

Embracing Diversity & Ending Bullying

How shared stories
can bring an end
to HOMOPHOBIC,
BIPHOBIC &
TRANSPHOBIC
bullying in schools!



Diversity
Role Models

Diversity Role Models

Established in 2011, Diversity Role Models (DRM) actively seeks to prevent homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying in UK schools. Our mission is to help schools celebrate difference, encourage acceptance and eliminate gender and sexuality based limitations. DRM aims to stop bullying before it happens by educating all young people about differences in sexuality and gender identity, by challenging stereotypes and by tackling the misuse of language.

The DRM model is based on working with positive volunteer role models – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and straight allies – in schools to help LGBT students feel confident, and ensure their classmates are accepting of difference. Trained facilitators deliver workshops, giving young people the chance to hear personal stories and ask questions in a safe environment.

The report

In January 2015, DRM commissioned a study to show both impact and outcomes of its programme for future development and to improve its data collection methods. The research specifically looked at DRM's workshops in secondary schools and the impact of homophobia on young people.

This report provides a brief summary of the headline findings and recommendations.

Although we have used LGBT throughout for ease and brevity, DRM fully understands that many people define their sexuality and gender differently.

Methodology

- Five case studies: three in London, one in the Wirral and one in Birmingham.
- A researcher visited each school for two consecutive days to do observations, individual interviews with staff and students and a focus group with up to ten students.
- Online survey: 1,102 responses that looked at experiences of students across the country.
- A review of the literature concerning HBT bullying.
- A review of DRM data.

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(staff member)

"A lot of people are influenced by their parents, so my dad used to be a bit homophobic and so automatically I kind of just... thought the same thing and I'd be like, "oh yeah, that's wrong," but now I've grown up and I've actually realised what it is, I've kind of changed his opinion now"
(student)

How much of the bullying at your school is about being LGBT?

53%

Some of it

9%

Most of it

2%

All of it

21%

None of it

15%

I am not aware of any bullying at my school

Online survey, Q3
835 respondents

The research

The complete text of the research is available, please email info@diversityrolemodels.org

Homophobic, biphobic & transphobic bullying in schools

A brief summary of the research literature review

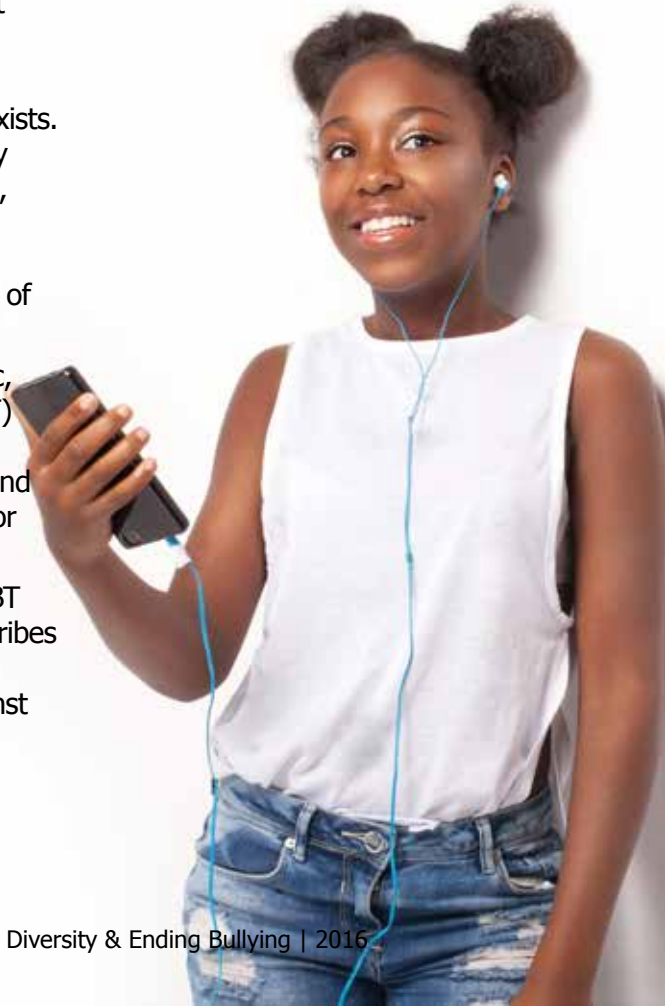
Background

There has been dramatic progress regarding equal rights for LGBT people in the UK in recent years. British society has become steadily less tolerant of discrimination and more interested in equality.

