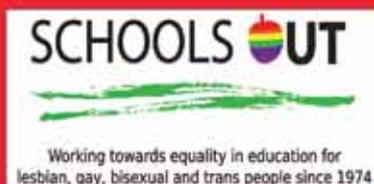


# Best Practice

## LGBT work in Schools



## Forward

The average age at which young people “come out” as lesbian, gay or bisexual is 15 years old. For some, coming out can happen much earlier, and it is not uncommon for trans young people begin to talk about their identities at a much younger age.

These young people are still at school - but are schools ready for this? Coming out in school can present a whole lot of issues for young people, and not feeling able to come out can present a lot more issues too.

We have for a long time recognised the need for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) specific youth work - meeting the needs of a specific group of young people, especially as these needs are not being met elsewhere. However, with more and more young people presenting themselves to our services at a younger age, more and more youth practitioners are focusing their attention on work in schools.

Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and heterosexism (the assumption that people are “straight” unless otherwise stated) exist in our schools. All too often the young people we work with come to us to share recent examples of homophobia they have suffered or witnessed. Often these stories of physical attacks and name calling from other students are directed at a person who has come out as LGB or T, or they are assumed to be so. But homophobia can also present itself much more subtly. I am yet to meet a young person who has not heard - or more likely used - the word “gay” being used to mean “rubbish”, “pointless”, “boring”, “stupid”, “pathetic”, etc, etc. I can’t imagine that this is having a positive effect on our LGBT youth.

As a society - including young people - we have come to recognise the negative impact of racism. Despite recent changes in the law however, (Equality Act 2010), society has not universally recognised the negative impact of homo/bi/trans-phobias. This is only compounded by constant headlines highlighting the inequalities suffered by LGBT people.

The coming out process is difficult enough without homo/bi/trans-phobias. The time between recognising that you are LGB or T and actually coming out can be the most confusing, frightening and lonely period of time in a young person’s life, and some young people never make it to adulthood because their lives are cut short by the pressures of a heterosexual world. We must work hard to make the coming out process a positive experience. This begins with the education of all young people.

*Rachel Williams - Schools Training Lead*  
LGBT Youth North West

## Background

On 24 November 2012, a group of youth practitioners came together to share examples of LGBT Awareness work that they had undertaken in schools. The information shared now forms this Best Practice Guide.

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## The Progressive Philosophy of LGBT Work in Schools

Schools OUT is a campaigning organisations that exists to educate out homophobia from school environments and make schools better for LGBT people (including pupils, parents and teachers).

From the work that Schools OUT, LGBT Youth North West and countless other organisations have done globally, we have come to realise that certain messages work better than others e.g.

Problematic message and its meaning:	More useful message:
Gay (or LGBT) people should be pitied because they get bullied – This implies that LGBT people are victims, and is patronising. It also assumes that they are bullied because they are LGBT and not because of homo/bi/trans-phobia, which blames the victim	When people are ignorant or cruel, they bully people. This is not acceptable. We need to make our society more sexuality and gender intelligent.
We should tolerate LGBT people – Tolerate is a negative word and means 'put up with' as if LGBT people are a blight on society that we have to endure.	We should celebrate the rich history and achievements of LGBT people and make sure that LGBT people are recognised in our curriculum and in our pastoral work
We are all the same – Implies that everyone should have to conform to one model of being a human being	Everyone is different, and difference can be a wonderful thing.

Schools OUT uses the following important concepts as ways of educating out homo/bi/trans-phobas in schools: "usualising" and "actualising".

**Usualising-** Rather than "normalising" - which suggests that one state is "normal" while another "abnormal", "usualising" refers to familiarising young people to the existence of LGBT people by referencing this in everyday teachings.

**Actualising-** This complements usualising but is more overt e.g. in-depth teaching with a specific objective of encouraging greater understanding of LGBT identities, such as a focussed PSHE or RE lesson.

With or without recognising it , the LGBT awareness work that will be outlined later in the guide follows this concept.

We recommend the use of the Schools OUT Classroom resource in conjunction with this Best Practice Guide when planning your LGBT awareness sessions.

The Schools OUT Classroom is a comprehensive online resource detailing dozens of lesson plans designed to make LGBT people visible in education.



