

THE PRIDE PROJECT

END OF PROJECT SUMMARY

The [PRIDE Project](#) has been funded by the Medical Research Council. Its main objective has been to co-create a media-rich online wellbeing toolkit for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) adolescents. This toolkit has been called Oneself, and it was developed together with LGBTQ+ young people. The PRIDE team has been led by Dr Mathijs Lucassen (The Open University), with Professor Louise Wallace (The Open University), Dr Rajvinder Samra (The Open University), Professor Katherine Brown (University of Hertfordshire) and Dr Katharine Rimes (King's College London) as co-investigators. The team was joined by Dr Alicia Nunez-Garcia as the project coordinator from October 2021. The project has consisted of three main stages/phases.

Developing the underpinning content for Oneself (Phase 1, Step 1)

Between September 2021 and February 2022 interviews and focus groups with selected community stakeholders were carried out to determine the overall design and key content for the toolkit. These consisted of six focus groups with LGBTQ+ youths, as well as 16 individual interviews with adult experts, including commissioners of health and social care services, health and social care professionals, community-based professionals (e.g., youth workers) and parents of LGBTQ+ youth. The results highlighted the everyday issues faced by LGBTQ+ youth, such as dealing with unsupportive family members, bullying at school, coming out, misgendering, feeling alone or isolated, stigma, and online abuse. Participants also identified solutions and strategies that the toolkit could offer to address these challenges. These included educating teachers and parents, helping with practical issues, tips on coming out safely, providing contacts for additional support or using positive phrases and statements (i.e., affirmations) to boost wellbeing. The team also completed a scoping review of the research literature about the coping strategies designed to enhance the mental wellbeing of LGBTQ+ youth. A formal study protocol was also published during this stage of the project.

Codesign workshops (i.e., Phase 1, Step 2)

Drawing on the findings from Phase 1, Step 1, the PRIDE team, in collaboration with the project's partner organisations and LGBTQ+ young people, created a prototype toolkit. This prototype was designed to cover the three most pressing topics to address, according to what was suggested by LGBTQ+ young people consulting on the project, specifically: family and friends; school; and coming out. The aim was to then integrate the challenges that LGBTQ+ young people face every day in each of these topic areas, followed closely by strategies and solutions to overcome these challenges. After a competitive bidding process, the PRIDE project contracted Bluestep Solutions as our creative partner. Between February 2022 and April 2023, the prototype was made in an iterative fashion together with LGBTQ+ youth attending a series of workshops and consultation sessions. As such, it included written advice from LGBTQ+ workshop attendees, for example:

“Know that what the bully says is a reflection of themselves. You are loved. You are valid. What they have said breaks the rules and is horrible.”

– 16-year-old LGBTQ+ consultant

Below are some screenshots of Oneself.

