

Executive Summary

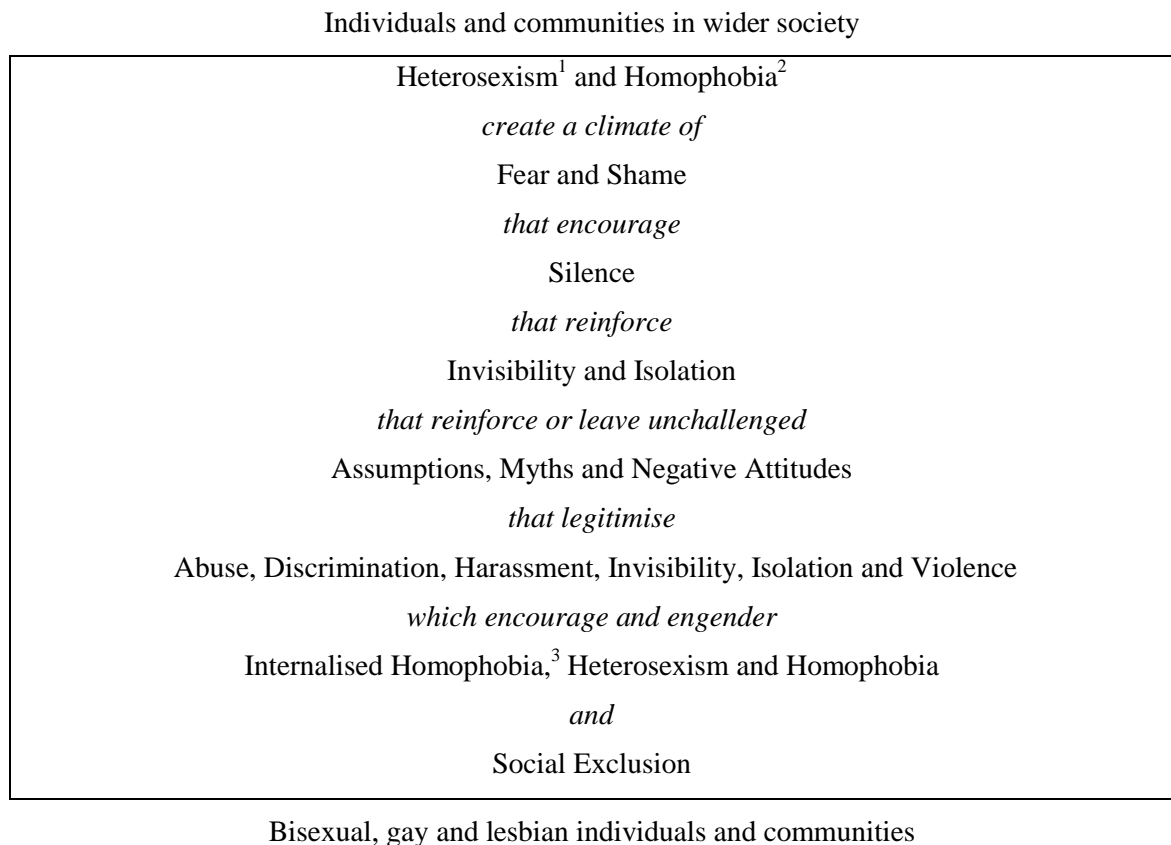
General Points

- ⇒ ReachOUT's research project is concerned with the health and housing experiences, issues and needs of young bisexuals, gays and lesbians and the particular experiences, issues and needs of those who are Asian and Black in Reading, Berkshire. These young people's experiences and issues often reflect or result from social *exclusion*. More specifically, they reflect or result from disadvantage, discrimination and oppression.
- ⇒ The research project is also concerned with the needs of these young people, as reflected in the report's recommendations to improve local services, both mainstream and specialist. These can be distilled into the basic need to be included and listened to i.e. social *inclusion*. More specifically the need for quality services that are non-judgemental, that offer choice, that are supportive, that welcome diversity and services that are standardised in terms of equality of access and opportunity.
- ⇒ Ultimately the research project and report aim to raise awareness of these young people's experiences, issues and needs among agencies, workers and the wider community so as to make everyday life easier for bisexual, gay and lesbian young people.
- ⇒ The research project employed both qualitative and quantitative methods: individual and group interviews, surveys and secondary data. Interviews were conducted with 35 young people and 17 workers about Asian, Black, health and housing issues. Surveys included 169 Young People's Health and Housing Surveys, 107 Homophobic Incidents Surveys, 39 Local Agencies Surveys, ten Local Secondary Schools Surveys and 27 Frontline Workers Surveys.
- ⇒ Based on the 1991 Census, the author estimated that there are 866 people aged 16-24 in Reading who are bisexual, gay, lesbian or unsure about their sexual identity. Of these 32 are Asian and 35 are Black.
- ⇒ In terms of the research project participants, the sample was not a random one: participants were targeted. This reflects the reality of conducting research with a hard to reach section of the community in a limited time with limited resources. However, the author estimated that approximately 24 per cent of Reading's bisexual, gay and lesbian young people (aged 15-25) were surveyed and/or interviewed. The author is therefore confident that this is *a local study of bisexual, gay and lesbian young people's experiences, issues and needs* and therefore is of relevance and use.
- ⇒ The research project found that there are few experiences and issues that bisexuals, gays and lesbians face *specifically*. Most are experiences and issues that are *pronounced* in comparison with the youth population generally – resulting from their minority position in society, or in the case of Asian and Black young people,

their position as a minority within a minority. Many issues are *general*, shared in common by young people whatever their sexual identity.

