

challenging homophobic & transphobic hate crime

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# Like It Is : 10 Years On

## Towards a Hate Crime Service For Under 25s

Dr Clare Roche

**HOMOPHOBIC  
TRANSPHOBIC  
ABUSE?**

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# Introduction

## Introduction to Galop

Galop is London's LGBT community safety organisation – we work to prevent and challenge homophobic and transphobic hate crime. We reduce crimes against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and campaign for an improved criminal justice response.

Galop's previous research with young people, 'Telling It Like It Is' [1998], was completed nearly ten years ago. This research identified some of the key experiences for young LGBT people who have experienced hate crime, and since that time Galop has continued to try to engage with young people, for example by visiting LGBT youth groups to talk to members about their rights and the kind of help that Galop can provide.

Galop works with clients of all ages, and although we see a number of younger clients, we are aware that we could do more to market ourselves to younger clients and to provide targeted services. A decade after our ground-breaking research, we felt it would be helpful to look again at this issue, and particularly at how Galop as an organisation can engage with younger LGBT people. Galop was lucky therefore, to be able to commission this small scale needs analysis, using funding generously provided by Help a London Child.

## Hate crime and young LGBT people

Previous research has revealed that young LGBT people are disproportionately vulnerable to homophobic abuse and harassment (Stonewall, 1996; Warwick, Aggleton and Douglas, 2001) and despite increasing societal acceptance of LGBT adults, research indicates that homophobic bullying of young people is on the increase (Adams, Cox and Dunstan, 2004).

The majority of existing research focuses on young LGBT people's experiences of school and illustrates that homophobic abuse and harassment can be a defining aspect of young LGBT people's school life. Abuse and harassment related to sexuality and/or gender identity can be experienced both by young people who identify as LGBT and young people who do not identify as LGBT but do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes.

## Dealing with abuse and harassment can be particularly difficult for young people for several reasons:

1) Young LGBT people may be afraid to disclose why they are being bullied for fear of experiencing more homophobia or transphobia. UK and Irish research studies have found that while many LGBT young people experience negative incidents at school regarding their sexuality and/or gender identity, only 15% or less go on to seek support<sup>1</sup>.

2) Young people may not experience effective support if they do tell someone at school. Thurlow (2001) found that 'gay' is a common term of abuse in schools, and is often not taken seriously by staff. Childline (2006) found that support for LGBT young people at school was 'patchy and inconsistent' and teachers

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1. Youthnet, Northern Ireland (2006) found that only 15% of LGBT young people sought help at school, only 13% sought help. Similarly, only 15% sought help in a Scottish study (CERES, 2006).

often did not address homophobia in class. Young LGBT people may also experience homophobia from teachers (Rivers, 2001).

3) Young LGBT people's key support networks such as family/carers and friends may also not be supportive. Problems related to coming out and the fear of potential homophobia<sup>2</sup> from parents was a significant concern for callers to Childline. In addition callers reported friends letting them down when they came out by blanking them, outing the young person to others at school or even joining in bullying in order to protect themselves.

The combination of the homophobic abuse, fear of seeking help and a lack of support can have serious effects on young people's lives. Their academic performance, school attendance and mental health can suffer. Galop's 1998 report, *Telling it like it is* found that many LGB<sup>3</sup> young people were coping with serious levels of harassment and abuse on their own, with serious potential impacts upon their self-esteem and mental health. Violence and particularly verbal abuse was something the participants expected as part of their everyday experience of being LGB. Very few expected support in school. We say more about Galop's findings in the next section but it is included here to highlight that the situation does not appear much improved almost a decade later. Childline (2006) found that many LGBT young people experience loneliness and isolation.

In the absence of support for young LGBT people in their key networks, (whether perceived or actual) the work of organisations like Galop in dealing with homophobic and transphobic hate crime becomes all the more crucial. Galop's work with young people is outlined in the next section.

### **Galop's previous (research) work with young people**

By the mid 1990s Galop's work was revealing that young people were disproportionately vulnerable to homophobic hate crime. Homophobic abuse and harassment was commonly occurring in their everyday spaces such as home and school. This was particularly difficult as young people have less resources and choices than most adults to enable them to deal with and/or escape these negative experiences.

A youth worker was appointed in 1996 and a needs assessment of young LGB people was conducted to investigate young people's experiences in more detail with a view to making recommendations to the Galop management committee regarding enhancing existing service provision. *Telling it like it is* (1998) was a survey of 202 young people in London. The research explored young people's experiences of homophobic abuse and harassment in detail. This included the type and frequency of different abuses (verbal, physical and sexual), where and why young people were targeted, police involvement, support they received and services they would have liked available to them.

The survey found that negative experiences were high and reporting was low. 65% of the participants had experienced verbal abuse on account of their sexuality (over half of which was repeated) and just under half had experienced physical abuse (half of which was repeated). A significant amount of abuse and harassment took place in schools, most often from other pupils (90-95% of cases). However, only 19% of people reported incidents to the police and only 22% felt they would report hate crime in the future. 12% told no one about their experiences, not even a friend.

In terms of formulating a youth service at Galop, over half of the respondents found it difficult to imagine the kind of support they would find useful. The most common request was for a more sensitive and supportive

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2. Transphobia was not mentioned in the study.

3. Transgender young people were not included in the study at that time.

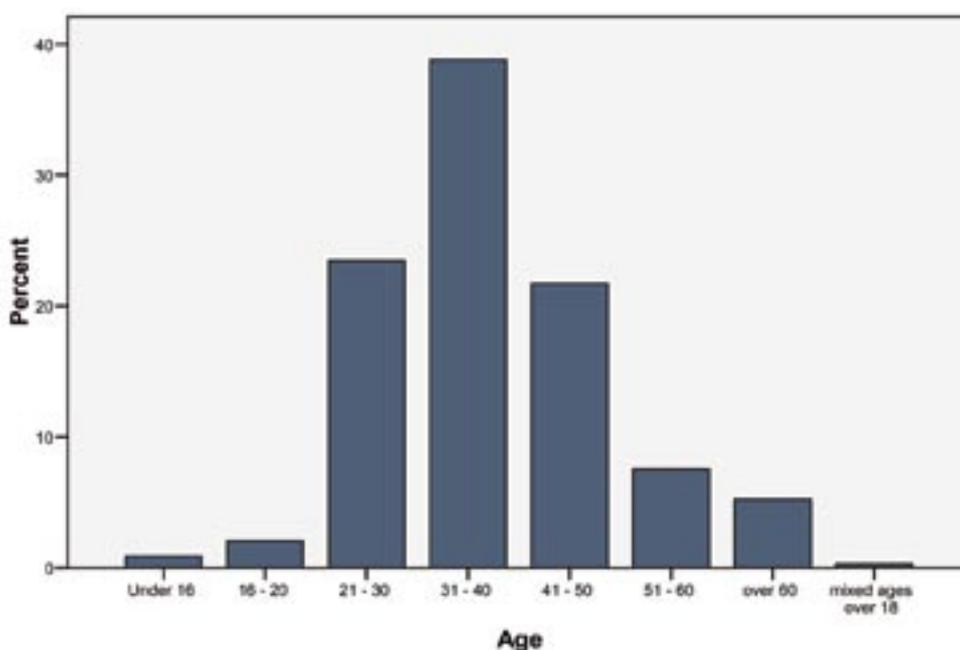
response from police officers. Many participants felt that existing service provision was inadequate – either absent or not appropriate to young people. Most were unaware of Galop.

