

HOW TO ENGAGE GAY PEOPLE IN YOUR WORK

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FOREWORD



Britain's lesbian, gay and bisexual population makes an annual contribution of almost £40 billion to the provision of the country's public services. However, there is evidence that many of them still experience poor and discriminatory service delivery because of their sexual orientation.

The new Equality Act encourages public bodies to engage with service-users. Critically, it also encourages those service-users to scrutinise the quality of the services they fund. Stonewall believes that encouraging gay people directly to help shape public services presents a rich opportunity to make those services better and more cost-effective.

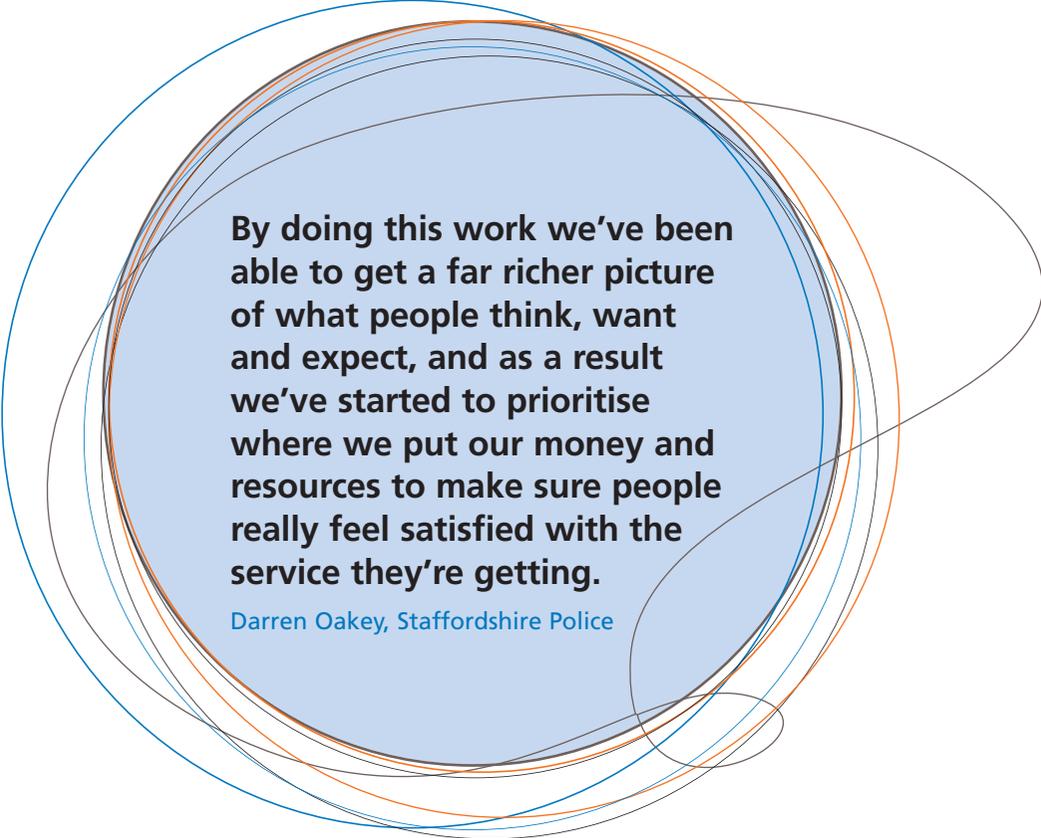
Improving differential service delivery is not necessarily complicated. The poster that reads: 'Smoking makes you unattractive to the opposite sex', for example, might have had a broader impact at no extra cost if someone had simply asked a lesbian whether that message resonated with her.

We're grateful to the organisations and individuals featured in this guide, all of whom shared valuable insights with our researchers. They believe – as we do – that to deliver the right services at the right time it's necessary, above all, to understand those who use and pay for them.

Ben Summerskill Chief Executive Stonewall

Contents

1	The business case	3
2	Setting up a lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group	9
3	Engaging with the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual community	16
4	Good practice engagement	22
5	Effectively engaging with lesbian, gay and bisexual people	27
6	Sustaining engagement	36
7	Top ten tips	40



By doing this work we've been able to get a far richer picture of what people think, want and expect, and as a result we've started to prioritise where we put our money and resources to make sure people really feel satisfied with the service they're getting.

Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police

INTRODUCTION

Research clearly demonstrates that lesbian, gay and bisexual people want to be treated with dignity and respect across Britain's public services. However, even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, many organisations have not begun to address the specific requirements of gay people in the services they deliver.

As a result, many of Britain's 3.7 million gay people still expect inappropriate services from public bodies and remain less likely to engage with civil society – for example, by seeking to become school governors or local councillors.

New provisions in the Equality Act 2010, which Stonewall campaigned hard for, place a groundbreaking responsibility on public bodies to demonstrate how they have enabled lesbian, gay and bisexual people to engage with the development and delivery of such services. Local citizens are now encouraged, rightly, to hold public bodies to account in ensuring that their services better reflect and respond to the lived experiences of those who pay for them.

