

Appendix 19: Brighton & Hove Youth Support Service Anti-Homophobic Strategy and Implementation Plan

Introduction

In our role as workers for Brighton & Hove Youth Support Service, it is our duty, as stated in our mission statement, to “provide safe, constructive and rewarding experiences where young people can express their thoughts and feelings. As well as developing strategies to deal with the difficulties and dilemmas that growing up often creates”. Within this statement we commit ourselves to equal opportunities “Youth workers are expected to challenge oppression and inequality as well as encouraging young people to do the same”. It is, therefore, a youth worker’s duty to support and empower all young people including those who are LGBUT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Undecided of their sexuality and transgender). It was felt the inclusion of the transgender community was important within this resource (an often forgotten minority group) although it may not be considered as a sexuality issue certainly the issue of gender identity overlaps some of the work related to sexuality. The aim of this strategy is to assist youth centres, clubs and projects to create not only an inclusive and anti-homophobic environment but also a safe zone for LGBUT youth. It will also assist youth workers to undertake work with young people, which will include challenging gender stereotyping and discriminatory beliefs.

This work aims to provide consistency to young people in the work that may have already been undertaken by other services. Within schools, sexuality is already being addressed through the PSHE curriculum, assisted by Brighton & Hove PSHE Advisory Team and their “Sexuality Project”. This work has been aided by Allsorts who have sent workers into schools to assist young people in understanding sexuality. As part of the Brighton & Hove Anti-Bullying Project homophobic bullying is being addressed and challenged across the services for young people. Diversity Alliance has assisted in co-ordinating this work as well as producing two very successful and high profile campaigns across Brighton & Hove to address homophobia. For more details of all these projects please refer to the resource list.

Youth workers play an important role in continuing this work addressing homophobia as well as encouraging other LGBUT youth to use the services. Youth centres, clubs and projects are often a focal point for young people so, therefore, it is imperative that we create a non-repressive environment in order to allow young people to develop healthily. Youth workers can act as role models in young people’s lives and it is our duty to promote equality.

Recruitment

There is a need for the Service to recruit more LGBUT youth workers who can act as positive role models for both LGBUT youth as well as heterosexual youth. It is most important for these workers to be supported by their managers and co-workers. Whether workers are open about their sexuality is down to individual discretion. In order for this to happen the department will need:

- To advertise posts in LGBUT journals such as G-Scene, The Gay Times, Diva, 330 etc.

- To form contacts with local LGBT organisations and use the mailing list within the resource to inform them of impending vacancies.
- For the wording of adverts to contain anti-discriminatory statement e.g. “we encourage applications from LGBT individuals”.
- To have LGBT representation within the recruitment process via LGBT community organisations (e.g. Allsorts).
- All workers involved in recruitment to receive training on why and how to implement anti homophobic practice, sexuality awareness and gain knowledge on institutional heterosexism reflecting this within recruitment process. (This will be provided through staff development).
- Recruitment monitoring information forms will include a section on sexuality as well as including transgender within the gender section in order to monitor applications. All Service managers will have access to this information in order to ensure that the Service is offering equal opportunities.

Training

Training is an essential key in order to employ and retain workers as well as secure the needs of LGBT youth. All workers will need to be trained agreeing to and understanding the need of an overall anti-homophobic and LGBT friendly environment. For this to commence there is a need for:

- Training to commence which will help workers recognise the needs and issues of LGBT youth in consultation with LGBT youth and LGBT services. This training should involve all workers from the Service from manager to caretakers of the building. This will be provided by partners from other agencies and voluntary organisations. It is estimated to be 2 x one-day events over the period of a year.
- The outcome of this training will enable workers to commit themselves to address homophobic actions and comments as well as challenging gender stereotyping.
- A commitment from all workers to ensure that their work, resources and language does not only reflect the life style of heterosexuals. Please refer to the resource list for details and ideas.
- All workers to know details of LGBT youth provisions (Allsorts, Safety Forum etc) but also being mindful to encourage young people to continue to access the projects and clubs so they do not feel excluded and LGBT clubs are viewed as an addition not a replacement. Details of local provisions and contacts will be given to workers on the conference day and are detailed in the resource list.
- The strategy and resource list to be given to all new workers as part of the induction pack. A copy of the strategy and resource list will be given to each project at the conference.
- LGBT training will be an integral part of the foundation course and will be highlighted as a core value through Youth Service training from induction to post qualification. It will not be seen as a separate issue to be covered but instead will underpin all Youth Service

training and work. The Youth Service Manager and the staff development group will monitor training and evaluation of course programmes.

