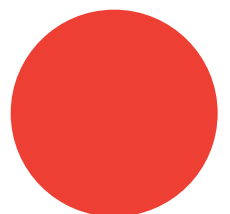# CYBERHOMOPHOBIA AND BULLYING SEMINAR

REPORT

Held on 20 November 2012 at the Department of Education
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, Westminster

Hosted by: **Jonathan Charlesworth** and **Adrienne Katz**

Cyberhomophobia and Bullying Seminar Report

Collated and written by Kate Marston MA
Support Services Coordinator, EACH

Edited by: Jonathan Charlesworth M.Ed. Executive Director, EACH

Introduction

EACH convened its ground-breaking seminar to celebrate 10 years of training and consultancy plus delivery of its unique Actionline. Additionally we were eager to explore the escalating problem of keeping young people safe online.

Our seminar welcomed experts from the field of anti-bullying and safeguarding: helping us determine what 'targeted' e-safety teaching should 'look like' for those most vulnerable to prejudice-based bullying.

The seminar was hosted by Jonathan Charlesworth, Executive Director of EACH and co-author of "Safe to Learn: Homophobic Bullying" for the DCSF, and Adrienne Katz, Director of the Bullying Intervention Group: the national award for excellence in bullying intervention and a former Anti Bullying Alliance Regional Adviser. Adrienne is author of 'Cyberbullying and E-safety - what educators and professionals need to know.'

Young victims of prejudice-based bullying have greater e-safety advice needs than their peers. Our latest research shows that too few are following the safety tuition they have received. We are developing a new model with targeted support for more vulnerable young people.

- Is e-safety education well targeted to those experiencing prejudice based bullying?
- How should the content of e-safety messages be made more relevant to the lives of teenagers?
- Who is appropriate, digitally literate and informed regarding the prejudice-based delivery of e-safety advice?

Research and evidence from young people tells us that their e-safety advice is out of step with what they actually do online. The most vulnerable appear to be least likely to follow the advice.

We are calling for a more nuanced approach. The one size fits all current mode of delivery does not meet the needs of vulnerable young people.

Our Reach Cybersurvey was completed by almost 2,000 young people across the South West of England: key findings from which are freely available to all on our website. This survey evolved as part of our Big Lottery Project 'Reach' whose goal, by 2014, is to create a resource for teachers and others working with young people to help them challenge homophobic and sexist bullying (with an increasing emphasis on Cyberhomophobia).

Arising from a number of small and whole-group exercises all attendees discussed the following themes and their responses have been collated within this report.

Seminar hosts

EACH - Educational Action Challenging Homophobia

EACH is the charity providing dedicated freephone Actionline support to young people experiencing homophobic bullying and delivering award-winning training to challenge homophobia in (amongst other agencies) schools, colleges and universities.

As part of our Reach project we are working with young people aged 13-21 in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire to explore their experiences of homophobic, sexist and cyberbullying to inform a toolkit for those working with young people to help them challenge aspects of prejudice based bullying

National Actionline: 0808 1000 143

Mon to Fri 09:00 – 16:30

www.eachaction.org.uk

info@eachaction.org.uk

B.I.G. Award

The Bullying Intervention Group (BIG) is a social enterprise set up to administer the BIG Award.

The B.I.G. AWARD is offered to schools, services, groups or Local Authorities. Members work to meet the externally agreed criteria to become a BIG Award-winning school or organisation. The criteria are carefully managed so that organisations are enabled to embed and maintain good bullying management practice to suit their needs. This award is both earned and evidenced.

http://www.bullyinginterventiongroup.co.uk

info@bullyinginterventiongroup.co.uk

Department for Education

The Department for Education is a UK government department with responsibility for infant, primary and secondary education. The DfE has a vision for a highly educated society in which opportunity is more equal for children and young people no matter their background or family circumstances.

EACH and BIG should like to thank the Department for Education for providing the venue for our seminar with particular thanks to Yetunde Fakayode (Behaviour and Bullying Team), Improving Behaviour and Attendance Unit for her assistance.

