

Dimensions of inequality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the South West



Pride, Progress and Transformation

Knowledge, influence, voice and engagement

January 2012



Contents

Preface to report	2
Background and approach to the survey	3
Part 1: Contributors' profiles and lifestyles	6
Equality and diversity characteristics	6
Occupation, location, housing, relationships and incomes	12
Appendix 1: Profiles and lifestyles, additional details	18
Part 2: Knowledge, influence, voice and engagement:	19
Introduction	
Survey Responses	22
Knowledge and awareness of legal rights and protections for LGB and Trans people	22
Sources of information on legal rights	23
Opportunities (to influence, contribute to and feel valued in the community)	25
Influencing local decision making	27
Voluntary or community activity	28
Caring for others	29
Feeling valued for paid or unpaid work	29
Consulting LGB and Trans people	33
Complaints procedures and responses	36
Meeting the public service needs of LGB and Trans people	40
Sexual and gender identities and voting	43
Conclusions, key issues and actions	45
Appendix: Preferred locations for rights information and advice	52

Knowledge, influence, voice and engagement

Preface to the report

This survey was designed by the South West Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) and Transgender (Trans) Equality Networks, supported by Equality South West (ESW).

The purpose of the survey was to identify the real issues for LGB and Trans people living, working and visiting the South West region. Its planning and launch coincided with the final stages of the drafting of the Equality Act, 2010. This harmonised the Public Sector Equality Duties, which had previously applied to disability, gender and race, and extended a new single duty to include LGB and Trans people.

The report has taken very much longer to appear than was envisaged when the survey was first launched. Like so many other organisations in the public and voluntary sector, Equality South West has been profoundly affected by the economic climate and the public spending cuts.

The survey sponsored by goodwill donations from: Dorset County Council, East Dorset, West Dorset, Sedgemoor, and Teignbridge District Councils, UNISON South West, and the Rivers of Life church, Dorset.

We also had early support with qualitative data analysis from Poole Council. We are extremely grateful for theirs and for our sponsors' support and interest.

The analysis and report writing was nevertheless substantially funded by Equality South West through Big Lottery BASIS project funding, and from reserves.

Now that we have reached the launch phase of this section of the report we would like to offer our sincere thanks to all those who participated in the survey for the time and trouble taken to record their thoughtful, honest, often moving responses as well as the uplifting, inspiring and humorous observations.

An additional thank you is due also, for your patience, and that of our survey advisory group, during the long enforced delay.

An overarching message from this survey is the need for all public bodies to ensure that they are fully engaged with and implementing the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

This means ensuring that the services they provide directly, and those that they commission or outsource to organisations to deliver on their behalf in the voluntary or private sector, are delivering on the spirit as well as the letter of Public Sector Equality Duty.

Background: how we approached the research

In the autumn of 2009 the South West Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equality Network, and the South West Transgender Equality Network, supported by Equality South West, decided to work together to undertake a survey to investigate a range of issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB and Trans) people who live in or are visitors to the South West Region.

An advisory group was formed of volunteer representatives from both networks, supported by three Equality Development Officers (EDOs). The Steering Group agreed to use the 'Ten Dimensions of Equality', developed for the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Equality Measurement Framework (EMF), as a basis for the topic areas to be covered.

The EMF was primarily designed as a framework for gathering equality statistics that would form the basis of the EHRC's triennial review of equality at a national level across each of the equality strands (or protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act)¹. The Discrimination Law Review recommended that the EMF should be used by public bodies at local level as the tool by which they should measure and monitor equality across all strands and across each of the ten dimensions within their own catchment areas.

In developing the EMF, the EHRC and the Government Equality Office recognise that the statistical evidence available to them with regard to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people across key areas of their lives and experiences is sparse in comparison to most other equality groups. Data are even less available or reliable at local level, and what data there are need to be supplemented by experiential, qualitative evidence.

The advisory group members were particularly concerned to ensure that, as far as possible, issues affecting the 'sub groups' that make up the 'LGB and Trans group' should be identified in the final report. They also wanted the term 'LGB and Trans' to be used in order to underline the fact that there are fundamentally different issues relating to sexual and gender identities. The group agreed to include specific questions which were considered to be consistent with the aims of the survey and which some of its sponsors wanted incorporated into the questionnaire.

The 'identity groups' provided on the questionnaire were included on the advice of the survey's LGB and Trans advisory group. GIRES were also consulted, and kindly provided useful comments on this. Nevertheless, not everyone was able to fit

¹ The first of these reports 'How Fair is Britain?' was published in late 2010. The full report and a summary can be found on the EHRC website <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/how-fair-is-britain/>

themselves into these groups and some contributors provided highly individual responses under the 'other' option.

The questionnaire was drafted and redrafted following initial feedback from the advisory group. It was then piloted by colleagues in ten partner organisations to test for 'usability'. Nevertheless, when it came to analysing the data that resulted, difficulties emerged in gathering all the detail hoped for.

Once responses began to arrive it became evident that the questionnaire took longer to complete than some contributors were able to commit. We also learned of a number of technical snags that arose for some people who completed the online version of the questionnaire².

Some contributors were not convinced of the value of the detailed profile that it sought from its contributors. The rationale behind these questions was a recognition that people's sexual and transgender identities are part of a much wider set of characteristics that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB and Trans) people possess. Self-evidently, LGB and Trans people's experiences are shaped by society's responses to their race, sex, disabilities, age and religious or other beliefs. In addition, Professor John Hills' ground breaking report³, published in early 2010, clearly showed that socio-economic status is a key determinant of people's quality of life and life chances, which applies across all the 'protected characteristics' covered by the 2010 Equality Act. Published almost simultaneously was a report by Professor Michael Marmot that identified future trends in health and their relationship to socio-economic status.⁴ The profile data that contributors did provide has helped develop a more rounded picture of life for the LGB and Trans population in different parts of the South West.

In addition, our agreement to incorporate some questions on behalf of several external stakeholders added to the complexities involved in analysing the data.

In spite of this hindsight learning, we believe the exercise has been well worth while in providing some rich evidence about LGB and Trans people's lives and experiences in the South West of England. By the end of June 2010 Equality South West had received 362 survey responses and a total of 276 (76.2%) were completed in full. The remainder of the questionnaires contained one or more questions that were not answered, so the figures presented in this report may vary question by question.⁵

² Hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed to a number of key locations around the region as well.

³ An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel Published by Government Equalities Office and London School of Economics, January 2010

⁴ Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities, in England post 2010. Published by The Marmot Review, February 2010

⁵ The contributors include a small number who described their sexual identity as heterosexual. Among these were individuals whose participation was clearly mischievous in intent, and care has been taken not to allow such responses to skew the analysis of the survey, or affect any conclusions.

Part 1: Contributors' profile and lifestyles

a. Equality and diversity characteristics

Some contributors clearly found the survey questionnaire to be laborious in terms of the detailed profile that it sought from its contributors, and some left parts of this section, which came at the end of the questionnaire, incomplete.

Clearly, LGB and Trans people's experiences are shaped by society's responses to their race, sex, disabilities, age and religious or other beliefs as well as their sexual or gender identity. Indeed, a number of contributors emphasised that discrimination was more often shown towards them because of their more visible characteristics – specifically their age, disability, racial or ethnic background and sex.

In addition, Professor John Hills' ground breaking report⁶, published in early 2010, clearly showed that socio-economic status is a key determinant of people's quality of life and life chances, which applies across all the 'protected characteristics' covered by the 2010 Equality Act. Published almost simultaneously was a report by Professor Michael Marmot that identified future trends in health and their relationship to socio-economic status.⁷

The rationale behind the PP&T profile questions lies in the recognition that people's sexual and transgender identities are a part of a much wider set of characteristics that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB and Trans) people possess. The questions also sought information about the socio-economic circumstances of contributors, and where possible, to compare any trends with the general population. Not only do such factors affect people's experiences, but it was considered important to recognise the diversity between, as well as the commonalities shared by LGB and Trans people.

Some additional details of the profile responses can be found in the Appendix to this section of the report. The main area of disaggregation that has been carried out in relation to these data is in relation to sexual and gender identities. However, the data regarding the diversity of contributors in terms of the other 'protected characteristics' which they own demonstrates the need for LGB and Trans support organisations to ensure they are taking fully into account these diverse circumstances and needs.

⁶ An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel Published by government Equalities Office and London School of Economics, January 2010

⁷ Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities, in England post 2010. Published by The Marmot Review, February 2010

Gender and sexual identity

It was important to members of the advisory group that the survey should gain a picture of the transgender and sexual identities of contributors, and that responses should be capable of disaggregation according to these identities.

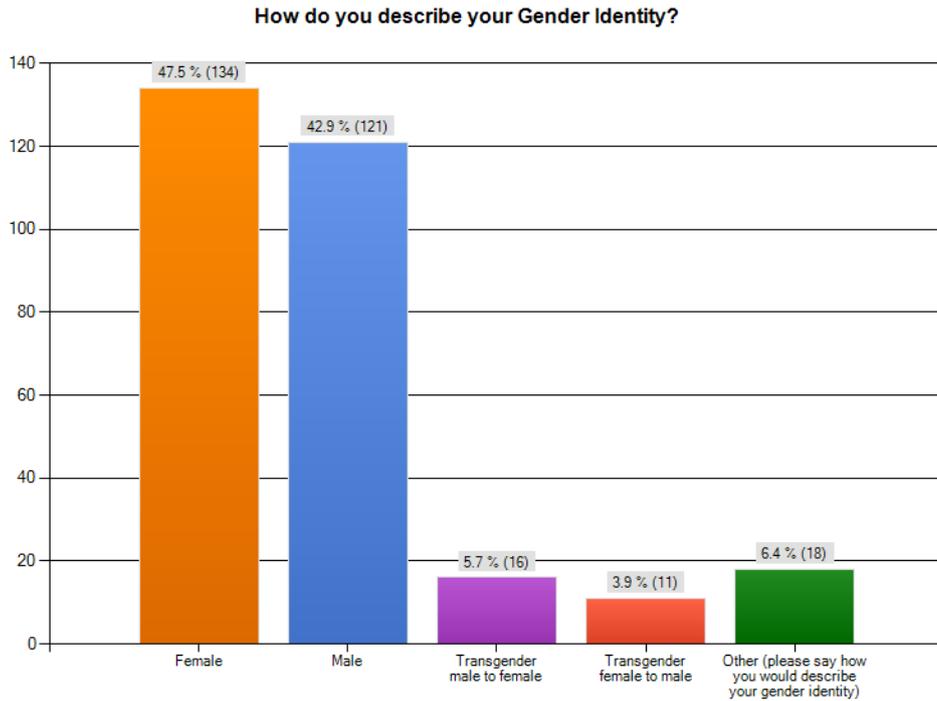
The identity groups provided on the questionnaire were included on the advice of the survey's LGB and Trans advisory group. GIRES were also consulted, and kindly provided useful comments on this. Nevertheless, not everyone was able to fit themselves into these groups and some contributors provided highly individual responses under the 'other' option. This makes a straightforward disaggregation more complicated than at first envisaged, but does illustrate the complexities around identity. We have endeavoured to maximise the understanding gained from each contribution.

