

Survey of EIS members on LGBT+ specific training

Summary of findings

May 2018

Background

The 2017 EIS Annual General Meeting passed the following resolution:

"That this AGM instruct Council to survey members to provide evidence of the level of LGBT+ specific training they have received in the last 5 years and what training opportunities around LGBT exist within their local authority or delivered by college employers"

A sample survey was conducted in February 2018, as per the EIS survey protocol, targeted at National Council members, Union Reps and Branch Secretaries. There was a 16% response rate. Responses came primarily from the school sector. 54% of respondents were primary teachers and 41% were secondary teachers. Only two FE lecturers completed the survey, making it impossible to make general observations about that sector. NB: 4% of respondents answered 'other' in relation to the education sector they work in. It is therefore assumed that the findings relate primarily to local authority rather than college provision.

Respondents were asked if they identify as LGBT+ and 11% said yes, 87% said no, and 2% preferred not to say. This was to enable analysis of whether people who themselves identify as LGBT+ are more likely to have undertaken training on these matters, either out of personal interest or because of an expectation that they will provide leadership on LGBT+ matters, which is an experience that has been described by members of the EIS LGBT+ Informal Network.

Headline findings

- **Training is generally not being offered regularly, and a quarter of employers reportedly never offer any LGBT+ specific training.**

In response to being asked, "How frequently are opportunities to take part in LGBT+ specific training offered by your local authority or college?" only 8% of members said that it was offered 'regularly'; 12% said 'sporadically'; 17% said 'rarely' and a quarter (25%) said 'never'.

- **The most commonly offered mode of LGBT+ specific training was a twilight course (53%) or a short, e.g. half-day course (35%).**

Other modes of training were offered less commonly. 15% of respondents selected online courses.

- **Over two-thirds of respondents had not personally engaged in any training or professional learning on LGBT+ issues in the last five years.**

30% answered yes to the question 'Have you personally had any training or engaged in any professional learning on LGBT+ specific issues in the last five years, i.e. between 2012-2017?' but 70% said no.

- **Those who had taken part in some training or PL on LGBT+ issues in the last five years had mostly had a short intervention at an in-service day or a twilight e.g. a guest speaker (43%).**

The next most common means were a one-day course, attended individually (26%) and a module or section on LGBT+ issues as part of a broader course (23%).

- **Training attended appears to be fairly general in its content.**

81% of respondents who had engaged in some form of training said it had provided an overview of LGBT+ specific issues.

- **Training appears to have a clear focus on learners rather than staff.**

65% had discussed supporting LGBT learners but only 16% had discussed supporting LGBT staff.

- **Some topics appear not to be well-covered in training.**

Only a fifth of those who had received training reported that it had covered strategies for challenging transphobia, with similar responses related to bi-phobia.

- **The majority of comments indicated broad support among respondents for more extensive training on LGBT+ issues.**

Sample comments in support of additional training:

“There is a real lack of awareness that results in teachers not being able to challenge and deal with LGBTI discrimination, pupils often report it goes unchallenged.”

“We need more training on all of the points listed in question 9 and it needs to be prioritised for whole school delivery. All of our school communities include learners (and staff) who identify as LGBT+ and all of the communities that we work with and live in are communities which include LGBT+ people.”

“There should be far more- in-service, twilights, etc.”

“I am not aware of any LGBT training in South Ayrshire, but we deal with LGBT issues often, within teaching, so it is desperately needed.”

“We need more of it.”

“It needs to be delivered at a whole school level. Not just individuals who feel there is the need for change.”

“I think it's imperative that there is more availability.”

- **A very small minority of respondents displayed reservations about this work and showed that some members have negative attitudes towards LGBT+ issues or feel that training is unnecessary.**

Those who were opposed to additional training mostly cited religious reasons, e.g. *“I feel that my own rights as a Roman Catholic in the Scottish system are not valued and I am discriminated against.”*

Differences between groups

It may of course be the case that workload issues and the cover crisis are preventing teachers from accessing the professional learning that they need and want, (the survey did not ask why people had not taken part in training, but some comments alluded to these barriers, and they were identified as obstacles to accessing equalities training in a prior survey). These will remain campaigning areas for the EIS.

The survey data suggests that twilight sessions (delivered in the early evening after school) are a widely used means of accessing LGBT+ training. This mode of delivery can be problematic. The EIS would reiterate that teachers are entitled, and should be encouraged, to participate in collegiate discussions with senior management colleagues to agree the content and delivery mode of professional learning events, in the context of wider discussions about the School Improvement Plan and Working Time Agreements. Discussions about twilight events should take into account barriers to participation, such as child or elder care responsibilities, as these can inadvertently exclude more women than men. Provision should also be sensitive to the needs of members with disabilities which may cause fatigue.

Training appears to have a focus on supporting LGBT+ learners, but supporting LGBT+ staff is more rarely discussed. Prejudice is still experienced by LGBT+ people working in the education sector, despite many initiatives to address it, and the EIS position is that efforts should be made to ensure that learning environments are safe and inclusive for both learners and staff. More training on LGBT+ specific matters as they affect teaching staff would be valuable. This would particularly appear to be the case for primary establishments, where fewer teaching staff have undergone any form of training.

It should be noted that the survey did not ask about coverage of people who identify as 'non-binary', which recent deliberations over the EIS response to the proposed reform of the Gender Recognition Act revealed as an area in which teachers would value professional learning. It can perhaps be assumed that as the training undertaken by respondents generally appeared to offer a broad overview of LGBT+ issues that this matter would only be touched upon. The EIS is clear that it is important for teachers to participate in professional learning during which they can explore issues relating to sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, etc., especially where some concepts are new, and unfamiliar to some teachers and lecturers. This will be particularly the case if new legislation on gender recognition is introduced and if legal recognition is extended to people who identify as non-binary.

The comments made in the survey show a broadly positive picture in relation to respondents' desire to promote equality and challenge LGBT+ specific prejudice, but a small minority expressed reservations about this agenda, and showed that there is more work to be done among the membership to ensure widespread awareness of the provisions of the Equality Act and of the importance of inclusive practice.

Data provided about the training providers known to respondents suggests that organisations who are able to offer training may need to find better ways of reaching teachers across Scotland.

Finally, it is noted that members who identify as LGBT+ are more likely to have undergone training, and at a more extensive level (e.g. a one-day course as opposed to a twilight session). The EIS continues to remind members that obligations to promote equality are distributed equally among teachers and should not be seen as only the domain of protected groups, in keeping with the professional standards that apply to all teachers.

More information

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For information about the EIS LGBT+ Informal Network see

<http://www.eis.org.uk/LGBT-Network/About>

and

<http://www.eis.org.uk/Equality/LGBT>