Sheffield Hallam University

(#FreshersToFinals) From freshers' week to finals : understanding LGBT+ perspectives on, and experiences of, higher education

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FreshersToFinals

From freshers' week to finals: Understanding LGBT+ perspectives on, and experiences of, higher education

Final report • Eleanor Formby • July 2015

Contents

Acknowledgements

Glossary

Asexual: Someone who does not experience sexual attraction

Biphobia: Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of, bisexual people

Cis or cisgender: Used to refer to people whose gender identity matches the biological sex they were assigned at birth. Sometimes referred to as the 'opposite' of transgender

Gender identity: Refers to the gender to which people feel they belong, and how they label themselves. This may or may not accord with physical anatomy and/or societal expectations. It is distinct from sexual identity (see below)

Homophobia: Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of, lesbian and gay people (also sometimes used to include bisexual people)

LGB: Lesbian, gay and bisexual

LGBT: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans

LGBTQ(Q): Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer. Q is also sometimes used to mean questioning instead, or sometimes both are included, as in LGBTQQ

LGBTQ(Q)I: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (questioning) and intersex

Pansexual: Person or people who are attracted to people of all genders. Sometimes used as alternative term to bisexual. Some people use panromantic in a similar way

Polyamory: The practice of having more than one (consensual) intimate relationship at a time

Queer: Alternative term sometimes used for LGB or LGBT by those seeking to 'reclaim' it from previous/current derogatory usage. Also used to refer to those wishing to challenge gender or sexual binaries, as well as other identity categories

Sexual identity: Refers to the attraction, practices and/or label which people feel or adopt in relation to intimate relationships, such as bisexual, heterosexual, gay, or lesbian

STEM: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

Trans: Umbrella term used to refer to people who may not identify as either 'male' or 'female' and/or who may identify as intersex, transgender, transsexual, or transvestite. People who, for example, identify as genderqueer, gender neutral or gender non-binary may or may not align themselves with a trans umbrella

Transphobia: Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of, trans people

UCAS: Universities and colleges admissions service (in the UK)

Executive summary

- There is a lack of (UK) evidence exploring lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) perspectives within, and about, higher education

- The #FreshersToFinals project aims were to raise public awareness of potential issues experienced by LGBT students and those considering entering higher education (HE); increase practitioner and institutional awareness about LGBT students' potential needs; identify any evidence gaps in the field, and build and strengthen relationships with and between relevant organisations in the HE and LGBT sectors

- The project consisted of two stages: a literature review, followed by a small number of consultation events with LGBT+ students, young people and staff members working with them (one was with current students attending university and two were with existing LGBT groups largely made up of people not attending university)

- Seven overarching themes were identified in the data (see below)

UNIVERSITY CHOICE-MAKING

"[I] chose my university specifically to move away from the North and further down South as it is perceived as more accepting"

"[I] looked at the LGBTQ society of every uni I considered, [it] greatly influenced my decision"

- Individuals' sexual and gender identities may influence university choice-making (which is not to suggest that LGBT+ students make decisions solely based on their gender or sexual identities)

- Research with LGBT participants points to the importance of geography in university choice-making

- Some people make decisions based on moving towards or away from specific locales perceived to be 'gay-friendly' and accepting, or intolerant and repressive, respectively (Formby, 2014a; Taulke-Johnson, 2008, 2010a)

- University decision-making may also be made with explicit reference to previous (negative) experiences at school (Formby, 2014a)

- Within the consultation participants often described the advantages of going away to university in relation to distance from family (surveillance) and/or (former) peers (see also Taulke-Johnson, 2008)

- 'Scene' size and vibrancy has also been suggested as a key factor for some prospective LGBT students: universities with large scenes nearby are thought to be more 'tolerant' and supportive (Epstein et al, 2003; Taulke-Johnson, 2010a; Valentine et al, 2009)

- University information may also influence choice of institution for LGBT students: Valentine et al's (2009) research indicated that positive images of LGBT people in university brochures, prospectuses and on websites had influenced students' decisions

- American research (Kane, 2013) has indicated that the existence of an LGBT student organisation is used as a key indicator of a 'safer' campus

- These findings were supported within the consultation, where general LGBT+ (in)visibility on campus was identified as a contributing factor to university decision-making

- External information about universities may also be influential, such as the Stonewall Gay by Degree resource

FINANCIAL ISSUES

"[My] Dad threatened to cut off financial support if 'social activities' related to [being] LGBT could be found by employers"

"Chucked out by my parents, and if I didn't have a well-paying job I would be homeless"

- Research suggests that financial issues can be specific concerns for some LGBT students: Valentine et al's (2009) research reported that LGBT students had experienced both a fear of losing financial support from their families if they discovered their identities, and actual loss of financial support, though only in a minority of cases

- NUS (2011, cited in NUS, 2014) research indicated that LGB students were less likely to receive information on their financial entitlements from family members than heterosexual students, and were less likely to receive financial support or help paying for their course from their families. Perhaps as a result, LGB students were more likely to be in debt, and in higher amounts of debt, than their heterosexual counterparts

- The consultation identified financial worries related to university for some LGBT+ people: even when this had not been experienced personally, there was clear awareness of the potential issue, meaning that some people's ability to be 'out' during and running up to their time at university was influenced by practical financial restraints

- For some, financial support was clearly used as a mechanism for parental control or influence over how students lived their lives, which could prevent access to groups or organisations that might be of benefit to them. Others were forced to live independently

- Whilst most financial issues were raised in relation to (lack of) parental support around the costs of attending university, financial limitations were also raised in relation to gender transition and associated costs

ACCOMMODATION ISSUES

"A friend who is not out is called 'the lesbian' by her housemates, so doesn't want to come out... [her] relationships have to be secret or non-existent"

- There are specific issues about university accommodation, for example Taulke-Johnson (2010b) found evidence of vandalism being used to permanently brand participant's doors with anti-gay sentiments, causing some to voluntarily transfer accommodation, and others to modify their behaviour in order to not allow 'gayness' to have a visible presence in the accommodation

- Research in American university halls (Evans and Broido, 2002) with lesbian and bisexual women identified similar experiences of a hostile environment as a result of direct and indirect harassment or lack of support from roommates and other residents

- In Valentine et al's (2009) UK research, some students described experiencing homophobic abuse in university accommodation, and what they felt were inappropriate responses to this, in institutions suggesting they - rather than the perpetrators - move accommodation

- Discussions about whether 'victims' or 'perpetrators' should be forced to move accommodation also featured in the consultation

- Valentine et al's (2009) research identified that accommodation can be a specific concern for trans students, because of some institutions' gender-based housing practices that may, or may not, include shared bathrooms or bedrooms (see also Beemyn, 2005; Pomerantz, 2010; Singh et al, 2013)

- The consultation similarly evidenced issues related to housing whilst at university, which could be linked to lack of financial support from parents (see above). However, often comments related to housemates' attitudes or misunderstandings (particularly of trans students), which regularly highlighted the lack of choice around some university accommodation

FACILITIES AND SERVICE PROVISION ON CAMPUS

"Lack of knowledge in university medical centre and use of transphobic language"

"LGBT spaces are not as safe and inclusive as I was led to believe. At my local group, my sexuality isn't represented, and there's always a huge scene focus, which isn't really for me"

- A series of issues can be brought together under the heading of facilities and services. NUS (2014) research, for example, reported that trans students felt the main difficulties on campus included the lack of gender-neutral toilets and facilities, and the lack of policies to support updating their name and gender on the student register

- Being repeatedly misnamed and/or misgendered represents a serious barrier to trans students' inclusion and appreciation of higher education (Formby, 2014b, 2015; NUS, 2015)

- In America, Singh et al (2013) identified gender neutral toilets, gender-specific sports teams, and legal assistance as areas where participants wanted institutions to improve

- Beemyn (2005) similarly noted concerns about access to toilets, changing rooms, and ability to update university records and documents regarding gender identity

- Lack of gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities was a key concern in the consultation, but dissatisfaction with university counselling and medical service provision was also identified (see also Beemyn, 2005; Formby, 2013; 2014a; McKinney, 2005)

- The consultation also identified frustration with limited/limiting gender and sexuality options on official university-related forms

- There was also discussion of LGBT+ societies and groups on campus: it was noted that the success of these groups could depend on the size of the university, and/or how active the students' union was generally. Different ethoses were also noted between groups focussing primarily on offering support, social activities, or campaigning/activism

- Keenan (2015a) has commented that LGBTQ societies can maintain 'hierarchies', in which some people are excluded, which was also noted within the consultation

- Where students' union officer roles had been broadened to cover all equalities issues, this was largely felt to be ineffective

CURRICULUM AND COURSE CONTENT

"Same old straight, white men, [we] need to study [the] achievements of others"

"I'm always the only one to mention gender identities outside the binary… often treated as 'strange' and 'radical' for bringing it up"

- Ellis (2009) reported that LGBT issues were inadequately represented in the curriculum; only a minority of her respondents felt comfortable raising these issues in class

- More recently, Keenan (2014) described LGBTQ experiences of higher education as marginalised through invisibility (see also McKinney, 2005; NUS, 2014)

- Gunn (2010) noted that there may be disciplinary differences (see also Valentine et al, 2009)

- Consultation participants concurred that curriculum invisibility was an issue: students provided many examples of the ways in which they felt, at worst, "forgotten", or at best, "tagged on"

- In subjects where participants did not expect to learn about LGBT+ identities or histories, examples used could still be experienced as inaccurate and/or insensitive (e.g. gender being used as an example of a binary within mathematics)

