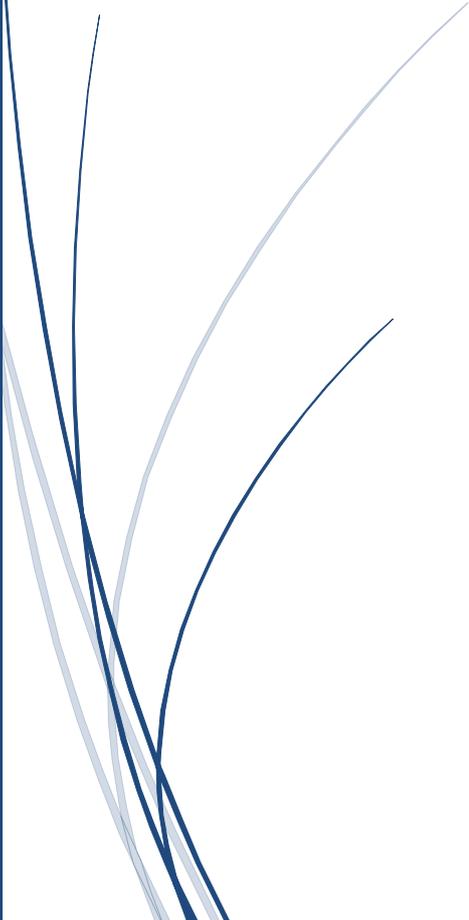




LGBT needs  
research and  
evaluation of  
the yOUTH  
project



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018 Eleanor Formby from Sheffield Hallam University and Jo Woodiwiss from the University of Huddersfield were commissioned by The Brunswick Centre to undertake local research and evaluation of the new yOUTH project in Kirklees. This is a five-year project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, which seeks to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) young people and their parents or carers on a one-to-one and/or group work basis. The aims of the project are to ensure that:

- LGBT young people have increased voice and influence
- LGBT young people report happier and healthier relationships and improved emotional health and wellbeing
- schools will be safer spaces for LGBT young people due to a reduction in bullying and improved anti-bullying policies.

The research and evaluation component of the project consists of the following elements:

1. Service mapping interviews with staff and related stakeholders to find out about current services and any gaps or needs in provision for LGBT<sup>1</sup> young people (conducted in 2018)
2. Needs research with LGBT young people via an online survey and follow-up interviews and discussion groups with young people (conducted in 2018)
3. Yearly impact evaluation with young people, involving online survey and follow-up interviews and discussion groups with young people (first round conducted in 2019)
4. Final impact evaluation involving online survey and follow-up interviews with staff and related stakeholders (due to be completed in 2022).

This first annual report documents findings from activities undertaken to date. This includes the service mapping (Chapter 2), needs research (Chapter 3) and impact evaluation (Chapter 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Although we use the term LGBT throughout this report to correspond with the yOUTH project's focus we made it clear to all young people that the research and evaluation activities were open to those identifying as LGBT+ (i.e. not only those identifying as LGBT but also other gender and sexual minorities as well, such as non-binary, gender-fluid, pansexual, queer, and so on).

## 2. SERVICE MAPPING

This chapter reports on interview-based findings from the service mapping exercise with Brunswick Centre staff and other key informants. The initial plan was to undertake 10 interviews but in the end the authors conducted 23. This included members of Brunswick Centre staff as well as representatives from: service provision for women, school nursing, sexual health, school and college staff, policing, offending, local authority services, domestic violence services, drug and alcohol services, and local counselling provision. The purpose of the interviews was to identify, from a range of key informant perspectives, what current services are available to LGBT young people in Kirklees, and any associated gaps or needs in provision. Potential interviewees were initially identified by the Brunswick Centre and then interviewees were also asked for potential contacts meaning the sample 'snowballed' out further. All interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted between 13 and 48 minutes, with most around half an hour. They were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed before being subject to thematic analysis. It is the results of this analysis that are outlined below.

### **Perspectives on LGBT young people's needs**

The mapping interviews explored interviewees' perceptions about young LGBT people's potential needs. The key themes covered are outlined below. More generally, interviews with local practitioners demonstrated a growing awareness that their work needed to acknowledge young people's varied identities:

"I think that we're getting better at having conversations with younger people in same sex relationships. I think it was a bit of an assumption that it didn't happen previously, but I think that's improved now"

"I'm very careful now... sometimes I might say to a 14 year old girl 'have you got a boyfriend?', then I'll say, 'oh I ought to correct myself there, have you got a partner, have you got a boyfriend or a girlfriend?'. They can just sort of look at me a bit aghast!".

However, it was not always felt that gender and sexual identities were acknowledged in all local service provision. This was sometimes thought to be because people were uncomfortable or embarrassed, and/or felt it was too personal:

"I just think everybody is a little bit too careful sometimes on some of those issues. That's my experience... 'God, you've asked me straight out', and I am not saying you don't have to ask sensitively, but you make it a part of a normal assessment and conversation, because it is normal".

### *Sex and relationships education, including sexual health and domestic violence/abuse*

A number of participants highlighted a common lack of sex and relationships education (SRE) suitable for LGBT young people:

“Sex ed of course is barely existent for young heterosexuals never mind young LGBT people”

“She [Locala worker] did a couple of sessions on sexual health [in college] which was great because the students didn't get anything like that in school. There's a huge gap for them [in] positive sexual health regarding LGBT... For someone to come in and do that, just have a laugh with them and talk to them about a lot of stuff was really helpful... It made them feel really valued that that was available to them... It means something to have people come in and talk specifically to you, which in their experience you never really had in school”.

The lack of education and services aimed at lesbian and bisexual women, and the implications of this for sexual health, was raised by more than one person, and concurs with existing research elsewhere (Formby, 2011):

“[A] total invisibility of young lesbian and bi women around their needs... beyond being off the radar really... there's no sense that some engagement needs to be around these young women, around their sexual health, around their screening”.

Indeed, some participants believed that many young women were not even aware of potential issues around their sexual health:

"In terms of young women who identify as gay or lesbian or bisexual... this is only my own personal view... [they] are very, very, very poorly represented in our clinic numbers... Some of the work I've been doing recently with a college LGBT group, certainly the women who have identified as lesbian or gay or bisexual have felt quite removed and actually don't see that they have kind of issues around sexual health... I think this goes back to their experiences in schools around SRE... actually it's alienated them, they just don't feel engaged with it at all".

This lack of education and service provision was also thought to have implications for domestic violence and abuse awareness:

“Without sounding over-critical I think of our DV services, I'm not convinced how well that is addressed for LGBT people generally, and certainly young LGBT people. That's not to say there are not good people in the services trying to do good stuff, there are, but... I think there's a lot more we could do”.

Interviewees also raised concerns about how LGBT young people were sometimes dealt with differently than heterosexual young people. They thought that LGBT young people's relationships were sometimes seen as problematic or even dangerous, particularly if there was an age gap. One participant described being asked to talk to a student in Year 9 who had an older boyfriend in Year 10 (although it transpired there was only a month age difference), as the school were worried and thought they were “going to have to tell parents”:

“[I asked] ‘How are things with you guys, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to, but are you involved in any kind of sexual activity?'; 'No, not at the moment'; 'Have you talked about what might happen if you do?'; 'Yes, we've talked about

going here and we've talked about getting a C card'. Very mature, very well thought out..."

Whilst the participant saw these young people as very mature, this was very different to the view subsequently expressed by their colleague:

"I reported this to head of year and it was, 'Well we need to tell parents, don't we, it's a safeguarding issue'; 'No, no, it's not a safeguarding issue. On that basis would you report it to parents if it was a girl?'; 'Well it's different, isn't it?'; 'No!'"

Such a response is unlikely to have followed a situation involving two heterosexual pupils in Years 9 and 10.

### *Mental health and emotional wellbeing*

Drawing on their own experiences of working with young people, several participants also raised mental health, emotional wellbeing and related issues for LGBT youth:

"I think that one of the things I was conscious about... was often fragile mental health and people taking solace in, particularly alcohol but also other substances... as a prop".

Particular issues were identified for young trans people, along with the need for trans specific services:

"A young man is really struggling... each month around really his emotional health and wellbeing and the fact that each month he has to face up to menses and what that means for him... I've been talking... about how we could support that young man in terms of what are his options... so we're looking at what can we do to help him to control actually that sort of side, the menstruation".

### **Awareness of, and engagement with, the yOUTH project**

Not all interviewees were aware of the yOUTH project, although most were aware of the Yorkshire Mixtures group and so were only unaware of this change/link. Where they were aware of it, most interviewees were positive about the yOUTH project (although it was not always known as this) and felt that it was adding to the support Kirklees was able to offer LGBT young people. The project was seen as an important place where those working with LGBT young people could refer young people, particularly those who it was thought might need additional support:

"From what I've seen the Brunswick [project] is fantastic... it's really taken off this year. I think it's nice for the kids to know that there's that place really, that's all it boils down to"

"Very recently one of the workers had contacted us as a school just to say that this project had just started... then I contacted them and said, you know, how do I refer... We've now referred, I think, five students... They're already providing the one-to-one

support to the actual students we've referred, which is great, and they're going to help them with sort of exploring their feelings, discussing it with family and, if needed, coming out with friends and in school. They're happy to give us tips if we need any advice”.

