

ROYAL NAVY CONFERENCE FOR LESBIAN AND GAY PERSONNEL, 27 – 28th January 2006

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The first Royal Navy Conference for Gay and Lesbian Personnel was held at Amport House on 27th and 28th Jan 06. The event was attended by 40 personnel and supported by key 2SL Staff Officers, the Executive Director of Stonewall and the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme Manager.

The Conference was Community led event and the agreements reached over the course of the Conference represent the aspirations of those who attended and are not reflective of formal policy. This Summary of Proceedings aims provide a record of the Conference for those who attended, those who were not able to attend and key desk officers.

PROGRAMME

Friday 27th January

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1400 – 1500 | Registration/Coffee/Room allocation |
| 1500 | Admin – Lt Cdr Rolf Kurth
Message of Support – Cdre Docherty
Welcome - Lt Cdr Craig Jones |
| 1515 | The last 10 years - Lt Cdr Craig Jones |
| 1535 | Proud2Serve – Flt Lt Philip Johnston |
| 1545 | Stonewall Diversity Champions – Steve Frost |
| 1605 | Coffee Break |
| 1620 | Cdr Tim Kingsbury/Cdr Graham Beard – D/E Desk Overview |
| 1630 | Panel Question and Answer – Cdre Docherty, Cdr Kingsbury |
| 1700 | Options for Change (Seminar Brief) |
| 1730 | Close |
| 1830 | Drinks/Dinner |
| 2000 | Address by Ben Summerskill, Executive Director Stonewall |

Saturday 28th January

0900	Seminar 1 – Capturing Experience by Questionnaire (2 all RN male groups, 1 all female group, 1 RAF/Army Group each led by Officer/SR volunteer)
0945	Plenary Discussion
1030	Seminar 2 – The Way Forward (same groups)
1130	Plenary Discussion
1230	Closing Remarks
1245	Lunch
O/c	Disperse

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

The following notes summarise discussion from the briefs, Q + A and seminars and have been widely distributed in draft form to ensure they reflect the discussion and the eventual consensus.

- Following Welcomes from Lt Cdr Rolf Kurth and Cdre Docherty a brief on policy and community development was provided by Lt Cdr Craig Jones covering the period 1994 – 2006. He provided an insight into the experiences of gay men and women in the Armed Forces through the 1990's, the pre AFCSC policy approach, the interaction of 'Rank Outsiders' and the ECHR/ECJ, formal adoption of the AFCSC, subsequent policy development, and the interaction between 2SL Staff, Stonewall and the gay community representatives to the present day.
- Stephen Frost, Stonewalls Diversity Champions Programme Manager introduced his role, as a consultant to 2SL Staff and introduced the aims and aspirations of the Diversity Champions programme.
- SO1 DEO (Cdr Tim Kingsbury) introduced his role and provided a resume of 2SLs Staff involvement in developing an approach which makes gay men and women in the Royal Navy feel welcome, including the developing association with Stonewall. Cdr Graham Beard (SO1 DEO Desig) introduced himself.
- Flt Lt Philip Johnston provided a brief on 'Proud 2 Serve' a web-based community support initiative which he has developed over the last 12 months. He was warmly congratulated on this first-class service which is widely used.

- Cdre Docherty led the 2SL team in answering a very well received period of 'Any Questions' with questions fielded by Lt Cdr Jones. Subjects discussed included; Internal/External media policy approaches, PRIDE, the development of an Association, specialist support (professional support from serving gay individuals during investigations/case work etc), development of a leaflet providing summary of gay community support initiatives, equal Ops lectures during induction, strategic disparity with race/gender strands (SO poor relation), tri-service/single service differences. These matters were discussed in greater detail during seminar. Expansion of this discussion is provided below.
- Before closing the first day, Lt Cdr Jones reminded the Conference of the fact that a number of external factors would influence the 'way forward' for the Royal Navy, including the pace of change in other Services and therefore aspirations agreed at conference would need much careful work (and sometimes a factor of time) in order to become realities. He then illustrated some 'options for change' to set the course for the subsequent seminars and to allow attendees an opportunity to discuss ideas informally through the evening.
- The group convened for drinks at 1830 and an informal dinner at 2000. Following a loyal toast, the group offered a toast to the 'Rank Outsiders' in recognition of their contribution which led to the development of the AFCSC. Following dinner, Ben Summerskill, Executive Director of Stonewall addressed the Conference (very well received).
- The conference was reconvened at 0900 Saturday and briefed on the seminars. Seminar 1 would consider the value and suggested content of a questionnaire which would seek to take a 'sample' of the experiences/aspirations of the gay community in the Royal Navy; Seminar 2 would ask seminar groups to consider aspirations for the development of the community in the future. The Conference was divided into seminar groups as follows: Group 1 Army/RAF, Group 2 women, Group 3/4 men.
- Seminar 1:- The potential benefit of the questionnaire produced mixed opinion. Many felt that that the recent EOC directed Questionnaire should have taken a broad sample of experience from other minority groups (even though no statutory requirement for this existed). Some felt that a questionnaire should seek to take samples from all parts of the community regarding attitudes/experiences concerning the inclusive policy for gay men and women in military society. The following were consider appropriate areas of enquiry for the questionnaire :
 - Experiences of intimidation, harassment, bullying, violence and abuse.
 - Opinions/experiences of the effect of 'banter'.
 - Whether individuals felt being 'out' had /would have a negative impact upon their career in the Service.

