



Luton National Union of Teachers (NUT)

Prevalence of Homophobia Survey

Summer 2011

Introduction from the President of the NUT



I am delighted to be given the opportunity to endorse the Prevalence of Homophobia survey by Luton NUT, and to welcome the hard work and commitment of Luton NUT in carrying out and presenting this work. I hope that this survey helps all who are concerned with child protection, safer schools and safer communities, to re-double their efforts to make our schools and colleges safer environments where homophobia and prejudice is challenged and eradicated.

I have been very aware throughout my time as a Secondary school teacher that sadly, homophobic name calling and bullying is still all too common in our schools. Homophobic attitudes not only have a very destructive effect on anyone who is perceived to be gay or lesbian but also someone who has an association with gay people or who does not conform to stereotypical expectations of masculine or feminine behaviour.

It's not the fact of being gay that makes some young people unhappy but the fear of the negative reactions of other people. It can be emotionally exhausting for lesbian and gay people of all ages to have to cope with these pressures. For young people in school this can have a lasting impact on their education. For teachers, it can sometimes be difficult to tackle this issue without the resources necessary. The results of the survey show that teachers are aware of the serious nature of homophobia and wish to have the training and practical materials necessary to challenge it.

The NUT has had a proud record over many years in the work we have done to celebrate human diversity and equality. There is still, however, much to do. During my presidential year I am committed to supporting the work that is done to protect our young people and their teachers from homophobic bullying, and to trying to ensure that we can empower everyone to challenge and eradicate this prejudice from our schools.

Nina Franklin

The Survey Results

Background: Homophobia in our schools has been described as 'epidemic', the 'last bastion of the bully' and 'the elephant in the room'. Following the Teacher Support Network/Times Education Supplement survey of teachers in 2006 and the Stonewall School report on 2007, the NUT Prevalence of Homophobia Survey began in Oldham and further surveys have since rolled out across the North of England. Surveys have been carried out in Oldham (2), Salford, Trafford, Lancashire, Blackpool, Liverpool, Blackburn and Darwen. They are being organized in Nottingham, Brighton and Wakefield and can be found on the Schools OUT website www.schools-out.org.uk. They have all shown that:

- Homophobic behaviour is commonplace
- Teachers can be targets as well as students
- There is a significant demand for whole school training to deal with it.

Following the findings of these surveys, the NUT Luton Division is the first to carry out the survey outside the North and the East Midlands. We hope it will be the first of many.

Data Collection Method: all members of the NUT in LEA secondary schools in Luton were sent a questionnaire with an SAE.

The **first section** of the questionnaire invited them to make a professional assessment of **the extent of homophobia** in their school environment. Questions one and two were concerned with this section.

The **second section** of the questionnaire invited teachers to make a professional assessment of **the challenge** this created for their schools and assess what **training needs** this challenge created. Question three was concerned with this section.

The results were collected and collated by the equalities officer and the (anonymous) returns are available for verification.

Results **Part One: Prevalence of Homophobia**

Question 1 **Climate of homophobic abuse in or schools**

56% Of teachers had overheard/observed homophobic abuse in their schools on a daily/weekly basis

94.5% Of teachers had overheard/observed homophobic abuse in their schools on at least a termly basis

Question 2 **Prevalence of homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying of pupils by pupils**

39.5% Of teachers had overheard/observed specific pupils being subjected to homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying on a daily/weekly basis

87.5% Of teachers had overheard/observed specific pupils being subjected to homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying on at least a termly basis

Question 3 **Homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying of staff by pupils**

6% Of teachers themselves have been subjected to homophobic abuse on a daily/weekly basis

29% Of teachers themselves have been subjected to homophobic abuse at least once in the school year

Results **Part Two: Responses to Homophobia**

Statement 1 **Attitude towards the seriousness of homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying**

82% Of teachers believe homophobia is a serious issue demanding attention

Statement 2 **Is your school vigorously addressing homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying?**

30% Of teachers consider that their school is vigorously addressing homophobia

Members' attitudes towards challenging homophobic abuse and discrimination through training

Statement 3 **Do you feel confident to challenge homophobic abuse/discrimination/bullying in your classroom?**

8% Of teachers feel confident about addressing homophobia in their classroom

Statement 4 **Would you welcome specific training to better address homophobic abuse/discrimination in your classroom?**

21% Of teachers would welcome specific training to help them address homophobic abuse/discrimination in their classroom

Statement 5 **Would you welcome whole school training to better address homophobic abuse/discrimination in your school?**

60% Of teachers would welcome whole school training to better address homophobic abuse/discrimination in their school

Conclusion **Protection of Children-and Staff-from Emotional, Verbal and Physical Abuse**

Luton NUT fully endorses the general recommendations in section 8 of the Stonewall School Report¹, the guidance from Schools OUT² and the accompanying Student Toolkit³, the national guidance from the Department for Education, including

- 2004 Stand up for Us⁴
- 2007 Homophobic Bullying? Safe to learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools⁵

...and welcomes the inclusion of LGBT people into the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act. We also welcome the findings of the other Surveys on the Prevalence of Homophobia, which may be found on the Schools OUT website.

The Luton Prevalence of Homophobia survey demonstrates that homophobia is existent in our schools on a scale that is unacceptable; more so than other forms of prejudice based bullying. The object of the exercise is not to isolate and attack Luton schools in particular; but rather to show from a grass-roots perspective that homophobia is a national epidemic that must be addressed in all the nation's schools.

Luton NUT understands that homophobic bullying has consequences including under-achievement, self-harm and suicide. Furthermore, we believe that what constitutes homophobic bullying would usually be hate crime if it took place outside the school premises.

Luton NUT believes that staff training, through whole school INSET, teacher training and CPD and lifelong learning courses for individuals is essential if we are to rid schools of the pernicious influence of homophobia in schools.

Dave Mingay Divisional Secretary, Luton NUT

1 Hunt, Ruth and Jensen, Johan *The Schools Report: experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools* (Stonewall 2007)

2 Schools OUT, *Developing Your Policies* <http://www.schools-out.org.uk/policy/contents.htm>

3 Schools OUT *Student Toolkit* http://www.schools-out.org.uk/STK/Student_Tool_Kit.htm

4 Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health *Stand up for Us* 2004 <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/SUFU%20Final.pdf>

5 Department of Children Schools and Families: *Safe to learn* http://www.schools-out.org.uk/policy/DCSF_antibullying_guidelines_2007.htm

A Message from The Director of Children and Learning

Luton Borough Council



In Luton we recognise that homophobia is an issue which should be actively addressed and therefore we welcome this survey as a way of advancing our understanding of the current situation and prompting us to take action to improve things in the future.

As with all forms of discrimination homophobia is unacceptable in our schools and should be challenged. We have already taken action to assist school staff and leaders to do this by, for example, membership of the Stonewall Education Champions Programme and by providing a range of specific training opportunities. We know that attitudes and language impact on behaviour and so have explicitly incorporated addressing homophobic bullying into the Luton Children's Trust anti-bullying strategy in order to create an environment where children, young people and the adults that work with them, can feel safe and valued.

Luton is a town which celebrates its diversity, strives to address discrimination and promotes harmony; these values should underpin the work we do to together to respond to the issues highlighted by this survey.

Martin Pratt

Corporate Director – Children & Learning: Luton Borough Council