## Section One - Getting in to Schools

With all the good will in the world, sometimes this can be the biggest stumbling block. Below are some top tips - things you might want to try to get into a particular school.

**1. Find the right person.**

This will vary from school to school, but what we do know is that letters or e-mails sent to schools without a contact person rarely get to who you need. Take the time to find out who is the head of PSHE, head of a specific or all year groups, head of pastoral care, useful Deputy Heads. A short phone call to the school can save you a lot of time in the long run, and don't forget that any young people that you know from the schools will often know who to direct your information to.

It may be useful try and get in through the Board of Governors - no parent wants bullying happening at their child's school.

**2. Use relevant policies/legislation/reports to highlight the need for this work.**

There are lots of examples that you may choose to use:

Stonewall - The School Report (2012) - Extensive survey highlighting the issue of homophobia in our schools.

Ofsted - No Place for Bullying (2012) - Guidelines for schools on tackling bullying, specifically mentioning homophobic bullying.

National Union of Teachers - Prevalence of Homophobia Survey (various) - These surveys have been undertaken in many areas, check to see if one has been done where you are.

DCSF Safe to Learn (2007) - Clear guidance from the government about what schools and local authorities should and can be doing about bullying.

The Equality Act (2010) - The law which bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. This may mean that where schools are not adequately addressing bullying, they may be breaking the law. Both sexual orientation and gender reassignment are listed as two of the nine "protected characteristics".

Repeal of Section 28 (2003) - This controversial law that stated that local authorities may not "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" was repealed in 2003 and therefore can not be used as a reason not to do this work.

**3. Use real-life examples to make your point.**

The young people that you work will have poignant examples of things they have seen/heard/experienced that will help you raise the importance of this work.

**4. Use parallels with other forms of discrimination.**

Do the schools tolerate bullying and discrimination of young people from BME communities? On account of their gender? Because they are left-handed?

5. **Consider your capacity.**

Often this work is outside of our youth work remit. Consider the time that you can give - assemblies and mass education is fine, but working with smaller groups may have a bigger impact and allow you to unpick presenting issues a little more.

Also consider charging for this work. This will give it a definite value and may enable the work to continue for longer as you use the monies gained to train others to deliver it.

6. **Don't Give Up!**

We all know and understand the importance of doing this work - your perseverance will pay off in the end!

## Section Two - Schools FAQ's - Be Prepared

The following section explores some of the questions that schools may ask you - be prepared with an appropriate response. The examples below are from real-life scenarios.

<p><b>Doesn't covering this make it into an issue, are we in danger of ramming it down people's throats?</b></p>	<p>We would not ever think that discussing issues of race, for example, would make this into an issue, we would think that this is responsible education.</p> <p>We can not ignore the issues faced by LGBT people, to do so would be not preparing young people adequately for the real world. Given that 1 in 10 people identify as gay or lesbian - more when counting bisexual and trans people - this is a significant proportion of the schools population that directly needs this information. The rest of the school needs the information to prepare them to be good citizens. In this country homophobic behaviour is recognised as "Hate Crime" and is treated with the same severity as racism.</p>
<p><b>Isn't this a bit too grown up to be teaching in primary?</b></p>	<p>Often Trans young people will be aware of their identity before they leave primary school. What would be the benefit of not talking about these issues?</p> <p>Any child can have LGBT family members - what benefit will there be by making diverse families invisible?</p> <p>The coming out process for LGB young people is difficult, mainly because in this heterosexist society, we talk to young people assuming that they will grow up to be straight. This will not be the case for everyone and so we need to make sure young people are aware of the possibility that they, or someone they know, may grow up not to be straight.</p>
<p><b>What if the parents/governors don't like it?</b></p>	<p>Parents and governors do not want children and young people to be bullied. Parents and governors want their schools to be safe places for children and young people.</p> <p>We have a moral and legal obligation to challenge bullying and discrimination - would the parents/governors like it if we did not challenge racism?</p> <p>Ofsted in their report "No Place for Bullying" specifically highlight the need to challenge homophobic bullying.</p>

