stonewall education for all conference 2016

QEII CENTRE, LONDON | FRIDAY 8 JULY 2016
Tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) pupils
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"It’s like people think you can be disabled or LGBT+ – but not both”

The views of LBGT+ Disabled young people on HBT bullying
INTRODUCTION

- 33 young people:
  - With physical, learning, and sensory impairments, deaf young people, young people with SEN, and young people who had experienced emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.
  - Who identified as trans, non-binary, lesbian, gay and bisexual, and young people who had or were questioning their sexuality or gender identity. We also spoke to disabled young people who identified as heterosexual.
Two thirds of disabled children and those with SEN have experienced Homophobic bullying – compared to 55% of all young people

Guasp, 2012
WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US?

Disabled children are:

- more likely experience bullying in school
- don’t get as much Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) as others
- more vulnerable to HBT bullying
- as likely as their non-disabled peers to be LGBT+
- more vulnerable to experience sexual abuse
SEPARATE ISSUES? SEPARATE APPROACHES?

- Homophobic bullying…
- Disabilist bullying…

- What about LGBT+ disabled young people?
YOU HAVE TO COME OUT... TWICE

“They say ‘You don’t look or sound gay’. Then I talk to someone who is gay and they say ‘you don’t look disabled’.”

You don’t look gay

You don’t look disabled
“IT’S A DOUBLE WHAMMY”

- Young people told us that they experienced both HBT and disablist bullying in schools and that “If it’s not one thing it’s the other. If you’re not bullied for being disabled, you’re bullied for being gay. Or both”

“I was badly affected by my autism at school - that’s what most of my bullying came from. I wasn’t out as trans then, I was trying to hide it, but people also bullied me for being effeminate.”

“Lots of LGBT young people are much more likely to have mental health issues.”

“The teachers understood my autism, but the students were unbelievably harsh.”

“Even in the gay community, they can be stigmatising about disability.”

“Imagine, you have not one but two stereotypes to contend with! It’s a double whammy.”

“I’m not out as trans at school. But people think I’m gay and bully me because of that.”
“They say ‘You bring it on yourself’ because you look or act different. Instead of doing something to stop it, they just said I needed to fit in.”
Young people told us that when they did report bullying, that little or nothing was done about it and that they were often told to change the way they looked or behaved to prevent further bullying.

They said this affected how they felt about being LGBT+ and how they felt about being a disabled person.
“HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TELL IF TEACHERS DON’T UNDERSTAND LGBT+ OR DISABILITY?”

- Young people told us that many teachers in schools had a poor understanding about disability and/or LGBT+ issues and that some were openly homophobic, biphobic or transphobic. They said this affected their ability and willingness to report bullying.

“We got taught homosexuality is a sin. When we’re then bullied for being gay, how are we supposed to tell?”

“A teacher gave me a detention and told me would he would write it in large print with a pink pen.”

“Told I couldn’t be aectionate to my partner even thought straight couples could be.”
Many disabled young people said they were not believed when they reported bullying and that this was even more of an issue if you were also LGBT+. Young people said that being a disabled young person meant they were often not believed on two counts:

- when they reported being bullied.
- about being LGBT+

“I got bullied for being gay. I told a teacher I trusted and they just said it was a phase I was going through. As if it being a phase made the bullying OK, or any less bad. They didn’t do anything about it. They treated it like it was nothing. It really affected me and how I felt about being gay. I thought it must be something bad.”

“People say ‘how do you know you’re gay if you can’t see anybody?’”
“I’VE LOST COUNT OF HOW MANY TIMES I’VE HEARD PEOPLE SAY ‘THAT’S SO GAY’”

- Many young people said that of the use homophobic, transphobic and/or disablist language was rife and that the use of this language was rarely challenged.

- This affected their identity and self esteem, and their confidence and willingness to report bullying.

- They told us that they felt that other young people thought it was easier to say ‘you’re so gay’ to disabled young people, than it was to use disablist language.

“Saying ‘That’s so gay’ is so common I don’t think people realise it’s homophobic.”

“It happens both ways. Whether you’re gay or not, they say ‘you’re so gay’. I think they think it’s easier to say that than to say something to us about being disabled. Then you hear people saying to gay people ‘you’re so retarded.’”
“HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TELL IF WE SEE BULLYING BEING IGNORED?”

- Young people told us that they had seen other young people and teachers being bullied for being LGBT+ or for being disabled. They said this:
  - made them think being LGBT+ was wrong or something to ashamed of.
  - affected their confidence to come out about being disabled and/or LGBT+.
  - made them try to hide that they were disabled and/or LGBT+.
  - affected their willingness to report bullying.