- ⇒ Although the research project identified several typical experiences and issues it is not useful to think in terms of the likelihood or probability of young bisexuals, gays and lesbians facing these. This encourages assumptions and stereotypes and is not useful when working with service users or when attempting to improve services. It is preferable to think in terms of *vulnerability*: that young bisexuals, gays and lesbians are vulnerable to certain experiences and issues – sometimes specifically, sometimes in a pronounced way and sometimes in common with other young people.
- ⇒ The findings of the research project indicate that there is a vicious cycle of social exclusion faced by many young bisexuals, gays and lesbians that needs to be tackled:

The Vicious Cycle of Social Exclusion facing some Young Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians



¹ 'Heterosexism' refers to the assumption or presumption of heterosexuality by individuals, institutions and society.

² 'Homophobia' refers to an irrational dislike, fear and/or hatred of homosexuality.

³ 'Internalised homophobia' refers to a dislike, fear and/or hatred of being gay or lesbian by people who are gay, lesbian or unsure because of society's homophobia.

- ⇒ Although the research findings and recommendations are particular to Reading, they are not specific to Reading. The experiences, issues and needs of young bisexuals, gays and lesbians in Reading, and the recommendations to improve local services, are likely to be of relevance and significance in other parts of Britain and wider afield. ReachOUT hopes the research report will be of interest and use to other bisexual, gay and lesbian youth projects, other bisexual, gay and lesbian services, specialist providers and mainstream services in other areas.

Health Issues⁴

Age of Consent for Gays and Lesbians

“I think the age of consent for gays should be lower [than 18]. The risks from heterosexual sex are the same. Under-age sex does happen and sex is important in a relationship.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ The age of consent for gay men at the time of writing was 18. In the absence of a legal age of consent for lesbian women, the practical age is 16.
- ⇒ Forty-five per cent of young people were aware of their sexual identity or ‘sexual difference’ before the age of 18.
- ⇒ Eighty-two per cent of young people had been sexually active by the age of 18.
- ⇒ Sixty-nine per cent of men’s first sexual experiences were with other men.
- ⇒ Sixty-nine per cent of women’s first sexual experiences were with men and only 31 per cent with other women.
- ⇒ Fifty-one per cent of young people had had their first gay or lesbian sexual experience before the age of 18.
- ⇒ Sixty-five per cent of young people had had their first gay or lesbian sexual experience with someone aged 25 or under who they met through school, college, university, in scene venues⁵ or it was a friend or through friends.
- ⇒ Bisexual and gay men seem to be sexually active at an earlier age compared to heterosexual men.
- ⇒ Heterosexual women seem to be more sexually active by the age of 18 compared to bisexual and lesbian women.
- ⇒ Of those young people who expressed an opinion, most were in favour of an age of consent at 16, and/or equal to the heterosexual age of consent.

