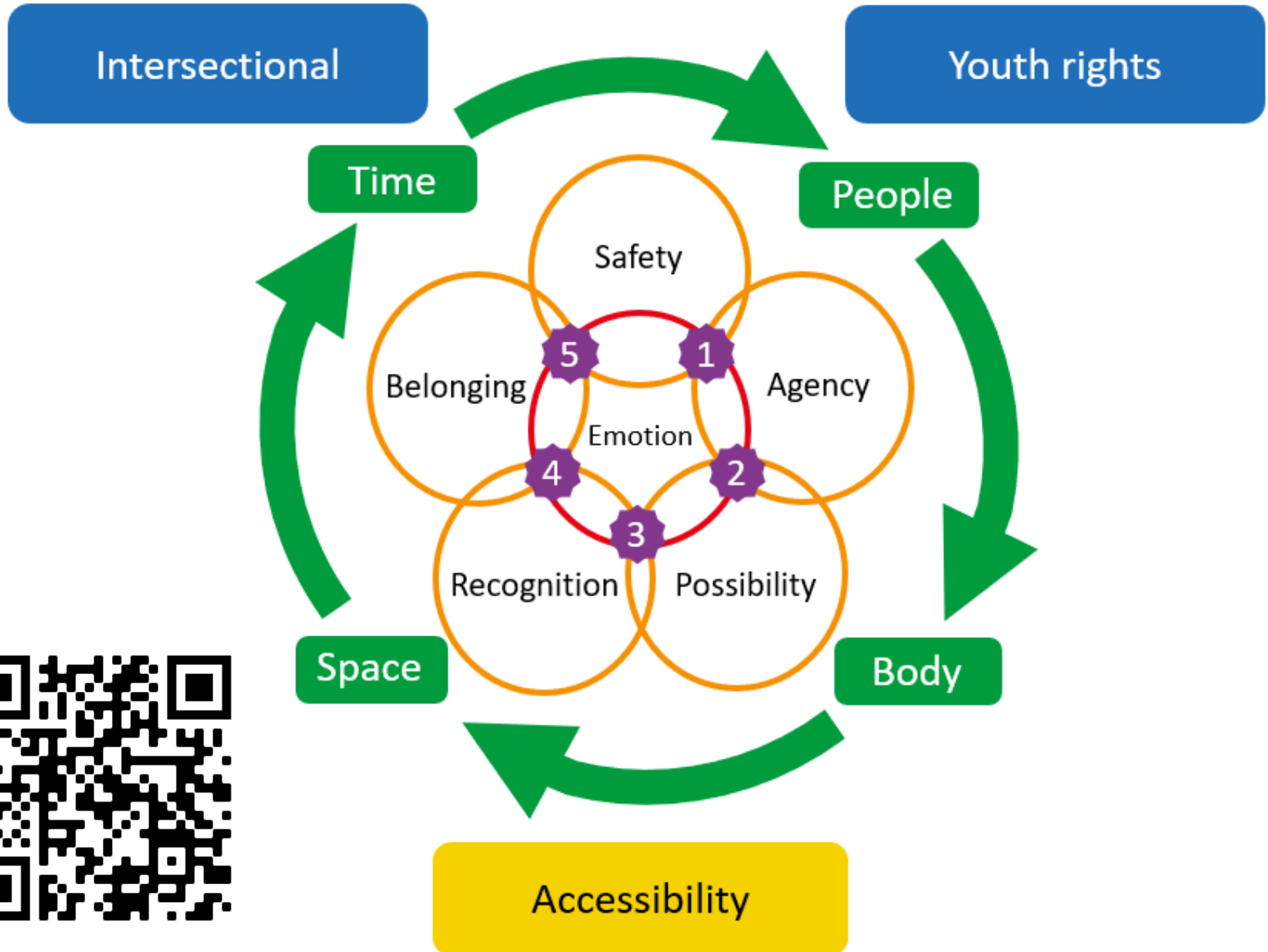


What works in mental health support for LGBTQ+ young people?





An intersectional youth rights approach

An **intersectional approach is crucial to upholding LGBTQ+ young people's rights**. LGBTQ+ identities are often represented in ways that don't recognise the many differences between LGBTQ+ experiences and LGBTQ+ young people's different needs.

