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Healthy Schools



# Stand up for us

Challenging homophobia in schools



# Stand up for us

## Challenging homophobia in schools

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‘Everyone is an insider, there are no outsiders – whatever their beliefs, whatever their colour, gender or sexuality’

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 25 February 2004*



'Teachers with street cred need to stand up for us; if you have respect for your teacher what they say is ok' *Young man, 16*

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## Introduction

*'Challenging homophobia is part of our school ethos – we won't tolerate discrimination against anybody'* **Primary schoolteacher**

*Stand up for us* aims to help schools challenge and respond to homophobia in the context of developing an inclusive, safer and more successful school environment for all.

### **WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR?**

**The issues and practical approaches outlined in this resource apply equally to early years settings, primary, secondary and special schools, off-site units and pupil referral units. It is intended for anyone who works in these settings.**

Homophobic behaviour can start in the early years of primary school, when children frequently misuse words such as 'gay' as a generic insult or term of abuse. Comments that question others' masculinity or femininity – as well as those that refer directly to sexuality – are also frequent and damaging. All schools, particularly early years settings and primary schools, are ideally placed to challenge homophobia because they 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.





Crucially, all staff need to demonstrate that they personally feel secure enough to challenge and respond to homophobia.

Working to address homophobia and tackle homophobic bullying will help you meet your obligations under the:

- Five outcomes for children, as described in *Every child matters* (DfES, 2004) and The Children Bill (March 2004: [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills.htm))
- Behaviour and attendance strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy ([www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/issues/behaviour](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/issues/behaviour))
- Primary National Strategy; Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot ([www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourimprovement/primarypilot/index.cfm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourimprovement/primarypilot/index.cfm))

It will also complement the DfES pack *Bullying: don't suffer in silence* (DfES, 2002) which offers practical advice for addressing bullying in schools, including how to establish a whole-school policy to combat bullying, as well as details of practical interventions schools can adopt.

#### **WHAT ELSE IS AVAILABLE?**

A series of 10 additional resources has been developed to support many of the activities outlined here, including further information about homophobia and relevant legislation and guidance, a range of materials for teachers, and an outline staff training session. The resources can be downloaded from the National Healthy School Standard website, [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk) (see page 28 for more information).

# Homophobia: what you need to know

## WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIA AND HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING?

**Homophobia** is a dislike or fear of someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). At its most benign it involves passive resentment of LGB men and women. In its most destructive form it involves active victimisation. Such attitudes can also affect anyone who is perceived to be homosexual or who does not conform to stereotypical standards of masculine or feminine behaviour.

Challenging and responding to homophobia will also help address concerns regarding gender-based bullying, and stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity (see [online resource 9](#) for further information).

**Homophobic bullying** is often present in an environment that fails to challenge and respond to homophobia. It can take the form of rumour-mongering, social isolation, text messaging and frightening looks, as well as more obvious forms of bullying. It does not just affect young people who identify as LGB. 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 LGB, and anyone who may have friends or relatives who are LGB. This can, in turn, affect the whole school community by giving out the message that bullying is tolerated, and that the school environment is unsafe.

‘Boys who are thoughtful, sensitive or clever can make others feel uncomfortable. Peers often try to marginalise them, labelling them as “boffs” and “gays”, empowering themselves to denigrate the qualities that threaten them and bully the individuals’ *Secondary schoolteacher*

## DEFINITIONS TO ASSIST CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

**HETEROSEXUALITY** is the term given to the expression of attraction and the associated sexual behaviour of those who have relationships with members of the opposite gender.

**HOMOSEXUALITY** is the term given to the expression of attraction and the associated sexual behaviour of those who have relationships with members of their own gender.

**BISEXUALITY** is the term given to the expression of attraction and the associated sexual behaviour of those who have relationships with members of both genders.

**HOMOPHOBIA** is a fear or dislike of someone who is LGB. It can vary in intensity from passive resentment to active victimisation.

**HETEROSEXISM** describes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual. It refers to a culture in which individuals, families and their lifestyles are categorised according to a heterosexual model. Examples include the assumption that a male pupil will have, or be looking for, a girlfriend; or that a female parent, when talking about her partner, is referring to a male. Such a culture can make LGB pupils and staff feel marginalised, and not valued or understood within the school community.



### WHEN AND WHERE DOES IT OCCUR?

Research suggests that most teachers are aware of homophobic bullying in their school. In one survey (DfES, 2002) 82% said they were aware of verbal incidents

and 26% were aware of physical incidents. A high proportion of LGB men and women say they experienced homophobic bullying at school (Table 1). Table 2 shows where the bullying is likely to take place.

