

# LGBT

## CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION AND HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

INCLUSIVITY IS NOT A LUXURY, IT IS A NECESSITY



sportBU



Dorset HealthCare University  
NHS Foundation Trust



Lesbian, gay, bisexual & trans people in the South West

# Prejudice and Pride

## Challenging discrimination and homophobia in Sport

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*Inclusivity works With Nature, indeed Is Nature for all who are self-confident and self-possessed. By contrast, exclusivist/discriminatory thinking and behaviour [the main source of prejudice] contest with Nature. Those possessed by them can only ever be as a result incompetent-unprofessional employees and colleagues and members of broader society, and, most of all enemies to their own need to experience peace of mind – which hate and fear of difference inevitably destroy.*

How far most, but sadly not all, of humankind has matured since the 1930's when in Nazi Germany exclusivist race-based political ideologies [exclusivist thinking is the main source of prejudice for those drawn in to manifestations of its religious, social and political ideologies] were highlighted to the whole world in the context of international athletics. And yet in the early years of the 21st century when the world may be truly said to have become a 'global village' and many of us have trans-cultural/trans-national identities, some of the ghosts that haunted and scarred humankind in that earlier time still raise their heads.

A very small minority through their divisive anti-social behaviour challenge all of the inclusive values of our contemporary multicultural UK, that reveres and backs with the force of law and government policy the sanctity of human rights irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and beliefs.

A great evolution has over the course of time taken place that may be accurately summed up by the statement that only inclusive values maintain and sustain a healthy society, and a life worth living: inclusivity is not 'permissiveness' it is simply the **only** course for rationale self-respecting individuals, and countries and societies governed by mature and ethical values. Inclusivity is **not a luxury**, it is an absolute necessity, and only those with divisive exclusivist selfish/disingenuous agendas – whose forebears exulted in pogroms, witch trials and inquisitions – fight against its invincible logic and ethical purity.

The exhibition project, originally created as a celebration of the diverse and inclusive character of the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation looks at the pressing issue of homophobia in sport & related prejudice. It outlines how this impacts negatively on society, and in particular upon the lives of pupils, students and staff in schools and colleges. It also explores the parallel negative impact of homophobic behaviour by some within public service organisations and businesses, and how such behaviour hampers their personnel and public relations effectiveness and professionalism.

The project is innovative in two ways, for it invites non-LGBT members of UK BME communities, and women, who have been discriminated against on grounds of race and gender to explore the phenomenon of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and explores the self-destructive impact of homophobic prejudices & stereotyping upon the lives of those most fully infected by related anti-social values and behaviour.

Very importantly, final phase of the project involved final year students from the Art and Design Department of one of South West England's largest colleges (The Bournemouth and Poole College) studying the background to the issues resources included on this website as the basis for creating a set of outstanding graphic design images for the project's exhibition panels.

Contrasting with the indifference shown by secondary schools [in regard to the anti-bullying perspectives of the project], where the direct impact of fear caused by self-evident influences of very active homophobia can be easily indicated, in line with national trends in schools, the 25+ strong college student team immersed themselves in the issues of homophobic and trans-phobic discrimination.

As a result, individual team members that had any inherited and social group acquired prejudices against lesbian, gay and trans individuals were enabled through involvement in the project to liberate themselves from such restricted and self-restricting perspectives. Through their creative work they enthusiastically took the side of the persecuted/bullied against that of individuals who are unthinkingly caught up in promoting and maintaining prejudiced and dehumanising ways of thinking and relating to those different to themselves.

In addition to the introductory material, the other six thematic PDF's included on this website (Panel 5 being the longest and including two of the three academic writers contributions) cover a range of related topics aimed at specific audiences: LGBT and non-LGBT sportspeople, teachers in schools and colleges, public service organisations staff and officers, amongst others. They are intended to encourage general reflective thinking that challenges homophobic attitudes and their origins in order to bring about positive change. An Appendix pdf is also included, covering useful links plus the three separate articles by academics.

