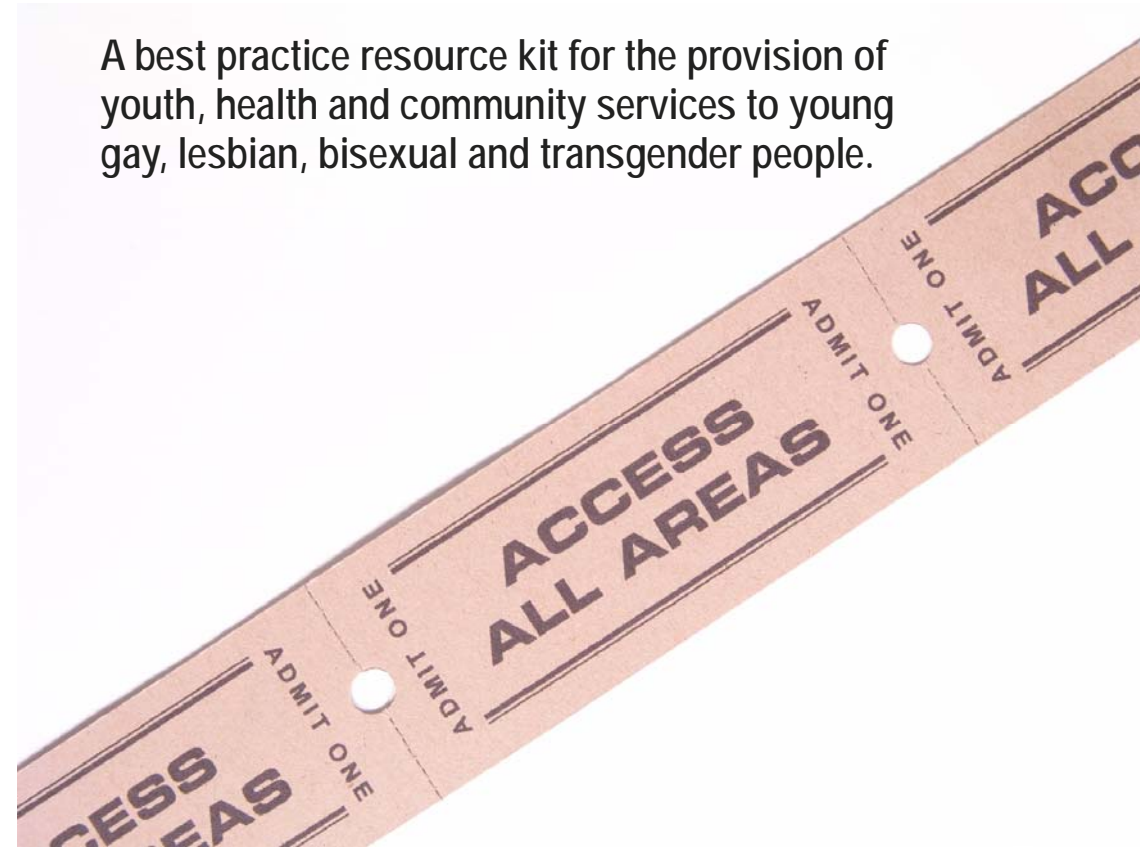


An initiative of Spyns Inc. and Twenty10 GLBT Youth Support

# ACCESS ALL AREAS

A best practice resource kit for the provision of youth, health and community services to young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.



Spyns Inc.



Spyns Inc. is a grassroots not-for-profit community organisation based in outer western Sydney suburb of Penrith. It works alongside communities to support self determination and to build respectful, diverse places where families and individuals can enjoy equal access to opportunities, resources and services. Spyns Inc. auspices the Diverse Sexualities Access Project which works to make youth and community services more accessible to young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the Nepean area. Spyns Inc is funded by the NSW Department of Community Services. The Diverse Sexualities Access Project is funded by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme.

PO Box 627, Penrith NSW 2751  
(02) 47 215024  
youthdev@pnc.com.au  
www.spyns.org.au



Twenty10 GLBT Youth Support is a long standing, community based, non-profit and statewide organisation. Twenty10's mission is to provide and promote opportunities, choices and support to young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, same-sex attracted or gender-questioning. We work with young people, their families and communities to ensure that these young people have more opportunities to participate fully in, and influence, their society. Twenty10 is funded by the NSW Department of Community Services and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

PO Box 553, Newtown NSW 2042  
(02) 8594 9550  
info@twenty10.org.au  
www.twenty10.org.au

# ACCESS ALL AREAS

A best practice resource kit for the provision of youth, health and community services to young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

