



# Fife LGBT Community Needs Assessment Report



LGBT Health and Wellbeing  
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# Introduction



In recent years considerable progress has been made towards achieving greater legal and social equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. However, we know that LGBT people across Scotland continue to face inequality in their everyday lives.

The Fife LGBT Community Needs Assessment Report is the most comprehensive research to date of the experience of LGBT people in Fife. The Report presents the findings from a survey of 148 LGBT people living in Fife, as well as from in-depth interviews with 12 individuals. Where relevant, these findings are reported alongside those from the Scottish LGBT Equality Report, to provide a national context and enable a comparator between the experience of LGBT people living in Fife and those living in other parts of the country.

The report reveals the extent to which LGBT people in Fife are often still not able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves. It highlights how the dearth of LGBT-specific social activities and venues in much of Fife, which severely limits the opportunity to connect with peers, can contribute to isolation and negatively impact on health and wellbeing.

The report also looks at LGBT people's experience of services in Fife, and highlights significant disadvantage when using health and support services, with needs often not recognised or met. The report findings point to a strong need for LGBT-specific information and support in Fife, as well as significant scope for mainstream services to become better informed and more LGBT-friendly.

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# Key findings

## Section 1: Being out at work and at home

*“ I want to be out, but I've heard so much homophobia and transphobia from my colleagues that I feel unsafe being out. ”*

Despite considerable improvements in social attitudes, and greater legal protection, LGBT people in Fife are often still not able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves. Instead, LGBT people are frequently forced to hide who they are for fear of negative reactions and treatment, impacting negatively on their mental health and wellbeing.

### The workplace

*“I feel comfortable being out but I don't always feel safe. I do get the occasional derogatory comment from colleagues but I try to not let it bother me.”*

- 1 in 3 respondents are not out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to any of their work colleagues
- 1 in 10 respondents (9%) feel that their LGBT identity is not respected or not at all respected by their colleagues.

### Neighbours

*“I moved away from Fife to be as far away from the people in my street who used to harass me for being a lesbian. There were also no visible support networks or spaces to go to.”*

- 2 in 3 respondents are not out to their neighbours about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 1 in 4 respondents (22%) feel their LGBT identity is not or not at all respected within their neighbourhood, and a further 1 in 3 (34%) feel they do not know if it is or would be respected.

### The local community

*“One neighbour is very homophobic. He has made comments about myself and my partner in the street and was about to hit me in an argument he had started and then made terrible comments.”*

Whilst the survey did not specifically ask respondents about their experience of hate crime or harassment, quite a number of respondents referred to incidents they had experienced in their local community, which ranged from verbal comments to sustained harassment and intimidation.

## Section 2: Connecting with other LGBT people

*“ My counsellor referred me to a group in Edinburgh when I told her that I wanted to meet other LGBT people and that I was feeling lonely. I struggle to find funds in order to travel from Fife to Edinburgh, otherwise I would come more often. ”*

Due to the lack of LGBT-specific social activities or venues, LGBT people in Fife have very limited opportunities to connect with others. This lack of peer contact and support has a negative impact on health and wellbeing, and often leaves LGBT people isolated and without a space to be themselves.

### Contact with other LGBT people

*“Moved to Edinburgh to be closer to better services and support. Lived in Kirkcaldy, Fife and was very, very isolated in being LGBT.”*

- Most respondents (86%) reported that they would like to have more contact with other LGBT people
- 3 in 10 respondents (28%) never or rarely have contact with other LGBT people in Fife
- The majority of respondents (82%) want to more connections with LGBT in Fife.

### Barriers to establishing social connections

*“No social scene in Fife, so if you want to meet other LGBT people you need to go to Edinburgh, which means time and expense. Public transport doesn't always feel very safe, especially at night.”*

- Over half of respondents (61%) gave lack of local social opportunities as the main reason they did not have more contact with other LGBT people
- 1 in 5 respondents (21%) attend LGBT groups, activities and the commercial gay pub and club scene outside of Fife.

Further significant barriers to establishing social contact with other LGBT people, each reported by a significant number of respondents, were: being too shy (35%); not knowing how to (28%); travel costs (25%); travel times (21%).

### Need for local social opportunities

*“The most important thing for me would be to have somewhere to meet other transgender people in a safe and friendly environment, within the limits of my travel capabilities and at convenient times, so that I could have more opportunities to “be me” and relax.”*

- 3 in 4 respondents (74%) are interested in attending social events in Fife
- 3 in 4 respondents (73%) are interested in a regular social group in Fife.

When asked what they would hope to get out of these LGBT-specific activities the majority of respondents reported all or most of the following benefits: making friends; improving their general wellbeing; talking about shared experiences; a safe space to be themselves.

## Section 3: Experiences of services

*“ I’m constantly looking for [LGBT affirmative] signs that this service will be ok and that I won’t have to fight another fight. ”*

LGBT people in Fife experience disadvantage when using health and support services, with services often failing to recognise and meet their needs. There is a strong need to provide LGBT-specific information and support in Fife, as well as for mainstream services to address the often well-founded fear of negative reactions and treatment, by addressing practice and by proactively indicating that they are LGBT-friendly.

### Health services

*“I was a patient in the hospital in a gynae ward and they asked my sexuality and for the rest of the hospital stay treated me badly. I heard nurses outside the door saying don’t go in there and examine her she is a lesbian, she might like it.”*

- 1 in 4 respondents were not out to their GP (26%) or sexual health services (29%)
- 1 in 3 (34%) were not out to mental health services.

### Social services and other support providers

*“I had to complain because my housing officer made a homophobic statement. He asked if I flaunted my sexuality because of the hassle I was having with my neighbour.”*

- Half of respondents (48%) using housing services are not out to their service provider
- Nearly half (43%) of those using social services are not out; moreover a significant minority (14%) who are out report their sexual orientation or gender identity is not respected within this service
- Over a third of respondents (40%) using (non-LGBT) voluntary sector services are not out.

### Need for LGBT-specific information and support

*“I would like online information, such as sexual health, including the chance to talk to someone anonymously.”*

*“I feel very lonely [in Kirkcaldy]. There is nowhere to go and meet people here, nowhere for LGBT people. It would be great to have services in Fife, to be able to meet other lesbians, make friends, get support, somewhere where I can feel comfortable.”*

3 in 4 (75%) respondents report they wanted to have access to LGBT-specific information in relation to health matters and support services:

- 2 in 3 respondents (66%) want LGBT-specific information about mental health and wellbeing; this was the case for almost all respondents who reported that they had a mental health condition
- Half of respondents (52%) want information relating to sexual health
- Half of respondents (52%) want information about community safety and hate crime reporting
- The majority of transgender respondents (83%) want more information regarding gender reassignment.

The in-depth interviews with individuals who live in Fife but currently travel to Edinburgh to use LGBT Health’s services demonstrate a strong need for local LGBT-specific and LGBT-friendly services.

# Methodology and demographics

This is the report of a Community Needs Assessment carried out by LGBT Health and Wellbeing (known as LGBT Health) from October 2014 to September 2015. LGBT Health is a community development initiative that promotes the health, wellbeing and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland.

Since setting up in 2003, the organisation has provided support and services for LGBT people, as well as research and capacity building work in relation to the needs of LGBT people. Research into the needs of the LGBT community has included a needs assessment of LGBT people in Edinburgh and Lothians, as well as a needs assessment of LGBT people over 50 years of age in Scotland's central belt (Greenwood, M., 2014).

The aim of the Fife needs assessment was to build a greater understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of LGBT people in Fife. To this end, LGBT Health sought direct feedback from individuals about their experiences of being LGBT and living in Fife, including their relationships with their local communities and with services. The needs assessment provides some recommendations on how to address the current gaps in provision, as well as the identified health and wellbeing needs.

The needs assessment was carried out in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders in Fife and through extensive community participation in both the development of the research and the community outreach. This report is written with the intention of sharing with our local funder (Fife Health & Wellbeing Alliance), service providers and commissioners in Fife, partner organisations and other stakeholders.

The target community of this needs assessment was all people who live in Fife and who self-identify as LGBT. LGBT is an acronym for lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender; however LGBT Health recognises that people's sexual orientation and gender identity can be more diverse than this and therefore use LGBT as an umbrella term which incorporates other identities such as queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and gender fluid (please see glossary at [www.equality-network.org/resources/glossary](http://www.equality-network.org/resources/glossary)).