The panels material, articles and links, and the associated project questionnaire 'voices'/ personal input section (below) detailing the experiences and thoughts of those who have experienced homophobia – and groups and organisations [LGBT or non-LGBT] who seek to see it eradicated – constitutes a thematic equality, diversity and anti-discrimination resource, ready to use for tackling specific issues relevant to the target audiences.

## Sample responses to the exhibition project questionnaire/survey

A questionnaire was created to accompany the exhibition project. Included below are some of the characteristic sample written or verbal responses received. Those who responded were mainly younger LGBT people (but included some older gay people and also non LGBT individuals):

***Whether LGBT or non-LGBT, what are your instinctive feelings on learning of homophobia, racism and sexism in football 'fans' when covered on television?***

Sad, that in many ways people are more accepting of diversity but in sport, especially football, times don't appear to move on.

Disgusted. I'm also not gay myself

I am from an ethnic community and think that more should be done by the media in combating racism of some followers of football by not just simply noting that it takes place. This is passive acceptance of bullying and ignorance.

These 'fans' don't have much going for them because they don't seem to want to step out of their little self-imposed 'boxes' of prejudice.

They are quite sad but need to wake up a bit to engaging with people who are different to themselves because they are of a different gender, race or love people of the same sex.

***What would you like to see educational and sports authority organisations, sports clubs and schools do to make some sports more welcoming for lesbians and gay people with a natural interest in sport?***

Anti-discrimination policy, teachers more aware of needs and sensitive to people

Get a class so they are together and put other people in the session so they are together

and put other people in the session so they see there is nothing wrong with being what you like being

Simply equality and no discrimination against any LGBT

Mixed-sex lessons with less 'manly/lad type' lessons.

Stand up to those who bully gay and lesbian people!

All schools and sports clubs should do more to make LGB&T people feel included in what they do and provide.

***Have you had any positive experiences of non LGBT school friends or teachers coming out against homophobia in school sports contexts?***

The most has been the teacher saying "stop that" – but no punishments

Yes

I feel that I had no real problems during P.E. ... even in an all-boys environment

Yes. I gradually came 'out.' When it became known I was definitely gay I had quite a few school friends tell me that this didn't make any difference at all because we were friends, and that is what mattered.

I had mixed experience of sports at school. I never came out until near the end of my time at school. In earlier times I suffered a lot of hurt from a PE teacher who seemed to know I was gay, and used to make me feel different and inferior in some ways such as repeatedly not remembering my name, one or two fellow pupils picking up on this and enjoyed making me suffer through name calling 'no name queer,' 'no name gay,' and things of this kind. This teacher left the school in my final year and his replacement was really different and much 'fairer' because he always remembered my name and encouraged me ... Even so, because of suffering before I was really put off PE and sport.

*Note: At a Space Youth Project liaison meeting it emerged that it was not uncommon for LGBT young people to be told they had to not use the allocated changing rooms, but change separately (often using toilets): this was an appalling finding, but one that accords with experience recorded elsewhere in the country. PE teachers behaving in these ways are effectively bullying or abetting bullying of LGBT youth by others, and in so doing breaking professional best practice standards and anti-discrimination laws.*

***Do you feel that teachers' efforts to counteract homophobia at schools and colleges that may have pronounced RE [Religious Education] or religious affiliations are hampered by the latter?***

NO. I attended an RE school and never found any problem

There were no anti-gay teaching experiences at the denominational school I attended

Not really any problems

I was uncomfortable

Unhappy about some aspects of religious educational classes

I experienced a lot of psychological harm through exposure to RE at school. This seemed to deny me any humanity as a gay person.

I am an older gay man and I went through a religious upbringing at school. I am okay now but because this conflicted with my same-sex love nature, I suffered many years through the emotional and psychological distress caused by its teachings.

I don't think to expose children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, to religious education is at all right.

