



# 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 Out in Somerset. I hope you enjoy the publication. We have gathered together testimonies, and personal stories, from a wide-range of LGBTQ+ people, and our allies, from 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 - influencing social change to create a fairer and safer society. We provide training and consultancy services across the UK, as well as specialist support services for LGBT+ communities at a local level. We are working with a range of groups and organisations to establish an LGBT+ Community Network for the county.”

“If you would like to find out more, and keep in touch, please use the Contact Us page at the end of the publication.”

**Berkeley Wilde, Founder and Executive Director, The Diversity Trust CIC**

The publication has been designed by The Diversity Trust CIC and has been made possible with support from the Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG).

“My name is Professor Trudi Grant, I am the Director of Public Health in Somerset. The work of Public Health is all about supporting people to be healthy and safe. It’s about promoting and maximising good health through our life chances and helping people to make informed decisions about their lifestyle choices. It’s also about protecting our health, from threats like viruses for example as we have seen over the past few years.

Services such as Health Visiting, School Nursing, Stop Smoking support, sexual health services, mental health promotion, all contribute to the health of the general population. Having said that, we are really aware that ‘universal services’ such as these do not mean the same for everyone and in the same way. The experiences of an LGBTQ+ person could be very different to a straight person for example when they are trying to reduce their alcohol intake or resettling into Somerset from another country.

Public health has a role to embrace the differences between people and provide information and advice that is right for them and their lifestyle. This should be done without prejudice and with public health staff and services recognising the need to learn about different communities and how this affects them as individuals.

We are thrilled to support this publication to promote the vibrant LGBTQ+ community in Somerset and where needed provide support for people.

**Professor Trudi Grant – Director for Public Health, Somerset**

“Established in 2003, 2BU Somerset is a local charity promoting wellbeing and positive mental health of young people and young adults (age 11-25) who identify as LGBTQ+ in Somerset. Supported by our growing team we provide a range of services including support groups, 1:1 and community outreach sessions across Somerset. We are able to deliver our services both in-person and online providing you with options and choices about the support you would like from the 2BU team.

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

**Lisa Snowdon-Carr (she/they), 2BU Somerset CEO**



“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**



“The friendship and support of the group would be difficult to find elsewhere.”



“ We are the organisation responsible for buying and monitoring the majority of health services in Somerset. One of our main purposes is to ensure that we understand our communities and provide services that meet their needs. We are committed to ensuring that LGBTQ+ people get the same access to all services that are provided locally; services that are free from judgement, assumption and discrimination.

We are proud of the progress we have made in recent years in respect of LGBTQ+ health. For example, working in partnership with 2BU Somerset, we have provided guidance to GP practices around making referrals into national Gender Identity services. We have updated to our Fertility Policy to remove unnecessary gender roles or gender references and any criteria that could be viewed as discriminatory for our LGBTQ+ populations. We are involved in a long-term project with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust looking at LGBTQ+ people in mental health services. Most recently, we have created a GP portal giving access to a variety of local and national resources to ensure that GPs have the information necessary to provide comprehensive support to people who are gender diverse. These activities are set to continue as part of our county-wide LGBT Action Plan looking improving various aspects of health.

If you want to get involved in our work to create a truly inclusive health service for Somerset, we urge you to get in touch. You might want to share your experience or take on a more active role. We would love you to get in touch with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead at [somccg.equality@nhs.net](mailto:somccg.equality@nhs.net) or by telephone on 07926 093782.”

**Lee Reed (Pronouns: He/Him) | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead Officer, NHS Somerset**

“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**



Taunton Gay Group (TGG) creates informal 'pop-up' social meet-ups for LGBTQ+ people to get together, chat and make friends. We meet in Taunton and welcome people from across Somerset or beyond, in all their diversity.

The group is really informal and does not require membership, we just meet up in local venues, such as a pub or cafe, or join existing events including arts and pride festivals, to bring people together from the community and feel less isolated. We also share relevant networks and support information from LGBTQ+ partners across Somerset and the South West.

Get in touch if you'd like to know more or follow us online to keep up to date with what's happening.

[f](#)
[t](#)
[@](#)
[@tauntongaygroup](#)
[www.tauntongaygroup.weebly.com](http://www.tauntongaygroup.weebly.com)
[tauntongaygroup@outlook.com](mailto:tauntongaygroup@outlook.com)

“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**

“Let's Get Beverages Together” is a friendly, informal meet up every third Tuesday of the month in Yeovil. It's important for people to have a safe space where they can connect with other people who have similar experiences. The LGBT+ community is a spectrum and no two of us are the same, but it's great to come together and be your authentic selves in a supportive and welcoming environment. Part of the Yeovil Diversity Project. <https://yeovildiversityproject.co.uk/lets-get-beverages-together/>



★ **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.