<p><b>We can't do this work in a religious school.</b></p>	<p>The Stonewall School report (2012) found that homophobic bullying was more prevalent in faith schools than non-faith schools.</p> <p>As a microcosm of society, all schools - including faith schools - have LGBT students. By not discussing these issues we are failing to prepare all students for the real world.</p> <p>All schools are legally obliged (Equality Act 2010) to provide a safe learning space for all students.</p> <p>This is not a moral issue, it is a human rights issue. No one deserves to be bullied.</p> <p>Many faith schools teach inclusion and love, and this might be a good way to introduce LGBT themes. If you want to arm yourself with information, please see our web list at the end of this document for online resources that explore religious texts and LGBT identity.</p>
<p><b>Should religious people have the right to withdraw their child from class?</b></p>	<p>Lots of LGBT people have faith – so how do we support these young people if their parents take them out of class?</p> <p>To remove a child from a class such as this is to deny them information about the real world - they will encounter LGBT people throughout their life and to deny that LGBT exist is dangerous.</p> <p>This is not about talking about sex, this is about people treating each other morally and fairly - everybody deserves that.</p>
<p><b>There are no LGBT young people or staff in our school so it is not a problem.</b></p>	<p>Given that 1 in 10 of the worlds population identifies as lesbian or gay, it is inevitable that there will be LGBT people in the school, both among staff and pupils. The issue here is that these people are not comfortable to be "out" about their true identities.</p> <p>Does the school promote a safe environment that would support an LGBT staff member of pupil that did come out?</p> <p>What would be the benefit to young people of having an out LGBT member of staff?</p>

<p><b>Parents will think that we are turning their children gay if we do LGBT work in school.</b></p>	<p>Would parents think that we are turning our young people black if we do race awareness work?</p> <p>Being LGBT is not a choice, any more than being straight or cis-gendered (non-Trans). We are doing all of our young people a dis-service if we deny them access to learning about different identities.</p>
<p><b>Why do we need to talk about LGBT stuff, we don't have lessons about "straightness".</b></p>	<p>In our heterosexist society (where we assume all to be straight unless otherwise stated), the dominant narrative is "straightness". That is why this education is needed as not everyone is "straight".</p> <p>We don't have explicit "white history" lessons as the dominant narrative assumes white history. This is why we have "Black History" and highlights why "LGBT History" is needed.</p> <p>Straight people are not oppressed for being straight in mainstream culture.</p>
<p><b>It is ok for people to be LGBT now, we don't need this anymore.</b></p>	<p>It is true that recent changes in legislation serve to protect LGBT people, and there have been changes in some media portrayal of LGBT people. However, the experiences of young LGBT people - especially in the school environment - remain as problematic as they were 20 years ago.</p> <p>Homophobic Hate Crime happens.</p> <p>Until we have a school where all LGBT young people feel safe to be "out", there is still work to do.</p> <p>Suicide and self harm rates are higher among LGBT young people than among their non-LGBT counterparts. We don't need this anymore?</p>
<p><b>The sexuality of a mathematician or an author is irrelevant so why mention it?</b></p>	<p>It is absolutely relevant to provide young people with positive role models. By mentioning important people from our history that were LGBT we are providing an opportunity to talk about equality and difference, exploring the issues in a safe and relevant way. This should not detract from what you are teaching but should help make it more relevant to some young people, and enrich the learning experience.</p>

## Section Three - Examples of Good Practice

We are grateful to the practitioners who shared examples of things that have worked when delivering LGBT Awareness work in schools.

### Contributor - Elly Barnes from Educate and Celebrate

#### *Workshop Contribution - Introduction to LGBT History Month*

This downloadable powerpoint presentation has been used by Elly in both workshops for young people and training for teachers and youth workers. Using examples of famous role models, the presentation highlights the need for celebrating LGBT History Month and outlines some significant dates in the LGBT History calendar. Visit Elly's website to find the presentation.



[www.ellybarnes.com](http://www.ellybarnes.com)

### Contributor - Judy Kelso from Sheena Amos Youth Trust

#### *Workshop Contribution - Youth Forum Theatre*

In conjunction with young people attending their LGBT youth provision "Fruitbowl", a piece of clever interactive forum theatre has been developed. Using a script which presents a problematic school scenario for an LGBT young person, the actors freeze the drama pieces and encourage the audience members to change the course of events making the outcome for the LGBT character a better one. Interactive and fun, this piece of work has been delivered successfully in schools in Sheffield.



