Non-Normative Gender and Sexual Identities in Schools:

An Exploration of the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (and Transgender) Individuals in British Schools

Amy MacMillan

September 2008

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement of the MA Gender Sexuality and Queer Theory
Non-Normative Gender and Sexual Identities in Schools:

An Exploration of the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (and Transgender\textsuperscript{1}) Individuals in British Schools

\textsuperscript{1} This research set out to include analyses of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals within school environments and all calls for participants indicated this. In actuality none of my respondents identified as transgender. However, I decided not to exclude transgender from the title, as I do address transphobia throughout the literature review and where relevant in the discussion.
# Contents

*Dedication*  
***

*Acknowledgements*  
iv

*Abstract*  
1

*Introduction*  
2

1. **Literature Review**

   *Sexuality, Gender and Young People:*
   *An Introduction to the inescapability of femininities, masculinities and heteronormativity*  
4

   *Schools, Queerphobia and Heteronormativity:*
   *Where have we come from, where are we going?*  
8

   *Addressing Queerphobia and Heteronormativity in Schools:*
   *Policies and Legislation*  
16

2. **Methodology**

   *Research Context*  
28

   *Methods, Ethics and Research Question*  
29

   *Epistemological Concerns and Theoretical Framework*  
37

3. **Discussion**  
41

   *Queerphobia, Heteronormativity and Schools:*
   *The Reality for LGBT young people*  
41

   *Teachers, Queerphobia and Heteronormativity:*
   *A Complex Relationship*  
50

4. **Conclusion**  
63

   *References*  
66

   *Appendices*  
83
This research is dedicated to the memory of Paul Patrick who died aged 57 on 22nd May 2008 after a long battle with a chronic lung condition.

Paul came out in 1969 only 2 years after homosexuality was legalised. He was the first openly gay teacher not to lose his job. He dedicated his life to both teaching and fighting for the rights of LGBT people in education. He co-founded The Gay Teachers Group in 1974 which went on to become Schools Out in 1981, which he Co-Chaired from 2002 until his death, and he was part of the driving force behind LGBT History Month. I had the pleasure to meet Paul a few months before his death and like many others I was overwhelmed by his passion and commitment to LGBT equality in education, even during such ill health. Paul demanded those with the power listened and his tireless efforts went a long way to changing both policies and attitudes.

We continue to be inspired by you Paul, by your passion, by your commitment and by your wonderful persona ~ you will be forever missed.
The completion of this project and my MA would not have been possible without a number of people….

I would like to extend thanks to…

Sarah Whitelaw and Robert Vanderbeck for your advice in the early stages, upon which my research developed; Sally and Shirley for supporting and advising me throughout and allowing me such flexibility with my work, I would not have made it without you both; Sally Carr for organising the young people in my focus group; all my research participants; Samantha, Silver and the young people at LGYM, and particularly Chris Gibbons and Sue Sanders who as well as participating in my research also gave invaluable, expertise and advice; Jamie, for your constant support and advice, for proofreading tens of thousands of words and for keeping my head above water when I was sinking; Sheila and Liz simply for listening and understanding when I didn’t even understand myself; Dario and Fiona for contributing to a fantastic working environment over the last couple of months and helping me find the words on many occasions; Gianna, for also being part of that environment and particularly for proofing and adding your expertise to my work, thank you, you are a star; Rita, for your ever-present support and understanding, I feel privileged to have found you, we have helped each other through the year and made each other proud; Geoff, for your ongoing insights, advice, ideas, technical support, invigorating conversation and invaluable friendship, I am going to miss you; Nic, my Saturday night msn buddy, you stood by my side and held my hand through my first degree and you’ve held my hand from a far through this one, I would not be here today without you, I love you hun; ‘Hotel Stacy and Pete’, for providing me with a bed, great research food and of course King Barnaby Bob and Stack, your daily Facebook motivational words often kept me going; Alex, Carol and Vix, what can I say, I love you; and Nomi, for simply being you, there are no words!

Special Thanks to…

Ruth – for your ongoing support and advice, without which submission of this project and completion of my MA would not have been possible. You have gone above and beyond to help me keep going when often it looked as though I may not be able to continue. You have shown me how to think outside the box and to question the normative - you have opened my eyes to numerous possibilities and directions and inspired me to go on in more ways than ways than you can know, thank you.

Mum, Laura and Grandad – this past 18 months have been the hardest of our lives, but amongst the pain their has been constant courage and love. We have shown that there is success and hope and together we are making it through and making Nanny proud, this is for her and for you, I love you always.

And finally, Kiri – for your ever present love and support, for listening daily to, and advising me on, every up and down of this project and of my life, for helping me through the darkest times and most of all for making me smile, I love you.
Abstract

This paper interrogates the current epidemic of homo/bi/transphobia (what I term queerphobia) in British schools and the effect of this on non-normative sexual and gender identity development. Attempts to address queerphobic bullying within schools are investigated and I suggest reasons why successful strategies are not being universally employed. I explore the effects of queerphobic bullying in schools on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teachers, and on young LGBT people. Furthermore, I ask how the heteronormative environments of schools are affecting LGBT teachers and are contributing towards identity negotiation for LGBT young people. I conclude that the current situation for LGBT people in education is extremely problematic and that in order for progress to be made in schools, we need to challenge queerphobia and heteronormative in multiple ways, from multiple platforms across the whole of society.
Introduction

Bullying in schools on the grounds of one’s sexual and/or gender orientation is nothing new. However, a significant amount of work still needs to be done in the UK to support LGBT pupils and staff in education. Research on the implementation of policies and the effect of queerphobia\(^2\) in schools is minimal. Furthermore, it is perhaps the case that rather than looking at overt discrimination of LGBT people we need closer focus on addressing heteronormativity, as queerphobia could in fact be a result of this underlying social relation. I use the term ‘heteronormativity’, first used by Warner (1991), throughout this work to signify everyday practices of society, which are implicitly heterosexual, marginalizing LGBT people. Within schools and throughout society, heterosexuality appears as the default position of social relations. This imbues compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980), whereby heterosexuality takes precedence as the only legitimate relationship type. Heteronormativity, and thus compulsory heterosexuality, are the outcomes of institutional attitudes to sexuality and gender (see Foucault, 1990) and the school, which is the primary concern of this paper, is one of the first of those institutions we encounter.\(^3\) Therefore, experiences at school may influence us for the rest of our lives, perhaps contributing to queerphobic attitudes.

---

\(^2\) In this work I use ‘queerphobia’ to encompass homo, bi, and transphobia or any combination thereof. The lack of focus in current policy on transphobic bullying, means that whilst I refer to homo, bi and transphobic bullying, under the term queerphobia, when trans and/or bi issues are neglected, it is because the research I refer to has not acknowledged these issues as separate. Where the term homophobia is used rather than queerphobia it is because I am referring to homophobia only. Note however, that the meaning of ‘queer’ itself is highly contested and that by using it in my work as an umbrella term to encompass LGBT, I am restricting ‘queer’ to particular identities (See Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003; Whaley, 2008). I recognise that this is not ideal and agree with Whaley (2008) that where possible queer should not be restricted in this way. However, for the purpose of this work I decided that ‘queer’ would mean lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

\(^3\) The hospital and family are perhaps the first instances where the institutionalization of sexuality and gender occur (Warner, 1993) and thus queerphobic development could begin here.
My research interrogates how schools are approaching queerphobia and addressing heteronormativity and the success of policies and guidance in addressing these issues. I speak to young people who identify, or who are beginning to identify, as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) about their experiences at school and to a lesser extent I look at LGBT identified or perceived teachers, how the school environment affects them and how all teachers contribute to the well-being of LGBT pupils. I show that there continues to be little opportunity for LGBT teachers to be openly visible and that there are major barriers for LGBT pupils to negotiate their identities. Furthermore, I highlight some of the devastating effects that queerphobia and heteronormativity can have on LGBT young people and teachers.

In Chapter One I review literature related to gender, sexuality and education and provide background knowledge to present problems. Showing the inescapability of heteronormativity I contest that young LGBT people face problems during youth development not faced by their non LGBT peers and I show that problems are particularly prevalent in schools despite the existence of relevant laws and policies. In Chapter Two I lay out the methodological and epistemological framework for my primary research and discuss ethical considerations. In Chapter Three I draw upon my primary research to show the reality within schools for the young LGBT people in my study and the complexities for schools and teachers regarding LGBT identities. In this Chapter I use the experiences of my respondents to support the situations highlighted by the secondary literature in Chapter One.


**Literature Review**

In this review, I first set a background by highlighting the difficulty for *anybody* to exist outside heteronormative confines and normative expectations and femininity and masculinity. I touch upon how this is particularly problematic for young people and *extremely* problematic for young LGBT people, and I set this within the context of some key theorists. I then specifically address some issues related to queerphobia and heteronormativity within *schools*, covering key historical events and developments. This leads to an extensive review of policy and legislation, understandings of which are crucial for this work as they demonstrate the political backdrop for the young people in my study during their school years.

**Sexuality, Gender and Young People:**

*An introduction to the inescapability of femininities, masculinities and heteronormativity*

Sexual and gender identity development are far more complex than is generally recognised and gender and sexuality are *not* necessarily givens. Although gendered social processes go largely unnoticed across society, queer theorists, amongst others, have contributed to alternative understandings of such processes and these have influenced my work (see Weeks, 1986; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Butler, 2004 and 2006; Sedgwick, 2008). Gender may in fact be performative; whereby we learn and continually enact masculine and feminine behaviours presented to us through social and political discourses, and which we subsequently associate with sexuality (Butler, 2006). In this way, ‘….subjects [who] are regulated by such [social/political] structures, are by virtue of being subjected
to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures’ (Butler, 2006: 3). As such, learnt feminine and masculine behaviours become aligned with heterosexuality and normative gender roles and these roles are encouraged by cultural and institutional discourses, of which schools are central (see Thorne, 1993; Mac an Ghaill, 1994a; Owens, 1998; Butler, 2006).

Gender performativity and how this interacts with LGBT identities is a central theme running throughout my work, with Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (2006 [1990]) and Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (2008 [1991]) implicitly informing the theoretical frame within which I work. Sedgwick (2008) demonstrates, through her interrogation of gender binaries and sexuality assumptions, the centrality of heterosexuality in our culture and therefore the problematic nature of homosexuality. This *Epistemology of the Closet*, she says, is particularly true of the school. Where, for example, ‘...the space for simply existing as a gay person who is a teacher is in fact bayoneted through and through, from both sides, by the vectors of a disclosure at once compulsorily and forbidden’ (Sedgwick, 2008: 70). This specificity of oppression based on sexuality, is often due to its lack of visibility, issues of perceived sexuality, and links to masculinity and femininity (Sedgwick, 2008). This is crucial to my research; research that has derived from a broad interest in identity development, to which Butler and Sedgwick have contributed queer understandings.

I specifically seek to understand how young people are able to develop their non-normative sexual and gender identities in British Schools. Using queer post-structuralist perspectives (see Rubin, 1984; Duggan, 1992; Butler, 2006; Sedgwick, 2008), I suggest a
need to deconstruct hierarchies of identity and question boundaries and borders. Butler (1993; 2004; 2006) and Sedgwick’s (2008) work are essential to such an approach, where norms and binaries are seen as problematic and ‘queer’ as counter-normative. I propose however, that these concepts can be broken down and that the school is a central site from which to do this, as it is a site where many of these norms get installed. This framework is further developed in the Chapter Two.

School systems are significant cultural sites, actively producing hierarchically ordered masculinities and femininities (Mac an Ghaill, 1994b) and from early practices of preschool onwards our bodies ‘become’ gendered (Martin, 2003), with anything deviating from this being questioned. This gendering of bodies is crucial as it sets up difference and contributes to the ‘Heterosexual Matrix’ whereby femininity and masculinity are set up as sexually oppositional (Butler, 2006). And when masculinity and femininity are constructed as oppositional in relation to sexuality, this can affect how young people understand sexuality. This, alongside others’ questioning of LGBT identities, can make life for young people who feel they may not fit gender and sexuality norms extremely problematic; particularly when they hit adolescence, a time when one often desires to be aligned with their peers and to fit presented notions of ‘normalcy’ (Forrest, 2006). It is through such discourses that male and female binaries are normalised and through which heterosexuality is privileged (see Foucault, 1990). And given that schools ‘…make a significant contribution to the development of values and attitudes in young children that are likely to be highly resistant to change in later life’ (Jennet, 2004: 4), this is crucial to the gender and sexual identity negotiations of young people.
These negotiations happen within the context of historical and social constructions of (hetero)sexuality and thus heteronormativity unavoidably frames environments within which LGBT young people are able to develop their identities (see Weeks, 1986; Butler, 2006; Sedgwick, 2008). From the moment a child walks through the school gates gender takes a central role, masculinity and femininity are immediately differentiated (see Thorne, 1993) and normative models of gender and sexuality are idealised as the only legitimate subject positions. These presented gender roles can influence perceptions of sexual orientation throughout one’s school years and thus the school may not provide a safe space for such exploration. Furthermore, ‘…as individuals are trying to figure out their own sexual and gender identity in adolescence, they are also policing their peers regarding this process’ (Horn: 2007, 363). This is central to the complex sexual and gender identity negotiations within schools. Taking all this into account, we perhaps should not be surprised that by secondary school age queerphobic bullying is endemic in schools (see Hunt and Jensen, 2007).

These discursive productions of normative genders and sexuality can however be actively challenged. If these gendered and heterosexual norms and binaries are broken down there would be no ‘reasoning’ behind bullying because of gender and sexual ‘otherness’ and there would not be the need to continually ‘come out’ (see Sedgwick, 2008). This need to come out occurs because, according to Sedgwick, everybody is assumed heterosexual until they state otherwise. As such, in attempting to understand gender and sexual identity and young people in schools, we need to move ‘…beyond traditional areas of concern regarding gender issues and to view schools as complex gendered and heterosexual arenas’ (Mac an Ghaill, 1994a: 4).
Societal messages about normative cultures permeate the lives of adolescents. Schools, as reflections of societal cultures, weave these messages throughout the informal curriculum by way of discipline, rules, and formal curricular. Many school climates foster norms, values and belief systems that communicate rejection and intolerance to some students. In particular, gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescences are a hidden minority in schools who are forced to negotiate homosexual identity development within typically homophobic climates.

(Nichols, 1999: 505)

Young people’s ideas about identity come via their experience, within the home, through the media and vitally, in schools. These experiences are encapsulated by heterosexuality and male and female binaries (see Epstein and Johnson 1994; Rasmussen, 2006). According to Government education policy, all identities should be viewed equally and pupils should be able to freely express any gender and/or sexual identity in non-discriminative environments. However, my review of literature demonstrated that LGBT people do not generally find this to be the case. LGBT youth are ‘more frequently victims of discrimination as a result of actual or perceived sexual orientation’ (Ryan and Rivers, 2003: 103) and teachers are often aware of homophobic bullying, but not always willing to tackle it (Douglas et al., 1999). Furthermore, as young people mature their notions of what LGBT means, will be influenced by the representations of these identities within schools and the way discrimination against these identities are dealt with. In this sense, both how one views their own gender and/or sexual identity and how ones sees others will be largely developed during your school years.

During these years LGBT young people have to cope with ‘usual’ developmental problems faced by youths and additional problems of developing non-normative gender
and/or sexual identities within largely normative contexts (see Owens, 1998; D’Augelli and Patterson, 2001; Miceli, 2002). The environments schools provide for these negotiations play vital roles in young people’s understanding of their gender and sexuality. Therefore, if LGBT identities are hidden or marginalised within schools these young people are further disadvantaged in relation to their non LGBT peers. When they begin to realise that they may not fit gender and sexual identity norms life can become very difficult, as those concerned with LGBT youth development demonstrate. Savin-Williams (1990; 2005); Mac an Ghaill (1994a; 1994b); O’Coner (1995); and Harris (1997) for example, show that such young people can become ‘an “invisible” minority and [are] one of the most significant “at risk” groups of adolescents’ (Thurlow, 2001: 25).

This current position in schools is no accident; it reflects what has proceeded it and this procession has been heterosexual and sexological (see Jackson, 1989). Gender roles and LGBT identities within schools currently must be viewed in this historical context, if any understanding of where we are now and how we can move forward is to be gained. As well as ongoing battles regarding sexualities in education, we also have to consider battles regarding gender in education (see Ali et al., 2004; Clair, 2004; Arnot and Mac an Ghaill, 2006 for example). Furthermore, in the early to mid twentieth century female (homo)sexuality was seen as posing a serious threat to societal structures (read patriarchy) and homosexuality was perceived to be more likely in single-sex schools. This assumption was a driving force behind moves towards co-education between the wars (see Faraday, 1989). During this time, discrimination of homosexuals in schools was explicit, with attempts to remove ‘possibilities’ for homosexual desire by decreasing single-sex schools.
As we moved through the sixties and seventies this discrimination became more implicit, delivered largely through the curriculum, with subjects being heavily gendered. The 1980’s saw a return to explicit discrimination with the Conservative’s anti-gay rhetoric and the introduction of Section 28 of The Local Government Act 1988 (Appendix 9). Section 28 stated that local authorities should not ‘intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality’ (Local Government Act, 1988: s28(1) 2A. (1) (a)), nor should they, ‘promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretend family relationship’ (s28 2A. (1) (b))\(^4\). These historical developments have influenced present education cultures and policies thus contextualise the current situation. They also reflect wider social and cultural shifts throughout the twentieth century, demonstrating how schools are a microcosm of society. Although it is through the family, community and the media, amongst other influences, that young people may start to learn about gender and sexuality, it is at school where these ideas are harnessed and developed (Forrest, 2006). As such, schools are a central socialisation site, contributing to shaping identities.

The most significant event for LGBT people in education has undoubtedly been the introduction of Section 28 and the dialogue this ensued. Section 28 served to alienate and stigmatise LGBT people, particularly in education. However, it also served to partially unite an increasingly fractured LGBT community. As such since the mid 1980’s, as well as much public debate around LGBT issues in education, there has been increasing concern in academic research relating to sexuality and education, for example; Harris (1990); Mac an Ghaill (1994a); Epstein and Johnson (1998); Rasmussen (2006); Rofes

\(^4\) For an overview of the situation in schools in the years leading up to the introduction of Section 28 see Gay Teachers Group (1987).
(2005) and important edited collections by Jones and Mahony (1989); Epstein (1994) and Rasmussen et al. (2004). This work has demonstrated the situation for LGB(T) young people and adults in education, it sets the backdrop for my research and the prevalence of such work is positive. However, it also demonstrates that little progress has been made in irradiating institutional queerphobia, which was fuelled by the media sensationalization of AIDS and the introduction of Section 28 during the 1980’s5.

Section 28 was repealed in 2003, but its legacies remain in 2008; for example, over half of LGBT pupils don’t feel able to be themselves at school; 35% per cent do not feel safe or accepted at school (Hunt and Jensen, 2007); 40% of LGBT adults who were bullied at school have self-harmed (Rivers, 2000); and more than 20% have attempted suicide (Mullen, 1999). These figures are more than statistics - they have a human value that is often overlooked, with victims suffering the effects for years to come (see Chapter Three).

Explicit bullying can take many forms, with verbal bullying being one of the most common (Hunt and Jensen, 2007). In particular the use of ‘gay’ as a derogatory term, which has become the ‘insult of choice’ in recent years, whether meant as intentional bullying or not6, ‘…pollutes the social-psychological environment in which young bisexual, gay and lesbian people must live’ (Thurlow, 2001: 26) and as such can be devastating for these young people.

5 Note that although I have used ‘queerphobia’ in this sentence, during the 1980’s it was almost exclusively homophobia that was referred to, with bisexual issues becoming ‘visible’ later and trans issues later still.  
6 This proved to be a point of contention, as explored in Chapter Three.
Experiences of young people at school heavily influence their perceptions of self and thus their negotiations of their sexual and/or gender identity, particularly if they are beginning to identify as non-normative. Rivers (2000) for example, found that common effects of discrimination of LGBT youth at school were abstention, self harm and suicide. He revisited these issues four years later and found that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression were significantly higher in those LGBT adults who had been bullied at school (Rivers, 2004). This is a bleak outlook for the mental health of LGBT people, and given that lesbian and gay youth have been found to be ‘victimized “kind of everywhere” by peers and adults’ (Mishna et al., 2007: 5), specific queerphobia at school can only compound an already difficult time for LGBT young people. Indeed, LGB people reported ‘varied psychological, academic and social effects of homophobic bullying’ (Mishna et al., 2007: 7) and these effects were not just the result of isolated homophobic incidents, but of years of ‘internalized homophobia’ and continual comments such as ‘That’s so gay’ (Mishna et al., 2007: 8).

These studies are just a few of the many in recent years, (see also Kehily, 2001; Ellis and High, 2004; Biddulph, 2006 for example), that show how, in comparison ‘to young people in general, young lesbians and gay men can face specific challenges to their physical and emotional well-being’ (Warwick et al., 2001: 129). They demonstrate that life within schools is not easy for young LGBT people and that the discrimination faced due to their actual or perceived gender and/or sexual identity can cause devastating short and long term effects. This situation is compounded by heteronormative environments,

---

7 T excluded here as Mishna et al.’s study only addressed LGB.
and these discourses inevitably also influence sexual and gender identity development (see Rasmussen, 2004).

Identity developments are complex, multi-faceted, ongoing and often problematic negotiations for anyone, but for those beginning to realise that their gender and/or sexual identity may not ‘fit’ in the ways that their peers’ identities do this negotiation is further complicated (see Warwick et al., 2001; Rasmussen, 2006). It is important to remember then, that whilst queerphobia, as highlighted, negatively affects young LGBT people, it is:

…not necessary for homophobia to be expressed for heterosexism as a cultural structure to be active in a particular moment. It operates through silences and absences as well as through verbal and physical abuse or through overt discrimination.

( Epstein and Johnson, 1994: 198)

This subtlety of discrimination, either alone or in combination with explicit bullying, ‘is particularly repressive and oppressive [for young people, who]…are very likely to experience profound emotional and psychological tension and feelings of isolation’ (Forrest, 2006: 114). Such feelings of isolation will not be helped by the silence surrounding sexual orientation at school and the sexualisation of homosexuality when it is talked about. In combination with non-normative sexualities being silenced in other areas of society this environment in schools, ‘create[s] multiple layers of silence that serve[s] to support the construction and maintenance of heteronormativity’ (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006: 333). Furthermore, whilst the official curriculum encourages heterosexual hegemonies and ‘moral majorities’ (Epstein et al., 2002), the ‘unofficial
cultures of students, teachers and others connected with particular sites (for example, Local Education Authorities and governing bodies in the UK…’) (Epstein et al., 2002: 273) also present heterosexuality and the legitimate subject position. This ensures:

…the assumed dominance of a heterosexual order in societies plac[ing] heterosexual relationships at the centre – as ‘normal’ and normalizing – and thereby indicat[ing] that all other forms of sexual relationships remain ‘deviant’ and abnormal.

(Kehily, 2001: 118)

And with schools maintaining this wider societal view by their use of the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Jackson, 1968), it is no wonder that young LGBT people find it difficult to understand and express their genders and/or sexualities.

Within these heteronormative contexts, negotiations of femininities and masculinities are central to young people and these too are subtly influenced from an early age in binary, heterosexual ways. Mac an Ghaill, 1994a; Nayak and Kehily, 1996; Skelton, 2001; and Arnot, 2002 all interrogate the construction of femininities and masculinities within schools and how this is inextricably linked to queerphobia. The inescapability of these presentations is demonstrated by the normative sexualisation of everyday products. Even stationary, for example, can encourage heteronormativity. In 2005 Playboy controversially introduced a range of stationary, which may be seen to encourage sexual division because it presents a brand to a vulnerable group of people, which depicts women as subordinate. Although Playboy insists that these products are aimed at adults,
stores nationwide have been marketing them amongst merchandise clearly aimed at children.8

This kind of materialisation of normative genders and sexualities upon everyday products shows how ‘…heteronormativity has permeated children’s worlds with images and accounts of sexuality pairing women and men and showing men in dominant and women in submissive sexual roles (Brown, 1995)’ (Forrest, 2006: 113). Furthermore, it does so at a time when children are forming views that are likely to remain with them throughout their lives, a time when what young people learn at school, whether formally, or informally will inform their ongoing social perceptions (Horn, 2007). Therefore this constant reinforcement and celebration of normative genders and sexuality may be extremely problematic for young LGBT people.

Given this inescapable heteronormativity we can see that queerphobic rhetoric is all around us in society and in relation to education, it begins on day one - in primary schools (see Renold, 2002; Reay, 2006) - and by secondary school age normative gender and sexual identity positions seem enshrined. The importance of this enshrinement is demonstrated by Skelton and Hall’s 2001 review of policy and literature regarding the development of gender roles and young children. They show that schools are central to moulding gender identities of young children and that they do this in heterosexualised normative ways.

8 For some of the debates around Playboy stationary and images of some of the products see Bell (2005); Pearlman (2005); Brooke (2008); Cockcroft (2008).
However, as equality strides have been made forward in wider society these *can* sometimes be seen to be slowly making their way into schools; schools which are appropriately placed to tackle queerphobic bullying and heteronormativity and which *can* be ‘…sites for the *production* of gendered/sexualized identities rather than agencies that passively reflect dominant power relations’ (Kehily, 2001: 118-119). Therefore schools *should not* be passively imparting sexual and gender norms onto pupils. Rather, there are possibilities for schools to be environments where *any* gender/sexual identity can be nurtured and thrive. This does not appear to be happening; instead queerphobia appears to be rife, heteronormativity encompassing, and messages through the curriculum and through schools’ handling of queerphobic bullying reinforcing normative gender and sexuality discourses. However, given this is happening within State-run schools and the State has an increasingly broad equality agenda (see below) surely things are moving forward on a policy front and with a focus on correcting ignorance and celebrating equality and diversity in schools as well as across wider society?

**Addressing Queerphobia and Heteronormativity in Schools: Policies and Legislation**

The Government has not *completely* neglected queerphobia in education and many laws since Labour came to power in 1997, even before Section 28’s repeal, contain elements which *can* make explicit queerphobia difficult. For example, Human Rights Act 1998; Crime and Disorder Act 1998; Learning and Skills Act, 2000; Adoption and Children Act 2002; Sexual Offences Act 2003; Criminal Justice Act 2003; Local Government Bill 2003; Civil Partnership Bill 2004; Gender Recognition Bill 2004; Children Bill 2004; Equality Act 2006; and Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill 2008. However, whilst
there is *some* protection in law and through an ever increasing Government equality agenda, few policies explicitly challenge queerphobia in schools and many can be ‘overridden’ by other polices. It has often fallen to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and charitable organisations to research queerphobic bullying in schools and suggest action and policy; for example Douglas et al. (2000); Mullen (2001); North Lincolnshire (2006). Whilst this is positive for *these* areas, the fact that these LEAs feel such research is necessary highlights lack of action and unwillingness to explicitly address LGBT issues from a national level.

The current *Sex and Relationship Education Guidance* (DfEE, 2000) reflects this. Such legislation is central to how young LGBT people negotiate their gender and sexuality. This guidance ‘aims to address areas of uncertainty’ (DfEE, 2000: 3) about what sex education within schools should do. However, coverage of sexual orientation issues are minimal and transgender issues non-existent. Whilst one of the policy’s main objectives is to ‘help and support young people through their physical, emotional and moral development… [and prepare] …pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life’ (DfEE, 2000: 3-4), *sexual identity and orientation* is reduced to 3 sub-points out of 96. Furthermore, within these points, whilst the guidance states schools should make sure ‘the needs of all pupils are met in their programmes…[and that]…young people, whatever their developing sexuality…feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs’ (DfEE, 2000: 12), it also states that schools need to ‘reassure parents of the content of the programme and the context in which it will be presented’ (DfEE, 2000: 13). This second point qualifies the first,
perhaps subverting it, and thus allowing schools to neglect LGBT issues. Non-normative sexuality is addressed elsewhere in the policy, but also in ambiguous ways, for example:

The Government recognises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside of marriage. Therefore, children should learn the significance of marriage and stable relationships as the key building blocks of community and society. Teaching in this area needs to be sensitive so as not to stigmatise children on the basis of their home circumstances.

(DfEE, 2000: 11)

Whilst on the surface one may read this as recognition that heterosexual marriage is not the only legitimate relationship type, note that same-sex relationships are not explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, although marriage is not necessarily the only legitimate family type, according to this policy, only other ‘strong and mutually supportive relationships’ are legitimate. Where does this leave other non-normative relations; single parents; families with more than two parents; polyamorous relationships? In this way, attempts to make this policy inclusive are weak. In particular the failure to use words such as, ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘bisexual’, ‘transgender’ or ‘homosexuality’, throughout the document, and moreover to discuss issues around these terms, reinforces the Government’s unwillingness to move forward with LGBT equality. Furthermore, there is a stark contradiction in the policy whereby the Government do not want to stigmatise children with different family circumstances, but at the same time they argue that ‘stable family relationships’ are the ‘building blocks of society’ and morally preferable. Two years on from Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (DfEE, 2000), Bullying Don’t Suffer in Silence (Smith, 2002) had the potential to do this and to an extent, on paper, it does.

---

9 Referred to from this point as Don’t Suffer.
Produced in the early twenty-first century during the climate of fierce Section 28 repeal debates (see Thorp and Allen, 2000), *Don’t Suffer*, was a seminal anti-bullying resource pack for schools which is still widely drawn upon. It recognised that bullying can be related to sexual orientation and that whilst at that time in England and Wales 82% of teachers were aware of verbal incidents and 26% of physical incidents, only 6% of schools’ anti-bullying polices referred to this type of bullying (Smith, 2002: 15). Importantly, it *does* suggest strategies for reducing such bullying. However, it is clear from findings of recent research (Hunt and Jensen, 2007) that these suggestions have largely not been taken on board and as such young LGBT pupils and teachers are suffering. I suggest and look to investigate in my primary research, that at the time of writing *Don’t Suffer*, there was, and still is, a cloud of fear, initially produced by Section 28, hanging over schools and teachers about what they can say regarding non-normative sexual orientation\(^\text{10}\). This climate of fear is being maintained by the Government’s failure to make anti-queerphobic bullying guidance statutory or to structure the curriculum to be inclusive to all genders and sexualities. Instead LGBT equality in schools continues to be overridden by ‘other concerns’ and it is falling to voluntary organisations such as *Schools Out*\(^\text{11}\) and to Unions to push these issues forward.

The Unions are strong in LGBT equality. As far back as 1991 the National Union of Teachers (NUT) produced guidance on lesbians and gays in schools (NUT, 1991). The

---

\(^\text{10}\) Non-normative *gender* orientation is only just beginning to make it onto the agenda, the new *Guidance on Trans Equality in Post School Education* (Unison, 2008a) being a step in the right direction, but only addressing post-16 education.

\(^\text{11}\) *Schools Out* is a charitable organisation, formally the *Gay Teachers Group*, formed in 1974, which aims: ‘to provide both a formal and informal support network for all people who want to raise the issue of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in education; to campaign on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues as they affect education and those in education; to research, debate and stimulate curriculum development on LGBT issues’ (*Schools Out*, 2008: Online).
NUT also has a successful LGBT Working Party, and there are currently excellent resources available from the four main teaching unions (Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL); NASUWT; NUT; and Unison). These demonstrate legal positions, support LGBT teachers and show how teachers can support LGBT pupils; for example ATL (2004; 2008); NASUWT (2008); NUT (2004a; 2004b; 2007; 2008a; 2008b); and UNISON (2007; 2008b). However, engagement with these guidelines and with organisations such as Schools Out is dependent on individual teachers’ and is often only those with a vested interest (usually those who are LGBT themselves) who do engage. This, coupled with Government policy pre Section 28 repeal skirting around LGBT issues, the situation in 2002 was not promising. However, once Section 28 was repealed in 2003, work began in earnest to specifically address homophobia in schools and Government polices for schools started to include LGB(T) issues; for example, Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2006a) and Youth Matters: Next steps (DfES, 2006b).

It was Homophobia, Sexual Orientation and Schools: a Review and Implications for Action (Warwick et al., 2004) which really began to move things forward. This research was commissioned by the DfES to examine three sets of key questions:

1. What is the extent and impact of homophobic bullying on pupils?
2. How is homophobia and sexual orientation addressed both within the classroom (issues relating to the curriculum) and as part of whole school approaches?

---

12 A selection of the most important statements and guidance from these Unions can be seen in Appendix 1-4.
13 There was however, resistance and Section 28 was seen by many as an out-dated policy and it was these voices who continued to push for its repeal.
14 It was only homophobia at this stage, with no or little recognition of bisexual or transgender issues.
3. To what extent and in what ways are issues of equity and diversity in relation to sexual orientation being addressed within the school workforce and what implications does this have on recruitment, retention and promotion?

(Warwick et al., 2004: 5)

It looked at the prevalence and types of homophobic bullying; reviewed previous literature and polices; highlighted the problem of not transferring policy into practice; looked at the implications of homophobic bullying on pupils and staff; and vitally, made suggestions on how to address such bullying. This research, in conjunction with calls for clarity on what Section 28’s repeal meant for schools, led to the DfES, with the Department of Health, producing guidance on dealing with homophobia in schools. *Stand Up For Us: Challenging Homophobia in Schools* (Jennet et al., 2004)\(^{15}\) aimed to ‘help schools challenge and respond to homophobia in the context of developing an inclusive, safer and more successful school environment for all’ (Jennet et al., 2004: 4). It demonstrated that work to address homophobia helps schools to meet their objectives under polices such as *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003); it summarised what homophobic bullying is, differentiating between it’s types and frequency; it looked at effects of homophobic bullying; and the benefits for schools of tackling it, including improved behaviour, attendance and academic achievement, and compliance with legal, curricular and Ofsted\(^{16}\) requirements (see Ofsted, 2003). Furthermore, it helpfully defined key terms, including *heterosexism*.

\(^{15}\) Referred to from his point as *Stand Up For Us.*

\(^{16}\) Ofsted is the official body for inspecting of schools, see Ofsted (2008).
Stand Up For Us was therefore, the first policy to explicitly address homophobia in schools and to acknowledge heterosexism/heteronormativity. It sets a background of understanding for LGB(T) issues and explores ways in which schools can challenge queerphobia by taking a whole school approach. This policy then, on the back of Section 28’s repeal, had potential to build platforms for change, and given the subsequent introduction of general guidance such as Sexuality the New Agenda (Creegan et al., 2007), which set out how local authorities can successfully engage with LGB communities; and Gender Equality Duty and Schools (Migniuolo, 2007), which specifically set out to eliminate sex discrimination and promote equality in schools, one would have expected that by 2007 the situation for LGBT people in schools would have improved considerably.

The School Report (Hunt and Jensen, 2007) highlights that this however, was not the case; this most recent research demonstrates that in spite of Section 28’s repeal and the introduction of policies such as Don’t Suffer and Stand Up For Us ‘homophobic bullying is almost epidemic in Britain’s Schools’ (Hunt and Jensen, 2007: 2). The report was compiled by Stonewall in collaboration with the School Health Education Unit and surveyed 1145 LGBT young people. It investigated what homophobic bullying looks like; who inflicts it; how and when it was responded to; the consequences of it; and what works well in challenging it. It found that queerphobic bullying took many forms; these are highlighted in figure 1. and that 65% of ‘young lesbian, gay and bisexual people

---

17 Note, this guidance does not address transgender communities.
18 Stonewall was formed in 1989 as a response to Section 28. Stonewall puts equality on the mainstream political agenda and is now recognised as the national lobbying organisation for gay, lesbian and bisexual equality across all areas of life, working with a range of agencies to address the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the wider community (see Stonewall, 2008).
experienced direct bullying…[and that]… less than a quarter (23%) of young gay people have been told that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school’ (Hunt and Jensen, 2007: 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Bullying</th>
<th>Percentage of Young Gay and Lesbian People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malicious gossip</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidating looks</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored and isolated</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberbullying</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism and theft of property</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death threats</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened with a weapon</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. (Hunt and Jensen, 2007: 4)

The report found that the effects of bullying on LGBT pupils were extremely negative. For example, ‘seven out of ten gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying state that this has had an impact on their school work’ (Hunt and Jensen, 2007: 3). The key findings of the report, which are central to my work, can be seen in Appendix 5. As well as highlighting the issues, the report made 10 key recommendations of how schools can support LGB pupils, these cover; acknowledgement of the problem; policy development; integration of sexual orientation into the curriculum; and celebrating achievements. Full details of these recommendations can be found in Appendix 6.
Where the *School Report* positively differs from previous work, is that it is the first 100% Government backed research on homophobia in schools and it fed into the production of the first State endorsed anti-homophobia policy aimed specifically at schools - *Homophobic Bullying. Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools* (DCFS: 2007a)\(^{19}\). *Safe to Learn* translates the *School Report* into guidance. It takes a whole school approach and suggests how to ‘create an inclusive environment in your school where all pupils feel safe and are able to fulfil their potential’ (DCFS, 2007a: 7). The guidance is unique in that it is an internet based resource which you can dip in and out of, rather than a policy which you need to read from cover to cover – in fact Ruth Hunt, Head of Policy at *Stonewall*, co-author of the *School Report* and advisor to the DCFS on *Safe to Learn*, instructed against this at the policy’s regional launch in Leeds on 06/03/08 (Hunt, 2008).

The guidance is a ‘one stop shop’ for *anyone* involved in education that has an issue they do not know how to deal with. It is separated into three sections; advice for governors; advice for Heads and senior management team; and advice for teachers and schools staff. Within these sections, the legal framework is set out and recognition, prevention, responding and monitoring are covered. It includes a number of worksheet style downloads which can usefully be edited so that schools can tailor them to their specific needs. A full list of these downloads can be found in Appendix 8. The guidance demonstrates how to develop inclusive policies and use curriculum opportunities to enhance social and emotional skills of pupils. It shows how doing these things can contribute towards attainment of *Social and Economic Aspects of Learning (SEAL)*

---

\(^{19}\) Referred to from this point as *Safe to Learn*. 
(DCFS, 2007b) and Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) targets. The executive summary of the guidance showing the central aspects of the policy, can be found in appendix 7.

As Alex Servier from the DCSF commented at the regional launch of Safe to Learn in Leeds 06/03/08, we should not look at anti-bullying in isolation and we need to incorporate it within wider projects such as SEAL (DCSF, 2007b) (Servier, 2008). Servier accepted that being bullied is associated with lots of negative outcomes, that there should be no hierarchy of bullying, that it needs to be tackled explicitly and that good practice needs to be spread (Servier, 2008). In many respects Safe to Learn does this and as such Safe to Learn has much potential to really move schools forward with LGBT equality.

However, whilst the policy may be well thought out and accessible, training needs to be provided so that it can be successfully implemented. Moreover, it needs to be promoted so teachers know it is there. Chris Gibbons, Senior Education Officer at Stonewall, fears this is not happening (Gibbons, 2008). He highlighted at the policy’s regional launch, there are already inconsistencies in implementation of Government policies and this needs to change. For example, under Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), a school is not fulfilling its duty if it is not safe, yet the School Report (Hunt and Jensen, 2007) shows a significant number of LGBT pupils do not feel safe at school. Reviewing the implementation of guidance and policies has clearly been a problem in the past. Safe to Learn does come with some assurance that this will be addressed in the future, in that the School Report (Hunt and Jensen, 2007), will be re-done in 2010 and then every two years subsequently, which means how Safe to Learn is being implemented can be reviewed – the jury will be out in 2010 and beyond.
Presently however, when it comes to the crunch, the Government seem unwilling to commit fully to tackling queerphobia in schools. Safe to Learn is not statutory, most teachers are not aware that it exists and the DCSF will not agree to have their logo on LGBT History Month\(^{20}\) materials. Furthermore, far from no hierarchy of discrimination existing; religion often ‘trumps’ homosexuality. For example in Bristol April 2008, where anti-homophobia books in primary schools, introduced into the curriculum through the No-Outsiders project\(^{21}\), were banned by the council in reaction to Muslim parents incorrectly claiming they had not been consulted regarding the project\(^{22}\).

Servier (2008) is correct when he said that teachers are lacking both confidence and tools to tackle homophobic bullying and that this new web-based guidance can help address that. However, how are confidence and tools to be successfully provided when councils are not supporting initiatives such as No-Outsiders; when teachers are not aware of new guidance; and crucially when the guidance is not statutory?

Until 2007, then, policies skirted LGBT issues and they continued to pride normative sexualities and relationships over non-normative ones. We now have a policy that explicitly addresses issues of homophobia in schools (DCSF, 2007a), even if it is does not address transgender issues; this is a step in the right direction. However, the rhetoric coming from education conferences in 2008 suggests that many teachers are unaware of the guidance, its launch was somewhat muted and it is not statutory. Therefore, in reality

\(^{20}\) LGBT History Month takes place every February, celebrating the lives and achievements of the LGBT community, see LGBT History Month (2008a).

\(^{21}\) The No Outsiders project is a 28-month research project funded by the ESRC and based in primary schools. During the project ‘primary teachers from three areas of the UK…develop ideas and resources to address lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality in their own schools and their communities’ (No Outsiders, 2007: Online).

\(^{22}\) Information about this incident can be found LGBT History Month (2008b).
there may exist a sound basis for challenging queerphobia and heteronormative cultures in schools, but change on the ground, where it matters, continues to be painfully slow and pushed forward only by those with a strong passion for equality and change and who are prepared to put their own careers and personal lives at risk to speak up on LGBT issues.

This is the situation even though when teachers and schools have spoken out about such issues, results have been fantastic. For example at Stoke Newington School LGBT identities are celebrated and the school openly educates their pupils about non-normative identities and issues. As a result, incidents of queerphobic bullying are rare, young people here are growing up understanding that LGBT people are part of our communities, and pupils and staff are expressing their LGBT identities freely. Stoke Newington has shown that preventative measures and inclusive curriculum’s are successful and reactive policies are not and given that Safe to Learn also suggests this why are more schools not taking it on board?

This review has shown that there is a wealth of existing literature on the problems of queerphobia in schools and that there are polices in place which have the potential to address these problems. However, it has also demonstrated that policies are not being successfully implemented and that young LGBT people are suffering as a result. Furthermore, the current literature is extremely pragmatic, for example, highlighting the problems, but failing to place a human value upon these or suggest practical ways in which these problems can be tackled – this needs to be addressed.

---

23 For examples of work being done here see Stoke Newington School (2008).
Methodology

Research Context

My review of literature demonstrates that schools may not be providing environments conducive to healthy development for LGBT young people. Furthermore, it shows it is vital to look at gendered and sexualised meanings and difference in order to understand discrimination and enable platforms for change. As such, my research investigates how young LGBT people view their gender and/or sexual identity development within school contexts. I explore the effects of young LGBT people’s experiences at school and investigate what should be happening in schools and what is actually happening. I was motivated to undertake this research initially by personal experiences of homophobia24 at school, and secondly by reading the School Report (Hunt and Jensen, 2007), which highlights the lack of progress in challenging queerphobia in the ten years since I left school (see Chapter One).

Previous work in this area has focussed on the types and extent of queerphobic bullying (see Chapter One) and there is a lack of focus on how this queerphobia is affecting young LGBT people, with the notable exception of Rivers’ work (Rivers, 2000; 2004). There is also a lack of focus within previous work on the prevalence of heteronormativity in schools and how this is affecting young LGBT people. However, some work has subconsciously started to investigate these issues by interrogating the social construction of gender and the discursive productions of femininities and masculinities, which

24 Note I use the term homophobia, not queerphobia, when referring to my own experiences as these were homophobic only.
underpins many of these issues (e.g. Epstein and Johnson, 1994; Mac an Ghaill, 1994a, 1994b; Kimmel, 2001; Davis, 2004; Rasmussen, 2004; Brickell, 2006). My research aimed to address these gaps.

I wanted to get the views and experiences of young LGBT people who were still in, or had recently left education. However, I understood there are problems related to researching sexuality within schools (see Miceli, 2002) and concluded it would be difficult to gain access to schools. Furthermore, I did not want to make people who were unsure of their sexuality and/or gender identity feel uncomfortable or pressured to answer questions that they themselves had not yet negotiated answers to. Therefore, I approached an LGBT youth group, Lesbian and Gay Youth Manchester\textsuperscript{25} (LGYM). In order to supplement what I discovered during my literature review about what should be happening in schools, I felt it important to speak to people currently within the field. Therefore, I interviewed two key stakeholders: Chris Gibbons, Senior Education Officer at Stonewall and Sue Sanders, Co-Chair of School Out and a gay teacher.

**Methods, Ethics and Research Questions**

In making decisions about how to conduct my primary research, my first consideration was whether to employ qualitative or quantitative methods, or a mixture of both. I chose a mixed method qualitative approach because I feel these methods are more interpretive, allowing for contextualisation, clarification and development of interesting points (see Hollway and Jefferson 2000 and Holliday, 2002). If I had used questionnaires I would

\textsuperscript{25} For information about this group see LGYM (2008).
have been provided with a broader range of information from more participants. However, I felt it would be preferable to get in depth information from fewer participants given the nature and restraints of the study. These restraints were still applicable within the methods chosen (see Miceli, 2002 for example) and I needed to keep the data generated within what could realistically be analysed in the timescale of this study. Therefore I decided to limit my research to two key stakeholder interviews, a one-one interview and a focus group. Having researched what these methods would entail in terms of background work, time and money (see Morgan, 1997 and Bloor et al., 2001) I felt this was a realistic.

I chose to run focus a group for the young people because I felt quantitative methods such as questionnaires would not contextualise my data and although one-on-one interviews would have provided opportunities to explore issues on a deeper individual basis, I would not have been able to include as many people in the study (see Bloor et al., 2001). Because my sample was a pre-existing group, they had established group dynamics, and given the nature of the subject matter I felt this would enhance the data. There is much debate about whether focus groups work best when they are composed of strangers or when they are pre-existing groups. However I concluded that for this research it would be most ‘…useful to work with pre-existing groups because they provide one of the social contexts within which ideas are formed and decisions made’ (Kitzinger, 1994: 105).

All research was audio recorded, transcribed (Appendices 20-24) and analysed using discourse analysis. By audio recording I did not have to worry about making accurate

---

26 Initially I had planned to run two focus groups, this is discussed later.
notes and I did test recordings to check the quality of recording beforehand (see Bloor et al., 2001). Discourse analysis is particularly useful for the comparative methods I was employing (see Howarth, 2005), as I was able to draw out and compare emerging themes and patterns. Whilst analysing the transcripts I also recalled information from memory in relation to the tone and context in which comments were made, thus linking the transcripts to the research setting (see Morgan, 1997). This mixed method of analysis helped draw out narratives which were central to interpreting data (see Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

Once I had organised dates, times and venues and devised schedules for the focus group and interviews, I entered the field with an open mind, yet with recognition of the impossibility of objectivity (discussed later). I remained aware that all respondents are diversely situated social subjects and that the young people in the focus group had other influences, such as the family, on their constitution of selfhood. I also remained aware of possible problems related to building relationships with respondents (BSA, 2002) and that I needed to keep a balance between making participants feel comfortable, but not becoming overly friendly. These research considerations were not necessarily negative however and I felt recognising them in fact enhanced my work. To further increase the success of my research, I adapted the methods if and when problems arose and in accordance with the situation. This briefly highlights some of the research negotiations, below are more detailed descriptions of each section of the research and the particular ethical considerations that accompanied these, as well as the five main research questions.
Questions:

Having reviewed existing literature and with consideration of my research limits, I developed five central research questions. These were:

- What impact does explicit queerphobia in schools have on young LGBT people?
- What impact does the heteronormative school culture have on young LGBT people?
- What practical impact are current policies aimed at tackling queerphobia having in schools?
- What is the current climate in schools for LGBT teachers, how does this affect them and their pupils?
- What are the effects of binary gender differentiation on the identity development of LGBT young people?

Stakeholder Interviews:

I met my stakeholders in London on 11th June 2008 and used the same semi-structured interview schedules to conduct both interviews (Appendix 10). These schedules were based on twelve open ended questions aiming to cover my five central research questions. I used a flexible, free association approach (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), making notes throughout to help guide the discussion and pick up on interesting points raised. I concluded my interview with Sue over the phone on 25th June, as she had limited time on the 11th and we did not cover everything in that time. Limited time combined with extensive knowledge was one of the main issues with these interviews, particularly given the limited time I had to analyse data. I therefore, had to remain cautious to keep interviews relevant to the present work. Chris and Sue both signed consent forms (Appendix 11); their identities were not anonymized as they are key figures in the field and were happy to have their names associated with this research.
Focus Group:

My focus group comprised of eleven young people aged 15-21, attending LGYM on Tuesday 17th June 2008 and was recruited through a personal contact. The young people were informed in advance about my research and shown an information poster (Appendix 12). Their participation was voluntary and their identities were anonymized. They filled in background information sheets/consent forms detailing their gender, sexual orientation and educational information (Appendix 13). This information is summarised in figure 2. and a copy can be found as an insert for quick reference throughout the discussion. The focus group was based on a semi-structured schedule (Appendix 14) and I used the same flexible approach as in the stakeholder interviews to help guide the discussion and pick up on interesting points raised by participants.

Additional points to notes are that all participants attended State-run schools in the North West of England; all gave the age at which they left school as 15 or 16, however four participants (Matt, Sarah, Von and Ushihu) detailed that they went to different Sixth Form colleges post-16; all detailed that they have, or are studying for, GCSE’s; two participants (Sarah and Von) said they had NVQ’s, GNVQs or BTEC National Diplomas and one, Matt, said he had ‘A’ levels. Some gave additional information about the ages at which they came out and this can be seen on the background information sheets in Appendix 13.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Age left school</th>
<th>Age came out to self</th>
<th>Age came out to others</th>
<th>Out to friends (f); family (fa); work/school (w)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10,12,15</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>13/14</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicola</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16,18</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ushihu</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Von</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16,17</td>
<td>f,fa,w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>some f</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.

The success of the group depended somewhat on its dynamics, and some members were more vocal than others. I tried to alleviate this potential problem by observing carefully all participants' reactions to questions and discussion and bringing less vocal members into conversations when it seemed they wanted to say something. I also tried to remain aware if/when the discussion might be becoming difficult for participants and guided the conversation to lessen these pressures. The venue (LGYM’s base) was also important because this helped facilitate the comfort of the participants (Morgan, 1997). There were
limitations however; ideally I would have run a number of groups across the country. However this was not possible within the time and financial constraints of this study.

**Interview with Silver:**

Whilst at LGYM I conducted an unplanned interview with 25 year old Silver. I was introduced to him before the focus group session and advised I would find it useful to talk to him. I did not have a prepared interview schedule for him. I explained my research and asked Silver to fill in the same background information/consent form that the focus group participants did (Appendix 14) and I used a copy of the focus group schedule as a framework for the interview (Appendix 15). This information is summarised in figure 3 and can be found on the participant information insert – Silver’s information is in red on the insert to differentiate him for the focus group participants and his identity is anonymized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Age left school</th>
<th>Age came out to self</th>
<th>Age came out to others</th>
<th>Out to friends (f) family (fa) work (w)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17,23</td>
<td>F, some fa, w</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.

Silver went to an all boys State school, he did not take his GCSEs, but over the last ten years he has achieved various qualifications through college courses. The ethical considerations for this interview were transferred from the focus group. This interview
enhanced my work because it provided me with a longer term retrospective view on experiences of queerphobia at school.

