

Gay pressure on the young



People are entitled to ask questions about the effect on young men and boys if the age of homosexual consent is lowered to 16. This step *will* promote homosexuality amongst young people.

We are concerned about:

- the sexual pressures on young people;
- the inherent risks to health of homosexual activity;
- vulnerability and protection;
- 16 meaning 14 in practice;
- undermining the married family.

70% of men believe that homosexual practice is wrong¹. They do not hate homosexuals. They just believe that homosexual practice is morally wrong. The overwhelming majority of parents want their young boys to develop stable relationships with women and to one day have a family of their own.

The ambition of the overwhelming majority of parents is that their children will grow up, get a good job, settle down and have a family of their own.

These ambitions are reflected in the way that most people attempt to live. Around 72% of people marry.² According to Government research the majority of the general public (72%) believe that “marriage should be forever”.³ The vast majority (70%) of households with children are headed by a married couple. Cohabiting parents who have a child outside of marriage commonly go on to marry. At any one time only 8% of households with children are headed by a cohabiting couple.⁴

Adolescence is a time when many boys can experience a phase of being attracted to other boys. This is a transient stage when vulnerable and lonely adolescents can be nervous of dealing with members of the opposite sex. Most boys grow out of this. According to the most detailed study to date, homosexual activity is significantly more common (three times more likely) in boarding schools than amongst those who do not go to boarding schools.⁵



Teenage experimentation with homosexuality is currently very limited compared to what could happen if the age of homosexual consent was lowered to 16.

Boys develop later than girls socially and physically. This is a fact of life. Janet Daley has argued that the immaturity of adolescent boys “makes them more suggestible and manipulable than girls,

and that this is an excellent reason for not making them legal objects of seduction... More strident activist voices are turning homosexuality into a commitment which locks people into what might have been a transitory stage of their emotional development.”⁶ She argues that : “Girls who submit to heterosexual sex at 16 are not being put in the same psychological danger as boys who are drawn into homosexual relations. If a girl has sex at 16, she may or may not be too young to cope with the consequences; she may or may not be exploited or traumatised, depending on her state of mind and the quality of the relationship. But one thing she will not be is initiated into a lifestyle which will separate her from the mainstream of society and preclude some of the major satisfactions of adult family life.”⁷

Sexual pressures on the young

Teenage boys can experience a homosexual phase

The Wellings study (the largest UK study of sexual behaviour) found that 5.2% of men have had a “homosexual experience” (which could involve just hugging or kissing).⁸ Only 3.5% have ever had a same-sex sexual partner at some time in their lives, but 50% of these never repeat the experience with another man.⁹

Only 0.3% of men have had exclusively homosexual partners over their lifetime.¹⁰ The Wellings study concludes that many men go through a phase in their youth:

“...homosexual experience is often a relatively isolated or passing event”¹¹
“the proportion reporting a same sex partner includes a large number of respondents for whom the experience was a single, possibly youthful and experimental, occurrence and for whom homosexual inclination was not a lasting orientation.”¹²

“A form of bisexuality prevalent in early adulthood may represent a transitional phase in which preferences are tested through experimentation with different lifestyles and relationships.”¹³

‘Homosexual orientation’ is not ‘fixed at 16’

The idea of ‘orientation’ being fixed at 16 is flawed on two grounds. Firstly the Wellings study, whilst being sympathetic to homosexuals, comprehensively demonstrates that many experience homosexual feelings in youth only to grow out of them.

Secondly although the BMA and Project SIGMA claim that “sexual orientation is fixed at 16”, the actual SIGMA study shows that homosexual intercourse occurs much later. SIGMA found that the average age of first anal intercourse for the men in study was 20.9 years.¹⁴

**73% of men and 71% of women
oppose the lowering of the age of
homosexual consent from 18 to 16.**

Source : NOP “Young People” 18th - 20th July 1997

Health

What are the health risks for young men?

A study on the medical problems of homosexual adolescents has found that they suffer from four types of disease :-

- classical sexually transmitted diseases
- enteric diseases (other infections which travel through the body)
- trauma (physical damage)
- AIDS¹⁵

The disease risks for adolescent homosexuals are correlated with the number of partners and the practice of anal intercourse. AIDS is the most well known disease, but hepatitis B, neisseria gonorrhoea and treponema pallidum can also be fatal.