[www.sayouthtrust.org.uk](http://www.sayouthtrust.org.uk)

*This piece of work has been funded by:*

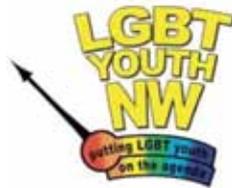


**Contributor - Sam Cresswell and Evan Coombe from Afternoon T.E.A., part of LGBT Youth North West**

***Workshop Contribution - Genderbread Person***

Originally taken from the website [itspronouncedmetrosexual.com](http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com), the Genderbread person is a very useful tool that explores gender and demonstrates clearly that we live in a much more complex world than we are presented with. We are more complex than male or female, man or woman, masculine or feminine, gay or straight - there is a whole load of possibilities in between...

A simple version for starting to talk around these issues can be found in Appendix One of this document. Version two for more advanced learners is Appendix Two.



[www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk)

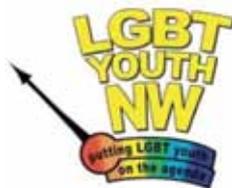
**Contributor - Rachel Williams from LGBT Youth North West**

***Workshop Contribution - The Allport Scale of Prejudice***

This exercise lasts around 20 minutes and is a clear explanation of the devastating effects of escalating homophobia. Most young people can identify real life examples of things that they have heard from the bottom of the scale (Anti-locution), some have seen things higher up the scale.

This exercise is very useful in highlighting that the issue is not that people are LGBT, the issue is that people are homo/bi/transphobic. We can all play a part in eradicating discrimination - starting at the bottom - just by altering the language that we use.

The resource can be found here in Appendix Three of this document.



[www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk)

## Contributor - Haydon from LGBT Out in The Bay

### *Workshop Contribution - Personal Stories*

We have long since realised the power of young people's personal stories. Haydon's story was no exception. Taking us from his experiences of starting to realise that he was gay, the difficulties and struggles this presented, right through to his development into adulthood, a transition made easier by his involvement with LGBT Out in the Bay - his local support group.

At LGBTYouth North West we involve young people in the delivery of our workshops wherever possible. It has the dual benefit of raising awareness of among those being trained from someone they can relate to, as well as empowering the young person delivering the Peer Education.



[www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk)

## Contributor - Nathaniel Hall and Sam Aldridge from George House Trust

### *Workshop Contribution - Positive Speakers Programme*

Our Positive Speakers Programme raises awareness of HIV and counters stigma and prejudice, using trained speakers who are living with HIV. The programme provides schools, colleges, professionals in training, businesses and community groups with the opportunity to hear, first hand, the experiences of people.

Our speakers are a diverse group of people with HIV who have been trained in public speaking.

The Positive Speakers Programme was "Highly Commended" in the North West Public Health Awards. The Awards recognise excellence and innovation in public health projects in the North West.



[www.ght.org.uk](http://www.ght.org.uk)

**Contributor - Kieran Bohan from the Michael Causer Foundation**

***Workshop Contribution - Count Your Losses***

This is a short workshop that should be used as part of a larger exploration into the potential experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people. While the outcomes outlined in the exercise rarely all occur to a young person, often these fears are the perceived things that may happen during the coming out process.

The exercise can be used to explore with young people what they could have done at each stage to make the experience better for the LGBT person outlined in the story.

Count Your Losses can be found in Appendix 4 for this document.



[www.michaelcauserfoundation.org.uk](http://www.michaelcauserfoundation.org.uk)

## Section Four - Useful Links

Below are some web address links that you may find useful when planning your LGBT Awareness work for schools.