**Interview with Gay Teacher:**

I planned to run two focus groups, one comprised of young LGBT people and one of adults working in education. In order to recruit this second focus group I devised a poster advertising my research and asking for volunteers (Appendix 16). This was sent to 120 secondary schools across Yorkshire via a regular postal mail-out from the Education Department at Leeds University, along with a cover letter (Appendix 17), giving details about my work and advising the recipient of where to display the poster. I felt this would be a successful way of widely distributing information about my study to people working in education. I had anticipated a small response given the nature of the research and what I knew about schools’ attitudes to these issues. I received zero responses. I can only speculate on why this was and cannot gauge an accurate response rate from the poster, as I do not know how many posters were placed on school notice boards.

After this unsuccessful recruitment I instead conducted one individual interview with a lesbian teacher, sought through personal contacts. I devised the interview schedule in the same way I had for the stakeholders, tailoring it specifically towards teachers (Appendix 18). I employed the same flexible approach, for the same reasons, as with previous interviews conducted; her identity was anonymized and she filled in a background information sheet and signed a consent form (Appendix 19).
Epistemological Concerns and Theoretical Framework

The methods I chose were met with a number of epistemological concerns which were carefully considered throughout the research. I did not enter any of the research settings with a blank canvas of knowledge or experience - I brought to each interview and to the focus group my own knowledge, experiences and opinions, this is unavoidable. However, in order to make the data as objective as possible, how I dealt with these concerns was subject to continued scrutiny. I recognise that no data can be totally objective, but I looked towards the concept of ‘strong objectivity’ (Harding, 2004a), and maintained an awareness of what informed me throughout.

To increase objectivity I needed to recognise the multiple positions I was coming from, what I thought about the subject matter and how this might affect my research. Theoretically, I was influenced by queer and feminist theories and methodologies (see Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003; Ramazanoğlu, 2002) and I looked to question identities, norms and binaries in a similar manner to Rasmussen (2006). Using the ‘queer’ ideas of Rubin (1984), Duggan (1992), Butler (1993; 2004; 2006) and Sedgwick (2008), and with a continual reflection upon my own position and how this relates to my work (see Butler, 2005), I take what may be considered a queer, feminist, post-structuralist approach. Within this framework, I consider; gender and epistemological negotiations (Potter, 1993); feminist standpoints (see Harding, 2004b); my ‘queer’ understandings of subjectivity; and my position as a lesbian reader (Hennegan, 1988). These considerations enable me to take into account issues of subjectivity within my work (Code, 1993) and appreciate that my standpoint is situated within all these contexts (Haraway, 2004).
The application of my own interpretive framework in analysis however, was unavoidable and I remained aware of power imbalances throughout my work, as well as my own standpoint (see Harding, 2004b). Furthermore, first impressions about my participants were unavoidable due to the social interactions that were taking place (Bloor, et al., 2001). With all this in mind, I remained careful not to suggest what I thought or to lead the discussions in ways which would back up my thoughts or exclude other angles. This reflexivity hopefully allowed respondents to speak openly.

Objectivity was also influenced by my relation to the participants. This was mixed - as a lesbian I could relate to the lesbians in my study, but was unavoidably positioned further away from the gay, bisexual and straight men. I am between five and ten years older than the young people in my study, with the exception of Silver, our experiences at school might reflect this. A central difference was that Section 28 was repealed during their school years. The main consideration for the focus group and Silver was the potential power discrepancies, how this might make them feel and affect their responses (see Hollway and Jefferson, 2000 and Bloor et al., 2001). I am currently located within an academic environment where I have access to specialist knowledge that the young people may not have, this was kept in mind throughout the session. My relation to the teacher and stakeholders is somewhat different. I am similar in age and experience to the teacher, however she is located within education, perhaps giving her access to knowledge that I do not have. Both the stakeholders have been in this field for considerable time, as such their experience is greater than mine.
These considerations show where I came from practically, when entering the research settings; it was also vital for me to consider where I was coming from ideologically and in terms of personal experience, as this potentially could affect my research. By explicitly considering my own experiences of homophobia before undertaking the research I hoped to alleviate these problems. However, I recognise that they could not be totally excluded from my mind during research.

I attended a State secondary school through the mid-late 1990s where I was subjected to continuous bullying on a variety of grounds, including my perceived sexuality. I was not out at school and trying to negotiate my sexuality within a climate where I felt my feelings towards women were not legitimised and often overtly attacked was extremely difficult. In retrospect I believe my experiences at school delayed my coming out by a number of years. Interestingly however, I do not think overt bullying was the primary cause of this. I did suffer, and still do, from these experiences, but I knew that the bullies were wrong in everything they said and did. Therefore, as I was realising my ‘differences’, I never questioned these as a result of bullying.

The dialogue I had in my head about my sexuality before I came out was in fact regarding the marginalisation of lesbians that I could see all around me. Aside from explicit homophobia, I encountered more subtle barriers to acknowledging and understanding my lesbian identity. I feel it was these subtle things - which I now recognise as heteronormativity - that contributed to my difficulties in understanding who I was and where I fitted. This is the position I started from when I began this research and these were the personal experiences that I would take into the field. This insider knowledge had
the potential to enrich my work and I feel that recognising how you as a person interact with your research from an autobiographical perspective is vital to that research (see Ward, 1991). However, I needed to remain careful not to let my experiences cloud my research.

Furthermore, in developing my research I recognised that my experiences were ten years ago and Section 28 is no more. However, I quickly discovered that the post Section 28 climate is not ideal. Although its repeal has facilitated environments where schools and teachers can make positive changes to attitudes of pupils and staff, there is little evidence of this happening (see Chapter One). I sought therefore to find out how the LGBT young people in my study had been affected by their experiences at school. Whilst I kept in mind the difficulties I had faced during my school years, I was careful not to generalise, or to expect my respondents to have had the same experiences. Also, I recognised that I have the ability to reflect retrospectively. This was a factor to bear in mind as I spoke to the young people who were all still in the midst of negotiating their LGBT identities. Given all these considerations I remained vigilant throughout not to twist the truth to fit my own agenda; of the limitations on the work presented by my own persona; that all evidence needed to be interpreted and it would be done so within my own narratives (Butler, 2005) and that my assumptions, which originally underpinned the research, could never be totally accounted for.
Discussion

Having reviewed existing literature on queerphobia in schools and grasped relevant policies (see Chapter One) I did not expect to find many positive experiences for LGBT young people and indeed, a number of negative experiences were described by those in my focus group, including explicit bullying, heteronormative school cultures and apathy from teachers. The stakeholders too, struggled to provide a positive picture either for LGBT young people or teachers.

The wealth of information collated in my primary research is too broad to fully examine within the confines of this paper. I have therefore limited the discussion to two central areas: Queerphobia and Heteronormativity in Schools – The Reality for LGBT Young People and Teachers, Queerphobia and Heteronormativity – Complex Relationships. Through these brief analyses and using extracts from transcripts of the focus group and the interviews, I hope to give some insight into the current situation for young LGBT people and teachers and to why this situation prevails.

**Queerphobia and Heteronormativity in Schools:**
*The Reality for LGBT Young People*

Queerphobic bullying and heteronormativity, as highlighted in Chapter One, is a huge problem in British schools. However, it has often been reduced to statistics and the human reality overlooked. The young people in my focus group and Silver, revealed the extent of such bullying and heteronormative cultures in their schools. They demonstrated that negotiating LGBT identities with British schools was extremely difficult and they
described a number of problems faced at school due to their actual or perceived sexuality, responses to these problems and effects. Silver described how his high school was ‘predominantly full of homophobia and bullying’ (Transcript 2: 2). He was bullied for being gay, of a minority race and religion and for being the ‘geek’, as he says he ‘had it rough’ (Transcript 2: 2). Von experienced explicit bullying by her classmates who put up posters:

…in the toilets saying look at [who] the new found dyke is and they just got took down, nothing was said, even though people admitted and went up to them and told them who it was, they didn’t do anything because it was easier not to.

(Von, Transcript 1: 3)

Von experienced the initial queerphobia from peers but she felt this was reinforced by the teachers’ failure to act, who she says ‘did Jack [//] basically’ (Transcript 1: 3). Helen found herself being constantly bullied from the age of ten after she was ‘outed’ because she kissed a girl in her class on a school trip. This example is particularly interesting because only Helen was persecuted after the two girls mutually kissed, which may indicate other factors at play in combination with queerphobia when being bullied and that multiple discrimination is a significant problem. After they kissed Helen received abusive phone calls and she describes how:

No-one would go near me… but I couldn’t tell anyone cos [//] well I was ten… she [the other girl] just made up loads of lies, cos, like, we were like, in a room with loads of people, so everyone saw it but, like, everyone backed her up, so I was just like the dirty lesbian…

27 Note, none of my respondents identified as transgender, therefore when I exclude ‘T’ from the acronym during this discussion it is because the comments being made refer only to LGB identities only, although there may of course be similarities, this would only be conjecture.
What is also interesting about this example is Helen’s own perception that she could not report the bullying because it was homophobic and she was ‘only ten’. She saw her age as a reason not to seek help. She said she knew then that she was not sexually attracted to boys and *she* was fine with that, but felt the bullying would not be taken seriously because others would perceive she was too young to know she was a lesbian. Her perception may well have been correct and such ill-conceived views can contribute to LGBT youth thinking their feelings are not legitimate because of their age (see Owens, 1998; Rasmussen et al., 2004; Savin-Williams, 2005).

As well as overt bullying, which the young people generally described as going unchallenged or unreported due to their perceptions of what would happen if they *did* report it, a number of the young people described problems around Physical Education (PE). These problems highlight the perceived *sexual* connection attached to LGB identities which are not attached to straight sexuality. Tanya, for example, found the girls in her class wanted her to be in the boys changing rooms because they felt that she was going to ‘perv on them’ (Transcript 1: 7) and her teachers supported these girls’ views. Ushihu made a conscious decision not to come out at school, although others perceived he *was* gay; he made this decision having witnessed what happened to a friend who came out in Year Nine. After coming out Ushihu’s friend was subjected to continual bullying and excluded from PE because the rest of the class were uncomfortable changing around him. Helen too was not allowed to do PE; she had to go to library instead, and for Silver, issues in PE changing rooms due to his perceived sexuality, led to him running ‘to the furthest corner of the room and just quickly get changed…’ (Silver, Transcript 2: 3). The
teachers in these examples reinforced queerphobic views by lack of action and, more drastically, by excluding the LGB students from the class. At first I found it hard to believe that teachers would take such action, but during my interview with Sandra, a lesbian PE teacher, I realised that this was likely. I discovered that Sandra’s lesbian sexuality and her presence in female PE changing rooms is a major source of contention - this is explored later in the chapter.

There were clearly problems for LGB pupils in PE then, and I asked whether the young people felt any other school subjects were particularly good or bad at incorporating same-sex issues. Good examples were isolated, demonstrating silences around sexualities in education (see DePalma and Atkinson, 2006). Negative experiences on the other hand were numerous. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) was a subject with the potential to explicitly address LGBT issues, but instead the young people felt this subject was particularly discriminatory. I asked if PSHE lessons included any information about same-sex relationships or gender variation, this was met with collective sarcastic laughs by all and an instant loud exclamation of ‘No’ by Von (Transcript 1: 8).

Sex education, as part of PSHE was the first subject to come up when the young people were asked if they found any elements of their learning experience to be heterosexually focussed. Von exclaimed ‘sex education…seriously! It was crap’ (Transcript 1: 8). Von says that everything in sex education was male and female focussed and when she asked a question about same-sex sex she was ‘sent into the inclusion room for a week’ (Transcript 1: 8), because her teacher thought she was asking awkward questions to ‘get the rest of the class rowdy…[and] to cause trouble for her’ (Transcript 1: 8).
These experiences show how difficult it is for LGBT young people to negotiate their identities in these environments. Yet this should not be difficult, as highlighted in Chapter One, the *Sex and Relationship Education Guidance* (DfEE, 2000) states that ‘…young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs’ (DfEE, 2000: 12). In reality the LGB young people in my study were made to feel ‘not normal’ (Daniel, Transcript 1: 20), that their questions did not merit answers and were only being posed to create problems for the teacher; when in fact the young people were bravely asking questions in a place which was appropriate - questions that needed to be asked due to the answers’ exclusion from other areas of the young people’s lives (see Rasmussen, 2006).

The young people I spoke to then, had experienced explicit queerphobic bullying and a heteronormative curriculum and school environment. Furthermore, they described regular use of LGBT associated words, particularly ‘gay’, in derogatory ways and how this had negatively affected them. The meaning of the use of these words in derogatory ways was however, the source of some disagreement amongst my respondents. Sandra and Chris Gibbons, Senior Education Officer at Stonewall explained that these types of incidents do not fall under official definitions of bullying. This may be seen as problematic, because whilst this kind of behaviour may not be defined as bullying, it can still have a negative effect on young LGBT people, particularly if it is not addressed. The young people in my study described how damaging this behaviour can be, and previous studies have also shown this to be the case (for example, Thurlow, 2001). The damage comes from the negative association through language, of theses terms and therefore of LGBT identities.
As Chris says, although schools may not view such behaviour as bullying, it *does* still need to be challenged in his opinion because:

> When all you hear is the word gay banded around as a derogatory term you come to think of gay in general...as being just negative in itself. So that sends a lot of young people further back into the closet and it makes them feel ashamed of being gay. But when that is removed from the school environment...then young people, you know, start to feel more positive about the associations they make with being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

(Transcript 4: 12)

However, both the young people in my study *and* the gay teacher explained that this was not the case in their schools. I fear this may be damaging, however, I recognise possible reasons why this may be the case. Language is constantly changing and although a dictionary definition may remain the same, the *general* understanding and use of a word may have changed. This has clearly been the case with ‘gay’ and as such I can understand arguments that when used in this way ‘gay’ is not meant queerphobically. I do agree that it may have not been *intended* as queerphobic *abuse* by the individual who uses it in that instance, however I contest that it *is* none the less queerphobia. I believe it is queerphobia because the word it is ‘replacing’ is an insulting word, and I feel that if this is left unchallenged, the next generation of British citizens will grow up thinking that ‘gay’ has a negative meaning.

Whether it was because of explicit bullying, LGBT terms being banded about in derogatory ways, or the lack of LGBT inclusion in the curriculum, the young people in my study had many negative experiences at school. Their understandings and responses to these experiences however, were varied. All were generally despairing about their
experiences not being dealt with in appropriate ways and they were aware of hierarchy of bullying, where, for example, racism was always addressed, but queerphobia was not. This was in stark contrast to what Sandra described as happening in her school, where all bullying is met with the same response and punishment. This shows that it is possible for schools to deal with queerphobic bullying in exactly the same way as all other types, yet clearly it is frequently not.

In terms of the young people’s personal reactions to their experiences, these too were varied. Helen was clearly only just beginning to come to terms with the damage that had been done by years of queerphobic bullying and came across as frightened and vulnerable; and Tanya seemed extremely confident that she did not care what people thought, said or did, however during the session Tanya’s guard seem to drop and I saw a confused, angry and upset young woman; Von seemed very positive about turning her negative experiences around. She responded by working really hard to prove teachers wrong when they repeatedly said she was going to fail. She says:

… I basically kicked my arse into gear, um, I got sent home, they said well, there’s no point in you staying in school, you’re never here, go home do your own revision at home which made me, they made me feel worse, they don’t want me there, they think I’m gonna fail, so I basically just revised and I came out with …1,2,3,4,5,6, seven C’s, the lowest grade I got was a d… and then the highest was an A* which was in me Arts and they were like, they were, the teachers were like well we’re surprised, but we’re not going to congratulate you.

(Von, Transcript 1: 19)

Von’s determination to prove to those who doubted her wrong is a common response to queerphobia in schools. However, although it seems positive, it has been shown that this can lead to psychological problems later in life (see Rivers, 2004). As such I think there
needs to be wariness that such responses can be damaging. Sue Sanders, Co-Chair of *Schools Out*, echoed these fears when talking about ways of coping with prejudice, she said, ‘there’s burying yourself in your books completely and getting yourself into University and then burning out the first year’ (Transcript 4: 37).

The way Helen coped was very different to Von and it was obvious that she had been badly affected by her experiences at school. She showed very negative perceptions of herself and her ability to succeed in anything; this is also a common response by LGBT youth to such experiences (see Warwick et al., 2001; Ellis and High, 2004; Rivers, 2004). I asked Helen if she felt her self esteem issues and problems with trust were short-term, she replied simply, ‘it will always be there’ (Transcript 1: 22), and later in the conversation went on to say, ‘I just feel like I’m not going to succeed [//] really. That I’m just gonna fail’ (Transcript 1: 36). The way Helen spoke came across as unsure, scared and extremely vulnerable.

Many of the young people felt they have not achieved the academic success they might have if they had not been bullied. Silver, at 25, provided a longer term perspective on academic achievements. He left school before achieving any qualifications and as a result he says ‘it’s been harder to get the right job that I want or to go to the right college to get into University’ (Transcript 2: 9). Silver was trying to get his life back on track and showed that positive experiences can come out of negative ones. Being that bit older than the young people in the focus group, Silver had the luxury of retrospect and indeed commented that some of the effects of his experiences were not immediately apparent and have materialised over the years since he left school. This is something that I can
closely relate to. He described some of the devastating emotional effects of the years of queerphobic abuse he suffered, but also a desire to overcome this and to help others; an effect which is relatively common amongst LGBT people who have suffered discrimination in their youth (see Rooney, 2005). Such positive outcomes however, cannot be seen in isolation to the long term negative effects experienced. Silver, for example, like many other LGBT adults who were bullied at school (see Rivers, 2004), suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of, in his own words, ‘the years of shit that I had to put up with’ (Silver, Transcript 2: 6) and when he left school at 15 he was ‘in a really messed up state’ (Silver, Transcript 2: 5), had no qualifications and was contemplating suicide for the third time.

Through the experiences of bullying, the continual use of LGBT words in a derogatory way and heteronormative cultures permeating their schools, the young people in my study, including Silver, were very aware that they were seen as different, and in Daniel’s case that his LGBT friends were seen as different. They expected to be bullied and had reconciled themselves to this being part of the process of ‘becoming’ LGBT. They also seemed aware that the basis for this bullying was often a lack of understanding and felt more needs to be done in schools to make people aware that, as Daniel states, being gay is not ‘something not normal’ (Transcript 1: 20).

The development, negotiation and management of identity during your school years is extremely important for future health and in the ways highlighted, young LGBT people find themselves disadvantaged to non-LGBT people regarding this development. For example, as Ushihu says, if you do not conform to the heterosexual and gender norms
then the school’s attitude is ‘screw you’ (Transcript 1: 21), the general school environment is ‘crap’ (Von, Transcript 1: 9) and makes you feel ‘a freak’ (Von, Transcript 1: 32). Youth development is complex anyway, but these examples show how it can be particularly difficult for LGBT young people (see Unks, 1995; Owens, 1998; D’Augellli and Patterson, 2001; Savin-Williams, 2005). As a result they may question whether their LGBT identity is valid, as Tanya says, ‘…if you’ve been bullied for like so long, you grow up thinking that its wrong and…that you just shouldn’t be that [gay]’ (Tanya, Transcript 1: 22).

Dealing with the effects of queerphobia and heteronormativity then, can be extremely damaging and effect your identity negotiation. However, we know from Chapter One that there  

*Teachers, Queerphobia and Heteronormativity: Complex Relationships*

It has been highlighted in the first section of this chapter how the young people in my study feel that teachers’ responses to queerphobic bullying and heteronormativity is inadequate, but *why* teachers respond in those ways and how these issues might be challenged is complex (see Adams et al., 2004; Baldwin, 2004; Forrest 2006). The young people expressed awareness that lack of understanding was often the route of this lack of challenge. Lack of understanding as a reason for failure to properly respond by teachers,
was also something that came up in the stakeholder and teacher interviews, as Chris says ‘…if they [teachers] are not aware of the issues in general then there’s no way then that they are going to be able to tackle it [queerphobia]’ (Transcript 4: 5).

If teachers’ understandings of LGBT issues affect how they deal with LGBT students, then making sure teachers have this understanding is vital, but it is often the case that only those who are LGBT themselves have such understandings, largely because training is inadequate. Furthermore, my interview with Sandra highlighted how even a gay teacher, who does have understandings of these issues, will not always be able to address LGBT issues. For example, when one of her students was being subjected to queerphobic abuse, Sandra felt that she was:

…in an awkward situation because I almost, well I obviously did want to stick up for this girl, cos I knew what it felt like for her but at the same time I would never have wanted the attention pointing on me as to why I would be sticking up for her that much…I had to be careful what words I used.

(Sandra, Transcript 5: 3-4)

Sandra was fearful that if she was seen to stand up for this girl the other pupils might wonder why and perhaps question her sexuality. She says that ‘as a teacher you always learn you don’t support people in terms of in their views, you more just [/] deal with the situation’ (Sandra, Transcript 5: 4). Whilst I can understand Sandra’s fears, I find this reason for not being more supportive of the bisexual girl over those doing the bullying contestable, because surely supporting the bullied over the bullies is not ‘taking sides.’
As well as understanding these issues, a big factor for schools and teachers is recognising them in the first place and this is often a stumbling block (see Douglas et al., 1999; Nichols, 1999; DePalma and Atkinson, 2006). Sue described how there can be complete denial that homophobia exists in schools and with regards to LGBT terms being used in derogatory ways she says, ‘there’s teachers who say oh don’t be ridiculous when they use the word gay they don’t mean it that way’ (Transcript 4: 19). As highlighted previously the use of LGBT terms in derogatory ways does affect LGBT young people, but teachers are not always challenging this behaviour because they do not think it is bullying: Because the child using the word does not mean gay, they mean stupid, and/or because the use of these words in this way is not persistent against the same person.

This type of behaviour Sandra says, is let go in her school because they would let it go if a child called another child an ‘idiot’. Sue however, was adamant that the use of words such as ‘gay’, ‘poof’ and ‘tranny’ in derogatory ways is queerphobic bullying and I agree. I feel this dangerous because it means young people are not taught that gay does not mean stupid (discussed above) and I think there needs to be reconsideration by schools and teachers about how to deal with this. Indeed, although Chris said that isolated verbal uses of these words in this way was not bullying, he did say that Stonewall would:

Encourage teachers in schools to confront…verbal incidents and that’s in primary and secondary schools and have young people understand when it is appropriate and when it’s inappropriate to use words.

(Transcript 4: 11)
Sandra explained how and why it is difficult to address the use of these terms, for example when you are on break duty and in charge of over a hundred children, you are not practically able to address every such comment. However, Sue makes the point that:

...if they were saying oh that’s so black, or that’s so Irish or that’s so Paki or that’s so spaz you know we would be we would be challenging it on all the other areas. And I find it fascinating that people trip over themselves to say oh it’s not homophobic, they don’t really know what they are saying. Where they wouldn’t be saying that if it were spaz or black or Irish, they would be saying do you realise what you are doing, what are you attempting to achieve? You know that use of the language in that particular way is clearly provoking hatred in some way or another.

(Transcript 4: 19-20)

Whilst I accept that it may be difficult to continually challenge the use of LGBT terms in this way, I suggest that practical issues can be overcome. Why not, for example, have an assembly where the terms and their inappropriate use is explained and students are told that their use in this way is not acceptable and why. After this, consistency in challenging the terms’ inappropriate usage, without having to explain every time why, would reinforce this behaviour as wrong, therefore discouraging it. Furthermore, I feel we should pay closer attention to what the victim feels about the treatment they are receiving rather than what the official definitions mean.

Although Sandra said that she doesn’t view this behaviour as bullying, she recognises the importance of staff picking up LGBT issues and expressed concerns over non LGBT staff recognising importance of these issues. She says:
I obviously pick up on it all the time cos it’s very relevant to me…For example…in assemblies the Head teacher was talking about like when you are older and…you grow up and you get married and *boys you are gonna have to look after your wives and because your wives will do this, your wives will do that.* And…I’m stood in assembly like, it kind of it does get me angry because I’m stood their thinking, it’s not, well it’s not really the heads fault, obviously he doesn’t have a full awareness of it, but that does frustrate me because it’s not that much more difficult to say *your partner*…

(Sandra, Transcript 4: 9-10)

However, I find it interesting that Sandra says ‘it’s not really the Head’s fault; obviously he doesn’t have a full awareness of it’. This may be true, but there is no reason why this lack of awareness should not be challenged and Sandra, as a gay teacher, *could* be the catalyst for such a challenge.

As well as recognising problems for LGBT pupils, for teachers the issues are also about LGBT *staff* and a major cause of tension seems to be about disclosure of LGBT identity at work (see Sanders and Burke, 1994; Evans, 2002; McCarthy, 2003). Sue feels it is absolutely crucial for LGBT teachers to be out at work. Many people, she says, contest that sexuality is a private business, she does not agree. As David Watkins says ‘*I am gay, that’s who I am. You know everyday of my life you know, whatever I’m doing*’ (Sue, Transcript 4: 23). David and Sue feel that your sexuality and gender identity are central to who you are and because of heteronormativity it is necessary for LGBT teachers to come out in order for them to be recognised. This is a daunting prospect for many LGBT teachers and many chose *not* to come out at work, including Sandra.

---

28 David Watkins is a gay teacher who successfully went to tribunal in 2007 after suffering homophobia in his school (see Teachers TV, 2008).
Sandra recognises a potential importance of coming out at work, however she has decided not to. She felt that it would be ideal if she could be out and that by being out she might be a role model for LGBT kids, but, she says, ‘realistically I don’t ever see it happening’ (Transcript 5: 2). In talking to Sandra it was obvious that she recognised that good could come of her being out at work. However, she had weighed this up against the possible negative outcomes and decided not to. Therefore whilst at work her girlfriend simply does not exist and her colleagues think she is single. Whilst she has taken this measured decision, the effect this has upon her day to day life is immense. She describes how everyday ‘there’ll be something that crops up where I have to hide it [her sexuality] or not disclose it’ (Sandra, Transcript 5: 5) and she says it is ‘one of my biggest issues in life…it makes my life so much more complicated’ (Transcript 5: 5).

The consequences for Sandra of feeling she cannot disclose her lesbian identity at work are far reaching and cause issues in her relationship, she says:

...obviously your partner has got to be extremely understanding that when you go to school they don’t exist effectively...and I know [her partner] thinks sometime that she’s only in half my life, because the massive time that I spend at school they don’t know about [her], they don’t even know she exists...So it obviously causes problems in our relationship.

(Transcript 5: 20)

Sandra feels lucky to have an understanding partner, however as regards long-term effects she has started to look for jobs outside of teaching. In the past she has considered coming out at work, but now she has decided that this is not an option; either she teaches and stays closeted or she find a job where she feels comfortable being out. Sandra does recognise that legally she cannot be forced out of teaching, but explained that if the pupils
reacted badly to her being gay that she would not ‘feel comfortable then to go back there and teach them’ (Transcript 5: 21).

This discussion with Sandra demonstrates some of the complexities for LGBT teachers and that those who are not out, rather than thinking their LGBT identity is not an issue, may in fact be very aware of the power of heteronormative discourses and the problems that could ensue for them, and that may be why they decide not to be out. Sue agrees with this possibility, saying that rather than hiding their LGBT identities because they view this as private and not an issue, some LGBT teachers are perhaps remaining closeted because they anticipate disclosure will cause problems. When I told Sue about a teacher I knew who was having a Civil Partnership with her girlfriend over the summer, who is not out at work and has led the staff and pupils to believe she is marrying a man, Sue said ‘well I do think she does understand it [the power of the issue] because that’s why she’s created this massive…lie…Because she does know how powerful it is and she is scared’ (Transcript 4: 24).

The possibility that LGBT teachers are not coming out at work because they are scared of the consequences was reinforced by Sandra describing how she feels particularly uncomfortable at work due to her sexuality because she is a PE teacher, this she says is a

…major issue in that obviously I’m in the girls changing rooms all the time and, um, that I’ve always thought that that’s, that is one the main reasons why I’ve not told anybody at school and why I don’t want to kids to find out

(Sandra, Transcript 5: 3)
She recognises that this shouldn’t be an issue, but she predicts that the girls would feel uncomfortable if they knew she was gay, and given what the young people I spoke to said about their experiences in PE, I fear her prediction may be correct.

Sue appreciates these difficulties for teachers and that their lives are made more difficult because ‘we’ve still not got a DCSF that is [//] celebrating and acknowledging its LGBT teachers, sufficiently’ (Transcript 4: 32), however she points out that there are now processes to go through to challenge problems and we need LGBT teachers to stand up and be counted. That may be true, but in reality the issues are extremely complex, more so than has been explored above. Whilst I have suggested that it is desirable for LGBT teachers to come out because their sexual and/or gender identity are central to who they are and because, amongst other reasons, they can be role models for LGBT young people, it is not a given that your gender and sexuality are central to who you are. This can be a very personal negotiation and from a radical queer perspective one might suggest that rather than encouraging LGBT people to be out we should be discouraging the differentiation of identities and breaking down categories - interesting and important debates unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper.

In Sandra’s school, although she was not aware of any specific policy related to queerphobia, she was confident that all bullying was dealt with well and equally and from the examples she gave, this did seem to be the case. However, she was aware that her school had a particularly good record at dealing with bullying and that it was in an area where bullying was generally lower than other parts of the country. Whilst this was at odds with the young people’s experiences at their schools, it demonstrated that, at the
very least, even if schools were not able or willing to fully address the unique issues around queerphobic bullying and LGBT identities they could still deal with queerphobic bullying in the same way that they dealt with all other types of bullying, not, as seemed to be the case for the young people in Manchester, by not dealing with it at all because it was queerphobic.

Whilst Sandra’s school in general seemed to be dealing with bullying positively, it is a huge problem that materials to support teachers are often not getting through to staff. Stonewall sent a copy of the *School Report* (Hunt and Jensen, 2007) and *Spell it Out* (Stonewall, 2007) to every secondary school in England, yet Chris ‘speak[s] to so many teachers who say *I have never seen it in my school*’ (Transcript 4: 7) and resources such as Wakefield (2006) and Teachers TV (2005; 2008) are not widely known about and Sandra had heard of neither. And even as a gay teacher who recognises how important the problems of queerphobia in schools are, she said in response to this that:

...as teachers you get so much stuff anyway, that is absolutely, not that this isn’t essential, but absolutely essential to be able to teach that, like, to have time to, for them to give us any other stuff, I don’t know when they would.

(Sandra, Transcript 5: 14)

She also expressed concerns about when the time could be found to train staff on these issues and policies.
Although schools are compelled to have a non-discriminatory bullying policy and a number of policies do cover issues of queerphobic bullying (Smith 2002; DfES, 2003; DfES 2006a; DfES 2006b; DCSF, 2007a; DCSF, 2007b), in reality the young people in my study felt teachers were unable to address queerphobic bullying. This problem is perhaps less to do with the existence of well thought out policies and more to do with the lack of understanding of the issues and training in how to deal with the issues. Indeed the young people expressed awareness that policy in itself is not enough and Sue and Chris agree; legislation and policies are crucial they both said, but more often than not teachers do not know about it. Teachers need the knowledge of these policies, and resources and understanding to back them up. Furthermore, within schools, if we are to successfully change things for LGBT people, we need a:

…whole school ethos, so everybody within your whole school community has got to support this, down to your dinner ladies and your caretakers you know to your PTA and your school governors’ board…leadership from the top…everybody has to embrace this, it shouldn’t be just the gay teacher who is doing this, um, it shouldn’t just be the young person who’s being homophobically bullied who is trying to deal with this, is should be the whole school community.

(Chris, Transcript 4: 14)

Sandra felt that she didn’t receive any specific training during her PGSE course on these issues and that for somebody who is not gay this would probably leave them feeling uncomfortable in situations where LGBT issues come up. She feels that as a gay teacher, she has personal knowledge that can give her the tools to deal with issues in a way her straight colleagues may not be able to. Although, as we have seen, on the flip side, her own sexuality can also discourage her from addressing LGBT related problems.
The visibility of *LGBT History Month* in schools is also a problem. Although *LGBT History Month* has been taken on enthusiastically by libraries, schools have been slow to celebrate it and this has not been helped by conflicting messages from the DCSF. Sue describes, for example, how *LGBT History Month*’s ‘initial funding came from the then department of education and skills [now DCSF]…but they’ve done it totally in the closet, we’ve never been allowed to put their logo on the website’ (Transcript 4: 9). This closeted position sends the wrong message to schools about LGBT issues and does not help them understand the importance of tackling LGBT inequality. As Sue says ‘if we don’t tackle homophobia and transphobia and heteronormativity in schools you know the rest of the communities suffer forever’ (Transcript 4: 13). However, the DCSF seems unable to grasp this.

This kind of caution to equality issues is in stark contrast to that shown by other Government departments, The Criminal Justice System for example, and shockingly the DCSF have an ‘excuse’ for this. Sue describes a recent conversation with a senior civil servant at the DCSF about how since the Steven Lawrence Enquiry (Macpherson, 1999), the Criminal Justice System have done a lot of work in this area. The civil servant’s response was ‘Well they [Criminal Justice System] had a serious car crash. [I.e. the Steven Lawrence murder] and had to do something with it’ (Transcript 4: 32). Sue quite rightly responded that ‘every [LGBT] suicide is a serious car crash’ (Transcript 4, 32) - seemingly this is something the DCSF have yet to accept and as Sue suggests perhaps they ‘have not grown up. […]and] are still frightened of the Daily Mail’ (Transcript 4: 32).
There is, then, the legislative framework to support LGBT pupils and teachers, but it seems heteronormative cultures are contributing to this not successfully being implemented and therefore to negative experiences within schools for LGBT pupils and staff. The lack of explicit support from the DCSF, lack of training and understanding around the issues, as well as resources and time are all contributing to the continuation of queerphobic and heteronormative environments in British schools.

There was an agreement between all my respondents that there needs to be more training and greater awareness of policies and moreover that a cultural shift is vital. Such a cultural shift, however, is hugely hampered by the far reaching legacies of Section 28. Sue and Chris sum up well the problems that Section 28 has left for schools, and indicate that these will take a long time to reconcile:

For 14 years you had…environments in schools where none of these issues were talked about, young people who were gay were scared to come out… there was no legislative framework to back them up you know, they might get kicked out their school and there was nothing really there to support them….with teachers….if they came out they would suffer homophobia…the sad legacy of Section 28 is that it’s very much stigmatised the gay community and there was a long period of time where these issues just weren’t talked about. We still speak to teachers who asked us you know well is Section 28 still in place or has it been repealed?

(Chris, Transcript 4: 9)

I think on an unconscious level there is awareness that this extraordinary law [Section 28] came into being because of what teachers did somewhere at some time…And therefore I think it has heightened on an unconscious level peoples fears and concerns about LGBT, of gosh I’ve got to be careful, something might fall down on my head if I say this or do that or do t’other.

(Sue: Transcript 4, 40)
Five years after Section 28’s repeal then, my study has shown that its legacies are affecting the speed at which cultural shifts in LGBT issues in schools are happening. This chapter has also suggested that the effects on LGBT young people of queerphobic bullying and heteronormativity in schools, although varying widely, are largely negative. For example, academic achievements have been affected and mental health problems have developed for some. Possible reasons for the negative experiences of young LGBT people in schools was explored in the second part of the chapter and this highlighted just some of the extreme complexities around these issues. If, and how to challenge the use of LGBT terms in derogatory ways for example, and the decisions around disclosure of staff LGBT identities within schools.

The current situation for LGBT youth and LGBT staff in British Schools is therefore, very problematic and very complicated – so where now?
Conclusion

Chapter One, through an extensive review of literature, demonstrated the historical context for LGBT identities in British schools; some broader societal issues for queer youth development, including the inescapability of heteronormativity and prevalence of normative models of gender and sexualities; legislative attempts to address queerphobic bullying, which I suggested were not being successfully implemented; and that research on the effects of queerphobic bullying in schools is limited. As such, I highlighted in Chapter Two that my research would explore these effects and possible reasons why queerphobic bullying and heteronormativity are prevailing in schools. Chapter Three drew upon my discussions with LGBT young people, a gay teacher and two key stakeholders in the field, to demonstrate the extreme complexity of these issues. I showed that whilst it is clear that queerphobia and heteronormativity and its effects, are problems in schools, how we might challenge these problems are highly contestable. In order to attempt to address these problems, we need to understand the issues and address the causes and that is one direction we can go from here. How we do this, however, is a more complex question.

We need to recognise that heterosexuality is normalised and privileged; that normative models of gender and sexuality are viewed as the only legitimate subject positions in many schools; that the prevalence of constructed notions of femininities and masculinities is central to this; and that if we can start to break these down then we can make progress. We need to look to challenge seemingly straightforward identity interpretations;
recognise and address the multiplicities of identities and discrimination; provide positive LGBT associations; and break down normative gender and sexuality binaries.

I have attempted to draw conclusions throughout this work and in Chapter One and Three I suggest possible reasons why the problems highlighted may persist. These include; legacies of Section 28; the closeted position of the DCSF; the seeming ability of religious and racial issues to trump LGBT ones; the lack of equality training for teachers; the limited visibility of policies; the lack of time and resources to implement these policies and to help staff understand and explore LGBT issues; the perception that LGBT identity is not something that exists until adulthood; and most vitally, influencing all these factors and significantly contributing to the problems for LGBT youth and teachers, the inescapable heteronormativity that prevails across society and which is imparted in official and unofficial ways in schools.

Changing the situation for LGBT people in schools is a huge and complicated task. The most likely way it is going to be achieved is if everybody does their bit to help, however small or large. Perception of LGBT identities is vital and we need to change negative attitudes about these, we can start to do this by encouraging wider social and cultural change and take not just a whole school approach, as Chris Gibbons suggested, but a whole society approach. I suggest that teachers need to come out at work29; that young people, of any gender or sexuality, should stand up for themselves and their peers; that Heads and school Governors must get behind policies and make sure their schools are

29 Although, as highlighted in Chapter Three, this is a significant area of debate, an extremely complex negotiation for each individual, who have multiple and varying factors to consider, and will not always produce positive outcomes for LGBT issues in general.
properly implementing them; and that *everybody* needs to be challenging the use of LGBT words in derogatory ways - these words need to be de-stigmatised.

Yes, explicit queerphobic bullying needs to be challenged and we need pro-active and preventative anti-bullying campaigns, rather than isolated and inconsistent reactions to specifics events, *but* this needs to be accompanied by understandings of why this behaviour is wrong and why LGBT identities should *not* be marginalised or discriminated against. No more policy is needed, the framework is there, instead we need to look at how *Safe to Learn* (DCFS, 2007a) can be successfully integrated into schools anti-bullying cultures, how schools can learn from past failures by recognising and understanding the experiences of their past and current LGBT pupils and how cultural shifts can be encouraged to create an inclusive environment for *everybody*.

Idealistic and optimistic – maybe, but these are complex issues, not ones that are going to be fixed overnight, so perhaps a bit of optimism and idealism are essential for any progress to be made.
References


Appendices
# Appendices Contents

1. ATL ~ LGBT Position Statements 85  
2. NUT ~ LGBT Resources for Teachers 94  
3. NUT ~ LGBT Guidance for Members 110  
4. UNISON ~ Model Statement on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity 118  
7. Safe to Learn (2007) ~ Executive Summary 127  
9. Local Government Act 1988, Section 28 134  
10. Interview Schedules ~ Chris Gibbons, Stonewall and Sue Sanders, Schools Out 139  
11. Consent Forms ~ Chris Gibbons and Sue Sanders 148  
12. Poster sent to LGYM 151  
13. Background Information/Consent forms ~ LGYM 153  
14. LGYM Focus Group and Silver Interview Schedule 176  
15. Background Information/Consent Form ~ Silver 181  
16. Poster sent to Schools 184  
17. Cover Letter sent to Schools 186  
18. Background Information/Consent Form ~ Teacher 188  
19. Interview Schedule ~ Teacher 191  

Transcripts: 197  
20. LGYM Focus Group 198  
21. Interview with Silver 237  
22. Interview with Chris Gibbons 247  
23. Interview with Sue Sanders 262  
24. Interview with Gay Teacher 307
Appendix 1
ATL ~ LGBT Position Statements
Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff and pupils

Core principles

1. **Schools (including those with early years provision) and colleges¹ have an important role to play in combating ignorance and prejudice.**

2. **Schools and colleges aim to create an environment in which all staff and pupils, whatever their sexuality or gender, feel equally welcome and valued.**

3. **This statement underlines ATL's commitment to equality, diversity and tolerance, and its challenge to homophobic bullying.**

Education and knowledge are key factors in the encouragement of tolerance, diversity and a free and fair society, since it is through them that ignorance and prejudice are challenged and dispelled. Schools and colleges have an important role to play in combating ignorance and prejudice by working with pupils to foster tolerance and openness to, and awareness of, diversity.

It is also important, particularly for young children, that assumptions are not made that, where pupils and students have two parents, that they are male and female. Assumptions should not be made that a parent’s partner is of the opposite sex.

¹ “Colleges” include city technology colleges and specialist colleges. For further education and sixth form colleges and higher education establishments please refer to the joint ATL, AUT and NATFHE Policy Statement on Equality for LGBT staff and students.
Homophobia is a clear manifestation of the ignorance and intolerance which so damage society. It is, however, something which is rarely considered in general discussions of prejudice and bullying. Homophobic bullying need not be physical (though it often is): name-calling and refusing to sit with or talk to people are other examples of such bullying.

The following statement and model policy underlines ATL's commitment to equality, diversity and tolerance. It is intended as permissive rather than proscriptive, to encourage schools and colleges to examine how and what they do, to foster a climate of tolerance and diversity which challenges homophobia.

ATL is committed to a working environment in which staff, pupils and their parents are treated equally and with respect. Homophobia can result in people being treated unequally and without respect. It can lead to discrimination, harassment and bullying in schools and colleges. In order to combat homophobic behaviour we urge you to try and establish a policy based on the following advice.
Model lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality policy

This school/college values all its pupils and staff equally, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender assignment.

Recognising the existence of homophobia in society, the school/college will ensure the following:

- Pupils will not be denied fair and equal treatment because of their sexuality or gender.
- All areas of the curriculum and resources will be closely monitored to see that they do not rely on heterosexist assumptions and that they contain no homophobic material.
- Homophobic abuse, harassment and bullying (e.g. name-calling, derogatory jokes, graffiti, unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, intrusive questions) are serious disciplinary offences, and will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure.
- Staff will not be excluded from employment or promotion because of their sexuality or gender.
- Schools/colleges will provide a supportive environment for staff or pupils who wish it to be known that they are either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. However, it is the right of the individuals to choose whether they wish to be open about their sexuality in the school or college. To “out” someone, whether staff or pupil without their permission is a form of harassment, and will be treated as such.
- Assumptions will not be made that partners are always of the opposite sex.
- LGBT issues will be included in equality training.
- Monitoring of complaints of homophobic abuse, harassment and bullying should be undertaken at least once a year.
- Staff undergoing medical and surgical procedures related to gender reassignment will receive positive support from the school/college to meet their particular needs during that period.
- Schools/colleges recognise LGBT staff and pupils come from diverse backgrounds, and will strive to ensure that they do not face discrimination either on the grounds of their sexual orientation or with regard to other aspects of their identity (e.g. race, age, religion, disability, belief).

Overall, the school/college aims to create an environment in which all staff and pupils, whatever their sexuality or gender assignment, feel equally welcome and valued, and in which homophobic behaviour is not tolerated.
Explanation of terms

The terms ‘heterosexism’ and ‘homophobia’ are used in this statement in the following sense.

Heterosexism is any negative valuing and discriminatory treatment of individuals and groups who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered or those perceived to be so. It is based on social values which teach that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual. Heterosexism can show itself through practices of institutions and also through the personal behaviour of individuals. These are known respectively as systematic heterosexism and personal heterosexism. Expressions of dislike, hate or fear based on heterosexism are usually known as homophobia, although the terms lesophobia and biphobia are also coming into use.

The reactions to LGBT people can range from indifference to denied personal and professional opportunities, through to harassment and violence. These reactions often leave LGBT people feeling excluded and unsafe in a heterosexist environment.
An inclusive culture: challenging homophobic and sexist bullying

“They play with a pack of cards, and one card is the gay card. Whoever ends up with the card is the ‘gay boy’ for the day. These boys are nine years old.”

**Primary school teacher, Sussex**

Extract from *Homophobic Bullying*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007.

A harmless joke? A trivial matter? Boys being boys? If the card had been assigned a racist term, would we think differently about this incident?

Half of all teachers do not challenge homophobic language when they hear it. The reasons for this are varied, but combined they contribute to a wide-ranging conspiracy of silence. As a result, homophobia remains a pervasive and persistent problem within our society, including in our schools and colleges.

In July this year, the charity Stonewall published The School Report, which documents the experiences of over 1,100 lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in Britain’s schools. The report notes that almost two thirds of young lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) pupils at secondary school have experienced homophobic bullying.

ATL believes that homophobia and homophobic bullying affects everyone. It is part of a wider culture that encourages particular stereotypes of men and women. In order to challenge homophobia and homophobic bullying, we must therefore also tackle the underlying stereotypes.

‘Doing gender’: cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity

Being ‘popular’ and ‘fitting in’ by taking up the dominant positions of masculinity and femininity are expressed by pupils as extremely important. Homophobia and sexism are key elements in this process of ‘doing gender’, which is generally defined as conforming to and behaving in line...
with prevailing constructions of masculine and feminine identities. Various studies have, for example, commented on the powerful role of homophobia within male peer culture and in constructing and reinforcing stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a ‘real’ boy or man. Based on the assumption of heterosexuality, boys who define themselves as masculine subjects in conformity with this dominant masculinity tend to position themselves in opposition to girls/women, gay or bisexual and/or non-macho boys/men.

For girls, a socially acceptable femininity is also premised on the norm of heterosexuality, and includes a requirement to have a ‘feminine’ appearance, thus marking girls out as different to the boys. Deviations from these ‘feminine’ conventions, including being too sexual, too popular, too different or too confident, are thereby stigmatised as being evidence of a girl’s ‘distorted’ sexuality and expressed, for example, in pejorative comments about the girl being ‘butch’, a ‘slag’, a ‘bitch’, or a ‘lezzie’.

Boys’ and girls’ sex/gender identities are developed under constant pressure and surveillance between and within male and female peer groups. In the classroom, boys frequently silence girls through sexist abuse and sexual harassment. At the same time, homophobia serves as a means for boys to distance themselves from femininity and forcefully reject boys who do not conform to the dominant standard of masculinity. The emphasis on heterosexuality thereby ensures that the story of ‘romance’, which promotes male dominance and female subordination, is not challenged or dislocated by girls who, within the context of their own heterosexuality, might display more ‘laddish’ behaviours.

Although there are alternative forms of masculinity and femininity in our culture that, in some manifestations, challenge the cultural stereotypes, they are usually posited as ‘deviant’ and therefore remain subordinate to the dominant cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity. ATL recognises that teachers and lecturers have an important role in addressing and challenging such prejudices and stereotypes, including through the school/college’s ethos and mission statement, the curriculum, pastoral support systems, working with parents, governors and the community, and through specific initiatives such as, the celebration of LGBT History Month or International Women’s Day.

**Every child matters and youth matters**

Narrow and stereotypical views of male and female identity restrict all boys and girls. They restrict not only the victims of homophobic and/or sexist bullying and abuse, who are disproportionately more likely to truant, drop out of school without any qualifications and are at an increased risk to self-harm and/or commit suicide, but they also restrict those individuals who fear social isolation and bullying and thus feel under pressure to prove their ‘masculinity’ or ‘femininity’ by engaging in abusive or risk-taking behaviour.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires schools and colleges to implement measures that encourage respect for others, promote self-discipline amongst pupils, and prevent all forms of bullying, including homophobic and sexist bullying. Schools and colleges also have a responsibility under the Government’s *Every Child Matters* agenda to ensure that ‘every child and young person is able to fulfil their potential’. This means that schools and colleges must systematically and consistently deal with specific homophobic and sexist incidents and should simultaneously begin to tackle the underlying culture leading to homophobic and sexist behaviour.

ATL believes that the need for a wider process of cultural change requires a more in-depth understanding of the interrelatedness of homophobia and sexism.
**Why do we need a focus on homophobia and sexism?**

There are at least three reasons to suggest a focus on homophobia and sexism as interrelated manifestations of a culture that privileges particular stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.

**Sexist bullying is not just perpetrated by boys or men**

Sexist bullying is predominantly perpetrated by males upon females. Girls and young women are almost twice as likely to be on the child protection register for sexual abuse as boys and young men. Statistics also show that in the UK, two women per week are killed by a male partner or former partner, and that one in four women will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime.

However, the Anti-Bullying Alliance notes that sexist bullying has ‘an impact on both genders, and can be perpetrated by both genders on opposite and same-gender victims’. The concept of sexism alone is not inclusive enough to facilitate such an awareness. In particular, the sexist bullying of girls by other girls as part of establishing conformity to dominant expectations of femininity and to the related boundaries of appropriate sexuality and sexual behaviour is not readily associated with the term sexism.

**Homophobic bullying is not restricted to lesbian, gay and bisexual people**

Homophobic bullying and abuse is not exclusively targeted at lesbian, gay and bisexual people, but also at those who are perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual, or who do not conform to existing sex/gender codes. The term ‘homophobia’, which is generally defined as the passive or active resentment or fear of someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual, does not explicitly include a reference to a lack of conformity to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity. Although homophobia presupposes such stereotypes by identifying behaviour that ‘deviates’ from these cultural norms as ‘gay’, we might wish to resist the homophobic notion of the existence of ‘gay behaviour’.

**Homophobic abuse of gay men frequently involves language that is derogatory to females**

The vocabulary of homophobic abuse of gay males commonly consists of terms derogatory to females, such as ‘sissy’, ‘girl’, ‘faggot’, and ‘nancy boy’. This interrelatedness of homophobia and sexism is also expressed in the regular and wholly pejorative use of the term ‘effeminate’ to identify a ‘lack’ of masculinity in boys or men and at the same time stigmatise the ‘effete’ or ‘effeminate’ male through the term’s simultaneous association with homosexuality.

**Tackling homophobia and sexism using the concept of heterosexism**

The concept of heterosexism includes a focus on both homophobia and sexism and therefore enables us to account for the underlying cultural prejudice against lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This prejudice is firmly tied to dominant male and female identities that rely on heterosexuality as a norm.

Heterosexism includes attitudes, behaviour and practices that constitute heterosexuality as the norm. At the same time, heterosexism reflects and encourages a dislike or feeling of superiority towards girls and women.

ATL believes that we can only successfully tackle sexism and homophobia by seeing them as two integral parts of the wider cultural problem of heterosexism. Heterosexism advocates and supports a narrowly defined set of heterosexual sex/gender identities that restrict everyone. Those who do not conform to these stereotypical notions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are frequently subjected to homophobic and sexist bullying and abuse.
ATL therefore recommends that heterosexism is widely adopted as the concept through which we challenge the narrow and restrictive stereotypes of masculinity and femininity as well as understanding the close links between homophobia and sexism. Tackling homophobic and sexist bullying and abuse using the concept of heterosexism means that our educational institutions will be better equipped to contribute to a change in social attitudes and the promotion of a more inclusive, equitable and just society in which everyone, regardless of their sex/gender identity and sexual orientation, feels equally valued, respected and safe.