## Methodology

In collecting data for this Community Needs Assessment, LGBT Health aimed to get quantitative input from a sizeable number of LGBT people in Fife, along with greater insight into the experiences of individuals.

We therefore used a survey, as well as conducting more in-depth individual interviews. To promote community participation in the development of the survey we also held a focus group. A brief literature review was also conducted.

### Literature review

We searched for relevant publications, particularly Scottish publications and previous research carried out in Fife. The literature review was conducted alongside other data collection and was important in highlighting key topic areas to focus on.

### Mapping of services

We made contact with a wide range of organisations, venues, groups and individuals to establish what LGBT and LGBT-friendly provision is available in Fife, in terms of services, support and social groups. These contacts were then used to help recruit survey participants.

## Interviews

A total of 12 interviews were conducted with LGBT people who live in Fife but access services or volunteer for LGBT Health in Edinburgh. Most interviews were one-to-one and in person, though one interviewee provided input through emails. These interviews gave LGBT people space to speak freely about their experiences, and early interviews helped identify key emerging themes to include in the survey. Quotes from these interviews are used to illustrate the report's findings.

## Focus group

Two people participated directly in a focus group, and a further two provided feedback via email, to provide feedback on the draft survey. Participants were recruited through the LGBT Health's work in Edinburgh.

## Survey

The Fife LGBT Community Needs Assessment survey ran from June to August 2015. The survey was available online, as well as in paper form at various LGBT events and via the post. In total 148 people filled in the survey. In order to make the survey accessible to those who did not want to or were unable to answer all questions, it was not mandatory to answer all questions; exact sample size thus varies between findings, as not all respondents answered each question.

## Recruitment of survey participants

Criteria used for participation in the survey were to self-identify as LGBT and to be living or recently have lived in Fife. All interviews and surveys were anonymised and respondents were provided with contact details should they wish to discuss their participation in the project. A variety of different channels were used in recruiting respondents in order to enable a diverse range of people to participate. These included: partner organisations promoting the survey through their websites, e-bulletins and social media; flyers and posters distributed through public and community services; LGBT Health staff distributing the survey at Edinburgh and Glasgow Pride, as well as at our events in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

**LGBT Pride Celebration**  
Film screening and event for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their supporters.

**Pride**  
featuring a guest speaker from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners

**The Adventures of Priscilla**  
Queen of the Desert  
The Academy Award-winning LGBT classic!

**Sunday 9th August 2015**  
Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy

Doors Open: 12:30pm  
Pride Screening: 1pm  
Discussion with Special Guest: 3pm  
Priscilla Screening: 4:15 pm

**£5 for both films**  
Tickets can be purchased by calling 01592 583302 or by visiting [www.onfife.com](http://www.onfife.com)

  [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk) 

## LGBT event

LGBT Health organised an LGBT Pride Celebration Event in Kirkcaldy in August 2015 in partnership with Adam Smith Theatre. Through this well attended event, which included film screenings, a talk, information stalls and a welcoming space for community members to mingle, the survey was further promoted.

## Demographics of survey respondents

148 people responded to the survey. This is a considerable success, especially in the light of LGBT Health's lack of service delivery in Fife and numerous accounts from local providers on how difficult it can be to reach members of the LGBT community. Whilst there have been no needs assessments carried out in recent years, previous studies of LGBT peoples' experiences in Fife have had considerably smaller sample sizes (e.g. 46 LGB respondents to LGBT Youth's needs assessment of 2008).

**Sexual orientation:** Around 2 in 6 respondents identified as lesbian or gay (37% and 33% respectively); 1 in 6 as bisexual (17%); a small number of respondents identified with another sexual orientation, such as pansexual or asexual (7%); a minority of respondents identified as heterosexual (and trans) (6%).

**Gender identity:** Just over half of respondents identified as female (55%; 64 respondents); over 1 in 3 identified as male (37%; 44 respondents); a small number defined their gender identity in other terms, including transgender, agender, non-binary or gender fluid (8%; 9 respondents).

**Transgender identity:** 14 respondents (12%) identified, or had in the past identified, as transgender.

**Age:** The age range of respondents was from 13 to 68. 4 in 10 respondents were under 25 (42%); 3 in 10 were 25-34 (28%); 2 in 10 were 35-54 (19%); 1 in 10 were above 55 (11%; 17 respondents).

**Location:** Responses were received from across Fife including: 3 in 10 from KY1 and KY2 (Kirkcaldy) (29%); 2 in 10 from KY11 (Inverkeithing) (20%); 1 in 10 from KY6 and KY7 (Glenrothes) (10%); 1 in 10 from KY12 (Dunfermline) (9%); other respondents were from KY8 and KY9 (Leven) (6%), KY3 (Bruntisland) (4%), KY4 (Cowdenbeath) (4%), KY5 (Lochgelly) (4%), KY10 (Anstruther) (3%), KY14 and KY15 (Cupar) (3%), KY16 (St Andrews) (2%).

**Urban / rural:** For the purpose of comparing rural and urban areas, postcode areas were classified as either urban or rural using the Scottish Government's Rural Urban Classification system. Using these classifications, 3 in 4 respondents lived in urban areas (74%) and 1 in 4 in rural areas (26%).

**Ethnicity:** Nearly 5 in 6 respondents identified as white Scottish (79%); 1 in 6 identified as white British (17%); a small minority identified as other ethnicities including Polish, Pakistani, Black Caribbean mixed background (4%).

**Employment status:** A third of respondents are in full-time employment (33%); a third are students (either full-time or part-time) (31%); around 2 in 10 are in part-time employment (17%); 1 in 10 are self-employed (11%); 1 in 6 are unemployed (15%), 1 in 3 of whom are currently unfit for work (5%); a small minority are retired (5%). In relation to unpaid work 10% reported volunteering and 3% have caring responsibilities.

**Income:** 45% have an annual income of under £10k; 29% have an income between £10 and £20k; 19% between £20 and £40k; 7% have an annual income over £40k.

**Mental and physical health conditions:** Respondents were asked to indicate if they had, or expected to have for at least 12 months, any mental or physical health conditions. 38% of respondents reported having no conditions, 62% reported a mental or physical health condition: nearly half of respondents identified as having a mental health condition (such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder) (45%; 42 respondents); 15% had a learning difficulty (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or autism); 14% had a physical disability; 11% had a chronic illness; 9% had other conditions (for example irritable bowel syndrome or other bowel issues); 3% were deaf or had a severe hearing impairment; 3% had memory problems.

# The experience of LGBT people in Scotland

The size of Scotland's LGBT population is not known as none of the Scotland-wide surveys (e.g. the 2011 Census or the Scottish Household Survey) ask people for information about their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, estimates of size of the population can be derived from research, and it is estimated that a significant minority (between 5% and 7%) of the adult population is LGBT; this tends to be higher in urban/city areas.

As the Scottish LGBT Equality Report (French *et al.*, 2015) outlines, Scotland has made considerable progress towards achieving legal and social equality for LGBT people since the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in 1980. In recent years we have seen great advances in terms of law, including equal marriage rights, as well as improved attitudes. It is however important not to lose sight of the fact that LGBT people in Scotland continue to face inequalities in their everyday lives and unacceptable levels of prejudice, discrimination and disadvantage in society.

Public attitudes towards LGBT people in Scotland have shifted sharply. Positively, 61% of people in Scotland are supportive of same sex marriage, a significant increase over the past decade. Less positively, 27% of people in Scotland still hold discriminatory attitudes towards same sex relationships. Prejudice against transgender people continues to be particularly prevalent and is showing little demonstrable shift, with 55% holding discriminatory attitudes towards transgender people (Ormston *et al.*, 2011). Thus both overt and subtle discrimination within society towards LGBT people continues to exist, with an adverse effect upon the health and wellbeing of LGBT individuals.

Many people, often particularly older people, can be reluctant to disclose their LGBT status, having previously faced discrimination or having had poor experiences of services and support because of their status. As Stonewall's Unhealthy Attitudes report (Somerville, C., 2015) highlights, major gaps in the knowledge and training of staff in health and social care services in Scotland in relation to LGBT people persevere, which is resulting in ongoing unfair treatment. Poor experiences of engagement with health and other services can lead to people being reluctant to seek support at an early stage and so the opportunity for prevention or low-level intervention is lost.