Since the funding for the mid 1990s youth worker post finished, Galop has not had a dedicated youth worker. Unfortunately, young LGBT people remain vulnerable to homophobic and transphobic abuse and harassment. The purpose of this current piece of consultancy was to take a fresh look at providing under 25s services at Galop

### 1.5 Galop’s current work with young people

Figures for Galop’s service users from April 05 to current indicate that people in their 30s are the biggest users of Galop (39%)<sup>4</sup> followed by those aged 21-30 (24%). Service users aged 16-20 only account for 2% and under 16s account for less than 1%. However, research findings continue to point to young LGBT people’s high levels of vulnerability to homophobic and transphobic abuse and harassment. Key questions arise therefore in relation to the age range of service users at Galop. This consultancy should usefully aim to discover whether sufficient young people know about Galop’s work and whether young people would value an under 25s hate crime service, before considering the shape an under 25s service might take.

**Age breakdown of Galop’s service users April 2005 – November 2007**



### 1.6 The report outline

The rest of this report presents findings from Galop’s small-scale consultation with LGBT young people in London. Section 1 outlines the methodology of the study and participants. Sections 2 to 5 cover material from the questionnaires and focus groups. Section 2 covers young people’s personal experiences of hate crime and/or witnessing hate crime; reporting to the police and organisations; getting help from other people, or not getting help and a discussion of ‘minor’ incidents. Section 3 discusses whether a specific under 25s service is necessary. Section 4 looks at the potential shape a youth hate crime service could take. Section 5 considers ways to deliver a youth service including advertising and how to get in touch. Section 6 concludes the findings and summarises the recommendations.

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4. Figures are based on a sample of 483 people. As figures are grouped according to decades it is not presently possible to give an accurate figure for the under 25s.

# Section 1 – Methodology

Young LGBT people are frequently over-researched and participants often gain very little benefit from taking part in research. For this small piece of research we were committed from the start to making the experience as beneficial to the young participants as possible. We therefore decided on an unconventional format whereby the bulk of the research participation would take place during an activity residential. This was supplemented by an extra focus group to address a gender imbalance in participants.

20 young people took part in the research. Further details of the participants can be found in Appendix A.

Information was collected from participants in two forms:

- 1) Questionnaire
- 2) Focus group

## Questionnaire

Young LGBT people taking part in the London LGBT Youth Council<sup>5</sup> and Girl Diva were informed about the purpose and structure of the research and asked to complete an initial structured questionnaire. The questionnaire enabled us to collect basic information about young LGBT people's: experiences of hate crime and/or negative experiences related to sexuality and gender identity; actions following these experiences; reporting to the police and/or voluntary sector agencies.

Due to the small number of participants the questionnaire was not expected to provide us with statistically significant information. Instead, it was designed to be a spring board for focus group discussions (and also to flag up any potential support needs of the young people around disclosure of hate crime incidents). The questionnaire used predominantly closed questions so it would be quick to fill in. We also did not ask participants to explore any experiences in-depth so as to minimise potential distress. Galop staff and youth workers were present to support the young people to fill in the questionnaire and answer any questions.

## Focus groups

Young people on the residential weekend and in our follow-up group took part in focus group discussions concerning:

- 1) Experiences of hate crime, reporting and the police
- 2) Experiences of voluntary sector service delivery and ideas about what a young people's hate crime service may look like.

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5. A project of the Consortium of LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations.

# Section 2 – Experiences

The first step in the consultancy was to establish whether the participants had previous negative experiences as a result of their sexuality and/or gender identity. This information was obtained via the questionnaire and then people discussed their experiences further in the focus groups if they wished to do so.

## 2.1 Being negatively targeted as a result of sexuality and/or gender identity

Young people were asked on the questionnaire to tell us whether they felt they had been negatively targeted as a result of their sexuality and/or gender identity.

13 young people had previous negative experiences. All of these had experienced verbal abuse on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity and a further five experiencing a combination of verbal abuse and harassment (4), physical abuse (2), domestic abuse (2) and intimidation (1).

Five young people felt they had not been negatively targeted as a result of their sexuality and/or gender identity and two were not sure.

## 2.2 Witnessing negative events

The young people were also asked if they had seen negative things happen to anyone else on account of sexuality and/or gender identity.

16 young people had witnessed verbal abuse (one of whom also was not sure), 10 of whom witnessed verbal abuse only and a further six had seen a combination of abuse on others physical (3), harassment (5), and domestic abuse (2).

Three young people felt they had not witnessed negative incidents and two were not sure.

## 2.3 Getting help/telling/reporting

Own experiences:

10 of the young people who had experienced some form of abuse on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity told someone about it.

The most common avenue they turned to for help was their friends (9 people). After friends, five young people also told their family, three a lover/partner, three told school or college and three told an LGBT organisation. One young man told his family and school instead of friends.

Witnessing:

Eight of the young people who witnessed some form of abuse against others on account of sexuality and/or gender identity told someone.

Seven told friends what they had witnessed. After friends, two also told their family, three told an LGBT organisation, three told school/college and one told another organisation. One young person reported to school without telling friends.

## 2.4 What young people hoped for when telling

Ten young people told at least a friend about their negative experiences. All of them did so to be listened to. Eight also wanted comfort, a further six wanted advice or information and three wanted action e.g. for someone to be arrested.

## Discussion – experiences:

Even from this small sample of young LGBT people it is clear that the majority of participants have experienced some form of abuse in relation to their sexuality and/or gender identity by the time they are 25. In fact only one participant had not experienced nor witnessed a negative event related to sexuality and/or gender identity. Given the prevalence of harassment and abuse, the case for specific support for LGBT young people appears strong. However, friends were the predominant source of help young people turned to following homophobic or transphobic abuse or harassment. Only three turned to an LGBT organisation like Galop for help.

### 2.5 Reporting to the Police

Four young people had reported an incident to the police where sexuality and/or gender identity was relevant. The questionnaire revealed that two of those young people found the police response supportive and/or sensitive and their experiences of the police were discussed further in the focus groups.

Ali was still at school when he experienced homophobic bullying and theft just near to the school. He was with a friend at the time who was also beaten up. He describes not really knowing where to turn for help at the time and so they went back to school. Ali found his form teacher very supportive and the school involved the police.

*“I was very young at the time, I was like, I think I was probably even 15 and I um, I mean I obviously didn’t know anywhere, what to do or what to turn to, so we went to school, went back to school and basically they got the police involved and that was that basically. You know we made a statement and it got dealt with. Nothing happened but that’s all we knew at that time what to do about it.” [Ali]*

Ali found the police ‘helpful’, although there was no further action on his case beyond taking a statement. The two other young people who reported to the police had found them either disinterested or hostile.