This position statement is based on existing research and educational thinking around these issues in the UK and elsewhere.

**Terminology**

**Gender** generally refers to the social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity and indicates that a man or woman's position is not dictated by nature, biology or sex, but is a matter of social and political convention.

**Sex** refers more specifically to male or female physiology as biological constructions of the body.

In this document, we have used the term *sex/gender* to indicate that even the depiction of male and female physiognomy has depended on the social and political significance accorded to gendered notions of masculinity and femininity. Physiological difference as the ‘natural’ basis for gender difference therefore cannot be separated from social and cultural constructions of manhood and womanhood.

**Sexist bullying** includes abusive name-calling; gestures and comments about appearance and emerging puberty; sexual innuendo and propositions; the public display of pornographic material and graffiti with sexual content; domestic or intimate abuse; and sexual assault or rape. Most commonly, sexist bullying is perpetrated by males upon females and is based on a dislike of or feeling of superiority towards girls and women. Women are thereby seen as legitimate targets for sexist and sexualised behaviour.

**Homophobic bullying** is often present in an environment that fails to challenge and respond to homophobia. It can be verbal, which involves name-calling, public ridicule, text messaging and the regular use of offensive and discriminatory language that refers to someone’s sexual orientation. It also often manifests itself indirectly through the spreading of rumours and/or the social isolation of the individual. In its most severe form, homophobic bullying is characterised by physical attacks and sexual assault. Homophobic bullying does not just affect people who identify as LGBT. In schools, homophobic bullying can directly affect any young person whose life choices, interests or needs do not conform to accepted gender norms, as well as adult members of the school community who are LGBT, and anyone who may have friends or relatives who are LGB (DfES, *Stand Up for Us*, 2004).

If you would like further information or to comment on this briefing paper please do so by contacting ATL on policybriefings@atl.org.uk

© Association of teachers and Lecturers 2008. All rights reserved. Information in this book may be reproduced or quoted with proper acknowledgement to the Association.
Appendix 2
NUT ~ LGBT Resources for Teachers
Tackling Homophobic Bullying

An issue for every teacher
Introduction

This guidance provides information and advice to NUT members on supporting pupils who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and on tackling homophobia within schools.

A school should be a place where diversity does not mean discrimination and where the dignity of all individuals is respected.

Teachers have a key role, therefore, in tackling homophobia and creating a positive environment for all students. Headteachers and school governing bodies have a responsibility to provide all young people with a full and balanced education and with a safe and secure school environment in which to learn.

Made up of people from different religions, ethnic groups, disabled people and people of different ages, the LGBT community is highly diverse. Substantial change in the understanding of and social attitudes towards sexual orientation over the last few decades has led to considerable improvements in the position of LGBT people within society. Many LGBT students, however, are still bullied or feel alienated because of homophobia. Research has shown that homophobic bullying can lead to educational underachievement, lack of confidence and even suicide.

This guidance provides helpful advice and support for teachers in their work to help all young people become confident learners and prepared for life after school.

A Whole School Approach

Supporting LGBT pupils involves ensuring that LGBT issues are included in all areas of the work of the school from school policies and procedures, to the curriculum and to the training opportunities the school offers to its employees.

Every school should have an equal opportunities policy that includes a section on equality for LGBT students, staff, and parents. An equal opportunities policy should clarify the school’s approach to staff, pupils, governors, parents, carers and external agencies. It should enable staff to manage equal opportunities issues with confidence, competence and consistency.

To be effective, all members of the school community, including pupils, staff, parents and governors, should be involved in the development of the policy. It should cover all aspects of school life, including the curriculum, organisation, staffing and management with the aim of enriching the culture and ethos of the school.

Developing an equal opportunities policy is the start of the process of promoting equality and tackling discrimination and schools should regularly review the policy and monitor its effectiveness in meeting its aims.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 require employers, including LEAs and governing bodies, to protect all employees from discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the grounds of their actual or presumed sexual orientation. This provides a legal impetus for schools to challenge homophobia. The Regulations ban discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment and in vocational training.

What is Homophobic Bullying?

Research shows that homophobic bullying is a significant element in anti-social behaviour in schools in England and Wales. Homophobic bullying involves the targeting of individuals on the basis of their perceived or actual sexual orientation.

Young people are singled out for abuse if they do not conform to a perceived dominant masculine or feminine gender image or if the perceived or actual sexual identity or sexual orientation of their parent or carer does not conform to such images. Sexist and homophobic terms form a large part of playground banter. It is often aimed not only at those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and who have been open about their sexuality but also at those who are perceived by others to be LGBT.

Homophobic jokes and insults are widely used in schools, although younger children often do not understand the meaning of the words being used. Teachers frequently report that the word ‘gay’ is used to describe situations or generally anything that the students dislike or perceive as dysfunctional. Homophobic abuse of this nature requires challenging and deconstructing.

Many LGBT young people experience bullying at school and at home. This might include physical acts of aggression, name calling, teasing, isolation and ridicule. Behaviour associated specifically with homophobic bullying includes:

- the regular use, consciously or unconsciously, of offensive and discriminatory language, particularly the widespread pejorative use of the term ‘gay’;
- spreading rumours that cause an individual’s perceived sexual orientation to be ridiculed, questioned or insulted;
- exclusion from social groups, isolation and rejection; and
- in extreme cases, sexual assault or physical attack.
Effects of Homophobic Bullying
Research shows links between homophobic bullying in schools, truancy and educational under achievement. Homophobic bullying impacts upon the health, emotional well being and academic attainment of young people subjected to such bullying.

A research study in 2000 found that 72 per cent of victims of homophobic bullying have a history of truancy and that the majority of victims of homophobic bullying with a history of truancy leave school at age sixteen, regardless of academic qualifications.

Further research in 2001 which explored the long term effects of homophobic bullying on emotional health and well being found that of those LGB adults who had been bullied at school over half had contemplated self harm or suicide.

All forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, need to be identified and tackled. It has taken some time for homophobic bullying to become recognised as an issue in schools. There is an urgent need to tackle bullying relating to sexual orientation in schools. There is evidence to show that sustained anti-bullying initiatives can decrease bullying.

It takes courage for students to approach teachers for help when they are being bullied. This is especially true for those subjected to homophobic bullying. Anxiety can lead to self-harm, violence towards others, substance abuse or even suicide. Some seek pregnancy or fatherhood.

Children who do not feel safe within an educational institution do not perform to the best of their ability. Those who are bullied commonly lack confidence, concentration and motivation. Such pressures are likely to impact negatively on their academic performance. Children truanting or refusing to attend school often cite bullying as a factor in this behaviour.

Practical Strategies
Strategies available for addressing homophobic bullying include:

- an explicit reference in the school’s anti-bullying strategy and equal opportunities policies to strategies to prevent homophobic bullying;
- the development of a school-wide initiative to challenge the use of offensive and homophobic language;
- the removal of graffiti;
- the commitment of staff INSET time to building staff confidence in tackling homophobia and the provision of practical training around challenging homophobic bullying behaviour;
- the inclusion of curriculum resources in the school library that are relevant and appropriate for school age pupils;
- a commitment to work on homophobia within the PSHE (or PSE curriculum in Wales) and SRE curriculum and citizenship frameworks;
- the development of links with outside agencies to offer expertise to schools and to offer advice and support to students experiencing issues around their developing sexuality;
- work on solutions to reduce the homophobic content of commonly used terms of verbal abuse and challenge negative stereotypes;
- proper supervision of the school site, including attention to areas where pupils may be vulnerable;
- procedures to achieve and monitor systems to provide a consistent experience in terms of responses to homophobic bullying behaviour and teacher reactions to individuals, situations or incidents;
- the collection and analysis of information on the incidence of bullying, taking full account of the views of the pupil;
- checking that follow-up action on confirmed allegations of bullying is appropriate in its range and is sustained;
- the use of positive peer pressure and the involvement of pupils in befriending and mentoring schemes;
- the use of LEA professionals to work alongside teachers, pupils and parents in overcoming the extreme effects of bullying; and
- links between all forms of discrimination including racist, sexist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic behaviour.

DfES Guidance
LEAs have specific duties to tackle bullying. Schools are required to have discipline policies that involve addressing bullying. LEAs are required to ensure that schools comply with their duties.

The NUT welcomed the DfES guidance ‘Don’t Suffer in Silence’, which provides information and practical advice on steps schools can take to combat bullying. The DfES advises that a school policy on bullying “should be short, succinct and written in a language that everyone understands” and include a definition of bullying which includes “racist, sexist and homophobic bullying”.

The DfES guidance makes the point that pupils do not necessarily have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual
to experience homophobic bullying and that just being different can lead to such bullying. The pack contains a section specifically dealing with bullying related to sexual orientation and recommends taking the following steps to address homophobic bullying:

- covering homophobic bullying in INSET days on bullying in general;
- guaranteeing confidentiality and appropriate advice to lesbian, gay or bisexual pupils;
- challenging homophobic language;
- exploring instances of diversity and difference;
- exploring pupils’ understanding of their use of homophobic language; and
- including homophobic bullying in the school’s anti-bullying policy.

In addition, DfEE circular 10/99 ‘Social Inclusion: Pupil Support’ says that schools need to deal with all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. The circular warns that:

“The emotional distress caused by bullying in whatever form – be it racial, or as a result of the child’s appearance, behaviour or special educational needs, or related to sexual orientation – can prejudice school achievement, lead to lateness or truancy and, in extreme cases, end with suicide.”

**Welsh Assembly Guidance**

The National Assembly for Wales has produced guidance for schools on the issue of tackling homophobia in schools. The guidance says that:

- “Name-calling is the most common direct form. This may be because of individual characteristics, but pupils can be called nasty names because of their ethnic origin, nationality or colour, sexual orientation (or perceived) or some form of disability.”
- “Sexual bullying can also be related to sexual orientation. Pupils do not necessarily have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual to experience such bullying. Just being different can be enough.”

**The Governing Body**

The governing body plays a key role in developing and reviewing school discipline policies, as well as in supporting the maintenance of discipline in line with these policies. DfEE Circular 10/99 ‘Social Inclusion: Pupil Support’ says that “the governing body should advise the headteacher of their views on specific measures for promoting good behaviour. This might include such issues as bullying, racial or sexual harassment, and maintaining regular attendance”.

Governing bodies must by law have regard to Annex B of Circular 10/99 when drawing up discipline policies and advising the headteacher. This Annex says that:

- Each school should have a clear school behaviour policy. It should make clear the boundaries of what is acceptable, the hierarchy of sanctions, arrangements for their consistent and fair application, and a linked system of rewards for good behaviour. It should promote respect for others, intolerance of bullying and harassment, the importance of self-discipline and the difference between “right” and “wrong”.
- The governing body should set the framework of a school’s discipline policy through a written statement of general principles. This should cover the ethos of the school, its values and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour; the school’s moral code; positive and constructive rules of conduct; and the rewards and punishments to be fairly and consistently applied.
- The governing body should oversee the headteacher’s sound maintenance of discipline at the school in line with their policies. The headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for discipline, with the backing of the governing body.
- Headteachers should put in place effective strategies against bullying which are developed and put into effect by everyone in the school, including pupils. Governing bodies should regularly review their school’s anti-bullying policy.
- Prospectuses and other documents for staff, pupils and parents should explain arrangements for pupils to report bullying to staff and how staff will investigate them.

**OFSTED Framework for Inspecting Schools**

The OFSTED framework requires inspectors to assess the extent to which the school:

- deals effectively with incidents such as bullying, racism and other forms of harassment;
- does all it can to promote good attendance; and
- is free from all bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.

The inspectors are required to assess the extent to which schools actively enable pupils to understand and respect other people’s feelings, values and beliefs and to understand the responsibilities of living in a community.
Inspectors are further required to assess the extent to which the school provides effective PSHE, including sex and relationships education and the extent to which the school ensures that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.

A recent OFSTED report has shown that schools can reduce incidences of bullying. The main findings include those set out below:

- Schools with the most successful approaches to bullying canvassed and took full account of pupils’ views. They dedicated curriculum and tutorial time to discussing relationships and matters like bullying.
- Features of good practice included the efficient checking of the school site, setting up safe play areas or quiet rooms, and close supervision at the start and finish of the school day.
- Schools need sound procedures for the reporting and the prompt investigation of allegations of bullying so that analysis of patterns could inform policy and practice.
- Follow-up action to ensure that the confidence of bullying victims was restored and that bullying did not re-occur was not comprehensive enough or well enough sustained.
- Where used, ‘circles of friends’, peer counselling, learning mentors and outside agencies often proved effective in supporting victims, in modifying the behaviour of bullies and affecting the culture of the school.

The Role of the NUT

The NUT is at the forefront in the campaign for equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all students and staff, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. The NUT’s work on these issues has been successful and longstanding. The NUT:

- has a working party on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality in Education which provides advice to the National Executive on the promotion of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers and pupils;
- organises an annual conference on LGBT equality in education;
- was the first teachers’ union to hold a seminar on homophobic bullying;
- is actively involved in TUC activities which promote LGBT equality, including the annual TUC LGBT Conference;
- at international level, continues to work with other Commonwealth teachers’ unions and Education International to develop policies on lesbian and gay equality; and
- persistently campaigned for the repeal of Section 28.

The NUT is part of a joint campaign developed by Stonewall, FFLAG and LGBT Youth Scotland called Education for All which is working with national government, local authorities and education, voluntary and community sectors to develop and implement a UK wide action plan to ensure that all LGBT young people can fulfil their potential and that the school system can deal appropriately with homophobia.

The NUT welcomed the repeal of Section 28. The clause fuelled homophobia and inhibited valuable anti-discrimination initiatives. The repeal of Section 28 should empower schools to challenge homophobia and homophobic bullying.

Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people are all represented within school communities as teachers, support staff, students, parents and governors. The NUT will continue working to tackle the discrimination faced by both LGBT students and teachers and to promote equality.

Advice to NUT School Representatives

NUT members should feel confident that concerns and complaints about discrimination or harassment will be treated sensitively and seriously. Such members should be advised to contact their NUT regional office or, in Wales, NUT Cymru.
Further Information

Education and Equal Opportunities Department
The National Union of Teachers
Hamilton House
Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9BD
www.teachers.org.uk
Tel: 020 7388 6191

Chrysalis
(Working for the rights and perspectives of lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered people)
Tel: 020 7635 0476
chrysalis03@yahoo.co.uk

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
School Inclusion Division
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT
www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying

Educational Action Challenging Homophobia
Office 24
14 Clifton Down Road
Bristol
BS8 4BF
www.eachaction.org.uk
info@eachaction.org.uk
0117 974 3795
Helpline: 0808 1000 143

FFLAG: Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
FFLAG
P O Box No. 84
Exeter
EX4 4AN
www.fflag.org.uk
01454 852418

Joint Action Against Homophobic Bullying (JAAHB)
(Lesbian, gay and bisexual support in the South West)
The Intercom Trust
P O Box 285
Exeter
Devon EX1 2YZ
Email: jaahb@intercom.freeserve.co.uk
Bullying helpline: 01392 20 10 18

LAGER
(Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights)
Unit 1G
Leroy House
436 Essex Road
London N1 3QP
info@lageradvice.org.uk
www.lager.dircon.co.uk

Press for Change
(campaigning for respect and equality for all trans people)
BM Network
London
WC1N 3XX
Email: editor@pfc.org.uk
www.pfc.org.uk

School’s Out! National
(Working for LGBT equality in education)
BM School’s Out! National
London
WC1N 3XX
secretary@schools-out.org.uk
www.schools-out.org.uk

Stonewall
46-48 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W 0DH
www.stonewall.org.uk

Stonewall Cymru
C/o EOC
Windsor House
Windsor Lane
Cardiff
CF10 3GE
029 20237744
Derek@stonewall.org.uk

Stonewall Cymru
Bangor office
Ty Gwydr
1 Rhes Trefelyan
Bangor
Gwynedd
LL57 1AX
01248 370082 / 0845 4569823
Jenny@stonewall.org.uk

Welsh Assembly Government
Pupil Support Unit
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
www.wales.gov.uk
Further Resources

**Safe for All:** a best practice guide to preventing homophobic bullying in secondary schools
by Ian Warwick and Nicola Douglas, Education Policy Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Copies of Stonewall’s ‘Safe for All’ are available from:
**Citizenship 21 Project**
46 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W 0EB
Email: info@c21project.org.uk
Tel: 020 7881 9440

**Bullying: don’t suffer in silence**
Smith, P. London
http://www.dfespublications.gov.uk/cgi-bin/dfes

**Sex and Relationship Education Guidance**
DfEE 0116/2000, Department for Education and Employment 2000 (DfEE)
now Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance

**Circular 10/99 Social Inclusion: Pupil Support**
Department for Education and Employment (1999)
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/circulars/10-99

The three publications above can be ordered from:

**DfES Publications**
P O Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottinghamshire NG15 0DG
Tel: 0845 602 2260
Fax: 0845 603 3360
Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com

**Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: Initial Guidance for Schools**
DfES and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2000)

The QCA publication on citizenship can be ordered from:

**QCA Publications**
P O Box 99
Sudbury
Suffolk CO10 6SN
Tel: 01787 884 444
http://www.nc.uk.net

**OFSTED’s Report into Sex and Relationships Education in Schools, 2002**

**OFSTED’s Report Bullying: effective action in secondary schools, 2003**

OFSTED publications can be ordered from:

**OFSTED Publications Centre**
Tel: 07002 637 833
Fax: 07002 693 274
Email: freepublications@ofsted.gov.uk

**Children, Families & Schools – Guidance and Recommendations on Preventing and Responding to Bullying**
Anti-Bullying Project, Policy Working Group, 2002
Brighton & Hove Regeneration Partnership

**Respecting Others: Anti-Bullying Guidance**
National Assembly for Wales Circular No: 23/2003

The publication above can be ordered from:

**Department for Training & Education**
National Assembly for Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Phone: 02920 821652
Fax: 02920 801044
Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students

An issue for every teacher
Introduction

This guidance provides information and advice to NUT members on supporting pupils who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and on tackling homophobia within the school environment.

Schools should be a place where diversity does not mean discrimination and where the dignity of all individuals is respected.

Teachers have a key role, therefore, in tackling homophobia in schools and creating a positive school environment for all students. Headteachers and school governing bodies have a responsibility to ensure that all young people receive a full and balanced education and are provided with a safe and secure school environment in which to learn.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community is a diverse community. It is made up of people from different religions, ethnic groups, disabled people and people of different ages.

Substantial change in the understanding of and social attitudes towards sexual orientation over the last few decades has led to considerable improvements in the position of LGBT people within society.

Many LGBT students, however, are still bullied or feel alienated because of homophobia. Research has shown that homophobic bullying can lead to educational underachievement, lack of confidence and even suicide.

This guidance provides helpful advice and support for teachers in their work to help all young people become confident learners and prepared for life after school.

A Whole School Approach

Supporting LGBT pupils involves ensuring that LGBT issues are included in all areas of the work of the school from school policies and procedures, to the curriculum and to the training opportunities the school offers to its employees.

All schools should have an equal opportunities policy that includes a section on equality for LGBT students, staff, and parents. Equal opportunities policies are valuable: They clarify the approach of the school for staff, pupils, governors, parents/careers and external agencies and enable staff to manage equal opportunities issues with confidence, competence and consistency.

In order for a whole school equal opportunities policy to be effective, all members of the school community, including pupils, staff, parents and governors, should be involved in its development. It should cover all aspects of school life, including the curriculum, organisation, staffing and management with the aim of enriching the culture and ethos of the school.

Developing an equal opportunities policy is the start of the process of promoting equality and tackling discrimination and schools should regularly review the policy and monitor its effectiveness in meeting its aims.

New legal responsibilities are now in place which require LEAs and governing bodies, as employers, to protect all employees from discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the grounds of their actual or presumed sexual orientation. This provides a legal impetus for schools to challenge homophobia. The Regulations\(^1\) ban discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment and in vocational training. Schools that fail to challenge homophobic abuse of staff whether from other staff, pupils, parents/carers or other members of the school community, could be liable to challenge and could be required to pay compensation.

Awareness Through the Curriculum

Schools can consider using the curriculum in the following ways:

- The school should be clear about the purpose of adopting a broad curriculum approach. Such an approach can raise awareness of bullying issues amongst pupils. Equally it can challenge and deconstruct the homophobic attitudes that might lead children to bully.

- A review can be conducted of the existing subject curriculum that might support anti-homophobic messages and foster respect for the dignity of individuals.

- Training on homophobic bullying can be included. The resource list at the back of this guidance will help.

It is far better that children are provided with accurate information in the classroom rather than inaccurate information in the playground. Whilst PSHE and Citizenship is the most obvious location in the curriculum, there are links to be made with other subjects. Issues surrounding relationships, stereotypes and prejudice can be explored within Art, English, Drama, History or RE.

It is important for primary schools to provide positive images of lesbian, gay and bisexual people and for the sexual orientation of famous and successful lesbian, gay and bisexual people both past and present to be acknowledged in every subject. This work needs to be placed in a wider context where lesbians, gay men and bisexual people are seen as citizens and participants in a wide range of activities.
Secondary school pupils and college students can discuss the subjects referred to above and also more complex questions such as prejudice, racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. A number of schools address these topics as part of PSHE. At Key Stage 4, for example, a requirement within PSHE is "to challenge offending behaviour, prejudice, bullying, racism and discrimination assertively and take the initiative in giving and receiving support". This could be developed within the classroom by considering strategies for challenging homophobic bullying, either when directed against oneself or against a friend.

Sex and Relationships Education
Sex education must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained secondary schools. Governing bodies of maintained primary schools are responsible for considering whether, and at what stage, to offer sex education. In all maintained schools, the governing body must keep an up to date written statement of the policy they choose to adopt, which must be available to all parents. DfES Guidance makes it clear that issues relating to sexual orientation should be included in sex education programmes. The guidance states:

- "The Secretary of State for Education and Employment is clear that teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support."
- "It is up to schools to make sure that the needs of all pupils are met in their programmes. Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationships education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs."
- "Schools need to be able to deal with homophobic bullying."
- "The government recognises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage."
- "SRE policies should be inclusive of all pupils."
- "Having a SRE policy in line with this guidance will be a key part of meeting the criteria for sex and relationship education outlined in the National Healthy School Standard."

Sex education should challenge the stigmatisation of lesbian and gay families. Many lesbian and gay relationships are stable and long-term.

The NUT believes that the following principles should apply to sex education:

- Sex and relationships education, together with Citizenship and PSHE, can help to educate children and young people against prejudice and discrimination, and enable them to value all forms of stable relationships;

- Schools should adopt an approach to sex education which involves everyone in the school. It is important to consult and involve teachers, health workers, parents, governors, pupils when appropriate, and relevant religious and community groups, particularly in the context of the right of parents to withdraw their children from all or part of the sex education programme. Wide consultation and involvement will reduce the likelihood of parents requesting the withdrawal of their children from sex education;

- School policies on sex education should contain appropriate references to LGB sexuality, and gender identity, recognising that sexual orientation is a central part of an individual’s identity; and

- Effective and practical sex education should foster a sense of respect and responsibility. It should encourage the exploration of values and moral issues, consideration of sexuality and personal relationships and the development of communication and decision-making skills.

The NUT advises teachers that, because they are not health professionals, they should not provide individual advice about contraception or abortion beyond that which may be included in a sex education class. A teacher may, however, legitimately give precise information about accessing contraception and pregnancy advisory services from appropriate health professionals.

Similarly teachers can give information about accessing LGBT advisory services and local lesbian and gay groups. School noticeboards should be used so that information about LGBT advisory services is easily accessible alongside other material.

OFSTED’s report on sex and relationships education says that:

- "In too many secondary schools homophobic attitudes among pupils often go unchallenged. The problem is compounded when derogatory terms about homosexuality are used in everyday language in school and their use passes unchallenged by staff. Where these problems arise, staff have often had insufficient guidance on the interpretation of school values and what constitutes unacceptable language or behaviour."

The report included the following points among the recommendations to all schools:

- that schools should make sure that values relevant to education about sex and relationships are consistently adhered to within the school so that, for example, homophobic attitudes do not go unchallenged; and
that teachers should be given further guidance about content and methods in teaching about sexuality.

OFTSED offers the following suggested learning outcomes for SRE for each key stage in seeking to highlight good sex and relationships education:

- awareness of the similarities and differences between people and the impact of our feelings and actions on others (Key Stage 1);
- being able to recognise and challenge stereotypes and respect other’s viewpoints (Key Stage 2);
- appreciating the diversity of lifestyles and why being different can provoke bullying and why this is unacceptable (Key Stage 2);
- being tolerant of the diversity of sexual preference in relationships and the importance of respecting difference in relation to gender and sexuality (Key Stage 3);
- the unacceptability of prejudice and homophobic bullying (Key Stage 3);
- having the confidence to assert oneself and challenge offending behaviour (Key Stage 4); and
- feeling confident and comfortable with ones developing sense of sexual identity (Key Stage 4).

OFTSED found that these learning outcomes are only likely to be achieved in schools where different forms of sexual relationships are valued and bullying or discrimination based on sexuality is actively challenged.

Supporting Students
Where pupils seek advice on sexual orientation or gender identity, the role of teachers should be confined to their specific educational responsibilities. Teachers should encourage students to refer to other agencies such as appropriate local lesbian and gay counselling services. It is important that teachers recognise that where they are not trained counsellors they cannot take on this role, regardless of the sexuality or gender identity of the pupil concerned. Teachers should, however, seek to help and provide support to students.

The boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear to pupils. A request by a pupil for confidentiality should be honoured in all circumstances except where the teacher is concerned about the health and safety of the student. Confidential information should only be passed on against the wishes of the pupil in exceptional circumstances. In these situations, the school should inform the pupil first and attempt to explain why their request for confidentiality could not be met.

The school should collate sources of useful information to provide to students such as telephone helpline numbers, useful websites and local lesbian and gay counselling services.

Training for Staff
A commitment to staff training will enforce and reinforce the positive message about challenging homophobic bullying. Lack of staff confidence in dealing with how to support LGBT pupils may contribute to the spread of bullying behaviour within a school. All staff, including support workers and lunchtime supervisors, should have access to training around how to support LGBT pupils and around bullying issues. Every member of the school community needs to play an active role in identifying, reporting and preventing bullying behaviour. Handling homophobic bullying is often a matter of concern to staff who commonly feel ill-equipped or lack the confidence to challenge the prejudices surrounding homophobia. These needs can be met through training.

Schools should consider:

- dedicating whole staff INSET time to issues surrounding homophobic bullying;
- ensuring relevant training is provided for non teaching staff as part of a whole school approach;
- encouraging the member of staff responsible for anti-bullying strategies to disseminate training they have received;
- ensuring that there are measures in place to respond quickly, effectively and supportively to LGBT pupils or others who are perceived to be LGBT who feel they are the victims of bullying, who request information or who wish to discuss concerns or issues relating to their sexual orientation;
- encouraging staff access to policies and ensuring that they understand how to use the support systems in place to protect and support LGBT pupils; and
- ensuring that training to help teachers identify and deal with bullying tackles how to deal with cases where bullying focuses on sexuality.

OFTSED Framework for Inspecting Schools
The OFSTED framework requires inspectors to assess the extent to which the school:

- deals effectively with incidents such as bullying, racism and other forms of harassment;
- does all it can to promote good attendance; and
- is free from all bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.
The inspectors are required to assess the extent to which schools actively enable pupils to understand and respect other people’s feelings, values and beliefs and to understand the responsibilities of living in a community. Inspectors are also required to assess the extent to which the school provides effective PSHE, including sex and relationships education and the extent to which the school ensures that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.

A recent OFSTED report\(^5\) has shown that schools can reduce incidences of bullying. The main findings include the following:

- Schools with the most successful approaches to bullying canvassed and took full account of pupils' views. They dedicated curriculum and tutorial time to discussing relationships and matters like bullying.
- Features of good practice included the efficient checking of the school site, setting up safe play areas or quiet rooms, and close supervision at the start and finish of the school day.
- Schools need sound procedures for the reporting and the prompt investigation of allegations of bullying so that analysis of patterns could inform policy and practice.
- Follow-up action to ensure that the confidence of bullying victims was restored and that bullying did not re-occur was not comprehensive enough or well enough sustained. Where used, ‘circles of friends’, peer counselling, learning mentors and outside agencies often proved effective in supporting victims, in modifying the behaviour of bullies and affecting the culture of the school.

The Role of the NUT

The NUT is at the forefront in the campaign for equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all students and staff, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. The NUT’s work on these issues has been successful and longstanding. The NUT:

- has a working party on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality in Education which provides advice to the National Executive on the promotion of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers and pupils;
- organises an annual conference on LGBT equality in education;
- was the first teachers’ union to hold a seminar on homophobic bullying;
- is actively involved in TUC activities which promote LGBT equality, including the annual TUC LGBT Conference;
- at international level, continues to work with other Commonwealth teachers’ unions and Education International to develop policies on lesbian and gay equality;
- persistently campaigned for the repeal of Section 28; and
- is part of a joint campaign developed by Stonewall, FFLAG and LGBT Youth Scotland called Education for All which is working with national government, local authorities and education, voluntary and community sectors to develop and implement a UK wide action plan to ensure that all LGBT young people can fulfil their potential and that the school system can deal appropriately with homophobia.

The NUT welcomed the repeal of Section 28. The clause fuelled homophobia and inhibited valuable anti-discrimination initiatives. The repeal of Section 28 should empower schools to challenge homophobia and homophobic bullying.

Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people are all represented within school communities as teachers, support staff, students, parents and governors. The NUT will continue working to tackle the discrimination faced by both LGBT students and teachers and to promote equality.

Advice to NUT School Representatives

NUT members should feel confident that concerns and complaints about discrimination or harassment will be treated sensitively and seriously. Such members should be advised to contact their NUT regional office or, in Wales, NUT Cymru.
Further Information

Education and Equal Opportunities Department
The National Union of Teachers
Hamilton House
Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9BD
www.teachers.org.uk
Tel: 020 7388 6191

Chrysalis
(Working for the rights and perspectives of
lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered
people)
Tel: 020 7635 0476
chrysalis03@yahoo.co.uk

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
School Inclusion Division
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT
www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying

Educational Action Challenging Homophobia
Office 24
14 Clifton Down Road
Bristol BS8 4BF
www.eachaction.org.uk
info@eachaction.org.uk
0117 974 3795

FFLAG: Families and Friends of Lesbians
and Gays
FFLAG
P O Box No. 84
Exeter
EX4 4AN
www.fflag.org.uk
01454 852418

Joint Action Against Homophobic
Bullying (JAAHB)
(Lesbian, gay and bisexual support in the South
West)
The Intercom Trust
P O Box 285
Exeter
Devon EX1 2YZ
Email: jaahb@intercom.freeserve.co.uk
Bullying helpline: 01392 20 10 18

LAGER
(Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights)
Unit 1G
Leroy House
436 Essex Road
London N1 3QP
info@lageradvice.org.uk
www.lagerdircon.co.uk

Press for Change
(campaigning for respect and equality
for all trans people)
BM Network
London
WCIN 3XX
Email: editor@pfc.org.uk
www.pfc.org.uk

School’s Out! National
(Working for LGBT equality in education)
BM School’s Out! National
London WC1N 3XX
secretary@schools-out.org.uk
www.schools-out.org.uk

Stonewall
46-48 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH
www.stonewall.org.uk
Further Resources

Safe for All: a best practice guide to preventing homophobic bullying in secondary schools
by Ian Warwick and Nicola Douglas, Education Policy Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Copies of Stonewall’s ‘Safe for All’ are available from:
Citizenship 21 Project
46 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W 0EB
Email: info@c21project.org.uk
Tel:020 7881 9440

Bullying: don’t suffer in silence
Smith, P. London
http://www.dfespublications.gov.uk/cgi-bin/dfes

Sex and Relationship Education Guidance
DfEE 0116/2000, Department for Education and Employment 2000 (DfEE)
now Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance

Circular 10/99 Social Inclusion: Pupil Support
Department for Education and Employment (1999)
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/circulars/10-99

The three publications above can be ordered from:

DfES Publications
P O Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottinghamshire NG15 0DG
Tel:0845 602 2260
Fax: 0845 603 3360
Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com

Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4:
Initial Guidance for Schools
DfES and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2000)

The QCA publication on citizenship can be ordered from:

QCA Publications
P O Box 99
Sudbury
Suffolk CO10 6SN
Tel:01787 884 444
http://www.nc.uk.net

OFSTED’s Report into Sex and Relationships Education in Schools, 2002

OFSTED’s Report Bullying: effective action in secondary schools, 2003

OFSTED publications can be ordered from:

OFSTED Publications Centre
Tel: 07002 637 833
Fax: 07002 693 274
Email: freepublications@ofsted.gov.uk

Children, Families & Schools - Guidance and Recommendations on Preventing and Responding to Bullying
Anti-Bullying Project, Policy Working Group, 2002
Brighton & Hove Regeneration Partnership

Footnotes

1 Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, 2003
3 DfES Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, 2000
4 Sex and Relationships, OFSTED, 2002
5 Bullying: effective action in secondary schools, OFSTED, 2003
Appendix 3
NUT ~ LGBT Guidance for Members
Introduction


The provisions cover employment and vocational training and give specific protection from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Under the Regulations it is unlawful to discriminate against a worker on the grounds of sexual orientation in relation to:

- recruitment;
- pay;
- terms and conditions of employment;
- training;
- promotion;
- transfer; and
- dismissal.

It is unlawful in certain circumstances to discriminate against a former employee after the employment relationship has ended.

What is meant by the term sexual orientation?

The Regulations define sexual orientation as an orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex, or persons of the same and opposite sex. The protection under the legislation is available to individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. The term does not extend to gender reassignment, which is distinct from sexual orientation. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 protects employees from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment.

Do the provisions protect all teachers?

Yes. All teachers are protected from discrimination at work. There is no qualifying period for protection from discrimination, the protection starts from day 1 of a teacher's appointment.
What discrimination is covered?

The Regulations will protect teachers from discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

**Direct Discrimination**
The employer will be liable where a person - for example, an employer, head teacher, another teacher, or a school governor - discriminates against a teacher on the grounds of sexual orientation.

**Indirect Discrimination**
Employers must not have employment practices or procedures relating to employment which apply to everyone but disadvantage employees of a particular sexual orientation. Indirect sexual orientation discrimination may be unlawful even if it is not intentional.

**Victimisation**
The employer will be liable where a teacher is treated less favourably because he or she has taken any action under the Regulations or if the employer knows or suspects that the teacher intends to do so.

**Harassment**
The harassment provisions cover harassment by an employer or employee. If the purpose or effect of a person's conduct is to violate another's dignity or to create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for him or her, on the grounds of sexual orientation, the employer will be liable.

What protection from sexual orientation discrimination is there for teachers seeking employment?

Teachers should not be discriminated against or harassed in recruitment procedures. This includes advertisements, selection and interview procedures, appointment procedures and the terms of employment.

Are teachers protected from sexual orientation discrimination during employment?

The protection from discrimination and harassment continues throughout a teacher's employment. Teachers should not be subjected to a detriment on the grounds of sexual orientation in access to and procedures for promotions or transfers, training or receiving any other benefit.

What if a former employer discriminates against a teacher?

Where an employment relationship has come to an end, it is unlawful for an employer or employee to discriminate against a former worker by subjecting him or her to a detriment or to harassment; this applies similarly to the provision of references.
Can an employer insist that a teacher must be of a particular sexual orientation?

An employer may argue that an employee must be of a particular sexual orientation if it can show that it is a genuine requirement of the post, which the employer must justify as necessary. The NUT does not envisage that any teaching post requires a teacher to be of a particular sexual orientation.

What about teachers in faith schools?

The Regulations allow employers with a religious ethos to claim that certain jobs require the post holder to be of a particular sexual orientation.

The NUT challenged the Government on the legality of this exemption. The judge gave a clear indication that the exemption was unlikely to apply to teachers employed in faith schools. This was because the Regulation applies to employment for purposes of an 'organised religion' rather than employment for purposes of a 'religious organisation'. It was unlikely that a teacher, employed in a faith school, would be employed for purposes of an 'organised religion'.

The NUT believes that employers in faith schools, including Academies with a religious character, cannot – in refusing to appoint, or treating a teacher less favourably or dismissing a teacher – rely upon a teacher's sexual orientation alone.

What steps should teachers take if they have been discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of sexual orientation?

Members should inform their divisions if they have been discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Members will be advised on their statutory and contractual rights and consideration will be given to whether a written grievance should be lodged, followed, in some circumstances by a complaint to an Employment Tribunal.

A written statement of grievance must be submitted to the employer within three months of the last act of discrimination or harassment.
GUIDANCE FOR NUT MEMBERS

WHAT IS SEXUAL ORIENTATION HARASSMENT?

This brief guide for NUT members outlines the legal definition of sexual orientation harassment, explains who is protected, and summarises the first steps you should take if you think you are being subjected to such harassment.

Who is protected from sexual orientation harassment?

All teachers have specific protection at work from harassment on grounds of sexual orientation under the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003. You are protected whether you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight. You are protected whether the alleged harasser is gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight. You are protected whether you are permanent, fixed term, full-time, part-time, supply or agency. You are protected from harassment from your colleagues, managers and governors.

What about harassment by pupils or parents?

Your employer must take steps to prevent and deal with unlawful harassment at work by third parties such as pupils or parents, especially if you have reported third party harassment before. You should take the steps below to report the harassment and inform your NUT representative who will be able to advise and support you.

What is sexual orientation harassment?

It is unwanted conduct on grounds of sexual orientation which violates your dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for you.

Harassment is unlawful whether it is on grounds of your actual or supposed sexual orientation or even on grounds of the sexual orientation of the people you associate with. Harassment of a male teacher because he is perceived to be gay will be unlawful whether he is gay or not.

Even if the conduct is not directed at you, you may feel intimidated by insidious behaviour which creates an offensive work environment for you.

What sort of behaviour is covered?

Harassment would include hostile and intimidating behaviour by colleagues towards lesbian or gay people generally or humiliating behaviour towards you because you have a same-sex partner.

Intimidating or degrading behaviour, such as name-calling, offensive homophobic ‘jokes’ by pupils or colleagues or graffiti, or requests to hide your sexual orientation from pupils, could amount to harassment.

A single incident might constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious. A series of incidents is likely to amount to harassment especially if you have
given a clear indication that the behaviour is unwanted.

**How do I know if I am being harassed?**

An individual may or may not intend to be harassing you. What is important is the effect of their behaviour on you. The treatment might be on more than one ground, for example because you are a bisexual woman. If you feel that you are being harassed, the NUT will help you consider the circumstances which gave rise to that belief and advise you accordingly.

**What should I do if I think I am being harassed?**

If you can, ask for the behaviour to stop. Keep notes of all incidents of unwanted conduct, including dates, times, places, the names of any witnesses and your response to the behaviour. Offensive pupil behaviour should be reported under the pupil discipline procedure or in writing to your head teacher. You should inform your NUT representative who should contact your NUT regional office in England or NUT Cymru in Wales. Your colleagues may have made similar complaints and you may be advised to tackle the issue jointly. The NUT urges all schools to adopt clear harassment and bullying policies and procedures for dealing with workplace harassment fairly and quickly. Ask your NUT representative or your school office for a copy.

The NUT will be able to advise you what steps you should take. You may be advised to deal with the matter informally, for example by writing a letter to the individual asking for the behaviour to stop, or you may be advised to lodge a formal grievance. In rare cases you may be advised to take the matter to an employment tribunal. The objective in all cases will be to put a stop to the unwanted behaviour and allow you to continue teaching in a safe and professional environment.

**What should my employer do if I complain?**

Your employer should fully investigate your complaint and take appropriate action to stop further unwanted conduct.

**What if I'm afraid that the behaviour will get worse?**

The answer is to act promptly. Informal steps may resolve the matter quickly with minimum disruption. On the other hand, formal proceedings may be necessary. The NUT will be able to advise you.

You must not be treated less favourably because you have asserted your statutory rights by, for example, lodging a grievance. Your employer will be liable for subjecting you to such retaliation or punishment.

**Where can I find more information on harassment?**

You are urged to inform your NUT representative and NUT regional office in England or NUT Cymru in Wales if you feel harassed on grounds of your sexual orientation or on more than one ground, for example your sexual orientation and sex.

Further information on discrimination, harassment and bullying, including harassment on grounds of race, sex, transgender status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age can be found at [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk).
GUIDANCE FOR NUT MEMBERS

WHAT IS TRANSGENDER HARASSMENT?

This brief guide for NUT members outlines the legal definition of transgender harassment, explains who is protected, and summarises the first steps you should take if you think you are being subjected to such harassment.

Who is protected from transgender harassment?

All trans teachers have specific protection at work from harassment under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and from the unlawful disclosure of transgender status. You are protected whether you are a man or a woman, before, after or during your gender re-assignment. You are protected whether you are permanent, fixed term, full-time, part-time, supply or agency. You are protected from harassment from your colleagues, managers and governors.

What about harassment by pupils and parents?

Your employer must take steps to prevent and deal with unlawful harassment at work by third parties such as pupils or parents, especially if you have reported third party harassment before. You should take the steps below to report the harassment and inform your NUT representative who will be able to advise and support you.

What is transgender harassment?

Transgender harassment is unwanted conduct which violates your dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for you.

It is harassment on grounds that you intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. Gender reassignment is the medical and social process whereby you change your birth sex to match your chosen gender identity. The legal definition is limited to gender reassignment and does not cover harassment on grounds that you are, for example, a transvestite person.

What sort of behaviour is covered?

Transgender harassment would include hostile and intimidating behaviour by colleagues towards you because you are preparing to undergo gender reassignment. Or it could include degrading or humiliating behaviour towards you because you have undergone gender reassignment.

Intimidating or degrading behaviour, such as name-calling or offensive transphobic 'jokes' by pupils or colleagues could amount to harassment.

A single incident might constitute transgender harassment if it is sufficiently serious. A series of incidents is likely to amount to transgender harassment especially if you have given a clear indication that the behaviour is unwanted.
**How do I know if I am being harassed?**

An individual may or may not intend to be harassing you. What is important is the effect of their behaviour on you. The treatment might be on grounds of, for example your transgender status, sex and sexual orientation. If you feel that you are being harassed, the NUT will help you consider the circumstances which gave rise to that belief and advise you accordingly.

**What should I do if I think I am being harassed?**

If you can, ask for the behaviour to stop. Keep notes of all incidents of unwanted conduct, including dates, times, places, the names of any witnesses and your response to the behaviour. Offensive pupil behaviour should be reported under the pupil discipline procedure or in writing to your head teacher. You should inform your NUT representative who should contact your NUT regional office in England or NUT Cymru in Wales. Your colleagues may have made similar complaints and you may be advised to tackle the issue jointly. The NUT urges all schools to adopt clear harassment and bullying policies and procedures for dealing with workplace harassment fairly and quickly. Ask your NUT representative or your school office for a copy.

The NUT will be able to advise you what steps you should take. You may be advised to deal with the matter informally, for example by writing a letter to the individual asking for the behaviour to stop, or you may be advised to lodge a formal grievance. In rare cases you may be advised to take the matter to an employment tribunal. The objective in all cases will be to put a stop to the unwanted behaviour and allow you to continue teaching in a safe and professional environment.

**What should my employer do if I complain?**

Your employer should fully investigate your complaint and take appropriate action to stop further unwanted behaviour or conduct.

**What if I'm afraid that the behaviour will get worse?**

The answer is to act promptly. Informal steps may resolve the matter quickly with minimum disruption. On the other hand, formal proceedings may be necessary. The NUT will be able to advise you.

You must not be treated less favourably because you have rejected or submitted to unwanted behaviour, or because you have asserted your statutory rights by, for example, lodging a grievance. Your employer will be liable for subjecting you to such retaliation or punishment.

**Where can I find more information on harassment?**

You are urged to inform your NUT representative and NUT regional office in England or NUT Cymru in Wales if you feel harassed on grounds of your transgender status or on more than one ground, for example your trans status and your sex.

Further information on discrimination, harassment and bullying, including harassment on grounds of race, sex, transgender status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age can be found at [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk).
Appendix 4
UNISON ~ Model Statement on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
Model Statement on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

This statement has been jointly agreed by management and the trade unions, who are equally committed to its implementation.

1. (Name of employer) recognises and values the diversity of its workforce.
   - We are committed to creating an environment where the sexual orientation and gender identity of all workers and service users are respected, and where all are afforded dignity and equal rights.
   - We also recognise and value the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people themselves, who are of every age, race, nationality, religion, disability, occupation, and family situation.

2. (Name of employer) recognises the existence of discrimination and prejudice
   - We recognise that false assumptions, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are widespread in society and that to achieve our aim, we must take steps to actively promote equality and combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
   - We will not make assumptions about people’s sexual orientation, gender identity, relationships or caring responsibilities.
   - We will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against job applicants or workers on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, including in recruitment, selection, promotion, training, pay, conditions, leave or benefits.
   - We will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity in the delivery of our services.
   - We will not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or marital/Civil Partnership status in the provision of family benefits or facilities for job applicants, workers or service users.
   - We will not tolerate prejudice or harassment.
   - We will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination or harassment, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

3. (Name of employer) recognises the need to take positive steps to promote equality and tackle discrimination
   - We will work with the trade unions to take positive action to redress past and present discrimination, both individual and institutional. All policies, procedures and practices will be regularly reviewed in consultation with the trade unions, for their impact on equality on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.
   - Our literature, language, publicity and images will reflect the diversity of the workforce, including LGBT members.
   - We will work to provide services accessible and appropriate to the diversity of LGBT service users.
   - We will consult LGBT workers and service users on steps to equality.
4. (Name of employer) recognises people’s right to be open about their sexual orientation/transgender identity and their right to keep this confidential

- We aim to provide a supportive environment for LGBT workers and service users who wish it to be known they are LGBT and respect the confidentiality of those who do not.
- We recognise that to out someone without their permission is a form of harassment and we will treat it as such.
- We recognise that this has implications for record keeping, for how some rights can be accessed and for how complaints of discrimination are reported and investigated.
- We will support workers undergoing gender reassignment and work with them and their trade union representative to agree a process for this in the workplace.
- We will ensure that workers who have undergone gender reassignment are treated in all respects as the gender in which they live.

5. (Name of employer) is committed to effective implementation and monitoring of steps to equality

- We will publicise this statement widely and include it in our equality strategy and equality action plan.
- We will work with the trade unions to monitor and report on progress in achieving our aims.
- We will establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability and make sure they are well publicised.
- We will include these equality issues in existing training programmes, and run specific training where necessary.
- We recognise that effective implementation requires the full participation of the trade unions.
- We will make clear to contracting companies and external agencies that they are expected to demonstrate compliance with our equalities policies.

Explanation of terms

**Sexual orientation** - defined in the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 as orientation towards persons of the same sex, the opposite sex or both sexes; in common language - lesbian/gay, straight or bisexual

**Gender identity** – the gender a person identifies with. People’s gender identity does not necessarily conform to the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transgender person** - someone whose perception or belief about their own gender identity does not conform to the sex they were assigned at birth

**Transsexual person** – legal/medical term for someone who lives (or wishes to live) permanently in their ‘new’ gender

**Gender reassignment** – the process of transitioning from the gender assigned at birth to the gender the person identifies with. This may (or may not) involve medical / surgical procedures

**LGBT** – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

**To come out/be out** - to be open about your own sexual orientation or gender history

**To ‘out’ someone** - to reveal another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent.

**Direct discrimination** – less favourable treatment

**Indirect discrimination** – a provision or practice that everyone has to conform to, but which some groups cannot meet so easily
Appendix 5

Summary

Homophobic bullying is almost epidemic in Britain’s schools. Almost **two thirds** (65 per cent) of young lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils have experienced direct bullying. **Seventy five per cent** of young gay people attending faith schools have experienced homophobic bullying.

Even if gay pupils are not directly experiencing bullying, they are learning in an environment where homophobic language and comments are commonplace. **Ninety eight per cent** of young gay people hear the phrases “that's so gay” or “you’re so gay” in school, and over **four fifths** hear such comments often or frequently.

**Ninety seven per cent** of pupils hear other insulting homophobic remarks, such as “poof”, “dyke”, “rug-muncher”, “queer” and “bender”. Over **seven in ten** gay pupils hear those phrases used often or frequently.

Less than a **quarter** (23 per cent) of young gay people have been told that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school. In schools that have said homophobic bullying is wrong, gay young people are **60 per cent** more likely not to have been bullied.

Over **half** of lesbian and gay pupils don’t feel able to be themselves at school. **Thirty five per cent** of gay pupils do not feel safe or accepted at school.
2.1 Bullying:
- Almost two thirds (65 per cent) of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience homophobic bullying in Britain’s schools.
- Ninety seven per cent of gay pupils hear derogatory phrases such as “dyke” or “poof” used in school.
- Ninety eight per cent of gay pupils hear “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” at school.
- Seventy five per cent of young gay people in faith schools experience homophobic bullying and are less likely than pupils in other schools to report it.
- Only a quarter of schools say that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school. In schools that have said homophobic bullying is wrong, gay young people are 60 per cent more likely not to have been bullied.
- Thirty per cent of lesbian and gay pupils report that adults are responsible for homophobic incidents in their schools.
- Of those who have been bullied, 92 per cent have experienced verbal homophobic bullying, 41 per cent physical bullying and 17 per cent death threats.

2.2 How schools respond:
- Almost three in five (58 per cent) lesbian and gay pupils who experience bullying never report it. If they tell a teacher, 62 per cent of the time nothing is done.
- Half of teachers fail to respond to homophobic language when they hear it.
- Three in five pupils fail to intervene and become bystanders to bullying.
- Just seven per cent of teachers are reported to respond every time they hear homophobic language.
- Lesbian and gay pupils are three times more likely to feel that their school is an accepting, tolerant school if it responds to incidents.

2.3 The consequences of bullying for lesbian and gay pupils:
- Seven out of ten gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying state that this has had an impact on their school work.
- Half of those who have experienced homophobic bullying have skipped school at some point because of it and one in five has skipped school more than six times.
- Seven in ten gay pupils have never been taught about lesbian and gay people or issues in class.
- Over 60 per cent of young lesbian and gay people feel that there is neither an adult at home nor at school who they can talk to about being gay.
- Four in five young gay people have no access in school to resources that can help them.
- Only 15 per cent attend a local gay youth group but nearly two in five have attended a gay club or a pub. Young gay people are two and a half times more likely to go to a pub rather than a youth group.
- Only three in ten young gay people know of a teacher who is openly gay.

The study In 2006, Stonewall asked young people from Great Britain who are lesbian, gay, bisexual (or think they might be) to complete a survey about their experiences at school. The survey received 1145 responses from young people at secondary school. The survey was conducted by the Schools Health Education Unit on behalf of Stonewall. Just under half the respondents are girls (48 per cent). Fourteen per cent are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and 12 per cent are disabled. Forty six per cent stated that they have a religious belief. Over half of these (29 per cent) are Christian. The majority of respondents (79 per cent) attend a state school, and 12 per cent attend private schools. One in ten respondents (110) attends a faith school. This report presents the results of the survey.
Appendix 6
Almost **two thirds** of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience homophobic bullying in schools, and **75 per cent** of young people in faith schools experience homophobic bullying. Schools should acknowledge that homophobic bullying occurs in schools and take steps to prevent it, and respond to it. According to a recent YouGov poll conducted for Stonewall, **92 per cent** of parents – including parents of under-18s – believe that homophobic bullying should be tackled. **Nine out of ten** ‘people of faith’ agree. The majority think teachers, head teachers and parents have a responsibility to take the lead.

