

Institution: Queen Margaret University
Unit of Assessment: UoA 4 Psychology
Title of case study: Advancing inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people in education
1. Summary of the impact

Research at Queen Margaret University (QMU) by Professor Ian Rivers identified issues facing LGBT young people and same-sex raised children in UK education. Rivers was the only academic member of a group formed by the Scottish Government to recommend ways of tackling negative and discriminatory attitudes towards LGBT people in Scotland. The Scottish Government implemented many of the group’s recommendations. Rivers’ research had an impact on (1) public policy and services in education, (2) schools and teachers as educational practitioners, (3) health and welfare of LGBT young people and same-sex raised children, and (4) society, culture, and creativity, and public policy and services, beyond Scotland.

2. Underpinning research

Between 2005 and 2007 Professor Ian Rivers of QMU and colleagues conducted research into the experiences within UK education of young people who were same-sex attracted and experiences of young people raised by same-sex couples. This research examined health risks (behaviours, victimisation, concerns), availability and use of support, and psychological health and well-being of young people in these groups as compared to their peers. From data collected in a large-scale investigation of adolescent health and well-being in the United Kingdom, involving 2002 students attending 14 secondary schools, the authors matched young people who reported being same-sex attracted, and young people raised by lesbian same-sex couples, with other young people on multiple demographic characteristics (age, race, sex, school year (grade), allowance, family members with whom they lived, and their attraction to members of the same and opposite sex). They were also matched for bullying at school, psychological well-being, exposure to drugs and alcohol, health risk behaviours, current concerns or worries, and sources of social support. The approach of matching participants on multiple criteria allowed investigation of differences in experiences between same-sex attracted young people and opposite-sex attracted young people, and differences in experience between young people raised by same-sex couples and those raised by opposite-sex couples. This research design also enabled examination of differences between the experiences of people belonging to those groups and those of the general student sample.

Comparison of young people who reported being attracted to members of the same sex with others not reporting such attraction (Key Output 1) showed that same-sex attracted young people were significantly more likely than opposite-sex attracted young people to report feelings of hostility and loneliness and more likely to report having drunk alcohol alone. Same-sex attracted young people were also found to be more likely to be worried about being lesbian or gay and more likely to seek support from a member of school staff. The comparison of young people raised by lesbian same-sex couples, young people raised by opposite-sex couples, and the general student sample (Key Output 2) showed similar frequencies and experiences of victimisation for each group. Children raised by same-sex couples, however, were less likely than others to use sources of support available at schools, possibly to minimise the possibility of experiencing homophobia were they to do so. These findings pointed to the need for schools and education systems to ensure that they do not marginalize same-sex couples and their children and the need for those who provide support in schools to be proactive in their attempts to protect and to support young people raised by same-sex couples.

These studies of the experiences of young people who were same-sex attracted or raised by same-sex couples used designs not previously applied in UK research and produced novel insights into the experiences of people in these groups. These findings point to the difficulties experienced or that might face these young people in their secondary schooling and the support that is required within the education system for LGBT young people and those raised by same-sex couples to

Impact case study (REF3b)

achieve inclusion and equality in UK education. At the time of conducting these studies (2005-2007), Ian Rivers was Professor of Psychology at QMU.

3. References to the research**Key outputs**

1. Rivers, I., & Noret, N.(2008). Well-being among same-sex and opposite-sex attracted youth at school. *School Psychology Review*, 37, 174-187.
DOI: [apa.org/?uid=2008-08832-003](https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.37.1.174)
2. Rivers, I., Poteat, V. P., & Noret, N. (2008). Victimization, social support, and psychosocial functioning among children of same-sex and opposite-sex couples in the United Kingdom. *Developmental Psychology*, 44, 127-134.
DOI: [10.1037/0012-1649.44.1.127](https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.44.1.127)

4. Details of the impact

Following the research subsequently reported in Key Outputs 1 and 2, and on the basis of established relationships with LGBT groups and research users, Rivers was invited in 2006 to join the *Hearts and Minds Agenda Group*, set up by the then Scottish Executive to set a progressive LGBT-inclusive agenda for Scotland for the next decade. The Scottish Executive charged this group with responsibility for making specific recommendations for advancing and promoting the inclusion of LGBT people in Scottish society. Rivers was the only academic member of this group. As a member of the *Hearts and Minds Agenda Group* and its 'Education and family' subgroup, Rivers produced recommendations in the group's (2008) report [source 1] to promote positive attitudes towards LGBT equality and inclusion in education in Scotland. Specific recommendations based upon Rivers' research were taken up in the Scottish Government's (2008) response to the report [source 2]. These recommendations had an impact on (1) Scottish Government policy towards LGBT equality and inclusion in education, (2) education services provided by Scottish schools and teachers, (3) LGBT young people and those from LGBT families, and (4) society, culture, and creativity, and public policy and services beyond Scotland, as follows:

(1) Scottish Government policy towards LGBT equality and inclusion in education

The working group recommended, *inter alia*, that:

- Learning and Teaching Scotland develop practical guidance and materials to help schools to promote the inclusion of LGBT people and their families through citizenship and inclusive education;
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) develops a good-practice framework for schools on addressing the needs of LGBT young people and promoting a positive ethos;
- The Scottish Government and COSLA actively promote the Scottish Government-funded Equal Opportunities In Education: Guidance on Dealing with Homophobic Incidents project to education authorities and schools;
- Research is conducted into the experiences of children of LGBT parents.

