



Staff Supporting Rainbow Diversity Groups

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Wellington 6011
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Inside  UT

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Ka tū tonu te tōtara i te Wao nui a Tāne

The tōtara still stands in the great forest of Tāne.

Ka haere te tōtara haemata, ka takoto te pukatea wai nui.

The tōtara floats, while the pukatea lies in deep water.

Tānemahuta, atua of the forest, used his trees to separate his parents, Ranginui and Papatūānuku, so that light and understanding could be let into our world. His trees symbolise not only a world illuminated from darkness, but the connection of whakapapa from the roots of the trees grounded in his mother to the tips of the branches supporting his father far above. The trunk that separates them is also that unbreakable bond connecting our past to our future.

Often, the tōtara is likened to a great community leader. The red of its bark is associated with leadership and the sacred connection all people have to Papatūānuku through our whakapapa. The above whakataukī (proverb) discusses the tōtara in two complementary ways to illustrate the role of rainbow young people and their mentors in schools. Our adult mentors and role models – be they school staff members or people in the wider community – are the tōtara growing up straight and true, sheltering the rangatahi uenuku (rainbow young people) from the rain outside its branches. They provide safe spaces for these young people to be themselves and thrive.

In addition, the flexibility, drive, and vision of these young folk enable the groups built by them to excel. The youth, like soft-wooded tōtara, provide the forward momentum. Meanwhile their supporters or staff provide the stability and guidance to help them achieve their goals. They are like the pukatea, which is more settled, with roots reaching into deep water.

With these two roles in balance, our rainbow rangatahi will thrive and excel.

Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi

With my basket and yours, the people will be well

Jaye Barclay | Resource Artist

Contents

05	Introducing InsideOUT
05	Our vision
05	Our mission
05	Our kaupapa
06	Introduction
06	Purpose of this resource
07	Section 1. Background information
07	Rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand
09	The three functions of a rainbow diversity group
10	Why are these groups needed?
11	What students say they get out of being part of a QSA
12	Section 2. Setting up a group
13	Feel the fear and do it anyway!
14	Be yourself
15	Initiate partnerships
16	Create a group purpose
16	Make a group kawa
17	Consider possible activities
18	Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi
19	Section 3. Finding your role
25	Being an advocate
31	Supporting individual students
33	Section 4. Creating an inclusive culture
34	Takatāpui
36	Cultural inclusivity
37	Gender diverse students
38	Accessibility for disabled and neurodiverse students
39	Inclusion of students across year levels
39	Religion and spirituality
39	Friendship, power, and inclusion
40	Dating
40	Including allies
41	Section 5. Ensuring group safety
41	Safety within the group
45	Safety within the wider school community
48	Section 6. Rainbow diversity groups in various types of schools
49	Co-educational schools
50	'Single sex' schools
51	Wharekura
51	Rural schools
52	Faith-based schools
53	Private schools
54	Appendix
54	Further training and support
54	Working with an InsideOUT Schools Coordinator
55	Acknowledgements

Introducing InsideOUT

Development of this resource was led by InsideOUT, a national charity that works to give rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand a sense of safety and belonging in their schools and communities. These are the goals to which we aspire, and the beliefs that sit beneath them.

I Our vision

All rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand have a sense of safety and belonging in their schools and communities.

I Our mission

To work with young people, whānau, schools, community groups, youth services, government agencies, and other relevant organisations to provide safer schools and communities for rainbow young people.

To foster the building and provision of resources, education, information, hui, and relevant tools which work to improve the health, wellbeing, and safety of rainbow young people.

I Our kaupapa

The statements listed below underpin all of the resources we create, and all that we do in our work with schools.

- Being trans, gender diverse, intersex, or having a diverse sexuality is a natural, positive expression of human diversity. A person's sexuality, gender or body is not up for debate.
- A person's gender or sex may be an important part of who they are, but it is not the only part of their identity; identity can also be shaped by their culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, religion, or disability.
- The adults within a school community have obligations to respect students' rights to safety, privacy, and inclusion within their whānau, school, and wider community.
- Respecting students' rights upholds their mana motuhake (self-determination) and mauri (energy, life force).
- Being proactive about creating welcoming learning environments, rather than waiting to react to students' needs or challenges, will make it easier for students to learn and thrive. When all students belong, it makes teaching and learning easier.

I Introduction

Nau mai, haere mai!

We are excited to provide this resource for staff members who wish to support students to establish and maintain rainbow diversity groups at their school. In this introduction, we explain its purpose and where it sits within a suite of resources we've created for rainbow students and the people who support them. We also share some information about what drives us in this mahi.

Purpose of this resource

Staff supporting rainbow diversity groups is a resource for teachers, guidance counsellors, and other school staff supporting groups of students who want to create a space in their school for including rainbow students and addressing rainbow issues. These groups are generally called 'rainbow diversity groups' or 'queer straight alliances' (QSAs). Whether you and the students are just starting out on this journey, or whether you are seeking to maintain and sustain an existing QSA, there is information to help you in this partnership.

This resource sits alongside another for students, called *Starting and strengthening rainbow diversity groups*. There is information there to interest you and, of course, students should feel welcome to read this one. Both are available on our website, along with a growing body of other resources.

The content of this resource draws from research into the experiences of rainbow young people, InsideOUT's own experiences supporting school staff and rainbow diversity groups across the country, and input from staff and students who are currently part of these groups. There is information about rainbow communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, the functions of a QSA and possible activities, the role of staff as allies and advocates, group safety and culture, and how to work within your school's culture.

Through our work in schools, InsideOUT has found that rainbow diversity groups face a common set of pressures and barriers. We have collated schools' and groups' experiential wisdom here in the hope that a wide range of school groups will be able to benefit from their experiences and knowledge.

Ngā mihi maioha!

InsideOUT knows how highly students speak of the teachers, guidance counsellors, and school leaders who reach out and support them. Your support makes a very real, positive difference to rainbow young people. It is noticed, appreciated, and remembered.

Section 1. Background information

This section presents some information about rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand today and the challenges they face. It then introduces the concept of a rainbow diversity group and explains how it can help address some of these challenges and provide a place of belonging and empowerment.

Rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand

Rainbow students have the right to feel emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically well, to feel welcome at school, and to be fully connected to their whānau, culture, and communities. However, many rainbow students still experience higher rates of discrimination and harassment than their non-rainbow peers. This can result in higher rates of mental health challenges and addiction issues.¹ InsideOUT believes that the best way of supporting rainbow students is to ensure they have access to rainbow communities and can live free from discrimination.

We use 'rainbow' as an umbrella term to describe people of diverse genders, sexualities, and sex characteristics. It is an alternative to the term 'LGBTQIA+' (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, + more). You can find definitions for all the terms used in this resource in a glossary that can be viewed or printed from our website.

¹ Lucassen, M.F.G., et. al. (2014). *Youth '12: The health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Results for young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes*. Auckland: The University of Auckland.

Some facts and figures

Rainbow young people make up a significant part of New Zealand's youth population. Recent findings from the Youth19 study, as well as other research, suggest that:

- In total, **16 percent** of Youth19 participants reported they were same- or multiple-sex attracted, not sure of their attractions, or not attracted to any sex. Nearly one in ten (9 percent) said they were same- or multiple-sex attracted, and 7 percent said they were not sure of their attractions or not attracted to any sex.²
- **Over two thirds** (71 percent) of same- or multiple-sex attracted students had disclosed this to someone close to them.³
- Between **one and four** in 100 young people in Aotearoa NZ report they are transgender or gender diverse (1 percent) or questioning their gender (between 0.6 and 2.5 percent).⁴
- **Three quarters** (73 percent) of transgender and gender diverse participants said they had started to identify this way before the age of 14.⁵
- **Two-thirds** (66 percent) of the participants who answered a question about whether they had “come out” or told someone about “being transgender or gender diverse” said that they had told at least one person. Around half of these students (52 percent) had told “close friends” and a third (31 percent) had told “parents or caregivers”.⁶
- Around **1.7 percent** of people are intersex or born with variations in sex characteristics.⁷

Despite growing awareness, rainbow students continue to face significant challenges due to isolation, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and discrimination. Findings from the Youth12 study⁸ show that:

- **Fifty-three percent** of rainbow students had come out to someone they love, but only fifteen per cent felt that they could talk to their whānau.
- Rainbow students were **4.5 times** more likely to be hurt or bullied at school on an ongoing basis than their non-rainbow peers.
- **Fifty-seven percent** were worried someone would hurt or bother them at school.
- **Forty-three percent** had been hit or physically harmed on purpose at school in the last year. There was no change between 2001 and 2012 in the amount of bullying students of minority sexualities were facing.
- Rainbow young people were **five times** more likely to attempt suicide compared to other young people.

Rainbow students' achievement in school is greatly affected by their experience of being rainbow in the school environment. While the impact can be negative, it can also be positive. Research shows that sexual minority (that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual) students who feel a sense of belonging, and whose teachers have high expectations of them, are almost four times more likely to achieve academically than sexual minority students who do not feel a sense of belonging.⁹

² Fenaughty, J., et al. (2021a). A Youth19 Brief: Same- and multiple-sex attracted students. Available at <https://www.youth19.ac.nz/publications/category/Fact+Sheet+and+Brief>

³ Fenaughty, J., et al. (2021a).

⁴ These estimates are combined results from the Youth'12 and Youth'19 surveys, which each surveyed more than 7,500 students across Aotearoa. See more at www.youth19.ac.nz

⁵ Fenaughty, J., et al. (2021b). A Youth19 Brief: Transgender and diverse gender students. Available at <https://www.youth19.ac.nz/publications/category/Fact+Sheet+and+Brief>

⁶ Fenaughty, J., et al. (2021b).

⁷ Blackless, M., et al. (2000). How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis. *American Journal of Human Biology*, 12(2): 151–166.

⁸ These statistics combine findings from both transgender and same- and multiple-sex attracted students' responses to the Youth'12 survey. See Clark, et al. (2013) and Lucassen et al. (2014) on the Youth'12 publications list, available at <https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/adolescent-health-research-group/publications-and-reports.html>

⁹ Fenaughty, J., Lucassen, M. F., Clark, T., & Denny, S. (2019). Factors associated with academic achievement for sexual and gender minority and heterosexual cisgender students: Implications from a nationally representative study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(10), 1883–1898.

