

Breaking Silence!

**Experiences of Lesbians, Gay Men,
Bisexuals and Transgender people
in Barking & Dagenham - issues for
Barking & Dagenham Council &
other public sector service providers**

August 2003
Paul Barlow



This survey and issues report was commissioned by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The fieldwork was carried out in 2002.

Unlike other local communities the basis for 'difference' of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities is deeply personal. It is based on emotion, on sexuality, on their own bodies and on the treatment from family, friends, work colleagues and society as a result. As such this report and its contents should be treated as a rare glimpse into lives of Barking and Dagenham people that are usually hidden from the mainstream.

It should also be said that this report represents the tip of the iceberg. To examine the needs of the wider lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community would be a long process, involving trust building and digging deep into friendship networks locally. The fieldwork for this report was carried out over a period of four weeks and, while it has had a reasonably wide input there will be many experiences not reflected here.

It is not a comprehensive report, but instead briefly covers a very wide range of subjects. It should be seen as a starting point, where public service providers can begin to understand their local communities, can start to examine their services and ensure they are appropriate, and can begin a discourse with the community.

Paul Barlow
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About Paul Barlow

Paul Barlow is a freelance consultant working for a range of national and local government agencies. Paul's background is in senior management in local government, and he has extensive experience in consultation and involvement techniques, Best Value and performance management, community regeneration, customer service and equalities. Recent clients have included ODPM, Home Office, the Audit Commission, Cabinet Office, GLA and the London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. Paul has recently had a paper on consultation in the UK published in the Commonwealth Local Government Forum handbook. He is recognised by the Australian Institute of Management. Tel: 07966 260 262 Email: paulbarlow@aol.com



Me

This report was prepared through the assistance of 42 lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people living or working in the borough and targeted professionals working in the field of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender support. 92 local lesbians and gay men were initially contacted through the internet.¹, a local support group, the lesbian and gay youth group in Romford, a transgender support group based in Dagenham and through personal contacts through 'snowballing'². Most participants were asked to complete an 81-question survey (35 did so), or were interviewed face to face (7).

Gay men are over-represented in the research. Gay men's usage of the internet allowed a much deeper and faster access into the community. Although there are lesbian websites for chat/meeting people these are not as widely used and as such it is more difficult to identify locality. The internet is developing as a crucial tool for contact and interviewing lesbians and gay men, especially for those who do not access lesbian and gay venues and for those who treat internet usage as a part of their regular life. There is a safety for some of the participants that is not available elsewhere in that they can remain completely confidential and interviews can be carried out in real time.

The surveys were carried out using an 81-point questionnaire and were either completed in hand, electronically, through interview face-to-face or online. The interviews were carried out face-to-face and were semi-structured.

The report is structured using 12 key areas of lesbian and gay issues that local councils or their partners have a remit over. These dozen issues are outlined below. They were developed by Paul Barlow through work with other boroughs and organisations, and draw on work by lesbian and gay rights organisations such as Stonewall.

¹ The internet is a useful tool for working in the main with young lesbians and gay men or older (mainly professional) gay men. For gay men it is particularly useful for making a large number of contacts in a short time.

² 'Snowballing' is simply asking one contact to name another few contacts, and so on.



Inti

It is impossible to carry out fully quantitative research on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities (referred to hereafter as 'LGBT'). For one thing sexuality is rarely completely static – people may come to realise their sexuality late in life as a result of homophobia, while others may discover that they are actually bisexual from a starting point of being lesbian or gay. Recognition of one's 'real' gender can be a tortuous process, fighting against the pressures of society's norms and the fear of the extensive consequences of accepting the reality.

Past commentary has questioned whether there is such a thing as a 'lesbian and gay community'. However, this research shows that the contacts made have expressed that their 'friendship groups' are dominated by other lesbians and gay men (up to 90% in some instances³) and thus form networks that, while not completely separate from the local community or from other communities of interest, are distinct. It can safely be said that lesbian and gay communities exist and provide distinct social networks. This is reflected among transgender people who seek out support groups for acceptance and advice. However in comparison with research in neighbouring boroughs the numbers of lesbians and gay men that are friends of the participants and live in the same borough are lower. This will be due to the far fewer opportunities to meet locally.

It should be stressed that those contacts identified will represent a limited view of LGBT life. Many LGBT people live invisible lives, and many will not identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. For a large number of people their sexuality is a point on a spectrum from absolute heterosexuality to absolute homosexuality. For some people their sexuality will not remain static - they may begin adult life as heterosexual and 'develop' or 'realise' a gay identity later. A number of people will self-identify as 'bisexual', 'open-minded', 'other' or simply as straight or heterosexual people who have sex with their own gender. This report examines the experience of a much smaller number of transgender people in the area.

The factors that trigger oppression against LGBT people are homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia. These are outlined below. It should be remembered that these could be manifested either at a personal level or an institutional or societal level.

- (1) **Homophobia** is a fear, hatred or revulsion towards lesbians, gay men or bisexuals and is prejudice, discrimination, harassment or acts of violence against these people.
- (2) **Heterosexism** is the stigmatisation, denial or denigration of non-heterosexual relationships. It is the assumption that either everybody is or should be heterosexual, and is the belief that heterosexual relationships are the only valid and legitimate type of relationship. It is manifested in the exclusion by omission or design of non-heterosexual persons in policies, procedures or activities of societal institutions.
- (3) **Transphobia** is a fear, hatred or revulsion of people who have identities that are partially or fully not a reflection of their biological gender, or people who do not have clear biological genders. It is demonstrated through prejudice, discrimination, harassment or acts of violence against such people.

³ According to the survey carried out for this report



Background: The Government & International Agendas

In the past ten years the statutory, social and political environment affecting local authorities has changed dramatically. Councils are expected to modernise their internal practices and external relations, developing a 'citizen-focused' approach. Many of these changes impact on how local authorities interact with minority communities in general and LGBT communities in particular.

Key developments include:

- Government policies to modernise and reform public services – in particular creating services that are responsive to people's needs and the duty of best value in the Local Government Act 1999. In addition the council has a duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas as outlined in the community strategy part of the Local Government Act 2000.
- A developing statutory framework for human rights in the UK – A number of legislative initiatives include guidance aimed at LGBT people.
- The development of case law in the courts⁴
- A changing social context for the treatment of LGBT people – Recent opinion polls show a positive change in social attitudes towards LGBT people in terms of employment, sexual activity, and relationships

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prevented local authorities from "intentionally promoting homosexuality". Official guidance in 1988 stated that "local authorities will not be prevented by this Section from offering the full range of their services to homosexuals, on the same basis as to all their inhabitants". Christopher Chope MP, Minister at the DoE said that "There is nothing in the clause which would prevent local authorities providing information, advice or counselling or any other service to homosexuals on the same basis as to other groups". The repeal of Section 28 took place in July 2003.

Other developments include the setting up of the Partnership and Sexual Orientation Team now based in the Department for Trade and Industry (within the Women's Unit), the work underway to prepare Britain for the EU Equal Treatment Directive that will outlaw employment discrimination on the basis of sexuality and the agreement to extend adoption and fostering arrangements to same sex couples.

The legislative agenda is changing almost weekly, but the movement is towards reducing inequality impacting on lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people.

⁴ UK courts are showing a greater willingness to set new precedents around lesbian and gay issues such as *Fitzpatrick v Sterling Housing Association* (1999) in which the Law Lords ruled that a same sex couple could count as a "family" in the terms laid down by housing law.

How many people are we talking about?

The most important study that shed light on the geographical distribution of lesbians and gay men in the UK is the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal 2000) that comprised a randomly selected representative sample of almost 11,161 men and women aged 16-44 years living in Great Britain⁵

The survey found that in Britain 5.4% of men and 4.9% of women reported a "homosexual" sexual partner in past five years. However, in London 10.5% of men and 6.9% of women reported a past homosexual contact, the result of people moving to London from the rest of the UK because London offered 'greater social opportunities and more accepting cultural environments'. The implication here is also that this movement is more the case for men than women.

It should be stressed that this survey has been criticised for using the term 'homosexual'. Many will not see their same-gender sexual partners as 'homosexual'. In addition others will not either not be willing to acknowledge their experiences either to themselves or to the survey staff.

A survey⁶ of 1001 men from the London gay scene found that 15 per cent were visitors to London, and of residents only 22 per cent had grown up in London. Around 80 per cent of gay men sampled grew up elsewhere, suggesting a massive gay immigration into London. ***"If these studies are representative"*** said researcher Peter Scott, ***"they suggest that half or more of the UK's adult gay population may be resident in London."***

Inner London will be home to an even larger percentage of people who have had sexual experiences with a same sex partner, as evidenced by the larger number of gay venues and lesbian and gay groups in inner London. This means the outer London figure will be lower, but not quite as low as the national figure. It should be stressed that Barking & Dagenham has no lesbian/gay venues at all.

