men - I didn't even know about trans people until secondary school, which made coming out harder."

Avoiding talking about LGBT+ topics beyond gay men also doesn't align with the experiences of lots of young people growing up with friends of different LGBT+ identities either. For example, your child might not be LGBT+ but have a friend who is bisexual, know a peer at school who has lesbian mums, or one day work with a trans colleague. Or, you might have a gay son whose best friend is non-binary. By being aware of and talking about the LGBT+ community as a whole, you'll be reflecting the reality of the diverse world around them.

Talking about safe sex

At Just Like Us, we don't cover sex education. [Brook](#) - the sexual health and wellbeing charity - has advice on discussing safe sex in an LGBT+ inclusive way with your child, which you can find at the end of this guide.



How inclusive is your child's school?

Homophobia and transphobia can impact all of us - straight young people can be bullied for 'looking gay', for example. Anti-LGBT+ comments and bullying in school can be detrimental to all young people.

Our independent research has found that schools where teachers talk positively about LGBT+ people are places where all young people's mental health and wellbeing are better. That's why it's so important that every school is LGBT+ inclusive, and why you should care if your child's school is proactive on this topic - regardless of how your child identifies.

Unfortunately, LGBT+ young people are twice as likely to be bullied in school today and many feel unsafe. Our research also found that even children who aren't LGBT+ but have same-sex parents face bullying because of the same stigma.

78% of primary school pupils have heard homophobic language, including in school and on social media. This figure rises to 80% for secondary school pupils aged 11 to 18.

You should speak to your child about why homophobic and transphobic language is wrong because there is an incredibly high chance they will hear it at school, online and beyond, and may even use it themselves. They may see it as a 'joke' and not realise it's harmful.

All parents can and should advocate for LGBT+ inclusion in schools. Your allyship will help to reduce anti-LGBT+ language and hopefully one day eradicate the high levels of bullying that LGBT+ young people face.

Although LGBT+ topics, such as talking about diverse families, are included in the England, Welsh and Scottish curriculums, in reality half of pupils don't hear positive messaging about LGBT+ topics in school. This is despite LGBT+ inclusive education being linked to lower rates of suicidal thoughts among school pupils, including for those who are not LGBT+.



How you can help make schools LGBT+ inclusive

As a parent - no matter whether your child is LGBT+ or not - you can help by advocating for LGBT+ inclusion in schools. Challenging sexism and gender stereotypes is also really important, particularly as anti-LGBT+ attitudes are often rooted in these.

Please tell your child's teacher that you support your child learning about LGBT+ topics. You could tell them that you read this guide, and how you'd like your child to grow up knowing about different kinds of families and LGBT+ history, for example. Teachers can get free, age appropriate resources from Just Like Us to support the school in doing this.

You can also encourage your child's primary or secondary school to take part in School Diversity Week, an annual celebration of LGBT+ equality in schools. If your child isn't LGBT+, they're unsure or don't know yet, you could talk to the school about how you've found out about this initiative and really support them taking part as it will help other families with same-sex parents at the school. Your allyship will go a long way!

You could also become a school governor and advocate for LGBT+ inclusion that way, too. We've created [a guide for school governors on advocating for LGBT+ inclusion in schools](#).

Lastly, if your child is at secondary school, you could let them know that Just Like Us provides [school talks](#) and can help them set up a [Pride Group](#).



What to do if your child is being bullied

We hope that no young person ever faces bullying. However, it is unfortunately a common reality for LGBT+ children; 42% are bullied and 91% have heard anti-LGBT+ language in the past year. Supporting your child will make a huge difference to how they are able to navigate this.

Anti-LGBT+ bullying can also impact children who aren't LGBT+ but perceived to be different. Children with LGBT+ parents also face bullying because of this same stigma.

It's really important that your child knows that you are fully accepting of LGBT+ people - otherwise, it will be nearly impossible for them to talk to you about facing homophobic or transphobic bullying.

Ensure that home is a safe, accepting place where your child can be fully themselves by embracing their LGBT+ identity and reassuring them that who they are is nothing to be ashamed of but something to be celebrated.

Sometimes LGBT+ young people are bullied for being different before they realise themselves that they are LGBT+.

Zoe explains: **“I was badly bullied during primary school, mainly because the other kids perceived me to be a lesbian** (even though at the time I had never had a crush and had really given no thought to my sexual identity or romantic attraction and wasn't yet even questioning my identity). When I told my mum about the bullying I was experiencing, she was always really good at listening to me and supporting me. **Even though at the time I did not think I was queer, I knew that my mum would still love me if I was because she talked to me about LGBT+ topics unprompted and I knew she was a great ally.** That was incredibly reassuring to me both when I was being bullied and later when I was considering coming out.”

Bullying can of course happen in school and/or online. NSPCC has a useful [guide on what to do if your child faces bullying](#), including cyberbullying, and [Young Minds](#) also has advice for parents. LGBT+ young people are [more likely](#) to face cyberbullying and we have more information on this in our section called *What to do if your child comes out*.

Firstly, stay calm, listen and reassure your child that you support them. Let your child know that the bullying is not their fault and listen to what they have to say. The [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) has helpful information on what to do in this situation.

Steps you can take:

- Talking to a member of staff at your child's school and escalate as needed if you feel it's not being addressed. Your school will have an anti-bullying policy on their website, so have a look at that (or ask for one if not publicly available), and you can also talk to the Parent Governor too.
- If your child is in primary school, you could talk to the class teacher about it. You could also speak to a SENCO/Assistant Head/Deputy Head or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- In secondary settings, someone pastoral is usually best. In most schools this would be either a form tutor or, most likely, a Head of Year (or a Head of House).
- When speaking to a member of school staff, try to arrange a face-to-face meeting and bring detailed notes, with reference to the school's anti-bullying policy if you can.
- Check in with that member of staff for updates and it may be useful to mention the need for more LGBT+ inclusion within the school. You can direct them to Just Like Us as a source of free LGBT+ teacher training and resources.
- In addition, we recommend that you get support as a parent. [Switchboard](#) is a great helpline service that you can speak to via email, phone or online chat - their trained volunteers are experienced in supporting straight parents of LGBT+ children.



Educating yourself and getting support

By learning about LGBT+ topics - such as reading this guide - you will be better equipped to show your child how to be an ally too.

Whether or not your child is LGBT+, learning to be an ally to a minoritised community is a useful skill that will teach them empathy and how to navigate many situations in later life.

That includes when they hear homophobic language in the school playground - something that is still extremely common.

Sadly, research shows that only 9% of LGBT+ young people think their family understands the things that are important to them. Learning about LGBT+ topics is key to changing this.

Being a proactive ally

Being an ally is about educating yourself and being proactive in supporting the LGBT+ community. You can do this by learning more about LGBT+ topics, supporting LGBT+ charities and getting involved in ways to improve LGBT+ rights.

A great way to learn about the LGBT+ community is to integrate LGBT+ voices into the media you consume - such as podcasts, TV shows and books.

You could pick a topic you're already interested in and learn more about it from an LGBT+ perspective. **You'll learn something new and this could also be a great conversation starter with your family.**

Remember that being LGBT+ is about much more than who a person dates - there's LGBT+ history, culture, arts, films, TV, music, Pride events, community, and so much more.

Many LGBT+ young people told us they wish their parents took an active interest in LGBT+ topics.

Zoe, a young lesbian, explains: "Please take an interest in LGBT+ topics. It makes me so happy that my Mum takes an interest. It has definitely strengthened our relationship."

Rohan, a trans young person, adds: "Your child can't be your only source of answers to all the questions you have - try and find some information and resources elsewhere too. Although there is a lot of misinformation about trans people so you have to be careful what you read."

There are recommendations of things to watch, listen to and read at the end of this guide.

Unlearning stereotypes

Much of what we learn about the LGBT+ community comes from stereotypes portrayed in the media, politics, and beyond. **Being an ally is often about unlearning what we thought we knew about LGBT+ people as much as it is about learning new things.**

Stereotypes are often unfounded and can be really harmful to minorities. They can have a lasting negative impact on the way that LGBT+ young people are viewed and see themselves too.

We spoke to many LGBT+ young people when creating this guide and here are some stereotypes that they wish their parents unlearned.

There's no one way to be LGBT+

You can be LGBT+ and look or dress in all kinds of different ways, work any kind of job, have any kind of personality, live in different locations, be a person of colour, speak different languages, have a faith, belong to any social class, be disabled, vote for any political party, become a parent and get married or civilly partnered if you wish, and have all sorts of different hobbies and interests.

Media portrayals or things we've heard about LGBT+ people often reduce LGBT+ people to one way of looking or being, which is unhelpful and not representative of real life.

LGBT+ people come from all walks of life. And so do our allies!

These stereotypes can pressure LGBT+ people into feeling that they have to conform to a certain way of being or looking, and ultimately make them feel that they cannot be themselves.

For example, our [research](#) shows that more than two thirds (68%) of lesbians have delayed coming out due to harmful stereotypes about lesbians. Young lesbians age 18 to 24 are the most likely age group to delay coming out because being a lesbian is seen as 'over-sexualised', 'masculine or butch', 'cringey or awkward', 'unattractive' or 'man-hating'.

