

THE SOMERSET LGBTQ+ NETWORK

On Tuesday 5th July 2022, the Somerset LGBTQ Network was officially launched. Hosted by Berkeley Wilde and Harry Nutt from The Diversity Trust, the event ran from 7pm until 9pm at the Friends Meeting House on Bath Place in Taunton.

Aimed at individuals, community groups and organisations working to advance LGBTQ+ equality across Somerset, the launch welcomed twenty representatives from groups and organisations including 2BU Somerset; SARI; Western Boys; Yeovil Diversity Project; LGBTQ Staff Networks from the County Council and the NHS; and officers and elected members from the local council.

“IT WAS SO GOOD TO RECONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND TO SEE OLD FRIENDS AND MEET NEW ONES.”

The event began with time for people to meet, chat and network together, with a buffet providing food and refreshments. After two years of being unable to hold community spaces during the lockdowns, and four years since we ran the last network in-person event in Somerset, anticipation filled the room. Some people knew one another and held conversations with ease, whilst others politely chatted in the developing social space.

After 30 minutes, attendees moved into the main function room where Berkeley and Harry began the main activities of the evening. The room was laid out cabaret-style, with 5 chairs around four tables, an ideal set up for the numbers. Once seated, everyone was invited to share their names, optional pronouns, and the group or organisation they represented.

Berkeley gave an overview of the network and the planned outcomes of the project, exploring how the network can bring people together in Somerset to share ideas and information, and how community-based research can be carried out to create an evidence base. With the network and



resources developed, the research and outcomes can be fed back to the commissioners from the Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG).

The newly published Out in Somerset booklet was officially launched, with copies being well received by everyone in attendance. Requests were taken from attendees for additional bundles to be sent to them, with some groups specifically requesting them for Taunton Pride.

Five questions were developed during the planning of the event, designed to engage the attendees in thinking explicitly around LGBTQ+ needs in Somerset, and how these can be identified, developed, and embedded into the community:

1. What would you like to see the Somerset LGBTQ+ Equality Network focus on between now and March 2023?
2. What are your groups/organisations priorities for the next 6-12 months and how can the Somerset LGBTQ+ Equality Network Support you in those aims?
3. What can you, your group or organisation offer to the Somerset LGBTQ+ Equality Network? What resources, talents, skills and ideas do we have in the room?
4. What does (re)connection mean to you/ your group or organisation after this time of potential disconnection? What work are you doing, or ideas do you have around (re) connection?
5. Mystery Question

Each table was given ten minutes to work on questions 1-3. Groups were able to see each other's responses and ideas and add to them as the activity proceeded. The result was a

THE EVENT HAD A REAL SENSE OF
RE-CONNECTING COMMUNITIES.
THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED"

comprehensive, actionable list of responses to each question, which will be used to create plans and projects within the network and inform areas for research and wider discussions with service providers throughout Somerset.

After a short break of coffee and cake, people returned to the main room to fill out their responses to question 4 and finally, mystery question 5: What's missing, what are the gaps for LGBTQ+ communities in Somerset?

With the activity finished, attendees were asked to give verbal feedback from each table with their top headlines. A QR code to a short online survey for the event was made available and people were asked to share their feedback on the launch event. 16 people provided feedback through the online feedback form.

The evening ended with time to wind down together, to have more conversations, re(establish) connections with one another, and enjoy the refreshments provided by Jilly Campbell Outside Catering.

Looking ahead, the autumn will see the next Somerset LGBTQ+ Network event developed and launched in collaboration with Yeovil Diversity Trust, where groups and organisations will have another space to meet, discuss and plan for an active community future within Somerset. The event has been scheduled for Monday 3rd October, 7-9pm, and will focus on the themes of preventing and reporting hate crime. The Diversity Trust will be joined by representatives of SARI and Avon & Somerset Police.