It would probably be safest to assume that Barking & Dagenham would reflect the national figures more than the inner London figures. On an assumption of 6.4% men and 5.4% of women (national figure plus one percent for men and 0.5% for women) this would suggest around 5,030 men and over 4,700 women locally who have had sex with "homosexual" partners based on the 2001 census.

Table One

	Borough	No of gay bars/clubs
1.	Westminster	36
2.	Lambeth	20
3.	Tower Hamlets	14
4.	Camden	9
5.	Islington	9
6.	Hackney	8
7.	Southwark	8
8.	Kensington & Chelsea	5
9.	Greenwich	4
10.	Lewisham	4
11.	Newham	4
12.	City Corporation	3
13.	Hounslow	3
14.	Ealing	2
15.	Ham'smith & Fulham	2
16.	Waltham Forest	2
17.	Croydon	1
18.	Haringey	1
19.	Havering	1
20.	Kingston on Thames	1
21.	Merton	1
22.	Redbridge	1
23.	Richmond on Thames	1
24.	Wandsworth	1
25.	Barking & Dagenham	0
26.	Barnet	0
27.	Bexley	0
28.	Brent	0
29.	Bromley	0
30.	Enfield	0
31.	Harrow	0
32.	Hillingdon	0
33.	Sutton	0

Source: Gay Times Listings March 2002

⁵ The Lancet, Volume 358, Number 9296 01 December 2001

⁶ *Gay Men Fighting AIDS (GMFA)'s F**K Sheet* July 1996 - Survey by Peter Scott and Peter Kelley

Additional evidence that Barking & Dagenham has not experienced the same kind of immigration of gay men that inner city boroughs have comes from an analysis of the 'Gaydar' website. Some 1,654 Tower Hamlets men were estimated to have set up profiles on this website while just 137 Barking and Dagenham men had⁷. Furthermore 1996 research by the HIV/AIDS group GMFA suggests a very low numbers of gay men from Barking and Dagenham accessing the London gay 'scene'.

The 2001 Census did not have a question on the form relating to sexuality but it did allow co-habiting lesbian or gay couples to identify their relationship. While this will not identify actual numbers of lesbians and gay men, and while the relative illiberality of the wider community will impact on willingness to divulge this, it will allow for the identification of areas of residential concentration. This is important, as it will allow for targeting of any specific initiatives.

Working on a basis of 5000 post-operative transgendered people nationwide (the most common assessment) this suggested that London Boroughs would have 15-20 living within the boundaries. However, London would attract more people from other parts of the UK looking for a more accepting environment and access to medical and psychological support. Additionally there will be many more people that have suppressed feelings (research suggested the start of realisation can come at very young age), and others that will be pre-operative, or simply participating in cross-gender activity within their home or at one of the few clubs available. There is no research to available to assess the extent or type of transgender population in Britain.

⁷ In March 2002 some 478 Gaydar profiles had a Tower Hamlets reference (such as postcode). An examination of a sample of all other profiles showed that just 29% displayed a geographical reference that could identify their borough. This suggests that while 478 profiles were identifiably Tower Hamlets ones there were another 1,176 that were TH but not immediately identifiable. The same process was used for the 40 identifiable Barking and Dagenham profiles.

What is the Population?

As discussed above we are probably looking at a minimal figure of 5,030 gay/bisexual men and 4,700 lesbian/bisexual women in the borough – approximately 10,000 people.

The 2001 census will give us an idea of the numbers of people who are living together with a same sex partner and willing to include it on their form. From the survey of 35 gay men and lesbians in Barking & Dagenham carried out some 7 of 35 respondents live with their partner, or 20%. In Tower Hamlets this figure was 41% suggesting that Barking & Dagenham is either less of a place where lesbian and gay couples consider setting up home, or that the community is more isolated and partnerships are slower to develop.

Very few of the sample said that the borough was one that had more lesbians and gay men than you would expect - as opposed to some 60% in Tower Hamlets. There is some evidence that Barking (from postcode and anecdotal evidence) is become a minor focus for mobile gay male settlement, presumably because of good transport links and a more diverse population.

9 of those surveyed lived alone, 7 lived with their partner (20% - fewer than in Tower Hamlets - 32%) and 5 with flatmates or friends. 7 or 20% lived with their families. The survey showed most owned their own home (20) with 6 renting privately and 9 renting from the council. The latter figure may reflect the low priority given to lesbians and gay men in housing allocation.

There is a strong LGBT friendship network but this does not seem to exist within the borough - people seem to have most of their friends outside Barking & Dagenham. 6, or 18%, had six or more LGBT friends in the area (40% in Tower Hamlets). More than half had no or just one LGBT friend in the borough (in Tower Hamlets this was less than 18%). LGBT people seek out others to befriend - - 24 of 35 surveyed said that more than 50% of their friends were LGBT, similar to the Tower Hamlets and Newham figures.

The Project Co-ordinator for Caress (a local HIV/AIDS support organisation that also hosted an LGB support group at the time of the fieldwork - People R People) described the situation locally as *"a lonely community. When people attend the gay support group for the first time they are incredibly nervous, but slowly come out of their shells."*

Table Two

% of friends LGBT	Numbers
0%	1
10%	1
20%	3
30%	2
40%	2
50%	5
60%	3
66%	1
70%	4
75%	4
80%	3
90%	4
Not stated	2
Total	35

Taken from 35 surveyed that stated which percentage of their friends were LGBT

History

Mention of homosexuality in English common law was first made in 1290 with the 'Fleta' law punishments. This was followed by the Britton law in 1300 that prescribed that 'sodomites' should be burned alive in England. The Buggery Act in 1533 made anal intercourse punishable by hanging, and the death penalty for this remained until 1861. There is little recorded history locally relating to LGBT people. However, it has been argued that the theatre world often provided a safer environment for sexual difference and the Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch (a contemporary of the Globe Theatre and of equal importance) was renowned for staging many of the homosexual playwright Christopher Marlowe's plays.

In the early 18th century there were a string of Inns across London called 'Molly Houses' and these generally tended to provide a safe place for gay men and transsexuals in particular to meet and be themselves. However this phenomenon also triggered a counter response from puritans who first harassed the users of these venues and then ensured that raids on the venues took place. There was a legal crackdown on homosexuals during this period with hundreds recorded in court records. As the majority of the local population lived in the cities of London and Westminster in this period there is little that relates directly to Essex villages such as Barking or Dagenham.

While there will always have been LGBT people for as long as there has been a population locally, the visible profile of these communities has been non-existent. The movement of east end communities out to new estates in Essex meant that the link to local 'friendly' pubs was broken.

The closure of local docks in the 1960s and 1970s also saw the closure of a number of local gay-friendly pubs in the east end. However this coincided with the movement for law reform that resulted in the decriminalisation of male homosexual acts (specifically anal intercourse) in 1967 and the growth of the Gay Liberation Front in the early 1970s. Barking and Dagenham was not part of the movement of councils in the 1980s that started, controversially, to focus on the needs of their LGBT citizens.

The relative cheapness of property in the borough has meant that for many low and middle earning LGBT people the borough is the only option in London. It is no coincidence that many of those moving into the borough cited house prices as a reason.

Two Kissing Girls of Spittlefields

1728

NB Dagnum = Dagenham, and part of the 'breach' or flood overflow still exists at the Ford works.

That one's a Man is false, they've both been felt,
Tho' Jolly swears, Bess is, or sh' has been gelt.
She bullies, whistles, sings, and rants and swears
Beyond the Plyers at St. Katern's Stairs;
She kisses all, but Jenny is her dear,
She feels her Bubbies, and she bites her ear:
They to the Garret or the Cellar sneak.
Play tricks, and put each other to the Squeak.
What Pity 'tis, in such a case as this,
One does not pass a Metamorphosis,
Then they'd not stop the flowing Breach of Dagnum
With *Digitus vel instrumentum magnum*.
Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer,
Saturday, 10 August 1728.

