

young gay men
talking

AVERT2

Well, am I or aren't I ... GAY?

- Phil:** "You've probably been brought up thinking that everyone, including yourself, is straight."
- Andy:** "Being gay is something you might discover about yourself as you grow up – it's unlikely to be a sudden feeling."
- Liam:** "Although it might be something you suddenly have a name for... you realise what it is you've been feeling for years."
- Howard:** "Working out you are gay will probably take a long time, and may involve very difficult feelings."
- John:** "And wishing that you could be the same as everyone else."
- James:** "This means lots of people act as if they're straight – you lead a sort of double life."
- Spencer:** "You've got all these people saying you shouldn't be doing this because it's not natural."
- Tim:** "You'll probably discover that many people don't seem to like people who are gay, so it can be very difficult to like yourself if you think you might be gay."
- Jim:** "I have always known that I was attracted to guys and not girls. I find women very beautiful and I love them, but I am not attracted to them sexually."
- Michael:** "I've tried to make myself straight, but I just couldn't do it."
- Robert:** "I have known I was gay since I was about 10 or 11, but just couldn't bring myself to accept it. I tried to kid myself that it was just "a phase", and that I would change."

We've all experienced most of these feelings. It hasn't been easy but it does get better.

We hope this booklet will help if you're wondering whether you're gay or not and help you to deal with your feelings if you decide that you are. If you are reading this booklet because you have (or think you have) a gay friend or relative, we hope this booklet gives you an insight into some of the issues that might be on their mind.



Howard

“For the last few months, I’ve had this thing about this boy I’ve seen on the bus going to college. I used to get up at half past seven every morning to look out of my window – this is right opposite where the bus stops. And just watch and see him waiting and then getting the bus. I’d walk my dog round the estate where he lives every time when I knew the bus was coming back and I’ve memorised all the times so I know what time he’ll be there.

But then I think ‘Do I really want to be with men, or do I just think I do?’ And I start thinking maybe it’s the security I want because I didn’t get it from my Dad. But when I look into it deeper, I would feel worse. I’d feel insecure. I’d feel frightened that everyone was going to find out and people would know and I’d hate it. So it can’t be that at all. Because I’d rather go out with a girl and then I’d be able to walk down the street with her and people would expect that of you. So I think it can’t be that.

But then I can change so quickly. One minute I’ll be out walking my dog, hoping this bloke from the bus is going to look out of his window and see me. I’m dying for him to just see me. And I can come home and I can cry about it and think,
no, I’ll ring Vicky, and I’ll think, yeah, I want to be with
her. Trouble is I think, if I go out with
Vicky then I’m cutting off every
thing else.”

Matt

I can remember the first time the feeling was strong. It was the hardest 3 years of my mental life trying to decide if I was happy to live a gay life, but it only dawned on me 12 months ago when I came out, that there is no such thing as a 'gay life', there is just life, and what you do with your life is up to you. I lived, what some people would call a straight life, for 18 years and that is not about to change now just because I like guys. I work for a construction company, go to the football, go to the gym and do heaps of things that straight guys get into. No one knows that I am gay unless I tell them.

So for all you guys who are happy with their lives and think that being gay is going to turn you into someone else, it isn't. Just be yourself, and don't let the concept of being different scare you.

Luis

When I was young, say 5th grade, I always knew that I was attracted to guys. I tried to deny it, but that feeling was always there. I thought maybe it was a phase I was going through, and I would then like girls. Maybe it was something all guys went through, but nope I have never grown to like girls. I tried to make myself straight in mid school, and even in high school. When I couldn't do it I finally admitted I was gay.