EXPERIENCES OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AS REPORTED BY 190 LGB MEN AND WOMEN (Rivers, 2000)

EXPERIENCED	MALE (%)	FEMALE (%)
Name-calling	85	69
Public ridicule	75	54
Hitting/kicking	68	31
Rumour-mongering	57	67
Teasing	58	56
Frightened by a look/stare	54	44
Belongings taken	47	31
Social isolation	24	41
Sexual assault	13	5

WHERE BULLYING OCCURS (Rivers, 2000)

TYPE OF BULLYING	CORRIDORS	CLASSROOMS	SCHOOL GROUNDS	CHANGING ROOMS	ON THE WAY HOME	OTHER PLACES
Called names	xxx	xxx		x		x
Teased				x		
Hit/kicked			xx		xx	
Frightened by look/stare	x	xx		xx	xx	x
Rumour-mongering	xx			x		
Public ridicule	xx	xxx	xx	x	x	
Sexual assault				x		
Belongings taken			x	x		

xxx = frequently; xx = regularly; x = sometimes.



### WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS?

Research shows that young people who experience homophobic bullying:

- Have higher levels of absenteeism and truancy in secondary school
- Are less likely than their peers to enter higher or further education
- Are more likely to contemplate self-harm or suicide.

In one study, 72% of LGB adults reported a regular history of absenteeism at school, and were more

likely to have left school at 16 years of age despite having achieved the equivalent of six GCSEs at grade C (Rivers, 2000).

Another UK study found that more than 50% of LGB men and women who had been bullied at school contemplated self-harm or suicide, while 40% had made at least one attempt to self-harm (Rivers, 2001). A further study (Mullen, 1999) found that more than 20% had attempted suicide.

*'I was asked to leave my school for my own safety. I never got to sit my GCSEs and would have loved to. People who pick on me don't understand what being gay is'* **Member of LGB young people's group**

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO SCHOOLS OF TACKLING HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING?

#### 1. Improved behaviour, attendance and educational achievement

Tackling bullying effectively, eg through peer counselling and listening; promotion of social, emotional and behavioural skills; cooperative learning; and the consistent application of rules and sanctions (Byrk and Driscoll, 1988) will contribute to wider benefits of

improved behaviour, attendance and educational achievement.

#### 2. A culture and ethos that promote the emotional health and wellbeing of the whole school community

A school that ignores any form of bullying, fails to challenge discriminatory behaviour or does not support **all** the members of its community is likely to feel unsafe to **every** person in it.



'The worst thing about homophobia in my school is knowing that the teachers won't stop it. They pretend it isn't happening, some even join in. It's bad enough without teachers patronising you by saying things like "It'll go away" or "we don't hear anyone saying anything"' **Boy, Year 9**

Content, secure pupils are more likely to thrive academically and to continue to do so into adult life. In contrast, bullying causes anxiety and misery and negates an individual's capacity to learn.

Positive action in support of all staff, including those who identify as LGB, is likely to have benefits for staff recruitment and retention.

### **3. Compliance with legal, curricular and Ofsted requirements**

The steps required to address homophobia and homophobic bullying effectively will help schools meet their requirements under Ofsted, the National Curriculum and the law.

● The Ofsted framework from September 2005 requires inspectors to report how a school is promoting the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004):

- Being physically and mentally healthy
- Staying safe, and being protected from harm and neglect
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution by being positively involved in community and society
- Economic wellbeing.

These outcomes will not be deliverable in a culture of homophobia and

homophobic bullying. Additionally, Ofsted will judge pupils' personal development, what the school does to cultivate it, and how well pupils mature during their time in schools.

● The *Sex and Relationships Education Guidance* (DfEE, 2000) states that, among other things, teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions, offer support, and be able to deal with homophobic bullying.

● The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 specifically ban both direct and indirect discrimination and harassment ([www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/eeregs.htm](http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/eeregs.htm)). If a school fails to address a culture of homophobia it may find itself challenged by an employee, even if that employee has not personally been in receipt of homophobic abuse.

● Education law requires all schools to treat bullying seriously, and to take steps to combat it promptly and firmly whenever and wherever it occurs. From September 1999 headteachers of maintained schools have been under a duty to draw up measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils.

Further information on the policy and legislative environment can be found in **online resource 2**.



## Where do you start?

### **STEP 1**

Familiarise yourself with this resource, and ensure other key members of staff also have a copy or have access to it. Raise awareness of the issue in staff briefings, via notice boards, pastoral meetings, staff bulletin, senior management team meetings, or any other way of getting the message across effectively.

### **STEP 2**

Make use of an existing working party, eg healthy schools task group, governors' working party or school council, to help increase awareness and manage change. You may be able to form a specific homophobia working party, but it is probably preferable and more time-efficient to use existing mechanisms. This is also more likely to

ensure any changes or additions to existing procedures will be properly embedded.

### **STEP 3**

Look through the whole-school approach checklist in the following section. It provides criteria for effective practice, and examples of evidence that will track whether or not this effective practice is in place. As a school, use the checklist to self-evaluate and decide what action you need to take – either starting new activity, enhancing existing mechanisms, or stopping doing things that you now feel are inappropriate.

### **STEP 4**

Take action, ensuring that you also plan in monitoring and evaluation procedures.

# Checklist for challenging and responding to homophobia and homophobic bullying



**Figure 1 Ten aspects of the NHSS whole-school approach**

The most effective way to tackle homophobia and homophobic bullying is to take a whole-school approach. The National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) provides a supportive framework for such work. It has identified 10 areas in which action should be taken (Figure 1), which combine to create a supportive ethos and shared ownership across the whole school community.