The three functions of a rainbow diversity group

A rainbow diversity group, or queer straight alliance (QSA), is a school-based group that is open to all students. The primary purpose of a rainbow diversity group or QSA is to support rainbow students and create a space for them and their issues to be included. As groups gain confidence, they may also advocate for change within the wider school community and beyond, into the local community. Most groups are led by students and supported by staff.

The reason rainbow diversity groups are often called queer straight alliances is to emphasise that students do not have to belong to the rainbow community in order to join. This helps encourage non-rainbow students to come along with their friends and to show their support. It also means that rainbow students do not have to 'out' themselves by being a part of the QSA.

The social function

is about having a safe space within which students feel protected and confident to be themselves.

The support function

is about providing students with opportunities to discuss their struggles and lift each other up.

The action function

is about advocating for positive change in the school, the wider community, or in education.

The balance between these three functions will be different for different groups and is likely to shift over time.

“It’s given me older queer students to look up to. It’s so important to have teacher support and students around you. I wouldn’t be the person I am without the support and love of those amazing people.”

Grace, queer/pansexual, Pākehā



Why are these groups needed?

The three functions described above arise from long-standing needs. It is important that the students in your school take the lead in determining what their specific needs are and how a QSA might best function to meet those needs. In doing this, they will also be looking for strengths and opportunities – your support and that of other adults in the school community can play a big part in opening up those opportunities!

Rainbow diversity groups are a chance for students to ‘find their people’ and feel a sense of belonging. They provide a ‘home base’ from which students can go out into the school and feel empowered. In this way, the presence of a strong rainbow group can help create a school culture where non-rainbow students can express aspects of themselves that do not conform to stereotypical gender or sexuality norms.

Providing a safe environment for rainbow students helps them to develop confidence in themselves and form support networks. The groups provide a chance for students to take a break from ‘minority stress’ — the sense of being different from others because of belonging to a minority group and feeling the need to be hypervigilant about others’ reactions to you. They create a space where people can drop their guard and have fun just being themselves. Students can meet older role models and imagine possible futures for themselves.

Rainbow students may not see themselves reflected in their school’s curriculum. For example, they may not be comfortable raising certain topics or questions during relationships and sexuality education in class. QSAs can provide support for students to engage in self-directed education about topics such as rainbow history, sexual health, and healthy relationships. While these topics should be covered in the school’s curriculum, QSAs can provide a space where rainbow-specific information can be explored in more depth, within an environment where students might feel more confident to talk and ask questions.

QSAs can also be a forum for rainbow people to come together and work towards wider change in the school, in terms of policy, culture, and practice. A QSA might participate in work to review and improve the school’s curriculum, policies, and day-to-day practices. Often, these changes can benefit non-rainbow as well as rainbow students. For example, the option to wear trousers is critical to making some gender diverse students feel comfortable at school but can also be preferable for girls who feel unsafe or uncomfortable wearing skirts. Making the funds of knowledge held by rainbow people available to all contributes richly to the curriculum experienced by all students. And combatting rainbow-focused bullying can help create a culture that is safe for everyone.

Schools are part of wider communities, locally, nationally, and globally. They are influenced by and influence their communities. Therefore, changes that rainbow young people and their allies collectively create at school can contribute to long and sustained change that can echo in other places, beyond the school gate.



What students say they get out of being part of a QSA

We asked current QSA members what they think the best thing about being part of a QSA is. Here are some of their answers.

“Having other people around that ‘get it’.”

Noa, Pākehā/Māori

“Other LGBTQ+ people.”

Sora, Pākehā/Jamaican/Chinese

“Being able to support students that are struggling with their identity or with homophobia, and just being a crutch for people.”

Jazz, pansexual

“Big family, helping the younger students, talking about queer politics.”

Kiefer, Pākehā, queer trans man

“You get to be around others who can answer questions and who you can feel comfortable and open with.”

Yugen, Sāmoan/Māori

“The community. The sense of belonging without needing to hide who you are and the ability to be able to talk to people your own age about experiences similar to your own is liberating.”

Flower, Pākehā, bisexual

“Creating a sense of community, no matter the background of the school. Having connections outside of your usual ones that can expand and challenge your mindset, or give you a space to be yourself. Allows for a shared experience, with people from all ages and backgrounds. Honestly, just everything is amazing, you get to meet the best people.”

Blake, Pākehā, bisexual, and femme

“It was a safe place where we could all gather to show our support for one thing. It was a space where people could let themselves be the person they wanted to be. It’s a place people who are wanting to know more can go to, to seek knowledge about any questions that they may be scared to ask in another. It’s just a welcoming, accepting, and loving space.”

Thomas, Niuean/Tongan

“All the chaos. Everyone has such a different personality and it’s so cool to have everyone get together and have fun, as chaotic as it is. It’s really nice to have a safe space to just let loose and exist without fear of being harassed.”

Kate, student

Section 2. Setting up a group

Start it! It's really important for rainbow kids to have a safe space at school, especially since they might not be afforded that at home. However, bear in mind that you and the kids might be harassed a little, so make sure that there are some safeguards in place (e.g., location). – Kate, student

This section discusses how you can partner with students to create groups that build from their strengths, interests, and needs.

Feel the fear and do it anyway!

Setting up a new rainbow diversity group can be an exciting project, and it can sometimes create significant change in a school environment over the course of one year. But this doesn't mean that it's always easy. InsideOUT is committed to supporting schools that are just starting this journey and helping them establish their priorities. We encourage you to reach out and ask for advice.

Working out how to make a QSA succeed in a particular school culture benefits from brainstorming and listening to diverse perspectives. That might involve conducting a survey, as described in the section on identifying and responding to issues (see pages 26-28 and page 47). Where appropriate, we can help you to anonymise the information gained from these conversations and use it to guide the development of your school's QSA. In some instances, people from well-established groups at other schools can help by sharing what has worked for them.

Positive working relationships and ongoing conversations between staff and students are essential for the group to thrive in the particular context of your school. The resource offers suggestions on how to set up the group so that it meets everyone's needs and reflects who they are and what they bring. (See especially the section on inclusion, pages 33-40).

Challenges can arise from external pressures and resistance and the need to navigate the internal dynamics of the school environment. A new QSA can sometimes make homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic ideas more visible. Some people may question why a QSA is even needed and worry about the school's reputation. This resource deals with some of those challenges (see pages 22-23).

Students appreciate teachers and other staff members who are willing to support the development of the QSA and work with them to navigate the range of issues they face. In InsideOUT's experience, these negative reactions generally die down after a while and, over time, rainbow students' experiences at school improve. As the group gains confidence, students often support each other and respond in the moment to negativity, thus reducing its impact.





Be yourself

[A challenge has been] the stereotypes/prejudice others have towards the rainbow community. To respond, just keep being you. No one should feel discriminated against and 'less than' in the work space. Just existing and being queer is enough. – Kevin, teacher, co-ed school

My advice to teachers? To just be yourself, and do what you can to help others feel safe and comfortable in their own skin. – Briana, Pākehā

If you identify as a member of the rainbow community, you may feel an affinity with the students in a QSA and may even be prepared to act as a role model by actively supporting the group. But you may also feel that supporting a rainbow diversity group is too 'outing' and makes you feel vulnerable. That is understandable – your journey is your own. You may wish to provide behind-the-scenes support and advice to another staff member doing this mahi.

If you identify as straight and cisgender, you may feel unsure whether you should be the one supporting a QSA group. Be assured that regardless of your identity, students will value any support and assistance you can provide to help them create a safe space. This may mean educating yourself further on rainbow identities.

A great place to start learning is to draw on the expertise of the young people in the group. You might ask for recommendations of shows with rainbow characters, or young adult literature with rainbow themes. This can help to provide staff and students with a shared cultural context.

The group context should be a place where everybody enjoys getting to know each other and growing warm relationships. Within obvious professional limits, you should feel comfortable to share who you are and the people in your life. If you are non-rainbow and have an opposite-gender partner, don't feel that you can't talk about them. Many rainbow students will value the opportunity to share and talk about relationships in an overtly safe space.

We have found that many teachers have a personal reason for wanting to support a group like this. This may be their own experience of schooling as a rainbow person or their affinity with a rainbow whānau member or friend. Sharing your story with the students is a great way of building trusting relationships. It helps them understand and connect with why you care.

Regardless of your personal gender or sexual orientation, we hope you enjoy your experience of supporting a rainbow diversity group.

Initiate partnerships

[The best thing is] seeing tentative young people grow into people who are confident about who they are. – Guidance counsellor, co-ed school

Just give it a go; it's better than nothing happening. You will learn as you go. Find an ally in student support or senior management and use them for guidance. Find some great queer students and support them to start the QSA. Some will need lots of support and encouragement and some will need slowing down. Knowing them and your school is key, there isn't one-size-fits-all...

– Claire, teacher, co-ed school

The process of setting up a rainbow diversity group in any school needs to be done in careful consultation with students. Many schools will already be well aware of potential risks and will be able to work with teachers to develop safety measures. Some schools have started this process slowly, and with a high degree of privacy. Other schools have started publicly and with a large group, which can have a rapid impact on the overall culture of acceptance in the school.

InsideOUT recommends meeting with key staff and students to decide on the group's approach before initiating the group. You may be aware of colleagues who are likely to be supportive and know how to navigate school culture and rules, while students might have ideas about what would be the safest approach, and who would be the right people to speak publicly on behalf of the group.

[The best thing is] seeing tentative young people grow into people who are confident about who they are. – Guidance counsellor, co-ed school

Create a group purpose

When starting a QSA, we recommend spending some time discussing the group's purpose. If you've spent time on identifying needs and opportunities, this information can help inform this discussion.

Bear in mind that each person will have a different idea of why they want the school to have a rainbow group, although not all students will have articulated this. Also, thoughts and ideas can evolve – part of the beauty of a well-functioning rainbow diversity group is that this is encouraged!