**1. Acknowledge and identify the problem**

Only a quarter of young gay people have been told that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school. In schools that have said homophobic bullying is wrong, gay young people are **60 per cent** more likely not to have been bullied. Lesbian and gay pupils feel more positive about their school if it has developed policies about homophobic bullying. They are twice as likely to feel their school is an accepting, tolerant school where they feel welcome.

**2. Develop policies and tell young people about them**

**Half** of teachers fail to respond to homophobic language when they hear it and **three in five** pupils fail to intervene but become bystanders to bullying. Even if a gay pupil has not been bullied, a culture of homophobia has an impact on their sense of belonging at a school.

**3. Promote a positive social environment**

Lesbian and gay pupils feel more positive about their school if it has developed policies about homophobic bullying. They are twice as likely to feel their school is an accepting, tolerant school where they feel welcome.

**4. Address staff training needs**

Only **5 per cent** of teachers are reported to respond every time they hear homophobic language. In total, **30 per cent** of lesbian and gay pupils report that adults have been responsible for bullying them. **Three in five** pupils never report homophobic incidents. When they do, **62 per cent** of the time nothing is done as a result of them telling a teacher.

School staff need training to help them respond to, and prevent, homophobic bullying and support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils. When staff respond to incidents, pupils are more than **three times** more likely to feel their school is an accepting and tolerant environment.

**5. Provide information and support**

Four in five young gay people have no access in school to appropriate resources that can help them stay healthy. There are no books in libraries, and they have no access to internet spaces. Only **15 per cent** attend a local youth group but nearly two in five have attended a club or a pub. Young lesbian and gay people are **two and a half times** more likely to attend a gay pub or club, than a youth group.

Schools have a responsibility to help all young people stay safe, and take healthy risks when they are growing up. Frequently, young lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils do not receive this support. Schools should ensure that pupils have access to the information and support they need.
Integrate sexual orientation into the curriculum

Three quarters of young gay people who experience homophobic bullying have never heard lesbian, gay and bisexual people or issues discussed in school. Lesbian and gay pupils who have been taught about gay issues are 13 per cent less likely to experience homophobic bullying.

Pupils who have been taught in a way that they find positive about gay issues are nearly 60 per cent more likely to feel happy at school.

Schools need to consider ways in which sexual orientation can be integrated into the curriculum, in a positive and constructive way, which enables both heterosexual and gay pupils to understand and respect difference and diversity.

Use outside experience

Fifteen per cent of young lesbian and gay people attend a gay youth group. Those who do attend a group are more likely to feel that there is an adult at home and school who they can talk to about being gay.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations can provide support to schools and young people to help lesbian and gay pupils feel more positive and included in their community. Working with bodies such as local authorities can also help schools support individuals and classes to prevent homophobic bullying.

Encourage role models

Over 60 per cent of young lesbian and gay people feel that there is neither an adult at home nor school who they can talk to about being gay. Three in ten know a gay teacher, and are 72 per cent more likely to talk to an adult at school about being gay.

Positive role models can help a young person feel more confident and comfortable. Teachers who are gay are in a strong position to fulfil this role, provided they are supported by their schools.

Don't make assumptions

Lesbian and gay pupils report that they experience homophobic bullying even if they are not ‘out’ at school – 98 per cent hear “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” on a regular basis.

Not all gay people are alike, and not all will experience being gay in the same way. Not all parents, governors or teachers will be heterosexual and not all pupils will grow up to be heterosexual.

Celebrate achievements

Acknowledge and celebrate progress so that all pupils, parents, governors and staff know and understand the progress that is being made. Celebrating work will also allow other schools to learn – a quarter of pupils attend schools that state explicitly that homophobic bullying is wrong and this reduces levels of such bullying.

These schools can help other schools. Lesbian and gay pupils feel more comfortable in school if they know there is an explicit policy about homophobic bullying, if there are resources available in school, if they know of a gay teacher, and if there is someone at school they can talk to.
Appendix 7
Safe to Learn (2007) ~ Executive Summary
Executive summary

1. Every child in every school has the right to learn free from the fear of bullying, whatever form that bullying may take. Everyone involved in a child’s education needs to work together to ensure that this is the case.

2. Schools need to take an active approach to tackling all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Schools should be taking action to prevent bullying behaviour, as well as responding to incidents when they occur. A preventative approach to bullying means that schools safeguard the welfare of their pupils. It also means that schools are playing their part to create a society in which people treat each other with respect. Schools know how to prevent and respond to bullying, and will already have strategies in place. Preventing and responding to homophobic bullying should be part of these existing strategies. This guidance helps with the specifics around homophobic bullying. For more information on overall anti-bullying work, refer to Safe to Learn.

What is homophobic bullying?

3. Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

4. Who experiences homophobic bullying?

- Young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB).
- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Young people who are different in some way – they may not act like the other boys or girls.
- Young people who have gay friends, or family, or their parents/carers are gay.
- Teachers, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.
5. Who does the bullying and why?

- Anyone. Especially if they have not been told it’s wrong.

- They think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are “wrong”.

- People who might be gay themselves, and are angry about that.

- People who think “boys should act like boys” and “girls should act like girls”.

- People who think gay people shouldn’t have the same rights as heterosexual people and use this as justification for bullying.

- People who think gay parenting is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

Why should schools do anything about it?

6. Schools have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with in schools. Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, head teachers, with the advice and guidance of governors and the assistance of school staff, must identify and implement measures to promote good behaviour, respect for others, and self discipline amongst pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. This includes the prevention of homophobic bullying.

7. Homophobic bullying can have a negative impact on young people:

- Bullying can also be linked to poor attendance with studies showing a high degree of absenteeism.

- Seven out of ten young lesbian and gay people say homophobic bullying affects their work.

- Bullying can cause low self-esteem, including the increased likelihood of self-harm and the contemplation of suicide.

- Young people who experience homophobic bullying are unlikely to fulfil the objectives of Every Child Matters and Youth Matters.

How to recognise homophobic bullying

8. Homophobic bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. Sometimes, pupils may not want to tell anyone about it in case teachers/staff or other adults assume they are gay. A recent study found that three in five gay pupils never tell anyone (either at home or school) when they are being bullied. The fact that young people are particularly reluctant to tell is a distinctive aspect of homophobic bullying.

9. Generally, homophobic bullying looks like other sorts of bullying, but in particular it can include:

- Verbal abuse – including spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that something or someone is inferior and so they are “gay” – for example, “you’re such a gay boy!” or “those trainers are so gay!”

- Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault, and threatening behaviour.

- Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

10. Can it happen in Primary schools?

- Yes. Pupils may not know what the words mean, but can use homophobic language against others as a form of bullying.
• Or, they may bully a pupil who has gay parents/carers or family members.

How to respond to homophobic bullying

11. School staff interact with pupils on a daily basis and are more likely to see, and be told about, incidents of homophobic bullying. It is important that staff responses are, in line with Ofsted guidelines, ‘swift, proportionate, discreet, influential and effective’. Staff should feel able to respond effectively to incidents of homophobic bullying, and instil confidence in pupils and parents/carers that issues will be dealt with.

Responding to homophobic language:

12. Casual homophobic language is common in schools but, if it is not challenged, pupils may think that homophobic bullying is acceptable. It is therefore important to challenge homophobic language when it occurs:

• Ensure that pupils know that homophobic language will not be tolerated in schools. Make sure it is included in policies and procedures.

• When an incident occurs, pupils should be informed that homophobic language is offensive, and will not be tolerated.

• If a pupil continues to make homophobic remarks, explain in detail the effects that homophobic bullying has on people.

• If a pupil makes persistent remarks, they should be removed from the classroom and teachers and staff should talk to him or her in more detail about why their comments are unacceptable.

• If the problem persists, involve senior managers. The pupil should be made to understand the sanctions that will apply if they continue to use homophobic language.

• Consider inviting the parents/carers to school to discuss the attitudes of the pupil.

Responding to physical bullying in secondary schools:

13. Like verbal abuse, pupils may be reluctant to report incidents of homophobic bullying because they fear that staff will assume they are gay, even if they are not. Physical abuse can indicate a young person is at risk, and the overarching strategies that are implemented to safeguard pupils might be appropriate in this context, for example working with other agencies, including, if necessary, the police. Schools know how to respond to incidents of physical abuse, and the same strategies should apply when motivated by homophobic bullying. Homophobic violence can be a crime. Anti-bullying policies should be rigorously enforced in order to keep pupils safe from physical abuse.

14. Teachers should refer to the anti-bullying policy and the ‘hierarchy of sanctions’ when responding to homophobic bullying. In particularly severe circumstances the school should consider permanent exclusion.

Prevention

15. Heads, governors and staff can take a number of steps to help prevent homophobic bullying. Prevention should be a central focus of a school’s work to tackle homophobic bullying since taking steps to prevent bullying makes it easier to respond to incidents when they occur. It also enables a school to create an ethos in which pupils are clear that bullying is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

• Ensure relevant policies exist, for example, checking that homophobic bullying is included in anti-bullying policies and related policies and procedures.

• Assess and monitor the extent of homophobic bullying through anonymous staff and pupil surveys, and existing methods like bullying
boxes. Evaluate the responses received and ensure consistent recording and reporting.

• **Raise awareness** of what homophobic bullying is and how the school will respond. Ensure effective reporting systems are in place to enable pupils to report incidents.

• Evaluate and make use of **curriculum opportunities** in order to instil respect for others.

• **Develop effective intervention strategies.**

• Know how to provide sensitive **support** to lesbian and gay pupils to help them feel safe, and able to tell teachers about incidents of homophobic bullying.

**Summary**

16. To create an inclusive environment in your school where all pupils feel safe and are able to fulfil their potential requires a whole school approach. This should be integral to your school’s mission statement and overall vision. The following ten steps can be taken to address homophobic bullying in your school:

1. **Acknowledge and identify the problem of bullying.** The most important step is to recognise that all sorts of bullying takes place in schools, even if some forms are not immediately visible.

2. **Develop policies which recognise the existence of homophobic bullying.** Ensure that your anti-bullying policy takes homophobic bullying into account. Take other appropriate action such as challenging use of the word ‘gay’ and ensuring fast removal of graffiti.

3. **Promote a positive social environment.** The ethos of the entire school community, including all staff and parents/carers, should be to support all pupils, regardless of their differences and to ensure that they are happy and safe.

4. **Address staff training needs.** Do not assume that only lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are able to deal with homophobic bullying, but ensure all staff are confident they know how to react to such situations.

5. **Provide information and support for pupils.** Make age-appropriate information about services and support available to all pupils. Refer pupils to services including ChildLine for additional support.

6. **Include addressing bullying, including homophobic bullying, in curriculum planning.** Try to include teaching about bullying, including homophobic bullying, in the curriculum as a whole in an age-appropriate way and in accordance with National Curriculum subject frameworks and guidance so that pupils understand and appreciate diversity. This can be done formally in lesson times, but also informally, e.g. by providing information about LGB groups within secondary schools, in accordance with the school’s policy.

7. **Feel able to use outside expertise.** People working in external agencies (such as lesbian and gay charities, youth workers or local telephone helplines) can offer support, both outside and inside the classroom, in addressing homophobic bullying.

8. **Encourage role models.** Openly gay staff, governors, parents/carers and/or pupils can all be strong role models for the school.

9. **Do not make assumptions.** Do not assume that all pupils in a class are, or will be, heterosexual. Do not assume that all staff in a school or college are heterosexual. And do not assume that all pupils experiencing homophobic bullying are gay.

10. **Celebrate achievements.** Make successes known, such as updating the school anti-bullying policy or reducing the incidence of bullying, through tutorial time, newsletters, notice-boards or websites etc.
Appendix 8
Safe to Learn (2007) ~ Downloads
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DL</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DL1</td>
<td>What does homophobic bullying look like?</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL2</td>
<td>The role of governors in preventing homophobic bullying</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL3</td>
<td>The School Evaluation Form and homophobic bullying</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL4</td>
<td>Raising awareness about homophobic bullying in the school community</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL5</td>
<td>Developing policies, practices and procedures</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL6</td>
<td>Developing the curriculum to prevent homophobic bullying</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL7</td>
<td>Steps for staff development</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL8</td>
<td>Making pupil support systems inclusive</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL9</td>
<td>Working with pupils who bully</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL10</td>
<td>Working with parents and carers</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL11</td>
<td>Schools with a religious character and homophobic bullying</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL12</td>
<td>How to talk to pupils about homophobic language</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL13</td>
<td>Promoting positive messages about different families</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL14</td>
<td>How to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL15</td>
<td>Coming out stories</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL16</td>
<td>Responding to verbal incidents in primary school</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL17</td>
<td>Responding to verbal incidents in secondary school</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL18</td>
<td>Responding to physical homophobic bullying</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL19</td>
<td>School evaluation form for heads</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL20</td>
<td>Ideas about how to discuss homophobic bullying in secondary schools</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL21</td>
<td>KS1</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL22</td>
<td>KS2</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL23</td>
<td>KS3</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL24</td>
<td>KS4</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL25</td>
<td>Holding bullies to account</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL26</td>
<td>Supporting those harmed by bullying</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL27</td>
<td>The experiences of girls</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL28</td>
<td>The experiences of boys</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL29</td>
<td>Summary – addressing homophobic bullying in your school</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9

Local Government Act 1988, Section 28
CHAPTER 9

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

COMPETITION

Preliminary

Section
1. Defined authorities.
2. Defined activities.
3. Other definitions.

Works contracts: restrictions
5. Works contracts: transitional.

Functional work: restrictions
7. The conditions.
8. The conditions: further provisions.

Accounts, reports and information
9. Accounts to be kept.
10. Financial objectives to be met.
12. Information.

Sanctions
14. Power to give directions.

A*
Local Government Act 1988

Miscellaneous

Section
15. Orders, regulations, specifications and directions.
16. Supplementary.

PART II
PUBLIC SUPPLY OR WORKS CONTRACTS

17. Local and other public authority contracts: exclusion of non-commercial considerations.
18. Race relations matters.
19. Provisions supplementary to or consequential on section 17.
20. Duty of public authorities to give reasons for certain decisions within section 17.
21. Transitional duty of public authorities as regards existing lists.
22. Exclusion of charges for inclusion in approved list.
23. Commencement.

PART III
PRIVATELY LET HOUSING ACCOMMODATION

24. Power to provide financial assistance for privately let housing accommodation.
25. Consent required for provision of financial assistance etc.

PART IV
MISCELLANEOUS AND GENERAL

Miscellaneous

27. Local authority publicity.
28. Prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material.
29. Local government administration.
30. Additional powers for auditors of local authorities etc.
31. Land held by public bodies.
32. Direct labour organisations.
33. Local authority companies.
36. Commutation of smallholdings payments.
37. Dog registration scheme.
38. Abolition of duty on dog licences.
39. Control of stray dogs.

General

40. Finance.
41. Repeals.
42. Citation and extent.

SCHEDULES:
Schedule 1—Competition.
Schedule 2—Public supply or works contracts: the public authorities.
Schedule 3—Local government administration.
Schedule 4—Sections to be inserted in Part III of Local Government Finance Act 1982.
Schedule 5—Land held by public bodies.
Schedule 6—Direct labour organisations.
Schedule 7—Repeals.
"(2) In determining whether material falls within the prohibition regard shall be had to the content and style of the material, the time and other circumstances of publication and the likely effect on those to whom it is directed and, in particular, to the following matters—

(a) whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another;

(b) where the material is part of a campaign, the effect which the campaign appears to be designed to achieve."

(2) In section 4 of that Act (issue by Secretary of State of codes of recommended practice on publicity), in subsection (1) for the words from "for the guidance" to the end there shall be substituted "; and local authorities shall have regard to the provisions of any such code in coming to any decision on publicity."

(3) This section shall come into force at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

28.—(1) The following section shall be inserted after section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition of political publicity)—

"Prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material.

2A.—(1) A local authority shall not—

(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;

(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease.

(3) In any proceedings in connection with the application of this section a court shall draw such inferences as to the intention of the local authority as may reasonably be drawn from the evidence before it.

(4) In subsection (1)(b) above "maintained school" means,—

(a) in England and Wales, a county school, voluntary school, nursery school or special school, within the meaning of the Education Act 1944; and

(b) in Scotland, a public school, nursery school or special school, within the meaning of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980."

(2) This section shall come into force at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

29.—(1) Schedule 3 to this Act (which relates to local government administration) shall have effect.

(2) That Schedule shall come into force at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.
Appendix 10
Interview Schedules ~ Chris Gibbons, Stonewall and Sue Sanders,
Schools Out
Interview Schedule: Chris Gibbons, Senior Education Officer, Stonewall and Sue Sanders, Co-chair Schools Out

Introduction

My research is looking into how the school environment affects young peoples sexual and/or gender identity development, focussing on the difficulties faced by young people who identify, or who are beginning to identify, as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

I’m concentrating on how homophobia, bi-phobia, transphobia and a culture of heteronormativity/heterosexism (the presumption of heterosexuality – clarify at this stage understanding of this and which terms they would prefer I use) in school culture has affected young LGBT people and also, to a lesser extent, on how these factors affect LGBT identified or LGBT perceived teachers.

My View:

I feel there continues to be little opportunity for LGBT teachers to be positively visible at work and that there are major barriers for pupils to negotiate non-normative gender and/or sexual identities at school, such as apathy towards homo/bi/transphobia issues from staff.

I believe the recent research on the extent and nature of homo/bi/transphobic bullying in schools, e.g. Stonewall School Report 2007 is vital. It highlights not only the extent of overt homo/bi/transphobic bullying in schools, but also an underlying heteronormative culture and apathetic attitude to homo/bi/transphobia from staff and other pupils within which homo/bi/transphobic language is commonplace and that is fuelling discrimination.

However, whilst this research is vital, it is not within its remit to fully address how such apathy and discrimination is affecting young people who are negotiating LGBT identities at school – I aim to start this process with my research.
Questions

1. Could you please tell me the remit of your organisation and your role within it?

2. Recent research has clearly highlighted the problems in schools faced by LGBT pupils and staff and there are a number of policies, statutory and non-statutory, and campaigns, which have the potential to help alleviate these issues.

How useful do you think these policies and campaigns have been/are and where they are not useful, why do you think this is?

Prompts:

Examples of Policies:

- Gender Equality Duty and Schools (2007)
- Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (2006)
- Bullying: Don’t Suffer in Silence (2002)
- Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (2000)

Examples of campaigns:

- Stonewall’s Education for All campaign launched 2007
- National Healthy Schools Programme, launched 2005
- DfES Make a Difference Campaign, launched 2004

My view: I think that the recent policy (DCFS, 2007) is excellent and needs to be made statutory and utilised by all schools. The plan to do a School Report every 3 years good as it can work as a monitoring tool, but reformulation of policy is now not necessary, we need to focus on implementation. Where policies are not useful it is because they are not understood and they are not required to be understood – policy will not work without both stringent application and monitoring
and moreover we need to **support policy with moves to change negative attitudes regarding the issues** – prevention, not cure.

3. **Same sex relationships are routinely talked about at primary level in other European countries. Do you think the same policies should be adopted here?**

**Prompts:** Do you think these problems exist at this level? What do you think is the best way to challenge these problems at this level?

**My view:** I think that it is vital to **normalise all varieties of sexualities and genders** at an early age **BEFORE** ill-conceived, incorrect, misconceptions are developed. During my research I have heard excuses such as 5 year olds being too young to understand sexualities, but not too young to understand differences of race and ethnicity. Again, I think it should be about **normalisation and acceptability of all families and relationships, so that children learn early that difference, any difference is normal and bullying on these grounds is unacceptable.** There is no need or reason for same-sex sex to be discussed at this level (another excuse I have heard for not addressing homophobia at this level) just as there is no reason for opposite-sex sex to be discussed and this links to the point of getting people to understand that homo/bisexuality is not solely about sex, another common misconception I have come across – it is about all the same things that heterosexual relationships are about and as such should be discussed on the same footing.

4. **Within schools, how important do you feel it is for combating problems of homo/bi/transphobia and heteronormativity/heterosexism for staff to recognise:**

   a. **That such bullying is occurring in their schools?**
   b. **That male/female binaries and heterosexuality should not be assumed?**

**Prompts:** Do you think that ignorance is fuelling problems?
**My view:** I think these issues are extremely important, they are the first barrier to the problems being overcome and if they are not first recognised then they cannot be challenged – simple as that! People need to understand that heterosexuality and male/female binaries are not essential categories and they need to understand early that discrimination on these grounds should never be tolerated, if those in charge do not adhere to these values, others will follow suit. This is particularly essential in schools, where as well as hierarchical staff relationships, you have the next generation looking up to their teachers as role models; these role models need to be good.

5. **How important do you feel it is for LGBT teachers and other staff to be ‘out’ at work?**

**Prompt:** There seems to be disagreement amongst teachers about disclosure of one’s own sexuality or gender identity at work. Do you see coming out at work as a matter of responsibility? For example to demonstrate to young people that it is ok to be gay/bi/trans and in an attempt to help normalise non-normative identities.

**My view:** I feel that in order for us to work towards equality we need to normalise LGBT identities wherever possible, hiding them at work will not help this cause. Whilst I appreciate some peoples views in relation to their private lives and I wouldn’t advocate the outing of anybody against their will by another person and not even necessarily the overt outing of yourself as soon as you arrive in a job, I strongly advocate a responsibility of LGBT people to be open about their identities in the same way their straight colleagues are, e.g. when a staff event invites partners for LGBT people to take theirs. Unfortunately there is still a presumption that you are heterosexual until ‘proven’ otherwise, so often it is necessary to verbally ‘come out’ in order to be recognised as non-heterosexual (or trans, although the issues are different here in terms of presumptions). However, what we need to work towards is no assumptions being made and I think the best way to do this is, where possible, for LGBT people to ‘come out’ naturally, i.e. a colleague asks what you did at the weekend, you answer with the truth – ‘my girlfriend and I went hiking!’
6. Many teachers cite ‘curriculum restrictions’ and ‘lack of training and resources’ as reasons why homo/bi/transphobic bullying is often not tackled – do you think these are legitimate reasons?

**Prompts:** why is it some schools make use of the resources and some don’t? Presence of ‘out’ LGBT teachers a factor?

**My view:** I would say that this is not an excuse. The resources and training is out there and can be sought and examples such as Stoke Newington School show how not only can overt homo/bi/transphobic bullying be tackled, but the whole school ethos can be challenged and improved without disrupting the curriculum. I recognise that each school has its own issues and homo/bi/transphobia is one of many problems for modern British schools, but apathy and ignorance is not an excuse – get the training and integrate equality into your curriculum!

7. There are some very successful examples of schools changing their ethos’ and challenging homo/bi/transphobic bullying:

   a. Why do you feel these examples are so rare?
   b. Why do you think the Government is not making such initiatives a compulsorily part of the curriculum?

**Prompts:** Why are these successful? Involvement of non-LGBT teachers and staff? Do they show that neither ‘curriculum restrictions’ or ‘lack of training or resources’ should prove a barrier to tackling these issues within schools? Do they demonstrate easy incorporation into the existing curriculum?

**My view:** I think the rarity of these examples has a lot to do with apathy, lack of understanding and a fear of tackling issues which are seen as taboo. A key problem is that they are seen as issues only for LGBT people, which is something we really need break down, much as issues of race are championed by those of all ‘colours’, issues of gender and sexuality need to be addressed by all. The Government seem unwilling to fully commit to policy regarding homo/bi/transphobia and whilst this continues, such examples of good practice will
remain rare. Why they are not making policies statutory and such initiatives compulsory – many reasons, the religion card is one I’ve heard a lot, in my opinion, not an excuse. Although many religions seem to contain much homophobia in their rhetoric, so do they also contain prejudice against each other, and I’m yet to hear the Government stall on racism policy for this reason. I do hear them taking the tone that views of all religions can be accepted within schools, but any prejudice on the basis of religion against another person will not be tolerated – so why is homophobia excluded from this?

8. Given that young people are often unaware of their own sexuality and/or gender identity during their school years, why do you think they are singled out for homo/bi/transphobic bullying?

Prompts: Visible signs? Behaviours perceived as ‘gay’? Do you think this type of singling out can affect how a young person thinks about their sexual and/or gender identity?

My views: I feel the performance of gender through masculinities and femininities from an early age influencing notions of ‘normality’ is central to homo/bi/transphobia, in fact I think it is at the route. Homo/bi/transphobia is basically gender phobia. We have been conditioned to believe there are two genders, male and female, that they act in particular ways, masculine and feminine and that they desire each other, anything that deviates from this model is not normal and therefore a target for discrimination. In this way heterosexuality as normalised and privileged and the normative models of gender legitimate subject positions, alienating LGBT subjects – I think this is compounded within schools, when in fact the school is the perfect site for these misconceptions to be addressed. We can see from Stonewalls School Report 2007 that the culture of the playground and the classroom is likely to have important effects on young people at a time in their lives when they are particularly vulnerable and are at a pivotal point in negotiating their identities.
9. What do you think the significance of using terms such as ‘gay’, ‘poof’, ‘dyke’, ‘tranny’ etc as a ‘put down’ terms in the playground and classroom is? Does this constitute homo/bi/trans bullying?

Prompt: Can we differentiate between the terms’ usage in different contexts? What value and meanings are attached to these terms?

My view: I think this is bullying and feel to some extent context can affect meaning and significance, but this is very difficult to recognise at school age. Education is the key, to teach pupils what are the factual meanings of terms and why using them in certain ways is offensive.

10. In your experience what do you feel are the short and long-term effects on LGBT young people of:

a. Homo/bi/transphobic bullying at school?
b. Heteronormative/heterosexist culture of schools?

Prompts: Physical and Psychological health, academic achievement, social confidence, attendance, careers, relationships, sexual relationships, family relationships?

My view: I feel that development, negotiation and management of identity during your school years is really important for your future health and that the difficulties that LGBT youth face with this have the potential to affect them throughout their lives. I feel that identity choices can often be restricted for young people within schools and even when they are able to explore them, fluidity is not seen as an option, e.g. even if the identity is non normative it is still defined. Also, I think the heteronormative culture and prevalence of homo/bi/transphobic bullying in British schools, does not only effect those directly subjected to harassment either as LGBT, LGBT perceived, or LGBT by association (friends and family individuals of LGBT people), but also those who take on board these discriminatory values and pursue them against others and to a lesser extent those who although do not actively participate in discrimination, witness it happening and are passive about it.
11. What do you think are the legacies of Section 28 are and how would you suggest we attempt to combat these legacies?

Prompts: Do you think practices have changed much over the last 5 years? Do you think there is still a fear of ‘crossing lines’ by talking about LGBT issues in schools?

My view: I wonder if there is still a fear of Section 28 and a lack of understanding about what you are and are not allowed to say/do/teach. However, I feel, just as when Section 28 was still in place, that this is often used as an excuse by teachers who are simply not willing to address the issues – they hide behind policy/the legacy of policies. Whilst Section 28 was extremely negative and set us back many years on the route to achieving LGBT equality in schools and in society more generally, it was often misunderstood, for example it did not legally prevent homophobic bullying from being tackled, yet it was often used as the reason why such bullying went unchallenged. To combat this I think we need to educate teachers and other staff member, at teacher training and induction level for all staff and within schools (INSET) for those already in post...a nice ideal!

12. Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make in relation to the issues covered and/or any questions you have about my work?

If you think of anything else at a later date that you would like to contribute, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Appendix 11

Consent forms ~ Chris Gibbons and Sue Sanders
Research Interview Consent Form

I Chris Gibbons give my permission for my audio recorded interview with Amy MacMillan on 11/06/08 to be used for academic purposes, including in the form of a written Masters Dissertation and publication on academic and/or activist websites in the context of this research in 2008.

Signed:

Date: 7/7/08
Research Interview Consent Form

I, Sue Sanders, give my permission for my audio recorded interviews with Amy MacMillan on 11/06/08 and 25/06/08 to be used for academic purposes, including in the form of a written Masters Dissertation and publication on academic and/or activist websites in the context of this research in 2008.

Signed:

Date:

16/07/08
Appendix 12

Poster sent to LGYM
WERE YOU BULLIED AT SCHOOL BASED ON YOUR GENDER/SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

WAS YOUR SCHOOL PROACTIVE IN EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR GENDER/SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS?

WERE YOUR TEACHERS HELPFUL IF YOU EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS DUE TO YOUR GENDER/SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

HOW WAS YOUR GENDER/SEXUAL ORIENTATION AFFECTED BY YOUR EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOL?

If you are interested in any of these questions, and others, I would like to speak with you…

I am conducting postgraduate research on how the school environment affects young people who identify, or are beginning to identify as sexual or gender minorities, including but not limited to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender.

I am coming to LGYM to run a focus group of about 6 people recently out of compulsory education about their experiences at school, good and bad on 17/06/08. If you are interested in participating please speak to Sally.

Many thanks
Amy MacMillan
Appendix 13
Background Information/Consent Forms ~ LGYM
1. Name: Becky

2. Age: 16

3. Age you left school: 15

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other
   (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other
   (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other
   (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)
   - Work
   - Family
   - Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?
   YES (please insert) _______________  NO  

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Carol

2. Age: 20

3. Age you left school: 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work
- Family
- Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES □ (please insert) ____________ NO □

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes □

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes □

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research □

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research □
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Daniel

2. Age: 21

3. Age you left school: 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):

   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?

   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)

   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?

   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)

   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)
   - Straight

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

n/a

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work
- Family
- Friends

n/a

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES ☐ (please insert) _______________ NO ☐

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Helen

2. Age: 16

3. Age you left school: 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

10, 12, 15 (different ages for different people)

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work
- Family
- Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES [ ] (please insert) _______________  NO [ ]

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes [ ]

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes [ ]

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research [ ]

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research [ ]
1. Name: Matt

2. Age: 19

3. Age you left school: 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6\(^{th}\) form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6\(^{th}\) form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
I don’t remember

10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

13/14

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work ☐
- Family ☐
- Friends ☐

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES ☐ (please insert) _______________ NO ☐

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Nicola

2. Age: 17

3. Age you left school: 15

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

15

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work [ ]
- Family [ ]
- Friends [ ]

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES [ ] (please insert) _______________ NO [ ]

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes [ ]

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes [ ]

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research [ ]

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research [ ]
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Sarah

2. Age: 19

3. Age you left school: 15

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other
   (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other
   (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other
   (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

   16 to parents, friends etc
   18 to sister

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

   Work  
   Family  
   Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

   YES (please insert) _______________  NO

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research
1. Name: Tanya

2. Age: 15

3. Age you left school: Not left yet

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

14

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work
- Family
- Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES ☐ (please insert) ______________ NO ☐

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Ushihu

2. Age: 19

3. Age you left school: 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
16. out with friends and family at 17

10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

See above

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work
- Family
- Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES ☐ (please insert) _____Ushihu______  NO ☐

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐
1. Name: Von

2. Age: 18

3. Age you left school: 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - G NVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state) BTEC National Diploma

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
11ish

10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

   Outed to Dad – 16
   Came out to Mum -17

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

   Work
   Family
   Friends

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

   YES (please insert) _______Von_______   NO

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research
Background Information and Consent Form for LGYM members, Focus Group 17/06/08

1. Name: Wolfy

2. Age: 15

3. Age you left school:
   Will be 16

4. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):
   - Private
   - State
   - Co-ed
   - Single-sex boys
   - Single-sex girls
   - Other (please state)

5. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?
   - n/a
   - Same School
   - Different College/6th form

6. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)
   - will have GCSEs
   - A Levels
   - GNVQ
   - NVQ
   - Other (please state)

7. What do you do now?
   - Full time work
   - Part time work
   - Student
   - NEET (not in employment, education or training)

8. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)
   - Lesbian
   - Gay
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Transsexual
   - Queer
   - Other (please state)

9. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
10. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

I haven’t just to mates who are the same

11. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

Work ☐
Family ☐
Friends ☐ some

12. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES ☐ (please insert) __________Wolfy___ NO☐

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes ☐

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research ☐
Appendix 14
LGYM Focus Group and Silver Interview Schedule
Introduction:

My research is looking into how the school environment affects young peoples sexual and/or gender identity development, focussing on the difficulties faced by young people who identify, or who are beginning to identify, as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

Although I am going to ask the group a number of questions, please do not feel you have to answer them all. The session is meant to be relaxed and interactive, so although I do have some key things I would like to cover, depending on your answers and experiences the session may go off in many directions and that is fine. The important thing is that you feel combatable with what we are doing and you feel able to contribute anything you think is relevant. If at any point you do not feel combatable please let me know or (and hopefully this wont happen!) if you feel extremely uncomfortable, free to leave at any point.

Please ask me to clarify anything you do not understand, to take leads from other people in the group and discuss things with them as well as me. Although I’m asking the questions, we do not need to stick rigidly to the schedule and it should be more of a group discussion than an interview, so if appropriate ask each other questions and compare experiences. Also, although I would like to hear about your experiences, it’s OK to tell me about any second hand experiences you have too, maybe of friends or relatives.

Finally, if there is anything I ask which you would like to answer, or to elaborate on, or anything else you would like to talk to me about, but do not feel combatable doing in front of the group, you can speak to me one-to-one afterwards, or if you prefer via phone or email at a later date – just ask!

Experiences at school:

1. Can you tell me a bit about your own experiences at school relating to your gender and/or sexual identity? E.g. did you get bullied, did people you know get bullied, how did the school deal with it and what were the teacher’s attitudes?
**Prompts**

**Bullying**
- Were you bullied, if so in what ways, when and by who?
- Did you report it?
- If not, why not?
- If so, what were the outcomes?
- Non-reporting linked to staff being involved in the bullying?
- Any experiences of being told they are the ones in the wrong for being LGBT? Instances of reporting making it worse?

**Teachers:**
- In general were your teachers and/or other staff helpful if you experienced problems due to your actual or perceived gender and/or sexual orientation?
- What was their attitude towards you like? Differences between teachers with different attitude, e.g. their identities?

2. **Were there elements of your learning experience that made you feel uncomfortable due to their heterosexual focus?**

**Prompts**

**General School Environment:**
- How did the environment of your school make you feel?
- Was your school proactive in equality and diversity for gender and/or sexual minority students?
- Did they have an anti-homophobic bullying policy and/or did PSHE lessons include information about same-sex relationships as well as opposite-sex ones?
- Did you feel that the overall curriculum and general school culture was inclusive of all identities, including individuals with ‘non-normative’ sexual and/or gender identifications?
- Were any subjects particularly discriminatory or inclusive?
Other Prompts:
- Before you were self-confident about your LGBT identity did other people identify you as queer/LGBT?
- Who were these people?
- Why do you think they did this?
- How did they do this?

The effect of your school experiences:

3. Do you feel there were short and long-term effects or consequences of these experiences at school on your sense of self/identity? Let's start with short term… and long term…

Prompts:
Short and long-terms effects:
- Academic achievement
- Attendance
- Participation in extra curricular activities
- Friendships and family relations
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Sexual relationships
- General well being and life outlook

- How did other peoples perceptions of you affect your own understandings about and feelings towards your gender and/or sexual identity?

Importance of the School:

4. How comfortable were you at school compared to other spaces, e.g. home or social spaces? How did different environments help you to understand your sexual and/gender identity?

Prompts:
- Where do you feel your knowledge about sexual and/or gender identities has come from?
- What do you feel has helped you to understand your non-normative sexual and/or gender identity as you have grown up?
• Were/are your family supportive of your gender and/or sexual identity/orientation?

The Future:

5. *How do you see yourself now and in the future?*

**Prompts:** Problems, career aspirations, family and relationship expectations and what they would like to see happen in schools.
Appendix 15
Background Information/Consent form ~ Silver
Background Information and Consent Form for Silver, 
LGYM 17/06/08

13. Name: Silver

14. Age: 25

15. Age you left school: 15

16. What type of school did you go to (tick all that apply):

- Private
- State
- Co-ed
- Single-sex boys
- Single-sex girls
- Other

(please state)

17. If you stayed post 16 was this at the same school or a different college/6th form?

- n/a
- Same School
- Different College/6th form

18. What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? (tick all that apply)

- GCSEs
- A Levels
- NVQ
- NVQ
- Other

(please state) Various Colleges Courses

19. What do you do now?

- Full time work
- Volunteer with ‘exceeding expectations’
- Part time work
- Recently left
- Student
- NEET (not in employment, education or training)

20. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Transsexual
- Queer
- Other (please state)

21. At what age did you ‘come out’ to yourself (approx)? (explain/expand if you wish)
22. At what age did you ‘come out’ to others? (explain/expand if you wish)

17 to some
23 to some

23. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

- Work
- Family
- Friends

Not to Mum and brother, 2 sisters know

24. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

YES (please insert) ______Silver_______ NO

CONSENT (tick 2 out of 4 boxes):

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used for academic purposes

I DO agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research

I DO NOT agree for my answers given during this focus group (17/06/08) to be used on academic and/or activist websites within the context of this research
Appendix 16
Poster sent to Schools
Gender and/or Sexual Orientation Issues in Your School?

- Have you experienced or witnessed bullying based on gender/sexual orientation in your school?

- Is your school proactive in equality and diversity for students and employees?

- Are you affected by your gender/sexual orientation at work?

- Are students’ gender/sexual orientation affected by their experiences at school?

If you are interested in any of these questions, and others, I would like to speak with you…

I am conducting postgraduate research on how the school environment affects young people who identify, or are beginning to identify as sexual or gender minorities, including but not limited to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender.

I would like to speak with anyone involved in education who feels they are able to contribute to this research, including but not limited to teachers, parents and teaching assistants.

Please Contact AMY MACMILLAN by 23/05/08 Email: gs07alm@leeds.ac.uk; Phone: 0113 3438337
Appendix 17
Cover Letter sent to Schools
April 20th 2008

All Secondary Schools Administrative Staff

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a postgraduate researcher looking into how the school environment affects young people who identify or are beginning to identify as having a non-normative sexuality and/or gender identity. I am interested in the experiences of ANY teachers, about any issues in this area, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Could you please display this poster in a prominent staff ONLY area. It is not intended to recruit student participants. All respondents will remain anonymous unless they commit to involvement in focus groups. Initial inquires to the researcher does not amount to an agreement to participate.

Sincerely,

Amy MacMillan
Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies,
Leeds University
Email: gs07alm@leeds.ac.uk
Phone: 0113 3438337
Appendix 18
Background Information/Consent Forms ~ Teachers
1. Name: Sandra Jamieson

2. Years as a qualified teacher: 3

3. What type of school do you teach at?
   - Private □  State □  Co-ed □  Single-sex boys □
   - Single-sex girls □  Other (please state) □

4. What subject(s) do you teach?

   PE

5. How do you self identify in terms of your gender and/or sexuality at present? (tick all that apply)

   Female □  Male □  Lesbian □  Gay □
   Bisexual □  Transgender □
   Transsexual □  Queer □  Other (please state) □

6. In which areas of your life are you ‘out’ (tick all that apply & explain/expand if you wish)

   Work - to colleagues □
   Work – to pupils □
   Family □
   Friends □  Some

7. This research will be anonymous; do you have a preferred pseudonym?

   YES □  (please insert) ________________  NO □
Research Interview Consent Form

I [Samantha Jefferson] give my permission for my audio recorded interview with Amy MacMillan on 22/08/08 to be used for academic purposes, including in the form of a written Masters Dissertation and publication on academic and/or activist websites in the context of this research in 2008.

Signed:

Date: 22/08/08
Appendix 19
Interview Schedule ~ Gay Female Teacher
Interview Schedule for Gay Teachers

Introduction

My research is looking into how the school environment affects young peoples sexual and/or gender identity development, focussing on the difficulties faced by young people who identify, or who are beginning to identify, as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

I’m concentrating on how homophobia, bi-phobia, transphobia and a culture of heteronormativity/heterosexism (the presumption of heterosexuality – clarify at this stage understanding of this and which terms they would prefer I use) in school culture has affected young LGBT people and also, to a lesser extent, on how these factors affect LGBT identified or LGBT perceived teachers.

My View:

I feel there continues to be little opportunity for LGBT teachers to be positively visible at work and that there are major barriers for pupils to negotiate non-normative gender and/or sexual identities at school, such as apathy towards homo/bi/transphobia issues from staff.

I believe the recent research on the extent and nature of homo/bi/transphobic bullying in schools, e.g. Stonewall School Report 2007 is vital. It highlights not only the extent of overt homo/bi/transphobic bullying in schools, but also an underlying heteronormative culture and apathetic attitude to homo/bi/transphobia from staff and other pupils within which homo/bi/transphobic language is commonplace and that is fuelling discrimination.

However, whilst this research is vital, it is not within its remit to fully address how such apathy and discrimination is affecting young people who are negotiating LGBT identities at school – I aim to start this process with my research.
1. *Do you see homo/bi/transphobia as a problem in schools for a) staff and b) student?*

**Prompts:**
Recent research (Stonewall, 2007) has graphically highlighted the problem of homophobia in our schools, for example that 65% of LGB people experience bullying in Britain’s schools and 97% hear derogatory comments relating to their sexuality, with half of teachers failing to respond to this language when they hear it.

2. *How important do you feel it is for LGBT teachers and other staff to be out at work?*

**Prompts:** Do you see coming out at work as a matter of responsibility? For example to demonstrate to young people that it is ok to be gay/bi/trans and in an attempt to help normalise non-normative identities. Or do you see it as irrelevant – or a personal matter?

3. *What have/have you not disclosed about your own sexuality at work, why, how and to whom?*

**Prompts:** e.g. do you take you partner (if/when you have one) to work events where heterosexual partners are in attendance? Do you engage in staff room conversation in an open way or do you omit things to avoid disclosing your sexuality?

4. *Are there ever times when they feel unsafe in the classroom because of your sexuality and if so what things make you feel safer?*

5. *Are there times when you do not disclose your sexual orientation for fear of negative reactions or explicit prejudice? If so, who do you envisage making trouble for you and why?*

**Prompts:** Other staff members, students, parent?
6. Have you experienced or witnessed homo/bi/transphobic bullying at your school? Can you tell me about it? What actions were taken as a result?

7. Do you hear words like ‘gay’, ‘poof’, ‘dyke’, ‘tranny’ etc used as ‘put down’ terms in the playground and classroom? How serious do you think this behaviour is? Do you think this constitutes homo/bi/trans bullying?

**Prompt:** Can we differentiate between the terms’ usage in different contexts? What value and meanings are attached to these terms?

8. Within schools, how important do you feel it is for combating problems of homo/bi/transphobia and heteronormativity/heterosexism for staff to recognise:
   
   c. That such bullying is occurring in their schools?
   
   d. That male/female binaries and heterosexuality should not be assumed?

**Prompts:** Do you think that ignorance is fuelling problems?

9. What policies are there in your school regarding homo/bi/transphobic bullying? Do you feel that a) staff and b) students are protected by these policies?

**Prompts:** Staff and student’s awareness of these policies and whether they make sure of them, if not why not.

10. What do you know about government backed campaigns and government policies that protect both staff and students from homo/bi/transphobic bullying?

**Prompts:**
Examples of Policies:
(only bring in a few if necessary)

Homophobic Bullying. Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools (2007)
Gender Equality Duty and Schools (2007)
Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (2006)
Education and Inspections Act (2006)
Employment equality (Sexual Orientation Act)
Bullying: Don’t Suffer in Silence (2002)
Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (2000)

*Section 28 abolished in 2003*

Campaign: Education for All

**Prompts:** Do you think practices have changed much since section 28 abolition? Do you think there is still a fear of ‘crossing lines’ by talking about LGBT issues in schools?

11.**What training did you receive during your PGCE/teacher training degree regarding issues around gender and sexuality?**

**Prompts:** Do you feel this was sufficient? Did you anticipate problems because of your lack of training?

12.**Do you feel there is space within the curriculum and training and resources to tackle and prevent homo/bi/transphobic bullying?**

**Prompts:** why is it some schools make use of the resources and some don’t? Presence of ‘out’ LGBT teachers a factor?

13.**Do you feel the curriculum is inclusive of all genders and sexual identities?**
Prompts: Is the curriculum heterosexist, is it doing anything to normalise homo/bi/transexuality? Is it overtly homo/bi/transphobic in places? Sex Ed for example?

14. Given that young people are often unaware of their own sexuality and/or gender identity during their school years, why do you think they are bullied on those grounds?

Prompts: Visible signs? Behaviours perceived as ‘gay’? Do you think this type of singling out can affect how a young person thinks about their sexual and/or gender identity?

15. In your experience what do you feel are the short and long-term effects of Homo/bi/transphobic bullying and heteronormative/heterosexist cultures of schools on:

a. LGBT or LGBT perceived young people
b. LGBT or LGBT perceived teachers

Prompts: Physical and Psychological health, academic achievement, social confidence, attendance, careers, relationships, sexual relationships, family relationships?

16. Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make in relation to the issues covered and/or any questions you have about my work?

If you think of anything else at a later date that you would like to contribute, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Appendix 20-24

Transcripts
Focus Group ~ Lesbian and Gay Youth
Manchester (LGYM) 17/06/08

Participants* ~ age, self identified gender and sexual identities:

Helen (H), 16 female, lesbian
Becky (B), 16, female, lesbian
Von (V), 18 female, lesbian
Matt**, 19 male, gay
Usihihu (U), 19, Male, bisexual
Sarah**, 19, female, lesbian
Daniel (D), 21, male, straight
Nicola (N), 17, female, lesbian
Wolfy (W), 15, female, lesbian
Tanya (T), 15, female, lesbian
Carol**, 20, female, lesbian

* All names have been changed and references to other people have been blacked out to protect identities. On page 26 the conversation between Wolfy, Tanya and Nicola included male and female ‘versions’ on the trans persons name that they are talking about.
* * These participants did not speak during the session.

Key:

AM: Interviewer (Amy MacMillan)
[//] indicates a noticeable pause in speech
... indicates break in/continuous of speech due to interruption by another speaker
{} words spoken over previous speaker
{} speech interrupted and cut off another speaker
() description of sounds/actions within/between speech
Italics indicates the speaker is imitating another person with their speech
! word/sentence exclaimed with emphasis or irony
, normal pause in sentence
. normal end of sentence

Transcript:

AM: Ok, we’re recording. So thank you very much everybody for coming to meet with me today. If I could ask that when you answer the questions, do try and speak clearly and as loudly as possible. I will try to get your names right, but do correct me if I get them wrong. Ok, we are going to start with your general experiences at school. So can you
please tell me a bit about your own experiences at school relating to your gender and/or
sexual identity development. For example whether you got bullied, whether people you
know got bullied and how did the school deal with this if you were. Anyone like to open
up? Yes Tanya.

T: Ur yeah, my, one of my closest friends, when she came out in like year seven or
something and everything body just called her on it until they got really bored and now
everybody just goes to me oh you’re a lesbian you’re a lesbian [//] I’ve not come out in
school yet cos its just quite scary at the minute and yeah everybody like if I walk into a
class they’ll just go yeah alright dyke or um I walk around the school yard just one of the
year sevens will go up to me a going you’re that lesbian from year ten. It’s like, great…

AM: {Ok}

T: …yeah so they’re always really a bit of knobheads to be honest.

AM: Fair enough, we are going to talk more…

T: {Am I supposed to swear?}

AM: …no, that’s absolutely fine as well. I did an interview with, um a very senior person
in this field down in London on, last weds and she swore quite a lot, so…

{laughs}

AM: …I wouldn’t worry about that. Um, Ok, anyone else? Yes, Becky.

B: When I started doing art with my teacher, called Miss [ ] …um…

{laughs}

B: …um when she found out I was gay, um she split, she tried to split me up from the rest
of the group, tried to get me suspended, lost my work on purpose, tried to get me expelled
and um when I saw her on prom she said that she wanted to slap me cos she was so
drunk, just because I said I had my girlfriend with me…

T: {laughs}

AM: {and this was a teacher?}

B: …and this was a teacher yeah.

AM: Did you report it at all?

B: Um I did try but then my headmaster told me just then it’s all a rumour and it doesn’t
[/] if you’re not really a lesbian or that I was just like pretty ohh.
D: That’s pretty bad actually you should have some kind of power over a teacher, just because you’re…

T: {what throw a chair at her head}!

(laughs)

T: (inaudible)

H: Well it is like harassment and things like that.

AM: Has anyone had experiences were teachers have [//] have been homophobic towards them?

V: My teachers did jack [//] basically…

AM: {Jack shit}?

V: …yeah I had posters put up in the toilets saying look at the new found dyke is and they just got took down, nothing was said, even though people admitted and went up to them and told them who it was, they didn’t do anything because it was easier not to, because they would have got shot in the head…

{inaudible}

V: …and I also got told my art work was very lesbian, because it was made up of triangles [//] that was interesting…

T: {seriously}?

AM: By your teachers?

T: {I got off…}

V: {It’s stupid}

T: {I got offered to do some body and life art drawing to…}

V: {It’s stupid}

T: …well its great cos my teacher’s a lesbian as well [//] yeah its like, what does that mean, she went, drawing naked people and I went like I’m getting all my mates can we all come and she were like yeah you know you’ll be drawing a female, even better.

(inaudible)

V: I had one nice teacher.

AM: Um Ushihu?
U: Ur when I was at high school what happened was um one of my friends came out in year nine and like I wasn’t out at the time but he was and I just like noticed everything that happened to him and it kind of put me off for a few years. Cos um, like I even noticed in ur um science classes um it was kind of split into like gender, so like all the lads like all the lads were just all on him and just putting him through like a load of crap and then like in the PE lessons he was kind of um like um made to stay in a room on his own cos the rest of the year made him like not allowed to do PE cos they said they weren’t comfortable with him doing it in front of them…

H: {Yeah I didn’t do PE, I went to the library}

U: …they just put him in a little room for like two hours a week, which was crap.

AM: And what did the teachers do about this, did they just…?

U: {Nothing they just discriminated against him, it was quite ridiculous

AM: OK, um, Helen.

H: Um well, in RE they always used to have these really heated discussions about things and my teacher would always just like target me cos she knew I had opinions on things like gay marriage and things like that. So one day she asked us to categorise things into sins and crimes or both like so a diagram with two circles. So she had things like rape, stealing, hitting a child, in the middle it was like homosexuality and I was like, I just said that I wasn’t going to participate in it cos I thought it was just wrong…

AM: {right}

H: …and then like afterwards like when we were all like having a discussion about it where people put things, everyone had just put it in the middle and she knew I wasn’t comfortable with it, but she still asked me about it and I just got like heckled by everyone cos I said well I don’t think it belongs here and she just did this consistently throughout the year because she knew she could always get a reaction out of me.

AM: So that’s another example of teachers um creating it…

H: {yeah}

AM: …a lot of what’s been said so far, um is actually (sigh) I would argue that it actually is bullying but some resources say its not direct bullying its more what we call heteronormativity in schools, is that something that’s familiar with anybody?