Trying to accept you might be gay 'coming out' to yourself

- Tariq:** "I thought people wouldn't like me anymore. People would change. I'd get beaten up... and be considered a freak."
- Hampton:** "I was in denial for a long time before I accepted it as part of who I am."
- John:** "I thought maybe if I go out with girls then I wouldn't have these feelings about men any more. At the time, when I was younger, I felt horrible about it. So I started seeing girls, having relationships. I was with a girl for about eight months and we were having sex. But it came to the point when I thought 'What am I doing? I'm with this girl, it's not right and she's sort of fallen for me in a big way'. And then it just came to the crunch. By being with this girl I was actually just using her. And I couldn't pretend any longer."
- Liam:** "For a long time it was the problem I had myself of accepting that I wasn't straight and everything that that implies, all the things I wasn't going to have like marriage and children. But I didn't want to accept it."
- Peter:** "I reckon there were whispers going round the office that I could be gay. I didn't want to be labelled like that, so I used to torture myself thinking 'I'm straight, I'm straight, I'm straight'. And I just didn't want to be associated with it because I thought, this is wrong, this is wrong. I can't be like this. Everybody else is straight. I'm sort of deficient and I didn't want to be labelled like that."

There isn't an easy way through these feelings. If they carry on for a long time, you will probably want to talk to someone else about them. Most of us talked to a friend first. A few of us talked to a brother or sister. See pages 29-31 for other possible contacts.

- Ross:** "I guess I have always known that I am gay. It just took me until I was 19 and at my first year of University when I could actually admit it to myself. It is such an uplifting feeling when you actually feel comfortable, and I mean really comfortable with it."



Adrian: “By 14 I began to see that I wasn’t the same as everybody else. I’ve never been interested in girls. From very early on I’ve been attracted to my own sex. It was a definite pull to one side rather than the other. I knew [what being gay meant] and realised that it applied to me. I found out bits and pieces from the library. I was quite embarrassed about it so I wouldn’t take the books out. It was not something anyone ever talked to me about, so unless I went out and found out about it for myself I wasn’t going to know anything about it. I’d only ever heard negative things about it. Never brought up in class. It was people being called ‘poof’ and ‘queer’ and things like that.”

Phil: “I knew I liked men but I hadn’t really made the connection in my head – I wasn’t thinking ‘Oh, I must be gay’. But when I got to 14 the connection actually happened. Way back I’d been having crushes on people and getting jealous if my male friends had girlfriends. It just goes back so far. But I can still remember when the penny just completely dropped. I was alright for a couple of weeks and then I’d be panicking. Thinking ‘It’s all going wrong. My life’s falling apart’. Because around that time I didn’t have that many friends anyway. So basically it was something I dealt with on my own.

Everybody else was having these relationships with girls and I was seen as this complete misfit and nobody ever saw me go out with a girl at all. So there were always people saying, ‘Oh, he must be queer’. I mean there was one point where I thought to myself, ‘They’re convincing you that you’re gay! It’s because of what they’re saying that you keep thinking about men’. You do wonder at the time.

Then I fell for this bloke really quite badly, in the supermarket where I worked. I forgot about being gay and started just thinking about him. Everything was just focused on him completely. I think that was the period where I went in really confused and really worried about things, and came out the other end totally sure about being gay. Because I know I’d actually been in love with this person. I felt, well, you don’t fall that badly for some one you just get friendly with. I never said anything to him because the thought of me telling him and him running away from me was just... I couldn’t do it.”



Someone to talk to – ‘coming out’ to others

- Phil:** “It was just complete terror that someone would find out, that people would be able to tell. I was very paranoid – even in my diary – I wouldn’t even write it in there. And my diary had a great big padlock on it. It was absolutely terrible.
- Michael:** “You need to choose the person. Take time on sussing them out. See what their reaction is, see what their views are, or whatever. Their attitudes.”
- Peter:** “If you talk to other people who you know are gay you can ask them, ‘How did it go along? Did you tell your parents? What happened?’ kind of thing. That was really helpful.”
- Michael:** “It seems that girls can always understand better than boys. You can sort of speak openly to them if you know what I mean.”

Some people decide that they don't want to tell anyone.

Danny:

"You should do what's comfortable for you. If you feel that you're ready to face the world and let them know your sexuality, great! Go For It! If (like me) the wash of feelings jars you in ways that don't seem to fit with the rest of your nature, that's Ok too. It's your life and if you choose to stay in the closet forever, well that's cool too! I may never come out to anyone or I may do it slowly, one person at a time. But I do know that, whatever I do, I'll do as me. The choices are mine to make.

