

Issues of Bullying Around Trans and Gender Variant Students in Schools, Colleges and Universities

Schools don't even talk about being gay. How much happier I would have been if I could have known earlier? How much easier would it make it for so many children and young people if they could know they weren't alone? How many lives might have been saved if only, if only, someone in authority would acknowledge the necessity for young people to know that it's okay to be different, to be gender variant? How many people are still searching for an answer and not finding it? How many will never find it?

Participant on Sci:identity Project
Contribution to 'Zine



gendered intelligence

understanding gender diversity in creative ways

www.genderedintelligence.co.uk

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www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Introduction

This report looks at bullying around transgendered or gender variant people in and around the school environment. This guide looks to outline key terms in relation to both trans people and those that do not express themselves within the gender norms of male and female, boy and girl.

The following concentrates on detailed excerpts of experiences in and impacts of the various bullying behaviour towards trans and gender variant young people at school, colleges and universities. It shows where and how, and by whom transphobia and genderist related behaviour might appear within the school environment, as well as offering some suggestions from levels of policy to staff education and teaching tools.

It makes links to various policies around homophobic bullying that work, in part, to prevent bullying around all non-normative gender presentations that also benefits trans young people. It also highlights restrictive opportunities based on sexed identities, for example in physical education aspect of school and the sexism that continues.

There are some reflections that consider the usefulness of naming certain acts specifically 'transphobic', and what measures should be put in place to prevent transphobia. It also considers though how despite implementing these preventions some young people who present non-normative genders might still slip through the net.

It interestingly offers ideas from the young people and their family members around what would positively impact on their school experiences and what could be implemented as good practise to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for all.

Introducing trans

We understand the world to be generally formed of men and women, boys and girls. This is called a gender binary. Trans identities are often thought of as complex and difficult to understand because trans people generally feel that they do not fit neatly into these two clear categories.

What is trans?

In 2007 a group of young trans people produced *A Guide for Young Trans People in the UK*. In this they define 'trans' as the following:

Trans is an umbrella term. It includes cross-dressers, transgender and transsexual people as well as anyone else who is in any way gender variant. Before we start it's important to understand that sex is between the legs and gender is between the ears. Sex is male, female, and intersex, and has to do with your chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, etc. Gender is man, woman, boy, girl, androgynous (gender-neutral), and has to do with your internal sense of self and how you choose to express yourself.

A cross-dresser is someone who likes to wear clothes usually associated with the "opposite" gender. They can identify as their birth sex or as gender-queer and can dress as another gender occasionally or permanently. Some people feel this lets them express another aspect of their personality whilst others just feel more comfortable in these clothes. Cross-dressing is usually quite fun for everyone to try occasionally. Most people try it for fancy dress or similar at some point in their lives. This doesn't necessarily make them trans though!

Transsexual people are those whose physical and psychological genders are conflicted. This can be quite hard and most transsexual people struggle with questions about the best way to live their lives. Some may decide to live as their biological sex, most however take hormones and/or undergo surgical procedures so they can be seen socially as their preferred gender. Other gender variant people can identify as both sexes and may present themselves in a way that's unusual for most people of their biological sex. They could be androgynous or enjoy being a masculine female or feminine male. Trans people can come from all different types of ethnic and faith backgrounds. Different cultural understandings of trans vary and legal statuses differ between countries.

A Guide for Young Trans People in the UK 2007

Making use of language

As with all identities, language is very important when it comes to trans. It can serve to describe as best as possible the identity of an individual and be very useful in understanding specific needs. In relation to trans identities, some people feel that language should be purposefully slippery or should sit critically or playfully against the binaries that language relies on, for example boy/ girl, masculine/ feminine.

Terms and definitions

Sex: Being male or female or intersex. Sex is the classification of an organism into male or female and refers to the physical anatomy, the congenital state of the male and female, mainly ovaries and testes denoting the reproductive function of the individual. Sex is often understood as “natural”.

Sexism: a prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of sex.

Gender: The concepts, roles or attributes that are associated with sex. Gender refers to the social shaping of an individual as being a girl or a boy, man or woman and is represented through behaviour. For example, the behaviour of being aggressive or passive. Gender is often understood as “cultural”.

Genderism: a prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of gender.

Gender expression: The various and different ways gender gets expressed. We can sometimes understand which gender a person belongs to by their secondary sex characteristics, which begin to develop during adolescence. These are body size and shape, voice type, facial hair etc. Also however, and perhaps more notably, gender is expressed through our choice of clothes, jewellery, watches, make up, haircuts. Even colours express gender (think of pink for girls and blue for boys) and we learn these ‘rules’ from as soon as we are born.

Gender is also expressed through our behaviour. We understand boyish behaviour to be physical and boisterous; where as girlish behaviour is thought to be delicate and still. This is stereotypical and of course does not mean that all girls are girlish and all boys are boyish. Regardless of gender there is flexibility to allow for all sorts of different behaviour to be expressed.

Likewise jobs as well as interests and hobbies (e.g. Sports) are gendered, e.g. caring professions are predominantly female and the engineering and mechanical world is predominantly male. Again this is stereotypical and the world is changing in order that young people, regardless of their gender identity, have more choice as to which line of work they want to enter into.

Gender expressions can be quite complex. They can be explicit or subtle. They can also be, and nearly always are, contradictory. You may have diverse gendered expressions but continue to understand yourself to be the sex that you were assigned at birth. i.e. male or female. Some people, however, find this more difficult to accept and instead find that the sex that they were assigned at birth does not sit easily with their gendered identity and their ability or options in the world to express that gender identity.

Gender normative: Expressing one’s gender through cultural codes and signifiers that fits within the binaries of man and woman, boy and girl. For example, for a girl to wear nail varnish is gender normative or a boy who likes to play football is gender normative.

Non-normative gender: Expressing one’s gender through cultural codes and signifiers that does not fit within the binaries of man and woman, boy and girl. For example, for a boy to wear nail varnish is non-normative gendered behaviour or a girl who likes to play football is non-normative gendered behaviour.

Trans: Trans is an umbrella term that identifies the spectrum of those who feel that their assigned sex at birth does not match or sit easily with their sense of self. It encompasses transsexuals, transgendered people and cross dressers, or anyone who challenges gender norms. It may be that a trans person feels more the “opposite” sex and so chooses to use medical intervention in order to align their body with their mind, their outside appearance with their internal feelings. Cross dressers may dress to express the more masculine or feminine side of themselves, or simply because they find those clothes more comfortable. Trans also is a generic term for the area for trans identities, and is used in academic areas, such as Trans Studies

FTM: Female to Male, also known as trans man

MTF: Male to Female, also known as trans woman

Gender variant: Someone who does not fit into neat categories of boy or girl. This category of trans also allows for a person to identify as outside of, or other to, the identities of male or female. Gender variant can also be known as Gender Queer.