This checklist can be used as a self-review tool to audit a school's current position in relation to challenging and responding to homophobia. It is categorised according to the 10 aspects of the NHSS whole-school approach. It is also available in a printable format (**online resource 7**) which includes space to record your school's progress against the criteria.

# Leadership, management and managing change

'I went to see the head about it. He said... basically... "There is nothing I can do about it because it's such a large group. If it was two or three boys then I could sort it out, and I could have them in the office." And then he sent me to see the counsellor who didn't know what to do'

*Liam, aged 16*

Leaders, including form tutors, heads of year, governors, heads of pastoral support, heads of subject and older pupils, as well as headteachers, play a critical role in nurturing an inclusive ethos and ensuring the school takes real steps to challenge and respond to homophobia. Effective leadership can support the school to take these steps by:

- Creating a vision – striving to engender an ethos in which homophobia is as unacceptable as racism or sexism
- Involving staff and pupils in developing and implementing the vision
- Modelling the kind of behaviours you want pupils and staff to demonstrate – eg understanding, respect, self-awareness
- Valuing the whole school community and being sensitive to the needs of individuals
- Enabling staff professional development.

## LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND MANAGING CHANGE

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
1	Challenging and responding to homophobia and homophobic bullying are seen as contributing to school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identified in the School Development Plan</li> </ul>	Do not ignore the issue – it is relevant and important for all schools
2	There is evidence of commitment at senior management level to promoting social inclusion and challenging homophobia and homophobic bullying wherever it occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Homophobia and homophobic bullying appear on the agendas of staff and governor meetings</li> <li>● Specific staff and governor training is provided and its effectiveness is monitored</li> </ul>	<p>Unless an individual chooses to disclose their sexuality, it may not necessarily be apparent which pupils or staff are LGB</p> <p>Do not underestimate the importance of the headteacher's stance on this issue</p>
3	Activities are monitored, evaluated and regularly reviewed for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitoring and evaluation tools are built into activities developed to address homophobia and homophobic bullying, including incident forms, questionnaires, classroom activities etc (See 'Getting the audit process started' p24)</li> <li>● Evaluation and feedback are collated, and activities modified and developed in line with this information</li> </ul>	



## Policy development

It is vital to have an up-to-date policy and associated procedures for dealing with homophobia and homophobic bullying. One study found that while almost all schools had anti-bullying policies, only 6% referred specifically to homophobic bullying (DfES, 2002).

Policy should be developed and reviewed in consultation with all members of the school community, and should emphasise that:

- Homophobic abuse and harassment is not acceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated
- Preventive action is taken to reduce the likelihood of such incidents occurring
- Homophobic behaviour is clearly identified as such
- Perpetrators will be dealt with effectively
- Individuals who are bullied will receive support
- The frequency and nature of incidents is monitored within the school and the local education authority.

(Adapted from North Somerset Council's *Guidance for racial and homophobic incidents in schools.*)



### POLICY DEVELOPMENT

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
4	Homophobic incidents are recorded and acted upon in line with other anti-bullying procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a clear procedure for dealing with homophobic incidents, and staff and pupils are familiar with it</li> <li>● Incident forms include reference to homophobic bullying</li> <li>● Incidents are monitored in the same way as other forms of bullying (eg racist, sexist)</li> <li>● Incidents are reviewed and victims given appropriate support in the same way as other forms of bullying</li> </ul>	Do not accept or leave unchallenged any homophobic language. As well as direct references to a person's sexuality, these might include comments such as: 'Come on then girls' (said to a group of boys); 'Look at A's trainers – they're so gay'



## POLICY DEVELOPMENT

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
5	Challenging homophobic bullying and addressing homophobia are referenced appropriately in relevant policy documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Governors and senior managers have reviewed policies and guidance statements to ensure they address the needs of the whole school community</li> <li>● The school's position on challenging homophobia is referenced in other relevant policies and documents including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- equal opportunities</li> <li>- anti-bullying policy/statement</li> <li>- behaviour policy</li> <li>- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), including Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)</li> <li>- Citizenship (secondary schools only)</li> <li>- inclusion policy</li> <li>- confidentiality policy</li> <li>- staff handbook</li> <li>- school prospectus</li> <li>- pupil planner</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Policies follow relevant DfES, <i>Every Child Matters</i>, Ofsted and other guidance</li> </ul>	
6	Policies are developed and/or reviewed in consultation with members of the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is systematic and regular input from:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- whole staff</li> <li>- pupils (including school council), who are allowed time to develop their understanding of the issues underlying the policy</li> <li>- parents</li> <li>- governors</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Roles and responsibilities of members of the school community are defined within policies</li> </ul>	Ensure pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the development of school policy and practice

## Curriculum planning and resourcing

There are opportunities across the curriculum to challenge pupils to think about their attitudes, to correct misinformation, and to raise awareness about the implications of prejudice and discrimination.

It is more appropriate to discuss issues such as homophobia within a broader context, rather than in specific lessons focusing solely on sexuality or homophobia. The latter will feel like 'bolt-ons', and run the risk of exposing young people who may already be targets of homophobic bullying.

