

LGBT Equalities Project

Impact Report January 2010 – March 2012



Introduction

The LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing (LGBT Health) is a unique Edinburgh-based organisation that promotes the health, wellbeing and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland.

Our LGBT Equalities Project, which is largely funded by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, was set up to provide guidance, advice and advocacy to LGBT people, improve accessibility of mainstream services and build capacity to support LGBT people facing multiple discrimination.

The Project has had a strong focus on making services and information provision more accessible for LGBT people, with an emphasis on supporting those who are likely to experience more acute access barriers and/or discrimination due to their intersectional identity, for example disabled LGBT people.

The project has taken a very multi-faceted approach to promoting equality, both by delivering support services directly to individuals experiencing inequality, and through the development of internally and externally focused learning, training and capacity building. The project has thus created new networks, promoted greater partnership work across equality strand organisations, and generated internal learning and service redesign.

Evaluation

Through sharing our expertise on LGBT issues with other equality organisations in Edinburgh, and simultaneously drawing on the expertise of other equality organisations and the LGBT community, we have begun to increase understanding of the access barriers LGBT people face, which can be particularly acute and little understood for those with intersectional identities.

Through this Project we have focused both internally at how as an organisation we can make our services more accessible, as well as worked with a range of partner organisations around these issues. The LGBT Equalities Project has thus started to engender new learning, communication networks, multi-agency working and dynamic partnerships of organisations committed to tackling inequalities. All of this is work LGBT Health is committed to developing further.

The LGBT Equalities Project works both with organisations and individuals across a number of diverse areas of activity to:

- Provide guidance, advice and advocacy to empower LGBT individuals to have greater control, particularly in relation to accessing mainstream services.
- Extend support available to transgender people.
- Provide information and support to LGBT victims of hate crimes.
- Promote wider awareness of LGBT rights and access issues, particularly in relation to LGBT people facing multiple discrimination.
- Support the engagement of LGBT people in decision-making structures and consultations.
- Improve the accessibility of the organisation's own services.



Partnership work: Dynamic Diversity Forum

Dynamic Diversity Forum membership

To date 26 representatives from 16 organisations have attended Forum meetings and training events. Membership includes representatives from:

- Cachin Cachan Cachunga!
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Edinburgh Development Group
- ELREC
- Equality Network
- Garvald Glenesk
- LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Lothian and Borders Police
- Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living
- Multi-Cultural Family Base
- Saheliya
- Shakti Women's Aid
- The Welcoming
- Transgender Scotland
- UPDATE

"The sessions provide lots of ideas about how to partner with LGBT/BME orgs. Good format which maximised our involvement/ideas sharing. Great energy, new networks, new relationships, lots of concrete suggestions and lovely facilitation."

"Has helped me reflect more on my organisation's (and my own) understanding of intersections. I liked opportunities to discuss in small groups, would be good to see actions and developments - let's keep this going."

The Project has promoted the inclusion of minority ethnic and disabled LGBT people by facilitating a successful multi-agency forum, which has been meeting since January 2011. The Dynamic Diversity Forum brings together minority ethnic, disability and LGBT organisations for training, awareness raising and to share information and good practice.

Activities have included:

- Workshops, talks and discussions on inter-sectional issues, involving LGBT people with complex identities
- Identifying and improving LGBT/ME and LGBT/Disability access issues
- Access to trainings on equality issues and training exchanges between organisations.

Evaluation forms are completed by all representatives after each meeting or event, to gather feedback on facilitation and content. The objectives of the group are also discussed at each meeting and new aims for future meetings are collectively decided on by the group.

It became apparent during meetings that representatives from various organisations felt a lack of confidence in supporting people who have complex identities. The Forum now provides an opportunity for organisations to seek advice and support from each other and find positive ways of working together. It works very pragmatically to help member organisations better support LGBT people with intersectional identities, as illustrated through the recent collaboration between LGBT Health and The Welcoming. This has enabled a Spanish LGBT person who doesn't speak English to access LGBT Health's mental health services, with Spanish-English translation being provided by a volunteer from The Welcoming.

Forum members now report for the first time feeling well-connected and supported in a multi-strand network, and inter-sectional issues are becoming easier for group members to respond to when they arise within their organisations. Forum members also report experiencing a new feeling of trust when referring service-users between organisations, and successful partnership work between member organisations continues to develop.

