

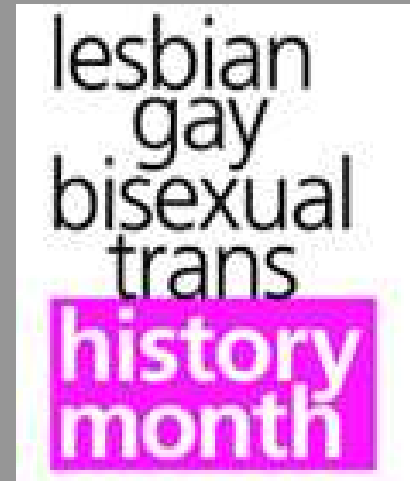


LGB&T History Month

LGB&T History Month has been in full swing this month. Begun in the UK in 2005 LGB&T History Month has been instrumental in raising awareness of, and combating prejudice against, the LGB&T community (you can find their website [here](#).)

This year, inspired by the 2012 London Olympics, the focus has been LGB&T in sports and has already attracted a lot of interest, garnering public letters of support from the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition, which can be read [here](#) and [here](#) respectively.

To link in with LGB&T History Month, this month's LAGIP newsletter includes an interview with **[Kieron Brady](#)** about homophobia in football (see Page 3).



LGB&T Health Summit 2011 - 29th–30th August

This year's summit will be held in Cardiff at the LGBT Excellence Centre. The Health Summit was founded in 2006 to provide a safe, supportive and exciting space for individuals, organisations and activists to come together to discuss, debate and challenge thinking and practice on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) health issues in the UK.

There have been five summits so far, the inaugural summit was in London in 2006, followed by Manchester in 2007, Bristol in 2008, Newcastle/Gateshead 2009 and most recently in 2010 in Hatfield, Hertfordshire.

For any further information, or to get involved, please contact Federico Podeschi on federico@ecwales.org.uk.

LAGIP AGM – 25 March 2011 – Letter To Chiefs

This year's AGM will be held at 1 Victoria Square, Birmingham between 11pm and 3pm. Reproduced here is the text of a letter recently sent to all Probation Trust Chiefs from our Chair, Amanda Watts, regarding this year's AGM. In this letter we ask that Trusts provide some assistance to allow members to attend.

"Over the years, staff associations have demonstrated that they have been able to provide a valuable service to Trusts, NOMS, members and the wider staff population within the Probation Service. However, as you will be aware, staff associations such as LAGIP are currently under threat due to budgetary constraints imposed on NOMS. Accordingly, this is a crucial time for staff associations which need to earnestly engage with their membership about what the future holds.

This is why I am writing to you today to request assistance for members to attend this year's AGM by funding their travel costs or allowing them time away from the office to attend. I understand that under the current circumstances the financial support Trusts can offer us is limited at present, but any assistance your Trust could offer to allow full members the opportunity to attend this event would be gratefully received."

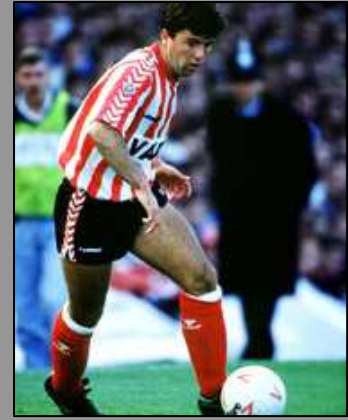
So far we've had positive responses from a number of Trusts which are putting money aside to allow a limited number of members from their area to attend so you should be able to claim back your travel expenses. Your Trust will be able to give you more specific information on what assistance is being provided.

For any general enquiries please contact admin@lagip.org.uk or call Richard on 01603 302180. A booking form can be downloaded [here](#).

Homophobia in Football – an interview with Kieron Brady

Kieron Brady played for Sunderland and the Republic of Ireland at U21-level before his extremely promising career was cut short by injury in 1993. Since then he has worked as an equality consultant, delivering over 500 equality sessions to businesses, universities and schools. In 2009, he set up *Celebrate Identity, Challenge Intolerance*, a Sunderland-based organisation which fights prejudice through education and training.

