Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Homophobic and Transphobic Name Calling.

Evidence from the 2014 YLT survey

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Contents

Introduction

This project feeds into a wider programme of the Department of Education (DE) for Northern Ireland to:

1. Produce baseline data for the effectiveness of the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE);
2. To assess the extent of homophobic and transphobic labelling, name calling and bullying.

Aims and objectives of the research

The aims of this research are:

1. To assess the experiences of 16-year olds with regard to Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)
2. To investigate the level of homophobic and transphobic bullying and harassment experienced by 16-year old in schools.

Methodology

What is the Young Life and Times Survey?

The Young Life and Times (YLT) survey is a constituent part of ARK (Access, Research, Knowledge), a joint resource by Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University providing access to social and political information on Northern Ireland (www.ark.ac.uk). The aim of the YLT survey is to record the views of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland on a range of issues such as community relations, health, politics, sectarianism and education. In its current format the YLT survey has been undertaken since 2003, making it the longest running annual large-scale cross-sectional survey of young people in the British Isles.

Sample

The survey sample was taken from the Child Benefit Register. Since 2004, a statutory instrument and explanatory memorandum (Tax Credits (Provision of Information) (Evaluation and Statistical Studies) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2004) is in place which allows ARK to access the Child Benefit Register for the YLT survey.

Child Benefit is a benefit for people bringing up children and is paid for each child. Therefore, the Child Benefit Register contains information on all children for whom Child Benefit is claimed. Until March 2013 this was a universal benefit, but in April

2013 legislation came into place which introduced means testing with regard to Child Benefit payments. Higher earners are now no longer entitled to receive Child Benefit. This resulted in a potential significant change to the YLT sampling strategy. Alternative universal or random sample frames for YLT (such as the GP register) were considered prior to the 2013 survey but found unsuitable or unworkable. However, consultations with HMRC, who administer Child Benefit payments across the UK, revealed that the names and addresses of those 16-year olds affected by the Child Benefit Payment changes and those whose parents opted out of receiving Child Benefit are still held at HMRC, for example, in order to issue National Insurance Cards. Thus, the sample of 16-year olds available to ARK for the YLT survey remained potentially universal and unaffected by the legislative changes.

Table 1: 2014 YLT survey content by funder and questionnaire version

Module	Funder	Purple version	Orange version
Background questions	Split among all funders	✓	✓
Community relations	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFMNI)	✓	✓
Relationships and Sexuality Education and attitudes to LGBT people	Department of Education (DE)	✓	✓
Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Education (CRED)	Department of Education (DE		✓
Children's rights in education*	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)		✓
Autism*	Centre for Behaviour Analysis (Queen's University Belfast)	✓	
Attitudes to integrated education*	Integrated Education Fund (IEF)	✓	

* **Note:** The modules on autism, Rights in Education and attitudes to integrated education were also included in the 2014 Kids Life and Times (KLT) survey. For more details, visit www.ark.ac.uk/klt.

According to HMRC, in 2014 only 185 eligible families from Northern Ireland had opted out of receiving Child Benefit payments, which makes the Child Benefit

Register an almost 100 percent accurate random sample of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland.

The sample for the 2014 survey was provided to ARK directly by HMRC. Due to an increase in the number of funders, and subsequently a higher number of questions, for the first time we needed to run a split survey (i.e. not everybody would be asked all questions). To account for this and to fulfil our obligations to our funders, we increased our sample size. Thus, for the first time one quarter of all eligible 16-year olds, namely all respondents with birthdays from January-March, were invited to take part in YLT.

Fieldwork methods

Fieldwork was conducted from October to December 2014. An initial letter was sent in September 2014 to all eligible 16-year olds and provided an introduction to the survey. Recipients of the letter were given the opportunity to say if they did not want to participate in the survey. In October 2014, a second letter with a paper questionnaire and FREEPOST return envelope was then posted out to all 16-year olds who had not opted out of the survey. A reminder letter containing another paper questionnaire and FREEPOST envelope was sent to all who had not responded by the start of November 2014.

Respondents could choose one of three methods for completing the questionnaire:

- They could complete the paper questionnaire and post it back in the pre-stamped envelope;

- They could complete the questionnaire online – inputting their personal identifier to enter that part of the YLT website;

- They could take part by phone, having quoted their identification number and check letter.

Survey Content

Given that the 2014 survey was a split survey, two questionnaires were produced; in the paper versions these were orange and purple. While the majority of questions were the same in both questionnaires, some modules were only included in one survey version (see Table 1). Respondents randomly received either the orange or purple survey questionnaire.

Response rate

5,692 names of eligible respondents were on the database of Child Benefit recipients received from HMRC. Forty-six initial letters or questionnaires were returned because the addressee had moved or was unknown at the address we were given. This leaves an overall sample of 5,642 eligible respondents in total.

Thirteen young people or their parents opted out of completing the 2014 YLT survey at different stages. Commonly this was because the young person suffered from a moderate or severe learning disability or mental illness which did not allow him or her to comprehend or answer the questions.

Overall 1,939 completed questionnaires were received by the end of the fieldwork period. This represents a response rate of 34.4 percent. This total number of responses excludes nine duplicate completions (either online and paper, or two paper completions), which were removed when the datasets were cleaned.

Table 2 shows that the most popular mode of completing the survey remains postal/paper completion. The Table also shows that the response rate among those who received a purple questionnaire version was higher. Telephone responses were offered as in every year, but no phone completions at all were recorded in 2014.

Table 2: Mode of survey completion by survey version

	Orange	Purple	All
Surveys sent out	2,846	2,846	5,692
Addressee unknown	12	34	46
Paper	777	867	1,644
Online	128	167	295
Total	905	1,034	1,939
Response rate	31.9%	36.8%	34.4%

Characteristics of the respondents

Before we report the main findings of the two DE modules, in this section of the report we summarise some key background characteristics of the respondents to the 2014 YLT survey. Due to rounding, column totals in the tables below do not always sum to 100 percent.

Missing responses, that is, where the respondent did not answer a question, were removed for the analysis. In closed questions missing responses typically make up no more than two percentage points of the total YLT population, depending on the type of question asked. In open questions, this figure can be significantly higher, however, YLT survey respondents tend to respond to open questions very well and often write quite extensive comments.

Gender

For the first time the YLT survey included 'other' categories in addition to 'male and 'female' when respondents were asked what sex/gender they were. Namely we asked whether they were male to female or female to male transgender or whether they identified as something else. Overall ten respondents chose one of these other categories (Table 3). This figure is too small to undertake any meaningful statistical analysis, however, the fact that 16-year olds said they were something other than male or female justifies the inclusion of these categories.

Table 3: Sex of respondents

	%
Males	41
Females	59
Transgender/Other	<1

Disability

Ten percent of respondents said they had a physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more with 68 percent of these respondents saying that this condition affected their ability to carry day-to day activities a little or a lot.

Area of living and number of years lived in Northern Ireland

Just slightly over one in five respondents (22%) lived in a large city or in a city's outskirts. Over one third of respondents (37%) lived either in a village or in a home in the countryside, confirming the fact that Northern Ireland remains a region with a significant rural population (Table 4).