Transphobia: Transphobia is the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as transgendered or transsexual.

Heterosexism: privileging heterosexual lifestyle implicitly or explicitly whilst simultaneously excluding, undermining and/or deleting non-heterosexual and non-normative gendered identities

Other relevant terms can be found in the very useful Stonewall document: *Stand up to Us*

HETEROSEXUALITY is the term given to the expression of attraction and the associated sexual behavior of those who have relationships with members of the opposite gender.

HOMOSEXUALITY is the term given to the expression of attraction and the associated sexual behaviour of those who have relationships with members of their own gender.

BISEXUALITY is the term given to the expression of attraction and the associated sexual behavior of those who have relationships with members of both genders.

HOMOPHOBIA is a fear or dislike of someone who is LGB. It can vary in intensity from passive resentment to active victimization.

HETEROSEXISM describes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual. It refers to a culture in which individuals, families and their lifestyles are categorised according to a heterosexual model. Examples include the assumption that a male pupil will have, or be looking for, a girlfriend, or that a female parent when talking about her partner is referring to a male. Such a culture can make LGB pupils and staff feel marginalised, and not valued or understood within the school community.

For a full copy of the document go to:
http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/PDF/stand_up_for_us_04.pdf

Methodology

The bulk of the report is largely formed by the opinions, thoughts and provocations from 2 focus groups. The first focus group consisted of young trans people aging from 14 to 21 years of age. They were asked lead through a discussion which looked at gathering the experiences in schools around their gender expression and identities. The second focus group consisted of parents. These were both parents of young trans people or parents who identified as trans themselves.

For a list of the questions see Appendix 1.

In the scripts the prefix 'C' and 'J' are the facilitators, Catherine McNamara and Jay Stewart respectively. The other letters represent the participants whose names shall remain confidential.

Both focus groups were audio recorded and sections of the transcript appear throughout this report.

Added to this we will also draw on various other insights as to the experiences of young trans people from the following two projects:

i. Sci:identity – What's the Science of Sex and Gender?

The Sci:identity project was an interdisciplinary arts project funded by the Wellcome Trust, which in, its first phase, engaged young transsexual and transgendered people in a series of creative workshops exploring sex and gender. These workshops culminated in an exhibition of film, performance art, painting, photography and art installation.

We will use the following resources:

- Art works produced by young trans people, including 'Trans Journeys' (a short film) and a 'Zine (collection of writings)
- The Sci:identity Documentary. To find our more about how to access the documentary go to: www.genderedintelligence.co.uk and request by e-mail.
- Sci:identity Evaluation Report. For a copy of the report go to: <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr/pdf/sciidentevalu.pdf>

ii. A Guide for Young Trans People in the UK

Funded by the Department of Health as part of their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group, a Guide for Young Trans People in the UK was created by young trans people for young trans people. Working in conjunction with Gendered Intelligence and GALYIC (Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale) a group aged between 15 and 22 was formed coming from across the UK.

For a copy of the Trans Youth Booklet go to:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_074258

Bullying because of one's gender expression

There are general 'rules' as to how a 'man' or a 'woman' should or does present him or herself, but in today's world we see all around us how various gender expression and presentations are rich and diverse. School, however, can often be a highly policed environment either implemented by the school in terms of uniforms, enforced appropriate presentations such as hair length etc, but also by peers in terms of sub-cultural fashions and trends of masculinities and femininities as well as ideas of what is desirable or attractive to others.

Gendered Bullying

Bullying can be a gendered act in itself, boyish or masculine bullying may be: physical and verbal abuse, whilst girlish or feminine bullying may be: ignoring or excluding people from friendship groups, or speaking badly of people to other friends in order for the person to be ostracised and left out.

Although these types of bullying behaviours might be described as boyish or girlish, this does not mean that girls will be girlish and boys will be boyish.

Bullying can be an act that purposefully sets out to differentiate gender, i.e. that produces boys from girls. By addressing some of the issues within schools and preventing this type of bullying this might widen and enrich the varied forms of gender expressions in the world and allow them to co-exist.

The shaping of identity

It may take time for young people to come to terms with their inner feelings around their own gender identity, or to develop the language that suitably describes themselves, or find other people that feel similarly.

P: Yeah, I mean, as a kid it was worse 'cause I didn't have the words to explain myself, I didn't have the comeback from it, I just looked like a freak and couldn't explain anything. And had no reason why I was being a freak basically.

C: So the more you kind of understood about yourself...

P: The more I understood myself rather than explain to other people and... get no reaction from them 'cause I can actually say 'this is me, there's words for it, there's websites where you can read about people like me and therefore, it's been a lot easier the older I've got.

At primary school a pupil will probably not have the tools to identify as trans, however it was clear that bullying around gender presentations start from a very young age.

F: Primary school; always got told by the older girls that I was in the wrong toilet. To the extent of physical bullying and being scared of being in the toilets. But obviously 'cause I'd been told from birth I'm a little girl, using those toilets. Going in to those toilets and actually missing classes 'cause I was hiding... in the cubicle 'cause I'd heard that the older girls or girls in my class were in the toilets chatting... for about 20 minutes or something, not caring - 'cause they're in like year 6 -that they're missing their class, but I was sitting there in year 4 thinking 'oh my god my teachers going to tell me off again... because I'm like 'oh well I can't leave this cubicle.'

Je: I suppose a precursor to transness is in primary school from the middle to the end, I'd always been more to the feminine than the stereotypical boy like. And you know, the gender policing you get with primary age kids. They basically, I started getting picked on for not being boy enough, not liking football and thinking that fights are fun and stuff, and like, actually wanting to do my work. And so, yeah, just sort of that, just simply not fitting exactly to a stereotype. Peer group would kind of ostracise you and laugh at you and get attacked and stuff.

Coming out as trans has both positive and negative aspects

Coming out is when a person will disclose willingly their trans status to another person, for example, their friend, or parents.

Being 'out' as trans

Being 'out' as trans is a term used similarly to lesbian and gay people being 'out', meaning someone who is open about being trans and it is common knowledge.

Je: I transitioned at university but I was on medical leave at the time so I wasn't attending classes. But I was still socialising around my friends and stuff. I was pretty much just, out, to anyone. And well, you could pretty much for both my friends and strangers, split it half and half between whether people received it positively or negatively. Some people were really brilliant and really supportive and others didn't, like I had problems with bar staff who didn't understand at the time so things had to be explained. But that was resolved.

Sometimes a route towards identifying as trans is to first for people come out as gay or lesbian. This is due to emerging sexual orientations forming alongside gender.

This is an excerpt of a parent telling the story of when her child came out to her.

L: Well B_ first came out to me about two years ago. And I was actually driving in the car, and I'll never forget the conversation. Driving in the car and B_ was in the back with his sister and very young brother and he said 'Mum, I've something to tell you, I think I'm gay. This is, you know, as a girl. So I said, 'Okay that's fine'. And he went mad. 'What is that it?' ...

Then B_ started in a very, very moderate way to self-harm which I believe is something that a lot of young people do, especially a lot of young trans-people from sort of the experiences that B_ has come across. So he started to self-harm and started cutting his arm and things like this. So we did approach the school. Actually they were very, very helpful and found a counsellor very quickly for B_ because they had seen the marks on his arm.

B_ through a friend (who is actually in the next group, X_) B_ sort of said 'Look, there's something else I need to tell you.' And he hadn't told the counselor but he said this is just too hard to tell you, I feel that I can't tell you. But a friend of mine is willing to tell you for me. So we sat together on the sofa one night and Ben phoned X_ and X_ told me on the phone. I was just so relieved. I really was. I thought, oh something dreadful is wrong with my child. That he's going through some unspeakable experience or whatever. When I found out that, you know this is going to sound awful, and I don't mean to dismiss it, but... I was so relieved and I just sat and hugged him and I just thought, I'm so pleased and we can now go forward and we can sort this out and get you to where you can actually make friends and meet people. Up to that point, B_ was very, very isolated.

Being 'outed'.

Being outed means when someone discloses to another that this person is a transsexual or a transgendered person. Derogatory ways of outing someone as trans might be: 'that boy used to be a girl', or is 'that girl is really a boy'. It was commonly felt by the members of the focus group that outing someone is inappropriate and has a direct impact on how the trans person is treated from then on.

W: I know that there was a woman, 'cause I arranged counselling sessions 'cause I needed a certain length of counselling to qualify for hormone treatment. And she's an awful woman, and she's always really hard to deal with... she outed me to her by saying, 'his name is William, but that's not his name, that's just what he wishes to be known by.' ... she just kind of sees it as an assigned name and not something that's genuine because of who I am, just some notion I have... you know, he's not actually W_, he just says he is.

Being Stealth

Being Stealth is a term for those who are not 'out' and chooses not to disclose that information to anyone. Many people choose to be stealth due to the every day difficulties around dealing with transphobic behaviour and attitudes.

R: Alright well, in Winchester where I don't live anymore I went to a 6th form college where there were a load of people who didn't know me, but there were people from my high school there who'd known me as a girl. So, obviously they outed me to other people, which I didn't want. But they were either quite understanding or really horrible about it. But then I left that college because I hated it anyway.

C: Was that a reason why you left?

R: It was actually yeah.

C: Okay. And now you're not out at the college you're at?

R: No, I've told a couple of close friends at my current college but I'm not out, no I'm stealth.

This is an excerpt from a trans parent of children who are currently attending a school in the UK:

M (trans parent): I have young children. They are ten and nine years old. And the twins are five. Obviously it's the other way around. It's not the children who are transgendered but both parents. So that makes for quite an interesting consolation especially since during the time when they first came into school we were living in transition. And we were of course not living openly because you can't live it any other way. I couldn't have dreamt of passing then. And looking like a man with a wife looking like a man wouldn't have quite worked out in a social context. So we had to be out about it to the school. To everybody really. To the neighbourhood because it can't be avoided. You always get everybody passing rumours around so attack is the best defence there. If you spread truth no one is going to spread rumours... What that caused our children was that they literally had no friends. Quite a few bullies either beating up on them or taking their stuff and throwing it away. What

children do at that age. They were like six and seven then. So it wasn't really an outright transphobic bullying because children at that age wouldn't be able to define it. It was just being different. Rather having different parents that caused it but it was in that sense transgender related.

Well some of the comments that we got were I'd say were quite bad, quite hurtful. Like people saying that the authorities should take our kids away. And how could we do that to the kids... And also we weren't really a part of the social network. We knew people on the streets to say 'Hi' to, and meeting them at school. There was no further interaction. We were never invited anywhere. Nobody ever followed up our invitations. The children's birthday parties were usually quite lonely affairs when one or two children coming out of eight or ten children that were invited. Often times when children were supposed to come over to our house, parents would come and it was obvious that they were looking us over.

The natural way that our children can handle transgenderism in all its forms just clashed with the narrow-minded attitudes of the parents and their children. To the point that we could obviously see that some children we're obviously indoctrinating their children against our children.

We didn't just switch cities. We didn't switch neighbourhoods or anything. We switched countries for crying out loud... we don't want to come out again.

One of the parent's concerns about trans people being stealth is that those young people coming out look to other trans people for support and information, but instead may continue to feel isolated when trans people choose not to be out or part of their community.

L (Parent): One of the reasons why I've made sure that I've come to support him at groups like Sci:identity project... because he really needs that reassurance at this point, that you're not on your own. And that is very easy to feel that way. Northern Ireland is such a small community and although there are transgender people out there, it's so hard to find them. Because as soon as possible, they will go... You never hear about them. And I can understand that. I can understand why. But at the same time it means everyone else who is coming to this as a new idea to explore for themselves is very isolated and vulnerable. Even more vulnerable than they possibly may be. But within the group next door, there's some great friendships going on.

Gender expression and sexual orientations

Sometimes people's gender expression might be linked to their sexual orientation. Homophobia and homophobic bullying can also affect trans and gender variant people, because sometimes gay and lesbian people can be identified as gay and/or lesbian through their own gendered expressions.

L (Parent): I think in a lot of ways in school he (L's child) was isolated because people thought he was gay. But a gay girl. I think in a lot of ways, Northern Ireland isn't anywhere near as progressive as the London scene and the scene that a lot of his friends have come across. So they don't even put together the idea of transgenderism. It's not there in their psyche. If you're different then you're gay. That's it. That's as far as they've got with their concepts. So a lot of the time it was, 'Oh you're a dyke' and the name-calling. And you're this and you're that and pushing and shoving. Bullied at school in that respect.

Comments that question others' masculinity or femininity – as well as those that refer directly to sexuality – are also frequent and damaging. If someone appears to be a masculine girl or feminine boy it may be that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or it may be because they identify as trans and their sexual identity is not relevant here.

Bullying because of someone's gender expression can be linked to homophobia and heterosexism, therefore transphobic-bullying strategies might already exist in homophobic bullying policy.

Here are Stonewall's definitions:

“WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIA AND HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING?”

Homophobia is a dislike or fear of someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). At its most benign it involves passive resentment of LGB men and women. In its most destructive form it involves active victimisation. Such attitudes can also affect anyone who is perceived to be homosexual or who does not conform to stereotypical standards of masculine or feminine behaviour.

Challenging and responding to homophobia will also help address concerns regarding gender-based bullying, and stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity (see online resource 9 for further information).

It does not just affect young people who identify as LGB. In schools, homophobic bullying can directly affect any young person whose life choices, interests or needs do not conform to accepted gender norms, as well as adult members of the school community who are LGB, and anyone who may have friends or relatives who are LGB. This can, in turn, affect the whole school community by giving out the message that bullying is tolerated, and that the school environment is unsafe.”

Stonewall recommends:

POLICY DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

ALWAYS REMEMBER... Do not accept or leave unchallenged any homophobic language. As well as direct references to a person's sexuality, these might include comments such as: 'Come on then girls' (said to a group of boys).

This comment relates to gender policing where a 'boy' is called a 'girl', but we might also consider these comments as sexist as the implication is that to be a girl is less than being a boy and therefore degrading.

Transphobic behaviour

Transphobic behaviour is an act or series of acts which expresses a dislike or fear for a trans person. This can be an array of acts from verbal to physical abuse. An act can also be classed as transphobic when a trans person is faced with discrimination from either staff, or fellow students or from within the system of the institute itself.

People can face discrimination because of their transgender or transsexual identity or because of their non-normative gender presentation.

Examples of transphobic bullying

In the focus group discussion there were particular examples of bullying that were construed as explicitly transphobic, in that the bullying took place precisely because of the trans status of the person involved. Experiences of being bullied came from students, as well as members of staff, including sometimes at very senior levels.

By other students:

R: At my college, there were some people, only about 3 lads, who would deliberately call me my old name, even though they knew that I wanted to be called Ricky. And they used to ask me really horrible questions like how big my dick was, and there was just nothing I could say back to that, so...

I had a couple of friends who didn't react very well, saying it was gross, saying it was unnatural, unchristian... and just stuff like that.

X: I've had stuff like, the usual sort of comments, 'tranny', 'shemale' etc. And you know like people pointing and laughing and yelling stuff at me....

By teachers:

R: Well one teacher said, when I was at school living as a female. 'I sometimes think, 'is there something IN you that makes you do the things you do''.

Ju: I was always on my own a lot, and just sort of yeah, something wasn't right. I remember getting told that 'you'd get less hassle if you were more normal'.

C: Okay. Who was that?

Ju: One of the teachers at my primary school.

By senior members of staff:

W: Yeah. For instance at the start of the year, obviously I hadn't had any hassle yet, 'cause it was like the first day. But he took me in to the office and said to me, 'you do realise that people, you know, in this area of the country aren't very accepting of this kind of thing, so you know, expect to get hassled in school'. And he goes 'in your daily life what toilets and changing rooms do you use?' And I goes 'always the male ones.' And he goes 'maybe for your own benefit you should use the disabled toilets from now on in this college.' And then I said you know, 'I won't be doing that, because I've never had any problems with the male toilets

whatsoever.’ And then basically he got down and goes ‘well have you had any operations yet?’ How is that relevant to what facilities you use? And then he goes ‘well if you haven’t done anything then its ammunition for people [to] not take you seriously and say you’re not genuinely your own gender yet, if you haven’t had this operation.’

C: Who was that?

W: It as the vice principal of the, it’s a further education college.

Bullying has different modes.

One of the conversations was about use of the internet and mobile phones as a space where bullying and harassment takes place.

X: And there’s being cyber stalked by this guy on the internet, erm from my university.

Ju: Yeah, and it can be anonymous. There’s someone who’s leaving anonymous posts on my journal which I really should disable but I haven’t, saying that I only hang around with trans people because I’m a chaser, and I’m blatantly not trans, and stuff like that.

... Yeah, it’s obviously someone who knows me, and it just... it’s worse that they know me and they want to be anonymous... they’re just, ‘yeah I’m just going to be randomly abusive because I can, and not explain myself and not listen if you want to explain why’.

Je: I’ve had the opposite situation really, rather than being anonymous, the person was actually on a committee I was on doing similar sort of stuff, but they were also doing it in person in the bar and stuff as well as online. So I knew them directly and erm they were doing it on the society forum, which I was the administrator of. So I was able to get the complete logs and give them to the police. And I’d given this person calm diplomatic warnings before, but they just continued. And it was weird. It was like they had some sort of death wish to get the police involved.

C: If you get that sort of cyber bullying situation going on, is there enough stuff in place within schools or colleges or universities to stop that or deal with it or do you feel like your necessary action is to go to the police?

X: My university didn’t care so. I printed it [logs from on line space] out and took it to the police.

C: Do you know what happened?

X: The policeman arrested him and basically got him to confess, and if he hadn’t of confessed he would have gone to court and got in a lot of trouble. And he got off with a warning just ‘cause he confessed and said he wouldn’t do it again. So hopefully he was scared in to being smarter.

Getting hassle by the way that you look

B: I'm out to a couple of friends in my school but I still go to an all girls' school, so... I mainly get hassled for the way I look, as opposed to being hassled 'cause they know I'm not the same as everyone else. Well, they know that but that's not why I just get hassled 'cause I've got short hair and I look like a dyke basically.... The trans words have been like, the trans abuse has been thrown around a bit, and they seem to think it only goes one way though, they think there's only male to females, they don't know there's the other way round so they don't identify me as that so much.

Ju: I do get hassled for being weird and I have had, well there's one guy at college... and he's said a couple of times 'oh do you think you're a man, do you want to be a boy?' and I just sit there and go 'I'm not going to answer that, I'm just going to walk away.'

L (Parent): So a lot of the time it was, 'Oh you're a dyke' and the name-calling. And you're this and you're that and pushing and shoving. Bullied at school in that respect... But I know that you were talking earlier about the difference between trans-gender bullying and homophobic bullying. But really the bullying that B_ I think has experienced up-to-date has been homophobic bullying. Where people will look at him. It's heart breaking for him because then he thinks, I don't pass. I'll never pass

In terms of presentation and being appropriately presentable school and university policies often insist on and reproduce a gender divide. Single sexed schools can implement gender codes into the school uniform policy, for example stipulating that hair cuts on boys can not to touch the collar or girls hair cannot being too short.

B: Yeah, first day back to school this year after I, in the summer, kind of took a psycho attack and shaved half my hair off. And I came back on the first day and I'd come back on the wrong day for the day my year was starting. I went to the office to ask where my class was and the teacher said 'you need to go and see the principal, your hair is ridiculous, you don't look like you should go to this school, you don't look like you belong here.' I basically got told I don't, it's been constantly like that even with teachers and everything, I've been sent to the vice principal for having short hair. It's just purely 'cause how I choose to cut my hair I'm getting penalised by staff that don't even know me.

C: So that was an office administrator?

B: Yeah.

Ju: I've had a teacher, well it was a couple of weeks ago, threaten to suspend me when I cut my hair like this... What pissed me off is we're a mixed college and there's boys in my class with shorter hair than me.

Single sexed spaces

We focused some of the discussion in areas where gender dividing happens and discussed how that impacts on those identifying as trans. Of course some schools are entirely single sexed spaces and sometimes trans people attend them.

Single sexed schools

L (Parent): It's actually an all-girls school. So a nightmare. But by the time that Ben came out to me, I couldn't take him away from that school. I tried but I couldn't take him away because no other school would accept him at that point because he had already started his GCSE courses. So we were stuck with the extra year at the all-girls school

Toilets

F: I always got bullied for being in the wrong toilets, and they'd always say 'the boys toilets are next door' or down the corridor or whatever it was. And I'd be like totally baffled by that point going 'erm, what?' and then I'd get bashed around a bit for being like, just questioning... the gender norms and roles as a little girl.

E: I just had a few amusing incidents of being locked in the boys toilets and having them scream at me from the outside, 'learn to be a real boy!' and things like that.

C: So they took it upon themselves to teach you a lesson somehow.

E: Yeah, it was quite odd really, 'cause you'd expect them to do it the other way round.

C: So almost by suggesting somehow implicitly or explicitly that you might want to be a boy, they're like 'alright then, come on then.'

E: Yeah, that kind of thing.

C: So quite violent behaviour.

E: Quite up front about it.

Sports

Sports are another area where the gender division of boys and girls is explicitly made.

R: I really wanted to play rugby at school. I tried to get a teacher to set up an extra curricular girls rugby thing. She refused. So I was made to do really lame stuff like netball and aerobics. I used to have a convenient period about twice a month to get out of aerobics.

Not giving all students the opportunity to do the sport they wish based on their gender is understood as sexist. Although some equal opportunities have been implemented policy wise, it was experienced by the group members that they are not always carried out.

E: When I was about to join secondary school, we had a meeting about sports. The headmaster specifically said that girls and boys could do exactly the same thing. But when it actually got to it, it was very much, there was one club that got closed down in the end, that was like touch rugby for girls. You had to like netball and all those different things. And the uniform was all, you had to wear the hockey skirt and everything.

C: Did it prevent you from doing sport would you say?

E: I probably would have preferred doing sport if I could do rugby or football or something. But netball, and you know, hockey and all these things. It was just cringey.

C: So you did PE, but would it be true to say you didn't do much extra curricular, joint team stuff.

E: I pretty much avoided PE. I don't think I would have if I'd had the chance to do anything that I wanted to do. It seemed a bit odd that it was all so sexist.

N: Primary school was really good... [Yet] I think there's a law or something where you get to a certain age, and you can't do contact sports, like mixed sex or something. But I was on the rugby team in primary school, and I think like the worst thing about when I went to secondary school was there no way I could continue to play it. And also in year 7 I remember there was a football team and I wasn't allowed on it entirely 'cause of like, sex. So it was just like, ridiculous really. It's kind of annoying 'cause they don't really like, give opportunities for like, males and females to do the same things. They separate all the time and it's ridiculous really 'cause it's not like your gender really dictates your sport preference or anything. It just seems really stupid.

Cl: It's perhaps more a matter of sexism rather than due to transphobia.

Although it was decided these inequalities were sexist, it was also agreed that this had a direct impact on trans identified and gender variant pupils and students.

F: It's about sexism, I'll agree, but it's about taking into consideration, you may be a young trans person, even before they've worked it out for themselves that this might be the avenue they go down. Talking about sports like, we had to go swimming. I was at a girl's school. We had to go swimming every fortnight or every week or whatever it was, and I basically just came up with every excuse in the book to avoid going swimming every single time. And when we did it was the most horrific experience of my life or whatever. And yeah, I basically gave up all sports that I could do from an early age at like 13 or 14, which then made me unfit and in horror of my body and all these kind of things. So even all the sports I could have done at school 'cause we had a girls football team, and a girls rugby team and stuff. The sports I could have done I was then not fit enough to do 'cause I'd stopped doing sports and stopped acknowledging that it was something I could do... 'Cause I remember, if you didn't do the sports session after all the 20 million excuses that you could find, you were just like, left to sit and read. So then you're being inactive because you're opting out of a sport that you have to

then expose your body to. You become inactive. They don't say 'well okay, why don't we do a football class or a set of running sessions.' No, it was total inactivity. So then you get this projection of being lazy, and then you internalise that, and you become it.

PE uniform

B: My school, the uniform for PE is the biggest challenge. It's always no matter what sport it is; it's a hockey skirt. And I refuse to wear it so I went up to the teacher I mentioned earlier, and I said 'I refuse to wear this, and I will refuse to do PE unless I get to wear the jogging trousers.' So I got to do that and then my teachers gave me a load of hassle 'cause I've been made fuss of. I wanted to do football 'cause I was really good at football in primary school, and there was no football team, and they were like 'if you want one, go over and play in 'Inst', because 'Inst' is the boys version of our school. And then when I got there, I basically got told to sod off home 'cause they wouldn't have a girl playing on their team.

C: When you say you got hassled, after you'd been allowed formally by one teacher to wear alternative uniform, what hassle did you get?

B: I got told that 'oh, what makes you think that you're better than everyone else? Don't think you're better than everyone else just 'cause you got to wear this. It's only 'cause you made a fuss.' I basically got told I should've just shut my mouth and done what I was told.

C: And was that the PE teacher?

B: PE teacher and the sports elitists in our school.

Experiences of changing rooms

R: Changing rooms were a complete nightmare:

[Agreement from group]

R: I just felt really self-conscious, about sort of what underwear I was wearing...

Je: Similar to the changing rooms issue, on mass forced showering after sports...

[Collective groan]

Je: ...completely naked, in a group, is WRONG.

For those who are stealth, the changing room can be an anxious time.

R: I'm not actually out, but I play hockey, well I used to. And of course I go in the blokes changing rooms. And it is quite, you know. I'm kind of having to face the wall and be as quick as I can so people can't see there's... nothing in your boxers. I'm okay with chest, I mean people have looked at my nipple piercing and not noticed a thing. But you do feel more self-conscious than usual. You just want to get it over and done with and get out of there really.

Nurturing sporting talent amongst trans and gender variant people

Some of the members of the focus group did have positive experiences of school, and found it to be a place where they actually thrived.

Ju: Sport was one of the few things my secondary school was actually good for. I think 'cause until your third year it was compulsory and you did netball. We still did hockey, which was a contact sports so I liked it. Once you got to your 5th form there was a range you could choose from. I think they've actually brought that in for the juniors now as well. And girl's rugby was on that, so I did girls rugby and I'm still playing for a rugby club now, which is great fun... And the girls who did rugby actually did train with the boys quite a lot of the time. So it was quite inclusive and quite good.

P: I'm a sports geek and... I've no patience for girls who are rubbish, and I don't want to be playing with them. I want to be playing with lads who are a challenge. And I still have that same opinion... Basically girls being rubbish at sport and being forced to do PE with girls who were rubbish and didn't want to be there did my head in when I was like 'Well there's lads I can play with, and gave a good game with, and they actually want to be here. You lot don't want to be here'

P: They could make PE a lot more bearable for a lot more people if they changed it just a little bit.

Cl: It's one of the main areas where there's so much of a gender dichotomy in terms of how they split the sports lessons.

Where gender expression and transgenderism may get addressed in the school curriculum

C: Lets think about subjects where you might talk about kind of difference, diversity, or different people... more consciously. So I'm thinking of things like citizenship now. Sex and relationships education now, PSHE, (personal, social and health education)... Life skills.

Some of that general stuff that kind of, the curriculum is there to say, 'let's look at the world and all of the people that are in it' and you might touch on sexuality, you might touch on race and ethnicity, you might touch on things. Does, has transgenderedness come up ever, formally, ever?

Cl: Not at all.

N: Should you even be asking that?

Cl: I must say actually, in my French classes, A level. We did actually have a unit, not on transgenderism but quite a large unit on homosexuality and prejudice and that sort of thing, which was actually quite encouraging.

B: My school, the only thing we've had, is biology. You get the standard booklet on STDs and they go in fine print at the bottom, they had some ridiculous statistic like it's 90% of HIV cases come from men having anal sex with men. I was like 'excuse me?' And that's the only thing we ever got. And then, they explained the biology of people, like Ricky said 'men have willies, women don't.' And I was like 'excuse me what about the ones that do?' and she's like 'they don't exist!'

R: In philosophy and the ethics of religion, which is an AS subject I did, we were doing sexual ethics. And it was one of the topics that got mentioned as 'we might discuss this' but actually we didn't...

Je: I'm a kind of activist and legislation geek. About literally a year ago I was working, studying the sex and relationships education and the PSE policies of my local council all the schools in it. And yeah, again, completely zip, nothing. You even had some schools who were still flatly not doing sex education beyond the catholic churches opinion, i.e. not using condoms... And, when you actually look at how it's all set up, with the guidance policy. Nothings mandated. It's all just suggesting. It's all wishy washy and vague. It's like they don't even, in any of the official guidance from UK or Welsh governments, mention bisexuality existing. They only mention homosexuality. And complete denial that people have a sexual orientation below 16.

The importance of good staff

In the focus group discussion it was established that strong intervention that establishes zero tolerance of transphobic and gender related bullying by staff was greatly received.

R: At my first college the vice-principal was absolutely brilliant when I reported any transphobic bullying. She got this guy in to her office and got him to admit that what he was doing, which was calling me my old name, was hassle. And she said if he did it a second time he'd get suspended... they were very much on my side, and very supportive.

Many staff that aim to help trans pupils and students also experience a fast learning curve and are forced to actively seek out information single-handedly. This knowledge is deemed an investment for future trans people that may come through the school or university.

B: There's just this one teacher in my school, who I think you've been in contact with, and she's just been brilliant the whole time. If anyone ever says anything to me she'll go and speak to them. And she actually puts herself on the stuff like the PFC (Press for Change) mailing list and stuff to help educate herself about this stuff. And she found the PDF of the booklet that you guys just created, and she's got it in her office now. She says if anyone like you ever comes to this school I'll be able to help them.

There is though understandably a lack of confidence in teachers in dealing with trans identifying students. This is probably due to a huge gap in knowledge.

Ju: I've kind of told my tutor at college and he's basically gone 'Umm, err, okay' and sort of ignores it because it's not really in his realm of 'I can understand this and this is what happens in real life'. He seems like 'This doesn't happen, no, no, I'm just going to forget about it. It's not going to happen.' So erm, he's nice and wants to be supportive but hasn't got a clue about anything.

The importance of good counselling staff

There was a request by members of the focus group for good counselling staff

F: Having a counsellor be trained on all the issues so you can go and sit down and talk to a counsellor confidentially. I don't even remember there being a counsellor at my secondary school, or primary school. The only person I talked to in my primary school was the first aid nurse, who bandaged up your arm

R: I think every school should have a counsellor who's just trained in everything, like F said. I mean it's not too much to expect. It's actually the bare minimum, I think.

Responsibilities from Schools

Having a trans student is best dealt with working in dialogue and gaining resources between parents, student and members of staff.

L (Parent): Actually the school had taken on the majority of it. They have been, I have to say, tremendous. I feel that they have been really on the ball with everything that they have done for B_. When I first started talking to the school it was one of the senior teachers in the school. Very pleasant lady to chat to and I didn't feel that it was my place to explain B_'s situation to her completely. She just needed to know that he needed help. And needed help in as much as counseling and talking things over with someone in strict confidence. That's what he needed. She was very quick on the ball. Got that sorted very, very quickly and as a result B_ has had six months of counseling through the school, specifically through the school... The self-harm actually stopped very, very quickly after that was arranged which was great.

B_ has actually come to that teacher himself and said: 'I am a transgendered boy.' We actually printed off the little booklet and he took it into school and 'if you ever have another child who comes through your doors like me give them this. Or at least let them have a read and tell them it's there so that was all good'. We just had a really good experience with the school.

Responsibilities from Universities

Je: I've had just, random strangers giving me hassle. But one person just kept harassing me so I had to get the police involved on that. And the really annoying thing on that is both the university, well, while the police were really supportive, the university and students union couldn't give a toss. They said they'd do something about it but then didn't follow up. They even refused to hand over the CCTV tapes at one time.

C: So they were not helpful and they were actually obstructive as well.

Je: Yeah.

X: The same thing happened to me with the university, I gave them all the same information I gave to the police to them, and they said that they'd get the guy and you know, deal with him in the university and they didn't do shit.

Je: I kind of knew the background of the law, and the background of the union and universities equal ops policies 'cause I'd been involved in the students union and actually ensured that gender identity and gender expression were included. The unions we got, the university was a lot harder. But... after consulting with [inaudible] to check it was as serious as I thought it was, I took it to the police and the students union. The police wanted to deal with it seriously, but the CPS, as usual, weren't interested so it just got an unofficial not written not reported warning. Students union completely shocked me in that despite having this policy and it being fairly well known amongst people involve din the union, they said that because I hadn't informed the person of the policy and how it affected him prior to him starting the abuse, he

could claim innocent ignorance. Even though the policy don't recognise that as an excuse. So they just, what was it, he had to stop going to a society and avoid contact with me. And that was it.

LGBT Societies

LGBT Societies in universities have an impotent role to play in providing a positive and safe space for trans people to come out and gain support within the university. Experiences of the young trans people in the focus group were mixed. It was thought that trans issues often gets left out of LGBT student agenda and LGB peers are perhaps unconfident in dealing with some of the issues that trans people face.

Je: at the university the LGBT society, which actually on me coming out as trans added the T... They were very supportive. They're obviously limited in any authority on what they can do, but they're certainly, you know, peer support, as well as extra bodies to put pressure on others.

The importance of diversity and equality officers:

Cl: I transitioned 4 months ago at my university so people knew me pre-transition as well. It's really been a quite positive experience, because the staff made the effort to have a diversity advisor come in to explain what the nature of my transition was, what it would entail, so...

J: Who did they explain it to?

Cl: The classes I was in. And everyone has been really positive about it and I think the worst reaction if there is one is people not quite understanding why I was doing it... but I've had no sort of negative reactions.

J: And the diversity officer, did she or he understand what 'trans' was?

Cl: Yeah, 'cause she's dealt with several cases of it.

Knowledges of policy

In the focus group there was a discussion about people's experiences and knowledges of policies in place to protect all young people from bullying. It was generally experienced that people's knowledges were brought out on a need to know basis in that anyone experiencing bullying were forced to get to know what policies were in place to protect them. Instead it was thought that all students and staff should be made aware of policies against bullying. It was also noted that some of the young trans people got actively involved in their school and university's policy making in relation to equal opportunities.

C: Do you know of... what policies around kind of protecting people are? So if it's an anti-bullying policy or an equal opportunities policy, whatever the kind of structures are that staff or other students or whoever it is could rely on. Have you got an awareness of what they are and have you ever had to get to know that policy, like with a member of staff or just reading it to yourself? Have you got involved in that?

P: Never been told where to find them.

N: My college had one. It just included race, sexuality, stuff like that. It didn't have anything about, well obviously, it included sex in terms of like, sexism, but there was nothing about gender or gender identity and expression in it.

Cl: Our University actually did but it was actually just for staff and recruitment, you know discrimination in those terms. There wasn't one specifically for students.

B: My school, well, it's, the only thing they cover is religion, 'cause it's in Northern Ireland, sectarianism. And race. That's the only thing it covers. Anything else they just say 'oh we'll talk to them'. And then they just say, 'so and so has told us this about you', and then it just gets worse. And that's the only thing the school does.

Ju: My college did sort of, say, there is an equal opportunities thing in place, but we didn't get told anything about it. And it's not in our student handbook either. But erm, my secondary school only got homophobia put on it 'cause I sort of went and lobbied the head teacher and deputy head, and was like 'you know your policy doesn't mention this, and erm, that's bad'. You know, it was during LGBT history month and I was just like being a little one-person activist. And I got it put on the PSHE syllabus as well which made me rather happy. But yeah, my school is rather backward.

C: But you made a difference, that's quite good.

Ju: Yeah but I don't know whether it actually filtered through. It's physically there but I don't know if it's being used at all.

Naming acts as transphobic

L (Parent): They see that this person is different, and therefore the difference creates the phobia.

In the focus group there was discussion around the benefits of naming acts as transphobic or not. Labelling bullying around non-normative gender presentations as transphobic can be a problem in that not all young people experiencing this bullying not currently or indeed ever identifying themselves as trans. These people will not be able to identify their bullying experience as transphobic.

N: I don't think using the word 'trans' is necessarily productive. I think... if they had... measures in place, you know, gender expression or gender identity, report that bullying. 'Cause I remember when I was in high school, I didn't really think I had a legitimate form of bullying to report. I thought, well, obviously it's my fault, for looking like a weirdo. But I didn't know that it was something... I didn't have the words to explain it. I didn't know whether it would be taken seriously. I think if they just said, you know, this is not acceptable. It could be this, this or this that could happen to you and you have to report it, etc. You know, that'd be good.

Et: 'cause it's not like just trans people get gender bullying, 'cause it's expression.

B: So if you label it trans then maybe people will think 'well I'm not trans so therefore it must not mean me'.

Ju: Well maybe it's just self expression, 'cause there's loads of people who are bullied for even, lesbians and people who are just not quite in the right gender box, or just don't look, and people bully them 'cause they think they're trans and they're not.

C: Yeah, I think a lot of the homophobic bullying that's called that, kind of, stems from, well you're a boy, but you're not the right kind of boy. And that's gender phobic, isn't it? That's just non-normative gender expression stuff.

Bullying produces different types of behaviours from unhappy students

The effects of bullying has a variety of impacts on young trans people and produces a variety of behaviours, from being shy and introverted, to playing truant, to sometimes being disruptive themselves in their behaviour.

X: I've had abuse, I even had to get the police involved with one person who was giving me crap through the internet from the university. Even in first year before I came out, ironically I was known as the 'scary weird bi guy' and apparently I frightened people with my masculine energy....I wonder why I scowled a lot

P: The teachers knew that I was basically the butt of a lot of bullying.... Even though I threw the first punch, it's like, people wind you up all the time and since sometimes you do just fly off the handle.

Ju: I sort of got in trouble 'cause I used to lash out at people being bastards. And I was the one who'd always get in trouble for it... if I threw the first punch... it was usually me. I got sent to anger management classes aged 6.

It affects others too

Trans people themselves are not the only students who suffer from transphobic acts. A parent told us of how her other child is being bullied in school as a consequence of B_ coming out as trans.

L (Parent): it's been tricky for B_'s sister, who goes to the same school, and people who are in B_'s class have sisters in S_'s class as well and they have picked on S_ and bullied S_, and have had to go back to the teacher who organized the counseling, 'Look it's spreads wider.' B_ is being much more confident, much more settled now because we have got something happening for him, but S_ is now experiencing this where it is kicking down the line.

I think they possibly felt that S_ was an easier target as well because she's younger and she was a bit more vulnerable, and didn't have that bravery to come out and say you know...

C: Was it reported as bullying or was there any kind of formal enquiry into that?

L: There was. As soon as I actually brought that up with the teacher she had [unclear comment] that there were three particular students involved in a couple of incidents of pushing in corridors. Just saying really horrible, really nasty things. And she brought them aside and said look you know somebody is very upset in your class. And she was very non-descript. They know what's been going on, exactly. So she brought them in and she said, 'Girls, I really hoping that you had nothing to do with this. And if I hear that you have...' And she just left it very open with them and since then it has settled down very, very much.

Issues around reporting bullying

B: If you're reporting anything... you need to have the option of being anonymous. Because most the time, I don't know what it's like in other schools, but in my school especially, if you got to, you have to go to Miss ___ and say 'so and so did this at this time, and they said this and this and this'. And that person then gets pulled in, and gets told 'We've had a report.' And you're the only person that was there, so then you get locked in the toilets and get the shit kicked out of you 'cause you reported the bullying. So it just gets worse.