Thanks too go to Allison Allen from NAACE (see appendix) for her detailed presentation on cyberbullying at the outset of our seminar.

Who needs targeted e-safety advice?

Research indicates that certain groups of 'vulnerable' young people are less likely to follow e-safety advice than others (Katz, 2012). However, identifying these groups is not a simple task. Vulnerability is not fixed and young people move in and out of states of vulnerability. During this session we identified a number of 'vulnerable' groups, as well as discussed the challenges with targeting specific groups and our understanding of vulnerability.

Specific vulnerabilities:

CHANGES AND TRANSITIONS

Young people whose circumstances have changed or are changing (permanent or temporary) such as those who are moving house/school, dealing with family illness,; leaving care,; changing foster homes,; living in transient communities,; or going through key transition points such as moving from key stage two to three. These young people may miss key e-safety lessons and be less likely to follow the advice.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Young people with special educational needs (SEN), moderate learning difficulties or English as an additional language were also identified as being at risk in varying ways. For example, e-safety messages may be laden with terminology that is difficult for these groups to understand. In addition simplified e-safety material may not be relevant to their age and stage of development.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health service users as well as young people who have expressed suicidal thoughts and feelings were recognised. Websites that encourage suicide, eating disorders and other harmful behaviours can be extremely detrimental to young people; particularly those already dealing with mental health problems.

FAMILIES AND RISK

Children and young people can have vulnerable family situations which may impact upon their access to e-safety. This includes those subjected to child abuse (emotional, sexual, neglect) or living in households with domestic abuse and/or substance misuse. In addition, children and young people living in poverty and young carers were identified within this category. These young people may, for example, have more opportunities to access the internet without parental supervision and for those in abusive situations they may be more exposed to inappropriate content online. Unhappy, isolated young people may seek intimacy or friendship online.

IDENTITY

It was also recognised that young people may be more vulnerable due to their particular identity. E-safety messages might not take into account the way that certain factors such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation mediate how people utilise new technologies. Therefore, certain young people may be denied effective e-safety advice if it is not relevant to their online practices or experience of being victimised via identity based bullying.

Specific vulnerabilities | continued

LOCALITY AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Young people living in rural or semi-rural communities and looked-after children are also recognised to be at potential risk. Research has indicated that schools in urban settings are better resourced to provide a consistent and effective practice than those in rural settings (Phippen, 2010). Therefore, young people in these areas may also be missing vital e-safety messages. Parents in rural areas appear to address e-safety with their children at a slightly later age than parents in urban areas. *(Katz 2011).*

Issues with identifying and targeting vulnerability

The above list is not exhaustive, but does provide an overview of some key factors to consider when developing e-safety guidance. These factors include characteristics of the young people, their family circle and the wider community which may challenge their safe development. However, in addition to exploring these factors we also discussed issues in relation to identifying and targeting vulnerability.

How do you identify people as potentially vulnerable without 'labelling' them?

Identifying young people as vulnerable can encourage assumptions about their identity, background and experiences. Belonging to any of the groups highlighted does not make online dangers inevitable and we must not treat certain young people as 'natural victims'. All young people will be vulnerable at different stages and to varying degrees. We must ensure a targeted approach does not reinforce the stigma that can sit around certain 'vulnerable' groups.

For example, research has found that LGBT young people are often 'referred' to school counsellors because of their sexuality or experiences of bullying. This, understandably, was not welcomed as young people felt they were viewed as the problem rather than the bullying itself (Formby, 2011). Young people's online behaviours vary depending on their background and identity. Groups traditionally recognised as 'vulnerable' may find that the internet can be a great leveller and help overcome barriers in the offline world. However, targeting specialised e-safety at these specific groups may suggest that their online practices are abnormal. On the other hand if a pupil reports being bullied in school, it is an opportunity to discuss their experiences online and provide appropriate e-safety advice. Those bullied intensely at school are more likely to also be bullied in cyberspace or to take risks seeking other friendships online (Katz 2012).