The Forum will continue to meet every two months and plans include mutual training on various equality issues, providing information to our service users in various languages, staff and volunteer secondments between organisations and the creation of an LGBT blog for community members to interact and discuss inter-sectional issues.

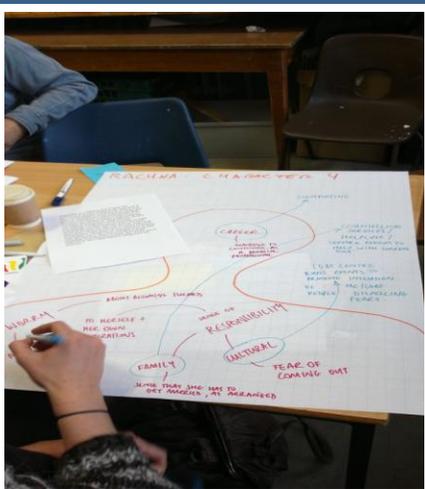
Partnership work: Training and Capacity Building

"I thoroughly enjoyed the training, the scenarios and the explanation about transgender identities - and some of the associated barriers and assumptions. Found it a real eye opener. It raises many parallels with disability issues and prejudice. It will give me more confidence in how I might approach situations I have little experience of. I would recommend this training to everyone, whether they work with individuals or not, useful for life!"

(Participant, LGBT Awareness Training)

"Brilliant training. Very informative session with excellent trainers. The first time I have ever understood the World Health Organisation's definitions and differences between sex and gender."

(Participant, Transgender Awareness Training)



The LGBT Equalities Project provides tailored training to mainstream organisations on LGBT and transgender issues, with the aim of making staff and volunteers more aware of sexual orientation and gender identity issues and how those impact on individuals.

Alongside this, a rolling training programme is also provided for LGBT Health's staff and volunteers on a range of equality issues, including faith and belief, disability inclusion and the communication needs of people with learning disabilities. This training programme is delivered collaboratively with a wide range of partner equality organisations and aims to make staff and volunteers more aware of a wide range of equality issues.



The LGBT Awareness Training has been tailored to the needs of specific health and equality organisations. These sessions have received very positive feedback, with professionals reporting they have increased confidence and awareness, and individuals have felt inspired and motivated to revisit their organisation's policies and procedures in order to ensure they become more LGBT-friendly. The manager of a disability organisation stated "The part on procedures and visibility was very useful - this will now be reviewed here service by service."

This capacity building work is ongoing, with some future partnerships focusing specifically on supporting LGBT people with complex identities and access issues. LGBT Health is currently working with RNIB Edinburgh to better support blind and partially-sighted LGBT people, and plans to expand its work with Swietlica, which supports Edinburgh's Polish community.

Consultation: Access Group

"It feels like we're being really listened to, and that if we discuss a barrier to access here, someone actually goes away and does something to improve it."

(Access Group member)

Access Group suggestions followed up have included:

- new door signs in the building which comply with RNIB guidelines
- information on the building's accessibility incorporated on the website and in publicity
- LGBT Health listings now routinely indicating when events are wheelchair accessible
- disability awareness trainings delivered to staff and volunteers.

The Access Group formed in August 2011 to discuss issues of accessibility and inclusion within the organisation's own services. Seven individuals (service users, volunteers and community members) joined the group, which is facilitated by LGBT Health's Equalities Development Worker. The short-life Access Group has held four meetings to identify potential access barriers, related either to disability or any other aspect of an individual's identity, and discuss new approaches to tackling these. The aim has been for meetings to provide a pragmatic roadmap for action.

The Equalities Development Worker has, after each meeting, taken responsibility for investigating issues raised, following up on suggestions and reporting back to the group on actions taken. This has ensured the group has had maximum impact, with further developments, such as minority ethnic/LGBT events organised at LGBT Health, in the pipeline.

The Access Group has provided valuable insight into the issues service users and volunteers regularly face, and given the organisation an opportunity to take action on previously unidentified potential barriers. The organisation's proactive and responsive approach has meant group members report feeling heard and valued, and clear action has flowed out of the group's discussions.

Community Safety Services

"It's not the kind of stuff other people are going to understand. I've tried to talk to other people and just got blank stares or got more questions back... Thanks to the support here, things are a lot better now. I've been able to make some changes that have made me feel safer, and some practical steps have meant I'm getting less hassle".

