

Institution: Sheffield Hallam University
Unit of Assessment: UOA 25 Education
Title of case study: Supporting young people's sexual wellbeing
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Policy-makers, professional and public audiences interested in young people's learning about sex and sexuality often approach discussions with strongly-held, sometimes conflicting views. Research at Sheffield Hallam University has contributed knowledge and understanding to discussions in <i>national policy and practice development</i>, and <i>public debate</i>, with impacts on education, service provision and support for young people. Findings have been used in Parliamentary debates, by national organisations lobbying for continued or improved provision in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), and in discussions about bullying in both lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT)-specific, and also in mainstream, community contexts. This has led to increased understanding about homophobia and LGBT wellbeing.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research grants completed from 2008-2012 have generated evidence about the content of the school wellbeing curriculum and service delivery, and specifically LGBT wellbeing. DfE-funded research into PSHE (G2), and local authority-funded research on sex and relationships education (SRE) (G3), has evidenced the uneven nature of classroom-based provision supporting young people's wellbeing (R2, R3, R5). It has demonstrated how the prioritisation of 'core' subjects in the curriculum is at odds with professional understanding that young people's wellbeing directly links to their attainment (R2). Curriculum demands have increased pressures to justify and evidence the benefits of such provision to young people (R2). The research has demonstrated the need for managerial and development support to enable professionals address enduring taboos and fears about supporting young people's sexualities (R1, R2, R5). This applies to educators and to sexual health service providers in schools. The research undertaken as part of G1, the first national study of its kind to examine school-based sexual health services, highlighted a tension between teaching and health-based approaches to supporting young people. For instance, members of senior school staff were often unsupportive of visible evidence of active youth sexualities, but in favour of other/generic health provision on school premises (R1). For any wellbeing-related provision to be effective, young people often report the necessity of confidentiality and non-judgemental support (R1, R3, R6). Research demonstrates that the common focus on a sex-negative, risk-reduction agenda in school-based SRE inadequately engages with young people who express interest in learning about sexual pleasure (R5).</p> <p>Research focussing on LGBT wellbeing has provided insights into the prevalence and impact of heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia in aspects of the lives of LGBT people (G6, G7). G6 was the first study to examine homophobia and transphobia in youth work settings as well as schools, and to identify barriers to professionals addressing these issues in their practice. Findings demonstrate LGBT invisibility in formal teaching curricula, and differing professional perspectives on how to address these issues (R6). Evidence also shows that current anti-bullying discourses divert attention away from some teachers' and family members' prejudicial attitudes towards LGBT identities and/or relationships, and focus on the individual rather than the societal level (R6). G7 was the first study to explore experiences of LGBT communities, and their role in LGBT life and wellbeing. It identified the importance of safe space, connections with other LGBT people, and peer support, to aid identity validation and the avoidance of self-censorship in public spaces. Research findings showed that LGBT health inequalities are linked to problems about health service access, as fears about prejudice from professionals are significant barriers to treatment or care for some people (R3, R4). Findings also identified a link between ineffective risk assessment practices within same-sex sexual decision-making and a lack of accessible health promotion suitable for people in same-sex relationships/sexual encounters (R3, R4).</p> <p>All research was conducted by current SHU employees: Lucy Clague (nee Shipton), Research Fellow from January 2007 to current; Mike Coldwell, Head of the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research since October 2006, prior to this held posts as research fellow and senior research fellow since starting at SHU in September 1998; Sean Demack, Senior Lecturer from</p>

January 2000; Eleanor Formby, Research Fellow, January 2007-2012/Senior Research Fellow 2012 to current; Julia Hirst, Senior Lecturer 2008-2012/Reader since April 2012, prior to this held posts as senior lecturer and Public Health Hub leader since starting at SHU in September 1989.; Bernadette Stiell, Senior Research Fellow from August 2006, prior to this held the post of research fellow since starting SHU in January 2005. Academic staff were supported in this work by three research assistants employed by SHU.. G1 involved colleagues from the University of Sheffield (UoS).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

International peer-reviewed outputs listed here testify to the quality of the underpinning research.

R1: Formby, E., Hirst, J., Owen, J., et al (2010) “Selling it as a holistic health provision and not just about condoms...” Sexual health services in school settings: Current models and their relationship with SRE policy and provision’, *Sex Education* 10(4):423-435 DOI: 10.1080/14681811.2010.515099 [Draws on G1].