## CONTENTS

### Introductions:

How it Works

### Section 1: Getting the Drift

Understanding Sexuality  
Issues for GLBT Young People  
Strengths of GLBT Young People  
Ensuring Inclusivity

### Section 2: Getting it Right

Roles and Responsibilities for Service Providers  
Being Informed and Informing Others  
Responding and Empowering  
Social Justice and Social Change

### Section 3: Keeping it Real

GLBT Friendly Checklist  
Responding to GLBT Young People  
Responding to Homophobia  
Statement of Welcome

ACCESS ALL AREAS is an initiative of Spyns Inc and Twenty10 GLBT Youth Support  
Written by: Robert Reynolds & Iain Kaan  
Design: David Moutou  
© 2007

This booklet compliments the READY or NOT Training Program

INTRODUCTIONS  
HOW IT ALL WORKS

# GLBT...

GLBT is an acronym for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender.

Other terms, such as **Queer** have been reclaimed by GLBT people. It was once a derogatory term for GLBT people but has now come to refer to any person who is marginalised because of their sexuality or gender identity.

This kit will help the management, staff and volunteers in your service to understand some of the needs, issues and strengths of your young GLBT clients so that you can respond to them appropriately.

It outlines some practical measures that you can take to show your support for GLBT young people and to create a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Each section deals with a particular issue and uses a case study of either a young person or a service to highlight the issues examined.

Use this resource to promote discussion among staff, your management committee and your youth advisory committee. Use it as an orientation resource for new staff.

**What things may you have to change about your service to make it more accessible to GLBT young people?**

# SECTION 1 GETTING THE DRIFT

This section gives an overview of some of the issues around young GLBT people accessing and using your service.

Each topic uses a case study to highlight the issues examined.

Understanding Sexuality  
Issues for GLBT Young People  
Strengths of GLBT Young People  
Ensuring Inclusivity

## SECTION 1 - GETTING THE DRIFT UNDERSTANDING SEXUALITY

**CASE STUDY:** Kelly, 15 years old. Uses your service.

Sexuality can be complex, ambiguous and problematic especially for young people.

*Kelly is having mixed and confusing emotions about her sexual feelings and thoughts. She is a strong minded but very private person. She can talk to her peers about sexual practices but not about her sexual feelings or identity. She is unable to talk to her Aboriginal Elders because she feels it is taboo to do so.*

**Sexual Feelings describes people's sexual attraction toward others.**

*Kelly has always enjoyed the company of boys and girls but finds herself much more attracted to girls than to boys. Sometimes she feels attracted to people who she really likes, regardless of whether they are girls or boys. She doesn't think that 'classic good looks' are important.*

**Sexual Identity describes how people see and describe their own sexuality.**

*Up to now, Kelly has thought of herself as heterosexual but now she's not so sure. She doesn't think that she quite fits her own idea of what a lesbian is. She knows another girl who likes girls and boys and calls herself 'queer' and she thinks maybe that's what she is too.*

**Sexual Behaviour describes the sexual activities that people engage in.**

*Kelly has kissed several boys and two girls. Some of these kisses got pretty heated and they felt each other up through their clothes but didn't get naked. Apart from this, Kelly's sexual experience has been limited to fantasising and masturbating.*

**Sexual Feelings, Identity and Behaviour can differ in each person and may change over time.**

*Kelly is unsure of her identity though she knows she can no longer identify as exclusively heterosexual. At the moment, she is more attracted to girls but still likes some boys. She would like to explore her sexuality more before she gives it a name.*

## SECTION 1 - GETTING THE DRIFT ISSUES FOR GLBTQ YOUNG PEOPLE

**CASE STUDY:** Josh, 16 years old. Uses your service.

**GLBT young people may feel that the world is dangerous and hostile to them.**

*At high school, Josh has seen other boys being harassed and even bashed by older boys who said they were "just bashing the little faggots". He's heard it said that homosexuals are evil and will go to Hell. His dad once said that "AIDS would rid the world of poofters."*

**GLBT young people may feel isolated, lonely and misunderstood.**

*Josh doesn't dare talk about his sexuality to other boys as he thinks he'd just be ridiculed or get bashed. He feels he can't talk to his family either because he fears he'd get kicked out of home. He knows he isn't the only gay person in the world, but doesn't know how to meet other gay people.*

**GLBT young people may feel shame, embarrassment or worthlessness due to their sexuality.**

*Sometimes Josh feels that maybe everybody else is right and he is sick, dirty and disgusting. When he finds himself feeling attracted to another boy he hopes that they don't realise it because then they'd hate him. At times he just wishes he could be normal.*

