LGBT+

Early Years

Jamie is a 3 year old boy in your setting. He is a pleasant, polite, bubbly child who likes playing with other children. He likes playing games with the dolls and tea sets. He sometimes gets distressed if the children play boisterous games and doesn’t like it when they role play sword fighting or cops and robbers games. This has led some of the older boys to say things like: “you’re such a girl.”

Today the children were playing dressing up games and Jamie chose to dress up in the princess outfits and the pretend high heel shoes. Two of the boys were overheard telling him not be so “gay.” When this was said a parent was picking up his 2 year old boy. He laughed and said to him: “I hope you don’t start wearing those gay outfits.”

Questions to consider:

How are gender attitudes approached within your setting?
How would you challenge the children about the language they are using?
How would you challenge the parent about what he has said?
How do you ensure staff have an unbiased attitude in relation to gender when supporting children in their play?
How could this develop into a safeguarding concern if left unaddressed?
Primary:

Jordan is in year 6 and was born anatomically male. Jordan and mum have always been open with the fact that Jordan has always felt female. Mum has allowed Jordan to wear girl’s clothes at home and has never had an issue with Jordan playing with girl’s toys and identifying as female. Jordan has been referred for specialist support and is open to the “Tavistock clinic” in London who work with transgender children. A child psychologist is also working with the family.

Recently Jordan and mum have been in to school to say that they would prefer Jordan to wear the girl’s uniform and also be known as female, being referred to as ‘she’ rather than ‘he.’

Jordan has the right to feel safe, respected and valued in school and school should make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to support Jordan in her choices.

School should consider the following alongside Jordan and her mum:

- Toilets and changing: to support Jordan does she want to change separately and perhaps rename the disabled toilet as ‘Unisex accessible toilet.’
- Swimming needs to be considered: Exploring alternative swimwear options may avoid potential issues that could develop due to the revealing nature of this type of clothing.
- School uniform should not present an issue for Transgender young people. Jordan should be able to chose to wear the girl’s uniform.

Staff may need and should have training around the subject. It may take some time, but staff and pupils should be expected to refer to Jordan using ‘she’ and ‘her’ in their language and discussion about how to tell other pupils should happen with Jordan and her mum.

Children should discuss LGBTQ issues as part of their PSHE curriculum as well as accepting and celebrating differences. If other parents raise concerns, use standard lines such as: “As this issue involves the personal circumstances of a young child we are unable to make any comment.” The school’s Equality and Diversity policy, however, should be made easily available.

Getting this right at the beginning may prevent further safeguarding issues developing for Jordan later on, such as bullying or discrimination. It is also important to consider high school transition as early as possible.
Secondary

Jack is in year 9 at school. In September he disclosed to his form tutor that he thinks he might be gay, but he was afraid of how his friends would react if he told them. His form tutor offered him support and tried to reassure him. In November Jack went back to his form tutor and said that he felt much better about things. He said he had met some friends online who he said ‘get him’ and he now felt he had people he could talk to who are also gay and understand him. He appeared to be much happier though his form tutor noted that he had begun to withdraw from his friends in school and he didn’t socialise with them any more outside of school as Jack said he can’t connect with them.

After Christmas Jack started to truant from lessons in school, but wouldn’t say where he had been. He began to lose weight and started looking very tired though when staff have expressed concern for him he says he is happy. You notice that he is wearing jewellery and also seems to have a new mobile phone, which he says are all gifts from his friend, though he won’t say who.

- What would you do immediately?
- Would you record any of this, and if so where?
- What actions would you take in the longer term?
- If you felt that you needed to take further advice who would you speak to?

Immediate

There are clear indications of CSE. Research suggests that LGBT young people are more likely to feel isolated among their peer group and may turn to online sites to find friendships, making them vulnerable to possible exploitation.

The designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed. The CSE screening tool should be completed with Jack if possible. Parents need to be informed of concerns so you can gather further information and they can protect him. There needs to be consultation with ChECS and the CSE screening tool sent in.

Ongoing

Further advice should be taken, but he should be supported in forming appropriate friendships and relationships and this may be through an LGBT youth group such as Utopia. LGBT and homophobia should form part of the PSHE curriculum and staff should receive training on these issues to support in prevention work.
All concerns and actions should be recorded and stored securely as a safeguarding record.