This guide provides practical advice on how to engage lesbian, gay and bisexual people in decision-making about local services in cost-effective and appropriate ways. It's based on in-depth research both with organisations that have already begun to involve local people in their work and with service-users themselves. It is informed throughout by our firm view that the most efficient public services are those which best understand the needs of the people they serve.



What is engagement?

Engagement is the means by which public bodies capture and understand the interests and requirements of local citizens.

Engagement is also the means by which they can capture the many innovative and practical ideas local people have about how to deliver more efficient, fair and innovative services. Engagement is known in some organisations as public consultation, involvement or participation.

Why is it important?

Giving local citizens an active role in determining the shape, structure and priorities of local services makes services more:

- Accountable
- Transparent
- Democratic
- Relevant
- Cost-effective

Local people who are enabled to play a full part in making decisions about their local services feel more involved in those services. By holding local services to account and ensuring those services address their requirements, local people will receive better, more relevant services.

Public bodies that involve local citizens in making decisions about their services improve their understanding of the local population's requirements. As a result they are able to develop tailored services that respond to local requirements and interests, as well as identify which existing services are not meeting the needs of local people.

Most important, public services that understand the complexion of their local community can develop services that address the cause of local problems rather than simply the consequences. This makes them more cost-effective and improves outcomes for local people.

Why is engagement with lesbian, gay and bisexual people important?



Hearing the community perspective and the issues that are really being experienced from members of the public has completely changed how we actually deliver our work.

Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police



Only by hearing the voices of real people will organisations understand the real issues within the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities. Sarah



If there isn't a lesbian, gay or bisexual voice at the table or on the distribution list, then the voice is not heard. Gary

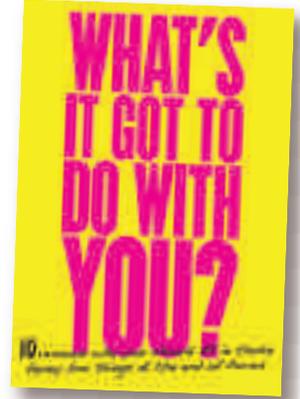
Lesbian, gay and bisexual people require the same services as the rest of the community, but they may access those services differently. In some cases those services can treat gay people poorly, with inappropriate customer service or ill-thought out services. Organisations can often resolve these issues simply by listening to local gay people's views on how to make their services more accessible and relevant. It doesn't need to cost money.

Engaging directly with local lesbian, gay and bisexual people is the most effective way for public bodies to understand how gay people

access their services. It will also help organisations understand if it is cost-effective to offer targeted services for local lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

There are two main methods by which public bodies engage with local lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens:

1 Through **general** engagement exercises with the whole local population or different groups within the local community. Organisations that **monitor** the sexual orientation of respondents are able to examine how a particular initiative or service impacts on lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This is a cost-effective way of exploring how different services impact on different groups. Stonewall's innovative *'What's it got to do with you? 10 reasons why you should fill in those funny box things at the end of forms'* provides a plain English explanation to service-users about why you might be asking for monitoring information.



2 Through **specific** engagement exercises with local gay people. Direct engagement helps organisations identify how gay people access their services and think about how they engage the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual population on other services.

“ We are taxpayers and local residents. I am as interested in my child's school as I am in care home provision for elderly lesbian and gay people. **”** Graham

Local lesbian, gay and bisexual people may never have been enabled to play a part in their local services or their local community. As a result research has shown that whilst three in four heterosexual people feel a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, just over half lesbian, gay and bisexual people do (*Citizenship Survey*, Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2010). Moreover, gay people are less likely to enjoy living in their neighbourhood and less likely to feel their local area is 'cohesive' compared to heterosexuals. Enabling local gay people to make their voices heard improves community confidence and cohesion.

How do gay people's requirements differ?

Research has shown that some gay people can have different experiences of, or be affected disproportionately by, the way local services are delivered. Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people, for example, expect local services to discriminate against them. This affects the way they access and use those services. For example:

- Three in ten lesbian, gay and bisexual people think they would be treated worse than a heterosexual if they wanted to enrol their child into a primary school or secondary school
- Three quarters of those experiencing hate crimes or incidents do not report them to the police
- Eight in ten think they would face barriers to becoming a school governor because of their sexual orientation
- One in five lesbian and gay people expect to be treated worse by police than a heterosexual if they report a crime
- One in five lesbian and gay people expect to be treated worse than heterosexuals when applying for social housing
- One in fourteen lesbian and gay people expect to be treated worse than heterosexuals when accessing healthcare

The way gay people access and use local services can vary based on where they live as well as their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion or other factors. For example:

- Gay people in the East Midlands are over 50 per cent more likely to expect discrimination from a housing officer than those in the North East
- Gay women, who have received fewer targeted healthcare messages than gay men, are twice as likely to expect to be treated worse
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales are eight times more likely to expect discrimination in hospital than those in the South West
- Two in five gay people in London feel the need to alter their behaviour to avoid being the victim of hate crime compared to one in four in Wales

Engagement with local lesbian, gay and bisexual people can help identify these and any other distinct experiences and requirements. Engaging directly with local gay citizens enables organisations to better understand the reason for any differences and help them develop innovative and cost-effective solutions to respond.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on public bodies to 'eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations' for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The Act also places a responsibility on public bodies to clearly demonstrate how they have engaged with lesbian, gay and bisexual people in delivering their services.