One way to begin the discussion is by thinking about the three functions discussed in the previous section: social, support, and action (page 9). Do they speak to the students? What might each entail? How important are these functions to students, relative to each other? Asking the young people to discuss the importance of each function can provide the group with guidance on how to balance the different kinds of activities they choose to undertake.

The group might decide that the best way to address the priorities and interests of all students is to have alternate meetings or two different group meetings. One might be a social space and the other an activism space. It's still worth identifying the shared purpose that connects these priorities and unites the group.

Make a group kawa

As well as clarifying the group's purpose, it is also useful to discuss a set of group rules or a group kawa. This is a shared understanding of how things will run, and how students will treat each other. You may find it helpful to brainstorm this together with the group. See Section 5 of this resource for some ideas about how to go about this.

Members of the group may have imaginative ways of making the group's kawa visible and present. For example, they could create a kākāhu (cloak) representing the safe place created by the group, with feathers representing its values.

Consider possible activities

Here are some activities that a group can do together. Have a think about them with the students. How might they align with the group's purpose? What are some other ideas that appeal to them? How will they choose what to do?

- Play icebreaker games.
- Learn to knit or crochet, make squares to put together into a blanket to decorate the space.
- Make rainbow pride crafts (for example, pins, badges, tote bags).
- Design a group logo or make a group t-shirt. T-shirts could be sold to older rainbow people who used to go to your school as a fundraiser. They will be excited to see there is a QSA at their old school.
- Ask InsideOUT to send a speaker on a topic that is of interest to the QSA.
- Ask a rainbow person from your community to come in and talk about their experiences.
- Watch relevant YouTube videos, television shows, or movies together.
- Make lists of your favourite rainbow media and write reviews.
- Play board or card games.
- Learn about rainbow history and literature.
- Make posters advertising your group, or posters that challenge bullying and celebrate the rainbow community.
- Plan events for Schools Pride Week.¹⁰
- Organise a meet-up with another school's QSA.
- Have a shared lunch.
- Make a plan together to support your friends through school events and activities that some rainbow people might find challenging (for example, swimming or athletics day).
- Make a directory of safe places and recommendations for younger rainbow people (for example, recommended doctors, counselling services, hairdressers, and clothes shops).
- Engage in political processes. This could include:
 - researching parties' policies about issues affecting the rainbow community
 - attending consultations
 - writing to the local council if there are services that do not suit rainbow people
 - writing submissions to parliamentary select committees that are considering issues relevant to rainbow young people.
- Have a name party to celebrate someone in your QSA deciding on their new name.
- Discuss issues in the school such as bullying and develop a plan of action.
- Workshop what the Te Tiriti o Waitangi means for how the group is run and what it should be promoting.
- Participate in school self-review and contribute to the development of inclusive policies and procedures and/or a more responsive local curriculum.

¹⁰ See <https://pride.school.nz>

Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi

QSA groups draw on Te Tiriti o Waitangi in a variety of ways: to frame themselves as part of the broader narrative of justice in Aotearoa New Zealand; to understand the need to specifically include takatāpui people and identities; and as inspiration for creating their own group agreements. The creativity with which students can engage in this will depend in part on how much Te Tiriti o Waitangi is discussed in your school.

Some specific ideas include for engaging with Te Tiriti o Waitangi include:

- Discuss Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a group, potentially with help from iwi, hapū, or other experts in your rohe.
- Learn about the impact of colonisation on takatāpui identities.
- Learn about the history of activism, pushing for greater recognition for Te Tiriti o Waitangi. How can those stories guide rainbow people to be strong and work for change over time?
- Consider what the Te Tiriti o Waitangi covers, and how that might inspire the group's kawa or agreement.

InsideOUT periodically organises Te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops for our staff and volunteers. If your group's leaders are interested in attending a workshop, or being referred to a public one, please get in touch.



Section 3. Finding your role

Your primary role is to support the group, which may take different forms over time. There may be times when you may need to move into an advocacy role or take action to support an individual student. This can take careful judgement. Rest assured that if you need a sounding board from outside of the school, our organisation is here for you, too.

Listen. Be part of the group. Don't sit on the outside looking in. Ask questions. Show that you care, are interested in the group and what it stands for. Find out about important events that are happening, like Day of Silence, and Pink Shirt Day.

– Diedre, teacher, co-ed school

It's important that the students guide the progress and development of the group. This gives the students a chance to develop their own kaupapa, leadership, and planning skills, and ensures the group is responsive to students' interests, needs, and strengths. It's empowering for students who may not always feel as powerful as they should.

Your primary role is to be there as a sounding board and trusted source of support when needed. You are there to partner with the students, actively supporting them to achieve the goals that are important to them, learning from and with them, and enjoying being part of the group.

At times, there can be times when it is hard to find the balance between partnering with the group in the background and providing additional support at specific times. You may need to be more involved in the initial stages, in transitions (such as when there is a changeover in the group's leadership), or during periods of conflict. However, the goal of reciprocity and partnership is an important one for you and the students to work towards.

This chapter presents some points to consider when determining what kind of arrangement might be most suitable for a particular group or school.

Create space

She gives us the space to have discussions without her present, as well as letting us know she's there if we ever need her.

– Grace, Pākehā, queer/pansexual

As a staff member, your primary role is to help create space for the group, both literally and in terms of people's 'head space'. In a literal sense, this could involve things like finding a safe place for the group to meet, providing materials with which to promote the group, or providing kai. For students who are nervous about their identities or place in the school, the support you offer as a member of staff can create a space in which they feel validated and endorsed. This is especially important when a group is being established.

It is important to pay careful attention to students' experiences in the school, along with their priorities. Remember, this is their group. Some groups might want to prioritise dealing with bullying, others may wish to prioritise introducing gender neutral uniforms. Some students might not want to be involved in activism; their priority might be creating a fun and inclusive safe space for themselves and others.

Having created the space for belonging and inclusion, it needs to be held. Groups can go through periods of vulnerability, for example, at the start of a new year when senior student leaders have left. In these instances, students may need help to maintain the status quo until new leaders are feeling confident enough to step in. It is often important to make sure something is still happening for the students, even if it's just a weekly social gathering. See below for further advice about supporting the group through times of challenge.

Education and acceptance through the student voice is the best assistance. Education through the students' experiences. Students being brave and advocating for the need of a support group with teacher support. – Denise, teacher, boys' school

I have been part of the QSA group for five years. I enjoy meeting a group of students who are passionate about making a positive difference in their school for both present and future students. The leadership of the students is incredible. I have a lot of respect for them as they run a group and plan for events ... not an easy thing to do.

– Diedre, teacher, co-ed school



With the schools I went to, the QSA was very student run and our support staff [guidance counsellors] were happy to be very involved but not take charge. They were very supportive and it was easy for everyone to feel comfortable.

– Finleigh, Pākehā, genderqueer and bisexual

Facilitate youth leadership

We know that in classrooms and schools throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, teachers and school leaders are working hard to share power with students. A QSA provides a wonderful opportunity to grow student agency. That includes supporting some students to take on leadership within the group.

Stepping into leadership roles and taking responsibility for keeping conversations on track can feel awkward for young people who have not had this experience before. As a teacher or counsellor, you bring skills and experience that can help students grow their facilitation and leadership skills. You will know how to run a meeting and have ideas on how to deal with any difficult group dynamics. Even just the act of standing up to ask for quiet before an activity can feel odd for students and is something you can do for them or support them with.

Identifying issues and brainstorming ideas together is an integral part of good leadership development. You can support the group leaders by talking with them about how it feels to provide leadership in a classroom and what you do. What do you do to encourage students to share their knowledge and ideas? How do you facilitate conversations about what is and isn't going well within the teaching and learning environment, and how to build a safe and inclusive learning community?

Rainbow student leaders often have responsibilities that can impact negatively on their own wellbeing. These can include dealing with mental health disclosures, carrying confidential information about friends' identities and relationships, and the task of making their groups inclusive and engaging. You can help student leaders to recognise their personal capacity and set healthy boundaries for themselves. For example, you can encourage them to plan time away from their leadership responsibilities around exam time and other potentially stressful periods.



Help the group navigate internal dynamics

Ensure all people feel welcome in the group. There are some super-confident, super organisers who take up the space. I deal with this by trying to ensure there are opportunities for quiet people to speak up – maybe asking them to carry out a role or help someone else.

– Guidance counsellor, co-ed school

Relationship issues can arise in any group. As noted above, the group is more likely to be effective and sustainable if you and any other staff can operate as sounding boards, guiding and supporting the students to deal with any issues themselves.

Sometimes, relationship issues can escalate into conflict. This can result from people in the group having different goals. If this happens, you could suggest that the students brainstorm what they want from the group. If a few people want something most members aren't interested in, perhaps they could look at doing that independently.

One of the gaps that can arise is that between more 'out' and activism-oriented students, and those that are just coming into their identity. Help the students navigate these

gaps by reminding them that nobody should feel pressured into being 'out' about their identity or about their involvement in the group or feel obligated to take part in activism. Some groups manage this tension by having a subgroup that works on social change in the school, such as talking to the principal about toilets and changing areas or organising a Pride event. Other groups advertise topics and activities in advance so that members can participate in the activities and events of their choice.

Conflict can also arise when students have many ideas, but have difficulty putting them all into action, because ideas exceed energy for the mahi. Having an open discussion as a group will help. For example, you could say: "It seems like everyone has great ideas, but when it comes time to commit to them, no-one turns up. What shall we do?"

If the conflict is due to personality issues, consider depersonalising the discussion to reduce the likelihood of individuals feeling shamed or victimised. For example, ask: "How can talkative students and shy students get along?" In some situations, it might be a good idea to take a brief break from QSA activities to give everyone time for a fresh start.

If the school's region has an InsideOUT Schools Coordinator, that person can be approached to help navigate these situations.¹¹ If a staff member does not have a rainbow identity and there are rainbow-specific divisions (for example, around the use of language, like 'queer', or people of some identities not being included), it might be easier for InsideOUT to have forthright conversations about this with the young people involved.