- Positive and negative experiences of support from Divisional System, Command and others.
 - Whether individuals felt informed/aware from internal and external communications about policy approaches and community initiatives.
 - How the Royal Navy might seek to assist gay men and women cope, find their place and excel in their roles.
 - What were aspirations of gay men and women for the development of their community in the Royal Navy?
 - Provide an opportunity for people to 'tell their story' in addition to structured questions.
 - Ask 'What was the outcome?' Where negative, why/what/whither/when. In cases of a positive outcome were results achieved through Command/Divisional support and good practise/procedures or was it one individual approach which made the difference.
- Seminar 2:- The conference agreed that there was a strong desire to further develop opportunities for mutual support. Specific initiatives discussed were as follows (no particular order) :
 - PRIDE – Conference agreed that they would be pleased to see involvement at Europride London, Brighton and Manchester. A tri-service approach would be particularly welcomed. London should involve a marching formation of men and women and all should involve recruiting stands which could be manned by a mixture of professional recruiters and members of the gay community. This should be an official, uniformed duty for those involved. A majority did not favour the use of a 'float' which might look 'tacky' and could become a target. All agreed that there should be no hint of 'campaign' and that the initiative would aim to encourage gay men and women to have a positive view of the Armed Forces (consider a career) and the added benefit would be a demonstration to serving gay men and women of the corporate support of them. Volunteers to assist would need to be solicited early through internal advertising. It was agreed that this would need a 'way forward' to be developed by 2SL Staff. **Action : CPO PTI Mark Probee agreed to provide community lead on this initiative.**
 - Association/Society – Conference agreed that the establishment of an Assoc/Soc would be welcomed, providing a community focus vice the present informal arrangement. It was suggested that the willingness for the gay minority group to gather together in this way reflected wider society, where similar collective mutual support was commonly sought. Ideally this would have tri-service coordination. One idea involved having 3 'chapters' of a single

organisation – possibly under the P2S banner. It was agreed that the gay community in the Royal Navy might seek to establish its organisation to lead on the issue. The group would need a central committee which represented all elements of the membership (gay women, gay men, TS, bi etc). It was agreed that the focus for the organisation would be an annual conference and dinner however the existence of a structure would likely be 'tapped into' but 2SL DE Staff when consultation was appropriate/needed. It was agreed that appropriate permissions would need to be investigated by 2SL Staff, in order to inform the development of this concept. There was a common aspiration that the Assoc/Soc would 'stand-up' at the 2007 Royal Navy Lesbian and Gay Conference at the Union Jack Club on Fri 2nd and Sat 3rd February 2007.

- Conference 2007 – There was enthusiastic support for a repeat Conference in 2007 and the first weekend of February was suggested. All attendees agreed that the Conference must seek to be Tri-Service (as a matter of priority). **Action: Lt Cdr Jones agreed to undertake initial work to set this in motion and set up coordinating Committee.**
 - It was commonly agreed that all 'New Entry' should be given a leaflet illustrating how the gay community in the Royal Navy is supported and how individuals might seek to become involved (should they wish). These leaflets should be widely advertised so that they can be made available to all serving personnel by request.
 - Considered desirable that P2S (Proud 2 Serve) should be advertised in Navy News, Soldier, RAF News etc.
 - Conference agreed that selected gay Officers and Senior Ratings needed to be placed in endorsed secondary roles which would allow them to offer support to others who might seek the counsel of a more senior gay colleague. This might be an individual on 2SL Staff or at unit/base port level (reflecting earlier 'Female Focus Officer' initiative).
- Closing remarks were made by Lt Cdr Rolf Kurth, Cdr Graham Beard and Lt Cdr Craig Jones.