Contributors were firstly asked how they would describe their identity, and then whether their current gender was the same as that assigned to them at birth⁸. 18.1% of those who replied to the question (49 individuals) said that their gender was different from that assigned to them at birth, compared to 222 who said it was the same.

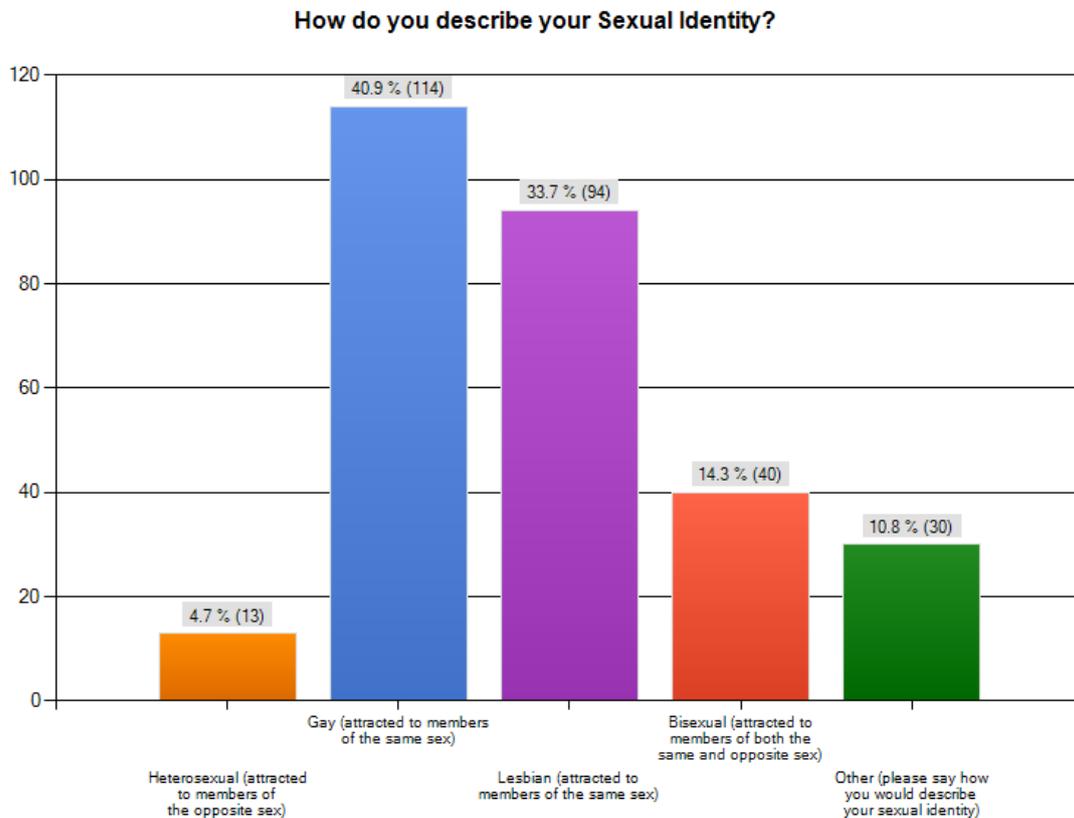
The graphs below show the breakdown of contributors who considered themselves to fit within the identity groups supplied. However, a number of contributors ticked themselves as 'other' and/or provided details related to their identities.

In response to the question about gender identities, marginally more people identified as women than men, including more male to female than female to male transgendered contributors.

⁸ While the latter question was considered to be acceptable in the context of an anonymous survey, it would be inadvisable for it to be used in staff monitoring questionnaires.



In terms of contributors’ sexual identity, the largest group were gay, with just over one third of contributors identifying as lesbian, and 14% as bisexual. Some women preferred to identify as gay rather than lesbian. Thirteen contributors described themselves as heterosexual, some of whom were Transgender.

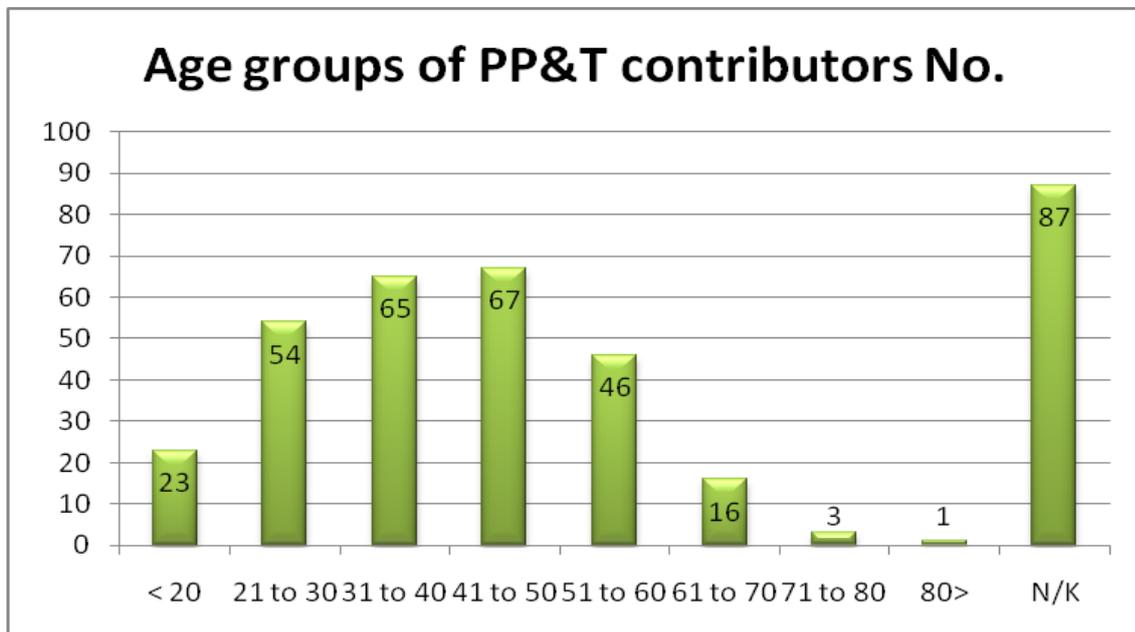


The information provided by people who ticked 'other' gender or sexual identities, gives an insight into the range and complexity of the spectrum of identities that people own. Additional detail about these 'other' identities is provided in Appendix 1.

These responses challenge clear-cut notions of gender and sexual identities, illustrating how difficult it is for many people to define themselves using 'mainstream' terms and concepts. Some show the internal confusion and conflicts that individuals can experience around aspects of their identity, whilst also dealing with external reactions from people around them.

Age groups

The survey benefits from the views and experiences of contributors who vary widely in terms of age and other characteristics and circumstances. Of those who replied to this question, the youngest contributor was 14, and the oldest was aged 87. Four were aged 16 and under and four were over 70. The largest group was aged between 41 and 50, with the majority aged 46 – 50. Eighty seven contributors withheld their ages. The graph shows the breakdown by age deciles.



Disabilities

Whilst disability and health issues are not necessarily connected there are areas of overlap, for example where long term and limiting illnesses can be disabling.

Two hundred and eighty three contributors to the Pride Progress and Transformation (PP&T) survey responded to a question about whether they considered themselves to have any disabilities. The responses did show a considerable degree of overlap between answers to this and to the health question.

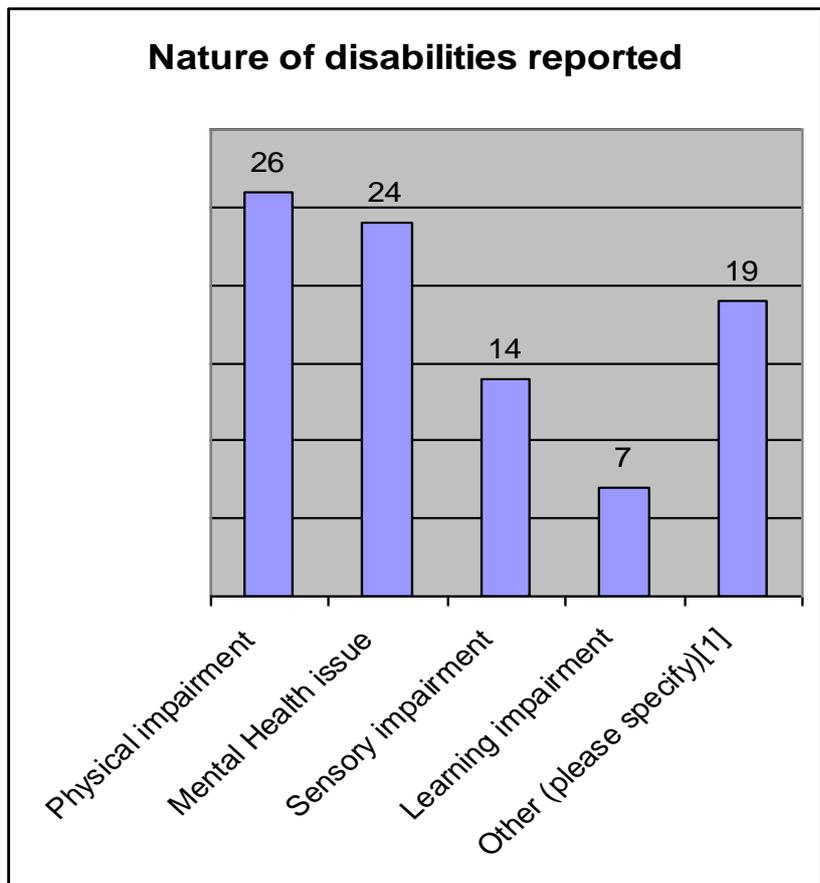
Of the 283 people who responded 65 (23%) said they did consider themselves to have a disability, and a further 9 (3.2%) were not sure. By comparison, the Annual Population Survey (Apr 2008 – Mar 2009), shows that just over 18% of working age people in the South West are disabled.

An additional question asked about the broad nature of any disability. It invited people to tick all of the categories that applied and to state any 'other' forms of self-identified disability that were not included.

The figures in the table below relate to the 65 contributors who self-identified as having a disability.

Among those who ticked 'other', four were HIV positive, two had ME/CFS and two had epilepsy, with associated memory and other problems.

A further three people referred to medical problems, including diabetes and serious back problems, and one had 'multiple disabilities'.



Religion or belief

Contributors were asked to describe their religion or belief, or to say if they have none. Of 257 people who responded, 143 said they had no religious or other specific beliefs. 18 of these described themselves as agnostic. An additional two said they were 'not sure' whether they had any specific beliefs. One hundred and thirty four contributors described their beliefs in a variety of ways which are difficult to categorise. The responses under the 'other' heading can be found in Appendix 2.

The figures for the more widely recognised religions or beliefs are adjacent.

No beliefs	143
Christian ⁹	57
Atheist	16
Buddhist ¹⁰	6
Pagan ¹¹	6
Jewish	3
Humanist	2
Spiritualist	2

Racial identity

There were 275 responses to this question indicating the respondent's racial or ethnic identity¹². From the information given, 21 contributors are from a BME background.

