



STRATEGY
2023-2027

INTRO

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LGBT Youth Scotland opened in 1989 as Stonewall Youth Project as a youth service to provide a safe space for young people to find support and acceptance as a direct result of Section 28 in Scotland. In 2003 we became LGBT Youth Scotland and 20 years later, we are the leading organisation supporting LGBTQ+ young people, and influencing policy and practice across Scotland.

We want to thank our supporters, our staff team, our volunteers, our Board of Trustees, our funders, our partners and most importantly the LGBTI young people we work with for helping us grow into the national organisation we are now.

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WELCOME

As a young person's charity it was vital that young people were involved at every stage of the strategy development. During the co-design project the Youth Reference Group (YRG) represented the voices of other young people from the organisation while we attended meetings and participated in discussions. We also carried out peer consultation and used the feedback we received to input into the final strategy.

We are really proud of the final strategy the codesign team have produced and believe that it represents not only the views of LGBTQ+ young people, but also the way forward for the organisation.

We really hope this strategy helps drive Scotland in the direction of progress for LGBTQ+ young people. As a group, the YRG not only see the struggles they face, but also live them every day, and want to do anything that we can to make Scotland a place where LGBTQ+ young people can flourish and thrive. We hope that the challenges we face now are no longer a worry for future LGBTQ+ individuals.

Young people should be at the heart of any decision that affects them, making youth participation a vital part of LGBT Youth Scotland. We believe that to truly reach the goals set out in this strategy young people should be meaningfully involved in its implementation and hope they will be consulted with at every opportunity and involved in discussions that impact the support they receive or the direction of the organisation.

THE YOUTH REFERENCE GROUP

Amy Winter (they/them)
MSYP Youth Reference Group



We are delighted to bring you LGBT Youth Scotland's new 5 year strategy. It's five years since we launched our previous strategy. Much has changed, the global pandemic, international events, significant changes in the cost of living and a change in the rhetoric around inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community have each had their impact.

As we celebrate 20 years as LGBT Youth Scotland, we recognise that the work we do through our charity is needed more than ever, supporting each young LGBTQ+ person that reaches out to us. As a result we're proud to say we've kept pace, grown and developed. For example, introducing digital youth work services to provide support to young people who find it difficult to engage with in-person meetings, and expanding our LGBT Charter, supporting more schools and workplaces across Scotland to become more inclusive.

This strategy has been informed by this complex backdrop, our research, and most importantly it has been developed hand-in-hand with our young people, those who need, use and benefit from our services.

We are really excited about the next five years and future of this charity with the goal of ensuring we are there for any young person that needs us, in a way that works for them,

while working with young people to progress LGBTQ+ rights and opportunities both locally and nationally across Scotland.

We welcome you to join us on this journey be it as a young person, staff member, volunteer or board member, through to our partners, funders and supporters, without whom our work would not be possible.

THE CONVENOR OF THE BOARD AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lewis Shand Smith (he/him)
Convener of the Board



Dr Mhairi Crawford (she/her)
Chief Executive



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ABOUT US



WHO WE ARE

LGBT Youth Scotland is the national charity for LGBTQ+ young people. This group of young people face unique and additional barriers to realising their potential and that is why we exist. We believe Scotland can be a place where all

young people can thrive and flourish, and we work alongside young people to remove those barriers; supporting young people individually, and amplifying their collective voices to influence change.

WHAT LGBTQ+ MEANS TO US

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer & questioning, and the positive '+' aims to represent and respect everyone within the LGBTQ+ community.

We want the term 'LGBTQ+' to be interpreted in the inclusive way it is meant. At LGBT Youth Scotland, we welcome the full diversity of the LGBTQ+ community and include intersex, asexual and non-binary people within this umbrella, whilst also being mindful that people can have multiple identities that intersect.

We have previously described our community as 'LGBT' and 'LGBTI', and both are still valued acronyms. LGBT Youth Scotland is informed by the views of young people. A consultation with young people as part of this strategy development revealed that they currently feel LGBTQ+ is the best way to describe their community. The addition of Q for 'queer & questioning' and a very inclusive '+' felt the best way to represent and respect everything on the gender and sexuality spectrum, and intersex.