## Social isolation

As ignorance, negative attitudes and stereotypes around LGBT identities continue to be relatively prevalent in society, individuals face rejection (or fear of rejection) by family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, and often avoid being 'out' (openly expressing their identity) in many spheres of their life. The most comprehensive study to date of LGBT people's experiences in Scotland found that more than half of LGBT respondents could never or rarely be open about their sexual orientations or gender identities with their families (French *et al.*, 2015). An even greater number felt unable to be open at work or when accessing services.

For lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people their relationships with family of origin are often poor. For transgender people this is even more acute, with half of trans people experiencing family breakdown due to their gender identity. Through their transition, a process that can take many years during which trans people are often most in need of support, it is not unusual for significant support networks (such as family and friends) to reject them (McNeil, J., 2012).

LGBT people experience high levels of social isolation. Contact with other LGBT people brings much-valued acceptance, understanding and a sense of being able to be oneself. The sense of validation and normalisation of one's identity, along with good social and community networks, are crucial protective factors that help create the resilience needed to counter ignorance and negative attitudes.

## Hate crime, harassment and abuse

Hate crime, harassment and abuse are extremely serious issues for LGBT people. Studies have consistently highlighted that due to fear of negative and even violent responses, LGBT people are often not comfortable being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity with neighbours, colleagues and local services (French *et al.*, 2015; Aldridge and Somerville, 2014).

### The largest study of LGBT people's experience of community safety in Scotland (Noller, H., 2010) found:

- Almost a third of respondents had been physically attacked because of their LGBT status; 70% of them did not report the physical attack to anyone.
- Almost two thirds of respondents had been verbally attacked; 88% did not report this to anyone.
- A third of people feel threatened or vulnerable in their neighbourhood (38% of women; 32% of men), half felt this was because of being LGBT.

### Transgender people experience particularly high levels of harassment and abuse. The biggest UK study (McNeil, J., 2012), which received a high level of responses from Scotland, found:

- 73% of trans people had experienced verbal abuse, including 38% within the last year
- 38% had experienced sexual harassment, physical intimidation and threats, including 19% who has experienced sexual harassment was within the last year
- 19% had been the victim of physical assault
- 14% had been the victim of sexual assault due to being trans.

Sadly, many LGBT people who are victims of abuse, assault and harassment continue to feel that it is to be expected and is merely part of being LGBT in Scotland. This is in spite of new legislation in Scotland in 2009 which introduces a 'statutory aggravation' for crimes motivated by 'malice or ill-will' against people on the basis of sexual orientation, transgender status or disability.

## Health inequalities

As a result of stigma and discrimination, LGBT people are a population group which experiences acute health inequalities, with, for example, very high levels of mental ill-health, psychological distress, drug and alcohol use experienced right across this population group. These health inequalities are particularly acute around mental health, where evidence shows:

- Suicidal behaviour is 3 times more prevalent among lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people when compared to the general population; this rises to 8 times among transgender people.
- Self-harm is 8 times more prevalent among LGB people; this rises to 20 times among transgender people (Webster, S., 2014).

However, LGBT communities are not a homogenous group and the needs among the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans sectors of the population also vary widely. For example, access to gender reassignment treatment is a key need for transgender people, whilst services around HIV and blood borne viruses are needed for gay and bisexual men.

The kinds of prejudice, discrimination and disadvantage reported by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender respondents are also frequently different. For example, bisexual people often feel less able to be open about their sexual identity compared to lesbian and gay respondents (French *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, it is important to consider how different minority or vulnerable identities intersect. For example, Scottish research shows that disabled LGBT people and LGBT people living in rural areas are most likely to have experienced an incident of prejudice and discrimination (French *et al.*, 2015).

## LGBT experience in rural areas

There are differences in experiences between LGBT people living in urban and rural areas in Scotland, nearly one in four respondents from rural areas described their area as bad or very bad for LGBT people to live in, compared to one in ten for respondents from urban areas (French *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, LGBT people in rural areas reported higher rates of isolation compared to LGBT people in urban areas, with almost half stating that they felt isolated. This number was even higher for transgender people in rural areas.

## The experience of LGBT people in Fife

Fife is one of the largest and most sparsely populated council areas in Scotland. In 2014, the adult population of Fife was 303,176 (16 and over), with the age group 16-29 slightly below national average and the 60+ age group slightly above (KnowFife, 2015). Fife is made up of small number of urban areas such as Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes (classified as 'Other urban' areas with populations between 10,000 and 124,999). The majority of Fife is made up of rural areas (classified as 'accessible rural' or 'remote rural' with populations under 10,000).

It is estimated that the LGBT population of Fife is between 15,000 and 21,000 (5% to 7% of the 16+ population).

To date relatively little research has been done on the experience of LGBT people in Fife. The most recent are Fife Men Project's 2007 study and LGBT Youth's 2008 research looking specifically at the experience of younger LGBT people.

The Experiences of LGBT People in Fife (Fife Men Project, 2007) looked particularly at mental health and highlighted the similarities in findings with national and other studies. For example, the link between mental health problems and experiences of discrimination and prejudice, the need for improvements in local services and the need for the development of specialist support through LGBT organisations.

LGBT Young People in Fife (LGBT Youth, 2008) highlighted issues around safety, anonymity and lack of specialist LGBT youth provision in many areas of Fife.



## **Social opportunities for LGBT people in Fife**

Fife has little commercial social provision for LGBT people (the 'gay commercial scene') and those wanting to access the gay scene need to travel to larger urban centres such as Edinburgh. Whilst some interviewees mentioned LGBT-friendly pubs and LGBT social gatherings in pubs, these appear to often have been short-lived. Additionally, there is a dearth of other local social opportunities, such as community groups or activities, for LGBT people to meet with peers.

As our comprehensive mapping of services in Fife clearly demonstrates, the infrastructure of LGBT and trans-specific organisations and volunteer-run community groups is very under-developed here, as it is in much of Scotland. Though there have been some good examples of volunteer-led social initiatives, such as for example The Big Gay Gala in Dunfermline and Facebook groups such as Going Out in Fife, again these initiatives seem to be short-lived. The lack of an LGBT information hub and good communication channels in Fife makes it challenging for LGBT social groups to promote themselves to a geographically-dispersed and often invisible community, thus leading to poor engagement and a precarious existence for groups.

## **Specialist and mainstream services**

In our discussions with organisations such as Sexual Health Fife, as well as from our mapping of support services, it is clear there is a dearth of targeted support services for LGBT people in Fife. In terms of LGBT-specific services, LGBT Youth Scotland runs youth groups in some areas of Fife. There are however simply no services for many sections of the adult LGBT community, outside of sexual health services aimed at gay and bisexual men. The lack of any targeted provision for transgender people and for lesbian and bisexual women is particularly acute. This has led some sexual health organisations, such as the Terrence Higgins Trust to try, alongside their core work, to also meet the needs of for example transgender people, often without the resources, infrastructure and expertise needed to develop robust initiatives.

In terms of mainstream services, we are not aware of any of the services in the Fife area, such as for example mental health services, having particular initiatives in place aimed specifically at reaching or supporting LGBT people.

# Survey findings

## Section 1: Being out at work and at home

We asked people who, within their personal and professional life, they are out to about their sexual orientation or gender identity, as a measure of the extent to which respondents feel comfortable (and safe) being themselves. Though it is up to each person to decide which information about themselves they feel comfortable sharing with others, it is important that everyone feels able to live openly and be themselves, and that LGBT people do not feel they need to hide who they are for fear of negative reactions and treatment.

Feeling able to live openly and honestly is vital for close relationships with friends and family. LGBT people must also feel comfortable to be themselves at work with colleagues, not least so they are able to work effectively.

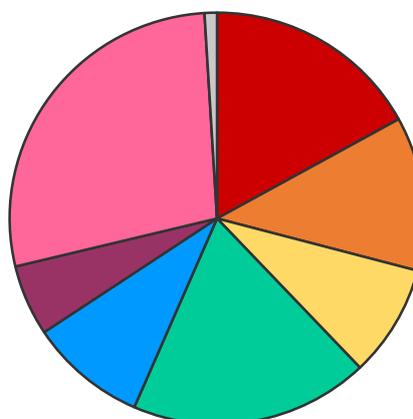
Where LGBT people cannot live openly and honestly, individuals will struggle to have to hide such a crucial part of oneself; doing so will have a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing, as well as on their ability to connect with others in their everyday lives.

However, we found that a large portion of respondents (1 in 3) are not out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to their colleagues and an even greater portion were not out to their neighbours (2 in 3). Transgender and bisexual respondents were the least likely to be out to either colleagues or neighbours.