Table 4: Where respondents live

	%
A big city	8
The suburbs or outskirts of a big city	13
A small city or town	42
A country village	17
A farm or home in the county	20
Don't know	<1

Respondents had lived for an average of 15.4 years in Northern Ireland, so in fact the large majority of respondents (91%) had lived in Northern Ireland for all their life.

Ethnicity

Table 5: Ethnic group (recoded open responses)

	%
White/Caucasian	65
Catholic/Irish Catholic/Roman Catholic	6
White Irish	4
White British	4
British/English	4
Irish	4
White European/European/Continental European	2
Protestant	3
Northern Irish/White Northern Irish	2
Christian	2
White Catholic	1
White Protestant	1
Mixed origin/other	3
Don't know/none	1

Thirteen percent of respondents self-identified as members of a minority ethnic group. Almost six in ten (58%) of those who said they had a 'mixed' or other ethnic background said this, but it is note-worthy that also one in five of those identifying as 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' also said this. In fact, among all respondents who identified as members of a minority ethnic group, almost half (47%) identified as 'White' or 'Caucasian', 15 percent as 'Catholic' and only 12 percent said they had mixed or other (e.g. Chinese, Pakistani etc.) origin.

Religious affiliation

Seventy-two percent of respondents said they had a religious affiliation. Table 6 shows the proportion of respondents affiliating with specific religions. Other religions included for example other branches of Protestant religions (e.g. Elim), Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Orthodox Christianity and Sikhism.

Table 6: Religious affiliation

	%
Catholic	54
Presbyterian	20
Church of Ireland	13
Methodist	3
Baptist	2
Free Presbyterian	1
Brethren	<1
Other	5

National identity

Table 7 shows that Irish, Northern Irish and British national identities continue to be the main national identities YLT respondents affiliate with. Nearly three quarters of Catholics (74%) identify as 'Irish', whilst over half (54%) of Protestants identify as 'British'. The proportion of Protestants identifying as 'Northern Irish' (38%) is twice that of Catholics saying they feel 'Northern Irish' (19%). However, respondents with no religious affiliation are most likely to say they feel 'Northern Irish' (40%).

Table 7: National identity

	%
Irish	36
Northern Irish	30
British	27
Ulster	2
Other	4
Don't know	2

<u>Sexuality</u>

YLT has been recording sexual preferences for many years. Table 8 shows that 88 percent of males and 81 percent of females were opposite-sex attracted, that is only ever sexually attracted to someone of the opposite sex whilst 11 percent of males and 12 percent of females were at least once sexually attracted to someone of the same sex.

Table 8: Sexual attracted to…*

	%	
	Males	**Females**
only to females and never to males	88	1
more often to females and at least once to a male	4	1
about equally often to females and males	2	3
more often to males and at least once to a female	2	8
only to males and never to females	3	81
I have never felt sexually attracted to anyone	2	6

*Figures for those saying they are neither female nor male are too small to report

<u>Education</u>

Ninety-five percent of YLT respondents were still in full-time education with the majority (81%) being in school. Table 9 shows the type of school respondents said they attended or, if they had left school, had recently attended. Table 10 shows that perceived religious mix of the schools respondents attended with just 14 percent saying that the proportion of Catholics and Protestants was about half and half.

Table 9: Type of school most recently attended

	%
Grammar	52
Non-Grammar, incorporating…	48
…Secondary (35)	
…Planned Integrated (7)	
…Irish Language (<1)	
…Special School (1)	
…Other (4)*	

* 'Other' schools include: Colleges of Further and Higher Education – e.g. Belfast Metropolitan College, Dixon system – comprehensive schools, schools outside Northern Ireland, alternative education providers etc.

Table 10: Description of school most recently attended

	%
All or nearly all Protestant	18
All or nearly all Catholic	35
Mostly Protestant	20
Mostly Catholic	6
About half Protestant and half Catholic	14
Don't know	7

Family-financial background

YLT records the socio-economic background of respondents via a self-reporting mechanism which has produced a reliable measure over the years. In 2014, just over half of respondents said their families were average well-off. Fourteen percent said they came from not well-off families, whilst 29 percent thought their families were well-off.

Representativeness and weighting

The sample frame for the YLT survey is representative of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland, as described above in the Methodology section. However, as in most other surveys, due to non-response bias, the achieved sample is not representative of the

target population. This may or may not have any implications for the results reported here. Table 3 shows for example that 59 percent of respondents were females, so due to females being much more likely to respond to the survey than males. This is typical pattern for most for social research studies.

Also, as can be seen in Table 9, 52 percent of YLT respondents said they had previously attended grammar schools, whilst the most recent DE enrolment statistics show that the proportion of pupils in grammar schools in Northern Ireland was 42 percent in 2014/15 (Source: www.deni.gov.uk/enrolment_time_series_1415.xlsx; Accessed March 2015). Indirectly, the higher proportion of respondents from grammar schools may also affect the YLT socio-economic background variable (self-perceived family-financial wellbeing), as a much higher proportion of secondary school pupils is entitled to free school meals (37%) than in grammar school attendees (12%) (Source: www.deni.gov.uk/per_cent_fsme_time_series_updated_1415.xlsx; Accessed March 2015). Free school meal entitlement can be seen as a proxy for the socio-economic status of young people and their families. All this is only relevant in so far, as frequency tables of results may over-represent slightly the views and experiences of females and those of grammar school attendees and, thus, indirectly the financially better-off respondents.

Should the data be weighted?

Partially, the non-response bias can be addressed by introducing weight factors. This can be done for variables for which we know the actual proportion people in the target population. Gender and school type attended are such examples. This is much harder where reliable statistics are not available, or where certain issues are very complex, for example disability. We know that people with certain sensory disabilities or with complex needs are more likely to opt out of the survey, however, people with physical disabilities may be over-represented – we cannot be sure. Generally several weight factors would need to be applied to address various variables, and even then non-response bias is a complex issue, which cannot be easily fixed. The academic view is that caution needs to be applied when weighting datasets (see point 5.4. in this document produced by the National Centre for Research Methods: http://www.restore.ac.uk/PEAS/nonresponse.php), as the weighting procedure whilst increasing representativeness in some areas can, at the same time, decrease sample accuracy in others. The YLT approach is not to weight data. However, gender, family financial background and school background are routinely used to cross-examine findings, and if differences are found, these are reported, as can be seen below.

Main findings

Experiences of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

The RSE questions were included in both 2014 YLT survey versions, so a total of 1,939 16-year olds form the base for the following figures.

Coverage and usefulness of RSE in school

Seventy-nine percent of respondents said they knew that their schools had to have an RSE policy. Eight-six percent of YLT respondents said they had received RSE in schools. Six in ten YLT respondents described the information they had received during RSE as 'very useful' (14%) or 'useful' (46%). Seventeen percent felt this information was 'not useful' (12%) or 'not at all useful' (5%).

A slightly higher proportion of males (81%) than females (78%) said they were aware that schools needed to have an RSE policy. Statistically, there was no difference between males (88%) and females (86%) receiving RSE in their schools, but it is notable that males slightly out-perform females in this respect, which suggests some change in practice compared to past times where males were often left out of sex education which was regarded as a 'female business'. Males (58%) were only slightly less likely than females (62%) to find RSE 'useful' or 'very useful', which again suggests a welcome change in the approach to RSE in schools, which now appears to meet young men's needs more than in the past.