However, homophobia still exists. Young people are particularly influenced by parental views, religious interpretations of sexuality and a lack of understanding or awareness of LGBT people.

This can lead to homophobic, biphobic & transphobic (HBT) bullying in schools, as it contributes to the isolation and lack of avenues of support for LGBT young people.

Government guidance on HBT bullying, *Safe to Learn*, describes HBT bullying as 'bullying motivated by prejudice against LGBT people'. It can include verbal abuse, name-calling, spreading rumours, physical abuse and cyber-bullying.



Research

HBT bullying has an impact on victims' mental health, academic attainment, self-esteem, attendance and overall well-being. Victims of HBT bullying are more likely to self-harm as well. Self-worth is linked to how we are perceived in relation to others. So our self-esteem is not only connected to our ability to identify with a group, but also in how that group is then evaluated relative to others.

A 2008 *British Journal of Social Work* article 'Bullying of Lesbian and Gay Youth: A Qualitative Investigation', explains that the conditions that foster HBT bullying appear across their entire social experience; at home, at school, in faith environments and in the media. 'Having no safe space and no adults to whom to turn may render lesbian and gay bullying especially dangerous.'

Homophobic abuse intensifies and peaks around Years 8 or 9 although this varies from late primary to late secondary school. It is clear that HBT bullying has its roots in primary school and is more intense outside the view of school staff, such as in playgrounds.

Barriers

Barriers for schools in addressing HBT bullying can be categorised into three distinct groups:

- Refusing to acknowledge the problem as well as the existence of LGBT youth; consequently, HBT bullying remains unrecognised within the school.
- Ignoring the specific motivation behind HBT bullying and treating all bullying as general bullying.
- Fear of reprisal or lack of support from senior leadership staff as well as fears related to views of parents and governors.

Use of language

Language can reinforce the exclusion felt by many LGBT people, often by the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. This is partly because of the invisible nature of sexual orientation, where LGBT people can inadvertently hear offensive remarks and HBT language.

As well as name-calling, HBT language can include a range of insults and phrases such as 'that's so gay', homophobic jokes or gender-based insults.

Homophobic terms are rooted in gender and begin to be used at primary school. Regardless of whether their meaning is understood, these terms remain the worst type of insult. This use of homophobic terms in primary school sets the scene for future HBT language and hostile secondary school climates. ■

What has DRM achieved already?

The research has shown clear impact related to DRM workshops, the work of the organisation is received in a very positive way, with real strengths being spoken about from participants. Students love hearing the role model stories and staff evaluations are overwhelmingly positive.



163 active schools



290 role models trained



1,512 workshops delivered



34,816 students reached

"It was nice to have a real person and not just statistics because it is quite easy to relate to a person but you can't relate to a number or a figure."
(Student)

"The impact was almost overnight. You will still hear the word 'gay' used in a derogatory sense, but you don't hear it anywhere near as much."
(Student)

EIGHT areas of impact

This research has shown that the DRM workshop model works well because the stories create empathy among students, bolster LGBT allies in schools and carry a positive and supportive message to LGBT students.

Much of the impact of DRM workshops is reliant on the Role Models telling their stories to students and in the opportunity for students to ask questions and have an open discussion with the workshop team. Authenticity plays a key role in why the workshops have an impact, as students have an appreciation for real stories that are told to them by adults, that they might not hear elsewhere.

The impact is also related to the Role Models themselves and the style they use to tell their stories, which is with respect, kindness and humour. This allows students to relate better to the Role Models.

1 Increases empathy

Students are able to identify with the basic human struggles and successes of people who happen to be LGBT. This is particularly important for people who have never knowingly met anyone LGBT before in their lives.

2 Challenges stereotypes

This is a key message within each workshop and students clearly understand what stereotypes are and why it is important to look beyond them and respect people for whoever they are.