Plan for transitions

Transitions are a natural part of a group's story as members, including leaders, come and go. It can be difficult to maintain momentum and cohesion through these times. Different groups will find their own rhythms, but here are some ideas:

- Have representatives from each year group on the leadership team, so that there is a built-in succession plan.
- Share organisational tasks so they are not dependent on a few people. One way to do this might be creating a calendar at the start of each term, where students can sign up to take responsibility for specific tasks in different weeks.
- Honour students' leadership and contributions. This could be through badges, prize giving awards, offering references or credits, or making sure leaders know what the group has meant for other students' wellbeing. This can inspire a new generation to make their contribution.
- Create a group handbook or website that captures what the group has learnt about what works well that can be passed on to future group leaders.
- Invite previous leaders who have graduated to return for a visit to share what they learnt about leadership, or to mentor current leaders.

¹¹ You can find a list of school coordinators on the InsideOUT website: <https://insideout.org.nz>

Maintain momentum

Sometimes a group can hit a hard patch because its initial energy is wearing off. If this is happening, it can be a good idea to go back to the original reasons the group was created. Are they still relevant, or has the situation changed, suggesting that it's time the purpose of the group changed?

For momentum to be sustained, there needs to be enough organisational routine and efficiency to keep the group running but enough spontaneity to keep things interesting. If enthusiasm is waning, it may be that the balance between efficiency and spontaneity is out of kilter.

Here are some ideas to help:

- Attend a Pride, InsideOUT, or other local rainbow community event. This can help rekindle enthusiasm and give students a feeling of support.
- Take note of what is going on in the school that the group could get involved in. Something fun to raise visibility, like a stall or activity at an arts event or sports day? Something more serious, like getting involved in review of the school's curriculum or health and safety policies?
- Step back to survey the local community to identify authentic issues and opportunities that could generate new and meaningful activity. Be imaginative. A cultural event could be an opportunity to showcase rainbow artists. A historical exhibition could incorporate rainbow stories. A new facility could be designed for inclusion.
- Find inspiration by celebrating the successes of past and present group members.

Being an advocate

[The hardest thing is] lack of understanding from other staff and students. It's a new thing for us and most staff are unaware and uninformed. So there's not much support or acknowledgement.

- Rosie, teacher, co-ed school

While your primary role is to provide support, there may also be times when you need to be an advocate, stepping out in front and taking a stand on behalf of the group. Even then, balance is important. You need to listen to and be guided by the students. That requires open communication and trust.

This section addresses some of the issues you may face when advocating for your group and how you might deal with them. It includes a sub-section looking at some of the strengths and resources that you and the students can draw upon in your advocacy work.



Potential issues and responses

Doubts about the need for a QSA

Some staff may not directly object to initiatives to support rainbow students, but still question the need for them. To help these people understand the need for a rainbow diversity group, you could consider asking rainbow students about their experiences at school and what the benefits of a group might be to them. However, as discussed on page 47, you must be very careful to anonymise the results to protect the students from potential harm.

InsideOUT is available to help staff members develop approaches and responses that fit their school's kaupapa and processes. The statistics at the start of this resource, and/or a professional development workshop with InsideOUT, can help demonstrate the need for support for rainbow students to other staff.

Resistance from school leaders

If school leaders have expressed reluctance to start a group, try to work with them to establish the nature of their concerns and work out how to address them. Look to see who on the leadership team appears sympathetic and may be prepared to offer advice or support. Have a think about the school's self-review processes and how the task of aligning national expectations with those at a local level offers opportunities to influence change.

A number of supports are available to schools that are new to addressing rainbow issues, such as InsideOUT's professional development training. It is sometimes easier for external organisations to address the school's questions or concerns and to support staff members that are interested in setting up a group.

In some cases, school leadership are reluctant to support the establishment of a QSA due to personal religious beliefs. Try to avoid a religion versus rainbow stand-off, remembering there are rainbow people in all faiths. InsideOUT's resource *Join this Chariot*, for Christian schools covers this in relation to rainbow Christian people, and also has some basic information about other faiths.

Remember that change takes time, and often the initial work is the hardest. Once progress starts, things can become easier.

Do not be afraid to be an advocate or ally. Every voice matters, and if we do not have the courage to support our students, then who will.

– Jaime, teacher, co-ed school



[I like] being able to support the LGBTQIA+ community with more than just not being homophobic/transphobic. Actively living my belief that diversity is awesome. – Claire, teacher, co-ed school

Discriminatory attitudes and comments from colleagues

Teachers and guidance counsellors supporting rainbow diversity groups sometimes find that the most challenging aspect is dealing with their colleagues' attitudes.

If this happens, you need to find support for yourself, as well as for the group. Seek out allies amongst your colleagues. These people may not attend group meetings but may be able to help with preparation for conversations with the board of trustees or responding to parents' concerns. Small actions, such as having a rainbow flag sticker on their desk, can help create an inclusive environment.

At times, you may need to openly challenge discriminatory comments. This is especially important if these are being expressed directly towards rainbow students. This is serious and needs to be reported to a senior member of staff.

You may find that discriminatory comments and attitudes are being expressed behind the scenes, maybe as little 'jokes'. Again, this is unprofessional – quite literally when we look at the *Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession*.¹²

For young rainbow people, being in an environment that is generally accepting with the odd exception can be easier than being in a 'neutral' environment where they are not sure where people stand. Rather than trying to change people's minds, it may be more effective to invest energy into encouraging staff who are supportive but don't know how to express that support. For example, you could encourage colleagues to display rainbow stickers in their classrooms or to call out homophobic comments such as, "That's so gay".

We acknowledge the staff members who navigate these tricky dynamics on top of their regular workload. Thank you.

Pressure for the group to support 'all types of diversity'

Some students wanting to set up a rainbow diversity group or QSA may be encouraged instead to create a general group that celebrates all kinds of diversity. While it is important for all kinds of diversity to have a place at school, asking students to create a space for students to discuss diversity in general can place a lot of expectations on them, while diminishing focus on their original intentions. As a result, it may no longer achieve the purpose of bringing safety and solidarity for rainbow rangatahi.

Worries about the potential for sexual relationships

Some people in the school community may worry that a rainbow diversity group might encourage sexual activity. It works best to address the issue before it arises. For example, consider communicating clearly that the QSA is a supervised lunchtime group, attended by many students who are busy with activities like crafts, watching a movie, organising a fundraiser, or having a political discussion.

¹² <https://teachingcouncil.nz/professional-practice/our-code-our-standards/>

Of course, members of the group may choose to date. You may need to remind your colleagues that this is no different from any other group. However, it is important to ensure that the same rules about public displays of affection apply to both non-rainbow and rainbow students.

Worries about pressures for people to 'become rainbow'

Some colleagues may need to be assured that members of a QSA group won't try to get their friends to change identities. It is more likely that the group is seeking to have people change their attitudes and behaviours towards them!

Rainbow young people might occasionally say things such as 'queers are better', but that often comes from a desire to be strong in the face of discrimination or to express pride and confidence as a minority. Sometimes these comments may highlight stereotypical gender roles in the relationships the young people see around them.

Some people think that a young person's diverse sexuality or gender is a 'trend' or 'phase'. While some students' identities and expressions may shift over time, it's important to listen to the young person and respect them for who they are at any point in time. After all, exploration is a normal part of human development. Identity can often be hard to figure out, especially for young people whose experiences are not positively represented throughout society.

People of sexual and gender minorities cannot be 'made' straight and cisgender simply by being exposed to straight and cisgender people, messages, or stories. Likewise, straight and cisgender people cannot be 'made' gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, or gender diverse just by being around people who are. So be assured, QSAs do not encourage people to 'become rainbow'! They simply encourage everybody within them to feel safe and supported in who they are.



Strengths and resources to assist with advocacy

The previous section includes suggestions of how to deal with difficult issues. There are also great opportunities to be proactive in making change.

Expectations set in national legal, policy, and professional frameworks

If you are experiencing resistance from colleagues or others in the community, it may be that they have not understood the full implications of national frameworks, often long-established, that require that schools offer safe, inclusive environments. The fact that there can be a disconnect between nationally stated values and expectations and the reality of young people's lives is apparent from a number of sources – not just the Youth '19 survey results, but the outcomes of Kōrero Mātauranga and the investigation by the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki into *What Makes A Good Life*.¹³

You may find it helpful to sit with supportive colleagues to revisit some of these frameworks through a rainbow-coloured lens! For example:

- The National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP)¹⁴ require places of learning to ensure that schools are safe, inclusive, and free from racism, discrimination and bullying and that they “reduce barriers to education for all”.
- The Education and Training Act 2020 obliges school boards to “provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for all students, and to take all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school”.¹⁵
- *The Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession*¹⁶ speaks of wellbeing, respect for diversity, the promotion of inclusive practices, and teachers managing their assumptions and personal beliefs.
- Both *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *The New Zealand Curriculum* put learners at the centre of teaching and learning and call on school communities to create environments that are inclusive, respectful, and caring.

¹³ www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/what-makes-a-good-life/

¹⁴ www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-statement-of-national-education-and-learning-priorities-nelp-and-the-tertiary-education-strategy-tes/

¹⁵ Education and Training Act 2020 s 127(1)(b).

¹⁶ <https://teachingcouncil.nz/professional-practice/our-code-our-standards/>

For additional support:

- The *LGBTQIA+ Guide for Schools*¹⁷ in the Inclusive Education series has helpful advice on how schools can meet their obligations to support the inclusion and wellbeing of rainbow students.
- InsideOUT has a variety of resources on rainbow students' legal rights, including a comprehensive booklet.¹⁸ We can also be contacted directly for more information.
- Schools can approach their regional Ministry office for assistance with queries, or email enquiries.national@education.govt.nz
- If you feel yourself under any kind of professional threat, or simply need some advice, remember that you can turn to your union. The PPTA¹⁹ and NZEI Te Riu Roa²⁰ are there to advocate for you.

Alignment between national and local priorities

The great thing is that there has never been a better time for this kind of social action. Across Aotearoa New Zealand, schools are actively seeking to grow student agency and become more inclusive. As they review and reconstruct their local curricula, many are on a mission to get better at noticing, recognising, and responding to the funds of knowledge diverse students bring to their school. And, as the education system as a whole seeks to transform, connections are being made between strategic change at the policy level and what is happening in classrooms.²¹

In this environment, school communities may be ready to recognise that, through the wisdom of lived experience, a rainbow support group can be a wonderful asset. Groups can use what they know to advise on policy change and how to co-create a local curriculum that makes rainbow identities, cultures, and heritage visible.