“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. Last year SARI decided to use our donations to fund a part time, dedicated LGBTQ+ caseworker and we now have an LGBTQ+ focused Team Leader too.

“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 DL (Hon LLD), High Sheriff the County of City of Bristol 2022, Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI)**



“I’m the Director of Development at South West Advocacy Network (SWAN) and a proud LGBTQ+ ally.

SWAN provides a full range of free and confidential services for adults in Somerset, including all statutory advocacy, community advocacy and the 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, South West Advocacy Network**



“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**



“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**



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



“ I am currently President of the Beaumont Society which is the longest established support group in the UK for trans people and their families. The Beaumont Society is run for, and by, people who are trans covering the full spectrum from those who occasionally wear clothing that does not conform with cultural expectations for the sex they were assigned at birth, to those who have completed gender reassignment surgery; and anyone who identifies between and around these descriptors. We welcome all trans people and their partners regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, creed or colour. There are groups that meet in venues like village halls and pubs all over the country including here in Somerset.



Jane Hamlin, President, Beaumont Society

## ★ 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.



“ While Yeovil Diversity Project is only small, we've got big plans to bring people together, break down barriers and foster tolerance and acceptance of differences. Our aim and motto is "Encouraging unity in Yeovil's community" and this is at the heart of everything we do. Education is one of the best tools we have to help to reduce racism, homophobia, ableism and other forms of discrimination; building more inclusive societies.



YDP is about bringing people together to learn about and from each other, and to work together to benefit the wider community. We work towards this by amplifying voices of marginalised communities as well as creating safe spaces and platforms for those people to express their lived experiences, needs and hopes for the future. Our work to achieve this takes many forms; annual and monthly events, online and local campaigns, outreach programs, as well as working in collaboration with and supporting other local organisations whose aims are in line with our own.

Lou (they/she), Chair, Yeovil Diversity Project







At Spark Somerset, our aim is to inspire strong and sustainable communities through voluntary and community action.



We have always been passionate about promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in our work across the county; we strive to extend this work following the publication of an exciting report - Reflect, Recover, Renew <https://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/reflect-recover-renew> One of the key recommendations from this wide-ranging report was a call for a community-led VCSE which understands community needs and endeavours to ensure that EDI is truly embedded in the VCSE.

I have always been an LGBTQ+ ally and have campaigned for decades for an end to discrimination to make a safer and fairer society. I have been tasked with setting up a VCSE Equalities Network, so along with Diversity Trust, 2BU and other partners, we are facilitating a more strategic approach through the work of this new Network. EDI needs to be considered in everything that we do - not just as a tick box exercise for organisations, but as a means to achieve genuine change - including removing barriers to access and supporting more cohesive communities. We aspire to support, upskill and connect the VCSE sector to embed EDI within their organisations in a really meaningful way. We look forward to working with community groups and organisations from across the Out in Somerset network to help achieve this!

**Sara Iles, VCSE Partnership Manager, Spark Somerset. Pronouns: She/her**



## Working with Local Councils and Community Groups



The Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG) brings together all the Public Sector organisations working in Somerset. The aim of this is to improve the impact we have and the outcomes for the communities we serve.

All public bodies in Somerset recognise that equality is not about treating everyone the same, but about valuing all individuals and their differences. It is about meeting need in ways that will remove the barriers people may face.

Through SEOG we are thrilled to have supported the first and very successful Taunton Pride in 2021. We have also provided funding to update this publication, support LGBTQ+ organisations to come together and have a stronger voice. Finally, we have funded ongoing research to support local LGBTQ+ organisations and our understanding of our local LGBTQ+ communities.

All Public Bodies in Somerset also support staff LGBTQ+ networks to provide a safe space for our staff to come together.

Lastly SEOG worked with 2BU to create a number of videos. These were created by the members of 2BU talking about their experiences of living in Somerset as a young LGBTQ+ person. These were supported to make sure we take the time to understand the experiences of young people living in Somerset and improve how their needs are included in the services we deliver.

**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 age 11-25 who identify as LGBTQ+. If you would like to find out what's on in your area please do get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.

