

Dear Members, Supporters and Speakers,

Thank you to all who came to the open meeting at Council House on 30th September : Challenging Homophobia : Supporting Equalities in Schools

I am writing in response to the many emails and phone calls I have received. Thank you to everyone for your input - positive or negative - it really contributes to the work of the Forum and enables us to provide a better service.

We had a fantastic turnout and I must apologise to you all for the delay to proceedings following the move to a larger and more suitable room. Many thanks to the Conference Office Team who made that possible in such a short time. In future, I will endeavour to secure that room for similar meetings and am now very aware of the fact that it is better to overestimate than to underestimate.

I also apologise for the overcrowding of the agenda. Education is an important issue with many people involved but I would like to extend my appreciation to both Cllr Gary Hopkins (Cabinet Member : Equalities and Community Cohesion) and Cllr Clare Champion-Smith (Cabinet Member : Children and Young People) for attending our meeting and their involvement.

From Cllr Gary Hopkins we heard about the commitment of the Council to equalities and the important announcement that the Council, via the Children and Young People Services department will be signing up to the Stonewall Education Champions see link below for more information about this work.

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/about_us/1727.asp

Cllr Clare Champion-Smith, who is new in post, stayed almost to the end to learn more about the difficulties facing young LGBT people in education and the difficulties the CYPS has experienced in addressing them. She has asked for more information from myself and Jo McDonald, and we will be helping her with any information she asks for.

She says there .."clearly needs to be concerted action on this and a much higher profile given to the problems experienced by children and young people" ..

Jon House, Deputy Chief Executive, expressed his own commitment and that of the Council to equalities and inclusion for all. He was keen to assist if there are difficulties in taking actions forward and wants to be kept informed of progress. We will be in touch with him.

The report from Freedom Youth highlighted very clearly and eloquently the reason we were all there for this meeting. LGBT young people need to know that there is support for them and their teachers in dealing with homophobic bullying. All involved must do all they can to eradicate homophobic bullying throughout education and send a clear message to perpetrators. LGBT equality and quality of life must never be ignored at the whim of other equalities groups. As we heard LGBT young people's needs in religious schools are totally ignored - this cannot go on and must be challenged by the Council and Government.

Thank you too to the Bristol Youth Parliament for talking about the excellent work they are doing in raising awareness of and challenging homophobic bullying. This is not an LGBT organisation and several of us thought that the Education Authorities could do well to both listen and be advised by them.

Annie Hudson, director of CYPS - Children and Young People's Service is relatively new in post and is new to the issues, we have high hopes that she will address capacity issues and support the actions involved in taking this forward. We look forward to the Action Plan that CYPS will be developing as a part of their signing up to the Stonewall Education Champions Programme, and derived from the mapping and gapping exercise that they are currently undertaking (under Su Coombes). This Action Plan will be of enormous help in providing information for the work they will be doing with Stonewall's guidance.

Jo McDonald, Equalities Officer, told us about the work the Equality and Community Cohesion Team have been doing in conjunction with the Rainbow Group to address issues, including the Myth Busting Booklet <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Community-Living/Equality-Diversity/files/information/lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-mythbusting-booklet.en>, speaking to both the Black governors network and the main governors network about the importance of combating

homophobic bullying, followed up by articles in both the Governors Bulletin and newsletter, and the setting up a self organised group for education professionals.

As a part of this the Forum is working in partnership with the Equalities and Community Cohesion Team in promoting and developing support for LGBT Governors and LGBT Teaching Staff. On 28th October at our AGM we are holding an open meeting looking at being an LGBT Governor (see attached flyer).

From Esther Pickup-Keller at CYPS and Jonathan Charlesworth at EACH, we heard of the training and courses offered to teachers and to bullies in support of reducing homophobic bullying. While this work is admirable and obviously going on, is it enough? What is the up take? How many schools are we training in and what kind of training are we providing? It was noted at the evening that there was no independent evaluation of this work being done. Do we know what the figures are for homophobic bullying in schools, which schools report and what are they doing? What do we do about the schools who submit "nil" returns for homophobic bullying? Are these figures put together with the figures from EACH of how many young people from Bristol contact their Action Line?

What is the effectiveness of the Council funded training provided by EACH, i.e. is there enough funding and who should be monitoring (do you mean evaluating here - there is monitoring - Safer Bristol have it) if EACH aren't funded to? We are endeavouring to find the answers to all these questions.

More information, including a minuted report of the evening, will be posted on our website (www.bristol-lgb-forum.org.uk) as activities and plans progress - there may also be a joint event in February - LGBT History Month.

Thank you again to all the speakers, including meeting chairs Simon Nelson and Alan Palmer, your presence and commitment to addressing homophobia is much appreciated and we look forward to working further with you. All at the Forum are more than happy to assist anyone at the Council (where capacity allows) in progressing all these actions, please use us.

Finally, please can you let us know in advance if you are coming to one of our events. We need to ensure we have the right facilities, comply with Health and Safety and have enough food and refreshments for all.

Thank you, Sarah on behalf of the Management Committee of the Bristol LGB Forum

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Please note new telephone number below

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