“At my school, it was horrible. One person came out as gay and he left really quickly.”
“Terrified to come out at school.”
“Our teacher was told they shouldn’t be out.”
“A teacher was transitioning in school, but they left due to abuse from the students.”
What do disabled young people tell us about how to tackle HBT bullying?
“Normalise and humanise LGB and T”
SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

“Sex education for disabled young people is c**p. There is none. In the whole 7 years I was at secondary school I had no sex and relationships education at all.”

- Disabled young people said they had received little or no sex and relationships education (SRE) at school and:
  - what little SRE they had received was limited and narrowly focused on heterosexual sex, safe sex and there was little focus on developing healthy relationships.
  - they had learnt little or nothing in SRE about disability or being LGBT+ - and nothing at all that related to being LGBT+ and disabled.
  - that they were often withdrawn from SRE lessons to be given additional learning or health support.

“Mine was ok. They covered a few things but not much detail. Just safe sex. Nothing about disability or LGBTQ.”
Disabled young people told us that SRE that positively addressed disability and the specific issues disabled young people faced was important because:

- If disabled young people are socially isolated or not educated in inclusive schools, then they can miss out on learning about sex and relationships by picking this up from friends, which is how many other young people learn.
- Disabled people are often assumed to be asexual and this can affect young people’s confidence and self-esteem. To counter this, young disabled people need clear messages and positive images about disabled people and relationships.
- Their confidence or understanding of relationships can be affected by a lifetime of personal support and/or intimate care.

“Getting no proper sex and relationships education is disconcerting as you don’t know what to do in adult life.”
“It meant I was confused. I used sexualised slang but I didn’t know what it meant. People would find this amusing.”
“Not getting good SRE means disabled young people not knowing about how to keep safe.”
“Sometimes, as a disabled young person, you can miss out on learning about things from your friends.”
Young people said they had received little or no information at school or in SRE about being LGBT+. What little they had learnt focused on sexuality, with little or no mention of gender identity. Young people said that not hearing or learning about being LGBT+, and especially not hearing about LGBT+ disabled people made them feel invisible.

“People didn’t talk to me about sex, relationships because of my visual impairment. They didn’t think I would be attracted to anyone because I couldn’t see them, as if all attraction is visual.”

“People think disabled people are asexual as it is, so they don’t talk to you about any relationships, let alone about being or acknowledging that you are LGBT.”

“First time I’d seen anything about trans issues was on TV.”
TURNING TO THE INTERNET

- Young people said they had learnt little or nothing about gender identity or being trans at school but rather turned to the internet for information.

“A teacher mentioned something about having a trans friend. The class just started laughing.”

“Nothing at school. I learnt everything on the internet from other trans people on YouTube.”

However many said that:

- that there was also a lot of negative information on the internet e.g. young people said there was information about unsafe ways to bind your chest or that gender identity is often represented poorly or mocked in the media.
- that they could often not access this information privately or discreetly as school firewalls often blocked LGBT+ searches or results, and young people were often reluctant to search on their phones or home computers as they were concerned their parents may and out by looking at the search history.
Young people said that not learning about gender identity meant they had not understood their feelings about their gender, had not felt able to tell anyone about their feelings, that they had felt isolated, and this had made them think that being trans was wrong.

“Means you don’t understand why you feel the way you do. Feel wrong, bad.”

“Feel isolated. Took me a long time to understand why I felt the way I felt. You know you’re different but don’t know why. If no one talks about it in school, you don’t figure it out until later. It can affect your mental health.”
INCLUSIVE SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

Make sure:

› all disabled young people have access to SRE
› information about being LGBT+
› advice and support available for all young people – in an accessible way
› local youth, LGBT+ or disabled people organisations used to facilitate SRE
› SRE covers issues that are important to disabled young people
PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO HBT BULLYING OF DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE

- Understand levels of all forms of bullying including HBT and disablist bullying
- Provide accessible information
- Support all students
- Make sure responses challenge and change bullying behaviour – not the behaviour of the person being bullied
- Challenge all forms of discriminatory language including HBT and disablist language
- Celebrate difference in all people
PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO HBT BULLYING OF DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE – STAFF TRAINING

Support school staff to understand:

- Disabled YP can be LGBT+ too
- What the issues are for LGBT+ disabled young people
- How to support all young people who are bullied
- How to challenge all forms of discriminatory language including HBT and disablist language

The Anti-Bullying Alliance has resources which can help you do this including guides on challenging disablist language:

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/send-programme.
Tackling LGBT bullying in Special Schools

Claire Dorer – CEO NASS
We know that children with SEND

• Are less likely to receive sex and relationships education

• Are more likely to be the targets of LGBT bullying than their peers

• Are more likely to have key life choices made for them by other people
What issues do Special Schools face?