⁴ Evidence obtained from the Young People’s Health and Housing Survey and interviews with young people unless stated.

⁵ ‘Scene venues’ refer to bars, clubs, pubs and other social space frequented by bisexuals, gays and lesbians.

Alcohol Use and Abuse

“As an Asian Muslim, I sometimes feel pressurised into drinking when I’m out on the scene. People pressure you if they know you don’t drink.” (Young man).

- ⇒ Eight per cent of young people did not consume alcohol.
- ⇒ The majority of young people consumed at or below the recommended safe level.
- ⇒ Twenty-two per cent of young (59 per cent) people consumed more than the recommended safe level.
- ⇒ Fifteen per cent of young people considered their alcohol consumption to be a problem.
- ⇒ Alcohol use among bisexual, gay and lesbian youth was comparable with use among the general youth population.
- ⇒ Three factors seem to be associated with alcohol use and abuse: a gay and lesbian scene based around alcohol-selling venues, the ‘Ab Fab’ lifestyle⁶ factor and the coping factor. These factors are not *specific* to bisexual, gay and lesbian youth, but seem to be *pronounced*.

Bisexuality

“I think bisexuality is okay. It’s just like being gay.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Eight per cent of men and 12 per cent of women identified as bisexual.
- ⇒ The majority of young people (63 per cent) considered bisexuality to be a sexual identity in its own right.
- ⇒ Seven per cent of young people considered bisexuality to be a ‘phase’.
- ⇒ The findings of this study seem to contrast with those of others. Other studies found evidence of widespread biphobia⁷ and several common assumptions and myths about bisexuality.

Bullying at School

“Lots of kids used to get beaten up for being gay. You just had to suffer it.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Eleven out of the 35 young people (31 per cent) who participated in the interviews had experienced bullying at school because of their sexual identity, real or perceived

⁶ The ‘Ab Fab lifestyle’ factor refers to the hedonistic lifestyle of the Edina and Patsy characters as featured on the BBC2 TV comedy series ‘Absolutely Fabulous’.

⁷ ‘Biphobia’ refers to an irrational dislike, fear and/or hatred of bisexuals (people who are attracted to both sexes).

and several knew of others who had been bullied in this way. Some of this bullying was serious and systematic over a prolonged period of time.

- ⇒ Two young people used to bully others.
- ⇒ There was evidence that schools and teachers sometimes responded to this bullying in ways that were not appropriate or effective.

Commercial Sex Work

“A friend of mine is a male prostitute. He hangs about the public toilets. He lets men fuck him and for extra money, he lets them do it unprotected.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Sixteen per cent of young people had sold sex for money.
- ⇒ The central issues seem to be consent and power.

Domestic Violence against Young People

- ⇒ Nineteen per cent of men and 25 per cent of women had experienced domestic violence.

Drugs Use and Abuse (Prescribed and Recreational Drugs)

“I get offered more drugs on the gay scene than the straight [heterosexual] scene.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Fifty per cent of young people had used drugs.
- ⇒ Thirty-two per cent of young people had used amphetamines (‘speed’), 39 per cent amyl nitrate (‘poppers’), 59 per cent cannabis (‘hash’), 20 per cent cocaine (‘coke’), 26 per cent ecstasy and 20 per cent LSD (‘acid’).
- ⇒ Men were three times as likely to have used amphetamines, amyl nitrate, cocaine, ecstasy and LSD compared to women.
- ⇒ Drug use is common among all young people, however, participants in this study were between two and five times more likely to have used amphetamines, amyl nitrate, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin and LSD compared to the general youth population.
- ⇒ Four factors seem to be associated with drug use and abuse: the high level of use by young people generally, the gay and lesbian club scene, the ‘Ab Fab’ lifestyle factor and the coping factor. These factors are not *specific* to bisexual, gay and lesbian youth, but seem to be *pronounced*.

