

## **Oasis initiative - Sara Barrientos**

- **How did the Oasis initiative come into being?**

Oasis is an initiative coordinated by the Candela Association (<http://candela.cat>) along with other LGBT independent professionals working in schools. One of the major concerns highlighted in recent years is LGBTphobic bullying, the lack of positive role models and the need for measures to address these issues. In fact, there has been much discussion about this problem in our city over the last year due to the suicide of a transgender teenager in the town of Rubí on 24 December 2015.

In recent years, there have been several reports deploring the seriousness of this form of bullying and the impact it is having on LGBT teenagers. The most recent data indicate that 43% of adolescents who suffer homophobic bullying at school have considered suicide at some stage in their life, according to a survey presented by the State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals (FELGTB) in 2013. The eradication of discrimination and LGBTphobia is also one of the current main challenges in Catalonia, which is why last year saw the passing of Law 11/2014 to guarantee the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and to eradicate homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. This project works towards this same goal and aims to serve as a tool for promoting the empowerment of LGBT teenagers.

Therefore, in 2015 we launched the OASIS project, the first meeting of LGBT teens in Barcelona, with the support of Barcelona City Council, the General Directorate of Youth, the Association of Parents of Gays and Lesbians and the Group of Families of Trans People. The meeting, which took place from 17 to 19 July, was a huge success. You can view the video from the meeting at: <https://vimeo.com/143251891>

The results were very positive and the response from young people, families, as well as associations and public authorities reaffirmed the need for this initiative. That is why we have expanded the project in 2016, doubling the number of participants (17 teenagers) and the duration (six days). Once again, the philosophy behind these OASIS summer camps is based on four pillars:

1. The methodology of positive role models, based on the idea that in order to combat the self-hatred or stigmatisation experienced by many LGTB teenagers it is important to offer positive stories that other people have experienced. Therefore, it is considered very important that the members of the education team at the meeting are all LGBT people, and also that the trainers or special guests we invite are LGBT people with different backgrounds, so they can meet and share their experiences with the group of teenagers.
2. Empowerment is crucial for all LGBT teenagers who are direct or indirect victims of violence based on their sex, gender or sexuality. Transphobia and homophobia are present in most areas of our society, particularly in schools, which unfortunately has

an impact on LGBTI youths' self-perception. In this regard, we emphasise the changes brought about by the LGBTI movement and the current challenges.

3. Creating links between teenagers with sexual and gender diversity is essential in order to break the feeling of loneliness and isolation and to enable them to express themselves freely at all levels. We find that this peer support helps to improve their self-image and social skills.
4. OASIS offers support to the families of LGBTI teenagers, providing reception and meeting space for sharing concerns, needs and tools concerning the education and support of their children in an atmosphere of mutual understanding

- **What has been its impact so far? (Have you had any feedback from the participants or from their schools, families, etc.?)**

The impact on the lives of the teenagers has been very positive. The video (2015) shows the opinions and feelings of the participants and their families, demonstrating a great level of satisfaction. The 2016 video will be finished in September and the contributions of the participants are very positive.

Last year nine teenagers came. In 2016, 17 came and we have many teenagers waiting to come next year. They and their families have been asking us to increase the size of the project and to organise activities throughout the year, which we are considering doing. The project is growing and more institutions are getting involved, as it is the only anti-bullying project aimed at LGBT teenagers.

Families are an essential part of OASIS. After OASIS, they go on to join parents associations that provide support and advice. Youth professionals are also involved in the project and their evaluation is very positive.

An example of the great impact of OASIS: the teenagers who attended in the first year and who returned in 2016 showed great improvements. Their self-confidence had improved, they had a good social network, personal projects and dreams, and also demonstrated a high level of responsibility, taking care of others in the group. They had a strong sense of community and help out in the organisation. They also wish to be part of the project in the future.

- **Has this initiative been implemented beyond Catalonia and/or has it inspired other similar initiatives in other regions, or even countries?**

The process underway is a pioneer initiative in Catalonia and Spain, and is based on similar experiences in the UK, US and Canada:

[\*\*Mosaic Summer Camp \(UK\)\*\*](#)

[\*\*Rainbow Camp \(Canada\)\*\*](#)

[\*\*Brave Trails \(California\)\*\*](#)

[\*\*Queer Rock Camp \(Washington\)\*\*](#)

[\*\*Camp Ten Trees \(Washington\)\*\*](#)

[\*\*OUTdoors Camp \(Arizona\)\*\*](#)

[\*\*Camp LightBulb \(Massachussetts\)\*\*](#)