



Out in Somerset



Jargon Busters

LGBT / LGBT+ / LGBTQ - initials which describe Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Questioning. Sometimes the “Q” stands for Queer used as a reclaimed word. The “+” symbol acknowledges the inclusion of a range of gender and sexual minority identities including: asexual, gender-fluid, intersex, non-binary and pansexual.

Welcome

“Welcome to our ‘Out in Somerset’ publication. I hope that you enjoy the publication. We have gathered together testimonies, and personal stories, from a range of LGBTQ+ people, and our allies, across Somerset. You will also find information about local community groups and organisations, including social and support groups, charities, hate crime and victim support services as well as LGBTQ+ youth groups.



“The Diversity Trust is a Community Interest Company, based in Somerset, providing training and consultancy services across the UK as well as specialist support services for LGBT+ communities at a local level. We have been working with a range of groups and organisations to establish an LGBT+ Community Forum for the county.

“We also run Glastonbury Alphabets which is a social and support group for LGBTQ young people, aged 13-19, in Glastonbury and Mendip. You will find more information about our services in the publication and more is available on our website.”

Berkeley Wilde, Founder and Director, The Diversity Trust CIC

The publication has been designed by the Diversity Trust CIC and has been made possible by an Awards for All grant from the Community Fund.



“As individuals, I believe our differences should be celebrated; it’s our uniqueness that makes each and every one of us who we are. Being targeted because of your age, race, sexual orientation or any other reason is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in Avon and Somerset.”



“For me, one of the most important things about being your Police and Crime Commissioner is to act as a bridge between the police and the communities they serve, including you. It is important that we always listen, especially to the quiet voices, so we can align our services to your needs. By listening to you, I can drive improvements in your police service to raise awareness and increase the reporting of homophobic hate crime in order to tackle it.”

“There are huge amounts of work being done and we have some fantastic services helping to support victims of hate crime, I want people to know if they are suffering, there is help available.” .”

Sue Mountstevens, Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner

“Established in 2003, 2BU is a youth support service promoting wellbeing and positive mental health of children and young people who identify as LGBT+ in Somerset. Supported by our team of volunteers we run a range of group support and 1:1 sessions across Somerset including our newest group “2BU T’ Time” for transgender young people age 8-18 and their parents/carers.”



“2BU continues to be creative in their work and we are truly inspired every day by the young people we meet, their resilience, strength and hope in a future where we say “Its OK 2BU in Somerset!”

Lisa Snowdon-Carr (she/her), 2BU Somerset

“We are a couple living in a Somerset village. Having searched the internet to find like-minded women to socialise with, we found the Somerset Lesbian Network. We were warmly welcomed and since then have become regular members of the group. In 2015 we considered moving to another part of the country, but the SLN was a major factor in changing our minds. The friendship and support of the group would be difficult to find elsewhere. We look forward to meetings and events; the SLN has been invaluable to us.”



Maggie and Sharon, Somerset Lesbian Network

“As a gay man working with young people to create Freedom Youth (the lesbian and gay youth project) in Bristol in the 90’s, I have seen how things have developed and improved over the last 25 years - I’m proud to have been part of those changes. In 2006 I married my partner of 13 years and we recently celebrated 26 years together.



I started working with CCS - (the Community Council for Somerset) - in August 2018 and was delighted by my welcome to the team. CCS want to meet their challenging targets to support LGBT+ people across Somerset, especially in the isolated rural communities. Using our network of Village & Community Agents we are able to provide practical support alongside signposting people to reduce isolation and challenge discrimination, always putting people first. I’m looking forward to what can be achieved in the next 25 years.

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Ade Murphy, Community Involvement Officer, CCS Smart Communities



“Being an out member of the LGBT community and living in a rural area is not without its challenges, something I have personal experience of! As an LGBT-inclusive organisation myself and the rest of the team at the Eddystone Trust are firm believers that everyone has a right to live free of prejudice and discrimination, empowering clients to challenge it whenever they encounter it.”