- There will be a consideration of the venues and times of training to encourage the widest uptake of training opportunities.

Commitment to LGBT Workers

It is important for workers to feel supported by co-workers and the strategies in place. This can be achieved through:

- Workers having access and knowledge to the local LGBT Forum for Council workers (details in resource list), and will be encouraged to play an active role within the local council. (Through their line manager, and supervision/staff development).
- Ensuring there is an effective anti-discrimination complaint procedure in place. (This is in place with the Council Handbook)
- All clubs and projects to have a clear policy for dealing with homophobic incidents directed at either young people or staff. (This will be an expected outcome of the training.)

Physical Environment

Youth clubs and centres are visual representations of the values and beliefs of the Youth Support Service. They can send both positive and negative messages to young people and is therefore important to have positive imagery of all minority groups including the LGBT community. It is also important for the building to be and feel like a safe environment to all young people. This will be a continuous process (See evaluation sheet for more details, this will be evaluated by the Youth Service Manager).

- To have an anti discrimination policy clearly displayed to young people stating the non-acceptance of homophobia within the Service.
- To have positive imagery on the walls which does not only represent heterosexual lifestyles but also LGBT lifestyles, (please refer to resource list as a starting point).
- To immediately clean away any homophobic graffiti or replace posters which have been graffitied and challenge those involved. Each club/ project will identify a reporting method for young people.
- Have a selection of material representing LGBT youth (see resource list for further details) in the resources for young people.
- Consider health and safety issues to ensure young people feel safe entering and leaving the club. To enable this to happen additional training will need to be undertaken involving vulnerable young people such as those from the LGBT community and other groups.

Code of Practice

To maintain consistency there is a need for workers to jointly agree to a code of practice when interacting with young people. This would include:

- When referring to lifestyles use both heterosexual and LGB examples.
- Never assume the sexual identity of the young people who you are working with. (When a young man talks about his partner do not reply with "What's HER name")
- To address homophobic actions and comments such as the use of the word "gay" being used within a negative context ("That's so gay").

Community Development

To undertake such a policy, it is essential to largely involve the LGBUT community in order to empower the community and ensure that the strategy is effective and credible. For this to happen the Youth Support Service must:

- Maintain stronger links and relationships with existing groups (e.g. Allsorts, The Safety Forum, Spectrum etc) regularly attending meetings/forums/training/management groups.
- Actively keeping up to date with new developments and integrating this within youth work.
- Provide support to existing groups through attending at meetings and training opportunities.
- Actively keeping aware of the climate of bullying through contact with other projects such as the Anti-Bullying Project e.g. phone texting is presently a common form of bullying which can go unnoticed.
- Consult with existing groups and LGBUT Youth in how to continually and effectively undertake an anti-homophobic policy.
- Recognise the diversity of the LGBUT community and challenge any stereotyping.
- To attend both LGBUT and non-LGBUT community events with resources which reflect the LGBUT community.
- Improve communications with all Brighton & Hove Youth Support Service provisions. This will be done through a standing item on the agenda at the Area Working Meeting aiming to inform all working of the current climate, new resources and new campaigns. This process will be reviewed in March 2003.

Programmes

This strategy is not about isolated pieces of work addressing sexuality; it is part of the whole youth Service curriculum. This allows discrimination to be addressed at all levels and in all situations from a football match to a workshop. It is a holistic approach to working with young people helping them to understand their prejudices and to address them. This will then create a safe space for young people to develop without oppression of their sexuality and gender identity and will also attract other young people from the LGBUT community. Below is a plan of programmes for youth centres, clubs and projects to assist in making a LGBUT safe place.