

# NEU LGBT+ Educators' Conference 2018 report

by Benedict O'Connell, Surrey NEU LGBT+ Officer

On the weekend of 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> April Surrey NEU members headed up to Leeds to take part in the NEU LGBT+ Educators' Conference.

As with all previous years, conference attendance again grew with over 250 delegates taking part in a number of workshops and networking activities at the Queen's Hotel in Leeds. Workshops were provided by a range of organisations including Mermaids, Stonewall and Gendered Intelligence.



One welcomed addition to this year's conference were separate caucus events for Black teachers, Disabled teachers, Bi teachers and Transgender and Non-binary teachers. I had the pleasure of facilitating the Bi teachers' caucus this year and found the space allowed for important discussions to take place on how we as Bi teachers relate to the wider LGBT+ community and also how we can support our Bi students; the latter being particularly important with recent government statistics suggesting that over half of young people identifying as 'something other than heterosexual'. Off the back of discussions in the Bi caucus, an informal 'NEU Bi Teachers Forum' was set up (Facebook and email). Any Surrey members interested in joining this can send me an email on [benedictoconnell@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:benedictoconnell@hotmail.co.uk)

Another addition to the LGBT+ Conference this year was an Awards Dinner with a variety of awards up for grabs including Best Event, Most Inspiring Individual and Best Training. Committed union activist Chay Brown picked up several awards for his work on increasing Trans visibility and supporting Trans teachers.

NUT Surrey Division member Marc Dodi and I were also pleased to see that word of our Pride Week at Strode's College had spread with one delegate expressing that she would like to use it as a model in her own school.



*Fox and Owl present their video series 'My Genderation' that documents stories of Trans people and their experiences*

On Sunday, several motions were debated with one on supporting LGBT+, Black and Disabled members against discrimination and harassment voted for to be taken to national conference. The motion considers changing disciplinary procedures within the union to ensure members are assisted in pursuing complaints relating to harassment.

Of course, there were opportunities at conference for socialising too and we were pleased to see a return of the Saturday night 'Queer Disco' which again featured some impressive moves and Friday night Bingo where winners received giant inflatables including a dinosaur (see said dinosaur below).



*Friday night Bingo*

Overall the conference provided opportunities to connect with other LGBT+ educators, to share experiences, highs and lows, to reflect critically on our practice, to consider how we can further LGBT+ visibility in our various educational contexts and ultimately move forward in supporting our students and supporting each other as LGBT+ educators.