

STARTING A RAINBOW GROUP

A GUIDE TO CREATING AN
LGBTIQA+ SUPPORT GROUP FOR
YOUR SCHOOL

SHINE_{SA}

SHINE SA would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We acknowledge that a treaty has not been signed and that sovereignty has never been ceded.

We pay our respects to Kurna Elders past, present and emerging, as well as those from other nations.

We are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by striving to provide services and resources that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.

GETTING STARTED

This guide has been created for educators and school leaders to begin and sustain an LGBTIQ+ support group for students. This guide contains practical tips and ideas to set up your LGBTIQ+ support group.

An LGBTIQ+ support group aims to create an inclusive place for gender and sexually diverse students to find support and build a community.

The group can be set up like any other student group, with a support teacher and regular meetings. Everyone is welcome regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Note: 'LGBTIQ+' is one of the acronyms people use to describe sexual or gender identity. The acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and many other terms (such as non-binary and pansexual). The + symbol is used to show that there are many more ways to be gender, sexually or body diverse.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS AN LGBTIQA+ SUPPORT GROUP?

An LGBTIQA+ support group is a group that empowers and supports transgender, queer, and allied youth leaders to advocate, organise, and mobilise an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities.

WHAT POLICIES EXIST TO ENCOURAGE THESE GROUPS?

The Department for Education's policy 'Supporting gender diverse, intersex and sexually diverse children and young people' outlines staff obligations and responsibilities for supporting all children and young people. The policy requires that all children and young people need to receive a quality education in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, free from discrimination, bullying and harassment regardless of intersex status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

The Department for Education's policy states that "Children, young people, staff and families may need support in understanding gender diversity, intersex and sexual diversity and/or addressing discrimination and harassment. Staff are required to make available information and be aware of key resources and services and how to access them."

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF AN LGBTIQA+ SUPPORT GROUP?

Members of an LGBTIQA+ support group are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, queer, intersex, straight ally youth, school personnel, and supportive community members who value and support trans and queer youth leadership coming together for gender and sexuality equality and justice. Straight, cisgender youth are often part of LGBTIQA+ support groups because they have trans and/or queer family or friends.

WHAT IMPACT DO LGBTIQA+ SUPPORT GROUPS HAVE ON THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT?

There is ample evidence to indicate that LGBTIQA+ support groups improve the school environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex students and their allies. LGBTIQA+ support groups that conduct student and teacher sensitivity training typically see a decrease in slurs, name-calling, and harassment following their advocacy efforts. LGBTIQA+ support groups also create youth-run spaces for students to meet and socialise. The presence of an LGBTIQA+ support group is associated with lower levels of youth self-reports of school-based victimisation.

IDENTIFY YOUR MISSION AND GOALS

Start by determining the goals that your student leaders have for creating this group. Identifying your mission and goals will then help guide your group's activities and plans. Consider how your group will serve your student community. It's a good idea to work with your student leaders to address the nature of your club and its goals in an official mission statement.

YOUR ROLE

Your role as a leader is to empower your LGBTIQ+ students to lead. As an educator or school leader you will support students to lead the LGBTIQ+ group and celebrate their achievements. Your role is to help students facilitate and lead meetings, set the agenda, draft plans and activities for the year, and make decisions around campaigns, partnerships, and community building.

You may help facilitate discussions where students talk about what they're interested in working on as well as what opportunities and needs that could be met by the school. You can support students to explore potential school-wide changes that will help sexually and gender diverse students now and into the future.

As the leader of this group, you will be one of the most constant and stable parts of the LGBTIQ+ support group. Your role is to help the current students think, plan, and act not just for this school year or the next but also for many years in the future. Working towards social justice in schools can take time. For effective change we need robust, well-led, and well-organised LGBTIQ+ support groups.

YOUR ROLE IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS

There are many ways you can help your students build for the future, this includes:

- by raising funds for future years
- creating solid structures in the group that will ensure consistent and good student leadership
- creating an archive of LGBTIQ+ support group records, events, campaigns, and stories so that your future leaders have access to the history of your group

Other opportunities in your role include:

- providing regular opportunities for building skills, leadership, and learning
- teaching students how to navigate the ins and outs of your school policies and the law
- serving as a liaison between leadership and the LGBTIQ+ support group
- training students to resolve conflicts
- supporting students to foster a safe environment for everyone, including challenging any behaviour or language from the group that may perpetuate discrimination



THE ROLE OF OTHER SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

The most successful LGBTIQ+ support groups incorporate input from a range of other trusted adults from the school and community. This support includes peer teachers who may support the LGBTIQ+ group through lending their classrooms for meetings, fundraising, or spreading the word.

