

# LGBTQ+ service development

## Impact report (May 2022)



## Introduction

The BeYou Project is funded by the NHS and delivered by the charity Porchlight.

In 2021, the service obtained further funding for a service development post. Our vision for this specialist role was to oversee the growth of the BeYou project and the development of new services to meet the significant needs of the LGBTQ+ cohort.

This report explains the scope of the role and reflects on the benefits it has brought to the charity, the wider community, stakeholders and commissioners. We'll look in more detail at the workplan, and how effectively we have achieved the set objectives.

We'll also review where this work has had the most impact and what learning we can take from the first year of funding, as well as plans for continued growth and improvement.

## Objectives

- Conduct in-depth involvement work with LGBTQ+ young people and adults to identify the changes to services they'd like to see to improve practice and support
- Develop bespoke training, policies and resources to upskill Porchlight staff, partner organisations and external agencies
- Strengthen referrals into the BeYou service, in particular helping to create seamless pathways between NELFT, the Tavistock gender identity clinic and BeYou, to ensure that LGBTQ+ young people can access the support they need
- Develop targeted services for trans and non-binary young people, acknowledging their specific needs
- Work to develop new services and processes that plug identified gaps in LGBTQ+ provision
- Improve the quality of existing services, conducting an equalities audit across Porchlight services (with the scope to undertake similar work with partner organisations and external agencies) so that we understand how we're meeting the needs of LGBTQ+ people and where we can do better.

# Achievements and outcomes

## Involvement work

The service development manager engaged with young people from the BeYou Gay Agenda steering group to understand what LGBTQ+ young people want from a youth group in school. This information fed into a wider piece of work which looked at the recruitment of youth workers and setting up more targeted services for trans and non-binary young people.

The service development manager ran an online survey to look at the experiences and support needs of LGBTQ+ people in Kent and Medway. Questions related to people's experiences of coming out and hate crime, as well as what services can do to better support LGBTQ+ people. The aim was to broaden our own charity's understanding, and to share any findings with partners and external agencies including mental health services, schools, public health and services like Kent police.

This piece of work has helped us make sure that our offer is relevant and we're building on the feedback to continually improve support for our cohort.

## Upskilling staff and external agencies

We knew that staff and external colleagues needed guidance on specific issues relating to the LGBTQ+ community, for example, the unregulated practice of purchasing hormones online.

We developed a best practice document to give staff the knowledge and confidence to support the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. By making sure everyone has access to appropriate and up-to-date information, we can safeguard children and young people and those who are supporting them.

The LGBTQ+ best practice guide helps Porchlight to:

- Support staff to deliver inclusive services without bias or prejudice
- Ensure that LGBTQ+ people's voices are reflected in the support they receive from Porchlight
- Ensure LGBTQ+ people are supported using a preventative model that reduces the escalation into crisis or more specialist provision (unless needed)
- Provide safe and inclusive support spaces
- Support LGBTQ+ people around their gender and sexual identity
- Raise awareness of LGBTQ+ issues, promoting inclusion and tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia within internal and external agencies, and with individuals and their support networks.

**The BeYou team act as a point of contact for Porchlight and external professionals who are supporting LGBTQ+ communities.**

## **Developing training**

The political landscape is ever changing so it's important we're responsive and that our training recognises emerging trends and new legislation.

The BeYou Project has delivered internal LGBTQ+ training at Porchlight since 2018. The service development manager has developed this training to ensure that all staff understand how to work with LGBTQ+ people sensitively and effectively.

The development work focused on the different directorates within Porchlight to ensure that all policies were inclusive. There was particular focus on safeguarding policies, making sure language was inclusive and applied to all staff, services and clients.

We've developed an LGBTQ+ trainer role to create and deliver high-quality training materials to improve support within schools and services across Kent. Through this work BeYou strives to promote allyship, helping to create environments where everyone can be themselves. By putting the right support in place, we can ensure LGBTQ+ young people feel included, have positive mental health and a bright future. The service development manager helped to develop this important role and line managed the trainer.

## **Strengthening referral pathways**

BeYou's referral pathways have been strengthened over the last year with an increase in referrals from NEFLT which is now the service's second largest referrer. In the first quarter of 2021/22 BeYou saw sign ups increase by 39%.

## **Specific needs of the trans and non-binary community**

In response to the [Bell versus Tavistock](#) court ruling in early 2021 (a case which looked at whether puberty blockers could be prescribed to under-18s with gender dysphoria), the service development manager developed an internal procedure to help staff protect the safety and wellbeing of trans and non-binary children and young people.

We attended over 30 events to share learning from our LGBTQ+ services including those run by the trans and non-binary action group and national and southeast LGBTQ+ youth-based networks.

## **Improving the quality of existing services**

We are seeking National Youth Agency accreditation for The BeYou Project. This quality mark enables organisations, however large or small, to reflect upon and review the services they offer young people, helping them to explore ways to develop and provide youth work to the best possible standard.

## The next 12 months

This report gives an overview of the value of the service development manager's role, the impact it's made and the positive changes that have come about as a result of the work.

In the year ahead, we look forward to more constructive and collaborative work with children and young people, stakeholders and commissioners and the opportunities to continue sharing best practice.

There will be a strong focus on gender identity to better understand the needs of this cohort, who currently make up over 50% of BeYou referrals. The aim is to raise awareness and understanding of issues that relate to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young trans people amongst partners and stakeholders across Kent and Medway.

Work to develop more streamlined pathways to support will continue through networking, exchanging information and spreading good practice within local and national forums.

And we'll continue to drive forward developments that will help LGBTQ+ children and young people live safe, happy and healthy lives where they can be themselves without fear of discrimination.