DISCRIMINATION, PREJUDICE AND 'BULLYING'

"Outside of LGBT societies and safe spaces, most people are subtly intolerant"

"Still difficult to be out to random people like housemates and seminar groups"

- Rankin (2005) identified that (in America) more than a third (36%) of LGBT students had experienced harassment within the last year, including derogatory remarks, verbal threats, anti-LGBT graffiti, pressure to conceal their identity, and physical assault

- In the UK, Ellis (2009) reported that homophobia existed on campuses across the country, with just under a quarter (23%) of students indicating that they had experienced homophobic harassment or discrimination at least once, usually from other students

- Valentine et al's (2009) research reported that trans students encountered a higher proportion of negative treatment, including physical threat, than LGB students (see also Garvey and Rankin, 2015)

- NUS (2014) research also highlighted the experiences of trans students, identifying that just 21% of trans students felt completely safe on campus (by contrast, 37% of LGB students felt completely safe)

- Research by Keenan (2014) found that incidents of verbal abuse and physical violence were experienced by LGBTQ students: though the former was more common than the latter, both still appeared to influence students' perceptions of safety on campus

- In the consultation, participants identified experiences of prejudice or discrimination, but fears around prejudice or discrimination were also identified as an issue which could impact upon varying levels, or times, of 'outness' (i.e. behaviour modification)

CAREERS-RELATED ISSUES

"I would like more careers-related advice as I'm currently unsure how to present myself through my CV etc. Currently, I feel there is nowhere I can access this information"

"At [my] university, I organised an LGBT-specific careers conference to push how [being] LGBT can be used as a tool to get a job. The experiences, positive and negative, can be harnessed"

- Evidence from the US has identified that non-heterosexual students experienced less careers-related support and guidance (Nauta et al, 2001)

- In other American research (Schneider and Dimito, 2010), those who had experienced anti-LGBT discrimination in the past were most likely to report their identity influencing their academic and career choices, in both positive and negative ways (see also Formby, 2014a for similar findings in Europe)

- Schmidt et al (2011) have suggested that perceived discrimination contributes to 'vocational indecision'

- Scott et al (2011) have argued that transgender students face unique challenges that many university careers advisors are not equipped to handle, e.g. understanding of potential discrimination in securing references, and awareness of how a name change can impact upon employment history records. Transgender students may avoid seeking career development support altogether (Scott et al, 2011)

- Other (US) research findings indicate that lesbian students' perceptions of campus climate are important in predicting their career development, with positive perceptions appearing to enhance vocational advancement (Tomlinson and Fassinger, 2003)

- Recent UK evidence has suggested that minority sexual orientations are disadvantaged in seeking work: Drydakis' (2015) research identified that participation in gay and lesbian university students' unions negatively affected participants' workplace prospects, with the probability of gay or lesbian applicants gaining an interview 5% lower than their heterosexual counterparts

- Within the consultation, how to present one's self or identity was also raised in relation to CVs and interview dress/performance

CONCLUSION

- Despite the advancement of legal protections for LGBT people in the UK, there remain potential issues for those who identify as LGBT+ who wish to attend university

- Negative occurrences at university can impact upon LGBT people's experience of higher education, and employment opportunities (Formby, 2014a)

- Potential impacts include social isolation, and influences on academic attainment, achievement, choice of career and migration decisions (Formby, 2014a; Garvey and Rankin, 2015; Rankin, 2005; Valentine et al, 2009)

- LGBT+ experiences can directly impact upon retention rates: NUS (2014) research found that LGB students were more likely to consider dropping out than heterosexual students, with over half (56%) of LGB students citing the feeling of 'not fitting in' as the main reason. LGBT students who had experienced homophobic or transphobic harassment were 2-3 times more likely to consider leaving their course (NUS 2014; see also Formby, 2014a; Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012)

- However, despite much evidence of negative experiences, in NUS (2014) research LGBT students overall still had a positive view of higher education, and tended to find university a safer space than the rest of society (see also Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012; Valentine et al, 2009)

- Overall, the research suggests a need for nuanced understandings and responses to LGBT+ experiences of university: the evidence indicates that there is a broad continuum of experiences, with many examples somewhere in the middle, and/or shifting over time

- At one end of the continuum, university can be described as a positive experience that facilitates greater freedom to explore sexual and gender identities or practices, within a more welcoming and inclusive environment than school (Formby, 2014a; Scourfield et al, 2008)

- At the other end of the continuum, university is not experienced as a place of safety or freedom for some LGBT+ people (Formby, 2014a; McDermott et al, 2008)

- Research in higher education settings which illustrates the complexity of experiences should be utilised to inform complex, thorough, and appropriate responses

RECOMMENDATIONS

For universities

- Senior university leadership should signal their support for LGBT+ inclusion on campus via the implementation of, and support for, appropriate policies and practices throughout the institution, including mechanisms to respond to any cases of bullying or discrimination

- Marketing and admissions staff should consider the impact of their information on prospective LGBT+ students

- Support staff should ensure requirements (e.g. guarantor forms) and provision of financial information or guidance and support to students (such as any emergency or hardship funds) is appropriate for LGBT+ students who may be estranged from family members

- University staff with roles connected to university accommodation should ensure their policies and practices are suited to all students, giving appropriate choice, advice and support where necessary

- University leadership should ensure that induction information is issued to all students (whether in writing or through awareness-raising sessions) about requirements for non-discriminatory practices in university accommodation and on campus

"Many students will avoid attending programs on topics that make them uncomfortable, such as sexual orientation. Preparing display cases, putting up bulletin boards, displaying LGB resource materials, and posting 'safe zone' stickers are alternative ways to support LGB people" (Evans and Broido, 2002: 40)

- University leadership should consider how to allay LGBT+ students potential fears about safety on campus

- University estates should provide gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities on campus and make sure they are clearly advertised and signposted

- Staff with roles connected to university sports teams should investigate ways to include all students in sports teams if they wish to participate but do not feel they suit a particular gender team

- University leadership should ensure all university records, documents, email addresses and identity cards are able to be easily updated with regard to name and/or gender identity if students request it, and ensure that all official documentation provides more gender options than only 'female' or 'male' (e.g. the use of an open box)

- University leadership should encourage and promote awareness and confidence about LGBT+ inclusion in curriculum content (including reading lists) amongst all members of academic staff (e.g. through mandatory training, e-learning or written information provision), including the use of sensitive and non-discriminatory language use and examples within subject areas where LGBT+ identities may not be considered 'relevant'

"A more sensitive attitude from academic staff towards sexual orientation and gender identity would help LGBT students to feel more included in the classroom. Heterosexuality should not be assumed, and teachers should try to diversify their examples and exercises to take into account everyone's perspective" (NUS, 2014: 47)

- Library staff should maintain and increase access to diverse authors and resources covering diverse relationships and identities within library service provision

- University leadership should ensure all staff working on university premises (including academics, support staff, medical/health-related staff, and bar staff where relevant) are aware of the need for sensitive and non-discriminatory language use, in particular the need to not misname or misgender any students (or staff)

- Senior careers staff should take steps to improve awareness among all careers-related staff on matters related to LGBT+ experiences of seeking employment, particularly around name change issues regarding qualifications and/or employment history. Within this, consider promoting 'good practice' LGBT+ employers

- University leadership should ensure any university-supported welfare roles are fully trained, resourced and supported to adequately support LGBT+ students where this is needed

For NUS leadership

- Consider providing or promoting increased online information related to higher education and related issues for LGBT+ students. This could, for instance, include signposting to sources of advice or support for those experiencing financial hardship and/or family estrangement, and advice or guidance about employment and accommodation issues (including rights related to private landlords)

- Consider implementing a rating system akin to Gay by Degree but that provides more detailed information and is more inclusive of identities other than 'gay'. This could, for example, focus more on activities of students' unions and/or university LGBT+ societies/groups

For students' unions and/or university-based LGBT+ societies and groups (working together if possible so as not to duplicate efforts)

- Consider, where possible, providing or signposting to information related to higher education and related issues for LGBT+ students. This could, for instance, include signposting to sources of advice or support for those experiencing financial hardship and/or family estrangement, and advice or guidance about employment and accommodation issues (including rights related to private landlords)

- Consider advocating for, or contributing to, a rating system akin to Gay by Degree but that provides more detailed information and is more inclusive of identities other than 'gay'. This could, for example, focus more on activities of students' unions and/or university LGBT+ societies/groups

- Consider the needs of all potential members and try to ensure that all forms of communication, social events and other activities are inclusive (for example, of trans, disabled and asexual students) (for further discussion, see LGBT Youth Scotland and NUS Scotland, undated)

- Consider offering advice or signposting to information related to transition which could help reduce associated costs for students (e.g. where/how to buy second-hand binders, etc)

- Ensure that any communication and welfare roles are fully trained and supported to adequately consult and support LGBT+ students as appropriate

For external LGBT+ organisations and groups

- For those engaged in offering direct support to LGBT+ people, consider whether there is a local need for specific provision for students in the area. This could involve partnership working with university-based staff, societies or groups

- Investigate the feasibility of providing or promoting information of relevance to some students, particularly around emergency housing, employment rights, financial hardship and/or family estrangement

- Consider offering advice or support to parents/carers of LGBT+ young people which may reduce the likelihood of family estrangement for LGBT+ students

- Consider offering advice or signposting to information related to transition which could help reduce associated costs for students (e.g. where/how to buy second-hand binders, etc)

For research funders and researchers

- Prioritise and address evidence gaps within the UK, for example related (but not limited) to:

  LGBT-specific careers mentoring schemes;

  experiences of older LGBT+ students;

  LGBT+ students' experiences of university accommodation;

  experiences of students less often focussed upon within research, such as those identifying as asexual, bisexual or trans;

  links between youth homelessness and access to education or employment;

  understanding the impact and experiences of LGBT+ groups and societies on campus;

  prior knowledge of university-based LGBT+ societies or groups and its influence on university decision-making

Introduction

The Centre for Education and Inclusion Research at Sheffield Hallam University has a track-record of research in the field of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) identities and relationships. Often when looking at young people[1] in particular, this field is dominated by work examining school-based experiences of homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying. This concentration means that there is a lack of (UK) evidence exploring LGBT perspectives within, or about, higher education[2]. For this reason, the #FreshersToFinals project was conceived and conducted.