R2: Formby, E. (2011) “It’s better to learn about your health and things that are going to happen to you than learning things that you just do at school”: Findings from a mapping study of PSHE education in primary schools in England’, *Pastoral Care in Education* 29(3):161-173 DOI: 10.1080/02643944.2011.599857 [Draws on G2].*

R3: Formby, E. (2011) ‘Sex and relationships education, sexual health, and lesbian, gay and bisexual sexual cultures: Views from young people’, *Sex Education* 11(3):255-266 DOI: 10.1080/14681811.2011.590078 [Draws on G3, G4, G5].*

R4: Formby, E. (2011) ‘Lesbian and bisexual women’s human rights, sexual rights and sexual citizenship: Negotiating sexual health in England’, *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 13(10):1165-1179 DOI: 10.1080/13691058.2011.610902 [Draws on G5].

R5: Hirst, J. (2012) “It’s got to be about enjoying yourself”: Young people, sexual pleasure and sex and relationships education’, *Sex Education* 13(4):423-436 DOI:10.1080/14681811.2012.747433 [Draws on G3].

R6: Formby, E. (2013) ‘Understanding and responding to homophobia and bullying: Contrasting staff and young people’s views within community settings in England’, *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 10(4):302-316 DOI: 10.1007/s13178-013-0135-4 [Draws on G6].

* = in the journal’s “most read articles” since publication.

Research grants:

G1: School-linked sexual health services for young people mapping and effectiveness study 2007-10, National Institute for Health Research, £187k. Report released 2010: www.hta.ac.uk/project/1662.asp. PI: Jenny Owen (UoS); under the leadership of Hirst, SHU staff led on data collection and analysis (as described in the report).

G2: National PSHE mapping and effectiveness study 2009-11, DfE, £193k. Report released 2011: www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education-a-mapping-study-of-the-prevalent-models-of-delivery-and-their-effectiveness. PI: Mike Coldwell.

G3: SRE audit and strategy development 2009-10, Leicester City Council, £20k. PI: Julia Hirst.

G4: Gay and bisexual men’s sexual health needs and experiences research 2007-09, NHS Sheffield, £18.5k. PI: Julia Hirst.

G5: Lesbian and bisexual women’s sexual health needs and experiences research 2006-09, NHS Sheffield, £8k. PI: Julia Hirst.

G6: Homophobia and transphobia in schools and youth work settings in South Yorkshire 2011, Higher Education Innovation Funding, £9k. PI: Eleanor Formby.

G7: LGBT understandings and experiences of ‘community’, implications for wellbeing 2011-12, Arts and

Impact case study (REF3b)

Humanities Research Council, £29k. PI: Eleanor Formby.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Research evidence has had national reach, informing **policy and practice development** on PSHE and school-based health services - significant priority areas within New Labour's 'Every Child Matters' agenda. The largest ever study of PSHE in England to date (G2) was funded to inform government policy and has guided work in this area (described by a DfE representative in April 2013 as "a key source of evidence", S1). The research was cited in a Parliamentary debate by Schools Minister Nick Gibb in March 2011 (see Hansard, S2) and has shaped a member of the House of Lords' proposed Children and Families Bill amendment (via telephone discussions with research staff, July-Sept. 2013). National organisations lobbying for continued or improved PSHE provision and resources have drawn on evidence about the variability and perceived importance of provision in their responses to the government review (Nov. 2011), citing findings about uneven/unsupported provision to argue for the statutory inclusion of PSHE in the curriculum (see S3 examples). This research has also informed briefings for Parliament on the Education Bill (June 2011), particularly about the need for well-qualified staff (S4). Evidence about the need for training for PSHE teachers, and to support good practice in schools, has been utilised in CPD by the PSHE Association (June 2011, S5), and the National PSE Association for Advisors, Inspectors and Consultants (email correspondence, 17.4.2013, S6). Practitioners and advocates in local authorities and charities have used evidence from G1 and G2 to establish, defend or extend their PSHE and/or health service provision (email correspondence, April 2013, S6). SRE research for Leicester City Council (G3) which highlighted weaknesses in provision led to them recruiting a Strategic Lead for SRE to support city developments; since then they have recorded a reduced teenage pregnancy rate (Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator, 11.7.12). This work, and linked presentations by Hirst, has informed national SRE resources on masturbation and sexual pleasure produced by the Centre for HIV and Sexual Health amid much national and international media interest (July 2009, see S7).