• Lack of time – in the face of other issues, LGBT not seen as a priority
• Tensions in balancing protecting against vulnerability with individual rights and dignity of risk
• Lack of staff confidence in addressing issues
• Concerns about how to involve parents
Issues for staff

• Challenging homophobic/biphobic/transphobic language ‘they don’t understand what they are saying’
• How to address issues of identity for children with very complex needs
• Lack of knowledge – particularly about trans young people
• Fear of ‘saying the wrong thing’
How do we form our identity?
Keeping Possibilities Open …

• Choice of clothes – are non gender stereotypical choices available?
• Choice of friends and leisure activities
• Believe in the right of all to chose their gender and sexual identity
• Believe that young people can have SEND and be LGBT
• Access to resources and information
And at the same time ...

- Challenge all HBT language, every time
- Accept children and young people’s experiences
- Address LGBT issues in your school policies and practices
'Pupils struggled with the Stonewall posters, resources and slogans stating ‘Some People Are Gay... Get Over It’, asking ‘Get over what?’
Resources

• Direct language
• Makaton symbols available for sex and relationship education
• Useful LGBT resources online e.g. [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk) and [www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)
• Let young people create their own resources
• Share with Stonewall – let’s create our own resource bank!
TACKLING HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND) PUPILS

Rob Butler
Deputy Head
The Beech Academy, Mansfield
The Beech Academy

• An 11-18 special school academy
• PAN of 70 students
• Large percentage of students with diagnosis of ASD
• KS4 students typically at E2 – F grade
• Part of a multi academy trust
• Waiting for our first Ofsted
• Awarded Bronze in Stonewall School Champions
Ethos of the school

Strong focus on life skills (including numeracy and literacy)

School code of conduct

- Have high aspirations for all
- Try our best in everything
- Listen carefully to others
- To be helpful, cooperative and friendly
- Be respectful towards people and property
“Beech Shake the School”

• School video
• Shows the ethos and what the school is about
• Made to celebrate life at the school and promote the school to new parents
• Lyrics changed and recorded by TA, students involved in the filming
Staff development

More to this than having respectful staff.

Training to staff included:

• Sexist and discriminatory language

• Reference to statistics from Stonewall – why any form of LGBT bullying is a problem

• Nohomophobes.com helps illustrate size of problem

• What they can do/school processes

• Who to lead?
Policies

• It doesn’t matter what is written on policies if it isn’t what staff are doing.

• Make policies as friendly to minority groups as possible e.g. gender neutral uniform policy

• Replace specific policies with a single equalities policy

• Seek support from governors and keep them updated
Curriculum

Assemblies

• Assemblies are delivered by all teaching staff on a rota. Typically 2 assemblies a year focus specifically on LGBT issues but others cover bullying, name calling, abolishing gender stereotypes like “you throw like a girl” or “man’s work”

• In this curriculum year we have taken part in No Bystanders, celebrated the International Day against homophobia (IDAHO), discussed and celebrated our differences (autism, sexuality, gender etc) and a variety of other topics

• Tolerance and respect are British values and all schools must be promoting these qualities.

• Use displays to make messages stick
• Stonewall recommended primary age texts help students understand and empathise with discrimination

• Students enjoyed the stories (as did the staff!)

• Video clips that show how the victim feels helped get key messages across
Curriculum

Get Wise days

5 Get Wise days per year to deliver PHSE curriculum
Timetable suspended
All staff take part
Includes work on gender and stereotypes (Y7), Safe sex (Y10), different families (y7)

Engagement and pupil voice positive
Curriculum

KS4 LGBT unit

- A 20 GLH unit carrying 2 credits as part of a wider qualification (SEFL)

- Content covers
  - LGBT terminology
  - Legal rights of LGBT individuals including history
  - Impact of inequalities on LGBT individuals
  - Support available for LGBT people and support in the work place
• Students says it makes them think about what they say to others
• Very little literacy required (symbols, pictures, witness statements) – suitable for use with weaker groups
• Resources starting to appear with more trans characters e.g. a video from Tesco to celebrate LGBT History Month
Behaviour and monitoring

- Use of homophobic or transphobic language is challenged, tracked and monitored in the same way as racist language and classed as hate speech.
- Tracked using SIMS so all electronic and no forms to fill in etc.
- Allows for analysis of data e.g. 0.3% incidents involved discriminatory language which was attributed to two students who used hate speech as a general insult.
Stonewall School Champions

What’s in it for the school?
• Support
• Resources
• Recognition from parents
• Recognition from Ofsted

The School Champions scheme isn’t about getting brownie points, it’s about recognising the good work that goes on in schools and if you approach it from that point of view you can’t go wrong.
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Email/Tweet me if you want a copy of the slides
Questions
Please make your way to the First Floor for lunch