Beyond responding to individual incidents we need to be wary that 'universal' e-safety messages do not function to privilege particular identities whilst marginalising others. This involves reflecting on the social and cultural environment in which they are being educated. Do these environments have a culture and ethos which promotes a rights-based approaches to education whereby all young people are recognised and supported? Is this ethos embedded within the e-safety curriculum?

Understanding vulnerability and resilience

Focusing solely on online vulnerability may lead to e-safety practices that 'lock' and 'block' young people, which was widely recognised by the group as counterintuitive. When safeguarding young people from online risks we do not want to restrict their opportunities. However, this requires a careful balancing act. For example, young people struggling to access relevant help and support. Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have the

opportunity to find useful support and information online (Young Minds, 2012). They also risk finding sites however which promote e.g. anorexia, suicide and self-harm.

It was noted that young people who are exposed to nasty, harmful or abusive messages online need to be skilled to deal with it effectively. This involves moving beyond vulnerability to look at resilience and young people's ability to cope with stress and adversity online. Some young people will already be practicing effective e-safety and applying coping mechanisms however others will not. As practitioners we need to be engaging with and celebrating young people's successful practices whilst providing additional support to those who are struggling.

Resilience is not simply something that certain people have and others do not. External factors such as a supportive friend, parent, teacher, youth worker or bystander can play a crucial role in buffering the negative effects of adverse experiences. The Reach Cybersurvey demonstrated however that those who were homophobically cyberbullied, for example, were less likely to report it and if they did they were less likely to get help (EACH Cybersurvey, 2011). We cannot expect these young people to continually bounce back from adversity without any support. Therefore, beyond universal e-safety we need a responsive programme which recognises those young people who are experiencing persistent aggression and harassment online and provides intensive support. Establishing effective monitoring and reporting systems can allow schools to collate data in order to understand whether certain groups of young people are experiencing disproportionate bullying or harassment.

What should the content of e-safety include?

Taking into account the above issues around vulnerability, risk and resilience the seminar then discussed the content of e-safety and what needs to be included in a more nuanced approach. The key messages have been identified below.

Rights-based

The e-safety curriculum needs to have a rights-based approach at its core. This involves understanding how our rights and responsibilities translate into an online environment. As practitioners working with young people we need to ensure that we respect, protect and help realise the rights in question, as well as ensure that young people understand their responsibility to respect the rights of others. E-safety should not discriminate on any grounds: gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic or other status. To ensure that e-safety does not privilege certain identities over others, practitioners must reflect upon their own behaviours and norms. Gendered use of language can reinforce certain norms which alienate young people. For example, the issue of sexting is often treated as a girl-only problem leading to disproportionate blame upon girls and a lack of understanding around boys' experiences (Ringrose, 2012).

Dialogue

Participatory learning was a key feature highlighted for e-safety. It was noted that practitioners teaching e-safety can often feel less knowledgeable about technology, specifically in relation to the wide variety of platforms young people are using. Therefore to ensure the content of e-safety is relevant to young people's use of technology it should be conducted in dialogue with them. This also reinforces the rights-based approach as it ensures that young people are respected. Best practice in bullying intervention has shown that youth participation models are productive compared with top down models.

Positive messages

It was noted that e-safety has tended to focus on the negative, using 'shock' tactics and overly simplistic 'danger' messages. This was recognised to be ineffective and e-safety needs to incorporate a wider digital citizenship and well-being message. By promoting the positive use of technology alongside the dangers it was felt that young people would be more likely to take the information on board. In addition, it could function to promote positive behaviours online.

Tech savvy

The rapidly changing landscape of technology means that e-safety content can quickly become redundant. Social media sites regularly change their privacy settings without consultation. It is important that e-safety is up-to-date with technology, but keeping abreast of these changes is a challenge. The companies behind the technology need to take responsibility for disseminating accessible and transparent guidelines. However, for those teaching e-safety it is possible to develop transferrable skills and practices whereby young people can critically evaluate content online and consider their digital footprint.

Transferable skills

Focusing on transferrable skills was thought not only to be important for teaching young people to navigate different online platforms but also to demonstrate how offline safety practices can be applied online and vice versa. The group noted that what happens in the online world mostly happens in the offline world as well. For example, e-safety can often focus heavily on stranger danger and neglect the way that the online world mediates peer relations. It is important that practitioners do not draw a false distinction between these two environments and the dangers that exist in each.