The project's aims were to:

- raise public awareness of potential issues experienced by LGBT students and those considering entering higher education (HE);

- increase practitioner and institutional awareness about LGBT students' potential needs;

- identify any evidence gaps in the field;

- build and strengthen relationships with and between relevant organisations in the HE and LGBT sectors.

This document is not designed to give a full account of the research process (which will be disseminated via academic publication), but to provide a user-friendly summary of available research literature in the field, together with youth and student perspectives on this, to act as a form of guidance for what universities could - and should - be thinking about in relation to student experience. The report will be launched at two final dissemination events: one aimed primarily at an LGBT sector audience (at the LGBT Foundation in Manchester), and one aimed primarily at HE staff (to take place at Sheffield Hallam University).

Project process

The work consisted of two stages, with the primary focus on the first: a literature review, followed by a small number of consultation events with LGBT+ students, young people and staff members working with them (one with current students attending university, and two with existing LGBT groups who were largely made up of people not attending university[3]). Interim dissemination presentations at the Society for Research into Higher Education (February 2015) and at the University and College Union (UCU) LGBTQI+ research conference (May 2015) also fed into this consultation. In addition, informal feedback on the draft report was sought from a number of organisations acting as advisors/partners.

The literature search was conducted using systematic methods in order to identify appropriate sources. A variety of databases were used to search for literature across a range of subject disciplines, such as (but not limited to) education, sociology, and psychology. Search terms included 'campus', 'college', 'further stud*', 'higher education', and 'university', together with 'bisexual, 'gay', 'homosexual', 'lesbian', 'LGBT', 'sexual minorit*', 'transgender', or 'transsexual'. These were chosen to try and capture a variety of UK and international (but published in English) literature, where terms vary. The evidence found has been collated and analysed in this report, with seven overarching themes identified, relating to: university choice-making; financial issues; accommodation issues; facilities and service provision on campus; curriculum and course content; discrimination, prejudice and 'bullying'; careers-related issues.

Much of the research examined took place within America, where often there is a focus on the concept of 'campus climate'. This has been defined as "the cumulative attitudes, behaviours, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential" (Rankin, 2005: 17). Where there was research evidence from the UK, this has been focussed upon because of its greater potential for comparability for current UK institutions. For the same reasoning, American literature specifically exploring experiences of Christian universities and other education institutions has not been included because of its lack of applicability to a UK context. It should be noted there is also a small body of guidance literature that has also been excluded as its research/evidence base is unclear, but which may be useful for prospective students to refer to, such as The Advocate College Guide for LGBT Students (Windmeyer, 2006) in America, and in the UK the charity Stonewall's Gay by Degree web resource (www.gaybydegree.org.uk).

The report includes evidence from three consultation events with LGBT+ students, young people and staff members working with them (see Table 1), the purpose of which was to discuss the literature review findings, and amend or add to these drawing on their own perspectives and experiences. The consultation stage deliberately engaged with both LGBT+ students and non-students. It also included a range of self-identities, including (but not limited to) asexual, bisexual, fluid, gay, genderless, gender neutral, lesbian, non-binary, panromantic, pansexual, trans, transgender, and queer.

[1] This project was about students and prospective students, but the term young people is sometimes used when referring to participants or existing literature.

[2] There is even less on further education (except see James and Lambley, 2011 and a forthcoming collaborative NUS/UCU report).

[3] This approach is not presented as representative or generalisable, in particular there are limitations to the geographical spread of the groups which only took place in England, but the participants made valuable contributions and additions to the literature which has enabled a broader scope for this report.

Report outline

This report continues with concise chapters summarising the themes identified above. These are followed by a discussion and conclusion chapter, and finally by a practice implications and recommendations chapter.

With regard to language use, the most appropriate acronym to encapsulate a variety of gender and sexual identities is the subject of much debate (see Formby, 2012 for further discussion), but throughout this report - following the example of others - LGBT+ is used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning and 'other' diverse identities which are included within the plus symbol. It is therefore intended to include identities, such as asexual, which were included within the research, but which are not always clearly included within the shorter 'LGBT' acronym. LGBT+ is also used to include the diverse range of gender expressions and embodied experiences within a 'trans' umbrella. Where referring to other research, the associated terms or acronyms they adopted are used.

Table 1: Consultation group details

Group	No. of students or young people (aged 18-24)	No. of staff/volunteers working with young people
1: University students	28	-
2: Youth group	8	5
3: College group	3	2
Total	39	7

University choice-making

Existing literature, supported by consultation findings, suggests that individuals' gender and sexual identities may influence university choice-making. This is not to suggest that LGBT+ students make decisions solely on the basis of their gender or sexual identities. There is a wealth of evidence that ethnicity and social class, for example, will also impact upon choice-making (see, for example, Ball et al, 2002; Reay et al, 2001). Whilst examination of these and other additional factors was beyond the scope of this project, those working in universities and/or supporting LGBT+ people within or applying to university are encouraged to think about choice-making in the context of intersectional identities. As one participant commented, "there is no one way to be LGBT".

In the largest survey of LGBTQ young people in the UK to date, Metro (2014) asked respondents if sexuality or gender identity issues influenced their choice of college or university. Of LGBQQ[4] respondents, 14% said that it had. Of transgender respondents, a higher 22% said that it had. However, these responses may be skewed by the inclusion of college which almost certainly includes those aged 16-18 who are far less likely to leave home at this point, hence are more likely to attend the local college, with less choice around this. Separate questions on college and university may have been more useful, so it is difficult to say the extent to which identities may influence university decision-making.

Geographical factors

In addition to course, university reputation and location accessibility/distance from home that may be factors for many would-be students (for example see Briggs, 2006; Sheridan and Smith, undated), research with LGBT participants points to the importance of geography in university choice-making for two main reasons. First, the importance of perceived 'safety', 'tolerance' or 'acceptance' has been identified (Formby, 2014a), meaning that some people make decisions based on moving towards or away from specific locales perceived to be 'gay-friendly' and accepting, or intolerant and repressive, respectively (Taulke-Johnson, 2008, 2010a). These 'pull' and 'push' factors echo broader (UK) research on LGBT migration patterns (Cant, 1997; Formby, 2012; Howes, 2011; Valentine et al, 2003), but it is worth noting that university decision-making may be made with explicit reference to previous (negative) experiences at school, as these quotes from recent European research illustrate:

"I worry if it will be a safe space for me. I worry about repeat experiences similar to school. I worry about being able to participate as fully as I want to" (cited in Formby, 2014a: 7)

"Given that university and further education is a completely different environment the challenge is convincing people that things are different. Many people think that it will be more of the same… [but] the truth is there are entire communities within college and most are accepting of LGBT people" (cited in Formby, 2014a: 22).

Similar comparisons and concerns were apparent within the consultation:

"I spoke to a young man last year and he was… concerned about being judged, especially because he looked 'camp'… he was adamant that he wasn't going to go to university because he didn't think he'd fit in… I sent him to go and have a look at [a particular university] and he started that university in September and he came back to see me not long ago and he thinks it's the best thing he's ever done… he'd had bad experiences at school… he was hounded at school, so yeah, that's where it kind of came from" (Staff member supporting group 3).

Explicit comparisons between expectations of school and university were also evident within the consultation, sometimes directly related to areas presumed to be more 'accepting':

"[I] chose my university specifically to move away from the North and further down South as it is perceived as more accepting" (Participant, group 1)

"Having come from a rural area, frankly anywhere was an improvement" (Participant, group 1).

Second, the specific issue of scene[5] size and vibrancy has been suggested as a key factor for some prospective LGBT students, as universities with large scenes nearby are thought to be more 'tolerant' and supportive (Epstein et al, 2003; Taulke-Johnson, 2010a; Valentine et al, 2009). Again, this mirrors broader (UK) LGBT research which suggests that urban locations featuring sizable scenes are perceived as a 'draw' to (potential) LGBT migrants (Browne, 2008; Formby, 2012; Valentine and Skelton, 2003; Weeks et al, 2001). However, this assumption has recently been complicated by academics arguing that "the 'big city' is often

taken-for-granted as a destination for queer subjects… [but] such 'metro-centric' (Halberstam, 2005) focus often fails to account for diverse (and 'disgusting') geographies in and beyond the (right) 'big city'" (Taylor and Falconer, 2015: 44-5). Similarly, in Valentine et al's (2009) research a postgraduate student had chosen to move to a large city from a smaller rural campus, but reflecting on both experiences he said he had felt safer as an undergraduate because of the close-knit environment of the rural campus institution, and because the conduct of those on site could be 'policed' more easily than at the large urban university which he was then at. However, Stroup et al (2014: 104), based on American research, have indicated that "discrimination due to sexual orientation is more prevalent on rural campuses".