But many of us think that there are all sorts of good things about beginning to talk to people about your feelings: "It's a relief You feel like you 're accepted for who you are You find new friends You realise there are other people who have felt like you It isn't easier when you "come out", but you do feel better about yourself."



Liam

"It was difficult because I was admitting that 'I am different' and I was scared of what they would think of me afterwards. Because you've never had any contact with anyone who's 'come out' at all, you don't know what the general way of things is and what happens. I suppose really I didn't know a lot about being gay. And then, of course... embarrassed really.

I left a letter under a friend's door saying 'I think I'm gay' and then ran away. I got out, got on the bus... I just moped about for quite a while and kept away because I didn't want to see him after I'd told him. I didn't want to face him. And he'd left a note as well – it was quite a supportive note – saying it's OK. But he didn't talk to me about it which I wish he had.

I don't know what I expected. It's what you don't expect. People, when you tell them, what you're scared of is the reaction. How they feel towards you still. It's much better if they talk about it, I think. But once I'd done it once, I knew I had it in me to do it again so it really helped in that way.

Justin

"I decided to speak to one of my favourite professors at college (it's just like university). I knew that she was very open about everything, and that she wouldn't tell anyone even if she reacted badly. Best of all, she really isn't in contact with any of my close friends. So I told her, and it really wasn't bad at all. I still haven't come out to anyone else, but I'm going to."

Joe

"My sisters were kinda cool about it, but said that I'm just going through a phase. My brothers don't even talk about it to me."

Lee

Tell some one who would care, not some one who would spread it all around the town in a matter of seconds. Tell some one and feel great!



Is it in my GENES or my JEANS?

Was I born this way?

Some of us have wondered whether something 'made' us. gay. Although there is no concrete evidence that there is. a gay gene, many people believe that gay people are born gay. However, some people believe that gay people. choose to be gay.. .

Spencer: "A lot of boys who come out of care are gay,. I don't know whether it's a lack of having parents... it might confuse your emotions..."

Ferris: "It is not our choice to be gay or bisexual and we can't do anything to change it."

Adrian: "[Dad] didn't take it very well. He was led to believe when he was growing up that it was a very wrong way to be... He always tells me that it's a wrong decision to make, as if I've made a conscious decision to be like this."

Dan: "I strongly believe that we are born gay or s8."

Howard: "If I talk to people they say, 'Perhaps it's the security you need because you never got it from your Dad and you feel that a bloke would be more secure for you...'"

Liam: "If I can work out what made me gay I might be able to do something about it."

Joe: "How can science tell you what I am? I've had girlfriends, and was happy with them, had boyfriends and may have girlfriends again for all I know. If it's a gay gene what's going on? Is it just turning itself on and off in my head?"

No one knows why some men are attracted to other men

We found it helpful to think: it's nobody's fault – it doesn't matter what caused it – it's living with it that's important – try to leave behind the confusion about why you have these feelings.. .

Tim: "I've thought about why am I so different, but I've just accepted that I am. There's nothing I can do about it. That's the way I am and if people don't like it that's their problem."

John: "When I was younger I really wanted to know if I was made gay or became gay. It seemed important to have that security. Over time I came. to realise that I was actually worried about something else. I was worried about what it meant to my parents if it was genetic. If it wasn't a born thing, was it something I did or was done to me? After a while it becomes less important because you realise that what matters is who you are and what you're like."



School – the best days of your life?!

Kevin: “Occasionally the teacher would bring up the idea of homosexuality and being gay and then it was such an amazement to the rest of the class because no one else would bring it up. And then really ignorant remarks would come from the boys, the lads at the back of the class.”

Daniel: “The only mention of gay men was jokes. Even the teachers made jokes at my expense because of the rumours about me. Which is something I found really hurtful.”

Francis: “I too was bullied at school and never want to go through such endless torture ever again.”

Daniel: “I had, being serious, one friend. And the rumour was I’d slept with him so I didn’t dare see him. ‘Cos I was scared of what people would think.”

Simon: “I used to get a whole load of hassle. At that point I didn’t even know [I was gay] and you can’t go to your parents and say ‘Someone kicked me at school today, because they thought I was a poof’.”