Doing intersectionality in mental health support requires critical reflective practice to identify how to work in **anti-oppressive** ways, identifying who may be privileged and excluded and how.

A **youth rights** approach to mental health support sees **young people as rights holders independent of their parents or carers, and underlines the need for services and support providers to meet and uphold these rights**.

LGBTQ+ young people have rights to **non-discrimination, identity, development, autonomy, freedom of expression, safety, good mental health and good mental healthcare**.



Structural

- Regular drop-in hubs at different locations and times
- Online as well as face-to-face support offers
- All gender toilets
- Reimburse travel expenses
- 'Top-down' anti-oppressive working

Cultural

- Co-design inclusive resources with LGBTQ+ young people
- Recruit staff with diverse experiences at all levels
- Display LGBTQ+ inclusivity clearly in online and print resources
 - Actively address stereotypes

Accessibility

Systems

- Create easy ways to self-refer
- Provide brief explanations of confidentiality, privacy and information sharing as part of sign-up forms
- Ensure that forms reflect the diversity of LGBTQ+ young people's identities

Interpersonal

- Feature diverse service staff in online content e.g., videos celebrating Pride
- Provide service walk-throughs online showing the service building and layout
- Offer buddy systems for first time attendees

Key problem 1: LGBTQ+ young people have poor mental health outcomes

What's the problem?

- LGBTQ+ young people are more at risk of mental health problems (anxiety, depression, self-harm) than their cisgender and heterosexual peers

What works to reduce poor mental health for LGBTQ+ young people?

Services must support **connectedness, self-expression** and **hope for the future** as priorities to reduce poor mental health for LGBTQ+ young people





To address isolation and uphold **Belonging**


- Provide LGBTQ+ groups or signpost to trusted LGBTQ+ youth groups
- Connecting LGBTQ+ young people with wider communities in safe ways

- Provide resources for LGBTQ+ young people to dress and present themselves in the ways they feel comfortable
- Facilitate access to inclusive sports and activities (without framing exercise, weight loss or diet as 'cures')

To support self-expression and the **Body**

To address hopelessness and support **Possibility**

- Modelling diverse LGBTQ+ lives and futures
- Supporting LGBTQ+ young people's skills and interests




Key problem 2: LGBTQ+ young people underutilise mental health services

What's the problem?

- LGBTQ+ young people are reluctant to seek support due to fears of discrimination, of LGBTQ+ identity being treated as a cause of mental health problems, and being 'outed'

LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to use mental health support when they can see that the service is **safe**, **knowledgeable** and **affirming**, and when support **fits into their lives**

What works to increase LGBTQ+ young people's use of mental health services?





To provide a
Safer service


- Transparent policy around confidentiality and safeguarding, communicated in young person friendly ways
- Seek regular feedback from LGBTQ+ young people on the service's safety

- Service providers have a demonstrable track record of working with and understanding LGBTQ+ young people
- Ensure facilities are accessible and inclusive e.g., providing all gender toilets

To ensure that
young people
feel **recognised,**
respected and
affirmed

To ensure that
the service **fits**
into LGBTQ+
young people's
lives

- Provide rapid response to initial contact
- Seek feedback from LGBTQ+ young people on support frequency, pace, timing and duration



Key problem 3: LGBTQ+ young people have poor experiences of mental health services

What's the problem?

- LGBTQ+ young people's poor experiences of mental health include: limited staff understanding of LGBTQ+ identities; having their LGBTQ+ identities dismissed, undermined or treated as problems; and being excluded from decisions about their care

LGBTQ+ young people have better experiences of using mental health support when they feel **ownership of the support space** and can **trust the people providing support**; services must also **support informed independent decision making** and **centre emotions**

What works to improve LGBTQ+ young people's experiences when using mental health services?





To create **Spaces** that centre LGBTQ+ young people

- Co-design service buildings and spaces with LGBTQ+ young people
- Ensure that spaces are comfortable and welcoming

- Advocacy support can help LGBTQ+ young people to navigate important relationships in their lives

To foster **trusting relationships**

To develop agency and **informed independent decision making**

- Provide options-based support that upholds LGBTQ+ young people's rights to be heard and to autonomy
- Policy and specifications ensure LGBTQ+ young people's involvement in decisions about their support

- Centre emotional language and education in service materials and approach e.g., sadness, panic, fear, anger, hopelessness

To centre **asset-based emotional support**