

putting the

LGBT

into **FE**

n u s lgbt

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LGBT pupils are more likely to leave school at 16 and not reach FE (regardless of their achievements at school). 2 in 5 say they fear the bullying will continue if they stay on.

Stonewall (2004)



FOREWORD FROM NUS LGBT COMMITTEE

Hello and welcome to ‘Putting the LGBT into FE’!

NUS LGBT Campaign exists to defend and promote the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students across the UK. One of the ways that we do this is by supporting students who want to set up LGBT groups or societies in their colleges. There are thousands of LGBT students in further education colleges across the UK, but despite this not many LGBT societies exist. Students in the FE sector face particular challenges which can prevent them from setting up successful LGBT groups. This is why NUS LGBT Campaign has decided to produce this publication.

The pack includes ideas, hints and tips for students and student officers who want to start their own LGBT group, and suggests ways to move forward once this has been achieved. It will also be useful to staff in students’ unions or student services who want to support LGBT students to set up groups. We specifically deal with the problems that FE students face which are unique to the sector, such as a lack of funding and the legacy of Section 28.

It includes research and information about homophobia and transphobia in FE, and case studies describing how different colleges have gone about setting up groups, including information about difficulties they have encountered and how they got over them.

We also talk about why LGBT groups are important and provide you with information you can use to argue your case with college authorities if necessary.

We hope you find the pack helpful. If you have any questions or would like any help in setting up an LGBT group please feel free to contact us on lgbt@nus.org.uk.

In pride,

NUS LGBT Committee

www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt
lgbt@nus.org.uk



GLOSSARY

Before we start, you may wish to look over the following definitions which explain some of the terms used in this briefing.

Biphobia – The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are bisexual.

B

Bisexual – A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of more than one gender.

Coming out – The ongoing process of coming to terms with and telling other people about your sexual orientation or gender identity. Most people assume that you are straight unless you tell them otherwise, which means that coming out is a continuous process for the majority of LGBT people.

Discrimination – Unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice.

Gay – Usually, but not always, refers to men who are emotionally, physically, spiritually and sexually attracted to other men. Also used as an umbrella term for the LGBT community. Some lesbian women also refer to themselves as gay.

Gender identity – The gender that a person sees themselves as, which can include refusing to be labelled with a gender at all. It is not always possible to tell someone's gender identity from their outward appearance.

G

Heterosexuality – Sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to a sex other than your own. Commonly thought of as attraction to the opposite sex. Heterosexual people are also referred to as straight.

Homophobia – Fear, anger, discomfort, intolerance, or lack of acceptance toward LGBT people, or experiencing these feelings about one's own non-heterosexual preference.

Lesbian – A woman who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and sexually attracted to other women.

L

LGBT – Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans.

Out – Refers to a person being open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sexual Orientation – To whom a person is attracted. Not to be confused with sexual preference: what a person likes to do sexually.

Trans – Someone whose gender identity does not match the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with. When NUS talks

T

about trans people we use it as an umbrella term for a variety of people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, transvestite or transgender.

Transphobia – Fear or hatred of trans people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment and discrimination.

UCU – University and Colleges Union. This is the trade union which represents the majority of teachers and lecturers in colleges. The University and College Union (UCU) support establishing groups that influence policy and implementation for all equality groups.



These groups enable staff and students to inform colleges about the policies and practice which impact in developing and supporting equality and diversity. They play a key role in ensuring that colleges meet equality and anti discrimination-legislation.

Many UCU branches / local associations have Equality Officers who can support and / or work alongside the action groups and ensure that the issues are brought into the core negotiations on working conditions in the institution. The branch / local association may also be supporting self-identified staff groups and be a resource for helping to establish self-identified student groups.

UCU are partners with NUS in the Forum on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Post School Education. UCU has a national Equality Unit with specialists in equality matters including LGBT. The Equality Unit provides support for UCU members including those who are in networks in Universities and Colleges across the UK. This support includes advice, guidance and training. More information about the Equality Unit is available on the website <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1868>

Definitions drawn from the following resources:

www.ohio.edu/lgbt/resources/educate_def.cfm

www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/GLBT-Definitions.htm

www.grimsby.ac.uk/Eccd/documents/sexualitymaterials.pdf

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH

In the last 10 years there have been significant legislative developments outlawing discrimination against people on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. There are openly LGBT celebrities and politicians, LGBT History Month is celebrated in schools, and Pride events are held in every major city and many towns in the UK. On the surface, it would seem that life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people is much easier than it used to be.

However the reality of life for LGBT students in the further education sector is sometimes very different, as a recent report by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), supported by the NUS LGBT Campaign, discovered.¹ Homophobia, harassment and bullying can be commonplace in many FE institutions, affecting retention of LGBT students and their self-esteem and achievement. A recent report also revealed that the majority of trans people experience high levels of transphobia, and the LGBT Campaign comes into contact with many students who suffer discrimination because of their gender identity or gender expression.² LGBT students are subject to continuous name-calling and verbal taunts, and sometimes physical abuse, with bullying aimed at LGBT students up by 30% since 1984.³ Most of the time staff fail to recognise or deal with the problem, unsure of the legal situation and often intimidated themselves. LGBT staff are also subject to the homophobia and transphobia that is rife in the sector, as is anyone who is perceived to be, or who is friendly with people who are, LGBT.

The CEL report recommended a number of solutions to this problem. Tutors, support staff and students must all play their part in ensuring that FE is a prejudice-free zone. Staff training, learner induction, LGBT-inclusive curricula and other measures are proposed as ways in which the learning and skills sector can respond to the findings of the report to support their LGBT students and staff.