V: What’s normal…

H: {Assuming everyone’s…}

V: …basically
AM: That’s not really what it means, it’s like the assumption of heterosexuality which happens in society as we all know [//] and it happens a lot in schools, so you guys as as L, G, B, or T would have to say, come out and say well actually I’m gay, I’m lesbian, or people would look at you and assume you are gay and lesbian from signals…

U: {It’s a bit ridiculous because you don’t get people coming out as straight…

AM: {exactly}

U: …people should force people to come out as straight!

V: What would you do if you found out your child was straight?!

V: That would make me laugh!

AM: Yeah, yeah, Tanya?

T: I was like, all the way through year nine cos I just I just had my hair cut really short it was like a lot shorter than this it were like two inches and spiky and everything, so everybody just assumed that I was gay and I went up to my, I went up to my deputy head who was Mr [redacted] and he were like you don’t look like a lesbian, you don’t, just cos you’ve got your tongue pieced and you got really short hair. I were like yeah, he went I think you look quite smart actually, but are you a lesbian? I were like yeah and he just started like helping me out a lot if anybody like bullied me cos of it, he just, they like get expelled straight away, so I was quite happy.

AM: So you did eventually get some help from your teachers?

T: Yeah but he’s left now.

AM: Oh no! Did people find, or do people find that at school there are certain teachers that are more supportive?

V: Yes.

T: My nurses were…

V: {I was outed}

T: …I went up to her and I told her, like and I told her I was having a load of problems right, cos I was ill and she were like right don’t go near any guys right, don’t its not safe for you at the minute. I went there’s there’s no worry about that Miss there’s none and she were like well I’m just telling you for your safety don’t go near any guys, I went no Miss there’s like zero chance that I actually will and she went oh, ohhhh, so well guys, girls don’t go near any of um, well its fine with me everybody’s mixed up in this jiggy-jungle together, I were like [//] its alright though she rode a triumph.

AM: Ok, Becky. No?
B: What?

AM: I thought someone wanted to say something over here?

B: No, my teachers weren’t supportive in fact my PE teacher tried to stop me from doing PE, which was really funny because um she started shouting at me because I beat her at basketball, it was like a one-on-one and I wasn’t supposed to get past her and I like got past her and she (inaudible) I was like coming out the changing rooms leaving school she was like oh my god you look a dyke, no wonder you’re a lesbian and all that, so that’s the only reason why you won…

AM: {and this was a teacher?}

B: …yes, my PE teacher.

T: It’s like a (inaudible).

AM: Were any of you um like experiencing quite consistent bullying? Um and if you were, I I wonder whether you reported it and if you didn’t why not?

H: When I was in year six like um I went on like a trip with like the whole year and like I got off with one of the g [206x438] girls and then when we got back to school like I just got like abusive phone calls and stuff all the time, no-one would go near me and things like that, but I couldn’t tell anyone cos [/] well I was ten.

T: (laughter/inaudible)

AM: Was the other girl, presumably not from the same school as you?

H: No, she was…

AM: {oh she was}

H: …no because she was, she just made up loads of lies, cos like we were like in a room with loads of people, so everyone saw it but like everyone backed her up, so I was just like the dirty lesbian…

AM: {inaudible}

H: …yeah and I couldn’t tell mum and Dad and they still don’t know about it and like this is why I hated school so much cos I just got like crap like all year and then like when I went into high school I still had like people ringing me up like because like I went to a local school I still had people ringing me up, like I just used to see them all the time and like my Mum and Dad just never really got why I…

AM: {So your Mum and Dad didn’t know you were gay? So didn’t like…

H: {Well I was ten!
T: She wasn’t even sure herself!

AM: When you were getting the…

H: {they just didn’t (inaudible)}

AM: …the problems at school, they didn’t know you were getting them or they didn’t know why you were getting them?

H: No, and like when I…

T: {that’s rubbish}

H: …I told the teacher about it, I think one of them just admitted that they’d done it and that was fine because they’d admitted it. So they said, yeah I’ve done it, so it’s like I got the big talk, it’s like, they’ve been very good, that they’ve admitted it, I never got like an apology so and it didn’t make a lot of sense really.

AM: So have other people had experiences were they’ve told teachers of homophobic incidents happening and they’ve either completely ignored them or they’ve said they’ll deal with them and then they haven’t really, um just I wonder how anyone’s teachers um have been?

T: Yeah, um in I think yeah its this year, um cos there’s a load of teachers at my school that’s like lesbians anyway but um they cant, well everyone thinks its rumours but its actually not, cos yeah I’ve had like one-to-one discussions [/] cos yeah if your being bullied and you tell them they cant do anything anyway cos um the teachers at my school they feel dead like oh I cant do that or they’ll actually um yeah. And I hate it in school [/] actually I find it quite funny when others bully you for being gay, I find it hilarious, cos like, its like they don’t even know what they are and the one thing that does do my head in though in school is that when you come out gay all the girls automatically think that your going to fancy every girl in school…

{laughter}

T: …I walked into the changing rooms and the all the girls turned round and went urg go in the lads you’re gonna start perving on us, I went, why you’re all munters!…

V: {there’s nothing to perv at!}

T: …and they went, yeah well they all think your automatically going to fancy every girl there which is…

W: {they all wear brown blazers!}

T: …I’m the only one that looks good in that uniform!

H: They just forget that everyone who’s straight doesn’t fancy every single boy, every single girl.
U: {yeah}

T: Cos I had an argument with my teachers though cos they were like they're right though they said you should be in the lads changing room, I went but…

V: {but I’m Feemale!}
T: …yeah, I I I were like….

{inaudible}

T: …God just because I’m gay doesn’t mean I have the equipment down there for the other sex, which is quite sad…
{laughter}

T: …yeah actually, I just sprouted one magically when I decided I was gay!

{laughter}

B: Have you got penis envy?!

{laughter}

AM: I think we’ll move on from this…

V: {yeah}

AM: …we’ve talked mainly so far about quite direct obvious bullying I also wonder whether any of you found elements of what we call the ‘learning experience’ which is like everything that happens at school which made you feel uncomfortable due to the kind of heterosexual focus, um yeah go on.

V: Sex education, seriously! It was crap…

U: {yep, yep}

T: {…don’t do it!}

V: …it was, it was all it was all um, in fact I got sent into the inclusion room for a week because of asking a question.

AM: Right.

V: Everything was male-female sex ed and I was like [/] I was, I was, my Dads a vicar so like I I I never knew what lesbianism was…

{laughter}
V: …my poor head it still hurts. Um and of course I didn’t understand how things worked but I knew I wasn’t normal, well normal to other people. Um and I asked and because of my school wasn’t the nicest of schools they thought I was asking to get the rest of the class rowdy cos it was still like…

AM: {What to get a reaction?}

V: …no like to because it was like an outside women who came in, for them to cause trouble for her and I got like sent to the head of years and it was before I got outing at school, by Johnny, idiot um and it was, it was I don’t, that was bad it was like it was nothing and it was like but what about two girls, two men, you know stop trying that Von and just like what and…

H: {that is part of what’s sort of like assumed.

V: {it was crap}

AM: Yeah.

W: When we was doing sex ed I think my teacher knew sumin’ about me, cos she thought I were like perving on her or sumin’ but she was like muntin’ anyway…

T: {what were she leaning over like this?}

W: …well she was like, every question she asked me in sex ed the answer was penis, so I found it quite amusing for two years.

T: Oh no, I find the best lesson right, um well the worst lesson, RE because know I’m gay at RE and I’m an atheist, I’ll probably get an ‘e’ or something. But we had this one lesson on homo, homosexuality and he made me do a poster Mr [redacted], right and it was, everybody else got like wealth and stuff like that and I got homosexuality, you know them like bathroom signs that you get, I were like, the females that only have one leg…{laughter}

T: …right I I I had two of them stood next to each other holding hands yeah he went you cant do that and I went why, its on homosexuality and he went that’s that’s that’s just silly and then we had a lesson talking about um like views on it in the, in Christianity, which is really rubbish and I’m not even gonna get into that and …

V: {oh it’s fun, my Dad protested at pride and I was on a float, I was outing, I was like hello}

T: …forty-five minutes of a lesson I was arguing with my teacher about homosexuality. So everybody else had to carry on writing and doing the posters and I were just screaming in his face saying you’re a horrible cunt get away from me…{laughter}
T: …yeah but like all Catholic, like all Catholic views are saying like that homosexuality is wrong, which is a load of rubbish cos it suggests in the bible that Jacob was gay anyway, with Simon…

V: {did you know though, did you know its also as bad, well it’s bad being gay as eating pig [//] eating fish which have fins and wearing garments of clothes which have more than one type of material so like half polyester half cotton, its as bad as being gay in the eyes of God…

T: {Yeah but um…}

H: {Yeah I mean its like exclusive things, like some people pick out parts that there…

V: {If you’re gonna quote anything, quote every single thing in Leviticus please [//] and then I’ll be happy.

{inaudible}

U: Religion is like a bit stupid anyway!

W: Um, like I’m a Catholic…

AM: {right}

W: …and um like I just get like, well I go to a Catholic school so I’ve not come out obviously and then at like any youth group I go to or sumin’ like that I get the mick taken out of me or sort of cos they’re like oh you believe in God and God says that it’s wrong to be gay and then like, half the [//] I always have like an argument with like my RE teacher or any preacher in the street of Bolton, because he said that I like, he said to my mate if I put um a murderer, um like a thief and a homosexual all in the same line in front of a just judge they’d all be condemned to hell and so half the preachers in Manchester and Bolton have my phone number and send me texts every two days saying like I’m the pasture who says it’s wrong to be gay, even though I’ve read the Bible seven times and it doesn’t say that…

V: {it says it in Leviticus, it says, God condemns two man to sleep with other man [//]} (inaudible)…

T: {It it actually says, no, no Man shall not lay lay next to another man as you would with a woman…or cos you’d be condemned…

V: {yeah…same thing…}

{inaudible}
T: {But also that dude that writes a load of letters to like whoever in like the bible or like whatever…

V: {Paul?}

T: …yeah that one. He says right, sodomists, thieves, murderers and like a load of other stuff, bigamists and stuff shall not enter the gates of heaven, which is a load of rubbish because…

V: {I don’t wanna go to heaven if all the people who have ever drank alcohol or who have ever done fun things in life which you have to do at least once, they’re all gonna be in hell, why the hell would you wanna be in heaven?!

T: {Yeah well…}

V: {Poor little goody two shoes!}

{inaudible}

T: …no cos Jesus said right, that no-body should get to heaven um like my fathers kingdom umcept, expect through me right but also it says somewhere else that if you live a good and healthy life you are gonna go to heaven anyway…

H: {Jesus’ golden rule though, Jesus’ golden rule though…

D: {What’s that?}

H: Its just like there’s like three golden rules…

V: {Let’s have a religion debate later}

AM: Ok, yeah moving on from religion we can link this in actually, you’ve mentioned PSE lessons, which I’m now told are called PSHE…

V: {yeah}

B: There’s actually…

V: {PSHRE, you need to call it alphabet lesson!

AM: I wonder, I think you’ve pretty much answered this question, I wanted to ask whether there was any anti-homophobia bullying policy at your school that you were aware of and were the PSHE QTR whatever they’re called lessons, included any information about same sex relationships?

B: No!

AM: Becky.
B: Um there was rules put in place in St James but um basically if anyone tried to do anything they were saying it was my fault and they would take their side and when I told my religion teacher that some of the guys in the class were attempting to bully me and that if I get into a fight its her fault for not stopping it, um she started um she started crying cos I told her I was gay and she was just like [/]

AM: Wow, so did you feel that your teachers didn’t understand how to deal with the fact that you were gay? Was that was that seen as the problem rather than the bullying?

B: They were unable to, because they’d always take the other peoples side…

T: {we’ve got posters up in our school of um the group that me and Nicky and Wolfy go to in Bolton LGBT um…

AM: {right}

T: …yeah, and its well mad cos like everybody just looks at it and goes urrr urrr. I’m like yeah I go to that and I’ve got a float in gay pride oh yeah!

AM: {Were you made to feel by your teachers that the problem was actually your sexuality not, not the bullying? No?

V: I used to have a mentor.

AM: {right}

V: Um and I had I was going through a bit of a crap time with my uncle, my uncle was a drug addict and like alcoholic and they all assumed that everything was just around the uncle cos he used to live with us…

T: {yeah that happens to me}

V: …um [/] but it wasn’t and it was like so how’s your uncle today, how’s your mum today and um like I ran away, I went to my well went to my best friends and she’s like how’s your mum, how your uncle and it was just like no matter, I I did tell them that it wasn’t that [/] but um I don’t know it was hard because I’d been outed but it was never how are you it was just how’s your uncle, how’s that making you feel, not how’s the people putting posters up in the toilets [/] and shit…

T: {I went to my head um head teacher and told her I as gay and cos she she were asking me a load of questions and the day after um she put me in counselling in school.

V: For being gay?

T: Yeah. That’s what happens in high school, especially in the college, you go, if you come out to somebody and the teachers hear about it they put you in for counselling saying like its wrong, you’ve gonna be fixed, God will save you…
B: {My Dads like that}
V: {My Dads like that}
T: …I’m sorry right it’s not as fun as…

H: {I think a lot of it is to do with attitudes in school, cos the teachers like, a lot of it is due to kind of ignorance and things like that, cos people aren’t told about it, cos teacher aren’t being, well possibly, I dunno, you know, I’ve not been on a teaching course, but they’re not told about these kinds of issues in a classroom and I was like I was…

T: {inaudible}

H: …like I went to a very diverse school, but there were never anything like that. It was always set in stone that racism was wrong. So there was like kind of, no-one in my school was kind of black or from other races it was always kind of said that that’s always always wrong, and then they was like sort of really homophobic and things like that…

T: {Yeah but yeah but they never put the point across that its actually normal to be gay, which really does my head in because they say that um racisms ur are wrong and everything, well why cant homophobia be?

AM: {That’s what my research is like is based on, what I’m trying to do, so…

V: {I work in a nursery and I know it’s a bit different and I know it’s a nursery but they is a lickle boy who is kind of I think showing trans things. Its like when you’re talking round the table, he’s like, I want to be a little, I want to be a big boy like my sister, I want to be a big girl, its like and its just stuff like that and the teachers actually sat him on the egg timer before, which is used as a punishment, for telling him not to be silly.

AM: Yeah, no I’ve heard, I’ve heard about experiences like that. I’ve got um two young god children, one of whom is a toddler and he, well he, he’s not I don’t think at all that he’s gay or trans, but that’s neither here nor there, he just likes dolls…

V: {yeah}

AM: …and in in his nursery they wont let him play with dolls and when I found out, well when his mum found out we went absolutely mad and he’s not from a gay family, he from a straight family …

V: {yeah}

AM: …but you know, so, it does, it’s very common.

T: In the nursery where I worked at you know, all the lads, you know you have like dress up and they all dressed as like women or fairies or sumin’ and pretended to be women…

V: {how cute!}
T: …and I thought it were really cute cos they were all like and then all the little girls were like, I wanted to play with that // and they started a big fight and they were all like no, I wanna be a big girl, and I were like, I love you kids /// I don’t even like kids so…

V: {inaudible}

AM: Right, before we move on to the next section which is um about /// you’ve told me a lot about your experiences and this section is going to be more about the impact of these experiences have had on you. So just to kind of tie up this section, has anyone got any more comments about generally how the school environment made you feel, um…

V: {It was crap!}

AM: …that that sums it up well! Whether there were any subjects that were particularly good or bad that people felt included?

V: English literature was good.

AM: Sorry?

V: English literature cos we did a big thing on lesbian poetry…

AM: {right, ok}

V: …um and I loved, um it was really good and the English teacher was ace, um she was an inside, um outside teacher who came in…

AM: {supply}

V: …but that was the only good thing. PE was crap…

D: {I think it’s been mostly RE, Sex Ed and PE that have been pretty much mostly the ones.

AM: Yeah, RE and Sex Ed I’m not surprised about, PE I’m slightly surprised about, not well, well not well surprised about…

T: {Yeah most um kids think the teachers are gay if they are women.

H: {I know}

AM: Female PE teachers?

T: Yeah.

V: Like our teacher as well…
T: {like my teacher like um got ran out of the room crying cos they were all calling her gay cos my best mate fancied her…

V: {Awwww!}

W: Was she fit?!

T: …nooo she isn’t! She had a nice ars but that’s about it!

V: Can’t believe it!

AM: A few of you have mentioned about teachers where there’s sort of rumours that they may be gay, did any of you have any teachers that were actually out in school?

V: Yes.

B: Oh, I’ve got one. Um my, one of the religion teachers was outed when I was in year 10 and she got um like she got fired because she was gay teaching religion and they couldn’t handle the fact that a lesbian could teach religion…

T: {My my RE teacher’s gay and I used to have an argument with him, saying it were wrong cos he were Catholic and saying he were gonna be killed by God [/] he did jump on the, did, he did [/] he’s a bit of an idiot right, he right jumped on the table with a hockey stick saying he was the Messiah, so…

H: {One of the like dance technicians at my school like, like he in the school and he ended up like like pastoral tutor but like he just looks gay, his shoes his (inaudible) and also cos like he’s a dancer as well, so everyone’s kind a like, oh he’s gay and I saw him in a gay bar and I was like well that’s sort of confirmed…

T: {inaudible}

H: …but I think what a lot of teachers do know cos like they pass comment about it, like you see like little jokes they have.

AM: Yeah.

V: We had a lesbian…like that.

H: {Twinkle toes}

D: Thinking about a similar subject I’ve just realised as well, sorry [/] thinking about it, there’s a few guys who cos they were bored and they didn’t get bullied or they had nothing to do, they joined the choir and I was in the choir for a bit as well and I was like I noticed a lot of the guys got called gay….

T: {…yeah but also like with women apparently if you like rock music you’ve gotta be a gay woman, it’s quite sad really.
V: No…

T: {Right cos in my music lesson I’d be listening to something like Slipknot or Soil and they’ll all be like, *urr you lesbian*, I’m like…

AM: {That’s a very good point actually because one of the last things I was going to ask in this section was before []/ well []/ maybe before you were confident about your own LGBT identity or perhaps after as that example probably was, I wonder how you think other people identified you as LGBT, you said music is one thing and um clothing as well.

H: Yeah.

B: And your hair []/ and if you wear make up or not.

D: The way you talk as well…

T: {or the way you wear your make up.

(inaudible)

U: A lot of people…

N: {I had long hair at school, shush!

V: You had long curly hair?!

AM: Do you think this is more to do with the boys than the girls, do you think?

U: Well, yeah cos…

V: {guyliner and manscara}

U: …no they just assume everybody who doesn’t wear baggy’s is gay, it’s ridiculous.

D: I’ve met a few guys for the first time before and two have actually been homophobic and I’m completely straight, but a few of them, because of the way I act and the way I talk, I’ve got a high pitch voice, they immediately thought, oh my God he’s gay…

AM: {Right}

D: …and they were constantly worried like that I’m gonna come on to them. So I think your voice and the way you act and stuff does, kind of, it is pretty important really…

T: {Also, If you do sport, usually they think you’re a lesbian, you know cos they think you’re dead butch or sumin’ its like…yeah I’m gonna knock you out.

(inaudible)
AM: Ok, well just before we move on to sort of the next little bit, has anyone got any final comments about anything that kind of happened at school that you feel we haven’t covered? No, OK. So the next section then really is about how you think all these things that we’ve just talked have affected you in the short and the long term. So I wanna know about any kind of consequences of these experiences. Part mostly on yourself and your identity, so for example if you were say bullied before you were comfortable with your own lesbian identity for example how do you think this affected you in any way, the fact that you were bullied. But also what practical affects, like your academic achievements, attendance maybe if you were bullied when you were at school, um friendships, family relationships and also you health, really importantly, like whether, like well I don’t think there’s any point in saying negative or positive, cos its bound to be negative isn’t it, negative effects on your physical or mental health, perhaps even sexual relationship, just your general well-being or lack of really, in the short term and the long term, so.

T: I like completely like just didn’t go in for any of my exams because I were being bullied so, so like I I like failed all of them in year 9 so I didn’t have any sets to go into in year ten.

AM: That would have been your SATS?

T: Yeah and then I had um a maths GCSE like a month ago and it all started up again, me being the dyke of year ten, wasn’t it anymore, it was me and um a load of stuff kicked off and um I ended up getting kicked out for a couple of days and like they all said it were my fault for being gay, I was like…

AM: {the teachers said this?}

T: …yeah, well some of them did but others were like its fine its fine, just leave calm down and then we had this um, I had to go into a DT for the first day I were back, just so I didn’t get into trouble and the one person that was really doing my head in calling me gay was…

V: {was in that DT?}

T: …was in that DT!

V: Oh fuck!

T: Yeah.

V: So you get (inaudible) and then you get in trouble and they give you a DT for three days [excellent!]

T: There was like, cos there were a load of tables in the classroom and everything, at one point the teacher were just looking at me while we were having a big argument, I ended up jumping over a table, she ended up going to hospital for a while. And um they said, you shouldn’t hang around with her, I went yeah cos I clearly wanted to be in the same
room with her didn’t I and they were all like well well you shouldn’t you shouldn’t be in this in a DT then, I were like you told me to come here [//] and its like I failed my maths GCSE so I had to re-sit and I had to do it at a lower level, so all my grades were just like [//] yeah.

AM: Anyone else?

V: {DT’s!}

T: It was a fun DT!

N: I, I don’t remember school I, I’ve slept since.

AM: You don’t remember school?

N: I’ve slept since then.

(laughs)

T: You’ve slept a lot since then, you don’t get up, I kicked you in the head.

{inaudible}

N: It were 3 o’clock in the morning shut up!

H: I just didn’t want to go in anymore, cos, I felt like I um, I just felt hated by everyone, I didn’t feel like I could um trust anyone…

AM: {yeah}

H: …so like I didn’t wanna um, like people sort of screwed me over anyway like, sort of got my trust and then just like left me anyway, but then like it just made me feel like even worse like I couldn’t like build up any sort of friendships or relationships with anyone cos I thought they were like just gonna do the same thing, like sort of play off the fact that I probably would trust them, sort of not straight away cos I’m not that stupid but just kind of fairly sort of consistently I sort of try and be there for them and so [//] in the end like I just didn’t go into and of my lessons and things like that cos I just couldn’t be with these people cos they were just using me I just couldn’t like they would just like (inaudible) things and just like make comments and so…

AM: {So this really affected your academic achievement then?}

H: …yeah then I just like there were other things going on like at home and it just made it worse and they made comments on that as well, like and they just sort of thought they knew me pretty inside out and they just didn’t and so…

T: {It is stupid that people have stereotypical views though cos like they all think yeah if a guys gays then he’s gonna be proper girly, and if a girls lesbian then they’re gonna be
butch and manly and everything and its just stupid and like just because you tell, you tell, they know one thing about ya, it’s it’s they think they know it all…

H: {they just build like personality around sexuality}

T: …Its, it’s what they think about you, not who you actually are.

AM: Did you find that once people found out your sexual identity, that they thought that was kind of everything about you?

U: Yeah.

H: Who you are.

V: Its like you get like introduced, hi this is Von, she’s the gay one.

T: Yeah but you just get, you just get classed on what you are really, It’s like what they think about you, its nothing to do with who you actually are.

H: And like people I have trusted just like use all the amo they think they’ve got to like hate ya and they’re like you can talk you can talk to me if you want to I’ll listen to ya and then they just use all that amo on me basically just to try and sort of…

T: {Yeah they get close to you and then they use what you’ve told um to, against you and it’s quite stupid.

AM: Did you want to say something? Go on Von.

V: At school I was told I was going to fail all my exams…

AM: {right}

V: …because of my attendance and stuff, but in a way that made me determined to prove them wrong um and I basically kicked my ars into gear um I got sent home, they said well, there’s no point in you staying in school, you’re never here, go home do your own revision at home which made me, they made me feel worse, they don’t want me there, they think I’m gonna fail, so I basically just revised and I came out with …1,2,3,4,5,6, seven C’s, the lowest grade I got was a d…

AM: {that’s really good}

V: …and then the highest was an A* which was in me Arts and they were like, they were the teachers were like well we’re surprised, but we’re not going to congratulate you [/] its like…

AM: {Do you think they [/] their negativity kinda made you…

V: {yeah}
AM: …think, well actually fuck you.

V: Yeah, yeah it was it was they were like you’re gonna fail there’s no point in you going in, you might as well just go, go go and get a job now, go and join Rathburns now, cos you’re not going to get into college now, you’re not going to be able to do the courses which you want, which made me think, no I’m gonna prove you wrong, which I did do…

T: {Teacher set up a meeting…}

V: …which made feel good…

T: {…like for my SATS cos like I failed them all I just had a big like with (inaudible) one of my teachers cos like it’s stupid when your failing cos you’re cos it’s something you are and you can’t help being that thing so people just judge you on it and then …

V: {basically people are arseholes}

T: …yeah everybody’s got a knobhead inside of them!

U: People just don’t understand.

D: They need to do more at school to make people aware of it. I mean that it’s not something not normal.

AM: That’s a very good point.

H: It is just that ignorance.

T: Yeah but aren’t most people, aren’t people like born bi-sexual anyway, like if they get given the chance to choose…

V: {Isn’t it, isn’t it like how you’re brought up, like and how, what environment you’re subjected to like whether you can show different feelings towards different [//] no that just a load of bollocks…

AM: {Yeah I mean I think that’s….

T: {yeah but also like you know when your parents are homophobic does it not like, feel like, turn you that bit like that way cos you wanna be a bit rebellious [//] cos its like…

U: {laughs [//] at school…

V: {Well apparently I’m only gay cos I’m trying to split my Dads side of the family up}

U: …at school…

T: {Apparently I’m only being gay cos my Dad was…

V: {it’s a phase}
D: It’s because people are scared of people who are different to everyone else, you get bullied if you’re clever, gay, if you’ve got some kind of…

V: {you’re fat, your thin, your tall, you wear glasses, you have brown hair, you have ginger hair, if you’ve got one toe missing.

AM: Yeah go on Daniel.

D: No I was just saying that’s kind of the whole thing.

AM: So it’s about difference and I think what you said about understanding is a good point and so do you all feel that your experiences at school were a lot of them because people didn’t understand and they were afraid…

D: {Yeah I’d say so.

H: Most people can’t understand.

T: {inaudible}

D: People understand that you’re all equal.

AM: Yeah and the school environment and how, a lot of you have described how you have badly treated really by the teachers but it wasn’t overtly you know discriminatory or just kind of oh well it doesn’t really matter…

T: {Oh no I loved my teachers!

U: It’s cos they want conformity and if you don’t conform then screw you, but…

V: {It’s because, basically schools are fighting in the teuge of, the teuge of results they’re not arssed what goes on around, all they want is better grades so they can be top of the stool so they get more money off the Government, so they can make themselves look better.

AM: That’s a really good point Von. It’s something, it’s something that I’ve heard a lot going around nation education conferences, but the intelligent people, um like myself, people at Stonewall, which I’m sure you are aware of and an organisation called Schools Out which some of you might be aware of…

H: {yeah}

U: {yeah}

AM: …say things like yeah that’s true, but has it not occurred to any of you policy people that happy kids will get good results? [/] So we are trying to kind of push for ur if the kids are happy and there’re not being bullied yeah…

H: {inaudible}
AM: ...yes you are absolutely right its kind of what the Government wants is, results, results, results but they cant see that actually results would be better if kids were happy.

(inaudible)

H: If kids aren’t happy then they are not going to perform well are they.

AM: Um, a few of you have mentioned a lot about other peoples perceptions of you, and like looking at you and seeing things about you. I wonder how these perceptions, do you think they actually affected your own understanding of yourself? Did you just kind of like think you know it’s rubbish, it just went right over your head…

V: {it totally screwed me up}
AM: ...or did you sit down and think God, you know is what they are saying true?

H: I just didn’t bother anymore [//] I juts kind of like, the only sort of purpose of my life was just to think about other people and that and that like should always come before like my needs, my needs ever like that I should just used to empathise with other people and just think about that and just analyse like every single situation, but I shouldn’t take that into account, like if someone didn’t like me it was never because of anything that was in them, it was always because they didn’t like me…

AM: {Was that a short-term thing or was that something that you are still trying to deal with?

H: It will always be there.

V: We love you Helen!

AM: Ok, does anyone have anymore points about um firstly short term effects, we’ve kind of covered academic achievement and um attendance at school, anyone got any comments about effects?

T: You can have like, if if you’ve been bullied for like so long, you grow up thinking that its wrong and it’s like…

AM: {That homosexuality’s wrong?}

T: ...yeah you grow up thinking its wrong and um that you just shouldn’t be that and you try faking to be someone that you’re not and then you’ve got, you’re always in that same mental state that um a part of you must be wrong to be that way [//] it’s quite stupid actually.

AM: Ok, what about more long term affects? I mean looking around the room, without assuming, I’m guessing you are all under twenty-four, maybe even a bit younger than that, so you’re still quite your still quite young. But I mean I personally think we develop until the day we dye anyway, so like…
D: {Yeah you’re always developing}

AM: …yeah you are always changing, so how do you kind of think you are now…

V: {I was always presumed to be straight, like a straight female who was going to settle down with like a husband and have little children and…

T: {That’s what the girls think as well, you just haven’t met the right guy}

V: …um especially like, with my Dad, my Dad lives in Liverpool and he set me up with like this cult, which I now know is a cult because they tell me which other church meeting they’re for and tell me which Church my Dad runs which actually, he’s now doing the church services in my bedroom cos he thinks that if he can do the church service in my bedroom then it will somehow make me like a man….

{laughs}

V: …I know, it’s cos my Dad’s weird, um, which has, I dunno its made me feel a bit shit to be honest, because its like aren’t parents meant to give unconditional love to their kids like no matter what and then…

T: {So did he like object to you being gay?}

V: Basically yeah [/] I sent my Dad a father’s day card on father’s day and I got a phone call in fact on Sunday night, I don’t want your card I just want my daughter back, I know you are only doing this to split the family up [/] if you get that off parents what the hell are you get off people that don’t even know ya which is like, it I don’t know (sigh).

T: My Dad like pretends its not happening at all so I’m, I sent him a birthday card saying sorry that I’m gay and he turned round and he went I don’t care, do what you want, I just think it’s disgusting and I were just like….

V: {love you too daddy!}

T: …yeah.

H: It all starts from the parents.

T: It’s like, you like women, why cant I?

AM: Anyway, so a couple of you have pointed out um some bad experiences with family, is, is, are there any of you that have actually got good relationships with family?

D: I’ve got a really close relationship with all my family, but my Dad is really really homophobic and once after a night out me and one of me close mates like came back to my house and shared a bed…

AM: {right}
D: …and he wasn’t totally disgusted by it, but he was just like *int that a bit wrong*, its like, no. It’s like cos we’re straight as well which made it even, he just couldn’t get it, he’s [/] I dunno, he’s homophobic.

T: Yeah my Mum thought I was lying about me being gay and then I brought like my ex girlfriend back from a party…

V: {you have to listen to this or something?!}

{inaudible}

T: …um yeah um woke up in morning and went downstairs making eggs, hangover, really bad…

V: {eggs?}

T: …yeah eggs in the morning! Um yeah, I came, me Mum came down and she went *what the hell is that on your neck* I went what, cant see anything I looked in the mirror, there were a great big shagger on my neck and I were like…

V: {not heard that phrase before!}

T: …and I was upstairs and I went [/] and then me mum kicked me out for like two days and I was like…

V: {where to live?!}

T: …God and she really doesn’t like it and, but neither do I so its alright [/]

W: But she is horrible.

T: No she’s not, right, she look, she looks really nice with her mouth shut from far away…

AM: {Right ok.}

N: {inaudible}

T: {inaudible}

H: Most of my family are quite, I’m I’m quite lucky like, I’d never tell like anyone else in my family cos I don’t think [/] but both my parents have said well your still you and my Dad just kind of sat me down like last night and just kind of held my hand and like (laughs) you know like I’ll always love you unconditionally cos you’re my daughter and like no matter what you do, so that was nice.
T: My Mum used to say, well my mum says stuff like that but whenever I enter her room and you can back me up on this (to Nicola) my mum loves her more than she loves me (gestures to Nicola) [/] yeah.

V: Awwww!

N: It’s great!

V: {inaudible}

T: No, no I walk through the door no and I walk through the door and she’ll go you alright lemon licker or lettuce licker or daisy pusher or sumin’ and I’m like what the hell and then kita ‘ll walk in behind me and kitas more of a lesbian than I am and she’ll be like oh you alright love, do you wanna brew, I’m like…

N: {I’m like, ya alright Mum!}

(inaudible)

T: It’s not alright for her daughter to be gay, but it’s alright for everybody else to be.

V: So are you [/] you spend more time in the village then me!

T: She’s like, oh I love you really.

AM: Talking about families…

V: {oh I love my mum}

AM: …kind of links to one of the final questions [/] I wanted to ask how comfortable you guys were at school…

U: {sarcastic sigh}

AM: …compared to other spaces of which home is one and maybe social spaces, you’ve mentioned the scene um and how these different environments helped, helped you to understand your sexual identities, so you’ve mentioned the Church Von…

V: {The church, the church youth group were crap. I think the only time that I was able to be myself was when I was talking to (inaudible) seriously I was, I was a poor little child I still am.

AM: So I guess the question I suppose really put more simply is, what environments have helped all of you understand who you are today?

V: Queer Youth and here!

AM: Um Yeah, Becky.
B: Well I don’t actually feel comfortable in my own home because my brother’s really homophobic [] that makes me laugh. And um he’s really quite violent towards me just cos I’m gay. Um Nat would know first hand about my brother being violent because I’m gay. Um…

V: {Poor Nat}

B: …and basically I feel more comfortable at Nat’s flat than I do in my own home and it’s somewhere that I’ve not been there and I’ve been in my own home for all my life.

AM: Right ok.

T: In school in a games lesson I hate it right cos all of the lads are flying free and it makes me sick cos they’ll all be looking at my ars or my boobs or sumin’ and I’ll be like [] that’s disgusting and just walk away and it was horrible yeah and I feel comfortable like in Bolton LGBT cos that everybody’s just so cool, you walk through the door and your like I’d just like to say, you’re all gay!

AM: You go to Bolton LGBT yeah?

N: Bolton LGBT yeah.

T: Bolton LGB.

W: {And [ ]}

N: There is no t at the end its just [ ]

T: { } is our friend who is who is yes[]

N: [ ].

T: Did you know did you know he did Mr [ ]...

{inaudible}

AM: {Right, yep Helen.}

H: Um well, I had art therapy school so that like was kind of like a space, that was like a little room like which is where I would go like once a week so [/] but I was always sort of like, by my art therapist they would always tell me you know this is a space you can use it you know how ever you want, you know as long as you never hurt the space…

T: {your bubble}

AM: {How do you hurt a space?
H: Well, it’s like smashing it up…

AM: {Oh, right}

H: …and things like that.

V: You used to smash your art therapy room up?

H: No, no that was the condition of it, I didn’t smash it up.

T: I feel dead awkward, or I used to feel dead awkward cos I used to have anger management and depression and stuff like that, and they’d all be like so you’re gay and I’d be like yeah and then they were like you know your problem, you might be angry because you’re gay and I were like that’s not why I’m angry they were like but you are angry, no I’m not angry and…

AM: {that’s a good point}

T: …she kept, well she kept on saying it and I were like, I had to get my lessons cancelled because I assaulted her because she said I was queer.

AM: Do, does anyone else have experiences where they’ve got a problem and it might be nothing to do with their sexuality but it’s assumed that that problem is the problem is your sexuality?

V: My Mother.

AM: What she’s your problem?

V: No, she like, Mum I need to talk to ya, it’s like what’s happened is it girls, I was like no, then what’s the matter. Its just like, everything is just even the like fact that, like I was gonna have some friends over um and after we’d been out she left a flipping message under the bed have fun with your special friend because I automatically sleep with all my female friends in fact who was it it was you and drew (gesturing to Sarah), but she was like, have fun with your special friend, cos me Mum knows that Shiv’s a girl and she knows Shiv’s gay, so automatically every friend who you bring home is gay and its like…

T: {No, in fact every friend that I bring home is gay!}

V: …no, even in fact with my friend who’s like my only friend where I actually live cos I’m a bit of a social reject and all my friends are from like here basically and I said Mum can sleep. She goes why would sleep, not a lesbian and it’s like, but she’s my friend and me Mum, my Mum’s apparently bi-sexual herself, its like why the hell don’t you understand these things.

T: Yeah my Mum and my sister used to walk me through town right when they first found out and they were like, do you fancy her, no, do you fancy her.
V: I came out, my Mum announced me on the karaoke…

T: {from the back yeah!}

V: …in the pub and it was like no don’t there’s people there!

T: Oh no, I told my Mum I was gay when she was drunk and um she started shouted it off, started crying in the middle of the street, pissed out of her head with a can of Carlsberg in her hand going my daughter’s gay and she thought I was joking about fifteen minutes later and she went and I went [censored], she thinks I’m lying about being gay and she were like no its true, its true she’s been gay for about two years, she’s had a girlfriend and everything, it were that [censored] do you remember and she hated [censored] anyway when she thought we were best friends.

N: (inaudible)

T: (inaudible)

AM: (to Nicola) Have you forgotten what you were gonna say now?

N: No it’s come back to me. Um like at work everyone keeps saying um like you have to be gay if you work for the Army and all that and it’s like, I work for the Army, I joined the Army ur but how does that make me gay. And to do with the thing we’ve just been talking about, um my mother she were like that, she introduced me as to one of her mates and I end up going sleeping with her…

{laughter}

T: {She’s fit!}

N: …she’s like one of me Mums best mates and me Mum was like going round the pub going oh my daughter my daughter’s slept with my best mate, my daughter’s slept with me best mate, but she were quite happy of the fact to be honest, she were trying to turn me into a lesbian since I were born…

T: {yeah but…}

N: …my sisters pregnant…

T: {My aunty came to um New Years dinner yeah and me Mum…

V: {You have a New Year’s dinner?

T: …yeah. And me Mum were having this big argument um with me about me being gay and saying its all a phase and then me aunty walks in a goes [censored] get over yourself your daughter is gay, your daughter’s gay, your daughter’s gay, keep it going round in your head she’s gay, leave her alone, right and she went to me she went to me, Tanya if your
Mum won’t let your girlfriend sleep just come round to mine, you know you’ve got a spare bed, I were like, well.

U: {laughs}

N: I’d rather you didn’t bring them to mine!

T: You’re closer!

AM: Ok, let’s start to draw this to a close. We’ve just been talking a lot actually about, about kind of the influences that you get, been getting from home um, church in some cases, from spaces like this and obviously we’ve talked mainly about schools, um I was wondering, I was just wanted to know if any of you have got anything to say on what you feel has helped, it’s been quite negative in terms of experiences, what’s helped you to understand your non-normative…

V: {this place}

AM: …sexual identity, um as you’ve grown up?

V: This place basically. It took me two years to come here, um, I used to be a lurker on a website called queer youth.org.uk and I found out about this from a friend called [who I met over the internet who goes to one in London basically and she told me about the website and I lurked for hours, in fact no I lurked for years actually and it took two years to come here and I came with my best mate [and then [stopped coming for various reasons but this place basically they were there when I got outed to me Dad they were there, I was on a float with these lot and there was me Dad holding up a sign saying [not nice things, which was very bad, but I know, I know for a fact that this place does so many good things for so many people and its saved so many lives and its just its such a good place and it’s the only place where you can come and be yourself.

AM: You don’t feel you could be yourself at school then?

V: No.

T: I love it in Bolton town centre cos practically everybody there is either bi or gay anyway…

N: {or tries to be bi at least, it’s awesome}

T: …yeah, yeah. No, it’s apparently ur like ur its like a fashion statement if you’re bi.

U: Oh I hate all those annoying….

T: {it’s like I’m so cool}

U: …they’re like we’re scene we’re this we’re that it’s like oh just burn yourself!
V: I’m bisexual but I’m only bi-sexual so I can kiss a boy, kiss a girl in front of a boy and make them horn…

U: {I know}

V: …so that they will come on to me, sorry!

(inaudible)

AM: Ok um yes, anyone else [/] about what they think helped most the most in their sexual identity development?

B: Um my best friend

AM: Ok.

V: Awwww!

B: Basically she came out before me as bisexual and went out with one of my other best mates…

AM: {right}

B: …and um that all ended up really bad but um we just um we just, when I came out about two years after her because I’d seen all the rubbish she’d got in when she was being bi um basically we just went through it together and then I went with my first girlfriend um we went through coming out together in high school. It was like proper (inaudible) me mates.

AM: So did you see your friend, was she the same age as you or a bit older?

B: She’s a bit older.

AM: Did you see her as a bit of a role model?

B: Um, not really no.

AM: No? Ok, I was just wondering whether any anyone thinks it may have helped if they had adults, teachers possibly, as kind of role models, not necessarily gay, but supportive of [/] yeah I suppose gay…

D: {Someone to get all your friends to look up to yeah, they’d be seen as a role model…

T: {my, my…

V: {Me Mum and me Aunty

AM: As role models?
V: When we first moved out of Liverpool my Mum lived with this woman who was known as aunty [REDACTED]. I’ve established since…

AM: {was she a ‘special friend’}?!

V: …she was a special friend! Um and in a way, I don’t know, it was really weird coming out to them [/] both, either though I knew they’d both be totally fine with it, its not as if they would whatever its called [/] contradict, critical…

AM: {hypocritical}

V: …hypocritical that’s the word! Um and its like they obviously knew but didn’t say anything cos they wanted me to figure it out for myself which I probably respect them for, but its like I didn’t tell them until after my Dad found out, I don’t know why really.

T: My ex helped me, cos when I was straight we went to this party together and we always said that we’d back each other up and um she was, she was gay, I was just straight, oh well I thought I was, and this guy kept coming on to me and I really didn’t like him and um like at end of night he asked me if I’d go home with him and I went, sorry have you met my girlfriend and um a load of stuff happened, she split up with her girlfriend and I then turned bi at that point and like I can always go to her for help and she’s like four years older than me and she was always there for me so she was always dead like understanding and everything…

N: {That’s why she climbed through your window at 3 o’clock in the morning

T: Every night, oh yeah!

H: Just in the same way my friends were just like, my family were like really understanding. I’d say it’s practically the reverse actually. If they are really supportive, it’s really hard because in the end like they are always going to be people in your life who don’t like you. No matter who you are, like if you are gay or if you are not a nice person or if you have traits that people don’t like.

V: Which everyone does.

H: Yeah.

W: (inaudible) Right I joined LGBT. Like I only joined it because the person I was getting married to goes there (laughs) We’d been skateboarding and we’d had a bit to drink and like I just stayed there and I was proper ace and it’s like cos I’m like a bit of an alcoholic and I guess like when I started drinking in like village like proper out you could talk to people who were you know didn’t like judge you cos you were gay or like.

D: I think if you’re not old enough to drink then Canal Street is a great place to go!

T: No, I lost contact with Nicola for about three years didn’t I? (to Nicola)
N: Yeah.

T: And ur yeah after primary school, when you left primary school I lost contact with her and um we only like like met up about two three years ago and um Nickys always been like there for me cos she’s like my sister but its not just that, its like we can talk about anything it’s like we’ve got, I prefer her to my whole other side of my family cos she’s the only one who like understand and doesn’t call me for it I mean like my other sister [crossed out] her boyfriend’s an absolute knobhead, and he were on the phone to me drunk, he were on the phone to me and he were like, *so are you actually a lesbian* and I were like yeah, he were like *you’re not though you’re not though, all you need to do is go outside and find some hard earned cock* and I were like [//] I met him the next day and I punched him so hard right and he’s like he’s like twenty and he like fell to the floor and he were like *I’m sorry I’m sorry* I were like…

U: {laughs}

V: {you should be}

T: …and then he were like, he’s alright with me now and so my whole family now is just warming up to the idea, so I feel, I feel more comfortable now really.

AM: Well hopefully once you’ve…

T: {and me Mum likes my current girlfriend!

AM: …gotten through to your family hopefully get better so [//] it doesn’t always happen, ok.

V: People seem to get better as you get older, if that makes sense. It’s like yeah cos my cousin [crossed out] she came out at the age of thirteen um her mum is strict Catholic, cos all my family is strict Catholic. Her Mum kicked her out and she came to live with us and as she’s got like older, um I came out and me Mum ran round to me aunty [crossed out] and me aunty [crossed out] she she was fine with it because I was older, I think it was the matter of the age, it’s like *oh you don’t know, you’re still only young*.

AM: Does that not annoy people though…

V: {Yes!

AM: …do they not think, well how do you know that you are straight when you are thirteen?

V: {Exactly

AM: Or do you guys think that that’s…

H: {that’s the assumption thing

AM: …you mentioned earlier on (to Helen)…
AM: …do you think that people see that as really weird do you think?

H: Its like, I liked girls even before like in year five…

V: {it’s like my cousin, she came out in like year five at primary school she was getting loads and loads of crap at school in primary school and she just stood up in the middle of assembly and went look I’m a lesbian what are you gonna do about it and that was in year five.

H: (inaudible)

T: {I think like if you are sure like that [/] but if you are not sure…

AM: {Just let Helen talk for a second.

H: There’s time you cant know but you can’t hide from your feelings, like I was always, I’ve always felt like closer to women, like most of my friends are women like maybe that’s because I’m a girl, but I’ve always like just always felt more comfortable with women and I’ve always had feelings for them and it’s just, I think like with anyone, anyone can have strong feelings for whoever they like but it’s just kind of how they interpret the feelings, whether they’re romantic or whether they are just like whether that feel that they can have stronger bonds with people of like the same gender.

V: {I thought I was a freak

AM: So it’s the interpretation of these feelings. So like did this effect you by not going to school (inaudible)…

H: {Yeah cos you learn things from when you are younger, because if like if you’re abused or hurt when you are younger like by like a male figure or a female figure you’re obviously, you’re obviously going to associate that with all the people that you meet because they all, they all react with each other. It’s like, it’s how you develop fears and things. Like if you’ve fear water it’s because like you nearly drowned when you were younger, things like that (inaudible) So for example like if your mother or father was gay and you knew that split up your family, that’s…

D: {That’s something that happened to us

H: …well that’s something that ruins everything [/] like I think I’m gay, what if I’m gay I’m going to ruin everything, oh my friends gay…

T: {I lost all my friends when I turned gay though. Which I thought they were like my real friends, but clearly they wasn’t so.

V: I did too.
D: I think a lot of older people do…

V: {You’ve still got us lot.

T: Yeah but the worst things is though, my one main friends, she were called Danielle she were already going to me while I was straight, she were like do you wanna try something, do you wanna try something, I were like no that’s wrong that’s wrong and now she bullying me for being who I am and like walk down the street and she’s with all her chivvy little cronies and they start shouting their mouth off, it’s like [/] yeah but I get more sex than you so it doesn’t matter!

N: That’s what I said to them chavs I was like…

AM: {Ok, we digress. Um, before I just ask one question, if you don’t mind can I just ask Daniel, you’ve mentioned a couple of times that you are actually straight…

D: {yeah

AM: …which I find very interesting can you just tell me like why you are at this group…

D: {Um

AM: …I think it’s fantastic, I just…

D: {…it’s mostly just cos I was with Nat today and she said do you fancy coming down and I was like yeah sure…

AM: {Ok
D: …and I’m not just here for the free drink, although that was cool to get free tea

U: {laughs} Free drink is awesome!...

T: {We used to have some straight people in um LGBT at Bolton…

D: {That’s why I like people’s views, I think it’s quite interesting to see…

AM: {by coming to this group?

D: …yeah I think that’s why it’s existed.

AM: Ok.

D: I’m at Manchester Uni anyway, so I’m here quite a lot, I just thought it would be kind of sumin’ different to do.

H: I think its like, people say oh you’re straight why are you here, it’s like you are just like…
AM: {yeah

H: …you can’t like sort of punish someone for being ignorant and then not allow them to learn.

AM: {yeah

D: That’s why I’ve kind of come as well sort of like seeing a few peoples opinions and what its like.

H: Cos if you say oh I hate straight people they’re all the same it’s like basically the same.

AM: Do you all feel like that it’s quite important and like speaking to Daniel and assuming that everybody else here is gay in the room, I dunno I don’t know everybody, for us as gay people to say like lets be inclusive to everybody lets not say gays or straights over there.

H: Cos we are like fighting for equality, we can’t go out there sort of generalising…

D: {excluding

V: {If you are fighting for equality shouldn’t you like [/] you should…

T: {Accept all people

V: Exactly, it’s a bit like stereo [/] not like stereotypical but it’s like oh yeah we wanna be accepted for being who we are but we don’t want you here because you’re not who we are, that’s not fighting for equality.

(inaudible)

U: That just doing what the opposite side do.

V: Exactly.

AM: So no-body here is straight-phobic then…

V: {No

AM: …or at least admit being straight phobic?!

V: I can be at times, no I can be at times, you know if someone giving me crap.

AM: Yeah.

T: I’m just a bitch and I admit it!
V: I don’t know, I can be slightly bi-phobic as well.

(inaudible)

U: I know, if anyone calls me for being bi I just call um monosexual and that makes um like the same as a straight and it really winds um up and its quite funny.

V: No I’m not bi-phobic, I’m just bi-phobic against people who do it just for…

U: {like if it’s for seeking attention yeah

V: …the people who are…

{inaudible}

AM: {Ok, we digress again, so I think…

V: {Yeah we always digress!

AM: …yeah that was just an extra thing that I threw in because I was very interested by Daniel mentioning he was straight, so. Ok, final question then, um I wonder if any of you have got any comments to make about how you see yourselves, how you feel about yourselves now and perhaps in the future? Like good or bad, given all these experiences you’ve had at school, how do you see things going for you?

T: Right I just used to hate myself when I was straight. I used to actually just think that I was hopeless and everything. But now that I’ve come out to like everybody and myself I feel like so much happier cos I can just be myself and who I wanna be so it’s like yeah all good.

AM: Great, anybody else?

H: I just feel like I’m not going to succeed [/] really. That I’m just gonna fail like even if like [/] I end up where I want to be I just gonna like ruin it.

D: Why do you feel like that?

H: I always ruin everything.

U: I know, but like the more you think about the negative the more you make like negative things happen.

H: I’m a bit of a pessimist.

U: I know but even if something good happens…

V: {I shouted at you about this last night, you said you’d look optimistically!...
T: {Oh no don’}

V: …ok, it’s basically what I was saying to you the other night.

AM: Ok, anyone else got any comments about what they feel?

B: Um…

AM: {It’s like therapy isn’t it – how do you feel?!}

B: …I’ve not come out yet, so cos if I did I’d get treated like [/]

AM: {Whether you are out or not is something that is on the little tick box at the end that I’ll hand out.

T: (inaudible)

V: In a way…

AM: {Go on Von, finish us off. Go on!}

V: …I’m just trying to I don’t know how to word it, its in my head but I don’t know how to [/] from like the difference at school and saying that I was going to fail and then at like college and I had lots of crap at college and yeah granted myself dropped out and then I got myself back on my feet and I went on to Rathburns which is a training course and I am stuck in a room full of homophobic idiots who which is, a load of bollocks basically (inaudible) like constantly, but I’m determined to stick it through cos I had like crap at coll, I had crap at high school, went to college and did a childcare and childcare students aren’t the nicest of students anyway, they were little dolly girls who were only there to get their EMA…

T: {and there all um heterosexual just cos you have to be…

V: {yes!}

T: {…heterosexual to do childcare

V: {Oh yeah of course!

