1. NATURE AND EXTENT OF PREJUDICE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Current evidence shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) young people are not safe, respected, or included in schools. When asked where they face the most discrimination, LGBT young people overwhelmingly named education. Evidence shows they experience high rates of bullying in school and they are not confident reporting this to school staff. Our research also shows that transgender young people face more discrimination than their LGB peers. Experiences of bullying affects LGBT young people’s physical and mental health, leads to some young people leaving education and can have longer term impacts on their job seeking.

School experiences

- The majority of LGBT young people (64.3%) felt that the school experience for LGBT young people was ‘bad’.
- 69.1% of all LGBT respondents had experienced homophobic or biphobic bullying in school.
- 76.9% of transgender respondents had experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying in school.
- 48.2% of LGBT young people in schools would not feel confident reporting homophobic or biphobic bullying and as much as 62.9% of transgender young people would not feel confident.
- Young people are not always involved in deciding what happens in response to a bullying incident, and LGBT young people are often outed to parents or others in the process.

Impact of Bullying

Experiencing bullying can: remove an individual’s sense of agency; affect confidence; undermine identity; lower self-esteem; increase social isolation; contribute to poor mental health; and, affect physical health. LGBT young people experiencing bullying can be distracted from their studies as they worry over the threat of the next incident, or may decide to stop attending certain classes or school altogether, meaning they leave school with no qualifications or poorer attainment.

- 10% of LGBT respondents left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia in the learning environment, 37% of transgender young people had left for this reason.
- 14.3% of those who had experienced homophobic or biphobic bullying in education left as a result and 42.3% (2 in 5) of those who had experienced transphobic bullying left education.
- More than half of those who had experienced homophobic and biphobic bullying believed that it had negatively impacted on their education.
- 43.6% of LGBT young people who experienced homophobic or biphobic bullying in education considered themselves to have mental health problems; 69.2% of those who had experienced transphobic bullying consider themselves to have mental health problems.

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• We also support LGBT young people who manage suicidal thoughts and ideation daily; many of them specifically reference their experiences of school and bullying as a key contributor to their poor mental health.

2. HOW DO SCHOOLS RESPOND TO BULLYING AND HOW ARE THEY SUPPORTED?
The demand for LGBT Youth Scotland to support schools in addressing bullying and improving LGBT inclusion increases year on year. Our key tool for engaging with schools is our LGBT School Charter Mark. This uses a ‘whole school approach’ and supports schools and local authorities to review their policies, practice, curricular inclusion and resources. This model endorses approaches that addresses school ethos and culture rather than a piecemeal approach, recognising the need for school leadership and training. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zToZ-vBOU0g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zToZ-vBOU0g)

There is an increasing number of transgender young people who are coming out in school environments, and staff lack confidence and knowledge in this area to provide appropriate support. One of the most common advice requests we receive from schools is how to support transgender young people with their gender identity or expression, or how to respond to transphobic bullying.

We are also working with groups of young people to be leaders in this area, many setting up their own groups to address LGBT inequality in their schools. These are most effective when supported by school staff and senior management. Changing school ethos can, and should, involve its pupils as essential partners but overall responsibility for change should sit with school staff and senior management.

A 2015 report on prejudice-based bullying found that in Local Authorities where anti-bullying policies explicitly discuss protected characteristics, pupils are more likely to say that they’ve been taught about prejudice, and as a result pupils more confident to report bullying witnessed. Overall this report found that 22 Local Authority policies mentioned sexual orientation, 17 recommended recording this form of bullying, 8 mentioned gender reassignment or transgender identity with just 6 suggesting it is recorded.

**LGBT Youth Scotland’s Response**

Last year LGBT Youth Scotland trained 250 practicing teachers; worked within 6 of the 8 teaching Universities in Scotland, engaging with more than 1,800 students; delivered interventions (including referrals & 1-2-1 support) with schools in 25 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland; and provided advocacy and support for transgender pupils in 38 schools, including primary schools. There are also 30 schools signed-up to the LGBT Schools Charter Mark, across 17 local authority areas.

