

The experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities using NHS services in the Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole area

Introduction:

The survey was Commissioned by the NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The CCG was aware of the gaps in insight from the perspectives of the LGBT community using the NHS. The Survey was conducted from the end of October to early December 2015, comprised 42 questions, and received 202 responses. There was an additional survey participation meeting at the end of October, which gathered data from a further ten members of the Bournemouth LGBT community.

Of the 202 participants of the online survey 40.99% were gay, 27.95% lesbian, 26.71% bisexual, and 4.35% identified themselves as belonging to the transgender community.

58.88% of participants came from a large town/urban area [50,000+ population size], 29.95% came from a small town/urban location [10,000+ population size], and 11.17% from rural/village locations.

Almost three-quarters of respondents acknowledged working in the medical and healthcare sector, consequently giving greater value to the quality of the research in terms of its recommendations potential implementation and outreach.

Acronyms used in the report:

- LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
- E&D: Equality & Diversity
- BDP: Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole
- PPEG: Patient & Public Engagement Group

Researcher:

Alan Mercel-Sanca is a member of the local LGB&T Dorset area community, and a committee member of the Bourne Free organisation (which organises Bournemouth's nationally important annual gay pride festival).

As an education orientated LGBT activist, he was the initiator and lead for the Olympics Legacy 'Time for Change – Now!' anti-homophobia exhibition project, that has gained national level recognition, and was subsequently client and lead for a ground-breaking Bournemouth University Centre for Event & Sport Research anti-homophobia in sport, [including school sports] research project: 'Homophobia in Sport: What's the Score?' [March 2013].

In addition, he has an established record of research into and related educational work for and on behalf of Dorset's Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] communities in conjunction with Chinese and Nepali communities as well as Dorset Race Equality Council (where he is the Organisation Development and Education officer).

Acknowledgements:

The researcher wishes to thank the very many representatives, officers and members of the organisations, businesses and groups – listed below -- directly or indirectly supporting the survey's dissemination. In addition special thanks goes to Ebi Sosseh, Stakeholder Development Officer of the Dorset CCG for his support throughout, to Father John Hyde [Trustee at SPACE Youth Project, and lead of the 'Silver Moments' LGBT Group], to Chris Ashton and Martyn Underhill of the 'Bourne Free' organisation.

Dissemination:

The survey was disseminated through extensive local area LGBT and non-LGBT (Local authorities, public service and voluntary sector organisations) networks.

LGBT community:

- Bourne Free Organisation
- Space Youth Project
- Bournemouth LGBT scene networks included 'DYMK,' the 'Xchange' and 'Flirt Café Bar'
- The 'Silver Moments older LGBT persons' social group
- Bournemouth University LGBT Society (including members from the Arts University Bournemouth [AUB] LGBT community)
- Over The Rainbow [OTR] Centre
- A number of the researcher's own personal contacts in the local [BDP] LGBT community
- The Metropolitan Community Church [MCC]

* The researcher also involved Stonewall in awareness of the research being undertaken and its potential equality and inclusion benefits to the BDP area's NHS service users from the LGBT community

Local authorities, public service and voluntary sector organisations:

- Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust [DHUFT]
- Poole Hospital Foundation Trust
- The Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner's office
- Bournemouth Council
- Poole Council
- Dorset County Council
- Skills & Learning [BDP]
- Poole CVS & Bournemouth CVS
- HealthWatch Dorset
- Dorset Police
- Boscombe Independent Advice Centre [BIAC]

** The researcher also involved NHS England's Equality & Health Inequalities team – Michail Sanidas and Senior Equality Manager, NHS England Dr Habib Naqvi -- in awareness of the research being undertaken in the BDP area

Survey Dissemination Methods:

- a) This comprised of online dissemination, via Survey Monkey
- b) A community engagement meeting at an appropriate LGBT run/friendly venue [Flirt Café Bar] was held at the start of the survey dissemination period, at which after the researcher described the background to the initiative and its purposes, and provided both a supportive letter and NHS diversity monitoring form with the hardcopy survey, a number of participants completed the documents directly and others took these away, and later returned completed versions. Most of the participants were not personally known to the researcher, but were introduced by the co-facilitator who was a LGBT community group lead [Silver Moments group]. Those who attended voiced their strong support for the purpose of the survey and its coverage in clear and effective ways in all of the areas of research and engagement with the BDP area LGBT community, that they believed had been completely lacking to date.

Preparation and Structuring of Survey Content:

The researcher was required by Dorset CCG to develop a survey that would look at all areas of engagement with NHS service users from the Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole [BDP] LGBT community: this because to date – for example in comparison to engagement mechanisms that had existed for some years with the BME community – no such work had been undertaken at local / pan-Dorset level, with or by the local LGBT community.