Many of us hoped that we’d get information about being attracted to men in sex education classes.

Tim: “I was waiting and expecting to hear something about homosexuality, safe sex and different things in sex education. Maybe some information that could help me. But I got nothing. There was nothing.”

It may be having the same sorts of feelings as you. Perhaps also like you, they are frightened of saying anything. (Other people do not begin to wonder whether they’re gay or not until they’ve left school. That’s quite normal too!)

Jason: “It’s funny now because at the time I thought I was the only one, and yet now I see four of us out at the gay club I go to. From the year below there’s about another four that I see around.”



"Coming out" at school

Michael

"I couldn't risk saying anything to them at school because they were like, 'Oh let's go and beat them up'. Really, really narrow-minded people."

Will

When I was at school I told everyone I was gay when I was in the second year, why? BECAUSE I DIDNT CARE!! Anyone who didn't like it could come and say so to my face.

John

"I'd say you might be better off talking to someone outside school first, if you can. But then there are people like Wayne who will stick by you. And he's had all sorts of hassle himself because he's my friend, people have said 'well he must be gay too'."

David

"I first told my best friend and she was so supportive. I was in so much joy I then told my other friend. A few days later the whole school knew because I told a lot of them. No one ever really bothers me, except the occasional "Is it true?"".

Andy

worthy friend you know. One of the people I told let slip and suddenly the whole year knew. Nobody said anything directly to me but I did notice a lot of the boys suddenly weren't friends and they'd ignore me and they'd sort of be laughing when I was around. Other people I know have had a much worse time than that, but it was bad enough."

Tim

"I wish that my friends at school had known a lot more than they did. A lot of them – the girls they didn't really care. And that was fine for them. But a lot of my, what were my best friends, just clammed. So for my last few months at school I would lways sit with the girls. Lunchtimes I never used to spend in the classroom because no one understood. That was the only thing that was hard to come to terms with. Everyone's reaction to it."

Kevin

"I think you need to... perhaps even not tell your school friends. Try to lead a double life for a while. And just see if you find new friends before you just dump everything and say, that's it. Because I think it's a lot easier to be gay if your school friends put two and two together, without you just telling them, and them reacting harshly. Because I think they accept it a lot easier than if you just smack them in the face with it."

Andy:

"Being gay at a boarding school just wasn't acceptable so the whole saga went on behind closed doors. After a little while I began to feel like I was doing something wrong and that should anyone find out about it, I would have been outcast.

Anthony:

"Coming out at school or 6th Form was a definite 'no!' I was reasonably happy, popular and I wasn't about to turn my life upside down. Besides, I wasn't ready to."



Talking to your parents

This is something we've all worried about a lot. If you do tell them, there's the chance of causing problems. If you don't tell them it can feel like you're pretending to be someone else all the time.

Michael:

"I suppose if you've got a good relationship with your parents, that's fine but... I haven't. I'm not going to tell them. Not now, anyway. I mean, maybe if I ever move out or whatever. Then, it will become obvious, I would have thought."

Jason:

"It's more likely that you think about telling parents before... anybody else... You often tell other people first, but parents is the first thing that hits your mind when you're thinking about your sexuality."

Peter:

"The question can be introduced over time. Make them feel relaxed about the whole thing so when they do finally find out they're going to think 'Well, he's been perfectly happy, perfectly normal'. It's been the only thing that I can think of doing. I used to pretend that I had girlfriends. Now I'm going to be single for a long time and gradually make them think, well he doesn't have girlfriends, so... I've moved out as well so that makes it a lot easier."

REMEMBER: You don't have to tell your parents if you don't want to. (We know this is easier said than done.) It can be very difficult dealing with all their emotion on top of yours. If you do tell them, try to remember that things will almost certainly get better after the initial shock.

Jason:

"I just thought that she should know. [This is] a very small place and when it came out that I was gay a lot of people found out that I hadn't actually told. So I thought she's going to find out, even if I say nothing"

Darren:

"I think [telling your parents] is rocking the boat when you don't have to... I don't reckon that you should necessarily have to tell anyone whether you're gay or not... I think if I was in a situation where I didn't see a lot of them, and I didn't think a lot about them, if I didn't have a lot to lose, then I would say something. But I wouldn't want to say now."



