

Who we are

- Association of Colleges
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers
- Association of Teachers and Lecturers
- Equality Challenge Unit
- Higher Education Funding Council for England
- National Union of Students
- Skills Funding Agency
- UNISON
- University and College Union

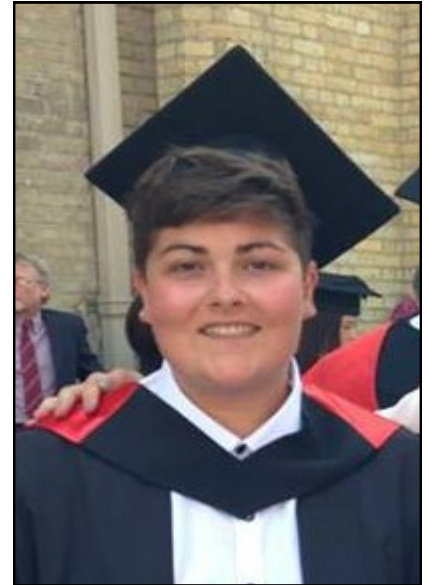
Chair's Update by Seth Atkin

We've just celebrated LGBT History Month's 10th anniversary. Nurtured into an increasingly broad collective consciousness by Schools OUT, this celebration has a special place in the history of LGBT activism in education. The Forum marked it with a seminar at the School of Oriental and African Studies. We looked at where organising under the umbrella acronym LGBT has come from and its meaning in different cultures. Much publicised threats to LGB and T people internationally, such as in Uganda and Russia, stand in stark contrast to the rights enjoyed in the UK now. The social standing for LGBT people in the UK has improved greatly in the 10 years since the first LGBTHM, and even more so, in comparison with the position a decade ago. So hope flourishes both in legal and cultural terms. In this position of strength there is still a need to ensure that all who are included under the term LGBT are able to find voice and expression and UK Black Pride serves as a great example of how, together, we can work towards this. We can also stand alongside and work with local LGBT activists in countries where there is ongoing struggle. Solidarity was in evidence at the winter Olympic Games in Russia – despite attempts to silence and make people invisible, the human spirit can be durable and resistant to repression. It is such visibilising that was envisioned by the team behind the first UK LGBT History Month.

No one here is complacent though. Work is still needed if we are to realise equality in the UK. For example, NIACE is consulting on an Education Training Foundation-supported equality monitoring form within the FE sector. This form includes options to break the gender binary of male and female with the internationally used options of X and other and optional use of Mr / Mrs prefix. Under sexual orientation, it includes the term 'undecided' and 'other' for those who do not relate to the essentialist sexual orientation identity categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual. A range of reactions has included some very positive responses. We await the outcome of this attempt to enable people to identify more freely.

Please visit our website: www.sgforum.org.uk or contact me for further information about the Forum's work.

**Georgia Green, MA
Student at Sussex
University, tells us
about her journey**



My interest in Gender Studies arose from the problems I faced growing up in a society which rejects anything other than heterosexuality and strict male and female roles. Until I took an active interest in learning about gender, I was unaware of the fundamental fact that underpins our everyday lives; that sex does not determine gender.

As children we are consistently segregated by gender, from the moment the words "it's a girl" are declared, ideals and expectations of how we should behave and live our lives are created. Set notions of gendered expectations continue throughout primary school, consistently displayed in the subliminal gendering at playtime through toy choices, the gendered sports undertaken during P.E. lessons and the constant reaffirming of gender by praises such as "good girl". The unconscious gender socialisation which takes place in our schools (the hidden curriculum) is not consciously recognised by the children involved, leading them to accept these gender roles as the norm and view them as naturally inscribed. But they are in fact anything but so. This hidden curriculum removes similarities between the sexes and highlights the differences, reinforcing the gender divide and when you don't fit, problems arise.

When I reached junior school the effects of such gender segregation began to affect me. My pursuit of happiness was abruptly restricted by my gendered clothing; I was an eight year-old girl in a dress who wanted to play football. Whilst never openly disapproved of, a girl playing football was certainly not a norm at

my school and so the issue of gendered clothing had never arisen before. With the help of my mum, the school agreed that I could abandon my dress in favour of shorts, enabling me to gather with the boys every lunch time for a game of football.

In the early stages of secondary school, before I became aware of my sexuality and thus developed an interest in LGBT issues, the only mention of anything 'gay' was an insult directed at anyone or anything deemed to be 'weird' or 'bad'. Whilst we were told to memorise the periodic table in chemistry, in biology we were never taught the difference between sex and gender, despite the latter's effect on our everyday lives. Having no education in anything outside heteronormativity, colliding with the discovery that I was gay, led me to struggle to understand where I fitted in. It was only after studying gender further that I realised I didn't fit, and that that was okay. 'Out', proud and ready for the excitement of Brighton, I decided to undertake a Media Studies BA at Sussex University. It was in my first term of university that I finally discovered Gender Studies, and for the first time in my gender-troubled life, I discovered that I wasn't abnormal because I didn't fit into the desired gender role assigned to my sex. Through studying, I learnt that there was nothing unnatural about not conforming to these norms, and actually, not conforming is as natural as it can get. Through learning about gender I managed to emancipate myself from the conformist gender roles forced upon everyone in our society, and instead just be me.