We are aware that terminology changes over time and we had been using LGBTI for a number of years so the Youth Reference Group engaged with our young people to ask what felt most relevant for them right now. LGBTQ+ is what they felt represented them best.

WHAT YOUTHWORK MEANS TO US

Youth work is about providing safer spaces for young people to come together and learn about themselves, others and society. This is done through informal, fun and educational activities.

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At LGBT Youth Scotland we take a Community Learning and Development (CLD) approach. This means that young people choose to work in partnership with us to progress their own learning and development.

To plan and evaluate our youth work programmes, we use our expertise in LGBTQ+ equality and the National Youth Work Outcomes. These are guidelines set by Youthlink Scotland, the national organisation whose aim is that all young people can access high quality youth work. We also work with young people to inform the direction we take every step of the way.

At LGBT Youth Scotland we offer opportunities for enjoyment, challenge and learning, as well as opportunities for young people to have their voices heard by decision makers. Being LGBTQ+ can present additional challenges but it can also bring joy and opportunities to connect with others.

Because of this our youth work provides a safer space for LGBTQ+ young people to explore their identities, build stronger connections with their peers and with their wider communities. This allows young people to develop the confidence to be their authentic selves and be empowered to realise their potential.

Our values guide us in how we work and approach our work which complements the what we do outlined in our strategic goals.

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FLOURISH AND THRIVE – This looks different for every young person – for some it is having the courage to come to a youth group where they can be themselves, for others it will be becoming a MSYP or finding a new role. As a youth work organisation, we meet LGBTQ+ young people where they are and work with them to help them understand what this means to them in themselves and in their communities.

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OUR VALUES

INCLUSION

We champion young people's rights. We welcome everyone who actively works to make things better with and for young people, building a more diverse and accessible community where everyone feels valued.

INNOVATION

We are led by the needs and views of LGBTQ+ young people to take an imaginative and creative approach in everything we do.

EMPATHY

We listen to, learn from and empower one another which helps us actively influence positive change. We do this by being kind, honest and compassionate in our work.

RESPECT

Respect - we value young people, our partners, ourselves as individuals and each other. We recognise and appreciate the contributions, qualities and achievements we all bring.

OUR VISION

Our strategy includes a vision so that young people, our partners and funders know what we are aiming to achieve. A vision needs to be ambitious. It needs to look to the future we want to help bring about. It needs to be something that benefits all LGBTQ+ young people.

Our vision is that Scotland is the best place for LGBTQ+ young people to flourish and thrive.

From talking to young people about this vision we understand that the Scotland we are aiming for is very different from the one they experience in their day to day lives. And so our work, locally and nationally, will start with the Scotland we are living in today and work strategically to make it the Scotland young people deserve.

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OUR MISSION

We support LGBTQ+ young people to flourish and thrive in all aspects of their lives through the provision of amazing youth work. We support LGBTQ+ young people to use their voice and create change in equality and human rights.

WHERE WE ARE

Our first 5 year strategy was launched in 2018 and at that point, the impacts on Scotland and the world in terms of Covid, conflict and costs of living could not have been forecast. While there have been some real successes such as the Gender Recognition Reform Bill being successfully passed by the Scottish Government in 2022 this has been accompanied by the toxicity of the overblown debate in relation to young trans people's. These events have resulted in change right across the country and have impacted both LGBTQ+ young people and the charity significantly.

Our work is needed as much as ever and we have grown during the past five years to include digital national youth

Our vision is what we want for LGBTQ+ young people in the future. It's not something that can be achieved in 5 or 10 years but is deliberately aspirational as a long term goal to work towards. Our mission is how we will achieve this at a very high level - condensing everything we do into two sentences.

work delivery through our Pride & Pixels online community, creating more inclusive spaces and communities through growing the LGBT Charter and influencing policy and practice through key strategic interventions.

We successfully do this based on the knowledge of our impact measured through our research and evaluation frameworks.

OUR CO-DESIGN APPROACH

Everyone knows that developing a strategy is a big piece of work. As a charity which is young-person led, we've worked together with our Youth Reference Group (YRG) in a co-design group. Along with the YRG, the co-design approach brought together staff and volunteers to work with our CEO to look at our values, vision, mission and strategic goals.