The consultation also illustrated university choice-making associated with ability to access the scene:

"I turned down [a Scottish university] to go to a London uni instead because of the lack of a gay scene" (Participant, group 1)

"[That] is why we set off the whole [city] thing because that's the closest sort of scene city for us and then we did the trip and we took these [young people] to [that city] for the day which was really nice" (Staff member supporting group 3)

"I went to Brighton specifically for the LGBT scene, only to find out that there was almost no people of colour scene. People feel obliged to choose between their race and their sexuality" (Participant, group 1).

The above comment illustrates the importance, noted earlier, of understanding intersecting identities, which was also noted within the consultation in relation to social class and financial means.

University information

In addition to geography, there is some evidence to suggest that university information influences choice of institution for LGBT students. Valentine et al's (2009) research, for instance, indicated that positive images of LGBT people in university brochures, prospectuses and on websites had influenced students' decisions. American research (Kane, 2013) has also indicated that the existence of an LGBT student organisation is used as a key indicator of a 'safer' campus, thus influencing student decision-making about university (see also Epstein et al, 2003).

There was evidence to support this from the consultation, with LGBT+ visibility on campus identified as a contributing factor to university decision-making:

"[I] looked at the LGBTQ society of every uni I considered, [it] greatly influenced my decision" (Participant, group 1)

"[I] chose [a South West university] over [a Midlands university] because when I was looking for a uni they looked like they had an active LGBT society" (Participant, group 1)

"I know when I was in school and we got the chance to go round and visit some universities, and by chance one of the universities I went to it was LGBT history month and the whole university was just plastered with LGBT news and facts and things… I was just coming to terms with my sexuality at the time so I thought it really helped knowing that the university was backing it and they were supportive of it, so that was a contributing factor for me choosing the university" (Participant, group 2).

The desire for visibility was not universal, however:

"You're going to have all these notice boards and whatever for everything else, so if you have got like some kind of LGBT group or event then it shouldn't not be advertised just because it's LGBT, but I don't think they specifically need to make sure that there is always something to do with LGBT on there" (Participant, group 2)

"If you plaster notices about LGBT all over the university people are just going to get irritated that they're all over the place" (Participant, group 2).

Another participant also identified that for them, evidence of negative responses within an institution would have more impact than evidence of positive responses:

"I don't think it would make a difference that way round for me. I think if the opposite thing happened, like if you saw something negative, that would have a bigger impact on my decision… if you have a choice between nothing and something that's a positive, if that's not the main factor in your decision it doesn't make a huge difference, but if you see nothing and something negative then that's kind of more salient in your mind" (Participant, group 2).

External information about universities may also be influential. Within the consultation, for example, there were people who had used the Gay by Degree resource to 'narrow down' their university options before applying to UCAS.

Despite the above discussions within the consultation, for some not currently at university, financial barriers remained:

"Tuition fees are the main thing [influencing my decision]" (Participant, group 2).

There were also examples where people said their identity did not influence their decision.

It gets better?

Within the consultation, those that had not attended university were asked about their perceptions of university life as an LGBT+ student. In general, participants thought that being at university would be a more positive experience than being at school, with this usually the comparator:

"I think, having not been to university, a lot of what I've heard it seems a lot more LGBT friendly than high school does" (Participant, group 2).

These assumptions were informed by word of mouth, for example from friends or family, and from popular culture, such as television programmes:

"I think a lot of portrayals of sort of school and university in the media focus on the last couple of years at school and how great it's going to be when you go to university, but then they never talk about the second part of it... because they never get that far" (Participant, group 2).

Beliefs about university were also influenced by the idea that those entering higher education would be automatically predisposed to be more liberal or understanding in their attitudes. This illustrates and supports Taulke-Johnson's previous (2008, 2010a) research:

"This may be just an assumption, but people that go to university are higher educated so they don't really care about who someone is, rather than someone who goes somewhere else and doesn't really fully understand the concept of LGBT" (Participant, group 2).

Other responses suggested that LGBT+ people's greater age and associated confidence tends to make university 'easier' than school:

"I think because you're a bit older your own view is that you don't care as much as you would at school. You're a bit more confident in yourself so you don't really care what other people think about you" (Participant, group 2).

However, not everyone thought that university would necessarily be a more welcoming environment than school, with some appearing to be resigned about the ongoing likelihood of prejudice in various settings:

"It's no different than society really because you've got those people that don't really like you for who you are, and there's people that love you for who you are, and you've just got to deal with it (Participant, group 2)

"I think it depends on how school was for you because if you've had an amazing school life and then you've decided to go onto higher education, then there's always going to be that possibility that you lose the friendship groups you've had and you lose the support that you've had and so it makes it kind of seem worse" (Participant, group 2)

"It kind of depends where you are. I mean in some parts of the country school is better than university and in some other parts of the country university is better than school because there's openness" (Participant, group 2).

The advantages of going away to university were often identified in relation to distance from family (surveillance) and/or (former) peers (see also Taulke-Johnson, 2008):

"You're away from your family so they can't see what you're doing" (Participant, group 2)

"It's different, isn't it, because you meet new people at university whereas at school you're often with people who you've known since you were like five and grown up with who have assumptions about you... you can start fresh at university where people don't know you" (Participant, group 2).

However, not everyone felt their identity impacted upon their choice:

"I don't think it like matters at all... I want to go away to study because I like moving around a lot... and I want to go and do public services because I want to be a prison officer and none of that has anything to do with the fact that I'm trans" (Participant, group 2).

Whilst many factors are likely to contribute (consciously or otherwise) to university choice-making, gender and sexual identities may be influences that universities can respond to, at least in the provision of 'LGBT+ friendly' information.

[4] Where LGBQO stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning and 'other'.

[5] The 'scene' is typically used to refer to commercial venues such as bars, pubs and clubs orientated towards an LGBT+ clientele, although research suggests they can often be experienced as more geared towards young gay men specifically (see, for example, Formby, 2012).

Financial issues

Research suggests that financial issues can be specific concerns for some LGBT students. Valentine et al's (2009) research reported that LGBT students had experienced both a fear of losing financial support from their families if they discovered their identities, and actual loss of financial support, though only in a minority of cases. More recent research (NUS, 2011, cited in NUS, 2014) indicated that LGB students were less likely to receive information on their financial entitlements from family members than heterosexual students, and were less likely to receive financial support or help paying for their course from their families. Perhaps as a result, LGB students were more likely to be in debt, and in higher amounts of debt, than their heterosexual counterparts.

The consultation also identified evidence of financial worries related to university for some LGBT+ people. Even when this had not been experienced personally, there was clear awareness of the potential issue, meaning that some people's ability to be 'out' during and running up to their time at university was influenced by practical financial restraints:

"Had a friend come out as lesbian in college a few months before leaving for uni… [she was told] she would be cut off financially, so had to go back 'in' [the 'closet']" (Participant, group 1)

"People can fear suffering from financial issues… it can make a big impact on coming out" (Participant, group 1).

For some, financial support was clearly used as a mechanism for parental control or influence over how students lived their lives, which could prevent access to groups or organisations that might be of benefit to them:

"[My] Dad threatened to cut off financial support if 'social activities' related to [being] LGBT could be found by employers" (Participant, group 1).

Others were forced to live independently when they otherwise might not have, or felt their desire to go to university was unattainable without parental support:

"Chucked out by my parents, and if I didn't have a well-paying job I would be homeless" (Participant, group 1)

"Last year because I was going to uni and my parents weren't OK [about my identity] I thought… I'm not going to be able to go" (Participant, group 3).

Whilst most financial issues were raised in relation to (lack of) parental support around the costs of attending university, financial limitations were also raised in relation to gender transition and associated costs.

For those who had not had any negative experiences, there was a sense of their 'fortunate' position:

"Personally… supportive and financially privileged parents. However, [I'm] very lucky to be in this situation, many people can't get parental support because of [their] identity" (Participant, group 1).

However, it was also suggested that financial issues could be a concern for other prospective students too, so it should not only be considered in relation to LGBT+ people:

"There's so many people that aren't LGBT that have been kicked out or their finance from their parents has been cut" (Participant, group 2).

Though financial issues will vary, and clearly do not impact upon all LGBT+ people, nevertheless they can be significant factors influencing access or time at university for some people.

Accommodation issues

There are specific issues about university accommodation, although more evidence on this from America than Britain. In 2010, Taulke-Johnson summarised that university accommodation has been found to be "intolerant, unwelcoming, hostile and homophobic", though some of the references for this statement date back to the 1980s (Taulke-Johnson, 2010b). In his own more recent (UK) research with young gay men, however, he also found evidence of vandalism being used to permanently brand participant's doors with anti-gay sentiments, causing some to voluntarily transfer accommodation, and others to modify their behaviour in order to not allow 'gayness' to have a visible presence in the accommodation (Taulke-Johnson, 2010b). Research in America (Evans and Broido, 2002) with lesbian and bisexual women in university halls also identified similar experiences of a hostile environment as a result of direct and indirect harassment or lack of support from roommates and other residents.

In Valentine et al's (2009) research, some students described experiencing homophobic abuse in university accommodation, and what they felt were inappropriate responses to this, in institutions suggesting they - rather than the perpetrators - move accommodation. Discussions about whether 'victims' or 'perpetrators' should be forced to move accommodation also featured in the consultation, and suggest that universities need to be mindful of the complexity of tackling cases of abuse or discrimination in campus halls of residence.