The Equality Act also encourages people, including those who are gay, to hold local service providers to account about what they are doing to eliminate discrimination and advance fair treatment and equality of opportunity for gay people. Organisations will increasingly have to respond to questions from local citizens such as:

- What have you done to make sure services are relevant and appropriate to gay people?
- What steps have you taken to prevent discrimination against gay people?
- What evidence can you give me to show you're making progress in these areas?

By engaging with lesbian, gay and bisexual people in delivering their services public bodies will be able to demonstrate how they have addressed these issues.

“ By doing this work we've been able to get a far richer picture of what people think, want and expect, and as a result we've started to prioritise where we put our money and resources to make sure people really feel satisfied with the service they're getting.

Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police

“ Once you know what the community's priorities are, you also know what areas are not priorities. So you can target your resources better and put less focus on those areas that aren't having the desired impact.

Mary Evans, Brighton & Hove City Council

Benefits for organisations

“ After consulting, all Brighton and Hove City Council's strategies were evidence-based and evidence-led rather than being based on just hunches.

Kath Browne, Brighton University



We've been able to make some pretty crucial decisions around where we put our resources based on a very accurate reflection of the feedback we've received from the community. Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police

Public bodies that listen effectively to members of the public should be able to:

- Demonstrate improved quality of service delivered to individuals – measured through a better take-up of services and earlier engagement with service providers
- Identify common requirements of different groups in a local community – for example, health information delivered in supermarkets – encouraging economies of scale
- Develop a clear evidence base to ensure the delivery of relevant outputs, better planning and delivery of services
- Improve efficiency and value-for-money by only delivering services they *know* local people need and will use
- Improve reputation and establish trust, satisfaction and confidence among local people in the services that they pay for
- Be more visible and approachable to local people – leading to greater local involvement in the delivery of services
- Identify the barriers that prevent people from using their services and learn how to design inclusive and accessible services in future
- Avoid the risk of potentially expensive legal action by identifying potentially discriminatory policies or practices

Benefits for individuals

In areas where local public bodies achieve effective engagement:

- People feel more involved and part of their local community
- They feel more confident and satisfied with their local services
- They feel that their local services are delivering value for money
- They feel that their taxes are better spent
- People receive better, more relevant services



2 LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL ADVISORY GROUPS

“ It's vital to get the right partners on board at the outset. Make links with the people out there on the ground talking to and working with the sorts of people you want to reach. They can help you with the messaging and find ways to really access those people.

Mary Evans, Brighton & Hove City Council

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people, acting as an advisory group, are useful in helping organisations understand the requirements of lesbian and gay people and how best to involve gay people more generally in the planning and development of services.

What is a lesbian, gay, and bisexual advisory group?

A lesbian, gay, and bisexual advisory group is a small group of lesbian, gay and bisexual people from a range of backgrounds who act as a 'sounding board' for the work local organisations do on gay issues. The groups are structured and semi-formalised, often with members applying for positions on the group.

Advisory groups have sometimes been established by single organisations, such as police forces, working in a specific area.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory groups are most effective, however, when they are used and shared by a number of local public services including health trusts, local authorities, police forces, fire services and GP surgeries.

Purpose of a lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group

Lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory groups have a similar role to the employee network groups established by some of Stonewall's 600 Diversity Champions. These network groups provide a crucial means to ensure that employment policies, practices and procedures reflect the requirements and experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. The best ones have also focused on service delivery.

An advisory group of local citizens can serve a similar function in relation to service delivery. The role of the advisory group is two-fold:

- 1** To act as a first port of call group for organisations to answer questions about issues or services relating to lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Advisory group members can directly offer their experiences and opinions on an organisation's work relating to gay people.
- 2** To offer advice and information on how, when or why organisations should consult local gay people more broadly. The advisory group may play a role in deciding when and how the local gay community should be involved in an organisation's work.

The benefits of a lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group

By acting as a source of advice, experience and information for organisations, lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory groups can function as a small, cost-effective and informed group of individuals that organisations can directly engage with.

Engagement with the wider community may not always be necessary, appropriate, feasible or cost-effective. In some cases members of the advisory group may be able to point the organisation in the right direction or **answer questions themselves**, without needing to consult all local citizens.

An effective advisory group can:

- Provide advice and local expertise and act as a critical friend to help improve efficiency and ensure services are relevant
- Highlight areas of concern which require immediate action
- Determine what is and what is not a suitable topic for wider engagement with the local gay community
- Help organisations to find local gay people to engage with
- Tell organisations how best to engage with local gay people
- Help organisations reach less visible and more vulnerable people

The cost

The main cost of an advisory group is the use of a room and some administrative support to communicate the work of the advisory group with the local community and local services. Organisations may also decide to cover expenses for participation in accordance with their existing policies. The cost of engaging local people would usually be modest.

Forming an advisory group

To encourage lesbian, gay and bisexual people to join a group it's important to advertise and promote the advisory group as widely as possible. Members of the public may need to understand why it's important that they engage in the services they pay for, so organisations will need to be explicit about the benefits of engaging with and shaping the services that they pay for and benefit from.