Additional support

Finally the content of e-safety should include the option of additional support, particularly for those engaging in risky practices. Young people have differing needs and expectations therefore this support should be as individualised as possible. We should not assume that those facing cyber bullying have a common experience and there is thus a common solution. If a young person is experiencing harassment or bullying online this will be mediated by a number of factors including gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic status and so on. Only through a personalised approach can we work with young people to find effective solutions.

How can we best 'reach' young people?

Ensuring that e-safety messages are reaching young people requires a multi-faceted approach. Not all young people are the same therefore certain methods will be more successful with some groups than others. Detailed below are the multiple opportunities the group identified for getting e-safety messages across.

Holistically

A number of people noted that e-safety needs a whole-school approach. This includes ensuring e-safety messages are embedded from an early age: delivering e-safety in conjunction with other school policies such as the behavioural policy and empowering all staff to address and

take responsibility for e-safety. It was also highlighted that the responsibility should not just fall upon schools. A holistic approach needs to go beyond the school and connect with the home and wider community. E-safety messages need to be consistent and communicated in a variety of settings.

Training

Training is vital to ensure that those who have responsibility for young people are aware and knowledgeable about e-safety and able to engage with them. It takes a diverse skills set to deliver the above e-safety content and there is a common dilemma whereby ICT workers may have the digital but not the listening skills and teachers or youth workers have the listening but not the digital skills.(Katz 2012) However, through training we can make efforts to ensure that parents/carers, teachers, support staff, youth workers and others working with young people are equipped with the appropriate skills set to work together and engage young people on key e-safety issues.

Curriculum opportunities

The curriculum provides a vital opportunity to promote positive online practices as well as prevent and challenge risky behaviours. E-safety has tended to be 'siloed' within specific lessons., To teach e-safety within a wider digital citizenship and wellbeing framework the key messages need to be embedded across the curriculum. ICT and PSHE lessons provide an obvious opportunity to promote e-safety messages but these should not be delivered in isolation as 'the e-safety lesson'. Messages around positive online behaviours can be reinforced across the curriculum and young people should be reassured and reminded at every available opportunity. E-safety is often delivered by an external service on a one off basis: leaving the pupils without support or reinforcement.

Specific initiatives

In addition to cross-curricular reminders around e-safety a number of specific initiatives were discussed. This included using a variety of media to present e-safety messages such as theatre/drama, film, websites and print material as well as bringing in outside experts. All of these could provide an opportunity to look at e-safety and online behaviour in depth. In addition, these initiatives could open up dialogue with the young people.

Online

Using technology was also noted as a means to get e-safety messages across to young people. Whilst this could include in-school activities and lessons utilising the web it also provides an opportunity for young people to access support and guidance confidentially. It was noted that people may be more likely to ask for help anonymously. In addition websites, apps or social networking campaigns could be a way of e-safety information filtering into young people's everyday online practices: viral videos or memes may be a means through which young people share e-safety advice with each other.

Who should be delivering e-safety?

A holistic approach to e-safety requires that responsibility for its delivery should not depend on 'specialists'. Whilst some people and organisations may be best positioned to lead on e-safety it was also highlighted that a range of people should be utilising opportunities to reiterate and reinforce e-safety messages. The people and organisations highlighted below should not be working in isolation on this issue but working in partnership to ensure that e-safety reaches all young people.

Schools

According to the latest Ofsted inspections framework schools should 'regularly evaluate and update their approach to take account of developments in technology' (Ofsted, 2012). Within school all staff, including support staff, should be reinforcing e-safety messages., Keeping abreast of developments in technology and regularly evaluating the school's approach however requires individuals to take a lead on the issue. Those taking responsibility do not have to be the obvious candidates. Schools instead should be focusing on individuals with the best skills and abilities to not only bring the subject alive but create a legacy of good practice within the school.