One of the key recommendations of interest to NUS was that colleges should support the development and work of LGBT staff and student groups. They noted that 'LGB staff respondents identified the creation of LGB groups/societies as one of the most important mechanisms available to increase confidence in dealing with homophobia.'⁴ So not only do LGBT groups help students, but they also empower staff to challenge homophobia and support LGBT students themselves. Students have a unique contribution to make in organising peer-led LGBT student groups which can be vital in changing the atmosphere in a college from one of hostility to one of celebration and tolerance.

Convinced? Then read on to find out how to do it!

¹ Phil Barnett Associates for the Centre of Excellence in Leadership (CEL) (2006) *Equality and sexual orientation: the leadership challenge in further education* [online]. Available from: www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/UsersDoc/EqualityandSexualOrientation.pdf [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

² Al-Alami, M et al. (2007) *Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People's Experience of Inequality and Discrimination* [online]. Available from: www.pfc.org.uk/files/EngenderedPenalties.pdf [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

³ Ellis, V and High, S (2004) 'Something more to tell you: gay, lesbian or bisexual young people's experience of secondary schooling' *British Educational Research Journal*, 30 (2): 213–225.

⁴ CEL (2006): 65

FIRST THINGS FIRST: MAKING THE CASE FOR AN LGBT GROUP

You may find that there are supportive people in the college who will help you to set up your LGBT group. However it may be that you have to persuade some people who are resistant to the idea first, or who do not understand the need for an LGBT group of any kind. We have compiled a list of questions which you may get asked and ideas for answers.

Why have an LGBT group?

There are lots of different reasons to have an LGBT group in your college. These include:

Student Welfare

Starting college can be quite a daunting experience, and having an LGBT group is a great way for students to socialise with other LGBT students, have fun and make friends. Furthermore, research shows that young LGBT people in particular are at risk of violent attacks, harassment and name-calling because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that in 50% of these cases violent attacks involve fellow students. It is the responsibility of the college to do all it can to prevent such behaviour. One way of supporting LGBT students is by encouraging them to set up a group.

Promoting Equality

Colleges are legally bound to promote equality between people of different races, genders and between people who have disabilities and who do not. They will have had to publish an equality scheme detailing how they will promote equality in these areas. It doesn't take much more effort to consider other equality groups in this process (such as LGBT students). Find out where the equality scheme is published and talk to the college about extending it to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Representation

LGBT students are best placed to describe the reality of being gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans in your college. If your college is serious about listening to students, an LGBT student group is essential for finding out about the issues that LGBT students face.

Improving the Learning Environment

Homophobic and transphobic bullying have an impact on learners' ability to learn, or willingness to stay in education. An intimidating and hostile atmosphere will affect not only LGBT students, but any student who identifies with the group or who has friends, relatives or parents who are LGBT. An LGBT group provides a safe space for learners to discuss these issues and provide support to each other.

Retention

Homophobia ruins lives and future prospects. LGBT groups can provide a safer and supportive environment for students who are being bullied or experiencing homophobia at home or in college by providing friendship and signposting them to appropriate support agencies. This increases the likelihood of them continuing with their education and improves college retention rates. Remember, colleges lose money if students leave before their courses finish! The following case study illustrates how LGBT groups can help students:

Case study

I came to my college from a small rural village and I moved into halls of residence. I had hidden my sexuality from my friends and family while growing up but had decided to be 'out' at college. **I was not prepared for the verbal bullying that I received and wasn't sure where to turn.** As a new student I had heard all about student services but didn't think they would have enough knowledge to deal with my problem. I saw a poster for the student LGBT group and went to the meeting. **It was the first time I had met people who I could relate to as they had all had similar experiences to myself.** The LGBT officer helped me approach the right person in the college to help me deal with the issues that had been raised and although the problems were not sorted immediately I felt I had met friends who I could talk to at the group who understood what I was going through. **I probably would have left the college if it was not for the group and I would advise anyone to join their college group.** I have asked to go to a conference that is coming up soon – something I would never have done if I had not had the confidence gained at college.

We don't have any LGBT students at this college – no one would join.

It is estimated that around 6% of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual,⁵ with a further 5000 thought to be transsexual.⁶ There are no accurate figures about the amount of people who identify in other trans categories, but estimates suggest figures from about 1 in 100 to as many as 1 in 20 in the male population.⁷ It is therefore very unlikely that there are no LGBT students at your institution.

⁵ Department of Health (2007) *An introduction to working with lesbian, gay and bisexual people* [online]. Available from: www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dID=138990&Rendition=Web [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

⁶ Al-Alami et al (2007): 7

⁷ Ibid.

CEL researchers said:

'Our fieldwork confirms that, without an LGB voice to articulate LGB experience, college leaders are unlikely to be aware of the extent and nature of homophobia that might exist within their college. Where LGB staff and learners have told us that they do not want to be part of groups specifically for them, their reason has often been a fear of discrimination... colleges should deal with the experiences that have given rise to these fears. If they can be addressed, the demand for LGB staff and learner groups may well be stronger.'

We also know that homophobic and transphobic incidents are likely to be significantly under-reported, often because victims do not expect to be taken seriously. If you don't think there are any LGBT students at your institution then it is likely that they do not feel safe to come out or welcome to express their sexuality or gender identity in the environment, rather than that they simply don't exist! An LGBT group would help people to feel that they are part of the college too, and are valued as much as other students.

There is no homophobia or transphobia at this institution – what is the point of an LGBT group?

The research quoted at the beginning of this pack provides irrefutable evidence that homophobia and transphobia are present in most institutions. It is also worth pointing out that what makes it difficult to be LGBT in a college isn't always the obvious kind of discrimination – bullying, harassment etc (though these are common too) – but also indirect and institutional prejudice. This could be ignoring LGBT students' needs, not mentioning sexual orientation in equal opportunities policies or failing to challenge homophobic language – e.g. using the word 'gay' as an insult.