Even when the yOUTH project was not working directly with young people it was felt to be influencing local provision:

“We're just at the very early stages... you know, you're worried about using the wrong words aren't you... we've only recently had two students, so we're kind of finding our feet and I've used [yOUTH staff member] as a sounding board for some advice”.

A minority drew attention to wider awareness and capacity issues:

“From my experience there are LGBT young people out there who aren't aware of the Brunswick project, so I think it's about getting that out there, that information out there and making people aware of what they can offer really”

“We used to have posters and things for Yorkshire Mixtures; we've got nothing for the Brunswick Centre... I think even if schools maybe don't do things... they would be willing to have a poster up. I think if there were some things that we could have, you know, that could be given out, that would be good. Because I think it's important there's somewhere that's a non-school place like the Brunswick Centre, you know, a safe environment for young people”.

Joined up working between different agencies was thought to be particularly important, and something that the yOUTH project was engaging in:

“The partnership work with schools and others is critical... I think that close working contact and trust is really important”

“I'd say that's improved. Before that, yes we did have a group that we could refer into, but in terms of picking up the phone and talking to somebody and kind of explaining that a bit more, I don't think that was there. I think that's clearer now... In terms of agency working I would say that voice was a bit absent... but now it's there... I'd say that works better in my opinion”.

Examples of how this partnership working could help young people were highlighted:

“One person that goes to the Brunswick Centre is coming to college in September, they're quite a vulnerable student so we're going to bring them up before they come, have a little guided tour around the college and stuff like that”

“Each week [the yOUTH staff member] has something that he wants to talk about, so even if it's just for ten or 15 minutes... like the week before last it was about fair trade... I have preferred [he] just to take the role because he's more experienced and

I've got other stuff to be getting on with, so he does all the preparation and I turn up and we both engage with the kids".

However, one participant did raise issues around resources and capacity:

"I'm also conscious that there's only [one worker] really. So I think I'm quite conscious that he's limited in what he can do as well... it's getting that balance isn't it between getting the information and the awareness out there but also really be mindful of what he can do in the time he's got. So I think it's one of those things isn't it that if it was a bigger resource it would be used... everyone's under resourced aren't they?"

Whilst most participants spoke very positively about the yOUTH project there was also an awareness of the tensions around how the group was run in terms of access and safety:

"[Some people] felt Yorkshire Mixtures was much more open... whereas they found the new system less inclusive in that respect, more formal, which I think has alienated them from that particular group... which is a shame... [but] I think what [they] have done has brought a much more safer environment I would argue. Yes there is a more formal process to it which might be off-putting for some young people but then again I would argue that, you know, when you're running a group it has to be a safe place and in order to be a safe place there needs to be boundaries and ground rules and sometimes that might mean you lose some people but actually the people who want to come, do... I actually see yOUTH's point of view... but I think some of the people are finding that more difficult to kind of get to grips with"

"When [the yOUTH staff member] came he gave the students the impression that they needed to be much more worried about their safety than they were aware, and that he wouldn't allow anybody to just turn up; they had to be a friend of a friend and he had to know that they were coming and things like that, and they were a little bit freaked out by it, that talk".

There was a suggestion that this policy might put some young people off attending:

"I do respect, obviously, the desire to protect young people, but at the same time I think we've got one or two really excellent schools with good practice in this area and if they are feeling excluded from it, that's not great".

However, there was also a recognition that others were clearly getting a lot from the group:

"About three or four young people... have told me... that there's been issues within the group where they haven't been able to go back... [but] a lot of them are still attending and they're still really buzzing about what's going on".

### **Local provision for LGBT young people**

A key component of the interviews was to try map what services are out there that LGBT young people might access in Kirklees. The findings are displayed in the table below with further commentary provided below that.

Potential issue or group of young people	Local services stakeholders were aware of that might support this issue/group
Smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brunswick Centre (the most common answer)</li> <li>- Princess Royal Health Centre</li> <li>- School nurses</li> <li>- GPs</li> <li>- Locala</li> </ul>
Drug or other substance use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Base (by far the most common answer)</li> <li>- Brunswick Centre</li> <li>- School nurses</li> </ul>
Domestic/interpersonal violence and abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pennine Domestic Violence Group/PDVG (by far the most common answer)</li> <li>- Karma Nirvana</li> <li>- Kirklees and Calderdale Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre/KCRASAC</li> <li>- Police</li> <li>- School nurses</li> <li>- Brunswick Centre</li> <li>- WomenCentre</li> <li>- Victim Support</li> </ul>
Child sexual abuse and exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CSE hub (the most common answer)</li> <li>- Karma Nirvana</li> <li>- KCRASAC</li> <li>- Police</li> <li>- Barnardo's</li> <li>- ESCAYP</li> <li>- Northorpe Hall</li> <li>- CAMHS</li> </ul>
Housing, homelessness and missing persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fusion housing</li> <li>- Huddersfield Mission</li> <li>- Connect housing</li> <li>- Foundation Kirklees</li> <li>- Sadeh lok</li> </ul>
Mental health and emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Northorpe Hall (the joint most common answer)</li> <li>- CAMHS (the joint most common answer)</li> <li>- IAPT</li> <li>- Locala</li> <li>- S2R</li> <li>- WomenCentre</li> </ul>
Experiences of bullying at school or college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WomenCentre</li> <li>- Northorpe Hall</li> </ul>
Sexual health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Locala (by far the most common answer)</li> <li>- Princess Royal Health Centre</li> <li>- Brunswick Centre</li> <li>- School nurses</li> </ul>
BME young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Karma Nirvana</li> <li>- Pakistani Youth Forum</li> <li>- Conscious Youth</li> </ul>
Seeking asylum and new migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DASH (the most common answer)</li> <li>- WY-FI project</li> <li>- Brunswick Centre</li> </ul>

Potential issue or group of young people	Local services stakeholders were aware of that might support this issue/group
Those who are NEET or educated outside of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethos college</li> <li>- Fusion housing</li> <li>- PRUs</li> </ul>

- **Smoking:** there was some uncertainty about who dealt with smoking cessation in the area, and therefore who they might refer young people to
- **Drug or other substance use:** across each of the specific issues and groups identified, The Base was the most consistent answer (i.e. for other issues/groups there was more variability and/or uncertainty). The Base were also thought to be particularly aware of LGBT young people's needs: "The Base have got some good stuff going on there... [for example] if you look at their emails they put pronouns on all of their emails". Moreover, a worker interviewed from The Base volunteered to attend the yOUTH group if that would be helpful
- **Domestic/interpersonal violence and abuse:** whilst PDVG was the most known service, there was some uncertainty as to whether they would deal with young people's relationships: "In terms of younger couples, I'm not sure there's that kind of specific service there for them. I think there's a lot of workers who are clued up and can explore that, but in terms of a specific service for young people relating to domestic violence, I think there could possibly be a gap there". An interviewee from within a domestic violence service also felt that "whether they [LGBT people] are children and young people or adults, we are sorely in need of finding a way to communicate with that community, for enabling that community to feel like they are part of the services that we provide... I just feel that it's the languages that we use, our understanding of the needs, the barriers... so there is loads that could be done... I do think confidence makes a big difference for frontline workers, that they've been able to use the language confidently and respond appropriately to somebody, it makes all the difference in building a trusting relationship and it has to be that the service is for everybody, and that includes people from the LGBT community"
- **Child sexual abuse and exploitation:** the local CSE hub was the most known service, though it was not known how much they focussed on LGBT young people: "particularly [LGBT] young people who are trying to find support often are online trying to find connections, which makes them at greater risk of grooming"
- **Housing, homelessness and missing persons:** although there was some awareness of local provision, this was an issue that people did not generally seem confident about who/where they would refer young people to
- **Mental health and emotional wellbeing:** this was often a key area of discussion for practitioners and for that reason is discussed in further detail below
- **Experiences of bullying at school or college:** this was an issue that a majority of interviewees said they would try deal with in-house, though this is not to suggest that it wasn't seen as a 'serious' issue: "It [bullying] is definitely a normality in young people's lives... it is often something I think with the boys mainly rather than the girls that come through who are LGBT... they come through with something like a criminal damage or they might have hit somebody, assault, in response because it's been constant and they will turn around and do that or they might be in possession of something like cannabis or other substances. They end up coming through and they're really being criminalised because of the underpinning bullying due to homophobia and things"

- **Sexual health:** Locala were very well known and spoken of highly: “they do lots of very good stuff”
- **BME young people:** there were not many known services specifically aimed at BME young people
- **Seeking asylum and new migrants:** apart from DASH, there were not many known services supporting asylum seekers and refugees. It was also not often known whether DASH worked with young people or not
- **Those who are NEET or educated outside of the school:** this was one of the areas with most uncertainty about local service provision. Only one person mentioned a potential link between being LGBT and being NEET, in relation to an LGBT youth group that they had been involved in previously: “There were quite a lot of young people who were potentially NEET or struggling in terms of their career choice because of their sexual orientation... but we had some good success stories”.

