



Young lesbian
and bisexual
women's

GUIDE TO WELLNESS

YOUNG
WOMEN'S
HEALTH
PROJECT



THIS GUIDE IS ABOUT HOW TO STAY WELL AS A YOUNG LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL (LB) WOMAN

It is based on feedback and opinions of young lesbian and bisexual (LB) women across the North West and information from peer research completed by the Young Women's Health Project. The project's main recommendations are that tailored sexual health services should be provided for young LB women; education should value the role of young lesbian and bisexual women as experts in their own lives; and health services should value emotion, instead of dismissing emotions as unimportant.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S HEALTH PROJECT IS...

a group of young LB women who get together regularly and do fun activities connected to the 5 areas of wellness: physical, emotional, social and political awareness, self-care and community. Working to improve the health and wellbeing of young LB women, we are led by a committee of young women and our sessions are planned as a group.

POP ALONG TO ONE OF OUR SESSIONS

We hold weekly sessions on Thursdays 4.30 – 6.30pm close to Manchester City Centre.

Get in touch to find out more

call/text

07530 316 656

email

myrtle.finley@theproudtrust.org

follow us

@YWHP_mcr

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[facebook.com/YoungWomensHealthProject](https://www.facebook.com/YoungWomensHealthProject)

visit us

youngwomensgroup.org



OUR RESEARCH FINDINGS...

Services SHOULD be aware that young LB women exist

"When I go in and I ask a sexual health service if they've got any dental dams they never have any, I think there's only been one occasion where they've actually given me some."

"I think in sexual health services I would like a dedicated one day a week for LB women to drop in, with properly trained staff who asked proper questions, are understanding and have experience."



Young LB women should HAVE

- ★ A strong support network of peers
- ★ Voices to challenge our silencing
- ★ Training and support to be safer people for others in our lives
- ★ The right to be represented in health services

Young LB women NEED

- ★ Improved mental health services – without long waiting times and by people who won't judge us
- ★ Sexual health services that cater for us
- ★ Education which does not ignore us
- ★ Mental health services which give practical resources and tools
- ★ A chance to air our views and hear the views of others

WHAT CAN LB YOUNG WOMEN DO?

- Take part in the Young Women's Health Project
- Help through volunteering, fundraising or sharing LGBT positive messages on social media
- Challenge any misinformation or judgemental attitudes in health services
- Lobby for changes in services by writing to services or your MP
- Come out to professionals wherever you feel confident – make sure they consider young LB women
- Get involved with any LGBT groups or Gay/Straight alliances in school, college or other places

Services SHOULD NOT dismiss young women

"When you're a teenage girl people act like you're just being dramatic. Lots of depression gets dismissed as us being 'difficult' or 'hormonal'."

Services SHOULD NOT be judgemental or make assumptions about young LB women

"I think they ask really awkward, embarrassing questions... and I think 'would you really ask that to somebody who said they were straight?'"

Young LB women WANT

- ★ To be listened to
- ★ To not be ignored and silenced
- ★ To not be discriminated against based on age, sexuality or gender (or any other aspect of identity)



WHAT CAN OTHERS DO?

- Support LB women by standing up against prejudice including sharing LGBT positive messages on social media
- Encourage services to display LGBT inclusive posters and leaflets
- Listen to young LB women about their own health and wellbeing needs
- Challenge any assumptions made by yourself and others, including avoiding using phrases like "you're just being emotional" or "it's 'teenage girl issues'"

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWARENESS

Social and political knowledge helps you lead a healthy life-style. Instead of internalising problems in the world that trouble you, you can do practical things to improve the world.

What we do:

Workshops, research, discussion, quizzes, accreditations, campaigning, budgeting and life skills sessions e.g. for school, work and beyond.

What you can do:

Stimulate your mind through reading, watching a good film or watching a documentary. Learn about your history, such as lesbian and bisexual women's history – it's interesting and important! Visit the Jaye Bloomfield library at the LGBT Centre to access lots of great LGBT themed books, zines and media or create your own!



PHYSICAL

What we do:

Sports like cycling, canoeing, walks; opportunities to get involved in events like Pride Youth Games; cooperative games, visits to The Proud Trust allotment and healthy food at every event we have. In addition we do workshops e.g. looking at body image and body positivity.

What you can do:

Regular exercise that fits in to your lifestyle such as a walk round a park or going swimming. Eat a balanced diet and try to eat five portions of fruit/veg a day. Work on feeling confident in yourself and your abilities. This will help you to make positive decisions in your life. Visit www.nhs.uk/change4life for more ideas.

Taking regular exercise, a balanced diet and body positivity.



GUIDE TO WELLNESS

We are the Young Women's Health Project run by and for young lesbian and bisexual women aged 14-25.

We work to improve young lesbian and bisexual women's health by promoting activities which address the five areas of wellness.

You can find out more here

youngwomensgroup.org

COMMUNITY

For us this is the umbrella that encompasses all the other areas of wellness. It's about being together with others in safe, supportive and positive ways and knowing that people need these spaces for different purposes.

What we do:

Regular activity sessions, outings and planning meetings. We run an annual summer camp residential trip and annual LesBiCon event. We have a secret facebook group for members of the group. All our activities are free or low cost so that this isn't a barrier to getting involved.

What you can do:

Be around others like you who you can talk to and will understand you; find out about activities or groups you might be interested in and try them out.

SELF CARE

De-cluttering your mind and focusing on your needs to feel spiritually balanced.

What we do:

Yoga, relaxation, visualisation, and developing time management skills. In workshops and groups we share ideas about getting enough sleep, as well as talk about our beliefs and sharing ideas.

What you can do:

Take time for yourself to relax and unwind and switch off from the world around you, such as having a bath with aromatherapy oils. Recognise the importance that belief, faith and/or religion can have on your life. If you have a faith, explore how lesbian and bisexual women feature in that faith, and how/where you are accepted.

EMOTIONAL

Understanding and looking after your emotional health and feeling able to ask for support when needed.

What we do:

Have group meetings and chats. We raise positive awareness through events and resources about lesbian and bisexual women's identities, to break down stigma. We do craft and creative writing activities. We also share experiences, including planning and making decisions about whether to come out and how best to do it.

What you can do:

Express yourself creatively through painting, singing, writing or dancing. Be 'out' if/when you feel safe to be. Get some fresh air. Talk to someone if you feel down and know that you are important and cared about. Contact the Peer Support Project for 1-2-1 emotional support about coming out or to talk through your identity with another young person of the same age. Email peersupport@theproudtrust.org or text 07873 351 702



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