The survey topics and thematic sections were created through extensive consultation with and technical support from the Dorset CCG, from the perspective of NHS engagement with the BDP LGBT community (including a review of local LGBT research and work done to date, and national level NHS engagement work with the UK LGBT community), and in addition extensive liaison and participatory involvement of the BDP LGBT community.

Executive Summary and Recommendations:

The survey results indicated the following findings and potential areas for subsequent engagement with the Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole LGBT community in terms of healthcare:

Development:

LGBT communities' NHS services evaluation approachability potential:

The survey revealed this to be extensive because a considerable percentage of participants were revealed to work in or have a good working knowledge of medical and healthcare provision (see appendices responses to Question 3).

Credibility of outreach potential for subsequent engagement work, as a result of the survey, with the local area LGBT communities, demonstrated by the following:

- The LGBT communities healthcare service users were, in survey responses and comments, shown to be very receptive to providing constructive and informed input to not only LGBT

specific equity and non-discrimination in healthcare provision, but potentially general healthcare provision as well

- In all questions suggestions were provided on how services could be improved, specific solutions to communications issues, LGBT culture-sensitive training of NHS staff [administrative/customer relations, to medical professionals and senior officers] needs and the potential commissioning of services that could transform LGBT NHS service users satisfaction with and uptake of NHS services, were frequently demonstrated in the survey data and comments

Survey Findings

Main identified areas where work needs to be undertaken and subsequently developed:

It is envisaged that these will be able to be included in periodic local area NHS service reviews in addition to potential dedicated work that is indicated as advisable for customer care and other considerations.

Note re classifications / phraseology: it emerged at a number of points in the findings that classification of LGBT NHS service users sub-groups (such as the trans community in particular), require more care to enable more effective engagement with specific LGBT population groups, including in NHS questionnaires more diversification of classifications to include 'pansexual,' 'asexual,' etc.

- Diversifying the approach to LGBT NHS service users away from being predominantly sexual health provision /STD prevention support orientated, and more towards mental health services
- 1) Domestic Violence [DV] identification and LGBT - culture sensitive referrals 2) training on the issue of LGBT DV (which according to national research is consistently found to be more extensive than with the non-LGBT population
- LGBT carers and cared for needs and related support and amelioration???? Perhaps simplify and expand
- Older socially isolated [rural and urban] LGBT's particular needs and vulnerabilities needs to be highlighted within health provision and research.
- It was strongly highlighted that there is a major unmet need for more specialism on counselling referrals and related (such as mechanisms for identification of needs/issues and mechanisms for referrals being made): the survey revealed a major wont in this area
- Issues of rural NHS services provision being less effective in engaging with local LGBT NHS services users due to perceived latent or actual homophobia and transphobia on the part of some general practice staff and healthcare professionals
- It was revealed that there is considerable dissatisfaction from lesbian NHS service users in the area of current IVF provision, and insensitive treatment in general hospital treatment when their sexual orientation had been directly or indirectly revealed
- Whilst hospital care was on balance found to be good, a number of responses indicated that this was because sexual orientation was not revealed (please see comments to the relevant survey question); there were however indications that LGBT inpatients felt hospitals to be especially alien environments in which they were not comfortable in front of hospital staff and non-LGBT fellow inpatients, to reveal that they were gay or lesbian

- In regard to general practice services satisfaction, there was revealed a mixed picture of, on the one hand general and consistent recognition of good quality care (revealed in a number of comments as well as relevant questions responses data) in hospitals to on the other hand alarming findings such as a considerable percentage of LGBT general practice service users not feeling comfortable due to perceived hostility and lack of friendliness in waiting rooms if their sexual orientation / same-sex love characteristics were revealed by behaviour to non-LGBT service users: there appeared to be minimal awareness on the part of reception staff about when this had taken place, and therefore no strategy or policy of how to deal with it
- It was shown that there is demand from the local LGBT community that mental health services provision, in conjunction with DHUFT, should be reviewed in a structured and transparent way. This with a view to research in to how this major area of importance for many LGBT NHS service users (especially particular sub-groups such as the bereaved, young LGBT's facing discrimination, those LGBT's having difficulty in coming to terms with their sexual orientation or gender identity, BME LGBT's facing the same mental health related issues as non-BME LGBT's but with the additional complications of cultural and also, in some cases, linguistic ones, and Trans NHS service users) can be addressed in effective ways that LGBT NHS service users themselves can feel they are involved in thorough dialogue and engagement with the NHS
- 'Mystery shopper' activity and related mapping of NHS services locations at a detailed level [foundation and acute care trusts / general practices] to assess competency and efficiency for provision of equitable and effective healthcare services for LGBT communities members is a consistent input from the respondents.
- The BDP community participants of the survey indicated that they would like to be a part of, or involved in a practical way in regard to how NHS LGBT related E&D training is carried out

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Recommendations

Main recommendations arising from the consultation, through the survey, with the BDP LGBT community for potential actions to address the issues raised by the survey findings:

The LGBT community participants in the survey by inference indicated that the Dorset CCG and the broader NHS services providing organisations in Bournemouth-Dorset-Poole, would benefit greatly from working with relevant partner organisations [such as local authority social services, HealthWatch Dorset and the voluntary sector to assist in creating a standing body/entity – akin to *Dorset Race Equality Council*, for race relations, and *Access Dorset* for disability -- that seeks to both address the issues raised by the research from the side of both LGBT service users and to a certain extent LGBT NHS staff, and Dorset CCG's wish to enhance and improve the quality of NHS services across all

domains (foundation - acute care trusts, primary and secondary care, general health, specialist health, mental health, NHS – social services collaborative work [such as for carers, etc.], community health services) for members of the BDP LGBT community.