If your school decides to take advantage of this asset to review its curriculum and policies, there are resources to help. These include:

- The Inclusive Education *Guide to supporting LGBTIQ students*: www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-lgbtiqa-students/
- *Creating rainbow-inclusive school policies and procedures*: www.insideout.org.nz/resources
- *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidelines*: <https://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-Health-and-Physical-Education-HPE/Policy-Guidelines/Relationships-and-Sexuality-Education>

In a less supportive school environment, you could foster more general conversations about what current changes in education might mean for your school community. What do the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP)²² mean for your school? What is the relationship between diversity and inclusion and how you enact it? Even if you don't tackle the topic of a QSA directly, you may find that conversations such as these can help generate critical thinking and action on a range of ethical issues and that these may lead, naturally, to better support for rainbow students.

¹⁷ www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-lgbtiqa-students/

¹⁸ See <http://insideout.org.nz/resources/>

¹⁹ Contact details for PPTA are here: www.ppta.org.nz/contact-us/

²⁰ Contact details for NZEI Te Riu Roa are here: <https://nzei.org.nz/contact>

²¹ See the Local curriculum: Strategic planning guide in the Leading local curriculum design series for more on this. Leading local curriculum guide series / Strengthening local curriculum / Kia ora - NZ Curriculum Online (tki.org.nz)

²² See www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-statement-of-national-education-and-learning-priorities-nelp-and-the-tertiary-education-strategy-tes/

Supporting individual students

Your choice to support your school's rainbow diversity group does not mean that you are also expected to provide personalised support to individual students. However, issues can arise. These are discussed below, with tips on how to deal with them.

Supporting students with situations in their whānau

Students will often come out with their identities in the group before coming out anywhere else, including at home. This can require a great deal of sensitivity from you and any other staff supporters.

As you know, maintaining student confidentiality and safety is of the utmost importance. Students may or may not want to talk to their whānau about this part of their identity, and the thought of doing so may make them nervous. It may not be safe for some students to come out at home or talk to their whānau about their rainbow identity.

The group can be a safe place for students to talk through these issues with their peers and share their ideas and experiences for dealing with them. Other students are likely to have helpful suggestions drawn from their own experiences. You can provide support by encouraging students to brainstorm ways to speak with their parents or primary caregivers. However, students may decide not to come out at home, and that decision must be respected.

If you're a classroom teacher, you might offer to talk with the student's parents to assure them that their child has the school's support, and by supporting every courageous step they take. But please be careful. This is a very delicate situation, with risks that you may not foresee for yourself and the student. If you're not a guidance counsellor, it's best that you encourage the student to connect with the guidance team for support. There may or may not be an active role for you to play in any intervention, but it is without doubt that your kindness and acceptance at school can make a big difference in a young person's life.

InsideOUT has worked with other rainbow organisations around Aotearoa New Zealand on a campaign called Be There.²³ This is aimed at supporting the whānau of rainbow young people and has useful guidance and resources.



²³ <https://be-there.nz/>

Supporting transitioning students

You may be in a position to support students who are transitioning gender, offering encouragement and helping them to navigate any barriers. You don't need to know everything about transitioning to provide this support.

No gender diverse person's transition is the same, and different students have different priorities. It is important that the needs of the student transitioning and the specifics of their situation remain central to the development and implementation of support.

Transitioning, or certain steps of transitioning, won't always be accessible to all students at all times. Being there to affirm the gender of gender diverse students struggling to access transition is a powerful way staff can provide support.

Some schools find that their current policies and procedures require updating to accommodate transitioning students. Inclusive schools will take all practicable steps to ensure that students do not feel any burden through the need to update school policies. InsideOUT's guidelines for inclusive school policies can be found on our website. You could use these alongside the Ministry of Education's *Inclusive Education Guide*²⁴ on this topic.

InsideOUT has another resource, *Making schools safer*, that offers more specialised guidance for supporting these students. If you ever need additional information, contact InsideOUT or Gender Minorities Aotearoa.²⁵



²⁴ See www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-lgbtqi-students/

²⁵ <https://genderminorities.com/>

Section 4. Creating an inclusive culture

Rainbow communities are made up of people with a diverse range of identities, languages, cultures, and religious and spiritual perspectives. Forming a group where everyone feels included, and within which students feel they can be their true selves, is a challenging undertaking.

While it might seem overwhelming at first, it's worth remembering that no group does this perfectly. However, given that inclusion is central to the purpose of the group, it's important to discuss this topic with the students and any other staff members in the group, and create some goals you would like to work towards together.

A good starting point may be to look to your school's values and how they could be made real in the way the group operates. You could also consider how to promote inclusiveness and diversity within the group's leadership team. When diversity is modelled within the group's leadership, a wider variety of young people is likely to feel confident and comfortable participating.

Below are some ideas around fostering different types of inclusion for people belonging to different identity groups. For a resource dedicated to rainbow people with more than one minority identity, go to The All of Us Project.²⁶ This booklet aims to start a conversation about increasing access and inclusion for intersex, gender diverse and queer young people who also have other minority identities.

²⁶ See theallofusproject.net

Takatāpui

Takatāpui is a te reo Māori term meaning “intimate companion of the same sex”. Takatāpui people were embraced in Te Ao Māori prior to colonisation, but the legacy of imposed Western gender and sexuality norms means this is not always the case now. The word takatāpui has since been reclaimed to embrace all Māori who identify with diverse genders, sexualities, and variations in sex characteristics.²⁷

Ākongā Māori might not feel welcome in a group started by non-Māori students unless specifically invited. This can be especially true where ākongā Māori do not feel culturally included in the school environment.



²⁷ Kerekere, E. (2017). Part of the whānau: The emergence of takatāpui identity - He Whāriki Takatāpui. Wellington: Tiwhanawhana Trust. <https://takatapui.nz/#home>

Here are some things rainbow groups can do to be more inclusive of ākongā Māori:

- Make sure the group follows basic tikanga (for example, not sitting on tables, putting hats on the table, or stepping over each other).
- Open and close gatherings with karakia.
- Practise whakawātea: after a heavy topic, members could deliberately do something to shift the feeling in the room. This could be having a kai or drink of water, saying a blessing (in any language), or going outside and getting five minutes of sunshine.
- Watch InsideOUT's takatāpui More Than Four video.²⁸
- Ask the te reo Māori teacher for advice on including ākongā Māori or opportunities to engage them.
- Collaborate with Māori cultural groups on joint projects, such as a mufti day celebrating diversity and raising funds, or a bake sale to raise money for the kapa haka group.
- Discuss how colonisation impacts the ways Māori may express their identities and navigate rainbow spaces. Actively encourage members to examine and decolonise their own thought processes. A good place to start is with the Re:news²⁹ item on decolonisation.
- Attend Māori cultural or learning events together. This could involve an event at a marae or wānanga, local kapa haka competitions, or iwi-led Te Tiriti o Waitangi commemorations.
- Acknowledge the gifts and knowledge of Māori in the group, whilst not always expecting them to answer any and all 'Māori' questions.
- Hold a te reo pronunciation workshop. Approach a Māori student, staff, or community member with knowledge in this area, or reach out to InsideOUT or a local organisation for support. Check out the te reo Māori resources³⁰ listed on Te Kete Ipurangi.
- Invite a takatāpui speaker from InsideOUT or your local community to come and talk about takatāpui identities and experiences. Honour their time and knowledge with a koha.
- Access resources on takatāpui from *Takatāpui: A Resource Hub*.³¹ For example, there are booklets you can order and videos you can watch as a group.
- Include the word takatāpui when listing identities on posters or other promotional material for the group.

²⁸ <http://insideout.org.nz/more-than-four/>

²⁹ www.renews.co.nz/topics/tag/decouolonisation

³⁰ <https://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Reo-Maori-resources>

³¹ <https://takatapui.nz/>

Cultural inclusivity

Depending on the cultural make-up of each school, different considerations will need to be made to ensure the rainbow diversity group provides a safe space for everybody.

Common considerations include the concepts of 'coming out' and claiming identities. For rainbow people of some cultures, there is an expectation that someone's identity will be known but never directly spoken about. People might also feel more connected to non-English terms for their identities. For these reasons, it is important that people are never put on the spot to state their identity. As well as this, 'coming out' is not part of everybody's journey. In InsideOUT's experience, rainbow young people are generally well-versed in accepting the range of people's experiences.

In collectivist cultures, the happiness of the whānau or group can be considered more important than that of the individual. Rainbow young people need to find a way of navigating this so that they feel they are respecting their whānau or culture while also being kind to themselves. Simple statements such as "just be yourself" can minimise this very real tension. If someone in a group is struggling with this, it is advisable to link them up with a safe person who is also from a group-based culture to talk things through. This might be a member of staff.

Below are some practical steps your group can take to help young people of various cultures feel welcome and that they belong. These are just ideas – brainstorming with the group might yield better ones to suit your context.

- Watch InsideOUT's More than Four videos on Rainbow Pasifika and Queer Asian people's experiences.³²
- Learn and use rainbow terms from different languages.
- Watch the documentary *Leitis in Waiting*³³ on ETV, looking at gender fluidity in Tonga or other short documentaries on gender diversity within Pacific culture at The Coconet.tv.³⁴
- The Manalagi Repository³⁵ is an open-access archive that centres Pacific LGBTQIA+ MVPFAFF communities in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific diaspora.
- Celebrate a variety of cultural festivals and events (such as Chinese New Year or Diwali) or different language weeks (such as Te Wiki o te Reo Māori).
- Watch or read about and discuss media about rainbow people from various cultures.
- Invite adults from various cultures to be guest speakers. Who are the people to whom your and your students are already connected who would be willing to share?
- Village Collective's Rainbow Fale³⁶ supports Pacific young people, including rainbow diversity groups in local schools. It is based in South Auckland. If you are in Auckland, you could reach out to the Collective but even if not, there are links on the website to resources you may find helpful.

InsideOUT's resource *Making schools safer*³⁷ has further information on working with gender diverse young people from different cultural backgrounds.