### **“Homophobia in schools – Young People Speak Out” (2008) (6mins 57)**

Young people’s voices about their experiences of school

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASgFOtyK-wo&feature=youtu.be>

### **“LGBT Young Peoples Experiences of Sport”**

This regional project saw a number of films produced by and for young people including the following:

LGBT Youth and Sport (2012) (7mins 59)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvXMqHCqtP4>

Sport is... (2012) (1min)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=UHfdXrcor1w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=UHfdXrcor1w)

We can change that (2012) (1min)

<http://vimeo.com/42328820>

### **“GoG’s on Bullying” (2012) (10 mins 19)**

Testimonials of four young people affected by homophobic bullying - this is currently being used for the training of Ofsted inspectors.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADRB75rw7ck&feature=email>

### **“Trans Talk” (2012) (12 mins 23)**

Film from presentation given to LGBT youth group by 4 trans women and one of their partners.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hHeZbjG5IQ>

### **“Understanding Trans” (2012) (6 mins 38)**

Film from presentation given to LGBT youth group by 4 trans women and one of their partners (this is edited version of the above, which itself is edited from an hour long talk).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1GFtTK1mnw&feature=email>

### **“Stand Up! Don’t Stand For Homophobic Bullying” (2011) (4 mins 24)**

Irish anti homophobic bullying advertisement, created as part of BeLonG To Youth Services annual Stand Up! LGBT Awareness Weeks.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxM>

### **It Gets Better - [www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org)**

The It Gets Better Project was created to show young LGBT people the levels of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach – if they can just get through their teen years. The It Gets Better Project wants to remind teenagers in the LGBT community that they are not alone — and it WILL get better. Lots of inspiring short films to choose from.

### **Also check out this resource from Queer Youth Norway:**

<http://www.ifm-sei.org/articles/rainbow-resources-finished>

### **The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement**

Some resources that may help in understanding biblical text in relation to LGBT Issues:

<http://www.lgcm.org.uk/resources/>

## Imaan - LGBTQI Muslim Support Group

Some resources to help understand what the Qur'an says in relation to LGBT issues:  
<http://imaanlondon.wordpress.com/islam-sexuality/>

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks are extended to all contributors and participants on the day. Such a positive experience clearly demonstrating commitment to getting this work done, in turn improving the experiences of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people.

## Who We Are

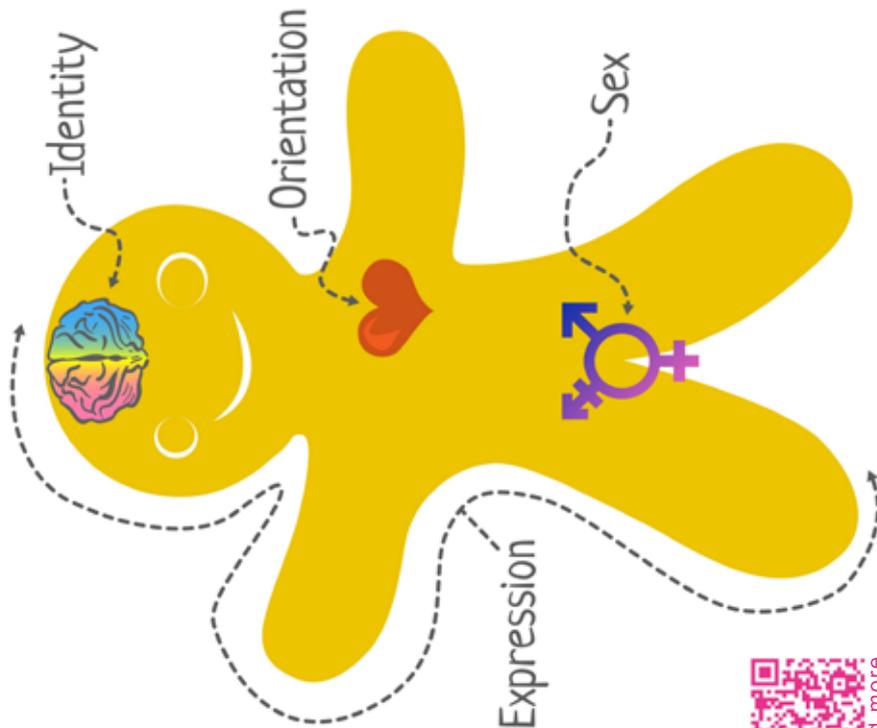
Schools OUT	LGBT History Month	LGBT Youth North West
<p>A national organisation providing both a formal and informal support network for all people who want to raise the issue of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in education.</p>  <p><a href="http://www.schools-out.org.uk">www.schools-out.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans History Month takes place every year in February. It celebrates the lives and achievements of the LGBT community.</p>  <p><a href="http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk">www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk</a></p>	<p>A regional organisation supporting LGBT young people and LGBT youth organisations in the North West of England.</p>  <p><a href="http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk">www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk</a></p>

Appendix One:

<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/01/the-genderbread-person/>

# The Genderbread Person

by [www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)



Gender identity is how you, in your head, think about yourself. It's the chemistry that composes you (e.g., hormone levels) and how you interpret what that means.