Youth services

E-safety should not begin and end at the school gates. Staff within statutory youth services have a skills base that can be utilised when promoting e-safety amongst young people. Youth workers are uniquely placed to advocate for young people's interests and have the opportunity to not only reinforce, but build upon good e-safety practice through their work. In addition, outreach youth workers may work with 'at risk' groups who reject formal activities and therefore have opportunities to get e-safety messages across to those who are potentially vulnerable. However, it was highlighted that the changing nature of funding and budget cuts does require us to look beyond local authorities and statutory youth services.

Voluntary sector

The voluntary sector is made up of a range of organisations who deliver diverse services and activities to children, young people, families and the wider community. The work of these organisations provides an opportunity to support e-safety delivery either directly or through capacity building, training and support. A number of voluntary organisations represented at the seminar provided services that could support the delivery of e-safety. Further details are available in the appendix.

Service providers and technology companies

The responsibility of the people behind the technology was felt to be an overlooked area. Some of the most popular mobile phone companies, websites and social networking tools require us to opt out of unsafe practices rather than opt into additional protections. Therefore by default the very action of signing up to a social networking site can put many young people at risk. We need more transparency from the outset so that young people (and adults) know to what they are signing up. Although some companies are investing more in this area there is a lot more to be do

Family

Parents and carers should be engaging with their young people on e-safety and utilising a combination of approaches. Relying on monitoring and blocking is not sufficient as devices multiply making parental mediation of internet use a challenge. In addition, Ofcom found that 46% parents feel that their children know more about the internet than they do (Ofcom, 2012). Parents need to be empowered to not only mediate internet use effectively and respectfully but also talk to their children about e-safety. It was also noted that other family members can help deliver e-safety: siblings may be more aware of each other's online practices. As a result they may be in a position to model positive e-safety practices and be aware when things go wrong.

Young People

Young people themselves should have a role in the delivery of e-safety. As previously discussed, e-safety should be delivered in dialogue with young people and draw upon their expertise. Young people delivering e-safety are more likely to possess the relevant vocabulary to ensure that e-safety messages resonate with what people are actually doing online. One method highlighted for involving young people in the delivery of e-safety was through peer mentoring schemes whereby older students model positive online practices to younger students. However, ideally any e-safety interventions should be co-constructed with young people to ensure their voice is at its heart.

About the hosts

Jonathan Charlesworth is EACH's Executive Director and a former Head of English and PSHE. He has written a number of guidance documents for Children and Young People's Services on the repeal of Section 28 and homophobic bullying and co-authored the ground-breaking Department for Children, Schools and Families' guidance "Safe to Learn: Homophobic Bullying" and contributed to others in the "Safe to Learn" suite.

Jonathan is responsible for managing EACH's Big Lottery funded project *Reach* and the Charity's nationwide freephone Actionline for young people to report and seek help concerning homophobic bullying. EACH also delivers the same service for adults across the West of England similarly affected by homophobic and transphobic harassment.

A CEOP 'Ambassador', Jonathan is included within the NPIA / Serious & Organised Crime Agency's (SOCA) Expert Advisers' Database as an investigative trainer providing consultancy to it and various national institutions . He is the Chair of Avon and Somerset Crown Prosecution Service's Local Scrutiny Involvement Panel and is regularly invited to contribute to national media discussions, conferences and training.

Adrienne Katz is a co-director of Bullying Intervention Group (BIG) a not for profit social enterprise that promotes effective anti-bullying strategies and offers the national BIG Award for schools and services with excellent practice.

A former Regional Adviser for the Anti-Bullying Alliance, Adrienne developed guidance for the former DCSF: 'Safe to Learn: Bullying Involving children and young people with special needs' with the Council for Disabled Children and the suite 'Safe From Bullying' with charity 4Children for the DCSF.

Adrienne runs the online 'Cybersurvey' and is the author of 'Cyberbullying and e-safety' published by Jessica Kinsgley Publishers London.

