

Bath & North East Somerset

Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual and Trans Health
and Inequality

RESEARCH REPORT

NOVEMBER 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our report explores how some Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGB and Trans) people experience a range of services in Bath and North East Somerset, which includes: health, education, local government and police services.

In response to the Public Sector Health Equality Duty, this health research report has been designed to capture the pressing needs and concerns of LGB and Trans residents and service users in B&NES. It was funded by the Community Empowerment Fund of B&NES Council. This research was conducted between July 2013 and July 2014; it was launched at the 2013 Bristol Pride.

Our survey data, interviews and discussion groups highlight the diversity of LGB and Trans experiences in Bath & North East Somerset. LGB and Trans residents experiences vary dramatically depending on their age and life stage (for example: being at school, university or in employment). Adult and employed participants being more established in their gender and / or sexual identity – expressed less need for ‘safe spaces’ or special provision to feel comfortable in the area.

THE SAMPLE

330 people took part in our Bath & North East Somerset “LGB and Trans Needs Assessment”.

- Over 65% of our survey sample were either Lesbian (Over 20%), Gay (Over 24%), Bisexual (Over 12%) or identified as another minority sexual orientation including; Asexual (2%), Pansexual (2%), Queer (3%) or “Other” (2%) sexual orientation.
- Over 35% were young people aged 16 to 24.
- About 60% were “out” and about 30% weren’t “out” as an LGB and / or Trans person in their local area.
- Most people in our sample were either in full-time work (52%), in education (Over 26%) or in part-time work (Over 16%). The social context and life situation of respondents had a significant influence on their experience of living as LGB and / or Trans in B&NES.

KEY FINDINGS

Health and Mental health

- Almost a quarter of our sample (24%) had a long-term limiting illness expected to last 12 months or more. Gay men and people identifying with sexual minorities report having higher rates of ill health than lesbian women and heterosexual respondents¹. However, our analysis suggests that LGB and Trans respondents are no more (or less) likely to encounter physical ill

1 The relatively small sample size (n=130) may have produced a non-significant result here (Type II error), despite the observable variation between groups. See D.Cramer (2003) Advanced Quantitative Analysis. Open University Press, p4.

health than heterosexual respondents.

- Just under 18% of our sample had a mental health condition expecting to last for 12 months or more. Respondents who identify with minority sexual orientations were more likely to say that they had a mental health condition than lesbian or gay respondents.
- Just over 50% of our sample had received help for anxiety or depression. Young respondents (aged 16-24) were significantly more likely to have sought medical help for anxiety and depression than older adults; and respondents identifying with minority sexual orientations are significantly more likely to have sought medical help for anxiety or depression.²

Self-harm and suicidal thoughts

- Over 30% of our sample had harmed or injured themselves. LGB and Trans respondents are significantly more likely to have self-harmed in comparison with the heterosexual sample³. Younger respondents (16-24 year olds) are more likely to have injured themselves than older adults. Respondents who identify with minority sexualities and Lesbians appear to be more likely to self-harm than gay men.
- Over 40% of our sample had thought about or attempted suicide. LGB and Trans respondents are significantly more likely to have thought about trying to kill themselves than heterosexual respondents⁴.

Discrimination and visibility in B&NES

- A third of LGB and Trans respondents encountered discrimination in their local area because of their gender identity and / or sexual orientation. Younger people (16-24 year olds) are more likely to report discrimination than older adults (for example: focus group respondents received abuse for 'holding hands' in certain areas).
- Some young people at school reported disapproval from some teachers and school nurses as well as from some of their peers. Several young people reported that the professionals who were supposed to support them in challenging bullying thought they were responsible for "targeting themselves".
- These incidences can have a profound effect on the mental health and wellbeing of LGB and Trans young people, contributing to isolation ("I do not go out much so they cannot do anything") and alienation ("They want us to die, and not have relationships or be gay").
- Awareness of LGB and / or Trans issues, as well as making assumptions and stereotyping, among some service providers and professionals, was a concern for LGB and Trans respondents.
- Some LGB and Trans people do not "come out" when receiving a range of services, because they fear being treated worse as a result, for example, experiencing negative attitudes, biphobia, homophobia and / or transphobia. Lesbians and gay men are more likely to be "out" in their neighbourhoods than respondents who identify with other sexualities.

2 at a confidence level of 95%.

3 at a confidence level of 95%.

4 at a confidence level of 95%.

Recommendations for Commissioners and Service Providers

From this health needs assessment we recommend that:

- Bath & North East Somerset Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Joint Strategic Research Report include the health and wellbeing needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans populations in planning and service delivery.
- Bath and North East Somerset develop an LGB and Trans Health Improvement Strategy.
- Training for frontline staff on achieving cultural competence in delivering an inclusive service to LGB and Trans communities.
- Teachers, school nurses, health and social workers who have regular contact with young people should have training to be sensitive to the concerns of LGB and Trans young people.
- Ensure effective monitoring of gender identity and sexual orientation across services.



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