Why anal intercourse carries a very high risk

The seriousness of the risks associated with anal intercourse can be appreciated from the fact that those men who have “EVER had sex with another man” are not permitted to donate blood in the UK through the National Blood Service [emphasis in the original].¹⁶

Gay researchers report that anal intercourse has a high status amongst homosexual men.¹⁷ Project SIGMA found that 92% of the homosexual men in their study had had anal intercourse (71% in the past year and 41% in the past month).¹⁸

As well as the risk of actual physical damage, anal intercourse carries particular risks for the transmission of disease.¹⁹ Physical damage to the rectal lining is a serious problem with anal intercourse for the “receptive partner” irrespective of whether a condom is worn. Even without such major trauma, microscopic tears in the lining allow for the immediate entry of germs into the bloodstream. Anal intercourse leads to a breach in the barrier between the bloodstream and the extraordinarily toxic and infectious contents of the bowel.

AIDS

In the UK 72% of HIV infections amongst men are acquired as a result of homosexual intercourse. (Sexual intercourse between men and women in a low risk category makes up at the most 4% of all infections.) In the UK in the year to June 1997, 871 men died of AIDS as a result of homosexual intercourse.²⁰

According to the Terrence Higgins Trust, up to 20% of homosexual men in London are HIV+.²¹

‘Safer sex’ advice is wilfully ignored

- Project SIGMA found that homosexual men, in full knowledge of the risks, and of “safer sex” practices, continue to engage in risky i.e. “unprotected” homosexual practices. Non-use of condoms is not because of a lack of knowledge about HIV.^{22,23}
- A study into HIV risk behaviour among homosexual men at “Gay Pride” festivals from 1993-1995 concluded: “Despite an increase in prevention work targeted at this population, aggregate levels of sexual risk-taking have remained very stable.”²⁴
- A 1994 study of the sexual behaviour of gay and bisexual men²⁵ found that 42% of those with casual partners in the UK do not use a condom on every occasion.

Anal intercourse leads to high condom failure rates

- In 1987 the official policy of the *Terrence Higgins Trust*, the premier AIDS charity, was that: “Anal sex with or without a condom is dangerous. If you choose to continue having anal sex, condoms may offer some worthwhile protection.”²⁶
- *There is no agreed safety standard for condoms for anal use.*²⁷
- A major review of condom use for anal intercourse found a breakage rate of 32% and slippage of 21%, “significantly different from the breakage and slippage rates of 5.3% and 6.3% respectively, calculated for this group during vaginal intercourse.”²⁸
- A 1994 study of the sexual behaviour of gay and bisexual men across Europe found that around 25% of condom users report having had a condom burst.²⁹

‘Safer sex advice’ for 16-17 year olds can already be given.

A common sense view is that if the age of consent is lowered, *more* young men will commit homosexual acts and so *more* will become HIV positive. During the 1994 Parliamentary debates the very opposite was claimed: changing the law would mean *fewer cases of HIV* because of better sex education being given to young homosexual men. The reason claimed was that, if the law was changed, doctors and health educators could give advice free from concern that they were inciting individuals to break the law on the age of consent. As has been seen, the prediction of a fall in cases as a result of the legal changes in 1994 has not materialised.

The claim that sex education is impeded by the law is entirely bogus.

- In the *Gillick* case³⁰ the law lords held that a doctor could give contraceptive advice to a girl under the age of heterosexual consent. Clearly by analogy, doctors can also give “safer sex” advice to boys under the age of homosexual consent.
- A whole host of gay helplines, youth advice centres and freely available leaflets give the most explicit advice on homosexual “safer sex”.

- Knowledge about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases must by law be taught in all secondary schools. (Such teaching is specifically exempt from Clause 28, the law which prohibits the promotion of homosexuality in schools).

UK cases of AIDS & HIV thought to have been acquired through sex between men

Age	AIDS cases		HIV infected persons	
	1997	Total Cases	1997	Total Cases
>20	1	16	16	301
20-24	16	326	136	2435
25-29	110	1590	313	4566
30-34	148	2412	352	4203
35-39	186	2239	255	3034
40-44	108	1760	129	1968
45-49	75	1146	78	1166
50-54	62	612	45	625
55-59	27	338	25	315
60+	28	244	26	266

PHLS AIDS Centre, Quarterly Unpublished Tables No 39, Table 20

Few AIDS cases amongst under 20s

At present there have been very few cases of homosexual men acquiring AIDS under the age of 20. There are typically only one or two new AIDS cases every year for homosexual men under 20. In 1997 there was one new case of AIDS in this group. This age category has the lowest number of cases amongst homosexual men. By contrast for homosexual men over the age of 60, there were 28 new AIDS cases in 1997.

AIDS, a fatal illness, develops from HIV. In 1997 there were 16 homosexual men under the age of 20 who became HIV positive. For homosexual men over the age of 60 there were 26 new cases of HIV infection.