Table 20: Awareness, experience and perceived usefulness of RSE by school type.

	%			
	Planned integrated	Grammar	Secondary	**All**
Aware of RSE policy rule	80	80	77	**79**
Received RSE in school	84	90	84	**87**
Information received during RSE was….				
…very useful	19	11	19	**14**
…useful	46	45	46	**46**
…neither	14	23	22	**22**
…not very useful	14	15	6	**12**
…not at all useful	7	5	4	**5**
Don't know	0	1	3	**2**

Looking at the sexual orientation of respondents, same-sex attracted respondents were significantly less likely than their opposite-sex attracted counterparts to find the RSE delivered in their school 'useful' or 'very useful' (49% and 62% respectively) and they were much more likely to say that it was 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' (26% and 15% respectively).

Tables 20 and 21 show a breakdown of this data by school type and by religious composition of school. Table 20 demonstrates that whilst grammar school pupils reported the highest degree of coverage of RSE, they were least likely to say that RSE in their school provided useful information. Pupils from secondary schools were least likely to say that RSE in their schools was 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful'.

Table 21: Awareness, experience and perceived usefulness of RSE by religious composition of school

	%				
	All or nearly all Protestant	All or nearly all Catholic	Mostly Protestant	Mostly Catholic	About half and half
Aware of RSE policy rule	81	75	82	79	81
Received RSE in school	90	86	87	80	87
Information received during RSE was….					
…very useful	10	16	12	20	16
…useful	49	46	42	37	50
…neither	24	19	26	22	18
…not very useful	10	13	14	10	12
…not at all useful	6	5	5	8	3
Don't know	2	1	2	2	1

Table 21 shows that respondents in schools with a mixed religious intake were most likely to say that the received information was 'very useful' or at least 'useful' with a combined 66 percent saying this, compared to just 54 percent of respondents from mostly Protestant schools who felt RSE was (very) useful.

*Information on sex education service providers*

Respondents were asked whether they were given information on organisations which offer confidential support and advice on relationships and sexuality. Over half of respondents (55%) said they could not remember whether or not they had received such information. Just over one quarter of respondents (26%) said they had been offered such information during RSE, but when asked to specify the organisations they were given information about, again, the most common response was that they could not remember their names. The organisations mentioned most often by those who did remember were *Love for Life*, *Brook*, and *Family Planning clinics*. Other organisations mentioned included *Women's Aid*, the *GUM* (Genito-Urinary Medicine) clinic, *Childline*, *Barnardo's*, the *NSPCC*, the *Samaritans'*, the *Rainbow Project* and *GLYNI* (Gay and Lesbian Youth NI). Some of these latter organisations were only mentioned once or twice. Some of these organisations mentioned (such as the *Samaritans*) do not provide specialised sexual health advice, whilst others specialise on children's and young people's abuse/exploitation, such as Childline, NSPCC or Barnardo's rather than generic sexual health services provided, for example by Brook or the GUM clinic. This could suggest a focus on sexual exploitation in some RSE classes in school or alternatively that young people did in fact not remember what organisations they received information about.
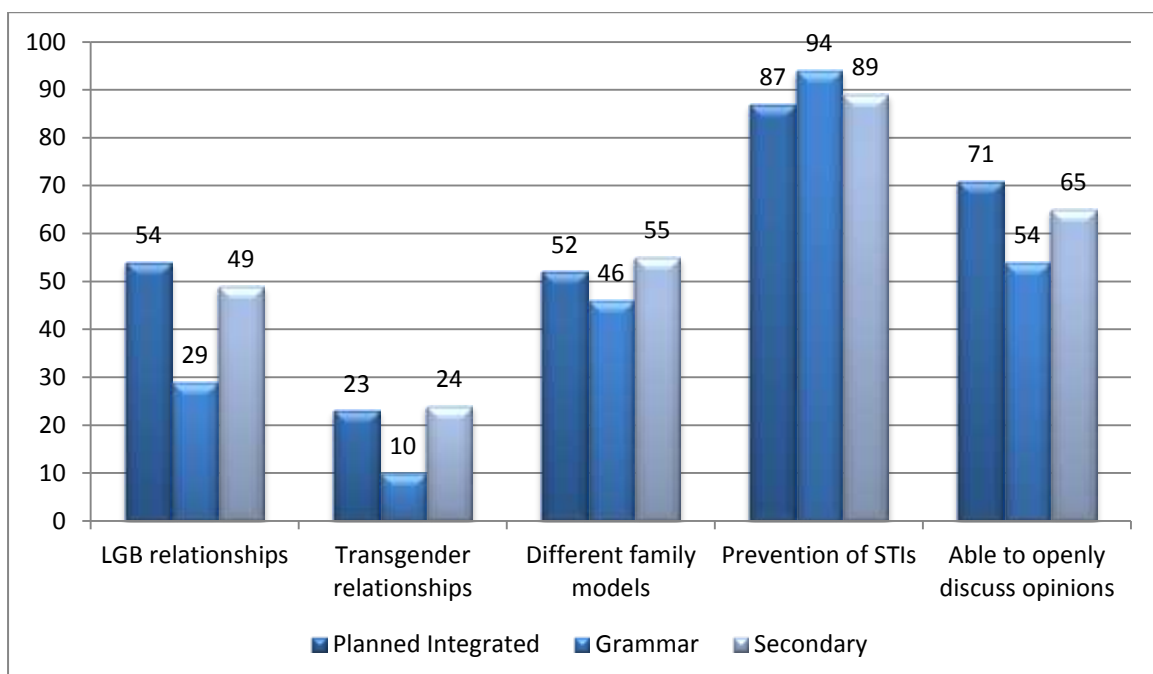

Topics covered in RSE

Respondents were asked whether a range of topics was covered in RSE. These included lesbian gay and bi-sexual (LGB) relationships; transgender relationships; different family models, including same-sex families; and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Respondents were also asked whether they could openly discuss opinions that might be different from the school's ethos or the teachers' views. Figure 3 summarises the findings on this question.

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of these results presented in Figure 3 by school type attended. What stands out is the finding that grammar schools are most likely to have covered STIs during RSE with almost all (94%) of respondents attending grammar schools saying that they covered this. However, all other topics were significantly more likely to be discussed in planned integrated or secondary schools. For example, pupils from planned integrated schools were almost twice as likely as those in grammar schools to say that they discussed LGB relationships (54% and 29% respectively). Significantly, pupils from grammar schools were also much less likely than their counterparts who attended planned integrated or secondary schools to say that they could openly discuss different opinions, even if these did not agree with the teacher's or school's point of view (54%, 71% and 65% respectively).

