

# HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

## HELP FOR FAMILIES

### All bullying and playground abuse can be devastating

- \* "Homophobic" bullying is when adults or children or young people use words such as "gay" and "lesbian" and "tranny" as if they were terms of abuse.
- \* Many of the victims of this kind of bullying are not themselves lesbian or gay, or transgendered. Sometimes they pick on someone because they have a lesbian mum or a transgendered dad. It doesn't matter whether they someone is lesbian or gay or not. The bullying should be dealt with firmly.
- \* School staff, especially head teachers, are legally obliged to take steps to prevent all kinds of bullying, including this kind, and to deal with it when it occurs.

### What can we do?

- \* Ring up the school and make an appointment to speak to the Year Head. When you meet her or him, explain what has been going on. Make it clear that it is the school's responsibility to provide a secure environment for your child to work and play in. Explain that it doesn't matter whether the victim is actually lesbian or gay: the issue is your child's safety and well-being.
- \* If you are still not satisfied, go to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher has a legal duty to combat all forms of bullying in the school (School Standards and Framework Act 1998 section 61.4), and s/he also has responsibility for ensuring that your child is safe during school hours.
- \* If the Head Teacher fails to take effective action, write to the Chair of the school's Board of Governors, and send a copy to the Local Education Authority. If the Chair fails to respond effectively, ask the Local Education Authority to take action. You are also welcome to let us know what is going on.
- \* Some bullies work by excluding other young people from groups, teams, or social activities. This is a form of bullying that the school will want to approach imaginatively. Young people who are marginalised in this way are losing the opportunity of learning vital social skills that they will need as they grow up.

- \* The victim is not the problem. Your child should not be segregated, removed from lessons or team games or community activities, or lose out on quality time within the school.
- \* Many schools have access to a local Mediation Service. Mediation Services are expert in dealing with bullying. Schools that don't know about local mediation resources can make enquiries.
- \* You might also phone your local police service. Ask to meet your local Youth Affairs Officer. The police can be an excellent support, and they are on your child's side about bullying. Bullying is a crime, even where there's no actual physical contact. Any bullying, whether on or off school premises, is a public order offence or common assault. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 may also apply.

### The School's Responsibilities

- \* Every school, maintained or independent, has an absolute duty to protect the safety and emotional well-being of every young person in its care (Children Act 1989). If a young person is being harassed or abused the school must take action to protect the young person. The duty of care is the same for all. Young people who are lesbian / gay / bisexual, or who are transgendered, or who are homophobic-ally bullied, must not be offered a lesser standard of care, or inappropriate care.

### What else can I do?

- \* Phone us here at **The intercom Trust** (below). We'll listen, and we'll try to help. Or call **FFLAG** (Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gay Men) on 0845 652 0311. Or call ChildLine (0800 1111), or Kidscape (0207 730 3300).
- \* School staff are specially welcome to get in touch. We will do all we can to provide support and any resources that staff might find useful for themselves, their pupils or their colleagues.

**JAAHB** is a project of **The intercom Trust**, in partnership with Devon County Council, Devon & Cornwall police, FFLAG (Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gay Men), PTA Devon, ChildLine & many others. The **intercom Trust** is a regional lesbian gay bisexual and trans community-led resource. For more info, contact us:

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**JAAHB**

**Joint Action Against  
Homophobic Bullying**



**SWest Helpline: 0845 6020 818**  
**[www.intercomtrust.org.uk/goodschools](http://www.intercomtrust.org.uk/goodschools)**

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