**GLBT young people may be at risk of self harm.**

*Sometimes Josh will drink beer to get smashed. Often Josh feels like life becomes too difficult to cope with and he wishes he could just escape from his life. The effort off keeping his feelings to himself is sometimes exhausting.*

**GLBT young people may be keen to experiment sexually.**

*Like many young men his age, Josh fantasises about sex a lot. He has 'played around' with a couple of other guys and is curious about going further. He's heard about safe sex and condoms but is too embarrassed to go and buy some.*

## SECTION 1 - GETTING THE DRIFT STRENGTHS OF GLBT YOUNG PEOPLE

**CASE STUDY:** Khaled, 16 years old. Uses your service.

**GLBT young people have probably learned some survival skills.**

*Khaled soon realised that some people were cool about his sexuality and others were not. His youth worker was happy to talk and gave him some information to follow up. He also found out more on the internet. He is starting to work out who he is and how he wants to live his life.*

**GLBT young people may enter and build strong informal social and support networks.**

*Khaled met another gay boy at his school who had an aunty who is a lesbian. They hang out at her place sometimes and have met a few other GLBT people. Khaled and his friend are thinking about checking out a local café where he heard that GLBT people hang out.*

**GLBT young people may have learned to believe in themselves despite what others may think or say.**

*Despite all the bad things Khaled has heard people say about GLBT people he knows he is a good person and so are his friends. He thinks people who put down GLBT people are just plain homophobic and boring.*

**GLBT young people may be more sensitive and supportive of other people who are marginalised.**

*Khaled met Miriam at their youth service. Miriam has a physical disability and is being bullied at school. They've become good friends and often talk about how to deal with bullies. He has invited her along to his friend's aunt's place one time.*

**GLBT young people may become proud to celebrate who they are and challenge discrimination.**

*Khaled has seen the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on TV and thinks it looks pretty wild. He's not quite that 'out there' yet but one day he'd like to go in the parade. He also heard about a group called 'GLBT Equality' and would like to find out what they do.*

## SECTION 1 - GETTING THE DRIFT ENSURING INCLUSIVITY

**CASE STUDY:** Adrian, 15 years old. Uses your service.  
Joss, 17 years old. Uses your service.

**Sometimes bisexual and transgender people feel they get left out when sexuality/gender gets discussed.**

*Adrian is attracted to both boys and girls. He doesn't like it when people assume he is 'gay'. Joss is female, although she is biologically male. She is working out what this means for her.*

**Bisexual young people can sometimes feel like a minority within a minority.**

*Adrian found that many of his straight friends have difficulty coming to terms with his attraction to boys. He met some gay guys at a peer support group run by his local youth health service but they gave him the brush off because he was also into girls.*

**All young people need freedom and flexibility to explore their sexuality and sexual identity.**

*Adrian finds some boys and some girls attractive. He finds that attraction depends on a number of qualities of the other person and not just their bodies or their gender. Sometimes he finds himself more interested in boys and at other times in girls. He is comfortable with that.*

**Gender can be experienced differently by different people in more ways than just 'male' or 'female'.**

*Because Joss is biologically male, she felt many expectations to fit into a particular culturally prescribed role. What it means to be male or female often gets confused with what it means to be masculine or feminine. Different people and different cultures play around with gender in different ways.*

**Transgender young people may have issues around gender that do not necessarily relate to sexuality.**

*Joss has had difficulty getting her gender acknowledged by her TAFE. Some people perceive that Joss is a gay man who wears dresses, which makes Joss angry. Joss wants to live as a woman and get on with life.*

# SECTION 2

## GETTING IT RIGHT

This section examines why your service should be accessible to young GLBT people and strategies you can use to make sure it is.

Each topic uses a case study to highlight the issues examined.

Roles and Responsibilities for  
Service Providers

Being Informed and Informing Others

Responding and Empowering

Social Justice and Social Change

## SECTION 2: GETTING IT RIGHT

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

CASE STUDY: Quest Youth Service operates in Western Sydney.