Some participants in Valentine et al's (2009) research suggested that they would have liked to be able to request 'gay-friendly' housing, but others were clear they did not want to be segregated in specialist housing, but would want institutions to work to create safe, inclusive spaces within their accommodation. These differences of opinion were also echoed in the consultation, suggesting that they are still relevant issues.

Valentine et al's (2009) research also identified that accommodation can be a specific concern for trans students, because of some institutions' gender-based housing practices that may, or may not, include shared bathrooms or bedrooms.Literature from America has focussed specifically on trans students, and similarly to UK research, has reported concerns about shared housing and bathrooms (Beemyn, 2005; Pomerantz, 2010; Singh et al, 2013). Krum et al (2013), for example, explored the housing preferences of transgender and gender non-conforming people when considering living on campus, with apartment-style housing and self-contained singles being the most preferred options. Seelman (2014), using the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (in the US), noted that 19% of respondents had not been able to access gender-appropriate housing while they were students within higher education. They also identified that trans women (compared to gender non-conforming people), and transgender people with a lower annual household income, were more likely to be denied, or unable to access, appropriate housing.

The consultation evidenced many issues related to housing whilst at university, which could be linked to lack of financial support from parents (see previous chapter). However, often comments related to housemates' attitudes or misunderstandings (particularly of trans students), which regularly highlighted the lack of choice around some university accommodation:

"We had one person [in the group] and I know they won't mind me telling the story… who had a great experience at school being LGBT… The school members of staff were really supportive, their friends all very positive. Went to university and was in a halls and it just happened to be that there were several different people who were homophobic for one reason or another… she said that living in those halls was the most horrific year of her life" (Staff member supporting group 2)

"A friend [who is a] lesbian got a shared room for financial reasons and was put with a Catholic girl who was very opposed to LGBT people. Eventually she came round but there were a few months of avoiding her own room" (Participant, group 1).

These experiences could restrict students' relationships with others, and impacted upon their decision/ability to be 'out':

"A friend who is not out is called 'the lesbian' by her housemates, so doesn't want to come out… [her] relationships have to be secret or non-existent" (Participant, group 1).

Other impacts included being or feeling isolated, uncomfortable, the subject of jokes, being called 'too sensitive' when challenging people's language use, and feeling obliged to 'educate' housemates to be more inclusive of LGBT+ identities (see also Keenan, 2015a, b; Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012).

Accommodation issues external to university campuses were also raised, with private landlords identified as potentially problematic:

"Trying to rent while openly queer [is] sometimes very hard if landlords [are] LGBTQ phobic" (Participant, group 1).

For those who did not have negative experiences, once again there was a sense that they were 'lucky', so positive experiences to a certain extent were perceived as exceptional, rather than routine. This has also been evidenced within the literature: Evans and Broido (2002: 39) found that "women perceive their environments as positive when negative acts are minimal… [because] society… condition[s] lesbian and bisexual women to expect the worst and to be relieved when 'nothing bad happens'" (see also Keenan, 2015b for similar (UK) evidence among LGBTQ students more widely). This means that it is complex to evidence the extent of prejudice or discrimination if experiences of this are not always understood as such. However, it is clear that accommodation whilst at university (both on and off campus) can be a sight of concern for some LGBT+ students.

Facilities and service provision on campus

This chapter brings together a series of issues under the broad heading of facilities and services. NUS (2014) research, for example, reported that trans students felt the main difficulties on campus were the lack of gender-neutral toilets and facilities, the lack of policies to support updating their name and gender on the student register, and issues related to university security services, as well as the prevalence of transphobia. The report suggested that being repeatedly misnamed and/or misgendered represents a serious barrier to trans students' inclusion and appreciation of higher education. This has also been found with younger students (Formby, 2014b), and it has been argued that the importance of desired name and pronoun usage is often misunderstood and under-acknowledged within much LGBT youth research that often tends to focus on (perceived) intentional 'bullying' amongst peers (Formby, 2015).

In America, there has been a greater volume of research focussing on the experiences of trans students specifically. Singh et al (2013), for instance, identified gender-neutral toilets, gender-specific sports teams, and legal assistance as areas where participants had concerns and wanted institutions to improve. Beemyn (2005) also noted concerns about access to toilets, changing rooms, and ability to update university records and documents regarding gender identity. Seelman (2014) suggested that, of their respondents, around a quarter (24%) had not been allowed access to appropriate toilets and other facilities whilst a student, with trans women, transgender people of colour, those who were younger, and those with a disability more likely to be denied access to appropriate facilities due to being transgender or gender non-conforming.

Lack of gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities was a key concern in the consultation, but dissatisfaction with university counselling and medical service provision was also identified which supports previous research that has identified poor experiences of (non-specialist) counsellors and health service providers (Beemyn, 2005; Formby, 2013; 2014a; McKinney, 2005):

"Counselling services are presumptive that issues are related to sexuality that aren't… [and] untrained to deal with trans issues" (Participant, group 1)

"Lack of knowledge in university medical centre and use of transphobic language" (Participant, group 1).

The consultation also identified frustration with limited/limiting gender and sexuality options on official university-related forms.

There was much discussion of LGBT+ societies and groups on campus, which can impact upon LGBT+ students' experiences of higher education. According to NUS (2014) research, just over a quarter (28%) of LGB students and a little under half (42%) of trans students were members of their institution's LGBT society. Within the consultation, one of the benefits of going to university was identified in relation to these groups and their ability to facilitate peer/new friendships:

"I think that probably at university you might have a little bit more access to say LGBT groups and that kind of thing and they're easier to find than perhaps they are in normal society" (Staff member supporting group 2)

"Some people... might not know so many other LGBT people, but at uni there are societies and more opportunities to meet other people who you identify with... So I think there's more kind of opportunity to find new friends, relationships, support" (Participant, group 2).

Assumptions or beliefs that university would be a positive experience for LGBT+ students did not always prove accurate for everyone:

"LGBT spaces are not as safe and inclusive as I was led to believe. At my local group, my sexuality isn't represented, and there's always a huge scene focus, which isn't really for me" (Participant, group 1).

Some people suggested that it was important that any groups be student-led:

"It has to be provided by the students, not the staff because... you're just going to think it's just the staff doing this because they have to because it's part of their job... if there's a group that's only run by staff members and... one or two students then I think it kind of does give the impression that it's only being run because the staff have been told they need to run it, whereas with a lot of the other like interest groups they're going to be set up by students for students because they're interested and they want to meet other people like them" (Participant, group 2).

From a staff perspective, however, whilst this was the ultimate goal, they felt that it might have to sometimes start as staff-led:

"I think sometimes those kind of things do start by being staff-led... because sometimes it'd be quite brave for the student to start it up if there's nothing there at all, so I don't think staff-led is always a bad thing. I think it can start that way and then can be taken ownership of by students" (Staff member supporting group 2).

It was noted that the success of these groups could depend on the size of the university overall, and/or how active the students' union was generally. Different ethoses were also noted between groups focussed primarily on offering support, those tending to only provide social activities, and those with more of a campaigning/activist emphasis:

"I think welfare has to be at the forefront of any LGBT+ society, as we are the welcoming family and friends for people who perhaps have none" (Participant, group 1)

"If you want to go and hang out with some people and that's all you want to do, then you should have the right to do that, but... if you feel like you need to lobby for something or you feel like you need to make your voice heard, then you should have the right to do that as well" (Participant, group 1)

"Societies should do politics and welfare. We have three welfare officers and try to run campaigns every term to raise awareness of issues, for example polyamory and asexual awareness" (Participant, group 1).

Keenan (2015a) has commented that LGBTQ societies can maintain 'hierarchies', in which some people are excluded. McKinney (2005) also noted trans experiences of marginalisation within and from LGBT groups on campuses in America. These both echo broader evidence on discrimination, exclusion and 'hierarchies' between and amongst LGBT people (see, for example, Formby, 2012; Hines, 2010; Simpson, 2012; Weeks et al, 2001). Such experiences were also evident within the consultation.

For students involved in running these groups or services, this could also be isolating and/or wearing:

"I'm from [a university where] we're split across like different cities altogether... I'm literally the only person in the entire university working for LGBT and I'm a student... which can be a bit tough at times" (Participant, group 1).

Where students' union officer roles had been broadened to cover all equalities issues this was largely felt to be ineffective:

"She's very lovely and approachable, but she represents over 30,000 students... there's not a whole lot of contact time between her and the student body and even though she's great she doesn't come from a lived experience of being LGBTQ" (Participant, group 1)

"The one [officer] for next year is also really great, but it's too much expecting them to work on LGBT, women's issues, BME, mental health, and all that, when... they're full-time students, like they don't have staff for this, so it is too much to put the whole of equality and diversity bit [on them]" (Participant, group 1).

In America, 'safe zones' have been implemented to try and raise the visibility and inclusion of LGBT+ students on some campuses (see, for example, Case et al, 2010; Evans, 2002). There was some evidence of similar approaches being used or desired within the UK, so that staff members could visibly signal they were 'LGBT+ friendly', or that their classroom or office was a 'safe space':

"That's what we're trying to roll out [use of rainbow stickers on staff identity cards] to more schools so that people know it's a safe person to speak to... maybe if unis could do that, I know they're a lot bigger but within each sort of faculty..." (Staff member supporting group 3).

The evidence above suggests that there are a range of practical issues for some LGBT+ students that universities could address with regard to facilities and services on campus.