Owen was out with a group of friends in central London when they were set upon by a group of young people. Owen was the main target and he dialled 999 in front of the attacking group which scared some of them off. He then spoke to the police and who came to the area. By the time they arrived he felt uncomfortable asking for help, even though the incident had left him feeling scared.

*“Owen – I did feel kind of stupid you know expecting to ask if [the police] could like walk with us as far as the station. But in a way it felt like you know with that having just happened, you don’t know how secure the rest of the evening is going to be for you really.  
Interviewer - What was their response in that situation?”*

*Owen – They reasoned that we were going to be safe from there on because there didn’t seem to be any trouble around us when they arrived. [...] I was with the same group and we were still sticking together in our numbers, that felt safe in itself, but obviously I didn’t want the same thing to happen again. I didn’t want any reprisal from any of those youths from having called the police because for all I know, I mean for all I knew they may have you know run a mile away, um or they may have only been a few hundred yards away.”*

Owen felt that the police were slow to respond on that occasion and a quicker response from the police would have helped the situation. He felt that the homophobic incident was low priority compared for example, with an incident potentially involving a weapon.

Each of those four young people who reported wanted the police to take action. They also wanted the police to be aware of what happened and/or a record to be kept in case of further events. What actually

happened was the police took a statement from two young people, the third had no action taken and the fourth was not sure what the police did.

## 2.6 Reporting to the police in the future

Among the four young people who had previous experience with the police one felt he would not turn to the police in future, one was not sure, one would and the fourth said it would depend how serious a future event was if she would go to the police in future.

Among the participants as a whole four young people would go to the police in the future if something happened to them as a result of their sexuality and/or gender identity. Four young people would not, four felt it would depend what happened e.g. if the abuse was physical, and ten were not sure whether they would approach the police or not.

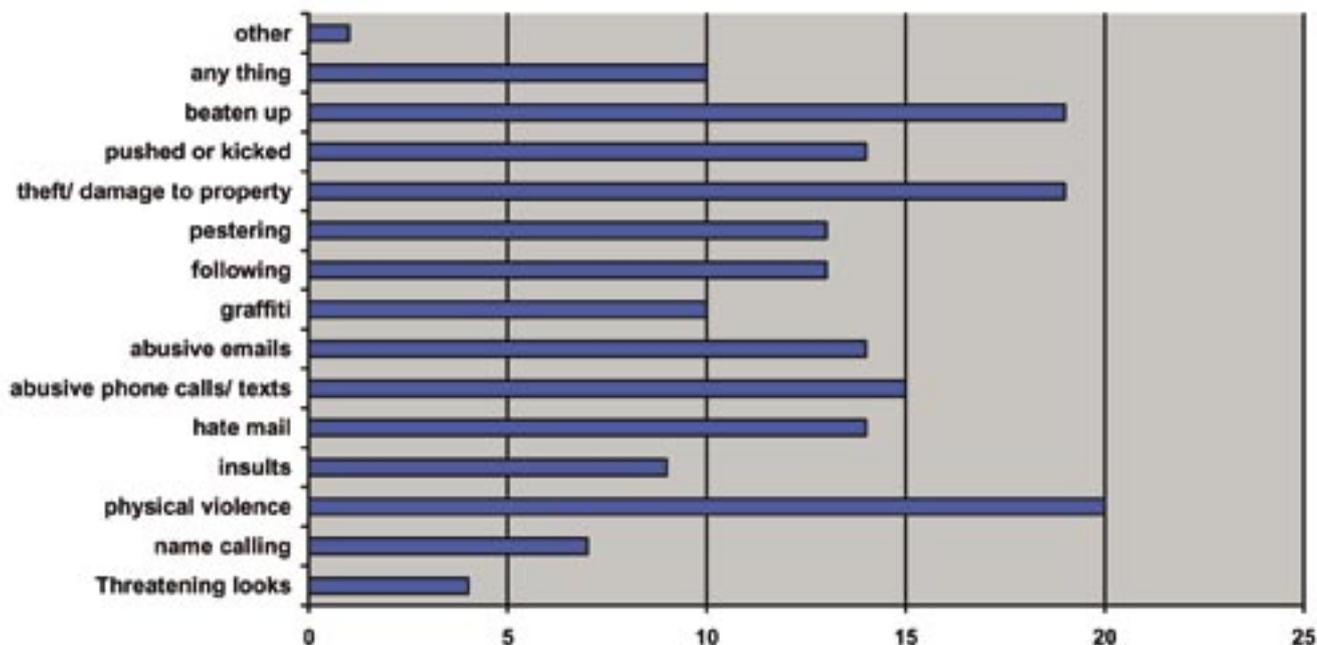
## 2.7 Not reporting to the police: seriousness of incidents and limitations on reporting

16 participants did not report to the police. Five of those felt what happened was not serious enough to go to the police, five said nothing had happened to them, one young man worried it might make the situation worse and another young man said he did not report for other complicated reasons.

The numbers in the consultation are too small to be statistically significant but there was a strong gender division in young people's feelings towards police reporting with young women holding more negative views.

None of the young men reported feeling scared of or not liking the police, not trusting the police or being concerned about police homophobia or transphobia. The young women had more concerns about the police. Two reported multiple reasons why they did not report including feeling scared of or not liking the police, being worried it might make things worse, not trusting the police and being concerned about police homophobia or transphobia. Two young women also felt there was nothing the police could do for them.

We also asked the participants to answer a question about the kind of incidents connected to sexuality and/or gender identity an LGBT person could potentially report to the police. The answers are represented in graph format.



The three most popular categories that could be taken to the police were physical violence, being beaten up and theft or damage to property. Insults and name-calling were quite low with only nine and seven young people feeling these kinds of verbal abuse were something to take to the police. None of the participants knew that Galop could provide anonymous third-party reporting to the police.

### Discussion – The Police:

Only a small number of participants had experience of reporting to the police and most were not clear whether they would approach the police in the future. As a group the participants seemed to have very low expectations of what the police could do to tackle homophobic or transphobic incidents except in the most serious of cases such as serious physical assault. This includes those who had reported to the police for the purpose of wanting action to be taken.

The issue of seriousness was more pronounced for these participants than mistrust or fears about how the police would treat a young person reporting a homophobic or transphobic incident. There is a need for increased clarity about what constitutes a homophobic or transphobic hate crime. This is not to overlook the concerns some young women expressed in relation to police reporting.

### Recommendations:

- Awareness raising in relation to the different kinds of police reporting already available through Galop, such as third-party reporting, for those concerned about the police response to LGBT people.
- Ensure clear information about what constitutes hate crime and what Galop and/or the police can do is included in any information for young people.

## 2.8 Experiences with LGBT organisations

The participants were also asked whether they had reported an incident to an LGBT organisation. Four of the young people had reported to organisations they were involved in. No one had reported to Galop. Ella tells her story of why she turned to an LGBT organisation rather than going to the police for help.

Ella preferred to turn to her LGBT youth group regarding an incident of harassment against a friend of hers. She felt that it was easier to talk to a worker she knew even though it was something she could have reported to the police.

