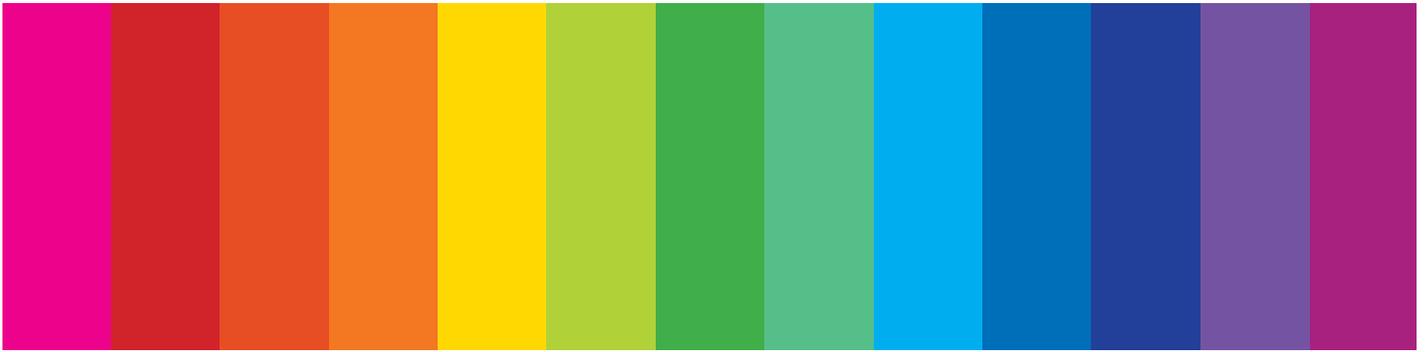


The Challenge for Change



Health Needs of Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual People in Bradford & District

Community Feedback

Setting the scene

Health and social care services cannot be 'world class' or 'high quality' without including action to tackle discrimination and promote equality.

Department of Health: Single Equality Scheme 2009-2012: p.5: June 2009

The Equity Partnership is a Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual (LGB) community based and LGB run organisation committed to meeting the needs of the LGB people living, working and socialising in the Bradford and district area. It has also has a regional role, to network LGB organisations across the Yorkshire and Humber area. The Equity Partnership is committed to grassroots engagement with LGB people to identify the issues and experiences that concern them, in order to inform its work.

There are no comprehensive official statistics on sexual orientation identity but currently it is estimated by the Government, that the lesbian, gay men and bisexual population is between 5 and 7 per cent of the total population. So there are between 33,446 and 47,780 people in Bradford and district that identify as LGB and yet LGB health concerns are still misunderstood.

NHS Bradford & Airedale felt that the Health Needs Assessment of LGB people was of importance and relevance to them and so commissioned Equity Partnership to repeat the one that was done in 2007.

**My friends have been supportive during the coming out process."
"They (friends) mainly seem confused and think it's a phase."
"They've harassed me for being gay."**



EQUITYPARTNERSHIP

NHS
Bradford and Airedale

The Health Needs Assessment

The Health Needs Assessment was a questionnaire, which included different types of questions. The questionnaire was posted on the Equity Partnership website. Information about the questionnaire was placed in the local press and the wider regional LGB press.

The local Equity Radio (LGB radio) promoted the importance of taking part and gave guidance on how to complete one. Paper questionnaires were also taken out to the various organised LGB Groups and events that were happening at the time and outreach sessions took place in commercial scene venues asking people to complete a questionnaire.

These factors plus the fact that respondents were self-selecting in choosing to complete the questionnaire gives an element of bias in the findings.

The number of LGB people completing a questionnaire was almost double that of 2007 (**96%** increase).

Who took part?

212 questionnaires completed by LGB people

53% (114) are female and **47%** (103) are male. In both instances one person said they were trans.

45% are lesbian/gay women, **44%** are gay men; **8%** are bisexual women; **2%** are bisexual men and **1%** is questioning their sexual orientation.

83% of respondents are white British, and the rest are from ethnic minorities, which is comparable with the general population of the UK.

17% said that they had a disability, including physical and mental disabilities

71% of respondents live in the Bradford District area, the rest living in other parts of West Yorkshire, such as Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Leeds. A small number lived outside West Yorkshire.

50% had an annual income of between £15,000 and £34,999, **24%** between £3,000 and £14,999 and **14%** more than £35,000.

“One GP is great but the others in the practice assume I’m straight every time and every time I tell them I’m a lesbian. Tedious!”

“GP always responds well.”

Key findings

Being out

(**66%**) 140 local LGB people make decisions on a daily basis as to whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation. This is almost **20%** less than it was in 2007.

Almost a third (**30%**) 62 are out to a few or no health professionals, which is a slight increase from 2007 (**28%**).

Just over half of all respondents (115) are out to their GP, which is a **10%** increase from 2007.

Are you out to other specific health services?

The majority of LGB people were not out when accessing specific services in the last 5 years. The exception to this was when accessing sexual health services.

From those who were out there were reports of health staff being accepting of respondents' sexual orientation and only a few reports of respondents receiving a negative response from health care staff.

