



Gaywise LGBT Communities Support

HARINGEY LGBT COMMUNITIES CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Key Findings & Recommendations



Charity No: 1077616

Introduction

Haringey, as a Borough, faces a number of social deprivation issues that were compounded by the riots in August 2011. The current economic climate has witnessed increasing unemployment and a dramatic reduction to public expenditure leading to number of services have been axed or reduced.

The impact of these has had a detrimental effect on both our primary clients - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people, and the wider community.

The LGBT population account for 5%- 10% of the Borough's population¹ and are reflective of the wider diversity of communities in the Borough i.e. includes people from and Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, refugees and new migrant groups.

As part of its organisational practice the organisation continuously consults both new and existing service users for all our initiatives to help us assess the needs of the target community.

The need to gather evidence had been identified as a result of:

- i) A recent survey of LGBT & Queer of residents/ visitors / attendees to Wise Thoughts office/ LGBT activities and events (including GFEST- Gaywise FESTival)
- ii) A 20% increase in the number of telephone enquires about local LGBT services (15 calls per month)
- iii) Feedback from voluntary organisations on the MARAC/ Domestic Violence Partnership Board/ HAVCO / MPS IAG & Haringey LiNK groups.
- iv) The Department Of Health recently announced that HIV infection rates among Gay men had increased over the past 10 years, however there has been an overall reduction in the budget for voluntary agencies by up to 20%²

In light of the above and the ever changing environment that LGBT people are faced with, the organisation had conducted a pilot project to assess the needs of local LGBT people living, working or socialising in Haringey.

The organisation held a series of consultations with LGBT staff; artists; service users and LGBT people living, working studying or socialising in the Borough. Participants included those from other marginalised groups i.e. from BAME or new migrants community members. Total No of respondents = 317

In addition to the consultation, we have also used the following mechanisms to help identify the needs of LGBT communities:

- Feedback by attendees and participants and facilitators for activities delivered under our programme of work. (1123 participants and attendees feedback forms + facilitators feedback from GFEST 2011 activities)

- 7 Consultations with staff & users from key local statutory and voluntary service providers such as adult learning, cultural & libraries services, HAVCO, Haringey LiNK,
- Priorities as identifies in the Borough's 'Strategy for Young People'.
- Haringey Equalities Policy aim (*'A council which ensures the provision of services appropriate to local need, valued by all and delivered by staff who reflect the diverse communities we serve'*). - April 2012
- Challenge it, Report it, Stop it: The Government's Plan to Tackle Hate Crime (3. *Increasing reporting and access to support*) – March 2012
- Stop Hate Crime Final Report 2011- 2012 (*13% of victims reporting Hate Crimes identified their sexual orientation as a cause of victimisation*) – July 2012
- Proposed activities help to meet a majority of the desired 'Outcomes' for the Borough's Community & Voluntary Sector strategy.
- Rapid HIV Testing by NHS Haringey is no longer offered at the Library and there has been an increase in STI's HIV/AIDS - **Whittington Hospital NHS Trust**
- There has been a marked increase in the rates of STI's among aged 50+ - **British Medical Journal - FEB 2012**
- Older people facing a 'diminished quality of life' due the pressures on social care – **DOH Select Health Committee Report 2012**
- Department Of Health policy – **Healthy Lives, Healthy People 2011**
 - 2.20 □ appropriate access to sexual health services;
 - 2.45 □ develop and implement innovative approaches to empower individuals and communities to improve health and wellbeing working with partners throughout the public sector and in civil society;
 - A.10 □ local initiatives to tackle social exclusion.

Why Wise Thoughts?

Wise Thoughts is currently the only LGBT organisation in Haringey.³ The organisation has an established track record of working with people from diverse communities. An analysis of the range of initiatives that form part of our programme of work such as **GFEST** – **Gaywise FEST**ival has identified our unique ability to attract people from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, for the initiatives and services that we develop.

