

Homophobia is gay!!

By Ben Salisbury, aged 16, Deputy Representative to the South West Regional Assembly

Being homosexual has been legal since 1967. Yet still today the amount of homophobia among adults and young people in particular is astonishing. Being 'gay' myself has really given me an insight to how big the problem really is.

One way in which this could be tackled is Sex and Relationships Education which UKYP has focused on tremendously over the past year. Currently only heterosexual sex & relationships are taught in 'Sex Ed', but if homosexual relationships were also taught, this would improve people's understanding of why people are gay, and that being gay is not a negative thing. I feel that this would drastically reduce the enormity of the 'homophobia problem'.

Many schools have a 'bullying policy', which gives teachers guidance on what measures to take when they encounter bullying in or outside of their lessons.

However, for my own school (in Somerset) the policy is very vague and does not

give the specifics of what forms of bullying the policy should be preventing.

I believe that if changes take place in the Sex and Relationships curriculum and in schools' bullying policies this would significantly reduce the problems we are currently facing.

However, on a more extreme level, homophobia can seriously affect people psychologically. Any type of bullying can do this but as it is an issue as serious as homophobia, young people can start to question themselves and are almost forced to 'fit the mould'. This affects self-esteem and confidence severely, and in serious cases could lead to self harm or suicide.

In this modern day of inclusion and diversity, this type of discrimination should not be as serious as it currently is and this, as I have said, is really down to poor and 'stream lined' Sex Education. Something must be done to tackle this problem as homophobia seems to get worse and worse, with young people in particular being 'beaten up', harassed and seriously wounded, mentally and physically.

BULLYING STATISTICS

Almost two thirds (65%) of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience homophobic bullying in school. Almost three in five (58%) of those experiencing bullying never report it but, if they do tell a teacher, 62% of the time nothing is done. Half of teachers fail to respond to homophobic language when they hear it.

Source: Stonewall

Is homophobia a problem where you live?
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