Participants also named national organisations who work on some of the above issues, for example NSPCC and Barnardo’s. This was particularly the case for mental health, where Healthy Minds, Samaritans, Mind, and YoungMinds were all named. It is worth noting that there may be some misunderstandings locally about the organisational focus of some service provision. Aside from the yOUTH project (or Yorkshire Mixtures as some still knew it), only one additional service was identified for LGBT youth locally, which was the WomenCentre’s Sister shhhOUT group for lesbian and bisexual young women (though not open to under 16 year olds).

### **Identified gaps in service provision and additional needs for LGBT young people**

Despite general service awareness, and a willingness to work together locally, gaps were still identified that could mean some young people ‘fell through a crack’:

“I know they do because I am thinking about one young man who was being sexually exploited and he was a gay young man and he had really complex bereavement issues... when we had finished working with him because of his age, and I had referred him to adult services because he was using cannabis, he couldn’t go in to the services that he wanted, and they encouraged him to go in to the adult substance misuse services and he didn’t see that as a problem because he was self-medicating etc for mental health, so sometimes the threshold for different services is a real barrier I think”.

Sometimes it was felt that practical barriers existed that prevented more work with young people. One issue that was identified was the timing of any provision or groups and therefore the difficulty for some young people to participate:

“I think it's quite difficult to organise things outside [college]. I'd like them sometimes to go to events or things which other groups are running but it's quite difficult to organise that as a college event because they need permission and that opens up a whole new thing for students about whether or not their parents know or whether they want them to know, or whether they want staff to know if they're missing a bit of college, so we never really manage to do anything outside of college”.

It was thought that yOUTH was well placed to provide a range of services and information:

"I'd love to think yOUTH could look and explore all things around sexual ease, you know, sexual harming and right down to quite intimate stuff about sexual practice; I don't think that's talked about, I think it's very hidden. I think it leads to kind of then hidden, slightly charged, sexual practices going on, and I think that needs to come out of the closet really to be able to think about those issues and so people have healthy sexual lives... in whatever way people choose".

Some suggested that yOUTH could also provide resources or information for those who could not or did not attend (although there was no suggestion as to how this would be paid for):

"I know how difficult it was for us when we got our first trans student, if they could produce, whether it be online or a paper leaflet or something, guidance for schools of how best to support, what we need to be doing sort of to make legal obligations, to make sure we're not discriminating... [that] would be really useful... the trans throws up much more questions than the general LGBT".

It was also suggested that greater training with professionals could help increase awareness about trans and gender non-binary identities in particular, although who would pay for or provide this service was not addressed:

"It was part of my training on Friday, and there were people there who had got no idea whatsoever, they were just like... 'I don't understand anything about it. I don't know what I should be saying; I don't know what I shouldn't be saying'... I think something needs to happen with some more sort of specific training for Kirklees professionals... Even things like bisexual for some of the[m]... they were just like 'we don't know what that means'... I haven't met anybody yet who wants to disrespect or be homophobic or transphobic, but sometimes it comes across that way, just purely by ignorance... they don't actually have much experience and they don't know where to begin"

"I think the self-confidence and self-esteem course that the WomenCentre offered for free was fantastic... most of the issues that I'm dealing with, or come across, they could be solved quite easily; it is self-esteem and confidence, because with that you can be much more resilient to a lot of things, so possibly something like that".

It was recognised that yOUTH was open to a range of LGBT young people and their parents/carers. Whilst this was a strength, it also raised a number of challenges. Having a range of ages in the same group was one such challenge, also discussed in LGBT youth work research elsewhere (see Formby and Donovan, 2016):

"The needs of a 13 year old are not the same as the needs of a 21 year old. There's a lot in common, but I think there is a need for different age groups. Or even if it's not a group with older [people, but] something different to the group work".

Some also felt that the specific needs of trans young people requires more than a monthly group:

"I know the [trans] parent and family group is once per month, but in my opinion I think that maybe they should have their own group more frequently than that... time to work with other people like them outside of the bigger group, because looking at mental health and looking at all the other issues they're facing, they are in a very unique position in relation to what their needs are... whereas LGB seems to be a bit more mainstream, and people are more accepting, people are more understanding".

### **Mental health service provision**

When discussing gaps in local service provision and potential unmet needs for LGBT young people, support with mental health and emotional wellbeing was by far the most common theme identified by a range of workers. This was largely related to cuts to services and lack of capacity:

"Obviously CAMHS has a huge waiting list at the moment... [and Northorpe] have got such a huge waiting list at the moment as well"

"There is quite a long [CAMHS] waiting list... It can be months and months and months. We can't run as school nurses continually seeing them, we've completed our piece of work and identified they need some support, so they're just left then waiting and waiting and waiting. It really is quite a gap there"

"I think the average waiting time for CAMHS in Kirklees at the moment is about 30-40 weeks... I have got students who I referred... who haven't been picked up yet... It is very difficult, because CAMHS are very rigid. You get your session that day and then you're on your way... It frustrates me that they're not able to offer more, which I suspect frustrates the people at CAMHS as well... I am not sure how schools who don't have somebody in school cope to be honest"

"The problem is really in terms of where to refer young people with those issues and where they can get that support in a timely way... we know all about the usual referral such as CAMHS and stuff but it's just not, the waiting lists are ridiculous"

"Eating disorders are quite difficult to deal with in terms of referring them on to other people. CAMHS don't have a very big provision I don't think at the moment for the eating disorders, and when I've sent a student to them, they've actually told them to eat more, which is obviously not very helpful, so that's the one that I've really struggled with at the moment, and self-harm really, because unless it's suicidal, they get put on a 14 month waiting list... I send a lot to the doctors who just end up getting yo-yoed between us both until something gets sorted... especially at this age... 16 to 19. When they turn 17 and a half CAMHS don't really want to know or count them because they can't get them in, through and processed".

The pattern of working for CAMHS provision was also identified as problematic for young people and for workers:

"I find that a lot of young people that I work with find CAMHS really unhelpful... a lot of them will get sent to talking therapy and things like that and... it doesn't work for them, they need to look at other ways, I think, to engage with them and work with them".

A particular issue that was identified in relation to working with CAMHS was around communication and the sharing of information, with many feeling that CAMHS staff were not 'team players':

"The services are quite hard themselves to get in touch with as well, if you are another agency worker with a young person who is working with CAMHS it's an absolute nightmare to get any information from them and to get someone to call you back"

"It's quite difficult as well to sort of keep track of where somebody is on a waiting list and they seem to... 'oh we sent you a letter and you didn't respond', and not informing schools that they've done that. Because there might be a genuine reason... Obviously if they miss something then they've got to go back, right to the bottom of the pile. So that's just a real big issue"

"It is difficult getting the interaction with CAMHS as an agency, unfortunately... They are very, very reluctant to share any kind of information about who they're working with... kind of a reluctance to play the team approach".

In the absence of CAMHS provision, some schools bought in alternative support for their students:

"We also use ESCAYP... obviously there's a cost to the school for that but that can sometimes be set up a lot quicker [than CAMHS]".

The shortage in service provision also meant that some staff felt 'intelligent thinking' was required in order to support young people in need, with a recognition that counselling may not always be appropriate or needed:

"Maybe they just need to sound something out with somebody and just have a chat, it doesn't need to be psychological support, it might just be something much more low key than that... Maybe something to do with some capacity building within the other services and stuff as well".

Participants recognised that the potential blurring of boundaries between supporting and counselling young people was not always easy and needed to be managed with care:

"It's keeping within a fine line of are we counsellors or are we youth workers? Can we provide that support or is that done with another agency, because at the moment we are providing a leisure service, like a youth work service. It's about making sure we are using other agencies and keeping that balance within what our role and what our boundaries are".

## Geographical access issues

Another common theme that emerged within the interviews related to the geography of Kirklees and whether yOUTH services are accessible to everyone. There was a consensus of opinion that there is a North-South divide in the area, which meant that some young people were not always able to engage with or benefit from the service:

"I took another student, there was an issue of getting there because it's in the centre of Huddersfield and I go through Huddersfield on my way home, so I dropped him off... Part of that I think is just logistics and then sort of, it's not a massive distance but on an evening and you've got to get the bus... I kind of get the feeling that there is a little bit of a North-South divide... There's nothing I'm aware of here in North Kirklees, so for our students that [group] can be quite tricky to access. So yeah some parity would be nice"

"I think it's a real challenge... I think that's incredibly difficult. People won't leave their areas... unless you actually go and sit directly there, they will not come to you".

Whilst a reluctance to travel outside of the area was identified by some as a reason for young people not attending the group, many also recognised the particular difficulties faced by young people who often had little money and/or relied on others to provide transport:

"I do think a lot of people getting to places, whether that's financially or practically, is a real barrier"

"I just think they should be evenly spread. I think that they shouldn't all be based in one area. Not everybody can get to one area. If you live in a remote area you don't want to be travelling in to cities and things like that, so I just think that they need to look at the demographic and spread it evenly".

A number of participants felt that Huddersfield was well served but that other areas missed out and wanted to see groups set up in other areas across Kirklees:

"Our students didn't really access that [group] because it's based down in Huddersfield so it's quite daunting for them to be able to travel down... I've worked in various schools and our children don't really see much outside Cleckheaton, so even to go to another part of North Kirklees that would be daunting enough for some of them, but certainly to venture down into Huddersfield and South Kirklees, it's like another world"

"I do feel and I think most people do, that Huddersfield really gets given priority. So I think there is a gap over in the North, definitely. Particularly when we're talking about young people because of the transport issues... we're just kind of setting them up to fail aren't we?"

