



UNI-T PROJECT

LGBTQI+ COUNSELLING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

FREE ONE-TO-ONE COUNSELLING FOR LGBTQI+ YOUNG PEOPLE IN MERTON

*“What is therapeutic for adolescents is to be granted the opportunity to reveal themselves in the context of a genuine relationship, adolescents are yearning to be made visible” (Richard Frankel in *The Adolescent Psyche*)*

ABOUT THIS SERVICE

The **counselling for young LGBTQI+ people** is a **free service** offering up to 12 individual sessions. The service is provided by **Spectra** under the **Uni-T project**. The Uni-T Project aims to provide community-based and peer-led services for LGBTQI+ young people.

The service is for young people aged between 13 and 18 and their families who find it difficult to access counselling from non-LGBTQI+ agencies.

During pre-puberty and adolescence, young people are exploring and forming their identities, they can change their minds, and/ or become more certain of their identities. This service aims to provide a space to explore this pivotal stage of life between childhood and adulthood.

The service offers a confidential, non-judgmental and non-stigmatising space to explore feelings and emotions at the client's own pace. The dialogue between counsellor and young person can be verbal as well as explored through the creative media. Creativity can be helpful in accessing parts of oneself that have often been too painful to acknowledge cognitively. Working with the arts can offer ways to take a step back from the problem to be able to reflect on it from a different angle.

The service is community-based and peer-led and facilitated by an experienced counsellor/ creative therapist. The therapeutic relationship gives the young person an experience of a positive relationship which is affirming of their sexual and gender identities, supporting their exploration and expression in a safe, containing environment.

OUR GOALS

The difference this project aims to make is to help young people to articulate and feel positive about the range of possibilities and relationships open to them in their own futures.

The counselling sessions aim to strengthen the young person's ability to express and manage difficult feelings and support the development of self-awareness and reflection.

This will support them in turning down the volume of their “inner critic” and developing a more self-affirming, positive attitude, which fosters self-acceptance, enabling them to meet life challenges with confidence and resilience.

And this helps build resilience to face and overcome the challenges of living outside of the hetero/gender-normative community, accepting diversity of gender and sexuality or confident enough after exploration in being their assigned identity/sexuality.

AREAS OF EXPLORATION

Some of the issues that a young person may want to explore in counselling can include:

- Sexual and gender identity
- Transitioning
- Gender dysphoria
- Family related issues
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Self-image
- Relationships and peers
- Identity and sexuality
- Bullying and abuse

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Young people wishing to register with the service should:

- Identify as LGBTQI+ and/or be questioning or wanting to explore their gender/sexual orientation
- Be aged between 13 and 18 years' old
- Live, study, work or socialise in the London borough of Merton
- Consent to and attend an initial counselling assessment to make sure counselling is the most appropriate support for them
- Consent to and attend regular weekly sessions,
- Not be in therapy anywhere else whilst receiving counselling at Spectra
- Family members of LGBTQI+ young people may also be considered for support on a case-by-case basis

WAYS OF MAKING A REFERRAL

You can refer a young person that you know may benefit from this service or you may wish to share this with them and for them to self-refer.

Email: Uni-T@spectra-london.org.uk

Website: <https://spectra-london.org.uk>

We'll get back to you/ or the young person within 7 working days to arrange a free initial assessment. This will be a chance for the young person to talk through what has brought them to counselling and find out if the service is right for them. If the young person decides to go ahead, they will join our waiting list to see a counsellor.

DID YOU KNOW?

As part of the Uni-T project, we run a peer-led **LGBTQI+ youth group** to combat isolation so young people feel less alone in their feelings/ experiences. They will meet like-minded young people, develop friendships and a sense of community that can support and encourage sharing of resources for well-being and resilience.