What is your race?	Number
White British	220
Any other White background	34
Irish	4
White & Asian	3
Any other mixed/ multiple ethnic background	3
Black Caribbean	2
Gypsy	2
Traveller	2
White & Black Caribbean	2
Asian British	1
Black African	1
Celtic	1

⁹ Those who described themselves as Christian included Anglican, Catholic, Church of Scotland, Methodist, Baptist and Lutheran and ranged from 'practising' to 'liberal'.

¹⁰ Includes Theravada Buddhist/Mahayana Buddhist

¹¹ Includes Witch /Wicca/Greek Neopagan

¹² Some who described themselves as 'other' included: White English, White Welsh, White non-British, White European and White African. These are included in the 'Other White Background' figures.

b. Occupation, location, relationships and incomes

Main occupation

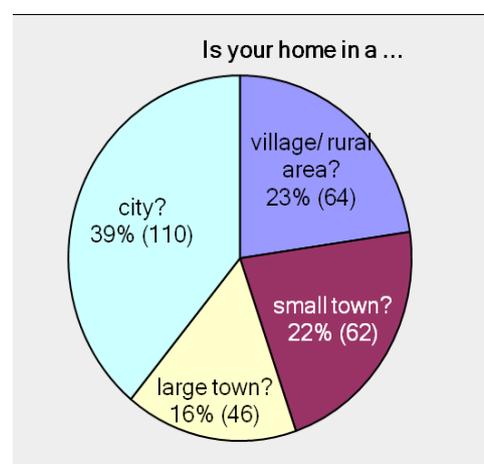
In total 281 people responded to a multiple choice question about their main day to day occupations. In total there were 350 responses, indicating that some respondents are working or retired as well as undertaking study and/or caring responsibilities. The table below shows these responses in order of frequency, and indicates that 229 individuals were in full or part time employment.

Occupations	%	Number
Working full time	65.5%	184
Working part time	16.0%	45
University student	10.7%	30
Retired	6.8%	19
Carer	6.4%	18
Seeking work	4.6%	13
College student	3.6%	10
Not seeking work	2.5%	7
School student	1.8%	5
Other	6.8%	19

Location: Urban or rural

Of the 282 responses to this question, the largest group of contributors are based in cities, although a substantial percentage (45%) live in more rural areas, including villages or small towns. This variation may well account for the diversity of experiences recorded in response to questions posed in the survey.

Two hundred and fifty people who live in the South West provided postcode information. An analysis by local authority areas is shown in Appendix 1.



Location: Local Authority area

Bath & NE Somerset	6	Purbeck	1
Bournemouth	26	Sedgemoor	4
Bristol City	67	South Devon	7
Cornwall	22	South Gloucestershire	5
East Devon	1	South Hams	2
East Dorset	1	South Somerset	10
Exeter	15	Stroud	1
Gloucester	7	Taunton Deane	5
Mendip	8	Teignbridge	1
Mid Devon	7	Torbay	3
North Devon	4	West Devon	1
North Dorset	2	West Dorset	6
North Somerset	9	West Somerset	5
Plymouth	7	Weymouth and Portland	8
Poole	1	Wiltshire	8
All			250

Housing tenure

People's position within the housing market is routinely used as a proxy indicator for their general socio-economic status. However, the responses regarding contributors' housing tenure inevitably provides only a snapshot, since it is not unusual for people to rent in the private sector as a temporary stop-gap before a more permanent home is secured, and some tenants do either move out of, or purchase social housing.

Official statistics for 2007, provided by Shelter, show that 70% of people in England were outright home owners, or buying their homes. 18% were in social rented accommodation and 13 per cent were renting privately. Home ownership in the South West is higher than the national figure, and in 2007 it stood at 73%. The statistics for renting in both the private and social housing sectors were equal at 14%, although these figures may change in the current economic climate.

There were two hundred and eighty responses to this question, but some ticked more than one option so the total number of respondents was 195.

A number of responses suggested that the contributors were in a rather precarious situation with regard to their housing and living arrangements, which may or may not have been connected with their sexual or gender identity.

The fourth column in the table contains figures for the South West from 2009 published in *Regional Trends*, produced by the Office of National Statistics. These provide a means of comparison with the figures obtained through the survey. The fourth columns shows the % gap, plus or minus, between these two sets of figures where they are comparable. It shows a smaller percentage of PP&T contributors living alone than the regional figure, and a significantly higher proportion sharing with unrelated adults, predominantly friends.

Some of the 'other' responses are likely to be further clarification of previous answers, and it is possible that some have ticked the question about 'sharing' as well as one of the specific tenure types (private rented, etc).

Housing tenure	PP&T %	No.	SW %	PPT % gap
Homeowner/ buyer	51.8%	145	73%	-21.2%
Tenant: private	28.9%	81	14%	+14.9%
Sharing a home owned or rented by other/s	15.0%	42	-	-
Tenant: social housing	6.1%	17	14%	-7.9%
Homeless	0.4%	1	-	-
Other	3.2%	9		-

Nevertheless, it is clear that over half of those who responded are home owners or buyers, while between one quarter and one third are in private rented accommodation, most being the legal tenants. This compares with just 6% of respondents living in social housing, some of whom are sharing with others who hold the tenancy - for example with parents or partners.

Those who described 'Other' tenures were living in a variety of circumstances. Two were living with parents, and one lived in live in flat provided by partner's parents. Another lives with their civil partner, who owns the house, while a contributor who lives in rented accommodation is also a private landlord. Two contributors live in caravan. Among the least permanent arrangements, in very different ways, were university dorms and emergency bed and breakfast accommodation because of homelessness.

Household composition and significant relationships

There are many fanciful myths about 'gay lifestyles' which belie the commonalities that exist between gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people and the rest of society.

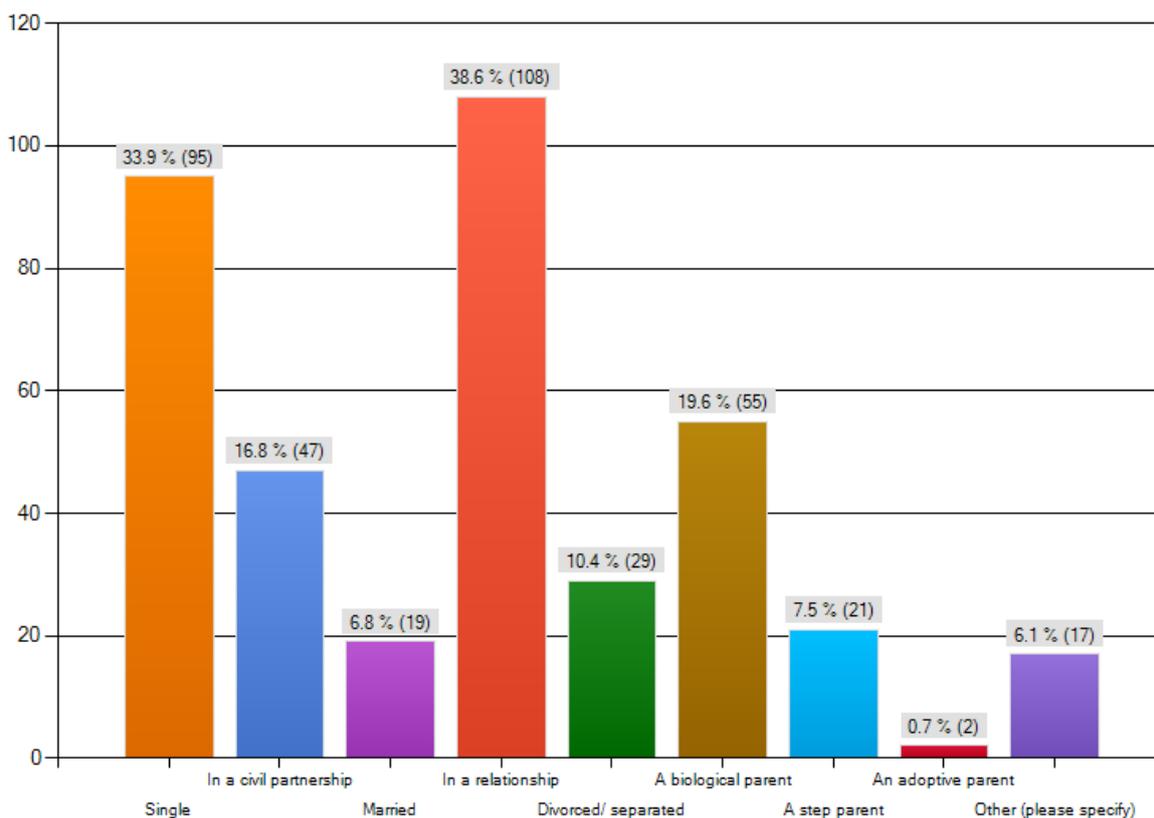
The survey sought insights into household and significant relationships of contributors, and the table below shows the distribution of responses to the options included in the questionnaire.

The survey also aimed to map the kinds of close relationships that contributors shared at the time of the survey, and a number of options were provided, of which contributors were asked to tick all that applied. There were 280 responses to this multiple-answer question.

A significant number of contributors were in close relationships with partners and in parental roles that included foster parenting and informal caring arrangements.

One younger respondent was living in temporary accommodation as a homeless person, and another was a student in a flat share. One shared a privately rented home with others. Three respondents switch between two living arrangements, one lives with a partner some of the time, and alone for the remainder, another lives with a partner in the USA some of the time and remainder in the UK with their mother, while the third sometimes lives at their mother's house, and at other times

Are you...(tick all that apply)



at a friend's house.

A disabled respondent has an employee 'living in', another respondent has lodgers, while two other respondents are lodgers themselves.

Other respondents live with: a sibling; an ex-partner and their partners' parents. One who lives alone also has shared custody of their child.

The ONS has a category that includes 'two or more unrelated adults, and some of the 'other' arrangements would fall into this category.

"I married my partner in Canada, however, it is only recognised as a civil partnership in the UK (regrettably!)"

Unfortunately the information about households with children is not precise enough for comparison with ONS categories (which break these down into dependant/non-dependant children and lone and two parent families). However, from the figures we do have we know that almost 12% of respondents were in households with children.

Some respondents were widowed, and several said they were living with their partners. One was about to enter into a civil partnership, and two contributors were 'non-biological mothers'.

Another told us

"... my partner and I chose to have children together - she is the biological parent - I define myself as a parent ... I have court awarded parental responsibility."

One contributor had found that the marriage legally contracted elsewhere was effectively downgraded on reaching the UK:

"I married my partner in Canada, however, it is only recognised as a civil partnership in the UK (regrettably!)"