Mara (they/them), a young lesbian, explains how stereotypes have a negative impact: "My high school experience was quite challenging at times, as the word lesbian was often used as an insult, so it was difficult to come to terms with being a lesbian when most of what I had heard about them was in a negative light."

LGBT+ people can also be disabled and neurodivergent, too.

Mara adds: "My journey to discovering that I am both queer and autistic hasn't been without struggles, but they are both things that make me *me*, and have helped me learn the truest version of myself. [Volunteering with Just Like Us](#) has also shown me that I can be a visible queer autistic person, that I'm able to do anything I want, and do it with incredible support around me."

LGBT+ people of colour exist, and so do LGBT+ people of faith. This is something that's often forgotten but is very important to raise awareness of, as typical narratives about LGBT+ people can erase those with intersecting identities.

Koi, 22, adds: "It's vital to remind people that being both Black and queer is possible, and there's no problem with being so."

Romia, 20, explains: "I'm not the only Black LGBT+ person in the world, just often the only one in the room. Like a painting in a museum where people just point and say: 'Wow, I didn't think they had that kind of stuff here!'"

Arber, another LGBT+ young person, adds: **"Muslim and LGBTQ+ identities are often positioned as polarised in our society, suggesting the two cannot mutually exist in one person. They can, and we do.** Our identities, experiences and the way we present ourselves are completely valid."

Maha, 21, is LGBT+ and Hindu - his faith has given him the space to find acceptance. He explains: "I grew up in India and then Nigeria, where being queer was neither respected nor safe. Now in the UK, the world I live in still, unfortunately, doesn't always accept me. Debates and prejudices, particularly around LGBT+ rights, create a sense of isolation among queer people. But I've always felt that my religion gave me an internal sense of acceptance and love, long before I was able to be open about my LGBT+ identity with those around me."

Fee is trans and Christian. They attend an LGBT+ inclusive church and explain why this matters so much to them: "To see other trans Christians was a joy in itself. My gender became part of furthering my relationship with God, perhaps as prayer. To be a trans Christian is to glorify Him/Her through your self-expression. In my eyes, my gender and religion are intrinsically linked."

The biggest challenge to having a faith while LGBT+ can be a lack of acceptance from family. Ruth, 19, has grown up in a Christian family. When she realised she was LGBT+, her mum stood by her and showed her she is accepted just as she is. Ruth explains: "I can understand how it can be scary to have a queer kid in a religious community that is not inclusive. However, what I needed first and foremost was acceptance and love from my parents. It is from this place of confidence and comfort I can explore my new relationship with my faith which includes my queer identity. Having an environment that accepts my queerness is essential to my continuing faith; without it, I would have struggled a lot more to remain Christian."



Being LGBT+ is not a trend

Young people don't come out or identify as LGBT+ because of a trend, nor is it a 'phase'.

Usually, an LGBT+ young person has gone on a long, introspective journey figuring out who they are before they reach the stage of coming out to you. That journey might last several years, or even decades, but hopefully is a shorter and less lonely one as more parents become proactive allies to the LGBT+ community.

As Anna, a 23-year-old non-binary lesbian, points out, young people being LGBT+ isn't the result of a phase or a trend. Anna explains: **"It's not just something they copy from their peers or the media. Even if that's where they find out about it, there's still so much introspection you won't have seen."**

Reilly, who is also non-binary, adds: "Even young children can know themselves well at times, so please don't tell your kids: 'You'll grow out of it'."

Libby, who is a young lesbian, adds: **"I think they assume it's a choice - either a phase, or a desire to be rebellious. I think this devaluation of my identity was one of the leading causes of my self-esteem issues growing up."**

It's worth noting that there is also often a stereotype that certain identities within the LGBT+ umbrella, particularly bisexuality and being non-binary, are mislabeled as a phase or 'not real'. This of course isn't true and can be very damaging, undermining an LGBT+ young person's sense of self and stopping them from being seen for who they are by the people closest to them.

Matty, a young bisexual trans man, explains how his dad struggled when he came out as trans. He says: "They felt like me being transgender was out of the blue for them and that being transgender isn't something I was able to understand the gravity of at the age of 14. **Parents often think that being LGBT+ is a sudden decision but many LGBT+ young people are aware they're different from their straight/cisgender peers from a very young age.** Being desperate to hide that at all costs is a common experience for LGBT+ kids."

Zoe explains: "My mum was really comforting and understanding, though she did say to me that it could be a phase and that I may eventually 'pick a side'. Since then she has come to understand more about LGBT+ issues and understands that bisexuality is valid and real, but at the time it was invalidating to hear."

While being part of the LGBT+ community isn't a phase or a trend, sometimes LGBT+ people can go through a journey of realising that a particular label they first came out as doesn't quite suit them and then go on to use a different term to describe themselves. For example, one young person we spoke to first came out to her parents as bisexual and later realised she is a lesbian. This doesn't mean that being bisexual is a phase, just that she herself realised 'lesbian' better fits who she is. **We all grow and change throughout our lifetimes and it's OK for young people to shift in the language they use to describe themselves too.** It's important to support them in this journey of self-discovery.

Laura is 20 and bisexual. She explains: "Parents/carers should know that LGBT+ identities can shift over time. Their child may come out more than once as they discover different things about themselves as they grow - this is normal and OK!"

Zoe, a young lesbian, adds: **"I would discourage parents from using the terms 'phase' or 'experimentation' or even the term 'confused'.** The feelings that your teenager has are real and valid even if they do not last. If your child tells you they may be LGBT+ but they are unsure, let them know it is OK. **It is worth reminding kids that they can take their time to figure out which label best suits them, change labels multiple times or even, if they wish, have no label at all!** It's all part of the journey and just because they may change their minds does not make the feeling or experience any less valid."

Don't assume your child will be straight or cisgender

A very common assumption made by many straight parents is that their child will grow up to be straight and cisgender too. However, we know that LGBT+ people exist in all walks of life and there's every chance that your child might one day realise they are LGBT+.

Many parents expect their child to be straight because they are looking for stereotypical signs that may not be there. Assuming your child will be straight by default is really damaging for LGBT+ young people who then feel they don't live up to your expectations. Many are left feeling that they have failed to live up to their family's hopes by simply being who they are.

Rush, 22, explains: "We did not talk about LGBT+ topics at all in my childhood - I did not know it was an option. I learned about it on the internet in my teens. It was confusing. **My parents did not intentionally make it hard for me to find answers, they did not think I would be queer.**"

Jenna, a young lesbian, adds: **"Keep a positive narrative around anything LGBT+ even if your child hasn't expressed any indication that they may be.** This will either help them to grow as an LGBT+ child and have a foundation to their discovery or they may be straight and cisgender too but it'll help them become strong allies to other people - always good to be. Because we didn't have these conversations at home, I found out what a lesbian was through inappropriate Google searches."

These assumptions might slip out in the ways you talk to your child, for example by talking about getting married or having children in the future with a partner of a particular gender.

Vicky, 23, is asexual. She explains: "Never assume your son has/will have a 'girlfriend'. Explicitly say 'or boyfriend' even if it's uncomfortable (and vice versa for daughters and a 'boyfriend'). If you don't act like it's weird, it will never be weird to your child and that's a great way for them to grow up with positive attitudes towards LGBT+ people."

Erin, a young lesbian, adds: "Ask questions about people in general - for example 'have you met anyone you like at college yet?'"

Less gender stereotyping, more freedom of expression

Gender stereotypes are unhelpful for all young people growing up, not just those who turn out to be LGBT+. They prevent people from being themselves and limit young people's freedom of expression.

Daniel, who is 25, bisexual and trans, explains: **"Less gendered assumptions and expectations generally would be more freeing for children, even ones that grow up to be straight.** Sexism becomes normalised early by strict gender roles and heteronormativity. There's no reason a child in primary school should feel the need to have a boyfriend/girlfriend but parents and the media they are exposed to create this imitative behaviour that makes it so difficult to be LGBT+ because your difference is more prominent to both yourself and your peers. A child experimenting with clothes etc doesn't mean they're LGBT+, it's just that gender roles used to be so strict you couldn't engage with anything outside of that. It's a good thing if a boy has female role models they want to imitate and vice versa."

Fievos, 20, adds: "Never show something as weird or unusual, and **don't fall into traps such as discouraging dresses for boys or feeling the need to suggest particular career paths.**"



Being LGBT+ doesn't mean your child will be unhappy

Gender stereotypes are unhelpful for all young people growing up, not just those who turn out to be LGBT+. They prevent people from being themselves and limit young people's freedom of expression.

Some LGBT+ young people we spoke to said that, when coming out, their parents assumed their life would be extra difficult. It's really understandable for parents to have worries and fears for their child and to be concerned about the challenges they might face because they are LGBT+ and therefore part of a community that is often discriminated against.

However, many LGBT+ young people explained to us that this isn't helpful for them to hear from a parent and is something they are hyper aware of anyway. Instead, they need your reassurance that you support, accept and love them for who they are and will be there for them if they do face any challenges.