*“Interviewer - Was it something that you potentially could have reported to the police?”*

*Ella - I could have I, I really should but um I don't know. It felt easier to talk to them 'cause they sort of understand and know what to say.”*

16 young people did not get support from any LGBT organisations. Six of those felt nothing had happened to them and four felt what happened to them was not serious (four of this group of ten had experienced verbal abuse). Three did not know of any organisations to turn to and three others were either not out, thought there was nothing an organisation could do, or worried it might get worse if they told someone.

The four young people who did contact an organisation did so by drop-in, phone and email.

### Discussion – LGBT organisations

Only four of the participants reported an incident to an LGBT organisation that they were involved in. Given that fear of experiencing further homophobia or transphobia prevents many young people from reaching out for support (see introduction), LGBT organisations could provide a crucial support avenue for young people,

particularly for those who are isolated and fearful. However, lack of awareness of organisations and how they can help, and/or lack of resources to discover and access organisations is a crucial factor for young people.

#### Recommendations:

- Conduct age-specific awareness raising about Galop's services.
- Consider age appropriate places to advertise Galop's services.

## 2.9 Not getting help

Despite the high levels of homophobia and transphobia experienced by the participants, there were some who did not receive any kind of support at all. Three people did not tell anyone, including one young man who had experienced verbal, physical and domestic abuse and harassment. The other two had experienced solely verbal abuse. Five young people who witnessed abuse against others did not tell anyone including one young woman who had witnessed verbal and domestic abuse and harassment.

In order to establish whether the participants were happy not to tell anyone about their experiences, we asked further questions about reporting and getting support. For example, we asked if anyone had wanted to tell someone about an experience and did not feel able to. Some young people wanted to deal with situations on their own:

*"I think it depends what sort of person you are as well because you know I'm quite confident and strong person so anything that's come to me I've given them straight back so I've never felt the need to deal with it any further than myself." [John]*

However, on the questionnaires five young people reported that they had wanted to get support following past experiences and were not able to. The most common reason for not telling was that they were scared it would make things worse (4). This was followed by not knowing who to tell (3), not being out at the time (3), feeling that no one would take it seriously (2) and feeling it wasn't serious enough to tell anyone (2). All of the five young people had a combination of the above reasons for not telling.

These fears were discussed in more depth during the focus groups. Some young people described feeling scared of reprisals or ashamed of their sexuality and/or gender identity which made it difficult for them to get support. This was compounded by their age.

*"I felt like more ashamed like, so I didn't want to tell anyone like, like myself and my problems and stuff I just sort of felt ashamed. [...] When you're younger you see the world differently and like if you get bullied or whatever you're more likely to just like just take it and don't say anything to anyone, 'cause that's what I was like when I was younger. But then like, I don't know, it just changes." [Nick]*

*"I got beaten up four times when I was at school because I came out and because I was gay people beat me up. I did go to hospital once because of it but I mean I just thought if I took it to the police and they got involved it would make it worse and people would come round my house rather than you know, it was just when I was walking back from school rather than people actually at my house. So I don't know, I don't know. I think I probably would report it now but at the time obviously because I was younger and you're in the situation it's just like you want to leave it and let things lie." [Matthew]*

Nick did go on to tell his school but did not have a positive experience. One of his attackers got suspended for two days despite him being hospitalised by the attack. He felt like ‘nothing happened’ as a result of his attack.

## 2.10 Verbal abuse and ‘minor’ incidents

In the section on the police, we found that the greatest reason for not reporting was concerned with the perceived seriousness of the abuse or harassment that happened to a young LGBT person. This issue of seriousness or ‘minor’ incidents is discussed in more detail here.

13 of the young people had experienced verbal abuse on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity. When discussing whether and how they may get help for a hate crime incident in the future, the participants made a strong distinction between verbal and physical abuse. Most young people felt they would be mostly likely to try and deal with verbal abuse on their own.

*“John – I’d try and defend myself before trying to contact anyone else.*

*Ryan – Depends how serious it is as well. If it was so bad to the point where I got beaten up and ended up in hospital then I’d call the police, but if it was just name calling I’d deal with it myself.*

*John – mmm exactly. I wouldn’t trouble the police with anything other than physical violence.”*

However, dealing with verbal abuse yourself was not straight forward for all young people. Deciding whether to try and deal with an attack yourself (whether homophobic and/or racist) was complicated and depended on personal confidence and factors such as whether you are on your own and how many attackers there are.

*“I think it’s alright if you feel confident enough to deal with that but I know that sometimes I’m not particularly confident and I know in situations where people are getting at me I just sort of close up and I can’t talk back to people and I find it really difficult. So I don’t know, but then I probably wouldn’t go to the police because name-calling isn’t to me like you know so bad you’d go to the police, I’d probably just take it.” [Matthew]*

“You always want to think you’d be this strong person and you’d stand up for yourself, but if you’re in a situation where there’s more of them or they seem more threatening, sometimes it is just best to keep your head down and pretend you didn’t hear it and keep walking. ‘Cause I’ve found if I’ve ever had racial abuse I’ve reacted in two ways and one is having a smart mouth back and then the other is just if I pretend long enough that I didn’t hear it, will they just forget that they’ve said it? Because you don’t want to deal with it sometimes. (mms)” [Lauren]

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, only one participant had not experienced homophobia and/or transphobia personally nor witnessed it, and the majority of participants had experienced verbal abuse on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity. What became clearer in the focus group discussions was the extent to which getting verbal abuse was considered ‘minor’ and just part of being LGBT that they had become accustomed to with time.

*“Yeah I get a lot of names called after me and some of them are really offensive but I mean after a few years getting used to it, “oh faggot, fag” you know, it goes straight over my head. It’s like, “oh yeah whatever. I’m not interested in you, whatever, just get out of my face”. Then it kind of gets, it’s repetitive but then you get used to it.” [Sol]*

*“[T]here was a period in my life where you know we’d go out and it was happening like nearly every time we’d go out or whatever, but yeah you just kind of get used to it. It just, it lessens and lessens.*

*You just become used to it because I suppose your mind, you start thinking that, not that this is the norm but this is the way it is you know? It's sad but it's the way it is." [Ali]*

Some of the young people made a conscious decision to brush off homophobic comments refusing to let it affect their mental health, another felt it was just part of a wider experience of negative comments young people experience going through life.

*"Yeah when you walk down the street you get the occasional person you know either staring at you in a weird way and commenting on the way you dressed or how you look but um I basically just let it go because I think to myself if you carry that burden it'll just become big and create issues within yourself so, and I just think it's too minor to go and report it to the police (yeah) or to even talk about it." [Samir]*

*"I mean you can sit and cry about it as much as you want but do you know what I mean? We've all got lives to lead at the end of the day and if you let something like as minor as that affect you. I mean different people are different, this is not a cuss to anyone you know? Different people deal with it with different ways but you know this is London there's so many other challenges as well for young gay people as well so you know?" [Ali]*

*"But if it wasn't your sexuality it'd be your clothes or it'd be your hair or it'd be something. It's always something. People are the same you know people aren't nice generally, strangers more so. So you know they'll find something to get you at and if, that's what I think, that's the way I treat it." [John]*

Again, the participants acknowledged that not everyone was able to brush off homophobic or transphobic comments. Whether or not you were out and the level of support you have were important factors in that.