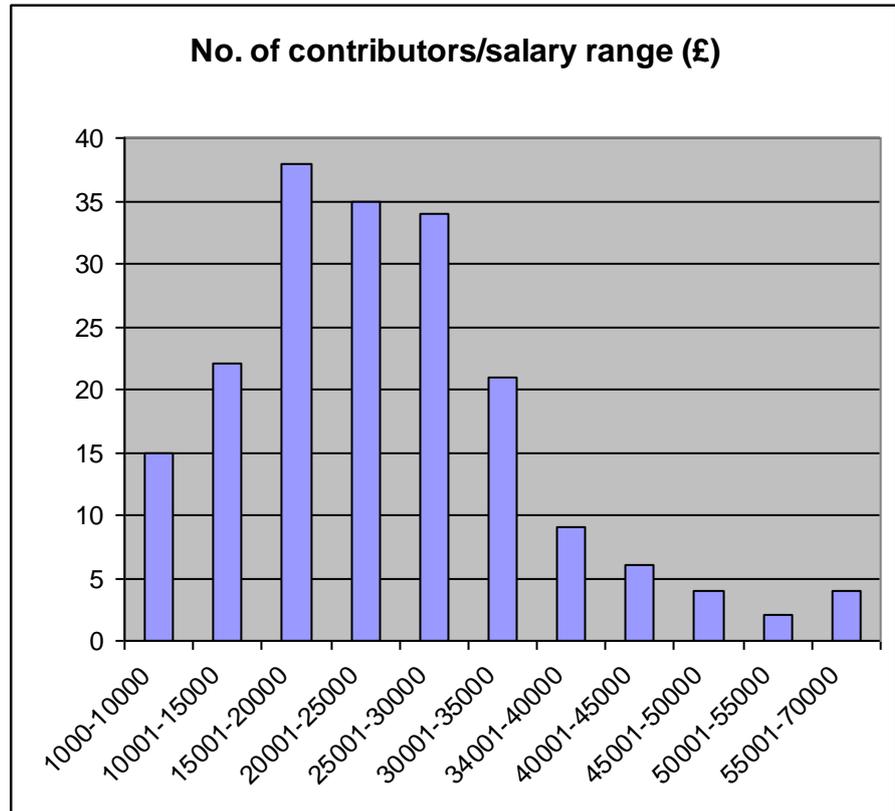
Some expanded on difficult circumstances that they, and people close to them have faced as a result of prejudice, and grey areas in respect of familial and social relationships and rights. For example, one contributor described a situation in which they had been separated from, and denied access to, a former partner's child following that partner's death, in spite of having played an important role in the child's life up until that point. This was clearly a source of grief to the contributor, and suggests a child bereft of important sources of comfort and love.

Annual salaries/income

A number of contributors were either retired, students, on benefits or their earnings were unpredictable. Their annual salaries are included wherever stated, and these make up the majority of salaries below £5000.

Figures from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings for 2009 showed that median weekly pay for full-time employees is £25,123. The median is the mid-point for all employees in the UK. By comparison, the salary mid-point for PP&T contributors in 2010 was £24,000 according to the responses.

PP&T salary figures are translated, except for at the very top and bottom, into bands £5000, however. The majority of contributors earn less than £25,000 per year.



Appendix 1 to 'Contributors' profiles and lifestyles'

1. Sexual and Gender identities: identifying as 'other'

Gender identity:

- Androgyne (electively "hermaphroditic")
- Physically evidently female, identity fluid
- Closet (transgender) diagnosed, but not acted upon
- Post-operative M2F transsexual woman...
- Don't know
- Male stuck in a female body but totally CONFUSED - cross dress
- I am a female who has a transsexual history
- Gender neutral
- M to F transgender, but not transsexual.
- Living as male but Transgendered
- I'm happy being female on the outside but feel male inside

Sexual identity: responses of contributors identifying as 'other'

- "Pansexual (Neither gender or sex specifically affects my attraction) I'm SO glad you had this option on here! :)"
- "Gay boy stuck in a female body but like girls when I feel female.....CONFUSED."
- "Femme inside a male body, with a boyfriend. logically I am Gay... inside I am Hetero... you figure it out, I can't."
- "I am attracted to boys even though i was born a 'boy' but i believe i was meant to be a girl so i identify as straight..."
- Another contributor explained her identity as
- "Queer. Lesbian dating genderqueer boi. Into anyone not bio-male (for lack of a better word, no offence meant)."
- "Pre Transition ftm (female to male transgendered) attracted to women - still member of lesbian community."
- "MTF (transgendered) attracted to other women but celibate for 12 yrs."
- "Attracted to my fem partner - I'm TG."
- "Queer. In terms of the spectrum, at the gay end of bi, but I don't identify as either gay or bi."
- "Heterosexual cross dresser."
- "Neutral and Celibate (now)"
- "Asexual (3)"
- "Post-gay, in a same-sex relationship."

2. Religion or belief – other

- “Spiritual - non specific”
- “Yes - spiritual but not religious.”
- “Holistic”
- “Earth based, druid, spiritual”
- “I have some spiritual beliefs of my own but not attached to an organised religion.”
- “My own, non organised.”
- “Theist - non-organised religion.”
- “I was baptised a Catholic but have not practiced since I was 15. I consider myself agnostic.”
- “Lapsed CofE/ Disillusioned Anglican.”
- C.E/Spiritualist/Humanitarian
- Trade unionism - everyone should belong to one.
- Jedi
- Science of Mind
- Non Duality
- Universal
- Eclectic
- Gaia Hypothesis

Part 2: Knowledge, influence, voice and engagement: Introduction

It is often said that 'Knowledge is power'. This section of the Pride, Progress and Transformation (PP&T) survey report brings together the survey results relating to LGB and Trans contributors' knowledge about their rights under British and UK equality and human rights legislation. It looks at the opportunities they enjoy to influence decisions that affect their lives, and how they think the latter might be improved.

To look at the connection between knowledge and power from a different perspective, many LGB and Trans people feel it necessary to withhold from others knowledge about their sexual or gender identities in order to avoid this knowledge being used to their detriment.

One of the conundrums in this is that many organisations with the power to effect beneficial changes have no way of assessing their own performance in this regard. They do not ask for information about people's sexual or gender identities, for example, when they are monitoring customer satisfaction, or analysing complaints, while many LGB and Trans people prefer not to give this information even when it is asked of them. These organisations are therefore unable to identify or respond to issues that are of particular concern to LGB or Trans people.

Among the central aims of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 is the elimination of the discrimination against LGB and Trans people (along with other protected groups) on grounds of their sexual or gender identity, and the promotion of equality of opportunities for people who had previously been at risk of marginalisation because of prejudice. Public Bodies have a unique, specific and central role in progressing these aims, however, they are working with a knowledge deficit regarding LGB and Trans citizens.

Increasingly this matters, as increasingly citizens are being called upon to hold those with power to account, and to make informed judgements – backed up by data - about their performance in relation to equalities.

The Big Society, the small state and birth of the 'citizen regulator'

When Equality South West first launched the Pride, Progress and Transformation survey the 'Big Society' was a formless theory to everyone but a handful of enthusiasts. Since then several pieces of legislation, and many government initiatives have been set in motion which begin to reveal the scale and nature of its significance for equality groups and the organisations representing their interests.

One of the key political themes running alongside the Big Society is that of 'ending red tape and bureaucracy' and under this banner performance indicators and targets for Local Strategic Partnerships and individual public bodies were abolished almost as soon as the coalition agreement was signed. They included National Indicators and Public Service Agreements, which had required public bodies to demonstrate how they were meeting their obligations (including equality duties) in the planning and delivery of services.

The Public Bodies Bill, introduced in October 2010, provides for the abolition, or reduction of powers of inspection and regulatory bodies in line with the 'Big Society/small state' agenda. This includes the Audit Commission whose inspection regime includes monitoring public bodies against their equality and human rights obligations. Within this mix previous obligations on local councils to involve and consult their communities on decision-making have been relaxed, so that discretion concerning the nature and extent of proactive public engagement lies with councils themselves.

While abolishing infrastructure organisations that have helped to advance equality in the South West, the Public Bodies Bill also permits the changes to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which are set to leave this primary monitoring and enforcement body depleted in terms of its powers, independence and capacity to support those in the community who wish to challenge breaches of the Act. Ironically, under the proposals the EHRC will be required to generate much more 'red tape' in reporting to ministers and parliament on its actions in future.

Measures within the Localism and Open Public Services Bills set out more clearly how the 'Big Society' is intended to operate. Not only is it proposed that many local voluntary and community organisations will become the deliverers of public services, but that, in their traditional role as champions for marginalised communities, they will have the capacity and knowledge to monitor public bodies' equality activities, forming a frontline in enforcement.

Equality in the Big Society

The Equality Act passed under the previous government extended the Public Sector Equality Duty (see insert below) to cover LGB and Trans people. Since then the secondary legislation (specific duties) underpinning the PSED, were unexpectedly revised in order to 'reduce bureaucratic burdens' on public bodies. The final draft, published in March 2011 reversed transparency provisions put in place in January, making it more difficult for individuals and equality groups to monitor and challenge local compliance with the Act. It also removed requirements to engage with equality groups in the course of policy development to ensure they fulfilled the PSED.

Trevor Philips, Chair of the EHRC has begun to refer to 'citizen regulators', in anticipation that individuals will both act as front line monitors of compliance with the legislation, and will challenge guilty public bodies and agencies where breaches occur.

The expressed intention of government to outsource public duties to a mix of local private, and 'civil society' organisations (and the expectation that large multi-national corporations will become involved) will, however, place unprecedented burdens on individuals and equality groups.

The cumulative impact of these and the other proposed changes will make the task of 'citizen regulators' unrealistically complex and demanding, with reduced back-up from the EHRC and other regulatory bodies. The 'burdens' may be lifted from public bodies; but they are being shifted onto the backs of groups who are already battling entrenched disadvantages.

This is the new policy landscape within which this report has finally come to be written: significantly different from when the Pride, Progress and Transformation survey was planned. The changes outlined place an unexpected emphasis on questions concerning contributors' knowledge of their rights, involvement in decision making processes, participation in community activities, and ability to influence decision making.

If the Equality Act 2010 is to make the intended difference, a great deal will depend on the degree to which public bodies, and the organisations and companies that they commission to deliver services on their behalf, respond to the information in this and other research, and meaningfully engage with LGB and Trans groups in the planning and delivery of services. An overarching prerequisite is for these organisations to provide clear, visible, meaningful and measurable evidence of their commitment to equality, and determination to eliminate all forms of discrimination within the scope of their powers.

Equality groups and support organisations will also need to rise to the challenges, and develop the knowledge and capacity to provide the necessary scrutiny and pressure to ensure that the Act has the necessary 'bite' to secure the change we need.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

The Duty also applies to any other person or body who is "not a public authority but who exercises public functions ... in the exercise of those functions..."

Survey Responses

Knowledge and awareness of legal rights and protections for LGB and Trans people

As discussed above, one of the emergent themes of the coalition government's legislative programme is the expanded role of 'communities', not just in taking over areas of public service provision, but also in driving local decision and challenging the actions of public bodies where there is dissatisfaction with their performance.

In total, 282 people responded to the question which asked about their level of awareness of equality and human rights legislation relating to LGB and Trans people in the UK and Europe. The responses understandably showed that a higher proportion of people felt they were very, or reasonably aware of the protections under UK equality, but less so in relation to UK human rights legislation, or European equality legislation. Nevertheless, a relatively high proportion of respondents – more than one fifth – had 'Very little knowledge' of these protections.