***If yes, what would you like to see done to remove the related restrictions on efforts to stamp out such bullying of LGBT pupil/students in those schools/colleges – for example, the requirement for the latter to undertake regular human rights / equality, diversity and anti-discrimination training events (and educational resources: DVD's literature, etc) to counteract homophobic bullying?***

All of these would be good

Maybe best practice academy type schools where discrimination and bullying of all kinds are not tolerated could be then used to help work with one's where incidents of homophobia and other discrimination are high?

A very recent landmark court ruling decided that a couple who ran a guesthouse had contravened UK anti-discrimination law and the human rights of a gay couple who were refused accommodation because the guesthouse owners personally followed religious teachings that gave sanction to anti-LGBT sentiments and behaviour.

***Do you think more should be done to highlight the paramount status of UK anti-discrimination law and human rights over personal views that conflict with the latter? Please add any other comments below:***

*Note: All who responded answered strongly in the affirmative concerning personal views having to give way to the demands to respect human rights and anti-discrimination laws.*

If your work ethics lack or you offer a service you should be professional and have no discrimination

***Do you feel that your LGBT identity plays a part in taking a special interest in keeping fit and healthy -- if so, why?***

Not as a gay woman but through volunteering with young people do feel overall young gay men tend to be body conscious

I understand that some LGBT can feel threatened or nervous about keeping fit

***Are fitness pursuits –for example, attending the gym, cycling, power-walking, jogging, martial arts and Tai Chi, etc – in some ways more preferable to keeping fit through involvement in team sport?***

I prefer solo things like swimming

Somewhat contradictory, I go to the gym with 2 friends. But being by yourself makes you just feel more relaxed and focused

I am bisexual but more predominantly gay. When at school I didn't like team sports such as football not because I felt different in not being a typical heterosexual, but because these types of sports seemed to be a bit too regimented

Behaviour of some football 'fans' puts me off interest in following this team sport!

I've got a lot of respect for gay football players. They can't 'come out' because of expected heterosexual 'laddish' behaviour norms and peer and media pressures, but still enjoy the game for its own sake. It is sad that they aren't allowed to be themselves and have to 'keep in the closet' for fear of ridicule. Justin Fashanu was really brave!

I love martial arts!

***Does maintaining or developing a good physique relate directly to positive self-image as a lesbian or gay person? If not LGBT yourself, do you have an opinion about these issues/perceptions?***

Yes, I feel that there is a lot of pressure on body image + how you 'should' look.

I'm not gay but respect gay people into fitness for doing more to maintain how they look through good self-image

***As a sportsperson do you ever reflect upon your LGBT identity impacting positively on your performance as a sportsperson -- Do you feel you have to strive to prove yourself more as a successful sportsperson?***

Strive to prove yourself

Yes, and this gives more sense of accomplishment

I am gay and enjoy snooker which is a sporting recreational activity that is quite 'hetero ladish' I would say that I like the game for its own qualities and just try to do my best, rather than playing it to be 'one of the lads'

## Some findings from the Dorset Space Youth Project feedback concerning issues around school PE and sport for LGBT youth.

### On Sport

"I am in to solitary activities, they are a get out option. I have power. I don't see sport as a social thing."

"I need a gym buddy!"

### On PE and Team Games at school

"Its all a bit straight."

"I was scared."

"I was scared I'd get hurt."

"Gays dont do PE... if I ever did it I would go in the girls group."

"Rugby and football are very manly, with people who ram you"

"Masculine atmosphere becomes intimidating"

"I like rugby, rugby is fun. Angry gay guys would like it!"

"Its too masculine, it makes you feel unsafe."

"I dreaded it."

"I couldn't face that I might get ridiculed."

"PE was the hardest subject to engage with partly because of sexuality."



"I dont think the PE teacher even knew my name."

"People who are insecure and worry about people knowing who they really are won't like it."

"I dont like getting changed in front of people"

"I felt I had to overcompensate in the changing rooms."

"Feel even more outcasted"

"I'm weird, I'm a fitness freak but I hate doing PE."

## **How to encourage inclusion:**

"Mixing the genders works for PE."

"Lots of different sports options"

"Include swimming"

"Keep PE offsite."