Consider inviting lesbian, gay and bisexual people to apply to be a member of an advisory group for a fixed term. A simple application form will allow people to outline what they can contribute.

Organisations should have set criteria for applicants, depending on the type of work the advisory group will do.

These can include:

- Having lived in the local area
- Experience of working in a team to reach decisions and consensus
- An understanding of the diverse requirements of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community

- Direct experience of using local services
- A commitment to helping services improve and finding solutions to problems

Local people may have different reasons for getting involved and may have different things they want out of engaging. Some may want to participate as an altruistic act whilst others may participate as part of their career development. It is important that the work of the advisory group meets both these requirements from the outset and that the benefits of being a member of the group, both to members and the wider community, are communicated clearly.

Getting a good mix around the table

“ It might be harder to get women or black and minority ethnic people or people with disabilities involved. It's important to recognise the differences within the community and find different ways to engage different people. Mary Evans, Brighton & Hove City Council

“ Wherever the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities are, then that's where you should start. It needs to be more than just an open invitation to a meeting; it's about going out and talking to people in their own setting. Kath Browne, Brighton University

“ They access the same cohort over and over again and miss out a large chunk of the community who don't access particular services. Sunita

Organisations who have engaged with local people sometimes feel that they hear the same 'monochrome' voices from the gay community and miss out on hearing from other people from the local population, for example, disabled gay people, parents, older gay people and in particular lesbians. Engagement is most effective and trusted when a wide-range of people, with diverse insights and ideas, are able to feed in. Without a diversity of experiences the information coming from engagement exercises risks being of poor quality and limited use.

Therefore organisations need also to recruit lesbian and gay people who are women, from ethnic minority backgrounds, religious, older and younger people, parents and carers, and those

who have a disability. To do this, organisations will need to promote the advisory group and other engagement opportunities, such as online surveys, in places where a diverse range of people will hear about it. For example:

- Community groups or forums for lesbian and gay parents, older people, people with a disability, black and minority ethnic people
- Youth groups, places of worship or ethnic community centres
- Newspapers or radio stations aimed at black and minority ethnic people, younger or older people
- Community health initiatives or drop in centres for specific groups within the local community
- CABs, Job Centres, town halls, hospitals, GP surgeries, schools, FE colleges and leisure centres

“ All too often it is local high profile lesbian, gay and bisexual people who get cherry-picked to be representative – but often they are not representative. Dave

“ It seems that one group is relied on and it’s easy for the Council to rely on this one group rather than actively seeking other views. Charlotte

It’s also important to ensure a balance of representation between individuals, staff and representatives from local lesbian, gay and bisexual community groups. Local community groups play an important role in helping organisations access gay people, often those who are vulnerable, and will be able to help identify potential participants. Charity staff may want to participate themselves in the advisory group and they should be encouraged to apply.

Just engaging with representatives from a charity, however, is not a substitute for wider engagement and involvement. This also applies to lesbian and gay staff who work for the service provider. Gay staff play a crucial role in helping organisations understand the requirements of local lesbian and gay people. Like local groups, their input should be considered alongside wider engagement, not instead of it.

Some organisations include trans people on advisory groups with gay people. The important issues and requirements of trans people can be distinct from those of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It is

up to individual organisations how they choose to engage with local trans people, but it is important to do so, while recognising these differences.

Aims, outcomes and outputs

Organisations and advisory groups should be clear from the outset what the goals of the group are. The goals of the group can include:

- Helping organisations identify any barriers that stop gay people from accessing services
- Coming up with innovative new cost-effective ideas on how to support gay people more efficiently
- Developing services that include lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Promoting positive work of organisations to the local lesbian, gay and bisexual community
- Identifying services that aren't needed by the local lesbian, gay and bisexual community
- Assessing policies to ensure they include lesbian, gay and bisexual people

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Enlist the help of the communications team, if you have one, to promote the group through local radio, newspapers and websites
- Advertise in places that local gay people visit such as bars, clubs and community forums or centres
- Use the expertise of local lesbian, gay and bisexual groups
- Go to where gay people are. Be visible and approachable to local people
- This may include working outside office hours and visiting venues that are popular with lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Make people feel that they're part of something that's unique and important which will have a real influence on their local area

- Make them understand that organisations really can't deliver good services, and shouldn't try to do this, without their engagement
- Advertise on notice-boards in public buildings such as libraries, hospitals, GP surgeries and council buildings
- Be sure not to lend too much weight to the views of any one individual and to check whether people really represent those they claim to speak on behalf of – for example, by asking how many active supporters their organisation has

Don't

- Imply people cannot feed-back later if they don't engage right now. People should be able to feed-in and ask questions at any time
- Imply that the advisory group is the only way by which their voices can be heard
- Suggest that if they don't participate, organisations won't consider their needs



There will be occasions when an advisory group feels that wider engagement exercises should be conducted with local lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The advisory group will be able to help organisations decide whether topics for consultation are appropriate and help determine which methods of engagement are accessible and cost-effective.

What is engagement with the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual community?

Engagement with the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual community is when organisations run an open public exercise specifically for members of the local gay community to capture their views on topics relating to public services. This engagement can be conducted in a number of ways, outlined later in this chapter.

What's the purpose of engaging the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual community?