T: {or you’re a peido

V: …yeah, that has actually happened to me before. Um and now I’m even though I hate the class that I am in, I’m determined to stick it out just to prove to people that I can do it and I’m getting on really really well in at and I’m like I started 3 months later than everyone else and I’m not being big headed now but I’ve caught up, I’ve caught up with them and I’m passing and stuff.

AM: That’s brilliant, thanks.
Key:

AM: Interviewer (Amy MacMillan)
S: Silver
[//] indicates a noticeable pause in speech
... indicates break in/continuous of speech due to interruption by another speaker
{ } words spoken over previous speaker
{ } speech interrupted and cut off another speaker
( ) description of sounds/actions within/between speech
*Italics* indicates the speaker is imitating another person with their speech
! word/sentence exclaimed with emphasis or irony
, normal pause in sentence
. normal end of sentence

Transcript:

S: Hi my name’s [Cut off here], Um I’ve been doing lots of work on the Exceeding Expectations um anti-homophobic bullying campaign in school and the thing was I went to [//] I returned to my old school, um exactly ten years to the day in which is left, um to not just come out but to (sigh) do it as like a political thing, for um you know my rights, my freedom and to show that you know that I I’ve survived many hardships since and you know I’m always stronger for that um, and it its been a, it was a challenge [//] …

AM: {yeah}

S: …um but I was always prepared for that challenge. I mean as soon as I left I knew I would come back ten years later.

AM: Right.

S: …and um…

AM: {like a target?}

S: …yeah, even though at the time I left I was mentally and emotionally scarred, um [//] I knew that I would come back stronger and brash and bold and it felt good to achieve going back to create some change, um to show my previous teachers that were still there that you know I’m a different person then when I left, but I just thought you know, it’s a funny irony to turn up on the exact same day as I left ten years ago…

AM: {yeah}
S: …um [//]

AM: Was that a coincidence or was it planned?

S: I’m gonna be honest I kind of had a sort of, I knew it was going to happen so it was semi-planned in my head.

AM: Yeah.

S: And it was just co-incidence that someone asked me here at LGYM would I like to go on that and I jumped at the chance to do that and when [//] I had that chance I took it with you know I I thought I’m not fail this chance, because its my chance, my story and you know I’m gonna create change no matter what and I’m gonna prove that I can do something, that I can be someone [//] …

AM: {yeah}

S: …you know that can give me more focus, more drive in order for me to, for people to understand me more [//] maybe later in life I can put that in my autobiography when I’m like a politician a something!

AM: Yeah, how did it come about you going back to the school? Did they invite you?...

S: {well}

AM: …did you pressure them?

S: Well, I currently come to um lesbian and gay youth Manchester and um I’ve always been involved in all the things that we’ve done here, before doing Exceeding Expectations and when the chance was given um I thought I’m not gonna let this pass by because they mentioned the high school that I used to go and it being predominantly full of homophobia and bullying, I I wasn’t just bullied for being gay I was also bullied for other things, being of a minority, a race, non-religion, um the geek, so I had it rough. I mean I’m not gonna deny that life was good because I’d be bullshitting you know, and to go back a strong person made me even more stronger in some sense because you know its like I faced that and I faced it alone and to not have that support that there could have been now um was hard, but you know like I said I Idid it alone, and um at the end I survived, I always do [//] …

AM: {yeah}

S: …and um [//]…

AM: {When you say you did it alone, I’m assuming that teachers weren’t helpful at all?}

S: No, I mean one I wasn’t sure of myself or my sexuality and um I knew what I felt inside but I knew I wasn’t gay and I wasn’t straight and [//] not knowing how to name what I am, I just found it difficult to be in an a situation where I’m in an all boys school and its bad to be gay. And with there being religious factions that boosted their religious
beliefs as well as their cultist like religious beliefs you know on other people it was kinda beating you in a sort of // I dunno a false sense of belonging, so you had to live up to everybody else’s expectations um and that was hard trying to be me and trying to forget my sexuality when you know I knew that there was something different that I didn’t have a name or a identity for and no-one understood what I was and there was a lack of knowledge. The sex education lessons we had was just male-female reproduce end of….

AM: {yep}

S: …but one teacher that came in told us some stuff but didn’t go into full details because he wasn’t contracted to do that…

AM: {Right // Can I ask when this was? Just thinking about section 28 and, and whether it was pre or post abolition.

S: Um it was pre.

AM: It was pre abolition, so it was pre 2005 yeah it would have been because you it was 10 years ago of course it would have been. But as I’m sure you’re aware that’s a myth anyway because it shouldn’t have actually prevented homophobia being stopped and homosexuality…

S: { Yeah I mean people made an issue…}

AM: {…being talked about}

S: …of racism because there was multi minorities but when it came to homophobia it was kind of very swept under the carpet, and it was just not mentioned, but everyone bullied people for being gay, you know with it being a boys school its like oh don’t ur look at anyone whilst changing, don’t have a shower with anyone, don’t try to make eye contact with other lads that were getting undressed and um some, basically all I did was ran to the furthest corner of the room and just quickly get changed…

AM: {right}

S: …um which was kind of bad um and I noticed like other people who was in my class um and that that had clear issues about their sexuality…

AM: {right}

S: …and I only figured out recently um that the psychology behind it, maybe they was trying to come out to me…

AM: {right}

S: …um because everyone bullied me for assuming I was gay…

AM: {right}
S: …and um there was one lad that used to show me his six pack and like do all sorts of strange things to to get my attention and looking back on it, I was like, he’s supposed to be like the roughest nut in school and he keeps showing me his six pack and his underwear and I never wondered why until recently and um I just cant imagine how it would have been like for him to you know to be you know one of the second heads of my year basketball team and it was just like looking back on it [/] …

AM: {it was very hidden?}

S: Yeah lots of things were hidden and it was very, cos (sigh) I basically had a way of around forgetting about my sexuality throughout high school. Um being like the class geek, I was majorly into things like Star Trek and I kind of sort of fell in love with the idea of being a machine where you don’t get to feel emotions so um I had to, I became obsessed with things like the borg and cybernetics and things like that so I couldn’t associate myself with human emotion um [/] …

AM: {and do you think that was as a direct result of the experiences you were having because of your sexuality…}

S: {Yeah}

AM: …so you were almost trying to become sort of emotionless?

S: Yeah, yeah that’s exactly what happened and you know like Sally said everyone knows me here as Silver [/] …

AM: {yep}

S: …and that’s also another part of it I mean it came purely by coincidence that my name became called Silver, um and sometimes when I look back at my high school age I just wish I could have been called Silver sooner…

AM: {yeah}

S: …you know so I could have been completely more engaged in being emotionless and more focussed on what needed to be done [/] …

AM: Do you feel that’s changed now though? One of the questions I asked in the young people perhaps they were a bit young to to know this, was was how you felt at school and how you feel now and the kind of differences and I suppose progression do you think [/] you know its pivotal that you went back ten years later and was a huge thing for you…

S: {yeah I mean it was like an emotional high like kind of having your chains released from your shackles, like the freedom to move to kind of saying look I’m bi, gay, lesbian whatever, you know and I’m here to stay no-one can get rid of me and that was the most powerfulest thing that I could feel emotionally at the time that I had that freedom to feel to say to you know make people know that I’m here and there’s nothing no-ones gonna
do to get rid of me, um cos I’ve I’ve like spent (sigh) ten years since that day going from hardship to hardship, nothing can crack me, you know [/] …

AM: {the day you left school, was it you know the sort of day that everybody left school or was it you know a significant event that meant you had to leave school?

S: Um, well what happened is um I had some other physical illness and basically (sigh) everybody bullied me really bad…

AM: {yeah}

S: … um and I left in a really messed up state I I was contemplating suicide at the time, um because my previous attempt had had failed um but on the third attempt um I just left, but on the second attempt, um the second attempt was interesting because um I tried to leave school but I picked up the nearest thing that resembled a weapon which was like a jagged rock and anyone that came near me I just attacked because they was trying, some people tried to dragged me back into school to sort out the problem but to me it was never enough cos the more you screamed and shouted about how much your suffering so much injustice, it just never seemed to be enough justice to even cope with what I was going through [/] 

AM: Yeah.

S: So it was hard [/] you know.

AM: The consequences of their actions were…

S: {yeah}

AM: …no where near [/] the consequences for you were massive but the consequences for them were minimal?

S: Exactly, to them the punishment for something that was more hurtful to me, was a good punishment, because they they [/] saw it as good because they were suspended, that’s all they ever wanted to do [/] …

AM: {right}

S: …you know it was like a holiday to them you know and and and um I I just thought that was wrong they should have at least had like given a book on like you know human rights or something as an essay to do. That that was my personal opinion that I thought they should do, cos you know I got attacked um when I was fifteen I got attacked by um a gang of youths um and it was a racial assault and it left me very emotionally scarred and physically and mentally scarred as well and I came back to high school like a week later after my injuries were healed and I just got attacked more and more because there was a rumour, that you know one of the people knew that a gang had attacked someone from my school and it got back to school and more people attacked me ur based on my race, age, sex, identity, just being me and um that’s when the second incident happened and…
AM: {how old were you did you say, um fifteen at this time, fifteen yeah?}

S: …yeah yeah I was just approaching fifteen it was like summer um I think it was like May time [/] yeah May 25th, um my Mums birthday I got attacked I stayed off school for a week then the next month came and ur low and beyond like I was having to be put in a school where there’s (sigh) I’m still in the school where I’m still having you know being in a racial minority you know of x amount of people and (sigh) it just didn’t add to anything, and the teachers knew that I’d been attacked and hospitalised for a great deal of time and [/] you know…

AM: {and did anything, the teachers?}

S: …no, they just you know subtled me up, you know and said life will get easier, it never did, um everything’s just been you know a struggle and I’ve I’ve learnt to just shut off you know, I’m the perfect machine at the end of the day.

AM: Yeah.

S: Um all I ever see is the variables of how people act, interact based on body language and other variables and so on and so fourth and…

AM: {so, well I don’t even think we need to ask this question I would say its obvious from what you’ve said already that these experiences have affected you to a…

S: {yeah big time}

AM…to deep level and and an emotional level?

S: Yeah I mean I’m currently going to 42nd Street…

AM: {yeah}

S:…um because I suffer from what is like Post Traumatic Stress of the years of shit that I had to put up with and I have nightmares at night where I’m waking up bleeding, you know that’s not a normal thing, I haven’t even been in a war and most of my dreams feel like I’ve been in a war. And some of my nightmares stopped a while ago, but I had one just last week which put me on a really bad low and its just been hard you know to try deal with what I’ve gone through and the more I have a nightmare the more I just try to think you know I’m stronger than this you know I can survive and that all what keeps going in my head you know and these days I’m just getting, focussing on you know good things like getting into politics becoming someone making a name for myself and not just as Silver, I mean Silver’s great but you know [/] it still has a lot to put you know, um a lot of reputation to uphold…

AM: {Yeah I know what you mean}

S: …um cos you know I’ve been around in various social circles, been there done that kind of thing, been a scally, been a mosh, I’ve been goth and had done trendy and you
know now I’m on the whole gay scene I still don’t fit in anywhere I still see me as a machine you the boy in the machine […] …

AM: {do you feel like you need to fit, want to fit?}

S: I feel like I want to feel some sort of completion to fit in, but I know I’m never gonna fit it, so I just accept that I don’t fit in anywhere in order for me to just carry on…

AM: {yeah}

S: …um but I deal with life with a great deal of um diplomacy and things um and you know I for a few years after being attacked I was quite vicious and I got called angriness down and um started to try to become as human as possible but you know sometimes I have drawbacks um in terms of trying to be human (slight laugh) um cos it its like you become something that you know you try to be for so long to deal with your problems that you just forget how to be human…

AM: {yeah}

S: …and when you try to look at the kid you used to be, you know the child that you know never got to really grow up its kinda difficult to become human again you know and um it still baffles me. I mean I understand humans in terms of the psychological context um and how humans interact and how you expect them to be in certain situations based upon their psychological or religious or various natures or belief structures they have and um I just kind of try to remotely be human, but it still doesn’t work. I always get knock backs and I expect nothing less from people so I just want to be me but try to have some […] just use my diplomacy and other humanesses that I have […]

AM: And so at the moment you are doing a lot of work through here um…

S: {yeah}

AM: …is it, what did you say it was called the Exceeding Expectations project?...

S: {yeah}

AM: …which is going to…

S: {schools}

AM: …secondary schools […] to […]…

S: {yeah, yeah}

AM: {teaching about homophobia

S: Making people aware of various names of sexual identities and orientations…
S: …and you know deal with them in, as people…

AM: {yeah}

S: ...not try to be-little them or condensed them but handle it diplomatically and act like a teacher, you know accordingly and to teach them what they don’t know and um because some teachers don’t know what some of the terms are…

AM {yeah}

S: …or meanings are. I mean they might have heard them but never really understood them and so we get lots of teachers that um ask questions based on um say what is a bisexual or whatever or you know what is the difference between a transvestite and a transsexual and you’ve got to kind of you know teach the teacher you know what the different terms and meanings are instead of using derogative slang [/] um…

AM: {do you feel this is really important in kind of educating the teachers and pupils?…

S: {yeah}

AM: …rather than just punishing the bullies?

S: Yeah

AM: Do you think its about understanding…

S: {yeah I think [/] yeah, I think bullies need to like I said earlier really really need to understand um human rights and why are they doing you know what is wrong. If like someone for instance is I dunno hypothetically black or mixed race and they bully someone you know on being gay, they’ve gotta then look at their history of like um persecution and you know hate related persecution and then like is said read a book on human rights and the law on human right and you know write an essay on it so that they know what they are doing is wrong and um [/] …

AM: {yeah}

S: …and that if you cant accept racism then you shouldn’t be promoting hate of sexuality homophobia.

AM: Yeah.

S: And I think that really really needs to change.

AM: Yeah I I agree.
S: Cos if I ever got, if and when I ever get into politics that would be the first thing on my agenda…

AM: {yeah}

S: …that and transport (laughs).

AM: (laughs) transport [//] slightly different issues!

S: {yeah}

AM: But [//] um, can I just ask, you said you left school ten years ago, um presumably, all the bullying and stuff you encountered, its obvious how its effected you emotionally and physically [//] …

S: {yeah}

AM: …what about um academically, your academic achievements were they really disturbed by your experiences at school?

S: Yeah, majorly, I mean I never got my GCSE’s…

AM: {right}

S: …and I mean like Its been harder to get the right job that I want or to go to the right college to get into university so everything that I have to do I have to do on my back by using my skills my intuition [//] I, I do everything on my own back you know and I do with much degree of patience, but how I see it you know is I’ve succeeded at one thing in taking ten years to do I’m sure another twenty-five years, I’ll get there…

AM: {yeah}

S: …you know um because that’s the kind of person I am, I’m very persistent but I have a great deal of patience you know so like I say my patience has always made me a difficult person to crack and as long as I have that patience I’m a hard nut to break!

AM: That’s a fantastic attitude given…

S: {yeah}

AM: …given what you’ve been through. Thank you very much is there anything else you’d like to add?

S: Um, no!

AM: Brilliant, thank you so much.
Interview with Chris Gibbon ~ Senior Education Officer, Stonewall 11/06/08

Key:

AM: Interviewer (Amy MacMillan)
CG: Chris Gibbons
[/] indicates a noticeable pause in speech
... indicates break in/continuous of speech due to interruption by another speaker
{ } words spoken over previous speaker
{ } speech interrupted and cut off another speaker
( ) description of sounds/actions within/between speech
Italics indicates the speaker is imitating another person with their speech
! word/sentence exclaimed with emphasis or irony
, normal pause in sentence
. normal end of sentence

Transcript:

AM: OK, if we could just start if you could please tell me the remit of your organisation and your role within it.

CG: Sure, Um Stonewall is the national gay and lesbian lobbying organisation so we work to ensure that lesbian, gay and bisexual people across Britain have um the same rights as everybody else throughout Britain. Ur we work in various ways, we work ur with the Government in terms of lobbying Parliament, we work with the House of Commons, the House of Lords ur and MPs to ensure that legislation that goes through um ensures equality for lesbian gay and bisexual people and we also um influence ur policy at a local and national level ur and um, so we work with departments like DWP, department of health, department of children, schools and families um and we also work to try and change hearts and minds as well, so we try to bring about a shift in cultural attitudes…

AM: {big job!

CG: Yeah big job! Um yes slowly but surely we hope we are getting there. Ur and I’m senior education officer um at Stonewall and I have responsibility for our Education for All campaign to tackle homophobia and homophobic bullying in Britain’s schools.

AM: Ok, great. So you probably know a lot about what’s happening at schools at the moment.

CG: I hope so!
AM: Ok, ur recent research has clearly highlighted problems for LGBT pupils in schools…
CG: {uh hum}

AM: …which as your role within Stonewall you know well. Um, there are a number of policy, statutory and non-statutory and also campaigns, of which one you’ve just mentioned…

CG: {uh hum}

AM: …which I believe have the potential to help elevate these issues, but my question is how useful do you think theses polices and campaigns actually are and if they are not useful, where they are not useful why do you think this is?

CG: I think, you need to take, you need to look at legislations and policies and campaigns together and how they all have different roles to play in bringing about change. Um we know that there is a lot of very useful and strong legislation out there um employment equality regulations, education inspections act 2002 about safe guarding young people and the recent um goods and services facilities regulations which means that you can’t be turned away from a school for being gay or being thought to be gay or having gay relatives etc. this is all very useful in itself, however you also need policies within schools and local areas which support teachers and school staff to bring about those changes in schools um we speak to teachers all the time at Stonewall who say well we understand what the legislative background is, but we don’t know what to do if a young person tells us they are gay so school need to be, have very strong policies and an understanding around issues of LGB in general um and of course campaigns like ours Education for All highlight and um highlight sort of within the public domain the you know policy domain the issues that are going on so that we um carried out a survey in 2006 called Speak out where we ask young people, young gay people about their experiences of homophobic bullying. 1145 young people responded to that and the results of that were collated as the School Report which is our our research which has been widely um supported and endorsed especially by national government who are using that as very much a sort of the baseline for all of the work that they are trying to do cos the stats of course said that 65% of gay young people have been, had experienced homophobic bullying at school. Given that that data the department for children schools and families has knowing acknowledging that this is something that has to be dealt with seriously. So the legislative framework is there and now how do you implement that practically.

AM: Yeah, that’s sort of the main thing I’ve been looking at. I mean would you agree, my opinion is that we [///] I don’t think we need any more policy I think the legislative framework is there….perhaps policies within schools, but at a national level I think the policies are there, you know the new DCSF policy I think is fantastic, but its not statutory, but that’s…

CG: …sure yeah the homophobic guidance itself isn’t statutory but it sends out a great indicator to schools…
AM: {yeah yeah}
CG: …um there is a lot of talk about um the need for statutory monitoring of homophobic incidents in schools because throughout a lot of the work we do around homophobia and homophobic bullying we always draw parallels with racism and racist bullying…

AM: {yeah}

CG: …and of course now there is a statutory duty on schools to monitor racist incidents. The problem there is that they don’t, they don’t know what to do with that information and so a lot of schools are sending…

AM: {I’ve heard that a lot}

CG: …there sending back their monthly reports which say zero zero zero to their local authority. Because they don’t know what they are supposed to do once they have that information, so as much as we’d like to see um a statutory requirement on local authorities to be um monitoring homophobic incidents, we don’t want to see that until we know that local authorities and schools understand what homophobia and homophobic bullying are and then how to deal with that. Otherwise we’ll just be stuck there with all these policies and rules and regulations and not knowing what to do with them.

AM: Yeah, that’s a really excellent point. Ok moving on to the next question. Same sex relationships at primary level are routinely discussed in other European countries…

CG: {um}

AM: …do you think the same sort of polices should be adapted here?

CG: There’s definitely room to talk about these issues in the primary school environment and we know its quite a contentious and delicate issue in a lot of schools and a lot of local authorities. We, ur, at present out campaign works across primary and secondary schools and we take very different approaches in the way we deal with that. So in secondary schools we talk about being gay, how that feels and how it can affect you when people discriminate against you. In primary schools we talk about very generally different families…

AM: {yeah}

CG: …so you take a class of twenty-five you know key stage one and two pupils, you look at them you know across that class you’ll have some who come from single parent families, some who come from very nuclear 2.4 families, um families which have um a mixed heritage, some who are adopted, live with carers, live with grandparents and there will be children in that class who come from same-sex parentage families. They may have gay uncles, gay aunts, gays brothers, gay sisters, gay you know what I call gay by association, so they’ve got sort of you know they they have a link to the gay community. So it’s very important that when we talk about cultures, society, families, we talk about those issues that accurately reflect what young people experience. So there is definitely a place to talk about these things within primary schools. Whenever the SEAL agenda, which is the social emotional aspects of learning primary school agenda which has been
set down by the Government does talk about um you know prejudice and discrimination and difference and you know very generic issues. So there’s definitely a vehicle there to talk about different families and same sex families.

AM: Yeah, sure. One of the things I’ve found during my research for excuse for not talking about it, is things like five years olds are too young to understand sexualities but on the same hand, they don’t appear to young to understand racism and different ethnicities.

CG: Sure.

AM: That’s where I’d agree with what you’ve just explained. Um explaining differences, different families um and really trying to normalise the flexibility of all families and relationships. And it’s not about, another excuse I’ve heard is about talking about or not talking about same-sex sex and I wouldn’t advocate talking about same-sex sex or opposite-sex sex at that level.

CG: No.

AM: And I think that’s a…

CG: sex and relationship education, SRE is a very different issue to talking about same-sex relationships and different families. Um, you know a five year old is quite capable I imagine of understanding that you know [/] a woman can live with another woman as a couple. She may have two mummies and be very understanding of that without having to know the in depth issues around sexual orientation itself. So we definitely think there is a place to talk about different families and we are very pleased that the DCSF guidance does make specific reference to primary schools and how you can talk about different families and other things you should be doing in the classroom. For example, if if your class is making mother’s day cards be wary of the fact that some children in your class may not have a mother, some may have two mothers, so its not just talking about that gay issue, it’s about talking about the fact that some children in that class won’t fit into that very you know generic, send my one mother a mothers day card. And also when you send a letter home to parents don’t put dear mum and dad, cos some of them might not have a mum or dad, you know put dear parents.

AM: Yeah.

CG: And that’s something a lot of schools do adhere to and that’s in the DCSF guidance. We are very pleased to see that DCSF has acknowledged that there is scope to talk about these issues.

AM: Ok, that’s really good. Moving on, within schools, how important do you feel it is for combating problems of homo/bi/transphobia and heteronormativity for staff to recognise firstly that bullying on this level is occurring and secondly that male and female binaries and heterosexuality shouldn’t be assumed?

CG: Um sorry I’m not sure if I understand the question, can you.
AM: Sure, within schools, how important do you feel it is for combating these problems for staff to recognise that firstly bullying is actually happening?

CG: Oh I see. Um yeah it’s very important. We we you know we hear of schools and we speak to schools who say *we don’t have any gay children in our schools and we don’t have any homophobic bullying in our schools*. Um if they are not aware of the issues in general then there’s no way then that they are going to be able to tackle it. And this is why we are really pleased that we’ve been able to you know work with the government to you know highlight the issue, that we’ve been able to publish our own um our own research on it. Um it’s difficult, you know schools, some schools are more receptive than others and sometimes it’s left to that gay teacher in the school to sort out the issue, whereas we very much talk about the whole school ethos…

AM: {sure}

CG: …and this leadership from the top. You know where if you haven’t got the whole school community participating then you are not going to be able to bring about any change. Um this comes back party to the issues of monitoring homophobic incidents and you know while we don’t you know put pressure on schools to do that. If they can do that and recognise that they have to you know, that there are things that they can do to safeguard all of their young people, then that’s really great and that sort of starts that dialogue and like I said there is legislation in place. I mean the Education Inspections Act 2002 says about safeguarding all children and young people and that includes all of those young people who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, who may be transgender you know who may be questioning their sexual orientation. So there is an awful lot there that suggesting that this is something you have to be doing and there is an awful lot of resource and support out there to now be able to do that.

AM: Right, sure. As well as recognising the bullying, what about the fact that heterosexuality shouldn’t be assumed and that also male female binaries shouldn’t be assumed? Again is this something that teaches aren’t recognising? Should be recognising?

CG: I think yeah. I don’t think teachers are particularly at ease with with with [//] taking the stance that’s ort of the non-assumption of heteronormativity and heterosexuality. Um, I think at this point and this whole movement towards talking about LGBT more on the school agenda, it’s more about talking about those issues and making [//] sort of indirectly making young people understand that heterosexuality isn’t always the norm, but without, I don’t think they feel comfortable at present to be you know standing there and saying you know *we don’t assume that anybody straight*. It’s sort of, we are talking about the fact there are different communities out there, almost like they talk about, you know Black History Month they talk about bme, within LGBT History Month we talk about those other communities you know that are out there.

AM: So, they are still kind of seen as other?

CG: I think so and while that’s not ideal, we are not naive to the fact that you know you cant expect schools to take all of this on at once. Um especially if you look at issues
around trans. We are really pleased that the DCSF has now commissioning guidance on transphobic bullying and you know while the trans lobby has been calling out for this for quite a while, I think the Government might have been quite [//] until it had started getting it’s head around homophobic, homophobic bullying I think it was slightly at unease to talk about trans transphobic, transphobic bullying. So, you know we realise that it’s a step by step approach and not everything is going to happen at once. And so those very progressive schools, and there are some out there, you know will talk about you know the non assumption of heterosexuality and they will talk about you know the LGBT as very much, as part of the community and that and it being no different. But we acknowledge that schools and local authorities are all at different stages of of starting to address it in that way.

AM: yeah. That’s great. Moving on to staff in schools. How important do you feel it is for LGBT teachers and other staff member’s at schools to be out at work?

CG: We would always encourage a teacher if they feel comfortable [//] to be out at work. We would never say they must be out at work, cos you know I’m a gay man and I chose who I tell that I’m gay, that’s completely my business and you may have a heterosexual member of staff who decides not to talk about their private life. Um, I don’t talk about my private life in my office even though you know the majority of our staff here are gay. Um, but we do know that gay members of staff can be extremely positive role models for young people and if you’ve got staff, you know if a heterosexual member of staff says you know this weekend me and my wife went to you went to the park then there’s no reason why an LGB member of staff shouldn’t be able to say well me and my partner, say Mr Jones, says well me and my partner Bob went to the park this weekend. And they should feel comfortable to be able to say that. Whether they you know want to say that or not is up to them, but every teacher should be able to feel comfortable to be themselves within their class, because if they can’t be themselves, I don’t know how they can expect young people to be themselves, and we do know that, especially for those young people who are questioning their sexual orientation or you know have accepted and come out as LGB to have somebody within their school who sends out a clear message that in this school, it’s fine to be lesbian, gay or bisexual and everybody fully supports that and I am a lesbian, gay bisexual member of staff myself, send out a wonderful strong message to those young people that there’s nothing wrong with being gay. You know and it’s something they should really embrace and be proud of and not feel different from the rest, so [//] I’ve digressed a bit, but while we wouldn’t force a teacher to come out, we really do encourage them to.

AM: Yeah, I think that’s pretty much the view I take as well. As you mentioned, it can be used to sort of normalise identities, it gives the kids role models.

CG: Yeah.

AM: And ur I really, I’ve got many teachers, friends who are teachers and I advocate that it’s kind of their responsibility to come out at school in the same way as their straight colleagues. So I think that example that you gave is really a good one. You know I wouldn’t say to my friends, you know go into a school and shout out I’m gay…
AM: …but, when another member of staff talks about their partner, you know their opposite sex partner then talk about your same sex partner and if there’s an occasion where partners are being taken, take your partner, that kind of thing. But at the same time, like you’ve said, I’d never force a teacher to come out…

AM: …and there’s much disagreement amongst just my close, small group of friends who are teachers, who disagree about whether they should come out at work, some are some aren’t.

AM: Yeah. Um, sticking with teachers. In my research so far, I’ve found many teachers citing restrictions and lack of training and resources why the bullying is often not tackled. Do you think this is a legitimate reason?

AM: For key stage 3 and 4 and we sent a copy of that to every single secondary school in England and I speak to so many teachers who say I have never seen it in my school. So there will be a lot of materials that go into schools which don’t get to the teachers and this is why, especially with the um homophobic bullying guidance, having it commissioned as an online resource means you don’t have to, if there’s a copy in your staff room or your head teachers office you don’t have to go and you know be the one who gets that down off the self because you know your head teacher might think why are they doing this you know its not part of our agenda, are they gay themselves? This might affect your promotions, so to be able to access that online and that has a lot of practical resources to use on the curriculum as well, is really really good. Um, in terms of
curriculum there is a lot of change taking place and we’re talking, we work with the QCA, the qualifications, curriculum authority to look at um ways in which in citizenship and PSHEE as it’s now going to be called from September, Um.

AM: It’s getting longer and longer!

CG: Each year, no no no they’ll add as many letters as they can! Um that within those subjects and that within English literature and drama there are you know um there are ways to talk about LGBT issues. They don’t have to be shoe-horned into every subject. So we know that there’s some staff who might want to do it in the maths lessons or you know Sally and Sarah have got a joint mortgage and there’s that danger of it being a bit tokenistic. And we are not at that stage where you can drop same-sex couples into any example. We need to be talking about you know LGBT people in history, um talking discrimination and prejudice, civil partnerships, same-sex relationships, homophobic bullying, um you know there’s an awful lot of issues out there that we can talk about that don’t make it look tokenistic. Um so I I I try to side with teachers and I understand, you know especially the teachers we talk to who are really really positive about it but just don’t have the support and resources they need.

AM: Do you find the presence of out LGBT teachers in schools is a factor? Do you get a lot of, these teachers that you talk about coming to you, are they mostly LGB or T or are a lot of them straight.

CG: Their, the ones I speak to are mostly LGB, if they are T, they don’t say um but um I yeah it does tend to be them, but we do also speak to heterosexual staff who also want to deal with this as well and a lot of head teachers who we deal with who we speak to want to deal with this for their school because they realise you know, it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to realise that if you’ve got happy students and if you’ve got productive students and head teachers, you know teachers, and school governors and local authorities, they want results.

AM: Yeah.

CG: As well as looking after young people they also have to say well you know we get results, so this is a good school and they have pressures on them from national Government to do so. So they you know, those those, really canny teachers will realise well if we look after all of our young people and you know create a really positive learning environment then we are gonna have good and productive young people. Um, so we do hear from a range of teachers who want to put this on their agenda.

AM: That’s great, that’s good to hear, positive.

CG: Well, yeah there’s definitely a lot of positive stuff out there.

AM: Actually, that links on to the next question, because um I’ve found some very successful examples of schools changing there ethos’ and challenging homo/bi/trans bullying, um Stoke Newington for example, there’s a school in Bradford that I recently
saw a programme on that are really being proactive. But why do you think these examples are so rare?

CG: Um, Section 28, would probably be my straight forward…

AM: {yep!}

CG: …answer to that.

AM: Fair enough.

CG: I know there’s a question about it later, so it will probably be a bit repetitive…

AM: {no, no that’s fine, one of the reasons why we put it later, it was originally at the start and we put it later to see at what point it came up.

CG: I always try and focus on the positive in what we do, because in campaigning you can get bogged down in the negative and you have to sort of look at it as positive outcomes. Section 28 of course, you know the irony of it being that it was a piece of local Government legislation that was never intended to stop teachers from talking about LGBT issues in the classroom actually very much did that. Um and you know so for 14 years you had you had environments in schools where none of these issues were talked about, young people who were gay were scared to come out um you know, there was no legislative framework to back them up you know they might get kicked out their school and there was nothing really there to support them um and also with teachers, you know if they came out they would suffer homophobia and homophobic abuse um and you know the sad legacy of Section 28 is that it’s very much stigmatised the gay community and there was a long period of time where these issues just weren’t talked about. We still speak to teachers who asked us you know well is Section 28 still in place or has it been repealed? Um and they also think that when it was in place that it did apply to them um [//] so I’d say there’s so few example because you know people are starting to come out of the woodwork now but it’s taking a long time because it’s only 2003 it was repealed, now that’s not very long ago.

AM: It’s not really. I mean we can link this to the question about Section 28 and I wonder, which you have just practically answered for me, is the sort of fear of Section 28, and a lack of understanding about what you are and are not allowed to do and say.

CG: Exactly that. There’s there’s a fear of Section 28 amongst those who, you know it was there, it was part of their careers for so long, um there’s those who don’t realise it’s been repealed and when you do stigmatise a community for such a long time it takes a long time to sort of you know pull off those shackles really, um so I think there’s going to be an awfully long way to go. But I think you know if you look at where we’ve come with DCSF publishing guidance specifically on homophobic bullying and you know Ed Balls Secretary of State, Kevin Brennan Minister for Schools standing up and saying we’ve got to tackle this like we deal with racist bullying then we are getting there. But those examples from schools they are not few and far between but they are you know they are still small in their number but they are starting to grow.
AM: Yeah. I think that probably covers the second part of the question as well which I was going to ask, why do you think the Government’s not making these kinds of initiatives a compulsorily part of the curriculum?

CG: I think it’s because of that um that environment in schools about talking about the issues is still quite sensitive um but you know slowly but surely we are making progress. If you look at the, like I said the PSHE curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 for the new curriculum that comes in in September 2008. There are, there are now definitions around homo, talking about homophobia and homophobic bullying. Within citizenship there’s reference to talking about same sex um relationships and civil partnerships, but, and whilst this is not at any stage where these things are mentioned is it statutory, it’s a step in the right direction and there’s a very big move there’s a PSHE association which is lobbying to make PSHE statutory in schools, so we’d love to see that happen at some stage. And even then, if it were to become statutory [//] talking about those issues is still optional because it’s not been written in stone as definitions, you may want to talk about these issues, but they’re still not you know concrete there.

AM: Yeah.

CG: But it’s a step in the right direction and there are a lot of schools that are really embracing this and saying you know we want to do it, it’s there, the QCS says we can do it, we are going to do it.

AM: That’s’ great, a step in the right direction.

CG: Definitely.

AM: moving on to young people. The development of their own sexuality, which is the primary focus of my research really. Given that some young people are often unaware of their own sexuality and their general identity during their school years, why and how do you think they are actually singled out for this type of bullying?

CG: Well, much like any form of bullying, you can be homophobically, biphobically, transphobically bullied just for being different. It’s not about being gay, it’s not about being bisexual, it’s not about being trans. Um, I’ve worked in bullying for many years, I used to work in disabilist bullying and [//] disablist words would be banded around just directed at somebody for being different or not part of the group. Especially when we talk about homophobic bullying, which which also encompasses biphobic bullying and to an extend transphobic bullying um you know it’s those boys who aren’t particularly sporty, the girls who are particularly sporty, who aren’t part of the group um you know who [//] the intelligent ones in the class, who have a gay brother, who have gay parents, um they can be, the can experience homophobic bullying. So it’s not always about those who are perceived as gay. It’s not always those who come out as gay. Um [//] and a lot of the time we know that you know the um, the language that young people use poof, queer, gay as derogatory terms um a lot of the time they use it as a derogatory term without actually thinking about the meaning of the word. Um you know school trainers, school textbook or trainers get called gay, um you know gay is sort of that word that is often used to refer to something as being crap or rubbish. Um, so it’s, it’s quite a complex area really. It’s
not necessarily about saying *well you’re the gay kid in the class, we are gonna have a go at you for being gay.* It’s about being different, it’s about using language in inappropriate ways.

AM: The use of the language, you use examples that I use as well, gay, poof, dyke, tranny….

CG: {yep}

AM: …as put down terms in the playground and classroom, do you feel this does constitute homo/bi and trans bullying?

CG: Well, the use of the word in itself doesn’t constitute bullying. You know research, have done a lot of work into what bullying actually is and there’s a difference between you know using a word against someone and you know using it repetitively as a way to make them feel bad about themselves over a period of time which constitutes bullying. And so bullying can take many forms, one of which might be you know verbal bullying, might be physical bullying and also you know mental bullying where you sort of isolate people. So you know, if I were to call you you know an f’ing queer or something once that wouldn’t constitute bullying, that would be an insult. That wouldn’t be bullying in itself, but if I were to over a time you know, pick you out and have a go at you whether it’s because I think you are lesbian, gay, bisexual yourself, or whether I think you’re trans, or maybe cos I just want to single you out for any other reason, that would constitute bullying.

AM: So, you would say that sort of single use of it is wrong and it’s an insult and that should be tackled…

CG: {yeah}

AM: …but almost that it should be tackled as an isolated incident?

CG: Yeah, yeah we definitely talk, we we encourage teachers in schools to confront um verbal incidents and that’s in primary and secondary schools and have young people understand when it is appropriate and when it’s inappropriate to use words. You know you have some schools who will outlaw the word gay, which is completely counter productive. We could go back to Section 28 almost there where you are just don’t dare mutter the word. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans used in you know very appropriate situations are absolutely fine, but its not appropriate in others.

AM: So you would advocate the sort of education at a young age, as soon as the word in used in inappropriately…

CG: {yeah}

AM: …educate them what the word actually means…

CG: {definitely}
AM: …and why it is inappropriate to use it in such a…

CG: {definitely and even those teachers who aren’t, you know feel uncomfortable about [/] going into the complexities of when it is appropriate to use it, at least to point out that it is inappropriate to use it you know and you don’t you know when little Sam fall’s over on the playground you don’t call him a gay boy.

AM: Yep.

CG: Cos we don’t speak to other people in our school like that.

AM: that’s great. Um linking these things together, if you’ve got a young person who’s, whether they [/] if they haven’t realised their own sexual or gender identity yet, but they are being given these signs from other people, they are being subject to this kind of bullying, these kinds of words, because for some reason they have been singled out.

CG: Yep.

AM: Do you think that this can effect how the young person the n starts to perceive themselves? Do you think they start to question their sexual identity because they are getting all this external…

CG: {definitely, they’ll be certainly questioning their sexual identity and they’ll be some who accept their sexual identity and start to feel ashamed of it. When all you hear is the word gay banded around as a derogatory term you come to think of gay in general and when I say gay I’m talking about LGB and often T as well as being just negative in itself. So that sends a lot of young people further back into the closet and it makes them feel ashamed of being gay. But when that is removed from the school environment, so when gay, you know those terms cant be banded around in a derogatory way [/] then young people you know start to feel more positive about the associations they make with being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

AM: So positive association you think is really…

CG: {definitely}

AM: …OK, sticking with the experiences of young people. What do you feel are the short and long term effects on LGBT young people of this kind of bullying and the general culture, the heteronormative culture in schools?

CG: Well we know that young people who experience homophobic bullying are more likely to skip school, um they they you know they self esteem, much like any forms of bullying, their self esteem and their self confidence suffer. Ur and in the long term of course that’s going to affect their productivity, their future life opportunities. Um we had a lot of young people attend our gay youth event on Saturday who are what we refer to as NEET, so they are not in employment, education or training.

AM: that’s a good term.
CG: Yeah it’s a well used…

AM: {I’ve not come across that before}

CG: …you’ll find that within social care, it’s used a lot. Um, and um and a lot of those young people will be NEET because they’ve not performed well at school because they’ve not felt supported at school. Cos they may have been homophobically bullied at school. Um so we know that in terms of their life chances, it does, you know it can have a detrimental effect, just like any form of bullying. And if you look at the, you know the Governments Every Child Matters agenda, you know staying safe um you know achieving academic well-being, um enjoying and achieving, there’s lots, I cant think of the five of them now, but if you look at those five Every Child Matters outcomes, we know that young people cannot achieve those young people cannot achieve those outcomes if they are being homophobically bullying. And they cant then go on to you know contribute to, be positive contributors to society, or at least it hinders that and makes it more difficult for them. Um so ur, I’ve lost the thread of my question now!

AM: The short and long term effects.

CG: Oh yes. Yes so you’ve got the short term which is very much how they feel at the time and start skipping school and start under performing and then of course how it affects their life chances.

AM: On the opposite side, you said earlier that in your job you try and focus on the positives rather than the negatives. Have you in the past or recently anybody that’s experienced this kind of bullying but actually has managed to have a really positive outcome out of it.

CG: Yeah, well one of the young people who came to our gay youth event last year. He’d experienced quite horrible homophobic bullying at his school and had since left the school. But after the even he started to realise that you know being gay is ok you know in the 21st century it won’t stop you from doing what you want to do in life.

AM: Yep.

CG: Um and ur he went back to his school and helped them re-devise their anti-bullying policy to make specific reference to homophobic bullying. Um we had a young person we worked with quite closely who had a really rough time at school and once he sort of he got over that with then, when he finally got support he helped set up his local LGBT youth group and we successfully nominated him last year for a Dianna award, so he’s, there are very positive examples of people who’ve managed to turn it on it’s head. We are just launching a youth volunteering programme at the moment where we, whereby we give young people the opportunity to try and tackle homophobic bullying in their local areas. And a lot of those young people will be those who have directly experienced homophobic bullying and now want to do something about it so that no-body else experiences it. So yeah there is a lot of positive examples out there.
AM: Ok, the next question is about Section 28, which I think we’ve pretty much covered unless there’s anything else you would like to add about what the legacies have been and perhaps ideas of how we might combat these legacies?
CG: I think you know like I said before it’s stigmatised the gay community for such a long time that it’s left a legacy of homophobia and homophobic bullying um and slowly but surely we are seeing a way out of that I mean schools are starting to put this on their agenda. You know the Government has made it very clear, you know we’ve started to deal with racist incidents, we’ve now got to deal with homophobic incidents as well, um so no I don’t think there’s anything else to add in that sense.

AM: Great, to draw to a close then um is there anything else you would like to talk about in relation to the issues covered or any questions that you have about my work?

CG: Um, I don’t think so. I mean like I said at the beginning it’s very important that you have the legislative framework, you have the polices in place, but then you also have that understanding within schools as well that, you know the teachers have the resources that they need, they are supported as they need to be and that you do, something that we always emphasise is what we call the whole school ethos, so everybody within your whole school community has got to support this, down to your dinner ladies and your caretakers you know to your PTA and your school governors board. Um and um leadership from the top. So if your school, if your local authority and your school governors and your senior management team which includes your head teacher don’t have this on their agenda then it’s very difficult to filter that down. Um so it’s you know everybody has to embrace this, it shouldn’t be just the gay teacher who is doing this, um it shouldn’t just be the young person who’s being homobically bullied who is trying to deal with this, is should be the whole school community. Um and that’s something we very much talk about in all of the work that we do.

AM: Brilliant, thank you very much.
AM: Could you please start by telling me the remit of the organisation that you work for…

SS: {well there’s two}

AM: …and your role within it

SS: Schools out is over thirty years old and it’s changed its focus I guess over the years, initially it was um the gay teachers group and its intention then was back in the 70’s to really to have a, a support group for lesbian and gay, probably not even thinking bisexual in the very early days, certainly not ‘t’ um to support teachers in those days there were we a total (inaudible), there was no-body supported us, no-body cared about us, were public enemy number one probably, you know we were a problem, unions weren’t thinking about our needs, local authorities weren’t and if you came out you’d probably get sacked. So we needed some sort of support system [//] Very soon after the gay teachers support system was set up, John Warbaton got sacked, or suspended and then eventually sacked by the inner London education authority where he was seen by a group of his students on a very early Gay Pride March and was asked ‘are you gay’ and he said yes, he was suspended and then eventually he was, he was sacked [//] so [//]…

AM: {because he was gay?

SS: …because he said he was gay in the classroom. And He was asked to sign a piece of paper to say that he would never admit that he was gay again [//] listen to the language [//] admit, you admit a crime you don’t admit your sexual orientation…
AM: {yes quite}

SS: …so a whole bunch of us, um, got a petition together saying that we would not sign such a statement. It was shocking to me in those early days how many people wouldn’t sign that […] um […] you know it was an invitation to be sacked…

AM: […] um […] by not signing?

SS: …well by signing the petition saying that we would not sign…

AM: {oh not sign the petition, oh I see.

SS: …yeah […] Saying to ILEA we will not sign such a petition, you know, such statement. If you ask us to sign such a statement, we would not sign it.

AM: So you petitioned?

SS: And we sent this letter of to ILEA and said you know x number of people have said and these are there names who say they wont do that and I supposed it shocked me how many people, lesbian and gay people, did not feel confident, were scared, you know would not sign it. Um So Schools Out then became therefore a more campaigning organisation um and in the early days there were regional areas…there is in fact a book um which I can give you a copy of so…

AM: {ah is it the little white one?

SS: …yes we were giving them out at the conference.

AM: Yes, I got one yes, it was very useful.

SS: Good, good, good, good. Um […] so that sort of, Schools Out sort of bumbled along and then of course it became Section 28 and we really had to leap into action and both Paul and I were in London at that stage and Schools Out became quite prominent in pulling all the education stuff together and there were sort of two big lobby’s around Section 28, well more than two, cos there was the lesbian avengers […] there were all sort of groups you know fighting the whole beginnings of all that, but the two that I were particularly involved in was the Arts lobby in which Ian McKellan and Michael Cashman and Simon Fanshaw were all involved and we met at the Drill Hall and then the Education lobby and I was sort of the bridge between the education lobby and and the Arts lobby in trying to educate McKellan and Cashman and the others in the issues around schools, which bless their hearts they never really got. Um so masses of work at that time both under the arts lobby, both under the education lobby, both under Stonewall and I think one of the things that that that I’m most proud about about about Schools Out is that it, that it is is a very democratic organisation it’s a very loose organisation, it’s a very um, it’s driven by its volunteers, it, it its um, it can pop up in very interesting and different places, depending upon the passion and abilities and time of its, of it’s members in a sense and I suppose in particularly in the last 10-15 years when I’ve been very active with it and where Paul and I have been co-chairing it and since the Internet and I suppose
the Internet has proven to be the most amazing tool and obviously since Labours come in with the whole new equalities sort of agenda and post Steven Laurence, Steven Laurence enquiry has made a phenomenal difference [///] We have I think as an organisation, chivvied, educated, encouraged and pushed, in a variety of different places and interestingly enough because of the Steven Laurence enquiry and because I have [///] although I’ve always kept my education roots I began moving into and earning my living as a freelance trainer. After the McPherson Steven Laurence enquiry I was already working with the Southwark anti-homophobic forum and we heard that there’s company called IONA had been had got the contract to deliver the diversity training to the Criminal Justice System, or at that point it was to the Metropolitan Police and to other Police service, I rang them up and said what do you know about LGBT [///] long pause [///] off I go [///] and then I become a trainer freelance trainer and an IONA in associate and then begin delivering diversity training to the Met Police to the Essex police, goodness alone knows other police services, the Crown Prosecution Service and her majesties court services which is now obviously different again so I began to be very involved with the criminal justice system.

AM: And did you leave teaching for this?

SS: Yeah I had I had already, I taught for two years at Catford County over the road…

AM: {because you did a lot of supply didn’t you?

SS: Yep, I did 2 years at Hammersmith College for further education then went over to Australia. Taught in Australia in a women’s prison and in a Roman Catholic Girls School, extraordinary and actually got, prisoners work, smuggled some prisoners work out of the prison took it to the Roman Catholic Girls School and got the girls to do a show which we took it back into the prison which was [///] phenomenal really [///] um came back to this country did another year at Hammersmith College, then went back to Oz again and did a whole variety of different things then came back and then began really full time freelancing, was director at the oval theatre for a year did a something called development of anti-sex initiatives which was at at Kissel Park School, which is now Stoke Newington school, um did lots of bits of supply as I began to develop my um training skills and my consultancy skills and was also a therapist for a short time.

AM: Oh wow, varied CV then!

SS: Yep, yep so I’ve always kept my links with teaching cos that’s my first love in a sense you know but interestingly enough as I began to do training and I began to do that sort of work so it sort of linked up with this IONAIN stuff so I began to get more and more involved in the Criminal Justice System, at the same time we had the whole situation of the Paddington Rail crash there were friends of mine who were members of the race advisor group for the Paddington Rail crash who called me in to be a lay advisor because a. I had PTS knowledge and training and no-body was thinking about PMT and secondly everybody was assuming everybody was heterosexual and so my friends on the race advisory group said look we need you in here wearing at least 2 hats to actually stir them up work with them [///] so I began to be aware of this advisory group. Then I began working with police around family liaison officers who had never considered working
with you know the implications of what it might mean to be working with lesbian and gay families [//] and I suppose always whenever I was doing this work I would do it as Sue Sanders, but I would always talk about Schools Out. You know I was Co-Chair of Schools Out I would always say you know as the Co-Chair of School Out this work you know because I was trying to make the links between the Criminal Justice System and Education. Massive under reporting of homophobic crime, where do people learn about not reporting homophobic crime, in schools where schools take no notice of it, so why are we then surprised that people don’t report homophobic crime, if when they’ve been at school, they have watched there teachers do nothing about homophobia and maybe even perpetrate it, so why would they then assume that the police would be actually be their friends? So [//] I would always be raising the issues with the police and the criminal justice system about saying your concerned about the under reporting of homophobic crime therefore you’ve got to do work with the education and therefore me being Co-Chair of Schools Out is a really important link for you to be thinking about those [//] through…

AM: {what are you looking at Dusty}!

SS: …um so, Schools Out therefore has been, visible within the criminal justice system and because of my membership of the lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender advisory group to the Met Police um I was invited to do a presentation to the CP service, amongst others, to discuss the whole potential of the CPS thinking about producing a guide to prosecute homophobic and transphobic, well homophobic crime at that point and was there a need, so a group of us did a presentation to say yes there bloody well is and then I was on the advisory group that that co wrote that and then Dr Michael Halls who’s from Intercom Trust down in Cornwall and does the four Counties down in the South West he and I are responsible for training all the regional homophobic crime co-ordinators, so every year or maybe twice a year we we train we do two big days training down there and the CPS uses me as a usually volunteer, occasionally they’ll give me a bit of money [//]

AM: {If you’re luck you get a cup of tea out of it}!

SS: …yeah, yeah, I mean I’ve certainly worked with them on their single equality policy which is probably one of the best um and just recently we’ve revamped the policy and um advice on prosecuting homophobia and transphobic crime and we’ll have to update it again because obviously we’ve just got the new law coming in.

AM: Of course yeah.

SS: So [//] (sigh), so I suppose what’s the complexity of Schools Out its the joy of it’s a rich as the members of it and who can get themselves out there. I’ve been extraordinary lucky to be in a very crucial point in at a crucial time to then get very involved with the Criminal Justice System that Schools Out has been, has gained this quite prominent place from the…

AM: {from the links that you have made}!
SS: …(nods) from the links that I have been able to make, Paul would make lots of links within education and we’ve spent every bloody summer, doing what I would call the government homework. Every summer there’s a big consultation. So Schools Out will usually put something in to for instance the Single Equality Policy, um the Homophobic guidance [//] um oh if you look on the website, there’s a whole long list of of documents [//] …

AM: {yes I have there’s a massive list!}

SS: …yes, that we have spent hours unpaid writing about, to try, I mean we attempted to have the DCSF stuff when everyday matters, every child matters…

AM: {Yes Every Child Matters}

SS: …I spent an inordinate amount of time trying to point out that not mentioning LGBT was a disaster and terrible and disgusting and then they produced Every Youth Matters and again we weren’t in that and you finally think you know, is there any point to this [//] um [//] so I guess Schools Out has it’s public hat in getting into interesting places and making a change [//] …

AM: {yep.

