



## LGBT People and Dementia

To mark World Alzheimer's Month 2018, we are releasing our first briefing exploring the needs of LGBT people affected by dementia and the role of our new project.

### Background

Dementia has a wide range of physical, emotional, economic and social effects, not only on people with dementia, but also on carers, families and communities. As we learn more about dementia and its impacts we are beginning to further understand how it affects people of different identities.

Models of good practice promote working with people to ensure their dignity and rights are maintained and they are enabled to live well with dementia. In order to achieve this, we must ensure that every person living with dementia, or caring for someone who is, can express their full identity and any associated needs and expect to have them met.

At LGBT Health and Wellbeing our National LGBT and Dementia Project aims to add to the growing learning and practice in this area to ensure that the needs of LGBT people affected by dementia are holistically met.

Whilst you can develop dementia at a younger age dementia mainly affects older people. Older LGBT people have distinct needs as a result of their past and present experiences. For example, if an LGBT person develops dementia, early experiences of discrimination may become more pronounced in their memory and cause them to feel distress.

Research carried out into the current experiences of LGBT people show that they are more likely to rely on formal care in further life but that many fear discrimination in these settings. Some talk of having to return to not being 'out' in their identity in these settings and the detrimental impact this has on their access to services and wider wellbeing.

LGBT carers might worry they will not be recognised and supported as a carer by practitioners or family members of the person that they care for.

### Representation

Common narratives around dementia might not fit the lives of many LGBT people. For example, an LGBT person may be caring for someone with dementia who is not supportive of their LGBT identity. LGBT people may have caring responsibilities in their family of



choice as well as their family of origin, creating greater strains on their time, resources and wellbeing. Within the LGBT community men and non-binary people are as likely as women to provide informal care.

### **Access to Services**

There are many different types of dementia and each person is affected differently. Through person centred, holistic approaches we can ensure that the needs of LGBT people living with and affected by dementia are met in both specialist and mainstream services.

As LGBT people have distinct histories and life experiences this means that they have distinct needs in accessing services and therapies. For example, therapies focussed on talking in groups about events from our pasts can be made more inclusive by taking account of some of the difficult and unique experiences of LGBT people.

### **Supporting LGBT People**

First steps in supporting LGBT people:

The LGBT people you support might have had negative experiences 'coming out' to services in the past so finding ways to proactively promote your inclusive practice is important.

Don't assume because someone hasn't told you they are LGBT that they are not. This could lead to you unintentionally misinterpreting their needs.

LGBT people often fear discrimination from peers accessing services. It is important that staff are trained in how to manage these situations and that processes for accessing support and reporting incidents are visible to LGBT people using services if they do experience discrimination.

### **How to Get in Touch**

If you are affected by dementia and would like to find out more about getting involved in the project you can contact Megan on [megan@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:megan@lgbthealth.org.uk) or 0141 271 2330 / 07949472829

To find out more about how we can support you to support LGBT people you are working with and to keep up with further briefings contact Megan on [megan@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:megan@lgbthealth.org.uk) or 0141 271 2330 / 07949472829

**We'd love to hear from you if you have an example to share of good practice in supporting LGBT people affected by dementia.**