	Very aware	Reasonably aware	Very little knowledge
European Equality legislation	19.4% (54)	46.6% (130)	34.1% (95)
UK Human Rights legislation	23.0% (65)	53.2% (150)	23.8% (67)
UK Equality legislation	29.8% (84)	48.6% (137)	21.6% (61)

At the time the questionnaire was set there were concerns that the Equality Act 2010 might not have completed its passage through Parliament and into law before the general election. Had this happened, the Human Rights Act and the Draft European Equality Directive (which has still failed to complete its passage into European law) might have become the safety-net legislation for LGB and Trans people in the UK in terms of some important protections, hence their inclusion.

Sources of information and advice about legal rights as an LGB and/or Trans person

Sixty three percent of respondents (177) said they that did know where to go to get information and advice, while a total of 37% either did not know (55) or were not sure (50).

A further question asked in what kind of places contributors would like to see information and advice about their legal rights as an LGB and/or Trans person made available.

Some respondents focused on LGB and Trans specialist locations, media and methods for accessing this information, but the responses from the majority of contributors favoured using mainstream facilities, venues, organisations, media and sources of information to disseminate such information.

One highlighted the dual function of using mainstream and everyday locations to publicise basic legal rights: as a source of reassurance, as well as being a source of key information. This person's suggestion was that it should be available in "Places where some may feel vulnerable as its reassuring to see."

The responses have been summarised below, and are categorised and shown in detail in Appendix 3. Within each of the categories, a breakdown has been provided where specific types of location or source have been mentioned, and the frequencies with which they have occurred. This helps to identify the importance which contributors attach to specific locations and organisations as accessible sources of such information, and enables organisations to respond to contributors' suggestions.

Key locations, in order of frequency, included:

1. Libraries
2. Council offices/public buildings
3. Healthcare settings (GP's, hospitals)
4. Online
5. Schools
6. In the media
7. Workplaces
8. Police stations
9. Citizens Advice Bureau
10. Via LGB and Trans organisations (Stonewall, Intercom Trust etc)

The fact that libraries featured as the most popular location for such information is significant in view of the current proposals by many councils to cut library services and close many in more rural areas.

The internet was a popular suggestion, however some were keen to emphasise the need for information to be presented in simple and accessible ways -

“With simple English and a contact number to explain anything that might not be understood.”

Another contributor reflected that customary ‘word of mouth’ methods for obtaining reliable information had become less satisfactory because of the pace of change over recent years, and that it was now much easier to obtain information remotely and anonymously.

“I used to rely on friends and word of mouth but am aware that there are changes all the time, especially now that it is less likely to cause a stir and be promoted in the press. As long as it is advertised on the internet with good recognition by a search engine and clearly identifiable as from a reliable source then I would seek advice when I need it.”

There were mixed views about using the press as a source of information –

“Newspapers. They publish all sorts of advice and information, except, it seems anything linked to LGBT issues. I’m thinking about or local newspaper here, the Bristol Evening Post...”

Another view was it ought to be published everywhere “except the tabloid newspapers and magazines!”

One contributor proposed that third sector service providers should hold this information, commenting that, presumably based on direct experience, such agencies

“would need some serious awareness raising first..”

One contributor suggested a need for pro-active work to raise LGB & T people’s awareness of their rights. Identifying key mainstream access points, the suggestion included the addition of

“a specific place with a trained adviser ... This could be revolving throughout towns within the community. A dedicated phone line to back this up should be made available, where minor issues could be resolved or an appointment set up to either visit or even arrange a home visit to discuss”.

The ideas of peripatetic advisors and a well publicised dedicated phone line are the kinds of provision that can contribute to addressing the isolation that affects many people in rural areas of the region.

Several contributors suggested that places of worship should display or provide this information, one commenting that this would help

“to dispel the myth that you cannot be gay and Christian”

Some who responded to this question highlighted a more general need for people to be able to inform themselves about their rights in an accessible way.

Opportunities to influence, contribute to, and feel valued in the community.

Key findings from survey research about current LGB and Trans participation in public and political life carried out at a national level were published by the government Equalities Office in November 2010 (*Experiences and barriers to participation in public and political life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people*¹³). The findings showed that those who were interviewed had been involved in a range of public and political participation activities which included:

- Being part of a trade union
- Involvement with a local-decision making body, such as a council or health organisation
- Involvement with a community group, taking part in charitable work
- Being part of other campaigning organisations, such as a student union
- Being a member of, or working with, a political party (either voluntarily or through employment)
- Taking part in campaigning activities, including demonstrations and petitions
- Contacting a local political representative

The researchers found that engagement in these activities was fairly evenly spread across the four ‘sub-communities’ but “that individual activities and experiences within each of these types of activity varied considerably.”

The participants were recruited carefully in order to balance opinion from each of the constituent groups (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and to include people who were not actively involved in or associated with LGB and Trans organisations or the ‘scene’. However, there was inevitably a greater proportion of urban based participants involved.

¹³ Experiences of and barriers to participation in public life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people: Report to the government Equalities Office, published by the Office for Public Management, November 2010

These national findings provide an interesting backdrop to the PP&T survey results relating to LGB and Trans engagement in politics and public life in the South West of England, much of which is rural in nature.

Here in the South West of England, contributors to the PP&T survey were asked about their levels of engagement in democratic processes and community activities at various levels and in different ways.

One section of the questionnaire asked about contributors' opportunities to participate in, and make valued contributions to their communities or society in general in a variety of contexts, including in employment¹⁴, volunteering and in their communities.

A large majority of people did not feel that their opportunities were affected in any way by their sexual or transgender identity. While this is a welcome indication of progress in terms of social attitudes towards LGB and Trans people, it is notable that many people said that they were selective about the circumstances in which they were openly expressing their identity, and fewer than half of all contributors said they were 'out' in all situations.

In response to each of the questions a number of respondents were 'not sure' or did not consider the issue to be applicable to them. Among LGB respondents there were others who expressed confidence that their sexuality would not stand in their way, whatever they chose to be involved in.

"... my sexuality is who I am , I would never let me being gay get in the way of anything."

"It's not an issue; my sexuality ... is neither a hindrance nor an advantage."

"In my opinion sexuality has nothing to do with any ... opportunities. They are things that are dependent on personality and priorities."

"It is me as a person not the fact I am gay which enables me the same opportunities to be involved, just like any other individual."

"I believe my achievements and progress are solely based on my own drive and tenacity, not my sexual orientation."

One contributor, who was confident in their ability to contribute to, and participate in any activities that they chose, also indicated that they are selective in those choices, depending on the reactions of others concerned.

"My sexuality ... may have an effect on how contact/information from me is received by others, or cause others to act in a way which means I decide not to access certain things."

¹⁴ The responses in relation to employment are reported in section 5 of the PP&T report

Homophobia and transphobia were explicitly identified as limiting factors for many, but not all, contributors to the survey. It was recognised by some that this was not necessarily directed at them personally, but was nevertheless a damaging aspect of cultural attitudes in certain organisations.

There was a considerable degree of overlap between the comments made in relation to opportunities to feel valued in paid and unpaid work, opportunities to participate in voluntary and community activity, and opportunities to care for others.

It is difficult to estimate how many of those who did not experience barriers related to their sexual or gender identities were 'out', although a number of those who gave additional comments indicated that this was a factor.

"I choose whether or not people know my sexual identity, this means it doesn't affect any opportunities because people simply don't know."

"I am in the closet at work and in the community at large as I fear negative reactions."

Do you feel that your sexual and/ or gender identity affects your opportunities to influence decision making in your local area?

No	137	44%
Not sure/Not applicable	84	27%
Yes, negatively	52	17%
Yes, positively	41	13%
Total responding (% rounded)	314	100%

Some found that smaller, more 'traditional' communities were particularly difficult environments in which to become politically active or vocal about local issues.

"I think being lgbt does affect opportunities to take part in local councils or local voluntary organisations etc. especially in small local communities."

"... my involvement (in decision-making) has been mainly at County/ City level. Not at my local council level."

"Whilst I am generally very open about my own sexuality I am aware of negative attitudes and this would impact on my willingness to engage locally for example in local politics."

Among contributors who identified sex discrimination as the primary issue for lesbian/ gay women, one observed that she was 'pigeonholed' as a feminist because

she is gay. Her opinions are attributed to her assumed feminist perspective, rather than being respected as her own considered views.

“... it is viewed as being a 'gay' opinion before being my opinion.”

Others were also clear that sexism plays a greater part in limiting certain opportunities than does homophobia or transphobia. However, when it came to seeking public office it was anticipated that sexuality would come into play.

“In spite of all the improvements in gender equality, it is still easier for a male to gather power and influence.”

“Since my sexual identity isn't visible ... sex discrimination is much more likely to be an issue in these situations. The only exception would be if I wanted to run for Council or stand as a MP, and then I think people would make an issue of my sexuality...”

Among contributors to the survey Transwomen are unusually well-placed to assess the impact of sex on these questions.

“Because of my social and educational background, my gender identity has not been too much of an issue affecting my social inclusion. However, I am aware that both in my professional life and social life, my voice no longer carries the same weight as when I was seen as a male with social status.”

Do you feel that your sexual and/ or gender identity affects your opportunities to participate as an active citizen in any voluntary or community activity (including trade union or student activity)?

No	135	43.4%
Yes, positively	68	21.8%
Yes, negatively	53	17.0%
Not sure/Not applicable	55	17.7%
Total responding	311	100%

These responses inevitably reflect different experiences in different arenas. For example, trade unions, student unions and other organisations that have robust and well-publicised equality policies are more likely to encourage engagement than those which do not.

The reservations reported earlier concerning more tightly-knit communities are echoed by another contributor:

“There are community networks in my area which I would never feel comfortable to attend due to ... homophobia. As a mother and carer ... I am very aware of the level of explicit homophobia in the schools and this affects my ability to care for and protect my children and affects their ability to feel safe and accepted in the school environment.”

Do you feel that your sexual and/ or gender identity affects your opportunities to care for others (including children and parents)?

No	117	37.6%
Yes, negatively	84	27%
Not sure/Not applicable	74	23.8%
Yes, positively	36	11.6%
Total responding	311	100%

Do you feel that your sexual and/ or gender identity affects your opportunities to feel valued for the work that you do, whether paid or unpaid?

No	165	52.7%
Yes, positively	58	18.5%
Not sure/Not applicable	54	17.3%
Yes, negatively	36	11.5%
Total responding	313	100%

Although many contributors have a great deal of confidence in being open about their identity, others were far less certain that openness about their identity would have no adverse effect. Some were quite clear on this, and protect their identities judiciously in order to avoid any impact on important opportunities available to them.

“I would never disclose my sexuality status to anyone who I was trying to get employment with as I feel i get treated negatively most of the time if I

do... having said that in voluntary work I feel I can be more open and have had a positive experience disclosing."

"I choose whether or not people know my sexual identity, this means it doesn't affect any opportunities because people simply don't know."

"As I do not share my gender identity in these situations it does not affect (my opportunities)"

Problems associated with gender-based occupational segregation had been felt directly by some. The following illustrates the ways in which women can feel excluded from male dominated occupations which they would like to pursue, whether this is objectively justified or not.

"I feel that I have always been a valued member of my work force (and the majority of my friends have been really supportive as well as my family ... (however) when I went to apply to be a mechanic ... I feel they turned me down because I am a woman."