Curriculum and course content

Whilst curriculum content and LGBT visibility is a large area within education-related research, there has been less focused on university settings (at least in the UK) than schools. In the UK, Ellis (2009) reported that LGBT issues were inadequately represented in the curriculum, and only a minority of her respondents felt comfortable raising these issues in class. More recently, Keenan (2014) described LGBTQ experiences of higher education as marginalised through invisibility. In their research, NUS (2014) asked respondents on a scale of 1-10 how much they agreed with the statement 'I see LGB experiences and history reflected in my curriculum', which LGB students scored an average 3.9. An equivalent question 'I see trans experiences and history reflected in my curriculum' resulted in an average 2.5 from trans students (see also McKinney, 2005 on (lack of) trans inclusion in curriculum programming in the US). Responses were more positive in large-scale (UK) research by Metro (2014), who asked respondents how LGBTQ issues, people and their achievements were handled on their course. Just under a quarter (23%) of LGBQQ respondents said they were ignored or not mentioned, or referred to negatively, with this proportion higher for transgender respondents (31%).

Gunn (2010) has noted that there may be disciplinary differences, for instance with students in science disciplines experiencing more negative attitudes and classroom climates towards LGBT issues than in other disciplinary areas. Valentine et al (2009) also found that there were statistically significant relationships between experiences of homophobic and biphobic comments and the disciplines people were studying, especially in medicine and dentistry; veterinary science;

agriculture and related subjects; engineering; business and administration studies; European languages; literature and related subjects, and education. There is a variety of literature on efforts to make various curricula more 'LGBT+ inclusive', but often this is restricted to school rather than university settings; for an exception, see Case et al's (2010) account of 'queering across the curriculum'.

Consultation participants animatedly suggested that curriculum invisibility was an issue, summed up by one participant who described their course content as "pale, male, stale". Similarly, another commented:

"Same old straight, white men, [we] need to study [the] achievements of others" (Participant, group 1).

Students were able to provide many examples of the ways in which they felt, at worst, "forgotten" within the content of their learning, or at best, "tagged on":

"No queer research is ever discussed, even in social psychology, LGBT issues aren't mentioned. Research into relationships is always hetero[sexual] focussed" (Participant, group 1)

"No consideration for LGBT+ issues when studying politics and public policy. Things like the NHS, agenda setting, etc didn't even mention LGBT issues. Also, no one else in the class understands why this is hard" (Participant, group 1)

"It feels like it is just an extra and not something vital, like it should be mainstreamed. It should be throughout all our learning, both in social science subjects and in STEM subjects, and it's persistently upsetting that it's like 'Oh, I guess we can talk about this weird group of people if you're into it' on the end of the whole course" (Participant, group 1).

In subjects where participants did not necessarily expect to learn about LGBT+ identities or histories, examples used could still be experienced as inaccurate and/or insensitive:

"In mathematics... I do think some of the examples used are a bit insensitive. I got very annoyed recently when my statistics course notes used gender as an example of a binary statistic. It literally said 'An example of statistics in this way could be gender because all participants in the survey are either male or female'. That's so annoying" (Participant, group 1).

The lack of available expertise in various teaching departments could also restrict students' chosen area(s) of specialism:

"Doing my Masters, there is no one to supervise my dissertation, since I wanted to do it on LGBT+ activism" (Participant, group 1).

Students trying to address gaps in provision or awareness could feel isolated for doing so:

"I'm always the only one to mention gender identities outside the binary... often treated as 'strange' and 'radical' for bringing it up" (Participant, group 1).

There were exceptions, however, where particular courses could be subject to stereotyping that was unhelpful or frustrating for students on the course:

"Basically with my course it's different. Because I do performing arts everyone assumes that all the guys doing performing arts must be gay because they're dancers... I think a lot of people on my course in particular struggle with that kind of thing because they don't think it's fair that people feel the need to say that... They shouldn't feel the need to label who they are" (Participant, group 1).

Whilst the extent of LGBT+ invisibility within curriculum/course content varies within research evidence, it is clear that more could be done to increase inclusivity across a range of subject areas. 'Norm critical' approaches can be a useful way of examining broader structures in which (dominant) gender and sexual identities are often constructed and maintained (IGLYO, 2015). Inequalities are therefore examined within a broader context rather than 'specialist' LGBT lessons or projects which can be experienced as tokenistic and/or isolating.

Discrimination, prejudice and 'bullying'

In an early campus climate study in the US, Rankin (2005) identified that more than a third (36%) of LGBT students had experienced harassment within the last year, including derogatory remarks, verbal threats, anti-LGBT graffiti, pressure to conceal their identity, and physical assault. Also highlighting campus cultures, NUS (2012a: 36) research indicated that "group mentalities [of sexism, misogyny and homophobia] were thought to be particularly dangerous in terms of producing or exacerbating derogatory attitudes towards women and LGBT people".

In the UK, research by Ellis (2009) reported that homophobia existed on campuses across the country, with just under a quarter (23%) of students surveyed indicating that they had experienced homophobic harassment or discrimination at least once, usually from other students. Moreover, over half (54%) of respondents had deliberately concealed their sexual or gender identity, leading her to conclude that because the prevalence of homophobic incidents on campus is quite low, "LGBT students do not particularly perceive a 'climate of fear', but [still] actively behave in ways that respond to such a climate" (Ellis, 2009: 733). There were lower rates of 'concealment' evident in Aldridge and Somerville's (2014) research, which found that 12% of LGBT people overall said they would feel uncomfortable being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity at university, though this was higher for bisexual (28%) and trans (31%) respondents. According to NUS (2014), one in 10 trans students never felt comfortable to speak up in class, whilst LGBT students who were out to teaching staff tended to feel more confident to speak in class than those who were only out to their friends (see also Garvey and Rankin, 2015 on levels of 'outness' and 'disclosure' in the US).

Valentine et al's (2009) research reported that, in general, trans students encountered a higher proportion of negative treatment, including physical threat, than LGB students, though 47% and 43% of LGB and trans students respectively had received homophobic, biphobic or transphobic comments from other students. Respectively, 9% and 19% of LGB and trans students had received such comments from lecturers. Nearly two-thirds (60%) were not out to teaching staff because they were cautious about or feared discrimination.

According to Rankin (2004, cited in Garvey and Rankin, 2015), a significantly higher proportion of trans-spectrum students (in the US) experience harassment compared to cisgender queer-spectrum students.

Research by Keenan (2014) in the UK found that although universities often speak publically of their commitment to equality and diversity, including LGBTQ rights, this does not necessarily match the everyday lived experience of LGBTQ students, with incidents of verbal abuse and physical violence still apparent. Though the former was more common than the latter, both still appeared to influence students' perceptions of safety on campus. As with Taulke-Johnson's (2010b) earlier research, some language that could be described as offensive was minimised and explained as 'banter', but Keenan (2015a) notes that this nevertheless continues to objectify and 'other' LGBTQ students, and is therefore a limited form of inclusion - what he has called elsewhere (2015b) 'inclusive exclusion'. In his research, experiences included being 'collected' as an 'exotic' friend, being seen as an information source, and being responsible for 'fitting in' (despite potentially offensive 'banter') (Keenan, 2015a, b). The occurrence of such 'banter' was also illustrated within the consultation:

"'Lesbian' banter but I'm confident enough to say the 'joke' is enough" (Participant, group 1).

NUS (2014) research particularly highlighted the experiences of trans students, identifying that just 21% of trans students felt completely safe on campus. By contrast, 37% of LGB students felt completely safe. Overall, one in five LGB and one in three trans respondents had experienced at least one form of bullying or harassment on campus, but levels of reporting of verbal or physical harassment, threats and intimidation were low. Even incidents of physical assault had only been reported in a third of cases. NUS concluded that there are often no clear points of contact for those experiencing physical or verbal assault on campus, and recommended that students' unions should become third party hate crime reporting sites.

Metro (2014) research asked respondents if their time at university had been affected by discrimination or fear of discrimination about their sexuality or gender identity: 10% of LGBQO respondents said that it had, whilst 21% of transgender respondents said that it had. In European research (Formby, 2014a), respondents were similarly asked if their time at university or in higher education had been affected by any bullying, discrimination or fears related to their identity: for the majority it had not, but for a little under a third (29%) it had. Aldridge and Somerville (2014) found that nearly a quarter (23%) of their LGBT respondents believed they would face discrimination from other students at college or university, including over half (54%) of trans people, though these expectations varied between subject disciplines. Smaller numbers (13%) of LGBT students expected to experience discrimination from their teachers (Aldridge and Somerville, 2014).

In the consultation, participants identified experiences of prejudice or discrimination:

"Clearly still prejudice and discrimination within universities... LGBT people looked down upon more than straight peers" (Participant, group 1)

"Outside of LGBT societies and safe spaces, most people are subtly intolerant" (Participant, group 1).

Fears around prejudice or discrimination were also identified as an issue which could impact upon varying levels, or times, of 'outness' (see Formby, 2012, 2013 for further discussion of LGBT self-censorship and identity management):

"Still difficult to be out to random people like housemates and seminar groups" (Participant, group 1)

"[I] work in a gay bar but certain people I don't tell as I get scared" (Participant, group 1)

"Behaviour modification is one of my biggest issues, I'm still not totally out to my sports team" (Participant, group 1).

NUS (2012b) research has suggested that initiations and the prevalence of 'lad culture' in sports teams can prevent LGBT students from joining sports teams.

As has been identified elsewhere (Formby, 2014b, 2015), misnaming and mispronouning was a particular issue for students who identified as trans or non-gender binary, and was thought to be symptomatic of a wider lack of awareness or understanding about gender identity:

"Sexuality very accepted. Gender identity, expression and presentation much less accepted" (Participant, group 1).