### CURRICULUM PLANNING AND RESOURCING, INCLUDING WORKING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
7	Homophobia is considered where possible across the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schemes of work and pupils' learning outcomes show evidence of work on homophobia across the taught curriculum, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- circle time</li> <li>- Citizenship</li> <li>- drama</li> <li>- English</li> <li>- history</li> <li>- PSHE including SRE</li> <li>- religious education</li> <li>- career education and guidance</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Preparation for work experience covers topics such as sexual harassment of both boys and girls, prejudice and discrimination, and how to address these issues</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><i>Several citizenship units readily support a discussion of homophobia, eg</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- KS1 and 2, unit 5, 'Living in a diverse world'</li> <li>- KS3, unit 4, 'Britain – a diverse society?'</li> <li>- Unit 9, 'The media in society'.</li> </ul> <p><i>For more information see <a href="http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2">www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2</a></i></p> </div>	<p>Avoid always using race and gender as the only examples of prejudice</p> <p>Teaching about sexuality involves teaching about different kinds of relationship, about love and about caring for ourselves and others. It is not the same as teaching about sex. This is especially pertinent at KS1 and 2</p> <p>Do not assume that work placements will be welcoming to LGB pupils</p>
8	The school actively engages with local LGB support services and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The school has links with agencies that can support the planning, resourcing and delivery of the curriculum, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- homophobic bullying/hate crime forums</li> <li>- police/community safety</li> <li>- LGB groups</li> <li>- theatre in education and other support agencies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
9	Resources used in school are inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The school has agreed criteria for assessing resources</li> <li>● Resources include positive, non-stereotypical images regarding sexuality and gender</li> </ul>	Use non-stereotypical images in lessons and throughout the school

## Teaching and learning

'At my previous school we had just come out of sex education... it was all about straights. I was close to one teacher so I told her that I like girls instead of boys. She replied, "Don't be silly, of course you don't like girls, you will find a nice boy soon – girls don't like girls"' *Alice, aged 15*

Teaching and learning has a significant impact, both on how LGB young people engage with and progress in school, and on the attitudes of the whole school population.

Crucially, staff need to demonstrate that **they personally** feel secure enough to challenge homophobia, to explain why such behaviour is **always** unacceptable, to answer young people's questions about sexuality honestly, and to talk about the subject of homosexuality without embarrassment. Professional development opportunities can help address this.

TEACHING AND LEARNING			
	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
10	There are effective procedures for managing lessons which address sensitive issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are work agreements/ground rules about roles and responsibilities in lessons which deal with sensitive issues</li> <li>● These are referred to in the PSHE and teaching and learning policies, and are enforced</li> </ul>	
11	Pupils are encouraged to make informed judgements about their actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Classroom activities include raising awareness about the damaging effects of homophobia and homophobic bullying (see <a href="#">online resource 5</a>)</li> </ul>	Do not be nonchalant about things that may be significant to pupils
12	Recognition is given to different styles of learning, and opportunities are offered to put learning into practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are appropriate strategies used to create the right environment for effective learning, eg by:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensuring differentiated input tailored to the needs of individual pupils</li> <li>- supporting all young people to be active, informed participants in the learning process</li> <li>- encouraging cooperative learning, including peer support</li> <li>- allowing time for reflection and review</li> <li>- encouraging and supporting discussion in small groups and/or the whole class</li> </ul> </li> <li>● There is sensitivity shown in lessons to feelings and individual experiences</li> <li>● There is recognition that some pupils may feel threatened by the work. Some may require additional support, and staff should feel confident to address any homophobic reactions</li> </ul>	Do not assume you can use known LGB pupils as a teaching resource



## School culture and environment

'...Pupils can be keenly aware of discrepancies between values stated and values practised within a school'

*Citizenship at Key stages 3 and 4: Initial guidance for schools, (QCA, 2000)*

The school ethos influences every aspect of school life, and can be a key determinant in the success of work to challenge homophobia.

**Managing religious sensitivities:** contrasting views on homosexuality between (and within) different religious faiths are often seen as an obstacle to addressing homophobia in schools. However, most religions and faiths are based on fairness and justice. The key issue to address is not so much the range of religious beliefs about sexuality, but rather the need to challenge discrimination and promote the respect and equality of all young people, regardless of their sexuality.

### SCHOOL CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
13	The school's commitment to challenging homophobia and homophobic bullying, and to creating a safe learning environment for all pupils, including those who are LGBT, is made explicit to all members of the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff handbook</li> <li>● School documentation is clear that the school does not tolerate homophobia</li> <li>● Appropriate references in recruitment information</li> <li>● Induction programmes for new pupils/parents/ staff explicitly address the issue of bullying, including reference to homophobia among other aspects</li> </ul>	<p>Homophobic language is sometimes used by pupils as early as KS1. See <a href="#">online resource 5</a> for more information on challenging homophobic language and questioning stereotypes at all key stages</p> <p>Do not accept or leave unchallenged homophobic language from any staff or visitors</p>
14	Language used is inclusive, and communication between staff and pupils is respectful and supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflected in policies that are effectively monitored, both formally and informally</li> <li>● Included in whole staff training</li> </ul>	Do not assume all staff are aware of what is meant by 'homophobic language'
15	Language used in communication with pupils and parents/carers is inclusive and the school acknowledges that families take many forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appropriate training and guidance provided for whole staff</li> <li>● Acknowledged in eg:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- office systems and protocols</li> <li>- contacting parents/carers</li> <li>- staff handbook</li> <li>- equal opportunities policy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Do not use generic language that assumes parents and staff always have opposite sex partners