James Mead, Men's Health Worker, The Eddystone Trust

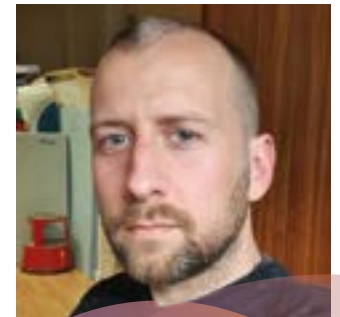


“Every letter of the LGBTQ+ community face their own individual issues when walking alongside mainstream society. My own sexuality (bisexuality) is often underrepresented, misunderstood or steeped in stigma; unfortunately, often within the LGBT community itself!

“However, I see more curiosity these days than biphobia and have a wonderful circle of friends and colleagues whom I know would educate their friends if ever the topic arose.

“Whilst working for Compass Disability Services I found myself discussing my sexuality during an Equality & Diversity training course and the reception was fantastic. On the whole we have certainly come a long way in society but it's the big push towards the end of a race that gets us over the finish line.”

Simon Gibson, Compass Disability Services





“It can be really difficult in Taunton, and Somerset in general, to meet likeminded people and form real friendships especially if new to the area. This can be amplified when you are LGBT+ as it feels sometimes there is ‘nothing for us’. Social isolation has a huge impact on wellbeing and it’s for this reason I set up Taunton Gay Group (TGG), as a simple “let’s meet up in a pub” informal social group. It’s steadily grown with both regulars and newbies coming along each time and now it feels like we actually have a visible community here, with a greater circle of friendship and laughter”

Stephen Bennett-Troake, Taunton Gay Group (TGG)



“I have always been an LGBT ally and it’s never felt more important to me than now, with what feels like an increase in hate and polarising politics. I am incredibly proud to work for Victim Support, which is a top rated Charity by Stonewall.”

Mark Thompson, Victim Support

“Stand Against Racism & Inequality supports victims of any type of hate crime, emotionally and practically. We work throughout the Avon and Somerset area and are funded by Big Lottery to provide a casework service to all victims in the county.

“We began working in Somerset in 2015 and since then have worked hard to raise awareness of hate crime among agencies, community groups and residents – we still have huge under-reporting of hate crime especially by LGBTQ+ communities although we have had our highest reports of Transphobic cases from Somerset. The effects of hate crime are very damaging, can be long-lasting and have serious consequences for victim’s mental and physical health.

“SARI is run by a Board with ‘lived experience’ of hate crime and discrimination and that includes LGBTQ+ representatives as well as Black and Minority Ethnic, Faith communities and Disabled representatives. We are also staffed by people with personal understanding of hate crime and who represent the diverse communities we serve. If you need our support in Somerset – just call, e-mail or get hold of us on Facebook – we will be in touch fast and will do all we can.

“Personally, I have my own experience of hate crime and discrimination that galvanised me to join SARI 27 years ago and to stay in this work for the long game. I want to do all I can to counteract inequality and abuse towards any person just because they want to be who they are!”

Alex Raikes MBE, Director (Strategic), Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI)



“I want to do all I can to counteract inequality and abuse towards any person just because they want to be who they are!”

Jargon Busters

Ally - An ally is a cisgender or heterosexual person who supports LGBTQ rights, equality, and social justice. Someone who actively challenges homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia... An ally believes that LGBTQ people can experience discrimination and can be socially disadvantaged. An ally is someone standing alongside the LGBTQ community in support of our rights, protections and freedoms.

Cisgender - Term for people whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.



“I’m the Director of Development at Swan Advocacy, a Trustee at Young Somerset and a proud LGBTQ+ ally.

“Swan Advocacy provides a full range of free and confidential services for adults in Somerset, including all statutory advocacy, community advocacy and the new Victims of Crime Advocacy Service (VOCAS). VOCAS is funded by Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner and provides support and advocacy for vulnerable victims of crime or antisocial behaviour, or those who have been persistently targeted, including because of their sexuality or gender identity.

“As someone responsible for designing, developing and delivering advocacy services in Somerset I am committed to working tirelessly with LGBTQ+ individuals and groups to ensure all services are accessible, appropriate and fully inclusive.”

Niki Westerling, Director of Development, Swan Advocacy



“At Young Somerset, we believe that positive youth work relies on building a relationship that is open, honest, trusting, respectful and led by the young person. That requires us to be open-minded, inclusive, welcoming and sensitive to the young people we serve. Being an ally to LGBTQ+ groups is simple for us - we want all young people to thrive in our beautiful county: we know that putting young people first will improve Somerset.”