About the participants

Allison Allen | NAACE Board of Management

Working with schools, LA's, government & suppliers to advance education through technology This includes:

- Various aspects of e-safety, curriculum and school improvement
- Working with organisations such as Ofsted
- Engaging young people in e-safety practice
- Investigating why people put more online/writing than they do face-to-face (Kate Fox) and is it because of the trust needed to engage in an online community (Wenger)
- TEL & ICT Curriculum

allison.allen@outstream.co.uk

Mohammed Bham | Solihull Council Principal Educational Psychologist & Anti-Bullying Lead

www.solihull.gov.uk/psychology

Stay Safe page: "Cyberbullying Survey 2009 – Solihull CYPs Perspective" (2010 – new guidance for safeguarding workforce)

Julie Campbell | Safe Network and Children England | Regional Manager

Safe network is a partnership between NSPCC, Children England and CAPT

Our work provides:

- Online resources developed by the VCS for the VCS
- Self-assessment tool to assess current safeguarding practice against 4 core standards including preventing and responding to bullying
- National, regional and local support for VCS groups and organisations.
- Local support from safe network "champions" (volunteer orgs) who act as Safe Network representatives in their local communities and champion safeguarding as everyone's business
- Working in partnership with LSCBs, statutory partner

Collaboration welcome

julie@childrenengland.org.uk

Stephen Carrick-Davies | Carrick Davies Associates

See www.munchpokerping.com

Focus on support and equipping staff working with vulnerable young people.

stephen@carrick-davies.com

About the participants | continued

James Diamond | Leicestershire Council **|** E-safety Lead

Providing support and training to the schools workforce. Work with staff/parents/young people to provide a holistic approach to digital safety. This includes:

- 1-2-1 work with identified vulnerable children, including looked-after children

- E-safety workshops for foster carers

- Targeted sessions for year 10/11 young people on digital responsibilities and consequences

- Working with school councils to empower young people to deliver e-safety advice to their peers

james.diamond@leicester.gov.uk

Thad Douglas | BeatBullying | Head of Research and Development

We deliver CyberMentors embedding whole school approach and positive anti-bullying in schools. Also, train young LGBT CyberMentors (aged 17-25) to help other children who encounter these issues.

thaddaeus.douglas@beatbullying.org

Eleanor Formby | Sheffield Hallam University | Senior research fellow

Research traditionally on young people's wellbeing linked to learning (PSHE, SRE, etc) increasingly LGBT wellbeing specifically, both young people and adults.

Currently writing up research reports for academic journal submissions and trying to argue a critique of bullying to instead focus on social/cultural constructions such as homophobia/transphobia, etc.

e.formby@shu.ac.uk

Simon Genders | Leicestershire Council | E-safety Lead

Provides support/training for schools and delivers e-safety survey for year 9.
Happy to share survey data

simon.genders@leics.gov.uk

Karen Harvey | Samaritans | School Development Officer

Deliver outreach work on emotional health for young people and offering emotional support to anyone in need.

Provide service to support schools/Las in planning for and responding to a suicide – "Step by Step" – suicide prevention.

Looking to develop online outreach to young people

k.harvey@samaritans.org

About the participants | continued

Teresa Hughes | Securus Software | Child protection software

Let me come and show you! It's easier than writing it!

teresa.hughes@securus-software.com

Lorna Naylor | Nottinghamshire County Council | Anti-Bullying Lead

Work across a Nottinghamshire county working within children, families and cultural services.

Offers two main packages, as well as bespoke training:

1) Gen work around school policy working with staff, parents and YP to produce workable ways of embedding AB work (Ofsted proof)
2) E-Safety work in primary schools with staff and parents to embed.

Looking for ideas to develop digitally competent citizens. Any help/networking gratefully received

lorna-naylor@nottscc.gov.uk

Nick Pickles | Big Brother Watch | Director

www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk

Paul Rigglesford | Anti-Bullying Works

Just launched an online/downloadable toolbox/boardgame aimed at 5-11 year olds – 'No More Bullying'.

info@antibullyingworks.co.uk

Jessica Ringrose | Institute of Education | Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Gender and Education

Lee Souter | Hounslow Council | Anti-Bullying Lead

Professional interest in 'teenage suicide', as well as sharing best practice between and with schools.

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eachaction.org.uk/reach

facebook.com/Reach2014

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