



An Excellence Gateway case study

Published: 30th July 2012

National Union of Students UK (NUS): Student-led dialogue on LGBT and Faith

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Outline the aim

The overall aim of our initiative was to support staff and learners to tackle real and perceived tensions between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equalities, and religion and belief equalities, in FE colleges. The project focused on dialogue methods as a means to increase and improve inter-personal communication between learners relating to the subject of faith and sexuality.

We did this by providing training, offering support in running college-based activities and providing a toolkit of written materials that staff and learners could use to foster good relations and build good mutually respectful relationships through dialogue.

Within this overall aim, we intended to support colleges to;

- Tackle tensions (real and imagined) between lesbian, gay and bisexual equalities and religion and belief equalities in the learner community
- Promote inclusive and cohesive communities - with a particular focus on inter faith relations and the interaction between students in relation to sexuality and religion/belief
- Improve the experiences of students in FE - in particular LGBT students and students with a religion or belief

In doing so the project responded to the public sector duty requirement within the Equality Act 2010 that requires colleges (and other public sector bodies), to have due regard to;

- eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- advancing equality of opportunity for people who share a protected characteristic, and
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't share that characteristic.

The project in particular responded to the recognition that protected characteristics can at times interact or be in conflict with one another and cannot always be addressed in isolation, in this case religion or belief and sexual orientation equalities.

A particular challenge, which the project focused on, is fostering good relations between people who share different protected characteristics. This includes increasing opportunities for learners to hear about the experiences of people with different protected characteristics through interaction and dialogue.

The challenge

The project sought to support staff and students in Further Education colleges to tackle real and perceived tensions between lesbian, gay, bisexual equalities and religion and belief equalities.

At the heart of the project was the belief that good mutually respectful relationships between learners from different backgrounds are more likely to be developed when learners can express and explore their personal experiences, rather than rehearse fixed opposing principles.

This was raised in the LLUK research report "Managing the interface between sexual orientation and religion and belief" (2010) which also concluded that;

- a) There is a very limited amount of good practice in the sector relating to managing the interface between equality on the grounds of sexual orientation and equality on the grounds of religion or belief.
- b) The degree of anticipated conflict is disproportionate to the actual conflict found in practice.
- c) The anticipation of conflict can exert a powerful inhibition on strategic and operational leadership as well as work with the two groups, both separately and together.

The report also concluded that students' unions can play a significant role in bridging the gap between these two equality groups through organised activity and their ongoing political and organisational function.

Similarly, conversations we have had with staff from a number of colleges in 2011, through our Interfaith Project, highlighted the need for more assistance and support in facilitating conversations and activities with learners about the tensions between these two protected characteristics – sexual orientation and religion or belief. Likewise students and delegates at last year's NUS conferences requested further information and support in sharing good practice on this issue

Partnership organisations

The project was led entirely by NUS, predominantly drawing on our internal knowledge and experience gained from a long history in LGBT campaigning and several years of inter-faith work within the FE and HE sectors.

We also sought guidance from a number of organisations from the FE, LGBT and inter-faith sectors to help us develop the project. Their input was merely advisory, for example to act as a sounding board for improving our recruitment strategies and training materials. No specific roles were delegated.

Key contributors were:

- St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace who shared some of their training materials.
- Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (Fbfe)
- Seth Atkin, Chair, Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Post-School Education
- Phil Barnett, Independent consultant specialising in equality and diversity
- Siriol Davies, Inter Faith Projects and Chaplaincy Development, Diocese of Southwark

The outputs

1. Stated Output

A two day training event, one for 20 staff in colleges and one for 20 FE learners from at least ten FE colleges.

Achieved Output

- We ran a two day residential training for both staff and learners combined, with a mix of combined and separate activities for the two groups.
- A total of 34 people attended the training course, 17 of whom were students and 17 were learners.
- Participants represented 19 different FE colleges from throughout England.
- All participants were given a series of handouts to support their learning.

2. Stated Output

Work with staff and learners from four colleges who attended the training to develop an activity or project for learners at their college.

Achieved Output

This output was not fully achieved for a number of reasons that will be further outlined in the later section 'Did you encounter any difficulties in implementing this project?'

One college has already run an activity;

Portsmouth College

Some of the training methods were used to obtain learners views in tutorial times. We have not been able to gain further information on this.

A total of 8 colleges plan to run activities, but have not done so yet. These include;

St.Brendan's 6th Form College, Bristol

St Brendan's is a Catholic college in which all students take a compulsory course called 'Spiritual Journey' that explores a variety of ethical and moral issues. Four learners who attended our training (and two staff) plan to deliver a workshop for all teaching staff on this course in the beginning of the next academic year.

This will mean that by the end of the 2012-2013 academic year, over 1,400 full-time learners aged 16-18 will have experienced some of the dialogue based activities we designed within this pilot project. This fantastic achievement will be learner led, with staff support.

This activity has the backing of the college's senior management, but has not yet been achieved due to timetabling issues and exam preparations taking precedence.

City and Islington College, London

The Vice-President of the Student Union intends to run an activity with the LGBT group of its Sixth Form College Centre that explores their experience and perception of how faith and sexuality interact.

This has not yet been achieved due to timetabling issues and exam preparations taking precedence. The student in question has also not yet been unable to get enough support from appropriate staff members to get permission from senior staff to agree this activity.