Organisations may wish to capture a broad range of views from the

local gay community. An advisory group should play a key role in deciding when and where it's feasible and important to consult the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual population. In many instances an advisory group may feel that it's not cost-effective, practical or relevant to engage the wider community. Issues and solutions can be explored by the advisory group without need for wider input.

However there will be occasions when it is appropriate and important to consult the wider community. For example, when:

- There's a need to capture reliable quantifiable evidence of the views of local lesbian, gay and bisexual people on a topic. For example, determining the numbers of local gay people who use or would use a local service
- An issue is deemed to be of significant importance or may have a disproportionate impact on local lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- The advisory group feels that further engagement is needed to capture in greater detail the perspective or experience of a particular group within the local community
- There are changes planned to specific services for lesbian, gay or bisexual people or services disproportionately used by gay people

When is it right to engage with the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual community?

Gay people use the same local services as other people and more often than not those services will not have a disproportionate impact on them. They may, however, have concerns about the way those services are delivered and how they can access them.

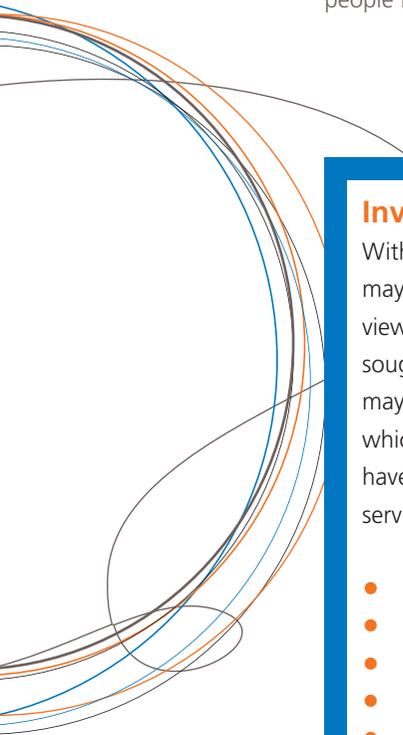
Many organisations run targeted engagement exercises with local gay people about services which are no more relevant to them than others in the community. This is neither cost-effective nor appropriate.

Organisations should focus their engagement with local gay people on how they use local services and what concerns they may have about using them. For example, it certainly wouldn't be appropriate for a local authority to engage with local gay people about the frequency of the bins being collected. However, the local authority might properly engage with local gay people about the behaviour of

staff when delivering services, including waste collection.

The advisory group can help organisations decide when to engage with the wider lesbian and gay community and can also provide advice on the most appropriate methods of engagement

For example, if an organisation is developing a new equality plan it should first work with an advisory group to identify key policy areas that need to be covered by the scheme. Once this process is complete the organisation may decide to engage with the wider lesbian, gay and bisexual community about these key points. The advisory group can advise how to ensure a diverse range of gay people locally are consulted and encouraged to respond.



Involvement ideas

With the involvement of an advisory group, organisations may determine that there are particular issues on which the views of lesbian, gay and bisexual people should be actively sought. An advisory group can advise on any issues which may disproportionately impact on local gay people or on which they may have significant concerns. Organisations that have engaged with local gay people find that issues and services of particular relevance to gay people include:

- **Anti-social behaviour and community safety**
- **Registering of births, civil partnerships and deaths**
- **Enrolling children in schools**
- **Establishing academies and free schools**
- **Access to local healthcare**
- **Childcare provision and after-school care**
- **Fostering and adoption services**
- **Housing and homelessness**
- **Young people's services**
- **Older people's services and social care**
- **Preventive healthcare messages**
- **Parental support for university students**

Working in partnership

The most efficient form of engagement exercises are those used by a number of local public service organisations. This removes duplication and enables better collaboration but also allows organisations to share the small costs associated with engagement exercises.

The benefits of jointly hosting an advisory group or running joint engagement exercises include:

- Organisations are better able to identify any duplication of work they are doing, making their work more cost-effective
- Organisations are better able to identify how they can work together on specific pieces of work
- Organisations can learn from each other
- Organisations can share the minimal costs associated with setting up, hosting maintaining and supporting an advisory group
- Organisations can share a pool of their existing and new contacts
- Organisations can share the minimal costs associated with running wider engagement exercises such as online surveys
- Organisations get to work with lesbian, gay and bisexual people they may not otherwise have engaged with
- Organisations improve their reputation by demonstrating they are willing to work collaboratively on lesbian, gay and bisexual needs
- Participants of engagement exercises get a variety of issues to discuss and input into, giving them broader skills and increasing the likelihood of further engagement

Different methods of engagement

There are many different ways that organisations can engage with the wider population and a lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group should help organisations decide the best method, or combination of methods for any particular issue. Different methods of engagement include:

CITIZEN'S PANELS consist of a large group of citizens who participate in regular surveys. These surveys can be online, by telephone or paper versions sent by post. They can be used to

identify local issues, assess service needs and determine the effectiveness of new services. Asking participants questions about their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability status and gender identity can enable further detailed breakdown of data.

FOCUS GROUPS are in-depth, interactive small group conversations where participants talk to each other as well as to the facilitator. They can capture detailed data on people's attitudes, perceptions and opinions particularly from less confident people who otherwise might not make their voice heard.