*"It could really depend for some people. I mean if some people that are really strong inside I mean they could just brush it off, I mean but some vulnerable people you know will try and brush it off inside but then it kind of builds up into a bigger option. So it really depends on how you actually deal with it. Yeah it's right in your face but it's up to you, either it's going to build up inside and wait for a big explosion, or are you actually strong enough just to forget it? I mean yeah it won't affect you but some people will be affected by it." [Sol]*

*"When I didn't have any like support and I was on my own it would affect me much more when people would like say stuff to me and stuff, but now I have lots of friends who are like the same and I know lots of people and it's not so bad." [Nick]*

We also asked if anyone modified their behaviour as a result of experiencing these so-called minor incidents. It was clear that the cumulative effect of 'minor' incidents had an effect on the way some young people behaved, even if they are out and confident in their sexuality most of the time.

*"Yeah I would say so like if you're on your own in a public place and there's a group of perhaps very laddish men, I still, even though I'm very out, I still think to myself, "oh don't look really queer now because you don't know what's going to happen". You know I think it's a shame that we should have to do that. You know even thinking it." [Adrian]*

*"I find that I think I don't want to do it but when the time comes like I try and act like more masculine or like less camp or something like. It's like a, it's not like a conscious thing really it's like I just do it when the time comes, when I was there. I don't want to do it but then I worry about the way people*

*see me, so like I act more masculine or less camp or something just because, just in the moment because I don't want people to say things to me and stuff.” [Nick]*

## **Discussion – not telling**

Some young people have negative experiences related to their sexuality and/or gender identity and do not look for support because they wish to deal with things themselves. However, even in this small piece of consultancy, a quarter of the young people wanted to get support for their experiences but were held back by a combination of reasons including fear that telling someone would make things worse, that they would not be taken seriously, or because they did not know who to tell. Many young people discussed their age as being a significant contributing factor to the lack of support. They felt that they were most vulnerable when they were still at school, and particularly before they had a safe place to turn to such as like-minded friends or experience of the scene and access to LGBT information.

A crucial area for concern however was participants reaction to homophobic and transphobic verbal abuse in their lives. Overwhelmingly verbal abuse was considered a part of being LGBT and something you get used to. The implication being that if you are not able to 'get used to it', your mental health will really suffer because of the prevalence and frequency of verbal abuse experienced by young LGBT people. However, coping with verbal abuse currently appears to rely very much on individual LGBT young people's own personal resources and networks. The young people were not well resourced in terms of places to turn for those who can not just 'brush it off'. Even among those who felt mostly strong and confident in their identity, the cumulative effect of 'minor' incidents and fear of experiencing homophobia or transphobia led to behaviour modification such as trying to appear less gay or camp.

## **Recommendations:**

- Explore possibilities of developing workshops e.g. confidence building, or developing partnership working with organisations who currently provide such services.
- Explore the possibility of fast and easy ways to report incidents young people consider to be minor, such as verbal abuse, to help create a clearer picture of the extent of such incidents.

## Section 3 – Is a specific under 25s LGBT service required?

When talking about their experiences of homophobia and transphobia the young people felt that the way that affected them depended very much on the kind of person you are. Some of the things that helped them were down to personal characteristics such as being a ‘strong person’. However, other factors included having similar friends, how out you were and having someone to turn to who understands. For those young people who would like external support there may be a role for Galop, but would that necessarily be a specific under 25s service?

Young people were asked in the focus groups what steps they would take if they experienced homophobic or transphobic hate crime in the future. Following a discussion about potentially going to the police, and then turning to family and friends Ali raises the point about those young people who are not yet out.

*“Obviously it depends whether you’re out or not. But then after that, yeah you know if there was an organisation, I mean I personally haven’t heard of an organisation until obviously yesterday but yeah it would be great to have an organisation to go to for support, for talking. You know some people they go through horrendous things and they need counselling and they need someone literally just to talk to or to support them or you know yeah. It would be great to have something like that.” [Ali]*

Most of the young people agreed with Ali that it would be important to have an organisation that could help young people, even if they did not feel it was something they would personally use. However, they had mixed opinions on whether there was a need for an age specific service.

A couple of young people did not feel attracted to an age specific service preferring mixed company:

*“Oh it doesn’t matter what age it is. Me personally I prefer to go somewhere it’s mixed ages, not just aimed at young people but with older people as well because me personally I get along better with older people.” [Ashley]*

John agreed that he did not feel he would use a youth specific service. However, he felt this may be because he came out at 13 and was now 21, and may have valued a youth service when he was younger, or if he had not come out so early in life. John also had the benefit of an in-school counsellor he was encouraged to go and see when he came out

Most young people said they would really value a specific under 25s service, and that they would have particularly valued that when they were still at school:

*“If something was advertised, if I was 16 and I see something advertised as I don’t know, 16-24 that would make me more, that would make me want to call more or get in touch more. [...] You haven’t been open to a lot of things in your life up until that point in your life, so it’s kind of like, it’s kind of like a welcoming hug in an odd kind of way you know seeing that ‘16’ whatever or even like ‘teenage’ or whatever, it’s that kind of like you’re part of the group kind of thing. I’d say definitely.” [Ali]*

Ali described feeling sense of belonging according to age and other young people also valued youth specific services. Ryan valued them because he would be able to talk to others like him. Lauren felt a youth service would have specific qualities and had specifically searched for a youth service in the past:

*“The youth group is a good idea because then people are very similar to you and you can talk to other people your own age about your problems who are in the same boat.” [Ryan]*

*“I was looking specifically for that under 25s, 16 to 19 bracket because you want things to be taken seriously but you don’t want to be lectured, and it tends to be when things say the under 25s that they’re a lot more open and they’re a lot more friendly and they’re a lot less judgemental I’ve found.” [Lauren]*

The young people also valued the fact that a specific youth service through Galop could provide action along with feelings of safety for young people who were not yet out. Ryan and John raised an important point about the benefits of having a service for young people who lived at home that enabled them to report without going to the police.

*“Ryan – If you are under 25 and still living with your parents or anything, especially if you’re 16-19 you might have a bit of reluctance telling the police because then your parents will have to find out and they’ll know why it’s been happening.*

*John – And part of the problem is with young people, that’s why they don’t do anything because they’re frightened that their parents will find out and they haven’t got the control.”*

Having established that most of the participants would value an under 25s service we then asked them what shape that service might take (see Section 4).

### **Discussion – a specific service for under 25s?**

It is clear that the young people taking part in this consultation had different needs and views in relation to getting support for hate crime from an organisation like Galop. Further, that Galop’s work takes place as part of a wider potential support network of friends, family and the police. However, support was strong for a hate crime service, and most of the participants felt a youth specific service would be important, whether or not they would use it themselves.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Pursue development of an under 25s hate crime service.

# Section 4 – The shape of a youth hate crime service

When we asked the focus group participants about the kind of service they would like Galop to provide, many cited services that are already in place in our all-age provision.