“ I do so desperately want to be at a stage and in a place where I can ‘be myself’ all the time, but these things don’t happen quickly ”  
-Transgender respondent-

### Who are you out to about your sexual orientation/gender identity?

- Other LGBT people
- Most close family
- Most family
- Most friends
- Most colleagues
- Most neighbours
- Everyone
- No-one



## The workplace

Only 1 in 5 respondents (19%) reported being out to most colleagues, whilst nearly 1 in 3 (30%) were not out to any of their colleagues. We asked if they feel comfortable being out at their place of work:

*“It helps that one of my managers is an out lesbian. If someone of higher authority is out then it is easier to be out at work.”*

- 3 in 4 respondents (78%) feel comfortable or very comfortable
- Significant minority (15%) feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

We also asked if respondents feel that their sexual orientation or gender identity is respected by their colleagues:

*“I work in the Civil Service who have zero tolerance on treating LGBT people badly.”*

- 3 in 4 respondents (78%) feel comfortable or very comfortable
- Significant minority (15%) feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

Respondents to the survey and interviewees also provided comments which give further insight into their experience at work. Positive experiences included:

*“ After coming out as trans to my manager he set up a meeting with someone at LGBT Health and Wellbeing so he could find out how to support me better. He’s been superb. I’ve recently moved to working part-time at a different site within the same company, keeping the same manager, and he explained (with my permission) my situation to staff there, and I’ve since been known by my chosen name rather than birth name. I’m yet to explain to clients I work with (who knew me previously) but I know I’ve got my management’s backup if any problems arise. ”*

*“I feel comfortable [being out] but I don’t always feel safe. I do get the occasional derogatory comment from colleagues but I try to not let it bother me.”*

*“I am self-employed, being out might put off customers.”*

*“I think it’s important to be out but I do worry it affects how I’m thought of.”*

*“Not really applicable as am self-employed and selectively choose ‘T’ [trans identity] exposure.”*

However, the survey indicates a significant minority feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable being out at work (15%) and feel their LGBT identity is not or not at all respected (9%) in their workplace. Further comments from respondents outlined negative experiences individuals had had at work, which ranged from adverse comments and looks to respondents feeling unsafe, vulnerable, concerned about how others think of them, or concerned about how them being out would affect business prospects.

Comments suggest that for some not being out is a conscious decision based on experienced or anticipated negative attitudes or behaviours from their colleagues.

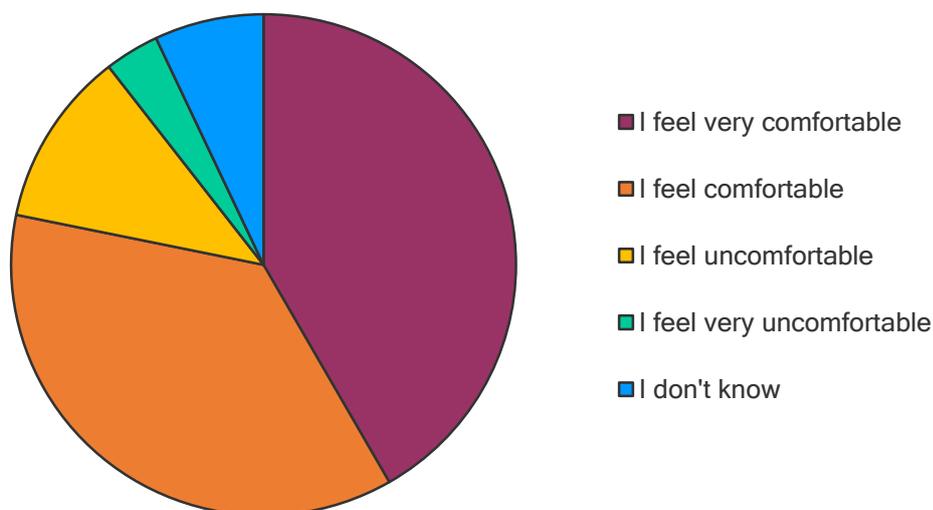
“ *I want to be out, but I've heard so much homophobia and transphobia from my colleagues that I feel unsafe being out.* ”

Looking specifically at transgender and bisexual respondents (14 and 20 respondents respectively), it was much less likely that they would be out to their colleagues or feel comfortable being out:

- Over 2 in 3 (70%) transgender respondents were not out to their colleagues; 1 in 5 (21%) transgender respondents felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable about being out at their place of work
- 2 in 3 (65%) bisexual respondents were not out; almost 1 in 3 (29%) bisexual respondents felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable about being out at their place of work.

Comparing the responses from full-time, part-time and self-employment respondents (33%, 17% and 11% of respondents respectively) there are noticeable difference in experiences between respondents in full-time employment and respondents in more insecure employment (part-time and self-employment). Almost 9 in 10 (89%) respondents in full-time employment were out to at least some of their colleagues, while this dropped to 3 in 4 (77%) respondents in part-time or self-employment. Moreover, while less than 1 in 10 (8%) respondents in full-time employment felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable being out in their workplaces, this figure rose to nearly 3 in 10 (27%) for respondents in part-time or self-employment. Only a few (3%) respondents in full-time employment felt that their sexual orientation or gender identity was not respected compared to more than 1 in 6 (17%) respondents in part-time or self-employment.

### Do you feel comfortable being out about your sexual orientation/gender identity at your place of work?



## National context: Scottish LGBT Equality Report

The 2015 Equality Report (French et al, 2015) represents the most comprehensive research to date of LGBT people's experiences across Scotland. The in-depth Equality Report survey received over 1,000 responses. The report does not analyse responses geographically, but the survey included a considerable number of responses from Fife (42 respondents with KY postcode).

We include some of the key findings from the Equality Report to put our Fife findings into context. We have also provided quotes from Fife respondents from the Equality Report.

### Experiences of employment and the workplace

- 24% of LGBT respondents said they had personally experienced discrimination at work because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 22% had experienced harassment.

Examples ranged from negative comments and treatment by colleagues to a perception that they had been fired, not promoted, or not hired in the first place because they were LGBT.

*"A colleague told me I 'should have to choose',  
referring to my bisexuality."  
-Fife respondent-*

### Equality Report recommendations: Employment and the workplace

Employers should provide a welcoming and supportive work environment for LGBT people, and understand their obligations under the law.

- Employers should ensure they are aware of their legal obligations to prevent discrimination and harassment against LGBT employees
- Employers should have clear and effectively communicated policies that ensure staff are not disadvantaged or discriminated against as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and to deal with complaints of bullying and harassment
- Employers should make the most of training and engagement opportunities to understand the needs of LGBT employees, and should consider the benefits of supporting LGBT staff networks
- Employers should have clear and effectively communicated policies on supporting transgender staff who are transitioning.

## Neighbours

Whilst over half (57%) of respondents indicated they were out to 'everyone', only 1 in 10 (11%) specifically indicated they were out to most neighbours. Respondents were less likely to be out to people in their local neighbourhoods than for example to their colleagues, and were also more likely to feel that their sexual orientation or gender identity was not respected by neighbours:

*"Acknowledged, wouldn't say it was particularly respected."*

*"My neighbours know although it will not be discussed directly other than solicitation of wellbeing for my partner. I also have gay neighbours."*

*"I am not close enough with my neighbours to find out."*

*"For the most part yes my sexual orientation is respected in my neighbourhood."*

- Fewer than half (43%) of respondents feel their sexual orientation or gender identity is respected or very much respected by neighbours
- Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) feel it is not or not at all respected
- 1 in 3 (34%) do not know (if it is or would be respected).

Whilst several respondents commented that they were not close enough to their neighbours for them to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, others suggested that it had been a conscious choice not to disclose this information. It was much less likely for transgender and bisexual respondents to be out to their neighbours; in both cases 7 in 10 (70%) were not out.