Nationally, findings about the nature and impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying (R6/G6) have been utilised by practitioners to raise awareness and to evidence the need to improve or target support: for example, a specialist article commissioned by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (in *Children and Young People*, March 2013) drew on research findings to suggest that individual counselling may not be the most appropriate/appreciated form of support for LGBT young people, arguing that broader inclusive education practices would be more beneficial. This research has also been reproduced in teaching materials used to raise class-based awareness ('Issues today' and 'Issues: LGBT equality' school resources: Independence Educational Publishers, 2012). Findings from G6 have informed the development of new cyber-homophobia resources following Formby's participation in an 'experts seminar' at DfE (Nov. 2012) where she presented critiques of bullying discourses and associated counselling support to policy makers and practitioners. Because this area of work frequently has to be defended or justified, this research has had national reach and has been used by a range of public and voluntary sector organisations since Nov. 2011 to support their work and/or raise awareness: for instance, local authority staff have distributed and discussed G6 findings with managers and colleagues to underline the need to address homophobia and transphobia in schools (email correspondence, April 2013, S8). G7 has also been cited by LGBT community organisations in their delivery and planning, for instance in applying to fund a 'safe LGBT space' through community cafe provision (LGBT Youth North West, March 2013) and feeding into workshops to identify community needs at the launch of a community-led initiative, LGBT Sheffield (July 2013). In addition it has informed local authority LGBT hate crime reporting and community safety planning (email correspondence, April 2013, S10).

The research has also contributed to **public interest and debate**, with national and international reach. Findings have contributed to media and public debate about homophobia and transphobia in school, via interviews and discussions (Nov. 2011) on BBC Radio Manchester (LGBT Citizen show) and BBC Radio Sheffield (Drive Time programme) which have highlighted issues beyond peer bullying in identifying the prejudicial practices of some schools and/or teachers. An article in *Pink News* (Europe's largest online gay news service) in November 2011 reporting these findings was the 'most read' and 'most discussed' item on the site, with 109 reader comments and 624 Facebook 'likes' (see S9). This debate also featured in practice-orientated publication (*Children and Young People Now*, November 2011), and in international media coverage (e.g. *Huffington*

Post in the USA; *Narobe* in Slovenia; *XQ28* in Denmark, all Nov. 2011). It resulted in a subsequent letters debate about LGBT (in)equality in the *Sheffield Star*.

Evidence from G7 has improved knowledge about the meaning and experiences of UK LGBT communities, and implications for LGBT wellbeing. There has been supportive and enthusiastic feedback about the project report and public engagement event from LGBT community members (see S10, 2012-2013), as well as media interest (Nov. 2012) in the gay press (*Sosogay*), international press (*Rainbow Sudan*), and regional media (*Yorkshire Times*). The final project event (which was highly over-subscribed, Nov. 2012) was designed to stimulate discussion about the meaning and desirability of constructions of 'LGBT communities'. It led to very positive feedback from attendees (a mix of 80 project participants, practitioners, academics, and the general public), with comments including "inspiring" and "brilliantly informative". Practitioners emphasised how it would inform their practice: "I found the conference very interesting and it gave me some idea's to discuss with [an LGBT forum]"; "It certainly gave me some food for thought regarding trans provision for young people". The long-term impact of improved professional awareness and practice is therefore on enhanced support for young people, though individual young people have also benefited directly from involvement in the research through being enabled to share their collective experiences.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1: *Email correspondence with former Research Manager at DfE* (12.4.2013).

S2: *Parliamentary debate*:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110324/text/110324w0002.htm#11032481000021> (24.3.2011).

S3: *National charity Mentor's response to the government PSHE review* (November 2011):

<http://www.mentoruk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/PSHE-review.pdf>.

National Children's Bureau response to the PSHE review (November 2011):

http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/472463/111130_ncb_response_pshe_review_final.pdf.

S4: *National Children's Bureau briefing for the House of Lords*:

http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/180230/110630_20ncb_20lords_20cmttee_20stage_20pshe_20briefing.pdf (June 2011).

S5: *PSHE Association report of annual conference*:

<http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1110> (June 2011).

S6: *Email correspondence with Director of Programmes, Mentor* (11.4.2013), *local authority Healthy Schools Consultant* (11.4.2013), and *Independent Educational Consultant* (17.4.2013);

S7: *Whoopi Goldberg and colleagues discussing resources*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKqo0EBZShw> (14.7.2009).

S8: *Email correspondence with local authority Healthy Schools Consultant* (11.4.2013), and *local authority Equalities Officer* (19.4.2013).

S9: *Media discussion*: <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2011/11/17/south-yorkshire-study-gay-students-told-to-change-for-pe-separately/> (17.11.2011).

S10: *Email correspondence with LGBT report reader* (2.1.2013), *local authority Cohesion, Migration and Safety Officer* (12.4.2013), and *Blog entry by LGBT conference attendee*:

<http://gillivertravels.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/rainbow-over-steel-city.html> (11.11.2012).