It is easy to see from the table above that the highest risk groups are those men aged between 25 and 34. Overall HIV infections acquired through sex between men rose by 11% from 1995 to 1996 - “a considerable rise compared with previous years” according to research reported in the BMJ which comments that new cases of HIV infection are “particularly common in young homosexual men (aged less than 30 years)”.³¹ Reducing the age of consent in 1994 has clearly failed to deliver on the claims of reducing the spread of HIV infection.

Why are under 20's HIV infections so low?

There are more homosexual men under the age of 20 who are HIV positive now (16 in 1997) than there were in 1994 (11 cases) when the law was changed. But it would not be right to claim that there had been a 45% increase in these HIV cases as a result of the legal change. No such claim can be established from such a low base of cases over such a short period of time.

The 16 cases of HIV in the under 20s is a fraction of the 136 cases in the 20 - 24 age group. The infections can only be lower because *fewer* men are committing homosexual acts in the under 20s age group. The SIGMA project found that the average age of first *anal intercourse* was 20.9 years.³² The only other alternative is that men under 20 are spectacularly well informed about how to reduce the HIV risks in homosexual activity.

Why are comparatively few under 20 committing homosexual acts? Clearly the law has an impact. Importantly, so too does the fact, shown by other research, that teenage men can experience homosexual feelings with the majority of this group then growing out of it.

The Sex Education Myth

'Safer sex' advice *is being given* to young homosexual men with *little restriction* from the age of consent.

Even after the advice is given, many homosexual men deliberately ignore it and engage in risky 'unprotected' sexual behaviour.

Even if they do follow the tenets of 'safer sex', condom failure rates for anal intercourse mean that the dangers are still considerable.

There are only *very small numbers* of young homosexual men under 20 but they are at high risk of acquiring disease.

Project SIGMA

Project SIGMA is the leading academic research project into male homosexual behaviour in the UK. The project claims to have emerged from within the homosexual community³³ and is attached to the University of Portsmouth.

The main SIGMA study of homosexual and bi-sexual men was funded by the Department of Health and published by HMSO.³⁴

Project SIGMA found that 20% of the men in the study first had sex with a man who was 10 years or more older than themselves.³⁵

Multiple partners

The SIGMA project found that most homosexual men have casual partners. Of those who do the average was 7 casual partners a year, or one every seven or eight weeks.³⁶ Over one quarter (27%) met at least one in a public lavatory (“cottage”). Men using cottages average 30 partners per year.³⁷

Project SIGMA states:

“There is a widespread expectation among gay men that relationships will not be monogamous since this is widely seen as a means of combining the security of a long term commitment with the excitement of new encounters.”³⁸

Young men under 21

A detailed examination³⁹ of the 111 gay men *under 21* in the study found that 26.9% first had intercourse with someone 10 years or more older or younger than themselves.⁴⁰ The partner involved was either 10 or more years *younger* (i.e. a child under the age of 11), or a man 10 or more years *older*.

The young men in the study were immersed in the full range of homosexual activities. Fourteen sexual practices of the young men in the study were identified ranging from anal intercourse, experienced by 87%, and regularly practised by 53%, to coprophilia (eating of and playing with human excrement) experienced by 20%.⁴¹

Nearly a third (32%) of the young men had homosexual experiences with “identifiable strangers such as someone they had just met in a park, pub or toilet.”⁴² Two thirds of the young men had casual partners.⁴³

Rape

The SIGMA project found that 24% of homosexual men reported being raped or coerced into sexual activity by another man.⁴⁴ The study also found that, “Older men ‘molesting’ or ‘touching up’ younger boys was not uncommon.”^{45, 46}

The study concluded “the gay community itself is reluctant to acknowledge that gay men intimidate, exploit, and sexually assault other gay men; it is

Project SIGMA

politically embarrassing to the gay movement (in the same way that paedophilia is embarrassing), and it is dangerous ammunition for an oppressive majority”.⁴⁷

SIGMA argued that the problems of under-reporting of homosexual rape would be greater than with heterosexual rape.

According to the official Criminal Statistics in 1996 there were 5759 rapes of women recorded in England and Wales. This represents around 0.03% of all adult women.⁴⁸

Male rape was first introduced as an offence in 1994. A detailed analysis of criminal statistics reveals there is a disproportionately high proportion of male rapes though by no means as high as SIGMA’s 24%.⁴⁹

In the SIGMA study, some 70% of the men were part of the “gay scene” (attending homosexual clubs).⁵⁰ Perhaps the reason why as many as 24% of gay men experienced rape or non-consensual sex is due to the problems associated with the gay subculture.