Whilst the prejudices that LGBT people experience often stem from pervasive, patriarchal gender norms, the effects of gender are deeply entrenched and affect us all – gender discrimination in the work place, the pay gap, the pressure on women to have an unattainable 'perfect' body, and the 'crisis of masculinity' are just a few examples.

Accepting gender socialisation means nothing will change. It is not enough for such critical thinking to only be made available for the first time in education to those who choose to study Gender, it should be part of everyone's learning. LGBT History month helps to raise awareness of issues surrounding the LGBT community, encouraging positive change, as by reflecting upon the history of LGBT people, it becomes apparent that despite how far we've come, there is still a long way to go to reach equality and fully abandon prejudice.

Austerity and the pink pound: gaining an in-depth understanding

2014 dawned cheerless, with George Osborne promising a further £25bn of public sector cuts if the Tories are re-elected, saying the job was "not even half done". In commentary on the cuts, as in much else, LGBT people are largely invisible. Those who are visible are the rich and famous, feeding the myth that the pink pound is doing fine and is spent on pleasure, not necessity.

Why does it matter? Because we can see that decades of painstaking work to ensure public services meet the needs of LGBT people is being lost – services which change lives and indeed save lives. And they risk being lost silently. So last year UNISON, through our General Political Fund, commissioned NatCen Social Research to investigate.

Published in December 2013, the research reveals significant and detailed evidence of a number of ways in which austerity cuts affect LGBT people and the services they use. Unsurprisingly, LGBT people individually were facing greater financial hardship. In this they are no different to anyone else. Specific to this community, however, is the increased marginalisation, the fear that progress on challenging anti-LGBT discrimination was being reversed and that overt prejudice was on the rise again.

People talked in detail about the effect of cuts to specialised LGBT services: housing, anti-hate crime and youth services, help-lines, mental health and sexual health services, and gender identity services, at the time these were needed more than ever. Job cuts meant the loss of valuable LGBT staff and staff with specialist knowledge built up over many years that would be difficult to replace even when there was reinvestment in public services.

There was considerable concern about housing, particularly for younger LGBT people. An LGBT housing advice service reported that calls were at an all time high, with 25% of callers already 'street homeless', in squats or sofa-surfing. Multiple difficulties: fleeing parental abuse, potentially unsafe shared accommodation, the need to live near LGBT

**By Carola Towle, UNISON National Officer -
LGBT Equality**

support networks, changes to housing benefit, and loss of dedicated LGBT housing services were leaving people with nowhere to turn.

People reported feeling more unsafe. LGBT discrimination was creeping back into society while anti-hate crime initiatives, policing and staffing on public transport and other public places were all being cut back. People felt frustrated, unhappy and worried about hate incidents in public spaces and at work.

Another recurrent theme was marginalisation, guilt and isolation. People expressed concern that LGBT needs were treated as less important than others - a luxury or 'nice thing to do' that could be dropped in harder times. They felt guilty for asking that their needs be met in a climate of austerity. Cuts were leading to less acceptance – a trans woman described how Jobcentre staff with no time have even less time for you if you don't fit their system because your gender and legal sex are not the same.

Reduction of appropriate sexual health support was of real concern. There were fears of a rise in unsafe and risky sexual behaviour, and a decrease in HIV and STI testing. Appropriate mental health services were also less available. The research findings are no surprise to people with a knowledge of the LGBT community. Nevertheless they make hard reading in terms of the immediate human cost and devastating long term implications.

We must use the findings to end the invisibility of LGBT people in anti-austerity campaigns. We cannot allow there to be silence as LGBT services close and expertise is lost. LGBT equality is not a luxury. Going into the next general election, we must demand public services which work not just for the majority but for all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

You can read the research report here: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/implications-of-austerity-on-lgbt-people-in-public-services/>



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for full terms and conditions see: www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/bulletin/competitions

Schools OUT and ATL book competition

ATL and Schools OUT are running a competition to design an E-book for emerging readers, aged between 4-7. We want students aged 16-18 to design an inclusive book for children, which could take the form of a picture book. You can submit entries in Word, Pages, or any other programme. You can find further details here:
<http://www.schools-out.org.uk/?events=schools-e-book-competition>

Please send submissions by September 15th 2014 to:
competition@schools-out.org.uk

Voices and visibility: New resources for *Integrating UK LGB and T Lives and Voices in Teaching and Training*

Members of the Forum are working with Gloucestershire College to develop history resources illustrating the campaign for recognition and equal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people in the UK. Through powerful words and images from the last 150 years an information wall chart (plus digital version) will highlight some of the people who have made a difference and emphasise the diversity of LGB and T people across the UK.

The resources will bring to the fore the contribution LGBT people made and continue to make to life, learning and society in the UK. This includes their involvement, past and leading into the present, in fields ranging from politics, law and the labour movement to science, the arts and sport. The resources will also highlight legal changes and the use of language to describe sexual orientation and gender identity over time.

