

Trust for London funded the LGBT Consortium to explore how the complex needs of LGBT people are being addressed by service providers. Anglia Ruskin University was commissioned to research the experience of a handful of LGBT providers and service users. The research recognises that a more collective and coordinated approach in providing support for LGBT people is needed.

Still Out There

An exploration of LGBT Londoners' unmet needs

Key Findings

- Many LGBT people in London face a multitude of issues that require targeted support by statutory and third sector service providers. Key amongst these are issues of poverty and significant levels of prejudice (e.g. homophobia/biphobia/transphobia) faced by LGBT people, both of which have far-reaching consequences for their overall health and well-being.
- The research highlights that over one third of LGBT people in the study face significant financial hardship and lack sufficient financial resources to maintain a suitable standard of living in the Capital, earning less than £15,000 per annum (below the current London Living Wage of £9.40/hour).
- For one third of LGBT people in the study, ensuring their physical safety both at home and elsewhere is a constant or significant challenge.
- More than 40% of LGBT people in the study experience some form of prejudice on a regular basis.
- The research showed that a majority of LGBT people are reluctant to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity, for fear of the reaction they will receive from staff in mainstream organisations.
- LGBT service provision is largely underfunded or unavailable within many London boroughs or regions. As a result, the majority of respondents were unable to access LGBT-specific services within their locality, whilst a majority of respondents stated they would prefer to access LGBT-specific services if they were available to them.
- The evidence showed that LGBT individuals with increasingly complex and diverse needs were presenting to service providers and that, given funding limitations, there was limited scope to respond to these complex demands.
- Despite obstacles, a range of initiatives currently exist to support LGBT communities. These initiatives, and the organisations leading them, have had a positive impact on the lives of people who otherwise face significant hardship. These examples could serve as beacons of best practice from which both voluntary sector organisations and funders can benchmark initiatives and activities.

Introduction

At a time when it is often assumed that sexual and gender minority people face fewer challenges attributable to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, there is a need to fully understand the true, lived experiences of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) people in London. Funded by Trust for London, a partnership of LGBT organisations (LGBT Consortium, Stonewall Housing, London Friend, METRO, GMFA, Broken Rainbow and PACE) came together in recognition that LGBT people presenting to service providers do so with increasingly complex needs (health, mental health, housing, drugs and alcohol use, safety and violence) at a time when service providers are facing increased pressure on resources. There was a recognition that a more collective and coordinated approach in providing support for these communities was needed. That said, the research focuses exclusively on providers and users of LGBT services, not the LGBT community as a whole.

Background

The introduction of anti-discrimination protections for sexual and gender minorities, the legalisation of same-sex marriage and the inclusion of gender reassignment as a protected characteristic are all indicative of significant socio-political advances. Further, the prevalence of openly LGB and Trans politicians, musicians and celebrities all suggest a significant shift in societal attitudes towards LGBT communities. However, such positive steps do not fully account for the everyday lives of LGBT people, particularly in London. Prejudice and victimisation, in the form of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are still commonly reported by LGBT people.

This report presents the findings from the research. It provides a broader narrative drawn from both interviews and surveys, concerning the experience of LGBT service users and providers across London. The findings offer some insight into the current challenges faced by LGBT people and organisations, giving clear evidence and recommendations as to how they might be addressed. In this respect, it is hoped that this report will be of particular interest to commissioners, funders and service providers in determining their strategic aims and priorities in relation to future service provision for LGBT people.

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was adopted for this research, including qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to provide a broad evidence base to address the objectives. This included both service provider and service user surveys and subsequent follow up interviews, either face to face or by phone. 60 service providers, representing a range of services and communities, responded to the survey, including mainstream and LGBT specialist providers, with eight follow up interviews. 158 service users completed the survey, with a varied breakdown of sexual orientations and gender identities represented. Six individuals, who represented a range of cross-cutting personal characteristics, were then interviewed.