Speaking to **The Justin Campaign's** Director of Communications, **Alan Duffy**, Kieron speaks openly and passionately about the issue of homophobia in football.



You currently run the Celebrate Identity, Challenge Intolerance organisation which works with schools and businesses on equality issues. What drove you to set up the organisation in the first place?

It undoubtedly has stemmed from operating in the field of anti-racism and social justice. It is an area I have a great passion for and through initially working as an educationalist around racism and religious intolerance, this allowed a greater recognition that discrimination, societal hostility and Hate Crime is not restrictive regarding race and religion.

In your work with the CICI, have you noticed a difference in how people react to the subject of homophobia, compared to how they react to the issue of racism, for instance?

Sadly yes, it would be folly to draw any conclusions that proponents of challenging racism are in unison regarding homophobia. Racism, even the term itself has developed a potency that inadvertently suppresses other forms of discrimination and Hate Crime. We are having to contend with alternative social cancers but there is an onus on all who operate in the sphere of Equality to at least try to understand the emotional difficulties that elements of society have, for example, placed upon young people regarding sexuality. To be competent and effective within this area, having an empathy for any victim and compassion for someone experiencing emotional turmoil through sexuality should be a pre-requisite and that should transcend the protected characteristics.

You were recently featured in an article in the Mail on Sunday, in which you urged the footballing authorities to create the right environment for a gay player to come out. Why, in your opinion, have the footballing authorities been so slow to deal with the issue of homophobia in football? Indeed, is their heart really in the fight against homophobia?

I think we have to be able to differentiate between two issues which although some would regard as being inextricably linked present varying problems. Regarding homophobic abuse within stadia then I still do not see any measures that illustrate a zero tolerance approach to abuse around sexuality. You have to also factor in that because the abuse is in the main aimed at heterosexual players it may be erroneously conceived that this is not homophobia. It most certainly is as the subtext to such pejorative language seeks only to propagate archaic stereotypes as well as the implication that there is something wrong with being Gay or Bi-Sexual. On the issue of players entering into the public domain that they are Gay or Bi-Sexual then there are additional complexities. The environs and inner sanctum of professional football are beset with attitudes of overpowering heterosexuality. Certainly from my own experiences this almost unspoken de facto mantra engendered a sexism of sorts that promiscuity and women were a perk of the job. When we discuss the matter of the game being without any openly Gay or Bi-sexual players I do not think that this can be overlooked and this is contributory to why Gay or Bi-Sexual players have an unease about being open about their sexuality.

During your playing career, did you observe any homophobia, either in the dressing room or in the stands?

Nothing that I recall but we have to consider that such invective may only have appeared if a player had made it known that he was Gay or Bi-Sexual. Prejudice can lie dormant within individuals and its representation is sometimes contingent on changes in the immediate surroundings.



Do you feel that stewards and police officers within grounds on match days are doing enough to single out those fans who are shouting homophobic abuse at players?

I think that is something that may vary from club to club and the dictat that emerges from those in the higher echelons within respective clubs. I would hope that police officers having had Equality and Diversity training would not adopt a blasé attitude to homophobia. There is a danger in downplaying any form of intolerance and a muted response and inaction conveys all the wrong signals.

The stigma around homosexuality and bisexuality in professional football is great. In your opinion has this situation been blown out of proportion? If a player were to “come out” do you think their experience would be as bad as the media is making out?

No, as football has become an embedded part of the culture of celebrity it is an inescapable fact that it has not yet been successful in creating the necessary confidence for someone to be overt about their sexual orientation. The implications, and severity of them, of any player entering this into the public domain, certainly in the longer term are in my view contingent on the football authorities and how they react to this in stadia and clubs in their capacity as employers in the daily working environment. Both clubs and the governing bodies have to ensure that any consequent homophobia is treated in a comprehensive manner. In adhering to any Social Responsibility initiative at both club and authority level both parties have to play a vitally important role in relaying to wider society that homophobia has no place in football but moreover wider society.

Do you see things changing in the near future? For instance, do you think there will be an openly gay player in the Premier League within the next couple of years?