It's worth noting that research shows LGBT+ people with accepting and supportive home environments are much more likely to lead happy, fulfilling and successful lives.

Niko, 22, is a queer, trans man and explains: **"Parents often misunderstand and think that being LGBT+ means you'll be unhappy. With the right support, LGBT+ people are fully capable of living a happy and fulfilled life and that's what your child needs to hear most."**

Erin, 20, adds: "My parents seemed to think my life would be harder because I identify as a lesbian. I haven't changed, I've just decided to be more open and transparent about my feelings and who I am. There will be things that we struggle with/are trickier because of our identities, but that doesn't mean that anything is inherently wrong or bad."

Iona, 24, says: "I'm out as gay to all family members. But I haven't come out as asexual to them because I think I would be met with pity. I think that they will try to be supportive, because I also know from little comments that they have made about other things that they think being asexual is a sad way to be, and I don't want them to look at me with pity."



Support for parents

Growing up as an LGBT+ young person can be a lonely, daunting experience and unsurprisingly it's a journey that requires lots of support and acceptance. As a parent, you are also going on a journey - whether it's one to becoming an ally no matter how your child identifies, or a journey of stepping up to support your child who has come out. Regardless, you may need and should seek your own support too.

Switchboard is a great support service accessed by many parents who are keen to learn more and/or need support in their child's coming out journey.

Switchboard is a non-judgemental helpline run by trained LGBT+ volunteers that you can speak to via phone, email or online chat. They are experienced in supporting straight parents of LGBT+ children, including those struggling to accept or navigate their child coming out.

Ashton, a queer, trans man, explains: "It's a hard process for parents as well as the person coming out, it's important they get support too."

Kai, a bisexual, trans young person, agrees: **"I also think parents should know that they can talk to other people to get advice and support - they're not meant to know all the answers and it's OK to struggle to understand things as long as they communicate unconditional love to their kids."**

Building trust and fostering closeness

As parents, we of course want to foster a sense of trust and closeness with our children. Unfortunately, LGBT+ teens are half as likely to feel 'very close' to their family. Our research shows this continues into adulthood too. LGBT+ young adults are twice as likely as non-LGBT+ young adults (i.e. their straight peers) to say they are not close to their immediate family members. For trans and non-binary adults, this figure jumps to a fifth (19% and 23% respectively).

If a young person isn't absolutely certain that their parent is fully accepting of LGBT+ people, or can't see that they are a proactive ally, they will understandably worry about any possibility of a negative reaction to their coming out. It doesn't matter if the risk is 1% or 50% to a young person, even a 1% chance that they may not be accepted or be safe is enough to make them wary of being themselves around you. That is how LGBT+ young people often end up being less close to their families.

Emotional closeness can also lessen if they grow up seeing that you are not proactively interested in LGBT+ topics, something that will likely feel deeply personal and important to them. As a result, only 9% of LGBT+ young people feel their family understands the things that are important to them.

Having open, positive conversations about LGBT+ topics as a family is a great way to instil trust in your child from a young age that you are an ally and a safe person for them to talk to about the topic, if they ever need to chat to you in the future. But it's really important that as a parent you lead the way in starting these conversations so the onus doesn't fall on your child, leaving them feeling isolated and burdened with bringing up the subject and having to consider how you might react.

Being a proactive ally is a great way to show your child that you accept them, as well as demonstrating that you are invested in supporting them and their future - for example, in helping them and their community to gain rights and acceptance in wider society.

Ruth, 19, has become closer to her parent because she's a proactive ally: "My mum is active in the Church of England, and supports equal marriage for same-sex couples, which she has been engaged with for over a decade. I know I can rely on her to support me in every aspect of my life."

Be your child's biggest ally, even when they're not in the room. It's important to remember too that allyship includes standing up for LGBT+ people even when they're not present. This might look like speaking up when you hear homophobic comments, or gently correcting someone when they use the wrong pronouns for a trans person. You'll gain an insight into what it's like navigating the world as an LGBT+ person.

Showing a willingness to learn will help foster closeness with your child.

Silver, 23, explains: "It's helped to have open and honest discussions about LGBT+ identities. My parents especially are on the older side, but they know they can come and talk to me if there's something they don't understand, which is special. It means a lot they are willing to learn, even if they don't always get it."

Zoe, a young lesbian, says: "My mum especially is a very enthusiastic ally, who is really curious to learn more and actively seeks out LGBT+ media."

"She is hoping to come to Pride with me next time I go. It makes me so happy that my Mum takes an interest in LGBT+ topics. It has definitely strengthened our relationship."

"My grandad is very sweet - he doesn't know all the correct terminology but his heart is in the right place and we've had some really great discussions. Sometimes if he has seen a TV show or has read a book with LGBT+ themes or characters he will tell me all about it when I visit."

Niko, who is 22 and trans, says: "My grandmother in Northern Ireland has been very kind and curious about my identity, and I feel we've gotten closer since I've come out to her."



What to do if your child comes out

Many LGBT+ young people don't feel confident that coming out will result in their parents accepting them. To a young person, the risk of not being accepted cannot be understated and their fears are grounded in a statistically common reality - levels of homelessness, abuse and family estrangement increase when you are LGBT+. In fact, a quarter (24%) of homeless young people are LGBT+, according to akt (the national LGBTQ+ youth homelessness charity).

This fear of not being accepted can be present regardless of whether or not the child's parent considers themselves to be supportive. It might feel odd or disappointing to you that your child has worried about becoming kicked out of their home - perhaps it doesn't align with your values - but their fears are based on real-world realities for many LGBT+ young people. Be empathetic to this, understand the courage it takes and consider it an honour that your child has chosen to come out to you.

Imi, a young lesbian, explains: "I was terrified to let my family know, and didn't come out until I was 18/19. This was despite knowing they were generally accepting people and would likely react positively or neutrally - there is still a huge amount of fear of the chance that they may react badly."

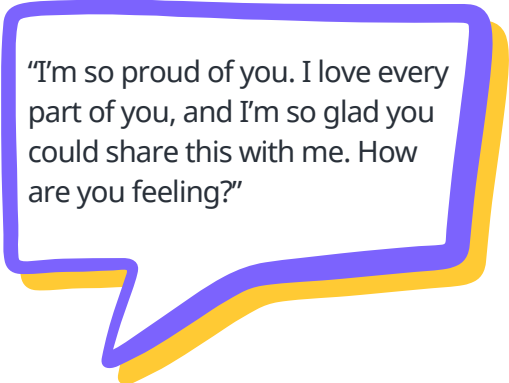
Laura, 20, also struggled with building up the courage to come out to her family as bisexual, despite knowing they were generally supportive: "My parents had always made it clear that they would love, accept and support me regardless of my sexuality, so I knew that coming out would not be a problem. However, it was still difficult to have the conversation and it took me a while to build up the courage! I had to be confident with my identity in myself before I was ready to come out to them. When I did eventually tell them, they were very supportive, which was a great feeling."



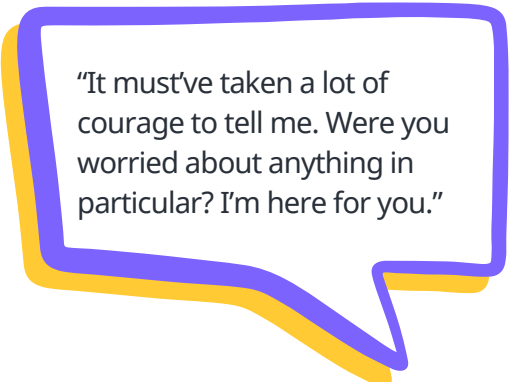
What to say when your child comes out

Ultimately, being a supportive parent isn't just about the moment when your child comes out to you. It's about being a proactive ally throughout their lifetime, and beyond that initial coming out moment too.

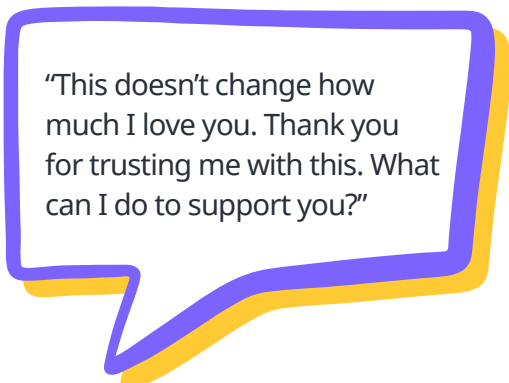
But we know many parents would like to know what is and isn't useful to say in that pivotal moment. **We asked LGBT+ young people what they'd like to have heard from a parent when coming out:**



"I'm so proud of you. I love every part of you, and I'm so glad you could share this with me. How are you feeling?"



"It must've taken a lot of courage to tell me. Were you worried about anything in particular? I'm here for you."



"This doesn't change how much I love you. Thank you for trusting me with this. What can I do to support you?"

Being a great listener in that moment is important, too. As Lily, who is bisexual, says: "Listen, and don't assume you know more than them."

It's really important that the moment your child comes out to you remains centred on your child. It will be emotional and possibly overwhelming for you as a parent but try to stay focused on your child and their needs at that moment. It will be a moment they have built up to for a very long time and rehearsed many times.