(Service user,
Community Safety Services)

Hate crime and harassment are critical issues for many LGBT people. Our Community Safety Services provide LGBT people with a range of support around these issues:

- community safety information
- remote reporting facility
- police surgery with Lothian and Borders Police's LGBT Liaison Officer
- community safety events
- one-to-one support
- advocacy around community safety issues.

Partnership work with other community safety and support organisations helps ensure LGBT issues are better understood and LGBT individuals have access to responsive sources of further support.

Case Study: Community Safety Services

"the LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing was the obvious place to come. You have an understanding of these issues, I just didn't even think of accessing a mainstream service".

"Staff have an understanding of what it's like to be a victimised minority and that more than anything gives you the edge over mainstream organisations. When I came to the Advocacy Service I was feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. I'm now safer in my own home. The Community Safety Officer is there for me and I'm getting visits from Victim Support."

Cathy's* story

Cathy had often come along to events at the LGBT Centre and it was this familiarity and sense of belonging that led her to speak to staff when harassment from a neighbour escalated into constant verbal abuse that left her feeling vulnerable and frightened.

As a disabled gay woman, Cathy was being verbally abused in the street and in her block of flats by her neighbour because of her difference, and this resulted in her feeling increasingly unsafe in her home and in her neighbourhood. She had contacted the police, but no progress seemed to be being made. When she turned to the LGBT Advocacy Service she was worn out, overwhelmed and at a loss as to how to proceed.

Over several appointments the worker liaised on her behalf and collected the information Cathy needed to move forward. With advocacy support, she articulated to the police her frustration with the slow progress and the police initiated a '7 day process' to accelerate an arrest and to bring the case to court. Cathy was also able to work towards feeling more secure in her home by ensuring her flat was prioritised for a secure entry system, gaining permission to have fencing erected around her block of flats and getting a personal alarm. The advocacy worker also facilitated contact between Cathy and Victim Support, from whom she continues to receive support.

** Case study names have been changed*

Information & Advocacy Service

"I came here to get help with being transgender and not knowing what to do, from the only people I knew I could talk to who would know about it and understand the difficulties I was facing... I now feel much surer about my path forward. The support has helped me to say 'this is where I am and this is what I need'."

(Service user, Information & Advocacy Service)

The Information and Advocacy Service ensures that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people can access individually tailored information and support in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity and other issues affecting their day to day lives. The Advocacy Service provides more intensive casework support to ensure the wishes and concerns of LGBT individuals are heard by others.

The service has provided information and advocacy around a wide range of issues such as discrimination, hate crime and harassment, housing, health and social care, and access to gender reassignment treatment. The service works extensively to increase referrals and access for individuals to a range of mainstream services,

Case Study: Information & Advocacy Service

Judy's* story

"I now understand myself and others a bit better. I feel a lot stronger, have met new people and had fun. Things have really changed for me. It's not something I would have imagined possible a year ago."

Judy has been accessing the service for almost a year, working through challenging life changes. Judy had decided she wanted to pursue a transition from male to female, but needed support in the practical and emotional challenges ahead. Judy was extremely withdrawn during her first advocacy appointment. Her self-esteem and confidence were very low and this was impacting on her ability to make social contacts and realise her gender transition goals.

Judy was also still using a male name, and with the support of the advocacy worker identified finding a female name she felt comfortable with as a priority. Over several months, the worker helped Judy explore the different options for the name change process, set up appointments with the Justice of Peace Court, assisted in drawing up her Statutory Declaration and supported her in seeing the formal process through to its completion. The worker also helped identify the organisations that would need to be contacted and helped in drafting letters. Family and social contacts proved even more challenging and both emotional and practical support was needed to think through having these difficult conversations.

Judy also began to tackle her shyness and low self-esteem by attending our weekly drop-in group and joined the LGBT Music Jam group, where she found she could communicate through music more confidently than speech. Feeling increasingly less isolated and more confident, the next priority for Judy was accessing hair removal services. Together she and the worker explored the different options, and the worker set up the first two hair removal appointments until Judy felt confident enough to start arranging these appointments herself. Judy continues to work with the advocacy worker and to build her confidence and social networks within our social groups.

Further Information

For more information on the learning from the LGBT Equalities Project, please contact:

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To access any of the LGBT Equalities Project services, groups or training, please contact:

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