



Our Place



Why do we need safe spaces?

LGBTQIA+ young people may be exposed to a host of **challenging and discriminatory experiences** which may make them feel **unsafe**. Common experiences include:

- Anti-LGBTQIA language, lack of inclusive support, and bullying in schools
- Exposure to anti-LGBTQIA rhetoric online, in the media, and as part of political debate
- Experiences of verbal, sexual, and physical assault and harassment
- Barriers to access in employment, healthcare, housing, education, and in participation with community. These all contribute to higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and isolation.

This has marked impacts on wellbeing, with LGBTQIA+ young people being nearly 17 times more likely to experience high levels of psychological distress and 2.5 times more likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health condition in the last year.

What Our Young People Say:

LGBTQIA+ young people in the City of Swan and at Our Place report high levels of bullying in schools and the local area. This was raised as a key concern in our 2024 Youth Summit. When surveyed they also acknowledge the challenges of being faced with anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and discrimination in the “outside world”, and the negative impact that can have on sense of belonging and psychological wellbeing. Our young people also discuss sometimes feeling unsafe to be themselves at home, school, and other community spaces.

We asked our young people what a safe space looked like to them. Here is what they said:

Responses sorted by themes, bigger text indicates a more common theme



“If we don’t feel like we belong anywhere it gets scary and isolating living day to day life” -OPYC Member and Drop-In Attendee, 20

“We don’t get to be authentically ourselves in a lot of spaces. And it’s important to have a place to explore who we are” - OPYC Member, 25

“The world can be chaotic and heavy and unaccepting - So safe spaces to me work as shelter, where those issues stay at the door” - Drop-in Attendee, 18

Based on Australia-wide youth data:

40% of LGBTQIA+ young people feel unsafe or uncomfortable at work

In secondary schools, 93% of young people have heard anti-LGBTQIA+ language, 60% of LGBTQIA+ young people feel unsafe, and 33% miss school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable

In 12 months alone, 41% of LGBTQIA+ young people report being verbally abused, 23% report being sexually assaulted/harassed, and 10% report being physically assaulted/harassed for being LGBTQIA+

Approximately 30% of LGBTQIA+ young people in tertiary education settings report feeling unsafe and/or uncomfortable at their institutions

Our Place

Supported by **headspace Midland**, **Youth Focus**, and the **City of Swan**, Our Place is focused on supporting, connecting, and empowering LGBTQIA+ young people (aged 12–25), and promoting diversity and inclusion in WA. From the project’s inception we have taken a youth informed approach, and we are now successfully a **fully youth-led and co-designed project**. Our work is underpinned by our **four project pillars**:



The Our Place Youth Committee (OPYC)

Made up of ten passionate LGBTQIA+ young people, the OPYC drives the Our Place project. This includes designing impactful events, resources, and workshops tailored to the needs of LGBTQIA+ young people and advocating for LGBTQIA+ young people in the community.

Peer Mentors

The Peer Mentor team consists of OPYC members who facilitate the Our Place Social Drop-In. Working closely with trained staff from headspace Midland and the City of Swan, Peer Mentors use their lived experience to help build connections, provide peer support and mentoring, and direct our young people to safe resources and support.

Our Place Social Drop-in

The Our Place Social Drop-In endeavours to provide a safe space for LGBTQIA+ young people to express themselves, connect with others, learn new skills, and participate in fun activities. Its creation was informed by a need for safe spaces in the City of Swan, a team of youth representatives and a community youth survey. Since 2023 it has been co-designed and co-facilitated by the OPYC. Drop-ins run weekly on Wednesdays (Ages 12–17, 3–5pm; Ages 18–25, 5–7pm).

Engagement and Advocacy

Our Place participates in a variety of engagements in community, including Perth Pride and local youth and community events. Our Place and the OPYC also take an advocacy role, engaging with stakeholders and promoting inclusion by educating peers and community.

Our Place Outcomes

Here are some outcomes from our young people based on a small-scale survey:

- **All** had **stable-to-positive change** in their **sense of connection** to other young people in the community and their **mental health** since attending Our Place.
- **89%** always **felt comfortable being themselves** at Our Place, with the remaining 11% responding “neutral”
- **77.8%** always **feel safe and supported** at Our Place, with the remaining **22%** **feeling safe and supported most of the time**.
- **All** reported having **friends** in the space, with **89%** reporting making **new connections**

The impact of Our Place according to our young people (May 2025)!

“When I was very depressed last year, I didn’t want to go out at all. When I went to my first session at Our Place, I felt like I fit in somewhere. It made me look forward to something each week.”
– Social Drop-In Attendee, 15

“It’s the kind of space I wish I had access to growing up. It gives me a lot of hope for the future, to not only see that an initiative like Our Place exists but also being able to be a part of it –
OPYC Member, 25.

“It makes me feel supported and loved” – Social Drop-In Attendee, 16

“Honestly, Our Place is what I picture when I think of a safe space for LGBTQIA+ people.” – Social Drop-In Attendee, 18.

“The amount of opportunities I’ve received were beyond expectation but the real thing I treasure was the skills I developed while on the committee. I never thought I’d enjoy something as much as I have in engaging with my community and creating spaces that they can feel safe in.” – OPYC Member, 23.



Timeline

September 2018

Young person proposes a safe space to Swan council

2019

Our Place open Safe Space Drop-In

2020

COVID closure and project review; Community Partner Award at YF Make a Difference Awards

2021

Community consultation (survey); Recruitment of youth representatives for co-design

2023

Short-term YACWA Grant, funds one year of OPYC and Peer Mentors

Mid 2023

Launch of OPYC and Peer Mentors

2023

Diversity Award at WA Mental Health Awards

Throughout 2024

Increased community engagement and advocacy, Funding from City of Swan and Youth Focus

May 2025

Moved to Midland Youth Hub (dedicated Our Place space)

Our Place’s Concluding Tips: “Listen to us!”

Talk to and involve your LGBTQIA+ young people! – When the young people of Our Place were asked to provide tips for other organisations, they resoundingly said to involve LGBTQIA+ young people (in fact it came up in **73%** of our text responses!) They spoke about **involving LGBTQIA+ young people at every stage**, including the design, facilitation, and in providing feedback for the space. When reflecting on the benefits of involving LGBTQIA+ young people, they discussed:

- Young people having **ownership and autonomy** over the space which deepens their connection to it
- The importance of lived experience in creating a sense of **relevance, authenticity, understanding, and comfort** in a safe space – LGBTQIA+ young people know LGBTQIA+ young people best!
- The opportunity to **empower and upskill LGBTQIA+ young people** through their participation to support each other and their community

Ensure your space is inclusive to a wide range of identities and experiences – The remaining tips from our young people all spoke to making sure **everyone** feels welcome and comfortable in the space. The LGBTQIA+ community is made up of people with **diverse identities and experiences** and considering the **intersections** of these when designing your space can help make sure needs are met and no one is excluded.



If you’d like more information on Our Place, co-designing safe spaces, or to work with us you can reach us:

