

Report of the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills

Update on Stonewall Challenge

Summary

1. This paper provides a summary update on the work of the City of York Council (CYC) Anti Bullying Strategy Group, led by the Senior Adviser Behaviour Attendance and Safety, to tackle homophobic bullying in York schools.

Background

2. Stonewall was founded in 1989 by a small group of women and men who had been active in the struggle against Section 28 of the Local Government Act. Section 28 was an offensive piece of legislation designed to prevent the so-called 'promotion' of homosexuality in schools; as well as stigmatising gay people it also galvanised the gay community. The aim from the outset was to create a professional lobbying group that would prevent such attacks on lesbians, gay men and bisexuals from ever occurring again. Stonewall has subsequently put the case for equality on the mainstream political agenda by winning support within all the main political parties and now has offices in England, Scotland and Wales.
3. The Stonewall Education Equality Index has been running for 4 years and is a comprehensive annual benchmarking exercise for local authorities, which will showcase how well they are tackling homophobia and homophobic bullying in their schools and supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in their local community.
4. The Senior Adviser Behaviour Attendance and Safety completed the 2013 Stonewall Education Index, in order to benchmark the work of the Local Authority (LA) and received feedback in July 2013; CYC was 32nd out of the 48 LAs who completed the index (There are 140+ LAs) with some very positive feedback and actions to take forward.

5. In addition, CYC has been running an online 'Stand Up for Us' anti bullying survey since 2011, with the aim of monitoring the prevalence and nature of bullying behaviour in primary and secondary schools in the City. In 2013, the survey was developed further to explore in more detail, aspects of physical health and emotional wellbeing.
6. In 2013, 1,559 Year 8 and 2,540 Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils completed the survey. The 2013 equality data from the Anti Bullying Survey showed that, although being called 'gay' was not the most prevalent reason for being bullied, it had increased slightly:

Because I am called 'gay' or 'lesbian' (Secondary Anti Bullying Survey)

2013: 67 (4.3%)

2012: 33 (2.8%)

2011: 84 (3.5%)

7. For this reason it became the focus for the CYC Anti Bullying Strategic Plan. The Senior Adviser Behaviour Attendance and Safety started working with the York Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual (LGBT) Forum in 2012, liaising with the schools sub group in April 2013.

Consultation

8. Since January 2014 the Senior Adviser has liaised with the CYC Anti Bullying Strategy Group, Cllr Fitzpatrick, the LGBT School Group, The Youth Council and schools, to tackle homophobic bullying in schools. Simon Rodgers (AVIVA Stonewall volunteer) has worked in York High school (YHS) with staff and students to talk about his experiences as a gay student, the effect bullying had on him, and the effect that homophobic language has upon LGBT students. This piece of work was 'one of the best pastoral interventions I have ever done' - Deputy Head Teacher YHS. There have been no reported incidents of derogatory homophobic bullying since Simon Rodgers' workshops.
9. This good practice has been shared across the West of York cluster of schools (10 Primaries and 1 Secondary) and also at the Pastoral Leads meeting. All secondary schools have requested similar support through a workshop for staff and for pupils.

10. The 2014 Stonewall Index has been completed (with the support of LGBT members) and verbal feedback will be given on 25 June 2014 by the national school's Stonewall champion.
11. Consideration has been given to several options in order to develop and share the effective practice in York High school:
 - Secondary schools to enrol as Stonewall members by September 2014
 - Develop York Stonewall role models by September 2014
 - The Local Authority to become members of Stonewall
 - Schools to buy in 'Diversity Role Models'.

Analysis

12. After discussions with Pastoral Leads in April, it was decided that all secondary schools, not the Local Authority, should enrol as Stonewall members, as this would entitle each school visits from a 'role model' along with a bank of resources. It was also decided that, working with Simon Rodgers, (Stonewall volunteer) role models would be recruited from the York area and trained locally by Stonewall and the Local Authority.
And, York University LGBT students would provide advice/resources links for the LGBT Youth group web site.

Council Plan 2011-15

13. *'Protect Vulnerable People' - 'We will be sensitive to the possibilities of exploitation or extremism, and will continue to adopt a 'zero tolerance' policy for bullying in any form. Maintained, throughout difficult budget rounds, a forum for young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or 'questioning' their sexuality, following representations from young people themselves.*

We will work relentlessly to ensure that no child, young person or community is at a relative disadvantage, removing all traces of discrimination from our systems and our interactions – with a particular focus on disabled children, the rising numbers of children from a black or minority ethnic background, and on those who are lesbian or gay or questioning their sexuality. This principle is as much about celebrating the positive as it is about eliminating the negative.'

Implications

14. **Financial** - Schools do not see the value of £400 to Diverse Role Models for a one off session. They would prefer to enrol as Stonewall members, so they have access to role models and resources, with the Local Authority supporting the recruitment and training of role models.
- Stonewall membership for schools - £150.00 pa
 - Training of York Stonewall role models will be met by Stonewall (No cost)
 - Stonewall membership for Local Authority £1,800.00 pa
 - Diversity Role Model one day visit £400.00 approximately
15. **Other - Benefits**
- A reduction in the number of homophobic related instances in schools across the York area
 - Secondary Schools will be able to work with cluster Primary schools
 - Young people have access to a range of resources designed to help, support and guide them on LGBT related matters
 - School team staff are more informed and have the motivation and confidence to deal with LGBT matters.
 - Support and guidance is available to the wider community on LGBT related matters, for example parents, guardians, community leaders etc.
16. There are no known HR, Legal, ITT or other implications associated with the recommendation in this report

Risk Management

17. All Stonewall role models to be Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked.

Recommendations

18. Members are asked to note the update on the Stonewall Challenge and on the work of the CYC Anti Bullying Strategy Group.

Reason: In order to keep the Committee informed of the Council's work in support of Stonewall.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected:**All**

For further information please contact the author of the report

Abbreviations

CYC - City of York Council

LA - Local Authority

LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual

YHS - York High school

DBS - Disclosure and Barring Service

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes: N/A