“I get a lot of discrimination because of being a Gypsy, if they knew I was gay I would be discriminated against even more.”

“I have always been confident in my sexual orientation and it has no effect on my mental health.”

Smoking, alcohol and drugs

Well over a third of respondents have never smoked (83) and a little more than a third (73) are currently smokers, which is higher than the smoking prevalence rate for Bradford and also **13%** more than in 2007.

63 (**30%**) of respondents regularly exceed the recommended levels of alcohol and 63 (**30%**) occasionally exceed the recommended levels.

39 (**18%**) of respondents regularly binge drink and 51 (**24%**) occasionally binge drink.

The percentage using recreational drugs is relatively low. This does not reflect other research, which suggests that drug use within the lesbian and gay communities is higher than amongst heterosexual communities. Of the small minority who do use, poppers and cannabis are the most used.

Diabetes, heart disease, respiratory complaints

71 (**33%**) of respondents stated that they had a health condition. The incidence of the conditions experienced by the respondents was generally low. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes type 2 being experienced the most.

Cancer screening and self examination

Just over half of female respondents 66 (**59%**) have regular cervical smears and 7 (**6%**) have been refused screening or been advised that it is not necessary, which is half of the rate in 2007.

A significant number of respondents, 22 (**20%**) are not having regular cervical or breast screening or examining themselves for breast lumps and this is higher than for women in general.

More than half of all male respondents 63 (**64%**) regularly examine themselves for testicular lumps and 40 (**41%**) have been shown how to do this. 11 (**11%**) of male respondents do not examine themselves and have not been shown how to do this.

Mental health

118 (**55%**) of respondents have experienced some sort of mental ill health, which is about the same as the findings in 2007 but higher than that for the general population.

Domestic violence

82 respondents have experienced domestic violence. 23 (**10%**) experienced it in a previous heterosexual relationship; 52 (**25%**) in a previous same sex relationship and 7 (**3%**) in a current same sex relationship.

Abuse in the workplace

59 (**34%**) have experienced abuse in the workplace.

Lesbian fertility and pregnancy

Of the 66 lesbians who responded 10 (**15%**) said they or their current partner had or tried to have a child.

Sexual health

The vast majority of respondents 170 (**80%**) have not been diagnosed with any sexually transmitted infection (STI), HIV or AIDS. From the 42 that have, 38 have had an STI and 5 are HIV+.

Well-being and keeping fit

From the 207 respondents the vast majority 135 (**66%**) are generally happy and ok about their weight.

Using the body mass index (BMI) 46 (**29%**) are overweight; 37 (**24%**) are obese and 2 (**1%**) are severely obese.

160 (**77%**) respondents are not taking the recommended at least 5 sessions a week of moderate intensity exercise.

Specialist support

Respondents identified a need for specialist support workers in sexual health; mental health; HIV/AIDS; domestic violence and hospital matters.

Key recommendations

1. Train staff in LGB Equalities and Understanding LGB Needs

Training and awareness raising for staff at all levels on heterosexism, stereotyping, challenging homophobia and understanding the different needs of LGB people.

2. Understanding LGB Health Needs

Increase the knowledge and skills amongst professionals from different agencies about the health needs and experiences of LGB people and how sexual orientation may impact on their health and well-being.

3. Improve Monitoring of Sexual Orientation

Equity Partnership to develop and implement further work with different agencies around monitoring sexual orientation of all staff and service users.

4. Encourage Organisations to Come Out as LGB Friendly

Equity Partnership to explore the idea of a charter mark that organisations can sign up to showing that they are at least LGB friendly and welcoming.

5. Develop Health Information for LGB People

Service providers need to tell LGB people what they need to know about specific health issues such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, breast and cervical cancer

6. Increase Visibility

Different agencies and service providers need to have up-to-date information on display to create a welcoming and safe atmosphere for LGB people.

7. Review and Make Complaints Procedures Clear

All agencies and service providers need to ensure that LGB people can make a complaint without the fear of some sort of backlash.

8. Employment of Specialist LGB Workers

Equity Partnership and service providers need to work together and with the wider LGB communities to look at ways of employing specialist LGB workers in the prioritised areas.

9. Provide Tailor Made Interventions

Tailored alcohol and smoking prevention and cessation interventions should be developed and targeted at LGB people. Tailored promotion of cervical and breast screening services should be targeted at lesbian and bisexual women.

10. Develop Services for Men Experiencing Domestic Violence

There is a clear need for developing some provision for gay and bisexual men experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

11. Develop a LGB Mental Health Initiative

The Mental Health Services need to explore ways of targeting mental health promotion work to LGB people. There is scope to develop a specific LGB Mental Health promotion.

12. Raise awareness of LGB Communities to their Rights

There is a need to work with the wider LGB communities to raise awareness of their newly found and newly created legislative rights to receive quality services.

Copies of this report are available on request from:

Equity Partnership, Equity Centre, 1 Longlands Street, Bradford BD1 2TP

Tel: 01274 727759 or email: info@equitypartnership.org.uk

A full copy can be downloaded from: www.equitypartnership.org.uk

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