Gender expression is how you demonstrate your gender (based on traditional gender roles) through the ways you act, dress, behave, and interact.



Biological sex refers to the objectively measurable organs, hormones, and chromosomes. Female = vagina, ovaries, XX chromosomes; male = penis, testes, XY chromosomes; intersex = a combination of the two.



Sexual orientation is who you are physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to, based on their sex/gender in relation to your own.



Appendix Two:

<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/03/the-genderbread-person-v2-0/>

# The Genderbread Person v2.0

by itspronouncedMETROsexual

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like Inception, Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.

**read more**  
bit.ly/ipmgbqr

**Gender Identity**

**Nongendered** { 5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos } → Man-ness / Woman-ness

**Gender Expression**

**Agender** { 5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos } → Masculine / Feminine

**Biological Sex**

**Asex** { 5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos } → Female-ness / Male-ness

**Attracted to**

**Nobody** { 5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos } → (Men/Males/Masculinity) / (Women/Females/Femininity)

**Gender Identity**

5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos

Man-ness

Woman-ness

**Gender Expression**

5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos

Masculine

Feminine

**Biological Sex**

5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos

Female-ness

Male-ness

**Attracted to**

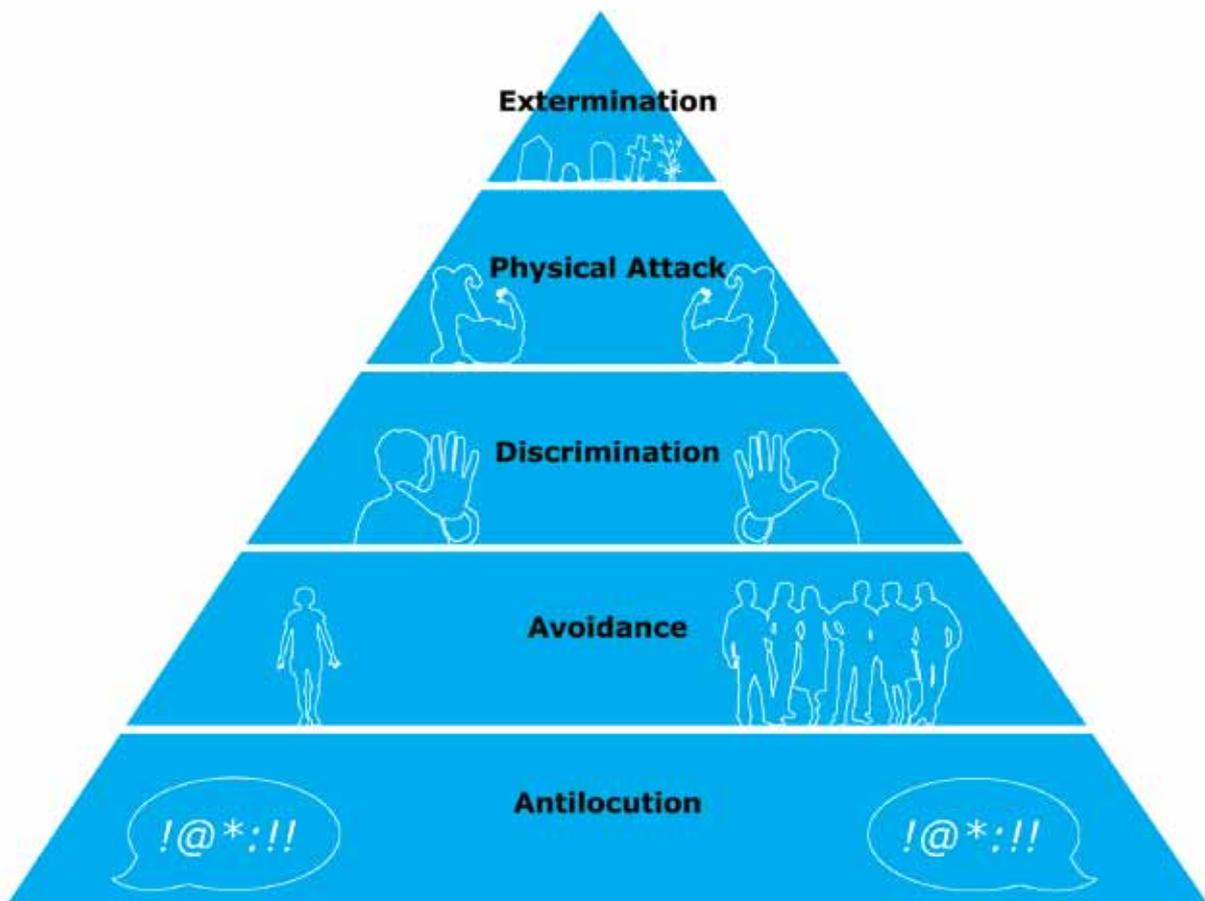
5 (of infinite) possible points and label combos