Ultimately only LGBT students and staff can tell college leaders whether there is a problem with homophobia or transphobia in the institution. Why not set up an LGBT group to find out what they think?

We have lots of religious students here – they might have objections to an LGBT group.

This statement rests on an assumption that *all* religious people are homophobic or transphobic! It is a common misconception that having both religious and LGBT student groups necessarily causes conflict. In fact, there are many examples where quite the opposite is true and both sets of students are able to organise in colleges which promote equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity.

Furthermore lots of LGBT people have faith, and there are LGBT faith groups who you could invite to talk at your college or to your Board of Governors to address any concerns they might have (a list is provided at the end of this pack). A recent Stonewall survey revealed that the majority of 'people of

faith' supports laws allowing gay people protection from discrimination, and more than 9 in 10 religious people believe that homophobic bullying should be tackled.⁸

The CEL research points to examples such as Oldham College, where 'a clear set of college values that promote inclusion and which are backed up with comprehensive staff and learner induction and training' ensure 'a complete absence of tension between sexual orientation and religious equality within the college'.⁹

Ultimately it is illegal to discriminate against or fail to protect LGBT individuals in educational domains. Colleges should be places where prejudice is challenged and people feel free to express new ideas, rather than somewhere where stereotypes are used to pit groups of students against each other. Remind your college that the problem is prejudice, not homosexuality or being trans!

We would get complaints from people's parents.

Once again the experiences of other colleges suggests that this is unlikely to happen. Stonewall research suggests that attitudes are changing in this area, with 73% of the population stating that they would be comfortable if their child's teacher was lesbian or gay. 91% of parents of children under 18 want anti-gay bullying in schools and colleges tackled.

It may also be worth contacting a support organisation like Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays who may be able to come and speak about this specific issue to college leaders.

Section 28 means that we can't promote homosexuality – we want to help but we can't.

Section 28 was part of the Local Government Act, a government bill introduced in 1988. It made it illegal to 'promote homosexuality as a pretended family relationship' and applied to local authorities (and therefore schools and colleges). The major effect of this was that most teachers and tutors simply stopped talking about LGBT issues completely, believing it to be unlawful, and therefore LGBT learners received no support, and homophobic and transphobic bullying increased massively during these years.

⁸ Stonewall (2007) *Living together: British attitudes to lesbian and gay people* [online]. Available from: www.stonewall.org.uk [accessed 01 Oct 2007]: 19

⁹ CEL (2006): 75

Section 28 was repealed by the Local Government Act in 2003, but it is clear from our experience and the findings of the CEL research that many in the sector do not realise this or are unsure about the legal situation.

Please make it clear that staff and tutors are no longer bound by this legislation.

Furthermore, in the same Stonewall survey cited above it was found that people believe that **schools and colleges have the greatest responsibility to address anti-gay prejudice** – more than parents, government and the police.¹⁰ So not only has Section 28 been repealed, but many people now think it is the job of colleges to prevent homophobia.



**73% of respondents said
they would not mind if their
child's teacher was LGB**

Stonewall (2007)

¹⁰ Stonewall (2007): 14

SETTING UP YOUR LGBT GROUP

Purpose of the Group

So, you have decided to set up an LGBT group. It is important to be clear from the very beginning what you are trying to achieve with your group; being unclear about the purpose can cause problems from the very start and put people off. Make sure when you invite people to join that they know what they are joining.

What type of group do you want?

Type of group	Purpose
Campaigning/action group	To take action against homophobia and transphobia
Social group	To have fun and meet other LGBT students
Support group	To provide a space for LGBT students to meet and discuss issues around sexual orientation and gender identity
A mixture of all three?	

All of these aims are worthwhile – the important thing is to work out what is best for you and the students in your college.

How do I decide which kind of group would be best?

The best way of making this decision is to ask LGBT students at your college what they would want from an LGBT group. You could try an online anonymous survey so that people who are nervous about coming out can have their say. Remember, there is really no point in setting up a group that doesn't meet the needs of its members.

It is usually best to keep a nice balance between socialising, support and campaigning. Social groups can quickly become cliquey and inaccessible to new members, but it is also important to keep the social and support side going if you decide to focus on campaigning.

Alternatively, there is an option to set up separate groups dealing with different things. Some colleges use this model, which is outlined in the next section, very successfully.

Having More Than One Group

Some further education institutions have separate groups dealing with different things – for example, a support group and an action group. In this section we explain how this might work and the benefits of using such a model, by describing a scenario where a support group is run alongside an action group.

Student Support Groups

The point of these groups is to provide an opportunity for LGBT students to discuss issues around sexual orientation and gender identity with other students. These groups are ideally student-led and only open to LGBT students. It would normally fall under the umbrella of the students' union. It may be that the group receives some support from a staff member or other professional.

Alton Sixth Form College has an LGBT support group with the following terms of reference which you might find useful as a model (this example was taken from the CEL research already quoted):

'Alton College LGBT student group offers support to students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or confused or unsure about their sexuality. It meets in confidence to explore and discuss issues including: sexual health and education; coming out to friends/family/at college; homophobia; bullying and discrimination; any other concerns. The group is supported by an experienced and trained Connexions Personal Adviser. In the first instance, interested students should contact the student services manager in confidence.'

It is important to ensure that the support groups remain confidential (there is more information about this later).

Student-Staff Action Groups

Action groups campaign against homophobia and transphobia, and can also act as a consultative group of staff and students to liaise with the institution about sexual orientation and gender identity equality.