Eating Disorders

“The stereotypes [about how gays and lesbians should look] can be very oppressive and they are perpetuated on the scene. I find it very depressing.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Twelve per cent of young people had had an eating disorder.
- ⇒ Thirty-four per cent of young people had often or sometimes dieted, 53 per cent had skipped meals, 57 per cent had often or sometimes worried about their weight and 43 per cent were not happy with their body.
- ⇒ Several young people were dissatisfied with their appearance, body shape and/or size.
- ⇒ Fourteen per cent of young people considered there to be a link between this dissatisfaction and their sexual identity.
- ⇒ Young bisexual, gay and lesbian people seem *more likely* to suffer from eating disorders than the general youth population, for example young bisexual and gay men were *three times more likely*.
- ⇒ The gay and lesbian media and scene both promote ‘ideal’ body types at odds with reality for the majority of young people. These young people aspire/are pressured to achieve these ‘ideal’ types.

Experience of Health Services

“When I went to see my GP I ended up telling him that I was a lesbian. I was so angry at the way he approached my health, asking if I was sexually active and whether I was using contraceptives. He just assumed my sexuality without asking. Once someone has made that assumption, it’s much harder to come out.” (Young woman.)

- ⇒ Twenty-seven per cent of young people were out to their GP and 26 per cent would like to be.
- ⇒ Eight per cent of young people found coming out to have been a good thing, two per cent a bad thing and 18 per cent found it made no difference to the quality of service they received.
- ⇒ There seem to be two main issues at two extremes: the invisibility of bisexuals, gays and lesbians within health care settings (and the consequences for their care, assumptions, etc.) and the real or perceived intrusiveness when health workers know about a service user’s sexual identity.

Homophobia and Homophobic Crime⁸

- ⇒ Seventy per cent of young people had been verbally abused (called named, shouted at and threatened), 63 per cent because of their sexual identity.
- ⇒ Thirty-nine per cent of young people had been physically abused (beaten up, hit, kicked, pushed and having things thrown at them), 26 per cent because of their sexual identity.
- ⇒ Twenty-four per cent of young people had been harassed (abusive calls and letters, blackmail, graffiti and vandalism), 16 per cent because of their sexual identity.
- ⇒ Thirty-two per cent of young people had been sexually abused (being flashed at, groped, raped and sexually assaulted).
- ⇒ Eight per cent of men and 13 per cent of women had been raped.
- ⇒ Only 12 per cent of young people reported abuse, harassment and violence incidents to the police.
- ⇒ Gangs or strangers on the street perpetrated most incidents of homophobia and homophobic crime. However, a significant number occurred in local schools, colleges, in the workplace and on the bisexual, gay and lesbian scene.
- ⇒ The study found evidence of domestic violence within same-sex relationships. The study found evidence of abuse, harassment and violence because of disability, ethnic identity, gender and mental health problems. The study also found evidence of abuse, harassment and violence on the bisexual, gay and lesbian scene.

Mental Health

“I’m often in situations where I feel I have to act [as if heterosexual]. I have to do it every day and it’s stressful.” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Fifteen per cent of young people had had a mental health problem.
- ⇒ Eight young people were currently receiving treatment while 14 had in the past.
- ⇒ Eleven young people felt that their treatment had helped while 11 did not.
- ⇒ Three young people thought their sexual identity was a factor in their mental health problem.
- ⇒ Ten young people had been out during treatment and three young people felt that coming out had affected the quality of the service they received.
- ⇒ Fifty-five per cent of young people had thought about committing suicide.

⁸ Evidence was obtained from the Homophobic Incidents Survey conducted across Berkshire, including Reading. The author was commissioned by the Berkshire Anti-Homophobia Group to conduct a study into homophobia, published as a report: *Homophobia and Homophobic Crime in Berkshire*.

- ⇒ Twenty-two per cent of young people had attempted suicide.
- ⇒ Thirty-three per cent of young people had deliberately harmed themselves.
- ⇒ Bisexual, gay and lesbian youth were *no more* likely to suffer from a mental health problem than youth generally. However, they *were more* likely to suffer from depression, self-harm and suicide. For example, young bisexuals, gays and lesbians were *three times as likely* to suffer from depression and young gay men were almost *four times as likely* to have attempted suicide. Depression, self-harm and suicide are mental health problems that are more social in nature, as opposed to clinical/neurological disorders.

Sex Education

“Sex education in my school was like penis, vagina, go forth and multiply. And they did!” (Young man.)

