

It's OK to be Gay and a Scout!

Advice for young people



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0845 300 1818

What does Coming out mean?

Coming out is when you tell someone about your sexual orientation. This phrase is often used when you are attracted to someone of the same sex.

Thinking about Coming out, things to consider

Coming out is a major decision in your life. It is your choice when, or if, to 'come out'. There is no right or wrong time, but you will normally feel ready. There is no right or wrong way to tell people, for example face to face, via a letter or email.

For many it is a great relief and for others a very traumatic experience. Once you tell someone, you can't take it back, but whom you tell is up to you. You may decide to tell your family, a friend, your teacher or a Scout Leader. Whoever you tell, feel comfortable about telling them, as it is a big step in your life. There is nothing wrong with being Gay and being a Scout and the person that you tell should be supportive and non judgemental to what you are telling them. However be aware that not everyone in society is comfortable with same sex relationships.

The reaction of the person you chose to tell might surprise you, and be completely different to what you expect. They may be very happy that you have come to terms with your sexual orientation and you will wonder why you worried about telling them.

It can, however, be hard for someone to accept that a member of their family, or friend, is gay and the shock of hearing it can lead to an over reaction. Their initial reaction may be one of anger or upset, because they didn't suspect that you are gay. The initial reaction of the person you are telling may be one of shock but, in time they will realise you are just being honest and people have to accept that you are gay.

Once you have told people that you are gay you may find that your friends and family treat you differently. Sometimes this won't change but often in time it won't make any difference that you are gay because they accept "you" for being "you" and not for being gay.

Unfortunately there are homophobic people who will never accept your lifestyle. If you encounter these sorts of people there are professional organisations that specialise in supporting you through such issues. Below are some suggested organisations that you can phone and speak to someone about your personal circumstances.

It's OK – to be a Scout and be Gay

The Scout Association has an equal opportunities policy and as it says, has no objection to the sexual orientation of any of its members. Therefore you do not have to leave Scouting if you are gay.

The Scout Association says:

No young person should receive less favourable treatment on the basis of, nor suffer disadvantage by reason of:

- *class;*
- *ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race;*
- *gender;*
- *marital or sexual status;*
- *mental or physical ability;*
- *political or religious belief.*

All Members of the Movement should seek to practice that equality, especially in promoting access to Scouting for young people in all parts of society.

You are not alone, many people throughout the Scout Association are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. It is an individual's choice how

public they wish to be about their sexual orientation.

Organisations to help

The Scout Association is not a specialist on giving advice on gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender issues, but they know people who are:

PACE

Youth work and counselling service for all lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and those questioning their sexuality, who are under 26.
020 8348 1785
www.outzone.org

ChildLine

Free confidential 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

Providing an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people from all backgrounds throughout the United Kingdom.
020 7837 7324
www.ligs.org.uk

Strathclyde Gay & Lesbian Switchboard

Confidential telephone counselling service in the West of Scotland.
Open every night of the week 7-10pm
0141 847 0447

Lothian Gay and lesbian Switchboard

Confidential helpline aimed at addressing your questions, concerns and needs.
Open every evening of the week, 365 days of the year, 7.30-10pm
0131 556 4049
www.lgls.co.uk

Swansea Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Switchboard

Tuesday 7-10pm
01792 301855

Belfast Cara-Friend

Mon-Wed 7.30-10pm
028 90322 023

Words you may hear:

Bisexual	A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women
Gay	A person who is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex, more commonly refers to men.
GLBT	The acronym for Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgendered people.
Homophobic	Fear of or contempt for Lesbians or Gay men.
Homosexual	A person whose sexually orientation is to someone of the same sex.
Lesbian	A woman who is sexually attracted to other women
Sexual Orientation	The directions of a person's sex towards a person of the same, opposite or both sexes.
Sexual Status	The position relative to others relating to characteristics of Sex, including a person's sexual orientation.
Straight	A person who is sexually attracted to the opposite sex.
Transgender	Appearing as, wishing to be considered as, or having undergone surgery to become a member the opposite sex.

Other Gay related factsheets:

- o Being Gay with an Adult role in Scouting (FS185081)
- o Supporting a Young person who is Gay and in Scouting. (FS185083)