LG Legislation Timeline

1290	<i>Fleta</i> in English law of a punishment for homosexuality.	1987	Clause 28 (actually with an ever-changing sequence of numbers) of the Local Government Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 7th. December.
1300	The <i>Brimstone</i> case prescribed that sodomites were to be burned alive.	1988	Section 28, preventing the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local authorities, passed came into force on 24th. May, with help from the Local Government minister Michael Howard.
1376	Edward III promised to banish foreigners accused of 'the too horrible vice which is not to be named'.	1993	Stonewall supported the appeal made by gay men under 21 to the European Court for equality.
1533	The Buggery Act was passed which made it punishable by hanging.	1994	The Commons voted to reduce the gay male age of consent to 18. Stonewall and Euan Sutherland launched an appeal to the European Court for under 18s.
1861	The Offences Against the Person Act formally abolished the death penalty for buggery in England and Wales.	1997	Recognition by the British government of same-sex couple in the immigration rules came into effect on 13th. October.
1885	The "Labouchere amendment" was passed on 7th. August and became known as the "blackmailer's charter".	1998	Human Rights Act passed. Subsequent court cases involving LGBT people find positive results. British House of Commons voted to set the age of consent for gay men at 16 in a debate on the Crime and Disorder Bill. British House of Lords defeated the clause to lower the age of consent to 16 for gay men.
1954	Appointment of the Wolfenden Committee on 24th. August to consider the law in Britain relating to homosexual offenses.	1999	The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) regulations passed to outlaw discrimination against transgender people in certain circumstances
1956	The Sexual Offences Act became law and determined much police activity against homosexuals in the UK for the rest of the century despite amendments introduced by the Sexual Offences Act 1967.	2000	On 12th. January the British government lifted the ban on homosexuals serving in the armed services. On 26th. July the report <i>Setting the Boundaries</i> was published by the Sexual Offences Review Group. On 31st. July a European Court of Human Rights ruling on the case of 'ADT' meant that UK sexual offenses law would have to be redrafted.
1957	The Wolfenden Report was published		Learning and Skills Act removes effect of Section 28 on Schools.
1967	The Sexual Offences Act came into force in England and Wales, and decriminalized homosexual acts between two men over 21 years of age and in private.	2002	After an early defeat a bill allowing same sex couples to foster and adopt is passed in the Lords. The impact of the Human Rights Act start to be felt in two cases where a lesbian partner was recognized as next of kin in health matters and a gay male surviving partner was awarded the tenancy of his privately rented apartment following the death of his partner. Government announces that it will seek to sweep away all the anti-gay sexual offences laws
1970	Corbett divorce case results in judgement that sets back transgender rights for 30 years, effectively denying their existence.	2003	Section 28 Repealed. Tenancy Succession in private rented accom. Allowed for LGBT couples.
1972	Law Lords found International Times mag guilty of 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals' by printing gay contact ads.		
1974	The Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform (Northern Ireland) appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to force the UK to extend the 1967 Sexual Offences Act to them. The Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform (Northern Ireland) appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to force the UK to extend the 1967 Sexual Offences Act to them.		
1975	Sex Discrimination Act passed. This would later be viewed by the European Court to encompass transgender rights.		
1976	EU Equal Treatment Directive establishes in EU law equal treatment in employment & training - extended in 2003 to LGB people.		
1977	Lord Arran's Bill to reduce the gay age of consent to 18 defeated in the Lords.		
1980	Male homosexuality was decriminalized in Scotland, by a Robin Cook amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill. In September the European Commission ruled unanimously that the British government was guilty of breaching Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights by interfering with Jeff Dudgeon's private life by refusing to legalise consenting homosexual behavior in Ulster		
1981	The European Court of Human Rights found in favor of Northern Irish gays.		
1982	Male homosexuality was decriminalized in Northern Ireland with the passing of law reform in the House of Commons		

Extracted from a list produced by Lisa Power for the Pink Paper, with later additions by author.

Equality

Ethnic, Religious and Cultural issues

Like many London boroughs Barking & Dagenham has a diverse community, with a growing ethnic minority population.

If we are looking at a local LGBT population of around 10,000 people you might extrapolate that 1480 of them will be from non-white communities, based on the census figure of 14.8%.

It is a feature of LGBT communities nationally that there is a greater invisibility of lesbians and black & ethnic minority LGBT people. This is less so in London with specific groups and venues catering for black, Asian and Cypriot communities (among others), and the fact that all groups and clubs are to some extent multi-cultural and even more multi-national given London's position as a lesbian and gay centre of international importance. However there are complex equality issues to be examined within LGBT communities itself, not least around culture and religion.

Faisal Alam of the Muslim gay and lesbian group Al Fatiha said "*Homosexuality is so highly stigmatized in Muslim communities, that many gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and those questioning their sexuality end up internalizing the shame and disgust which surrounds them in their families and communities. They are often unable to come to terms with their own sexuality, fearing ostracism and even physical punishment.*" London East AIDS Network run a support group, 'Himat', for South Asian men many of whom are Muslim. Fazal Mahmoud, the convenor of the group, said that "*the issues that south asian gay men are lack of support groups, the lack of sensitivity of mainstream organisations, coming out, having no support at school/colleges, and, of course, marriage and identity.*"

The "gay scene"⁸ has long been viewed as a white male dominated arena, rarely making an effort to include minority LGBT people. Many of the images in the LGBT press are white. There are some important inclusion issues that LGBT communities need to deal with. In addition all ethnic communities (including white) have long held bigoted and misguided views on homosexuality. Many in the black community are only now beginning to understand and make sense of gay issues and importantly the effects homophobia has on black gay men and women. The Black Development officer for THT⁹ has said: "*In Brixton for example the black community has rallied around a white gay male police officer - something that would not have been heard of 20 years ago - and why? Not because he is white, not because he's a police officer, not because he is gay but because he is in tune with, and takes onboard, issues within the whole community.*"

For this report two African and two mixed race gay men and one black woman were surveyed. It proved difficult, in the time period available, to make contact with a range of ethnic minority LGBT people in order to identify specific issues and needs. Research by other organisations and by the author of this report shows that black and Asian LGBT people are far more likely to be secretive about their sexuality and therefore more isolated.

Disability

Self-definition is crucial in most work on disability. However the DfEE estimates some 6.5 million people "*with a current long-term disability or health problem which has a substantial adverse impact on*

Call sheet information - East London Friend Helpline

Male, Gay, East African Asian, 25
Young man had come out to his family. Talked about how members of his family had reacted to his sexuality and the pros and cons of coming out to the rest of his family. There was a need to explore issues around culture etc. As he had only accepted his own sexuality a year ago he had no wish to join support groups available as many of these were sexual-health related. Had tried and tried to ring London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard with no success. Call length 70 minutes.

⁸ The "gay scene" is used as a collective term for LGBT commercial venues such as pubs and clubs

⁹ Terrence Higgins Trust

*their day-to-day activities or limits the work they can do*¹⁰. This equates to around 12% of the population. 12% of the estimated LGBT population locally would mean 1200 people who are disabled. However, this figure takes no account of particular factors such as living with HIV/AIDS or the pressures on mental health of dealing with one's sexuality or gender against a backdrop of societal condemnation.

The government definition of disability is just one. Many just describe their condition and do not categorise it as a disability at all. It is estimated some 1 million have visual impairments (equates to around 200 in our group), 7.5 million have hearing impairments (1300) there are some 1/2 million wheelchair users (100) and around a million with learning difficulties such as Down's Syndrome (200). 1 in 4 will experience a mental health issue sometime in their lives (2500, although this is likely to be higher for LGBT people).

There is very little material around issues of sexuality/gender recognition and physical or sensory impairment. One rare study¹¹ looked at the impact of neglecting cultural, emotional and practical issues around homosexuality on lesbians and gay men with head trauma, which led to depression, decreased self-esteem and self-confidence. Another study looked at the impact that health care workers' discomfort with lesbian issues impacts on their clients.

Bob Guter, Editor of 'Bent', a American publication for gay disabled men, examined the lack of attention given to joint gay and disability issues and the lack of political activity around it. He says *"as we pursue love and work and physical autonomy while being ignored by our non-disabled gay brothers, as we struggle to feel whole in the face of slurs, stares, and outright discrimination, is it any wonder that managing our identities leaves us neither the time nor the energy for activism?"*¹²

Disability agencies are beginning to focus more on their LGBT constituency and some are undertaking their own research in this area.

Class

Class is an important and often overlooked factor in equalities issues. Working class people suffer disproportionately from financial insecurity, poor housing, crime, job insecurity, reduced or non-existent mobility etc. The added factor of sexuality or gender dysphoria can often exacerbate the conditions faced by working class LGBT people.

Working class LGBT people may find themselves excluded from the commercial scene (in venues or via the internet) and the support it may provide. They are likely not to be able to move home when faced with harassment. Working class people tend to lack confidence in dealing with authority, and as such are less likely to report homophobic or other hate crimes or ask for assistance in dealing with discrimination.

Studies of LGBT people have always focused on those more easily contactable, either through venues or through organisations, and often those who solely identify as gay. Many working class LGBT people may be married, or may not identify as LGBT at all despite sometimes having sex with a same-gender partner or questioning their gender.

The sole study of working class gay men revealed that no ethnic minority or working class gay man in the study were rejected by their families after coming out despite the prior assumptions of the researchers who expected a similar if not higher rejection rate to middle class gay men (5%). Research found that working class gay men were less likely to be involved in the cultural and political activities of

¹⁰ <http://www.disability.gov.uk/dissum99.html>

¹¹ <http://www.lesbianinformationservice.org/disabs.htm>

¹² <http://www.bentvoices.org/editorspage/editorspage.htm>

the gay community with some men reporting that costs of participation and class tension/bias were factors.¹³

There is no evidence that mainstream working class attitudes are any more or less homophobic than those of the middle-class. Indeed, the existence of gay venues in historic working class areas such as east London and old Soho and of the 'drag' culture in mainstream pubs in the east end might suggest a greater tolerance.

