Affirmative practice 101 - cheat sheet

Did you know?

- LGBTIQAP+ SIstergirl and Brotherboy young people are significantly over-represented in experiences of homelessness[1][2][3]
- Affirmative practice can significantly improve access to housing and support as well as mental health outcomes[4]

What does the LGBTIQAP+ acronym stand for?

Lesbian – generally speaking, a lesbian is a woman who is attracted to other women.

Gay – generally speaking, a gay person is a man who is attracted to other men. In addition, this term is sometimes used to describe anyone with a same gender attracted orientation, regardless of gender.

Bisexual – someone who experiences attraction to two or more genders.

Transgender (trans) – an adjective to describe someone whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned to them at birth.

Intersex – intersex people are born with physical sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies.

Queer – term used by some people to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or expression that is not "normative" in society. Historically used as a slur but now reclaimed by many in the LGBTIQAP community and often used as an umbrella term. Be cautious with this term, especially with older members of the community.

Asexual (ace for short) – someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction. This can also be used as an umbrella term.

Pansexual – someone who experiences attraction to all genders or attraction regardless of gender.

Sistergirl – an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander gender diverse woman (assigned male at birth) who lives and presents as a woman. Sistergirls have a distinct cultural identity and often take on women's roles within the community, including looking after children and family.

Brotherboy – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gender diverse man (assigned female at birth). Brotherboys have a male spirit and a distinct cultural identity. Brotherboy's cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs are pivotal to their lives and identities.

What's the difference between gender and sex assigned at birth?

- **Gender identity** – "one's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity!"
- **Sex assigned at birth** - "the assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, chromosomes." (TSER, n.d.)

Personal pronouns

- Personal pronouns are the words we use to refer to people when we don't use their name. They include: he, she, they, him, her, them, his, hers, theirs.
- It is important to use the correct pronouns when referring to someone, especially if that person is gender-diverse as it reaffirms their gender.

[1] The Trans Pathways study (Strauss et al 2017) found 22% of transgender participants experienced issues with accommodation, including a lack of stable accommodation, homelessness or couch-surfing.

[2] In this Canadian study 29.5% of 1,103 respondents aged 12-27 who were experiencing homelessness identified as LGBTQ2S (Gaetz et al 2016)

[3] In Australian study by ABS, 20.8% of bisexual people and 33.7% of lesbian/gay people reported ever experiencing homelessness, compared to 13.4% of heterosexuals (ABS General Social Survey 2014).

[4] The Trevor Project (2019) found young people with at least one accepting adult in their life were 40% less likely to have attempted suicide in the last year

- If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask
- If you make a mistake, in general you should briefly apologise and correct yourself. "He needs accommodation. Sorry, I meant to say they need accommodation."

Once a young person has disclosed their preferred name, gender and pronouns, these must be respected. **If someone repeatedly misgenders (using the wrong name, gender and pronouns) a young person, this is considered discrimination and can have legal consequences.**

Where to start?

Organisations can start with:

- Ensure practice and policy complies with legal and human rights requirements
- Have clear trans and gender diverse affirming policies in place with regard to service provision
- Have a clear complaints pathway for addressing discriminatory experiences with staff or other young
- Display posters, flags and brochures indicating that the service respects and supports LGBTIQAP+ •
- Designate at least one clearly signed gender inclusive bathroom, if possible this should be separate to the disabled bathroom (see printable sign)
- Provide sanitary bins (and products) in all bathrooms
- Using gender inclusive language on websites and publications. E.g. "our service supports young people" not "young men and women"
- Social media posts supporting the LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy community and acknowledging significant events
- Replace Male / Female options on forms using one of the examples below

Option 1: Example of blank gender field with affirming statement

Gender:

Pronouns: she/her | he/him | they/them | other: _____

Youth Housing Service supports LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy young people and encourages everyone to describe their gender in their own words.

Option 2 Example of expanded gender options

Gender: Male | Female | Non-Binary | Prefer to self describe_____ | Prefer not to say

Pronouns: she/her | he/him | they/them | other: _____

Workers can start with:

- Don't assume that people are heterosexual or cisgender
- Ask all young people about their preferred name, gender and pronouns
- Respect confidentiality – clarify if they would like you to use different names or pronouns in different contexts (for example, when talking with family)
- Learn about gender inclusive language
- Visual signalling through rainbow lanyards and pronoun or ally pins (you can purchase these from Minus18)

- Include your pronouns in your email signature (if comfortable to do so)
- Add a statement supporting LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people including pride flags to your email signature

Position Title | Program Title
Organisation Name

Youth Housing Service is proud to support its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and staff, its LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy clients and staff and welcomes diversity in all its forms

Example script for how to asking young people about their gender

"My name is X and I use she/her pronouns. Can you tell me how you describe your gender and what pronouns you use? It might seem like an obvious question, but I ask this because we often work with trans and non-binary young people and want to make sure we are respectful of everyone's gender and using the correct pronouns."

Referrals and vacancies

- Make individualised placement decisions based on young people's self-identified gender and preference, in order to ensure the most emotional, cultural and physical safety
- When considering the need for a gendered vacancy, ask whether this need could be served by considering behaviour, needs and disposition of potential referrals instead?
- **Where vacancies or services are gendered, make explicit that the service is inclusive. "This vacancy is for young women. We encourage referrals for trans women."**

Safety in accommodation

- Ask young people about any safety concerns they may have around their gender or sexual orientation and housing (for example safe access to bathroom facilities)
- Foster a climate of respect and set expectations with young people using the service that discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation are unacceptable
- Immediately respond to harassment or discriminatory behaviour

Casework

- Link to appropriate community supports
- Consider LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy young people may have specific health care needs
- Recognise trans and non-binary young people may need help to navigate systems, such as changing their legal name or gender (see Justice Connect resources)
- When making referrals, it can be helpful to check worker/service knowledge and understanding of LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy issues before referring young people

How to challenge anti-LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy attitudes and behaviour

- Create emotional safety through mutual respect
- Highlight discrepancies, irony and contradictions in young people's thinking. E.g. unpack stereotypes others may hold about them to promote empathy
- These attitudes may be linked to ideas about gender roles. Have conversations that unpack binary gender roles and provide examples of people they know and respect (e.g. celebrities) who sit outside these roles.
- When a young person uses a slur or uses a threat of violence, it can be helpful to name the behaviour, refer to an agreement and consequences if the behaviour continues. E.g. "Talking about doing X doesn't line up with our agreement to respect each other in this space. Let's talk about where that is coming from but if it continues, we'll have to work out whether or not it's safe for you to keep staying here."

References

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