

QUEER FUTURES: EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Q:alliance Bedfordshire Youth Services
Presented by Noah Alfred Pantano



HELLO!

- Noah Alfred Pantano (He/They/Any)
- Doctorate of Theatre Studies (Playwriting)
- LGBTQ+ Youth Outreach Practitioner
- Performer, Activist, Academic
- Neurodivergent

Q:ALLIANCE

- We are an LGBTQ+ charity for Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire providing support, information and empowerment to the community.
- Listen First, Be Strengthening, Share Power, Be There Well



- It's okay not to know everything or anything
- Inclusive-learning environment
- Ask questions at end
- If you need me to repeat, explain, or slow down please interrupt!
- I go on tangents (ADD)

DISCLAIMER

- Sharing personal lived experience
- The queer theory shared today is not all reflective of Q:alliance's beliefs but are shared to explore relevant LGBTQ+ topics

DISCLAIMER

- 
- A vertical bar on the left side of the slide, composed of four colored segments: orange, yellow, green, and blue.
- A brief introduction to queer futurism scholars like Edelman and Munoz and how their theories inform how we comprehend a “queer utopia.”
 - Explore the causes of cynicism and poor mental health in LGBTQ+ people, particularly regarding young people and their futures

- **Discuss strategies to empower and support queer people in crisis and inspire hope and confidence**
- **Insight on using inclusive language, correcting mistakes, and creating safe spaces**

LGBTQ+

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Trans+
- Queer
- (and more)

LGBTQ+

But What Do I Use?

- What's LGB?
- LGBT vs LGBT+ vs LGBTQ+
- LGBTQIA+
- LGBTQIA2S+
- Queer & Gay

QUEERNESS

An umbrella term for non-normative sexual and gender identity

Deriving from the word queer meaning different or weird. Not all people like this term.

Queer Theory is the academic theory about queerness

Barriers to Access

How Do You Access Your Favourite Hobby?

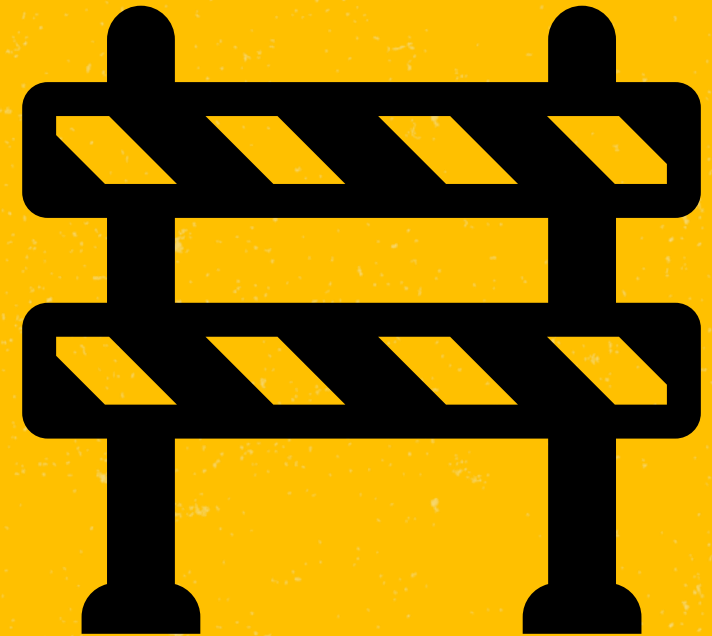
- How do you get there?
- How do you find out about events?
- What challenges do you face as an adult?

- Bullying
- Family
- Funding
- Pressure to “blend in”
- Pressure to come out/label
- Relationship issues
- Religious Difficulties
- Self-resilience/confidence
- Legal Barriers

CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

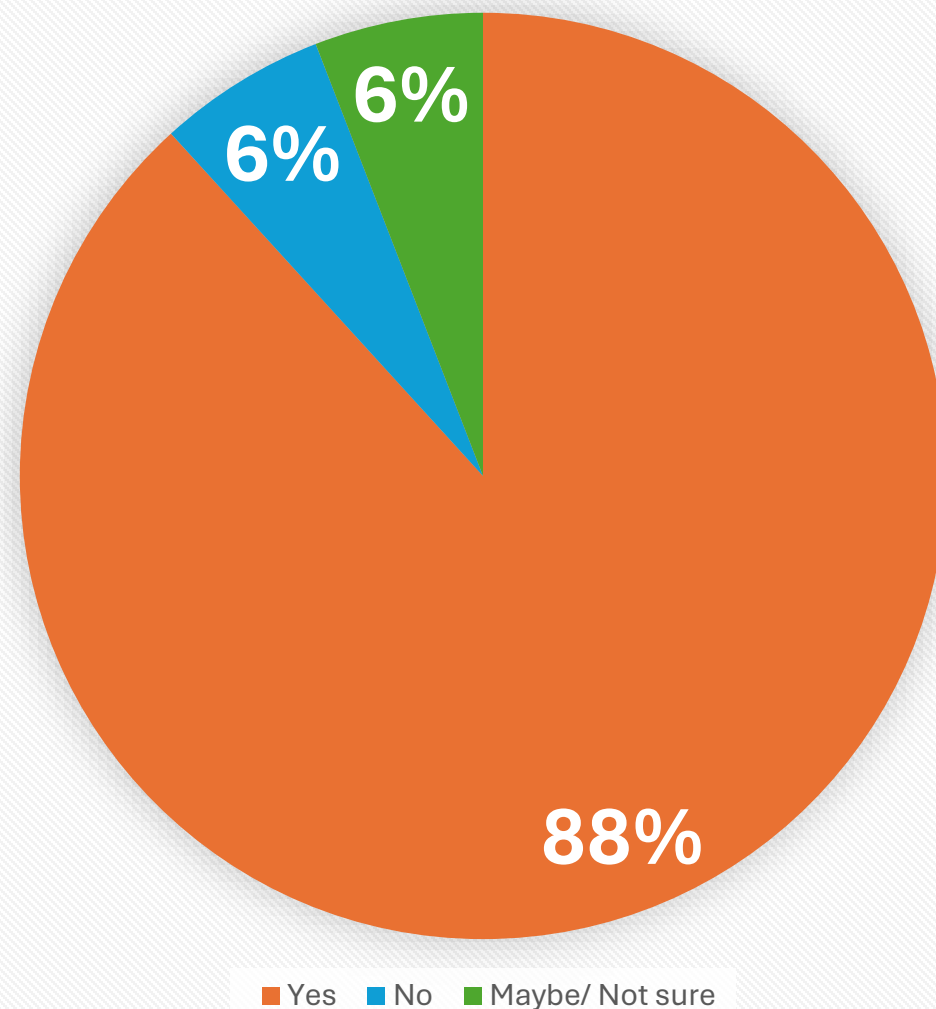
- Lack of social spaces
- Lack of travel support
- Lack of 1:1 Support
- Lack of trusted adults/peers



THE COMMUNITY FEELS

- Socially Isolated (Social media, COVID)
- Doubt the future will exist (Climate catastrophe, War)
- Politically frustrated (Policy is made by older generation, no right to vote, lack of civic responsibility)

Do you think LGBTQ+ young people need more safe spaces in Bedfordshire?

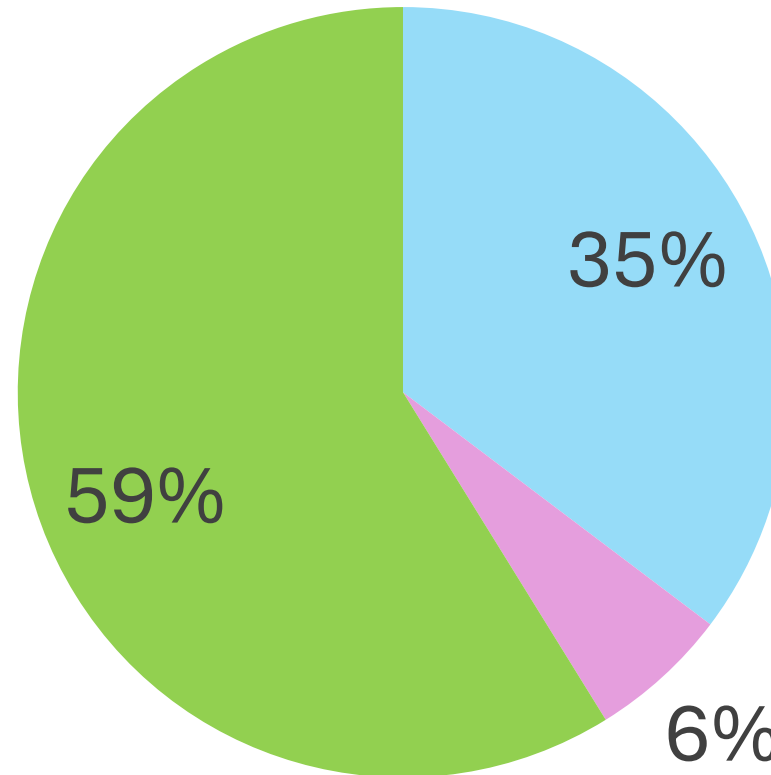


Attending a dedicated LGBTQ+ space in Bedfordshire

■ I currently go to a local youth space

■ I used to attend an LGBTQ+ space but stopped

■ I don't know of any local youth spaces





QUEER FUTURES

Current academic debate within queer theory about the future of queerness, the place queer people have in the future, and what kind of future is possible or desirable.

