

CREATING SAFER, MORE RESPECTFUL SPACES FOR EVERYONE

NSPCC
NORTHERN IRELAND

Cara-Friend

THIS TOOLKIT IS HERE TO HELP ANY BUSINESS, ORGANISATION, COMMUNITY OR PUBLIC SPACE TO BE MORE LGBTQIA+ INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORT LGBTQIA+ YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL SAFE IN THEIR SPACE

Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia don't stand alone.

They grow from the same harmful systems as sexism and misogyny — systems that tell us whose voices matter, who deserves respect, and who belongs.

Misogyny tells women and girls their voices don't count.
Homophobia targets people for loving who they love.
Biphobia targets people who can love more than one gender.
Transphobia tries to force everyone into narrow boxes of "male" and "female."

These attitudes share one root: gender inequality and control.

They feed the same culture that excuses harassment, silences victims, and tolerates violence — against women, girls, and anyone who challenges gendered expectations.

When young people — especially LGBTQIA+ youth — experience judgement, mockery, or harassment on buses, in shops, libraries, or online, the message is loud and clear: you're not safe, and you don't belong. Young people have told us that they don't feel safe and accepted in public spaces in Northern Ireland. That isn't okay.

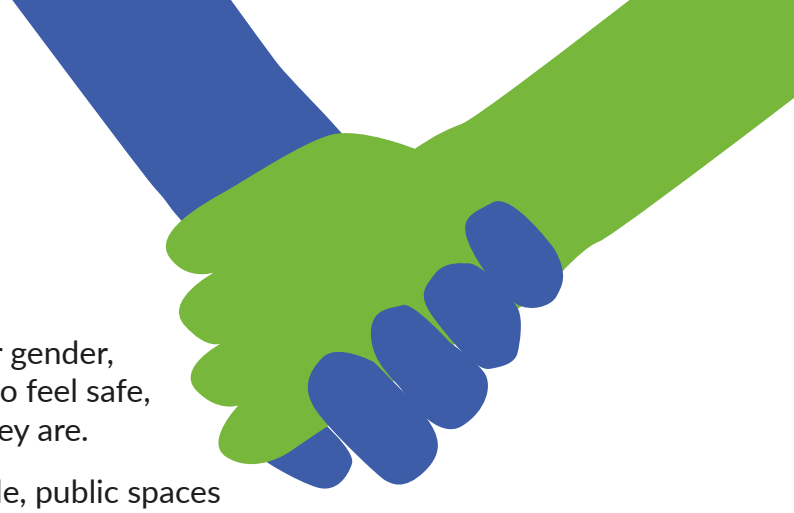
THAT'S WHY WE'RE SPEAKING UP

Because creating safer, more respectful communities means ending the attitudes that allow inequality, hate, and gender-based violence to thrive.

Because healthy relationships education must reflect all of us — women, girls, boys, and LGBTQIA+ young people alike.

Because public spaces, communities, and businesses need to stand up againsthate — not stay silent.

BECAUSE WE ALL DESERVE TO FEEL SEEN, SAFE, AND SUPPORTED.



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Every young person — whatever their gender, sexuality, or identity — has the right to feel safe, respected, and included, wherever they are.

But for many LGBTQIA+ young people, public spaces don't always feel that way.

Fear of judgement or harassment can make everyday life harder and more isolating.

And when people feel unsafe or excluded, it affects their wellbeing, confidence, and relationships.

This campaign recognises that violence, harassment, and exclusion are connected.

Challenging one form of harm helps prevent others.

By promoting inclusion, kindness, and respect, we help create the kind of culture where violence against women and girls — and against anyone targeted for who they are — cannot take root.

WHY WE NEED THIS CAMPAIGN

LGBTQIA+ young people have told us that using public spaces — from cafés to buses, gyms to libraries — can sometimes feel unsafe or unwelcoming.

They've shared that being unsure whether they'll be accepted is a constant barrier to feeling confident and connected in their communities.

That uncertainty can also make young people more vulnerable to isolation, harassment, or exploitation — the same dynamics the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy seeks to prevent.

"SAFE TO BE" AIMS TO CHANGE THAT.

It gives businesses, those responsible for public spaces and services, and organisations a practical way to show allyship, challenge prejudice, and model respect, and for those already doing that, resources and support to maintain their efforts in supporting LGBTQIA+ youth.

It also gives LGBTQIA+ young people clear signals of where they can expect safety and inclusion — and where support is available if they experience harm.