DATA MONITORING

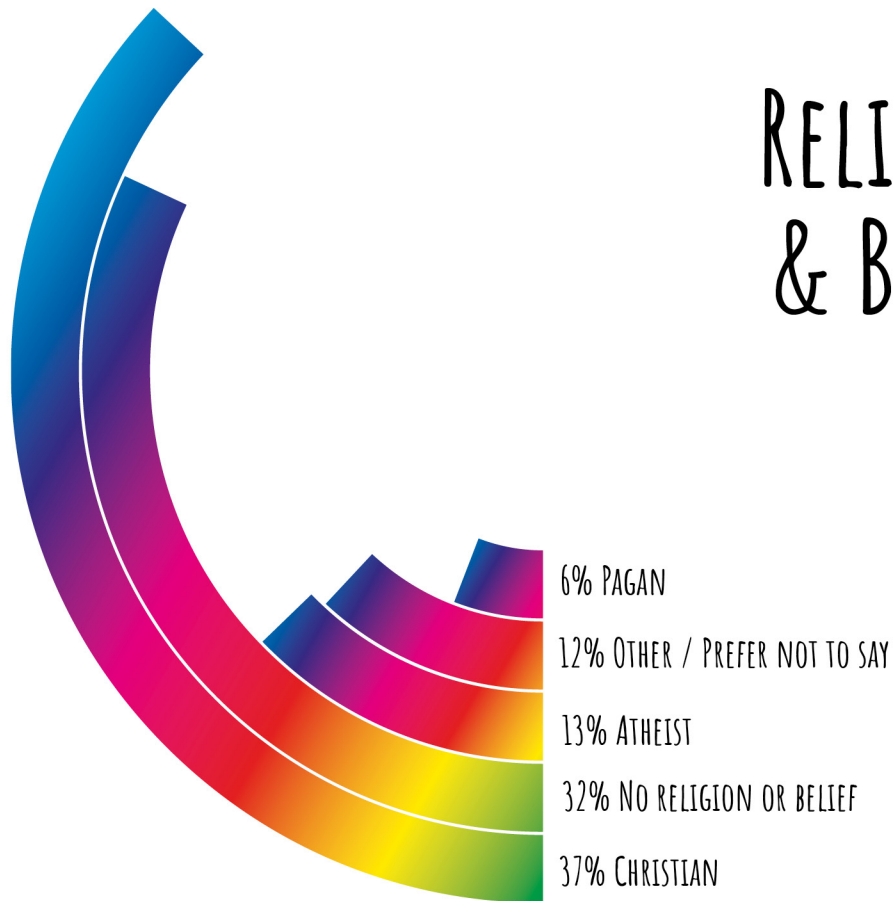
33% IDENTIFIED AS
TRANS OR
NON-BINARY

88% WHITE
6% CARIBBEAN
6% OTHER ETHNICITY

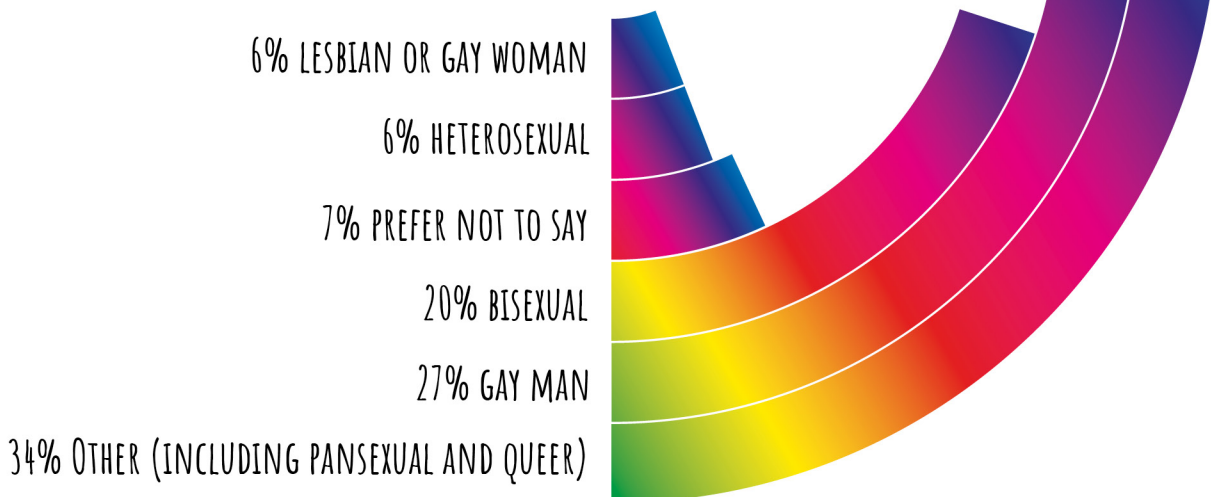
19% DISABLED

AGES 19 - 64
40% AGED 55-64

RELIGION & BELIEF



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



ACTIVITY OUTCOMES

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE SOMERSET LGBTQ+ EQUALITY NETWORK FOCUS ON BETWEEN NOW AND MARCH 2023?