Figure 3: Topics covered in RSE and ability to discuss openly different opinions (%)
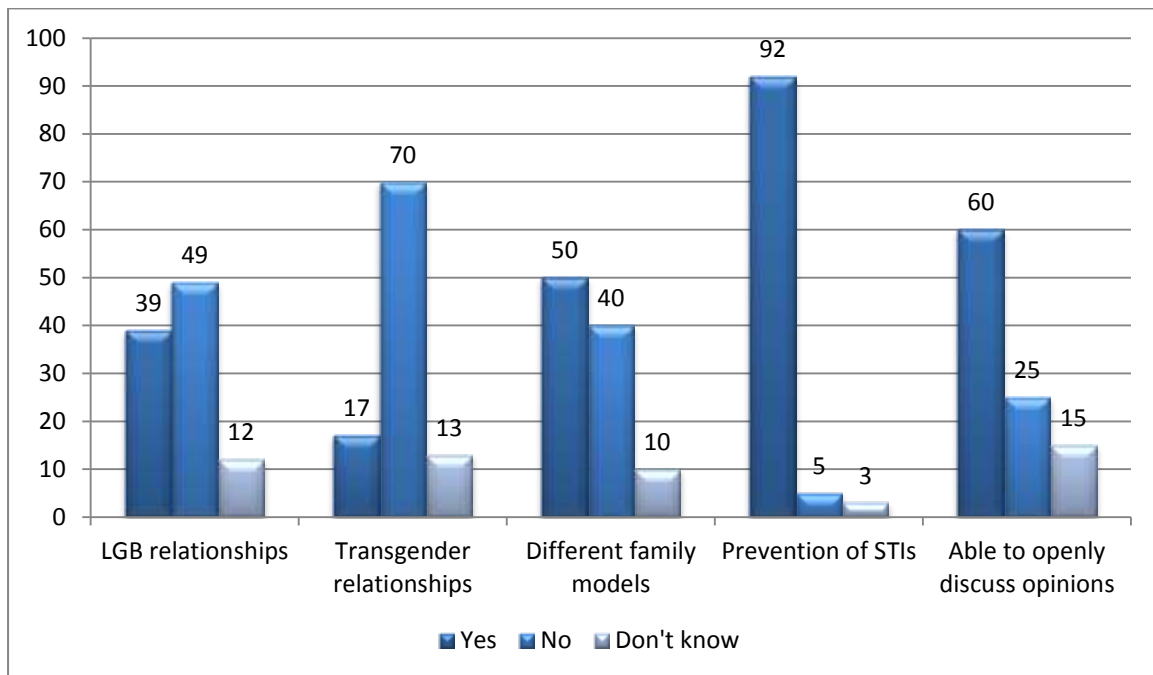
Figure 4: Respondents confirming coverage of respective topics in RSE and ability to discuss openly different opinions. By school type (%)

It is interesting in this context to look at sexual orientation as a background variable. The 2014 YLT survey found that only one in five same-sex attracted respondents

(20%) said that LGB issues were covered in RSE, whereas twice that proportion of opposite-sex attracted (42%) respondents and respondents who said they had never been sexually attracted (41%) said they covered this topic. This would suggest that the perception of the coverage is very different among same-sex attracted young people, and that the discussions that took place on LGB relationships did actually not meet their needs. The same applied to transgender relationships where only seven percent of same-sex attracted respondents felt this was covered compared to 18 percent of opposite-sex attracted young people and 16 percent of respondents who said they had not been sexually attracted to anyone.

Ease with which RSE can be discussed with teaching staff

Around one in three respondents (32%) said that they found it '*easy'* or '*very easy*' to discuss RSE issues with their teacher in school. Identical proportions found it either '*neither easy nor difficult*' (32%) or 'very difficult' or 'difficult' (32%) with the remaining six percent saying that they did not know.

There was no difference in experience of YLT respondents with different religious backgrounds, but the school type attended and the sexual identity of respondents mattered in terms of the reported experiences, as Table 22 shows. With regard to school type, a significantly higher proportion at grammar schools found it difficult to talk to teachers about RSE issues than in planned integrated and secondary schools. Same-sex attracted respondents were also more likely to find talking to their teachers about RSE difficult compared to their opposite-sex attracted counterparts.

Table 22: How easy or difficult did you find it to discuss RSE issues with your teacher in school? (By sexual attraction and school type attended (%)

	%				
	School type attended			Sexual attraction	
	Planned integrated	Grammar	Secondary	Same-sex attracted	Opposite-sex attracted
Very easy	16	6	11	7	10
Easy	26	21	25	22	24
Neither easy nor difficult	26	32	33	28	31
Difficult	18	25	16	24	21
Very difficult	9	11	8	17	8
Don't know	4	6	8	3	6

Forty-three percent of respondents said they had an opportunity to provide feedback on RSE in their school. This proportion was highest in grammar schools (45%), followed by planned integrated schools (39%) and secondary schools (38%).

What respondents would like to find out more in RSE

Figure 5 is a word cloud which provides a visual representation of the comments received by YLT respondents. This representation is based on a simple count of words from the comments, whereby larger words in the word cloud represent a greater frequency of words. This does not replace an in-depth qualitative analysis of the comments, but it provides a visual notion of what topics 16-year olds would like to discuss more. It is noticeable that 'LGB' and 'transgender' issues stand out as comparatively large. It is important to note that young people responded to this question before LGB and transgender issues were addressed in detail in the YLT questionnaire. This suggests that there is indeed a need for greater coverage of sexual and gender identity issues in RSE. This does also reflect suggestions from previous YLT respondents that YLT ought to include questions on this in future surveys.

However, the greatest demand from 16-year olds is for an open discussion of different forms of relationships, in general, including LGB and transgender relationships, and the word cloud shows this very clearly.

Figure 5: Word cloud representing YLT respondents' comments on topics that should be covered more in RSE

Homophobic and transphobic labelling, name calling and bullying in school

Respondents were asked a range of questions on homophobic and transphobic labelling, name calling and bullying.

Tables 23 and 24 provide an overview on the answers to the questions in this section. Table 23 looks at experiences of homophobic bullying and name calling in school, whereas Table 24 summarises the responses on the questions addressing transphobic insults. Table 24 shows that less than half of the respondents (46%) had 'never' been called 'gay', 'lesbian' or 'queer' etc. Over one in five 16-year olds (21%) said they are called 'gay', 'lesbian' or similar 'often' or 'sometimes' in school. The proportion of those respondents saying that this happens to their classmates was again much higher. In fact, only 15 percent of respondents said that this 'never' happened to their classmates whereas over four in ten (43%) 16-year olds said that this happens 'often' or 'sometimes'. This suggests that name calling using homophobic terminology is commonplace among adolescent peer groups in Northern Ireland's schools.

Table 23: Homophobic name calling and insults in school* (%)

	%					
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Don't know
...been called names by another pupil, such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'queer' etc.						
Classmates	15	14	21	21	22	7
Respondent	46	15	13	12	9	4
…been insulted by a teacher using words, such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'queer' etc.						
Classmates	81	8	3	<1	<1	7
Respondent	92	3	2	<1	<1	2
Any school staff ever been called names, such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'queer' etc. by a pupil						
	45	18	13	8	3	13
Ever heard or seen school staff intervene when words such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'queer' were used as an insult						
	47	16	12	8	5	11

* **Note**: Rarely=once or twice a year; Occasionally=once or twice a term; Sometimes=once or twice a week; Often=almost every day.