**Services have ethical and legal responsibilities to all stakeholders.**

*Quest has a funding agreement with NSW Department of Community Services which stipulates that services must be provided in a non-discriminatory way. The Management and Staff of Quest are committed to the needs and rights of all young people regardless of sexuality or gender.*

**Services have a duty of care which extends beyond their stated legal and ethical requirements.**

*When a young lesbian client informs a Quest staff member that she is being harassed at school Quest offers to advocate on her behalf with the school to make sure that the harassment is dealt with and prevented from happening in the future.*

**Staff of services have the potential to be good role models, especially for young people.**

*When a young person at a Quest group makes a homophobic comment, a Quest staff member challenges the comment and then leads an informal discussion about homophobia and how it can really hurt all people. The staff member explains why it is unacceptable within the group.*

**Services can be a good first point for GLBT young people to come out and find out more.**

*A young person in a Quest group discloses to a staff member that he might be gay. He does this because he likes the staff member and thinks they won't judge him. The staff member explains how Quest can help and what other services may be available to him.*

**Services must respect the privacy and confidentiality of all service users.**

*After explaining services to the young person, the Quest staff member then assures the young person that their privacy will be respected by all the Quest staff. Quest's staff will follow their agency confidentiality policy.*

## SECTION 2: GETTING IT RIGHT BEING INFORMED AND INFORMING OTHERS

**CASE STUDY:** The Stables Youth Health Service operates in Western NSW

Services need to ensure that all their staff are informed and receive training around GLBT issues.

*A few years ago a young man who was a client of The Stables committed suicide and left a note saying he was gay. This really upset the staff who hadn't seen how serious his situation was. They now get regular training on understanding and responding to young GLBT people.*

Services can play an important role in providing information and referral.

*The Stables puts out leaflets on GLBT counselling, social and support services in a prominent place so young people who might be interested will be able to see them and take one. They also have a sign up saying people can ask to speak to a GLBT Liaison Officer.*

Services can promote positive images of GLBT people to other services and the general community.

*By consistently using positive language when referring to their GLBT clients and emphasising their strengths and the contribution that they make to the community, The Stables has started to create a culture which is more accepting and celebrating of sexual and gender diversity.*

Services can raise awareness of the specific needs and issues of GLBT people.

*The Stables has really taken up the cause of youth suicide in their area in light of their own experience. They have pushed the issue in the papers and local radio station, advocating for better local counselling services and for GLBT young people to be accepted and supported.*

Services can inform young GLBT people of possible hazards or pitfalls.

*When a young client tells a staff member that she is going to 'come out' to her family at her next birthday party, the staff member points out that doing so could have mixed and unpredictable results. He suggests she tell one or two close family members first and see how that goes.*

## SECTION 2: GETTING IT RIGHT RESPONDING AND EMPOWERING

**CASE STUDY:** Moldavia Community Centre in the NSW Southern Highlands.

Services can create an environment which makes it easier for GLBT people to seek and receive help.

*Staff at Moldavia have put up posters which portray positive images of GLBT people and also have a rainbow flag in their window which is a well known GLBT symbol. Information on crisis services like the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service is prominently displayed.*

Services need to develop the capacity of all their staff and the service as a whole to respond.

*Moldavia holds regular training days on a number of issues including issues for GLBT young people. They have brought in specialist trainers and guest speakers including some GLBT young people who talked about their experiences and how they would like services to help.*

Services need to listen but must also be willing to act.

*A young client of Moldavia reported that he was the target of homophobic violence at his school. He spoke to staff about the problem and they referred him to a specialist counsellor. Moldavia then worked with the school to implement pro-diversity and anti-bullying programs.*

Services can encourage and support GLBT young people to advocate for themselves.

*When the local library refuses to put up a notice promoting a GLBT youth group at the centre a staff member met with the young people to talk about how they could challenge the library's action as discrimination. The young people agreed to talk to the head librarian about it.*

Services can work toward making the whole community more responsive and empowering.

*Moldavia applied for and received a small arts grant to run a queer photography workshop for young queer people to document their experiences. Moldavia then received funding from the local Council to hold a public exhibition of the works which had very good media coverage.*

## SECTION 2: GETTING IT RIGHT SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

CASE STUDY: Mt Tandem Youth Service operates in the NSW Blue Mountains

Services need to acknowledge and challenge the disadvantages that GLBT young people often face.

*Mount Tandem runs a GLBT youth group at its centre. Some of its members have been hassled on the train when going home after attending the group. Mount Tandem has requested extra security on the train and is looking into setting up some safer traveling arrangements.*

Services can build upon the existing strengths of GLBT young people and empower them.

*The GLBT youth group started off small and stayed that way for a while even though Mount Tandem promoted it through the sector. Gradually new members came, mainly through word of mouth. One of the members made a flyer which other members put up around the place.*

Services can be good role models for their clients, other services and the general community.

*The high visibility of the GLBT youth group has changed the attitudes of members of other groups. After some initial resistance in the local community, the GLBT group is now fairly well accepted. They put on a small art show at the Civic Centre which got good publicity.*

Services can auspice new GLBT specific services and undertake community development.