Josh, 23, says: "Don't make their coming out about you - don't get annoyed they didn't tell you sooner, or say you always knew."

When an LGBT+ person comes out to you, it's not particularly useful to say 'I knew anyway' or 'that was obvious' because it could undermine the courage it's taken them to talk to you about something that is really personal and core to who they are. Instead, make sure your initial response expresses how much you love, accept and support your child. Later, you could say something like: 'I had wondered about whether you might be LGBT+ and I hope I've made our home a safe place for you to be yourself and figure that out, but I want to know how I can support you.'

Tell your child that you love them unconditionally. Express that you love them for exactly who they are and that you love every part of them. **Rather than saying 'you don't mind if they're gay', for example, tell them how proud you are of them and that you are grateful they've trusted you with this information.** Similarly, instead of saying 'I don't care if you're LGBT+', it's usually better for them to hear that you *do care* that they've taken the courage to open up to you and that you accept them.

Jennifer, who is bisexual, says: "Accept them even if you don't understand yet. The first response will stay with them, make sure it's loving."

It's worth considering too that your child may feel really vulnerable when coming out to you. You can reassure them that you are there for them and that you will be able to talk about their identity anytime they need.

It's really important to ensure this isn't the last conversation you have with your child about being LGBT+ and that you don't rely on your child to bring up the topic.

Rohan, 21, says: "Don't let there be radio silence!"

Show them that, now they've come out, who they are is an accepted part of your family life that can and is regularly, comfortably talked about.

As a parent, you will likely be able to gauge how much or how often they'd like to speak about it with you - you could even ask them about when they'd like to talk more and let them know you're ready and happy to talk whenever they'd like. **Some young people might like to talk about their identity lots and regularly with you, others might need more time, but do check in with your child as otherwise they might read your silence as discouraging.**

Zoe, a young lesbian, says: "If you are able to do so, it may be worth asking your child thoughtful and carefully considered questions so that you can better understand their experience, but also understand that they may not want to answer those questions straight away, as it may feel overwhelming or sensitive.

"Remind your children that you love them unconditionally for who they are. There are many different ways you can show your support: it might be that if your child comes out to you you could go to a family friendly Pride event together, or a shopping trip for gender affirming clothes.

"My Dad bought me a rainbow coloured water bottle recently and whilst it was a very small gesture to me it made me feel he was thinking of me and accepted me," Zoe says.

Silver's mum was keen to show she's on board with her child being gay but her wording left her feeling quite alienated. She explains: "My mum has often said 'being gay is all the rage now'. She means well, but it makes it seem as if being LGBT+ is a trend, when for the majority of us who explore our identities, it is not. It's important to remember that exploration of identity is very serious and emotionally taxing to a young person, even if it seems trivial to a parent or carer."

We also recommend that you watch [this TED talk by Uchenna Umeh](#), a parent ally of an LGBT+ child, who talks about what it was like for her and her child in the coming out process.

Watch now



Trusting your child

It's really important to trust that your child knows themselves best. They've likely spent a great deal of time - some spend years, even decades - figuring out who they are before they speak to you about being LGBT+. As Rush, a 22-year-old non-binary young person, explains, "When your child is telling you something, they are putting a LOT of trust in you. Be thankful for it, or acknowledge it if you can in the moment. Even if it is a difficult conversation, I want to feel safe to tell my parents the painful stuff."

Alex, a 22-year-old lesbian, adds: "If they come out to you it is because they love and trust you, all they want is that acceptance from you. If you don't understand, be open to learn and grow alongside your child. Be someone your child wants to talk to."

Eve, 19, says: "It's often thought to be a phase, or that they are too young to know if they're gay, or trans or any part of the LGBT+ community. This is not the case at all, **if they're telling you that they're LGBT+, then they are!**"

Kai is 19, trans masculine, non-binary and aromantic asexual, and uses he/they pronouns. His dad initially struggled when he came out as trans: "My dad said I needed to make sure my transition is what will make me happy and that he needed to 'challenge' me on it. **What my dad didn't realise is that I've spent longer than he knows thinking about it. Trust your child knows what they're talking about.** They know their own mind and heart the best, and it's taken them a lot of courage and trust to tell you about it. Knowing about it is a privilege, so don't waste that."



Acknowledge who they are

Acknowledge that your child has come out to you - never minimise or ignore the fact they've shared something deeply personal with you, even if you don't understand at first. It takes immense courage and they have placed enormous trust in you by coming out, so it's important to acknowledge this as well as the part of them they've opened up about.

Beckett, 21, explains why this is so important: "I felt further away from my family after coming out because they didn't acknowledge my truth even after I had told them."

Scout, who is 22 and queer, adds: "Family is extremely important. They've taken a huge step in telling you, don't dismiss them with an 'OK' or 'yeah, I know'. **You may not realise that there is a difference between "active support" as opposed to just accepting your child's queerness.**"

Anna, 23, uses both non-binary and lesbian to describe themselves. They have found family relationships have been harder since coming out: "In general I think my family ignores my being LGBT+. It took over a year for them to acknowledge my girlfriend, and they don't try to use the correct pronouns for me."

If your child comes out as trans or non-binary, acknowledging who they have told you they are might include adjusting to a new name or new pronouns. This can be a big adjustment but one that your child will need your support with to feel safe and comfortable in their family.

Sky, 22, is non-binary and explains: "My parents have never called me by my preferred (now legal) name. It's been several years. So I don't know how to feel. I don't think they're actively against LGBT+ people, but I also don't think they're actively for LGBT+ people. It's hard, I know they care about me and support me, and I love them so much. But it does mean I'm always having to pretend like a big part of me doesn't exist. A part of me always feels like I don't deserve to be loved."



Ask your child what they need

This guide is just a starting point and there's never going to be a single approach that works for everyone. Every child is different, therefore so is the approach and support that they need.

Eve, 19, says: "Ask your child what support THEY need. Different people need different support."

You don't need to be an expert

Showing a willingness to learn and be on your child's side is more important than having extensive knowledge of LGBT+ topics and identities. Taking the time to educate yourself is important and will help but you don't need to be an expert - your love, support, acceptance and willingness to learn are the most vital.

You may make mistakes along the way. What's important is not perfection but being open about trying to learn and support your child for who they are. Don't be afraid to be honest with your child about getting it wrong or being unsure of the right words.

Rush explains: "If you realise your first reaction wasn't great or you maybe said the wrong thing, I would really appreciate a parent bringing this up and saying 'sorry, can we try that conversation again' and take it from there."

Labels may or may not be important to a young person

For some LGBT+ people, language can be really empowering. Finding a word, such as 'lesbian' or 'non-binary', that resonates, describes how they feel on the inside and helps them identify their community, can be transformative. For some others, the specific label or terminology matters less. Either approach is absolutely OK and personal to each individual.

Silver, 23, explains why she wants to be recognised as being LGBT+ but doesn't go by any specific label: "Questioning my identity and self-discovery played big roles in my life growing up. But trying to find the right 'label' or word to describe myself became a source of frustration and the words just didn't quite feel like they fitted who I am. **I know I'm part of the LGBT+ community but, for me, the specific label isn't important.**"

Encourage them to find community

A key way you can support your LGBT+ child beyond creating a safe and supportive home environment is to empower them to find community. For teenagers, this could be a local LGBT+ inclusive youth group where they can make friends and meet others like them.

For 18 to 25 year olds, we highly recommend they join our Ambassador Programme, which runs right across the UK. Young people who take part say it is 'life-changing' and make many LGBT+ friends.



Young people who take part in our Ambassador Programme get training to speak in secondary schools (in pairs, not alone!) to bring much-needed LGBT+ representation to pupils. The programme supports LGBT+ young adults to use their voice, develop skills and find community.

As a Just Like Us ambassador, you can:

- Speak in schools to help stop anti-LGBT+ bullying
- Take part in skills workshops, such as leadership and wellbeing
- Write for media outlets like GAY TIMES
- Get an LGBT+ career mentor
- Meet LGBT+ friends

Arbër, who joined Just Like Us' Ambassador Programme, says: "I've encountered some amazing experiences that have truly enriched my life!"

Remember your child is still the same person

While finding out your child is LGBT+ may initially feel disorientating, remember that they are still the same person, you just happen to know them better now. They have taken the courage to share a really personal part of who they are with you. **They are still your child who needs love, acceptance and support from their family.**

Emily, a 19-year-old trans woman, explains: "I think a lot of parents have this idea that their children not being straight/cisgender somehow makes that person a completely different person, when that's just not the case."

Ren, 24, who is queer and non-binary says: "Your child is still your child and being LGBT+ doesn't suddenly make them a different person or a stranger to you. For example, if your child is kind, curious and sensitive, they are that same kind, curious and sensitive child if they are LGBT+."

It's worth recognising too that until coming out, your child might have hidden (consciously or not) part of themselves from their family. They may not have felt comfortable to fully express themselves. So they may also seem different in the ways they dress or behave, as they are now being more open about who they are. Providing they're safe and healthy, this is absolutely nothing to worry about - try to celebrate that they are expressing themselves more.