Blackpool and Fylde College, FE Campus

The incoming Student Union President and LGBT Officer who attended our training intend to integrate dialogue methods into its LGBT History Month celebrations in February 2013.

Lewisham College, London

There is discussion amongst the staff Values, Faiths and Beliefs working group and the staff LGBT working group on how they could use our dialogue methods to increase their co-working and communication. Progress with this initiative was stunted by difficulties in engaging senior managers and other staff who did not attend the training.

Further, **Portland College, Colchester College, Mid Kent College** and **New College Nottingham** have all said they plan to run activities next year, but we have no further information on this as yet.

The requirement to run an organised 'activity' was a too restricted outcome, as there are other ways in which the training has been used that falls outside of this definition.

For example, **Colchester College** has not run a specific activity but states;

"We have now made a far stronger commitment to Equality and diversity and how to deal with LGBT issues for our students" (staff member)

This will be discussed further later in the report.

3. Stated Output

A toolkit of materials FE staff and learners can use at their colleges.

Achieved Output

A resource pack of training materials and background information on our dialogue based approach has been produced and is currently being printed, and unfortunately due a hold up with the printers will not be available by Friday 29th June. This will be forwarded on as soon as possible once it is available (estimate the first week of July) and will be made available in print and online next week at www.nusconnect.org.uk.

Once completed it will be disseminated widely to;

- Our contacts within the FE, LGBT and inter-faith sectors
- Staff and student leaders in all 450 (approx) of our member FE Student Unions
- Staff and student leaders in all 150 (approx) of our member HE Student Unions
- Internally to NUS, for example our Liberation teams and training staff

We estimate this will reach approximately 1,000 people in the short term. Longer term estimates can be determined by checking the number of downloads from our website.

Hard copies will be disseminated to those who have a specific interest in this area of work and/or have helped to develop it. Soft copies will be disseminated to all others.

4. Stated Output

Disseminate learning from the project across the sector at conferences and events.

Achieved Output

We have presented workshops to a total of 125+ delegates at the following conferences;

NUS LGBT Campaign Conference - 31st March 2012 (20 delegates)
www.nusconnect.org.uk/events/6001/293/

Cutting Edge Consortium Annual Conference - 21st April
(13 delegates)
<https://sites.google.com/site/cuttingedgeconsortium1/cec3rdannualconference>

NUS National Conference - 25th April (10 delegates)
www.nusconnect.org.uk/conference/

Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (Fbfe) Quarterly Meeting - 15th May (25 delegates)
www.fbfe.org.uk/

Equality and Diversity Partnership Project Dissemination Event, Birmingham – 26th June (approx 60 delegates)

Planned events:

Salford University, Faith & Sexuality Conference 2012 – 11th September
www.equality.salford.ac.uk/Faith_and%20Sexual_Orientation_Conference_2012

NUS, Welfare and Community Officer Training 2012 – 10th July
<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/ents/event/496/>

The impacts and outcomes

Please also see the additional document 'NUS Faith & Sexuality Dialogue Project - Impact Model'.

We have sought to measure our impact using a model known as the 'Kirkpatrick Learning Evaluation Model' shown below.



The Impact Framework

The Framework takes a process perspective in considering the outputs and outcomes at various points along a pathway, through the effect of investment in training and development activities¹⁰. It seeks to illustrate the complexity of evaluation along the pathway, but in a way that still offers potential options for evaluation.

Impact Level 1: Reaction

This level indicates the reaction of participants to training and development activities. For example, at the end of a workshop participants may be asked what were their views of the experience? What was their view of the training programme as a whole?

Impact Level 2: Learning

This level reflects 'the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skill as a result of attending the programme'¹². For example, does a researcher have a better understanding of how to work effectively within a team as a result of attending a training workshop?

Impact Level 3: Behaviour

This level reflects 'the extent to which change in behaviour has occurred because the participant attended the training programme'¹². Is the researcher now managing their project and time better as a result of the development activity? How has the researcher applied what they have learnt?

Impact Level 4: Outcomes

This level measures the final results of the training and development activity. Have changes in behaviour resulted in different outcomes? Has the quality of research improved? Is there a more highly skilled research workforce?

As the project hinged on the training we developed, the below is key findings from our evaluation according to the above model.

Level 1: Reactions to the training

- **Participants personal reactions / feelings about the training**

Both learners and staff had very positive overall reaction to the training, rating it highly for new learning gained and relevance to the subject, with learners rating slightly higher.

1. *How would you rate your overall event experience? (With 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent)*

Learners 8.2/10 Staff 7.6/10

2. *How would you rate 'new learning'? (With 1 being lowest and 5 being highest)*

Learners 4.2 Staff 3.9

3. *How would you rate 'relevance' to the subject (With 1 being lowest and 5 being highest)?*

Learners 4.5/5 Staff 4.1

Some sample quotes;

"Fantastic training" (student)

"It was awesome. Do some more stuff like this. Thanks for putting it on :)" (student)

"Passionate trainers delivering difficult topics. Well done!" (staff)

Level 2: Learning from the training

- **Participants knowledge and understanding of the issues**
- **Participants skills in being able to facilitate discussion around tensions**
- **Participants confidence in engaging in dialogue on faith and sexuality**

We asked participants certain questions before and after the training to rate various aspects of their experience, understanding and skills in discussing of faith and sexuality. This included questions such as their understanding of diverse experiences, their confidence to tackle discrimination, their knowledge of concepts and issues.