USER PANELS are regular meetings of a particular service-user group that take the format of a workshop. They can help identify the concerns and priorities of a particular group and can lead to the early identification of problems and barriers or ideas for improvements. User panels tend to meet every few months in an ongoing capacity with members being replaced as time passes. These may be sub-groups of a lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS are often used for local engagement with a broad range of diverse citizens. These can provide a big picture but organisations should be aware that gay people may not feel prepared to out themselves in a public forum by raising issues relevant to lesbian, gay or bisexual people. In particular gay people who are women, disabled, from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, older, younger and those of faith may be less inclined to contribute in open public meetings, as may shy people. Remember also that those with loud voices don't necessarily speak on behalf of any more people than those that aren't so forward.

MONITORING SEXUAL ORIENTATION on existing anonymous questionnaires that people are invited to complete at the point where they receive a service. Monitoring sexual orientation on these questionnaires can provide an inexpensive 'snapshot' of how gay people feel about the service. Organisations should take steps to ensure lesbian and gay people feel comfortable to indicate that they are gay on surveys – for example, by making '*What's it got to do with you?*' available.

ELECTRONIC SURVEYS provide a cheap and simple method of quickly capturing people's views and opinions online. They are distributed as a link that can be emailed or posted on a webpage. Capturing monitoring information provides additional insights, but be mindful that older people may not engage.

ONLINE FORUMS can allow people concerned about outing themselves or too busy to attend meetings to contribute. People engage in dialogue online, through posting comments on a particular topic. However, watch out for the risks of online communications which may include multiple posts from the same person – sometimes even under different names.



Brighton & Hove

Count Me In Too project

'Count Me In Too' is a large-scale research project that took place in Brighton and Hove beginning in 2006. The local lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans forum, Spectrum, and researchers from the University of Brighton worked with local LGB&T people to design and conduct a survey and focus groups, and to analyse data with local service providers and formulate recommendations.

Local lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people made key decisions right from the outset. The steering group selected questions for the questionnaire survey, designed questions for the focus groups, decided who to target these groups at and recruited participants.

The survey and focus groups were promoted through 'snowball sampling', where existing participants recruited future subjects from among their acquaintances and through a wide range of advertising. 819 questionnaires were completed and 69 people took part in focus groups. Specific efforts were made to include older, young, black and minority ethnic and deaf lesbian, gay and bisexual and trans people, as well as parents and people who had experienced hate crime.

Local lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people played a central role in analysing the issues raised in the research and in subsequent analysis groups. The findings led to collaborative city-wide initiatives on key policy areas such as domestic violence and abuse, community safety, housing, mental health, general health and drugs and alcohol. A few examples of these outcomes include:

- The research revealed a housing and homelessness issue for young gay people in the city. This led to work around housing strategy and the dedication of a member of staff to help young lesbian and gay people with housing options
- Same-sex domestic violence and its under-reporting was identified as an issue. The city's Domestic Violence team allocated staff to deliver outreach work to prevent same-sex domestic violence
- A GP Access Officer was allocated to work with GP practices and local communities to identify barriers that lesbian and gay people face in accessing GP services

Anchor Trust

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans tenants' forum

Anchor is the largest provider of housing, care and support for older people throughout England. In 2007 they established a national LGB&T tenants' forum. The forum was open for any of their lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans tenants to attend. Despite assurances of confidentiality, however, people were initially cautious to attend meetings.

In response Anchor agreed with some forum members to provide their phone or email details as a point of contact to give tenants an opportunity to discuss the group with someone independent from the organisation. One male and one female forum member agreed to have their contact details provided and as a result the group is now well attended.

The group meets at gay-friendly venues up and down the country and Anchor covers members' travel and accommodation costs. It acts as a consultative body on a range of issues. The group has reviewed the Trust's letting policy for same-sex couples and produced guidance to support managers to effectively respond to reports from tenants of

homophobia. Members of the group have also contributed to training workshops and conferences for staff and tenants.

Anchor has run training sessions to support the group to produce annual workplans so it can more effectively link in with the organisation's business objectives, set its own agenda and measure progress. Two members have also received training in setting up online communities to help involve tenants unable to attend meetings. Some members have grown in confidence to the point where they've felt able to join their local tenant forums and represent lesbian, gay and bisexual issues for the first time.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Online social network

Tower Hamlets run a number of public fora for local people to have their voices heard, however they recognised that in some cases open public meetings can be a problem for lesbian, gay and bisexual residents who may feel concerned to 'out' themselves to other members of their community.

In response Rainbow Hamlets, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community forum in the Borough, set up a social networking space online to allow members of the community to contribute their views without having to attend public meetings. The social network also maintains interest and involvement between meetings and allows those that can't make meetings due to work or family commitments to contribute as well.

Staffordshire Police

Lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens' panel

Staffordshire Police have a panel of 175 lesbian, gay and bisexual residents who complete a quarterly electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to capture feedback on issues affecting them in their local areas.

The panel was extensively promoted at local Prides, through local charities and voluntary organisations, online and in both the local gay and mainstream media to ensure that a representative panel was recruited.