**Website** [www.2BU-Somerset.co.uk](http://www.2BU-Somerset.co.uk)

**Twitter/facebook** @2BUSomerset

**Phone** 07799 136552

**Email** [Lisa@2bu-Somerset.co.uk](mailto:Lisa@2bu-Somerset.co.uk)

### YMCA Brunel Group Youth Clubs

**YMCA  
BRUNEL GROUP**

BATH / BRISTOL / WILTSHIRE  
MENDIP / SOUTH SOMERSET

YMCA Brunel Group is an independent, locally governed and managed charity, operating in Mendip, South Somerset, Bath, Bristol and Wiltshire. We are part of the international YMCA movement.

Our mission is to transform young lives by creating places of belonging, support and inspiration. Our Youth Clubs support many young people with their sexuality and gender identity and also link in with 2BU for support. We have 12 youth clubs throughout Mendip & South Somerset, including Young Carers. We work with 10-19 year olds, up to 25 with SEND. Our youth clubs are in Yeovil, Frome, Coleford, Shepton, Street and Glastonbury. We support a lot of young people with their sexuality, gender and identity and our youth workers are often among the first people they come out to.

**Website** [www.mendipymca.org.uk](http://www.mendipymca.org.uk)

**Facebook** YMCA Brunel Group

**Twitter** @YMCABrunelGroup

**Instagram** @YMCA Brunel Group

**Phone** 01749 679553 ext. 5501

**Email** [admin@ymca-bg.org](mailto:admin@ymca-bg.org)

## Useful Resources – LGBT+ 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



Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

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](http://www.fflag.org.uk)

## Somerset Lesbian Network (SLN)



### Somerset Lesbian Network

The Somerset Lesbian Network (SLN) aims to create opportunities for cisgender and transgender women in Somerset who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (LGBQ) to network and make new friends, and to reduce social isolation and its impact on health and wellbeing. To find out more please visit the website or email.

**Website** <https://somersetlesbiannetwork.com/>  
**Email** [slnetwork@hotmail.com](mailto:slnetwork@hotmail.com)

## Taunton Pride CIC



Taunton Pride CIC promotes events celebrating arts, culture, diversity and inclusion. Check the website or social media for latest information.

**Website** <https://tauntonpride.co.uk/>  
**Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/tauntonpride/>  
**Instagram** @tauntonpride  
**Email** [info@tauntonpride.co.uk](mailto:info@tauntonpride.co.uk)

## Taunton Gay Group (TGG)



TGG is an informal social group based in Taunton for LGBTQ+ people in the area to meet others, make new friends and feel less isolated. We just bring people together at the same time and place to chat and have fun.

- Informal, no membership, just come along - event calendar posted on website and Facebook
- Open to anyone who feels they fit in or around the LGBTQ+ umbrella and allies
- Regular socials at local venues, lunch/drink meets, quizzes, trips to pride and other events
- TGG website has links to other networks and support

**Website** [www.tauntongaygroup.weebly.com](http://www.tauntongaygroup.weebly.com)  
**Facebook/Twitter/Instagram** @tauntongaygroup  
**Email:** [tauntongaygroup@outlook.com](mailto:tauntongaygroup@outlook.com)



## 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.somersetccc.org.uk](http://www.somersetccc.org.uk)  
**Phone** 01823 331222  
**Email** [info@somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:info@somersetccc.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

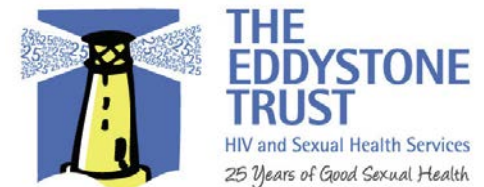
to remove barriers which exclude disabled people from equality of opportunity.

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](mailto:info@compassdisability.org.uk)

**Website** [www.compassdisability.org.uk](http://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](mailto:info@eddystone.org.uk)

### Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI)



STAND AGAINST  
RACISM & INEQUALITY

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](http://www.sariweb.org.uk)

**Phone** 0117 942 0060

**Email** [sari@sariweb.org.uk](mailto:sari@sariweb.org.uk)

### South West Advocacy Network



SWAN 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](http://www.swanadvocacy.org.uk/services-near-you/somerset)

**Phone** 03333 447928

**Email** [somerset@swanadvocacy.org.uk](mailto:somerset@swanadvocacy.org.uk)

### Victim Support



We provide emotional and practical support to victims of crime across Avon & Somerset, including victims of hate crime. 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](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

### VOCAS



Support after crime and  
anti-social behaviour

SWAN'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](http://www.swanadvocacy.org.uk/vocas)

**Phone** 03333 447928

**Email** [vocas@swanadvocacy.org.uk](mailto:vocas@swanadvocacy.org.uk)





## Contact Us

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