- Philip:** "[Talking to your parents] gets rid of the guilt. You might feel guilty about them being upset or the way you've handled it. But... they come to terms with it in their own way. It takes a while. But they do come to terms with it. In a funny way helping them deal with it has helped me deal with it. It's sort of rewarding." Phil: "I told my parents and it's been really difficult at times. Not that I regret it. I feel so much less pressure now they know and not having to lie to them any more is a real relief. I really hated lying to my parents and now I don't have that guilt any more."
- Ross:** "I started off telling some of my friends who I knew are also gay and they helped me through the whole process of coming out to my parents."
- Tim:** "I'd like to tell my Mum, but I know she'd be hurt by it and I suppose I don't know how she'd react. And it's the not knowing, because through reading different magazines you've heard different stories where things have gone really well and other things have gone really badly. Who knows how it's going to turn out. The only way you'll know is by doing it. So I just thought I'd wait until I was older. The thing is that if I don't tell my Mum I can't really tell anyone else because they could tell her, unless they're gay themselves."
- Jesse:** "I wrote a letter to my father (my parents are divorced.) He totally freaked out and forwarded a copy of the letter to my mother. My mother was a little more understanding than my father was. She was calm and collected when she approached me about it. She told me that she would love me no matter what."
- Dan:** "I got my family into a discussion about gays. The first things to come out of their mouths were that they were bad, against God, and such and such. Then, quite smartly, I said "I'm gay." They stopped talking and looked at me. It made them realise just how stupid they were stereotypicalizing (not really a word, but work with me) people, and they apologised, and then we talked. It made them realise that I was no different from my brother for instance, except that I was attracted to men, not women."
- Ian:** "I told my mother that I was gay. Though the reaction at first was pleasing the later one was not so. At first she was thrilled, seeing as she had expected it. But later she started to question me. She would say things like "Are you sure you're not just saying you're gay to be different?" Those comments really hurt me. But they didn't change my mind. I knew what I was and I didn't care."
- Howard:** "Like several people I know, I didn't have to say anything to my Mum. I just said, 'You know don't you', and she said, 'Yeah, I'm not stupid you know'. And that was about it. She's been really OK about me being gay. I can talk to her about it."



What will my parent/s THINK... SAY... DO?

If I talk to them about my feelings or if they find out some other way.

It's a sad fact that lots of parents are unhappy when they find out they've got a gay son or daughter. This is the worst that got thrown at us. Their remarks actually seem quite funny now (honestly):

"That's quite natural... but it goes away..."

"You've got to realise, it's like somebody's died..."

"There's no need for you to be gay... lots of girls fancy you..."

"Why are you punishing me like this?"

"Being gay is a sin"..

"I don't want a fag for a son..."

"She looked at me, screamed, laughed and started to cry..."

"You do realise you're going to have such a hard life..."

"why would you want to do that?", and "you'll get aids!"

BUT almost ALL our parents are getting used to the idea now and are beginning to accept us as gay. And other parents have expected it for a long time, or are fine about it when they do find out.

"It doesn't matter, we're fine about it..."

"I've known that since you were fourteen!"

"I still love you..."

BUT it can take some time.

Brett:"

One of the wisest things I ever heard about being gay was "don't expect your friends or your family to deal with you being gay any faster than you did!" I believe this is so true. Too often I have wanted people to understand what it meant that I was gay too fast. Sure, they should always love me and care for me, regardless of whether they understand what I am. However, it took me years, and still is taking me time and experiences to accept who I am. So how can any of us possibly expect our mother, or father or friend to accept or understand it any sooner than us. It all takes time.



SEX... the fantasies and facts...

Daniel:

"I thought that the minute I started seeing someone I would have to leap into bed... I never thought that I'd end up friends with a whole lot of people."

Liam:

"I was really scared about the first time, what would we do... and it wasn't brilliant, the earth did not move, but he knew it was my first time and it was a real milestone for me because I knew better what to expect and now I feel it can only get better."