The information captured from the questionnaires provides

Staffordshire Police with a clear picture of what local gay people need and want from the police. The police feel it has helped the force to target resources better, improve services and communicate more effectively with the gay community.

For example, officers have developed a greater understanding of the reporting of antisocial behaviour by gay people and how this links to the reporting of hate crimes and incidents. This has led to a more appropriate and sensitive approach from officers and greater confidence among local citizens. The panel's success and effectiveness has led other public bodies to approach the force to share access to their panel and expertise to help improve services in other areas.

Leeds Partnerships NHS Foundation Trust **Closing the Gap**

In 2009 a group of Leeds health bodies got together to decide how to engage with and understand the requirements of local lesbian, gay and bisexual people accessing the city's mental health services. Previous research had identified mental health as a particular issue for people from these communities. The organisations wanted to learn how to promote positive experiences and equal access to mental health services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the city.

Posters, outreach, email and an internet site were used to recruit over 100 lesbian, gay and bisexual people to complete a survey. This suggested strongly that gay people in the city were experiencing mental health issues in disproportionately high numbers and that in many cases they felt excluded from mental health services. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with 15 participants to establish why this was the case.

These interviews resulted in the development of clear guidelines for improving the accessibility of services for gay citizens. These contained a number of practical recommendations to help staff empathise with the challenges and experiences of gay people and use inclusive language (eg. by not presuming a partner is opposite sex) when speaking to service-users. Local gay citizens were asked for feedback on the guidance before it was disseminated to service managers and staff.

Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust has established a variety of mechanisms for patients, service-users and carers to contribute to the development of the Trust's policies and strategies.

Each hospital and strategic area within the Trust has a patient/service-user/carer council or forum. These forums develop policies for patients and service-users and are also involved in developing training for staff. The Trust also has an equality and diversity steering group on which service-user and carer 'champions' sit to ensure the perspectives of service-users are heard. This is also reflected in steering groups which represent each of the seven protected characteristics, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans group, which are championed by both a staff and a service-user or carer representative. The Trust actively works to ensure that each group, despite having a specific focus such as race, disability or sexual orientation, also considers the other strands.

Recommendations from these groups regularly feed directly into the strategic action plan and they also help advise the Trust on how to respond appropriately to any complaints. Contributions of patients who participate are recognised through the Trust's magazine and with awards and prizes.

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and Lancashire Police

Joint consultation on Single Equality Schemes

In 2008 Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and Lancashire Police ran a joint engagement exercise with local people to help both organisations develop inclusive Single Equality Schemes. The two organisations cover the same area and so serve the same diverse communities. They decided to work together to save on resources, to pool local contacts and to avoid duplication.

The consultation was promoted widely to ensure a diverse range of citizens was included. Two events were held at conference centres in Blackburn and Lancaster. In total 200 people shared their views and experiences on issues such as anti-social behaviour, violent crime, access to services, fear of crime, community engagement and drug misuse.



5 EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING WITH LESBIAN, GAY & BISEXUAL PEOPLE

There are a number of practical steps organisations can take to effectively engage with local lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Many are also relevant for effectively engaging with a whole range of local communities. Whether organisations are establishing a local lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group or undertaking an engagement exercise with the wider gay community, they should:

- Make efforts to communicate with and involve the local community first
- Enable people to shape the form of engagement from the outset and give people time to offer their views
- Work in partnership with other local public bodies
- Manage the expectations of participants
- Ensure a diversity of views is captured
- Enable participants to challenge and criticise
- Offer feedback to participants about what's been done

Building trust first

For engagement with local gay people to be effective, it needs to be part of a broader strategy for equal treatment. Local lesbian, gay and bisexual people may feel there is limited value in engaging with

an organisation which has not demonstrated visible commitment to lesbian, gay and bisexual fair treatment before.

Engagement with the lesbian, gay and bisexual population should run in parallel with a range of other work to demonstrate an organisation's commitment to gay equality. For example, organisations might utilise Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index – a free auditing tool to measure how inclusive the workplace is for lesbian and gay staff (www.stonewall.org.uk/wei).

An advisory group can provide important information about how the organisation is perceived by the local lesbian and gay population and what other actions an organisation may take to build trust among local lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens.

“ First off organisations need to establish they're lesbian, gay and bisexual positive and make this clear by being non-judgemental and gay-affirmative in their practice. Karl

“ Organisations need to be more visible within communities. At present they only consult with the community when they want something. Alice

Setting timescales

Poor quality engagement is often due to poor scheduling. Many organisations start engagement with local citizens too late in a process and use it simply to 'rubber stamp' a policy that's already been developed and approved. Local people will be sensitive about being used to 'tick a box' in this way and will sense that this does not help public bodies to improve services. This type of poor quality engagement makes people less likely to offer their voices in the future.

When beginning wider engagement organisations should ensure they:

1 Plan engagement activities in advance and schedule enough time to involve local gay people in developing the engagement exercise, promote the exercise, seek responses and provide feedback to local citizens on any action to be taken.

2 Involve local people, such as the advisory group, right from the outset in planning the method, timescales and practicalities associated with the engagement.

“ If the policy document is already written then it's too late. The first question to consider is why should people talk to you? Services need to be able to answer that question themselves rather than simply presuming that people should talk to them.