³² <http://insideout.org.nz/more-than-four/>
³³ www.leitisinwaiting.com/

³⁴ www.thecoconet.tv/

³⁵ www.manalagi.org/manalagi-repository

³⁶ www.villagecollective.org.nz/rainbow-fale
³⁷ <http://insideout.org.nz/resources>

Gender diverse students

Even in schools where students with minority sexualities are generally accepted, gender diverse students can still face discrimination and exclusion. These different experiences can make things difficult in the rainbow diversity group. If some students believe things are fine at their school for all rainbow students, it can make things hard for others who feel unsafe or excluded.

For more information about gender diverse young people in Aotearoa New Zealand, staff can have a look at InsideOUT's resource page,³⁸ Gender Minorities Aotearoa's website,³⁹ or read the *Counting Ourselves*⁴⁰ report about transgender and non-binary people's health and wellbeing.

Here are some things you and the group could consider doing to ensure gender diverse students feel included within your group:

- Remind people that everyone has a different experience of gender and sexuality.
- Ask InsideOUT or a local community organisation whether a gender diverse person can come to speak with the group.
- Check in privately with gender diverse students about how they are feeling.
- Provide optional opportunities for students to let others know what pronouns they use. This could be during a round at the start of meetings or through checking in at other times.
- Make sure students' pronouns and names are respected in the group, even if they aren't used or recorded elsewhere. Check in with the students about where and with whom they use their name and pronouns outside of the group, as their name and pronouns may differ depending on the context.
- Ensure that the group addresses the topics that most affect gender diverse students. This may include gender neutral toilets and uniform options.
- Hold a session on how to be a positive ally to trans and gender diverse people and brainstorm ideas together.

InsideOUT is working on resources for and by takatāpui people in both English and te reo Māori. We hope these will aid QSAs in English-medium schools and wharekura.

³⁸ <http://insideout.org.nz/resources/>

³⁹ <https://genderminorities.com/>

⁴⁰ <https://countingourselves.nz/>

Accessibility for disabled and neurodiverse students

A significant number of rainbow people have a disability or are neurodiverse, making accessibility for disabled students very important. For example, the *Counting Ourselves* report found that 25 percent of trans and gender diverse people over 14 years old report having a disability.⁴¹

Schools should work towards removing barriers to ensure the school environment is accessible for disabled students, caregivers and staff. The board of trustees must ensure the school meets legal accessibility requirements.⁴²

Inclusive education also relates to the ways in which learning spaces and activities are designed to ensure all learners are affirmed in their identity and can learn and participate together.⁴³ Deliberate attention is applied to identifying and removing barriers to learning and wellbeing.⁴⁴

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Investigate whether the school's accessibility policy names and defines rainbow students, and request changes if appropriate.
- Ask students in the group what they need to be able to participate. This could be in person or through a survey.
- Hold group meetings in an accessible space and try to keep noise levels reasonable. Let people know that it is okay to ask their friends to speak up for them. Sometimes we are better at advocating for others.
- Due to stress and discrimination, high numbers of rainbow students have mental health struggles such as anxiety. It might be helpful to have mindfulness colouring-in and fidget/stim toys available.
- If the school has a learning support space, the group could consider how to collaborate with students who use learning support and welcome them to the QSA.
- Learn more about accessibility. This should be a collective responsibility but some individuals may be able to take a leading role.

Some disabled students attend school up to the age of 21. Make sure students in this age group also have access to support through your group and information about rainbow services outside of school.

⁴¹ Veale, J., Byrne, J., Tan, K. K., Guy, S., Yee, A., Nopera, T. M. L., & Bentham, R. (2019). *Counting ourselves: the health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Transgender Health Research Lab.

⁴² <https://education.govt.nz/school/property-and-transport/projects-and-design/design/design-standards/accessibility-design/>

⁴³ <https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/> universal design for learning Inclusive Ed guide

⁴⁴ www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/about-inclusive-education-2/

Inclusion of students across year levels

Sometimes students may not know how to include students from other year levels, particularly junior students. You may need to remind senior students that the group should be there for everybody. It may help to ask them to consider what having access to a group would have meant to them when they first came to the school.

A good way to approach inclusivity could be through having brainstorming sessions together with the students currently in the group. You might kick this off by asking students about their experiences when they were younger. How did they perceive the group? What might have made them feel more welcome? What worries did they have? What attracted them to the group?

Religion and spirituality

Religion and spirituality can sometimes be tricky topics in the rainbow community. Some young people might be members of a faith group and feel able to show their rainbow identity at faith gatherings. Some may feel a tension between their rainbow identity and their religion's teachings or leader's views. Some rainbow people might have significant trauma around religion, while others might be neutral on the topic.

Ideally, a rainbow diversity group will be a safe place in which to express all these perspectives and experiences. In InsideOUT's experience, young rainbow people are often very good at navigating tensions between rainbow and faith-related issues. If the topic of religion or spirituality comes up, or if people are interested in exploring it, consider holding group discussions about how this can be done safely.

If any students in a group are struggling with tension between their faith, or spirituality, and their rainbow identity, InsideOUT can offer support. Our staff and volunteers have a range of religious beliefs, spiritual practices, and life experiences. Even if we cannot support students in a specific situation, we will do our best to point people in the right direction. InsideOUT is often aware of faith communities that are rainbow-affirming, and those that are unsafe.

Friendship, power, and inclusion

Successful groups, especially new groups, often have a core group of friends that hold things together. This can make it difficult for people not in that group to 'break in'. This is a dynamic that students will probably already be aware of, but may be shy to name.

InsideOUT recommends brainstorming solutions to this problem. **Some suggestions to get you started are:**

- commit to regular icebreakers and trust and teamwork games
- encourage people to sit next to someone they don't know or do not usually sit with for an activity or game
- discuss the expectations that come with different roles.

Inclusion is everyone's responsibility, but especially that of the group's leaders. They may need your help.

If a group that is struggling with its dynamic, one approach you might suggest is for the leaders to sit down with the group and ask them what its strengths are (for example, "We are already great at working together") and its challenges (for example, "Others might not feel welcome"). Having acknowledged both the issue and the strengths they have for overcoming problems, the group is likely to come up with a strategy for dealing with it.

Dating

It is reasonable to assume that there will be dating within the group at some point. Because of this, it might be worth including something in the group agreement like:

We agree that if we are experiencing love and attraction, we will find a way to express this without making other people uncomfortable, just like in any other group of young people the same age. We will listen carefully to what others want and do not want, and we will remember to connect with all the amazing people in the group.

Including allies

Do your own research, it's not up to kids to teach you. Be supportive and encourage students to share their ideas and what they want out of their QSA. Also, encourage straight cis kids to join in and be a part of building a safe queer community in their schools.

– Finleigh, Pākehā, genderqueer and bisexual

Your school's group might want to have a kōrero on how it includes non-rainbow students and teachers. Many groups have a statement such as: "All students are welcome, but the emphasis is on being safe for rainbow students. We request that allies be sensitive to this." If there are any issues, then the student leaders and staff can consider how to respond appropriately, given the circumstances.

If rainbow students feel overwhelmed by too many non-rainbow students or other allies attending, or by non-rainbow students asking questions that seem unsuitable to ask in the group, the purpose of the group could become lost. Some groups offer "How to be a good ally" workshops for students interested in attending. These sessions can provide a space for that area of learning without letting it overtake the safe space element of the group.

Section 5. Ensuring group safety

The ideas of safety and inclusion are, of course, closely connected. However, given what we know about the ways rainbow people are often treated and the impact on wellbeing, the topic of safety needs its own chapter.

We suggest that there are two aspects to consider. One is the level of safety the group itself provides to enable its members to feel valued and free to express themselves. The other is the safety of the group within the wider context of school, whānau, and community. An important thread that joins these two is that of confidentiality – people need to feel safe to express themselves within the group and that doing so won't come back to hurt them later.

Safety within the group

Balance pride with privacy

Groups should provide a chance for students to feel proud of their identities and talk about them, but people should also have the option not to share information if they do not want to. You can help to create a safe environment for conversations by regularly using conversation starters, such as:

- ***"If you want to..."***
- ***"For those that are comfortable speaking about their identities..."***

What are some other conversation starters you can think of?
What can students suggest?

prepare for conversations about mental health

One of the hardest parts about being a leader is having students with mental health problems talk to you and not being able to get the teachers to help due to their own rules around how much they're allowed to get involved. Developing a plan with counsellors/the teachers for how to deal with this would help immensely!

– Kiefer, queer trans man, Pākehā

Joining a QSA or rainbow diversity group can be the first opportunity many young people have had to be themselves. Here they can develop new relationships, talk about what is going on for them, and share their hopes and dreams for the future.

Given that rainbow and takatāpui people have higher rates of mental health challenges than their non-rainbow peers, it is likely some sensitive matters will come up. When they do, their adult allies sometimes feel they have done something wrong or are responsible for a situation that has become complicated or may have negative consequences. However, the support that makes these kinds of conversations possible can be an important part of why students attend QSAs. At times, they create the possibility that you can connect students with people who can offer the help they need.

Kiefer, in the quote above, is right that if you are to connect young people with help, you need to be prepared. Make sure you know and understand the policies and procedures around dealing with mental health issues that are present in your school. If you are not a guidance counsellor or social worker yourself, check whether the guidance staff in your school are rainbow-supportive. If they are, and if the students wish, you can invite them to visit the group. By facilitating this connection, you may make it easier for students to reach out for additional help if needed.

If there is no counsellor or social worker in the school that students trust, look beyond the school. OUTline⁴⁵ is a mental health organisation offering specialist counselling support to rainbow people of all ages. It is delivered by rainbow people who have been trained to help others over the phone. If you are in Auckland, there is also the possibility of face-to-face counselling.

Some regions have rainbow-specific services. For those that do not, the rainbow community often has knowledge of rainbow-friendly service providers. Feel free to contact InsideOUT, or other rainbow organisations, for advice.

If it is an emergency, or you feel that someone is in danger, dial 111 straight away. If you're worried that someone may attempt suicide, contact your local Mental Health Crisis Team by ringing Healthline on 0800 611 116.