The organisation is also linked to national networks of LGBT service providers via LGBT Consortium organisation and Stonewall, that periodically produces up dates and is linked to several local (Haringey) and regional (London) LGBT / community networks, such as HAVCO, MARAC, that send out information on local initiatives & services to their clients. The service will also be advertised on the local authority website

1 Haringey Council Equalities Scheme 2010-2013 – Sexual Orientation

2 Terrance Higgins Trust

3 As identified by HAVCO

Key Finding

Key issues for LGBT people:

- A) 79% of older respondents (45+) felt socially isolated and disengaged with the local communities due to:
 - (i) Limited access to statutory services due to fear of stigmatisation from staff.
 - (ii) Limited access to local social support networks/groups.
 - (iii) Availability of non-commercial meeting spaces.
 - (iv) Degeneration of public spaces i.e. libraries due to restricted opening hours/ reduced staff.

- B) 83% of young people (13 – 19) feared stigmatisation from peers and service providers because of their sexuality and/or ethnicity.

- C) 71% of LGBT people expressed a desire to engage with the wider public and other from minority groups and for diverse agencies to create a programme of activities that increased opportunities for wider public engagement.

- D) 97% there was a lack of understanding of LGBT people, cultures and identities. A number of participants did not identify themselves as LGBT.

- E) 69% expressed a need to provided dedicated access to social / affordable housing. There is perception among housing providers that "all LGBT people are financially affluent" and that they do not need access to social / affordable housing. Significant percentages were reluctant to apply for social housing register for fear of disclosing their sexuality.

- F) 65% of LGBT people complained of the lack of availability of dedicated provision to skills building training within the creative and cultural industries, or cultural activities and initiatives that can increase opportunities and access to employment.

A review of existing provisions / consultations with staff from other agencies/ groups including NHS Haringey / Positive Rainbow has identified:

- G) Increased rates of STI & HIV infections, obesity and stress due to:
 - (i) Access to confidential HIV/AIDS and STI's testing in non-clinical spaces (particularly key issue among BAME LGBT people). There was also a perceived lack of emphasis on sexual health promotion.

- (ii) Limited / lack of access to physical activities, as these are regarded as 'luxuries'. (The need for physical / cultural activities, that can improve physical and mental well being was a particular factor that was identified among older LGBT respondents.)
- (iii) Socio-economic and cultural climate/ fear of job security and/ or unemployment.

H) Reluctance to report homophobic / transphobic hate crimes due to:

- (i) Perceived apathy among statutory bodies to tackle the issue.
- (ii) Limited Access / links / confidential referrals to agencies dealing with victims of hate crimes.

I) Not all participants affiliated themselves with the 'LGBT' label; a number said they believed it was a restrictive definition and excluded those that choose to define themselves as 'Queer'. Young people (between 16-24) were more likely to identify themselves as 'Queer'.

Recommendations

1. To increase dedicated service provision for LGBT people living, studying, socialising or working in Haringey.

Participants felt there were a very limited number of services provided for LGBT residents. Existing service providers did not have a comprehensive understanding and/or appreciation of the diversity of communities and socio- cultural contexts of LGBT communities.

There is a prevailing 'culture of fear' of facing homophobic / transphobic attitudes amongst a significant percentage of LGBT respondents, across the age ranges. In some cases it has led to reluctance to access generic public services offered by diverse providers.

It would be beneficial for service providers (particularly statutory and business service providers) to periodically conduct an impact assessment on existing / proposed services to evaluate if they are accessed by LGBT people.

2. Ensure LGBT community consultation and inclusion in the development of policy and services offered by statutory, voluntary and business providers.

An overwhelming majority felt there was a need for service providers to have sustained consultations with LGBT communities, prior to the development of any new / proposed services.

Service providers would benefit from having LGBT representation on management and governance panels to help insure inclusion and consultation.

3. To support the establishment of a centralised dedicated resource base, offering access to information, providing services and other initiatives for LGBT people in Haringey.

Respondents expressed a need to establish a local LGBT resource centre that is able to provide dedicated advice, guidance and support. A centre that can accommodate dedicated service provision by diverse service providers.

It may be also appropriate to offer skills building training in additional venues around the Borough to enable greater access by diverse communities.

4. The council to campaign for and develop initiatives that can aid community cohesion.

To develop and support activities and initiatives that can help combat stigmatisation of LGBT people and create opportunities to engage with the wider community.

To create an archive of LGBT histories and cultures that can help to promote greater understanding of LGBT people and communities.