*Several members of the GLBT youth group were talking about homophobic violence and how they would like to do self-defense classes but those classes were usually full of 'yobbos'. Mount Tandem applied for and got a small grant to run a free self-defense class for them.*

Services can engage and influence cultural and political processes to support GLBT young people.

*When a the local Council was developing its Community Plan and seeking submissions, Mount Tandem worked with members of the GLBT youth group to lobby Council to include GLBT young people as a target group and highlight issues such as a lack of safe transport.*

## SECTION 3 KEEPING IT REAL

This section gives some useful tools to make your service more accessible to young GLBT people and to keep it that way.

You can incorporate these tools into your everyday practice.

GLBT Friendly Checklist  
Responding to GLBT Young People  
Responding to Homophobia  
Statement of Welcome

## SECTION 3: KEEPING IT REAL GLBTQ FRIENDLY CHECKLIST

### How well is your service set up for GLBT young people?

- Do you have visible GLBT material? (rainbow flags or stickers, posters, brochures, books etc.)
- Are reading materials such as GLBT magazines, newspapers and brochures available?
- Do you provide special programs, as required, for GLBT young people?
- Are GLBT people listed as clients in your brochures and other promotional materials?
- Are GLBT issues and relevant policies included in orientation for staff and volunteers?
- Do you provide periodic diversity training to staff and volunteers which covers GLBT issues?
- Do your other trainings such as 'mental health', 'suicide', 'alcohol & other drugs' consider sexuality as a factor?
- Is it clear that homophobic or heterosexist comments by staff or clients is unacceptable and not tolerated?
- Are GLBT clients or staff likely to feel comfortable to be open about their sexuality?
- Do forms and client data bases allow for same sex partnerships and diverse households?
- Is information on GLBT specific services available as a referral tool?
- Do you advertise employment vacancies or services in the GLBT media?

## SECTION 3: KEEPING IT REAL RESPONDING TO GLBT YOUNG PEOPLE

### Tips for engaging and communicating

- ★ Be aware of your own feelings about sexuality and gender and be as open about discussing sexuality and gender as you can.
- ★ *Make sure you refer the person to a professional if you think they are at serious risk of harm.*
- ★ Let the person know that you care about them and respect them as a human being.
- ★ *Let the person talk. Don't judge what they say, treat them as a problem to be solved or keep interrupting them.*
- ★ Be reassuring and supportive if a young person is struggling to come to terms with their sexuality and / or gender identity.
- ★ *Counter any myths and stereotypes which the young person themselves might have heard or come to believe.*
- ★ Encourage the person to identify any other people in their lives who accept and support them for who they are.
- ★ *Provide information that can link the young person with others going through similar experiences (e.g. a social group).*
- ★ Consider needs or pressures aside from those around sexuality / gender identity (e.g. study, family dynamics or health issues).
- ★ *Let the person know that you are available if they want to discuss anything further at a later time.*
- ★ Encourage the person to make up their own mind and make their own decisions.
- ★ *Remind the person that coming to terms with the issues they are facing may take some time.*
- ★ As much as possible, also focus on the positives and personal strengths of the person and their situation.

## SECTION 3: KEEPING IT REAL RESPONDING TO HOMOPHOBIA

### Tips for intervening against homophobic behaviour in group settings

#### Interrupt the Action

*Assess the situation for the key elements (e.g. homophobic joke). Act as immediately as possible.*

#### Support the Target

*Offer the targeted person(s) an opportunity to talk about the incident with you or a counsellor.*

#### Offer Information and Resources

*Make resources and information on support groups, community organisations or websites available for the targeted person(s).*

#### Counsel the Perpetrator

*Offer the perpetrator an opportunity to talk about the incident with you or a counsellor without being punitive.*

#### Provide the Perpetrator with Information

*Give the perpetrator information which explains why homophobic behaviour is unacceptable.*

#### Attain Closure

*Check your own feelings. If you need to, talk with a friend, colleague or counsellor. Discuss the situation in supervision.*

#### Review the Situation

*Consider how well you handled the situation. How might you have done it differently?*

#### Affirm Yourself for Intervening

*Recognise that it took strength and courage to intervene and give yourself credit for intervening.*

#### Follow Up

*Check in with the target and perpetrator later and stay vigilant in keeping your service free of homophobia.*

# STATEMENT OF WELCOME

This service respects gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

These are the things that you can expect from us:

- ★ An environment that is safe, welcoming and supportive. ★
- ★ An environment that is free of homophobic language or behaviour. ★
- ★ Staff who are suitably trained and willing to listen to you. ★
- ★ Information on groups and services that might be useful to you. ★
- ★ Respect for your specific and individual needs and issues. ★
- ★ Respect for your privacy and confidentiality. ★