“The town centre of Huddersfield is quite easy to get to, transport wise, and it's reasonably anonymous, but I think somewhere perhaps at the other end might be useful too, just to make it more accessible for young people”

“I would recommend that there would be, because of the diversity of Kirklees and as well the area span, I would recommend that there be a group in... Huddersfield and a group in Dewsbury, just to kind of have a fair share of an offer there for the whole of Kirklees”

“I think it does cause issues... at least have something kind of in the Dewsbury and Huddersfield area rather than just concentrating on the Huddersfield area”.

It was clear from the above discussions that there is not an easy solution to this issue.

### **Engaging with BME young people**

Similarly, some interviewees felt that it was important that the yOUTH project be welcoming to, and inclusive of, BME young people. How this could be achieved, however, was not readily identified:

"I would say that that's an area in particular that there needs to be more work done... without a doubt there is a definite under-representation of young women from BME backgrounds [accessing services]"

“I think that there's a huge gap with BME young people accessing the service, just because of the cultural issues... I think it's about working with that community, working with local community figures like the imams and kind of getting in to that community”

“I think that is a particular challenge, and I am not sure how we as a society get to really support [those] young people”.

Most participants felt that appealing to or including BME young people was a challenge, although a number did offer suggestions as to how this might be achieved:

“You can target those groups [by] working with local schools”.

Within this, cultural sensitivity and visibility were identified as important:

“Make it really visible that there are non-heterosexual British South Asian women and they do exist and to maybe have very inclusive posters, very inclusive advertising, really emphasise LGBT friendly youth workers that understand the pressure for confidentiality, [that] there won't be this push to come out as a step towards accepting your sexual identity, that that doesn't have to happen”.

It was also felt that BME young people might need particular reassurances, such as they would not be forced to 'come out' or indeed be 'outed' by others:

“So that people don't feel pressured in to it, or that that's what will happen if they go to these places, that there'll be forced to come out”.

One interviewee who had worked with non-heterosexual British South Asian women in the past reflected:

“They didn't find the workers culturally competent. They didn't understand their need for visibility management and that type of thing. They found it difficult to talk about their experiences and why they wanted to remain, as we would say, in the closet... [but] they didn't feel like they were in the closet, they felt they were very out because they were accepting of themselves and their own sexualities, but they still had to manage that... There was one woman who had a very positive experience and that seemed to be because the youth worker where she went when she was a teenager and at school had been very culturally competent and had actually organised Diwali celebrations and things like that so she felt a lot more included... but then they were very suspicious of British South Asian youth workers because they felt that they couldn't trust them, that they wouldn't keep their secrets, that they would be outed”.

### 3. NEEDS RESEARCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

In this chapter we outline results from both elements of the needs research with LGBT young people: the online survey findings, and data drawn from follow-up in-depth research methods with a total of 15 participants involved in four individual interviews and two discussion groups. The purpose of this research was to identify, from young people's perspectives, what services are available to LGBT young people in Kirklees, and any associated gaps or needs in provision. Survey respondents were recruited via social media and Brunswick Centre promotion of the survey. Interviewees were drawn from survey respondents who volunteered to participate further in the research. In addition, the two discussion groups took place within a regular weekly yOUTH group session. The interviews took place in person or over the phone and all qualitative data was digitally recorded and then transcribed before being thematically analysed.

There were 366 responses to the online survey, though not all identified as LGBT, so to account for this a filter was applied to the questions on gender identity and sexuality. Although this is not a perfect solution, those self-identifying as not female or male and/or as bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer or in another non-heterosexual way have been included. After this exercise, there were 68 completions that have been analysed below under the headings they appeared within the original survey.

#### Survey results

##### Participants

In terms of the profile of respondents, ages ranged from 11-24. Both the mean and mode average was 16. Regarding current gender identity:

- 34%<sup>2</sup> identified as female,
- 22% said they were male,
- 15% were trans,
- 10% identified as gender-fluid,
- 7% said they did not identify with any of the given options,
- 6% were gender non-binary,
- 3% said they preferred not to say, and
- 1% identified as genderqueer.

Those that did not identify with any of the given options identified as "demi girl", "trans male", "questioning" and "having doubts".

In terms of current sexual identity:

- 49% identified as bisexual,
- 18% said they were 'none of these',
- 13% were queer,

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<sup>2</sup> Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

- 9% lesbian,
- 7% gay,
- 3% identified as heterosexual or 'straight', and
- 1% said they preferred not to say.

Those that identified in alternative ways said they were pansexual, "asexual bi-romantic", "not sure" and "[it] depends on my gender, but I usually go with gay".

The clear majority of respondents (78%) identified as white, whilst a total of 20% said they were Asian or Asian British (12%), black or black British (1%) or from a mixed background (7%). In addition, 1% preferred not to say. In total, 69% said they had no religion, whilst 14% identified as some form of religion (4% Buddhist, 6% Christian, 3% Jewish, 1% Muslim and 1% Sikh). An additional 6% preferred not to say and 9% said 'none of these', though only two expanded on their answer (with Jehovah's Witness and "I identify as spiritual which basically means I do believe in higher powers but I don't follow a set religion and just try to be a good person").

### Services and support

Participants were asked 'Below is a list of areas that we think LGBT+ young people might want information or support about. Please can you tick if you agree and if you know where you would go to access support or information about them'. The table shows the actual number of responses (not mutually exclusive) per sub-question.

	I think myself or another LGBT+ young person might want information or support about this	I would know where to go to access support or information about this in Kirklees	I would go online to access support or information about this	I don't know where I would go to access support or information about this
Smoking	15	22	33	9
Drug or other substance use	21	21	35	10
Domestic/interpersonal violence and abuse	22	24	25	14
Child sexual abuse/exploitation and online safety	21	27	23	14
Homelessness, housing or missing persons	27	16	20	23
Mental health and emotional wellbeing	38	24	28	12
Experiences of bullying at school	39	24	20	11
Sex and relationships, including sexual health	35	24	25	9
Seeking asylum	19	7	22	26

	I think myself or another LGBT+ young person might want information or support about this	I would know where to go to access support or information about this in Kirklees	I would go online to access support or information about this	I don't know where I would go to access support or information about this
Employment and looking for work	23	21	35	13
Further study or training	14	29	27	10
Relationships with family or friends	32	24	23	13

As the above table shows, the largest number would go online for support or information about smoking, drug or other substance use, and employment and looking for work. The areas that the largest numbers thought LGBT+ young people would want information or support about were homelessness, housing or missing persons; relationships with family or friends; and most clearly, mental health and emotional wellbeing; experiences of bullying at school; and sex and relationships, including sexual health. The areas that people were least likely to say they would know where to go to access support or information about in Kirklees were seeking asylum and homelessness, housing or missing persons.

Participants were then asked 'In general, do you think that if you accessed support or information about any of the above areas they would include and cater to you as an LGBT+ young person?'. Answers were reasonably positive in that over half (53%) said 'yes sometimes' (46%) or 'yes always' (7%). Interestingly, 21% felt their needs as an LGBT+ young person are no different to another young person. However, 18% said they did not know and 7% said 'no never'. Additional detail provided by some participants included:

*"Sometimes when I go to people who want to help I do struggle because some of the people who are meant to support me actually make me feel worse about who I am. An example is that I went to a guidance counsellor and she said that she didn't believe in this sort of thing and dismissed me and I had no help"*

*"While perhaps the reason behind, for example homelessness, might be different from someone not part of the LGBT+ community, it doesn't change the outcome needed"*

*"In some circumstances, LGBT+ needs are different e.g. in the case of sexual education particularly, and also mental health may be relevant"*

*"Wouldn't feel able to access support about issues like domestic violence and child abuse as no one talks about these things"*

*"As a trans person, I've had a lot of bad experiences from services, especially surrounding mental and sexual health. Professionals didn't know how to adequately support me and were often really transphobic"*

*"I think 'only sometimes' the information would help because at school when someone is being bullied I feel like the school should ask why they think they are being bullied so are able to deal with the situation properly"*

*"I think that LGBT+ needs are different in such a way that we need specialised help. Many LGBT+ people may find themselves struggling with domestic abuse due to their parents differing beliefs. I think that there should be resources aimed solely towards LGBT+, because we are different to most people, and actually quite a lot of the issues (such as mental health issues and relationships) could be resolved if there was specialised help"*

*"I haven't seen anything from the council which shows their support/solidarity/awareness of LGBTQ+ issues. Particularly for young people, if I wanted support for the plethora of problems that come with being gay, I would not know where to go. There are no safe spaces that I am aware of, which are publicised widely for young LGBT in Kirklees, such as coffee houses, meet-ups, support groups or even gay clubs. Kirklees needs more LGBT visibility without a doubt"*

*"Staff at New College help with everything".*

When asked 'Do you know of any groups, projects or services that are aimed at LGBT+ young people in Kirklees?', just over half (51%) said they did, whilst 29% said no, and 18% said they did not know. Those known about were:

- Yorkshire Mixtures/yOUTH group x 14,
- LGBT group within school or college x 8,
- The Brunswick Centre x 5,
- Huddersfield Gay Group (HuGG) x 1, and
- University of Huddersfield LGBTQ+ Society x 1.