- Lee Edelman (Queer Negativist)
- Jose Esteban Munoz (Queer Utopianist)

EDELMAN – *NO FUTURE*



- Edelman argues that modern politics is obsessed with what he calls “**reproductive futurism**”: the idea that society is organized around protecting “the future,” symbolized by **the Child**.

EDELMAN – *NO FUTURE*

Conservative Argument

We need to stop gender-affirming care to protect children

Liberal Argument

We need to continue gender-affirming care to protect children

Edelman argues both of these arguments prioritize imagined futures to justify moral correctness.

EDELMAN – *NO FUTURE*

Queer people
deserve
inclusion in the
future

**EDELMAN
INSTEAD
ARGUES**

Queerness
exposes the
oppressions and
exclusions built
into the very idea
of *the future*.

MUNOZ – *CRUISING UTOPIA*

- Queerness is not yet here.
- The present world is structured by racism, capitalism, heteronormativity, and oppression.
- Any attempt to imagine and experience “queer utopia” is limited by our present circumstances



MUNOZ – *CRUISING UTOPIA*

- We cannot be against the future as there is a future for queer people
- Marginalized people, especially queer people of color and trans people, often survive through imagination, worldmaking, and hope.
- We must imagine and experience potential futures to survive

- Queerness is a horizon
- Something we move toward. Small moments of connection, performance, pleasure, or collective feeling can point toward new ways of living.

MUNOZ – *CRUISING UTOPIA*

- We *glimpse* at the horizon when we are in spaces of free queer expression
- We glimpse at better futures which we conceive which do not exist yet



APPLYING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- Edelman reflects the present values of many young people
 - Young people are frustrated with present social and political structures which they feel they have no control over
- Munoz encourages hope
 - Acknowledgment of the wrongs of today AND a desire to see things better. Both can co-exist.
 - We create glimpses of better futures in youth groups, activism, events, etc.

YOUTH ACCESS TO “GLIMPSES”

Young people are not allowed into/have access to all queer spaces because of their:

- Age (Adult-only exclusion)
- Location (Travel Time and Cost)
- Knowledge (of safe spaces and events)
- Comfort (some spaces are more socially intimidating than others)

How do we encourage young people to “glimpse” at queer futures in our community – particularly where we currently lack resources, groups, and events for young LGBTQ+ people?

Q:ALLIANCE APPROACH

- **Youth-led approach**
 - Young people should be at the front of all decision making for young people
 - Confidence in a system which you helped to build



UPLIFTING YOUNG LGBTQ+ PEOPLE



- Create safe spaces
- Are LGBTQ+ people in your organization? Are you trained on identity, sexuality, and gender?
- Where are gaps of knowledge/outreach?

- Is sharing pronouns a regular part of routine?
- What is the procedure for reporting discrimination and receiving feedback from young people?
- Are young LGBTQ+ determining policy? Or are you deciding it for them?
- Do I have a youth group? 1:1 support? Pride?

Pronoun Usage

- EVERYONE uses pronouns
- Using correct pronouns is a sign of respect

“Elmo thinks that Elmo should go to Abby’s house and play with Abby and Abby’s friends. Elmo would love to do that”



USING PRONOUNS

- It is **always** okay to ask if you are unsure.
 - **ALWAYS** better to ask than get it wrong.
- When first meeting someone, offer your pronouns first if you feel uncomfortable directly asking.
 - Hello, my name is Noah (He/They). What are your pronouns?
- Include pronouns in your email signature

MAKING MISTAKES

It is okay to make mistakes.
Everyone does.

- If you make a mistake, apologize quickly, correct, and move on
 - “She said--”
 - “Bobby uses he/him pronouns”
 - “My mistake, *he* said.”

- Do not:
 - Make it about you
 - Lengthy apologize
 - Not try

IF YOU SEE SOMEONE ELSE MAKE A MISTAKE

- Correct the error
 - It should be a part of routine
 - Create an environment where it's okay to make mistakes and okay to correct those who do.

Everyone works together to improve

IF YOU SEE SOMEONE ELSE MAKE A MISTAKE

- Do not assume ill intent
- Correct and move on. Follow-up later if needed.
- What accommodations can be made to make it easier for everyone?
- Not trying and repeated mistakes can cause lasting harm, no matter the intent
- Report maliciousness to supervisor or safeguarding lead.

Resources/Signpost

Q:youth Bedford

Q:youth MK

Adult Services MK

Resources/Signpost



**Rainbow
Bedfordshire**

**Adult services
Bedford
Borough**



**Leighton
Buzzard Youth
Services**



**OK2B
Luton Youth
Services**

QUESTIONS?

noah.p@qalliance.org.uk

qyouthbedford@qalliance.org.uk

<https://www.qalliance.org.uk/contact>