Nik Harwood, Chief Executive, Young Somerset

“We want all young people to thrive in our beautiful county: we know that putting young people first will improve Somerset.”

“Hi! My name is Kaz and I work as a Youth Worker for Young Somerset. I work closely with my colleagues to deliver youth work across the county.

“I am responsible for a young people’s centre in Wellington; I have also delivered other projects in schools - with a range of sessions focused on consent, sex and relationships.

“I have completed training from 2BU, an organisation supporting young LGBTQ people, and I am a member of Somerset Lesbian Network. This is an organisation with members aged 18+ who create events for anyone who associates themselves as Lesbian, bisexual or questioning.”

Kaz Hayes, Youth Worker, Young Somerset



Jargon Busters

Transgender - Trans is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and / or gender expression differs in some way from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Non-Binary - A person whose gender isn’t wholly male or wholly female all of the time. They can be a combination of male and female, flow between these binaries, or have no gender at all. They may prefer a gender-neutral pronoun such as “they”, “their”, or simply use their name.



“I feel very lucky that the charity I work for is totally accepting of me being Transgender.”

“Hello my name is Gina; I am Transgender and also live with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I work for Shopmobility in Taunton, who hire and sell mobility scooters, power chairs and wheel chairs to customers that have permanent or temporary mobility problems.



“Being an administrator for The Gender Society’s Facebook page I see how LGBTQ+ people have problems relating to their employment. I feel very lucky that the charity I work for is totally accepting of me being Transgender.

“I started volunteering for Compass Disability Services and was then approached to take on a paid role. I was eager to do so, not only because I enjoyed the work, and was able to work around the needs of my disability, but also because, as an equal opportunity employer, Compass Disability Services strive to practice what they preach. My position allows me a high level of contact with the public, who I am pleased to say, are very accepting and interested in my transition.”

**Gina Collins -
Shopmobility,
Compass
Disability
Services**



Working with Local Councils and Community Groups

“We are working together with a wide range of groups and organisations to develop an LGBT+ Community Forum for Somerset.

“Sedgemoor District Council recognises that Equality is not about treating everyone the same, equality is about valuing the person ‘as an equal regardless of their characteristics and treating people according to their needs in order to achieve an equal or fair outcome.”

“The Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG) have been working with The Diversity Trust over the last year to look at how the LGBT+ community in Somerset can be supported through better partnership working. A workshop with the community developed a series of proposals in order to seek the views of the wider LGBT+ community in Somerset. An event was held in September followed by an online consultation. From this work a series of meetings have been held with Somerset LGBT+ groups to develop further the proposals. The group have to date agreed that a forum be formed called Somerset Community LGBT+ Forum and work is now underway to move the forum forward with a clear set of aims and objectives, terms of reference and an initial work plan.”

Angela Farmer, Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG)



Useful Resources – Youth Groups

2BU-Somerset



2BU-Somerset run a range of support groups across the county for young people who identify as LGBT+. We also invite young people to connect with us via the safe and secure members area of the 2BU website. We look forward to hearing from you.

Website www.2BU-Somerset.co.uk
Twitter/facebook @2BUSomerset
Phone 07799 136552
Email Lisa@2bu-Somerset.co.uk

Glastonbury Alphabets LGBTQ+ Youth Group



Glastonbury Alphabets, a project by the Diversity Trust, runs a monthly youth group in Glastonbury and various other events throughout the year. Young people from 13 to 19 years old can come along to meet others in an informal and friendly space where they can relax and be themselves. We also have a blog that we invite young people to contribute to and visit. We have been running since January 2018

and are powered by our passion for community and all things LGBTQ+, we look forward to meeting you!

Website <https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/young-peoples-services/>
Blog <https://glastonburylgbtq.home.blog>
Mobile 07775 756 093
Email info@diversitytrust.org.uk

Mendip YMCA

YMCA MENDIP & SOUTH SOMERSET

YMCA Routes is a drop-in centre offering advice and guidance for young people aged 11-25. We are open from 10am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday and are based at 1a Palmer Street, Frome. BA11 1DS. Young people can come and spend time with friends and receive a range of support, information and advice on issues such as housing and homelessness, mental, physical and sexual health, relationships, education, training and employment opportunities and so on.

