



**Children and Families Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**
4th February 2009

**Report from the Director of Children
and Families**

Wards Affected:
ALL

Tackling Homophobic Bullying

1.0 Summary

Tackling all forms of bullying remains a high priority for the local authority and the School Improvement Services. In November 2007, the Children and Families department held a conference to highlight the importance of tackling homophobic bullying. Ten schools were represented and there were 40 participants.

This academic year, 2008-9, we have made tackling homophobic bullying a major focus of our work. We are working with Stonewall, the charity that advises the government on tackling homophobic bullying, on their Education Champions programme to take a lead in this area with our schools.

2.0 Detail

All schools were asked in September 2008 to send their Anti-Bullying/Behaviour policies to Anthony Felsenstein, the named lead officer on bullying, so that he could audit them in relation to references to tackling homophobic bullying, or bullying based on sexuality. This would form the basis for a report to the Scrutiny Committee of members on the issue.

2.1 Policies were returned from 27 schools, 35% of the total number of primary, secondary and special schools. 13 out of 14 mainstream secondary school policies were returned, 13 out of 59 primary school policies and one out of five from special schools.

2.2 18 out of 27 policies, or 67%, had direct references to phrases such as tackling *homophobic bullying*, *homophobic language* or *bullying based on sexuality* or *sexual orientation*. In many policies these references formed part of the school's summary of what bullying can be based on and how this type of bullying is unacceptable.

2.3 9 out of the 27 policies, or 33% had a more detailed reference to homophobic bullying, or bullying based on sexuality. There was a wide variety of this type of reference: one policy included a detailed appendix discussing *what is homophobic bullying, who is affected by it and what should be done*, whilst others included references to homophobic bullying integrated throughout the policy, in the same way that other types of bullying were included.

3.0 Other work to tackle homophobic bullying in schools

As part of our work with Stonewall, we have drawn up a draft action plan to take this work forward. There is a variety of work planned.

3.1 The Brent Anti-Bullying Guidance to schools is currently being updated in conjunction with the Head of the Education Psychology Service. This will be produced for consultation in January 2009 and includes more detailed advice for schools on tackling homophobic bullying.

3.2 All schools were invited to the annual Brent launch of National Anti-Bullying Week on 17 November 2008. The theme this year was *Being different, belonging together* and there were 100 participants, half of whom were pupils. Staff chose one of three workshops to attend, one of which was on tackling homophobic bullying. There were 15 participants and the issue of homophobic bullying was explored and practical strategies discussed as to how schools could best tackle this type of bullying. The workshop was led by Stonewall.

3.3 Links have been made with local groups with an interest in supporting this work, such as Mosaic, a youth group, within Brent Youth Service. It offers support to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people under the age of 19. Mosaic contributed to the workshop at the Brent launch of National Anti-Bullying Week.

3.3 Further meetings will take place with Stonewall and other local authorities involved in the Education Champions programme, in order to share effective practice.

3.4 It is planned that the School Improvement Services will work with two schools in 2009, in order to develop further our work to tackle homophobic bullying. Schools will be invited to work with the local authority and preliminary discussions have already taken place with two schools.

Background Papers

n/a

Contact Officers

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