Gender

Gender issues are inextricably linked into issues of sexuality. There are huge gender disparities in services to LGBT people. While there is development of gay-men themed services (mainly as a result of pre-emptive HIV and sexual health work) there is very little for lesbians. This is also reflected in the 'gay scene' where there are far fewer lesbian/mainly lesbian venues in comparison to gay male/mainly gay male venues. This is replicated in the much slower development of the lesbian internet realm.

There are also particular circumstances where lesbians may be put on the spot to define their sexuality. One example is the issue of family planning/birth control. GPs always ask women about their contraceptive needs and often there is the assumption that "no need for birth control" means "not sexual active".

Older LGBT People

With homosexuality being decriminalised in 1967 and the vast growth in the numbers of lesbians and gay men 'coming out' the issue of services to older LGBT people is now being faced by many service providers. Last year Age Concern issued a wide-ranging report *Opening Doors: Working with Older Lesbians and Gay Men* that for the first time addressed where services were not meeting clients needs.

The Director General of Age Concern said *"Lesbians and gay men now in their 70s have spent at least half of their lives in varying degrees of secrecy, anguish, anxiety, fear, confusion, deceit, shame, excitement, fun, joy and love. Their experience has made them understandably wary and cautious. It is also true that prejudice, inappropriate discrimination and even violence remain a threat for many and a reality for some"*.

It is often at this stage in life that discriminatory practices around pensions and life insurance become a reality, especially when a partner dies. There may be financial issues, bereavement issues, inheritance issues and even exclusion from your own partner's funeral arrangements.

Call sheet information - East London Friend Helpline

Lesbian, over 50

Caller had been married for 30 years and has children. She felt isolated and alone and had recently had a breakdown. She wanted someone to confide in and information on where to get support and meet people. Information provided. Call length 90 minutes.

Gay White Male

Married man wanted support around coming out. Wasn't sure if he was bisexual or gay. Call length 20 minutes.

Female, Heterosexual, White, 25

Caller has been in a satisfactory relationship for 3 years. Has found a mobile phone bill belonging to her boyfriend and discovered he has been calling gay chatlines. When confronted he moved out from their home to an unknown address. She does not know if he is gay, bisexual or straight and is very confused. Has only since had contact by email and wants to talk to him to discuss further. Caller seemed able to progress herself - just wanted to reassure herself that she was heading in the right direction. Call length 30 minutes.

Male, Bisexual, White, 29

Caller had recently broken up with girlfriend and said he had gay feelings. He wanted to explore sexual experiences with men. He had had a couple of encounters from newspaper contacts but really needed social and other support from other gay or bisexual men. He did not want one night stands as they were not successful. Thought that a steady loving relationship was the right path for him. Suggested local gay group. Call length 20 minutes.

¹³ Working Class Gay and Bisexual Men., George Appleby, Harrington Park Press/Methodology P34-35

As an older LGBT person you no longer see much targeted service information (especially around sexual health). There may be assumptions that unmarried elderly LGBT people with no grandchildren are sad and lonely. In sheltered accommodation or nursing homes LGBT people may find that a lifetime of at least maintaining a level of freedom in their own homes is over, and prejudice and discrimination is now even closer.

Bisexuality

While literally millions of people are bisexual, most keep their sexual orientation secret, so bisexual people as a group are even more invisible in society. Gay men and lesbian women have long recognised the need to work together, create communities and organise politically which has led to significant gains in political and human rights, as well as a visible and thriving gay and lesbian community in many areas. Bisexual people have been much slower to come out of the closet and engage with others to gain visibility and political clout despite having many similar issues. The rigid division between gay and straight has caused many bisexuals to feel alienated and rejected by gay men and lesbians.

LBBB Survey:

White South African Gay Man 30
"There are loads of bi men here..."

Asian Gay Man 21
"There are a quite a lot of bisexual men in this area."

Many bisexual people complain that they feel like outsiders in both the straight and gay/lesbian worlds, and that they can't fit in anywhere, feeling isolated and confused. Studies have shown that bisexual people suffer from social isolation even more than gay men or lesbians because they lack any community where they can find acceptance and role models. Many gay men feel that bisexual men are really gay and that they are just in denial. Bisexual women are often distrusted by some lesbians for "sleeping with the enemy," hanging onto heterosexual privileges through relationships with men, and betraying their allegiance to women and feminism.

One 44 year old bisexual man contributing to this study explained *"For me sex with men is purely a sexual thing - nothing at all to do with life or the way I should be treated. I don't think I should get preferential treatment just because I like men. If I liked women in suspenders and stockings should I get help or preferential treatment in front of others? I see it as purely a lustful experience and not a genetic difference."* However this man was not out to anyone and for him the sex was also a secret thing, perhaps for reasons of safety or shame.

Youth

Young people growing up experience a range of difficult challenges. For young people who begin to realise they are 'different' in some way from the people around them the issues take on a more problematic angle. There can be a lot of confusion, with some feeling passing and others deepening. The hardest part can be dealing with school. Without adequate support the stress between realising you're different and developing that identity while at the same time trying to fit in with friends and peers can be intense.

Some people become comfortable with being LGB sooner than others. However, for most being gay or bisexual or having transgender issues will remain a well kept secret and public life may become more of a pretence. The minority who do come out at school or are suspected of being LGB are often subject to intense bullying.

Call sheet information - East London Friend Helpline

White Female heterosexual 40
Caller was the mother of 25 yr old son who 'came out' 9 months ago and she is having difficulty understanding events. Talked over all the issues of gay life for the future and the fact that there was a wedge between them that was unwelcome. Call length 30 minutes.

The pressures often take their toll in many ways. The most extreme is youth suicide and Christopher Bagley at the University of Calgary found in his study of 750 youth aged 18-27 that as a result of

stigmatisation young gay and bisexual males are nearly 14 times more at risk of suicide than their heterosexual counterparts¹⁴.

Transgender

The rate of occurrence of gender dysphoria (commonly called transsexuality) is not accurately known. Due to social stigma it is something that is often kept hidden. Some estimates put the figure at greater than 1 in 10,000. Other 'intersexed' conditions can have rates of occurrence of, or approaching, 1 in 1,000 of the population and it may well be that this is the true order of magnitude of gender dysphoria.

The present legal position is that people who have been diagnosed as experiencing gender dysphoria immediately lose a substantial part of their civil liberties. Transgender women were placed outside the remit of the Sex Discrimination Act although this was overturned by the European Court of Justice.

Problems are encountered by transgender people through not being able to have their birth certificates amended to show their changed gender status. There is no alternative to the birth certificate as an identity document (except for other official documents based on the birth certificate), yet the Government tells the European Court that it is not a form of identity. Therefore, when applying for life or medical insurance, obtaining a mortgage, joining a pension scheme or obtaining employment, a passport or driving licence, a transgender person can be asked to produce their birth certificate. Their original gender is also recorded on national computer networks such as the DSS where it is accessible to anyone of sufficient rank. It makes it difficult and embarrassing for transgender people to obtain employment, higher education and benefits.

Transgender people in the U.K. cannot marry a person whose gender is the same as their recognised birth gender. Because of the impossibility of legal marriage, transgender people have no protection under divorce laws, they cannot claim maintenance, although it can be demanded of them, they may have no rights to pensions of their partners, or to property, and they can certainly be denied access to their children, even if their former partner does not object to it. The bar to marriage has in the past made it virtually impossible for transgender people to foster or adopt children, even in stable relationships. When they die, a transgender person's next of kin have the added trauma and indignity of having to cope with a death certificate that will state their official gender.

¹⁴ Working Class Gay and Bisexual Men., George Appleby, Harrington Park Press/Methodology P34-35

For transgender people community safety issues are paramount. One woman, Rachael Hopkins¹⁶, living in Dagenham found some neighbours stirring up trouble when she made the step to living full-time as a woman. Other neighbours either supported her or just kept themselves to themselves. The minority would look through windows, harass her at the charity she volunteered at, dismantle her car, smash the windows (six times). At one point her daughter was attacked. The Council and Police responded eventually with CCTV and threatened the perpetrators with eviction.

Table six shows the levels of recorded crime in East London boroughs, with Hackney and Tower Hamlets recording the highest levels as befits boroughs with a large number of venues. However, these will be the tip of the iceberg and efforts to improve reporting are only just beginning to see results. Barking & Dagenham records some of the lowest figures with, strangely, a large reduction this year. This will be grossly deflated - the result of non-reporting for reasons already mentioned.

Borough	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Hackney	73	77	92
Tower Hamlets	59	86	85
Waltham Forest	33	89	56
Newham	46	60	48
Barking & Dag	25	29	12
Havering	10	13	11
Redbridge	13	10	11

Figures from Metropolitan Police website April 2002. Figures for last year are 9 months only, but extrapolated pro rata up to 12 months

A number of people said that they hadn't experienced homophobic abuse and that this was because they were very careful about hiding the fact they might be gay in certain areas. Although the majority of lesbians and gay men feel safe in the borough this is because they have severely modified or completely suppressed natural behaviours, such as showing affection in public, to hide their sexuality. 88% of the Stonewall study participants said that they always or sometimes avoided expressing affection towards their partner in public in order to minimise the possibility of violence and harassment.