Participants were also asked 'What information, support, groups, or other activities would you like to see the yOUTH project provide for LGBT+ young people or their families in Kirklees?'. Answers included:

*"I would like teaching about LGBT+. Such as, what is the difference between dysphoria and dysmorphia? Are people born gay, trans, bisexual etc? What is asexuality and aromanticism? Is it possible to be born asexual and/or aromantic? Are asexual and aromantic people LGBT+? Is being transgender a mental illness? Are you transgender if you experience gender dysphoria? Is there more than two genders? What is agender and how can you tell? What is the difference between gender and sex? Questions like that"*

*"More things for trans or non-gender conforming people, and being LGBT in different religions"*

*"Something that educates people. There's social groups and things but we need something that educates parents, for example. There's too much ignorance"*

*"I would like to see events that are open for everyone, including families, which explain what the LGBT+ community really is and relinquish all rumours and nonsense from their minds about us"*

*"More support and awareness towards gender fluidity or non-binary people"*

*"More activities - board games. Online gaming, group activities - to help us make friends [and] get to know each other as it feels segregated. Team-building and tournaments. Group discussions about LGBT issues and making changes. Quizzes"*

*"More arty stuff, more food, decorate with art work and colour"*

*"Social outreach and issue-specific campaigns (e.g. focused on domestic violence, sexual health, homelessness etc)"*

*"Want to do more than chill but don't know what. Maybe more about LGBT rights"*

*"I would really like to see a website developed. It could include... information about local support groups. It should also have support and resources to help people to come out, because I myself haven't yet come out because I'm scared about my family's reaction, so I think that that type of help would be greatly appreciated"*

*"Places to meet and socialise... Kirklees has a large minority population, particularly South Asian, and BAME people need a space for themselves also. Sport clubs, coffee meets, quiz nights, workshops, LGBT theatre, film screenings followed by Q&A or discussions, maybe even a visibility conference or Pride march in Huddersfield, LGBT club nights for 18+. Whatever the activity though, if you want it to succeed, the team behind it MUST include LGBTQ people (and please don't forget the "T") as well as BAME people in leadership positions".*

As the above quotes testify, the majority of comments broadly concerned awareness-raising and yOUTH activities. However, a number also said that they were *"happy to chill"*.

Finally, participants were asked if there was anything else they wanted to say about being an LGBT+ young person in Kirklees. Responses speak to the variability of people's experiences:

*"Life is pretty difficult. Homophobia, transphobia; it's not a nice experience and I hate how nothing is ever done by it. Even by the police"*

*"[There is] support for gay/lesbian people but not much for people of non-cisgenders"*

*"More information about being gay within religions"*

*"Due to the culture of some, it is impossible to ever be accepted, therefore, having support groups that focus on allowing you to accept yourself would be ideal"*

*"For me there's a pretty good young LGBT community in Kirklees (Holmfirth kind of area), but it's not organised or anything and I think some younger kids could benefit"*

*"I'm 16 and happy with myself but I've seen lots of unhappy 11/12/13 year olds, and was one myself"*

*"It's shit because I don't feel I can fully be myself yet. I hide who I am because it's easier"*

*"Life is stressful because of people using wrong terms and wrong pronouns"*

*"I feel comfortable in groups in certain environments like Youth Out. Don't feel comfortable on streets as people shout abuse and school people used to ask me sexual questions not in a nice way"*

*"Some people are OK about me being LGBT, some are not. I can be called names"*

*"I'm OK [but] sometimes I get people question[ing] me a lot and I feel attacked by it. These people were doing it in a nasty way"*

*"It's OK, pain sometimes, not great, still people who give funny looks if in same sex couple. Judgemental people in own age group. Some communities where being LGBT is not accepted, i.e. Muslim and Christian"*

*"It's difficult anywhere because peers use 'gay' as an insult and it makes people struggle with mental health"*

*"I am bisexual and I find it really annoying when people assume I am a lesbian or I am straight because I am both. And people at school call me a lesbian on purpose and people do not know the difference between all the sexualities"*

*"A mixture of people being OK and not. College is really accepting because I have a reputation that I will fight back so people leave me alone"*

*"I would like for my school to understand LGBT+ better and to support young people"*

*"I haven't been beaten up for being LGBT, so that's a plus in my book"*

*"It is a rather mixed experience. Some people are rather accepting of who we are but there are others who make us feel ashamed of who we are. This is actually rather common now as I feel that people are very poorly educated upon this matter. We are all people at the end of the day. We are killed with the same bullets, eat the same food and are hurt with the same words, so none of should us should be treat differently"*

*"I feel like there isn't enough being done to help young LGBT+ people"*

*"It seems everything LGBT, and particularly for BAME people, happens outside of Kirklees; in Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Brighton and London. We have no place to socialise and call our own, and that needs to happen".*

## **In-depth findings**

### Participants

In total, 15 young people were involved in this stage of the research. Their ages ranged from 12-22. Most were at school or college and living with their family. All identified as LGBT+ in some way. Whilst some had supportive families, some did not.

### Life in Kirklees

Initially, participants were asked to describe what life is like for an LGBT+ young person in Kirklees. Most responses referred to some level of variability, whether in terms of identity or location:

*"It probably depends what you are, because for gay, bisexual and trans people there doesn't seem to be much of a problem, but for like pan or non-binary people... I think it's probably a bit harder, because there's not much representation or anything... Quite a lot of people at my school don't know what it is to be asexual or aromantic or anything because it's not really talked about at all... I've had to explain it to quite a few people in my classes because people have asked me because they've been confused about letters in the acronym since I'm out and people want to know what things mean, so they come to me. I feel like I shouldn't be the one who has to tell people since... I don't have that much information and I'm not qualified to know all this stuff... People still use words like gay in a negative sort of way but they don't mean it as like an insult, I think that they basically just don't understand... like you're walking home from school, or like walking around school and suddenly you'll hear someone say the word 'faggot' and that's a bit of a problem. It's used quite commonly and I don't really think it should be"*

*"I think that a lot of people who are LGBT might have mental health problems I would say... from my friends and just from knowing a lot of people... [and] I feel like gay people are more accepted than trans people... even though we're still not fully accepted... The only time in school I felt threatened was maybe when I was like on my own and there was a lot of really straight people around me and I just felt weird compared to them"*

*"In high school I did have a bit of bullying when they first found out but after that it got a lot better. Now that I've left that kind of thing most of the world over 16+ is more accepting... because obviously [they're] more mature... When you tell people you've got to, this sounds really harsh, but you've got to know that it's coming because that's just what it's like"*

*"It's alright, but it could be better... you can either get people who are accepting of it, or you can get people who make it their life's mission to make life very difficult for you... [at school] there were people who were acceptant, and then there was just some people who made it ten times worse than it already was... Staff are rather accepting, but they've got confused on names from time to time but they would always correct themselves and apologise. That's understandable because there's that many students ....and then suddenly it's changed... but students... They weren't really forgetting... Kirklees is a giant pick n mix, you can either get people who are acceptant or you could just get people who try and make things very difficult for you"*

*"A lot depends where you are... our school is full of queer people; apart from like a few idiots, it's really accepting. Our school is like that but then I've got a friend who goes to, I think it's a Catholic school somewhere near here, and she knows that there are two queer people in her whole school who are out... and there are a lot of people that use gay as an insult".*

When discussing experiences of school, issues about PE and responses to bullying were particularly highlighted:

*"In PE, [a friend] and I are both female to male transitioning and we both get changed in the nurses office and then we have to do PE in with the girls, we are not allowed to be in the boys group for doing PE... I like that because the girls' activities I like better, because I'm not very sporty, but [my friend] works out, he loves rugby and he loves all that and he is not allowed to do it with the boys"*

*"If you're wearing [a] hijab they let you take a break but if you're wearing a binder they don't let you take a break and you need to wear both of those, neither of those things is a choice"*

*"I feel my particular life in high school, it was like I went through all this homophobia... and it mentally hurts you, mentally scars you... and it's like the teachers, most of them, don't seem to fully grasp how you feel. So when they see me like beating some guy's face in because of it... it's like you've led me to that situation. I felt unsafe"*

*"I once got suspended for hitting somebody because they had constantly been saying stuff to me and they didn't do anything about that, they just suspended me... It is always the victim is the one that gets in trouble"*

*"When the teachers try to address the issue of LGBTQ+... I felt like I was some sort of quarantine victim, like 'oh, these people are special'. Like I want people to acknowledge that I am LGBT, I want to be like normal... I want to be treated equally with respect, but... the whole like treat us differently even though they're trying to help us, it made it worse"*

*"You want to be acknowledged but you don't want to be separated out".*

More generally, participants were very aware of the silencing of LGBT identities within school spaces, which they felt directly affected their lives:

*"I feel like as a result of the whole Section 28 thing... it was such like a shitty, 'don't talk about it', topic"*

