

Homophobic Bullying Fact-sheet

Homophobia is the unfounded fear or hatred of people on the assumption that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. The term homophobia can also incorporate transphobia, the unfounded fear or hatred of transgender people.

So what is bullying? The government says that:

Bullying is meant to be hurtful, and keeps happening. Bullying can be direct: physical and/or spoken. Bullying can be indirect: leaving a child out or not talking to them.

And what is homophobic bullying?

Homophobic bullying is a particular type of bullying which is related to a person's sexuality or assumed sexuality.

In a recent Scottish study, when asked about safety, 68% of respondents said that they had been verbally abused or threatened by someone who has assumed they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) at some point in their life. 23% reported experience of physical assault because someone assumed they are LGBT.

Bullying behaviour often goes unnoticed and can include; name calling and teasing, damage to belongings, excluding people from social activities, spreading malicious rumours, abusive phone calls, text bullying (via your mobile phone), physical bullying or threats.

Homophobic bullying continues to be a problem for Scotland's schools. Homophobic bullying can be directed at any student or teacher within a school, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Some young people may have parents, friends or family members who are LGB or T. Homophobic insults are common place in the school playground, and can socially exclude young people, leaving them living in fear of attack or ridicule.

What are the effects on young people?

Homophobic bullying within school can have a serious impact upon the self-esteem and confidence of LGBT young people, and can make it harder for those wishing to come out to do so. Coming out is a key process in the development of personal identity.

It has long been shown that bullying negatively impacts upon young people's educational attainment and mental health. It is therefore unsurprising that most LGBT young people decide not to 'come out' at school – leaving them isolated and unsupported.

What can schools and youth clubs do?

There are a number of things that schools and youth groups can do to help prevent homophobia. These include:

Displaying posters and leaflets to help LGBT young people feel valued and included, and demonstrate a commitment to diversity

Check that any equal opportunities policy is inclusive of LGBT people, and that the anti-bullying policy explicitly addresses homophobia

Incorporate LGBT awareness into the curriculum or day-to-day activity of your work with young people.

Websites for support

BBCi provide useful information and support for young people who are concerned about bullying and their parent's and teacher's

The anti-bullying network provides young people and adults a chance to share information about bullying and help support each other. This page has lots of useful numbers and contacts for young people who are being bullied

Childline Scotland have a bullying line for young people to phone and chat to someone. If you live in Scotland and you cannot find someone to talk to, you can phone the ChildLine Bullying Line on