In the sample for this report just 3 said that they would hold hands in public, and 3 that they would give their partner a kiss. This is even more extreme than the London wide figures or the figures for Tower Hamlets. This suppression of natural, spontaneous behaviour - together with the fear of attack - puts lesbians and gay men under additional psychological stress, which can contribute to depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and even self-harm.

Call sheet information - East London Friend Helpline

White Female heterosexual
Caller's friend is young gay man in need of counselling/support due to abusive relationship. Friend is concerned they are going downhill and she is finding out details of support routes. Gave local details. Call length 15 minutes.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a major issue that affects both same sex and heterosexual relationships. 5 of the 35 participants in the survey reported experiences of domestic violence from a partner while 2 others reported domestic violence from a flatmate, family member or other co-habitee. This means that 1 in 5 of the sample have experienced some form of domestic violence.

Criminalising Sexuality

There are few areas where lesbian and gay sexuality is criminalised although this is likely to be swept away following the passing of the Sexual Offences Bill 2003 (this passed its second reading on 15th July 2003). The repeal was a result of a European Court decision in July 2000. The new Bill will repeal the offence of buggery and the laws which make gay sex involving more than one person illegal. The offence of gross indecency also disappears. In 2001 the age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual acts was equalised at 16.

¹⁶ Rachael has asked that her name be used in this report. All other contributors interviewed that are not professionals are anonymised.

routinely denied access to their children despite studies showing that there are no problems associated with continued access.¹⁹

Against this general level of prejudice, the discrimination is greater towards gay fathers, particularly if the child happens to be male. In many cases involving a gay father, courts are unlikely to give custody because they may fear the child will grow up in a 'risky' environment. Fortunately the days of courts refusing to grant any visitation rights to gay fathers are generally over, and as more and more research emerges as to the effects of living with a gay father, more tolerant rulings are expected.

Becoming parents

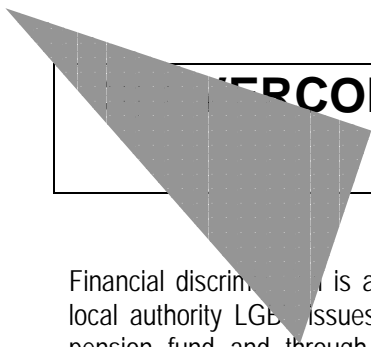
Many lesbian couples seek to have children through donor insemination, although many health authorities didn't allow this until 1999. Some health services (such as those in the ELCHA area²⁰) will support women through the decision making and other processes but will not pay for the actual service. This means that for many lesbians having children is a matter for those that can afford to do so.

There has been a growth in parenting support and neighbouring Newham Council recently supported the organisation Pink Parents in running local workshops for women to identify issues and solve problems.

For at least one local lesbian couple in touch with this survey but not directly participating, this was a very live issue that they were going through. Recent press coverage of access granted to the donor for the child of lesbian parents shows the need for issues to be openly discussed and clarified before proceeding.

¹⁹ www.pfc.org.uk/campaign/a-z.htm

²⁰ East London and City Health Authority



OVERCOMING FINANCIAL DISCRIMINATION

Supporting LGBT people in achieving equity in financial dealings both as members of the community and as staff of the council

Financial discrimination is an area rarely raised with regard to local authority LGBT issues. However through the authority's pension fund and through Trading Standards there are key issues for the authority to deal with.

HIV Prejudice

The growth of lesbian and gay financial and legal institutions - such as Massow's Rainbow Group, First European Securities, David Clark & Co Solicitors - is evidence that there is discomfort in using mainstream services among a large section of the LGBT community. This is particularly the case for gay men, who as a result of the AIDS pandemic sometimes find themselves advised to lie in forms or are subjected to unwanted HIV tests. 2 of our sample, both men, reported problems obtaining a mortgage or loan as a direct result of their sexuality. However this will be

because many of the others will not have revealed their sexuality.

LBBB Survey:

White South African Gay Man 30

"I initially had problems with the mortgage, but not too serious. Life insurance has been problematic, though".

White Gay Male 39

"I had a number of problems obtaining a mortgage and insurance".

White Gay Male 31

"I had a slight problem with my private pension, although I had to agree to being 'mostly straight' to be accepted which although was 10+ years ago did concern me slightly and still does"

be a relevant factor.²¹

Equality in pensions

With the majority of pension schemes, a surviving same-sex partner is unlikely to get any pension benefits after their partner's death, even if the deceased partner was the breadwinner. Even where pension schemes may pay out to an unmarried partner, this is seldom guaranteed. Public sector union

Table Four

Employers should treat the long-term partner of gay or lesbian staff in the same way as the partners and spouses of other staff members when it comes to benefits like staff discounts or pensions.

Response	%
Agree	58%
Tend to agree	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%
Tend to disagree	5%
Disagree	7%

Survey of 1000 people in employment. Cited in Straight Up! Why the Law Should Protect Lesbian and Gay Workers TUC 2001

The issue of financial institutions advising clients to lie in forms is often well-intentioned. The lender may well be against the need to declare sexuality. However false information put on forms can lead to the negation of the whole contract.

AIDS has transformed the insurance market, with many insurers willing to turn away gay customers because of a suspicion or misunderstanding of the disease. This not only affects life insurance but also products with life insurance elements, such as mortgages as well as critical illness and permanent health insurance cover. Most insurance policies will not pay out if sickness, disability or death is AIDS related. Some gay businesses are producing a raft of insurance products, including travel and home insurance, specifically targeted at gays, but these can come at a price. Additionally anyone who is HIV positive will probably find it difficult getting insurance of any type, including to go abroad.

Insurance and transgender issues

Insurance is a legal minefield for transgender people. The fact that a transgender person's legal sex is contrary to what they appear to be means that an obligation is created for them to disclose the "facts" when taking out a range of insurance products in which sex may conceivable

²¹ www.pfc.org.uk/campaign/a-z.htm

UNISON campaigns for an end to the discrimination against unmarried partners in the public sector pension schemes.

Public sector scheme members can only pass their pension to their partner when they die only if they are actually married to them. Changing the scheme rests with government who have argued that extending pension rights would mean increased contributions. UNISON counters that *“extending benefits would be cost-neutral because of the unplanned savings in the schemes resulting from the drop in numbers of people getting married.”*²² Interestingly both MPs and civil service unions have recently changed their schemes to allow same sex partners to benefit.

In 2001, the Local Government Employers commissioned a report from Watson Wyatt, Consulting Actuaries, the conclusion of which was backing for the UNISON position. The Local Government Pensions Committee has written to all local authorities laying out the arguments in favour of amending the scheme and asking for their support, and meanwhile discussions between the various parties continue.

A legal opinion obtained by UNISON recognises that the denial of benefits may contravene Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998, taking into account the provisions of Article 14, but notes that lesbians and gay men are more likely to be successful when Protocol 12 is ratified and the Article 13 Employment Directive enacted. A case being taken by Liberty to the European Court of Human Rights is being monitored with interest.

Partnership law

The Government have released a consultation document proposing a partnership recognition law for same sex couples. The document proposes far ranging provisions that will provide equality in terms of law with marriage, although it is not an extension of the marriage legislation. This will address a number of areas of financial discrimination although is unlikely to impact on those related to HIV/AIDS.

²² http://www.unison.org.uk/resources/document_view.asp?did=157

5) EQUALITY IN SERVICE PROVISION

Ensuring LGBT people are included in service improvement,, that services are appropriate and LGBT people are consulted and involved.

Consultation

Barking & Dagenham Council has a duty to consult and involve its users and potential users, as well as the community at large (those living and working in the borough). Developments such as 'best value' and 'community leadership' underline this. This is important as many of the services provided by public bodies may not be appropriate to the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender user. Because of illiberal social attitudes many of these groups will not access regular consultation events.

Authorities must engage with service users and local communities in order to meet their duty of Best Value. The guidance states that "reviews should consider the way in which services impact on all sections of the community including minority groups"²³ Just as separate consultation events for other minority groups are held so should events be held for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people.

However, according to the survey carried out for this report just 6 had ever been consulted by a public body and of these just 3 people said it was related to their being part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender communities. Furthermore all 3 said this was an exercise around 'safer sex' and HIV issues.

LBBB Survey:

White Gay Male 19

"The only point that I would like to raise is that information for gay people in Barking and Dagenham is very difficult to come by.

With some exceptions, the support services are there if you need them, but are not advertised well enough, making it difficult to find and make use of them."

LBBB Survey:

White Gay Male 34

"I spent all my life living in Barking and Dagenham. There were no gay issues included in sex education when I was at school.