Jennifer, who is 23 and bisexual, explains: "I wish people understood that coming out doesn't change who you are, you're still the same child. But they might express themselves differently when they feel safe and allowing that growth is important."

Beckett, a trans young person, adds: "They are still your same child, just more open and that's not a bad thing."

Never pressure your child to come out

Coming out is a process that shouldn't be rushed or forced. As a parent, you might feel shut out by not having found out sooner, but the time your child has taken to tell you is usually time they needed to process the information themselves first. Rush, 22, is non-binary and explains: "My parents were hurt that it took me years to tell them. I think they misunderstood my wish to come to terms with my identity alone first."

If you think your child might be LGBT+ but they haven't come out to you, they might need time to figure things out for themselves first and/or they might be looking for more clues that you are supportive. There are lots of ways you can demonstrate your support, such as educating yourself about LGBT+ topics and talking about what you've learnt with your family.



Coming out to wider family members

Just as you should never out someone without their consent, it's really important to let your child lead the way in how they'd like to come out to wider family members.

Let your child know that it's their decision and that you will support them in how they would like to come out to members of their wider family, when they are ready. Let them know that you will advocate for them however they might find helpful, including telling a family member on their behalf if that's what they'd prefer.

Rohan, a 21-year-old trans young person, found it really helpful to have his parents' support with this. He explains: "For me, coming out as trans, it felt like everyone needed to know the information because I wanted to change my name and I have such a big family it felt exhausting. So having my parents support me in how to tell other family members really helped me."

Reassure your child that you will stand up for them if any extended family members make difficult comments or struggle with their coming out. Ensure your child knows you are on their side and make sure you demonstrate this with other family members if needed.

It's important to not pressure or force your child into hiding who they are around extended family, if they wish to be open with them.

Sophie, who is a young lesbian, explains: "I'm not out to my grandparents, due to worries about acceptance and requests from my parents not to tell them. My parents preferring that I don't share my lesbian identity with my grandparents has been tricky – it makes me think they're not entirely comfortable with my queerness themselves. It also adds another layer of tension to any conversations that touch on me being gay, which has led to us being less close than we were. I am very lucky to have wonderful friends and chosen family to support me, so now I definitely lean into those relationships more than those with my parents."

Kai, 24, says: "My parents went on a lot about not telling people at the beginning, and although in hindsight I think they were coming from a place of wanting me to be safe, it really made me feel like they were ashamed and embarrassed which obviously did not help."

Libby, 20, adds: "My dad said it was fine but he didn't want my Mum to start telling other people. I feel he is a bit ashamed of me."



Never out an LGBT+ person without their consent.

It might feel difficult to not share the news with other family members but your child's consent is vital. This frustration or challenging feeling is an insight into what it's like to be LGBT+ and having to hide who you are before you come out - it can be tough but it's not your news to share (unless you have consent to).

Riya, who is 24 and bisexual, explains: "Outing someone is a huge deal. I wish my mum asked me before disclosing or implying to my wider family that I'm queer. It was a big deal to me even though I knew she was trying to be supportive. Our identities should not be weaponised to educate or sensitise other people."

Coming out isn't a one-time event

LGBT+ people come out in many ways, many times to many different people in their lifetime - to school peers, family, friends, colleagues, doctors, landlords and more.

Coming out isn't a one-time event and this can be emotionally draining. As a parent, you can support them on this journey by understanding the toll it may take.

As Sky, 22, explains: "Coming out isn't one event - it's a process that doesn't really ever stop as you continue meeting and getting close to new people. It's exhausting."

Young people, or indeed LGBT+ people of any age, may also come out as different identities or use different language to describe themselves throughout their lives, too.

Felix, 23, who is non-binary, asexual and aromantic explains: "LGBT+ identities aren't always static, and changing identities is a lot more common than you might think! It's all about self-discovery and trying labels to see what fits, and the process can be a wonderful, exciting one with a supportive circle of family and friends around you." LGBT+ people may also come out more than once in relation to their gender as well as their sexual orientation.

For example, Kai, 19, has come out as trans masculine and non-binary, which is how they define their gender. However, they have also come out as aromantic asexual, which is their sexual orientation.



What if more than one of my children come out as LGBT+?

Just as some families have more than one child who is straight and cisgender, there are also families where more than one child or young person is LGBT+.

Several LGBT+ young people we spoke to in creating this guide talked about their experiences of having an LGBT+ sibling. This is really normal and may also enable your children to support each other and feel less alone.

Sophie explains: "My brother and I are both gay and came out around the same time. Having a brother who is also LGBT+ is wonderful! We became a lot closer when we both came out, and having someone to chat family things through with who fully gets it has been such a gift. Attending his wedding and getting to know his husband has been such a beautiful source of queer joy."

Will I still have grandchildren?

Lots of parents assume that they will one day become grandparents. Of course, not everyone chooses to have children, but this isn't decided solely by whether or not your child is LGBT+.

Many LGBT+ people become parents and there are lots of different ways of creating a family, including IVF/IUI through a clinic, known donors, adoption, fostering, surrogacy and co-parenting.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people can and do become parents. To hear some of their stories, you can watch this video with [trans dad Jake Graf](#) talking about how many people don't expect trans people to have children. You can also find more resources at the end of this guide.



Find more resources about LGBT+ families to watch, listen to and read at the end of this guide.

What to do if you're struggling

Lots of parents, with the best of intentions, still struggle to adjust to the news that their child is LGBT+. Perhaps you consider yourself supportive of LGBT+ people but didn't expect your own child to identify that way, or it might have sparked worries about your child's safety and future.

One LGBT+ young person we spoke to, Erin, says this happened in her family: "My parents have always been accepting of others in LGBT+ relationships, but they also struggled a little bit when I came out. I think it felt different when it applied to someone so close to them."

You might be grappling with how to accept your child and how that fits with your traditions, political beliefs, faith or other values. The news might be challenging how you had previously viewed your family or yourself as a parent. It might not fit with the expectations you'd had - consciously or not - for your child.

However, it is worth remembering that LGBT+ people can and do belong to any faith community, have any ethnicity, vote for any political party and have a variety of values too. Please don't let misconceptions become barriers to loving and supporting your child for exactly who they are. **None of these have to be barriers.**

For example, Koi, a Black trans young person, explains: "It's vital to remind people that being both Black and queer is possible, and there's no problem with being so."

Ruth, a 19-year-old young person who is aromantic, says her family's faith didn't have to be a barrier to her being accepted. She says: "My mum being a Christian never got in the way of her accepting me at all. Even before I came out, she was engaged with inclusive understandings of the Bible and would argue for the rights of LGBTQ+ [people]."

"We had a vocally non-inclusive vicar when I was three and she used to put rainbow hair ribbons on both of us in protest. Especially in recent years, the Church of England has been focusing on LGBTQ+ rights, specifically prayers of blessing for people who are in same-sex relationships. My mum is in the General Synod (a governing body of the CoE) so she is very engaged and knowledgeable on the debate, working with other people who are inclusive. I think it matters to her because she has a queer kid so she feels first-hand how painful seeing bigotry in the Church can be, and has seen second-hand how it has affected me. But this is also part of her morality and belief in God - that He loves LGBTQ+ people and does not condemn them.

Faith does not have to be a barrier to accepting your LGBT+ child and supporting them. In fact, for Ruth and her mum, accepting her child for who she is brought them closer together.

Ruth adds: "My mum being a vocal ally in the church means the world to me. Her actions show how she accepts me, and I know I can rely on her to support me in every aspect of my life, including my faith. I have full trust that she will always fight my corner, even if I am not physically there, as she works to make our local and national church more inclusive. This is love and support beyond anything words can express.



“If you are struggling to accept your child due to religious reasons, I really encourage listening to LGBTQ+ religious figures and leaders who talk about their faith, because they share knowledge both from experience and spiritual study. You will often find that interpretations and understandings that are new to you have common themes with mainstream understandings, which shows how religious faith is inclusive,” Ruth explains.

Difference does not have to be a barrier.

We recommend watching this video featuring [Saima, a proud Pakistani mum of two LGBTQ+ children.](#)



Erin, a 20-year-old lesbian, goes on to explain: “Sometimes change is difficult - acknowledging that you may be struggling with the change, but making it clear that it isn’t the new information that is difficult but rather the fact things are different can be helpful. It’s OK if it’s a process and you don’t understand right away, it’s about trying and learning.”

Try not to project your struggles onto your child. They will be hyper aware of your reaction and very likely to internalise your struggle as shame and feel that there is something wrong with them.

Erin adds: “My mum seemed to struggle when I came out and I ended up going back in the closet around my family for a little bit because of her reaction.”

It’s really important to make sure you get support for yourself as a parent. Speaking to someone for support and taking the time to learn more about LGBTQ+ topics is vital - whether you are finding the news really surprising or difficult, or not.

When seeking support, please be mindful of what content you consume. Much like LGBTQ+ young people come across misinformation and anti-LGBT+ hate online, there is also a risk that parents can encounter misinformation and disinformation about LGBTQ+ topics too - particularly on social media platforms, forums and blogs with an anti-trans agenda.

