

SOCIAL COHESION SUB GROUP

**REPORT OF THE BARKING & DAGENHAM LGBT FORUM
& NETWORK**

13th SEPTEMBER 2004

FINAL REPORT OF THE BARKING & DAGENHAM LGBT FORUM & NETWORK DELEGATION STUDY VISIT TO BRIGHTON & HOVE	FOR DECISION
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report provides the Sub-Group with the Final report of the recent Barking & Dagenham LGBT Forum & Network delegation study visit to Brighton & Hove Council. The visit was jointly funded by the Council, Barking & Dagenham Police and the Community Empowerment Network.</p> <p>The visit enabled the delegation to assess, first hand, the infrastructure and services provided in another major local authority, with a large LGBT community and reputation for providing high quality services to that community. It also provided a background against which the Forum could clarify the service needs and aspirations of the of the LGBT community in Barking & Dagenham.</p> <p>The Report contains a number of detailed recommendations around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The need for an LGBT infrastructure in the forum of a 'Hub' or base for the full range of LGBT and HIV?AIDS related services• The need to work towards integrated, multi-agency services that address key areas where it is felt that provision is lacking, such as older people, youth and counselling/advice/support services• An identification of areas where further detailed work are required and a request for meaningful engagement with the PCT on Sexual Health provision in the borough <p>The report has been endorsed by the LGBT Forum (17 August 2004) and represents a further development of the work began with the commissioning of the 'Breaking the Silence' Report.</p>	

The Social Cohesion Sub-Group needs to consider the contents of the Report, comment on the recommendations and identify the best way of taking the issues identified forward via the Partnership and effective multi-agency working.

Recommendations

That the Social Cohesion Sub-Group comment on the report and agreed the best way in which to address the recommendations

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FINAL REPORT ON THE BARKING & DAGENHAM LGBT FORUM VISIT TO BRIGHTON & HOVE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Barking & Dagenham LGBT Forum & Network is composed of local lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender individuals and representative organisations, who have formed to engage and develop a programme of action with the Council and other partnership organisations on the needs and concerns of the community.
- 1.2 The LGB T Forum & Network grew out of the research commissioned by the Council in to the needs and concerns of local LGBT that resulted in the commissioning of the 'Breaking the Silence' Report. From that starting point, the Forum has set itself the objective of taking forward LGBT issues locally and promoting equality and diversity in the area of sexuality and gender reassignment.
- 1.3 As part of this, the Forum agreed that it would be highly beneficial to visit a local authority area with a visible LGBT community, a history of serving the needs of LGBT people and, correspondingly, a developed LGBT infrastructure. The Forum's choice of locality was Brighton & Hove.

2. Objectives and Agenda for the Visit

- 2.1 The LGBT Forum & Network set the following objectives and agenda for the visit:

General overview: to look at LGBT provision in Brighton & Hove including:
 - The Voluntary & Community sector
 - Statutory sector (including PCT on sexual health issues)
 - Private Sector
- 2.2 To seek examples of an LGBT provision service manual that identifies LGBT friendly services such as GPs, Dentists, solicitors, police and so on
- 2.3 To examine the development of the LGBT infrastructure within the city
 - How it developed
 - The social scene
- 2.4 To learn from best practice by examining LGBT community & partnership working through the Local Strategic Partnership

2.5 To meet with various organisations to examine specific areas of need such as:

- Community Safety
- Venues
- Provision for younger and older people
- Tackling homophobic/transphobic bullying including at school
- Parenting – including LGBT looked after children
- Tackling Crime (Police)
- Community involvement, for example:
 - Consultation and engagement with public, voluntary and private sector
 - Participation in statutory event (Open days etc)
 - Participation in community events (Gay festivals)

3. Commentary on the Visit

- 3.1 The LGBT Forum delegation met with a wide range of public bodies, agencies and voluntary and community organisations, over the two day duration of the visit. The majority of these meetings were hosted at the Spectrum headquarters and on the second day, the delegation was pleased to meet and discuss pertinent issues with the Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove Council, David Panter.
- 3.2 The LGBT Forum delegation noted the frank exchange of views that took place between officers of Brighton & Hove Council and representatives of the community and voluntary sector. There is a general view amongst LGBT people of Brighton as a 'LGBT utopia' and the City are to be congratulated for the work that it has initiated. However, it was also true that there were obvious issues and points of contention/dispute that required resolution within the City. It became clear to the delegation that Barking & Dagenham had established an excellent approach in terms of partnership and strategic working. Indeed, the visit emphasized the value of the strong and supportive working relationship that the Barking & Dagenham LGBT Forum had established with the Council and other local agencies such as the Police and CEN.
- 3.3 The delegation took the view that Brighton has a strong LGBT infrastructure and pockets of excellent service provision, especially those delivered by the community & voluntary sector.
- 3.4 The overriding conclusion of the delegation is that the LGBT community in Barking & Dagenham requires an infrastructure group that will facilitate the future development and co-ordination of services. In order to achieve this objective the community needs, what the delegation termed, a base or 'Hub' that would facilitate community access to services and assist multi-

- agency working to meet community needs. This 'Hub' should take the form of modern office accommodation, with offices and a social/meeting space, in a central location. It should provide a focal point for all LGBT and HIV/AIDS community and voluntary services and information/campaigning activities.
- 3.5 The delegation felt that there were positive lessons to be learnt from Brighton in the following areas:
- Advice/Counselling/Support services
 - Youth services
 - Support to LGBT older people
 - PCT and Sexual health services
 - Dealing with homophobic & transphobic incidents
 - Culture, festivals and venues
 - Innovative community initiatives, like the 'Our story' LGBT Oral History Project
- 3.6 In particular, the delegation was made aware of the type of high quality sexual health services delivered to the community by the local PCT covering the City. The scope and range of these services only served to highlight the inadequacy of the respective services available in Barking & Dagenham. It was noted that the relationship between the Barking & Dagenham PCT and the LGBT community had virtually broken down and that there was widespread concern about the services commissioned locally. This was a situation that required urgent mediation through the Barking & Dagenham partnership.
- 3.7 The delegation was also aware that urgent work was necessary in the following areas:
- Personal social services (including fostering & adoption)
 - Combating homophobic bullying in schools and colleges
 - Supporting good LGBT employment practices across all local agencies
- 3.8 Major areas of research and development were necessary in the following cross-cutting areas:
- Specific services for transgender people, bisexuals and lesbians
 - LGBT and disability
 - LGBT and BME communities
 - LGBT communities and domestic violence
- 3.9 The main body of the report provides a succinct summary of findings, with recommendations for action in Barking & Dagenham.