*"It's like a secret thing"*

*"[At school] today... the speaker guy kept talking about, because we were all girls, kept talking about guys as if they were like the people we'd be attracted to, but it's like me and a couple of my friends were sat there like 'we don't really get what you're saying'... It could make someone feel like they shouldn't come out, or they shouldn't like say anything about it because it could sort of cause something to happen ... A few people were getting annoyed, including myself, but it's not really enough people for them to actually change what they're doing"*

*"Prom dancing is a massive issue. Girls can't dance with girls, boys can't dance with boys. They are not allowed to, and a female cannot lead a male... people in year 10 and 11 have kept on trying and they won't do anything... You have to practice prom dancing in year 10 and 11, and you are not allowed to dance with the same sex".*

#### Accessing information or support

Participants explained that they thought of school as a source of information, but that this wasn't always LGBT-inclusive:

*"The main place I get information about stuff... is from the school bulletin, so nothing really gets mentioned in there... I'm in year 8, so it's been like two years... There's not really anything that's really talked about. A lot of people aren't even aware that [Pride] happens".*

Young people also said that they saw the internet as a source of information and potential friendship or support:

*"Somewhere to just talk to other people who are LGBT would be nice, because at the moment the only thing that I am really aware of that I can do that is the internet... because it's just nice to talk to other people who identify with the same sort of community... One of my friends, she told her mum I was gay and she had quite a poor reaction, so for them it might be nice to have somewhere they could go for support because they're quite scared because they're bi and they don't really want to tell their mum because she reacted in a poor way to finding out I was gay"*

*"I don't think there's much out there. I remember when I first wanted to start finding people who were the same as me I went online... I found it quite hard but I suppose there is chat rooms and stuff like that but it's not the same as going to an actual group and interacting with people... [Later] I had friends which were LGBT so they all had groups themselves, they'd made Facebook groups and I was in some of them... There are some chat rooms but I just think you have to be a bit safe online and I'm*

*not really about going on and talking to people I don't know so it is difficult for some people who are doing that".*

Where schools or colleges had LGBT groups these were usually (though not always) talked about favourably:

*"I went to the [school] diversity group and it was honestly one of the best groups that I've been to... Very acceptant and very, very helpful and if you ever needed to speak to anyone about issues like that then you could openly talk and nobody was going to judge you"*

*"The [group] at college is convenient... we kind of just talk about stuff... the student welfare officer, she runs it, and I speak to her quite a lot. She is very good"*

*"Basically it started up and people went for a few weeks but then nothing really happened and it wasn't on a lot of weeks... and it's just kind of stopped... all the times I went, we didn't really do anything... and I think that people just lost interest".*

Those with experience of the yOUTH group also found this positive:

*"The [group] in town is bigger... [and more] social... [we do] activities"*

*"There's more structure to [the new yOUTH group] now, which is good... It's just really relaxed and there's other rooms if you want to speak in private"*

*"In here it's amazing"*

*"We have a woman [from Locala]... she went on a residential as well... she is very funny... Brilliant... [she gives] lots of advice and just being helpful, not judging. Just really good"*

*"[The] group is good, so I'm quite happy with that. We've even got activities that we can go to and residential. It's really good, especially they're free as well because not everyone can afford or some people don't even want to tell their parents that they go... I really like it. It helps me a lot through times where I've been bullied and had other people to relate to. It's like a safe space"*

*"You can be yourself"*

*"This is my first night, I've never seen any of these people before and I felt like proper welcomed... my experience here so far, I really enjoy it. I haven't seen anything that could improve"*

*"[Without the group] I would not have so many good friends as I do now"*

*"[Without the group] I wouldn't have all the lines of support and all the friends that I've got from this"*

*“All of the experiences from like meeting people and spending time with them, people I wouldn’t have known otherwise... [it is] really good”*

*“I would say that my confidence has built a lot more, while I’m here”*

*“We can all relate to each other”*

*“It is that thing of being safe and being with people like you”*

*“Here it is a lot easier to explain my sexuality, because it’s like ‘no I am not just bisexual, I am all these things too”*

*“I think that I am definitely a lot more confident having been here, and definitely, that has definitely been a big help for me... just being more confident, being like I was so proud, because I used to have a terrible social anxiety”.*

Comments suggested that the project was already having an impact beyond the weekly group:

*“To begin with I thought high school was difficult, just difficult in general and then being part of LGBT+, like it’s even worse. But then thanks to [yOUTH staff member] it’s a bit more bearable”*

*“In my school anyway [yOUTH staff member] is definitely helping. He comes in and sets things straight”*

*“Now we have more funding... we’re doing more, like we’ve been on a residential which was so fun, like I would love to do that again whenever we can... there was only a few of us and that made me a lot more happy because I wasn’t around such a massive group of people”*

*“It’s got a lot better than when I first started coming [to Yorkshire Mixtures]... you can actually talk to them if you’ve got a problem... When I first started, even if you spoke to them about it, ‘yeah, yeah, we’ll do something’ [but] they never fucking did... Since [yOUTH staff member] started it’s helped me a lot more, because there are people I can actually talk to”.*

The only aspect of yOUTH where there was some uncertainty or disagreement concerned the security procedures in place at the group:

*“I completely see why we have to do more to get in now, and I fully get that, but there was kind of a thing before of, I don’t know, it was more like we were friendlier altogether”*

*“It feels very tedious. It makes sense, but it’s tedious”*

*“I just think before it... just had more of a kind of casual friendly vibe”*

*"I like the idea of this being quite an enclosed group... because I have massive panic attacks... when I am in here I know that there is only a couple of groups of people so I know I will be a lot more safe".*

There were also some differences of opinion on the age range of the group:

*"They've expanded the age which I think is a lot better so there is younger people but if any older people want to join they do sit down with older people and talk to them"*

*"I like... the wide age range, because then it also shows you how some people are still surviving"*

*"I think it would be good to have it starting at 12 instead of 11, just because especially since it's that first year of high school, you change a lot in that one year as well, so I think that it would just be that extra bit to mature a little before you came".*

Participants were asked about specific issues and whether they knew where to find more information about them. The topics that people focussed on were mental health and emotional wellbeing, and sex and relationships, including sexual health. In general, the comments pointed to support needs in these areas:

*"If the family is not accepting then it could cause some mental health problems. They might want something to help them with that... there's quite a lot of poor reactions, which is why there's higher suicide rates and stuff like that"*

*"Mental health is a big part of LGBT so if someone does come to a teacher then referring them to someone if they do need it. It's not forcing it on them because obviously people think there's something wrong with them if you did that, but saying there's these people you can go talk to about how you're feeling, that's always helpful because I know a lot of people do struggle coming to terms with who they are and just talking to someone who is trained is good to have"*

*"The lack of stuff in the education system about LGBT [in] sex education, there's like nothing in there, so that's kind of a bit scary... [we are] not represented... when we were doing sex education at school in year 7 I think that would be the biggest time I was questioning my sexuality so... I didn't know it was an option, if that makes sense... it makes people quite naïve, and then the amount of people that ask, like me, because I identify as gay, ask about how sex works, it's truly annoying. I wish they would teach it so they wouldn't ask all the time"*

*"They didn't teach us about sexual health between female to female, male to male, it was just male and female, so it would be good if they taught more about that because... you kind of need to know"*

*"When I was doing sex ed originally it was birds and bees, blah blah blah... they told us nothing about gay sex, or relationship-wise for that matter... It just shows them teachers, they can't do their job properly"*

*"I think that it's good that they should teach about gay sex because something I've been asked for no reason, because I am 12, is how would two gay people have sex. Like how is that your business... [and] why are you asking me. I'm 12! ...They assume that you are an expert on this subject... Like we've both been taught jack shit, why are you asking me?!"*

### Sources of information and support in the future

Finally, participants were asked to identify what other provision they would like to see for LGBT young people or their families in Kirklees. Often suggestions were about increasing awareness and education about LGBT identities and relationships:

*"Well some people aren't aware of other people that come under that community and fit in to it, because like people aren't necessarily aware of gender-fluid people or non-binary people. It's just like they're not aware of other people who are in the community and... I feel that there should be more awareness"*

*"It's really sad that Huddersfield Pride might be taken off again because of funding. It was really good when they did have it, it just brought awareness to Huddersfield, areas where it isn't as big as Manchester"*

*"I would say that to just incorporate it... because there will be different sex education for different points or topics that we go through, like pregnancy and all that stuff, and just have it as one of the topics. Like when they talk about heterosexual sex, intercourse, just talk about it then... but maybe like avoid using terms like gay, maybe just say like two females"*

*"I believe you should teach kids sex ed when they're young or year 7 and I feel the main problem is that they don't teach about LGBTQ at all"*

*"I was going to say I feel there should be, not barriers, but like more of like an entry requirement for teachers, as in they actually... have to know at least a certain amount, like a certain amount about mental health and what to do and also about LGBT"*

*"I think that it's really hard to know what it [asexuality] is, so I feel we should learn more about that, because even in the LGBT system we don't know that much about it, because it's more focused around gay and bisexual... like rather than always saying it's okay to want to have sex, they should say that it's okay to not want to have sex, because then you feel pressured... We need someone to come to every school and explain it in detail".*