"I was very isolated until I came out at 20. I had to go to London Friend in North London for support, and out of Barking & Dagenham to socialise. I don't know of any venues in this area as I expect the Council wouldn't grant them a license.

"I never see any leaflets for gay groups or support groups in the boroughs libraries or offices. It is 2002 and I think this borough is stuck in the dark ages when it comes to services and events for gay people."

Inclusion in plans

There are also numerous statutory plans in which there are specific and general issues affecting these communities and where they should be involved, such as the community strategy, Health Improvement Plan and the crime and disorder strategy.

In addition there are key cross cutting equality issues within these communities, (which is at least as diverse as the general community). There will be specific issues for women, and other more complex cultural issues for some black and minority ethnic lesbians and gay men. LGBT people with physical or mental impairments will find physical, procedural and attitudinal barriers to services. Older LGBT people may not be welcome at many entertainment venues.

It is crucial that ways of reaching out to these communities are developed, maintained, and used. In order to do this it will need the council to raise visibility of these communities, identify and include them in service planning and diversity celebrations.

Where people are engaging with the LGBT communities, or where services are being provided to them, it is essential that the officers have an understanding, awareness and sensitivity of the issues affecting them. For all services officers should not be assuming that the sexuality of the person they are dealing with is heterosexual.

²³ DETR Circular 10.99, 14 December 1999 para 17.

7) GROWING UP SAFE AND SECURE

Ensuring inclusion and security in education and youth provision support to young people who are developing their sexual or gender identities

Sexuality and Suicide

The period prior to and during coming out can be traumatic. Suicide rates among young people in inner London and particularly young LGBT people are very high. This can be a time of intense isolation and confusion. Ken Plummer of the University of Essex reported in 1989 that *"the negative self image and worry may be so extreme as to lead to thoughts of attempted suicide"*. 1 in 5 of Plummer's 1989 study of lesbian and gay youth had made a suicide attempt. A 1982 study carried out by Parent's Enquiry found that 55% had made a suicide attempt, and this figure was 19% in a 1984 study by the London Gay Teenage Project.²⁶

LBBB Survey:

Gay white male 19

"I generally don't tell people that I'm gay who don't need to know about my sexuality. I tend to just tell close friends and family."

Children and Gender Dysphoria

Although there is a greater awareness of gender identity problems in adults it is not yet widely known that children and adolescents can also suffer from gender identity disorders. Children with these disorders often experience intense distress, especially in adolescence. Social problems are common, both at home and at school, leading to learning difficulties, school refusal, anxieties, depression and suicide attempts. Recovery from such a disorder may be identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual - only a small proportion will result in a transgender outcome. There is only one gender clinic in the UK - the Gender Identity Development Service²⁷ - which will accept referrals from professionals in Health, Social Services and education departments across the country.

The final focus of a transgender child's battle with identity may be birth certificates and passports. Britain has refused to change birth certificates (of the 39 Council of Europe countries just three others - Albania, Andorra and Ireland - refuse this facility). However, passports may be issued that do not carry a gender identification. In addition there could be problems with changing examination and degree certificates.

LBBB Survey:

White Lesbian 21

"I was constantly bullied by classmates but also by teachers"

White Gay male 19

"I suffered severe verbal abuse at school around 1998 - 2000. There were four main periods. I dealt with it through the Headteacher who was very good."

Gay White Male 22

"One incident that springs to mind was some bad verbal abuse (and minimal physical abuse - i.e. things being chucked at me) outside my school, by fellow school colleagues of my year group, in 1997. I didn't report it to the Police - it would have been too much hassle, not worth it, and what would they do?"

Table Six

What age did you first have sex with someone of the same sex?

12 or under	13.46%
13-15	26.81%
16-19	26.71%
20-23	7.54%
24 or above	2.65%
Haven't done it yet	22.83%

Total Votes: 981

Poll undertaken on www.gayyouthuk.co.uk

Need for Safe Advice

Children affected by any of these issues will need to know where to go for advice and information, how to get in touch with others their own age, how to socialise safely, how to reverse or prevent abuse and bad treatment etc. An online poll of 981 young lesbians and gay men found that 13.46% had sex at 12 or under, 26.81% had sex between the ages of

²⁶ GLB Suicide Problems in England, Scotland & Ireland. <http://www.sws.soton.ac.uk/gay-youth-suicide/02-england-scotland-ireland.htm>

²⁷ Part of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust - cited in www.mermaids.freeuk.com/gidca.html - Family support groups for Children and Teenagers with Gender Identity Issues.

13-15, 26.71% between 16-19 and the rest at a later age or had not yet had sex.²⁸ It is important therefore that information is available and from an early age. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 banned 'the promotion of homosexuality' and severely constricted the ability of schools to tackle these issues. However the Learning and Skills Act 2000 removed any local authority responsibility for sex education and Section 28 itself has now been repealed.

Supporting LGBT Pupils

An inclusive school respects the developing identities of its pupils and students and their parents. The DfEE is clear about the need to make sex and relationship education relevant to young people whatever their developing sexuality with no direct promotion of sexual orientation.

Local Education Authorities should have a good and broad policy on Education for Personal Relationships, which deals with how diversity in sexual orientation and, in particular, homophobic bullying can be addressed. This helps schools develop broadly the work to PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and leads schools to useful materials and sources of information.

Bullying

Schools will need to deal with homophobic bullying. 16 of 35 questioned for this report said that they had experienced bullying at school. This could be reviewed to gain some idea of the extent of the problem.

Table Seven
Has being online helped you accept your sexual orientation?

An awful lot:	46.67%
Quite a bit:	32.38%
Maybe a little:	15.24%
Not at all:	5.71%
Total Votes:	105

Poll undertaken on
www.gayyouthuk.co.uk

A Stonewall survey of 300 schools found that 82% of teachers were aware of verbal homophobic incidents and 26% of physical homophobic incidents of bullying, yet just 6% of schools had a bullying policy that specifically dealt with this.

Youth Service

The Employers Organisation and ALG have advised that Authorities should review their links with the local lesbian and gay communities, provide safe facilities for young lesbians and gay men and ensure that any youth service curriculum is inclusive and challenges prejudice.²⁹

There is no local youth service provision for young LGBT people that this research became aware of but there is a health-authority funded project based in Romford - Anything But Str8 - that attracts over a quarter of its clientele from Barking and Dagenham. In February 2002 12 of the 41 attendees came from the borough - the joint highest figure (with Havering). In May 2001 this figure peaked at 24 young people. David Perceval, the project co-ordinator, said *"the group offers support in coming out which is rarely available in schools and colleges. It also gives access to safer sex materials, an opportunity to make friends and support from housing, health and social services."*

The service won the December 2001 Philip Lawrence Award for its work in *"combating homophobia and promoting community safety in Havering and Barking & Dagenham"*.

Comments from young people attending Anything But Str8 Youth project in Romford

"I have been coming to the youth group now for about two months. I can positively say that it has helped me with my confusions about my sexuality and I feel a bit more comfortable with myself"

"It has helped me come to terms with my sexuality. We learn about STIs and safer sex, talks on HIV and AIDS."

"I feel the group is a good place for gay, bi etc people to meet and socialise."

"I've been coming here for about a month. Its nice to have somewhere to go that's local, where you can meet other young people".

²⁸ www.gayyouthuk.co.uk/cgi-bin/poll/poll.pl

²⁹ Supporting Inclusive Communities - lesbians, gay men and local democracy, LGA 2001

Anything But Str8 has also attracted two young people with transgender issues, one female to male and the other male to female. The latter also uses a wheelchair and although living a long distance away uses the centre because of its good access.

For many young people their first experience of stepping out into the lesbian and gay community was through the commercial 'scene', i.e. a gay pub. However nowadays the internet has opened up a wide range of opportunities for people to 'try out' being gay, to talk to people anonymously and to meet others. This brings with it opportunities and threats. David Perceval has almost a 'virtual' lesbian and gay youth club of young people who contact him by email for advice and information and otherwise remain completely anonymous. However LGBT young people will be as open to abuse through internet contacts from adults as are heterosexual young people.

8) GREATER SECURITY IN HOUSING

Overcoming discrimination in tenancy, tackling harassment, and supporting young LGBT people made homeless through their sexuality

Housing issues affecting on LGBT people in Barking & Dagenham fall into a number of groups. For council tenants and housing association tenants there may be succession of tenancy issues or security issues, for those renting privately there may be discrimination in allocating properties, with homophobic landlords blocking lesbian and gay tenants, for those that own their own home there may be inheritance issues.

LBBB Survey:

How many in your household?

1	9
2	12
3+	10

Among the sample of 35 people used for this report 20 owned their own home, 6 rented privately, 9 rented from the council.

Tenancy Succession

In terms of public sector housing, married and unmarried heterosexual couples have the right to succeed to a council tenancy or private sector tenancy. Lesbian

and gay couples did not until recently. Government guidance now recommends that local authorities allow a same-sex partner to succeed in the same way, but this guidance is not binding and does not affect private tenancies. This came about in October 1999, when in the case of *Fitzpatrick v Sterling Housing Association Ltd*, the Law Lords ruled that same-sex partnerships could be construed as family relationships in public sector housing succession case.