Having an action group provides an opportunity for staff and students to swap information about what it is like to be LGBT in the college, or simply to discuss the incidence of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the institution. Student-staff action groups could look at the following:

- Developing sexual orientation and gender identity policies for the institution
- Discussing issues around 14–16 year old LGBT students in FE
- Monitoring the institution's progress in relation to legislation – i.e. has it published a gender equality scheme?

- Working with senior management to establish a system for recording and monitoring incidents of homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Carry out a sexual orientation and gender identity equality audit of the institution. UCU have developed a sexual orientation checklist that you can use to find out whether your institution is LGBT-friendly, which we have included at the end of this pack. *Please note this is for sexual orientation policies only, you will need to carry out a separate audit for gender identity.*

What are the benefits of setting up two groups?

Having an LGBT student-only group helps to preserve the **autonomy** of LGBT students in the institution.

Autonomy is key to the campaign and a central principle of NUS. We believe that only LGBT students should decide their priorities – that is why events that NUS runs where campaign priorities are decided can only be attended by LGBT students.

NUS also believes that it is important to provide a **safe space** for LGBT students where they will be free from homophobia and transphobia and will not have to 'out' themselves to their heterosexual counterparts. This is why it is important to have LGBT student-only self-defining groups.

At the same time, there are lots of straight people who feel really strongly about homophobia and transphobia and want to get involved in changing things for the better. This is why an action group is a good idea – it provides a forum for everyone in the college who wants to improve sexual orientation and gender identity equality to do their bit. As long as it is LGBT students who decide what the priorities are, when the issues affect LGBT students directly, then there is no reason why other people can't help.

When considering the aims of an action group it is important to understand that you will need to look at sexual orientation and gender identity separately. This is because the legal requirements are different for both. To summarise, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is illegal in the provision of goods, facilities and services, and in employment (including vocational and higher education). Discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment is illegal in employment, and colleges also have a duty to promote equality on the grounds of gender reassignment. NUS is campaigning to end these inconsistencies and to ensure that protection from discrimination is the same for all groups of people.

What is the difference between a support group and an action group?

Support groups	Action groups
LGBT only	Open to non LGBT members
Students only	Open to students and staff
Part of the students' union and able to access students' union funds	Official standing within the institution as consultative group; any costs paid by the institution
Lower-profile	High-profile
Provides a space to discuss what it is like to be LGBT in the institution	Takes action against homophobia and transphobia
Organises social events for LGBT students	Looks at institutional culture change and makes recommendations

Membership and Support

As we have said above, we believe it can be useful to have an action group composed of staff and students. However, support groups should definitely be student-only to protect both students and staff.

If your group is LGBT only then we suggest that you leave it up to individuals to decide whether or not they should join the group – that is to decide whether or not they are LGB or T. NUS operates a system of 'self-definition' – meaning we trust people to decide for themselves if they should attend closed LGBT events. If you think about it there is no other way of telling if someone is LGBT – and you should never question someone's decision. At the same time make it clear in your first meeting how important this trust is for the autonomy of the group.

Having an autonomous group doesn't mean that you can't ask for help! It may be that in setting up your group you work with a member of staff in the initial stages. People you may wish to discuss ideas with could include:

- The Equality and Diversity Manager at your institution (if you have one)
- Senior Management Team member responsible for equality and diversity
- UCU equality official – if the staff have an active trade union there may be a member of the union with responsibility for equality. Ask a staff member for information about who this might be. Bear in mind that there may not be an active trade union branch, and even if they are active, they may not have an equality official (see the glossary for more information about UCU).
- Students' Union President
- Student Governors. Ask one of your student governors to submit a paper to the Governors' meeting explaining how an LGBT group could benefit the college.
- Board of Governors. Information about the college's governing body should be held publicly – ask in your college library for details.
- Student Staff Liaison Officer (SSLO)
- Student Services

People are your most important resource and setting up the group will be easier if you are not doing everything yourself. The best place to start is often with the people you know – do you have other LGBT friends in the college who will be able to help you kickstart the group? Are there any 'out' LGBT tutors or staff that might be supportive? If so, start with them. They may have ideas or experience of doing this before.

How Your Group Fits into the Students' Union

It's important to make sure you follow any rules that your union has when setting up your group. Find out about your constitution from your students' union representatives. The Constitution is the document that governs how your students' union works – it should have information about what you need to do when setting up your group. To access funds you may need to follow certain rules such as:

- Having a minimum number of members or interested students.
- Charging a membership fee – this should be minimal to make sure that finances don't stop people becoming involved.
- Having a constitution – this can help lay out the structure of the group and also the main aims. Contact your students' union for a model constitution.
- Electing members to positions such as chair, secretary or treasurer.
- Submitting a list of names of members (in this case, you will need to argue that it is not appropriate to submit a named list of members because of confidentiality).

Your First Meeting

Once you have decided what kind of group you are going to set up, found out all the rules you need to follow, and argued the case with the college, you can hold your first meeting.

To try and get people to the first meeting, think about the following:

- Hold the meeting in a room that people can go to inconspicuously (see 'Space' section later on).
- Think about different types of students when setting a time. For example, don't have a meeting on a Friday evening (Jewish students may not be able to attend) or in the evening (student parents may not be able to attend). Wednesday afternoon could be your best bet if no lessons are scheduled then.
- Advertise all over your college. You can get free posters from NUS LGBT Campaign with space for you to write in details of your meeting. See our website for order forms.
- Put posters up on notice boards, classroom doors and in toilets (get permission first).
- Is there a student newspaper or magazine at your college? If so ask to put an article in about the new group with the date of the first meeting and an e-mail address. Set up an e-mail address for the group on hotmail or another free e-mail service so that you don't give out your personal e-mail address.
- Ask the college to send out an e-mail inviting all students (and staff, if appropriate) to the first meeting.
- Are there lots of people in your college whose first language isn't English? If so make sure you put up posters in that language.
- Advertise your group on the NUS LGBT website. Email the details to lgbt@nus.org.uk and we will post it on our societies page.