Increases were experienced in all areas, although there was a notably higher increase in participants' practical skills (skills to facilitate discussion), compared to their increases in knowledge and understanding, and confidence in engaging dialogue relating to the subject. It is worth noting that the areas where the growth was highest is where the scores were lowest beforehand, and therefore does not prove that the training was not effective in these areas, but rather that there was less ground to cover.

Staff experienced higher increases than learners in all areas.

1. My understanding and familiarity of people's diverse experiences in relation to religion/belief and sexual orientation

Learners 10% average increase

Staff 23% average increase

2. My knowledge about concepts and issues relating to religion/belief and sexual orientation.

Learners 16% average increase

Staff 29% average increase

3. My confidence to tackle discrimination and prejudice in relation to religion/belief and sexual orientation

Learners 20% average increase

Staff 23% average increase

4. My awareness of approaches that can help to build understanding between students in relation to religion/belief and sexual orientation

Learners 38% average increase

Staff 77% average increase

5. My skills and confidence in facilitating dialogue between students in relation to religion/belief and sexual orientation

Learners 42% average increase

Staff 53% average increase

6. I have ideas on how to implement activities relating to tensions around religion/belief and sexual orientation in my college

Learners 32% average increase

Staff 94% average increase

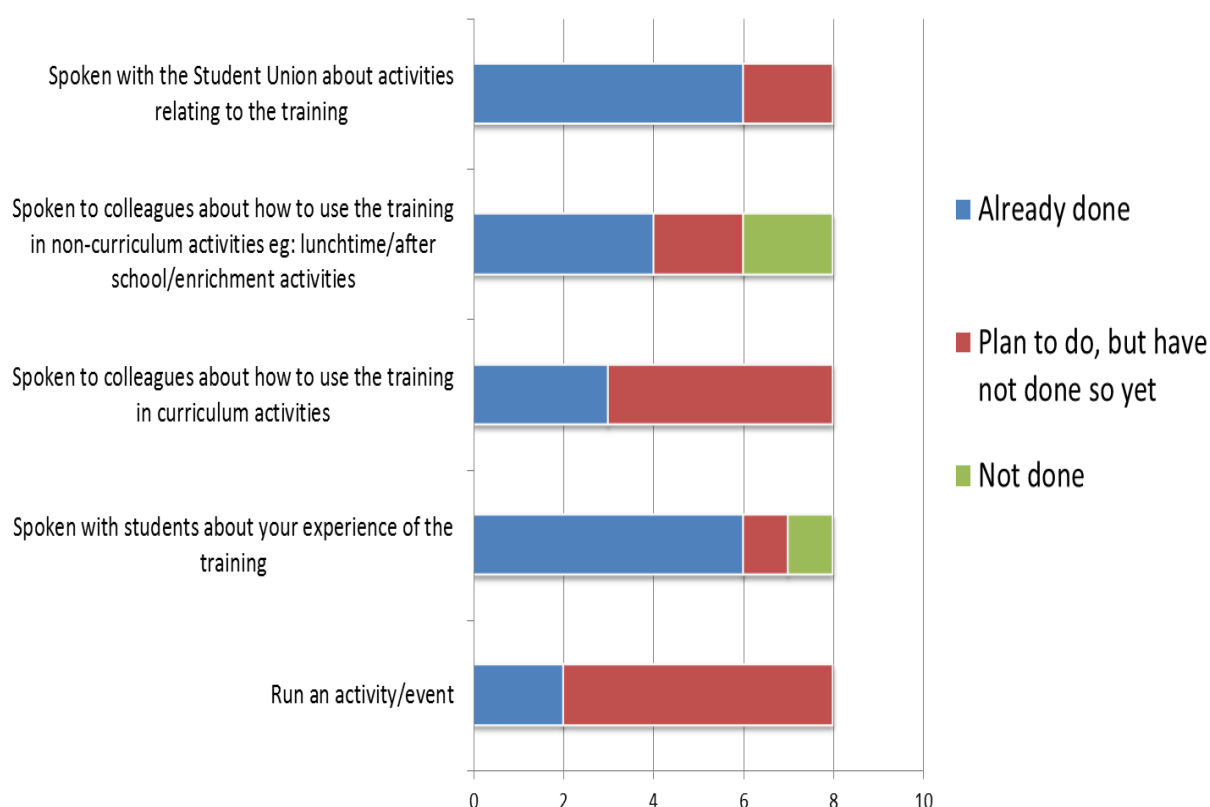
Level 3: Behaviour Change after the training

- **Individuals have engaged in dialogue with others on the themes of the training(either 1:1 or in small group situations)**
- **Participants run activities / events in their colleges that apply their learning from the training**

We ran a survey two months after the training to gauge how participants' behaviour had changed since. Below is a summary of the key questions;

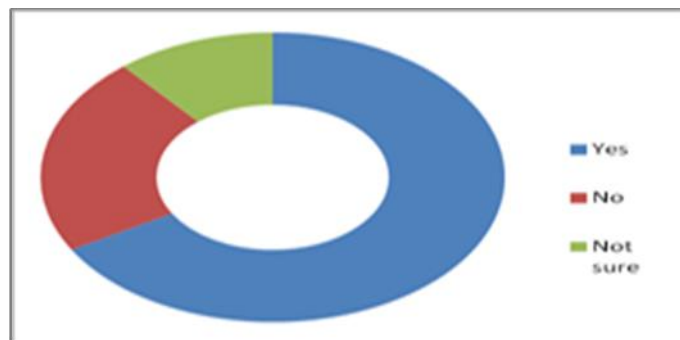
1. Please mark the ways in which you have shared, or plan to share your learning from the training in your college.