- ⇒ Twenty per cent of young people felt that their sex education had been ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.
- ⇒ Forty-five per cent of young people felt it had been ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.
- ⇒ Seventy per cent of young people reported that their sex education had covered HIV and sexual health.
- ⇒ Twenty-two per cent of young people reported that their sex education had covered gay and lesbian issues.

Sexual Health

“Most people assume that lesbians don’t need protection or to practice safer sex. I don’t think that’s true.” (Young woman.)

- ⇒ Fifty-seven per cent of men and 26 per cent of women ‘always’ practised safer sex.
- ⇒ Thirty-six per cent of men and 44 per cent of women ‘mostly’ practised safer sex.
- ⇒ Six per cent of men and 30 per cent of women did not practice safer sex.
- ⇒ Thirty per cent of men and 14 per cent of women had been for an HIV test.
- ⇒ Most young people either knew, or believed themselves to be, HIV-negative.
- ⇒ Two young people were HIV-positive.
- ⇒ Forty-seven per cent of men and 27 per cent of women had been vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- ⇒ Fifteen per cent of young people had had a sexually transmitted infection.

- ⇒ The study found several health experiences and issues that some young bisexual, gay and lesbian people are vulnerable to high alcohol consumption and alcohol problems, bullying because of real or perceived sexual identity, selling sex, domestic violence, use of certain types of drugs, eating disorders, homophobic abuse, harassment and violence, certain mental health problems (depression, suicide and self-harm), poor quality sex education and not practising safer sex.

Housing Issues

“I have worried about being made homeless because my parents are really homophobic. I’ve got a friend at work who has offered me a spare room if I need it.”
(Young man.)

- ⇒ Twelve per cent of young people lived alone, 31 per cent with family, four per cent with relatives, 11 per cent with a partner, five young people were homeless, 30 per cent with friends, two per cent in shared accommodation and seven per cent in university accommodation. Young bisexual and gay men were more likely to be living in the family home or with friends than young bisexual and lesbian women, who were more likely to be living with a partner or relatives.
- ⇒ Thirty-seven per cent of young people lived in owner-occupied accommodation, 42 per cent in private rented accommodation, two young people in local authority housing, four per cent in housing associations, seven per cent in university accommodation and two young people in hostels.
- ⇒ Thirteen per cent of young people spent less than 20 per cent of their income on housing costs while 45 per cent spent *less* than 50 per cent of their income on housing costs and five per cent spent *more*. A significant number of young people spent a substantial proportion of their income on housing costs. This was sometimes unmanageable and problematic.
- ⇒ Twenty-seven per cent of young people reported that meeting their housing costs was, or was sometimes, a problem. The high rent level locally, which some young people sometimes struggle with, obviously leaves some vulnerable to homelessness.
- ⇒ Thirteen per cent of young people were, or had been, homeless – four per cent because of their sexual identity.
- ⇒ Eleven per cent of young people had experienced housing problems because of their sexual identity, including being evicted, refused tenancies, etc.
- ⇒ There are a number of housing issues that are *pronounced* and *specific* to young bisexuals, gays and lesbians, and a number of *general* issues that face many young people.

Pronounced Issues

- ⇒ Young heterosexual men and women are *more* likely to be living in the family home compared to young bisexuals, gays and lesbians. Bisexual and lesbian women in particular were twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to be living away from the family home. Young bisexuals, gays and lesbians are thus *more* likely to face the housing issues and problems that are associated with trying to live independently.
- ⇒ Bisexual, gay and lesbian youth were *three times more likely* to be homeless, or to have been homeless, than their heterosexual counterparts.

Specific Issues

- ⇒ Being out and coming out as bisexual, gay or lesbian carries the risk of discrimination (and even being made homeless) by flatmates, landlords, parents, etc. This is compounded and legitimised by the lack of legal protection.
- ⇒ Not being out is not cost free. Not being honest and open can affect young people's lifestyles (i.e. constraints on personal freedom, etc.), their relationships with people they live with (i.e. having to lie, etc.) and their confidence and self-esteem.
- ⇒ Given the nature of society and the realities of life for many bisexuals, gays and lesbians (widespread discrimination, fear, homophobia, violence, etc.) it is important that bisexuals, gays and lesbians feel comfortable and safe at home. Home is a sanctuary from some of these social realities.
- ⇒ Young bisexuals, gays and lesbians potentially face discrimination by mortgage brokers and housing providers because of their sexual identity.