Another area that participants called attention to was future events and visibility in Kirklees:

*"I think that there should be more social events surrounding LGBT in Kirklees because at the end of the day love is love... I think that there should definitely be more activities concerning LGBT and I haven't seen very many Pride marches in Kirklees"*

*“We want a Gay Pride in Huddersfield”.*

Other contributions were specific feedback for the yOUTH project:

*“More evenings would be good because not everybody can make Wednesday nights. Another night would be good, if it was two nights a week... if people are working or have got coursework to do”*

*“I think more nights during summer and things like that... having like a couple of days each week in the holidays would be very good. We don't have anything else really”*

*“More open acknowledging of minorities who are LGBTQ+”.*

For one interviewee unaware of yOUTH what they described was very akin to the provision that yOUTH is able to offer:

*“It would be nice to see that there were groups and places to go for support... like the Gay Straight Alliance thing that's in America. I don't really think that is in the schools in the UK at all, which is a bit of a shame, because it seems like something that people might want... because if they can't go home and tell their parents... it would be nice for someone to go to school and have somebody... We have places specifically for people who struggle with like mental health or mainly for dyslexic people... We have like a place for them to go at break for lunch, but there is not really like a certain place for other communities to go to... We have Pride and stuff but I prefer to see something smaller that's at school”.*

## **4. IMPACT EVALUATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

Here we summarise results from both elements of the first round of impact evaluation with young people involved in the yOUTH project. This includes the online survey and data drawn from follow-up in-depth research methods with a total of 13 participants involved in two individual interviews and two discussion groups (involving 11 individuals). The purpose of this evaluation element was essentially to gather views on yOUTH services and support from young people with experience of accessing them.

Survey respondents were recruited through Brunswick Centre dissemination of the survey. Interviewees were drawn from survey respondents who volunteered to participate further in the research. In addition, two discussion groups took place within a regular weekly yOUTH group session. The interviews took place in person or over the phone and all qualitative data was digitally recorded and then transcribed before being analysed thematically.

### **Survey results**

To date, 24 people have responded to the survey, of which 17 had experience of yOUTH, so it is these results that are reported here.

#### Participants

The majority of respondents were aged 17 (x 15), with smaller numbers either side of this: one was 12, three were 13, two were 14, one was 15, two were 16, one was 18, one was 19, and one was 23. In terms of gender identity, the majority (13 in total) did not identify as cisgender: seven were trans, four were gender non-binary, and two were gender-fluid. In addition, five were female and four were male. Regarding sexual identity, five identified as pansexual, four as bisexual, three as gay, two as lesbian, two preferred not to say, and one said they were queer. Respondents were largely white (x 14), with smaller numbers Asian or Asian British (x 2) or from a mixed background (x 1). The majority (x 10) said they had no religion, whilst two were Christian, two were Muslim, one was Hindu, one said they were Wiccan, and one other preferred not to say.

#### Services and support

Survey participants were asked what kind of contact they had had with the yOUTH project. As the table below shows, over half (54%) had received one-to-one contact or support (just under a quarter 'most of the time'), whilst 29% had never. The yOUTH group had been accessed by 71%, with 41% saying they did so 'most of the time'. Smaller numbers accessed an LGBT youth group at their school or college that the yOUTH project are involved in (41% had, and 41% had never). Over a third (36%) had attended the monthly parents and trans youth group, whilst 53% had never.

	Yes but only once (%)	Yes but not very often (%)	Yes quite often (%)	Yes most of the time (%)	No never (%)	I'm not sure (%)
I've had contact or support on a one-to-one basis (in person or over the phone)	-	18	12	24	29	18
I've attended the weekly LGBT youth group in Huddersfield	-	6	24	41	18	12
I've attended an LGBT youth group at my school or college that the yOUTH project are involved in	18	-	12	29	41	-
I've attended the monthly parents and trans youth group in Huddersfield	-	12	-	24	53	12

Participants were also asked to identify what they thought of their contact with the yOUTH project. The table below clearly demonstrates that the results were positive: no core yOUTH activities were thought to be 'not very good' or 'rubbish'. The largest numbers found the one-to-one support and the weekly yOUTH group to be 'excellent'. Only school or college-based groups had a slightly more mixed response, with 41% viewing them positively and 18% viewing them negatively.

	It was excellent (%)	It was good (%)	It wasn't very good (%)	It was rubbish (%)	I'm not sure (%)	I have no experience of this (%)
I've had contact or support on a one-to-one basis (in person or over the phone)	35	12	-	-	18	35
I've attended the weekly LGBT youth group in Huddersfield	47	24	-	-	-	29
I've attended an LGBT youth group at my school or college that the yOUTH project are involved in	29	12	6	12	-	41
I've attended the monthly parents and trans youth group in Huddersfield	18	18	-	-	-	65

Some people chose to provide more detail to explain their responses and how the yOUTH project has helped them:

*"It is amazing"*

*"Helped to feel comfortable about myself and not alone"*

*"It has allowed me be more open about myself to other people"*

*"The project has helped me to meet people who are similar to me and who have the same interests and likes as me. It has made me much more confident with myself and being bisexual. It has also helped me to become much more confident and open about who I am"*

*"I feel so welcomed and accepted"*

*"Gave me a bit more confidence and... I socialise more with people my age and go out more. Workers give out a lot of advice and they are friendly and helpful".*

Respondents were asked about any information or support they had been given about particular issues. The table below suggests that the three issues most likely to be discussed were (in this order): mental health and emotional wellbeing; relationships with family or friends; sex and relationships, including sexual health. It was a minority of subjects that most people felt were not discussed: homelessness, housing or missing persons; seeking asylum; employment and looking for work. Of course this might be because these issues are not felt to be relevant to staff or service users.

	Yes (%)	No (%)	I'm not sure (%)
Smoking	53	35	12
Drug or other substance use	65	29	6
Domestic/interpersonal violence and abuse	47	41	12
Child sexual abuse/exploitation and online safety	65	24	12
Homelessness, housing or missing persons	35	47	18
Mental health and emotional wellbeing	82	12	6
Experiences of bullying at school	62	19	19
Sex and relationships, including sexual health	71	24	6
Seeking asylum	6	65	29
Employment and looking for work	24	71	6
Further study or training	47	41	12
Relationships with family or friends	81	6	13

The penultimate question that respondents were asked related to any further information, support, groups or other activities they would like to see the yOUTH project provide for LGBT young people or their families in Kirklees. Responses included the below, not all of which it may be possible for the yOUTH project to respond to, though some may be worth consideration:

*"My school doesn't have any LGBT groups or support"*

*"I would like a Pride event please, also more in-school LGBT clubs"*

*"More information about hate crime and where to get support"*

*"I would like to have more information on how to keep safe in terms of hate crime, we should have more talks about how to keep safe at night etc"*

*"Information about other services for when service users are older than 24"*

*"Make other places LGBT friendly".*

The final survey question asked participants if there was anything else they wanted to say about the yOUTH project or what it is like being an LGBT young person in Kirklees. Just three people responded:

*"I am very pleased with the project and it has made me feel much more welcome to the college as I am a fairly new student and I felt a bit left out but now I feel much more included and involved"*

*"It's good"*

*"I feel like an average person and not special because of my gender".*

## **In-depth findings**

### Participants

Those involved in interviews or discussion groups about the impact of the yOUTH project were aged between 12 and 18. Most were living with their families and attending school or college. Whilst most were located in Huddersfield some travelled some distance to attend the yOUTH group.

### Experiences of the yOUTH project

Initial discussions with participants focussed on which aspects of yOUTH they had engaged in.

#### **1-1 advice or help**

There appeared to be high levels of trust in the provision of 1-1 support, which participants were clear they could easily access if needed:

*"They're always there"*

*"If I had a problem, I could go to him [yOUTH staff member] and he would always have a solution for me. Even at 12 o'clock if I needed to ring someone they would actually speak to me"*

*"If we need information we can always ask"*

*"They check up on me every time I go to the group. They're always like caring and friendly to make sure that we're safe and we're generally OK... They can read if someone is not alright and then they bring you to one side and have like a little one-to-one to make sure you're alright".*

### **The weekly yOUTH group**

The group was talked about very positively by all participants:

*"In every aspect... the management of it, the staff, it's just really good"*

*"I love it here".*

Here we outline immediate responses to the weekly yOUTH group, whilst later we discuss the impacts of this for young people. Young people explained that the group often involves arts and crafts or games, and discussion of topical events or issues, such as International Women's Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, and Fairtrade Fortnight. Their ability to choose what to be involved in seemed particularly positive:

*"There's usually like a topic and we talk around that, but we're not forced to"*

*"We're not forced to do anything we don't want to do"*

*"It's not like, 'Sit down, you have to do this'. It's like, 'It's there if you want it but feel free to do whatever the hell you want'"*

*"The best part is just that we mess about with each other... and they don't say stop messing about".*

Beyond that, participants also talked about how the group represented a "safe place" for them (in a context where they might not feel that their school provides this). This sense of somewhere they can just 'be' (themselves) was related to the staff and the other young people involved:

*"I'd say it's mostly the fact that you're with people who are not necessarily the same as you but they've been in situations that are also tough times"*

*"They don't judge you [whereas] you can come to school and everyone will stare at you"*

*"It's very accepting".*

Interestingly, whilst there was some uncertainty about the safety procedures in place at our baseline visit, at our repeat visit these concerns did not seem to be present, as this exchange shows:

*"It's quite relaxed... we can't bring people into group who haven't met [yOUTH staff member]"*

*...which is kind of good*

*...It's like a sponsor system*

*...I'd say more like an affirmation*

*...I think it's a good system*

*...It's for our safety".*

The (2018) residential was remembered fondly by those who went on it:

*"That was so good".*

Pride events also appeared to be another memorable aspect of taking part in the yOUTH project. Participants talked positively about attending previous events, and were clearly interested in and/or excited about going to further Pride events this year.