A lack of knowledge was also related to other identities:

"[The] main issue is asexual erasure, people don't know what it is and get confused [or] think it's weird if I explain. Discrimination I've faced is more ignorant than malicious" (Participant, group 1)

"I'm an asexual and I've found that LGBT spaces are quite sexualised and for me that's like, it's really off-putting" (Participant, group 1).

Stroup et al (2014) have argued that bisexual students, particularly those at more rural campuses, may face (in comparison with gay or lesbian students) greater challenges, including making new friends, and making decisions about whether or when to disclose their sexual orientation.

It should not be assumed that negative experiences only emanate from other students:

"Assumptions of gender made by bar staff and lecturers, as well as occasional slurs used in lectures" (Participant, group 1).

The consultation also identified experiences related to language use that have been well-documented at school-level (see, for example, Guasp, 2012, 2014; Thurlow, 2001):

"Problematic language [such as] 'that's so gay'" (Participant, group 1).

Equally, the consultation identified experiences of racism at university that have been documented more widely amongst LGBT people (see, for example, Formby, 2012; Keogh et al, 2004; Simpson, 2012; Weeks et al, 2001):

"Lots of racial micro-aggressions in the LGBT scene which is excused" (Participant, group 1).

However, negative experiences can provide motivation for positive responses:

"I generally saw and heard derogatory remarks and situations that others were in. This motivated me to restart the LGBT society in my university and try my best to show that different sexualities and gender norms were OK" (cited in Formby, 2014a: 25).

As with curriculum content, course differences were also noted:

"I think it is dependent on the type of course you do at uni. Because I'm doing social work at the minute and everyone on that course doesn't really care if you're gay or if you're black because they're all pretty open-minded" (Participant, group 2).

Though clearly variable, despite increasing legislative and social policy equality for LGBT+ people, there are still occurrences of discrimination, prejudice and 'bullying' on campus. Even when these are not experienced, there may be fears around this which can still impact upon LGBT+ experiences of higher education, which universities could begin to address.

Careers-related issues

Although LGBT experiences of the workplace have been studied within the UK (see, for example, Colgan et al, undated; Hoel et al, 2014), there is less literature on careers-related advice or support for LGBT+ students, certainly in comparison with America. However, there have been developments in LGBT-specific careers mentoring schemes for students at some institutions, including Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Birmingham, which could provide useful opportunities for research or for other universities to follow in the future.

Evidence from the US has identified that non-heterosexual students experienced less support and guidance (Nauta et al, 2001), and that those who had experienced anti-LGBT discrimination in the past were most likely to report their identity influencing their academic and career choices, in both positive and negative ways (Schneider and Dimito, 2010; see also Formby, 2014a for similar findings in Europe). Research has also suggested that perceived discrimination contributes to 'vocational indecision' (Schmidt et al, 2011), leading Schneider and Dimito (2010: 1355) to suggest that "[careers] counsellors need to take sexual orientation issues, particularly past experiences of discrimination [into consideration], when working with LGBT clients".

Scott et al (2011) have argued that transgender students face unique challenges that many university careers advisors are not equipped to handle. This includes, for example, understanding of potential discrimination in securing references, as well as awareness of how a name change can impact upon employment history records. Transgender students may also avoid seeking career development support altogether (Scott et al, 2011). Supporting this, broader research with LGBT participants in the UK found gaining employment and experiences within work a key concern for some trans participants (Formby, 2012; see also Whittle et al, 2007). Other American research findings also indicate that lesbian students' perceptions of campus climate are important in predicting their career development, with positive perceptions appearing to enhance vocational advancement, meaning that "campus climate [is] capable of either facilitating or inhibiting lesbian students' vocational development" (Tomlinson and Fassinger, 2003: 857).

Recent UK evidence has suggested that minority sexual orientations are disadvantaged in seeking work. Drydakis' (2015) research identified that participation in gay and lesbian university students' unions negatively affected participants' workplace prospects, with the probability of gay or lesbian applicants receiving an invitation to interview 5% lower than their heterosexual counterparts. Related to this, European research (Formby, 2014a) suggests that some students may hide their LGBT-related activities or activism involved in whilst at university, in order to try gain employment:

"There are things I am too afraid to put on my CV, such as... my activities with my university's LGBT society" (cited in Formby, 2014a: 23).

The research also indicated that school and university experiences can impact upon perceived ability to gain employment or seek career progression (Formby, 2014a).

Concerns about CVs also featured in the consultation:

"I would like more careers-related advice as I'm currently unsure how to present myself through my CV etc. Currently, I feel there is nowhere I can access this information" (Participant, group 1).

Broader fears related to employment were also noted by participants (see also Formby, 2012):

"I work in languages and sometimes feel worried about when I go to work in a foreign country" (Participant, group 1).

However, there were also examples of people using their activities or identities in positive ways, in order to gain employment, or to gauge where they would like to work:

"At [my] university, I organised an LGBT-specific careers conference to push how [being] LGBT can be used as a tool to get a job. The experiences, positive and negative, can be harnessed" (Participant, group 1)

"I intentionally put LGBTQ society on my CV so prejudiced people won't hire me, and I won't have to work for them" (Participant, group 1).

The above comment suggests that whilst invitations to interview may be lower for some LGBT+ people (Drydakis, 2015), there may be some potential benefits to the above strategy.

Presentation of self or identity was also raised specifically in relation to interview dress/performance:

"Would subscribe to binary norms and dress in a suit for an interview, despite being gender-fluid and not necessarily defining as a man on the day of interview" (Participant, group 1).

Though there is not a great deal of available research in this field from within the UK, evidence suggests that there may be careers-related concerns for some LGBT+ students, and that these could potentially be addressed (at least in part) by university careers-related staff.

Discussion and conclusion

Despite the advancement of legal protections for LGBT people in the UK, this research demonstrates that there remain potential issues for those who identify as LGBT+ who wish to attend university. The report has outlined evidence and experiences related to university choice-making; financial issues; accommodation issues; facilities and service provision on campus; curriculum and course content; discrimination, prejudice and 'bullying', and careers-related issues. It has been suggested that some, if not most, universities in the UK only engage with LGBTQ issues episodically (for example during LGBT history month or to coincide with local Pride events), and/or often pass responsibility for LGBTQ student wellbeing (at least in part) onto student-led LGBTQ societies or students' union roles (Keenan, 2015a).

Negative occurrences at university can impact upon LGBT people's experience of higher education, and ultimately employment opportunities (Formby, 2014a). Potential impacts include social isolation, influences on academic attainment, achievement or choice of career, and migration decisions (Formby, 2014a; Garvey and Rankin, 2015; Rankin, 2005; Valentine et al, 2009). However, alternative (American) research (Longerbeam et al, 2007) has suggested that in their study gay men were associated with greater academic and intellectual outcomes (though they also found they were more likely to drink alcohol to aid 'fitting in'). Differential access to university, accommodation and/or scene 'choices' highlights the importance of understanding experiences which are influenced by intersecting aspects of a person's identity, such as social class or financial resources, ethnicity, and so on. LGBT+ students should therefore not be seen as a homogenous group.

Evidence on the potential impact of the issues covered in this report can also be illustrated by NUS (2014) research, for instance, which found that LGB students were more likely to consider dropping out than heterosexual students, with over half (56%) of LGB students citing the feeling of 'not fitting in' as the main reason for considering dropping out (see also Formby, 2014a; Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012). Over half of trans respondents (51%) had also seriously considered dropping out of their course (NUS, 2014). Perhaps not surprisingly, LGBT students who had experienced homophobic or transphobic harassment were 2-3 times more likely to consider leaving their course (NUS, 2014). One in seven trans respondents also interrupted their studies related to their transition (NUS, 2014). In general, this supports earlier research (Valentine et al, 2009) that reported that 20% of LGB students had taken time out of their course related to their sexuality, homophobic discrimination or bullying. Similarly, 29% of trans students had taken time out due to trans-related issues, transphobic bullying and harassment (Valentine et al, 2009). In European research (Formby, 2014a), just under half (49%) had missed classes more than once, which they related to their identities. Overall, around a quarter (24%) had changed university or institution, and 6% had dropped out altogether (Formby, 2014a). Tetreault et al (2013) have suggested that perceptions of campus climate are related to having thought about leaving campus: those most likely to have thought about leaving were those who reported that they were not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity and/or who had experienced unfair treatment by an instructor. This report therefore indicates that LGBT+ experiences can directly impact upon retention rates, a concern for universities, in addition to wider wellbeing and human rights concerns.

It is interesting to note that those at university were more likely to talk about their course content and careers-related issues, whilst those not (yet) at university often talked more about university choice-making and perceptions or fears related to discrimination or bullying. This may be because once at university students have more positive experiences than some expected, and therefore have different concerns whilst there, whereas those not yet at university may be more likely to experience apprehension or fear. This is understandable for anyone embarking on a new experience, but for some LGBT+ people may be specifically related to their identities, potentially influenced by popular culture, word of mouth, or their own previous experiences, which may or may not be applicable to higher education settings (Formby, 2015). There is evidence from within (UK) health-related research, that word of mouth and fears about other people's experiences can act as a barrier to access or participation (Formby, 2011).

As with any research, research in this area has potential weaknesses. In particular, data collection often only captures people's thoughts at that moment, meaning that how experiences are constructed, remembered and recorded can vary.