## SCHOOL CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
16	The school environment celebrates diversity and challenges stereotyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Displays and resources reflect different types of family unit</li> <li>● Generic information and support (eg on sexual and mental health) includes information relevant to LGB young people</li> <li>● Montage of notable achievers who were/are LGB (see <a href="#">online resource 5</a>)</li> </ul>	
17	Areas where homophobic bullying can occur in school are identified and a strategy to address this is developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Health and safety risk assessments are in place</li> <li>● Unsupervised areas in school are kept to a minimum</li> <li>● 'Danger areas' are targeted for supervision/ remedial action</li> </ul>	
18	There is support for LGB staff to be open about their sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School actively supports the inclusion of LGB staff</li> <li>● Staff room culture is not heterosexist (see pages 6 and 21)</li> <li>● LGB staff feel able to bring their partner to a school social event</li> </ul>	

## Giving pupils a voice

Children and young people can be involved in many aspects of the school's programme to challenge and respond to homophobia. This not only helps gain their commitment, but also can clarify their understanding of the nature, extent and impact of homophobia.

A charter against homophobic bullying, drawn up by year 10 pupils, included the following:

- Promote the self-esteem of all students through all aspects of school life
- Value other cultures and lifestyles – it's OK to be different
- Treat all people with respect regardless of sexuality
- Ensure equal rights for everyone
- Offer counselling/support around issues concerning sexuality
- Create more opportunities for discussion in school to raise awareness about homophobia and its effects
- Challenge name-calling no matter what the nature of it
- Publish telephone helplines around school
- Punish those who use homophobic language.

*(Adapted from Mulholland, 2001)*

### GIVING PUPILS A VOICE

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
19	Pupils' needs assessment informs planning of activities for addressing homophobia and homophobic bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Questionnaire to all students</li> <li>● Issue raised with school council and outcome of discussion recorded in minutes</li> <li>● Issue raised and discussed in form/tutor groups</li> <li>● Feedback from above referenced in development of policies and planning of activities</li> </ul>	Listen to what pupils have to say about what and how they are taught, and about pupil behaviour
20	Pupils take responsibility for some aspects of work on addressing homophobia and homophobic bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pupils are involved in the design and assessment of recording forms, and in recording incidents of homophobic bullying for school audit. See page 25 and <b>online resource 3</b> for examples of appropriate incident forms</li> <li>● Prefects, peer mentors, school council, etc address issues related to homophobic bullying</li> </ul>	
21	Pupils' comments and feedback inform the curriculum, teaching styles and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Issues are discussed in class</li> <li>● There is pupil evaluation of lessons and/or modules</li> <li>● Pupils are encouraged to use suggestion boxes</li> </ul>	

## Provision of pupils' support services

'Everyone in school was walking past me going "queer". The first day I knew it had gone round school, I walked into my form room and everyone, including my two best friends in my form, moved to the back of the room and sat at the back. Even when I went back I used to hide in the music practice room from them because I just couldn't go to lessons. I just couldn't face it.' *Young man, aged 18*

As well as action at whole-school and class levels, members of the school community who experience homophobic bullying will also need individual support to help them overcome its effects.

PROVISION OF PUPILS' SUPPORT SERVICES			
	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
22	The pastoral system allows all pupils to raise issues and access support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All requests for confidentiality are respected</li> <li>● Appropriate training is provided to enable staff to support pupils in their care and react appropriately to disclosures</li> <li>● There is a supportive atmosphere in form/tutor groups, acceptance of diversity, trust in tutor etc</li> <li>● All pupils are well informed about reporting procedures regarding bullying</li> <li>● Key support staff, including school nurse, counsellor etc, are aware of emotional health issues surrounding homophobic bullying and other LGB issues, and clear referral procedures are in place</li> </ul>	All staff should take responsibility for the welfare of pupils – do not abdicate responsibility to the school nurse or counsellor
23	All pupils are provided with opportunities to raise views and concerns around homophobia and homophobic bullying anonymously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following are in place to enable pupils to express concerns and seek advocacy:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- suggestion boxes</li> <li>- mentors and peer support</li> <li>- school counsellors</li> <li>- Connexions personal advisers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
24	Pupils have access to information about local support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All staff know where to find information on local services, helplines etc</li> <li>● Information is posted on school noticeboards, included in pupil handbook etc</li> <li>● Leaflets and other resources are easily available, and are placed where pupils can access them without others knowing</li> </ul>	Keep leaflets and helpline numbers up to date



## Staff professional development, health and welfare

If whole-school approaches to tackling homophobia are to be effective, all staff need to react consistently and appropriately to incidents and be able to offer support to pupils.

Are all staff equipped to challenge the derisive use of language around sexuality and gender as rigorously as they would challenge the use of such language in relation to race or ethnicity?