The Broader Picture

The research provides a snapshot (and broader narrative) of some of the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people living in London and illuminates the issues faced by organisations providing support to these diverse communities. In doing so, this analysis achieved four key objectives:

- It details some of the issues experienced by LGBT people ‘in need’ and/or in poverty.
- It identifies what services LGBT people access and key reasons why those in need and/or in poverty do not access services they require.
- It specifies ongoing challenges experienced by organisations in meeting the needs of LGBT communities.
- It highlights positive examples of working models of good practice.

Recognising the Issues

The full research report provides a more detailed account of the issues faced by lesbian, gay bisexual and trans people as described by service providers during interviews, and that span across the majority of LGBT communities in London. A summary of the main issues are outlined in this table.

Lesbians	Gay Men	Bisexual	Trans people
Invisibility: Lack of recognition of lesbians’ needs by service providers	Sexual health: HIV prevalence rates remain a significant issue	Bi-erasure: Hostility, dismissal and erasure of bisexual identity	Services: Distinct lack of trans-specific or actively inclusive services
Isolation: Lack of support leads women to seek help within communities rather than from services	Substances: Drug and alcohol use pose increasing issues	Invisibility: Lack of visibility leads to lack of services to meet needs	Knowledge: Lack of awareness of trans people’s requirements and individual needs
Substances: An increase in alcohol and drug use in women is recognised.	Social Pressures: Men face increasing pressures of how to be gay, causing distress and mental health issues	Mental Health: Higher incidence of mental ill-health among bisexual people	Transphobia: Trans people face significant prejudice, discrimination and victimisation

There is a clear indication that the demographic profile of LGBT people who consider themselves to be in poverty does not fit with the common perception that this is as a direct result of low educational attainment. The research suggests that LGBT people who are well educated are as likely to be in poverty as those who are unqualified. It also suggests that the needs of LGBT people are considerably more complex and multi-layered than previously recognised.

Service use by LGBT People

In the main, both LGB and Trans people do not feel that they receive an appropriate level of support from their local authority. The majority of respondents are reluctant to reveal either their sexual orientation or their gender identity to these mainstream organisations. This hesitancy often stems from fear concerning the reaction that LGBT people will receive upon revealing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, from staff in these

organisations. The research has highlighted that the relatively low level of LGBT service provision that exists suggests that some LGBT people are unable to access the support they require. Given the sparse distribution of LGBT-specific services, people are often required to commute considerable distances in order to access support, thereby acting as a barrier in doing so. Service providers, as part of the research, also argued that the limitations they face in providing specific services are, in part, due to restrictive geographic boundaries placed on them as part of their borough or region-specific contracts.

Challenges of LGBT Service Provision

The challenges faced by LGBT service providers include the pressures placed on them as a consequence of increasing demand on services due to, and at the same time as, severe restrictions arising from cuts in funding. Organisations are also being challenged with increasingly complex requests from individuals presenting with a multitude of needs, whilst also trying to accommodate and develop support that meet the needs of diverse communities. In order to overcome challenges, some service providers have engaged in a range of activities such as cost-saving initiatives, entering into funding partnerships, or have taken direct action to challenge funding cuts.

Meeting Needs

The research has illustrated how, through collaboration and participation, service providers can come together in partnership to support LGBT people effectively both in terms of complex needs and geographical locations.

As part of our study, service providers were being faced with increased demand for services and those seeking support presented with increasingly complex needs. In this way, a co-dependency between service provider and service user emerges. Whilst service users are presenting with increasingly complex needs, available service provision to meet these needs is declining, resulting in Local Authorities and service providers reduced ability to tackle LGBT communities' needs more fully.

In order to overcome this veritable 'perfect storm', investment and support is required for the individual organisations that work with LGBT people and support is also required for collaborative initiatives to help address complex needs.