The co-design group have been informed by Life in Scotland, our quinquennial research¹, our annual youth work evaluations and the wider political and economic landscape in Scotland. To support the development of this strategy, we've invited young people who access our services, our staff and volunteers to consult at various stages on our journey and the outcome you see here, is the culmination of 12 months of working together.

As a result of this, our strategy contains elements which are important to our young people, for example clear and accessible language and explainers to summarise sections. Young people tell us that this makes our strategy more relevant and accountable.

¹. 'Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People' LGBT Youth Scotland 2022



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OUR

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There's a long road ahead to achieve our vision, but we believe that by being informed through our research and through consultation with young people, volunteers, staff and our Board, we are focussed on the right things and headed in the right direction.

This strategy is focused on how we do what we do better, with greater impact and with fewer distractions. We've focussed on four key outcomes, supported by key indicators so that we can measure steps to achieving them.

THROUGHOUT THIS WE WILL

- Keep delivering leading youth work, meeting young people where they are at
- Keep supporting young people through youth participation to make things better
- Keep improving opportunities for young people through our partnerships
- Keep working with others to help Scotland as a whole become more inclusive
- Continue to be a human rights led organisation

As part of this we remain committed to a community learning and development (CLD) approach, working within, and shaping national frameworks relevant to us and the landscape in Scotland. These include the National Youth Work Strategy and National Youth Work outcomes, Respect for All around bullying and from an Education perspective, Curriculum for Excellence. We also work within the Scottish Government Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) principles including the Wellbeing SHANARRI indicators.

We can only achieve this through having the right team in place and we will continue to invest in our staff and volunteers through training programmes, opportunities for development and progression. This will mean that every staff member and volunteer has the right tools, the right skills and the right support to excel in their role. Alongside this, we will invest in the organisation to ensure we have the right process, policies, platforms, and tools to support our team. This goes hand in hand with our long term plans for sustainability to ensure that any young LGBTQ+ person who may need us can reach us.

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GIRFEC sits hand in hand with youth work, placing the young person at the centre of, and participating in, any decisions that affect them. This is supported by the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators which are Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. These indicators form part of the National Youth Work Strategy and Outcomes, Respect for All and curriculum for excellence. They are also embedded within our impact framework where we measure our work and progress.



OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1 CHANGING LIVES THROUGH YOUTH WORK
- 2 INFLUENCING CHANGE THROUGH YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES
- 3 IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLES LIVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS
- 4 IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLES LIVES THROUGH CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH YOUTH WORK

OUR OUTCOME:

LGBTQ+ young people take ownership of their own lives and become more confident and successful individuals.

KEY INDICATORS:

- LGBTQ+ young people have a vision for their future
- LGBTQ+ young people have increased confidence and are more aware of their potential
- LGBTQ+ young people feel a sense of belonging within their communities

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS:

- We deliver youth work with a LGBTQ+ specialism creating space for young people to be their authentic selves

- We provide an inclusive and accessible service for LGBTQ+ young people who are multiply marginalised. This includes 13-25 years old young people of rural / faith / mental health / disability / people of colour and more
- Our youth work is informed by LGBTQ+ young people and they are involved in shaping our services
- We deliver consistent high quality youth work through a skilled workforce and volunteers
- We are CLD led – a reflective organisation
- We robustly evaluate our youth work practice with LGBTQ+ young people

As outlined earlier, our youth work is supported by an impact framework which is built from the National Youth Work outcomes². This means that we measure and report on all of the indicators relating to this. For our strategy, we have chosen three indicators that support young people to take ownership of their lives and to become more confident and successful (bearing in mind success looks different for every

young person). By delivering universal youth work with a LGBTQ+ specialism we aim to support them to have a greater sense of belonging both in the LGBTQ+ community but also within their wider communities. We believe these to be the most important indicators to support young people to support themselves in the future.