General Issues

- ⇒ The imbalance between housing demand and supply locally.
- ⇒ The lack of affordable housing in the private rented sector.
- ⇒ The lack of affordable social housing (co-operatives, housing associations, local authority housing, etc.).
- ⇒ Young people's generally lower incomes compounded by the withdrawal of welfare benefit entitlement for 16-and 17-year olds (as of 1988), the restrictions on Housing Benefit for young people (as of 1996) and the lower minimum wage level set for young people (as of 1999).
- ⇒ The study also found several housing experiences and issues that some young bisexuals, gays and lesbians are vulnerable to spending a substantial proportion of income on housing costs, problems meeting their housing costs, being made homeless, experiencing housing problems because of their sexual identity and limited housing options.

Asian and Black Issues⁹

“There can be a loss of Asian identity in the predominantly white gay scene. You may be gay, but what about being Asian? There are pressures to conform to gay culture at the expense of your own. Gay culture is reflected in the music people listen to, fashion, etc. The loss of your own cultural identity can leave people feeling lost.” (Male worker.)

- ⇒ In terms of Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians, the study found several experiences and issues at the individual, family, Asian and Black communities, bisexual, gay and lesbian community, institutional and wider social levels.
- ⇒ At the individual level the following issues arose: identity-formation and identity conflict and confusion (ethnic and sexual), problems of labels and language around sexual identity, mental health, the need for ‘middle way’ strategies, constraints or the lack of options, peer pressure, personal loss and sacrifice associated with coming out, personal safety, peer support and the importance of religion.
- ⇒ At the family level the following issues arose: family expectations, homophobia, *izzat*, male privilege, the pressure to marry and family as a source of support and oppression.
- ⇒ At the Asian and Black communities level the following issues arose: communalism, community leaders and organisations as gatekeepers, conservatism, homophobia, inter-generation issues, the invisibility of bisexuals, gays and lesbians, the position of women and the Asian veto to keep certain issues off the agenda.
- ⇒ At the bisexual, gay and lesbian community level the following issues arose: invisibility, racism, relationship issues, sexualisation and stereotyping.
- ⇒ At the institutional level the main issue was the reality and consequences of Anglo-centric mainstream services.
- ⇒ At the wider social level the main issue was racism and the status of Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians as a minority within a minority.
- ⇒ The study found that some young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians face exclusion and oppression on several fronts: as Asian or Black people, as bisexuals, gays or lesbians, as women and as young people. They also face exclusion and oppression from several constituencies: the Asian and Black communities, the bisexual, gay and lesbian community and wider society.

⁹ Evidence obtained from interviews with Asian and Black young people and workers.

Agency Issues¹⁰

“Staff assumed that all discussion of homosexuality was illegal. Staff were cautious around the issue and some felt that Section 28¹¹ promoted homophobia.” (Social Services Manager.)

- ⇒ Thirty-eight agencies surveyed had an equal opportunities policy and only one did not.
- ⇒ Thirty-three agencies with a policy included sexual identity while four did not.
- ⇒ Only two agencies monitored their service users’ sexual identity and three sometimes monitored service users’ sexual identity.
- ⇒ Twenty agencies had provided training for their staff around bisexual, gay and lesbian issues while 18 had not.
- ⇒ Twenty-one agencies reported having resources available for service users and staff on bisexual, gay and lesbian issues while 13 did not.
- ⇒ Thirty agencies considered their agency to be a safe environment for staff to be out while three did not.
- ⇒ Twenty-five agencies considered their agency to be a safe environment for service users to be out while four did not.
- ⇒ Twenty agencies knew about Section 28, five did not and 13 were not sure.
- ⇒ Six agencies felt that Section 28 affected their agency’s work while 16 did not and 12 were not sure.
- ⇒ The 12 agencies that were not sure whether Section 28 affected them were statutory and voluntary sector agencies not covered by the legislation.
- ⇒ Only one local institution (Probation Service) had provided any training for its staff *specifically* on bisexual, gay and lesbian issues.
- ⇒ In terms of local agencies addressing bisexual, gay and lesbian issues and needs, as expressed through their policies, procedure and practice, there is a mixed picture. Some agencies have or have begun to acknowledge and action these issues whilst others have not. There is no clear statutory/voluntary sector divide on these issues; neither sector is more progressed or progressive on these issues.