## 4.1 Third party reporting and police liaison

The young people valued a service that was attached to the police and could take action, but that valued LGBT experiences and took homophobia seriously

*“Ali – Yeah so it’s like you’re going to see the police but through an organisation.*

*Lauren – It’s like a safety net really.*

*Sol – Like a tailor made service for us ‘cause we don’t get much kind of voice when we have crimes [against us].”*

## 4.2 Counselling

In addition to the practical support of reporting to the police, the young people felt that emotional support should be a key feature of the service.

*“Lauren – I think counselling also highly important*

*Ali – Definitely.*

*Lauren – because sometimes you don’t realise how much something’s affected you (mmm) until you sit down and you say, you start talking about it and you think, “oh my god that was awful” because you’ve spent, as Ali said, he spent so long just like, “oh it doesn’t matter it’s water off a duck’s back”, but you don’t know that one day you might not go “actually, no that’s not acceptable”.*

*Ali – Yeah that’s a really good point. That’s true. Counselling is really important, really, really.”*

The participants felt that both group support and one-on-one counselling would be necessary. This would mean that individuals could benefit from group support and would not feel alone, but would also have the space to deal with their own particular issues. Those services would need a range of activities “like a restaurant with a menu”, including talk therapy to help young people deal with their problems and fun activities to help them get away from it all. This kind of support may also include being able to refer people on to long-term help.

Other young people suggested Galop’s under 25s service should be a combination of both elements:

*“Tony – Yeah the police are scary to young kids. Just someone to talk to like a*

*John – A cross between the police and the Samaritans, somewhere in the middle. So someone who’s going to take the action but someone who’s not so formal perhaps.”*

## 4.3 Helpline

Young people were in support of a helpline, though there was no clear agreement of the hours that would be convenient. Suggestions included 24 hours, early mornings, lunchtimes, evenings and weekends. One young woman suggested Galop could have youth volunteers on the helpline.

#### 4.4. Proactive skills

Other young people wanted to take a more proactive approach to defending themselves from homophobia and transphobia. They suggested Galop provide skills courses regarding diffusing difficult situations, talking to bullies, self-defence and dealing with crisis situations.

*“I hope for example if something happened to me I don’t just want to report, I need you to tell me if it happens next time, how can I deal with it? Tell me some skills to protect myself not only report it. I think I don’t need to tell anybody, it happened, I just need to prevent it next time.” [Jun]*

*“I think people like on the self-defence edge, you’d have a lot more confidence not, ‘cause most people I know that could protect themselves tend not to, because they know they don’t have to, they know they can walk away and if the person then follows them they know how to deal with the situation other than just you know blindly slapping or running away you know? Sometimes it’s important to know how to defend yourself because people have been just stabbed you know? It’s important to know how to not have that happen. Because sometimes you don’t have to do anything for there to be a problem so sometimes you just, it might be important for people to know like in a situation you know how to avoid getting hit, what to do if you have been hit, what to do if a friend has been hurt, you know because that can be the difference between life and death sometimes.” [Lauren]*

#### 4.5 Schools – prevention and support

Some young people were keen that Galop take action at the level of sex and relationship education to reduce ignorance and prejudice and therefore reduce hate crime at its source. They understood that this would be a long term strategy. In addition, schools were identified as a key site for providing an under 25s support service. Ideas included:

- LGBT mentoring
- In-school counselling
- Accessible leaflets and posters
- Teacher packs

#### 4.6 Diversity

Some young people were keen to point out that it would not be sufficient to just provide an under 25s LGBT service without paying attention to differences among young people because “one cap really doesn’t fit all”. For example, the service should pay attention to the way class, culture and religion intersect with sexuality and gender.

*“I think it would be important though, just personally, that the organisation reflected the person coming to it because usually if a slur is ever thrown, say if you’re gay, there is always like a cultural, sometimes there’s a cultural issue. The slur might not come from a person saying you know, “you fag” or something on the street, it might be, “you are against your god, you are against your parents” (mmms). So that to me, I feel that’s also a hate crime because you’re lessening me as a person, or lessening (mmms) my relationship with god just because of my sexual orientation. So I think it would be important to have someone who could sit and understand culturally (mmms) where you may be coming from, not just sexually.” [Lauren]*

## Discussion – the shape of an under 25s service:

Overall the participants identified the need for a two pronged approach for an under 25s hate crime service that included both reporting and emotional support for the effect of the crime. Interest was also expressed in gaining proactive skills for young people to protect themselves against attack such as self-defence. Counselling services are outside the current skills and experience of Galop and it is unlikely that the remit will extend in that direction as other LGBT organisations are specifically set up for that purpose. However, it will be important to bear in mind the specific needs of young people in relation to counselling and emotional support given both the findings of this consultation and previous research that highlights risks to young LGBT people's mental health as a result of homophobic and transphobic abuse and harassment. Signposting and making links with other organisations in London which already provide such a service would be an important feature of an under 25s service.

## Recommendations:

- Galop already provides a key aspect of the service features required by the participants in relation to the police. However, many young people remain unaware of this service. Galop needs to focus on extending awareness of third party reporting and police liaison among young people. This could include writing specific under 25s pages for the website.
- Make formal referral links to counselling services suitable for under 25s, to include services sensitive to a range of ethnic, cultural and religious differences and other diversities among young people.
- Create a pro-bono list of counselling services.
- Continue to prioritise opening Shoutline for maximum hours possible.
- Examine the possibility of young volunteers as part of the on-going volunteer strategy work.
- Look at working jointly with organisations currently doing personal safety courses and group work.
- Recognising the challenges facing all LGBT organisations regarding access to schools, Galop should try to find ways to get advertising into schools and raise awareness of the existing services.
- Pay attention to diversity of volunteers, staff and referral organisations.

# Section 5 – Access and promotion

Having established the potential elements that Galop might consider for an under 25s service, the participants were asked how we could best enable young people to access and find out about the service.

## 5.1 Getting in touch with Galop

The participants felt that Galop would need a wide range of possible ways for young people to get in touch with them including:

- Web-based services
- Text
- Email
- Phone line

Contacting Galop by phone was a popular option as it enabled young people to feel safer. A phone service would enable people to speak to someone who would be understanding, but without having to see anyone, or risk outing themselves by going to a specific building. One young woman said she would feel safer phoning from her bedroom. It is also possible to withhold your number and remain anonymous, unlike texting and email.

Other young people would use the phone for a small matter but would prefer face-to-face contact for more serious issues.

The internet was also a popular option as it was easy and private:

*“Interviewer – Where would be the best place to reach all kinds of different people? You went to the internet did you first?”*

*Matthew – Yeah ‘cause I mean if you don’t want to talk to someone directly, if you don’t want to like ask somewhere like a school for instance if you’re not out, then it’s a good place because you can do it at home by yourself where no one can see you.”*

*“I suppose it depends on the circumstances. ‘cause if say you’re like threatened in your home you might not have access to certain services, so it maybe easier to maybe go on the internet at the library or something or in a net café where you know you don’t feel threatened.” [Ella]*

Other important elements of the service include being clear about what services are offered, the different levels of confidentiality and who will need to be informed if you contact Galop.