Ideas for the first meeting:

- An icebreaker – this is a good way to get people talking and relaxed. You can find different types here: http://www.funandgames.org/Games_icebreakers.html
- Discussion about the aims of the group – what will you focus on as your priorities for action (for an action group)? What will be your first social activity (for a social group)? What issues would you like to discuss (for a support group)?
- Invite someone from a local LGBT organisation to come and talk to the group about what they do
- Invite one of the NUS LGBT officers to come and talk to the group about NUS LGBT

LGBT societies need commitment and some work to keep them going. Don't fall into the trap of leaving all the work to a small number of people, remain flexible and open to suggestions and encourage initiative. There are LGBT groups all over the UK so if your group is having problems or needs some help not only can you contact NUS, but there will inevitably be another group nearby that has faced or is facing the same challenge and would be willing to lend a helping hand. We have included case studies in this pack for this reason.

Nine out of ten people want anti-gay bullying in schools and colleges to be tackled

Stonewall (2007)



INCREASING LGBT VISIBILITY IN YOUR COLLEGE

It may be that there are no other societies or groups in your college, or that you meet resistance in setting up the group from college authorities. If this is the case, there are other ways to ensure that LGBT students are more visible in your college. There may be a well-developed programme of Enrichment or Wednesday afternoon activities. In this case it is a good idea to try and tap into what already exists as a 'way in'. For example:

- If your union regularly organises trips, suggest they organise a summer trip to your local Pride festival.
- If the college is running prominent anti-violence or anti-bullying campaigns, make sure the LGBT perspective is included. You could suggest that your college sets up a hate crime reporting centre, where students who have been victims of hate crime can safely report their experience to a member of staff if they don't want to go to the police. This will have the added advantage of drawing attention to the existence of homophobic and transphobic hate crime.



- Colleges often tap into national events and celebrations. Make sure that this year your college celebrates LGBT History Month in February or the International Day against Homophobia (IDAHO) on 17 May. Invite speakers from the local community to talk about LGBT life in the past, show LGBT films or set up a display of LGBT historical events (see our LGBT history month briefing for more ideas – www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt)
- Does your college run a freshers fayre? If so, do they invite LGBT organisations to run stalls? Do the research yourself and make sure that this year they do!
- Invite the national LGBT officers or regional representative on the committee to your freshers fayre to help you run a stall. A list of committee members can be found on our website.
- Most students' unions have notice boards where you can display materials. Ask to put up an LGBT poster (you can get free posters from NUS). Order forms can be downloaded from our web page: www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt

OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER

14–16 Year Olds

NUS strongly recommends that LGBT groups should not be open to students under the age of 16. Under 16-year-olds are, in law, children and therefore colleges must uphold child protection legislation in order to protect them. This means that they should not spend unsupervised time with adults, unless they are CRB-checked college employees or volunteers.

14–16 year-olds are in any case not eligible to be members of students' unions and therefore are not eligible to join LGBT groups. However this may be difficult to implement, especially in large colleges where further and higher education institutions have merged. We recommend therefore that ID is requested at LGBT events to protect yourself and underage students.

If you are approached by someone under 16 for advice, do not attempt to advise the student; you are not qualified to do so. Instead, direct the student to local LGBT youth workers or groups. Make sure that you have looked up this information beforehand.

16–18 Year Olds

It is likely that you will have group members of different ages over the age of 16. For this reason, it is important to understand the following:

- Child protection legislation defines 'children' as **anyone under 18**, and 'vulnerable adults' as anyone over 18 who may be especially vulnerable to abuse.
- The age of consent for most sexual activity is 16, **whether you are heterosexual or LGBT**.
- The age of consent is 18 **when one of the participants is in a position of trust or responsibility**.

What has this got to do with me?

Basically, any group members under the age of 18 will be classified as 'children' in legal terms; you may also have group members who would be classified as 'vulnerable adults'. Therefore, the college has a responsibility to ensure their health and safety when taking part in any activities related to the college (for example your LGBT group). They should have a policy about student groups and representatives which you should follow. This policy may say for example that students who run groups or societies in the students' union are in positions of trust and responsibility and therefore that it would be inappropriate for them to have relationships with members of the group under the age of 18.

It is important to understand that the responsibility for child protection issues lies with the college, *and not with you or the students' union*. The college will have a child protection policy and staff member responsible for child protection issues (called a child protection officer). Ask your students'

union to clarify this issue with the child protection officer, if they have not done so already, and to provide clear instructions about the rules you need to follow. If you have any difficulties finding out what your college's policy on this is, contact your NUS regional development worker for advice (you can find out the contact details of your regional office from www.officeronline.co.uk/regions).

Notwithstanding the fact that the college has ultimate responsibility here, and will guide you on this issue, NUS recommends that as a matter of best practice that anyone running the group does not enter into relationships with people under the age of 18 in the group.

Money



Many FE students' unions have very little cash to spare to support activities and societies. It is worth finding out from your students' union president whether there is a budget for societies, and if so how you can access the money.

Alternatively you may be able to access funding through the College Enrichment Programme. Some colleges fund LGBT societies this way. You will need to find out who is responsible for coordinating the programme to find out whether this is a possibility.

If you reach a dead-end do not despair! It is possible to run events at little or no cost. Alternatively, you could think about contacting another college or even university LGBT group. Not only does this increase the number of people who can get involved in your activities, but you can also share costs. NUS LGBT Campaign can help you with this by putting you in contact with other college or university groups in your area. FE and HE partnerships can have benefits for both sides including increased participation and shared resources. Why not try contacting another group nearby to see how you can work together?