Good Practice

The research identified several good practice models for LGBT service provision, which meet the diverse and complex needs of LGBT people, including:

- **LGBT Jigsaw:** A partnership of specialist providers, the group offers an inclusive safe space for young LGBT people to achieve their full potential, addressing issues around homelessness, mental health, domestic abuse and personal safety. This model allows young people to tell their story and receive a range of support from appropriate organisations who understand their needs. www.lgbtjigsaw.net
- **Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP), London:** Five specialist LGBT organisations that provide an immediate, joint response to domestic abuse. The DAP has produced specialist resources for LGBT people, improved the experiences of those who have previously had negative experiences of reporting domestic abuse and has established appropriate referral pathways to help tackle complex needs. www.lgbtdap.org.uk

Recommendations

- With the research highlighting the fact that those LGBT people seeking support is not the profile typically associated with financial hardship or low-income (e.g. high level of respondents in poverty having received Higher Education), further consideration is needed of the demographic profiles of LGBT communities, the causes of poverty and meeting these complex needs.
- Continued infrastructural investment and development of LGBT services is needed in order to ensure better co-ordination in meeting the broad and complex needs of LGBT communities.
- Given the breadth and diversity of LGBT communities demographic profiles, the Greater London Authority and regional bodies should consider and develop strategies to improve evidence gathering, as well as identify and develop coordinated solutions to support LGBT communities.
- LGBT sector organisations are encouraged to improve how they engage and work with individual LGBT communities and recognise ethnic, racial, religious, gender and other characteristics that exist among their prospective service users.
- Commissioners and funders should recognise that there is a real need to develop specialist service provision alongside more mainstream provision and scope to encourage collaboration and partnerships, which can more effectively engage with complex needs.

Mainstream service provision:

- There is a need for more Londonwide and cross-borough approaches to specialist service delivery. The rise in online services can help address this, where appropriate, and for those willing and/or able to access services in this way.
- An in-depth examination into the impact of specialist services – on local, borough and Londonwide levels – is required. Particular focus should be given to how funding could better support capacity building for co-ordinated delivery of services.
- Given the increasing demands placed on voluntary sector organisations and the increasingly complex needs being witnessed by third sector service providers, commissioned providers should be required to evidence how they meet the needs of LGBT people and they should encourage sub-contracting to LGBT specialist providers to assist with delivery.
- Service providers, particularly those targeting the general population, should review practices. This should inform efforts to improve their engagement with LGBT people in order to tackle the reluctance, by many, to access services or reveal their sexual or gender status to service providers.

LGBT service provision:

- Commissioners need to better acknowledge that often LGBT specialist organisations and services are in a strong position to meet Local Authority targets on a range of outcomes, for example through Health and Well Being Boards & Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).
- Given the increasing demands placed on voluntary sector organisations and the increasingly complex needs being witnessed by third sector service providers, commissioned providers should be required to evidence how they meet the needs of LGBT people and they should encourage sub-contracting to LGBT specialist providers to assist with delivery.
- Complying with legislation and meeting Local Authority targets can be achieved at a lower cost by commissioning specialist service partnerships from organisations with specific experience and training in working with specialist populations.
- Due to limited available funding opportunities, Local Authorities should be encouraged to provide evidence that the needs of communities are still being adequately met when they de-commission services.
- Joint approaches and alliances across LGBT organisations and other equality-led groups should be encouraged and supported to tackle common experiences of poverty and inequality.

Trust for London

www.trustforlondon.org.uk

Trust for London is the largest independent charitable foundation funding work which tackles poverty and inequality in the capital. Annually, it provides about £7 million in grants and at any one point is supporting some 400 organisations.

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LGBT Consortium

www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk

Is a national membership organisation focusing on the development and support of LGBT groups, projects and organisations; so they can deliver direct services and campaign for individual rights.

Partner Organisations

Stonewall Housing

www.stonewallhousing.org

London Friend

www.londonfriend.org.uk

METRO (London)

www.metrocentreonline.org

GMFA

www.gmfa.org.uk

The research was conducted by Daragh McDermott and Russell Luyt, Department of Psychology, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge and managed by the LGBT Consortium.

The full report can be downloaded from: www.trustforlondon.org.uk/lgbt-narrative/