We are one of the managing partners of respectme (Scotland’s anti-bullying service) and are currently developing a resource on challenging and responding to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in partnership with respectme. We are also working with the Scottish Transgender Alliance and key partners to develop national guidance on supporting transgender students; distribution is expected in March 2016.

**Evidence Gaps**
There are currently gaps in evidence on: the longer-term impact of experiencing bullying; the financial cost of bullying, for example, in regards to use of NHS services and the job market; intersex young people’s experiences; and a wide-scale study of experiences of prejudice-based bullying experienced (with pupils completing questions on their identification with all protected characteristics) across both primary and secondary school.

3. WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE TO ENSURE SCHOOLS CAN DEAL WITH CASES OF BULLYING AND PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY IN SCHOOLS?
In terms of what needs to change in order to ensure that schools appropriately and effectively deal with prejudice-based bullying and promote LGBT-inclusive learning environments, we recommend the following:

**Long-term Improvements/ Outcomes**
- **Teachers have improved confidence and knowledge** to respond to incidents of discrimination or bullying; create inclusive learning environments; and support LGBT pupils through their teaching practice. Activities could include:
  - A resourced training package available for school staff in all local authority areas. This training must include prejudiced based bullying and address the needs of those young people most affected by prejudice based bullying including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.
  - Easily accessible resources to support practice backed-up by detailed supporting teaching materials.

- **Initial teacher training** providers are able to equip new teachers to respond to incidents of discrimination or bullying; create inclusive learning environments; and support LGBT pupils through their teaching practice. Activities could include:
  - A nationally co-ordinated approach to including topics pertaining to equality and diversity and anti-bullying. Again this should include the experiences prejudice based bullying and specifically include LGBT identities.

- **Improved leadership** from schools and local authorities and national bodies; with schools leaders equipped to support their colleagues to create inclusive learning environments and address prejudiced based bullying. Activities could include:
  - The development and delivery of training courses for schools leaders to create inclusive learning environments and responding effectively to prejudice based bullying.
  - Specific support for approaches which engage with young people as school and peer leaders.
  - An action plan or specific leadership from Education Scotland to address prejudice based bullying.

- **Improved consistency** in addressing prejudiced based bullying in Scottish schools through effective regulation and legislation. Activities could include:
  - Explicit and detailed inclusion within the inspection framework for schools, which includes all protected characteristics. This should be reviewed by inspectors with rigor.
- Development of a specific standard for equality and diversity in GTCs Code of Professionalism and conduct.
- Schools to monitor incidents of bullying, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic incidents; regularly reporting their finds to local authorities. This approach should respect young people’s right to privacy and recognise that large or increasing numbers of incidents can be the result of good recording practices within school environments.
- Consideration of legislative routes, including strengthening the implementation and promotion of the Equality Act (2010) within school and local authority settings. It is important to note that under current legislation, harassment of pupils only applies to the protected characteristics of disability, race and sex and does not apply to sexual orientation or gender re-assignment.

Short-Term Improvements
- Launch *Respect for All: the National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People* with effective distribution and communications strategy
- Request that all Local Authority anti-bullying policies include all protected characteristics, in line with *Respect for All*. This will support public body legal requirements outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- Local Authorities to undertake a review of anti-bullying policies and include evidence of reported incidents across the relevant protected characteristics, as well as information gathered from pupils on their experiences of prejudice-based bullying and barriers to reporting2.
- Local Authorities or schools to conduct anonymous surveys of pupils to capture experiences of bullying across relevant protected characteristics and forms of prejudice. This information should be used to check, vary and adjust local approaches to dealing with bullying.
- Scottish Government and Education Scotland to support the development of a refresh Toolkit for Teachers on addressing homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Scottish schools, with greater emphasis on transgender inclusion and the Equality Act 2010.
- LGBT Youth Scotland and respectme are developing practice guidance on addressing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools. If effectively resourced, this could be the first of a series of resources that address other forms of prejudice based bullying.