INFLUENCING CHANGE THROUGH YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

OUR OUTCOME:

LGBTQ+ young people influence change through their voice and by taking action

KEY INDICATORS:

- 🕒 LGBTQ+ young people participate in decisions that affect their lives at local and national levels
- 🕒 LGBTQ+ young people understand their rights, act on them and advocate for others' rights and believe they can make a difference

- 🕒 LGBTQ+ young people's views and experiences are reflected in policy and practice

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS:

- 🕒 We provide opportunities for LGBTQ+ young people to learn about their rights and responsibilities
- 🕒 We provide opportunities for LGBTQ+ young people to engage with key decision makers

- 🕒 We carry out research and consult with LGBTQ+ young people, sharing their needs and experiences widely with decision makers
- 🕒 We raise awareness of LGBTQ+ young people's rights through effective communications
- 🕒 When LGBTQ+ young people respond to our research or consultations, we tell them about the difference their engagement has made
- 🕒 We robustly evaluate our youth work practice with LGBTQ+ young people

Youth work is about meeting a young person where they are at but also supporting them to grow and this outcome and indicators are about supporting LGBTQ+ young people to understand their rights and to better access them. This could be on an individual level - a right to education, a right to feel safe, their work to shape our services through to a national level – where we work with young people to influence policy such as Gender Recognition Reform or through our research, inform Education Reform.

IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

OUR OUTCOME:

LGBTQ+ young people have increased opportunities through meaningful relationships and partnerships with other organisations

KEY INDICATORS:

- 🕒 The range of our partnerships enhances the opportunities on offer to LGBTQ+ young people

- 🕒 The organisation is stronger and more sustainable because of our partnerships with funders and other stakeholders
- 🕒 We are considered as a key partner of relevant local and national bodies, supporting the partners to take positive action to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ young people

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS:

- We develop meaningful relationships and partnerships with a wide range of other organisations, creating opportunities for LGBTQ+ young people
- We work with key partners that will have an impact on LGBTQ+ young people's lives, prioritising local and national government, youth work, education and health
- We will work with partners who share our aim to be more financially and environmentally sustainable for young people now and in the future
- We will use our social media channels and partner networks to share positive and effective communications about policy, support and signposting as well as equalities and rights
- We will ensure that we have a skilled workforce in order to build and sustain stronger partnerships
- Directly where we work with a partner to provide an opportunity that we couldn't offer on our own. This may be through artwork, outdoor opportunities, entrepreneurship and more.
- Through using our partnerships strategically such as working with our youth work, NHS or education partnerships to ensure that the services are inclusive as possible and that any policy or practice development reflects the needs of LGBTQ+ young people
- Through ensuring the sustainability of the charity through our funding relationships and partnerships, and through developing our workforce and volunteers. By bringing in partners who have the expertise that we may not, such as environmental sustainability, or other protected characteristics, strengthens not only our work, but theirs through mutual sharing of knowledge

Our partnerships improve opportunities for young people both across our services but also across Scotland. It is important we do this in a number of different ways.



IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES THROUGH CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

OUR OUTCOME:

LGBTQ+ young people have access to more inclusive environments to live, work and learn

KEY INDICATORS:

- Our partners have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support and include LGBTQ+ young people
- LGBTQ+ young people tell us that the services that they access which we partner with are becoming more inclusive
- There is increased uptake of the LGBT charter and wider training opportunities with increased reach in underrepresented areas

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS:

- We share our expertise with other youth work organisa-

tions by being a role model for LGBTQ+ inclusive policy and practice

- Through the LGBT Charter, we support organisations to become more inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ young people
- We will review and make improvements to the LGBT Charter in line with young people's needs
- We will develop new tools to measure the impact of the LGBT Charter, with emphasis on the impact on young people and long-term change to embed an inclusive culture

We recognise that alone we cannot achieve our vision, but through working with partners to help create a more inclusive Scotland, LGBTQ+ young people will have better opportunities to belong, flourish and thrive.

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I've personally felt less ashamed and become a lot more confident around people. I've also had the mental energy to try harder in school because I've had that time to recharge with like-minded people.

“

Being with my community has saved my life. Being part of LGBT Youth Scotland made my life better.

“

LGBT Youth Scotland will always have a place in my heart. I started as a young trans kid who had no idea about life, I couldn't even form a conversation, I was mentally unwell and I had no friends or no relationship with my family. Now I have everything I've ever wanted down to the hard working lovely humans at LGBT Youth Scotland.

“

LGBT Youth Scotland has greatly improved my life. I feel like I'm part of a community and it was the first place where I can be out about my gender identity. I have had so many opportunities because of them.



 www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

   @lgbtys

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