Michael:

"I couldn't relate to two men having a relationship. You think there's only sex. And to begin with I can remember thinking 'I want a man to have sex with and I want a woman to have the relationship part with'. Then you realise that you can be close to a man. And I think that everyone thinks all gay men are interested in is sex – but that's not all of it. It's like my friend says, what you need is a good man to love you. That's what I want, like everyone else, someone to love me and to love."

Adam:

"There was the idea that relationships just don't happen – gay men want sex, not relationships... But then you find out there are people who have been going out with people for years. It seems exactly the same as everywhere else."

Peter:

"I thought that all that men did in bed together was anal sex and that was disgusting... and then you find men who aren't bothered about doing that at all and no one has ever tried to force me to have penetrative sex. It's much more of a loving, caring thing than I thought, too."

Dan:

"It seems that every gay guy just wants sex. That is not me, I feel that sex is an extra for a relationship. I don't think that people should just date for sex. Having someone that truly loves you for the person you are is much better than sex."

John:

"I definitely thought that anal sex would be a big element of a gay relationship. Every time you met a new partner, you'd think, oh fuck, here we go... I didn't think that men actually kissed each other or held hands or in any way touched each other, other than to turn each other on to have an orgasm. That was what I thought at the time. And it's like they do what everyone else does, really."

Anthony:

"Sometimes, I wonder, is SEX all most gay guys want?! I am not one of those guys. I know though that many other gay guys want more than just sex. A healthy relationship is best and much more fulfilling."



HIV & AIDS ...are scary

Philip: "I had a lot of fear that I would get [HIV] when I was just coming out. The first thing my Mum said was 'Oh, are you going to die of AIDS then?'"

...and confusing

Howard: "It wasn't so long ago they were saying 'No, you couldn't catch [HIV] through semen in your mouth' and now they're turning round and saying, 'Yes, there is a risk of catching it'."

The general feeling is that oral sex with a man is a very low risk sexual activity but it's best to avoid it if you've got cuts or sores in your mouth.

...and can be difficult to get information about

But there are now places now where you can get information about protecting yourself and others from HIV and AIDS (see Useful contacts on pages 29-31).

Safer Sex

Protecting yourself and others from HIV and AIDS

HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) is transmitted by blood, semen (cum, sperm, spunk), or vaginal fluids passing from one person into the body of another. The risk of getting HIV is reduced by having safer sex.

Safer sex is avoiding passing blood, semen or vaginal fluids between people. The biggest risk (for men having sex with men) in terms of getting or passing on HIV is having unprotected anal sex (ie not using a condom. This is also true for many other sexually transmitted diseases. There's a lot more to sex than anal intercourse and many gay men do not believe it is an essential part of a really good sex life. If you decide not to have anal sex, either because you don't want to, or to protect yourself from HIV, you'll find you're not the only person who feels that way.

If you do decide to have anal sex, you need to use condoms and a water-based lubricant like KY jelly. Other lubricants like Vaseline and baby oil will rot the rubber and make the condom useless. If possible, you should use extra-strong condoms, which are more suitable for anal sex than ordinary condoms. If you cannot use an extra-strong condom, a standard strength one is better than no condom at all. If you start to go to gay pubs/clubs you'll probably find you can buy condoms and lubricant there, or you may also be able to get them for free. You can buy them from chemists, some garages and supermarkets and from machines in toilets. They are also free from some family planning clinics. For more detailed information about safer sex, contact one of the groups listed at the end of this booklet.



Looking forward...