⁴⁵ <https://outline.org.nz/>

Respect gender pronouns

Gender pronouns are words used to refer to someone in the third person that identifies their gender (for example, she/her/hers, he/him/his, the person's name). Increasingly, people are using gender-neutral alternatives such as they/them.

Using the correct pronouns is an important part of showing people respect. It is especially important for gender diverse students in your group, whose correct pronouns are often not used in other settings.

For some gender diverse students, sharing pronouns can be scary. They may feel that it emphasises their difference from cisgender students, especially if they are the only ones sharing their pronouns.

Groups can decide how they want to handle this, giving thought to how to create an inclusive space that does not pressure people while also discouraging misgendering.⁴⁶ For example, the group could make it optional for members to share pronouns. Educating each other about gender diversity and pronouns could be another way to ensure inclusivity.

Some groups include their pronouns along with their names in check-in rounds. Some use neutral pronouns for people until they have been told which pronouns to use, rather than making an assumption based on how someone looks.

If sharing pronouns is the preferred option in a group, it's important to encourage all members (especially cisgender members) of the group to share their pronouns while still allowing people to pass if they want to. This helps normalise the practice and takes the pressure off gender diverse students. You can take a lead in this by including your own pronouns when introducing yourself.

For more on pronouns, see the resource page on the InsideOUT website.⁴⁷



⁴⁶ 'Mistgendering' is the term for labelling someone with the incorrect gender.

⁴⁷ <http://insideout.org.nz/pronouns/>

Manage use of social media

Online spaces can be safe places for rainbow young people to connect but can also create a difficult dynamic for rainbow diversity groups to manage. It's important for the group to discuss and decide how to get the best out of social media, while avoiding potential harm.

Students need to decide together on the level of privacy to have for social media groups, and who can be a member. A good starting point for decisions on privacy is to encourage the group to apply its rules on confidentiality when interacting face-to-face to how they will interact on social media.

Things can rapidly get out of hand on social media sites, with people saying things they would not say to a person's face. Encourage the groups to implement a kawa of 'openness but no drama.' There may be a need for some specific guidelines, such as: "Do not use a general post to ask for mental health support. If you are struggling, private message two people who can support you to get help if needed."

Students may not wish staff to be part of these spaces. If so, the group could nominate one or two responsible students to moderate the space. These students should be asked to report any issues of concern to you or other staff members, should they occur.

Accept discomfort

Give us tips on how to talk to other teachers about homophobia/biphobia/transphobia.

– Kiefer, queer trans man, Pākehā

Rainbow communities often informally share knowledge about safe spaces, health professionals, and support services. Within a school context, rainbow students may talk about which school counsellor they feel safest talking to, which teachers convey accurate information about rainbow identities, and which staff members are safe or supportive.

As a staff member, it can be uncomfortable being party to this. However, these discussions are an important way for rainbow young people to help keep each other safe. In general, InsideOUT recommends that staff members simply let these kinds of conversations happen without attempting to intervene. Some students might seek advice from supportive staff about how to respond positively to upsetting experiences with members of staff.

If you hear concerning information, it's worth asking the students if you can follow up through official channels. You might also consider encouraging your school to ask InsideOUT to deliver some professional development for staff. Where possible, InsideOUT meets with rainbow diversity groups beforehand so that we can tailor training to rainbow students' concerns and needs.

Safety within the wider school community

Respect and honour confidentiality

Respecting and honouring the confidentiality of the group is about upholding its members' right to privacy. As trust builds, students may open up about aspects of their identity that they do not feel comfortable sharing outside of the group. Disclosing any such information without students' consent is a breach of their trust, privacy, and rights and increases the risk of them being discriminated against or bullied.

To build trust and ensure everyone respects confidentiality, the group could brainstorm privacy and confidentiality rules and procedures. Think about what is right and what is practical. For example:

- It might be unrealistic to expect absolutely everything in the group to remain confidential, so a rule might be "Talking about attending the group with friends is okay but keep people's identities and personal information private."
- Some groups have a space where students can tell each other about any situations where they need privacy. For example, a student might ask, "Please, do not come up and say hello if I am with my parents."

Make sure that new members are introduced to the group rules and agreements when they first attend and talk about the importance of confidentiality.

There is a very important exception to this guidance. If you are made aware of information that indicates that a group member or another person is at risk, you must act to protect that person's safety and wellbeing. However, you must still maintain confidentiality as far as possible and limit the people involved to those who can take action. Your school will have a policy for this that will lay out the procedures to follow and whose support you should enlist.

If you need personal support, you could contact InsideOUT or talk to a trusted colleague who works at another school. For concerns about possible abuse, see the guidance from the New Zealand Police on Keeping Ourselves Safe.⁴⁸ Note that if a report of abuse is not followed up within the school, you have every right to approach the Police or Oranga Tamariki.

⁴⁸ www.police.govt.nz/advice/personal-and-community-advice/school-portal/resources/successful-relationships/kos-info-teachers

Establish ground rules

Do not be discouraged! There may be roadblocks – bigots tearing down club posters, people who come in just to harass members. But the fact that there is a QSA is a beacon for people who need it

– Flower, Pākehā, bisexual

Rainbow students and the staff who support them often feel a tension between being safe now and advocating for change that will make things more safe in the future. We recommend staff and students have open discussions about this, especially if they have immediate concerns about members' safety or wellbeing.

Here are some actions the group could take:

- Decide how open or public the group wants to be in the school. The most private arrangement could involve staff establishing a group and initially, only inviting students who clearly identify as rainbow, then letting them invite other students. Some groups advertise themselves throughout the school but ask that anyone who would like to attend first talk to a nominated staff member to find out the details. Other groups are fully public.
- Choose the meeting space thoughtfully. The group might prefer the privacy of a room away from main thoroughfares where they are not visible to passers-by.
- Have a plan for how the group leaders will handle any difficult situations, such as unsupportive students attending.

It makes sense that staff members might feel protective of their group or be safety-focused. This is understandable, but keep in mind that the students in the group often live with this tension every day. Your support can help empower them with strategies for dealing with it.

Identify and respond to issues at your place



Give the students the voice. Teachers can get protective, especially counsellors, etc., for very good reasons, but also this can become overbearing and restrictive. It's best to let the students guide you with what they want from the group and to listen to their concerns before enforcing your own. – Blake, Pākehā, bisexual & femme

As part of establishing your school's rainbow diversity group, you may want to conduct an anonymous survey about rainbow students' experiences at school and what the benefits of a group might be to them. You could use this to identify needs, issues, and the potential benefits of a group. This is something that you could plan with the students initiating the group, using the concepts of 'social', 'support', and 'action' as prompts for generating questions.

The results of the survey might be used to explain to colleagues, the board, or others in the community why a group is needed. However, be very careful not to include any information that might identify a student.

As trust builds, it may be appropriate to move to a deeper discussion about what is happening. This can then be used to identify the group's priorities and inform its arguments for change.

Be aware that when students are asked very open questions about whether bullying and discrimination is occurring, they often begin by saying "No". More specific, directed questions, such as "How do people respond to your identity?" or "Do you hear people using homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic slurs?" tends to yield more revealing responses.

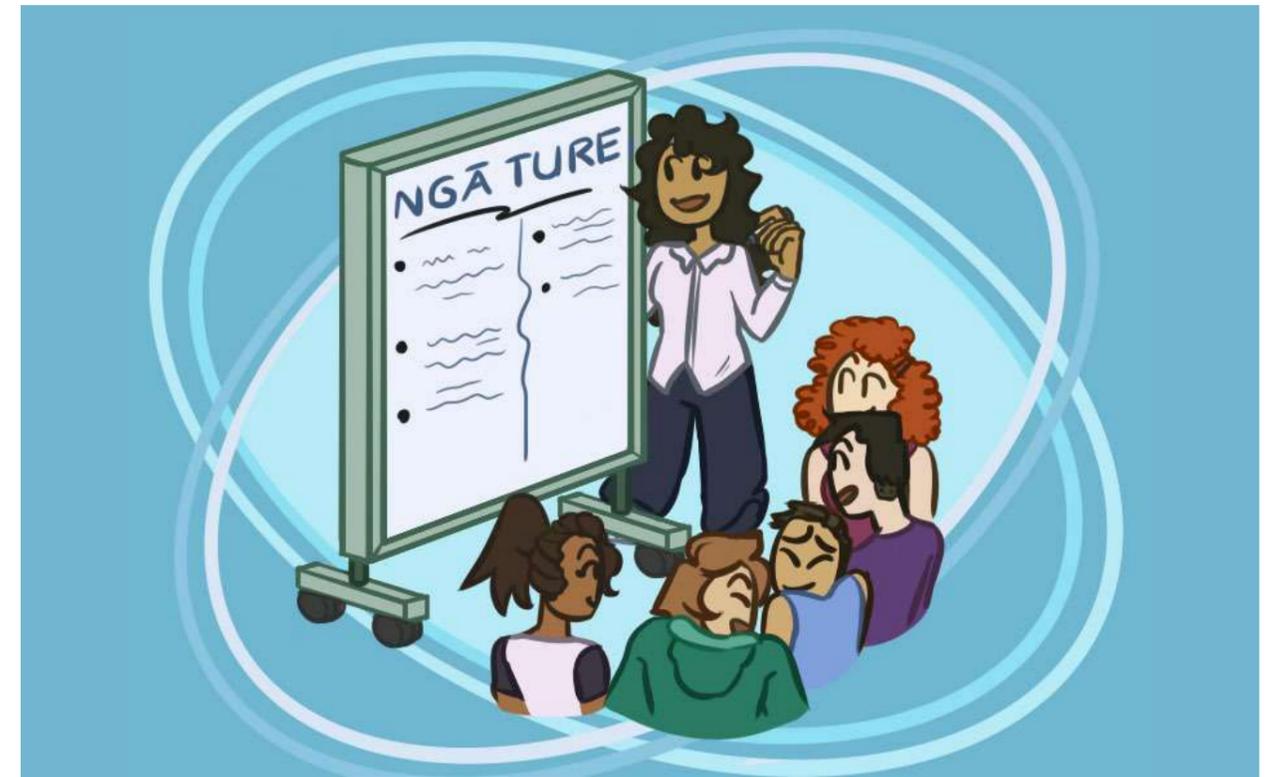
You also need to know that, as the conversation progresses, students may disclose various negative experiences. These may range from being excluded to experiencing severe bullying.