There was mixed success in participants speaking with others about their learning from the training. The below table indicates that a large proportion of participants spoke with their Student's Union and students, but a lower proportion spoke with staff. As later identified in the '*Lessons Learnt*' section, this is something we would like to change should the project run again as it is more likely that dialogue approaches will be adopted in a college if they are staff led.



2. Has the training positively changes the way you view tensions, if any, about faith and sexuality in your college?

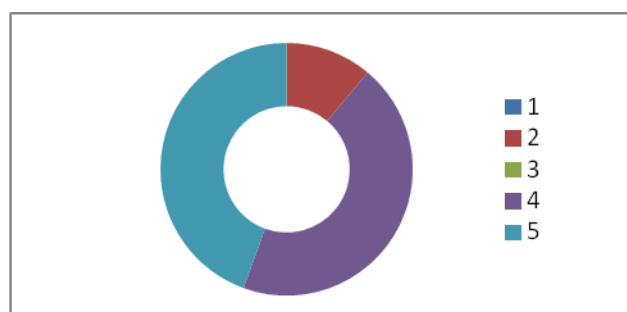
Around two thirds of participants felt the training had a lasting positive impact on their view of tensions around faith and sexuality. That one third of participants were unsure or unconvinced of the positive impact of the training in this way indicates that it was unable



3. What positive impact has the training had on your ability to do the following? Please rate on a scale of 1-6, with 1 being 'No impact' and 6 being 'A very large impact'.

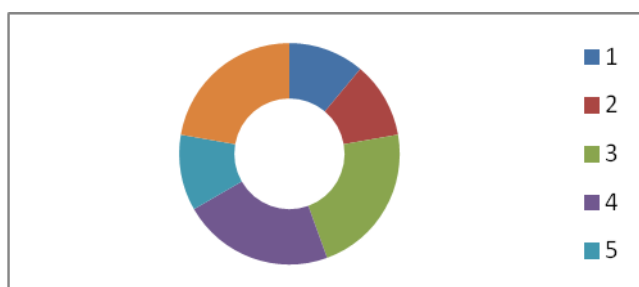
- a) Challenge assumptions and stereotypes relating to faith and/or sexuality amongst students and staff

The training had a medium-high impact in terms of increasing participant's ability to challenge assumptions and stereotypes, with most rating and impact of 4-5.



- b) Be comfortable listening to opinions different to your own

The training did not consistently increase participants comfort in listening to opinions different to their own. This is not a failing, as the purpose of dialogue is not for participants to agree, but rather to be willing to listen to and understand one another.



- c) Be comfortable to have more challenging conversations on faith and/or sexuality

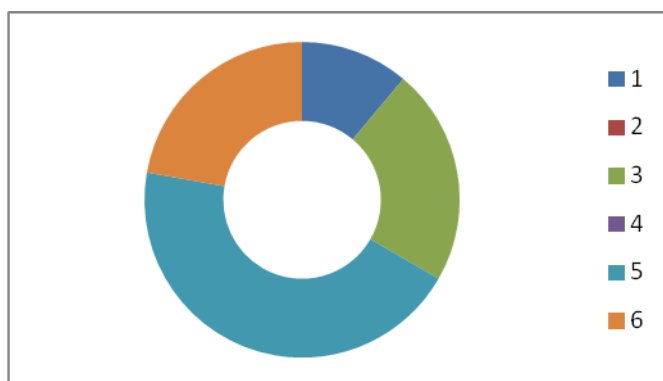
The training had a reasonably high impact in terms of increasing participants comfort with having challenging conversations on the subject, but there was some variance amongst participants' experiences. We feel this is a reasonable achievement from a two-day training course, as there are many



factors (eg: confidence, pre-existing discomfort) that will influence a person's level of comfort and that can't be fully addressed within this timescale.

- d) Be aware of diverse experiences of others in your college relating to faith and/or sexuality

The training had a mixed impact in terms of increasing awareness of diverse experiences relating to faith and/or sexuality. The diversity within the group was not as high as we would have liked, perhaps influencing this question, and this is something we would like to address should the training be run again.



Level 4: Overall Impact

- **Students who identify as being LGBT and/or having a religion or belief report an improved experience at the college**
- **There is a greater consideration of how these equality strands can be approached in terms of a college's E&D and enrichment strategies.**
- **The culture of the college is more inclusive and cohesive**

Overall impact is a medium-long term measure was not felt within the six month timeframe of this project. It would be hard to meaningfully measure impact without sustained, deeper engagement within training participants and the colleges they work/study in.

For the above impacts to be realised, participants of our training would have to needed to effectively share their learning within their own colleges. As we have identified mixed success in this, it is hard to therefore quantify overall impact.