TOP TIPS FOR PUBLIC SPACES AND BUSINESSES

These tips have been created by LGBTQIA+ young people during the development of this campaign. It was informed by current and past experiences of discrimination and harassment, and what they felt would have helped their situations.

1 SHOW KINDNESS

Small gestures — a smile, a welcome, using inclusive language — make a big difference. to everyone in the space, including LGBTQIA+ youth. While its important to show kindness to everyone in the public space using the Safe To Be poster or display sticker in your space will signal your allyship

Kindness helps break down the barriers that allow disrespect and discrimination to grow.

2 BE OPEN TO FEEDBACK

If something could be improved, listen. It's okay if you are not sure of certain terminology or you've gotten it wrong in the past. Asking questions and researching from trusted sources is all part of the learning process.

Creating a culture of respect means hearing from those who don't always feel safe and can make a big difference to a young person.

3 DON'T TOLERATE HOMOPHOBIA OR TRANSPHOBIA

What some people dismiss as "banter" can have a lasting impact on someone's mental health and confidence. Challenging hateful comments or behaviour helps stop the everyday disrespect that fuels gender-based violence.

4 RESPECT PRONOUNS

Using the right pronouns is a small act of dignity that tells young people: you are seen and respected.

Sharing your own pronouns helps show openness and allyship. For instance, if you are introducing yourself you can also share your pronouns alongside your name. This helps shows openness and allyship, and young people may be more likely to share their own pronouns.



5 TREAT EVERYONE WITH RESPECT

No assumptions, no judgement. Respect for all identities and expressions is how we build safer, connected and supported spaces.

6 CHECK IN WITH PEOPLE IF THEY'VE BEEN HARASSED

If you see someone being targeted, ask if they're okay.

A small act of care can interrupt harm and remind them they're not alone. Further information on bystander intervention can be found here: **www.breakingthesilence.cam.ac.uk/prevention-support/be-active-bystander**

7 VISIBLY AND ACTIVELY SHOW SUPPORT

Display the Safe to Be sticker and/or poster to let young people know your space welcomes and protects them.

Visible allyship helps build safer communities for women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people alike. To available of free training on LGBTQI+ awareness and how to support LGBTQI+ young people, please visit **www.cara-friend.org.uk/training-and-workshops/**.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT A YOUNG PERSON



If you're worried about a child or young person, it can be hard to know what to do to help them. You're not alone and there are things you can do to immediately help the young person and places you can turn to for help.

Intervene if safe to do so

Intervene if you see a situation where a young person is being harassed or discriminated against for their perceived gender or sexuality. This could look like calling out the negative behaviour or distracting the perpetrator or young person to re-direct the situation. If you are unsure on what to do or it isn't safe to intervene, check-in with the young person after the situation.

Listen carefully to what they are saying

Check-in with the young person and see if they are okay. Give them your full attention and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, understanding and reassure them if they open up to you. Be patient and focus on what you're being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them, it could make them stop talking and take back what they've said.

Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you

Reassurance can make a big impact. Harassment and/or discrimination is never okay. It is not their fault, and it is important that they hear and know this.

Say that you will take them seriously

They may have kept an incident secret because they were scared they wouldn't be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you'll listen and support them.

Explain what you'll do next

Explain you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. (Helpline)

Report as soon as possible

Report as soon after you've been told about the incident so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.

Signpost them to who can help

If a young person in your space has experienced a difficult situation, let them know of support available to them such as the services listed on the following page:



Childline

Childline is here to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Childline is free, confidential and is available online, on the phone, anytime.

https://www.childline.org.uk/ or 0800 1111

Childline cards are available in this toolkit.

Cara-friend

Cara-friend offers youth services and one-to-one support to any young person aged 12-25 identifying or questioning as LGBTQIA+. They can contact the youth team at **youthsupport@cara-friend.org.uk** or **admin@cara-friend**

NSPCC Helpline

If you can have concerns about the safety of a child, you can call the NSPCC Helpline on
0808 800 5000.

Key Messages

This youth-led campaign is about creating safe, inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ young people — and challenging the culture that enables harassment, exclusion, and gender-based violence.

We're calling for:

- Visible support from staff and adults
- Direct action against harassment and hate
- Equal treatment for all identities and expressions
- Education on healthy relationships and consent
- Safer public spaces across Northern Ireland

Because feeling unsafe, judged, or unwelcome should never be part of growing up.

When we make every space Safe to Be, we move closer to ending violence against women and girls — and towards a society built on respect, equality, and care for everyone.



NSPCC
NORTHERN IRELAND

Cara-Friend