Space

Space can be a problem in many colleges. Common rooms can be 'cliquey' and located in public areas where LGBT students might not feel safe. If you have Wednesday afternoons free for enrichment or sports, you could try booking a classroom for your LGBT meeting. If you're unsure who to ask, try your SU President or SSLO to start with, or someone in student services.

If classrooms are being used all the time, or you find it difficult to book a classroom for another reason, you could think about other spaces outside of the college you could use. For example, community centres often have free space which groups can use. However if you do this make sure it is as near the college as possible. Don't forget that some students at your college may have religious beliefs which prevent them from attending events where alcohol is being served, so it is best to avoid holding your meetings in pubs (not to mention that many of your members will be under 18).

Time

It may be difficult to find a time that is suitable for the students at your college who want to come along to your LGBT group. It is likely that some students will have caring responsibilities which will prevent them from attending evening activities. For this reason it is a good idea to vary the time of your meeting each week so that different people can come along.



Outing yourself (and others!)

You may be reluctant to talk to staff or students' union representatives if your college is not LGBT friendly. If this is the case try approaching someone who you do feel comfortable talking to. There may be a college counsellor who you can talk to in confidence and who may be able to advise you about other staff who could help you. Counsellors are professionally bound not to disclose information that you share with them, so you do not need to worry about them telling anyone else about your sexual orientation or gender identity. There will also be a member of staff who is responsible for equal opportunities (including sexual orientation and gender identity) – this information should be available on your college website.

You also have a responsibility to ensure that you do everything you can to ensure that members of your group who do not wish to come out are not 'outed'. This means keeping details of group members secure, and not telling other people who belongs to the group without their express permission. Make it clear when you are inviting people to join the group if it is going to be in a public place where they may be seen by other students so that they can make their own decision about whether or not to attend.

Direct or indirect prejudice

It may be that you come up against homophobic, biphobic or transphobic attitudes when you are trying to set up an LGBT group, whether this be from staff or other students. The important thing is not to feel discouraged – lots of other colleges have LGBT groups and you have every right to set one up.

If you're having problems, go back to your learner agreement or equal opportunities policy which should be available on your college website. Both of these should include statements about discrimination and equal opportunities which you can refer back to if you feel you are being unfairly treated because of your sexual orientation or gender identity. It is very hard to argue against something which is written down!

If it gets really bad, you could try presenting your case to the Board of Governors. FE colleges should have two student governors who you can approach to represent your views on the board who control the college. Make sure they are fully briefed before the meeting, and have all the information in this briefing as well as the research mentioned earlier.

If you need any further support, contact NUS LGBT Campaign. We are here to support you to develop your group, and can come to your college and help you out if you are facing problems. We also have FE reps on our committee who you can talk to. Even if it feels like it sometimes, you are not alone!

A TALE OF TWO COLLEGES

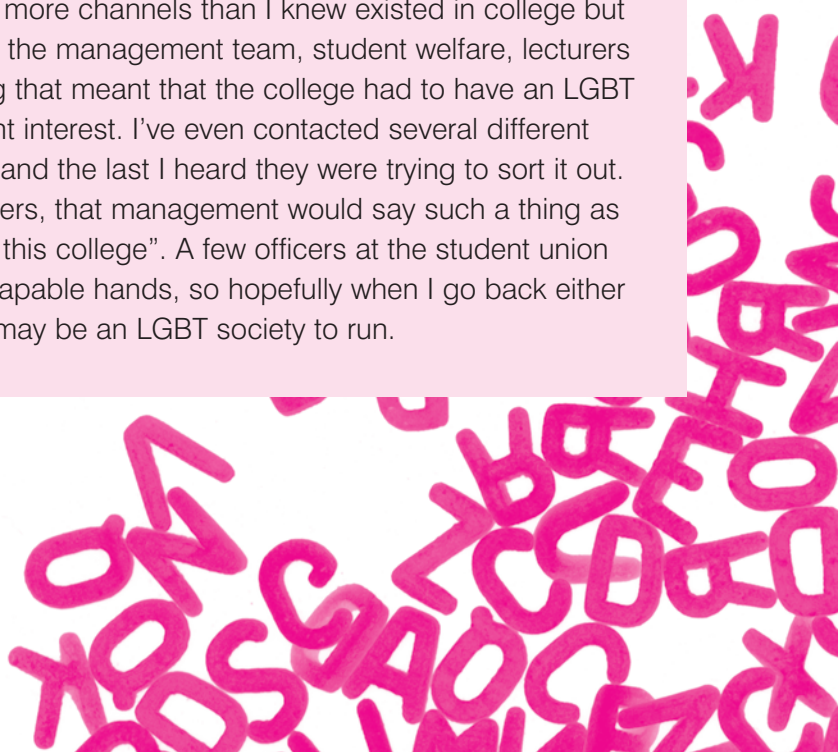
The following two case studies look at two situations where students tried to set up LGBT groups in their colleges, with different results. They show the kind of obstacles that students can face and how they managed those difficulties.

The city that my college is in is quite homophobic to say the least. I can't walk alone at night through the town without someone shouting some homophobic abuse at me or trying to start a fight. So I knew trying to set up an LGBT society at the college was going to be hard.

At the start of term I got in touch with the lecturer who deals with student clubs and societies and he thought it was a really good idea, so he put it on a list that was to be taken to management so they could see what was going to be set up and if it was covered by insurance etc.