- All network organisations on the same page
- Visibility
- Terms of governance
- Good practice
- Reputation
- Tangible presence
- Singular voice for all groups in Somerset
- Promotion of network
- Connectivity of different regional groups – promote the benefits of this
- Mental health support – links to resources in Somerset
- Black, ethnic minority specific support within the community
- County-wide social network
- Trans inclusiveness
- Young people support for coming out
- Disability support – intersectionality
- Promotion of public events – Pride month
- Schools sharing good practice
- Funding for young people coming out
- Mobile phone - support if having a bad experience
- Or where the support is available
- Parent understanding and support

WHAT ARE YOUR GROUPS / ORGANISATIONS PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 6-12 MONTHS AND HOW CAN THE SOMERSET LGBTQ+ EQUALITY NETWORK SUPPORT YOU IN THOSE AIMS?

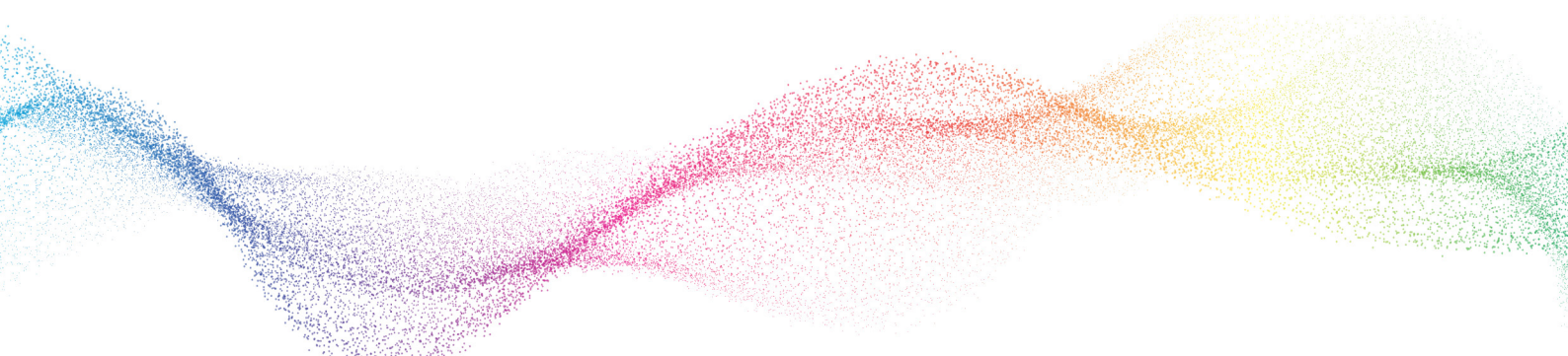
- Supporting the sharing of lived experience + looking after wellbeing
- More inclusive organisational culture
- More inclusive care (NHS)
- Pronouns on patient management system/ client database
- Funding for campaign poster
- Emphasis on ally work
- Engage senior leadership – staff networks, champion directors
- Reverse mentorship – 4-point plan re. being LGBT/Trans
- Implicit bias training
- Recruitment processes – inclusive job adverts + processes
- Review policies, Privacy, Parenting, EDI
- LGBT+ Self Help Guide
- Presence at Pride
- Staff training for engaging with staff and the public
- Schools programme – TDOR events
- UNISON – Trans Rights
- Awareness of organisational full purposes
- UNISON – strong network

WHAT CAN YOU, YOUR GROUP OR ORGANISATION OFFER TO THE SOMERSET LGBTQ+ EQUALITY NETWORK? WHAT RESOURCES, TALENTS, SKILLS AND IDEAS DO WE HAVE IN THE ROOM?

- Support for LGBTQ+ UNISON members
- Public voice
- Acknowledgment of the community and the network
- Connections with other groups
- Young Somerset – support available
- Support through SCC promotion
- UNISON – training and support for Prides
- Young person's voice
- Supporting and empowering people
- Reputation
- Facilitating others to do their stuff
- Peer support – role models – visibility
- Representation
- Share policies
- Training – Trans awareness
- Network focus groups, outreach
- Share lived experience
- Sexual violence awareness, consent workshops
- Peer-led discussions for training

WHAT DOES (RE)CONNECTION MEAN TO YOU/YOUR GROUP OR ORGANISATION AFTER THIS TIME OF POTENTIAL DISCONNECTION? WHAT WORK ARE YOU DOING OR IDEAS DO YOU HAVE AROUND (RE)CONNECTION?