The SIGMA study description of what is meant by ‘casual sex’ for homosexuals:

“There is a variety of places gay men can meet each other either primarily or solely for casual sex. Clubs and pubs are the central social venues of the gay community and as such offer gay men a safe environment for meeting, social interaction and for explicit and implicit sexual negotiations.

The cottage (public lavatory) offers the possibility of sexual contact both for men on the gay scene and for other men who keep their homosexual activities secret. Sexual negotiation in this context is mostly silent, and is highly patterned and ritualised. Cruising grounds include parks, heaths and lightly wooded areas where sexual contact can be negotiated and executed.... Of course, men may also meet in any public space, and negotiate a sexual encounter.”⁵¹

The collapse of prosecutions

Heterosexual age of consent offences are not generally prosecuted. One in three girls aged 14 - 15 is sexually active compared to one in five six years ago. Yet successful prosecutions of men who had sex with girls aged 14 - 15 fell from 1,426 in 1986 to 576 in 1996.^{52,53}

If the age of homosexual consent is reduced, the same effect will take place. Homosexual men who have sex with boys below the age of 16 will not be prosecuted. Thus the age of consent *in practice* will be lowered still further.

Prosecutions for homosexual offences have been declining, especially since the last reduction in the age of consent in 1994. In that year, amongst boys aged 16 to 18, there were 27 prosecutions for buggery offences resulting in 15 convictions. In 1996 there were only 6 prosecutions resulting in 2 convictions⁵⁴.

Even where there are prosecutions, sentencing may be well below the penalties provided for by law. The case of the so-called Bolton Seven illustrates this. A 17 year old youth was involved in group sex with six other men aged up to 55. All 7 received either probation, community service or suspended sentences⁵⁵.

The Homosexual Age of Consent : The Law

What is termed the 'homosexual age of consent' is the age at which homosexual acts are not a criminal offence. In law homosexual acts are divided into two categories: buggery (which is anal intercourse) and gross indecency (which is sexual acts between men that fall short of buggery).

Buggery was first made a criminal offence in English law in 1533 and has remained so ever since. The offence of Gross Indecency was created by the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885. The 1956 Sexual Offences Act consolidated the law relating to both of these offences.

Gross indecency and buggery were partially decriminalised by the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. Section 1 of the 1967 Act created an exception. Gross indecency or buggery were always an offence *unless*:

- i) the acts were committed in private; and
- ii) both parties consented; and
- iii) both parties had attained the age of 21.

The 1967 Act had to make provision for the well-known problem of homosexual acts carried out in public lavatories. "Private" was deliberately defined so that an act was not done in private if done "in a lavatory to which the public have or are permitted to have access". Nor was an act private "when more than two persons take part or are present".

The 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act reduced the minimum age from 21 to 18.

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- ⁹ *Ibid* page 187
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, page 209
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- ⁵⁶ *Guardian* 21 May 1998, Outrage press release, 14 February 1996
- ⁵⁷ Hansard, The House of Commons, 18 July 1997, col 347
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16, 15, 14....

An age of homosexual consent set at 16 means 14 in practice since the Police generally do not prosecute between 14 and 16. When the age of homosexual consent was lowered to 18, prosecutions for indecency and buggery involving 16 year old boys fell dramatically (see inside).

Some homosexual campaign groups like Peter Tatchell's Outrage! want to see the homosexual and heterosexual ages of consent reduced to 14. Below this age they say "Sex involving young people below the age of 14 should not be prosecuted providing both partners consent and there is no more than three years difference in their ages".⁵⁶ In Holland and Spain the age of consent is effectively 12 because of similar non-prosecution policies.⁵⁷

Gay Men's Press, the main homosexual publisher, has printed *Dares to Speak - Perspectives on Boy-Love* - a book justifying paedophilia (or as it terms it 'intergenerational sex').

Age of Consent - the thin end of the wedge

Gay rights campaigners want more than equality in the age of consent. Stonewall, the leading gay rights campaign group, wants:

- Repeal of the law of gross indecency - an offence created to deal with the specific nuisance of male homosexual activity in public;
- Repeal of Clause 28 - introduced to stop groups promoting homosexuality in schools;
- New anti-discrimination legislation - which could force employers and others to act against their conscience;
- Repeal of the ban on homosexuals in the military;
- Legal recognition of homosexual partnerships;
- The right to foster and adopt children.⁵⁸

This pamphlet argues that the debate about reducing the age of consent should focus on health, protecting the young, basic morality, promoting stable family life and preserving society.



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