The same cannot be said to the same extent about school staff. Around 12 percent of respondents reported that their classmates had ever been called gay or lesbian by teachers or other school staff, with less than one percent saying that this happens 'often' or 'sometimes', Ninety-two percent said that they had 'never' been called 'gay' or 'lesbian' by a member of school staff, and again just around one percent said that this had happened 'sometimes' or 'often' (combined). With regard to pupils using homophobic language for their teachers and other school staff, less than half (45%) of the YLT respondents said that this 'never' happened in their school, again indicating that homophobic language is widespread in schools. Around one in ten respondents (11%) said that this happens 'sometimes' or 'often'.

Almost half of respondents (47%) said that they had never witnessed a teacher or other school staff intervene when homophobic language is used in school. It is of course possible that teachers are not aware of this, but given the extent to which this language appears to be used in schools, it is equally possible that it is simply being ignored and not challenged appropriately.

Table 24 shows comparable results to Table 23, but the focus here is on transphobic language and name calling. To make sure that respondents knew what 'transgender' refers to, they were first asked whether they understood this term. Almost all respondents (94%) said they knew what this means.

The Table shows that transphobic name calling is nowhere near as commonplace as homophobic name calling. Still, only just over two thirds (68%) of respondents said that they had never witnessed one of their classmates being called 'tranny' or similar. Around four percent said that this happens often or sometimes, but the YLT evidence shows that over eight in ten respondents have never or rarely witnessed this. This figure increases to 94 percent when it comes to respondents' personal experience of transphobic language. Occasions where teachers or other members of school staff use transphobic language appear to be very rare indeed, as Table 24 shows. As with homophobic language, it is much more likely that pupils use transphobic language towards teachers than the other way round, but still fewer than one in ten respondents (8%) had witnessed transphobic language being used by a pupil when referring to school staff. Over three quarters of respondents said they had never seen a staff member from their school intervene when transphobic language is being used, but this may simply be due to the fact that this happens very rarely in the first place.

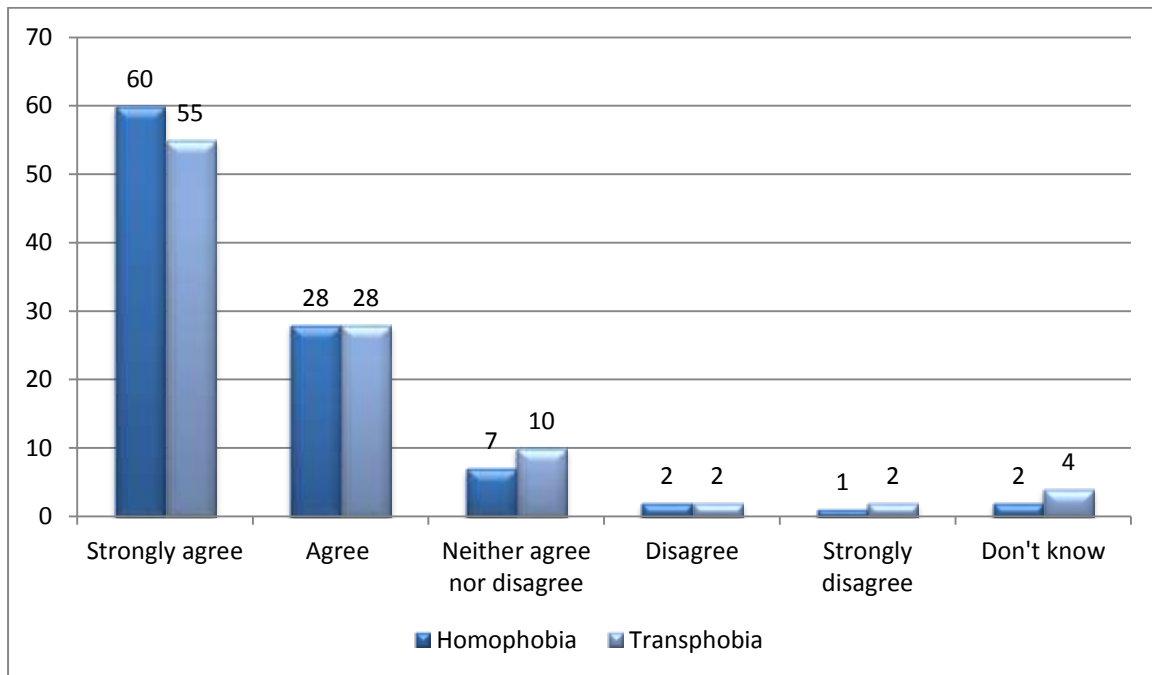**Table 24: Transphobic name calling and insults in school***

	Never	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Don't know**
			%			
…been called names by another pupil, such as 'transgender' or 'tranny' etc.						
Classmates	68	14	6	3	<1	8
Respondent	89	5	2	<1	<1	2
…been insulted by a teacher using words, such as 'transgender' or 'tranny' etc.						
Classmates	92	1	<1	<1	<1	6
Respondent	97	<1	<1	<1	<1	2
Any school staff ever been called names, such as 'transgender' or 'tranny' etc. by a pupil						
	82	5	2	<1	<1	10
Ever heard or seen school staff intervene when words such as 'transgender' or 'tranny' etc. by a pupil as an insult						
	77	6	2	1	<1	12

* **Note**: Rarely=once or twice a year; Occasionally=once or twice a term; Sometimes=once or twice a week; Often=almost every day.

Should homophobic and transphobic language be challenged in school?

Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed that homophobic and transphobic insults are serious issues and need to be challenged in school. Figure 5 shows that fewer than five percent of respondents disagreed, with the fast majority agreeing in both cases that such insults were serious matters.

Figure 5: Respondents agreeing or disagreeing that homophobic and transphobic bullying and insults are serious issues that should be challenged in school (%)

Homophobic and transphobic experiences by respondents' background

The last section in this report looks at the statistics on homophobic transphobic name calling and insults in school by in relation to some of the background variables, such as gender, sexual attraction, respondent's religious background and school type attended.

With regard to transphobic name calling, the evidence suggests, as reported above, that this happens very rarely indeed. In fact there is no statistical evidence at all that would support the view that school type, gender, or in fact any other background variable discriminates between the experiences that 16-year olds have. Because the number of transgender young people in the sample is so small (n=5), we cannot analyse their experiences in more detail or generalise their experience. However, we found that all three of the female-to-male transgender YLT respondents said that they had 'never' been personally called names such as 'tranny' etc. or insulted for being transgender. This was also true for one of the two male-to-female transgender respondents. The other respondent reported frequent name calling. Again, due to the nature of the small sample and in order to protect this respondent's identity there is no further information that can be given on this matter.

With regard to gender, YLT found that there is a significant difference between males' and females' personal experience of homophobic name calling and insults, as Figure 6 shows.