One issue highlighted in the additional comments provided in this section must be a cause for particular concern not only to those who feel its effects. The impact of a persistent attitude which regards contact between children and, in particular, gay men, as unsafe was mentioned by numerous contributors. The fear of being labelled as a paedophile was very evident.

"... the care industry (other than nursing) is still very suspicious of gay men and there is a frankly disgusting tendency to draw comparisons between male homosexuality and paedophilia. Until this changes, gay men will be frightened of going into professions like primary school teaching or youth work".

"I want to be a teacher and I am worried that my homosexuality may be something that holds me back..."

"I myself know of many closeted primary school teachers who fear the impact disclosing their sexuality will have on parents of children in their care."

"Unfortunately many people still regard the transgendered with suspicion, and are very reluctant to allow much contact with children and sometimes adults, though less so...The end result is a limitation in where we can work and who with, which is a shame."

"In general, my gender identity often creates suspicion when I am relating to or dealing with children. It is not the children themselves, but their parents, who still often relate LGBT to paedophiles."

"There is an awful link some people make between gay people working with young adults or children and paedophilia. I think something needs to be done

to address this as I believe many gay people are afraid to take up these kinds of jobs in case they come under suspicion e.g. teachers, Scout leader, etc.”

One contributor was quite comfortable about joining in with community organisations such as clubs and societies, but felt that volunteering to work with young people would expose him to such suspicion.

“I don’t feel comfortable specifically working with youth such as scouts etc as there is always an underlying feeling of "why would a gay man want to work with boys?" I have not tested this by wanting to work with these groups but have stayed in more mixed age group organizations.”

There were some misgivings about undertaking voluntary work in general as an ‘out’ LGB or transgender person because of fears that there was less acceptance in the voluntary sector.

“I feel that so long as I can contribute without often disclosing my sexuality I can participate positively ... I would like to do more volunteering however feel that others in my community would be less welcoming of me being open about my sexuality.”

“I do feel restricted in what form of voluntary work I seek to undertake particularly where it involves children, older people or religious groups. I have not been reassured by volunteer co-ordinators that I would receive adequate support were I to encounter homophobic attitudes or behaviour.”

However, the CAB was mentioned by some as an enlightened and accepting organisation. A number of other contributors were active in LGB and Trans organisations in a voluntary capacity, and found satisfaction from this work.

“I volunteer for CAB and they are great re: my Out Trans status. However other organisations are another matter.”

“I do some volunteering for the LGBT community, so I feel my sexuality is an advantage to this work.”

In contrast to other people’s concerns, one contributor found the volunteer youth service a rewarding and accepting place to work, and was using her knowledge and experience to benefit the young people whom they worked with.

“In the youth volunteering work I am doing ... I have offered to develop a LGBT section and display on a large part of one of the walls and the manager seems very keen for me to do this.”

Time and again transgender contributors spoke of other people’s reactions to them, and the widespread lack of understanding of gender dysphoria and its consequences.

“Other people are just not comfortable having a Trans person around as they have no idea of what our lives are like apart from stories in the popular press that have been touched up for the readers enjoyment.”

Better education and awareness were frequently identified as being fundamental to addressing the exclusive nature of some community activities, whose conception and marketing are often informed by, and express, heterosexist assumptions.

Some people commented in more general terms about the need to eliminate discrimination.

“We need to break down the stereotypes. We need organisations to encourage more open LGBT recruitment and to celebrate being diverse.”

“You’re gay – you’re suspect. This is deep in the psyche. The facts should be made paramount to allay prejudice.”

Another’s comment echoed an earlier point about the potential loss to communities of active citizens performing valuable roles because of the fear of discrimination. On deciding to help set up a neighbourhood watch scheme this person overcame their misgivings and ‘came out’ to neighbours from the outset.

“Whilst I did not have any negative experiences I was concerned initially about this disclosure and what the potential outcome could have been if there had been any homophobic response from a neighbour.”

While many contributors had not experienced, and did not anticipate, barriers to influencing, contributing to, and feeling valued in the community arising from the sexual or transgender identity, a significant number of others had either experienced, or anticipated such barriers.

In some cases this limited the range of choices and opportunities available to them, because of external or self-imposed pressures – or both.

Clearly there will be many local and individual factors that bear on these experiences, and several contributors feared, and/or had direct experience of discriminatory attitudes that are found to be prevalent in parts of the South West.

Consulting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people about public services

One of the survey questions was included at the request of local government partner organisations. It asked "What are the best ways for public bodies to consult LGB or Trans people about their needs and opinions on public services?"

A number of contributors felt that LGB and Trans people should be consulted in the same ways as public bodies consult with other residents living in their area.

Others were very firmly of a different view.

"I think that it is extremely important (that) public bodies avoid a "one size fits all" approach to equalities issues and has structures which acknowledge the unique experience of all "marginalised" groups. This means setting clear quality standards related to equalities issues, training decision makers and actively supporting community groups who provide a focal point for consultation and communication."

Various comments drew attention to the fact that many LGB and Trans people do not have social lives that include or revolve around the 'gay scene', and contributors recognised this can therefore make them more difficult to reach.

"Unfortunately that's very difficult. Not everyone goes to pubs or clubs or belongs to a group and if they do not fill in a questionnaire truthfully there is no way of knowing. The only people you can contact are those who you can see."

"Tricky, I expect, to target LGB/Trans folk directly, as the usual avenues - LGB venues, publications etc do not reach everyone, and the most isolated and hard to reach are likely to be those most in need of help."

"My sexuality ... is one part of myself but I have never felt the need to be associated to any groups - mainly because in the past I have not identified with other lesbians who I met at the time. I do have many lesbian and gay friends - but again, we socialise but are not members of any group... not sure how you could directly reach those people who are not visible in terms of their sexuality."

Among those who suggested particular methods, the importance of optional anonymity was emphasised time and again.

In terms of the tools used, contributors suggested using surveys, as these could be conducted anonymously – particularly if posted online.

"For "Out" people, through networks such as DCC LGBT. Otherwise, it would probably be good to use an anonymous drop box such as a web surveys."

“Primarily on-line, such as this survey. However, I was unaware of this survey until it came up on a website of which I am a member.”

“Web sites (especially if via a link from an LGB specific site such as Gaydar). However, this may only be effective for younger people or others who are regulars to such sites.”

Some also liked the idea of focus groups and consultation exercises, but pointed out that this would usually be restricted to people who were open about their sexuality or gender identity, as those who were not ‘out’ would see preserving their anonymity as a key concern.

The most common way in which contributors felt public bodies should consult was through engagement with local LGB and/or Trans organisations and groups. Some favoured consultation with existing groups.

“Hold regular consultation exercises with the local LGBT community”

“Engage with them and their organisations. I have answered positively to the questions above because I am very involved in LGBT equality in Bristol and arrange meetings to ensure that other LGBT people are also consulted.”

“By contacting LGBT people through their groups.”

Promoting consultation through gay venues, events and publications was also a repeated suggestion, as it was felt that promoting the opportunities available was key to getting people involved.

Several people suggested that public bodies co-opt advocates or ‘champions’ to committees and other decision-making bodies.

The issue of repeated failures on the part of some public bodies to act on previous consultations and/or to provide feedback to those who participated was a particular complaint raised by several contributors.

“Maybe if service providers listened and acted upon previous consultations that would make things better.”

There were some specific issues raised by Trans contributors. The issues for and needs of Transgender people are arguably the least well researched and understood. At the same time, for many, anonymity is paramount before, during and after transition, all of which phases create particular difficulties about which public bodies in general, and health care providers in particular, need to be more aware.

“Recognise the fact that many (indeed most?) trans people (particularly those who do not wish to fully transition, or those who have transitioned) have a need not to be outed and provide suitable means to keep their anonymity, or status hidden.”

"Being trans I obviously have a lot of contact with various people in the medical profession, surely this survey, or link could have been sent to my doctor's surgery with the instructions to pass it on to any trans patients? The most important thing to me, and I'm sure many others, is complete SECRECY. I live in stealth for a reason. I'm nervous even filling this in now."

For this group in particular, the opportunity to be represented by a spokesperson or group with detailed knowledge and insight, is extremely valuable.

"Direct contact with Trans Support Groups and NHS Depts dealing with Trans people."

"Via a spokesperson for Transgendered people"

"At present through meaningful and co-operative discussions with organisations that represent or have contact with trans people. It should not be beyond the wit of public servants to engage with forums of transpeople from their area to discuss relevant provision etc."

Contributors commented that the exclusion of monitoring questions made them invisible, and for some this is a real point of contention.

"Most surveys don't ask me about my sexuality they ask everything else but not this question so they have no idea and this makes me feel that they simply don't care. They ask me about my religion and my age and race but never not once have they ever asked me about how my sexuality affects where I live, the assumption is that everyone is straight and has children ..."

Perhaps the simplest way of identifying particular LGB and Trans impacts and perspectives, suggested by many contributors, was the inclusion of sexual and gender identity monitoring questions in general, anonymous surveys, along with other equality groups. This would answer many of the issues raised above.

" ... to include questions re sexual identity in surveys so that we can be visible everywhere."

Complaints procedures and responses

Contributors were asked about any barriers to complaining about public services that were related to their sexual or transgender identity, and a subsequent question sought suggestions as to how things might be improved.

Do you feel that your sexual and/or gender identity affects your ability to complain about local council and other public services?

No	195	70.6%
Yes, negatively	33	12%
Not sure/Not applicable	26	9.4%
Yes, positively	22	7.9%
Total responding	276	100%

In what ways, if any, could public bodies make it easier for you to register a complaint about their services?

Some people treated this as a general question about the current complaints mechanisms that public bodies use. A number of these had found existing procedures easy to access, and had no complaints, while others had general suggestions for improving things.

Among these suggestions was a commonly expressed view that many public bodies could improve the ways in which they promote the methods through which people can complain.

“Ensure that their publicity includes information about how to complain and that links to complaints page is clearly shown on website”

“... many people think you have to go to a local council office, for instance, to collect (a form), and often feel they would rather not go into an office and ask for a form to complain about the very office they are in! Again, publicise the fact you can complain online, and make forms more obviously available in public places.”

“By making their complaints procedure available, i.e. online, in print etc. When you do want to make a complaint there is often a bit of a problem actually getting information about how to make one.”

Several comments referred to communications problems related to sensory or physical impairments or literacy and language difficulties. Another set of comments related to the accessibility of complaints procedures and the materials used in promoting and registering them. Important among these is the opportunity for people to submit complaints without having to do so in writing.

“Simplify their literature”

“Record complaints made verbally, rather than forcing you to write letters.”

“BIGGER TYPE, MAKE IT SEEM EASIER...”

“Complaints procedures should be available in various formats, tape, large print, braille, words and pictures etc and be prominent on the website and in council literature...”

Another common thread was a lack of feedback about outcomes of the complaints made.

“Complaints procedures are only as good as their outcome. If you get no outcome you don't bother.”

“I've been through all three stages of the complaints process against my local authority and their response is we don't give a damn, take us to the ombudsman, take us to judicial review, because we really don't care and you don't have the money to take us on.”