Outputs

1. A two day training event, one for 20 staff in colleges and one for 20 FE learners from at least ten FE colleges.

This has already been realised.

2. Work with staff and learners from four colleges who attended the training to develop an activity or project for learners at their college.
One college has already run an activity. Seven others have expressed an interest in doing so, and we anticipate that this will happen at some point during the academic year 2012-2013.

3. A toolkit of materials FE staff and learners can use at their colleges.

The first week of July.

4. Disseminate learning from the project across the sector at conferences and events.

We have been doing so throughout the project, and have one more conference to present at in September at Salford University.

Outcomes (Behaviour Change)

- Individuals have engaged in dialogue with others on the themes of the training (either 1:1 or in small group situations)
- Participants run activities / events in their colleges that apply their learning from the training

Regarding the first outcome, we expect the realisation of outcomes to be an ongoing process for training participants. How each training participant personally explores and reflects upon the issues involved in the training are of course a subjective experience, and the nature and speed to which they do so is unique to each individual. The reflections they have gained will inform relationships with others over their lifetime and so will be realised gradually over an undefined time period.

Regarding the second outcome, we are expecting participants from seven colleges to run activities within the academic year 2012-2013.

Impacts

This is contingent upon the spreading of learning from the training within the college. This is the area where our project has scope for improvement.

The impact on the learners is detailed on the above section '*What are the main impacts and outcomes of the project?*'

A total of 34 people attended the training course, 17 of whom were students and 17 were learners. Participants represented 19 different FE colleges from throughout England.

Faith/Belief

Over half the participants stated they had no faith (17). Of the half that did have a faith, the majority were Christian, with the remainder representing a mix of mainstream and non-mainstream religions.

Sexual orientation

Over half of all participants identified as being Heterosexual or Straight (18). Of the remainder, 11 identified as being either Gay or Lesbian (11), 2 as bisexual and the remainder as preferring not to state. A higher proportion of learners identified as LGBT than staff.

Age

The majority of learners were aged 16-18 (12), with 5 aged 19+.

Ethnicity

The large majority of participants were White, notably White British (28).

Gender

There were a higher proportion of people identifying as female rather than male, with a ratio of 2:1. No participant self-identified as transgender.

We are content that the training involved a reasonable mix of learners from the faith/belief and sexual orientation equality groups. Ideally we would have been able to include transgender delegates, and delegates representing a broader range of faiths and beliefs. Many of the mainstream religions were not represented, eg: Islam, Sikhism and we did not ask which denomination of Christianity delegates identified with.

Working relationship with LSIS

I believe LSIS has a trusting approach towards the projects it funds. While I was pleased that LSIS was interested in how the project was progressing (eg: interim phone call after 2/3 months), I didn't feel that unnecessary pressure was applied. I think this trust is important to a good funder-fundee relationship and shows LSIS's faith in those that are delivering E&D work 'on the ground'.

There were several points where I was confused on who was the best point of contact within LSIS, having had contact with Margaret, Kemal, Catina, Laura, Sarika and Daniel at various points during the project's funding. This was particularly the case whilst making arrangements for the dissemination events. Where possible, it would be good to understand from the beginning of the funding who should be contacted and for what aspects of the funding to reduce confusion.

Good value for money

Here is a breakdown of project spends. £12,500 was provided by LSIS with a further £12,500 match funded by NUS. Consequently, the project came in under budget.

		Project to Date		
		Budget	Actual	Variance
Income				
	Income	£12,500	£12,500	£0
	Other Income	£0	£0	£0
Total Income		£12,500	£12,500	£0
Cost of Activites				
	Wages & Salaries	£12,083	£11,060	£1,023
	Project Management	£0	£0	£0
	Travel & Subsistence	£500	£1,860	(£1,360)
	Legal & Professional Fees	£0	£0	£0
	Venue Costs	£6,000	£5,639	£361
	Print, Stationery & Subscriptions	£0	£136	(£136)
	Premises	£1,667	£1,699	(£32)
	IT	£0	£0	£0
	Recruitment, Training & Temps	£0	£0	£0
	Marketing & Advertising	£1,000	£0	£1,000
	Sundries	£0	£0	£0
	Contribution to SU's	£0	£0	£0
Total Cost of Activites		£21,250	£20,394	£856
Surplus/ Deficit		(£8,750)	(£7,894)	

Benefits of being run by large organisation

There were financial benefits to running this project as part of a large organisation such as NUS.

- Being able to use our existing network of contacts to promote and develop the project reduced the amount of time required in research and relationship building, thereby allowing more staff time to be dedicated to project delivery and development.
- We were able to make use of existing resources and knowledge eg: in-house trainers, IT resources, guidance on venues from our Events Team.

By working in partnership with a few key organisations notably accelerated the development of the project. For example;

- Sharing materials with St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace reduced the time required to design all of our materials from scratch.

Better value for money if the project were refashioned

As previously outlined, the project did not fully succeed in terms of participants of our training programme translating their learning into organised activities in their colleges.

The project had the most impact on the individuals who attended the course, with less of a tangible impact on the colleges they attend/work for. So the Value For Money in terms of community cohesion is not certain, but I believe would notably increase should some of my key recommendations be adopted.