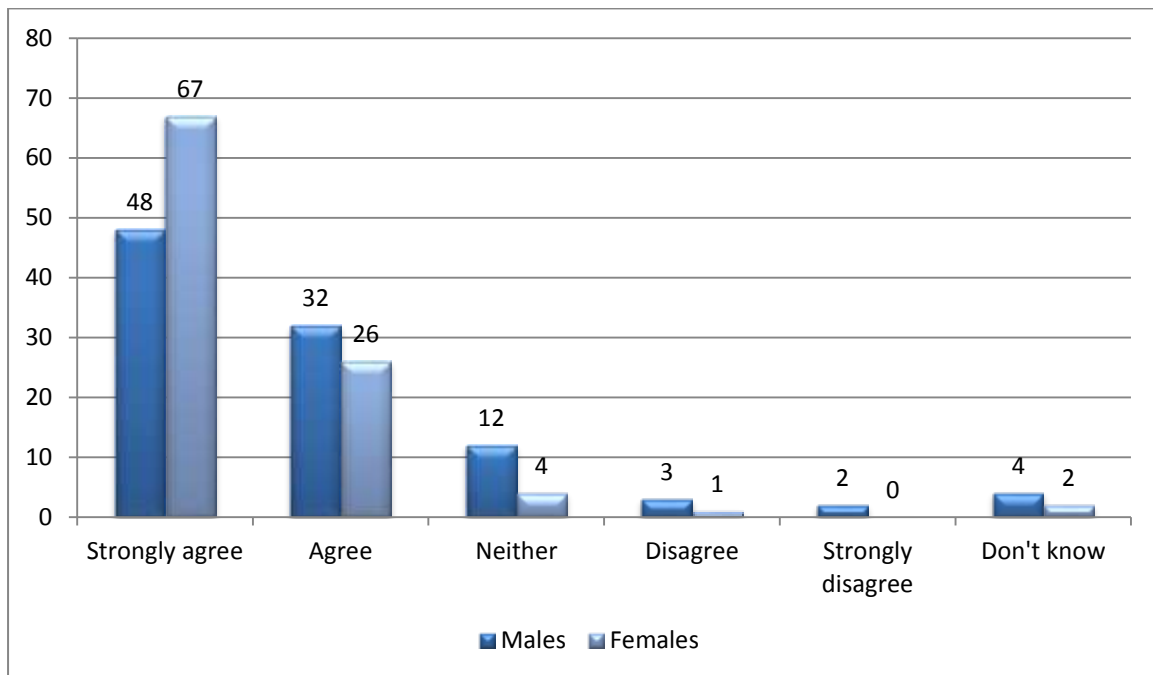**Figure 6: Experience of homophobic name calling. By gender* (%)**
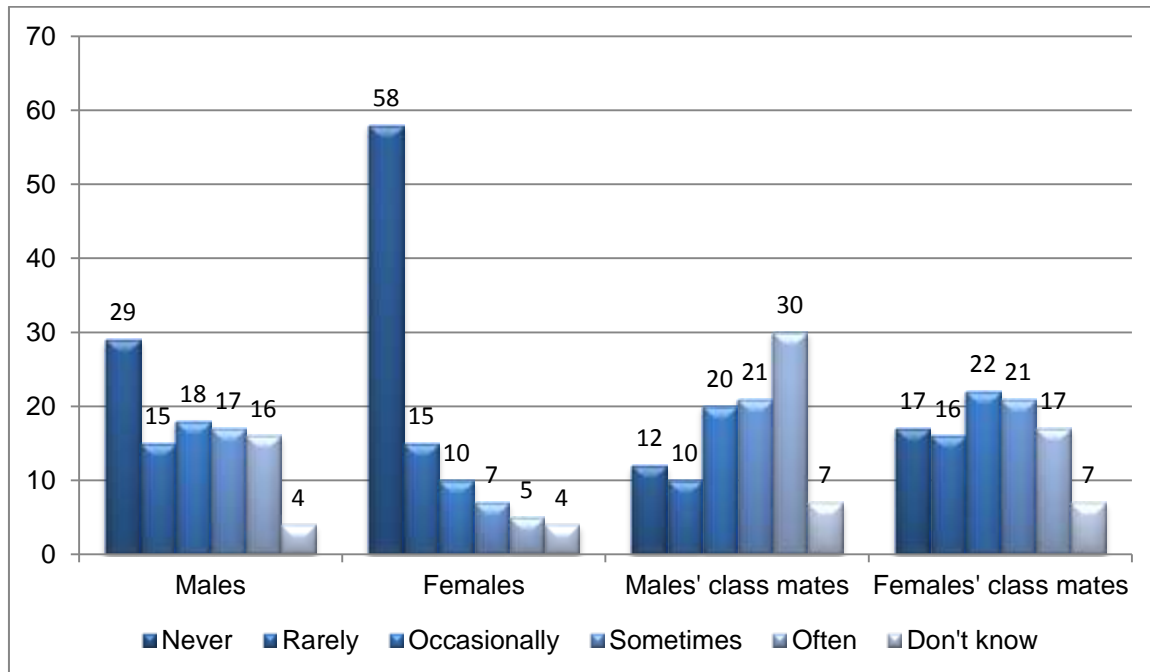
* **Note**: Rarely=once or twice a year; Occasionally=once or twice a term; Sometimes=once or twice a week; Often=almost every day.

Whilst one in three (29%) males reported that this never happened to them, twice the proportion of females said this (58%). Sixteen percent of males said this happens often – ie almost daily – to them, compared to just five percent of females. The views of males and females also varied significantly with regard to their perception of how often this happened to their classmates as Figure 6 shows. Here the most likely response from males was that this happened often (30% saying this), whereas females' perceptions was rather that this only happens 'occasionally' (22%) or 'sometimes' (21%).

Males were also more likely than females to report that they themselves (7%) or their classmates (14%) were ever called 'gay' or 'queer' by a teacher (females: 4% and 9% respectively). On the other hand, males were much less likely than females to say that they had never seen a teacher or other staff member intervene when homophobic language was used (39% compared to 53%). Finally, whilst a majority of both females and males thought that homophobic language is a serious issue that should be addressed, females felt much stronger than males that this was the case, as Figure 7 shows.

Figure 7: I consider that insulting someone for being gay or lesbian is a serious issue that should be challenged in school. By gender (%)