## 5.2 Advertising the service

Effective advertising would be a crucial element of any under 25s service, particularly in trying to reach young people who were not out, or on the scene. Only three young people participating in this study had heard of Galop before the research and they were all agreed that Galop needed to raise its profile among young people.

Young people from the focus groups spoke of the difficulties they had accessing support when they were first coming out:

Ali turned to his school when he experienced a homophobic attack, not because he felt they would be supportive, which luckily they were, but because he did not know what else to do. Matthew did not know

who to turn to when he started coming out and found it difficult to find support.

*“I mean I was very young at the time, I was like, I think I was probably even 15 and I um, I mean I obviously didn’t know anywhere, what to do or what to turn to, so we went to school...” [Ali]*

*“I had to search for LGBT youth groups on the internet before and it comes up with some things but some of the sites are out of date and it took me I think about three months to actually find one, to get through to the right people to talk to, because I just didn’t know who to talk to or what to do. I haven’t looked recently but it probably still needs to be like, you know, made easier to access and find.” [Matthew]*

The young people had a range of suggestions about where an under 25s service should be advertised:

- The scene – clubbing and pubbing venues
- LGBT magazines
- Libraries
- LGBT section of bookshops
- Yellow pages
- Have a good internet presence
- Health services e.g. GP surgery
- Community centres
- Colleges – in the library, careers board and weekly paper
- Bus stop posters/billboards
- Facebook and Myspace
- Connexions
- Leaflets and pamphlets everywhere
- Tv and cinema commercials
- Bus and tube station ads
- Free London newspapers

### 5.3 Schools

Participants felt that it would be particularly important to make teachers and secondary school pupils aware of the under 25s service.

*“It might be an idea to have teacher packs so that like A, you went to school so the teacher knows, oh I’ve got this number for this organisation who can help this child, or can help me help this child. [...] If the teachers were, like they had a pack that explained what to do, how to handle a situation, who they need to call, who needs to be informed, what action needs to be taken, ‘cause it’s one thing for us to take action but if you’re at school you do tend to rely a lot more on the staff and there’s nothing worse than having a teacher say that they can’t help you or they don’t understand, you know?” [Lauren]*

*“Ali - I didn’t feel like I could turn to anyone in school until it happened, or even after it happened [...] I mean at that [secondary] level people either know or don’t know, they’re questioning or whatever, it would be nice to have someone to go and say, “look this is what’s happening to me. I need help” you know?*

*Samir – I think it’s important that also in schools that they do like you know make the kids aware that there are organisations out there to help them, that they’re not alone, there is a society out there for them because I think most of the youngsters don’t know about it and they feel really, they’re going through puberty, they’re having a hard time and also they’re in the dark.”*

Importantly this would include education on the effects of hate crime. It was suggested that Galop could go into schools and give talks, ideally conducted by other young people who have been through the same experience:

*“I think the hate crime thing would have to be an aspect because also, with the way the laws have changed it’s what, it’s knowing what defines hate crime because I remember at school, calling someone gay, that was just like, if you didn’t like some thing, “oh that’s so gay. The way you act oh my god, why are you so gay?”, that was just what everybody seemed to say and it never really occurs to you until the day you wake up and realise, “oh I’m gay too” that that might have hurt someone, that might have been offensive to someone (mms), that might have made someone make a poor decision because they felt under-supported and like how they were feeling was wrong.” [Lauren]*

#### **5.4 Clarity and confidentiality**

A crucial feature of Galop’s work is enabling LGBT people to report hate crimes confidentially. The research participants felt that any advertising to under 25s should stress issues of confidentiality and be very clear about the different services and outcomes. That would include information for under-18s about disclosure. This is particularly important for young people who are not out and living with parents, or without any supportive friends.

Some young women felt they would be too scared to contact an organisation and would prefer to contact someone they knew. Other young people wanted it to be made clear when and why an LGBT person might contact Galop instead of going to the police, and an assurance that action would be taken.

#### **Discussion – Access and promotion**

Perhaps the most important finding of this consultancy is the poor visibility of Galop among young people. Most of the participants had not heard of Galop, but they valued the service that was already being provided. Therefore, promotion and delivery of the service is the most crucial area of focus for the future.

Many of the avenues to advertise suggested by the participants would require significant funding, for example billboards, public transport adverts and commercials. However, there may be a number of potential avenues to explore that may extend Galop’s presence among under 25s without requiring a substantial advertising budget.

The participants reported feeling most vulnerable and isolated when they were at school and before they came out, and/or had other like-minded friends. If they did experience homophobic or transphobic abuse or harassment during this time, the quality of support they received relied upon chance. Even those who tried to look for support often did not know where to turn and found it difficult to find up-to-date information on the internet regarding youth LGBT services. It is understandable therefore that the participants were particularly keen for Galop’s information to be available and publicised in schools. Reaching LGBT young people through schools is not a straightforward task for any LGBT organisation and it would be important that Galop does not undertake to replicate work that is being done by other organisations, such as formulating teacher packs. Galop’s most productive initial strategy should therefore be to tackle their internet presence with under 25s in mind. This could include specific under 25s pages and a presence on sites such as My Space, Facebook and Biba. It is also important to ensure that Galop has a presence in directories used by schools.

The most prominent concerns participants had about an under 25s service were about safety including: remaining anonymous, not being outed by seeking help, being safe whilst finding out about Galop and accessing services, who would need to be told. Although Galop does currently offer confidential and

anonymous services it will be important to highlight exactly what this would mean for a young person if they wished to contact Galop.

### **Recommendations:**

- Highlight confidentiality in all publicity and direct young people to more detailed explanations online.
- Emphasise the possibilities for anonymous reporting.
- Design a specific under 25s marketing strategy.
- Consider marketing new interactive webchat service towards under 25s specifically.
- Create a youth specific section on the existing website including clear explanations of exactly what would happen if a young person contacted Galop and who in their lives would or would not be contacted for each particular service available.
- Ensure Galop's website (and youth section) has a wide range of links to other youth sites.
- Consider developing a page for sites such as My Space, Facebook and Bibo.
- Consider ways to raise Galop's profile in schools.

## Section 6 – Conclusion and summary of recommendations

In 1998 Galop's youth survey concluded that many LGB young people were experiencing homophobic harassment and abuse and further, that many were dealing with their experiences on their own. In the time since the original Galop youth survey, Section 28 has been repealed (18/11/03 in UK) lifting restrictions on talking about multiple sexualities at school. However, it is clear from this consultancy that many young LGBT people are still experiencing high levels of homophobic and transphobic abuse and harassment. Only one participant in this consultancy had not experienced homophobic or transphobic abuse or harassment personally and not witnessed it happen to someone else. Young people feel most vulnerable to attack when they are of school age and still expect a certain level of abuse on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity. Young people also have low awareness and expectations of where they could find support for homophobic and transphobic abuse, harassment and hate crime and rely mainly on friends.

Support was high for a specific under 25s service at Galop, even among those participants who felt they would not use it personally. The existing Galop services were thought to be a very good idea, although the need for follow-on counselling as an addition to the service was felt to be very important for young people. Young people also wanted proactive skills training to enable them to protect themselves, as well as reporting and support services. Importantly, any service should reflect young people in their diversity.