## Safety within the local community

Whilst the survey did not specifically ask respondents about their experience of hate crime or harassment, this was referred to in a number of the comments we received:

*"I've had almost a year of hell from my neighbour."*

*"A few homophobic remarks over the years. However nothing threatening."*

*"Guys feel threatened when they find out I'm a lesbian and I get abuse like "how can a man be a lesbian" because I'm trans too."*

*"One neighbour is very homophobic. He has made comments about myself and my partner in the street and was about to hit me in an argument he had started and then made terrible comments."*

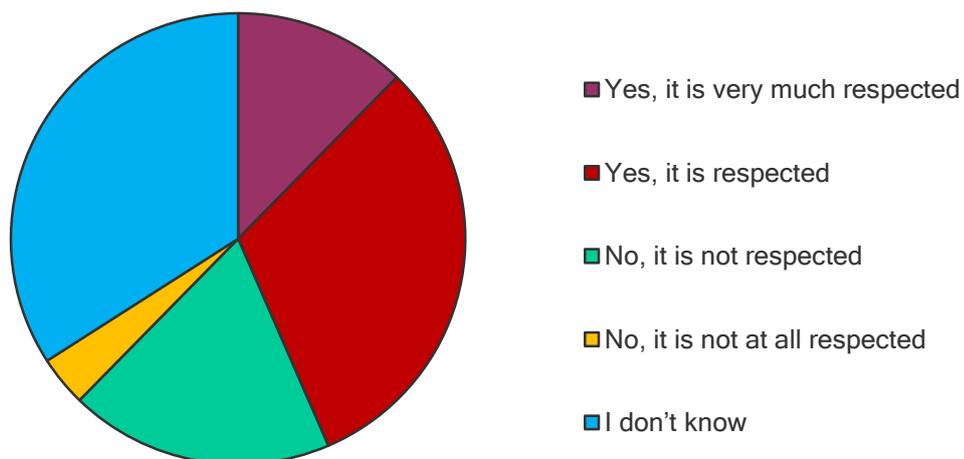
*"I can be open about who I am at the mental health group [in Fife], and people are ok. But going out publically is not safe, as I'm afraid of being assaulted."*

“ *“Safety” isn't an easy issue to sum up. “Safe” can mean a lot of things ... safe from violence, safe from ridicule, safe from gossip [...] I feel safe here dressed feminine at the kitchen window, as I am most days, as there are only some neighbours who can see me, I don't know them, and I really don't care what they think. Around my home area in general though I wouldn't feel safe from ridicule from people I do know or the gossip getting back to my wife and upsetting her, but I wouldn't feel in danger of physical harm. If I were to go down to the local pub dressed “en femme” then I would expect it to cause a stir among those that I know, and I'd expect a fair degree of ribbing about it and have to explain to people [...] There is another pub close by too, but I would never risk going in there “en femme” because a lot of the clientele is younger and very macho, so I would feel at risk of abuse and physical harm.* ”

A number of comments referred to “most neighbours are fine” and one to neighbours coming to the individual’s defence:

“ *One man on my street started talking about me to other neighbours, using homophobic slurs. Fortunately my other neighbours were quick to dismiss him and ‘defend my honour’ so to speak.* ”

**Do you feel that your sexual orientation/gender identity is respected within your neighbourhood?**



## National context: Scottish LGBT Equality Report

### LGBT experience of the urban-rural divide

The report highlights that the experiences of LGBT people vary considerably across the country, with those living in rural parts of Scotland reporting a significantly worse experience than those living in urban areas, including more prejudice, greater isolation, and less access to local services to meet their needs.

In terms of the different experiences in urban and rural areas the Equality Report found that:

- 24% of LGBT respondents living in rural areas and 12% of those living in urban areas described their local area as a bad or very bad place for LGBT people to live
- 55% of LGBT respondents living in rural areas and 30% of those living in urban areas said that services in their local area do not meet the specific needs of LGBT people
- 59% of respondents living in rural areas and 35% of those living in urban areas regularly travel outside their local area to access LGBT services
- 43% of respondents have either moved, or considered moving, to live in a different area because of being LGBT.

Respondents outlined the reasons they felt their local area (rural or urban) was a bad place for LGBT people to live, which included: a high prevalence of prejudice and discrimination; a lack of local services that meet the needs of LGBT people; a sense of isolation due to a lack of local social opportunities with other openly LGBT people.

LGBT respondents who had moved had often done so from a rural part of Scotland to a big city or more urban area. Respondents gave a range of reasons as to why they had moved, or wanted to move, from their local area, which included: wanting to live somewhere that had a more accepting culture towards LGBT people and less discrimination; more social opportunities; more services that meet the needs of LGBT people.

***“Moved to Edinburgh to be closer to better services and support. Lived in Kirkcaldy, Fife and was very, very isolated in being LGBT.” –former Fife resident-***

***“I moved away from Fife to be as far away from the people in my street who used to harass me for being a lesbian. At the time there was also no visible support networks or spaces to go to.” –former Fife resident***

### Equality Report recommendations: The urban-rural divide

More work is needed to tackle the particular inequalities and issues faced by LGBT people in rural parts of Scotland.

- Commissioners and service providers to ensure LGBT people living in rural areas are able to more easily access services, including support and health services, that meet their LGBT-specific needs
- Support for LGBT capacity building in rural areas to ensure LGBT people are empowered and able to engage with decision-makers on the issues which affect their lives.

## Section 2: Connecting with other LGBT people

An overwhelming majority of respondents expressed a wish to have more connection with other LGBT people (86%). Most of them wanted to do so in Fife (82%).

### Contact with other LGBT people

It is however clear that making contact with other LGBT people locally can be far from easy. Whilst two thirds of respondents (62%) report having LGBT friends in Fife, one third (28%) say they never or rarely have contact with other LGBT people in Fife.

Whilst limited, a small number of social groups and commercial venues in Fife do offer social opportunities for some LGBT people. However many respondents reported having to travel outside of Fife to meet peers:

*“No social scene in Fife, so if you want to meet other LGBT people you need to go to Edinburgh, which means time and expense. Public transport doesn’t always feel very safe, especially at night.”*

*“My only contact with anyone connected with [trans]gender issues in Fife is through LGBT Health [Edinburgh-based groups and support].”*

- Almost 1 in 5 respondents (18%) are a member of a LGBT social group or activity group in Fife; almost the same number are accessing such groups and activities outside of Fife (15%)
- More than 1 in 5 (21%) use the commercial gay pub and club scene outside of Fife, whereas a minority (9%) are only using the commercial gay scene in Fife; arguably this is because the commercial gay scene in Fife is very limited.

*“ I have been involved in the past in providing such activities and support services in Fife in a voluntary capacity so it is not that I expect everything to be done for me. However, as I am getting older I like the idea of something a little more structured than simply keeping up with my own friends. ”*

### Barriers to establishing social connections

Lack of local social opportunities was given as the main reason why respondents did not have more contact with other LGBT people (61%). Being too shy (35%) or not knowing how to (28%) were also cited by a significant number of respondents.

*“ For a while now I have been accessing services at LGBT Health’s Centre in Edinburgh. My counsellor told me about the organisation when I told her that I wanted to meet other LGBT people and that I was feeling lonely. I struggle to find funds in order to travel from Fife to Edinburgh, otherwise I would come more often. At the Centre I go along to a number of different activities including social groups, outings and meals. I really enjoy these groups because I feel that I connect better with other LGBT people and that I can speak more freely with them. ”*

Travel costs too were seen as a barrier (25%), as were travel times (21%). Travel times were even more of a barrier for those with a physical disability (37%), as travel costs were for those on a low income (57%). These responses again suggest the value attached to social opportunities being available to LGBT people in their local areas.

*“ The groups in Edinburgh are great, but the travel is very uncomfortable and worrying. With my health condition sitting on buses for long periods of time is simply unsafe. ”*

**Why do you not have more social contact with other LGBT people?**



The levels of social contact with other LGBT people reported by transgender people (14 respondents) is markedly lower than that of the general sample:

- Half of the transgender respondents (50%) report that they do not have LGBT friends in Fife
- Nearly half report rarely (21%) or never (21%) having contact with other LGBT people in Fife.

Respondents who reported a mental health condition (42 respondents) were also much more likely not to have contact with other LGBT people in Fife (19% compared to 10% for general sample).

**Need for local social opportunities**

The survey shows there is very strong support for LGBT-specific social activities, with 3 in 4 interested in social events (74%) and a regular social group (73%) in Fife. This was also demonstrated by a good attendance at the well-received Fife LGBT Pride event organised by LGBT Health in Kirkcaldy in August 2015.

When asked what they would hope to get out of these LGBT-specific activities respondents most frequently reported making friends (93%), improving their general wellbeing (64%), talking about shared experiences (62%) and a safe space to be themselves (57%) as the main benefits.