An analysis of this data by school type shows that homophobic name calling is most prevalent in planned integrated schools and least prevalent in secondary schools (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Personal experience of homophobic name calling. By school type attended* (%)
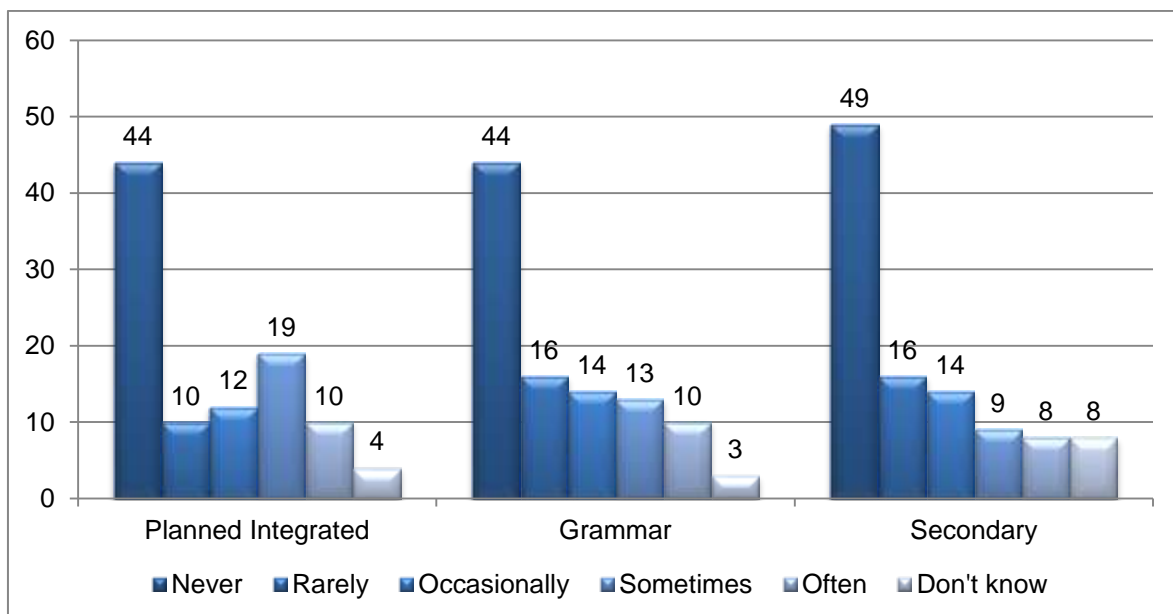
* Note: Rarely=once or twice a year; Occasionally=once or twice a term; Sometimes=once or twice a week; Often=almost every day.

Twenty-nine percent of pupils who attended planned integrated schools reported that they had sometimes or often been called names such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' compared to 23 percent in grammar schools and just 17 percent in secondary schools. The difference between school types was statistically significant.

This trend was repeated when respondents were asked about their classmates' experiences of being insulted by homophobic language, with the proportion of respondents saying that this 'never' happened smallest in secondary schools (15%), followed by grammar schools (14%) and planned integrated schools (12%). However, statistically this difference was not significant.

Catholic respondents reported the lowest incidents of being at the receiving end of personal homophobic name calling and insults, whereas respondents who had no religious affiliation or 'other' affiliations reported the highest rates (Table 25). When it comes to name calling and insults of classmates, this trend was confirmed. Over half of respondents with no religious affiliation (52%) or an 'other' affiliation (51%) said that their classmates were often or sometimes called 'gay' or lesbian' etc. compared to 40 percent of Catholic respondents and 43 percent of Protestant respondents. However, this religious difference appears to be a within-school rather than between-school difference, as we found no statistically significant difference in respondents' experiences of homophobic name calling by the religious set-up of schools, ie whether the schools have a predominantly Catholic, Protestant or a mixed intake.

Table 25: Personal experience of homophobic name calling. By religious affiliation of respondents* (%)

| | % | | | |
	Catholic	**Protestant**	**None**	**Other**
Never	52	49	36	34
Rarely	15	16	15	7
Occasionally	11	13	17	14
Sometimes	9	11	16	21
Often	10	8	12	14
Don't know	4	4	4	10

* Note: Rarely=once or twice a year; Occasionally=once or twice a term; Sometimes=once or twice a week; Often=almost every day.

Finally, as can be expected, same-sex attracted respondents were much more likely to report experiencing homophobic name calling and insults than their opposite-sex attracted counterparts and respondents who had never felt sexually attracted to anyone, as Table 26 shows. Same-sex attracted respondents were significantly

more likely to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' (a combined 96%) that homophobic name calling or bullying should be challenged in school, although opposite-sex attracted respondents also overwhelmingly agreed with this (86%).

The Table also shows that same-sex attracted respondents were not just more likely to be at the receiving end of homophobic name calling, but they also were more likely to report that such verbal insults were directed at their classmates or at school staff. As well as that, same-sex attracted respondents were less likely to report that school staff intervened when this happened. One possible explanation for this is that they had a greater awareness and sensitivity towards this issue. Another reason could be that the classmate they socialised with – regardless of whether or not they were also same-sex attracted – were more targeted by homophobic bullies.

Table 26: Transphobic name calling and insults in school. By sexual orientation of respondents* (%)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Don't know
%						
Personally been called names by another pupil, using words such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' etc.						
Opposite-sex attracted	48	15	13	10	10	4
Same-sex attracted	30	18	18	19	13	2
Witnessed classmates being insulted by another pupils, using words such as 'gay', lesbian' etc.						
Opposite-sex attracted	16	13	22	20	22	7
Same-sex attracted	8	17	20	25	25	5
Personally been insulted by a teacher using words, such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' etc.						
Opposite-sex attracted	93	2	1	<1	<1	2
Same-sex attracted	88	4	3	<1	<1	3
Witnessed classmates being insulted by a teacher using words, such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' etc.						
Opposite-sex attracted	83	7	2	<1	<1	6
Same-sex attracted	74	11	5	<1	<1	8
Any school staff ever been called names, using words such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' etc.						
Opposite-sex attracted	47	18	12	8	3	13
Same-sex attracted	32	24	20	10	4	10
Ever heard or seen school staff intervene when words such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'queer' were used as an insult						
Opposite-sex attracted	46	15	14	9	5	11
Same-sex attracted	52	19	8	8	3	10

* **Note**: Rarely=once or twice a year; Occasionally=once or twice a term; Sometimes=once or twice a week; Often=almost every day.

Discussion

The questions on RSE and homophobic and transphobic name calling and insults yielded some interesting results.

There was a good level of awareness among 16-year olds that it is mandatory for schools to have a RSE policy, with almost eight in ten respondents saying they knew this. Even more importantly nearly nine in ten (86%) 16-year olds had received RSE in some shape or form, with six in ten respondents finding the information given in RSE classes useful. The fact that slightly more males than females reported receiving RSE in school suggests that, perhaps at last, the times when sex education was regarded as a something of a 'female business' are finally over, and teachers have realised that men also have a role to play when it comes to sexuality, and reproductive and sexual health.

It is encouraging to see that a clear majority of 16-year olds in all school types felt that they could openly discuss sex education matters with their teachers, even if teaching staff or the schools as a whole was perceived to hold different views. This clearly shows that progress has been made with regard to RSE over the past few years in Northern Irish schools. A high level of openness and the ability to express contradicting views is a basic requirement for the school's and teaching staff's ability to identify young people that may be at risk of exploitative or unhealthy sexual relationships. Perhaps this also signifies a growing understanding among teaching staff that RSE is in fact a relevant issue that merits pedagogical input from schools.

However, the comments received from YLT respondents clearly suggest that still more can be done by schools to improve RSE. YLT respondents' suggestions especially relate to the failure by some schools to address issues that are often regarded as 'contentious' by adults or subjects that may not sit comfortably with a traditionally heteronormative Christian school ethos, such as sexual orientation, gender identity and the question of how to keep a relationship (outside marriage) going. Topics like this are evidently very important and relevant to a 16-year old. These open comments from YLT respondents provide a bridge to the second main topic in this module – homophobic and transphobic name calling and insults.

The two main findings were these:

Firstly, homophobic labelling is widespread in Northern Ireland's schools. Whilst homophobia is commonplace, transphobia, on the other hand, is not. In fact, it is extremely rare for a 16-year old to experience transphobic insults. This may well be due to the fact that transgender issues have only recently become a topic that people in Northern Ireland are starting to become more aware of (McBride, 2012). Also, evidently, the proportion of same-sex attracted young people far outnumbers the proportion of those with transgender identities. Or, perhaps transgender identity poses a smaller 'risk' or challenge to the group of people that traditionally display the strongest degree of homophobia – young heterosexual males.