Cultural change does not happen overnight, and colleagues may need to be supported and challenged in order to become more sensitive to the importance of diversity and inclusion issues.

### STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND WELFARE

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
25	Staff are consulted on their support needs, and a range of professional development opportunities are offered within the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training and support needs and experiences are assessed and evaluated. These might include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- focused training sessions (see <b>online resource 6</b>)</li> <li>- team-teaching</li> <li>- classroom observation</li> <li>- working group</li> <li>- appropriate literature</li> <li>- coaching</li> <li>- discussion</li> <li>- schools collaborating</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	A range of organisations can provide appropriate staff training and support schools to address homophobia and challenge homophobic bullying. See <b>online resource 10</b> for a range of contacts, or contact your local healthy schools coordinator for advice
26	Staff disciplinary procedures include homophobia and homophobic bullying in a manner consistent with other breaches of equal opportunities. <i>This covers both staff-to-staff and staff-to-pupil incidents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Referenced in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- disciplinary procedure</li> <li>- equal opportunities policy (which should make specific reference to sexuality)</li> <li>- staff handbook</li> <li>- staff aware of reporting and complaints procedure regarding bullying and harassment of staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
27	Absence procedures concerning conditions of service, including compassionate leave, apply consistently to all staff including LGB members of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Referenced in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conditions of service</li> <li>- contracts</li> <li>- staff handbook</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Partnerships with parents, carers and local communities

'Our son became increasingly unhappy at school over the last year. He finally broke down and told us that he had been bullied by a group who have been taunting him and calling him "gay". I am horrified at the attitude of his teachers who appear to think my son is the problem and have no strategies for dealing with this sort of prejudice. I am now left with the dilemma of whether to take him away from the school – but he is the victim and shouldn't be made to suffer further.'

*Letter from the mother of a Year 8 child*

Parents and carers play an important role in a whole-school approach to tackling homophobia. As well as being sensitive to the fact that parents and carers may be LGB, schools need to seek ways of consulting and involving parents, carers and members of the local community when responding to homophobia and homophobic bullying, while being clear about the school's approach to the issue. For more information on what parents and carers think about homophobia and homophobic bullying see **online resource 8**.

### PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
28	There is a process in place, which is publicised, for parents to raise their concerns, including those about homophobic bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Referenced in relevant policies</li> <li>● Exemplified in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school prospectus</li> <li>- parents' handbook</li> <li>- home-school agreements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Do not automatically assume there will be a negative response from the community when addressing these issues
29	The school seeks to raise parental awareness about school procedures and processes to prevent homophobia and homophobic bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Referenced in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school prospectus</li> <li>- parents' handbook</li> <li>- new parents' meetings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
30	The school makes clear to all parents and carers that any information about their personal circumstances, including their sexuality, childcare arrangements etc, would be welcome and will remain confidential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Referenced in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school prospectus</li> <li>- parents' handbook</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Same-sex partners are encouraged and supported to attend parents' evenings together</li> </ul>	When in contact with home, do not assume every child is from a 'traditional' family

## Assessing, recording and celebrating achievement



Stopping homophobic bullying, or changing a culture of homophobia, will take time. There are many achievements to be celebrated along the way, eg winning the support of governors, rewriting the school bullying policy, involving children and young people in an audit, providing access to information leaflets about safer sex that are relevant to LGB pupils, or simply increasing the number of images around the school that challenge stereotypes and traditional images of relationships. Each of these is an important step.

### ASSESSING, RECORDING AND CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

	CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	ALWAYS REMEMBER...
31	Pupils' achievements in creating an inclusive culture are celebrated in the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognising and rewarding peer mentors</li> </ul>	
32	Pupils are involved in setting targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pupils' feedback is sought, and informs the development of work within the curriculum to address homophobia and homophobic bullying</li> </ul>	
33	Impact assessment methodology is used to assess the effectiveness of the school's work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School makes use of data such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- number of reported incidents</li> <li>- nature of reported incidents</li> <li>- parental feedback</li> <li>- pupil questionnaires and surveys</li> <li>- views of Connexions Service personal advisers and community nurses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Record qualitative as well as quantitative evidence



## Getting the audit process started: creating a log of homophobic incidents

A good way to begin the process of addressing homophobia in school is to record the number and nature of homophobic incidents. This can be useful in a variety of ways. It will help illustrate the particular nature of any homophobia within the school, eg:

- Is there a particular issue around the misuse of language?
- Have there been any violent incidents?
- Are particular groups of pupils involved?
- Are there particular places in the school where it occurs?
- Are any staff involved in using homophobic language?

An incident log can be used to take a snapshot of homophobic language, behaviour or violence expressed by pupils and/or staff, and can usefully inform relevant activities such as staff training or policy discussions. It is important to develop an incident log that records **all** homophobic language and homophobic violence by any pupils or staff. **This includes calling someone or something 'gay' with a derogatory meaning or comments that question an individual's masculinity or femininity.**

The example overleaf is adapted from records kept by two members of staff in a secondary school over a three-week



period. It is helpful to involve two or more individuals in keeping a log, and to involve pupils in the process to demonstrate how prevalent such incidents are.