- Michael:** "It's better now I can talk to a lot of people. And open up to people. And you discover that there are straight people who will stick by you."
- Ross:** "The day I felt completely comfortable with my sexuality the line which helped me was that 'being gay is completely normal'".
- Robert:"** I like being this way, and I wouldn't have it any other way".
- Peter:** "My mate John said something which was very good – being gay is not a way of life, it's a part of life – which is very good. I've thought about that and it's true. That's how I try and see it anyway."
- Gabriel:** "Oh God!!!!!! I'm so happy to say I love boys!!!! I'm here just to say that being gay is very good, and don't give up, the prejudice always exists. Kisses for all gay teens! I love you all."
- Phil:** "When I first told myself that I was gay I was trying to push myself into a role model of this gay person I had an image of... but once you realise that I'm me first it gets a lot easier. Not gay first, me second. It's the other way around."
- Liam:** "I can just see a much brighter future for myself than I would have this time last year. I can look back, even two months and think I'm here, I've done it. And it's always getting better. It's like a complete progressive thing."
- Anthony:** "My advice is live your life always as fully as you know how and make the most of every moment. There will be bad times, but also many great ones. Be true to yourself and follow your heart, even if all of those around you are saying no. Stand tall."
- David:** "The truth is understanding who you are and accepting it, and loving it. And yes, I love that I am gay"
- Steve:** "I'm gay and God Damn proud of it!!!!"



Useful contacts

All of these organisations promise confidentiality and most are able to direct you to local helplines/ organisations. Do not be afraid to telephone. The person who answers the phone is likely to be friendly and understanding. You need not give your name.

Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

Tel: 020 7837 7324 (24 hours)

You don't have to be sure that you're gay to use this number – you can phone for a general chat about your feelings. They'll also know of local support groups. This line is very busy so if you don't get through at first, keep trying.

National AIDS Helpline

Tel: 0800 567 123 (24 hours. Free)

FFLAG (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

PO Box 84, Exeter, EX4 4AN

Tel: 01454 852 418

Web: www.fflag.org.uk

Email: info@fflag.org.uk

For your local helpline or support group.

Regional Gay & Lesbian Switchboards

Web: www.switchboard.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust

Tel THT Direct: 0845 1221 200 (Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm, Sat-Sun, 12pm-6pm)

Web: www.tht.org.uk

For information, help and advice on HIV/AIDS and safer sex for gay men. They also offer a referral service to local helplines and support groups.

Metromate

Web: www.metromate.org.uk

London's sexual health directory for gay men

Albert Kennedy Trust

Tel: London (0207) 831 6562 or Manchester (0161) 228 3308

Web: www.akt.org.uk

For homeless lesbians and gay teenagers



Gay Times

Available in many newsagents and by subscription by writing to;

Millivres Prowler Ltd

Ground Floor

Worldwide House

116-134 Bayham Street

London, NW1 0BA

Web: www.gaytimes.co.uk/gt/

Magazine with up to date information on gay issues and listings of local pubs, clubs, meeting places, support groups and resources for gay men.

LYSIS

PO Box 18, Ashton-Under-Lyme, Cheshire SK15 2FE Send an SAE for the booklet 'I think I might be a lesbian – now what do I do?' and details of a pen-pal scheme.

Lesbian and Gay Foundation

Tel: 0161 235 8000 (7 days, 6pm-10pm)

Web: www.lgfoundation.org.uk/

A lesbian and gay health charity providing information, advice, training and support

This booklet was produced by;

AVERT

4 Brighton Road, Horsham, West-Sussex, RH13 5BA

Tel: 01403 210202 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm)

Web: www.avert.org

Email: info@avert.org

AVERT offers a free and confidential Information Service for enquiries about HIV/AIDS and related matters. We can accept questions from anybody via email, post or telephone.

This booklet is part of a series of booklets designed for young people, and they are available to download for free, at www.avert.org

You can also access the 'Young Gay and Lesbian Index', at www.avert.org/ygmt.htm



The original edition of the booklet was the joint effort of Tim, James, Andy, John, Spencer, Liam, Daniel, Phil, Michael, Howard, Adam, Kevin, Steven, Peter and Jo Frankham. The young men took part in a research study funded by AVERT.

At the time of the first edition of the booklet, Jo Frankham said:
I hope this booklet will help if you're wondering whether you're gay or not and help you to deal with your feelings if you decide that you are. I also hope that it will give everyone else who reads it a better idea of what it feels like to be a young gay man.

With lots of love to everyone who's helped put the booklet together.

Jo Frankham

The subsequent internet edition of the booklet has been edited by Annabel Kanabus and Ben Hills-Jones and additional contributions to the booklet have been made by young men who contributed to the Young Gay Men Talking section of the AVERT web site.

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