SS: …and it has a place that that we attempt to support individuals, so people will ring us up, much less than they used to, and I think that’s probably that the unions have got a lot better so I don’t, I don’t [//] …

AM: {so it’s in a way it’s a good sign because there’s…

SS: {…yes, yes I think so.

AM: …because there’s more places for teachers to go to?

SS: I think there’s many more places for teachers to go to now. But what is shocking and appalling and frightening is that since 2003, we’ve only had one case that we know about that has gone to tribunal, successfully gone to tribunal…

AM: {yes}

SS: …which is David, which is one of Ours, you know which I was there for // David Watkins // which was in February…

AM: {special needs teacher? Yes? Yes.

SS: …that’s right // (phone rings) …and now I’ve lost the thread no of course.

AM: Yes we were talking about the only case to go to tribunal…
SS: {yes, yes, here we are in 2008 and as far as we can tell this is the very first case which has actually gone [/] gone all the way through…

AM: {yes because they are being settled out of court mainly aren’t they.

SS: …yes of course, which no-body knows.

AM: Yes if forget, ur is it David?

SS: David Watkins yes.

AM: Yes I saw a documentary last week which actually which he was on and he said they offered numerous amounts of money you know to not go to court and he, quite rightly in my opinion said no I want to go all the way because it’s the principle of the matter.

SS: That’s right, yes yes, bless his heart [/] Yeah no he was stunning he was stunning and I think and I mean and I’m hoping that lots of teachers will see that and it’s great that teachers TV has grabbed it. Um I have yet to see it and it was so exciting, I mean it was weird being there I mean I had been at both court cases for Shirley Piece, who was teacher in Southampton, Portsmouth I think, one of those Port town in the late 80’s, no 90’s who had been bullied by kids and she attempted to take a case under the Sex Discrimination Act that she’d been bullied under a les [/] because of a lesbian…

AM: {right}

SS: …and it was a dodgy case but we were really hopeful that we would win and this was pre the 2003 Act obviously and it was an attempt to get the legislation to acknowledge that under the Sex Discrimination Act you could be [/] um got at as a lesbian…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …and it went all the way to the appeal court

AM: {right}

SS: …and ironically Cherie Blair was barrister for the local authority…

AM: {oh}

SS: …which was pretty shocking really.

AM: This was pre 97? Or maybe…

SS: {no no no it was while Tony was in, was Prime Minister, no, oh yes absolutely.

AM: Right.
SS: …um and so Shirley lost and in a sense having spoke to some people responsible for the wording and and and um the work on 2003 that changed that case very clearly um informed them of the process of how they wanted to get, obviously it was European lead but they were acutely aware of Shirley Pierce’s case and it was acutely important that we had a case and as David said there are no doubt many teachers who have attempted the process and who have been brought off at the last moment or have you know have signed a confidentiality clause, cos you know this is what happens. So it was very exciting to be there and they weren’t very well prepared because I don’t think they ever expected it to get there, they thought he would cave at some point and of course he never did. And the whole thing had been set up for a week and it was sorted within before lunch, so he got his money and he said he that he wouldn’t sign a confidentiality clause…

AM: {yes I watched it last week and I believe he said that he wouldn’t sign a confidentiality clause and a full apology from the School involved.}

SS: Yes, so it was an unmitigated success and of course it is shocking that this is the first one we have and this is 2008.

AM: Yes I was very surprised when I heard that last week.

SS: Yes yes.

AM: That leads in well actually to my first main question um in terms of policy and how…

SS: {you asked me about my organisation so I haven’t told you about history month yet…}

AM: {oh yes sorry, yes before we go onto that, we’ll we’ll hold that thought.Yes LGBT history month, very important, yeah.

SS: …out of the work we’ve been doing as Schools Out, producing teachers packs either as, again when I train I train either as Sue Sanders or as Chrysalis cos that’s sort of the commercial arm, that’s how I pay my mortgage, cos all my work for Schools Out is unpaid and it just makes our lives easier if we just bill people as us or Chrysalis but I’m obviously always saying that I’m co-chair of Schools Out because it gives it weight and it you know is informing the process that we are doing. But what was so obvious to us all was the fact that getting visibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans, because over the years we have adopted bisexual and trans, we’ve moved with the times and of course we are about to have the debate, do we have Q, Q and I and all that…

AM: {I know that debate very well…}

SS: {yes, so that will be an interesting one, yes}

AM: …just from within student politics

SS: {yes, yes, yes}
AM: …there’s this whole debate going on about whether to include Q

SS: yes so I think we’ll probably have that debate probably at our next meeting [/] um [/] the total invisibility of lesbian and gay people, everybody’s assumed, heteronormativity is alive and well in our schools and[/] that’s both with the people, with the parents, with the kids and with everybody in the curriculum [/] Having see the success of black history month and seeing it move from don’t say that to actually…

AM: (laughs)

SS: …grappling with the thinking about exploring educating and enabling people to understand black experiences and existence, and I mean no-where near as much as it should be but one its unlikely that you will see reading books you know pure Janet and John stuff [/] it’s still not enough…

AM: {no}

SS: …it’s still not enough. One cannot say that our curriculums are considerate around race, or ethnicity which I prefer, because they are not. But seeing how black history month made a difference, I’d been saying to Paul for some time, we really need an LGBT history month and in 2004 because of the 2003 legislation, because at that point we could see on the horizon the equality and human rights commission…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …coming up…goods and services being discussed and being talked about, I felt that there was a potential for maybe setting it up. So Paul and I sat down and discussed it and we decided on February and we decided on February because it was a quietish month and because it had a half term in it and we were determined to have a month with a half term in it because we knew that libraries and museums would grab it. We knew that schools would be very freighted of it and we knew that…

AM: {good thinking

SS: …yes and we knew that if teachers, parents, kids, went into their museums and libraries and saw something about LGBT history month, that might give them confidence and resources and the courage really to take it into schools. Which I think to some extent has been true, it certainly um, I was talking in Brixton this year, did a numerable number of different events, probably 5 or 6 different events plus a big um display in the library and um exactly teachers came up to the library and said wow this is amazing maybe I can do something um we we probably have I mean Scotland now has it’s own set up and and um somebody who is now paid full time I think to run the Scottish LGBT History month (sigh) [/] still [/] we have no funds basically, so its such an irony um South West, Michael in Intercom Trust has got a young women there who has been funded there for I think for about 18 months and there’re looking to refund her for LGBT South West. And Brighton have just done a whole lot and there’s a big meeting today which I cant be at which sort of is a bit on the back of that looking at stuff around schools, but um so its really taken off and I think next year is our fifth year, last year we
were launched at the Royal Courts of Justice the attorney general, Barbara Follet and the London Chief…

AM: {yes I remember you saying}

SS: …you know which is a big bloody deal. Um, previous to that it was the Metropolitan Police and the MPA, previous to that it was the TUC and the very first one was at the Tate Gallery thanks to Southwark Council…

AM: {yep}

SS: …because I live in Southwark and Southwark has supported my work enormously, we had the council forum there and they supported me. So the irony is that out initial funding came from the then department of education and skills. 17 thousand the first year, 20 thousand the second year, but they’ve done it totally in the closet, we’ve never been allowed to put there logo on the website

AM: {I remember that being said at the conference in February

SS: Absolutely I was so angry about I can’t tell you, yes

AM: They give you the funds, but they don’t want to be associated with it

SS: That’s right and interestingly enough Gypsy and traveller month has started, this is the first year, in June and whose logo is on their website, DCSF, which of course is a rainbow which is…..

AM: Actually yes I noticed that, cos when the DCSF was new sort of in terms of the reformulation of the department and I noticed on their new website that it’s a rainbow

SS: Yes

AM: I though that was a bit [/] hypocritical, one might say

SS: Yes, just a tidge, just a tidge. Absolutely. So History Month, fifth year next year, I’m hoping to have Balls, Ed Balls the Education Minister launch it in a school in Tower Hamlets, we’ll see. Um, I I think, I mean I get a sense going round the country and Paul did a lot of travelling as well that [/] we’re beginning to get embedded in the equality calendar. I think, I wouldn’t say that everybody knows by any means, um [/] and we are not as mainstreamed as I would like, so although the BBC not this year but the last year Radio four did about, had a whole month of Tchaikovsky in February had at least five different, book programme, had a couple of dykes and a gay man, dessert island discs had a couple of gay people in that month, I mean it was really quite interesting

AM: {yeah}

SS: …but it at no point said February is LGBT history Month
AM: Right

SS: That I’m aware of. The first year Paul was interviewed by just about every BBC Regional programme

AM: {right}
SS: …round the country [//] I think its getting into people’s psyches I’m certainly at the Royal Courts of Justice the audience, we had about 400 people there and they were by no means all LGBT people I mean I’m I’m beginning to find ways of getting um what I would call the professional equality sector people and inviting them to events and getting them to think about it and all the rest of it. Um and the whole professionalisation of equality is interesting and sometimes incredibly painful. I mean I can go to meeting where there are local authorities equalities people and you know they’ll talk about LGBT issues and you can see you know that there knowledge is paper thin and sometimes they don’t even know what LGBT stands for so you sort kind of want to weep. We clearly need, it seems to be that we’ve got you know two more years [//] cos my fear is that the chances of Labour getting in again are negligible…

AM: {yes}

SS: …and it’s not the best Government in the world but certainly one would prefer them to the Tories…

AM: {my opinion at the moment as well}

SS: …yes. If, I think what happens with the Single Equality Policy, I mean I was at a conference on Monday and Harriet Harman was talking about it and there were things I felt good about and other things I felt shattered about. It looks like we are going to lose equality impact assessment which I think is such a big mistake…

AM: {right}

SS: …um so I think we’ve got two more years to sort of, get in there and then goodness alone knows. What will be very interesting to see is what Boris does, obviously in London.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Um [//] and he’s got a gay deputy.

AM: He has, I didn’t know that.

SS: Yeah Richard Barnes is a gay man, but who’s never suffered homophobia (said with sarcasm)

AM: Oh!

SS: The fact that he’s white, you know, middle class (sigh) hasn’t really clocked, anyway
AM: I think with the LGBT History Month um, its interesting you saying about visibility, cos it started in 2004 and we are in 2008 now, as somebody who is fairly active in the LGBT community and who is in her middle twenties lesbian woman, until last year I hadn’t heard of it…

SS: {Right}

AM: …but now, this year and last year, I’ve noticed sort of as a slightly mature student at University and not in a school setting, it is there…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …and it’s not just in schools…

SS: {yes}

AM: …so Universities are taking it on board…

SS: {good}

AM: …and I’ve got to know um the chair of the LGBT assembly at our university who is only 19, she’s an undergraduate and she’s there doing lots of stuff during February for LGBT History Month…

SS: {brill}

AM: …and they are linking up with Leeds Metropolitan and I know that other universities are doing stuff…

SS: {yes, Clare Anderson who was an NUS…

AM: {yes, I know of her}

SS: …yeah yeah she was sort of nomily a member of the committee but NUS work inevitably took you know…

AM: {yeah of course}

SS: …took over her, but you know she would have pushed it a bit. And I think [] it was clearly ripe and I think what interesting is that IDAHO was born in the same year, I mean, 2004 was our birth, I mean I launched it at, I mean I took such a punt, I went to an Amnesty meeting…

AM: {right}

SS: …which was launching Love and Homophobia, um, Love, Hate and Homophobia…

AM: {Love is a Human Right?
SS: No, this was about Homophobia across Europe.

AM: Oh OK.

SS: And just announced it in that small group of people that February is going to be LGBT History Month and then went to Gay Pride and you know tried to talk to all the various celebs there that I knew who were going on stage and asking them to announce it and none of the bugs would.

AM: London Gay Pride was this?

SS: Yeah. And um eventually Simon Hughes my, the MP in Southwark um agreed to, which has caused quite a few ripples in the Labour Party….

AM: Simon is a Lib Dem isn’t he?

SS: Sorry?

AM: Is Simon Lib Dem?

SS: Yes, yes he’s Lib Dem

AM: [Thought so yes]

SS: And has, has a history around LGBT issues in that he was a closet bi and of course he won from Peter Tatchell when Peter Tatchell was being outing and treated appallingly.

AM: Ahhh, yes.

SS: So its an interesting little number really, but Simon bless him did announce it and then eventually we got the funding that the DCFS eventually told us we had the funding I think late November early December, which was you know far too late, but then we held our pre-launch at the Tate in early December. Um and so we do it every November now, which is basically to tell people wake up smell the coffee start organising your February events.

AM: Yes. So it could be in two years time if the Labour Government are out that LGBT History Month could it be that it’s no more or could it just be…?

SS: [I think it, no no no I think it’ll be there I mean given that we haven’t got any fucking funding now…

AM: {Anyway, yeah so!}

SS: …so so I don’t think, its not gonna make a difference to us as a mother ship, I think what will be interesting is [//] where will the will be? For for, I mean I would imagine that universities will now run with it, I cant imagine universities not. I would have thought museums and libraries will continue, um the biggy will be schools and schools
are still um you know all over the place, I mean you’ve seen the case study on the LGBT History Month website with Ellie, which is stunning the work that she’s done, um and other schools have done great stuff but then don’t want to be named which is kind of frightening…

AM: {yes}

SS: …[/] given that the DCSF have now produced this guidance, and it is only guidance which is an outrage, um we’re meeting with Brennan, well I’m not, im gonna send Tony cos I think I might just bite Brennan’s head off! Greif has affected my anger massivly.

AM: Oh right I’m not surprised I can sympathise with that one.

SS: Yes. Um so I think it’s probably better if Tony goes and you know it skills him up to deal with these situations…

AM: {yes}

SS: …cos normally I do it or Paul would have done it, so we’ve gotta start sending the skills down. Um [/] so it’ll be interesting to see if Balls is prepared to to to do the notch. But I am saying you know the fifth year should be education, you should be up there and proud, the criminal Justice System has more than proved its worth around this issue…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …and you know it is your issue, if we don’t tackle homophobia and transphobia and heteronormativity in schools you know the rest of the communities suffer forever.

AM: Yep.

SS: So, you know deal with it.

AM: I think that leads us on very well, because that’s one of the main points that I’m looking at in my research that, I’ll be honest I wasn’t particularly that interested in education at first, at least I didn’t think I was…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …until I started thinking well what I interested in doing and it all came back to education, it’s the old education, education, education…

SS: {yes}

AM: …um and I realised as you just said if these issues aren’t addressed at that level then this…

SS: {well its like racism}
AM: …exactly, where they’ve got to learn from somewhere

SS: That’s right

AM: OK great. So um you’ve mentioned a number of policies and research actually um and also how inefficient they can be and my question is um how useful do you think these policies and campaigns have been, some of which you’ve touched upon, for example the new DCSF guidance, well we haven’t had long to really think about that and why do you think the policies are and are not useful?

SS: I think legislation and policies are crucial in the sense that they I mean they give you a chance to be able to say, you’ve gotta be doing this work. The problem is, if you got back now we’ve had twenty years of legislation around gender and ethnicity, we are still imprisoning black people at a ridiculously high level. Women still do not have equal pay and a woman is murdered every three days, by an ex-partner.

AM: Which tells you a lot about policy.

SS: Yes. On the other hand, without the legislation and the policy do cant do you should be doing this, you need to be dealing with this…

AM: {yep}

SS: …now I think what was really interesting was and I think Chris may have mentioned this to you cos he was at the same meeting yesterday, are you familiar with the No-Outsiders Project?

AM: I am, I am indeed yeah.

SS: Well, I’m on the board of that and Chris is as well and we were both at a meeting yesterday and what came out of the discussion that we had yesterday was they are probably working with around fifteen different schools around the country, maybe more…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …primary schools, um, you need to talk to Elizabeth I think.

AM: Yes, I was hoping to do that. Unfortunately because my project is quite small I’m mainly focusing on secondary schools…

SS: {right}

AM: …two things. One is I do want to bring Elizabeth into it and two if I take it wider into PhD I will definitely look at primary and secondary, so yes.

SS: But I think you know her work is so crucial…
SS: …and is such a uhh and she’s about, I hope, if she gets the funding she’s hoping, well she’s certainly, she’s putting in some money to do into teacher training…

AM: {right}

SS: …which is the crucial thing, there thereres, police officers get more training on equality and diversity than teachers do.

AM: Yes, I recently heard that at a conference up in Durham actually…

SS: {oh I’m glad somebody else is saying it!}

AM: Yes it was a sort of debate on the new law that was debating in the commons actually that day, the sexuality and hatred laws and that’s what the actual conference was about, but that was mentioned.

SS: Oh interesting, I should have gone to that. Anyway yes I mean it’s something that I’ve been screaming about for years, because obviously I’ve been delivering some of that training so I know you know um {[/]} so without the legislation you cant do the wrapping and say you know you need to do that…

AM: {yes}

SS: …on the other hand the legislation as yet, with the new commission, with the alck of knowledge, with the lack of {[/]} will…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …even with the legislation I think the Bristol case is is a superb in saying you can still have terrible fuck ups.

AM: Yeah.

SS: So you have a man who is sitting as a governor in a school, it’s a Church of England School, it has predominantly Muslims, Somali Muslims going to it, the head is Muslim, it has this particular governor who writes an article about the No-Outsiders work saying that parents were never consulted, lie. Um and sets the whole thing off, so you then have a whole group of of Muslim parents who whose English is very poor who are coming from a culture where kissing is not acceptable amongst heterosexuals yet alone amongst whatever…

AM: {yeah}

SS: ….so you’ve got you know the ‘King and King’ and it ends with two men kissing you know, on so many different levels it’s a challenge. Bristol council steps in and pulls the books away, then realises it wasn’t in there got so to do and says well you better make up your mind. You’ve got the Children and services area of Bristol council who was
supposed to know about these things fucking up like crazy. Social cohesion not really knowing, um I mean it, it’s a mess.

AM: Yep.

SS: So although we’ve got all this legislation and when I teach teachers about the legislation you know there’s a whole list as long as ya bleeding arm…

AM: {yeah, it’s piled up on my desk currently!}

SS: …which will, yes, which can support the work we are doing, but when push comes to shove like this case everybody’s pussy footing around, no-body knows quite what to do. And I think in this particular case what was frightening was and we’ve seen it in other places, the assumption that religion can trump LGBT and I think one of the things that I am livid about is ECHR did fuck all.

AM: Yep.

SS: And it seems to me that if the ECHR is going to of any use to us, here was a prime example where the need to take ownership of that situation go in and educate people around what the legislation was and enable people to do that and they did not at all and I have every intention of challenging them about that.

AM: Good.

SS: Because I think that is there job it seems to me but every time you meet any worker from the ECHR they all say oh its early days yet we don’t really know what we are doing, we haven’t got enough resources. I just think fuck off, your job is to fight for our equalities and if you are not doing it then who the hell is.

AM: Yeah.

SS: So, I think I think the legislation is crucial, the guidance is useful, but the DCSF guidance’s appeared to get lost so for instance after Section 28 in 2000 the DCSF produced a very useful piece of guidance which made it abundantly clear that all schools should be you know not advice, but was saying had to tackle homophobia, had to take LGBT issues seriously all things. Whenever I do inset training and show this to to teachers, it’s the first time they’ve every seen it.

AM: Yep.

SS: So although it’s there it seems to me that we have not yet learnt how to communicate skill up and give teachers that information and it seems to me that we have not learnt how to train our teachers. I mean I appalled that teachers can go into a classroom knowing nothing about equality and diversity, knowing nothing about child development and being given no training about how to use their voice…

AM: {yeah}
SS: Excuse me, what is the main tool they are going to be using for the rest of their lives.

AM: Yeah.

SS: I am left gobsmacked basically so we haven’t thought things through I don’t think anywhere near sufficiently. But I want the legislation, its crucial, but what needs to follow on from that is the training is is the cultural shift.

AM: Definitely, cultural shift. From what I’ve seen the polices are there, in some cases they are good policies and in some cases not so good. I’ve had a lot of teachers say to me how they don’t quite understand it, or they don’t know where it is…

SS: {no}

AM: …um.

SS: And its, I would say its competence and confidence.

AM: Yep.

SS: And most teachers don’t have either around most equality issues possibly they’ve done some work around race, but my guess is its majority around black African Caribbean stuff probably, the Muslim stuff has taken a lot of people napping. Um the whole concept around religion and belief is an interesting one and I think you know we actually do have still I think I must check but I think we still have on the DCFS Teachernet website this extraordinary statement that it would not be illegal for a teacher to say that Christianity and Islam would say that Homosexuality is immoral.

AM: Yeah, last time I checked it was still there.

SS: Yeah, I mean they are supposed to have gotten rid of it and you you heard the debate in the Schools Out conference, where I was saying you know for fuck sake get it off.

AM: Yep, pretty much! OK, I think you covered a bit of this next question in that answer actually. Which is, how important do you think combating, for combating these problems is it for staff to simply recognise that this type of bullying is happening in their schools?

SS: Yeah, I think what’s interesting is that some of our staff will be aware of it but not have the confidence always to deal with it. Or will go in foot in mouth. So some teachers will say oh we’ve solved that problem so we don’t let the word gay be spoken at all. Well thanks for that! Really haven’t thought that one through. Um I mean a deputy head when I was doing some training bless her heart coming from a very loving place, um challenged a young woman who yelled lesbian at me in the corridor and said don’t say that that’s disgusting and I thought oh my god where do I start!

AM: (laughs)
SS: Um so there’s all that stuff to unpick and to help them through. How do you deal with this. You know, there are skills in tackling racism that you can move straight over to homophobia and transphobia but there are others that you can’t.

AM: Yes.

SS: Um, very interesting working with a woman that I’ve taught, that I’ve worked with for probably something like twenty odd years ago and she’s now a deputy head in a school and she had me in to do some training the other day. And she told me this amazing story which really sort of woke up the other staff cos it was something I frequently say but she had this story to to to to you know from her own live experience. There was a young woman who for six months, maybe three, maybe I’m exaggerating, but considerable long time consistently said homophobic stuff…

AM: {right}

SS: …in front of her, at her, in her lessons etc.

AM: A kid?

SS: A kid yeah, a kid to a teacher.

AM: Right.

SS: And Vivienne consistently challenged it [/] down the line the kid comes out to her.

AM: (laughs) That doesn’t surprise me one little bit.

SS: No. But it will surprise lots of heterosexual teachers…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …because the assumption is that you are saying racist stuff, you are a racist, if you are saying homophobic stuff, you are homophobic. It doesn’t occur to them that what they are doing is testing them and making sure that you are a safe pair of hands to come out to.

AM: Yep, some kind of defence mechanism.

SS: Yes. Well this kid said what she was doing was was testing her.

AM: Right.

SS: But, and you are quite right there’s also the whole internal stuff. So for instance I was training this was in more adult, but delivering adult women’s studies and this woman consistently came every week but she challenged me every week I talked about lesbians and said this is a women’s studies course why are you constantly talking about lesbians? And every week I would explain why and then you now I’m on a lesbian strength and
who comes bouncing up! And said you didn’t expect to see me here and I thought oh yes I did!

AM: (laughs)

SS: So that whole internalised homophobia that whole processes of trying to decide you know where you are, plus the testing process I don’t think is understood. And why would it be understood by heterosexuals unless they are trained and are able to understand that stuff.

AM: Definitely.

SS: And who is doing that training, no one…

AM {yeah}

SS: …so there’s that then there’s the complete denial, so there’s teachers who say oh don’t be ridiculous when they use the word gay they don’t mean it that way it has now come to mean, then they use the word lame so then they are being disablist as well as you know.

AM: Yep.

SS: Um, so there’s the denial, you know the words changed and you know isn’t that interesting that the words changed you know it hasn’t changed to black, it hasn’t changed to Paki, it hasn’t changed to Irish, it’s gay. You know if it had been any of the others, oh well yes maybe you have a point, but it is getting there. So there’s all that stuff…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …that has to be unpicked.

AM: So it’s whether the use by a child of the term gay whether they are actually meaning homosexual, whether they are meaning it as a derogatory term…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …and do you think is very important as well, I think it relates to a question I’ve got later on which we can cover now is I wondered what you think the significance of the use of terms such as that in a derogatory way are? So if I were a student in as school and I was to say things like that’s so gay as a derogatory or you know poof, tranny, these types of words as singular put downs, do you think that constitutes homo/trans bully…

SS: {absolutely, totally, absolutely, no two ways about it.

AM: I agree.
SS: I mean it’s I say if they were saying *oh that’s so black*, or *that’s so Irish* or *that’s so Paki* or *that’s so spaz* you know we would be we would be challenging it on all the other areas. And I find it fascinating that people trip over themselves to say *oh its not homophobic*, *they don’t really know what they are saying* where they wouldn’t be saying that if it were spaz or black or Irish, they would be saying *do you realise what you are doing, what are you attempting to achieve*. You know that use of the language in that particular way is clearly provoking hatred in some way or another.

AM: So, in your experience, do you find a lot of teacher’s wont challenge these words,

SS: {yes}

AM: …because they think, well they don’t mean homosexual…

SS: {yes}

AM: …so it’s ok and for me that automatically indicates that they are thinking, if they did mean homosexual then that would be wrong, because homosexuality is wrong, but because they don’t mean, just to be clear, I don’t think homosexuality is wrong…

SS: {No, no no, I don’t think teachers think that.

AM: Right.

SS: Some may do. But I think what they think is, it is not homophobic because the word has now changed its meaning.

AM: OK.

SS: They don’t mean homosexual.

AM: Yeah sure, but what I think, perhaps you’ll disagree with this is what they need to understand is the fact that they don’t mean homosexual, the fact they mean stupid, is actually very homophobic…

SS: {yes}

AM: …because the use the word gay…

SS: {yes that’s right}

AM: …in itself is not a derogatory term.

SS: It’s been chosen…

AM: {yeah}
SS: ...as I say it is in what way [//] it’s not celebrating LGBT people in any way shape or form. If the word was black or spaz, or Paki or or Paddy they would be challenging it.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And they would have no difficulty in challenging it. They would know, you know even though that the word had changed its meaning in the same way they would know it hasn’t changed it’s meaning you have alighted on a word which is about a group of people that have no power, that there’s prejudice about and it is not acceptable. The fact that its about lesbian and gay people [//] where which which they have had very little experience of knowing how to deal with [//] one of the things that I have had, one of my fantasies around this is that I think that there’s massive links between disabled people and LGBT people. There is a potential that you could become disabled at any time.

AM: Yep.

SS: And I think there is an awareness in a lot of people that heterosexuality isn’t necessarily 100% set. Even when people say, you know I have never considered it. My guess is, most people at some point have recognised some same sex you know recognition and and attraction and and affection.

AM: Yep.

SS: Its 15.06 and I need to go.

AM: Oh, goodness we need to...

SS: {Um so I think there is perhaps, because teachers don’t have that chance to have those conversations about themselves and around thinking it through [//] when talking about sexual orientation it is such a personally un thought through and dodgy area, they don’t wanna touch it cos they’re not clear about it, they don’t wanna touch it cos local papers will have a field day is there fear, they don’t wanna touch it because parents will have a field day they have a fear, although the Stonewall research is really interesting, 73% of parents are comfortable with the idea of their kids being taught by lesbians and gays, so [//] until we skill our teachers up and give them the competence and the confidence to deal with this, there’s gonna be crap going on in our schools.

AM: Yeah. I think that’s probably an excellent way to conclude then, seeing as we’ve run out of time I think that summarises it very well.

Transcript 25/06/08:

AM: Ok, picking up from where we left off before, umm, the first question, you mentioned in our previous interview the importance of [//] for example Elizabeth’s work in primary schools, Elizabeth Atkinson work…

SS: {yeah}
AM: …I wonder [//] same sex relationships are routinely talked about at primary level in other European countries. I was wonder if you think the same sort of policies should be adopted here?

SS: Well I think we should have polices which are known by everybody which is the really big deal because DCFS come up with these guidance’s, polices for people that know about them…

AM: {yep}

SS: …nor are they properly policed, and I think one of the biggies is going to be, and I’ve met with the EHR now, their confidently saying oh well their very new, we haven’t got enough staff, they haven’t been signed off by the treasury yet, they haven’t got anybody specific on LGBT stuff…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …so you know we can have all the polices that there are in the kingdom come, but if people a don’t know about them and b there’s no-body making sure that people abide by them…

AM: {yep}

SS: …um it’s a problem. Obviously having them is crucial because then we can come along and say why aren’t you doing this.

AM: Yep.

SS: But it it’s a two fold process. You need them and you also need a process by which they are then checked and sorted. So Ofsted needs to know about them and I think Ofsted’s inspections can be you know all over the place.

AM: Definitely. I mean I’ve heard a lot of rhetoric about primary schools saying (sigh) suggested almost that problem, LGBT problems, simple don’t exist in primary schools I mean…

SS: {Rubbish!}

AM: …quite. I mean that’s, that’s what I think and I mean you know I think we kinda need to normalise as far as possible all varieties of sexualities and genders. I think we mentioned in our previous interview about the importance of [//] well I don’t think normalise is the right word actually, the importance of different families…

SS: {I use the word usualise.

AM: That’s a good word actually. Yeah, yeah that is a good word. I don’t like normalise.

SS: No, for obvious reasons. No, I use usualise.
AM: Yeah, OK that’s that’s great. Ok, the next one we touched upon in the first interview um and I wanted to to talk a bit more about this, was your opinion on how important you feel it is for LGBT teachers and other staff within schools to be out at work.

SS: Crucial. Absolutely crucial. I think what’s really worrying is that there are straight members of staff who say it’s not an issue and why does it matter and it’s a private buisiness.

AM: Yep.
SS: And I think well no it isn’t a private business, it’s who we are and I think its mistaking that whole concept of what we do in the bedroom as something which is separate from who we are as a person, and David Watkins in the Teachers TV programme, have you looked at that yet?

AM: I have, yes I’ve seen that.
SS: You know I mean David says it beautifully you know I am gay, that’s who I am. You know everyday of my life you know, whatever I’m doing. And it does you know, I think its [/] I was doing some inset training a couple of nights ago where there was a massive resistance to um monitoring, having black networks within the police forces offensive, didn’t understand why you had to monitor people on sexual orientation, didn’t see it as an issue and I though you know [/] there was a lot of seed throwing I had to do with that group. I mean it was quite, I was getting into fury with her [/] but they were in the very place of wanting to say that you know it doesn’t matter and I said well you know if we don’t, if we don’t come out then everybody assumes everybody’s heterosexual…

AM: {yep}
SS: …and of course being heterosexual, they didn’t see the problem about that.

AM: Yeah.
SS: And it moved to that place and that night. I mean hopefully you know over a time they will, but its not with the recognition that they saw it as us making a fuss about something because [/] they hadn’t yet grasped the dominant culture and the minority culture and how [/] even though I talk about heteronormativity it hadn’t sunk in yet.

AM: Yeah. I mean that’s…
SS: {it takes a while for people to get that.

AM: It does. Yeah I mean obviously I’ve found that that’s more so with straight teachers and the example you’ve just given is straight teachers thinking well I’m straight, it’s not my issue. But I’ve come across, I’m sure you’ve probably come across…

SS: {oh yes}
AM: …gay teachers as well who are resistant. I mean just within my small group of friends who are teachers, there seems to be so much disagreement amongst them about the disclosure of their own sexual identity.

SS: Um.

AM: I have to say I haven’t got any experience of various gender identities, it is just sexual identities. Um some of them sort of say you know it’s no-body else’s business, its my private life. All that kind of rhetoric.

SS: Yeah, yeah.

AM: And then some of them, I’ve recently found out um a friend of a friend who I’ve met a couple of times and I saw her recently and she’s explicitly lying, she’s having a civil partnership in the summer and her children, her kids at school think she’s marrying a man.

SS: Whaaaaaaaaat!

AM: And it’s just, she’s create this whole other world and I was going mad at her in the pub, I was like, what are you doing and I just I just think if I cant get my gay friends to understand the importance of this issue…

SS: {um, um}

AM: …you know we are banging out heads against a brick wall a bit, so is that something…

SS: {well I do think she does understand it because that’s why she’s created this massive [///]

AM {um}

SS: …um lie.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Because she does know how powerful it is and she is scared.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And it’s how do we then deal with people scariness. And you know, some schools it will be an issue and she will receive a lot of crap and other schools it wont be.

AM: Yeah.

SS: But I guess you know (sigh), particularly with Paul’s death so close to me at the moment, I’m thinking you know he was out and proud back in the seventies…
AM: {that’s exactly what I said to her}

SS: …you do kind of think excuse me, what are you worried about. Yes, I mean you look at David’s issue and you know he had a rough time in his school, but you know he also had a process to go through which challenged that.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Which you know is there and I think it is a question of…

AM: {it needs some brave people to come out, like David, doesn’t it, to sort of…
SS: {yeah}

AM: …to say, you know to come out in schools where it, likely may be a problem, not in fantastic schools like Stoke Newington for example…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …in schools where it may be a problem, in faith schools for example maybe and if they get problems to do what David did and challenge them, but that…

SS: {that’s right}

AM: …I guess that takes a brave person and as a lot of my friends have said, you know, as an individual I’m not prepared to take on that challenge, which as you said with Paul’s death so close seems just heartbreaking.

SS: Yeah, yeah.

AM: But, you can see where they are coming from perhaps.

SS: Well I sort of can, but I think also there’s a very useful analysis [//] have you come across Gordon Allport’s work?

AM: I haven’t actually no. Gordon Allport.

SS: Gordon Allport. He’s a sociologist, did work in the um, during the Second World War and looked at why people got into discriminating and prejudice and all the rest of it.

AM: Ok.

SS: Now, if you look on the School Out website, there’s the um triangle um which takes you through from verbal abuse to genocide.

AM: Yeah.

SS: In, in five easy steps.
AM: Um hum. Yep.

SS: He also does a very interesting analysis of the behaviours of stigmatized groups and you know he hasn’t gotten round to gays, he’s hardly got around to women bless his heart, but he’s got the concept of stigmatised groups and what’s interesting there is that if you look at those eleven behaviours of stigmatised groups then the recognition that we collude with our own um problems and that we are neurotic, that we give other minority groups a difficult time etc are all there.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And I think there is a real recognition then on looking at how do people um [//] find ways of coping with discrimination.

AM: Yes.

SS: And one of the ways of coping is to collude with it. And and to pretend you are not and I think you know, enabling people to understand when they are doing that is not the easiest of things to do.

AM: It’s not.

SS: You know that whole recognition of when you are dealing with power you either run from it or you collude with it or you you know you fight against it, or you try and engage and shed light. I think all that stuff is very useful to do work on to enable people to understand what they might then be doing.

AM: Yeah. I think that’s excellent yeah. Thank you, brilliant. I shall use that Sue, I shall quote you.

SS: You’re welcome.

AM: Um, Ok sticking with what’s going on in schools, um, I’ve heard a lot of rhetoric from teachers both straight and gay citing quote curriculum restrictions and lack of training and resources as reasons why the bullying on the basis of um sexuality and gender is often not tackled. Now I know obviously you go out there personally and do a lot of training.

SS: Um huh.

AM: So, do you think that these are actually legitimate reasons?

SS: No. Not at all. I mean we have all the legislation now…I mean I’m going to be doing inset training today in a, in an all girls school.

AM: Right.
SS: In Croydon. Now I’m actually doing it on all the equalities not just LGBT, but all the, virtually all the case studies um are LGBT ones because I’m going in for multiple identities, getting them to think about not only the fact that there’s this young woman is disabled but that she’s also a lesbian etc and getting them to think through all the issues.

AM: Yep.

SS: But I’m, what I’m, first of all it’s taking them through all the mass of legislation that’s there which means they’ve actually got to tackle equalities and diversities.

AM: Yeah.

SS: But, they haven’t been given the training //

AM: Yep.

SS: Um and that’s a really serious issue, that we haven’t as yet got the GTES within this massively short PGCE course to actually take on board these issues very seriously.

AM: Yep.

SS: So, so our police officers get more training of diversity and equality than than teachers.

AM: Yes, yes I’ve heard that before.

SS: Which is an outrage. So, clearly that needs to be dealt with. The I think SEAL has a lot of potential…

AM: {it does yeah}

S: …for dealing with all this stuff.

AM: Yep.

SS: But when you look at the SEAL material, its implicitly thinking about equality and diversity, but its not explicitly. So the illustrations are predominantly, well I think they are completely able bodied and I think they are completely heterosexual.

AM: Yep.

SS: so there hasn’t been a sufficient thinking to actually move that material to a place where it is actually much more inclusive.

AM: Yeah. So, you are kind of saying, there’s the potential there in the existing material, even when it doesn’t explicitly address LGBT issues, the potential is there…

SS: {correct, yeah}
AM …so if you’ve got a teacher who, gay or not gay, is willing to take these on and adapt the polices to, you know, then they can do it, but others wont and I mean […]

SS: {well it’s not obvious.

AM: Yep.

SS: That’s, that’s the issue. I mean somebody who is passionate and wants to do the work…

AM: {yep}

SS: …can fly. Because it’s all potentially there.

AM: Yeah.

SS: But if you are not thinking about those issues, there’s nothing in the material which will prompt you to think about it and therefore be inclusive.

AM: Right, that probably answers the sort of second point of the question actually, is why do you think that some schools and some teachers make use of these resources and some don’t.

SS: Well, that’s right.

AM: And I think probably the biggest thing that some, if they are already aware of the issues then they’ll use the policy, but like you have just said, its not obvious to them. It’s not going to jump out at them and go…

SS: {No, no and I think you know until we get our our teachers more effectively trained…

AM: {yep}

SS: …so that they are enabled to you know see the potential and see the possibilities and be given some um ur [//] training in how to do it, why would they take the risk. And I think that’s the other big issue I think…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …that what what’s interesting is when I’ve been doing this training in the schools that teachers have said this has been really excited this is the first time we’ve talked about these issues.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And it’s the first time that I can actually test with my um senior learning team or senior management team or whatever it is a sense of that I can say this stuff and that we can deal with it.
AM: Yeah.

SS: Because it’s you know not only around LGBT issues but other stuff of of there’s a whole area of [///] material, thought and ideas which (sigh) have not been explicitly made clear to staff that they are, that they can deal with it. Because it’s dodgy stuff…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …you know sitting there with, talking about, I mean it was very interesting I was with with these primary school teachers who I was talking with with the other night, some of whom were really resistant to stuff, but they’d been dealing with some really complex stuff. Like, um a child had her mother die on her and we are dealing with it and talking about it in circle time and all the rest of it and there were parents coming saying we don’t want you talking about this child death, this mother’s death.

AM: Right.
SS: Cos it’s not fair on our kids to have to deal with death [///]

AM: Right.

SS: So, excuse me?! That has to be challenged and that has to be dealt with.

AM: Yeah. It’s a sad fact of life unfortunately.

SS: Well that’s right. But they were confident because they were very small staffed, they could talk to their head on a daily basis that their head would you know sort them out and work with them and all the rest of it. But in a big secondary school where you don’t get to see your staff very often, all sorts of unwritten stuff starts happening, oh we cant do this, we cant do that.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And can we do this and can we do that, well I don’t know, so I won’t do it and won’t take the risk.

AM: Yeah.

SS: But you get to the point, which I’m sure I said to you before, you know there’s a teacher who said to me just before Christmas you mean to say to me I can use the word lesbian in the classroom?

AM: Yeah, I remember you saying.

SS: Because there isn’t, there hasn’t been an explicitness of how to deal with the stuff, and when you know it is difficult. I mean, you know I wonder how much teachers had the chance to sit in the staff room and discuss for an hour around how they were gonna deal with stuff around after 9/11 and the bombs on the London tube.
AM: Yeah.

SS: You know there’s a lot of live stuff out there which is complex and difficult and they need some time to think it through.

AM: {definitely}

SS: And who’s giving them that space, they are suddenly just suppose to cope.

AM: Yeah definitely. And it’s yourself and other similar organisations that are going out there and kind of in isolation and giving the training and obviously you’re one person, you’re on organisation, you cant possible get and there and and train everybody…

SS: {no}

AM: …every teacher, so it needs to be, it needs to be at PGCSE level really…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …a lot of my friends who have sort of recently qualified in the last couple of years and I’ve spoken to them about this and they’ve said no, no we had no training in our, in our PGCE course about these issues. So, um luckily most of my friends are, well, all of them, are pretty liberal so you know they are wanting to push the issues forward. But, but not always, like you say, if they feel its too risky then they wont.

SS: {No}

AM: This is gay teachers and straight teachers. But obviously we both know about some very successful examples, which we talked about before with schools that are really challenging the homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and also actually successfully challenging the whole ethos’ of their schools. Like Stoke Newington is obviously a big example…

SS: {yeah, yeah}

AM: …um…

SS: {and I think that’s a very good example and it wasn’t as totally smooth ride.

AM: No, of course I mean she had to deal with some quite homophobic stuff.

AM: Yeah.

SS: You know a couple of members of staff had to be disciplined and discussed and things. So you know it was all easy peasy.
AM: That’s probably one of the answers to the question, of why you think these examples are so rare, is it because it’s such a challenge?

SS: /// I think it’s (sigh) it think it’s a couple of things there I think you know it’s interesting though there’s a teacher in Tedbrook in the Teachers TV thing who I knew nothing about and she’s a drama teacher…

AM: {yeah}

SS: She’s in Tedbrook, I’m in Dulwich, why don’t I know her?

AM: Yeah.

SS: You know really interesting. So there’s clearly work going down that isn’t being /// necessarily, screamed and yelled and shouted about.

AM: Yep.

SS: For a variety of reasons, um, I mean what was interesting was, the first year that we had LGBT History Month there was a school that did some interesting stuff, but didn’t want their name attached to to their report. AM: Yes, I heard about that.

SS: Um, there is good work being done which just gets quietly done and no-body sort of shouts about it because ///…

AM: {yep}

SS: …they don’t think it’s worth shouting about, they their concerned that if they do shout about it there’s gonna be problems, I dunno, you know so I think, I think we have to be careful when we make statements in saying, you know it’s patchy. I think we can certainly say it’s patchy, we know it’s patchy (sigh) but why it’s patchy I think is interesting and I think we also need to sort of recognise that there’s probably more work going down than we know about.

AM: Yeah. That’s a good point. Um, you’ll probably just laugh at this question, but I’ll ask it anyway! Um, obviously the work that is happening in schools like Stoke Newington is, is off their own back, it’s definitely not government enforced, but given its success, why is the Government not taking more interest and making such initiatives compulsory?

SS: (laughs)

AM: Yes, you laugh, I thought you would!

SS: Well interestingly enough, there was a very big meeting with Kevin Brennan last week.
AM: Yes, the one you sent your college to?

SS: Well Tony went to it.

AM: Yeah, right.

SS: And we have, Elizabeth Atkinson did a very effective um // recording, sort of wrote up what was said.

AM: Brilliant.

SS: Kevin was delightfully cagey about sort of he doesn’t make policy on the hoof and say that he was gonna do anything with anything and then take it all back.

AM: Sounds about right.

SS: you know, I mean of course, but we’ve been asking him you know for how many years to get the logo, so when are we gonna get it.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Um // (sigh) I haven’t written off this new lot yet.

AM: Yep.

SS: But I think, I think there’s still within, I think what’s interesting you see, look at the DCFS.

AM: Yep.

SS: And you look at the porosity of their movement around these issues and you compare it to the criminal justice system and you think you know they have not grown up. They are still frightened of the daily mail.

AM: Yep.

SS: they did not and I think what was interesting was, I don’t know whether I said this you, but when I talked to a fairly senior civil servant at the DCSF and said you know the criminal justice system has really run with this. Since the Steven Lawrence enquiry they’ve really done work. And they said, well they had a serious car crash. i.e. the Steven Lawrence murder and had to do something with it. And we, Annie and I said every suicide is a serious car crash.

AM: Yep.

SS: But for some reason they are not, you know, the fuss has not been made, the press have not picked it up in the same way, I mean there has been a couple of suicides of
young LGBT people of LGB people, we don’t know about the T’s, I’m sure there have been some T suicides…

AM: {Yeah}

SS: …that we don’t know about. Um, it hasn’t become such a core celeb. We when do hear about suicides they are always white kids….

AM: {yeah}

SS: …now I know they’ll be black kids committing suicide because they are LGBT, why don’t we know about them? Why don’t the press pick up on that?

AM: Yep.

SS: Um, you know we’ve got the Army marching in full uniform in this Pride ///

AM: Right.

SS: And we’ve still not got a DCSF that is /// celebrating and acknowledging its LGBT teachers, sufficiently. I mean they did a little. Four years ago they had a couple of gay teachers um in Teacher, you know the thing that they produce.

AM: Yep.

SS: That’s on the Schools Out website. They’ve just done the Teachers TV week where they had two or three programmes.

AM: Yeah, I was rather disappointed with that though. Although the programmes they showed were good. When I was told, Teacher TV, homophobia in schools week, I was expecting loads of programmes. And actually…

SS: {Well they did, I mean the gay teaches I think was the one that they made themselves…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …and the others were the ones that they they were coming from the Channel 4 programme.

AM: Yeah, that’s what I thought, because the Gay to Z and the Batty Man, which are both excellent resources…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …but they are channel 4 resources.

SS: That’s right.
AM: And I’ve seen them before and I watched them again and that was great, but I thought well there’s nothing new here. What have you actually done?

SS: Um, well the Gay Teachers one was the new one.

AM: Yep. Which was useful, but I I wasn’t sure whether there was quite enough material there for them to say…

SS: {well, no no}

AM: …for them to say…it’s a week…

SS: {well I think we just have to think, it’s a start.

AM: Yes.

SS: We have to give them a pat on the back and say well done and now well how will you build on this…?

AM {what’s next, yep}

SS: [/]

AM: So, yeah ok. Brilliant. Right, well, let’s move on from the Government before we get completely depressed!

SS: Well I think the other thing about the Government I think that you do have to take on board which could be very depressing or very wonderful depending upon which way they jump.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Is the single equality policy that we are still waiting to see.

AM: Yep.

SS: Now, Harriet Harman indicated that we are going to lose the equality impact assessments which which terrifies the pants off me…

AM {yes, yes}

SS: …um if we lose them I’m going to be, unless something really powerful gets put in its place I’m really worried about it because it, well you know she says people can take too long with it and it doesn’t change anything. But I’m also aware that it can change lots of things. And I’ve seen things get better because of equality impact assessments.

AM: Um hum.
SS: Plus it also embedded it; otherwise you’re constantly relying on Champions. So I guess you know, we’ve got to see what comes out of the single equality policy and really monitor that and use that. Um DCSF is now moving to a single equality policy so that means that all seven strands will be you know incorporated. And it, we did win the the argument that the public duty should be all seven strands, cos you know in the White Paper it said we should only go for the three.

AM: Yeah.

SS: So clearly you know we need to grasp you know what comes out of the single equality policy and make it effective and work, but that will then require the ECHR to have some teeth and to be doing work not for us to be constantly reported schools to the ECHR and saying look this isn’t happening what are you gonna do about it.

AM: Yeah.

SS: One of the things that I really took them to task about was the fact that the ECHR did absolutely nothing in Bristol when the whole thing blew up in Bristol with the No Outsiders project.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And I think they [/] certainly the bloke I spoke to recognised that it was not good enough what you know the fact that basically we’re offering to chair, to be a neutral chair and I said that is not your job to be a neutral chair and you didn’t do it anyway, um your job actually was to get in their and start informing people about you know what the law said and and to challenge what was going down.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Um, which he agreed with me about, but whether he was high enough to make sure that that never happens again we don’t know. But we’ve, clearly we have to keep a watching brief on the ECHR and make sure that they are that they do actually do the work that they need to do.

AM: Yep. Definitely. Ok, we talked a lot in our previous interview and in this interview so far about what’s happening in schools, possibly why it’s happening, the policy that’s there to try and prevent it happening etc etc. However, one of the main focuses of my research, um and I’ve talked to young people about is the actual effect of all these experiences on the young people both in the short and long term. And obviously I’ve got the Stonewall Report from last year and figures from research previously and obviously the statistics are there. But I just really want to hear anything from your own experiences of of either direct bullying or the general environment of schools the short and long term effects on these young people.

SS: I think if you look at Ian River’s stuff that…

AM: {yep}
SS: …I mean he, that makes it pretty clear I think that I can be incredibly painful and
difficult and have you know post traumatic stress issues. Um I think going back to the
Allports you know behaviours of stigmatised groups…

AM: {yeah}

SS: …we know that lot’s of kids actually collude with and are perpetrators of
homophobia…

AM: {yeah}

SS:…in an attempt to hide themselves. We know that a high proportion of unwanted
pregnancies are done by young gay men and and lesbians.

AM: Really, that’s one I didn’t know actually.

SS: Um yes if you look at the Massachusetts figures, you’ll find that um Massachusetts
does an interesting sort of um questionnaire, America does questionnaires, each state can
actually add questions every year to it.

AM: Right.

SS: And Massachusetts has always asked about pregnancy and always asked about sexual
orientation and from that they’ve discovered that a very, you know a very high proportion
of young gay men and young lesbians are responsible for unwanted pregnancies.

AM: Yeah. And thinking about it, it doesn’t surprise me.

SS: No, no.

AM: But it’s not a fact that I’ve come across, so that’s very interesting.

SS: Yep.

AM: Ok, yeah I mean that sort of things that I’ve come up with so far are quite obvious
physical, psychological health…

SS: {yeah}

AM: …academic achievement, um I mean I did a focus group last week with a group of
15-19 year olds and very few of them had gone on past 16 in education.

SS: Um hum.

AM: some of them had you know really serious problems, some less so, um and also I
think possible I’ve discovered some problems in future careers and even in relationships.
SS: Oh for sure, yeah.

AM: You know from their experiences.

SS: Um, we have a higher use of alcohol and um drugs.

AM: Yes.

SS: And obviously our suicide rates are higher within LGBT.

AM: I saw that, not for men, but in terms of lesbian, cos the study Stonewall Lesbian Health Project, I got that through the post last week.

SS: Samaritans you’ll find will also say I think it's incredible high, I mean we’ve gotta check where it is cos we’re just about to re-do our leaflet and we want to put the suicide figures in and I’m not finding where it is. But I know there’s been various stuff which has said they are much higher, I’ve just got to nail down the actual research.

AM: the actual figure, yeah.

SS: Um, if you find it send it to me!

AM: Yes, I will yeah.

SS: I mean it’s certainly there, I mean its been out there for some time, the gay teenage project, but I cant work out where that project was. I mean I’ve used it loosely on the um on my power points.

AM: Yeah, um it rings a bell with me as well but I can’t think exactly.

SS: I know the Samaritans have done it as well, but I haven’t yet found where that bit is. I might need to ring them up and say, well I did ring them up, they didn’t ring me back.

AM: That’s’ useful!

SS: Yeah. So there’s all that stuff out there, um [//] there’s burying yourself in your books completely and getting yourself into University and then burning out the first year.

AM: Yes! (sighs) I actually yes, I can relate to that one. Although I didn’t actually burn out in the first year, I was very sensible and I kind of predicted this so I took a year out between my A levels and my university.

SS: Uh huh.

AM: And so, but yeah that’s’ personal experiences and experiences of friends where they’ve, like you said, buried themselves in books. So you kind of go one direction or the other, but which is actually better in the long term is is debateable really.