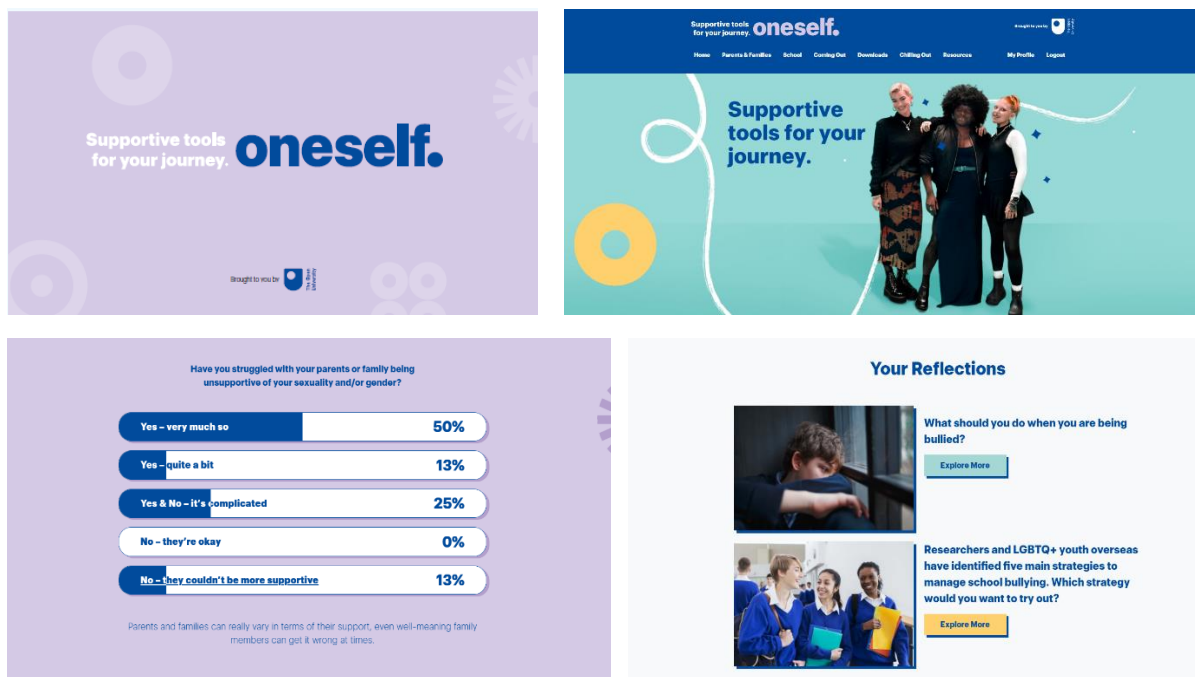


Figure 1. The top left-hand image is of Oneself’s logo and tagline, the top right-hand image is of the three LGBTQ+ community members who provide the lived experience narratives throughout Oneself. The bottom left-hand image is one of the social polls that users complete. The bottom right-hand image consists of links to two of the activities embedded in Oneself.

A series of four codesign workshops highlighted a preference for short video clips that would mix real-life LGBTQ+ community members (including social media influencers) narrating their own personal experiences with accompanying animation, so that these experiences could be both potentially relatable and engaging to watch. Three LGBTQ+ community members were selected from professional modelling agencies, in consultation with LGBTQ+ young people, to share about their own personal experiences, specifically: Chloe, Lilly and Georgie. Filming took place in November 2022. Three relaxation exercises - visualisation, controlled breathing and a body relaxation clip - were also scripted and recorded with Chloe, Lilly and Georgie. In the codesign workshops, topics were approved, and content for each area co-created in the form of words of advice, social polls, exercises to learn about strategies and techniques, downloadable guides, and external resources. A free video on pronouns and their use was co-developed and scripted by an LGBTQ+ youth group, called Rainbow Power (at Free2B Alliance) and this is now readily and freely available. You can [watch it here](#). The prototype of Oneself was ready for pilot testing at the end of April 2023.

The process/pilot evaluation (Phases 2 and 3)

From May to August 2023, the project team conducted the process/pilot evaluation of the Oneself prototype. LGBTQ+ adolescents (14 to 19 years old) have trialled Oneself, with each young person completing three ‘think out loud’ sessions, whereby they provide detailed feedback about the prototype whilst using it in real time. Young people have also completed a brief measure of their wellbeing (i.e., the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index) before and after using Oneself. Interviews have been carried out with adults too, including commissioners of health and social care services, youth workers and parents of LGBTQ+ youths. Feedback from LGBTQ+ young people and adults has also been

gathered via two surveys, specifically the System Usability Scale (a quick measure of a web resource's usability) and a bespoke Oneself satisfaction questionnaire. Below are two quotes, indicative of the feedback received:

"It was very helpful. It was telling you lots of different ways that you can stand up for yourself but without putting yourself in a dangerous situation [...] that you know that you're not completely by yourself." - 15-year-old LGBTQ+ tester of Oneself

"I think it's a very good website and I think it's quite factual...I think I learnt like it's better to talk to someone about things when it comes to bullying; otherwise, if you ignore it, it tends to just get worse." – 15-year-old LGBTQ+ tester of Oneself

Published papers:

The project has published two academic peer-reviewed papers to date, these are both open access (you can access them by clicking the hyperlinks below):

- Lucassen, M.F.G., Núñez-García, A., Rimes, K.A., Wallace, L.M., Brown, K.E., Samra, R. (2022). Coping strategies to enhance the mental wellbeing of sexual and gender minority youths: A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(14): e8738. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19148738>
- Lucassen, M., Samra, R., Rimes, K., Brown, K. & Wallace, L. (2022). Promoting Resilience and wellbeing through co-DEsign (PRIDE): Protocol for the development and preliminary evaluation of a prototype resilience-based intervention for sexual and gender minority youth. *JMIR Research Protocols*, 11(2), e31036. DOI: <https://www.researchprotocols.org/2022/2/e31036>

Newsletters

We have circulated newsletters to our PRIDE project partners to keep people up to date with our progress. You can click on the links below to read them all.

[February 2022](#) [May 2022](#) [September 2022](#) [December 2022](#) [March 2023](#) [August 2023](#)

Future directions

The PRIDE project team is now looking to secure further funding to implement the feedback from Phases 2 and 3, widen the scope of Oneself and share it more widely – for instance in local authority public health systems. Further open-access peer-reviewed papers are also being developed.

Overall, although Oneself is currently a prototype toolkit, we have received positive feedback. For example, **all LGBTQ+ youth testers thought it would appeal to LGBTQ+ youth and they would all recommend Oneself to LGBTQ+ young people.**

If you'd like to learn more about the project, do not hesitate to contact us. We are also really keen to get feedback about your ideas and what you think of our progress to date. Please email Mathijs.Lucassen@open.ac.uk or visit us on the web at [The PRIDE Project | Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies \(open.ac.uk\)](#).

We would like to finish this summary by thanking our partner organisations, including Free2B Alliance, Metro LGBTQ+ charity, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Centre for Policing Research and Learning (Open University). We would also like to thank all the LGBTQ+ young people who have taken part in each phase of the PRIDE Project.