I went along to the meeting expecting to have to fight for the society as a few friends at other colleges had told me some colleges don't allow it for different reasons. The lecturer and I went in and all was going well and she said yes to all of the societies but not the LGBT one. She completely missed it out, I thought it was a mistake and asked if there could be an LGBT society set up. 'No' was the answer that I got. I enquired as to why and her answer was 'Not very many people will attend because they probably don't even know what it is! I know I don't!' I explained what an LGBT society was about – she stopped me mid-explanation and said 'Ok, the reason I don't think we should have one of these LGBT things is because to be quite frank, I don't think we have any LGBT students in this college; also it will probably insult more people than would attend it.'

Since seeing this woman, I've gone through more channels than I knew existed in college but to no avail. I've spoken to other members of the management team, student welfare, lecturers and friends to see if I had missed something that meant that the college had to have an LGBT society because there was a genuine student interest. I've even contacted several different organisations including the students' union, and the last I heard they were trying to sort it out. It came as quite a blow to me and a few others, that management would say such a thing as "I don't think we have any LGBT students in this college". A few officers at the student union took it quite personally and its now in their capable hands, so hopefully when I go back either after my exams or to do my final year there may be an LGBT society to run.



I realised there was a need to set up an LGBT group within the college when I saw a few openly gay students were meeting daily at lunch and I could see other students were looking to join them. I took the initiative to approach the students' union and ask if a group could be set up. This was easy as it fell into the constitution so the SU organised a room and advertising and even gave us a budget of £100.00 which we used to fund a trip to tenpin bowling and advertising. The group started fairly small with only five or six members but now there are over 20. The college are pleased as we help give good expert advice with the diversity policy (we are the experts at being LGBT students within the college). Now we also have a dedicated LGBT officer on the Student Representational Council (SRC) who has an automatic place on the diversity forum which feeds directly into the college Board of Management. This has led to us setting up as a hate crime reporting centre with students being able to come to SRC officers as well as staff to report hate related crime.

Both of these examples show how important the students' union can be in helping to set up new LGBT groups. But if your students' union isn't very active, don't worry – check the list on page 14 for ideas of other people who could help you.



WHAT TO DO NEXT

So you are lucky enough to have an LGBT society already and want to know what to do next? Here are some ideas:

- Run a campaign to get an LGBT officer on your executive. An LGBT group is fantastic, and can really help LGBT equality in your college. However, formal representation on your students' union executive is also really important. It means that someone who understands the issues would be dedicated to working on LGBT issues in your students' union.
- Get involved with the national campaign. NUS LGBT campaigns on issues affecting LGBT students – and we depend on students getting involved to make them a success. Here are our current priorities:

Donation not Discrimination



Gay and bisexual men are banned by the National Blood Service (NBS) from donating blood for life. The National Blood Service has a blanket ban on blood donations from gay and bisexual men who have had oral or anal sex – even with a condom. We think that this is unscientific and unjust. It is based on the presumption that all men who have sex with men are 'high risk' for HIV, regardless of their individual sexual behaviour.

This year we are continuing our nationwide campaign to change this policy.

We want Donation not Discrimination! Why not run an information stall telling people about the NBS' policy, and asking them to sign our petition? For more information about this campaign, see www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt



Scott Nunn/Pink Paper

Bullying Sucks

Homophobic and transphobic bullying in FE and HE is the invisible crisis ruining thousands of LGBT students' lives. We've teamed up with the NUS Welfare Zone to launch a



comprehensive campaign to fight bullying at colleges and universities. **Would you know what to do if you were being bullied? Who would you go to for help?** Our interactive online module will help students who are experiencing homophobic and transphobic bullying to make positive changes to their situation. For more information about this campaign, see www.officeronline.co.uk/bullyingsucks

Love without borders

Around the world lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people are persecuted, imprisoned and even murdered by their own governments just for being LGBT. Same-sex sexual activities for men are explicitly illegal in more than 80 states around the world, and for women in more than 40 states. In 9 of these, the punishment for being LGBT is death. Here in the UK we have won many legal rights over the past few years, but we live in a global community and no longer can we stand by while the suffering continues. It's now time to use our freedom to fight for the rights of others, and we want to include you in this fight! Check www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt for more details!



If you have never done any campaigning before and don't know where to start, check out our introduction to campaigning at <http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/template%20a-z%20lgbt%20Campaigning.DOC>

NUS has also produced generic information about campaigning which is regularly updated: www.officeronline.co.uk/activism/articles/

- Attend NUS LGBT Activist Training Days. These are an opportunity to develop your skills and learn more about how you can support students in your college and campaign on issues affecting LGBT students. You will also have the opportunity to meet campaigners from external organisations, other student activists and NUS LGBT Committee. They are held in six locations across the UK and are subsidised by NUS – the FE student rate is only £7.50 each. Find out more at www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt

To find out more, keep checking online at www.officeronline.co.uk/events

- Send a delegation to NUS LGBT conference – each spring NUS LGBT Campaign holds a conference where LGBT students from all over the country meet to discuss issues affecting them, and to decide campaign priorities for the national campaign. You are entitled to send four delegates from your students' union to this conference. It is a great experience and an opportunity to meet other activists in your area and across the country, as well as to attend workshops and hear speakers. All NUS events are listed online at www.officeronline.co.uk/events and if you sign up to the NUS LGBT Campaign newsletter you will be sent information about all NUS LGBT events first.
- Enter your group for FE LGBT Society of the Year. This is awarded every year at NUS LGBT conference. Whether or not you win it's a really good opportunity to showcase your work to other students across the country.