### ***School and college-based groups***

Similarly to the weekly Huddersfield yOUTH group, school and college-based groups were usually talked about positively:

*"I like that it's chill, because I don't feel pressured to talk about things"*

*"The ones that are running in school are amazing".*

### **Accessing information**

Participants were asked if they had received or would want information on specific topics, including the following:

- **Smoking:** most people we spoke to remembered some content on this, and in particular the carbon monoxide tester
- **Drug or other substance use:** most people also remembered being given some information on this, including 'high risk' and 'low risk' substances, as well as alcohol. This was thought to be useful
- **Domestic violence and abuse** was less remembered and there was uncertainty about whether or not they had ever talked about it, though a number said they thought they should. As one person commented: "I've been in three emotionally and verbally abusive relationships and I never knew anything about it... I didn't realise one of them was horrible as they were to me until I broke up with them... so I wish I knew... I think people should know about it because... people will just mainly think of sexual abuse, or people hitting each other, and they don't really realise the whole controlling and emotional and verbal abuse"

- **Mental health and emotional wellbeing** was often felt to be one of the most important subjects for LGBT young people to learn about, and therefore the yOUTH project was thought to have “done quite a lot of that”
- **Bullying at school or college** was also something that the yOUTH project was thought to deal with, as participants suggested: “We talk about how our school deals with LGBT situations”; “If you tell [yOUTH staff member] about it, the next day it will completely be sorted”; “They do a lot about bullying”
- **Sex and relationships education** was another subject thought to be dealt with “a lot”, including “how to stay safe”; “They’re actually really good on pushing safe sex with LGBT+ youth”, though as noted above there could perhaps be more content on safe/healthy relationships (as opposed to sex).

One discussion group felt quite strongly that **housing issues**, issues related to **employment and looking for work**, information about **further study or training**, and **relationships with family or friends** were better suited to 1-1 encounters than group work.

Just one topic was thought to perhaps be missing, which might be described as ‘life skills’ (though we would suggest this says more about current schooling than it does about current yOUTH delivery):

*“I don’t even know how to pay my tax because I’m almost 18 and I’ve never been taught this”*

*“I’m going to uni next year and I don’t know how to do anything... I can cook, I can clean [but] I can’t do anything related to money or banking or anything like that”*

*“I don’t really know how to live on my own... [but] I have been getting like one-to-one help with it”.*

More generally, participants called for greater education about LGBT identities and rights, which speaks to ongoing interest in LGBT-inclusive SRE, as well as current media ‘debates’ about LGBT inclusion in schools:

*“I feel like we should... apart from LGBT history, which we need to be talking about obviously, but then talk about the law and our rights about it and how it affects us going forward... how we can know our own rights and use it to either protect us or people that we’re friends with and how it could affect us getting employment and rights about that. Because nobody really tells you that... so I feel we need to be taught our queer history and queer rights... I feel like these guys are like the best to tell us about it... unlike teachers we actually respect these people”*

*“I’m gay [and female] and I never got taught anything about same-sex female relationships, ever... so going into it, we were like, ‘What do we do, what do we need? We know nothing’... you only ever get told if you get taught about same-sex relationships, ‘Oh yeah man and man, one wears a condom when going in, bim bam boom’, but we never get taught”*

*“I think schools should teach LGBT into the curriculum, like they do different religions, why can’t they do different genders or sexualities? We don’t learn about modern issues, which we should do, so people at school are ignorant and there’s a lot of abuse towards me and loads of other people. But that’s just based on ignorance and lack of understanding”*

*“In school, well our school anyway, sex education is just a male and a female... They don’t talk about trans or two girls, two guys. [It’s] just black and white to them, so they don’t really... obviously you know what to do, but it’s not easy”.*

### The impact of yOUTH involvement

When asked, participants were able to describe how they felt the yOUTH project had impacted on their lives. Often their comments contrasted yOUTH environments with their family lives:

*“It’s inspired me to teach lessons to younger years about LGBT... because our teachers are pretty bad at that”*

*“I know from coming here I’m a lot happier... if I didn’t come here I’d just be at home all the time, and home is horrible”*

*“Before I went to group, I were like really shy and kept myself to myself, but ever since I’ve gone there and met... people like me... I’ve become more confident and outgoing and able to accept myself and be who I am... I used to [self-harm] every day and now it’s like... rare, quite rare... They’ve saved my life a few times, literally just by being there to talk to”*

*“I don’t have to hide when I’m here”*

*“To me, Wednesdays is my break from everything, because I’m happy when I’m here, and I’m completely accepted by other people... I will never come out to my family about my gender because I’ve seen the reaction my [relative] had coming out as trans, and my parents openly will make fun of non-binary and gender-fluid people... So coming here is a big rest”*

*“It [the group] made it a lot easier to handle [being trans] because there were other people who I could talk to who knew about it and were supportive of it... I’m not quite myself around other people”*

*“[yOUTH] has been more help in the last few months than CAMHS has in the last three years”*

*“This [group] and the one at college are the two places that I can actually be who I feel I am, and have no-one really judge me, because everyone here is just like... ‘we don’t care, we’re all like you, let’s be friends’”*

*“This sounds really dark, but I probably wouldn’t have got to college, I probably wouldn’t have made it to the end of high school without people, groups like this... I went from having zero friends and thinking there was something wrong with me for liking the same sex and not identifying as being a girl. I thought there was something super-wrong with me, and I thought... no-one is ever going to accept me, no-one is going to love me for this. And it was shit. I wouldn’t have made it out of Year 8 if it wasn’t for them”.*

In one instance a participant wanted to be able to share details about the group with others at their school but felt prevented from doing so by school staff:

*“At my school [other students] are interested but I just don’t know how to put it in place for them, because I have the pressure from my safeguarding department and I’m trying to do something which they don’t want me to... I actually can’t speak to the students regarding ‘Oh there’s this going on, there’s that going on’, they just don’t let me do it... [and] I know there’s some... people in my school who have problems themselves”.*

Another also contrasted their trust in yOUTH to their experiences of mainstream service provision:

*“The CAMHS woman outed me to my parents... without knowing how my parents would react. Luckily, they were brilliant but she had no right to do that... Basically CAMHS are not doing their job right... Right in front of me... she didn’t ask if we could talk about it, she just blurted it out... it weren’t a risk to my health or something, so she had no right to say it”.*

When asked if they had any requests or suggestions for yOUTH in the future, the majority of responses were akin to “carry on the good work”; “keep doing what they’re doing”; “we’d be lost without you”.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter we summarise key elements of the overall report. Across the board it was clear that local staff and LGBT young people agree on two key points: that there is a lack of LGBT-inclusive SRE in schools, and that LGBT young people may need support with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. These were two particular areas where it was thought that the yOUTH project could, and already was, addressing these gaps/needs. There was some suggestion from both stakeholders and young people that content on domestic violence and abuse could possibly be enhanced within wider discussions about intimate relationships.

### **Service mapping**

The service mapping element identified positive feedback about partnership working and communication undertaken by the yOUTH project. Although there was some lack of awareness about the yOUTH project at this stage, it is assumed that this will likely have improved since then.

Most clearly, the mapping exercise served to highlight grave concerns among practitioners about access to mental health support for young people, because of the lengthy waiting lists involved in local provision. Stakeholders also drew attention to the complexities involved in offering service provision throughout Kirklees, and in adequately engaging BME young people as service users. It is likely that these issues will be ongoing challenges for the yOUTH project, with no easy solutions moving forward.

### **Needs research with young people**

In general, young people involved in both the survey and follow-up in-depth methods said that they found Kirklees a 'mixed' place to be LGBT. This was thought to relate both to different identities within the LGBT 'umbrella' (e.g. it is perhaps 'easier' to be gay or lesbian than it is to be bisexual or trans) as well as the different micro contexts in which young people live their lives (e.g. because schools and/or home lives vary). It was clear that mental health and wellbeing, sex and relationships education, and access to local Pride events were important issues for young people.

### **Impact evaluation with young people**

This component of our work demonstrates that the yOUTH project (in particular the 1-1 support on offer and the weekly yOUTH group) is an important, trusted and appreciated service for local LGBT young people. Feedback was unanimously positive, with the project thought to offer opportunities for safety and friendship away from less positive contexts in which young people spend their time. Feelings of 'relief' and 'acceptance' resulted in self-reported impacts on self-confidence and overall levels of happiness, which speaks directly to the yOUTH project's aim around 'LGBT young people report happier and healthier relationships and improved emotional health and wellbeing'.

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