A general recommendation of particular importance that emerged was for the effective delivery of change in regard to satisfaction levels, and engagement per se within the BDP area, that local area LGBT organisations and groups need to be directly consulted and formally engaged with in areas such as customer services scrutiny & evaluation, and NHS staff [internal] training.

Specific recommendations:

- It will be beneficial to develop a standing internal facility within Dorset CCG, for all LGBT NHS service users engagement issues and opportunities
- To develop in conjunction with key stakeholders and sub-population groups [especially 'seldom heard / vulnerable / hard to reach' ones] of the BDP LGBT community, both a standing LGBT Engagement Network and related Panel: regarding the LGBT sub-population groups – in particular, older, rural, learning difficulties, mental health, BME, and trans – that these have dedicated representatives in the Engagement Panel
- To work on – through the LGBT Engagement Network – creation of a group of LGBT Health and Community Engagement 'Champions,' that would be able to voice and provide feedback and make practical positive suggestions about areas where work needs to be done in regard to BDP NHS services from the perspective of LGBT NHS service users, and at the same to be the mechanism for providing to the latter latest information about current and new NHS services
- The BDP LGBT community indicated that there would be great benefit in the creation of a dedicated LGBT sub-committee of the Dorset CCG Patient & Public Engagement Group (PPEG) to help the LGBT Network and Panel to directly input to and act as a critical friend for the PPEG work with the Clinical Services Review (CSR)
- It was suggested that it would be very helpful to review work done to date, internally in the BDP NHS organisations in regard to policies, procedures, communications mechanisms and in particular E&D training of NHS primary and secondary healthcare professionals and frontline staff (reception desks and phone-lines, to carers support, etc.) that relate to dedicated LGBT NHS service users engagement. This with a view to such work matched against the survey findings in these areas of, in particular training of healthcare professionals and frontline/administrative staff. To include in this review the standards-setting work of Stonewall, and of LGBT NHS service users – NHS engagement in other parts of the country
- BME LGBT's engagement mechanisms and dedicated research: these group was minimally engaged with because of nationally recognised cultural [in some but not all given ethnic minority communities cases] barriers faced by BME LGBT's in accessing medical and healthcare services, communications methods employed, and language barriers. A dedicated piece of dual BME LGBT communities research and engagement work would be most beneficial to boost NHS access to and development of a reciprocally beneficial relationship with BDP LGBT ethnic minority communities.

- There was substantial support from survey participants concerning the need for LGBT positive images – such as of same sex couples and trans people – to be included in NHS literature and service provision locations such as general practice and hospital clinics waiting rooms.
- We found out from the local LGBT community that LGBT cultural sensitivity appropriate training provision for both healthcare professionals and customer relations staff, and potentially top-down awareness resources, and related public-facing initiatives to demonstrate commitment to non-differentiation between LGBT and non-LGBT NHS services users, was sought...so this is a finding?
- It was revealed in the research that Trans NHS service users' engagement with healthcare providers at all levels: a dedicated trans community engagement panel would be invaluable in facilitating better communication and understanding about the trans 'communities' special characteristics and particular needs
- NHS services should be reviewed in regards to how trans patients are looked after and training should taken into account Trans issues.
- LGBT NHS service users should be made part of NHS E&D training, it will be most helpful if this revealed demand could look at a practical level in to how this can be incorporated into existing training, and potential new training delivery mechanisms.

We identified key groups and mechanisms that could assist on work for progressive realisation of the recommendation points above, and resolution of the related issues that impede the BDP area NHS in providing effective customer care across a number of domains to LGBT users of NHS services:

- Utilisation of the local BDP LGBT communities groups and organisations involved in supporting and disseminating the survey
- Utilisation of the BDP local authorities, NHS, and other non-LGBT organisations involved in supporting and disseminating the survey, network that has been established through the survey initiative
- Utilising and mobilising the great good will of internal NHS and social services LGBT staff that has been shown to exist through input to the survey, with a view to this being key to helping bridge between BDP NHS service users from the local area's LGBT communities, and Dorset CCG and broader NHS local area needs for more effective communication with local area NHS service providers

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Comments responses from the survey

Appendix 2: Survey Questions and responses data