I would love to think that a player would have the mental resolve and emotional confidence to be prepared to do so. Both Rugby Union and Gaelic Football within Britain and Ireland have had players in recent times who have entered this into the public domain. Whilst I warmly applaud the courage of both Gareth Thomas and Donal Og Cusack I think it relevant to allude to the fact that both players have been in the twilight of their careers when taking this decision. Celebrate Identity Challenge Intolerance have approached clubs in different sports as well as the governing bodies to offer to deliver Equality training for players, coaches and managers. We think that for any Gay or Bi-Sexual players within the game we could impart information around Equality legislation apropos the workplace and Hate Crime regarding criminal law which would at least illustrate that there are laws in place which safeguards individuals regarding any vitriol around sexual orientation. Our training would also seek to impress upon all in attendance that Gay or Bi-Sexual colleagues have the fundamental right to exist in a working environment that is free from any forms of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. We would be happy for players to confide in us with any issues that they may have around Equality and the issues within and that would obviously include matters around sexuality.

It is just over 12 years since Justin Fashanu tragically took his own life. Considering the number of openly gay people in high-profile positions in the UK, in areas as diverse as politics, business, the media and the arts, why has football been so slow to deal with this issue?

It is difficult to give any definitive or conclusive answer on this point. We could conjecture ad infinitum around the flaws or lack of preparedness on the part of clubs and governing bodies but we may not locate any answers. We can but hope the introduction of Equality legislation and laws around Hate Crime can in time reach through to clubs and this will hopefully instil confidence in players that there are measures in place to deter intolerance in both the workplace and beyond. I believe there is a validity in asserting that for some in empowered positions, they would rather not have to confront this issue. I appreciate also there may be those who are well intentioned and who find homophobia objectionable but they are bereft of the knowledge in how to approach the matter. In order to enfranchise Gay or Bi-Sexual players I think it is imperative that they have an awareness that their rights are as enshrined as anyone else's. It is through such education that we may be enabled to breed the confidence in players that they have protection around abuse owing to sexual orientation.

What impact on society would tackling homophobia in football have?

Again, to go back to a previous point, if a fan at Mansfield or Man City, Accrington or Arsenal for example is ejected for expressing homophobic sentiments it is difficult to envisage how this could have such a positive outcome regarding wider homophobia if the consequent coverage of their ejection is negligible. What is fundamental in our view to marginalising homophobia in a social context and in the longer term endeavouring to ensure that those with such attitudes would think twice about being so open about their mindset, is that if a player does acknowledge that he is Gay or Bi-Sexual and is compelled to be the recipient of any abuse, either from colleagues or within stadia that his employer would be willing to act with an immediacy and be clear and concise that such abuse is not only unacceptable from the perspective of the club but also is incompatible with the underlying aims of football and sport in general, that being that sport is based around inclusivity and should be a medium for all citizens and to be enjoyed by all citizens. The notion of a player emerging and saying that he is Gay or Bi-Sexual, then being subjected to widespread abuse that has carte blanche does not bear thinking about and could potentially set challenging homophobia back years. There are serious implications in permitting young citizens in particular to enter football stadia and to form the impression that there is justification in, and immunity from, engaging in homophobic abuse. When racism against black players in English football poisoned the atmosphere twenty five to thirty years ago it was allowed to flourish through it not being arrested when it first reared its ugly head. There are lessons to be learned in this regard. The Rugby Football League were seen to have been somewhat draconian with the fine which was given to Castleford following homophobic abuse aimed at Gareth Thomas and there may be a ring of truth in that. The fine was subsequently halved but I believe that there was an underlying and forthright message from the Rugby Football League and that is positive.

How important are organisations such as The Justin Campaign in the fight against homophobia in football?

I think that any initiatives to eradicate this elephant in the room are worthwhile. I can imagine that there are perpetual frustrations within the Justin Campaign, annoyances that progress is piecemeal and perceptions that change is being stifled. Such campaigns are essential in impressing upon the custodians of the game that football should always be, and be seen to be a force for good and that discrimination in any form is an enemy of what football and sport hopes to achieve.

LAGIP thanks **The Justin Campaign** for allowing us to reproduce this interview. The original interview can be found online at <http://thejustincampaign.com/interview-kieronbrady.htm>.

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