- Blended approach to doing things
- Hybrid meetings – in person + online
- Choice
- Important to make the effort to connect
- Consistency + reliable support
- Engagement
- Responsiveness
- Offer mental health support
- Social media
- Bridging the physical within the digital
- Provide 'what to expect' info, and accessible info
- Pride – Visibility
- Find new ways to re-connect when feel forgotten – e.g. on waiting lists
- Staff training
- Online consultations + photo + screening for sexual health from home
- Increased helpline times + started live chat service
- Online self-referral form



WHAT'S MISSING, WHAT ARE THE GAPS FOR LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES IN SOMERSET?

- Opportunities for representation. To feel seen, safe
- A safe hub/meeting space
- "Gay" Café (everyone welcome)
- Suitable care for elderly LGBTQ+
- Adult support
- Access to mental health support for LGBT community
- Finance
- Directory of good practice
- Community - 'not everyone is here in the room'
- Supported accommodation for LGBT+ people
- Including care homes/support for young LGBT+
- LGBT+ pubs/clubs/social spaces - inclusive of allies
- More local Prides
- Access to gender identity clinics
- LGBTQ+ specific counselling service
- Mental health - especially trans inclusive
- Rural engagement - outreach & transport
- Awareness of other groups & safe spaces (a directory?)
- Sticker for premises
- Networking; sharing experiences
- Social engagement - stimulating / coordinating activities - integration





EVENT FEEDBACK

"GREAT TO HAVE MET LIKE MINDED PEOPLE AND HAPPY TO HELP IF I CAN."

"BRILLIANT SESSION."

"A REALLY GOOD CHANCE TO GET TO MEET OTHER PEOPLE WITHIN SOMERSET."

"REALLY INTERESTING CONVERSATIONS COMING OUT OF THE EVENT."

"GREAT CHANCE TO MEET PEOPLE AND SHARE IDEAS."

"LOVELY TO MEET PEOPLE I WOULDN'T HAVE, ENJOYED THE OPPORTUNITY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS WITH OTHER PEOPLE. LOVELY REFRESHMENTS, VERY WELCOMING."

"GREAT TO SEE SO MANY FACES IN THE ROOM, I THINK THE NETWORKING ELEMENT WAS WELL RECEIVED. I WONDER IF FOLK WERE EXPECTING TO BE ENGAGING IN TABLETOP DISCUSSIONS THOUGH AT THIS STAGE? IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE IS APPETITE TO CONNECT AND BUILD COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND MAYBE THAT IS A GOOD STARTING POINT. THANKS FOR INVITING US, KEEP IN TOUCH!"

"THE PASSION AND COMMITMENT OF MANY OF THE ATTENDEES WAS FANTASTIC."

"THANKS SO MUCH INVITING US! LOTS OF GOOD CONVERSATIONS AND CONTACTS MADE. LOOKING FORWARD TO CO-HOSTING THE NEXT."

SOMERSET LGBTQ+ NETWORK: YEOVIL EVENT

MONDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2022
19:00 - 21:00

Join The Diversity Trust, SARI and Avon & Somerset Police on Monday 3rd October 2022 from 7-9pm at Westlands Yeovil for a community based event and networking. Refreshments available. The venue is wheelchair accessible.

The event includes speakers working to prevent hate crime and support victims and will cover:

- WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?
- HOW TO STAY SAFE?
- HOW TO REPORT HATE CRIME?

To book please email info@diversitytrust.org.uk

About Yeovil Diversity Project

The Yeovil Diversity Project works to bring people together to learn about and from each other, and to work together to benefit the wider community.

They work to amplifying the voices of marginalised communities as well as creating safe spaces and platforms for people to express their lived experiences, needs and hopes for the future.

The Project organises and runs annual and monthly events, online and local campaigns, and outreach programs, as well as working in collaboration with and supporting other local organisations whose aims are in line with their own.

<https://yeovildiversityproject.co.uk/>



**STAND AGAINST
RACISM & INEQUALITY**



HOSTED BY:



SUPPORTED BY:



**Somerset
Equalities**
Officer Group

OUT IN SOMERSET

READ THE LATEST, UPDATED VERSION OF OUR PUBLICATION!

https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/OIS_May22_5.pdf

SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER

<https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/subscribe/>

GET IN TOUCH

A: 124 City Road, London, EC1V 2NX
E: info@diversitytrust.org.uk
M: 07720 294 991

The Diversity Trust is a Community Interest Company (CIC).
Registered in England & Wales.
Company Number: 08141031
VAT Number: 378 3131 85