The Scottish Government implemented these recommendations by:

- Funding development of the 'Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools' toolkit for teachers [source 3]. This toolkit contains guidance for dealing with homophobic incidents;
- Distributing and promoting this guidance to education authorities, schools and school staff, by issuing the toolkit to every secondary school in Scotland (in February 2009), and posting the toolkit on its *Education Scotland* website, HMIE's *Journey to Excellence* website, and the *respectme* national anti-bullying service website (all on 17 November 2008);
- Posting on the HMIE's *Journey to Excellence* website three video clips of good practice relating to LGBT equality and inclusion [sources 4, 5 and 6];
- Conducting research into the experiences of children of LGBT parents [source 7].

Impact case study (REF3b)

All of these actions demonstrate the impact of the working group recommendations, based on Rivers' research, on the policy and practice of the Scottish Government towards the inclusion of LGBT young people in education in Scotland.

(2) Education services provided by Scottish schools and teachers

The toolkit issued to every secondary school in Scotland, and the examples of good practice made available on the HMIE's *Journey to Excellence* website, now inform Scottish schools and teachers how to deal with incidents of homophobia and homophobic bullying. The working group recommendations and research on which they are based have had an impact on the professional standards, guidelines and training of practitioners and services in the delivery of secondary school education in Scotland.

(3) LGBT young people and those from LGBT families

LGBT young people have benefited from the guidance issued to Scottish schools and teachers as to how to deal most effectively with issues that might have a negative impact on their experiences of Scottish education. LGBT young people and those raised by same-sex couples now have access to resources not previously available. In particular, the video clips on the *Journey to Excellence* website, and other resources there and on the *Education Scotland* and *respectme* websites, support their efforts to achieve inclusion, to maintain health and well-being, and to maximize their experiences within education. Moreover, the research of the Scottish Government into the experiences of children of LGBT parents recognises the potential difficulties of young people in this group. In these ways, the research and working group recommendations have had an impact on the health and welfare of young people in Scotland in mitigating potential difficulties and enhancing their quality of life.

(4) Impact on society, culture, and creativity, and impact on public policy and services beyond Scotland

The research and the recommendations of the working group have also had impact beyond Scotland. In particular, the 'Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools' toolkit has had an impact on society, culture and creativity in informing public debate in relation to homophobia within soccer in England [source 8]. The toolkit has also had an impact on public policy and services in relation to inclusive education in Hampshire, in the context of education in Australia (the Sydney Region Equity programme and Safe Schools Coalition Victoria) [source 9], and as a source for the 'Addressing Homophobia Guidelines for the youth sector in Ireland' prepared for the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs [source 10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. *The report of the LGBT Working Group - LGBT Hearts and Minds Agenda Group (2008). Challenging Prejudice: Changing attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland.* Scottish Government: Edinburgh. ISBN 978-0-7559-5671-5
Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/212871/0056591.pdf>
2. *The response by the Scottish Government to the Working Group report - Scottish Government (2008). Scottish Government Response to - Challenging Prejudice: Changing attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland.* Scottish Government: Edinburgh. ISBN 978-0-7559-5918-1
Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/243417/0067747.pdf>
3. *The 'Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools' toolkit funded by the Scottish Government -*
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/d/genericresource_tcm4512285.asp
4. *Example of good practice relating to LGBT equality posted on Journey to Excellence website - Promoting LGBT equality through the curriculum -*
<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/promotinglgbtequalitythroughthecurriculum.aspx>

Impact case study (REF3b)

5. *Example of good practice relating to LGBT equality posted on Journey to Excellence website - Partnership working to promote LGBT equality –*
<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/partnershipworkingtopromotelgbtequality.asp>
6. *Example of good practice relating to LGBT equality posted on Journey to Excellence website - LGBT equality education impact on young people -*
<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/lgbtequalityeducationimpactonyoungpeople.asp>
7. *Research undertaken by Scottish Government in taking up Working Group recommendations -*
Scottish Government (2009). *The experiences of children with lesbian and gay parents: An initial scoping review of evidence*. Scottish Government Social Research: Edinburgh.
ISBN 978-0-7559-7511-2
Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/17093220/0>
8. *The Football Association – Kick Homophobia out of football –*
<http://www.kickitout.org/files/81c3a9dc-/KIO%20homophobia%20guidelines%20V2%20final.pdf>
9. *Sydney Region Equity -*
<http://www.sydneyr.det.nsw.edu.au/equity/documents/BGEd/LGBT-low-res-7-01-09.pdf>
10. *Addressing Homophobia Guidelines for the youth sector in Ireland -*
http://www.belongto.org/attachments/233_Homophobic_Bullying_Guidelines_for_the_Youth_Work_Sector.pdf