This suggests that there is a need for caution in generalising from, or over-simplifying, any results. Research in this field is also complicated by difficulties in measuring or assessing experiences and impacts of 'abuse', 'discrimination', 'bullying' and/or 'harassment' (all of which may be interpreted or experienced differently) versus 'everyday' experiences of heterosexism and/or heteronormativity frequently reported (and which may

be harder to address). Participants in the consultation were often aware that this could be 'habitual', rather than 'intentionally offensive', yet it still impacted upon their experiences of university. Keenan (2015b) has suggested that it is the 'informality' of the dominance of heterosexuality that makes successful university responses more difficult to achieve.

Importantly, despite much evidence of negative experiences, in NUS (2014) research LGBT students overall still had a positive view of higher education, and tended to find university a safer space than the rest of society (see also Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012). In Valentine et al's (2009) research, the majority of students also said that their institution had enabled them to 'be themselves' by coming out as LGB or trans. This could highlight that students tend to minimise their negative experiences, as some research suggests, perhaps because they want to believe university is a safer space, and where higher education levels can be erroneously conflated with 'tolerance' (Taulke-Johnson, 2010a, b), so that "events which can be read as homophobic… can actually be framed, experienced and made sense as not" (Taulke-Johnson, 2008: 128).

Overall, the research suggests a need for nuanced understandings and responses to LGBT+ experiences of university. This would be a shift from the dominant portrayal of LGBT experiences of schooling (and sometimes of youth altogether) as universally negative (Formby, 2015; Rasmussen and Crowley, 2004; Youdell, 2004). The evidence indicates that there is a broad continuum of experiences, with many examples somewhere in the middle, and/or shifting over time.

At one end of the continuum, university can be described as a positive experience that facilitates greater freedom to explore gender and sexual identities or practices, within a more welcoming and inclusive environment than school, as in this example:

"I think higher education is much, much more accessible and a better place for LGBTQ students. For me as a gay man I found it very open and encouraging and friendly" (cited in Formby, 2014a: 7).

UK research which describes participants 'escaping' to safety at university as a form of resilience amongst LGBT young people would also fit here (Scourfield et al, 2008).

At the other end of the continuum, university is not experienced as a place of safety or freedom for some LGBT+ people. European research, for example, has illustrated negative experiences, and by implication unsupportive environments, which participants linked with their ability to complete university:

"As an LGBTQ person I've experienced more depression and less friendship and I spent huge amounts of time sorting out myself and my emotions than I would have done otherwise. This made it harder for me to choose the right course, and may make me drop out of university" (cited in Formby, 2014a: 23).

UK research has also documented violent (and unreported) homophobic incidents at university (McDermott et al, 2008). On the one hand higher education may be a place to escape to, whilst on the other hand, it may present an environment which

people need or desire to escape from. Partly this is a result of differing lived experience, among different individuals, on different courses, at different institutions, with different cultures, and in different locations, but it illustrates the need for greater understanding beyond the 'bullied' or 'suicidal' LGBT student that is sometimes assumed or portrayed. Findings from research into higher education settings also appear to move away from a tendency within (UK) school-age research to result in polarised, and competing, arguments, for instance that the majority of LGB young people are bullied (Guasp, 2012), or that homophobia is in decline across schools (McCormack, 2012). Research in higher education settings which illustrates the complexity of experiences should thus be utilised to inform complex, thorough, and appropriate responses.

Practice implications and recommendations

How do university settings provide services and facilities where there are such diverse experiences? At a minimum, regardless of reported student experiences, campuses (and curricula) should be inclusive, with visible diversity, including LGBT+ identities and histories throughout. This is likely to necessitate some training or information for staff. There should also be available advice, information and support (including, for example, on careers and sexual health) that is inclusive and useful to LGBT+ students, but which does not assume 'victimhood'. Student-led peer organisation and activities should also be facilitated and supported, for instance via students' unions and institution-based LGBT+ societies or groups.

"A great majority of LGBT [students] would like to see LGBT perspectives and authors more systematically included in the curriculum... This would create a greater sense of belonging for LGBT students and show universities' commitment to equality and diversity" (NUS, 2014: 47)

Specific recommendations for particular organisations or groups are provided below, directly informed by the literature and participants' views and suggestions. These should be considered alongside other existing guidance, such as that produced by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU, 2010a, b[6], 2013) or IGLYO (2014a, b, 2015).

For universities

- Senior university leadership should signal their support for LGBT+ inclusion on campus via the implementation of, and support for, appropriate policies and practices throughout the institution, including mechanisms to respond to any cases of bullying or discrimination

- Marketing and admissions staff should consider the impact of their information on prospective LGBT+ students

- Support staff should ensure requirements (e.g. guarantor forms) and provision of financial information or guidance and support to students (such as any emergency or hardship funds) is appropriate for LGBT+ students who may be estranged from family members

- University staff with roles connected to university accommodation should ensure their policies and practices are suited to all students, giving appropriate choice, advice and support where necessary

- University leadership should ensure that induction information is issued to all students (whether in writing or through awareness-raising sessions) about requirements for non-discriminatory practices in university accommodation and on campus

"Many students will avoid attending programs on topics that make them uncomfortable, such as sexual orientation. Preparing display cases, putting up bulletin boards, displaying LGB resource materials, and posting 'safe zone' stickers are alternative ways to support LGB people" (Evans and Broido, 2002: 40)

- University leadership should consider how to allay LGBT+ students potential fears about safety on campus

- University estates should provide gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities on campus and make sure they are clearly advertised and signposted

- Staff with roles connected to university sports teams should investigate ways to include all students in sports teams if they wish to participate but do not feel they suit a particular gender team

- University leadership should ensure all university records, documents, email addresses and identity cards are able to be easily updated with regard to name and/or gender identity if students request it, and ensure that all official documentation provides more gender options than only 'female' or 'male' (e.g. the use of an open box)

- University leadership should encourage and promote awareness and confidence about LGBT+ inclusion in curriculum content (including reading lists) amongst all members of academic staff (e.g. through mandatory training, e-learning or written information provision), including the use of sensitive and non-discriminatory language use and examples within subject areas where LGBT+ identities may not be considered 'relevant'

"A more sensitive attitude from academic staff towards sexual orientation and gender identity would help LGBT students to feel more included in the classroom. Heterosexuality should not be assumed, and teachers should try to diversify their examples and exercises to take into account everyone's perspective" (NUS, 2014: 47)

- Library staff should maintain and increase access to diverse authors and resources covering diverse relationships and identities within library service provision

- University leadership should ensure all staff working on university premises (including academics, support staff, medical/health-related staff, and bar staff where relevant) are aware of the need for sensitive and non-discriminatory language use, in particular the need to not misname or misgender any students (or staff)

- Senior careers staff should take steps to improve awareness among all careers-related staff on matters related to LGBT+ experiences of seeking employment, particularly around name change issues regarding qualifications and/or employment history. Within this, consider promoting 'good practice' LGBT+ employers

- University leadership should ensure any university-supported welfare roles are fully trained, resourced and supported to adequately support LGBT+ students where this is needed

For NUS leadership

- Consider providing or promoting increased online information related to higher education and related issues for LGBT+ students. This could, for instance, include signposting to sources of advice or support for those experiencing financial hardship and/or family estrangement, and advice or guidance about employment and accommodation issues (including rights related to private landlords)

- Consider implementing a rating system akin to Gay by Degree but that provides more detailed information and is more inclusive of identities other than 'gay'. This could, for example, focus more on activities of students' unions and/or university LGBT+ societies/groups

For students' unions and/or university-based LGBT+ societies and groups (working together if possible so as not to duplicate efforts)

- Consider, where possible, providing or signposting to information related to higher education and related issues for LGBT+ students. This could, for instance, include signposting to sources of advice or support for those experiencing financial hardship and/or family estrangement, and advice or guidance about employment and accommodation issues (including rights related to private landlords)

- Consider advocating for, or contributing to, a rating system akin to Gay by Degree but that provides more detailed information and is more inclusive of identities other than 'gay'. This could, for example, focus more on activities of students' unions and/or university LGBT+ societies/groups

- Consider the needs of all potential members and try to ensure that all forms of communication, social events and other activities are inclusive (for example, of trans, disabled and asexual students) (for further discussion, see LGBT Youth Scotland and NUS Scotland, undated)

- Consider offering advice or signposting to information related to transition which could help reduce associated costs for students (e.g. where/how to buy second-hand binders, etc)

- Ensure that any communication and welfare roles are fully trained and supported to adequately consult and support LGBT+ students as appropriate

For external LGBT+ organisations and groups

- For those engaged in offering direct support to LGBT+ people, consider whether there is a local need for specific provision for students in the area. This could involve partnership working with university-based staff, societies or groups

- Investigate the feasibility of providing or promoting information of relevance to some students, particularly around emergency housing, employment rights, financial hardship and/or family estrangement

- Consider offering advice or support to parents/carers of LGBT+ young people which may reduce the likelihood of family estrangement for LGBT+ students

- Consider offering advice or signposting to information related to transition which could help reduce associated costs for students (e.g. where/how to buy second-hand binders, etc)

For research funders and researchers

- Prioritise and address evidence gaps within the UK, for example related (but not limited) to:

  - LGBT-specific careers mentoring schemes;

  - experiences of older LGBT+ students;

  - LGBT+ students' experiences of university accommodation;

  - experiences of students less often focussed upon within research, such as those identifying as asexual, bisexual or trans;

  - links between youth homelessness and access to education or employment;

  - understanding the impact and experiences of LGBT+ groups and societies on campus;

  - prior knowledge of university-based LGBT+ societies or groups and its influence on university decision-making

[6] The guidance on supporting trans people is currently being updated (see www.ecu.ac.uk/get-involved/say/help-shape-ecus-new-guidance-supporting-trans-people).

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About the author

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