- My key recommendation 2, that suggests that rather than encouraging colleges to create additional enrichment activities it would be better to focus on how dialogue methods relating to equality tension could be integrated into existing curriculum and tutorial plans. This would ensure that a larger number and broader range of students would benefit from the dialogue approach.
- My key recommendation, 3c (see later) that suggests the training be refashioned to address a broader range of equality tensions, not only those relating to faith and sexuality. This would increase recruitment for the training and make it more applicable to a wider number of situations and contexts.

Senior managers involvement

NUS' senior managers were involved in the submission of our funding bid to LSIS and will be informed of our recommendations on behalf of how we as an organisation can take this work forward.

We did not involve Senior Managers in our training and as we will later outline, I would change this if I were to run the project again. In order for unfamiliar, explorative methods such as in this project to be adopted by colleges, I believe that Senior Manager Involvement is essential. This would

include E&D staff, Student Services staff, staff who are members of equality working groups, and perhaps certain curriculum heads (eg: religious studies).

Stakeholder involvement

The project was led entirely by NUS, predominantly drawing on our internal knowledge and experience gained from a long history in LGBT campaigning and several years of inter-faith work within the FE and HE sectors.

We also sought guidance from a number of organisations from the FE, LGBT and inter-faith sectors to help us develop the project. Their input was merely advisory, for example to act as a sounding board for improving our recruitment strategies and training materials. No specific roles were delegated.

Key contributors were:

- St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace who shared some of their training materials.
- Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (Fbfe)
- Seth Atkin, Chair, Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Post-School Education
- Phil Barnett, Independent consultant specialising in equality and diversity
- Siriol Davies, Inter Faith Projects and Chaplaincy Development, Diocese of Southwark

Learner involvement

The training

We ran two focus groups in February to explore the requirements of the training we were devising. One group was dedicated for learners, and the other was dedicated for organisations who already work with faith and sexuality issues (eg: Quest, Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement).

Unfortunately it proved very difficult to get learners to attend due to their college commitments, but one FE and one HE student did attend. The non-learner focused group was attended by five delegates.

All delegates of the training completed monitoring and evaluation forms before and after the training, and some completed a survey 2 months afterwards. The findings of these have been instrumental in shaping the recommendations we have made in this report and how the toolkit we have produced has been written.

The activities

As outlined in the '*What are the main outputs of the project?*' section, some learners have been involved in planning activities to be run in the new

academic year, but none have been able to run activities before the end of the project's funding.

Raising awareness

We have promoted the project widely both within our existing membership and beyond. Once our toolkit is completely finalised we will use the same avenues to disseminate it, reaching an estimated 1,000 people.

Within the student movement, we;

- Advertised the project via our website from early January www.nusconnect.org.uk/news/article/faith/Dialogue-Project-Faith-and-Sexuality/
- Promoted the training via social media, NUS' wide Twitter followers and a specific Facebook group dedicated for FE.
- Our LGBT mailing list that is received by several hundred LGBT students in FE and HE across 600 student unions around the UK. Via this mailing list we found out about numerous HE initiatives that have been run (some of which are included in our toolkit as case studies), and we hope to be able to support them further in the next academic year.
- Our FE mailing list that is received by several hundred FE students and frontline staff (eg: Student Liaison Officers) from around 450 FE students' unions around the UK.

Within NUS, we;

- Have written an internal evaluation of the project, detailing how our materials and learning can be disseminated across various aspects of our work.
- In July we intend to run a workshop for key training staff within NUS who may be able to incorporate our methods into their programmes. This will specifically include our work relating to Liberation (black students, women students, LGBT students, disabled students).

Beyond the student movement;

- Speaking at various conferences, as outlined in the '*What are the main outputs of the project?*' section
- We researched the below list of organisations and individuals who specifically focus on faith and sexuality. They were all invited to our focus groups in February and will receive a copy of the toolkit. We have met with, or spoken with very many of them, and we are hopeful they will be able to forward our toolkit of materials onto their own memberships. They are;

1. BaGeLs (LGBT project of Union of
2. Jewish Students)
3. EEFA
4. Diversity Role Models
5. The Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association
6. Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement
7. Quest
8. Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship
9. East of England Faith Agency EEFA
10. Naz project
11. Imaan
12. Safra Project
13. Faith and Sexuality Project
14. Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association
15. Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group
16. Jewish Action and Training for Sexual Health
17. Gay Jews in London
18. Keshet
19. IGYLEO
20. Courage
21. Sibyls
22. Changing Attitude Trust
23. Beit Klal Yisrael
24. Pink Triangle Trust
25. Cutting Edge Consortium
26. Inclusive Church
27. Queerstianity
28. Young Lesbian and Gay Christians
29. Schools Out
30. Elly Barnes
31. Phil Barnett
32. Cutting Edge members
33. FBFE (Faiths and Belief in FE) members
34. Three Faiths Forum
35. St Ethelburgas Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
36. Inter Faith Network for the UK

Continuity of project, after LSIS funding

In line with the findings outlined already, NUS does not plan to continue to run this project in the FE sector.

We do however expect the methods we devised to 'live on' within NUS by sharing them with numerous other colleagues who work with various equality

strands in their work. For example, this will include our Liberation Training Officer responsible for all training relating to gender, race, disability and LGBT.