Successful groups also have the support of two educators to run the group. Having more than one educator allows them to bounce off each other's ideas and consistency if one educator is away.

Principals and other leaders can guarantee the longevity of the LGBTIQ+ group and take time to listen to what the group has to say. Parents and caregivers can get involved in planning or chaperoning events. Finally, community groups and businesses that support the LGBTIQ+ support groups through education, awareness-raising, and activism can also support groups.

RUNNING AND SUSTAINING YOUR LGBTIQ+ SUPPORT GROUP

PREPARE FOR MEETINGS

- Set the agenda: Make a list of topics or issues to discuss at the meeting.
- Advertise the meeting: Find out the best ways to get to as many people as possible at your school. For example, setting up daily announcements, using 'Daymap', flyers, posters, and social media.

SETTING YOUR AGENDA

- Introductions and check-ins: Share names and pronouns.
- Conduct an ice-breaker activity so students can get to know each other.
- Run through the meeting agenda.
- Closing: Finish the meeting with club announcements when the next meeting is and any other information.

RUNNING A MEETING

- Set community guidelines: Establish community guidelines to make sure that all group members feel heard and safe. Remind students regularly to be mindful of them.
- Decision-making: Decide on how your group members will make decisions like consensus or majority vote.
- Identify a chairperson: Elect someone to keep the group members on-topic and focused on the agenda.
- Take minutes or notes: Elect someone to take minutes or notes for members that cannot attend.
- Use 'Daymap' or social media to share minutes with members.

HOW TO FACILITATE A MEETING

A facilitator is a person who coordinates the meetings and ensures the meeting is running smoothly. They make sure that there is equal participation between group members. They ensure that everyone can share their stories and opinions, discuss topics, and make decisions.

The facilitator's responsibilities are:

- Ensuring that all members agree on the agenda before and during the meeting.
- Making sure that the group adheres to the community guidelines during the meeting.
- Guiding the discussion and intervening if any issues arise.
- Staying neutral, asking questions, and suggesting ways to approach agenda items.
- Keep the group on track and have a schedule.
- Ensuring the group can make decisions and dividing work evenly amongst members.
- Ensuring participation from all group members and assuring everyone of the right to pass.
- Creating a safe, positive, and comfortable environment.

STRATEGIES FOR RUNNING A GOOD MEETING

- Check in and ask LGBTIQ+ group members if there is anything they feel is valuable to add to the meeting agenda for discussion.
- Ask the person with business arising to give some background information and what they hope to achieve.
- Ensure that group members stick to time limits when speaking.
- Create a list of off-topic comments, questions, or topics to discuss later.

STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION AND DECISION MAKING

- Assist members to avoid repeating themselves by making summaries of their discussion and getting comments in areas that haven't been mentioned.
- Encourage the group towards a decision or agreement if they have been discussing an issue for a while.
- If a group cannot make a decision, suggest postponing the decision until further information arrives.
- Ensure that everyone understands a decision.

Remember, it is essential that the facilitator remains neutral.

ADVERTISING AND ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE

There are lots of ways to encourage members to join and attend your support group. It's a good idea to brainstorm ideas with your group members to get their perspective on increasing group attendance. Here are some kicking off points to encourage students to join your LGBTIQA+ support group:

- Provide food at your meetings.
- Put an announcement in the bulletin or on 'Daymap'.
- Set up an information table at lunch or special events in a visible place.
- Reach out to cisgender and straight allies and community members who might be interested in participating or sharing their knowledge.
- Make flyers or posters to advertise meetings, topics and events. Post them around the school and on social media.

TRANSITIONING LEADERSHIP

It is important to identify future leaders in your students to ensure that the LGBTIQA+ group can stay strong for the future. Having an LGBTIQA+ support group is important in addressing and reducing homophobia and transphobia within the school community. Therefore, regardless of your group structure, you will need to have a plan and consider students that may be interested in leading the group in the future. You will also need to plan and consider the best approach to supporting and encouraging new leaders.