The LGBTQ+ group meets on the first Thursday of every month from 6.00-8.00pm and is run in partnership with 2BU Somerset, offering a safe space to meet other

young people and explore issues affecting you.

Website www.mendipymca.org.uk
Twitter/Facebook @YMCAMendip /

YMCA Mendip

Phone 01749 679553 (ext 2406 for Routes)
Email admin@mendipymca.org.uk

Useful Resources – LGBTQ+ Community Groups

Mindline Trans+



Emotional Support helpline for those who identify as Trans, non-binary & their friends and families.

We provide a safe place to talk about your feelings confidentially. We don't record calls nor ask for any personal details. Our listeners will try understand the multitude of feelings and concerns that may be going on for you. We are here to listen and offer our support.

Open Monday & Friday 8pm-Midnight
Phone 0300 330 5468

FFLAG



FFLAG is a national voluntary organisation and charity dedicated to supporting parents and their lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans family members.

To find out more, check out our website for our news and some personal stories along with details of our newsletters, booklets and posters that can all be downloaded free of charge. You can also find details of local support groups around the country.

Website www.fflag.org.uk

Somerset Lesbian Network (SLN)



Somerset Lesbian Network

The Somerset Lesbian Network (SLN) was established by local women to create opportunities for adult (18+) lesbian, bisexual and questioning (LBQ) women in Somerset to network. To find out more visit the website or email.

Website <https://somersetlesbiannetwork.org.uk/>
Email slnetwork@hotmail.com

Taunton Gay Group (TGG)



TGG is an informal social group in Taunton for LGBT+ people to meet others, make new friends and feel less isolated.

- Informal, no membership, just come along
- Open to anyone who feels they fit in or around the LGBT+ umbrella and allies
- Regular socials, coffee meets, quizzes and other events at local venues

Website www.tauntongaygroup.weebly.com

Facebook/Twitter
@tauntongaygroup



Useful Resources – Local Organisations

Community Council for Somerset - CCS



CCS is a small(ish) charity with a big job to do! Established in 1926, serving the entire county of Somerset it provides a range of personalised support and services for vulnerable individuals and communities (usually in rural and isolated areas) who want to shape their own futures.

Website www.somersestrcc.org.uk
Phone 01823 331222
Email info@somersestrcc.org.uk

Compass Disability Services



Compass Disability Services is a customer led organisation and our Board of Trustees, who are elected by our customers, is comprised of at least 80% disabled people. We have adopted the Social Model of Disability as a way of working

to remove barriers which exclude disabled people from equality of opportunity.

Compass Disability Services works through consultation, representation and service provision to fulfil our mission. We work in partnership with local government, the Health Service, Social Services, other voluntary sector and charitable organisations and anyone else who can benefit from our knowledge and expertise.

Address Unit 11-12 Belvedere Trading Estate, Taunton, TA1 1BH Phone 01823 282823 Monday to Friday 09:00 - 17:00 Text 07568 109960 Minicom 01823 255919 Fax 01823 351790 Email info@compassdisability.org.uk

Website www.compassdisability.org.uk

The Eddystone Trust



Most of us find it daunting to talk to someone else about sex let alone

our own sexual health. This can be made worse if you think you will be judged for who your sexual partner is. The Eddystone Trust promote a holistic, non-judgemental approach in supporting people to make informed decisions relating to their sexual health. We offer rapid HIV and Syphilis testing, advice around your sexual health, help to access other sexual health services and support for people living with HIV. For some people contacting us can be a big step and we aim to provide people with a safe and confidential space to explore their feelings and make decisions.

We challenge the stigma, discrimination and misinformation associated with HIV and sexual health, and work tirelessly with people affected by HIV to improve their quality of life. As partners of SWISH (Somerset Wide Integrated Sexual Health services) we deliver services across all aspects of the system, from being based with our clinical partners through to community-based support, ensuring a consistent approach is delivered to the public.

Website <https://www.eddystone.org.uk>

Phone 0800 328 3508

Email info@eddystone.org.uk

Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI)



Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI) provide free, confidential advice and casework support to victims of hate crime and discrimination. If you have been affected because of your race, ethnicity, religion or belief, disability (including mental health), sexual orientation, gender identity or age, please contact us. Even if you don't want any action, we would encourage you to report the incident to us and/ or the police.