(Men/Males/Masculinity)

(Women/Females/Femininity)

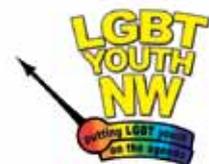
Appendix Three:

# The Allport Scale of Prejudice



Taken from G. W. Allport (1954). The Nature of Prejudice.

[www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk)



## Appendix Four:



### Count Your Losses

Our society assumes everyone is 'straight' or attracted to the opposite sex, and that their biological sex aligns with their gender identity (someone born female will become a woman, male will become a man), so LGBT people have to 'come out' – to identify themselves as something society often does not expect or value. Although LGBT young people have different coming-out experiences, many go through losses described in this exercise.

Give each participant five pieces of paper and a pen. Ask them to write down:

- Paper 1: Your best friend's name**
- Paper 2: Your favourite place to hang out and socialize**
- Paper 3: Your favourite family member**
- Paper 4: Your favourite possession**
- Paper 5: Your dream for the future**

Explain that you will now read out a scenario and you want them to imagine they are the central character in the story:

You are at school and your best friend comes up to you at break time and confronts you with a rumour that you are gay. You tell your friend that you think the rumour is true. Your best friend tells you that you are sick and says they want nothing more to do with you.

**At this point you have just lost your best friend. Please rip up and throw away paper number 1.**

You go to where you always like to go after school – when you get there it is obvious that your best friend has told everyone else. The other young people start to call you names. They say that you are weird and that you don't belong there.

**At this point you have just lost your favourite place to hang out. Please rip up and throw away paper number 2.**

You go home very upset and your favourite family member is there. They ask why you are upset and when you tell them, they tell you you're crazy and that they want nothing more to do with you.

**At this point you have lost your favourite family member. Please rip up and throw away paper number 3.**

They tell the rest of your family who get really angry with you. They tell you that you must leave immediately and never come back.

As you are moving out of the house, you realize you can't take your most favourite possession with you as you don't even know where you are going.

**At this point you have just lost your favourite possession. Please rip up and throw away paper number 4.**

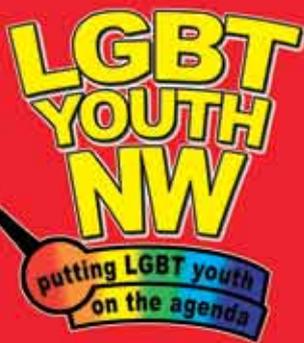
As you have to leave straight away you realize that without financial support or a place to live you won't be able to go to school and you won't be able to have the life you always wanted.

**At this point you realize you have just lost your dream for the future. Please rip up and throw away paper number 5.**

#### Questions to guide discussion:

- How did it feel to do this exercise?
- Where would the young person in the story go for help?
- If a close friend 'came out' to you in confidence, how would you react?
- How could you help and support your friend?
- As many as 1 in 3 homeless youth are LGBT. Why do you think this is?
- What can we do to reduce the risk of homelessness for LGBT youth?

**Adapted from 'Count Your Losses' by Youth Pride Inc. [www.youthprideri.org](http://www.youthprideri.org)**



[lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk](http://lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk)