

Coming out

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Do you think you might be attracted to men?

Do you think you might be gay or bisexual?



Coming out

... are you?

Coming out is the term used for the act of telling another person that you are gay or bisexual. Coming out to yourself - thinking of yourself as gay or bisexual - comes first.



For some people coming out can be straightforward, but for many it can be a confusing and stressful process. Gay and bisexual men often feel scared about coming out.

You may feel fine about coming out or you may be worried.

However you feel, we hope that you find the information in this booklet useful. It is intended as a starting point and will hopefully lead you on to contacting others who can support you.

Advice from people who have gone through similar experiences can make the whole process of coming out much easier for you.

"It was great. Mum and Dad already knew. They had been saying that I was gay since I was 8."

Will 17

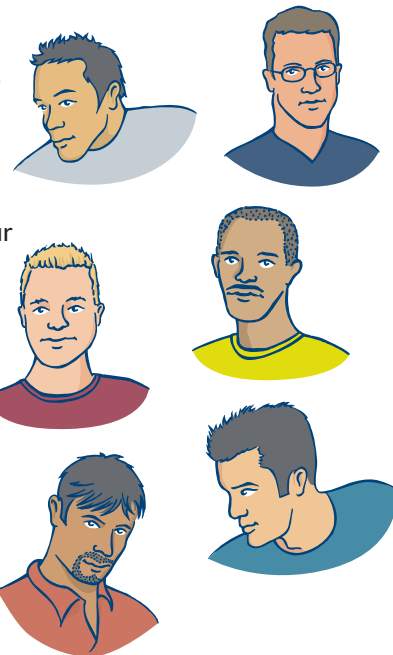
There are many gay and bisexual men: some of them are famous and some are not. You do not have to try to be like any of them. There is no one correct way to be. Everyone is different, no matter who they fancy.

You are not alone. Whatever your situation, there are many organizations that can help you with your concerns and questions about coming out.

(See contacts on page 25)

I first came out as a butch lesbian. Then I realised that didn't fit. I was not a butch woman, but a trans-man: a female-to-male transsexual. The third time I came out was as bisexual. Finally (I hope!) I thought about my sexuality more and came out again, this time as gay. So, I'm kind of bored with coming out because I have done it so many times.

Aaron 26



Coming out

... to yourself

Telling people I was gay was hard, but telling myself was the hardest.
Bilal, 18

Many of us have feelings for someone of the same sex. Some people may not understand this and get frightened, saying that it is bad or wrong. You may have been told that these feelings are unnatural. You may also be unsure what these feelings mean - are they friendly, romantic, or sexual feelings? Because people are anxious about same sex feelings and because feelings are complicated enough anyway, it can be difficult to come to terms with the idea that you may be attracted to men yourself. It is important that you try to accept that there is nothing wrong with you. Your sexuality is an important aspect of yourself. Accepting your feelings can be a positive experience. This may or may not mean that you start thinking of yourself as gay or bisexual. How you think about your sexuality and describe yourself is up to you.



Coming out

... to others

"My parents' biggest regret was that I hadn't told them sooner. They were hurt that I was afraid to share my life with them."

Mike 20

Why come out to others?

Being attracted to another man, or being gay or bisexual, is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, if you feel very strongly about something you may want to share this with others. For example, you may have a crush on a boy and desperately want to be able to tell someone you trust. Or, you may have a new boyfriend you want to introduce to people you care about. Remember that bottling up a secret can be very difficult. You may end up having to tell more and more lies to cover up your true feelings.

If you don't tell people who are close to you about your feelings, you may be cutting them off from a very important part of your life. This can make your relationships with other people very difficult just when you may need support. You may also decide that coming out may not make your relationships easier. It is up to you to decide what you want to share with other people.

Do I have to come out as gay or bisexual?

Your desires, fantasies and feelings are your own. It is up to you whether you want to share them with other people or not. It is also up to you to decide if you want to call yourself gay or bisexual.

If I decide to come out, who should I tell?

It's probably best to start with someone who you think will be more open and positive. Are you prepared for a bad reaction? Are you prepared for a good reaction? Talking it through first with a support worker or a telephone helpline might be helpful. *(See contacts on page 25)*

"I became closer than I thought I could to my friends."

Danny 16

"When I came out I thought it meant I had to leave my wife, who was my best friend, and family. Instead, by being honest I was able to have a much better marriage and share my life with my best friend. I do still get some rubbish from some gay men who can't cope with me still being married."

Adam 33

"I hated being gay and went to talk to my priest. He told my family and we prayed over me and I was sent away to be 'cured'. It took a while to realise this was how God made me and now I am happily married to another man. Needless to say I go to a different church."

Luke 23

Should I come out in stages or all in one go?

This depends on you and how much support you have. Some people want to tell everyone at once and get it over with. Others come out over a number of years. Some people decide to tell only one or two others. Who you talk to is up to you. You may tell a close friend first or a member of your family. Remember to prepare yourself for different reactions. You are only being honest and telling someone about your feelings.

"I told my whole family together, as I was so excited about finally realising I liked men. My family were horrified and threatened me with the police if I ever dated anyone. It took a year for them to come around and now they are brilliant."

Sam 29

Should I come out to my parents?

Whether you have a close relationship with your parents or not, you may feel that this is important part of your life that you want to share with them. Some people find it easier to discuss the subject with one parent or another member of the family first before approaching the rest of the family. Other people decide not to discuss their sexuality with their families. It is up to you.

Do you have the telephone number of a gay switchboard or parents organisation that could help you or your parents?

(You do now - see contacts on page 25)

"I told my mother after my friends and she felt hurt that I hadn't told her first."

Steven 25



Coming out

... how to do it

"I told me parents I was gay when I was 16. They threw me out and put an announcement in our community paper saying I was dead. It took 10 years before they would speak to me again."

Ahmed 29

There is no right place or right time or right way to come out. It is best to try to avoid an argument about it, and of course it is best not to do it when you've had too much to drink. Try to plan ahead.

When coming out to someone, remember how long it has taken you to accept your sexuality. Others may need time to accept this also - so try to keep calm.

"It was much harder coming out in my 50's and explaining to so many people who thought they knew me that they didn't. My wife was really angry and hurt, but my children did try hard to understand. My wife still finds it hard but we are working on our friendship."

John 59

Here are some suggestions for *responses* to statements some people might make:

It's just a phase.

Things may change in the future, but this is how I feel now. And that is what is important.

It's not important.

It is to me. I've had to build up a lot of courage to tell you.

Was it something I did?

No. It's just the way I feel.

God says it is wrong.

God made me the way I am.

Now it's said, don't mention it again.

If I don't, I will have to lie about where I've been and who I see. I'm not willing to do that.

Why do you have to tell everyone about what you do in bed?

I'm not. I'm talking about my sexuality, which is different from sex. I'm telling you about me.

Coming out

... the scene

DISCO

BAR

Café



What is it?

The scene is a term used to mean gay bars, cafes, discos, lesbian and gay centres and shops - places that cater for gay people, where you can meet friends and have fun. Mostly these are based in Glasgow and Edinburgh, with smaller scenes in Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness. If you live in a more rural area, you may not be able to get to a scene, in which case the contacts at the end of this booklet may be even more important. Some people love the gay scene and once they discover it are out nearly all the time. For others it can be intimidating, boring or expensive.

"My friend said it wasn't news, everyone had guessed already, and didn't I know that."

Simon 18

What happens?

People meet, chat, dance and eat.

Do I talk to people?

To some, coming out is important because it helps them make new friendships and close relations. If you want to talk to someone, that is okay. Some people may chat to you to try to pick you up. You can choose to say yes or no to sex, and still have a chat and make friends. Decide for yourself what you want out of talking to people.

Will everyone want to have sex with me?

Someone who is keen on you may well approach you. If you are not interested, say no. If you are, say yes. And if you're not sure, say you're not sure. Sex is best if you are completely happy with what you're doing.

"My parents asked me if I was gay. I was so embarrassed, but am glad they brought it up now as it is much easier."

Alchamer 20

"When I came out as bisexual my mother asked what the point was as I still liked girls."

Tom 19

“My mum cried and said she would never have grandchildren and she would never accept it. Now she’s been to gay bars with me, met my friends and she’s as proud of me as I am of her.”

Jason 18

What if I want sex?

Then find someone you fancy who wants to join you. Or enjoy a wank on your own. If you have sex with others, do you know about safer sex? (*See SEX on page 22*). Finding a sexual partner can be difficult. Not everyone will want to have sex with you. Some will be in monogamous relationships, some people don’t want sex and others may not fancy you. Sex is best when the people involved want the same things. Listening to people can help you work out what they want. At the same time, you can tell them what you want.

Am I more attractive because I’m young?

Some people prefer older men, some their your own age, and some like men because they are young. Hopefully you will meet people who are interested in who you are, not how old you are.

Do I have to behave in a certain way?

You may feel pressured to ‘act gay’. But, there is no correct way to behave. Everyone is different. We all have our own unique desires, personalities and bodies. So, you don’t have to try to ‘look gay’ either!! You will probably be happier if you can try to relax and be yourself.

I first came out as gay. But then I got hassle because I sometimes fancied women. So I came out again, as bisexual. Then I got hassle for not being bisexual enough. I finally decided to give up on labels. I just fancy who I fancy.

Mark 24

“It was funny when I came out because no one could believe me.”

John 16

Coming out

... thinking
about it?

"It took me years to come to terms with my sexuality but somehow I expected my parents to shout for a day, cry for a week and then get over it. It takes time and patience."

David 19

Ask yourself:

Are you attracted to other men?

Do you want to talk to other people about your sexuality?

What is the best time and place to come out?

What is the best possible reaction?

What is the worst possible reaction?

What support do you have?



Coming out

... what if you are unsure?

"I always knew I was gay, but I still got married because of pressure from friends and family. When I came out my wife said she felt used and worthless. It wasn't fair that I used her to avoid issues with my sexuality."

Peter 31

I think I'm attracted to another guy. Does that mean I am gay or bisexual?

Not necessarily. Feelings are very complicated. Your attraction could be based on admiration or friendship. Or it could be romantic or sexual. Or, it could even be a combination of different things.

Some men are only attracted to men. Others fancy both women and men. Some men are mostly into women, but find one or two exceptions who happen to be men. Some people also find that their sexual desires change over time. Sexuality is very complicated and doesn't necessarily fit neatly into little boxes.

I was never one of the lads. Because I didn't act like the other men I knew, I thought I must have been gay. I finally realised that I didn't have to be a 'real man'. I am now much more comfortable with my sexuality, which is heterosexual. Well, so far anyway. Stuart 22



Coming out

... SEX



What about sex?

There are plenty of things you can do and enjoy, like kissing, cuddling and oral sex, mutual masturbation, touching each other, anal and vaginal sex.

What if I don't like doing something?

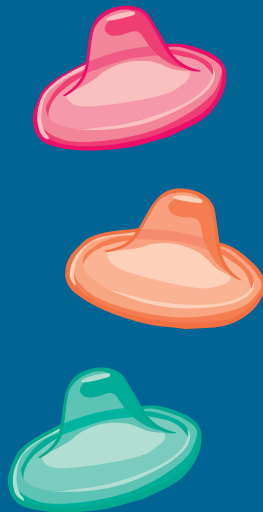
Don't do it. Although it is sometimes difficult to say 'no', remember you don't have to do anything you don't want to. You can take care of yourself and enjoy sex more if you can communicate what you want and what you don't want. You are worth taking care of.

What is unsafe sex?

Safer sex means sex that reduces the risk of transmitting infections. Some can only be passed on through unprotected intercourse. Others can be passed on through oral sex as well. To make sex safer, you can educate yourself. Many of the organisations listed in this booklet can provide you with information and support (*see contacts page 25*).

But, knowledge is not enough. Feeling comfortable about the sex you may have and being able to communicate with a partner are also very important. Thinking you might have got an infection or passed one on can be stressful. Good sex means feeling happy about it afterwards, as well during.

HIV is one form of infection can be passed on through sex, most commonly through unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse. HIV can be passed on whether giving or receiving. Penetrative sex without a condom is risky for either partner. If you have anal or vaginal intercourse, you can make it safer by using a condom and plenty of oil free lubricant. Lube should be either water-based or silicon-based. Oil weakens condoms, which makes them much more likely to break. Using plenty of lube makes sex slippier, which is better for both condoms and comfort. You can get condoms and lubricant at the chemist or free in gay bars or from the Healthy Gay Scotland website: www.healthygayScotland.com



I told my father and he was very worried that I would get attacked. He was also worried that I would never enjoy having children.

Ryuzaki 21

What is cruising?

Some men meet and have sex with other men in public places, such as parks. This is known as cruising. Be careful because you may risk assault or being arrested.

At what age can I have sex?

The legal age of consent for sex with women or men is 16 in Britain.



I'm nervous about having sex. What if it goes horribly wrong?

We live in a society that is very uncomfortable with sex. So, it's not surprising that a lot of people are anxious about it. Before having sex, there are a few things you might want to think about. Is sex what you want, or is it friendship, attention or just a cuddle? Are you confident enough to say what you want and say what you don't want? Do you feel like you have to get drunk or high to have sex? Do you trust the other person? Are you in a place where you feel comfortable and safe? Have you thought about safer sex? Do you feel comfortable using condoms, if you decide you need one? Sex can go horribly wrong. It can also be an amazing experience, especially if you feel comfortable and prepared.

The first few times I had sex, it wasn't very nice. I didn't really know what I was doing. Since I got better at working out what I wanted and how to communicate, sex has been much better. And I am still learning!

James 26

Coming out

... at last!

"Coming out meant I could stop lying and be honest. The lying took up so much energy."

Liam 22

A lot of people find sexuality confusing. It's OK to feel scared or not to know things. It's also OK to be sure that you fancy other men. However you feel, life is always easier when you have support. Maybe you get all of the support you need from your friends or your family. Or maybe you have been able to meet new people who understand how you feel. Alternatively, you may feel alone and isolated and find it's difficult to meet other people. If this is the case you can contact your local switchboard, who can put you in touch with others. If you feel confident, you may want to contact the group and offer your services in helping others by volunteering. We all need support sometimes and if you feel isolated there are many people who can help - many of whom have experienced some of the emotions you are going through.

LGBT Youth Groups

LGBT Youth Scotland

John Cotton Centre, 10 Sunnyside, Edinburgh EH7 5RA

t 0845 113 0005

e info@lgbtyouth.org.uk

w www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

Youth groups in: Berwick

Edinburgh (*Drop in: Tues 6.30-8.30pm*)

Galashiels Hawick Kirkcaldy Peebles

Ring confidential LGBT youth line for details:
0845 113 0055 (*Tues 7.30-9pm*)

Colours LGBT Youth

Youth Services, Glasgow City Council,
196 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HH

e colourslgbt@yahoo.co.uk

w www14.brinkster.com/colourslgbt

Highland LGB Youth Group

34 Waterloo Place, Inverness IV1 1NB

t 01463 711585 *Mon - Fri 9.30am-4.30pm*

e project@reachout.demon.co.uk

w www.reachout.demon.co.uk

Coming out

... contacts

This Way Out (Dundee LGB Youth Group)

PO Box 53, Dundee DD1 3YG

t 01382 202620 *Mon 7pm-10pm*

e diversitay@hotmail.com

w www.dundeelgb.freemove.co.uk

YLGC (Young Lesbian and Gay Christians)

t 020 7739 8134 *Wed + Sat 7pm-9.30pm*

e carrm@blueyonder.co.uk

w www.lgcm.org.uk

Other Youth Groups

Bridges Project

1 Mitchell Close, Haddington, East Lothian EH41 3NB

t 0800 068 5554

e mail@bridgesproject.org.uk

w www.bridgesproject.org.uk

The Corner

13 Shore Terrace, Dundee DD1 3NP

t 01382 206060

e office@corner.finix.org.uk
(general enquiries only)

w www.thecorner.co.uk

Crew 2000

32/32a Cockburn Street, Edinburgh EH1 1PB

t 0131 220 3404

e crew@chilledout.co.uk

Mayfield and Easterhouses Youth Project

2b Bogwood Road, Mayfield EH22 5DY

t 0131 454 9805

e office@youth2000project.com

MYPAS

Tolbooth Hall, 176 High Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AY

t 0131 454 0757

e midlothian_mypas@hotmail.com

West Lothian Youth Action Plan

c/o Community House, 33 Aller Place, Livingston

EH54 6RF

t 01506 461588

e wl@youth-action-project.freemove.co.uk

Youth Enquiry Service

65 Friars Vennel, Dumfries DG1 2RQ

t 01387 251322

e staff@dumfriesyes.co.uk

Other LGBT Groups

Al-Fatiha (an international Muslim organisation)

Box 424, 37 Shore Street, London WC1

e alfatiha_london@hotmail.com

w www.al-fatiha.net

Ayrshire Social & Sexuality Support Group (Over 18s only)

t 0141 332 3838 (or 01294 323 473 in Ayrshire)

e contact@phacescotland.org

Diversitay LGBT Group (Tayside)

PO Box 53, Dundee DD1 3YG

t 01382 202620 Mon 7-9pm

Answer phone on at other times

e diversitay@hotmail.com

w www.dundeelgb.freemove.co.uk/

Fife Friend

PO Box 19, Kirkcaldy KY1 3JF

t 01592 266688

Tues 7.30-9pm Fri 7.30-10pm

e info@fifefriend.co.uk

w www.fifefriend.co.uk/

Gay Men's Health

10a Union Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LU

t 0131 558 9444

e mail@gmh.org.uk

w www.gmh.org.uk

Holy Trinity Metropolitan Community Church

PO Box 12433, Edinburgh EH1 3FU

t 0131 347 8699

e mail@mccedinburgh.com

w www.mccedinburgh.com

Lads & Lassies Club, Scottish Deaf Gay and Lesbian Club

PO Box 7005, Glasgow G71 5UZ

e lsdgalc@hotmail.com

Lanarkshire Gay Group

134 Douglas Street, 2nd Floor, Glasgow G2 4HF

t 0141 332 3838

e contact@phacescotland.org

Phace Scotland

49 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 2DL

t 0141 332 3838

e contact@phacescotland.org

w www.phacescotland.org

Reach Out Highland

34 Waterloo Place, Inverness IV1 1NB

t 01463 711585

e support@reachout.demon.co.uk

w www.reachout.demon.co.uk

The Steve Retson Project

Sandyford Centre, 6 Sandyford Place,
Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow

t 0141 211 8601

w www.steveretsonproject.org.uk

West Lothian Transgender Support Group

t 07808 564626 (John)

w www.westlothiantsg.co.uk

Helplines

Borders Gay Switchboard

t 01896 756611 Thurs 7.30-10pm

Dumfries & Galloway L&G Phoneline

t 01387 261818 Thurs 7.30-9.30pm

Grampian LGB Switchboard

t 01224 212600 Wed + Fri 7.30-9.30pm

w www.glgbs.org.uk/

London Bisexual Phonenumber

t 0845 4501263 Tues + Wed 7.30-9.30pm
Sat 10.30am-12.30pm

London L&G Switchboard

LLGS, PO Box 7324, London N1 9QS

t 0207 837 7324 24 hours

w www.llgs.org.uk/

Lothian Gay & Lesbian Switchboard

t 0131 556 4049 Nightly 7.30-10pm

w www.lgls.org/

National Aids Helpline

t 0800 567123 24 Hours

Parents Enquiry Scotland

t 0131 556 6047 Daily before 10pm

Sexwise (info for 12-18 year olds)

t 0800 28 29 30 7pm - midnight

Strathclyde L&G Switchboard

t 0141 3328372 Nightly 7-10pm

w www.sglsc.co.uk/

Coming out

- a guide for
young men



healthygayscotland

Produced by:

Gay Men's Health Ltd

10a Union Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LU

t 0131 558 9444 f 0131 558 9060 e mail@gmh.org.uk w www.gmh.org.uk

LGBT Youth Scotland

John Cotton Centre, 10 Sunnyside, Edinburgh EH7 5RA

t 0845 113 0005 f 0131 622 2266 e info@lgbtyouth.org.uk w www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

Healthy Gay Scotland

Suite 2, Beaverhall House, Beaverhall Road, Edinburgh EH7 4JE

t/f 0131 558 3713 e info@healthygayscotland.com w www.healthygayscotland.com

Coming out

... a guide for
young men