SS: Um, that’s right yeah.
AM: Ok, um sort of sticking with kids in school I wonder that given a lot of young people are often unaware of their own sexuality or gender identity during their school years or at least they are negotiating it rather than being fully confident of it. Why do you think they are singled out for the homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying? What are the markers that people pick up on?

SS: I think there’s a whole series of things. I mean it’s really interesting, I mean I was very heavily bullied as a kid and it was never, the word lesbian was never mentioned um and I’m trying to think, what was it about me that enabled people to bully me and I think it was sort of general lack of confidence not fitting I, um I think (sigh) you see I think what’s interesting is that if you are a boy and the girls like you, you are sorted cos the girls will protect you.

AM: Yes.

SS: If you are boy and the girls don’t like you, you’re fucked. Nobody’s going to protect you. Um if you are a girl then I think there is all sorts of stuff around and I think you know my culture and what’s happening with kids now is very different. But what did shock me was that if you looked at what was happening to trans men, was much worse than what was happening to trans women.

AM: Right.

SS: If you look at the equalities review work that Steven Whittle did, now that was a surprise because I think now hang on you would have expected kids to tolerate and work with girls being tom boyish, so if that isn’t happening then what’s going down her.

AM: Yeah.

SS: but I think there’s a thing about difference, there’s a thing about not conforming you know and adolescent is a really challenging time about wanting to be a rebel and wanting to conform.

AM: Yep.

SS: And the complications of that at the best of times is difficult, and as you know your hormones dancing and not being 100% sure and trying to work out who the hell you are.

AM: Yeah.

SS: Um, there’s that whole I dunno I think just a lack of groundedness which I think kids delight at taking a pop at.

AM: Yeah, definitely I think difference and just anything that singles you out as not quite…
SS: {I think a sense of vulnerability is often not appreciated. If somebody’s gone and then, it’s almost like, you see a scab you want to pick at it.

AM: (laughs) yeah.

SS: you know we’ve all been [//] you’ve got a scab; you start picking at it, even though you know you are not supposed to.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And I think there’s that whole think about vulnerability. You know somebody is oozing vulnerability you know you are not supposed to kick um, you are supposed to protect them but there’s about it which [//] it’s quite a challenge I think for people not.

AM: Yeah. I can see that.

SS: I mean there’s something very wired into us, which doesn’t sound very pleasant.

AM: No. Well, the last main question really then. Which I’ve deliberately left til the end because I wanted to see how it was mentioned um just in the course of the other questions before me specifically relating to it. And it regards Section 28.

SS: Um hum.

AM: So, I wonder what you…

SS: {one of the things we haven’t talked about is multiple identity.

AM: Yep, sure, yep.

SS: And I think that’s a really big issue, because I think [//] you know the assumption that it’s all, the LGBT experience the same…

AM: {I think that is very important}

SS: …it’s just not the case, so I think the recognition that the multiple identity and the complexity of dealing with being lesbian or gay if you are black, or if you are disabled, or if you are Asian.

AM: Yep.

SS: Or if you are working class, or middle class, if you are in Brixton or you are in Dorset…

AM: {yep}

SS: … you know, there’s masses of differences there which we need to highlight and be aware of…
AM: {that’s a really good point yeah}

SS: …cos you can’t just talk about the LGBT experience. There’s four experiences there before you start. And then there’s ethnicity, you know class, weight, spectacles…

AM: {Yeah}

SS: …you know everything else. You come in to a whole range of difference and I think one of the complexities is that when we look at porosity of um service provision from our young LGBT people generally you know where are the LGBT youth groups.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And then how well are they in actually dealing with things like you know different religions [/] ethnicities, disabilities etc.

AM: Yeah and I…

SS: {I mean that’s a really crucial area that you know [/] we use these words LGBT as if that’s you know straight forward, its not. You know there’s a whole lot more to to be dealt with there so that the complexity of the diversity of our community really needs to be tackled and discussed because its not available to kids when you talk about LGBT they will only talk about white able bodies young men.

AM: Yeah. Definitely, yeah that’s vital. And I have to say that even though I recognise all that, the fact that I haven’t explicitly asked you a question about that shows that even somebody researching is is guilty of sometimes, even if subconsciously just having the four identities, LGBT, and not explicitly recognising that within each of those identities there’s differences and you know even across the four you can be T and you can be G, you know…

SS: {that’s right}

AM: …Or you could T and you could be straight, or T and B, so there’s so many different complexities, so yes than you very much for pointing that out. And the section 28 one really, its just legacies. Obviously it’s gone now, um supposedly, you know legally it’s gone…

SS: {umm}

AM: …but what do you think are the legacies and how…

SS: {I think the legacy is massive. Cos I think that, and I think it’s I think what’s interesting is, I think it’ had a very powerful affect I think not just on LGBT issues [/] I think it goes back to what we were saying before about teachers not always being very confident in what they can and cant say.

AM: Yep.
SS: I think in an unconscious level there is awareness that this extraordinary law came into being because of what teachers did somewhere at some time.

AM: Yeah.

SS: And therefore I think it has heightened on an unconscious level peoples fears and concerns about LGBT, of *gosh I’ve got to be careful, something might fall down on my head if I say this or do that or do t’other.*

AM: Yep.

SS: And I you know there will be people who have never heard of Section 28 now. But there is within their psyche, a knowledge, that what they say and do is the classroom can have phenomenal effects.

AM: Yep.

SS: And and you know things can happen to you if you get it wrong [//] and I think that gives people a ur [//] (sigh) a temerity which is not always healthy.

AM: Yeah, definitely. And how would you suggest, um we might attempt to combat these legacies?

SS: [//] I think it goes back to what you were saying initially, that what’s needed is a Government and a DCSF which is much clearer about it’s support around these issues, its not afraid to be you know, I mean for them to give support to LGBT History Month, we have their logo on the website.

AM: Yep.

SS: Um, that they are [//] out of the closet.

AM: Um, definitely. Bring the DCSF out of the closet!

SS: Absolutely, yeah.

AM: That’s a great goal. Um finally then, any other comments that you would like to make in relation to anything we’ve covered or any questions you might have about my work?

SS: I think what might be interesting is to link with some of the organisations that are working in schools.

AM: Yep.
SS: So link up for instance with um maybe talking with some schools liaison officers with the police and see if um you know where they stand. I mean, um I think some of the work they are doing is quite exciting.

AM: Ok.

SS: Um, the Crown Prosecution Service, you know they have um [], and I think it’s that process maybe of thinking you know perhaps talking to perhaps maybe some PSHE, I mean I’m very that the concept of doing this work in PSHE has popped up and I had to do a deep sigh and think that yes that is a place, but it’s not the only place and if that is the only place then we are in serious problems cos we are reinforcing the whole concept that we are talking about sex which of course we are not.

AM: Yes quite.

SS: Um, my passion about not using sexuality or sexualities is interesting cos its what Elizabeth does with No outsiders and we just have to sort of grit our teeth and sort of agree that we disagree. Um, but there’s a part of me that think that you know that part of the difficulty you had in Bristol was the name of the bloody project. Although I think there are other things going down as well. The other biggy I think is that that needs to be grasped, the nettle that needs to be grasped is the complexity between um the hierarchy between the um strands.

AM: Yep.

SS: So the assumption that people make that religion trumps LGBT.

AM: Yep, definitely.

SS: The lack of training around the, the lack of understanding around that, the DCSF had colluded in that with that ridiculous statement on the website that it would be, you know, not illegal for a teacher to say that that Christians and Muslims think that um that being homosexual is a sin. Um, we’ve got to get that off. I haven’t checked it recently, I assume it’s still there.

AM: I think it is.
SS: What?

AM: I think it is, I’ve not checked it that recently.

SS: Yes and I haven’t looked recently, but we need to look at it again. Um, so I think that’s a real biggy and again I think we need to start looking to the ECHR and you know saying what were you doing about this, because its its not good enough. What was interesting was that Patricia Hewitt did talk about you know dealing with conflicts you know within the strands and my guess is you know that’s a big one. And where’s the work, where’s the awareness of how to do this. But when we talk about social cohesion, I think again the DCSF guidance on social cohesion doesn’t include or isn’t anywhere near explicit that it includes LGBT.
AM: No.

SS: So there’s this concept that we’ll cohere you if you are black and if you are a Muslim, but the fact that you are a woman, and you are a lesbian and you are disabled we won’t cohere those bits.

AM: Yeah.

SS: So the recognition of the multiplicity needs to be powerfully there and I think when we as as campaigners do not make it explicit that we are talking about the diversity of the community.

AM: Yep.

SS: Therefore it has ramifications for everybody we are colluded with a discrimination and a prejudice which is not healthy.

AM: That is extremely important and I shall endeavour not to do that in my write up and hopefully you will tell you what if I do do it then don’t put it on the website!

SS: (laughs)

AM: You can check it before you put it up there once I’ve finished it.

SS: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AM: Brilliant I think that’s really fantastic Sue, thanks very much for speaking to me again.

SS: You are very welcome.
Interview with Sandra Jamieson ~ Lesbian Teacher 22/08/08

Key:

AM: Interviewer (Amy MacMillan)
SJ: Sandra Jamieson
[//] indicates a noticeable pause in speech
... indicates break in/continuous of speech due to interruption by another speaker
{ } words spoken over previous speaker
{ speech interrupted and cut off another speaker
( ) description of sounds/actions within/between speech
*italics* indicates the speaker is imitating another person with their speech
! word/sentence exclaimed with emphasis or irony
, normal pause in sentence
. normal end of sentence

Transcript:

AM: Ok, Sam, thank you for meeting with me today. The first question is, can you tell me whether you see homo/bi and trans phobia as a problem in schools in general. Ur firstly for staff and secondly for students?

SJ: Um, what in terms of whether I’ve had any experiences of it…

AM: {you can bring in your own experiences if you like, but just generally, what’s your kind of overall view about your own school and what you know about other schools.

SJ: Right. OK. In terms of um myself first as a teacher, I think it is [//] it must be an issue because as a gay teacher I I wouldn’t feel comfortable in my school being openly gay with other staff members. But more so the issue for me would be being openly gay with pupils. Um I think staff members obviously would be professional, well you’d like to think they would be professional about it to some extent um whereas pupils obviously haven’t got that maturity yet, so you would obviously get grief with different responses from them I think and that as a gay teacher would be daunting. So that’s that in terms of me. In terms of pupils, um very little is ever discussed about it at school. Um, the couple of occasions I’ve come across um things related to it with pupils, but on the whole it’s hardly ever mentioned. With boys you get the off comment like of *he’s gay* or something, but just, sometimes not even meaning that he is actually gay, just that he’s, it’s just that the word that they use to sort of a derogatory term for somebody when they probably actually don’t know what it means. Um whereas with the girls, the girl pupils you don’t really get anything like that at all, it’s just never really mentioned with girls its not an issues.
AM: Ok, that’s interesting to sort of bring in gender differences there between how the boys and the girls kind of use the term gay which is something we will actually come on to later, the use of the term, not actually meaning gay…

SJ: {yeah}

AM: …just used as a derogatory term. So we will come back to that. You sort of started to um bring in some of the second question now in answering the first one. When you said about not feeling 100% comfortable being an out gay teacher at work. I wonder how important you feel it is for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans teachers and in fact other staff at school to be out at work?

SJ: Urr (sigh) I think well if, it would be important, obviously in an ideal world it would be good to be able to be out and obviously then you’d, I guess you’d be some kind of role model for any kids that are in a similar position um and then, just personally myself, life would be easier if I could be out at school. But um realistically um ur I don’t ever see it happening. Um my first school I was at was a religious school, a catholic school and it was definitely never going to happen there, but having moved now to a non-catholic school, just a normal State school um I still wouldn’t feel comfortable. I might feel comfortable with my close people that I work with in my department, some of them [/] um [/] so I guess for my own, for me being comfortable in school it would be nice for them to know so it’s important in that respect but not important, obviously not important enough for me to tell people otherwise I would have done (laughs).

AM: Ok, well we’ll come back to that a bit more in a minute, but again that links on to the next question about what you have or have not disclosed about your own sexuality at work, to who and why? And how as well I think is quite important.

SJ: Umm. I haven’t told anybody anything at school.

AM: OK.

SJ: Because, well I did think about it when I moved to School I thought about telling my head of department um just in case, obviously I, my family and where I grew up is where I teach um and so there are people obviously within that community that know. Um, but and so I didn’t wonder whether to tell my head of department in case it ever did come out in some way. Whether she found out or any of this kids found out, um just in case. But I never have done, I’ve never felt I suppose comfortable enough to. Um, and I’ve also felt slightly awkward at putting her in that position of knowing something that everybody else in the department doesn’t know.

AM: Yep.

SJ: And I feel awkward, thinking that somebody, cos also obviously I’ve got another good friend, a really close friend in the department who I would feel comfortable telling, but I don’t feel comfortable being at school lying to other people in the department and with them knowing I’m lying at them. If you see what I mean. I feel awkward about that and so I’d rather just none of them know.
AM: So do you feel by none of them knowing that you’re kind of not lying because everybody just thinks the same or doesn’t know anything.

SJ: Umm, (sigh) the only time I ever feel like I’m directly lying is if they ask me to do something and I have to lie not to do it because I’m spending time with my girlfriend.

AM: OK.

SJ: that’s when I feel like I’m lying. The rest of the time I feel like I’m just not telling them everything about myself, if you see what I mean.

AM: Yeah. Has there ever been occasions where you don’t lie, but say there’s some kind of event going on at work where maybe partners are coming and obviously you’ve just mentioned that you do have a partner where [/] people might take their opposite sex partner but you sort of just turn up on your own, so maybe implicitly imply that you haven’t got a partner.

SJ: Oh yeah, they think I’m single, yeah. They don’t think I’m with anybody, because I can’t because obviously we go on social all the time and there’s lots of different things in a school environment where you could bring your partner to them. Um and obviously if I was saying I was with somebody but wasn’t willing to say it was with a girl they’d wonder why I didn’t bring that person, so I just, they just think I’m single.

AM: OK. [/] Right, OK moving on to the next thing, still talking about your own sexuality at work, have there even been any time where you have felt unsafe in the classroom because of your sexuality? Perhaps, homophobic comments being made and pupils are unaware of your own sexuality or anything like that, where you’ve thought oh if they knew that I was gay then I could be in trouble here.

SJ: Yeah, loads of times (laughs).

AM: OK.

SJ: Yeah just in the, well obviously the fact I’m a female PE teacher is one obviously major issue in that obviously I’m in the girls changing rooms all the time and um that I’ve always thought that that’s that is one the main reasons why I’ve not told anybody at school and why I don’t want to kids to find out because of, I’m actually a PE teacher rather than a maths or English teacher or whatever. Um so there’s always that issue that I think about and is a concern to me. But there’s, I mean there’s one particular incident when I was teaching a year 11 group of girls, all girls, and um it was rounder’s I think and there is a girl in that class who um, I didn’t know at the time, who is bisexual, I think she identifies as bisexual, am and she had written a letter to another girl in my class to let her know that she fancied her basically, that she liked her and this girl had then shown the rest, everybody else in my class this letter um and there was obviously a lot of issues and arguments in that lesson then that had to be dealt with. Um and in the changing rooms afterwards people calling this girl derogatory terms and um, this girl dealt with it really well actually, she was very confident and stood up for herself, but obviously that put me
in an awkward situation because I almost, well I obviously did want to stick up for this girl, cos I knew what it felt like for her but at the same time I would never have wanted the attention pointing on me as to why I would be sticking up for her that much, do you see what I mean?

AM: Yeah.

SJ: I had to be careful what words I used um.

AM: Did you feel that if you supported her too much that it would become clear that you were perhaps gay or bisexual yourself?

SJ: Um, possible yeah. I think, but I think as a teacher you always learn you don’t support people in terms of in their views, you more just deal with the situation, do you know what I mean. But obviously I did have feelings towards that situation, so I wanted to support her but I had to be careful not to. I had to just sort of deal with the situation, deal with the pupils that behaving out of line rather than particularly sticking up for her if you see what I mean.

AM: Yeah, so you weren’t really seen to take sides.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: OK, I think it’s interesting what you said, what you were saying about the fact that you are a female PE teacher and in changing rooms. Um, the reason why I think it’s interesting, it’s a rhetoric that’s come up quite a lot in my research where homosexuality and bisexuality, homosexuality more so is seen as much more sexual than heterosexuality and I can see where you are coming from in saying that you could be worried that you’re a female gay teacher in an environment where young women are getting changed I fear that the reason you are worried about that is because of what ignorant parents and ignorant other pupils may think. In actuality do you personally really think that that should be an issue?

SJ: Oh no, not, I don’t think it should be an issue at all. But obviously I know for a fact that the older girls particularly, if they found out that I was gay, they wouldn’t feel comfortable me being in the changing rooms.

AM: So they sort of equate, you’re gay, we’re young women, you must fancy us.

SJ: Yeah, oh definitely yeah. But then you could also argue that it’s the same thing as in a male member of staff can’t go into the female changing rooms.

AM: Yeah.

SJ: SO, and I can’t go into the boy’s changing rooms, so it’s kind of the same thing isn’t it like, you automatically assume that if a male walks into a females changing rooms they’re in their for the wrong reason.
AM: Yeah.

SJ: And it, you could, so they’re practically assuming the same thing about me aren’t they. That if I’m in the female changing room that I’m in there for the wrong reason.

AM: Sure.

SJ: If they know I’m gay.

AM: I think there should perhaps be a difference there between gender and sex…

SJ {umm}

AM: …but there isn’t that acknowledgement so, um, OK. I think you have perhaps covered this in what you have already said, but are they any specific times where you haven’t, deliberately haven’t disclosed your sexual orientation for fear of negative reactions or explicit prejudices?

SJ: Specific times?

AM: Ur well any times?

SJ: Well its everyday (laughs) do you know what I mean, like literally everyday that I’m at school they’ll be something that crops up where I have to hide it or not disclose it cos I just I just don’t feel comfortable with anybody knowing.

AM: So it’s an ongoing process?

SJ: Yeah it’s an ongoing thing that is that’s um ur not a, well yeah a major, one of my biggest issues in life is the fact that I cant tell people at school that I’m gay. I don’t feel comfortable telling them. That’s one of the main issues I have in my life, it makes my life so much more complicated [//] (sigh)

AM: Right. OK. Who do you envisage making trouble for you and why? Is it teachers and pupils or mainly pupils?

SJ: (sigh) I dunno it’s all them. It’s obviously all in my head, you never know how people are going to react until you do it, but um pupils mainly because I don’t think they would understand as much, they don’t understand as much what it is and there’s so many of them you could never sort of, you’d never get a chance to explain it to them, you’d just have to let them believe what they want to believe because you could never explain anything to them. Whereas members of staff I would feel like, particularly to my department, that I’m obviously closer to I could sit down and speak to them about it and explain it if they happen to find out on their own or if I chose to tell them I could obviously explain it to them. So I would hope that they would understand. But having said that I have heard homopho, well more just in jest, homophobic comments made by my own department as well…

AM: {right}
SJ: …as by pupils you see. But they obviously, I don’t believe they mean it necessarily but they are obviously joking about it. So it makes you feel then less comfortable about saying something again.

AM: Yeah. What about parents? Do you envisage them as a problem?
SJ: Yeah I do definitely. Just for the same, well I think again, I don’t think they’d understand and the issue of me being a female PE teacher mainly I think would be a problem.

AM: Yep.

SJ: But there is, there’s another member of staff who is a music teacher who is gay, kind of, I don’t know if he’s openly gay or not but people just know // um and obviously, as far as I know he hasn’t had any issues with parents, but I feel because of the nature of my teaching role there would be more issues.

AM: OK. Um, you’ve described at least one incident where you have witnessed homophobia with the girl and the letter she wrote to her friend. Has there been any other incidents that you’ve witnessed of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying at your school?

SJ: Ummm, no.

AM: Not that you have personally witnessed?

SJ: No not that I have personally witnessed. No, not bullying, no obviously that was a classic example where she was being bullied because of it. There’s obviously the comments that I’ve mentioned earlier that boys make to each other but I wouldn’t really class that as bullying.

AM: That’s good actually cos that links into the next question, we can cover the two together. You’ve already answered that you do hear words like, you used gay, also perhaps poof, dyke, tranny, all these types of words used as put down terms in the playground and classroom, you’ve said you do hear that. I wonder how serious do you think this behaviour is, you’ve just said you don’t think it’s bullying. In fact that was the main question, do you think this constitutes bullying?

SJ: We get told as teachers that bullying is persistent um behaviour like persistent behaviour towards somebody else. And what the, obviously I’m not that one person that’s getting called it, but as far as I can see on the, the vast majority it isn’t a case of one person particularly getting called you’re gay you’re gay you’re gay it’s just a random comment that is called to different people. The only time you, I would ever call it bullying would be if they actually did think that none person might be gay and were calling it, were like calling it to them constantly like teasing them about it. But the way that boys generally mean it as far as I can see is they don’t really mean anything by it, it’s just like, it’s like calling somebody another word, that they wouldn’t, do you know what I mean, it’s not.
AM: but by using that word as a derogatory put down, I think um some people said they use of for words like stupid, so they associate the word gay with it’s negative basically.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: Although they don’t mean homosexual and they are not winding that person up because they are homosexual, which you’ve just said, if they were consistently doing that you would see as bullying, because they are using it as a negative term, if it was persistent in that way, so persistent use of the term gay to mean something negative would you see that as bullying.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: OK.

SJ: It’s just the way I see it playgrounds and generally is it doesn’t seem to be persistent towards one person, just seems to be a random term that…

AM: {so it’s the persistency of it that would make it…

SJ: {yeah like it might be, if a group of lads are playing football, um and one of them misses the ball or one of them like complains about the fact the ball was in when, one of them might be oh don’t be gay, it was out.

AM: Yeah.

SJ: Like they don’t mean, it’s not, it’s just a word.

AM: OK. When they do that kind of thing, that’s a very good example there someone saying don’t be so gay that was out. Um do you yourself or other teachers do anything about that or do you just let it go because you know they don’t mean homosexual.

SJ: We let it go, because we’d let it go if we call them an idiot as well. I mean if they said don’t be an idiot it was out. We wouldn’t say anything about that either.

AM: OK, I understand that, but I wonder whether you think that if they said idiot, the word idiot, means idiot, it’s negative, it means idiot. If they are using the term gay to mean something negative do you not think it would be important to some body to step in the first time that’s used and explain that the word gay means homosexual

SJ: {doesn’t mean

AM: …homosexual is not negative, so by using the term gay as a negative, they are associating homosexuality with negatives.
SJ: Yeah I think, I have done that before on rare occasions, cos I think you you’re. So for example if I’m on break time duty and you walk in and there are hundreds of kids around and you hear a comment like that [//] you wont, you wont go and focus your attentions on that one person because you are supposed to be supervising the whole of the playground. So in that sense it’s not practical to call somebody up about that every single time. But, I have for example in my lessons before if I hear somebody call it, I I’ll probably address it then. I wont address fully, but I would address it, I’ll let them know that they shouldn’t call people that. Do they understand what it means.

AM: OK, well that’s important and I think the practicality of challenging it is a good point….

SJ: {Yeah.}

AM: …that I hadn’t thought of. Say you are in a class of say twenty-five, thirty people and one person perhaps stands up and says it, you can perhaps challenges it.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: But if it’s in the playground where you are meant to be looking after hundreds of people [//]

SJ: It’s just not possible.

AM: It’s just not possible. OK, I the one case that you gave me of the um homophobic bullying, do you know what action has been taken as a result? Was it just dealt with by yourself in that, um [//] in that instance or did it go further?

SJ: Um (sigh) let’s see if I can remember, on that, we were in the changing rooms after it had all happened um I then got the girls that were, I mean the whole class was involved, but um I got the main core of girls that was involved in terms of the actual bullying and they were sent to a separate space to the girl that was actually being bullied um and then their head of year was brought down and they were taken away and dealt with. The girl that was being bullied was taken to matron um for her to look after and calm her down and the other girls were taken off by their head of year. I don’t, I didn’t hear about then what punishment was actually given to them. I would have thought more than likely it would have been an after school detention, that’s what generally is given for any situations like that whether it be gay related or not. If they are being picked on normally it’s an after school detention that they are given.

AM: Right, OK, um. Moving on to the next section then. Within schools who importantly do you feel it is for combating these problems of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and heteronormativity, for staff to recognise that firstly bullying is occurring in their schools and not just ignoring it and secondly that male and female binaries and heterosexuality shouldn’t just be presumed?

SJ: How important do I think it is?
AM: Yeah, so how firstly how important it is for staff to recognise the bullying.

SJ: Well, obviously it’s really important. I mean the kids recognise it. Our, the kids nowadays they know a lot about bullying and they know what bullying is, they understand that it shouldn’t be going on and the vast majority of cases now, bullying is brought to our attention. It’s not the case of, in the olden days when it wasn’t, kids just suffered alone. Other kids will come and tell you if people are being bullied now if it’s gay related or not.

AM: so, there’s more a culture of telling on the bullies?

SJ: Yeah definitely, oh yeah definitely.

AM: Not like with our generation, at school it was just un-heard of really to tell people…

SJ: {yeah definitely}

AM: …about it because it would make it worse.

SJ: I mean one example related to bullying is a girl in year 11 who um ur she identifies as bisexual, which I never knew until she was telling me about this. But, she was getting a petition together and asking pupils and staff to sign a petition um where she wanted to raise awareness to the head um about making, I don’t know if, she wasn’t particularly clear, obviously she’s only 16 year old, but um as far as I could gather she wanted us to raise awareness within the school and raise awareness with the head, um about issues related to being bisexual and gay and um bullying issues. Um but interestingly enough I I did sign that petition, there weren’t many staff signatures on there, I know other members, not all members of my department signed it, because they were, I think they felt uncomfortable as to what exactly she was meaning [/] um and I didn’t hear anything back from that. So I presume she took that to the head, but as staff then, we haven’t received anything, we haven’t heard anything from it. And unless that girl had told me about it and asked me to sign it I wouldn’t have known it even happened. So what that means I don’t know, but.

AM: That’s very interesting that you know one student who obviously these issues are important to tried to raise it with with the school, but nothing seems to have come of it, at least that you’re aware of anyway. OK, so you definitely do feel that it’s important for combating these problems that staff recognise it. In terms of the less overt problems of bullying and the more subtle things that happen in schools where heterosexuality is presumed and everyone is presumed to be either male or female, again how important do you think it is for staff to recognise that this isn’t in fact the case and you are, especially, how many people are in your school?

SJ: 1800

AM: You know, in a school of 1800 there’s bound to be gay, bisexual people, there’s almost definitely going to be some trans people as well even if they haven’t sort of
realised it yet. Um, but they are in this environment where they are surrounded by kids where it’s like yeah, boys and girls and heterosexual.

SJ: Yeah, um. Well I think it’s obviously really important that um staff are aware of how they talk to kids. I mean I, I obviously pick up on it all the time cos it’s very relevant to me, where as I don’t know how much other staff pick up on it. For example in assembly’s there’s I don’t know why this one in particular sticks out, cos there’s loads, but it happens a lot, but in assembly’s the head teacher was talking about like when you are older and you get, you grow up and you get married and boys you are gonna have to look after your wives and because your wives will do this, your wives will do that. And obviously when I’m stood in assembly like, it kind of it does get me angry because I’m stood their thinking, it’s not, well it’s not really the heads fault, obviously he doesn’t have a full awareness of it, but that does frustrate me because it’s not that much more difficult to say your partner…

AM: {yeah}

SJ: …might be doing this, your partner might be doing that. Um but again I think that’s probably just ignorance on a lot of teacher’s part, it’s not because they are purposely not doing it, they probably just would never think to.

AM: Yeah.

SJ: Whereas obviously I would think to because it’s related to me. Whereas interestingly enough, when you talk about the fact that in my school they’ll probably be transgender people, it wouldn’t come immediately into my mind to deal with that issue.

AM: Yep.

SJ: Or even how I would deal with that issue, do you know what I mean, so.

AM: Yeah, I think that’s a good example of when something is close to you, you are more likely to see what’s going on. Um, and something that I’ve come across a lot is the assumption that if, which you touched upon earlier, if teachers are seen to challenge homophobia then they are often presumed to be homosexual themselves.

SJ: Hmm.

AM: When they are not always. And um I’ve found in my research that it’s becoming more and more important for people who aren’t lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, to be being really vocal…

SJ: {umm}

AM: …in this field. And there’s only one or two people um and because people are kind of, straight people are a bit scared to be associated with…
SJ: {it seems that, cos I I say a lot, that I think, obviously it’s important for people like me, which I’m not obviously doing my job as it is, to be a role model for younger gay people and be open about my sexuality, but at the same time I feel like it would be more influential for a non-gay member of staff to stand up and be more more, get kids to be more accepting of it. Because I think if I was a lot of kids would, it wouldn’t change their perceptions. Although obviously, I’m a liked teacher, so it would in that sense. They might sort of appreciate a bit more that just cos you are gay it doesn’t mean you are strange or whatever. But I think obviously if you are not gay and you accepting of gay people that relates more closely to them as kids being not gay.

AM: Yeah. I think that’s very important and I do have a number of friends who are teachers, mainly in primary schools actually, 3, 2, of three friends who teach in primary schools are straight and one is a gay man and it’s interesting that the two straight women are [] I don’t know whether it is because they are friends with me or they have got a lot of other gay friends, but they are really pushing within their classes for that kind of equality…

SJ: {yeah}

AM: …it’s really nice for me. And it might be because they’ve got gay friends perhaps they wouldn’t be pushing so hard, but at least I just think, that’s a start.

SJ: Yeah definitely.

AM: You know you have got some straight women their that you know are kind of putting these issues on the agenda.

SJ: Definitely.

AM: OK. Coming to policies. Um, do you know if there are policies in your school regarding homo/bi and transphobic bullying specifically or whether it's just included in the general bullying policy?

SJ: As far as I’m aware it’s just included in the general policy. I don’t think we’ve got anything specific on that at all that I know of.

AM: And thinking about these policies um and it may be the case that you know very little about them, but from what you do know about them, do you feel that staff and students who are LGBT or perceived LGBT are protected by these policies?

SJ: Um yeah just as much as any other pupil would be against anything else they were dealing with bullying wise. Yeah I would have thought so. If for example, if a kid came to a head of year and said that they are being bullied for being bisexual or whatever um the head of year would deal with them exactly the same as if a kid came and said that they were being bullied for being fat.

AM: Right OK.
SJ: I don’t think, the head of year wouldn’t see any difference I don’t think. They would just, they’d deal with it in the same way. So in that sense they are.

AM: So, you haven’t witnessed what some people refer to as a hierarchy of bullying in your school? Whereby different types of bullying say like homophobic, racist, fatist, agist um where some are seen more um, well worse really um.

SJ: No, not at all. I’d say all bullying in our school is dealt with exactly the same.

AM: And how about the staff and students awareness of these policies. So, if somebody is being bullied [//] do you think that they know what their rights are and what they are able to do about it?

SJ: What the pupils’ rights are?

AM: The pupils and staff actually.

SJ: As a staff member um if knew somebody, if I saw somebody getting bullied or if some body came to me to tell me they were getting bullied or a friend came to me to tell me that they had a friend who was getting bullied (sigh) um I would know and I would like to think the rest know, I think I’m pretty sure they would, exactly what to do in that situation cos we are told.

AM: Right.

SJ: Do you want to know what we are supposed to do or not?

AM: Ur yeah, go ahead.

SJ: In terms of we are supposed to get statements from both sides. We are supposed to go to the person who’s getting bullied get them to write a written statement as to what they’re going through. Go to the bully, ask them to write a statement and we then pass that on to the head of year, but we are present when the head of year has a meeting with both pupils. And the vast majority of cases they just need to make the bully aware of how it’s making the other person feel. And a lot, the vast majority of incidences the bully doesn’t recognise, doesn’t realise how they are making the other person feel and once they do, the bullying then stops.

AM: That’s interesting because some of the young people I’ve talked to, rather than wanting the bullies punished for doing, that’s something they’ve wanted. They’ve wanted the bullies to understand how it’s making them feel.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: So if your school, even if it’s only one school, is doing that, I think that is really good.

SJ: Yeah, and it works, it really works.
AM: It’s school policy it’s not Government policy.

SJ: It’s ur it’s not, it’s quite common as well for bullies to actually feel, to get quite upset with themselves when they realise how they’ve made the other person feel. And um so it does really work. So that’s that. From the pupils point of view um [//] yeah I think as staff we make it very clear. They have a lot of assemblies based on bullying and I think pupils, I think, I would like to think, that the pupils are very aware of what happens, what they should do if they see any bullying, if they’re suffering from bullying and what happens if [//] if they are, if it is being dealt with by members of staff, I think they are quite clear on that as far as I’m aware.

AM: That’s good. What about if staff were being bullied, either by other staff or by students?

SJ: [//] I don’t know to be honest with you, I don’t know.

AM: that’s interesting. I mean obviously if a member of staff experienced bullying they’d probably seek to find out what they could do about it.

SJ: Mmm, yeah I mean we, we’ve got, we’ve all got line managers obviously and they are the people that you would go to.

AM: Yep.

SJ: So, for example I’d go to my head of department um and then she would do, she would help me deal with it from there. Um but then I suppose you just, it’s just pot luck as to who your head of, who your line manager is and whether you feel comfortable talking to them about it (sigh) I don’t know if there’s like a welfare person in our school or something, I would have thought there must be in a school our size, but I’m not aware of who they are if there is.

AM: Ok, that’s interesting, um.

SJ: I know who my union rep is though, so I suppose that’s another person that I would go to if there was an issue.

AM: what union are you with?

SJ: The NASWAT, that one.

AM: Yeah. I don’t know whether you are aware but they are actually, well most of the unions are, but NASUWT in particular are very good on LGBT issues um I’ve discovered in talking with some of their um um not members but like people who run them over the past few months. OK, so that’s your school policies which, which actually sound really good [//] compared to some other school policies. I wonder what you know about Government backed campaigns and policies at the moment that protect staff and students from particularly homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying? If anything.
SJ: I wouldn’t know anything, I don’t think anyway.

AM: OK. So, in the last, what are we 2008, in the last year are you aware of your school having received any information from the Government or from the organisation Stonewall about these issues.

SJ: No.

AM: OK, that’s interesting. Um [//] basically there was a report done by Stonewall last year which was sent to every single school in the country um and also a DVD to help train teachers in these issues. A fifteen minute DVD sent to every school in the country.

SJ: Right.

AM: Um, but Stonewall are currently in the process of sort of finding out if that DVD and that policy, where it’s actually got to um and very few teachers I’ve spoken to have actually seen it.

SJ: No.

AM: And then the other thing what came off the back of that was the DCSF 2007 ur anti-homophobic bullying guidance which is the document at the moment to deal with both homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and also issues around if a student comes to you and says oh I think I might be gay um ways in which you could deal with it and it’s a fantastic, it’s a massive policy, but it’s an internet resource so you don’t have to sit there and read it all.

SJ: Right.

AM: And again, that’s something that’s been sent to all schools. But Stonewall are finding out that most teachers don’t know anything about it. So even though there’s resources out there people just don’t know about them.

SJ: Yeah, no I haven’t heard anything. In sort of, not in defence, but just sort of to put like um a realistic look on that is the fact that as teachers you get so much stuff anyway, that is absolutely, not that this isn’t essential, but absolutely essential to be able to teach that like to have time to, for them to give us any other stuff, I don’t know when they would.

AM: Yep. Well actually we can link that to question twelve because, about um curriculum time resources, and training um and whether you feel there is space within the curriculum and training and resources to tackle these problems. And that is something that has really come up, people saying yeah I’d love to tackle these issues, but when.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: When there’s so much going on.
SJ: Well, I think that’s another thing (sigh) in terms of training for staff I think you’d struggle to find time to train us on these issues, well it depends how much emphasis you’re putting on them. We have training days, but they are full to the, it’s not like we sit down and have tea all day. They are full with training all day. Um but normally on education, on actual training for your subject or different Government issues that they are pushing, not, not normally on specific issues like this. Um in terms of dealing with it within the curriculum, we do have citizenship. Um [/] and every school can delivery citizenship slightly differently.

AM: OK.

SJ: The way our school does it is in year 7 and 8 they have an hour a week of citizenship a lesson of citizenship. In year 9 and 10 and 11 it’s done throughout other humanities subjects, in history, geography um…

AM: {right}

SJ: …and RS, citizenship is taught through that. So in terms of, as a year 9 form tutor last year when I did citizenship with my year 8’s we did have um a topic on sexuality and sexual health and it was dealt with briefly in that in terms of what different terms mean um ur and just raising awareness of it basically. No, nothing in depth. But the citizenship programme, I’ve seen as a teacher is very open. SO it can be open for interpretation. So however a school wants to go with it they pretty much can. And it’s just, the idea is just to make pupils better citizens.

AM: That’s interesting so that shows how schools within that particular subject, in that part of the curriculum can be as inclusive…

SJ: {yeah}

AM: …or or exclusive as they want to be.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: OK.

SJ: And if you look at that, its only year 7 and 8 that have an hour of citizenship and think of all the different topics they could include to make somebody a good citizen. It’s like never ending isn’t it.

AM: Yeah. You mentioned how the space within citizenship to talk about these issues and that in year 9, 10, 11 that comes across other humanities subjects. What about the curriculum in general and how inclusive this is of all genders and sexualities. So for example, um rather than talking explicitly in sexual education or citizenship about these other different sexualities, these other different ways you can have sex, really explicit things like that. Just generally, maybe in English literature, so you study a book and it happens to have a lesbian topic, or in history you are not deliberately studying something
because it’s gay or lesbian, or it’s heterosexual, you are just studying it because it’s important to history. But it happens to be, have lesbian or gay content. In that way, do you think the curriculum is inclusive or do you think it still has a really heterosexual focus?

SJ: Ur I would say that it probably has a heterosexual focus, but I I don’t feel I can really answer that honestly because obviously being a PE teacher. Well, all the texts that I use as a PE teacher, would never, it’s never anything that would, you’d need to talk about whether it was a relationship or anything, it’s all about factual based stuff. So I wouldn’t know cos I obviously don’t teach a subject that would bring that into play.

AM: Yep.

SJ: I wouldn’t, I don’t think I’d be able to comment on it fairly, cos I don’t know the exact texts that people use. But as far as I would be aware I would have thought more than likely it would be heterosexual based.

AM: And in terms of um subjects again, perhaps sex education is a good example, perhaps not in your school from what you have just said, but do you feel that these subjects can ever actually be overtly homophobic, biphobic or transphobic, so for example if sex education only um heterosexual penetrative sex is talked about, that kind of thing?

SJ: Ur no I would have thought, well I think it will vary massively depending on which teacher is delivering it. But in terms of lesson plans that you get given and resources that you get given ur for dealing with sex education they’re very open and inclusive of all different genders and it’s whether you feel comfortable talking about it I suppose as to how much you would go into the different sides of it that you could go into.

AM: Right.

SJ: So I think it vary massively, I think obviously younger staff on a whole would feel more comfortable having open discussion about having um different sexualities, but I think older staff would probably find that more difficult.

AM: Yeah. OK, um going back a few years to your training. Um [/] I kno w you did your teaching training through a one year PGCE course, um during that year, obviously it’s a really intense year, with loads of training and a massive amount of issues. Was there any and if there was what kind of training regarding issues around gender and sexuality?

SJ: Ur, um [/] not specifically. I remember we had training on how to deal with, well we had training on how to be inclusive in general. Um and obviously that included sexuality issues. But it wasn’t, it was never specific focus, it was more you had, you did a topic on inclusion, so it would go in with that. But that was the most we ever looked at it. And I think that was a tiny part really of what, of the training.

AM: OK. So now having been in teaching for, how many years, three years
SJ: Yeah. 3 years.

AM: Just completing your third year. Having had this experience now, do you feel the training you received from your PGCE on these issues was sufficient?

SJ: Um, specifically related to sexuality or teaching in general?

AM: Specifically related to sexuality, not in general. I mean obviously teaching is a profession where you do very much learn on the job especially…

SJ: {yeah}

AM: …in the first few years. But…

SJ: {I think again that’s difficult for me to answer because, because I’m gay, I don’t think, I don’t think I felt like I would have needed as much training as a non-gay teacher would.

AM: That’s a good point.

SJ: To be inclusive. So I started my teaching career and after three years I would feeling with situations, if somebody came to me and said that they felt like they were bisexual or whatever the issue was I’d feel comfortable because I’m comfortable with it anyway.

AM: OK.

SJ: But I think, I would have thought for somebody who wasn’t gay I would have thought that they wouldn’t really have received enough training on it to feel comfortable in situations like that.

AM: OK, that’s interesting [/] OK [/] given that the young people you teach who are sort of 11-18, given that a lot of them may be unaware of their own sexuality and or gender identity during these school years and they are in the process of negotiating it, why do you think they get bullied on those grounds? You know when they are being specifically bullied because some body thinks they are gay or bisexual, but they haven’t come out what is it that people pick up on to associate that person with homo or bisexuality?

SJ: What characteristic?

AM: Yeah. Um [/] gosh [/] ur with boys um [/] I don’t know to be honest with you cos it’s like I said I don’t think I cant really think of any example where I’ve heard another boy call a boy gay because he actually thinks he’s gay.

AM: Right OK.

SJ: Do you know what I mean, they are just like, I’m trying to think if I ever have, but I don’t think I have um I could do it in terms of the kids calling members of staff gay.
AM: Yeah, yeah.

SJ: Like there’s um, like I said there’s a gay member of staff in our school, a music teacher, but he’s not openly gay with the pupils. Um but I think he’s told one or two members of staff and then that has spread around the whole staff. So the staff generally know, but I don’t know how much he knows the staff generally know. Um but the um the kids will ask us as members of staff is [redacted] gay, is he gay, is [redacted] gay, is [redacted] gay over and over. Because they think he is and they think, when if I was to say to them I don’t know I’ve got no idea, like whether he is or he isn’t he’s just a work colleague they were saying he must be have you seen his hair. So his hair’s one thing, because he’s got bleach blonde hair and it’s spiky.

AM: Right.

SJ: Trendy hair really, um really, but he’s very skinny which obviously makes him less macho, I think that’s the way the kids sort of see it.

AM: So do you think the kids in a way associate femininities and masculinities with homosexuality. So perhaps if there’s a feminine boy or male teacher oh he might be gay or a masculine looking...

SJ: {I think to some extent yeah, to some extent. But having said that, there’s a boy in one of my year 10 groups who is like, who is the campest person you have ever met in the sense that like he is dead feminine like and he plays on it like he he squeals and he’s like dead feminine, but no-body would ever say he was gay.

AM: Right.

SJ: Because, why I don’t know. The kids just don’t think he is gay. They would never call him gay, but he’s very feminine in the way he acts, so.

AM: Has he got quite a strong personality? Is it perhaps that...

SJ: {yeah}

AM: …if people just wouldn’t bullying him anyway cos he’s that type of person that just wouldn’t stand for it maybe.

SJ: Um, possibly, possibly, but I don’t even, they would even just light heartedly tease him, I’ve never even heard a comment like you look so gay when you do that. I’ve never even heard that sort of thing, it doesn’t even come to peoples minds it doesn’t seem.

When to me he’s extremely camp. Do you know what I mean like, but they just think, where as with [redacted] they do, they do see it in him and yet he’s not, I mean and he dresses very nicely and all this stuff and so I don’t know he must be a combination of all them things that make him look, make the kids think that he’s gay.

AM: OK right drawing to a close. Um the main purpose of my research is to try and find out from the young people how all the experiences they’ve had whether it’s explicit
bullying or whether it’s the general environment of the school, how they feel it’s affecting them whilst they are trying to negotiate their non-normative identities. I want to know, in your experience, what you feel, the short and long term effects of this bullying are on LGBT or LGBT perceived people either that you’ve actually witnessed or that you know of cos people have come up to you and said you know this is happening, this is effecting me this way, or just how you think that it might be affecting them.

SJ: Um when in the couple of incidences that I’ve been involved in I’d say on the what I’ve seen and what I’ve been really impressed at actually as a gay teacher is the two girls specifically, the one that was doing the petition and the girl that got bullied in my lesson for it um…

AM: {they were different girls?

SJ: They were two different girls yeah. Um that they actually, although the girl that got bullied did get upset, she never once stepped away from the confrontation, she was very, she was adamant that she wasn’t in the wrong and that she was that she wasn’t gonna be, she wasn’t gonna to feel inadequate because of it and she stood there and she took whatever they were saying and she was quite calm about it really, um it really impressed me the way that she dealt with that. And then there’s also the other girl that with the petition, obviously she herself is bisexual, she was a strong enough character to be open about it and actually get a petition about it round school, so in that sense, in them two incidences, that tells me that um actually kids are a lot probably could be a lot stronger nowadays then then they have been and more willing to stand up for who they are then they ever have been before. Um but then having said that the kids that are probably suffering are maybe the ones that we don’t know about. So I can’t really comment on them, but then you could also argue that in terms of long term effects of the ways schools are um I’m probably a classic example because obviously the way I went through my school. The way it was seen when I was at school I now don’t feel comfortable to be open about it when I’m teaching. So that could be an example of it being a long term effect of the way schools are. But I’m hoping that these girls that are being a bit more confident that I was when I was at school are being, are doing something towards that.

AM: So perhaps sort of in ten years time when they’re in their mid twenties they’re perhaps gonna have less effect that our generation.

SJ: Possibly.

AM: And maybe the next generation even less so and less so.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: Do you think though, those two examples that you’ve given of those two girls [//] um [//] do you think it’s partly to do with the culture of your school and what you’ve told me it seems very good with dealing with bullying, um whatever type of bullying it is. And also just their own personalities in general, they sound like quite strong people.
SJ: Yeah, well one of them actually is very quiet. The one that did the petition is very head strong and she she she’s definitely got a string personality, the other one however is very quiet and timid yet she was still confident enough to stand up for who she was um [] what was the question?

AM: Um also from what you’ve said about your school it seems like the culture for dealing with bullying is very strong. Perhaps compared to some other schools.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: So do you think that’s helped these two individuals say hang on no I’m don’t standing for this.

SJ: Yeah I think it has definitely. And I don’t know what it’s like throughout the country in terms of the way, obviously there must be massive variations but I mean in the schools that I teach near, like the schools that are in Harrogate and things I would, on the whole, I would have thought they all deal with bullying very well compared to the whole country.

AM: Yeah and geographical variations in something that will happen.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: Um what about the effects, you’ve just sort of touched upon this actually on your own personal experiences, the short and long term effects of this bullying on LGBT or LGBT perceived teachers? I mean you’ve mentioned that your personal experiences at school are now perhaps reflected in you not feeling comfortable to be out as a teacher at school. But if you sort of move yourself away from that a bit and think about your experience now as an LGBT teacher in school and what you are going through, OK you are not having any explicit bullying, but you are having to sort of constantly hide your sexuality…

SJ: {ummm}

AM: …and hide the fact that you’ve got a female partner on a daily basis like an ongoing process. How is that affecting you on a short term basis and how do you think it will affect you on a long term basis?

SJ: Well on a short term basis it’s um [//] like in terms of when I’m at school and I’m having to hide these things it makes me, people at school think I’m quite a closed person and that I don’t give much, tell people much about myself in general.

AM: Yeah.

SJ: Um and that is because I don’t want to because you never know when you are gonna slip up. Um not in terms of me slipping up and saying oh by the way I do have girlfriend, but slipping up in terms of me [//] it’s difficult to lie all the time. And it’s difficult to like if somebody says to you what did you do on the weekend? A simple question like that, um like if I say I went to the cinema, who did you go to the cinema with? Oh just a friend.
Do you know what I mean and it’s like which friends are these friends from Leeds? Do you know what I mean, it’s really, it’s difficult. So you end up not disclosing much about yourself on a day to day basis and so you could argue maybe that you don’t get to know them as well as you could do otherwise. Um so there’s that everyday that’s difficult to deal with. But in terms of long term I mean it cause issues in your relationship definitely.

AM: Yeah.

SJ: Because obviously your partner has got to be extremely understanding that when you go to school they don’t exist effectively so they its kind of and I know [REDACTED] thinks sometime that she’s only in half my life, because the massive time that I spend at school they don’t know about, they don’t even know she exists, they know she’s my housemate, but they don’t know any more than that. So it obviously causes problems in our relationship.

AM: And you’ve been in a situation where you’ve been with that same partner throughout your training and your whole career thus far.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: So it’s affecting you as a person, it’s affecting your relationship, do you think it’s actually affecting her as an individual as well?

SJ: Um [///] oh I don’t know, cos I’ve been with her such a long time I’ve obviously seen changes in her, but whether it’s to do with whether I can be out at school or not I don’t know.

AM: Yeah. Perhaps that’s something that I would have to ask her. But it’s interesting that you said that it does cause issues in your relationship.

SJ: Yeah. No I think it’s bound to isn’t it.

AM: Yep.

SJ: Um but having said that she’s, I’m lucky that she’s as understanding as she is. But I mean in terms of long term effects I now have started looking for jobs other than teaching. Like I love teaching, absolutely love teaching and if it was any other situation, if I wasn’t with a girl, I would never consider leaving teaching, because I absolutely love it. But it gets to the stage where, where you don’t want to spend every day lying and hiding things about yourself. So I have and it is something that [REDACTED] and I look at is other jobs that I would feel comfortable, that I would enjoy doing as much as teaching, which is difficult to find but it is, it is a situation you find yourself being put in having to leave it because you don’t want to have to be in that situation any more.

AM: When you’ve started thinking about and discussing these things with your partner, perhaps leaving teaching because it’s a struggle for you not to be out at work, has the option of coming out at work come up or is it completely just a no no?
SJ: Um [//] ur [//] it used to occasionally, um by both of us, like well more I think would mention it more um but I think we both just know it, I just I cant see if ever happening. Because [/] unless it is defiantly less more because of what the staff would think of it and more because of what how the kids would deal with it. Cos you just don’t have a clue how they are gonna deal with it do you. Haven’t got a clue and so and that would then force me out of teaching I would have, it could force me out of teaching, I’d have no choice then. If the kids reacted badly to it at my school [//] how would I feel comfortable then to go back there and teach them then. Do you know what I mean. Like what kind of respect would you get in your classroom.

AM: So you, I presume you recognise that legally you couldn’t be forced out of teaching.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: What you are saying is you could be put in a situation where you just wouldn’t feel comfortable.

SJ: Yeah.

AM: What about the possibility of looking to teach at a different school, perhaps where you know that there are out teachers and it’s fine and…

SJ: {well that’s another thing that me and [name] have talked about is moving to a place in the country that is more accepting of it. Cos I know obviously Harrogate a part in the country where there’s probably the least openly gay people ever. So we have discussed about moving to somewhere where there might be yeah the possibility of me being able to be open when I’m at school and it is something that we haven’t ruled out, it is something that we do talk about, so it’s a possibility. But then where would you go to, like Brighton, anywhere else, do you know what I mean!

AM: Yeah probably, London I guess. OK finally then just to bring it all together. Hopefully we’ve covered a broad range of interesting issues for you, are there any other comments that you would like to make in relation to anything we’ve covered or perhaps anything you feel you want to bring up in relation to my research which we haven’t asked?

SJ: U [/] no!

AM: Good!