“... I have never needed to register a complaint. From hearing experiences of others, it seems to me that the response to the complaints is what needs to be improved.”

“... a working e-mail address staffed by people that actually READ the letters and respond to them, even if it is just to say we got your letter and will be answering it shortly. Too often they just let your complaint sit and fester.”

“Online form, education as to the process and the outcome.”

“What isn't clear is what action will be taken, if any...”

“The police seem now to be set up with trained officers to listen. What they DO is less clear..”

While relatively few contributors felt there were particular barriers to complaining as an LGB or Trans person, 94 people made comments concerning current shortcomings, and suggested improvements. A number of these made specific reference to methods of addressing issues of service delivery affecting LGB and Trans people specifically.

In theory, analysis of the data resulting from complaints received is an effective way of bringing about service improvement to the users of public services. However,

several comments referred to a lack of equalities monitoring in terms of complaints registered, and the missed opportunities to identify themes in relation to particular areas of discrimination or disadvantage.

“Asking me about my sexual identity, and not just my gender.”

“It would start with public bodies initially recognising other gendered people.”

“Monitor and publish anonymised data in relation to SO (sexual orientation) and GI (gender identity).”

Many of those who commented addressed the ways in which public bodies could more effectively and sensitively deal with complaints related the ways in which services are delivered, and/or a lack of a provision in respect of their LGB or transgender status. There were several mentions of the need for public bodies to be explicit about their role in promoting equality, and declare their concern to address equalities issues where these were inherent in particular complaints.

“By developing, maintaining and publicising routes to comment on homophobia in schools. This is endemic.”

“Specialist services that recognise being LGBT is a complicated issue in itself.”

“Talk to me, listen to me, respond to me, show me that they really mean what they say, and aren't just ticking boxes & pretending to follow through on Specific Duties.”

“When sending through information they could do more to say that homophobia will not be tolerated and that way you would get people to think more about the consequences of their actions - also reporting via a third party so that they make comment.”

“Clear public policy statements on what people can expect e.g. provision of equitable provision of services to whole community - then organisational complaints procedures apply for us all.”

In this context the issues of confidentiality and anonymity were at the fore.

“Recognise the fact that many (indeed most?) trans people (particularly those who do not wish to fully transition, or those who have transitioned) have a need not to be outed, and provide suitable means to keep their anonymity, or status hidden.”

“Free and anonymous (if desired) phonelines email addresses.”

“Easier online submissions and better optional anonymity.”

“An anonymous online service maybe? A discreet office or post box somewhere? A 'hows my driving?' style poster in the doctors waiting room?”

“anonymous reporting and a record of decisions that is published when a resolution has been reached.”

Some saw the more effective use of, or better support for, local LGB and Trans groups as a way forward.

“Better funding support and advocacy for LGBT people from LGBT-led organisations.”

“Show willing and contact local gay groups like Gay West and Out in Unison.”

“Acceptance of anonymous info from single point of contact from LGBT groups.”

Some respondents were concerned that complaints that were directly related to people’s identity should be dealt with by officers who had an appropriate degree of awareness and understanding of LGB and trans issues. This would be helpful in ensuring positive outcomes, and therefore in giving them the confidence to complain.

“specialist workers of sufficient seniority to address issues.”

“Employ specially trained staff to deal with LGBT issues.”

“Have a specified Equality and Diversity officer to approach - preferably one that actually is trained in LBG T Awareness and protocol.

“Have specialist LGBT officers to deal with related complaints.”

“Easy access to reporting Hate Crime and Diversity Officers.”

Another comment referred to the need for all frontline staff to be appropriately trained and aware of LGB and Trans issues.

“Easy to use and obviously placed online reporting. Opportunities for anonymous reporting. Training for frontline - first contact staff.”

It was felt that telephone (particularly 0800 numbers), online and email contact were most appropriate methods – in terms of cost, convenience, and maintaining anonymity. Indeed generally, contributors were keen to see how public bodies could protect their anonymity when making complaints.

“On line anonymous facility to register complaints, concerns, fears.”

“Offer out of hours telephone lines for people to make a complaint out of work hours in the comfort of their own home and this is then followed up by a sensitive rep who could also, if wanted, make a home visit.”

“I feel happier writing an email, a computer feels less judgemental.”

One contributor summed up the burden of many people’s concerns:

"It's not about how easy it is to complain, it is about whether you feel safe complaining, and whether you have any confidence that anything will be done."

What could public services do to meet your needs as an LGB and/or Trans person?

Some of those who responded did not feel the need for any particular action in relation to their sexual or gender identity. A number of these indicated that basic acceptance, and being treated with the same respect as everyone else was enough.

"Treat us the same as any other person. We're not abnormal."

"I don't really have any special needs that need to be met. I just want to get on with my life, openly and honestly."

"... do I have special needs because I'm trans? No!

Do I have particular needs because I'm a human being, and because human beings are a diverse bunch with individual characteristics & requirements,?

Yes!

Is it difficult for public services to fulfil my needs? It shouldn't be!"

Several people commented that, in their areas at least, public bodies did a satisfactory, or good job in addressing the needs of LGB and Trans people, and creating an inclusive approach to service provision.

One contrasted the public sector favourably with the private sector in terms of inclusion and ensuring that LGB people were a visible part of their communities.

"I think that public bodies are actually the best informed and we've had better experiences with inclusion with them as they are much more linked in with the law. It's private bodies that are less inclusive and don't have 'civil partner' or 'partner' as options on forms you fill out. When they don't have an option for an answer that includes our life, I tell them they should."

Another held the opposite view, and felt that their local authorities lagged behind the private sector. In one specific example hospital staff had refused to recognise the rights of the patient's same sex partner, insisting on treating her as a 'friend'.

A number of people commented on traditional, (heterosexist) cultures perpetuated through their written publications and the images used, and there were many calls for LGB and Trans people to be given greater visibility.

One contributor's contribution echoed many others' in wanting LGB and Trans people to be seen as citizens with a similar range of concerns and interests as everyone else. This contributor wanted public bodies to advertise community events

in a more inclusive way, in order to counteract stereotypical ideas about the LGB and Trans people being concerned only with a narrow range of issues.

“Provide more gay-friendly events. All the events they run are to do with 'sexual health'. I think this paints the gay community in a negative light - their sexual nature is always emphasised, not their social everyday activities.”

A demand for greater visibility as members of the community was also expressed in the context of local surveys and consultations, where several contributors felt that their sexual identity should be included in the questionnaires to ensure any issues particularly related to their LGB or Transgender status could be identified.

“Always ask what we think. Don't think it's incorrect to include LGBT in all aspects of council monitoring.”

“... consult with willing trans people in their area of concern to find out our views etc.”

“Take our needs into account in all their services. They need a well informed lgbt advisory body to enable them to do this. They must consult. They must make their services relevant to all the community and that includes us.”

There was also a message for dedicated equality and diversity officers about how they could expand their role to be more effective in addressing discrimination .

“Diversity Officers are a really good step in the right direction but they must be willing to get out and about into communities and to find out what the issues are and want to help.”

Over a fifth of contributors highlighted staff awareness training as an important issue to enable them to discuss and handle LGB and Trans issues appropriately and comfortably. A lack of staff awareness, and of sensitive and appropriate behaviour underpinned a variety of concerns about public bodies and their attitudes. This was particularly marked among responses from Transgender contributors.

Allied to this were comments about the need to educate the public more widely, and for public bodies to promote diversity and acceptance. Schools were particularly highlighted as having a responsibility towards students and their families in terms of ensuring that heterosexism was not seen as the only legitimate sexuality or family foundation.

“Schools - need far more openness and tools to address issues of homophobic bullying, abuse and discrimination.”

“My LEA could recognise the needs that I have as a LGB parent and the needs my son has to go to a school which recognises all family structures including LGB ones.”

A series of responses called for more effective action on the part of public sector bodies in dealing with homophobia/transphobia. One contributor spoke of a:

"... catalogue of institutional abuses carried out by so-called professional people."

Others wanted public bodies to:

"be more understanding and tolerant of people who aren't breaking the law and not to pin point these people because they are LGBT."

"take us seriously and deal with homophobia."

Surprisingly few responses called for funding specifically for LGB and Trans services, and these were mainly concerned with addressing issues around isolation.

"(services for LGB and Trans people) need to be more widely available, help should be offered to everyone so people who may be sensitive or reluctant to discuss or even accept who they are."

"Specialist services that recognise being LGBT is a complicated issue in itself."

"Clubs, Youth Clubs, Groups, Activities... ANYTHING LGBT!!!! We are totally isolated out here."

At the same time, a number of contributors felt that public bodies could do better in publicizing the services, facilities and events that were provided for LGB and Trans people.

"Ensure they are aware of what is available in their area - many are unaware of specialised clubs and meeting places, or other voluntary services that area offered. Go visit these places and talk to people there."

"Publicise what action is done in LGBT media"

"Advertise LGB and/or Trans services more widely, perhaps a specific website including clubs and leisure activities etc that are LGB and/or Trans friendly. Club members etc should sign to accept club policies around behaviour and respect for all members."

"Nothing more than they are doing - except maybe more publicity for specific services like Equality South West etc."

"Advertise, as police do the departments who are trained and will try to help. however this all costs and as i suggest is very low priority for councils who can't afford enough road grit !!"

"I suppose having more visible information would be helpful. I also appreciate when offices make the effort to show that they won't tolerate homophobia (perhaps by displaying stonewall posters) because then I know I can relax and be open about who I am."

Sexual and gender identities and voting

Contributors were asked whether they use elections as a means of exercising influence, albeit this is a less direct, but anonymous way. The figures suggest that democratic engagement at local, national and European levels is greater among LGB and Trans voters than among the general population based on turnouts in recent years.

Do you normally vote in elections for...

	<i>Always</i>	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
Local Councillors?	59.2% (164)	17.0% (47)	11.2% (31)	12.6% (35)	277
Members of Parliament (MPs)?	67.8% (187)	13.8% (38)	7.2% (20)	11.2% (31)	276
Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)?	54.1% (146)	16.3% (44)	10.7% (29)	18.9% (51)	270

They were also asked about the impact of a political party's record on sexual and/or gender identity issues on their voting habits and intentions. It was clear that for a majority of contributors who responded to the question a political party's track record in relation to LGB and Trans issues was strongly influential in their voting decisions.

Does a political party's record on sexual and/or gender identity issues affect how you normally vote/ intend to vote in future?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	74.9%	209
No	12.2%	34
Don't know	6.5%	18
Don't vote	6.5%	18

"This is one of my key issues, if I don't feel a party will address my needs, I won't vote for them!"

"I would vote against any policy whatever party that discriminates against gay issues/rights."

"If a party is against or anti - LGBT then it is an immediate no, then it depends on which party is going to provide better services or understanding on LGBT (among other things)."

One Transgender contributor highlighted the invisibility of Trans individuals in the political arena

"I'd go further - we need an openly trans person in the government(s)... I'm working on it!"

However, many qualified their responses by adding that other considerations were also involved. Party affiliations, or a poor track record in relation to the individuals' wider political priorities would make a difference.