*“ All I know is that I felt really safe on Sunday [at the Fife LGBT Pride event], because I knew I was in an environment where everyone understood the issues involved... nobody was going to ridicule me, nobody was going to make snide remarks, and nobody was going to criticise me for "being me"... and that's where having somewhere "LGBT friendly" to go to on a regular basis would be so helpful in relieving stress and helping to build confidence, not just for me but for everyone else who has to hide away from society. ”*

“ I feel very isolated living in Fife as a trans woman. I know there are things going on in Edinburgh, and I’ve attended events there, but it’s difficult because of cost and time. Many trans people are on benefits, so can’t attend events that cost money – travel, buying drinks, etc. Also a bar setting isn’t what I’m looking for, I want to put on a dress, to be accepted, not have to worry. Sometimes just need to be able to vent to someone, someone who will understand and who I can feel safe with. I would like the opportunity for people to come together, to share useful information, experiences. ”

“I would like some kind of regular social group which does not revolve around going to the pub or clubbing or alcohol.”

“It would be good to be able to meet other transgender women in a safe space in Kirkcaldy, to just chat about clothes and stuff.”

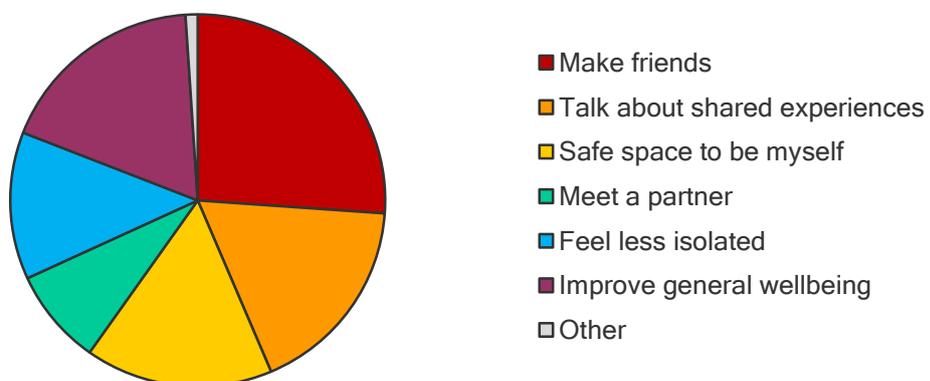
“Getting to know people who genuinely understand and can empathise with what one is going through is a vitally important means of support. It makes me feel happy and more confident being around other gay people.”

“The most important thing for me would be to have somewhere to meet other transgender people in a safe and friendly environment, within the limits of my travel capabilities and at convenient times, so that I could have more opportunities to “be me” and relax.”

When asked what kinds of people they would like to meet we found:

- 4 in 5 respondents (80%) stated that they wanted to meet LGBT people their own age
- All respondents who identified as transgender (100%) reported that they wanted to meet other transgender people
- For bisexual respondents nearly 4 in 5 (78%) wanted to meet other bisexual people.

**If there were LGBT specific activities in Fife, what would you hope to get out of them?**



## National context: Scottish LGBT Equality Report

### Experiences of coming out and living openly

The Equality Report findings are split into sexual orientation (responses from lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people) and gender identity (transgender people) to highlight the findings that transgender people experience particularly acute challenges in living openly.

- **Services:** 11% of LGB respondents said they never and 59% only sometimes feel able to be open about their sexual orientation when accessing services; 32% of transgender respondents said they never and 45% only sometimes feel able to be open about their gender identity to services
- **Work:** 10% of LGB respondents said that they never and 49% only sometimes feel able to be open about their sexual orientation at work; 57% of transgender respondents said they never and 17% only sometimes feel able to be open about their gender identity at work
- **Home:** 8% of LGB respondents said they never and 15% only sometimes feel able to be open about their sexual orientation in their own homes; this was 13% and 16% for transgender respondents
- **Neighbours:** 29% of LGB respondents said they never or 45% only sometimes feel able to be open with their neighbours; this was 59% and 20% for transgender respondents
- **Friends:** 2% of LGB respondents said they never or 18% only sometimes feel able to be open with their friends; this was 6% and 40% for transgender respondents
- **Parents:** 18% of LGB respondents said they never and 22% only sometimes feel able to be open with their parents; this was 33% and 21% for transgender respondents
- **Wider family:** 17% of LGB respondents said they never and 34% only sometimes feel able to be open with their wider family; this was 27% and 29% for transgender respondents.

Respondents gave two main reasons as to why they felt unable to be open about being LGBT. These were a fear of negative reactions and fear of different treatment, both towards themselves and towards their loved ones. Often these fears were based on negative experiences they had faced when being open with others in the past.

### Experiences of social isolation

*“For many years I lived in a small mining village in Fife and I really thought I was the only ‘gay’ in the village... I had no idea that there were other LGBT people living close by. I eventually moved to Edinburgh and the sense of relief I felt was like a great weight being lifted from my shoulders. For the first time in my life I could be who I was, who I wanted to be, not try and lead some type of double-life... this type of social exclusion is still going on.”*  
-former Fife resident-

- 33% of LGBT respondents said they feel isolated where they live because they are LGBT
- Reports of isolation were highest among LGBT people living in rural parts of Scotland with almost half (47%) stating they feel isolated, compared to around a quarter of those in urban areas (23%)
- Of all respondents, transgender people were most likely to feel isolated, with a majority in both rural (71%) and urban (56%) parts of Scotland reporting that they feel isolated where they live
- Reports of isolation were also higher across Scotland among disabled LGBT people (45%) and LGBT people under 25 (37%). This is likely to reflect the additional barriers that these groups face.

LGBT respondents outlined the reasons they feel isolated where they live, which included: a lack of other openly LGBT people in the area; a lack of services aimed at LGBT people such as social groups and venues; problems with prejudice and discrimination in the area.

## Section 3: Experiences of services

Being open about one's sexual orientation or gender identity can be necessary and important when accessing services, including healthcare and support services, in order to ensure that needs are met appropriately. We know that some LGBT people exclude themselves from accessing services because they fear negative reactions and treatment if they come out. This avoidance of timely engagement inevitably impacts negatively on the health and wellbeing of LGBT people.

*"I feel that with health and social care professionals I am very cautious about being "out" until I have picked up how I might be treated such as the terminology they might use. Clumsily stumbling through "wife" or "lady friend" instead of using open language such as partner."*

Respondents were asked to indicate what type of health and support services they access, whether they were out about their sexual orientation or gender identity in these services and whether they feel that this is respected.

Service	Number of respondents
GP	124
Other health services	63
Sexual health services	68
Mental health services	56
Housing services	45
Social services	37
Voluntary sector services (non LGBT)	48

We found a high number of respondents were not out when using health services, including to their GP (26%), sexual health (26%) and mental health (34%) services. Respondents were even less likely to be out when accessing housing services (49%), social services (43%) or voluntary sector services (non-LGBT) (40%).

**Table: Number responding in relation to each service**

### Health and mental health services

In our one-to-one interviews many individuals discussed their experiences of using services and the implications of not being out about their sexual orientation or gender identity, or of their LGBT identity not being accepted, including the barrier this represents in relation to developing a good and trusting relationship with services, feeling seen and respected and getting the right advice, including around sexual health.

*" I had gone to see my GP regarding a sexual health concern together with my boyfriend. At first I felt that things were going well but after I had told my GP about my health complaint, coupled with my boyfriend being there, the GP was not able to look either of us in the eyes for the rest of the appointment. I am not sure whether this was due to the GP having homophobic attitudes or being embarrassed talking about sexual health. "*

*“ I did have a bad experience with a GP. My then partner had epilepsy and his condition was deteriorating. We felt we needed to declare our relationship to give me some legitimacy in representing him. I gave the GP a detailed account of how his seizures had become more problematic. The immediate response was ‘do you know about HIV, are you practicing safer sex?’ ”*

LGBT people may be invisible to support services, including when seeking support around their mental and emotional wellbeing. There is a very high prevalence of mental health issues experienced by LGBT people, yet a third of respondents (34%) were not out when seeking support from mental health services. If people using these services do not feel able to disclose their LGBT status, and therefore discuss openly some of the issues and challenges that this might bring, as well as talk about their families of choice and those who can support their recovery, then their support and recovery may be restricted.