Similarly, if accessing therapy, you should be aware of conversion therapists who attempt to dissuade young people and their families from accepting the child or young person's LGBT+ identity - it is an incredibly abusive and damaging practice, one that LGBT+ people have long campaigned to make illegal. **Pink Therapy is a brilliant directory of therapists and counsellors who are either LGBT+ or allies, many of whom will be very experienced in supporting families through this journey.**



There is also a directory of support services at the end of this guide.

We highly recommend speaking to Switchboard, a helpline run by trained LGBT+ volunteers who are well versed in providing a listening ear to parents of LGBT+ children. They can provide you with a safe place to express your fears, worries and concerns, plus ask questions you may have.

It's important to seek this outside support so that your child isn't made to feel responsible for your struggles or worries about their LGBT+ identity. Plus, you may have questions that they don't know the answers to anyway.

Staying safe

All of the tips in this guide will help LGBT+ children feel safer at home.

However, we also have to consider their safety beyond the home environment, including online, safe sex and discrimination beyond school. (We explore safety at school in section five of this guide, *How inclusive is your child's school?*)

When it comes to safe sex, we recommend turning to resources by [Brook](#) - a leading sexual health and wellbeing charity - and you can find these in our directory at the end of the guide.

Talking about safe sex

As a parent of an LGBT+ child, you may worry about their safety when it comes to sex and relationships. It is also worth being aware that, unfortunately, LGBT+ teenagers are three times more likely to experience sexual harassment than their peers.

We have shared Brook's tips on how to talk about sex in an LGBT+ inclusive way with your child at the end of this guide.



Mental health

While being LGBT+ doesn't inherently mean that your child will struggle with their mental health, nor does it mean being unhappy, it is worth knowing that LGBT+ young people disproportionately face mental health challenges because of the society we live in.

LGBT+ young people are twice as likely to contemplate suicide, and Black LGBT+ young people are three times as likely. LGBT+ young people are also three times more likely to self-harm, and have an eating disorder.

There are many LGBT+ inclusive mental health services that can support your child if they experience challenges - including Switchboard, Childline, Samaritans, MindOut, Beat and Pink Therapy (a directory of LGBT+ and ally therapists and counsellors). And you can find a wider range of resources and organisations at the end of this guide.

It's also worth knowing that when LGBT+ young people are supported by their families, they are less likely to face mental health challenges.

Research has found that LGBT+ young adults from unsupportive school and home backgrounds are more than twice as likely to contemplate suicide and self-harm. But the reverse is also true - **your support as a parent will make a huge difference to how they experience the world and feel about themselves.**



Find resources and organisations offering support at the end of this guide.

Staying safe online

Our research with VotesforSchools found that 78% of children aged 9 to 11 have heard homophobic language. Many cited TikTok as a place where they'd heard 'gay' casually used as an insult in online games they'd played. Many didn't understand this was homophobic and the consequences it could have.

LGBT+ young people disproportionately face cyberbullying and harassment. LGBT+ teens are twice as likely as their straight peers to have been bullied in the past year, and a quarter (24%) of them were bullied online.

NSPCC has a useful guide on what to do if your child faces bullying, including cyberbullying.





Safety beyond school

Ensuring your child is safe of course isn't just about their experiences during their school years.

It is worth noting that compared to their non-LGBT+ peers, levels of bullying faced by LGBT+ people are also higher beyond their school years.

Our [Positive Futures](#) report on the experiences of young adults aged 18-25 found that being LGBT+ means you are more likely to face bullying in the workplace and potentially earn less than your straight peers.

Every organisation, college and university will have policies about tackling bullying and harassment that will mention how things should be reported. Discrimination and bullying in the workplace can be reported to [ACAS](#).

Showing your support will empower your child to navigate these potential challenges through childhood and into their adulthood. (However, it's also worth reading section three, where we talk about how *Being LGBT+ doesn't mean your child will be unhappy.*)

If your child isn't LGBT+, you'll empower them to stand up for others when bullying and discrimination takes place.

Definitions and further resources

Definitions

LGBT+

LGBT+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (or trans, for short). The plus symbol represents other, perhaps lesser known, people within the LGBT+ community such as non-binary, intersex and aromantic people. You might sometimes see LGBT+ written as LGBT, LGBTQIA or LGBTQ; they're all valid abbreviations, we just tend to use LGBT+ for this guide.

Ally

Usually, this means a straight and/or non-transgender person who supports LGBT+ people. LGBT+ people can also be allies within the LGBT+ community to those who are different to them (e.g. a gay non-transgender person could be an ally to someone who is transgender).

Anti-LGBT+ language

Anti-LGBT+ language is harmful, especially for LGBT+ people. It can include slurs and phrases that compare being LGBT+ to something negative, like 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay'.

Aromantic

Someone who does not have any, or strong, romantic feelings about others.

Asexual

Asexual describes someone who doesn't feel any or much sexual attraction to others. They might still feel romantic attraction and use words like gay, bisexual, lesbian or straight to describe themselves.

Bisexual (or bi, for short)

When someone is attracted to more than one gender.

Biphobia

When someone dislikes another person or treats them badly because they are bisexual. People can be treated badly for being seen as bisexual, whether they are or not.

Cisgender (or cis, for short)

Someone who feels comfortable with the sex they were given at birth and is not transgender.

Coming out

When a person tells someone that they are LGBT+.

Conversion therapy

The [UN](#) describes conversion therapy as 'an umbrella term to describe interventions of a wide-ranging nature, all of which have in common the belief that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity can and should be changed. Such practices aim (or claim to aim) at changing people from gay, lesbian or bisexual to heterosexual and from trans or gender diverse to cisgender.' It also warns that young people are disproportionately subjected to conversion therapy and the practice is sadly more common within faith settings. There has been a long campaign to ban conversion therapy in the UK.

The anti-LGBT+ abuse charity, [Galop](#), provides support to those who have faced conversion therapy.

Gay

A man who is attracted to men. It can also be a general term for gay and lesbian people.

Gender dysphoria

When a person feels uncomfortable because the sex they are given at birth and their gender identity don't match.

Gender expression

Gender expression is how a person shows their gender identity to others. This might be through what they wear, how they act, their appearance, as well as many other ways.

Gender identity

How a person sees their own gender. Gender identity relates to how you feel inside. It's different from biological sex, or how you look or act.

Gender-non-conforming

When a person doesn't conform to gender norms, such as a butch lesbian. Being gender-non-conforming does not necessarily mean a person is transgender.

Heterosexual (or straight)

A man who is attracted to women, or a woman who is attracted to men.

Biphobia

When someone dislikes another person or treats them badly because they are bisexual. People can be treated badly for being seen as bisexual, whether they are or not.

Homophobia

When someone dislikes lesbian, gay or bisexual people or treats them badly. People who are, or who are thought to be, lesbian, gay or bisexual may experience homophobia.

Homosexual

Someone who is attracted to someone of the same gender. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

Intersex

A word used to describe a person whose biology (for example, their hormones) does not fit with assumptions about what is male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

Lesbian

A woman who is attracted to women. Some non-binary people also use this term.

Lesbophobia

When someone dislikes lesbians or treats them badly. People who are, or who are thought to be lesbian may experience lesbophobia.

Non-binary

Someone whose gender identity doesn't match exactly with 'man' or 'woman'. Some non-binary people identify with parts of being a man or woman, while others don't at all.

Out

When someone else knows that a person is LGBT+.

Pansexual

A person whose attraction isn't limited by gender: for example, they might be attracted to a man, a woman, or someone who doesn't identify as either.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (such as 'I' or 'you') or someone or something that is being talked about (such as she, it, them or this). Gender pronouns (such as she/her, he/him and they/them), specifically refer to the gender of the person you are referring to.

Questioning

When someone thinks about their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and is considering that they might be LGBT+.

Sex

A label given to a person depending on their sex characteristics (for example, their genitalia).

Sometimes people are born with differences in sex characteristics that means their biology (for example their hormones or body parts) do not fit with assumptions about what is male or female. Intersex people might identify as male, female or non-binary.

Sexual orientation

How a person describes who they're attracted to. For example, a person's sexual orientation could be bisexual, lesbian, straight or gay.

Transgender (or trans, for short)

Someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not match, the sex they were given at birth.

Trans femme

Usually describes people assigned male at birth whose gender identity is partially or fully feminine or aligns with femininity.

Trans masculine

Usually describes people assigned female at birth whose gender identity is partially or fully masculine or aligns with masculinity.

Transition

The steps a transgender person may take to live in the gender they identify as. Each person's transition will be different.

Transitioning might involve things like telling friends and family, dressing in the clothes they feel comfortable in and changing official documents like passports.

For some adults this involves medical treatment but not all transgender people want or are able to have this.

Transphobia

When someone doesn't like another person because they are transgender. This can include denying who they are or refusing to accept it. People can be transphobic to people who are, or who are thought to be, transgender.

Further resources

Resources for parents to learn about LGBT+ life

Research

Growing up LGBT+ -

looking at the experiences of LGBT+ teenagers aged 11-18 in comparison to their straight/non-LGBT+ peers, the report covers school, mental health, family and home life.