3 Encourages discussion about LGBT issues

Students rarely have opportunities for conversations with LGBT people about sexuality and gender but more importantly, they don't often discuss these issues with friends or family either.

4 Increases awareness of HBT language

Workshops increase awareness of HBT language in school and have a direct impact on reducing its use. They allow students to debate issues around language in a safe space.

5 Supports LGBT students

The workshops play an important and unique role for LGBT students by providing positive visibility of LGBT people and issues, which may not exist elsewhere in the lives of students or in the school itself.

6 Develops allies

The workshops bolster support and understanding among potential allies and encourage some of them to directly identify as champions of diversity and equality. This is crucial within schools to create an environment which celebrates difference.

7 Encourages discussion in the home

Workshops have a cascading impact on intergenerational communication and understanding as well as helping to foster parental support for the school to tackle these issues.

8 Increases confidence among staff

There is evidence to show impact in relation to increased confidence and skills of teachers who observe workshops.

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(staff member)

FIVE key recommendations

As we have shown, DRM has already had a positive impact in the schools where it has worked. At the same time, HBT bullying and language is an entrenched problem in schools. Here are five key recommendations to help embrace diversity and bring an end to HBT bullying in schools.



1 Take a whole-school approach



- ✓ Promote and embrace diversity throughout the school by planning and supporting more workshops for young people and embedding diversity in the wider curriculum.
- ✓ Celebrate diversity throughout the school enabling staff to disclose their personal information or to act as role models if they wish.
- ✓ Capture data and feedback from staff and students on inclusion and diversity.
- ✓ Ensure clear anti-bullying policies and procedures are in place, including a sanctions and monitoring system.
- ✓ Support LGBT students by signposting resources, guidance, mentors, role models and support groups or clubs.
- ✓ Support parents by raising awareness and support governors by providing training.

2 Teacher training



- ✓ The experience and expertise of school staff in relation to LGBT issues and how to challenge HBT bullying can be varied. Dedicated teacher training sessions specifically designed to address HBT bullying are crucial, and enable trained staff to support the wider school team.
- ✓ Thanks to funding from the Government Equalities Office, DRM is able to provide e-learning for all school staff. We recommend this in conjunction with face-to-face training.



Recommendations continued...



3 Start early & repeat

- ✓ HBT bullying starts early, therefore, it is important to deliver workshops for primary school aged children and to target the transition between primary and secondary school.
- ✓ There is a hesitancy from primary schools to tackle HBT language and bullying. We need to shift this view and take a more preventative approach to HBT bullying in order to make a bigger and earlier impact.
- ✓ Repeat workshops throughout education to embed learning.

4 Recruit more Role Models

- ✓ The research clearly demonstrates the importance of role models in changing attitudes towards LGBT people. Further support is needed to recruit and train more role models from a range of backgrounds and experiences.

5 Gender is central to the issue

- ✓ DRM needs to investigate the delivery of workshops specifically addressing gender stereotypes and gender role conformity among younger age groups. It is important to deliver messages that support children to be themselves without any gender-based barriers to their achievement.

"Because you have real people talking about the impact on their lives....and they use humour.
The beauty of these workshops is that it chimes with every kid sitting there who is going to think of a time when they have thought I don't want to talk about that with my parents or I can't tell my parents this....it doesn't have to be about their sexuality."
(staff member)

Help us to end HBT bullying in schools

1 Funders

Please support DRM with funding. A whole school package costs just £1,200 and includes workshops, staff and governor training, policy advice and complete workshop lesson plans and resources.

2 Schools

We are keen to build our network of schools that champion equality and work meaningfully to eradicate all forms of discrimination. Contact us to discuss bespoke packages for your students and staff.

3 Everyone

LBGT and straight ally Role Models are critical to changing attitudes and supporting young people. Please consider volunteering.



Thank you!

This research was only possible with the cooperation of the staff and students of the schools who agreed to take part in the case studies. We are very grateful to each of them.

We would also like to thank the hundreds of secondary school students who took part in the online survey, and for their courage and honesty in sharing their views.

The research was conducted by Kim Donahue as an independent consultant with support from Wendy Sugarman and DRM staff whose feedback was very much appreciated.

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