LGBT RESOURCES

Practical briefings and toolkits

NUS *The A–Z of LGBT* [online]. Available from: www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt

NUS *LGBT History Month Briefing* [online]. Available from: <http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/7.%20template%20a-z%20lgbt%20History%20Month.DOC>

NUS *Union Officer's Manual* [online]. Available from: <http://www.officeronline.co.uk>

The East Coast Centre for Diversity, representing the Grimsby Institute of FHE (2007) *Sexual Orientation: A Practical Guide to Equality* [online]. Available from: <http://www.grimsby.ac.uk/Eccd/documents/sexualitymaterials.PDF> [accessed 01 Oct 2007]. Created with LSC funding.

The Forum on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Post-School Education (2008) *Guidance on trans equality in post-school education* [online]. Available from: <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/lgbt/articles/275494.aspx> [accessed 25 Sept 2008].

Research and Surveys

Al-Alami, M et al. (2007) *Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People's Experience of Inequality and Discrimination* [online]. Available from: www.pfc.org.uk/files/EngenderedPenalties.pdf [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

Ellis, V and High, S (2004) 'Something more to tell you: gay, lesbian or bisexual young people's experience of secondary schooling' *British Educational Research Journal*, 30 (2): 213-225.

Phil Barnett Associates for the Centre of Excellence in Leadership (2006) *Equality and sexual orientation: the leadership challenge in further education* [online]. Available from: www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/UsersDoc/EqualityandSexualOrientation.pdf [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

Stonewall (2007) *Living together: British attitudes to lesbian and gay people* [online]. Available from: www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/living_together_final_web.pdf [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

Religious LGBT Organisations

IMAAN (UK LGBT Muslim website) www.imaan.org.uk

SAFRA (Muslim women's support group and website) www.safraproject.org

Quest (Organisation for gay and lesbian Catholics in the UK) www.questgaycatholic.org.uk

Young LGBT Christians www.ylgc.org.uk

Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement www.lgcm.org.uk

Support

Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays www.fflag.org.uk

Young Gay Men (National website for young gay men from Terrence Higgins Trust) www.ygm.org.uk

Albert Kennedy Trust (Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and homeless young people) www.akt.org.uk

Information about Legislation

Stonewall Information Bank www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/

Learning and Skills Network (2007) *Guidance on the Gender Equality Duty for the FE Sector* [online]. Available from: www.lsneducation.org.uk [accessed 01 Oct 2007].

LGBT OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION

Below is a job description for an LGBT Officer that you could adopt into your students' union:

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Officer Shall:

- Ensure that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) students' views and opinions are reflected throughout the whole of the students' union's work
- Provide an LGBT perspective on all matters concerning the union and the college, and ensure that there is a regular forum or group where LGBT students can meet
- Organise education and social LGBT meetings and events
- Organise training events for LGBT students in conjunction with NUS LGBT
- Establish links, and provide information from groups and organisations that work on LGBT issues
- Promote the positive involvement of LGBT students in all areas of the union's activities
- Represent the views of LGBT students to the students' union and the college
- Be a member of the executive committee and student council and make reports to each as appropriate.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION EQUALITY CHECKLIST



You can use this checklist to find out how well your institution is doing in relation to sexual orientation equality. Ask the Diversity Manager or HR staff member with responsibility for equality to fill in the questionnaire and return it to you. The action group will then be

able to see where the institution is doing well or falling short of good practice. The questions follow a few principles: good policy making and effective procedures in line with entitlements; effective organisation for LGB support; engagement with LGB people and communities; and prominence of sexual orientation equality within the organisation.

Entitlements

1. Does your organisation offer survivor pension entitlement to same-sex partners of all staff?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

2. Does your organisation offer the following types of leave to people in either one or both marriage and civil partnership?

Bereavement

Adoption

Maternity / Paternity

☐ Yes

☐ Yes

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ No

☐ No

☐ Don't know

☐ Don't know

☐ Don't know

Are any of these offered to unmarried or unregistered partners?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Policies and Procedures

3. Does your organisation have a written equality policy including discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

4. Are there supportive procedures for the reporting of harassment and bullying?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

5. Has your organisation audited its policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the goods and services regulations?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
6. Does your organisation ensure that policies against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation are complied with in the procurement process?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
7. Has your organisation implemented The Joint Guidance on Sexual Orientation equality?
 This was agreed between the AOC and recognised Unions.
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Organising

8. Does your organisation have a working group addressing sexual orientation?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
9. Does your organisation have any officially recognised lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) groups for staff and students?
- ☐ Staff Only
☐ Student Only
☐ Both Staff and Student
10. Do you offer support to LGB staff and students other than an LGB staff / student group?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
- If yes what?

Engagement

11. Is your officially recognised LGB staff and student group routinely involved in discussions on employment rights, benefits and development?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
12. Do you carry out a regular comprehensive attitude surveys for staff and students that can be broken down by sexual orientation?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
13. In the past year, has your organisation recruited staff or advertised its products or services in any UK LGB media?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
14. Does your organisation monitor for sexual orientation equality?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
- If yes how?
-
-
15. In the past year has your organisation sponsored, or otherwise supported a UK lesbian, gay, bisexual community organisation or event?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
16. Do you engage with sexual orientation issues in other ways?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
- If yes in what ways?
-
-

Prominence

17. Are there any openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual members of your organisation's senior management team?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
18. At what level in the structure of the organisation is your lead person for sexual orientation equality?
- ☐ Senior Management
☐ Middle Management
☐ Don't know
19. Does your organisation provide diversity awareness training that specifically mentions or refers to 'sexual orientation' and is this training compulsory for all staff?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know
20. Have you had an Employment Tribunal hearing against your organisation that included a complaint on the basis of sexual orientation in the last 12 months?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

If yes give details

For your information these are the relevant pieces of legislation on sexual orientation equality.

The Goods and Services Sexual Orientation Regulations (2007)

The Civil Partnership Act (2005)

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)

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