Positive Futures -

identifying the key challenges that LGBT+ young adults aged 18-25 face in comparison to their peers, this report highlights the huge impact that a supportive family and school environment can have.



LGBT+ Parents - providing a window into the experiences of LGBT+ parents and their children, this report highlights what life is like today for LGBT+ families and why inclusive education in schools is so important.



Articles by LGBT+ young people

'Changing our language takes some work, but trans and non-binary people are worth it'
by Tallulah

'Being a Black LGBTQIA person can feel a bit like being a celebrity – but not in a good way'
by Romia

'As a trans teen, I didn't drink water at school so I didn't have to use toilets' by Rain

'How the bisexual community helped me find courage, freedom, and pride' by Sophie

'Lesbian is not a dirty word: How learning about our history filled me with pride' by Zaynab

'The 'A' is not for 'Ally' – As an asexual, I sometimes feel excluded by the LGBTQ+ community' by Sarah

Podcasts

The Log Books - exploring Switchboard's archive since it began in 1974, this podcast gives great insight into LGBT+ life over the last four decades.

Black and Gay, Back in the Day - activist Marc Thompson explores a vital archive.

Out with Suzi Ruffell - hosted by the lesbian comedian who is also a mum, she meets a new LGBT+ guest each episode.

'I'm a transgender man and I had a baby' - this episode features an insightful interview with trans dad Logan Brown.

Videos

Just Like Us' YouTube channel - we recommend our intergenerational series and interviews with young people.

First Times - a YouTube series where LGBT+ people from all walks of life shared their lived experiences.

LGBT+ young people of faith talk about their intersecting identities on Just Like Us' Instagram.

Resources about parenting LGBT+ children

Podcasts

Out and Proud Parents - a podcast series created by the Naz and Matt Foundation, interviewing parents of LGBT+ children. Many of the stories cover how to support your child as a parent of faith, too.

Videos

'Meet Saima, an out and proud Pakistani parent of two LGBT children' - a great video by the Naz and Matt Foundation, which has a whole series of videos about parenting LGBT+ children.



'Rethinking the Closet: Coming Out LGBTQ* vs Inviting In' - a TED talk by Uchenna Umeh, a parent of an LGBT+ child.



'Is My Child Too Young To Learn About Being Gay?' - a TEDx Talk by the founder of Just Like Us, Tim Ramsey, on how his parents didn't expect him to be gay and the important role you can play in your child's life.



'Having A Transgender Child: Parent's Perspective', featuring a young trans man and his parents talking about his coming out, including adjusting to using new pronouns.



Online guides

'Acceptance Starts at Home' - an online guide for parents of LGBT+ children, created by The Global Center. It contains a reflective worksheet exercise for parents, too.

'A Parent and Carer's Resource: Supporting Your LGBTQ+ Child' - an online guide created by Cara-Friend, an LGBT+ youth charity in Northern Ireland

'A Guide for Family and Friends – Non-binary/Transgender' - an online booklet guide by FFLAG, an organisation that supports parents with LGBT+ children.

'Staying safe online': Practical strategies to best support all children and young people online, including those who identify as LGBT by Childnet.

Articles by LGBT+ young people

'Lessons from my mother: parenting LGBTQIA children with love and compassion' by Charly

'Coming out as trans to my Muslim parents taught me a lesson about faith and allyship' by anon

'What (not) to do when a loved one comes out to you' by Khushi

'Why the festive season is so difficult when you're LGBTQ+' by Carden

Resources for children

Under 5s

Things to watch:

Vida the Vet on

CBeebies is aimed at 3 to 5 year olds, and the main character has two dads.



In **Bluey**, the character Chihuahua Pretzel has two lesbian mums in an episode called *The Sign*. This is mentioned in a casual way, usualising different kinds of families.



Peppa Pig has an episode with a polar bear family where the child, Penny Polar Bear, has two mums. The episode features characters with several different family structures.



Pop'N'Ollly's YouTube channel features more diverse reworkings of traditional fairytales, such as Prince Henry.



Books about diverse families:

Love Makes a Family
by Sophie Beer

ABC, A Family Alphabet Book
by Bobbie Combs



Forever Star by Gareth Peter and Judi Abbot

The Family Book by Todd Parr

Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love

Llama Glamarama by Simon James Green and Gary Parsons

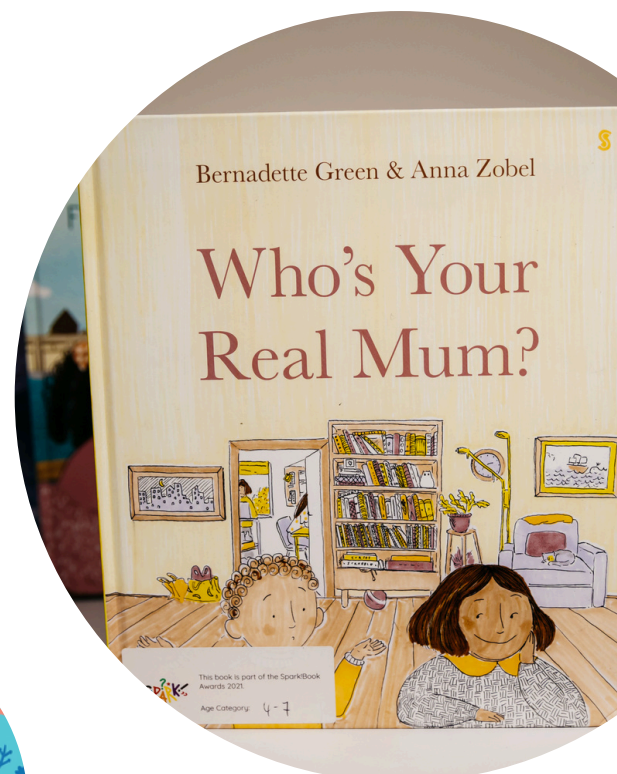
My Daddies by Gareth Peter

The Girls/The Boys by Jenny Lovelie and Lauren Ace

Timid by Harry Woodgate

Who's Your Real Mum? by Bernadette Green

Families Can by Dan Saks



Under 10s

Things to watch:

Steven Universe

features several LGBT+ characters as its creator said: "We need to let children know that they belong in this world."



In **Arthur's Mr. Ratburn and the Someone Special**, the first episode of Season 22, Arthur and his class see their teacher getting married to a man.



Ridley Jones features a non-binary character who uses they/them pronouns called Fred the bison, and another character, Ismat the mummy, who has two dads.



Doc McStuffins

features an interracial lesbian couple with a child in an episode called **The Emergency Plan**, where LGBT+ representation is not the story but part of the show.



Books about diverse families:

Pink is for Boys by Sophie Beer

If I Had a Hundred Mummies by Vanda Carter

Pirate Mums by Jodie Lancet-Grant and Lydia Corry

The Frog's Kiss by James Mayhew

The Pronoun Book by Chris Ayala-Kronos

Pearl Power and The Girl with Two Dads by Mel Elliot

The Great Big Book of Families by Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith

Are you a Boy or are you a Girl? by Sarah Savage and Fox Fisher

Stella Brings the Family by Miriam B. Schiffer and Holly Clifton-Brown

Grandad's Camper by Harry Woodgate

Nen and the Lonely Fisherman by Ian Eagleton

This Day in June by Gayle E. Pitman

Red: A crayon's story by Michael Hall

My Footprints by Bao Phi and Basia Tran

The Amazing Edie Eckhart by Rosie Jones

Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow by Benjamin Dean

Jamie by L.D. Lapinski

Just Like Everyone Else by Sarah Hagger-Holt



Teenagers and young adults

Things to watch:

Why trans and non-binary joy is not radical - a TEDx talk by Ben Pechey

How I came out as trans to my parents - a video by trans man Jamie Raines

What makes you proud to be LGBT+? - conversations between older and younger LGBT+ people

Sophie Duker's message to Black LGBT+ young people

Articles written by LGBT+ young people who volunteer as **Just Like Us ambassadors**:

'A Bollyqueer dance class allowed me to embrace my South Asian heritage' by Anuli



'I Kissed a Girl's powerful discussion about struggling to say 'lesbian' is so relatable' by Lily



'What does masculinity mean to me as a transmasculine person?' by Maha



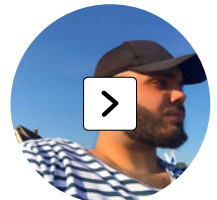
'Ace Week is an amazing time to celebrate asexuality, but don't forget that we're here all year round' by Sarah



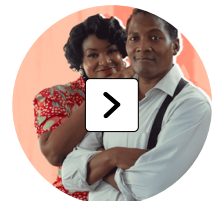
'I left one rural town for another – here's how I still found the LGBTQIA community' by Amy



'Embracing intersectionality: Affirming liberation for all of the LGBTQ+ community' by Arbër



'A League of Their Own explores Black trans joy in ways other shows have never succeeded' by Elliot Kwabena



'Speaking in schools means I can be the LGBT+, Muslim representation I always needed' by Rayyan



'I'm the wee lesbian!' How Derry Girls helped me accept myself' by Sar



Support services and useful organisations

This is a non-exhaustive list of UK national charities and organisations supporting LGBT+ young people and their families, as well as places offering support and advice for young people's safety.