Website www.sariweb.org.uk

Phone 0117 942 0060

Email sari@sariweb.org.uk

Swan Advocacy



Swan Advocacy provides a full range of free and confidential advocacy services for adults in Somerset - ensuring vulnerable and marginalised people have their voices heard, choices respected and rights upheld.

Website www.swanadvocacy.org

uk/services-near-you/somerset

Phone 03333 447928

Email somerset@swanadvocacy.org.uk

Victim Support



We provide emotional and practical support to victims of crime across Avon & Somerset, we are independent, free, confidential, non-judgemental and will support you whether you have reported the crime to the Police or not. You can contact us locally on 0300 030 1972 or our 24/7 Supportline is available on 08081 689111, with a Live Chat facility if you feel more comfortable not speaking.

Website www.victimsupport.org.uk

VOCAS

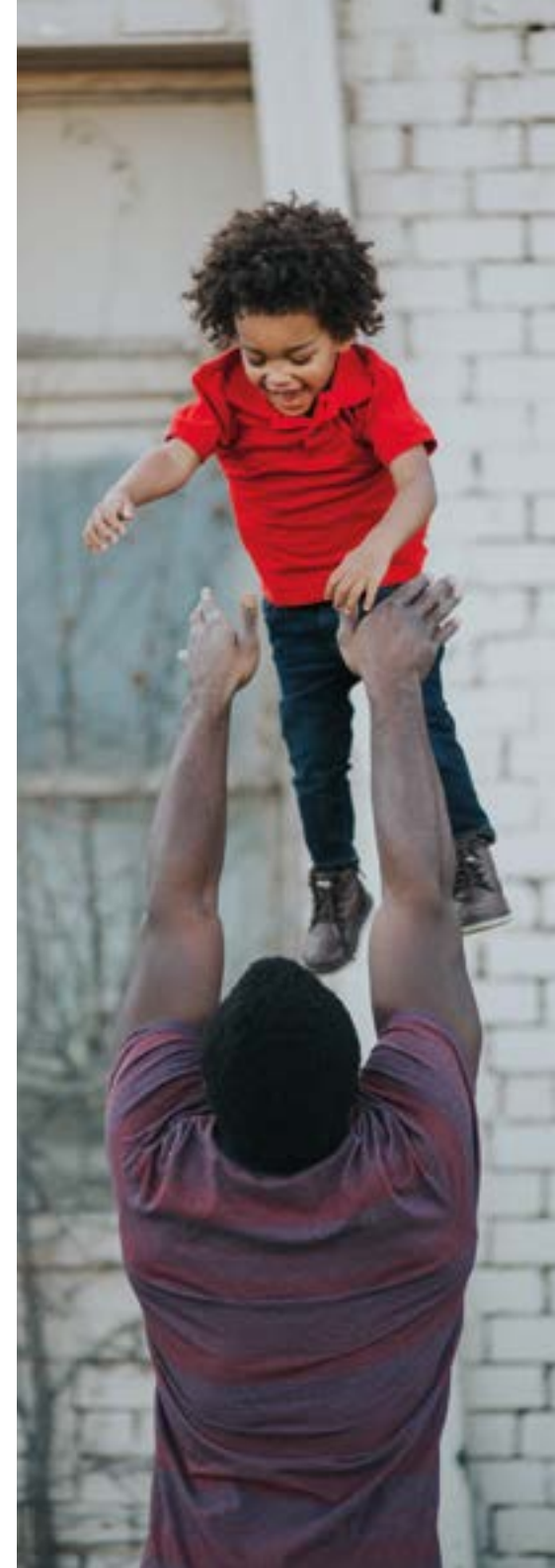


Swan Advocacy's Victims of Crime Advocacy Service provides free and confidential advocacy and support for vulnerable and targeted victims, including those targeted because of their sexuality and gender identity,

Website www.swanadvocacy.org.uk/vocas

Phone 03333 447928

Email vocas@swanadvocacy.org.uk





Contact Us

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Media Enquiries: 07747 752 454

Website www.diversitytrust.org.uk

Twitter [@DiversityTrust](https://twitter.com/DiversityTrust)

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