With additional guidance for teachers and trainers, these resources will support the integration of LGBT themes in workplace training, colleges, universities and schools. They will support the creation of welcoming and safe spaces and efforts to tackle bullying and homophobia. The guidance aims to give teachers and trainers the confidence to raise and cover LGBT themes to create an open environment where an effective two way meaningful dialogue on a range of LGBT themes can take place. The resources will give staff the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills to integrate LGB and T equality in their learning programmes appropriately and proportionately and in a way that supports culture change.

In using the resources staff can:

Raise awareness of why so much of the history of LGB and T people is hidden and remains untold, and seek to challenge this;

Challenge any curriculum bias in terms of gender and gender identity and expression and the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm.

Inspire people to learn more of the histories of LGB and T people, and providers of education and others to promote/teach about them;

Inspire a new generation of activists and alliances to continue the campaign for equality to ensure the significant gains of the last forty years are not lost.

The resources will be available in summer 2014 on the Forum and LGBT History Month websites. The project hopes to gain funds to provide training opportunities in the autumn to support the use of the resources. We are sure they will provide a valuable addition to activities in LGBT History Month 2015 - the theme of which is History!

For further information contact:

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Havering College of Further and Higher Education, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Project

Margot Lindsay, Project Lead

We are now in the sixth month of our sexual orientation and gender identity project which aims to promote the college as an LGBT-supportive college for students, offer training to all tutor observers and deliver challenging homophobia tutorials particularly within gender specific student groups, i.e. mechanics and hair and beauty courses, as well as networking with an external LGBT young peoples' social group.

The most encouraging aspect to date has been the manner in which the LGBT students have engaged in the project and taken a lead in its development. A community-based young people's LGBT group and the college LGBT group jointly organised a Creative Arts Workshop Day, on 18th January. The aim of this day was to provide information which would raise awareness and understanding of LGBT young people within the college and there were also three media workshops.

The workshops allowed participants to convey their feelings and experiences as LGBT young people through their chosen form of media. The young people gave written and verbal feedback at the end of the day, which included:

- "Today was great in the studio, producing music and a rap. I had a great time and I would love to do it again".
- "Today I learnt a lot, how to make comic strips and how to use software. I enjoyed working in our team".
- "Simple, great day. Creating a story board, taking photos".

A follow-up Creative Arts Day has been scheduled to take place early April, giving young people the opportunity to discuss how these pieces of work can be used in the future to challenge homophobia and benefit the college as well as other LGBT young people.

We worked closely with the LGBT Metropolitan Police Liaison Transgender officer who discussed with the group how they think the Police could support young LGBT people. The officer, along with our partner group and key worker for the LGBT college group have now started delivering workshops to our hair and beauty students to raise their awareness of how to work with Transgender clients professionally and sensitively, as well as being aware of possible treatment requirements.

The social aspect of the LGBT group is also extremely important and many trips and outings have been organised. The most recent was a trip to see 'Pronoun', a production based on a Transgendered young person.

Training for staff has proved to be our biggest challenge, since we are competing with many other priorities for staff, but we are slowly reaching our target. We have had a lot of positive feedback and will be using the guidelines incorporated into the observation criteria for curriculum and teaching practice. The college quality team are now all booked in for training which should prove a catalyst for others to engage.

Importantly the project is a regular item on the college Equality and Diversity Group, ensuring that senior managers are kept abreast of developments and are fully supportive. LGBT students also gave a presentation to Governors at the February Student Governor Liaison Group.

As is the case with any dynamic process, we have had to add new dimensions to the project and shift deadlines where necessary to ensure that we keep people on board and reach our desired outcomes. What is so fantastic is the enthusiasm and passion for the project from the young people, our partners and college staff.



AoC Equalities Conference, 24th June

Following the success of our previous conferences on equality and diversity, the Association of Colleges will be hosting its sixth conference in the summer of 2014. This conference offers the tools to stay up-to-date and at the forefront of good practice in equality. With a focus on sector-specific issues and opportunities to engage with colleagues and experts both within and outside of the FE sector, this is the essential event to inform your work in progressing equality and diversity in the college workplace and learning environment.

The event will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise through main stage plenary sessions and thought provoking and informative breakout sessions with a range of equality and sector specific experts.

This conference is your opportunity to...

- Hear the latest updates from key stakeholders on the latest developments in Equality Policy affecting the Further Education workforce
- Update your knowledge on the law and good practice
- Hear from other colleges about their work on equality and share practice. Gaining new ideas, solutions and expertise to take back to your organisation
- Build relationships and contacts within the sector for comparing notes and sharing ideas in the future
- Highlight issues of national significance directly with the AoC

For more information see: <http://www.aoc-create.co.uk/event/equality2014/#overview>

This newsletter was edited by Wanda Wyporska at ATL. The Forum takes no responsibility for the opinions expressed in this document and none of the content should be considered as legal advice. If you wish to get in touch with the Forum, please contact Seth Atkin satkin@ucu.org.uk. If you have items to be considered for the website or newsletter, please contact Wanda Wyporska, wwyporska@atl.org.uk.