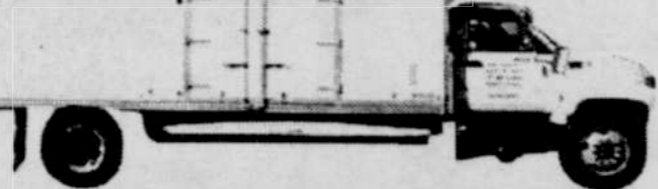


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WORLD news

UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester, England, has followed London in setting up a registry for gay couples.

Its system goes a step further, allowing gays to unite at an office before officials. In London, gays only may register Wednesdays and Saturdays at the visitors center of the Greater London Authority.

The first couples in Manchester were united April 19. One registrant, Steven Brayshaw, lamented the limited benefits of the procedure.

"We have just stood in the same room as the heterosexual couple who were married 20 minutes before us," he told Ananova.com. "Like them, we stood in front of a registrar and exchanged vows and signed the register, but our relationship is not officially legal and is not recognized except by the city of Manchester. We don't have the same rights that other couples take for granted."

The ceremony costs \$141. The office plans to change the sign on its door to read, "Register of Birth, Marriages, Death and Partnerships."

Lesbian couple in Edinburgh, Scotland, have been granted joint parental rights to their two sons. One boy was conceived with donated sperm, and the other was born to the second woman during a heterosexual marriage.

It was a Scottish legal first, according to the Scotsman newspaper. The ex-husband also is still a legal parent.

"Family is about cohesion, about bringing people together in a secure, loving, stable environment," one of the women, Natalie, told the paper. "When David falls over, he runs to one of us. When Cameron sees me or Pam or David, his face lights up. That's family."

The ruling will be used in an appeal by another Scottish lesbian couple who recently were denied joint parental rights because the judge said they did not constitute a proper family unit. In that case, the judge granted parental rights to the sperm donor who fathered the child.

The man behind the U.K. version of *Queer as Folk* is back with another groundbreaking gay series.

Russell T. Davies' *Bob and Rose* already has aired in Britain and is airing now in Canada. It's about a gay man and a straight woman who fall in love—and go for it.



Bob and Rose is like a British *Will & Grace*—with a twist

SWITZERLAND

Indian gay activist Aditya Bondyopadhyay addressed the U.N. Commission on Human Rights on April 8 in Geneva detailing discrimination, harassment, arrests, beatings, torture, blackmail, extortion and rape in his native land. Much of the abuse is carried out by police, the judiciary and other state institutions, he said.

Among much else, Bondyopadhyay presented details on the "Lucknow 4" case, in which four HIV prevention workers were charged with conspiring to commit "unnatural sexual acts" under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. They were detained without bail for 45 days to seven months.

"The arrested four were beaten, denied food, forced to drink sewer water, abused regularly and

refused treatment when they got sick," Bondyopadhyay said. "One of the arrested had his glasses stamped on and broken and had to spend 45 days' incarceration with impaired vision."

RUSSIA

Russia has the world's fastest-growing HIV rate, U.N. AIDS chief Peter Piot told the *Moscow Times* April 12.

"The situation in Russia and the [12 former Soviet republics] is rapidly getting out of control," he said. "New infections double each year."

Piot said that needle sharing causes most infections but that "an increasing number are being infected through sexual activity." The current budget allocates about \$5.3 million to fight HIV.



Peter Piot

The national government reports only 200,000 HIV cases. The United Nations says the real number might approach 800,000, and a top Russian AIDS official recently estimated it could top 1 million.

NIGERIA

A total of 14 high schoolers at Birnin Kudu College in the Nigerian state of Jigawa have been arrested for beating to death a fellow student they thought was gay. The suspects are being held in the capital city of Dutse.

Inuwa Yakubu was dragged from his bed and beaten until he lost consciousness, the African Eye News Service reported. He later came to and crawled back to his bed, where he died.

AUSTRALIA

An Australian court overruled the wishes of a lesbian couple April 5 and granted increased visitation rights to the gay man who donated the sperm to conceive their son. The ruling was handed down by the state of Victoria's Family Court in Melbourne.

Victoria is one of two Australian states where "socially infertile" (as opposed to "medically infertile") women are not allowed to use sperm banks, which led the couple to arrange an informal agreement with the gay man. The parties to the court case were not named in media reports.

IRELAND

A new study of Irish gay men found that one in five had more than 16 sexual partners in the past year and that 3 percent had more than 51 partners, the *Irish Independent* reported April 6.

The average number of sexual partners was five. The men met at bars, bathhouses, social clubs, private parties, cruising spots and public toilets as well as on the Internet.

About 8.5 percent had sex with a woman in the past year. Half of the respondents had a regular male sexual partner, and half of that group had been partnered for more than two years.

The survey was conducted by the Gay