



2014 Report: 12 Months On

"I find it extremely difficult to accept my sexuality due to the cultural pressures and due to the individual pressures I face myself" – Farouk (male, gay, 24)

"I kind of used to self-harm all the time.... I was stressed about like realising I wasn't straight and not being able to talk to anyone about that and feeling kind of wrong about that... I just basically felt like I was kind of a failure"- Clem (female, bisexual, 18)

"I guess it's just...reaching a point of such self-hatred that you just want a way out"
- Steffi (trans, lesbian, 25)

The Queer Futures research study aims to find out why young LGBTQ people like Farouk, Clem and Steffi (above) become distressed and want to hurt themselves or end their lives. The study also aims to find out how young LGBTQ people ask for help (if they do), from who, when and what would help.

The view of the Queer Futures team is that if we are going to find ways of preventing suicide and self-harm we need to *ask* young LGBTQ people themselves what causes their distress and what type of help and support would help them. The Queer Futures project has officially been running for 12 months and during that time the team has been working with young LGBTQ people to develop and complete the first stage of the research.

Stage 1: Qualitative Interviews

The team began inviting young LGBTQ people to take part in interviews in March 2014. To make sure we were asking the right questions we consulted with a group of young people about the research aims, objectives and methods, including the interview format and questions. These young people became our 'LGBTQ Youth Advisory Group', which helps us to know and understand what young people may be thinking when they come into contact with our research, and how they might want to take part. They help us by providing advice and feedback, mainly via Facebook, but sometimes in person at important research points.

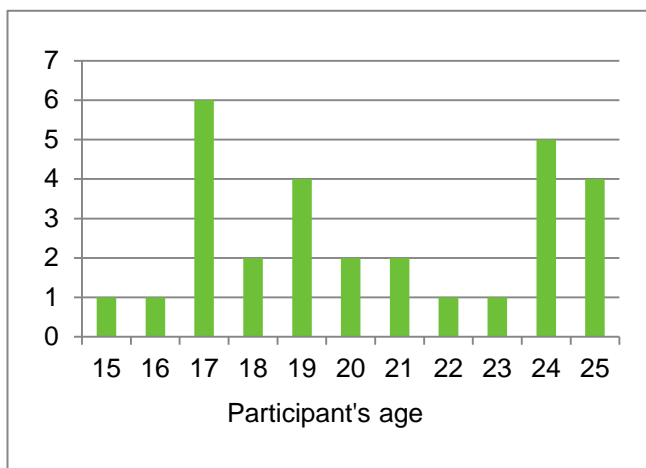


Figure 1: Number of interview participants by age

We needed to interview 30 LGBTQ young people so we worked with LGBTQ groups across England and used social media. During this stage, we received very positive feedback about our study, with many youth groups, LGBTQ organisations, mental health groups and service providers stating that our study was badly needed to inform ways of preventing suicide and supporting LGBTQ youth and to 'make things better'.

We thought getting 30 young people for interview would take a while because we recognised that young people would find it difficult to talk about the sensitive subject of their self-harm, suicide and sexuality and/or gender, and that this may be upsetting. However, we were wrong; the response to our request for young people to volunteer to be interviewed was amazing. The research team was overwhelmed with LGBTQ youth wanting to take part.

Many participants who we interviewed explained that although they had been through hard times, they felt as if their voice could contribute to helping others in the future. One participant explained: *"I hope that my responses can help with your research. I want to be able to do something positive with my negative life experiences"*.

