

## **HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA**

### **Schools OUT and LGBT History Month**

Schools OUT is an organisation that exists to support all LGBT people in education.

LGBT History Month is an event that exists to provide role models and remind people that we have existed in all times and in all places. It is essential to celebrate our existence and our achievements - as well as outlining the seriousness and prevalence of homophobia and transphobia – to avoid us representing ourselves constantly as victims.

### **Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity is the default position that one is white, male, middle class, Christian (or from a Christian background), straight and secure that his gender is in line with his birth sex. Everyone who does not fit this default position deviates from it.

### **The medical model versus the social model**

The medical model sees the person who deviates from the heteronormative position as the “problem” i.e. how do we deal with this person who is...?

The social model sees society or the institution as the problem i.e. how can we ensure this school / hospital / office meets the needs of everyone?

Understanding these perspectives is essential to gaining an understanding of why homophobic and transphobic bullying occur. Bullies don't seek to find LGBT people; rather they seek to identify people as different, isolate them, take their friends away and damage them. The issue is that sexual orientation and gender are very common weapons in the bully's armoury.

It's also important to establish that homophobia / transphobia / sexism etc. are all part and parcel of the same process; one that centres itself on the heteronormative default position. For example, we can assert that: “I'm gonna get you after school, gay boy!” is homophobic, but what about saying to a boy: “You run like a girl!” Is it homophobic, transphobic or sexist? Arguably all three, or any one of them. More importantly, it is about attacking people for not conforming to the default position.

### **Homophobic and transphobic bullying in Schools**

The figures are truly shocking. Stonewall School Report 2007: 97% of pupils witnessed homophobia, most said teachers did nothing about it. Oldham NUT report 2008: 98.8% of teachers witnessed homophobic incidents in one term. 56% had received homophobic abuse from pupils.

### **European Report**

A report released by the European Union 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009 found Homophobia and transphobia to be rife throughout the European Union. Nations fell into 3 broad categories: Hard line countries that actively obstructed any attempt by LGBT people to celebrate their lives (e.g. Russia, Poland, Ukraine); countries that failed or refused to implement anti-discriminatory and Equal opp's legislation (e.g. Italy, Czech

Republic, Hungary); and countries where passive and third party homophobia / transphobia was tolerated in public institutions such as schools and hospitals (including the UK).

Bullying can range from verbal abuse up to and including murder. Consequences of homophobia and transphobia include truancy, failure to achieve, alcohol and drug abuse, self-harm, suicide. Up to 50% of trans people have contemplated suicide at some point.

### **Responses from Government**

- The Equalities Bill seeks to protect people in schools from homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- The DCSF has reminded people to use the Teachernet guidance on homophobic bullying in schools.
- The DCSF now has guidance on transphobia in schools, thanks to GILES.
- The 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters include ensuring children are safe, healthy and capable of economic well-being. Now statutory in the new Secondary Curriculum.
- Baroness Morgan has acknowledged the need for Teacher INSET and trainee teacher training on homophobia and transphobia
- Homophobic incidents in schools to be recorded

### **Responses from outside agencies**

- Encourage celebratory events like LGBT History Month
- No Outsiders work promotes different family models in primary education
- THT Teacher pack
- NUT and other Union materials and conferences

### **Still we need**

- Mandatory teacher training; both in service and pre-teaching qualification
- Incidents to be recorded and logged by a central body, including how they've been dealt with
- A recognition of the meaning of *trans* and a working knowledge of who needs to be protected under the trans spectrum
- All schools to have equal opportunities policies that include homophobic and transphobic bullying and are monitored and subject to Equality impact Assessments
- An equivalent approach to dealing with homophobia and transphobia in further education which is outside LEA control
- Ditto academies
- To tell schools that they *cannot* tell children homosexuality "is a sin" under their religious/faith ethos