

SETTING THE RECORD '6

LGBQ - WHAT IS IT?

LGBQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning. These groups are often referred to as simply being 'queer'.

'Gay' refers to guys whose sexual and romantic feelings are mostly for the same gender. Lesbians are women who are attracted to other women. Bisexuals are men and women who are attracted to people of both genders. Before classifying themselves under one of these names, many people may say that they are 'questioning' - that is, they are questioning or experimenting with their sexual orientation.

**'6% OF PEOPLE IN BRITAIN ARE GAY
- THAT'S 3.6 MILLION!'**

MEETING OTHER PEOPLE

Whilst some people criticise the idea of LGBQ youth groups, as they encourage segregation from the rest of the young community, they can be an essential part of a queer young person's social life. Particularly if you've just come out (either to yourself or others) it can be daunting to brave the big bad (straight) world, whereas queer-oriented groups can offer the support both of services and people your own age. It is important to many queer young people to know that they are not alone in the world and that many others feel the same as them and encounter similar prejudice and problems on a daily basis.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.gayyouthuk.org.uk

Fact-files and information on LGBQ youth (under 25), contact details for many youth groups, and a forum for meeting other LGBQ teenagers.

www.avert.org

HIV AIDS charity, with a gay & lesbian section and advice on STIs.

www.advocatesforyouth.org

Providing articles on topics and issues related to adolescent sexual and reproductive health, including LGBQ youth, sex education, etc.

Kingston and Richmond NRG

Youth group for LGBTQ teenagers. **020 7803 1684**, ask@tht.org.uk or check out their website www.doyourparentsknow.com

THE ISSUE

Many LGBQ youth feel very alone and alienated from their peers. However, a government study shows that 6% of people in Britain are gay - that's around 3.6 million! But there are still problems with raising awareness of the gay community. Many LGBQ youth rely on television and the media to learn what it means to be LGBQ. In one study, 80 percent of these youth ages 14 to 17 believed media stereotypes that depicted gay men as effeminate and lesbians as masculine, while half believed that all homosexual people were unhappy.

THE LAW

In the UK the age of consent for heterosexual couples and homosexual men is now 16 in England, Wales and Scotland and 17 in Northern Ireland. This was changed in 2001 - before the age of consent for homosexual men was 18. There is no statutory age of consent for lesbian sex.

Section 28 was introduced in the 1980s, and made it illegal for local councils to 'promote' homosexuality. However, it never applied to schools, and was repealed in 2003.