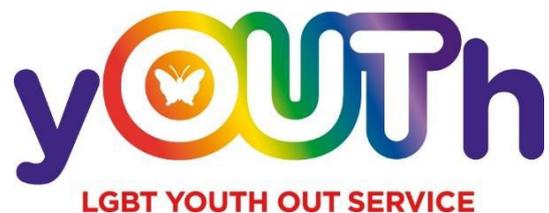


yOUTH Service – LGBT Young People

Mystery Shopping Project Report – Phase 3

August 2021



The Brunswick Centre would like to thank all involved in the project, especially the young people who have given their time, shared their experiences and contributed to the project. Without them it would not have been possible.

We would like to thank all the organisations who have been involved in the project for being mystery shopped and for being supportive of our young people.

Thanks also go to Kirklees Council, who have funded the work and enabled it to happen.

Thank you to all the staff and youth workers who have been involved in the sessions, giving ideas and being great role models for young people.

The term LGBT is used throughout this report. LGBT refers to those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgendered as well as those identifying as other gender and sexual minorities.

Introduction

The mystery shopper project was delivered by the Brunswick Centre through the yOUTH (Youth Out) Service. The yOUTH Service works with young people across Kirklees aged 11 - 24 who identify as LGBT. The current provision involves a weekly youth group, a monthly trans group for young people and parents, and 1-2-1 support as well as supporting local schools and colleges. The mystery shopper project was funded to see how accessible local services are for LGBT young people, what barriers may exist and what could be done to improve access for LGBT young people.

Phase one of the mystery shopper project concluded in April 2019, with services receiving feedback. If you would like to see the full report and get further information on the context and approach of the project, please go to:

<https://www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk/uploads/images/yOUTH-Mystery-Shopping-FINAL-Report-1.pdf>

Phase two followed on from this and concluded in December 2019, resulting in another three services receiving visits from young people. This report is available from:

<https://www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk/uploads/images/Mystery-Shopper-Phase-2-Report.pdf>

Mystery Shops and Covid-19

The pandemic had a direct impact on this phase of mystery shopping. In March 2020, all of our youth work moved to various digital platforms to ensure that we could continue with the high level of youth work needed in the area. This meant that the third wave of the mystery shopping project had to be completed differently.

After speaking to the young people, they decided on four provisions that could receive a visit – however the focus this time had to be on the virtual presence of the service as well as any online interactions that the young people could engage with.

Three of these services chosen by the young people had not been shopped before. As with phases 1 and 2, the services were not notified of the mystery shop happening as we wanted to ensure an authentic experience of the service by the young people which they could evaluate against the set criteria.

The shops needed more planning than in previous phases as young people needed to investigate online as to if services were open, what they were offering and how this could be mystery shopped, if at all.

The shops were planned in advance and included the young people researching the opening times, websites, and then either attending the provision online, or engaging with the provision online through webchats etc.

Staff supported young people where young people felt they needed it, this was a different way to mystery shop certain provisions and so young people understood that they might need to lean on youth workers in a different way compared to any previous face-to-face visits that had taken place.

Mystery Shop 1

Two young people undertook a mystery shop to a Live Chat for this organisation. They report that the workers were late starting the website function. The young people report that the website was easy to find but that there is a lot of information on the website. There is no specific LGBT section on the website. The young people noted that the option for selecting another language doesn't work – nor does the simplify page option. Young people also noted that confidentiality isn't mentioned on the website nor in the live chat.

Young people report that at the first mention of them being LGBT, the worker tried to signpost them to other services (LGBT Foundation), the young people note 'they didn't really talk about what we asked them about. It felt like they were shoving us off to another website without discussing what we went there for'.

However, young people did note that although they knew of LGBT Foundation, they felt it odd that they didn't refer to more local LGBT organisations. Young people noted that a positive of this shop was that the organisation had an active social media presence.

Mystery Shop 2

One young person undertook a mystery shop to this service which they described the online session 'run by workers and volunteers as exceptional'. They explained that zoom links are only sent out to these young people who needed them – ensuring young people are kept as safe as possible. Young people said that the service offered very clear information about what to expect before accessing the service, with the service having an up-to-date social media presence – responses times from the service are noted as 'the same day if not a day or two after the initial message.'

No information was available in further languages, there is a particular section for LGBT people and the young person noted there was a 'Hide Me' function 'this 'marker' stays no matter what page you are on, making it easy to access.'

The young person noted that the service could make the waiting room on zoom better by informing those waiting what the service is to ensure that they are in the right place.

The young person pointed out that if the service couldn't support with the young person's issues then they were signposted to the correct service which could support them.

Mystery Shop 3

One young person visited this service. It is a newer service supporting young people virtually. The young person said that they had a positive experience from the member of staff that they spoke with online, they were very quick to respond. The young person explained that the worker was very clear about what was available from the service as well as giving them a clear explanation of the website policies. There were also clear about the website's clearly set out safeguarding policy.

Regarding the layout and accessibility of the website, the young person explained that there wasn't an accessibility option for the website 'and as someone with dyslexia it was hard to navigate because of all the bright colours and backgrounds.'

The young person shared that they had to search for LGBT information and what they did find was limited.

In terms of talking to staff, the young person had this to say, 'the person I spoke to was very understanding and listened, gave some advice and also sent me a link for the Brunswick Centre, she said if I needed anymore help, I could talk to the people there or talk to her again and she was very considerate'.

Mystery Shop 4

One young person visited this provision – it was an online only based provision. It is a service which a larger organisation commissions to provide services to young people. The commissioned service was shopped and reported on in this instance.

The young person reported that the chat function is clear and has a good explanation about what it offers. There are no social media accounts for this provision. The young person shared that they felt that there was a variety of articles and discussions about issues pertinent to young people's lives - these can be viewed whilst waiting for someone to talk to, they also reported that LGBT-specific resources were easy to find, however there seemed to be no provision for people who don't speak English to someone who might need resources in a large format.

The service was very clear with the young person about its confidentiality policy – 'it was the first thing that they shared with me.' When talking to staff the young person shared that the worker 'provided an interesting perspective and was very good at listening to what I was saying – very friendly and accepting of LGBT identities.'

The young person noted that it took over 25 minutes from requesting to speak to someone, to someone answering.

Conclusion and recommendations

As detailed in the Phase one and two reports, the mystery shopper project continues to identify several areas for further development across a range of services offering interventions. Again, as before, there were some excellent examples of where services listen to young people – in two of the shops, confidentiality was very thoroughly explained. The presence of LGBT specific information on websites varied – some had some good information while others had none.

The world continues to be scary for LGBT young people and now, possible more than ever, shows the need to ensure that those that face high levels of isolation have relevant, meaningful and up-to-date information.

Recommendations

- Liaise with LGBT youth groups - services should engage LGBT young people, consider visiting youth groups, have open days for young people, and undertake consultations with LGBT young people to get to know their needs.

- Websites - ensure organisations or services' websites are regularly kept up to date, that links are working and relevant to the local area and accessibility is considered and have specific information for various groups of society.
- Ensure that the services offer the right support for the right reasons at the right time – LGBT young people don't always need referring to specific LGBT services – especially when dealing with specific issues that local services can support with. Look at all the needs of the young person. Any young person should be able to access any service and not feel they should be signposted just because they are LGBT.
- Confidentiality Policies - ensure young people are informed of the service confidentiality policy - where possible have this on display or on a website.
- Ensuring branding is up-to-date and relevant – this ensures that young people are aware if they are in the right service.