Rainbow people often enter situations presuming they might face prejudice and discrimination unless support is explicitly expressed. However, many rainbow young people may also normalise the prejudice they experience. They are aware of the extreme violence that rainbow communities are sometimes subject to and, as a result, may justify behaviour or attitudes that they do not perceive to be as 'bad' as others. Some might find it difficult to trust that anyone will care and believe them. It is important for students to feel that staff members believe and support them. It can be scary to disclose bullying or harassment.

As discussed earlier, it's critical that you and the group are respectful of people's right to privacy and maintain confidentiality. But you also have a legal and ethical responsibility to care for students' wellbeing. You need to have a plan in place for how to respond to disclosures that suggest a student is under threat.

Section 6. Rainbow diversity groups in various types of schools

Having an adult figure who is able to support us through something that not many people would have the courage to do is just so reassuring. It gives members of the group that do not have that older strong support figure a person to look up to and lean on in times of need. Also just interacting and helping us answer any questions we may have. – Thomas, Niuean/Tongan



Co-educational schools

Some of the strongest rainbow diversity groups are in co-educational schools, and these schools can often feel safest for gender diverse students. However, co-ed schools can also face specific challenges. Here, we focus on three.

One challenge is the assumption that the school already has a rainbow-inclusive culture, even though the students themselves feel isolated or silenced. It can be difficult for staff members who want to start a QSA to challenge this misconception. In this instance, it might be appropriate to hold an anonymous survey for students to privately relay information to school leadership about how they are feeling. Another useful approach is to present statistics that contrast the likely percentage of rainbow students at your school to their visibility.

Another challenge is that rainbow diversity groups in co-educational schools often include students who identify across the rainbow spectrum. This is beautiful and can be an exciting opportunity for students to learn from each other. However, students coming from different friendship groups may take a while to get to know each other.

Further to this, students with different identities can have very different experiences in the same school. In some schools, gay boys might experience bullying while students of other rainbow identities mostly feel safe. In other schools, gay and bisexual students might mostly feel included, while gender diverse students might face misunderstanding and exclusion. We recommend encouraging the group to listen openly to each other's experiences and be guided by the pace of the least confident members. If there is a 'group within the group' that is particularly struggling, InsideOUT may be able to organise someone who shares that identity to visit and talk to the group.

'Single sex' schools

Sexuality minority and gender minority students can face particular challenges in 'single sex' schools.

Pervasive myths may cause sexual minority students to feel lonely or become hyper-aware of hugging and being physically close to other students. This can be a barrier to participating in sports if students are worried about how physical contact in games or their presence in the changing rooms might be interpreted.

Gender diverse students in 'single sex' schools can struggle with gender norms, especially around uniforms, sports, and communication styles. Many of these schools use gendered language in their mission statements and formal speeches. In fact, the very terms 'single sex', 'boys' school', or 'girls' school' serve to exclude.

It is important to ensure both sexual and gender minority students feel included in the group. One way of doing this is to encourage students to include both sexual and gender minority students in the leadership team.

The QSA can provide space for gender diverse students to brainstorm priorities for changes they might want to request in their school and to gain support from other rainbow students. For example, in some girls' schools, QSAs have taken the initiative to bring trousers and shorts in as a uniform option for all students.

A particular dynamic that affects boys' schools is joking culture, where slurs like 'gay' are seen as 'just part of the banter.' For obvious reasons, these terms are more hurtful for gay and bisexual students. However, it can often be difficult for students to speak up in the moment.

Masculine gender norms can make things particularly difficult for trans and non-binary students. 'Male' uniform items such as pants are typically seen as gender neutral, but skirts and other 'feminine' clothing are very gendered in Western cultures. This can make it much harder to view these options as 'acceptable' or 'normal' in boys' schools. Activities and communication styles that are marked as 'female' can also be seen as inferior and expose students to the risk of teasing.

QSAs can be a safe haven for sexual and gender minority students in boys' schools. They can provide an opportunity for unity and a space to work together on safety and cultural change.

The mental health implications of being different are exacerbated in a boarding school context, where rainbow students may feel constantly aware of how their interactions are being perceived. Students may also miss out on the developmental milestones of being able to discuss intimate topics with their friends, such as first relationships and partners. Rainbow diversity groups can provide a safe breathing space where students can talk openly without censoring themselves, enjoy normal teenage experiences, and get support if needed.



Wharekura

We are currently developing our work supporting wharekura. Please contact InsideOUT for information and support.

Rural schools

Rural schools are very much part of the ecosystem of their wider communities. Members of the community are likely to discuss the school's work to develop a rainbow inclusive environment, and this could impact on the school's rainbow diversity group. Think about whether there are community leaders who would be willing to offer support.

Isolation frequently affects rainbow young people in rural regions. There is generally limited access to local rainbow services or spaces, and there are fewer rainbow young people within the community. Access to sexual health services may also be limited, and some students may lack internet access. Visible adult rainbow role models may not be available, either, because rainbow adults live elsewhere, or because they are not open about their own identities. There can also be a lack of privacy, so if a young person comes out at school, or is in a rainbow relationship, it is highly likely that their parents will hear about it.

In towns, students may have the ability to choose a more rainbow inclusive school. This is not often an option in rural areas. In these situations, a QSA can be a lifeline, as it can help students connect to rainbow-friendly services. This may involve inviting guest speakers to the group or organising a trip to Pride events. The group could also be a safe space for accessing online information, such as watching YouTube videos or listening to podcasts together.

We acknowledge that being the first school in the area to start a QSA can be tricky. In our experience, once one school in a region starts this mahi, it creates space, and others quickly follow.

Many regions without official rainbow spaces have an invisible yet supportive network of rainbow people. Making enquiries in the community is a good way to identify safe people to invite as speakers.



Faith-based schools

All rainbow students should feel welcome in faith-based schools, regardless of whether they personally hold religious beliefs or not. Students at these schools who do have their own faith can sometimes feel torn between their rainbow identity and their religious beliefs. Students have the right to express both their rainbow identity and faith without discrimination or criticism. InsideOUT recommends ensuring students in faith-based schools have access to material that supports their identities, both from secular and theological perspectives.

In recent years InsideOUT has done a lot of work with Christian schools, and there are many Christian schools in Aotearoa New Zealand that now have rainbow diversity groups. InsideOUT is also available to work with schools of other faiths, or schools with significant religious communities. InsideOUT staff members and volunteers have a variety of personal religious and spiritual beliefs, and so if you would like support from a person of a specific faith, please ask, we might be able to help.

In InsideOUT's experience, school chaplains can be an excellent source of support. They can help staff gain confidence that they, too, can support rainbow students without going against the special character of the school.

InsideOUT offers a specific resource for Christian schools. If you are involved in a Christian school, please contact us to order a copy or download it on our website.

For other information and support, see:

- Diverse Church New Zealand⁴⁹
- Queer Grace.⁵⁰



⁴⁹ <http://diversechurch.co.nz/>

⁵⁰ <http://queergrace.com/>

Private schools

Many private schools are also faith-based and could benefit from InsideOUT's separate guide for faith-based schools. Private schools may also share some of the characteristics of rural schools and 'single sex' schools, so the sections on these schools may be helpful (see pages 50-51).

Some private schools have faced the perception that a rainbow diversity group goes against school traditions. This may not be because of particular religious or ideological concerns, but a more general desire to protect school culture and traditions.

Traditions are important, but student wellbeing is of paramount importance. As Rabbi Kaplan has said, "The past has a vote but not a veto."⁵¹ Traditions may need to be adjusted to allow for the safety and wellbeing of rainbow young people. Alternatively, you could consider honouring traditions by integrating them within a QSA, for example, by advocating for rainbow representation in the school's group of prefects.

Parental pressure and views regarding the school's culture and image can be particularly influential in private schools. **Here are some ways you can advocate for the need and benefits of rainbow diversity groups:**

- Share research that shows that rainbow acceptance leads to better educational outcomes.
- Assure parents that other similar schools also have QSAs and include rainbow content in their curriculum.
- Emphasise the legal obligations on schools to care for student wellbeing.

Older students, whether they are rainbow or allies, may wish to do a presentation to the board of trustees or parent groups regarding the need for rainbow inclusivity. InsideOUT can help with the preparation for this.

⁵¹ Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, co-founder of Reconstructionist Judaism.

Appendix

Further training and support

InsideOUT resources are constantly being updated. Please check the InsideOUT website for the latest information: www.insideout.org.nz

InsideOUT offers a range of professional development options, as well as consulting support for areas such as policy and school culture. Please contact your local Schools Coordinator or hello@insideout.org.nz for more information.

If something difficult comes up and you need support and a chance to debrief, please feel free to contact InsideOUT. You could also access support from PPTA⁵² or NZEI Te Riu Roa,⁵³ which both have rainbow groups, or from EAP Counselling Services.⁵⁴

Professional development that is not rainbow-specific but that could help you in this role, such as mental health first aid, may be of benefit.

Working with an InsideOUT Schools Coordinator

Many regions of Aotearoa New Zealand have local InsideOUT Schools Coordinators, and we also have a National Schools Coordinator. We prioritise 'new' schools – schools that are starting to think about rainbow inclusivity and schools who are in the process of forming a new QSA. We are also very happy to help facilitate discussions if there are issues within a group.

InsideOUT's Schools' Coordinators are often working a small number of hours in large regions, so it can be hard for them to keep on top of what is happening in every school. Please reach out to ask for whatever support your QSA may need. The Schools Coordinators might not be aware of what is happening in each school.

Learning from each other

InsideOUT is always interested to hear from schools about what has worked in setting up a rainbow diversity group, both general insights and in terms of the support we provide. It works two ways: InsideOUT offers advice on the basis of experiences schools have shared with us, and we use what we learn to inform future work with schools.

⁵² Contact details for PPTA are here: www.ppta.org.nz/contact-us/

⁵³ Contact details for NZEI Te Riu Roa are here: <https://nzei.org.nz/contact>

⁵⁴ www.eapservices.co.nz/about/

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