Recording homophobic incidents in this way highlights the spectrum of

incidents that might take place, from low-level abuse to more serious bullying and harassment, and also helps to pinpoint where action is most needed and where it is most likely to be effective. Too much tolerance of low-level abuse can pave the way for more serious incidents.

### INCIDENT LOG (adapted from Mulholland, 2001)

Date	Type of incident – verbal or physical abuse (Please record words said)	Perpetrator and target/person being bullied
21/1/02	Boy X's bag stolen by group of boys in his class, all books vandalised, graffitied – eg 'X is a gay bastard'	Four year 8 boys and fellow year 8
21/1/02	'They are gay' – reference to the RAF (verbal)	Year 11 boy
23/1/02	Refusal to sit next to pupil Y – 'He smells, he's gay'	Two year 10 boys of another
26/1/02	'That ain't natural man!' and 'Stab him up, he's a battyman!'	Reference to Boy George by two year 11 boys
28/1/02	'Look at A's trainers, they're so gay!'	Year 9 girl to fellow year 9 girl of a classmate
3/02/02	'Battyman'	Year 8 to fellow year 8 boy
8/02/02	'Gay' – shouted out	Year 9 girl
9/02/02	'What's this boys? – a mothers' meeting' to group of loitering boys	Staff member to seven boys in year 10
14/02/02	'Faggot' – shouted out	Year 11 boy
21/02/02	'Are you queer, you gay?'	Year 7 boy to another
21/1/02	'He looks like a girl' (verbal abuse)	Two year 10 boys
32/1/02	'Don't be such a sissy'	Staff member to year 9 boy
26/1/02	'You're a f***ing bender'	Year 11 boy to another
26/1/02	Bender/gay – verbal abuse directed at goalkeeper having conceded another goal	Year 10, 11 spectating at football game
7/2/02	'Your mum's a lez, I've seen her snogging her girlfriend'	Year 9 girl to another
15/2/02	'Fairy'	Teacher to year 8 boy
15/2/02	'She's a geezer bird'	Year 10 comment about year 12 girl
15/2/02	'You're so gay'	Year 10 girl to year 10 boy
18/2/02	'Come on then girls' – said to a group of boys	Staff member to year 7 boys

Adapted from *Tackling Homophobic Bullying in Schools*, Bolton Homophobic Bullying Forum, June 2001  
Online resource 3 contains a blank template based on this incident log



## Supporting pupils who disclose information about their sexuality

Coming out – particularly for the first time – is a huge step, and young people have the right to expect that professionals in whom they have placed their trust will react appropriately and supportively.

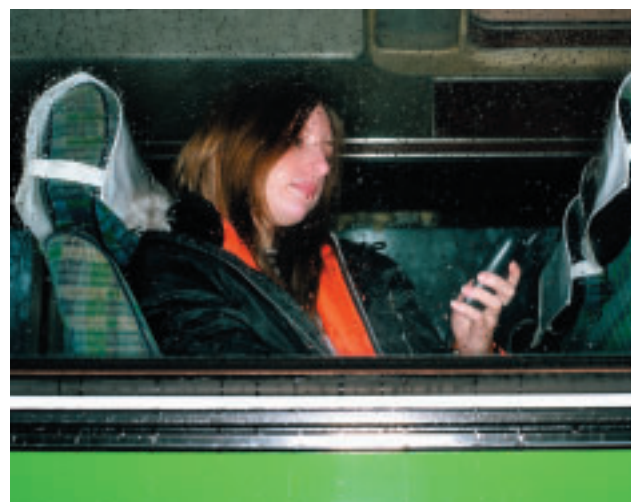
All young people have a right to be open about their sexuality, but this can be very stressful for young LGB people. They need to think about the implications of coming out – in particular, the reactions of other people.

If a young person discloses information about his or her sexuality, it is important to remember he or she has a right to expect this information to be treated with respect, and in confidence. Young people who are LGB have to make decisions throughout their lives about when it is appropriate to come out to different people and in different situations. Their first experiences can be highly significant in determining how well they handle these questions in the future.

Many staff will feel that, if a young person has concerns about their sexuality, they would rather refer them to a specialist agency. However, it is important to remember that pupils may choose to come out to particular members of staff because they trust them or because they feel it would be too difficult to ask for support from another person, such as a parent or someone they do not know. They could also feel rejected if you refer them on immediately.

If a young person does disclose information about their sexuality:

- Do offer validation and support. Without being patronising, you might wish to reassure them that:
  - you are pleased they have chosen to confide in you
  - that there are many other LGB people in the world
  - that it is perfectly OK to be LGB



- Do not react as though their sexuality is a problem
- If appropriate, offer to help them find additional support. If there is a local support group, it might be a good idea to contact them to check they are still operating before passing on their details
- If you are unsure what to say consider whether there are any continuing professional development opportunities available that might help to develop your confidence in dealing with similar issues on a subsequent occasion
- Remember that nobody is expecting you to have all the answers – just reacting positively and supportively is enough.