On the whole, the consultation did not suggest that a wholly new service for under 25s needed to be developed at Galop, rather it should build on existing service features and make them age appropriate and to make formal links to other suitable youth services in London. The most important finding of this consultancy is the need to significantly extend awareness of Galop's existing service to young people.

## Summary of recommendations:

- Pursue development of an under 25s hate crime service.
- Ensure clear information about what constitutes hate crime and what GALOP and/or the police can do is included in any information for young people.
- Conduct awareness raising in relation to the different kinds of police reporting already available through GALOP, such as third-party reporting, for those concerned about the police response to LGBT people. This could include writing specific under 25s pages for the website.
- Conduct age-specific awareness raising about GALOP's services.
- Highlight confidentiality in all publicity and direct young people to more detailed explanations online.
- Emphasise the possibilities for anonymous reporting.
- Continue to prioritise opening Shoutline for maximum hours possible.
- Examine the possibility of young volunteers as part of the on-going volunteer strategy work.
- Pay attention to diversity of volunteers, staff and referral organisations.
- Create a pro-bono list of counselling services.
- Make formal referral links to counselling services suitable for under 25s, to include services sensitive to a range of ethnic, cultural and religious differences and other diversities among young people.
- Explore possibilities of developing workshops and group work e.g. confidence building, and personal safety, or developing partnership working with organisations who currently provide such services.
- Explore the possibility of fast and easy ways to report incidents young people consider to be minor, such as verbal abuse, to help create a clearer picture of the extent of such incidents.
- Design a specific under 25s marketing strategy.
- Consider age appropriate places to advertise GALOP's services.
- Consider marketing new interactive webchat service towards under 25s specifically.
- Create a youth specific section on the existing website including clear explanations of exactly what would happen if a young person contacted Galop and who in their lives would or would not be contacted for each particular service available.
- Ensure GALOP's website (and youth section) has a wide range of links to other youth sites.
- Consider developing a page for sites such as My Space, Facebook and Bibo.
- Recognising the challenges facing all LGBT organisations regarding access to schools, GALOP should try to find ways to get advertising into schools and raise awareness of the existing services.

# Section 7 - Appendices

## Thank you

A big thank you first and foremost to all the participants for sharing your views and experiences with us. Thank you also to the Consortium of LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations and Girl Diva who helped us access young people to take part. A big thank you to Ben Gooch and Jamey Fisher for help with the focus groups, to Peter Kelley for the provision of statistics at short notice and to Deborah Gold for her helpful comments on earlier drafts.

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## Appendix A – Participant details

### Age

12 participants were aged 15-19,  
8 were aged 20-24.

### Gender

12 men and 8 women took part (including 3 young people whose gender identity was not the same as the gender id they were assigned at birth)

### Ethnicity

13 White, 4 Asian, 1 Black British and 2 Mixed parentage people took part .

### Disability

4 disabled young people and 16 non-disabled people took part.

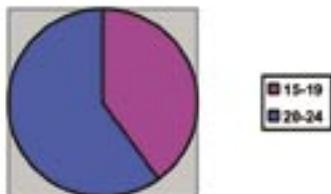
### Sexuality

The participants were asked to self-define their sexuality. 13 identified as gay, 5 as lesbian or dyke, 1 as straight, 1 was not sure.

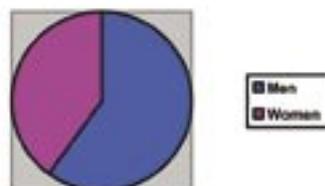
### Living

The participants were mainly living with their parents (12), with 3 living in a hostel, 2 private renting, 1 living with friends, 1 living at school and 1 giving no information.

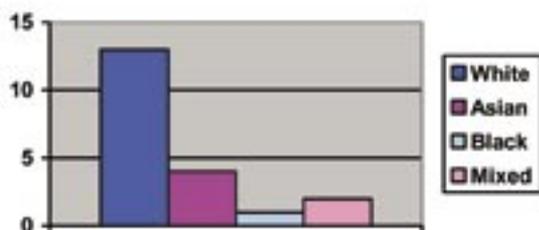
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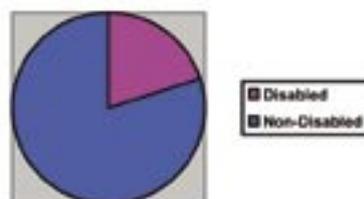
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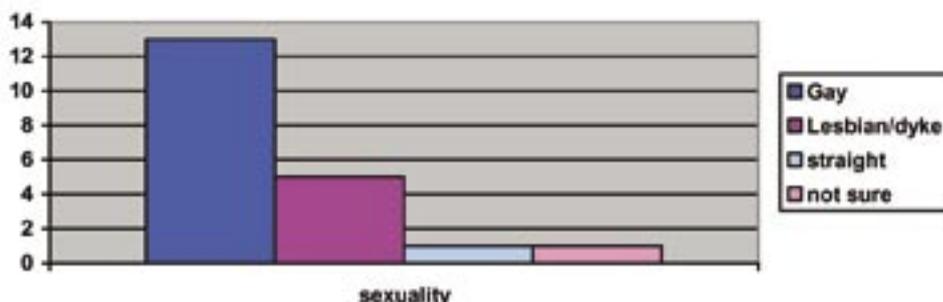
**Ethnicity**  
13 White, 4 Asian, 1 Black British and 2 Mixed parentage  
people took part<sup>6</sup>.



**Disability**  
4 disabled young people and 16 non-  
disabled people took part.

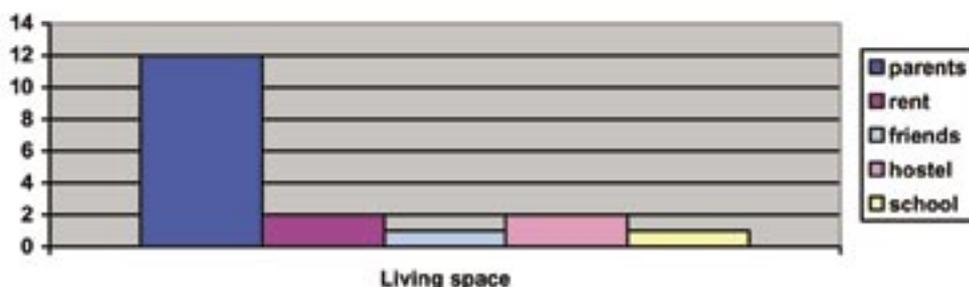


**Sexuality**



The participants were asked to self-define their sexuality. 13 identified as gay, 5 as lesbian or dyke, 1 as straight, 1 was not sure.

**Living**



The participants were mainly living with their parents (12), with 3 living in a hostel, 2 private renting, 1 living with friends, 1 living at school and 1 giving no information.

6. White category includes 'White British' and 'White Other', Asian category includes 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', 'Chinese' and 'Other Asian', Mixed category includes 'White and Black Caribbean' and 'Mixed Other'.

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