Secondly, despite the high degree of homophobic name calling, the large majority of 16-year olds recognise that homophobic and transphobic labelling is unacceptable and must be challenged in schools. To some extent this is a paradoxical finding, as it is evident that 16-year olds are aware of the detrimental effects that homophobia and transphobia has, whilst at the same time arguably a large proportion of young people is involved in using homophobic language as insult. So, how do we 'square this circle'?

A number of academics have recently suggested that in particular the word 'gay' – and it is young men who are in the main at the receiving end of homophobic language - is not necessarily used or understood by perpetrators as a an insulting term. However, LGB organisations have rightly pointed out for a long time that LGB young people and those who struggle with their gender identity are particularly vulnerable to homophobic abuse. Research shows very clearly the link between poor mental health and school performances and homophobic abuse and bullying. It is very clear that RSE in schools must indeed formally address this connection. This requires that same-sex relationships as well as transgender are being openly discussed in a non-derogatory way, which is exactly what many YLT respondents highlighted in their comments. The CRED education module shows very clearly that equality education does potentially lead to more favourable views and attitudes, also with regard to sexual orientation, so one can hope that as an effect, this would reduce the extent to which homophobic language is used in schools. Of course this must go hand-in hand with less stereotypical representations of LGB people in the media and with changing attitudes in the home environment.

References

McBride, R. S. (2013) *Grasping the Nettle: The Experiences of Gender Variant Children and Transgender Youth Living in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: ICR

Appendices

- YLT RSE survey questions

RSE SURVEY QUESTIONS

The next few questions relate to your experiences of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

72. Do you know that all schools have to have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy? This is sometimes referred to as "sex education".

Yes   ☐1
No   ☐2

73. Have you ever received any RSE ("sex education") classes in school?

Yes   ☐ *(Please go to the next question)*
No   ☐ *(Please go to question 80)*
Don't know ☐ (*Please go to question 80*)

74. How useful was the information you received in these classes? *(Please tick ONE box only)*

Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor useless	Not very useful	Not useful at all	Don't know
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

75. During RSE ("sex education") in school, were you provided with information on organisations which offer confidential support/advice, helplines on relationships and or sexuality?

Yes   ☐1

(Please specify the service providers/helplines mentioned)_____

No   ☐2
Can't remember ☐3

76. During your RSE ("sex education") classes at school: *(Please tick ONE box in EACH row)*

	Yes	No	Don't know
Were lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships explained/discussed?	☐1	☐2	☐3
Were transgender relationships explained/discussed?	☐1	☐2	☐3
Were different family models explored including nuclear families, lone parent families, same sex parent families etc.?	☐1	☐2	☐3
Was the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) explained, for example Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis or HIV/AIDS?	☐1	☐2	☐3
Were students able to openly discuss different opinions, even if they did not agree with the teacher's or school's point of view?	☐1	☐2	☐3

77. How easy or difficult did you find it to discuss RSE ("sex education") issues with your teacher in school?

✓

Very easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	Don't know
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

78. Did you have the opportunity to provide feedback on the RSE ("sex education") programme in your school?

✓

Yes ☐1
No ☐2
Can't remember ☐3

79. Is there anything you would like to find out more about in RSE ("sex education") classes?

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The next questions are about labelling and how people are treated in school.

80. Have you or any of your classmates been called names by another pupil using word(s) such as "gay"/ "fruit", "queer", "lesbian"/ "lesbo" (regardless of whether or not you or they were)?

*(Please tick **ONE** box in **EACH** row)* ✓

	Never	**Rarely** Once or twice a year	**Occasionally** Once or twice a term	**Sometimes** Once or twice a week	**Often** Nearly every day	**Don't know**
I have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6
Classmates have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

81. Have you or any of your classmates been insulted by a teacher using word(s) such as "gay"/ "fruit", "queer", "lesbian"/ "lesbo"(regardless of whether or not you or they were)?
*(Please tick **ONE** box in **EACH** row)* ✓

	Never	**Rarely** Once or twice a year	**Occasionally** Once or twice a term	**Sometimes** Once or twice a week	**Often** Nearly every day	**Don't know**
I have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6
Classmates have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

82. Have any of your teachers/school staff been called names, in the classroom or within school grounds, by a pupil using word(s) such as "gay"/ "fruit", "queer", "lesbian"/ "lesbo" (regardless of whether or not they were?   *(Please tick **ONE** box only)* ✓

Never	**Rarely** Once or twice a year	**Occasionally** Once or twice a term	**Sometimes** Once or twice a week	**Often** Nearly every day	**Don't know**
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

83. Have you heard or seen, in the classroom or within school grounds, a teacher or a member of school staff intervene when word(s) such as "gay"/ "fruit", "queer", "lesbian"/ "lesbo" was used as an insult?

*(Please tick **ONE** box only)* ✓

Never	Rarely Once or twice a year	Occasionally Once or twice a term	Sometimes Once or twice a week	Often Nearly every day	Don't know
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

84. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
I consider that insulting or bullying somebody for being gay or lesbian is a serious issue that should be challenged in school.

*(Please tick **ONE** box only)* ✓

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

85. Do you know the meaning of the term 'transgender'?

✓

Yes ☐1
No ☐2

86. Have you or any of your classmates been called names by another pupil using the word(s) "transgender"/ "tranny" etc. (regardless of whether or not you or they were)?

*(Please tick **ONE** box in **EACH** row)* ✓

	Never	Rarely Once or twice a year	Occasionally Once or twice a term	Sometimes Once or twice a week	Often Nearly every day	Don't know
I have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6
Classmates have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

87. Have you or any of your classmates been insulted by a teacher using the word(s) "transgender"/ "tranny" etc. (regardless of whether or not you or they were)?

*(Please tick **ONE** box in **EACH** row)* ✓

	Never	Rarely Once or twice a year	Occasionally Once or twice a term	Sometimes Once or twice a week	Often Nearly every day	Don't know
I have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6
Classmates have	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

88. Have any of your teachers/school staff been called names or bullied by a pupil using the word(s) "transgender"/ "tranny" etc. (regardless of whether or not they were)? *(Please tick **ONE** box only)* ✓

Never	Rarely Once or twice a year	Occasionally Once or twice a term	Sometimes Once or twice a week	Often Nearly every day	Don't know

☐1　　　　☐2　　　　☐3　　　　☐4　　　　☐5　　　　☐6

89. In the classroom or within school grounds, have you heard or seen a teacher or a member of school staff intervene when the word(s) "transgender"/ "tranny" etc. was used as an insult?

(Please tick ONE box only) ✓

Never	**Rarely** Once or twice a year	**Occasionally** Once or twice a term	**Sometimes** Once or twice a week	**Often** Nearly every day	**Don't know**
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6

90. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
I consider that insulting or bullying somebody for being Transgender is a serious issue that should be challenged in school.　　*(Please tick ONE box only)* ✓

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6