We are also currently in discussion with our newly nationally elected LGBT Officers whether they would like to adapt the project for HE settings. This would likely entail running a similar training programme for elected LGBT officers and members of faith societies in universities around the country, and providing guidance on how to effectively run events in their Students' Unions. With HE unions tending to be better resourced and organised, we anticipate that there may be a greater take up for training and an increased likelihood of the learning gained from training attendance to be converted into organised activities.

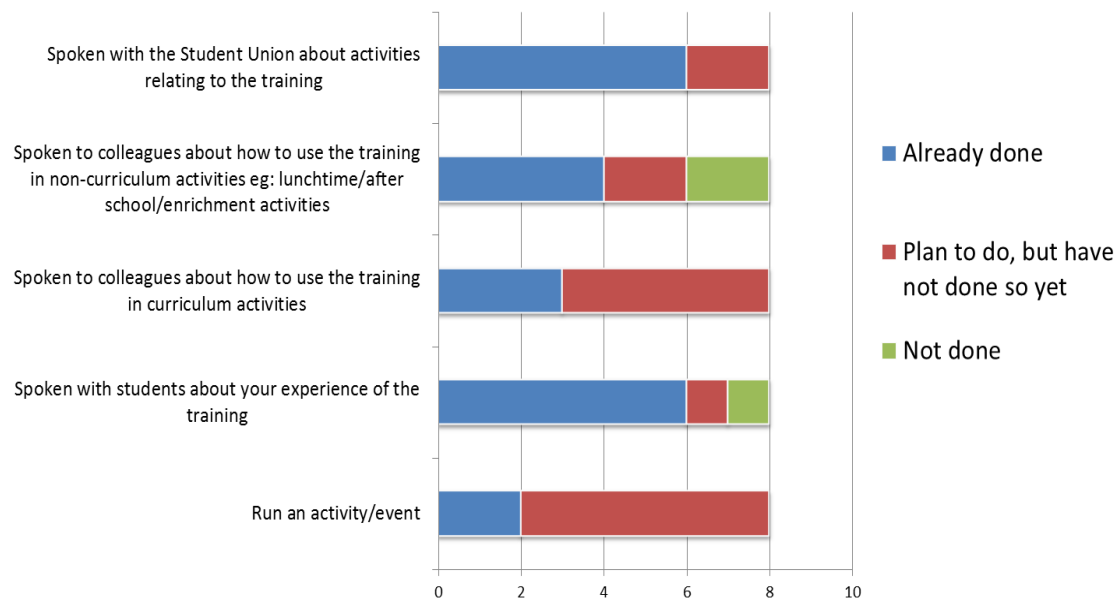
We are interested in offers of partnership with staff-led organisations within the E&D sector, relating to FE and beyond, who may be interested to take the project forward with our guidance, whether on a consultative basis or in a more involved, ongoing fashion.

With the lack of good practice guidelines relating to tensions between faith and sexuality, we hope that our materials will act as a platform for other organisations to build upon.

Did you experience any difficulties in implementing the project and how did you overcome these?

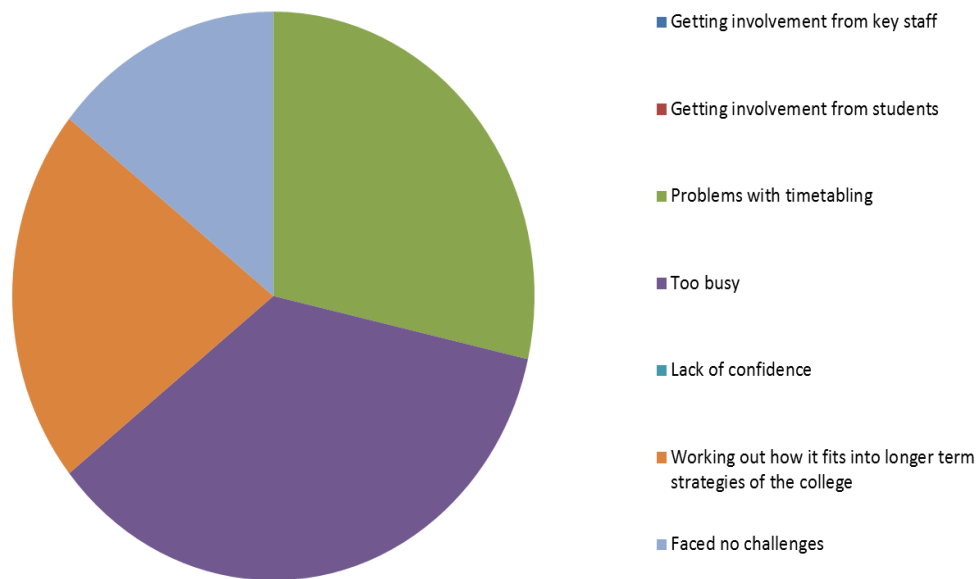
1. Supporting participant colleges who attended our training to run activities in their campuses that made use of our training approaches.

When asked how training participants had shared their learning in their colleges, they answered;



We struggled to get colleges to run activities after the training, shown by low proportion of those who had already run events.