*“ In mental health services and social services, when I mention being LGBT people are generally respectful, or treat it as though it's not a big deal, and it doesn't change the way they treat me. Having conversations with me that relate to LGBT things, such as LGBT related news, also makes me feel my identity is well respected. Being aware and at least slightly knowledgeable about LGBT issues is a must for people who work in those services. ”*

*“ When I was on the psychiatric ward I did worry at times about what other patients might think if they knew I am gay. I was ok, didn't get any hassle, but think it is important to have access to good advocacy services, to support patients who experience homophobia. ”*

### **Social services and other support providers**

Half of respondents are not out when accessing housing services (49%). Around 2 in 5 are not out to social services (43%) or voluntary sector services (non-LGBT) (40%). The experience of a significant minority of respondents with social services was especially negative; 5 respondents (14%) reported their sexual orientation or gender identity is not respected within this service.

*“ Social services were not supportive to me when my ex was harassing me and trying to remove my children from my custody due to my sexual orientation. The legal system was used to further this harassment. ”*

As indicated, hate crime and harassment are significant issues for many LGBT people, including in their neighbourhood. This means that it is crucial to be able to discuss issues around, for example, discrimination and abuse from neighbours openly with one's housing provider or social service.

Not only are a very high proportion of LGBT people currently not out when using these services, a significant minority are unlikely to risk coming out should they need to do so, as they do not feel their sexual orientation or gender identity is respected within these services:

*"I had to complain because my housing officer made a homophobic statement. He asked if I flaunted my sexuality because of the hassle I was having with my neighbour."*

*"I've had complaints from one of my neighbours. The warden [of the sheltered housing] was supportive, but now I don't wear female clothes in the communal area and don't answer the door when someone visits unannounced."*

- A significant minority of respondents (14%) did not feel that their LGBT identity is respected by social services
- A significant minority (7%) did not feel that their identity is respected in housing services.

### Transgender people's experiences of services

Research consistently shows that transgender people have a particularly poor experience of services. Both survey findings and one-to-one interviews echo this strongly in relation to health services. The survey found:

*"With the NHS I don't feel I'm receiving proper care. My GP doesn't have a clue about transgender stuff and doesn't seem to want to. I been put into a sexual health clinic with a Transphobic receptionist who continually loses my appointments. I should be at Sandyford [Glasgow's Gender Identity Clinic] but I'm not and waiting lists are ridiculous. I have been misgendered at the dentist by staff and even by doctors at my GP."*

- 2 in 3 transgender respondents (67%) reported that they are not out within the sexual health services they use; 1 in 5 respondents (20%) reported that they do not feel that their gender identity is respected within these services
- Over half of transgender respondents are not out in the mental health services that they use
- Half of transgender respondents (50%) are not out to their GP; 1 in 5 (20%) feel their gender identity is not respected by their GP
- Over two thirds (71%) are not out in other health services; one third (33%) feel that their gender identity is not respected in these services.

The number of trans respondents using other support services was low, and it is therefore difficult to draw strong conclusions. However, transgender respondents are also predominantly not out when using these services.

*" I went through a very drawn out process in order to get a referral to the Gender Identity Clinic. After a great deal of consideration I had made the huge personal decision that I wanted to begin exploring gender reassignment and therefore approached my GP. Due to lack of awareness of the referral process to the Gender Identity Clinic, my GP made an incorrect referral on my behalf. After several months of waiting and receiving conflicting or inconclusive information from various services, I felt helpless and lost. Fortunately I found out about the LGBT Helpline [delivered by LGBT Health] and was informed of the correct referral process. I could then go back to my GP and tell her what I needed from her. "*

## Need for LGBT-specific support

We carried out one-to-one interviews with 12 individuals who live in Fife but currently travel to Edinburgh to use LGBT Health's services. These interviews provide an insight into what individuals value about these LGBT-specific groups and activities and what kind of support they would like to see available in Fife.

*"The Men's Group [LGBT Health, Edinburgh] was the first time I was with other people I knew were gay. It was amazing, exceeded my expectations. For the first time in my life I felt part of the LGBT community. Also talking to the mental health worker [at LGBT Health] is good, because I get confused, unsure about things, and just need to talk to someone. Sometimes it is nice to hear that I am normal, that my thoughts, who I am is normal."*

*"I feel I can talk more freely with people like me, feel more relaxed. I enjoy the groups at LGBT Health [in Edinburgh], but otherwise feel very lonely [in Kirkcaldy]. There is nowhere to go and meet people here, nowhere for LGBT people. It would be great to have services in Fife, to be able to meet other lesbians, make friends, get support, somewhere where I can feel comfortable."*

*"I live at home with my brother and his wife and, to be honest, it's hard. My brother especially is really not ok about me being trans. My boss is supportive though, and I'd like to come out at work, but that will be difficult, so really feel I could do with some support to take that step. The trans workshop [LGBT Health, Edinburgh] was amazing, I just loved it. Learnt so much and met other people! Down side is I can't afford to travel to Edinburgh to attend other events, not on just part-time wages."*

*" I would like someone I can make an appointment to talk to about concerns and feelings. Also casual place where I can drop in for a cup of tea and a chat, maybe a men's group, to make friends and perhaps find someone I'm interested in. "*

*" The Social Circle [monthly LGBT learning disability group run by LGBT Health, Edinburgh] is the only time I meet other LGBT people. It takes me a long time to travel there, but the group is nice. A group and outings in Fife to make friends and maybe meet a partner would be great, also just someone to talk to about things. "*

## Need for LGBT-specific information

A large majority of survey respondents (75%) report they want to have access to LGBT-specific information in relation to health matters, as well as about services that might be able to support them:

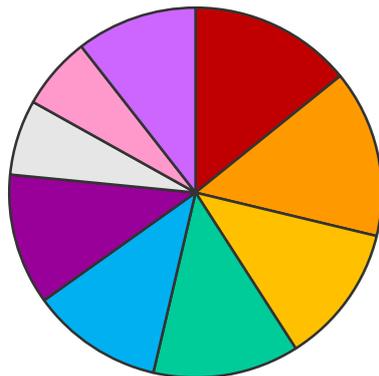
“I would like online information, such as sexual health, including the chance to talk to someone anonymously.”

“Where do you find out information about where might be ok, safe to go into? Any groups? Our rights? I recently discovered there is a woman who makes wigs for trans people locally. I feel people just don’t know what is available. Opportunities for people to come together, to share information, learn from others, is what is needed. I’d like that.”

- Two thirds of respondents (66%) wanted LGBT-specific information relating to mental health and wellbeing; this was the case for almost all respondents who reported that they had a mental health condition (94%)
- Two thirds of respondents (64%) wanted LGBT-specific information about support services
- More than half wanted LGBT-specific information relating to physical health and wellbeing (55%)
- More than half wanted LGBT-specific information relating to sexual health (52%)
- The majority of transgender respondents (83%) want more information regarding gender reassignment.

Several other LGBT-specific types of information were also identified as important by the respondents. Over half wanted more information relating to legal rights (57%), and similarly for community safety and hate crime reporting (52%). Nearly half (47%) wanted information relating to support for families.

**Please select all the LGBT specific information you would like more access to:**



- Support services
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical health and wellbeing
- Legal rights
- Community safety & hate crime reporting
- Sexual health
- Gender reassignment
- Ageing
- Support for families

Together, these figures suggest that there is a significant gap between what LGBT-specific information respondents have access to and what they would like to have. It is crucial to recognise that the information and support needs that LGBT people have may be different compared to non-LGBT people (for example, sexual health advice, how to seek support for homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime, information around transitioning). Providing LGBT-specific information can be crucial in supporting LGBT people to manage their health.

Providing LGBT-specific information also offers service providers an important opportunity to signal they are LGBT-friendly, thus addressing the access barriers that exist for LGBT people. By having these types of 'markers' visible within services, LGBT people may feel more comfortable and confident talking openly about issues relating to their sexual orientation or gender identity and in seeking support and help in a timely manner.

*“ One needs to be a little circumspect when approaching an organisation for a service. One small sign I look for might be a leaflet relating to an LGBT service on a notice board. Some community health services might display a small rainbow and [then] there is the monitoring form, does it include questions on sexual orientation and gender identity? ”*

*“ I’m constantly looking for [LGBT affirmative] signs that this service will be ok and that I won’t have to fight another fight.” ”*

## National context: Scottish LGBT Equality Report

### Experiences of local services

25% of LGBT respondents said they had personally experienced discrimination or 'less good treatment' in one or more services:

- 21% in healthcare services
- 11% in policing
- 6% in voluntary sector services.

Examples of discrimination ranged from negative comments and treatment by service providers and other service user, to being denied access to services altogether.