The European Court extended this right to those in private sector accommodation in June 2003.

LBBB Survey:

Why did you move to Barking & Dagenham?

Price/property	
/location/transport	10
Work	7
Friends	6
Partner	2
University/College	2
Family	1
No answer	7

Inheritance

In terms of home ownership the property rights of lesbian and gay home-sharers is one of the areas being reviewed by the Law Commission. At the moment there are crucial issues of inheritance and tax paid on this. Just 13 of the sample for this report had made a will... and 8 of the 20 homeowners in the sample **had not** made a will. This may cause serious problems on the death upon death in terms of succession.

The biggest reason given for moving to Barking and Dagenham was house prices (9 people).

Homeless LGBT Youth

For LGBT young people living at home there are other difficult issues to face. If they come out to their parents, or are 'discovered' they may find themselves homeless or living in an abusive or hostile environment. If they get as far as contacting housing or social service agencies they might find further homophobia/transphobia or a belief that they are 'just going through a phase'. The Albert Kennedy Trust was set up to help young people in this predicament and has been working in London for the last 5 years following the award of a Lottery grant.

LBBB Survey:

How long have you lived in Barking & Dagenham?

Under 1 yr	4
1-5 yrs	13
6-10yrs	3
11+ yrs	14

LBBB Survey:

Who do you live with?

Alone	9
Partner	7
Friends/Flatmates	
/Lodgers	5
Family	7

LBBB Survey:

Do you plan to stay where you are for more than 3 yrs?

Yes	19
No	11
Maybe	5

Supported Housing

Supported housing for elderly or disabled LGBT people is also a growing issue. Age Concern has called the right for elderly lesbians and gay men to their own separate care homes and sheltered apartments. Age Concern believes that one in every 15 of the people who use its' services are gay and that elderly gay people who have to share residential care homes with heterosexuals go through *"the very real fear of suffering and discrimination"*. There is no gay care housing in the UK. Gay sheltered apartments, however, do exist in Holland.

Harassment

There is a range of services that go with public housing and the response to harassment is one of them. Many local authorities have advanced policies and procedures around racial harassment but little or nothing for homophobic or transphobic harassment. Some authorities that have extended the coverage of their racial harassment service have done so without training or awareness raising and as such the experience of victims of the service has been negative.

Lesbian and Gay Men - Loyalty to 'Pink Economy'

85% of gay men and lesbians think it is important that a company is gay friendly
79% say that they are much more likely to buy from a gay friendly company
88% say that they are much more likely to favour companies that acknowledge and support gay people
89% think that it is important to support businesses that are positive towards gay people

© idresearch 2001

Tower Hamlets and Hackney have vibrant gay economies, Walthamstow and Stratford area have growing areas of activity but aside from these four areas there are just two part time LGBT venues in the whole of Redbridge and Havering and nothing in Barking and Dagenham.

Tony Galinas, the LGBT³¹ Liaison Officer for the local police thinks that there is a need for a gay venue in the area - even if it's for just one night a week. This would make his job easier too, improving the ease of mixing with the local community.

An LGBT economy can be a tourist attraction, with people drawn to venues often utilising local restaurants and taxis as part of their visit to a borough. The fact that this growing market and tourism phenomenon is being ignored by regeneration agencies is probably due to ignorance rather than hostility.

LBD Survey:

White Gay Male 31

"The only place I would be relaxed about being 'openly' gay is in Soho, and perhaps in Canal Street, Manchester. I rarely socialise in Barking & Dagenham - only the Spotted Dog on a Friday from time to time as it is the only decent pub in B&D. I tend to go either around Stratford as I have a lot of friends there or in central London, where I work."

Encouragement of this sector could take the form of supporting greater involvement of women and ethnic minority needs, creating different kinds of spaces (e.g. non-alcoholic) for local gay muslims or young people. It should be remembered that at present pubs and clubs often provide the first 'entry point' to the LGBT community for isolated and/or young LGBT people. Left to its own devices the 'pink pound' will continue to ignore these local needs or, as has happened in some areas, eventually succumb to rising property prices and disappear.

LGBT Poverty and inequality

However, it is important that this economy and that regeneration is equally accessed by all. Glasgow Women's Library recently completed a unique UK-based study **Poverty and Social Exclusion of Lesbians and Gay Men in Glasgow**. This found that lesbians and gay men in Glasgow are being denied the opportunities that are regarded as essential in the prevention of poverty and social exclusion – basic educational skills, a sense of self-esteem and self-respect, good health and a supportive family environment, because of the pervasive homophobia that they face. In a direct criticism of regeneration and social inclusion work the report concluded that *"Not only do lesbians and gay men experience poverty and social exclusion as a result of homophobia but as a group they face an additional layer of exclusion as a result of being excluded from the inclusion agenda."*

³¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY - PROMOTE CULTURE

Including LGBT culture within cultural and diversity strategies. Ensuring the inclusion of sexuality and gender definition in diversity initiatives

Cultural Strategy

Every local authority has been strongly encouraged by Government to develop and implement local cultural strategies for their areas in order to promote the cultural well being of the area. The strategies should play on the strengths and diversity of each area.

The development of a cultural infrastructure can be a vital element of community development in general for communities. This is particularly so for the LGBT communities where, in many areas, the only focal point for this community will be a pub, if that.

LBBB Survey:

Would you attend LGBT themed events in Barking & Dagenham?

Yes	18
Maybe	9
No	8

27 of 35 questioned for this survey said they would or might attend LGBT themed events in the borough.

LGBT Sports

The set-piece large scale events are often hard to come by. However Waltham Forest played host to the UK Gay Sports Festival in 2000 and

Hackney and Tower Hamlets have hosted the annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Festival.

However there is much more that can be done, such as making facilities available for LGBT sports groups (Newham and Camden play host to gay rugby and swimming clubs respectively), creating a programme of arts events - perhaps tied into Pride celebrations (Newham had a number of gay-themed events during the Millennium).

Raising Visibility

However, the visibility of LGBT people can be raised through a range of local authority cultural services, including relevant information, newspapers, periodicals and books in libraries (Tower Hamlets Library Service took a strong stand against Section 28 in the 1980s), exhibitions in library and other spaces, arts and sports events.

LBBB Survey:

Black Lesbian 35

"Perhaps some articles on gay services in the Borough could be publicised in The Citizen?"

White US Gay Male 28

"If lesbian and gay themed events happened in Barking & Dagenham I'd probably go along..."

White Gay Male 19

"I socialise outside the borough – mostly central London to GAY. There is not much readily available information for gay people about venues and events around Barking & Dagenham."

Why do gay men and lesbians feel the need to play sport in a segregated environment?

Ilse Hahan – from the executive board of the 11th London International Gay and Lesbian Football World Championship says that homophobia is at the root of it:

"Often gay people at school had the locker room jokes and comments like 'running like a poof' or girls throwing like guys and it means that people don't give their best"

"When they come to gay club they can actually be who they are and they don't have to hide and if they want to go to a social event they can come with their partner and just feel free. If you cannot be who you are and at the back of your mind is this idea that you have to be careful about something then you can't give of your best."

ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIP RIGHTS

Ensuring the recognition and support of LGBT relationships where possible and equitable support on breakups/death

Partnership Rights

Partnership rights is currently *the* major issue for most mainstream LGBT rights organisations at home and across the world. A number of countries have established separate legal frameworks for co-habiting couples and fewer have established rights as full or almost as full as marriage.

Gay 'marriages' in England were carried out in the 18th Century.

Historian Rictor Norton found that in the late 1720s fairly elaborate homosexual weddings took place and while some of these may have been 'mockeries' others were clearly ceremonies between couples described as being "deeply in love" and who lived together as couples. Furthermore about a century later - in 1810 - the Rev. John Church, a Church of England priest and a gay man who wrote about the value of 'homosexual love' performed a number of 'gay' weddings at The Swan in Vere St. in London.

The Mayor of London and the GLA have established a partnership register for lesbian and gay couples. This register is purely symbolic although the hope is that it might be adopted as proof of relationship where appropriate by various bodies. Many other authorities have followed suit.

Real Discrimination

The reasons that marriage or legal partnership is an issue is plain to see. It would, at a stroke, relieve many of the key points of discrimination:

next of kin

Only blood relatives or married partners are usually considered next of kin. This can cause problems if one partner is ill or dies, as it's the next of kin who is consulted by hospital staff and who is entitled to make funeral arrangements.

pensions

With the majority of pension schemes, a surviving same-sex partner is unlikely to get any pension benefits after their partner's death, even if the deceased partner was the breadwinner. Even where pension schemes may pay out to an unmarried partner, this is seldom guaranteed.

inheritance

If you're not married and die without making a will, the law says your property will go to your parents or brothers and sisters or other relatives - not to your partner. If you do make a will leaving everything to your partner, he or she will be liable to inheritance tax on anything over an Inland Revenue limit - which could mean having to sell the family home to pay the tax bill. Married partners inherit automatically, free of tax.

immigration

Married couples can apply for residency as soon as they're married. Unmarried partners have to cohabit for two years before they're even considered.

accident and compensation

The Fatal Accidents Act allows a spouse or unmarried heterosexual partner who has lived with their partner as 'husband and wife' for 2 years to claim compensation on the wrongful death of their partner. This is not available for same sex couples.

employee benefits

Employers often provide employee benefits in respect of a husband or wife or heterosexual partner but can legally refuse to provide the same benefits to same-sex partners.