When asked in a survey 2 months after the training what challenges participants faced in sharing their learning in their college, they responded;



When asked in a survey 2 months after the training what challenges participants faced in sharing their learning in their college, they responded;

We believe that expecting participant colleges to organise and run additional enrichment events, or adapt tutorials to incorporate our methods was unrealistic for these reasons;

- If colleges didn't have existing, robust E&D strategies then training participants found it difficult to persuade decision makers in the college to allow such activities. This was especially the case for learners.
- Training participants were uncertain of how to adapt/incorporate these approaches into their college's E&D programme. This is not something that could be included in a 2 day training course without compromising on teaching dialogue methods.
- Finding time for additional enrichment activities is a challenge and off-putting for some.
- Trainees lacked confidence and/or skill in their facilitation skills to try and use dialogue approaches. More coaching would be desirable to overcome this.
- Many trainees said they would be more likely to run activities if they had written activity plans to work from, but being a pilot project we had not written the full resource pack up until towards the end of the project. If the project ran again, we would prepare written materials in advance.

2. Recruitment for courses

We were enthused by receiving over 60 enquiries to take part in the training, but due to a mixture of factors a number of delegates dropped out (eg: personal circumstances, emergencies that arose at their college). This meant we did not reach our target output of 40 trainees.

A two-day, residential training was a big commitment for many learners and staff to take. While we think the length and residential nature of the training helped the group to bond and therefore increased their comfort in dialoguing

with one another, in future I may consider running it in abbreviated 1 day formats, or splitting it into a 2x1 day sessions.

Participants for the courses were self selected and were open in our recruitment criteria, which means that those that attended tended to have a close interests in faith and/or sexuality. While this was a good things as this related to our target equality groups, we don't believe the group was a fair representation of views that may exist in a college eg: there will be some learners in a college that feel ambivalent about the subject and so chose not to attend.

For staff recruitment we targeted SLO's and Chaplain's, and for learners we advertised via our FE and LGBT mailing lists. FE colleges do not tend to have faith societies so we don't have a specific mailing list for FE students with an interest in faith. This may have influenced who self-selected to attend the training.

We did not select which colleges could attend. Bearing in mind that dialogue works well when complemented with a robust E&D strategy, it might have been better for target our recruitment on colleges that meet this criteria.

We did not specify a minimum number of training participants from each college, although we encouraged a minimum of two. Where possible it would have been better to get some people from each college to attend, as where only trainee attended from a college they reported difficulty in getting 'traction' from other staff/learners in their college.

The lessons learned

1. Time

Ensure that plans relating to funded projects are in line with academic timeframes.

Consider if six months is a meaningful timeframe for all projects that are funded under this stream. If there are very defined outcomes then this may be possible, but with a project of this explorative, and largely untouched, nature six months proved to be not long enough to fulfil its potential impact. Enable follow on funding for projects that have potential to deliver good impact beyond the six months. Perhaps have an interim review half way through when this can be decided, as this would enable projects to adapt their plans accordingly and effectively

2. **Dialogue approaches don't need create an entirely new activity/project in a college, they can be effectively implemented within existing plans.**

Eg: a teaching method within curriculum plans, not necessarily an enrichment activity.

If I ran the activity again I would not specifically promote colleges to run enrichment 'activities' on this theme. Although this can be meaningful, it is

harder task (eg: recruitment, extra resources...) and does not always engage the learners you want to as much enrichment is self selective.

Instead I would work with teaching and E&D staff in colleges to think about how our methods could be incorporated across their teaching curriculum (all subject areas) and within their existing lesson plans. This would mean that the

3. Additional training needs of staff and learners

- a. Specific training on faith *and* LGBT, but not necessarily together, to counter weak literacy and apprehension of these subjects.
- b. Facilitation training. There is a big difference between facilitation and teaching, and facilitative approaches offer a different, fun and effective way of learning (especially on sensitive issues based subjects).

c. This is my key recommendation

Dialogue training that explores a range of tensions between various equality strands, not only faith and sexuality eg: race and sexual orientation, gender and faith, faith and disability, marriage/civil partnership and gender reassignment.

This training will be more widely applicable, and will therefore have more impact and increased recruitment.

If geared towards practical situations that arise in colleges and other public settings, I would be confident of this being an excellent, in demand course.

If I could run the project again, this is definitely what I would do in partnership with an E&D adviser.

4. Research

Commission research that builds upon the LLUK and The Forum report '*Managing the Interface between Sexual Orientation and Faith*', but focuses on the inter-personal communication aspects of how good relations are fostered in this area in colleges (and other settings).

Perhaps extend this to look at other equality tensions also, eg: race and sexual orientation, or gender and faith.

5. Consider running the training regionally rather than nationally to reduce travel and accommodation costs.

6. Dialogue based activities (and other advanced inter-personal communication approaches) should be staff led, with learner support in FE contexts.

Recruit decision makers from within colleges for courses that teach 'something new' like this project, as well as frontline staff.

Try to ensure that several staff members and learners are trained from every college.

These recommendations would increase the likelihood of new, innovative approaches to be adopted more widely within colleges. In our experience, training a single staff member or learner from one college meant that those individuals had a big challenge in persuading and demonstrating the

potential of such approaches, meaning that new approaches are less likely to be adopted and remain a niche interest of isolated individuals.

7. Dialogue approaches should not be applied without a robust, well implemented E&D strategy.

Additional comments

Thanks to LSIS and SFA for funding this innovative project.

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