If you do feel able to talk with a young person about their feelings, it is wise to outline the school's confidentiality policy (which you may find within the school's SRE or child protection policy) in case they disclose information that you might need to act on. Schools are not obliged to inform parents if a child discloses information about their

sexuality. In some cases it may be necessary to share information with colleagues, in which case this decision should be made jointly with the young person concerned. Good practice dictates that staff members should seek advice in principle, rather than revealing the identity of the young person.

Occasionally, young people of all sexualities may disclose information about under-age sex or sexual abuse. In these instances, staff should take appropriate steps as outlined in the school's policies relating to child protection. If it is necessary to break confidentiality, the staff member should inform the young person that they are going to do so, why they are doing so, how they will do it, and how they will support the pupil throughout the process. These procedures should apply to disclosures made by young LGB people in just the same way as to those made by heterosexual pupils. In this regard, schools should remember that, following the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, **the age of consent has been equalised and is now 16 for all.**

# Online resources

A range of materials has been produced to support the activities and strategies outlined in this booklet. They are all available on [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/standupforus](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/standupforus)

## **1 Homophobia: research and facts**

An overview of recent research on the incidence and impact of homophobic bullying. This resource can be used to inform discussions in the classroom or with staff, governors and parents. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/research\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/research_04.doc)

## **2 The policy environment**

Extracts from a range of relevant legislation and guidance. They provide a strong framework for promoting inclusion and challenging homophobia and homophobic bullying. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/policy\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/policy_04.doc)

## **3 Creating an incident log**

A blank template of the completed incident log in this booklet appears on the website: [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/log\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/log_04.doc)

## **4 Developing school policies and procedures**

Examples of materials that have been produced by King Edward VII School, Sheffield as part of their policy and procedures for challenging homophobia and homophobic bullying. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/procedures\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/procedures_04.doc)

## **5 Addressing homophobia through teaching and learning**

A range of materials for teachers that includes information on language and stereotyping, strategies for effective group work, and examples from real life and literature to promote discussion and debate. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/teaching\\_and\\_learning\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/teaching_and_learning_04.doc)

## **6 Training session outline**

A suggested outline for a whole-staff training session to raise awareness and develop skills and confidence in challenging homophobia and homophobic bullying. It can be used in full or in part, and is accompanied by a range of handouts. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/training\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/training_04.doc)

## **7 Self-review checklist**

This self-review tool can be used to audit your school's current position in relation to challenging homophobia. It is categorised according to the 10 themes of the NHSS whole-school approach, as outlined in this booklet. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/checklist\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/checklist_04.doc)

## **8 Background paper: the views of parents, carers and young people**

This overview includes findings from a needs assessment exercise that informed the development of *Stand up for us*. Useful for informing discussions in the classroom or with staff, governors and parents. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/parents\\_ypeople\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/parents_ypeople_04.doc)

## **9 Background paper: gender stereotypes**

Discussion of the key issues around gender stereotyping – including what they are, why it is important to challenge them, and links with sexual intolerance and homophobia. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/gender\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/gender_04.doc)

## **10 Additional materials**

A comprehensive list of relevant guidance, publications, training materials, books for children and young people, websites and organisations. [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/additional\\_materials\\_04.doc](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/Word/additional_materials_04.doc)

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## Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the many healthy schools coordinators and colleagues, partner organisations, schools and young people who have contributed directly and indirectly to this briefing. In particular, thanks are due to Marie Bisset, Dennis Carney, Alex Caught-Cottle, Jonathan Charlesworth (EACH), Howard Ford, Simon Forrest, Gill Frances (NCB), Peter Griffiths (Ofsted), Mary-jo Hill, Richard Kavanagh, Sarah Lamond, Angela Mason, Ruth Middleton, David Mills, Elaine Morrison, Jennifer Moses (NASUWT), Bethan Plant, Rachel Pope, Patrick Roach (NASUWT), Denys Robinson (EACH), Sue Sanders, Maria Stanley (Stonewall), Alan Wardle (Stonewall), Ian Warwick (Thomas Coram Research Unit), Natalie Whitty and, especially, Marilyn Toft (NHSS), Ali Harris and Graham Wild.

And many thanks to the editing group of Graham Hofmann (Kirklees LEA), Pat Hunter (Rossett High School, Harrogate), Diane McConnell (North Yorkshire LEA) and Hilary White (PSHE teacher) as well as other teaching staff in North Yorkshire.



The National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) is sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health, and managed by the Health Development Agency. Its three aims are to contribute to:

- Raising pupil achievement
- Promoting social inclusion
- Reducing health inequalities.

The NHSS offers comprehensive support to help schools address inclusion issues for the whole community, to challenge bullying effectively and to promote an environment that is conducive to learning for all pupils. Tackling homophobia and homophobic bullying helps schools become healthier, safer and more successful places in which all young people can thrive.

This resource aims to help schools develop their awareness of homophobia and homophobic bullying and challenge it in the context of a whole-school approach.

Additional copies are available from your local healthy schools programme or from the Health Development Agency, PO Box 90, Wetherby, Yorkshire LS23 7EX. Copies are available to download from [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk)

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For further information about the NHSS visit the Wired for Health website, [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk)

ISBN: 1-84279-200-8