*"I was a patient in the hospital in a gynae ward and they asked my sexuality and for the rest of the hospital stay treated me badly. I heard nurses outside the door saying don't go in there and examine her she is a lesbian, she might like it."*

*"The biggest issue facing LGBT is the lack of 'normalisation' of the LGBT community. People are still seen as unusual (even unconsciously and not always maliciously) if they are LGBT. It is assumed someone is heterosexual unless they 'come out'... In short it is still not an entirely natural part of society as it should be and LGBT people are forced to come out all the time."*

55% of LGBT respondents living in rural areas and 30% of those living in urban areas said that services in their local area do not currently meet the specific needs of LGBT people. Respondents outlined the reasons, which included:

- a view that mainstream public services, such as health and social care providers, did not understand or address the specific needs of LGBT service users
- the lack of LGBT-specific services within a reasonable distance, including gender reassignment services and targeted LGB sexual health services
- a lack of support services for LGBT people
- the lack of LGBT social groups, venues and opportunities outside of the big cities, which makes it difficult for LGBT people to meet others like themselves.

### Equality Report recommendations: Service providers

Service providers should meet the needs of LGBT people in Scotland and understand their obligations under the law.

- Service providers should ensure they are aware of their legal obligations to provide services that do not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity
- Services should incorporate visible representations of LGBT people in advertising and other communications
- Service providers should make the most of equality training and LGBT engagement opportunities to understand the needs of LGBT service users
- Services should avoid making assumptions about people's sexual orientation, gender identity, and lifestyle, especially when such assumptions effect service provision
- Services should ensure that equality outcomes made under the public sector equality duty are genuinely inclusive of the needs of all LGBT people, and created in consultation with LGBT people and organisations
- Services should ensure equality and diversity or non-discrimination policies explicitly include protections for LGB and transgender people; new policies should be assessed for the impact they will have on LGB and transgender service users
- Services should make a concerted effort to make systems, forms, information, and materials reflective of transgender and LGB people's needs
- Organisations should collect anonymised data on the experiences of LGBT people who interact with their services.

## Ensuring health and social care services meet the needs of LGBT people

In addition to asking LGBT people their experiences of inequality in Scotland, the Equality Report survey also sought their views on what needs to be done to tackle the prejudice, discrimination and disadvantage that LGBT people face. Inequality in healthcare was identified as a top priority by 29% of respondents.

Respondents raised a range of issues that need address in order to ensure Scotland's healthcare system meets the needs of LGBT people:

- ensuring better access to gender reassignment services for transgender people
- tackling health inequalities faced by LGBT people in mental, sexual and reproductive health
- ensuring NHS and other healthcare staff are trained to understand the needs of LGBT people.

Other public services mentioned as priority areas for improvement included housing and social care. The issue most commonly raised by respondents was a need for training and resources to ensure public service providers understood and catered for the specific needs of LGBT people and were equipped to deal with incidents of prejudice and discrimination.

### Equality Report recommendations: Health and social care

Health and social care in Scotland should meet the needs of LGBT people and tackle the particular issues and inequalities that LGBT people can face.

- NHS staff, social care, and other healthcare providers should train staff on the needs and health concerns of LGB and transgender people in order to meet the needs of service users
- NHS staff providing general mental health services should receive LGB-specific and transgender-specific training to ensure they are confident and competent to assist LGB and transgender people experiencing mental health difficulties
- NHS Scotland must commit resources to support transgender people in remote locations to access services which cannot be efficiently provided in all localities.

## **Unhealthy Attitudes: the treatment of LGBT people within health and social care services**

This 2015 UK-wide survey (Somerville, C., 2015) asked over 3,000 health and social care staff about their experiences of issues relating to LGBT healthcare. 14% of survey respondents were from Scotland (420 respondents).

The report highlights some key gaps in knowledge and training of staff in relation to LGBT people, which is resulting in unfair treatment of LGBT people, as patients, service users and colleagues.

Key findings from this survey of health and social care staff include:

- 10% of respondents say they are not confident in their ability to understand and meet the specific needs of LGBT patients and service users; this rises to 24% in relation to trans people
- 35% of staff in Scotland believed services should be doing more to meet the needs of LGBT service users
- 24% of respondents have heard their colleagues make negative remarks or use derogatory language about LGBT people; 20% have heard disparaging remarks about trans people
- 16% would not feel confident challenging colleagues who make negative remarks; 16% would also not feel confident challenging such remarks from another patient or service user
- 12% of staff in Scotland report their service has LGBT inclusive literature and posters available to patients and service users (12% LGB inclusive; 4% inclusive of trans people).

### **Recommendations: Improving the treatment of LGBT people in services**

The Unhealthy Attitudes report recommendations on how to improve the treatment of LGBT people within health and social care service users include:

- Policies and procedures: organisations should ensure complaints procedures are updated and communicate to all staff that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic complaints will be taken seriously
- Training: organisations should implement mandatory LGBT-inclusive equality and diversity training for all staff that covers homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and language, the diversity within the LGBT community as well as understanding the needs of LGBT patients and service users and how to ensure equal treatment
- Monitoring: organisations should implement routine sexual orientation and gender identity monitoring of service users alongside training, support and guidance for staff in order to improve confidence and understanding around the benefits of equality monitoring and enable them to track the experience and health outcomes of LGBT service users
- Information: all health and social care organisations must make sure that LGBT-inclusive information and resources are readily available for service users.

## Conclusions and recommendations

This LGBT Community Needs Assessment looks at the needs and experience of LGBT adults in Fife and aims to be a springboard for action in this area. It is hoped that the report will inform mainstream health and social care providers and commissioners. It suggests a range of ways in which the health and wellbeing inequalities experienced by LGBT people in Fife can be addressed.

Fife's Health Inequality Strategy (Fife Health & Wellbeing Alliance, 2015) uses a 3 themes approach to reducing health inequalities. This has been used as a framework for recommendations for the partners, to help those planning and delivering services and support across Fife to better recognise and meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

### Creating healthier places and communities: being out

**Despite considerable improvements in social attitudes, and greater legal protection, LGBT people in Fife are often still not able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves. Instead, LGBT people are frequently forced to hide who they are for fear of negative reactions and treatment, impacting negatively on their mental health and wellbeing.**

- Ensure LGBT people are able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves within their local communities and workplaces
- Support LGBT people to build connections and supportive LGBT and other social networks within their local communities
- Encourage LGBT people to identify what impacts on their health and wellbeing and participate in developing solutions, including around promoting community safety and addressing harassment and hate crime
- Provide a range of support services locally for LGBT people and support transport to key services provision further afield, such as the Gender Identity Clinic in Glasgow
- Support LGBT people to engage in decisions about what happens locally affecting their lives
- Support communities to be more welcoming to LGBT people.

## Supporting healthier lives: being connected

**Due to the lack of LGBT-specific social activities or venues, LGBT people in Fife have very limited opportunities to connect with others. This lack of peer contact and support has a negative impact on health and wellbeing, and often leaves LGBT people isolated and without a space to be themselves.**

- Be aware of the range of wider social factors that cause isolation, impact on health and limit the life chances of LGBT people
- Create local social opportunities for LGBT people to meet peers and improve their health and wellbeing
- Build skills, resources and knowledge within LGBT communities to enable individuals to create sustainable social opportunities and networks.

## Changing the way organisations work: being supported

**LGBT people in Fife experience disadvantage when using health and support services, with services often failing to recognise and meet their needs. There is a strong need to provide LGBT-specific information and support in Fife, as well as for mainstream services to address the often well-founded fear of negative reactions and treatment, by addressing practice and by proactively indicating that they are LGBT-friendly.**

- Provide services that are sensitive to the inequality, discrimination and disadvantage LGBT people face
- Make it easier for LGBT people to access services by ensuring provision is inclusive and welcoming, and addresses the needs of LGBT people
- Develop staff skills and knowledge around the diverse needs of LGBT people and the specific issues that affect their health and wellbeing
- Ensure LGBT people have access to LGBT-specific information and tailored support to improve their health and wellbeing
- Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of LGBT workers through policies and practices that promote respect of diversity and support individuals to be themselves
- Consider how policies, plans and decisions impact on the health inequalities of LGBT people.

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## Further information

For information about the services, programmes and activities LGBT Health and Wellbeing delivers please visit our website: [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk)

This document is available in PDF format on our website in the 'Online resources' section.

In this section of our website you will also find links to training resources, impact reports and needs assessments.

To discuss any aspect of this report please contact Maruska, Chief Executive at [maruska@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:maruska@lgbthealth.org.uk) or on 0131 523 1106.

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