¹⁰ Evidence obtained from Local Agencies Survey.

¹¹ Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act “prohibits local authorities from intentionally promoting the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” However, Department of the Environment Circular 12/88 stated that “Section 28 does not affect the activities of school governors, nor of teachers. It will not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom, nor the counselling of pupils concerned about their sexuality.”

- ⇒ The mixed picture means that individual co-ordinators/managers have been left to address (or not) these issues using their experience, knowledge and skills. Crucially, this process has often been dependent on their personal commitment or a result of lobbying by staff and/or service users. The mixed picture reflects the fact that no central or local government agency – central government, health authority, local government, etc. – has provided any guidance or lead on bisexual, gay and lesbian issues. The result is patchy provision; provision that is not standardised in terms of quality. Bisexual, gay and lesbian young people cannot assume they will receive the appropriate and quality services they should be able to expect. For example in terms of monitoring, policies and training provision many agencies locally do not even acknowledge that they exist, never mind their issues and needs.

School Issues¹²

“[The school is not a safe space for bisexual, gay and lesbian students] because prejudice exists among parents, pupils and staff.” (Headteacher.)

- ⇒ Four headteachers were aware of bisexual, gay and lesbian students in their school while six were not.
- ⇒ Five headteachers considered their school to be a safe environment for staff and students to be out while four did not.
- ⇒ Four headteachers had dealt with cases of homophobia in their school while six had not.
- ⇒ All ten schools that responded had an equal opportunities policy, but sexual identity was only included in four schools’ policies.
- ⇒ All schools had a bullying policy, but sexual identity was only included in two school’s policies.
- ⇒ All ten schools had a sex education policy and all covered HIV prevention and sexual health promotion in their curricula.
- ⇒ Seven schools included bisexual, gay and lesbian issues in their sex education curriculum while three did not.
- ⇒ Five headteachers were aware of Section 28 while five were not.
- ⇒ Only one school had provided any training for its governors and staff around issues of sexual identity.
- ⇒ In terms of local schools addressing bisexual, gay and lesbian issues and needs there is a mixed picture. Some schools are addressing bisexual, gay and lesbian issues and needs as expressed through policy, practice and training while others are not. There is no clear private/state school divide on these issues; neither sector is more progressed or progressive on these issues. The mixed picture reflects the fact that

¹² Evidence obtained from Local Secondary Schools Survey.

the local education authority (first Berkshire, now Reading) has not provided any assistance or guidance on these issues and central government has only recently begun to issue circulars on these matters. This means that the matter has been left to individual governors, headteachers or teachers to address. The result is patchy provision; provision that is not standardised in terms of quality.

Worker Issues¹³

- ⇒ Twenty-five workers monitored the age, ethnic identity and gender of service users yet only three monitored sexual identity.
- ⇒ Twenty-five workers were aware that their workplace had an equal opportunities policy.
- ⇒ Sixteen workers knew their workplace policy included sexual identity, seven workers said it did not and six were not sure.
- ⇒ Eight workers had experienced training on bisexual, gay and lesbian issues while 17 had not.
- ⇒ Nineteen workers had no access to resources on bisexual, gay and lesbian issues while ten did.
- ⇒ Seventeen workers felt that their workplace was a safe environment for service users and staff to come out while six did not.
- ⇒ Thirteen workers had worked with young people around issues of sexual identity while 15 had not.
- ⇒ In terms of workers' experience and practice, a mixed picture emerged. Some workers were aware of their organisations' policies around equal opportunities, they monitored service users' sexual identity, had experienced training around bisexual, gay and lesbian issues, had access to resources and had worked with bisexual, gay and lesbian youth. Others however had not. There was no pattern in terms of which sector a worker worked in (statutory or voluntary) or what area (mental health, etc.). Most workers were accepting and progressive in their practice, but others were not. This situation has implications for service delivery to young bisexuals, gays and lesbians.

¹³ Evidence obtained from Frontline Workers Survey sent to those working directly with young people: counsellors, mental health workers, social workers, youth workers, etc.