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IDENTIFY YOUR RESOURCES

Identifying your resources will support the sustainability of your group, consider the following:

- What are the group's strengths?
- What are the group's challenges?
- Who is currently involved?
- How many graduating students lead the LGBTIQA+ group now?
- How many students across age groups do you have?

IDENTIFY FUTURE LGBTIQA+ LEADERS

Consider the young people in your LGBTIQA+ support group. Are there students at school next year who would be interested in an LGBTIQA+ leadership role? Maybe some students within the group would make great leaders with some coaching and training, but they feel unsure about their leadership potential. Remember, everyone has the potential to become a leader.

There are many ways to provide support in building student leadership, this includes:

- Train and encourage new members to understand the rules, history, and project of your LGBTIQA+ support group.
- Spread responsibility across all members throughout the school year, not just at the end.
- Take turns facilitating meetings, so everyone knows what it feels like to be within leadership and prepare them for such a role.

EVERYONE HAS
THE POTENTIAL
TO SHOW
LEADERSHIP

COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS/CARERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Supporting LGBTIQ+ students is a shared responsibility of educators, carers, family and the school community. Your school and group will want to communicate with carers and community members to invite support for your group.

- Anticipate concerns, questions, and possible resistance.
- Be prepared to educate and provide information to others around what an LGBTIQ+ support group is and does. Be prepared to address potential misconceptions that school communities and carers may have about LGBTIQ+ support groups.
- Emphasise the skills and abilities that LGBTIQ+ support groups can foster in their members: organising, social justice, facilitating, inter-group dialogue, conflict resolution, interpersonal intelligence, event planning, public speaking etc.
- Know your school's policies that either implicitly or explicitly support LGBTIQ+ support groups and be able to direct parents, carers, and families to that information.
- Have parent, carers, and family-specific resources available for LGBTIQ+ support group members' families in various languages.
- Invite supportive families to an LGBTIQ+ support group meeting or event.

EMPHASISE THE SKILLS AND ABILITIES THAT LGBTIQ+ SUPPORT GROUPS CAN FOSTER IN THEIR MEMBERS

CHECKLIST

- IDENTIFY YOUR MISSION AND GOALS**
Tip: Work with students to create a mission statement.
- FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH YOUR ROLE AND OTHER ADULTS IN THE GROUP**
Tip: Having more than one educator involved supports the consistency and success of the group.
- CREATE A PLAN FOR YOUR MEETINGS**
Tip: If meetings have lost direction, refer back to this guide or seek advice and support.
- ADVERTISE AND ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE**
Tip: Consult with students to get their ideas on encouraging attendance.
- CREATE A PLAN FOR TRANSITIONING LEADERSHIP**
Tip: Consider the sustainability of the group.
- IDENTIFY FUTURE LEADERSHIP FOR THE GROUP**
Tip: Support students in your group to see themselves as future leaders.
- CREATE A PLAN FOR COMMUNICATING TO PARENTS/CARERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
Tip: Create open communication with the school community and encourage understanding of the positive goals of the group.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



If you have any questions or need more information we encourage you to reach out to the Schools Education and Support Team at SHINE SA.

Please email:
School-Support@shinesa.org.au
or phone 8300 5317.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Department for Education

The Department for Education provides a 'Supporting gender diverse, intersex and sexually diverse children and young people' Policy and Procedure.

www.education.sa.gov.au/doc/supporting-gender-diverse-intersex-and-sexually-diverse-children-and-young-people

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/doc/gender-diverse-and-intersex-children-and-young-people-support-procedure>

The Student Wellbeing Hub

The Hub is a resource for carers, teachers and students to build safe, inclusive and connected school communities that promote wellbeing and learning.

A guide for schools about supporting students to affirm their gender at school is available.

www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/resources/supporting-a-student-to-affirm-or-transitiongender-identity-at-school

SHINE SA

SHINE SA provides workforce development and sexual and reproductive health services. As a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation SHINE SA is committed to safe and inclusive service delivery. Our Gender Wellbeing Service provides support to people who are questioning their gender identity or identify as trans or gender diverse.

www.shinesa.org.au/sexual-gender-diversity

headspace

headspace supports young people and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.

www.headspace.org.au

Minus18

Minus18 aims to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people. They provide resources and workshops for young people and school communities.

www.minus18.org.au

This guide was written by Sarah Childs in collaboration with SHINE SA.

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