Et: If you report bullying they tend to make it your responsibility... They tend to suggest you're provoking it somehow, and suggest you change yourself to deal with the bullying. And I think that's quite negative on the person who gets that advice, because it's like, makes them feel responsible for what's happening. And also, when you do report bullying, it usually does get worse 'cause they just tell the bully that you've reported it. They never follow up or ask 'has it stopped?' They just don't really want to deal with it.

W: The thing I always notice with colleges and stuff is that if you do mention you've been getting hassle, you know, they're not interested in taking people aside and talking to them. They always take you aside and suggest things you can change.

Impacts of implementing bullying policies around non-normative gender expressions

It was recognised in the focus group what the importance of educating people about trans issues in schools is.

F: Young people that are in primary, secondary, colleges and further education now, if they become exposed to things like policies...or educated on these matters, that they potentially make the people that are going to be out in every day society in the next 5, 10, to 20 years. And if they're then outside because policies have happened on the inside from education side of things, then you might start to feel safer, outside that. Work places as well, yeah.

A parent's concern:

L (parent): That's certainly something that I worry about with Ben, especially when hopefully he going to integrate fully into college and is sort of saying... "I'm not going to tell anyone about my gender status. That's going to be my own private affair."...

My obvious worry is about forming relationships and the possible success he's going to have in those relationships. As I said earlier, who do you tell, what point do you tell them and how successful are those relationships going to be? But that's a worry that all parents have for their children.

And so in terms of college, I suppose that's the point where he's going to have to do that on a large scale.

Looking forward

We asked the group what measures can be put in place to prevent bullying because of non-normative gender expressions and what would make a big difference to the quality of their school and university lives.

R: I've got to say, that if this was done in sex education in year 6, and in year 9 and all that, people would understand it more, and therefore they wouldn't be as afraid of it. Therefore there'd be less bullying. But, transsexualism, and homosexuality, are just seemingly pushed under the carpet.

N: Well, if they had a PSHE lesson on it. And on homosexuality as well. I mean, like, you know the Sci:identity school presentations. If every school had that, and everyone in year 9 or something had that, that workshop, then it'd probably be much better. And also, putting the gender identity and expression in the equality thing.

Je: Yeah, like you were saying, the diversity training for teachers, teaching staff. Preferably in a format where they actually meet a trans person, so it's normalised...

Je: A lot of trans people sort of, have the realisation but not the words and concepts...

Ju: You can get children's books that explain trans issues though.

C: What about, how early to educate teachers? They train of course, so, is that a good place.

X: Educate them when they're kids.

N: Yeah, I mean, I think, if they put 1% of the effort they put in to, you know, racial, kind of, equality, and you know, stopping like, racist bullying, in to you know, gender identity stuff. It'd be way better.

Je: As a possible sort of minimum framework idea, they could simply have like, a central hotline or office in the department of education, for dealing with the issues of having a trans student. Or gender based discrimination. And just circulate that number widely to both the staff and the students at all schools... So you don't necessarily need the expertise in the school.

Ju: Even if you can't have a counsellor at school, just books and literature at every school, 'cause I remember sort of coming out as queer, I was rather geeky. I went to the library and was looking through and trying to find something, and there was absolutely nothing. And it was, yeah, it was really disheartening

that you can't find anything in the wider world, and then I found QYA, [Queer Youth Alliance] which was really great.

P: I think that kids and staff who are going to give people hassle for their gender presentation or other similar things like that... the bullies need to know what the sanctions are otherwise they'll just continue doing it... and knowing that the sanctions are going to be carried out.

Ju: When there is someone who's obviously getting hassle and presenting differently, don't wait for them to come to the teacher... if the teacher sort of makes it known, 'I am here, I can help you'. Because quite a lot of people are too scared to go to a teacher, because 'oh they might not understand, they're going to be even more critical, they're from a different generation, they're going to be even more closed minded and conservative'. Quite often that isn't the case, but that's how it appears to a young child.

Et: I think even general bullying policies, if they were put in place they'd help trans people and gender variant people.

R: I had the idea of, you know in schools there are some teachers who have first aid certificates, and it's like 'in this building the nearest first aid certificate holder is blah blah blah'. Well you could have one teacher who's trained in dealing with trans issues. So whenever any kind of transphobic bullying got reported to another teacher, it could be referred to someone who'd been trained in it. And they could be given a presentation, you know, like the one we got at Sci:identity. Which was actually really good, you know, emphasis on 'it's not a fetish, it's not a whim, it's not a lifestyle choice.' 'Cause those are the most common misconceptions people have about it. So if they just got one teacher in a school trained, they could be like the manager of transphobic bullying.

Je: I'd just like to record an objection to a word, 'bullying'. Because I think it continues to entrench the state of denial that schools and the government are in about what happens in schools. Which, in any other situation, would be called 'abuse', or 'harassment', and would be a criminal offence, which the police would deal with. But because it's in schools, it's just 'oh it's just kids being kids' and they need to get serious and start actually recognising when abusive crimes are happening and erm, you should have the same protection there as you would in the home. It's like if a parent did something to a kid, if social services found out they'd be straight in. Another kid does it to them, school doesn't care.

Summary

This report is a preliminary look into the extent of bullying around non-normative gender presentations. It demonstrates:

- There is a lack of general support for trans people and for parents and siblings
- There is a lack of general understandings by teachers, heads, and health professionals in schools.
- There is a lack of confidence from staff around tackling gender policing amongst peers.
- Trans awareness raising needs to be implemented through to all members of your staff and governors through courses, training sessions and policymaking.
- There is a need to establish some teaching tools in order to address and intervene.
- There is a need to ensure that all members of the school and college community understand about the nature of bullying around gender expressions and more importantly where the school stands on the issue.
- There is a need to establish shared responsibility. Countering bullying around gender expressions is the responsibility of the whole of the school, college and university.
- There needs to be a procedure for reporting bullying of trans and gender variant young people
- There needs to be an inclusion of trans and gender variant people into all bullying school policies
- There is a need to map and research the extent of transphobic experiences in schools and the impacts that they have.

Signposts

Mermaids
GIREs
Gender Trust
FTM London

Fflag who offer nationwide support for parents of lesbian and gay children they currently feel unqualified to deal with trans issues. This is common across the LGB service provision, even when the organisation may have made steps to include T and become LGBT.

Queer Youth (formerly known as Queer Youth Alliance) is an internet message board.

About Gendered Intelligence

Gendered Intelligence is a growing organisation that works with both young trans and non-trans people as well as with professionals who work with young people.

Gendered Intelligence is interested in nurturing the creative talents of young trans people, and by offering them a platform in which to express and develop their gendered identity in a way that sits comfortably for them.

Gendered Intelligence also delivers trans training and workshops to professionals who work with trans and non-trans youth.

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