"If the party of my choice or local candidate was not supportive re the issues dealt with here it would not affect my vote. I do not do single issue politics. The whole of the policy which is offered is the determinant."

"Their attitudes and policies regarding many other things also influence who I vote for. Commitment to, and action to ensure, equality for all is a key criteria."

"Usually it's their policy on environmental issues that gets my interest, policies on older people and education and yes sexuality - but if the other policies are not there...then no!"

Some contributors highlighted the importance of local policy making, and local attitudes and action to create an inclusive environment.

"Perhaps more accessible information on individual MP's and their voting records re LGBT issues. It would be nice to take this down to a District and Council level, because this is where decisions on services which have a high impact on our lives are made."

"I feel that there is no practical support for young LGBT people in my area - there are helplines, but no social groups for just being able to chat with other people or get support for the little things."

A small number were not aware of any political party's position on LGB and Trans issues. Another small group expressed disillusionment with, and disengagement from the democratic process. Still others were unable to vote because of their nationality or age.

Key issues and actions: who should do what?

Opportunities to influence, contribute to, and feel valued in the community

Key Issues

- A significant proportion of LG and B people are confident that their sexual identity would not be a barrier to choice and opportunity in any of the situations discussed...
- There are, however, indications that many people make assessments about the situations in which they will place themselves (e.g. choice of employer), and in deciding whether to 'risk' coming out in any given situation.
- Fear of prejudice and discrimination limits some people's engagement and active participation in voluntary and community activities, and limits career choices.
- Some women contributors observed that their views were given less weight than men's in regard to influencing decisions and voicing opinions. One transwoman had experienced a loss of status in society since transitioning from male to female.
- A persistent myth connecting sexual or gender identity with paedophilia restricts valued occupations available to LGB and Trans people, and reduces the pool of talent available to teaching, other professions, and voluntary work.
- Far from being places of enlightenment and safety, some schools are intimidating environments for LGB and Trans people. There are teachers, parents and young people living in fear of disclosure to governors, colleagues, parents and pupils.
- Contributors from each of the sub-groups (LGB and Trans) were deterred from chosen careers by intimidating 'macho' cultures in certain workplaces and industries.
- A number of women experienced gender- rather than sexual orientation-based discrimination as a restriction on their choices at work and in other arenas.
- Some contributors found working in the public sector more accepting than the private sector, which was partly attributed to the equality duties governing the sector. At least one contributor felt the private sector was more LGB and T friendly.
- Voluntary and community organisations are not always welcoming, and may deter volunteers by failing to project a strong equalities ethos. Those in rural and tight knit communities can be particularly difficult to engage with.

Actions

Public bodies; school governing bodies and headteachers are legally required to address the issues raised and particularly to tackle the myths concerning paedophilia, and sexual and transgender identities.

- There should be robust anti-homophobic and transphobic policies clearly explained and effectively enforced for school staff and pupils, including cyber bullying;
- Staff should be awareness trained and helped to address LGB and Trans issues arising for students, including signposting to specialist help.

Councils and other public bodies

- should ensure that as a condition on voluntary and community organisations receiving public funds they meet the requirements of the public sector equality duty in the delivery of their services and in carrying out their activities.
- Should ensure that this also applies to all out-sourced services

Voluntary and community organisations

- that are in receipt of public funds should be required to develop good equality policies and practices as a condition for receiving public funds
- should ensure that staff and volunteers understand and comply with the Equality Act 2010 in carrying out their activities, delivering services and recruiting staff and volunteers.
- Should ensure that they have robust equality policies and practices that are clearly explained, publicised and complied with

Employers in all sectors should consider the negative impact on their organisations of failing to develop a positively inclusive culture which attracts and retains a talented and diverse workforce.

Consulting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people about public services

Some contributors did not have any specific suggestions regarding consulting LGB and Trans people. However there was considered to be room for improvement in consultation methods generally.

Key issues were:

- the need for better information about and wider access to consultations that are being undertaken
- the importance of public bodies providing feedback
- those designing and carrying out consultations need to have a basic understanding of LGB and Trans issues and those of other marginalised groups.

Actions

Public bodies should:

- Recognise specific issues affecting Trans people (Trans advocates, direct contact with Trans groups), and the particular need for confidentiality about their status
- Include question about gender and sexual identities in consultation surveys so that responses can be analysed to take account of any specific issues affecting LGB and Trans people.
- Set up LGB and Trans focus groups where appropriate
- Consult regularly with local LGB and Trans groups
- Co-opt representatives/champions from LGB and Trans community groups to contribute to policy discussions.
- Provide consultation channels that are accessible (e.g. online surveys) and guarantee anonymity to enable those not involved in LGB and Trans groups to express their views.
- Publicise and promote consultation exercises through LGB and Trans venues, events and publications as well as through equalities organisations.

Complaints procedures and service improvement responses: key issues and actions

Key issues

71% of those responding did not feel that their sexual or gender identity affected their ability to complain about council or other services. 12% felt that there was a negative effect, and 94 people suggested how things could be improved.

- As with the consultation question, it was felt that neither information about how to complain, nor methods for complaining were accessible enough in many cases.
- People need to know that complaints will be acknowledged, registered and properly attended to, and that they will receive feedback about the outcomes.
- They especially need to know that public bodies are both aware of and actively implementing their legal duty to promote equality and eliminate discrimination relating to LGB and Trans.
- An easy way to understand LGB and Trans (and other equality groups) issues would be to ask questions about equalities identities in full when logging complaints and undertaking a full analysis.
- The strictest confidentiality must be applied when dealing with information regarding complainants' sexual and gender identities and complaints relating to this.
- Public bodies could offer more support to LGB and Trans groups as advisory bodies.

Actions

Public bodies (including schools) should:

- Be explicit about 'zero tolerance' of homophobia and transphobia within the organisation – including literature, websites, posters
- Ensure that those dealing with complaints are aware of LGB and Trans/equality issues
- Be clear about the complaints procedure and what to expect following registering a complaint
- Ensure that services are delivered in an LGB and Trans sensitive manner where appropriate
- Provide specific procedures/officers for dealing with complaints about homophobic/transphobic treatment or discriminatory services

- Monitor and analyse registered complaints from equality groups by including relevant questions, including sexual and gender identities
- Enable complaints to be recorded anonymously where gender or sexual identity is a sensitive issue and the complainant prefers anonymity
- Provide acknowledgements of complaints and feedback about process and outcomes
- Make it easier for people to complain, including:
 - Information and documentation available in alternative formats (bigger type/Braille etc)
 - Online complaints system
 - Plain English
 - Complaints recorded by telephone

What could public services do to meet your needs as an LGB and/or Trans person?: Key issues and actions

Key issues

- While some public bodies are highly regarded, many need to progress to demonstrate LGB and Trans inclusiveness, and readiness to fulfil their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Public bodies must be prepared to deal with homophobic/transphobic speech and behaviour with clear 'zero tolerance' policies.
- Schools are considered to have a particular responsibility to teach diversity and acceptance, and provide a safe environment against homophobic and transphobic attitudes and bullying.
- LGB and Trans people can feel pigeonholed by a tendency for organisations to focus on sexual health events. There is a desire to see diversity in the promotion of 'mainstream' events by public bodies.
- There is a wish to be more visible within the population and for public bodies to include sexual and gender identities in monitoring forms and questionnaires.
- Contributors felt public bodies should provide for specialist LGB and Trans support groups to combat isolation in areas where there were no other facilities. This was shown to be an important consideration in many contributors' responses to questions about addressing depression and other mental health issues.
- Events and services for LGB and Trans people are not thought to be as widely publicised as they might be.

Actions

Public bodies should:

- Ensure discrimination-free services by:
 - Increasing the visibility of LGB and Trans people in publications, on websites and in literature, and using posters and visible information in reception areas
 - Providing staff awareness training that promotes diversity and acceptance across all services, so that they are comfortable discussing and handling LGB and/or Trans issues.
 - Using LGB and Trans people's expertise to inform and advise on how to mainstream inclusiveness.
 - Employing dedicated Equality and Diversity officers as an informed and safe point of contact for LGB and Trans people.
- Promote LGB and Trans well-being by
 - Providing funding and support for local LGB and/or Trans groups and events.
 - Working to change attitudes and educate people.
 - Ensuring events and services already provided are publicised as widely as they can be, using appropriate channels

Schools should

- Above all ensure they provide a safe, understanding and supportive environment for children who are LGB and Trans
- Operate a zero tolerance policy in relation to homophobic and transphobic bullying of students and staff
- Ensure that diversity in families is acknowledged and understood and that LGB and Trans family members feel accepted.

Sexual and gender identities and voting

Key issues

On average LGB and Trans people appear to be more likely than the general population to vote in all elections.

For most contributors, a political party's record in relation to LGB and T equality issues is an influential factor in determining how they vote, but for many it is not the only one.

Some felt that there is not enough information available about the voting behaviour and attitudes of local councillors, particularly in relation to LGB and Trans issues.

Political parties had not reached some contributors with information about their policies in relation to LGB and Trans issues.

Actions

Political parties and councillors should be more willing to publicise their policies in relation to LGB and Trans people's rights.

Resources

¹ **Guidance for schools** can be obtained at: <http://www.schools-out.org.uk/classroom/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/DCSF-Homophobic-Bullying.pdf>¹

<http://www.gires.org.uk/assets/Schools/TransphobicBullying.pdf> (contains information that would be useful for colleges and universities also)

Latest guidance:

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/p/preventing%20and%20tackling%20bullying%20advice%20for%20school%20leaders%20and%20governing%20bodies.pdf>

Evaluation of effectiveness of strategies to prevent bullying in schools:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR098.pdf>

Guidance for colleges, which covers homophobic/transphobic and other forms of 'hate' bullying: http://www.abatoolsforschools.org.uk/pdf/Safe_from_Bullying-FE.pdf

Sexuality and learning disabilities, helpful research for people with learning disabilities and people supporting them

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/norahfry/research/completed-projects/challenging.pdf>

Universities - Stonewall checklist

<http://www.gaybydegree.org.uk/index.php?dir=university&task=view-detail&uniId=20>

Appendix : Preferred locations for information and advice about legal rights

NHS premises:	52
GPs' surgeries	29
Hospitals	4
Dentists'	3
GU /sexual health clinics	3
Mental health centres	1
Libraries	50
Education sites	49
Schools	26
Colleges	13
Universities	10
Internet /websites/electronic media	39
Mainstream Leisure sites/ venues	37
Clubs/pubs/bars/venues	18
Youth organisations/centres	4
Restaurants	3
Cinemas	2
Community centres	2
Leisure centres	2
Hotels	1
Farmers' markets	1
Local council buildings/websites/ publications	34
Public spaces (general/indeterminate)	33
Mainstream Information and advice centres	23
CAB specifically	18
Workplaces	17
Mass media (TV & Radio, newspapers and magazines)	14
LGBT Organisations	13
Police stations	11
Government offices/websites	9
LGBT leisure venues	8
Law/legal advice centres/lines	7
Care homes and care organisations -	5
Job centres/Connexions	5
Churches/places of worship	4
Charities/Voluntary organisations (inc equalities groups)	3
Chemists	2
Public transport sites (buses, bus & train stations)	2
Union publications	2