If you are looking for something specific that you can't find below, [LGBT Consortium](#) has a great directory of organisations that you can search and filter, including regional organisations.

African Rainbow Family

A grassroots charity campaigning for racial justice and human rights of LGBTIQ+ refugees and people seeking asylum.

www.africanrainbowfamily.org

akt

Gives 16–25-year-olds who are LGBT+ and at risk of, or experiencing homelessness or a hostile living environment, the support they need to thrive.

www.akt.org.uk

Beat

The UK's eating disorder charity offers [LGBT+ specific resources](#). Their [helpline](#) is contactable via email and phone. They also offer [help if you are worried about someone you know](#).

www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Bi Pride UK

Creating spaces for those who experience attraction beyond gender can celebrate who they are.

www.biprideuk.org

Blaq UK

The UK's first Black, queer organisation led by young people.

www.blaquk.uk

British Asian LGBTI

Offering social support, events and a platform for British South Asian LGBT+ people.

www.britishasianlgbti.org

Brook

A sexual health and wellbeing charity with LGBT+ inclusive [resources](#) for parents and young people.

www.brook.org.uk

Cara-Friend

Supporting and empowering the LGBTIQ+ community in Northern Ireland.

www.cara-friend.org.uk

Childnet

Helping make the internet a great and safe place for children and young people.

www.childnet.com

Childline

A free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything.

www.childline.org.uk

Deaf Rainbow UK

A volunteer-run organisation, Deaf Rainbow UK provides a platform, resources and events for the Deaf LGBTIQ+ community.

www.deafrainbowuk.org.uk

FFLAG

Supports parents of LGBT+ children through its helpline and also has [online guides for parents](#). For parents of trans and non-binary children, you may find their online guide '[A Guide for Family and Friends – Non-binary/Transgender](#)' particularly helpful.
www.fflag.org.uk

Free2B

Runs [online support groups for parents of trans and gender diverse children](#) as well as an LGBT+ youth group.
www.free2b.lgbt

Gendered Intelligence

Supports parents, carers and wider family members of trans, non-binary and gender questioning young people.
www.genderedintelligence.co.uk

Hidayah

A volunteer-led organisation providing support and welfare for LGBTQI+ Muslims.
www.hidayahlgbt.com

House of Rainbow

Provides support and encouragement, especially to LGBTIQ+ people of colour, that it is OK to be LGBTIQ+ and be a person of faith. They offer one to one support, events and training workshops, as well as supporting families and allies.
www.houseofrainbow.org

Inclusive Mosque Initiative

Offers consultancy and training to individuals and organisations on Islam, Feminism, and inclusion of Black and brown people and LGBTQ+ communities.
www.inclusivemosque.org

Just Like Us

The LGBT+ young people's charity, working across the UK to make schools more inclusive, publishing [research](#) and supporting LGBT+ young adults through its [Ambassador Programme](#).
www.justlikeus.org

KeshetUK

Working for the equality of LGBT+ Jews, including creating spaces for LGBT+ Jewish young people.
www.keshetuk.org

LGBT Foundation

Provides a helpline, talking therapies, sexual health support, befriending and recovery support, and trans advocacy.
www.lgbt.foundation

MindOut

Offers LGBTQ+ adult mental health services: counselling, wellbeing groups, befriending, online chat and advocacy.
www.mindout.org.uk

Naz and Matt Foundation

A specialist charity that supports LGBT+ people, and their parents, from religious or culturally conservative backgrounds. They provide a range of trauma informed 1-2-1 and group support services, including a free, online parent support group called [Rainbow Chai](#).
www.nazandmattfoundation.org

Not a Phase

A trans-led charity improving the lives of trans+ adults, through awareness campaigning, social projects and funding trans+ lead initiatives.
www.notaphase.org

NSPCC

Working to prevent abuse, help rebuild children's lives and support families.
www.nspcc.org.uk

Ozanne Foundation

Works with religious organisations to eliminate anti-LGBT+ discrimination.

www.ozanne.foundation

Pink Therapy

A directory of LGBT+ inclusive therapists and counsellors.

www.pinktherapy.com

ParaPride

A grassroots organisation advocating for the visibility, education and awareness of LGBTQ+ disabled people.

www.parapride.org

Samaritans

Offers listening and support to people and communities in times of need, through their [helpline](#) and [email service](#).

www.samaritans.org

Sarbat LGBT+ Sikhs

Creating awareness and tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia within and beyond LGBT+ and Sikh communities.

www.sarbat.net

Sparkle

A grassroots, trans-led charity supporting trans, non-binary and gender variant people, as well as their families.

www.sparkle.org.uk

Stonewall

Campaigns for LGBT+ rights nationally.

www.stonewall.org.uk

Switchboard

A support service run by trained LGBT+ volunteers, well versed in helping parents of LGBT+ young people. Phone 0800 0119 100, email or chat online.

www.switchboard.lgbt

The Mix

Provides digital support to under 25s, including through its [Crisis Messenger](#).

www.themix.org.uk

The Proud Trust

Supports LGBT+ young people and has resources for adults as well as a directory of LGBT+ youth groups.

www.theproudtrust.org

Time for Inclusive Education (TIE)

Working with schools in Scotland on LGBT+ inclusive education.

www.tie.scot

Traveller Pride

A network providing guidance, support and information to make life easier for LGBT+ Travellers.

www.lgbttravellerpride.com

UK Black Pride

The organisation behind the world's largest free pride event for LGBTQIA+ Black and POC.

www.ukblackpride.org.uk

UK Safer Internet Centre

Helping children and young people stay safe online.

www.saferinternet.org.uk

Young Minds

Provides support via its [helpline](#) and has an [online guide on supporting a young person experiencing suicidal thoughts](#), as well as an [online blog](#) by a straight parent whose son came out as gay.

www.youngminds.org.uk

Talking about safe sex in an LGBT+ inclusive way

At Just Like Us, we don't cover sex education. Brook - the sexual health and wellbeing charity - has share its advice on discussing safe sex in an LGBT+ inclusive way with your child below.

Five tips from Brook



Being able to have open and positive conversations about sex and relationships at home is important for every young person, but in some ways, it's even more crucial for LGBT+ young people. After all, research indicates that LGBT+ young people continue to feel dissatisfied and unrepresented by their Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at school and instead are turning to social media. This isn't right, and at Brook we fight for every young person's right to inclusive RSE.

As a parent or carer, there is a lot you can do to inform and empower your young person to make healthy choices when it comes relationships and sexual health as they grow up.

1) Avoid assumptions

Avoid making any assumptions about your child's sexual orientation or gender identity.

This allows for openness and possibility, and it avoids unintentionally putting pressure on a young person who may not feel ready to share their identity.

Using open, inclusive language, like asking, "Are you interested in anyone?" instead of "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" This removes pressure and lets them feel safe to share in their own time.

2) Present all relationships as equal

When discussing relationships, present all types as equal. Take time to explicitly say out loud, "It really doesn't matter what gender people in a relationship are. What's important is that they love and respect each other." Taking time to say this, and say it often, makes it clear that you personally consider LGBT+ relationships to be meaningful and valid – and this helps make you a safe person for your child to talk to.

3) Create a judgement-free zone

Your reaction sets the tone for future conversations, so ensure your child feels safe to share without fear of judgement. Sometimes, young people decide to 'test the water' by sharing information about a 'friend' and watching how you respond!

If your child discloses something surprising, respond calmly and supportively with phrases like, "thank you for telling me" or "I'm so glad you felt you could share that." This is especially important for LGBT+ young people, who may worry about being misunderstood or rejected.

www.brook.org.uk

Five tips from Brook

4) Be open to questions - and answer inclusively!

While they can catch us off guard sometimes, questions are a great opportunity to explore important topics. If you're unsure, say, "I'm not totally sure... let's find out together." If you feel embarrassed or unsure about answering a question yourself, offer to check the Brook website together. When answering, always aim to be inclusive. For instance, if asked "What is a condom?" don't limit your response to facts about preventing pregnancy. Instead, explain that condoms can prevent STIs between sexual partners. Just as with any topic, tailor your answer to the young person's age and readiness.

5) Consider age appropriateness – and check for internal bias

When deciding what and when to discuss, reflect on whether any hesitation comes from unconscious bias about LGBT+ relationships. One form of stigma that LGBT+ people face is that they are sexualised in a way that heterosexual relationships aren't. Same-gender characters, couples and kisses continue to cause controversy when featured in children's film and TV, unlike their heterosexual equivalents. Ask yourself, "Do I feel hesitant to discuss this because it's LGBT+ related? Would I talk about this aspect of heterosexual relationships at this age?"

Demonstrating parity in how you approach all types of relationships helps normalise LGBT+ identities and experiences.

Brook's final thoughts

Talking about sex and relationships inclusively doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to be thoughtful. Remember, your role isn't to have all the answers—it's to create a safe, supportive space where your child can grow into their authentic self.



 **brook**

www.brook.org.uk

Thank you for supporting LGBT+ young people



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