Marcus Valerius Martialis was a Roman poet who brought the Latin epigram to perfection and provided in it a picture of Roman society during the early empire. Martial was born in a Roman colony in Spain.

*The bearded Callistratus married the rugged Afer
Under the same law by which a woman takes a husband
Torches were carried before him, a bridal veil covered his face
Nor was the hymn to you, O God of marriage, omitted
A dowry was even agreed on. Does this not, Rome, seem
Enough? Do you expect him also to bear a child??*

Martial 38 - 103 AD

For many of the participants in this consultation exercise this is a live issue. A number of questions were asked in the survey relating directly to partnership.

Of the participants a third (12) had a partner at the time of the survey. This compares with the figures for a similar survey in Tower Hamlets where two thirds had a partner. This can be partially explained by the difficulty for isolated working class LGBT people to meet others locally. 7 of the 12 with a partner actually lived in the same premises as them. Of the 12 in partnerships 4 had been together for more than ten years, 1 between five-ten years, 5 between one-five years and two for under a year.

All of the participants were asked *“If the law changed, would you consider engaging in a legal partnership with your partner?”*. 15 of 35 (42%) said they definitely would (about 20% less than Tower Hamlets), 8 said they might (about 25%) and 12 said they wouldn't. A similar question was asked about the GLA Partnership Register, set up by the Mayor of London. However, just 4 said they'd consider it, with 21 saying that they would not use it.

Proposed legislation

The Government has recognised and responded to these developments with the establishment within its Women's Unit of a Partnership and Sexual Orientation Team. This small team is tasked with laying the groundwork for potential future legislation. A consultation paper on proposals for partnership law has been produced.

The Government's consultation document *“Civil Partnership: A framework for the legal recognition of same-sex couples”*, proposes to create a scheme under which same-sex couples in England and Wales would be able to register their partnership. The scheme would be for adult same-sex couples who are not in an existing registered partnership or marriage and are not closely related. Couples who register would have a new legal status as 'registered civil partners', and would acquire a package of rights and responsibilities.

Registration: Couples would give notice of intention to register at a register office, and would be able to sign the civil partnership register 15 days later.

Dissolution of partnership: The government intends registered civil partnerships to be long-term, stable relationships, so there would be a formal, court-based process for dissolution. The partner applying for the partnership to be dissolved would have to show that it had irretrievably broken down.

Consequences of registration: Couples would acquire a package of rights and responsibilities that would reflect the commitment and help them organise their lives together. These legal consequences would follow from registration.

Rights and responsibilities during the relationship might include:

- joint treatment for income-related benefits,
- joint state pension benefits,
- ability to gain parental responsibility for each other's children,
- recognition for immigration purposes,
- exemption from testifying against each other in court;

Rights and responsibilities on dissolution might include:

- fair arrangements for property division,
- residence arrangements,
- appropriate contact with children;

Rights and responsibilities following the death of one partner might include:

- right to register the death of a partner,

- right to claim a survivor pension,
- eligibility for bereavement benefits,
- compensation for fatal accidents or criminal injuries,
- recognition under inheritance and intestacy rules,
- tenancy succession rights.

Transgender partnership legislation

For transgender people marriage can be a peculiar thing. As things stand, a post-operative male to female transsexual can marry her lesbian partner, but not her heterosexual male partner! The Government, following a European Court defeat, has committed itself to: *“aim to publish, in due course, a draft outline Bill to give legal recognition in their acquired gender to transsexual people who can demonstrate that they have taken decisive steps towards living fully and permanently in the gender acquired since they were registered at birth. That will make it possible for them (if otherwise eligible) to marry in their acquired gender.”*



RELATIONS

1) improving community safety

1. Action on homophobia needs to link into mainstream crime and disorder work. An Anti-homophobic crime Partnership should be established and integrated into the Crime and Disorder partnership, developing a workplan & engaging with the community & local venues to develop accountability. It should receive regular reports from schools, housing bodies (not just council) and safety bodies on homophobic incidents.
2. Homophobic crimes are not being reported. The Crime & Disorder partnership must ensure adequate systems for reporting, counting and mapping homophobic crime. This includes third party reporting for victims to report anonymously through friendly groups/LGBT venues.
3. Trust in the police is too low. Confidence building measures, such as joint events, need to be undertaken to build relationships between the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and authorities involved in community safety. These should be visible to all.
4. Many LGBT people experienced domestic violence. Domestic violence work undertaken within the borough needs include the issue of same-sex domestic violence.
5. Isolation breeds fear of crime. Developing the LGBT community should bring with it a lesser fear of crime. Where LGBT groups meet, and LGBT people gather, crime prevention measures should be considered.
6. Homophobic crimes are as damaging as racist crimes. LBBB Housing Directorate should include homophobic incidents in its harassment response.

2) overcoming parenting discrimination

1. LGBT people are often invisible. Staff training in agencies dealing with children locally should ensure issues of discrimination against LGBT people and challenging homophobia is visible and actively included.
2. Many LGBT people would like to foster or adopt. LBBB Social Services should actively seek LGBT adoptive and foster parents from the LGBT community following the recent legal changes, and seek to work with agencies like the Albert Kennedy Trust in supporting lesbian and gay young people at risk.
3. LGBT people are not seen as a specific group with separate cultural needs. LGBT clients of social services should be consulted to measure the understanding of, efficacy of and confidence in policies, services and procedures impacting on them.
4. The invisibility of LGBT clients should not lead to an assumption that they do not exist.
5. LGBT parents and their children are under added pressure due to society's attitudes. The Council should investigate how it could support LGBT parents through local groups and groups such as Pink Parents

3) overcoming financial discrimination

1. LGBT people find their partners are cut out of the local government and nhs pension schemes. The Council should support proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme and be flexible were possible in recognising same sex couples.

2. LGBT people can't marry. The Council should recognise the GLA register of gay and lesbian partnerships where evidence is required and support the proposed partnership law for LGB couples.
3. Trading Standards should bear in mind the common advice by financial institutions for gay men to lie in forms

4) overcoming employment discrimination

1. LGBT issues are often invisible. LBBB's Personnel section should ensure homophobia is specifically included and explained in its harassment and grievance procedures, and should analyse cases annually.
2. LGBT staff often feel excluded. They should continue to be included in the Staff Attitude Survey to measure the understanding of, efficacy of and confidence in personnel policies, services and procedures impacting on them.
3. Employment contracts offer security. The Council should ensure its employment contracts includes adherence to the equal opportunities policy referring to sexuality.
4. The Equal Treatment Directive becomes law December 2003. Personnel should begin preparations for the implementation of the EU Equal Treatment Directive
5. LGBT people are often invisible in training courses. Personnel department should undertake a review of its training courses and policies and procedures (such as compassionate leave) to ensure that discrimination against LGBT people and the issue of challenging homophobia is visible and actively included.

5) equality in service provision

1. LGBT people are often invisible. The Council should improve visibility of LGBT in its communications, ensuring that LGBT issues are promoted in the same way as those of other minority groups, in news releases, internal and external documents including the Citizen.
2. LGBT demography is a developing area. The Council should use the new census question on partnership to identify numbers of cohabiting gay and lesbian couples (in comparison with other boroughs), identifying areas of residential concentration within the borough, profiling the ethnicity, age etc of the identified couples,
3. LGBT people have different needs. The Council should consult formally with LGBT communities on specific issues, and examine where services might be better provided in a targeted way rather than in a generic and mainstreamed way.
4. LGBT people have different needs. LGBT issues must be highlighted within any equalities action plans, ensuring the visibility of these issues within equalities work and publications in the borough.
5. Events can tackle invisibility. Events of specific interest should be celebrated/marked as appropriate ensuring the visibility of the target groups. (Pride, World AIDS Day etc).

6) promoting health and well-being

1. Gay men's sexual health issues must be tackled appropriately. In HIV health promotion there should be appropriate weighting for gay men in terms of resources for service provision and promotion, bearing in mind the needs of other excluded communities.
2. Gay men's sexual health issues must be tackled appropriately. The Council should stress the importance of targeting Hepatitis C through health promotion to relevant bodies and in any sexual health promotion it undertakes again with similar weighting based on those affected.
3. LGBT people and issues can often be invisible. Professional training offered to those working within social services should include a full equality agenda including issues around homophobia and heterosexism.