Kath Browne, Brighton University

“ It felt like they needed to tick a diversity box and therefore asked for us to be involved. Mike

“ I felt it was lip service to the community and afterwards they just did what they were going to do anyway. Nicola

Acknowledging barriers to engagement

“ People are quite scared about consultation events. They say: 'I won't know what they're talking about, it seems very serious, it's only me, are my opinions valid enough?'

Dax Ashworth, Southwark Council

“ We had to understand that these barriers and fears were very real and change our language to reassure them, articulating that we were aware of those issues.

Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police

“ Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are not confident and need help and encouragement to approach large bodies like the Police or the NHS. Jerome

Gay people, especially those who have been excluded from services in the past, may have had little contact with an organisation and may have concerns about talking to a public body. Organisations should acknowledge the barriers that prevented people engaging in the past and make it clear that they are now welcome.

Local organisations that have direct contact with gay people, such as local charities for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, may also be able to help with this. Their experience and reputation can help organisations access less visible groups and they may be able to act as a trusted voice to reach people on your behalf who are reticent to speak directly to a public body.

It is important to remember that different methods of engagement will encourage, or discourage, different groups from taking part. Organisations should therefore develop a number of different ways to engage the wider local lesbian, gay and bisexual

population. Understanding the barriers that some people face should be a priority because they are likely to be excluded from services. Organisations should consider the following when deciding on the best way to engage:

- Not everyone is comfortable talking in open forums and gay people may have concerns about outing themselves in front of local people from their area
- Some people may prefer engagement that avoids face-to-face contact such as an anonymous paper or online questionnaire
- Some people will have had less contact with public services and may be less confident expressing themselves in public

 You need more than one string to your bow, in terms of alternative participation methods, to really get to the information that you need. Mary Evans, Brighton & Hove City Council

 I'd need to be reassured that I'll be treated with dignity and respect when I give feedback and that my sexuality will not be outed. Rhina

 There is insufficient use made of alternatives such as email, Facebook, social media and internet surveys like Survey Monkey. Erin

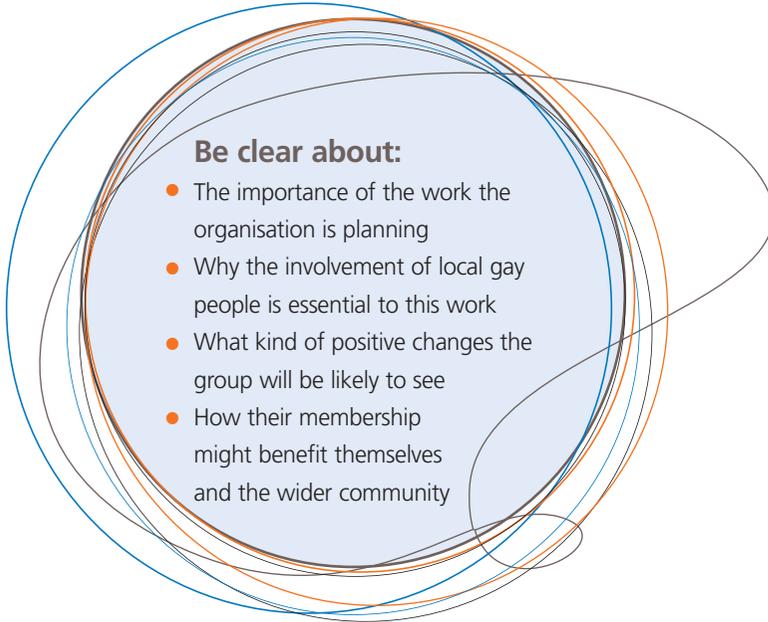
Marketing engagement exercises to local citizens

 You can't be afraid to try things. It's not going to be perfect the first time but you've got to be comfortable making mistakes and learning. It's about opening a way for that dialogue to begin. You have to start somewhere and then evolve and develop your ways of working. Nicky Griffiths, Manchester City Council

Organisations need a simple yet inspiring message that will convince local people to engage. Organisations should avoid jargon and should not assume that lesbian, gay and bisexual people automatically understand whether a topic is relevant to them (or even what acronyms like LGBT mean!).

An advisory group will be able to help organisations to develop specific messages on why lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the wider community should make their voices heard. The advisory

group will also be able to advise organisations on how best to monitor the sexual orientation of participants in general engagement activities.



Be clear about:

- The importance of the work the organisation is planning
- Why the involvement of local gay people is essential to this work
- What kind of positive changes the group will be likely to see
- How their membership might benefit themselves and the wider community

Managing expectations

“ You have to be very clear from the outset as to why you’ve invited the views of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. You need to lay out what you’ll do with their advice and be clear that their input will be a key part of that work and how you’ll keep them informed of progress. It’s also vital to be very honest in where we’ve got it wrong, showing how we’ve learned from that and how we’ve shaped policies and programs that prevent us from making similar mistakes. Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police

Managing the expectations of what people can contribute and what will come out of an engagement exercise is vital. Gay people tell Stonewall that effective engagement can be undermined by the perception of a lack of purpose or direction. Many are suspicious of anything seen as simply a ‘talking shop’, or monopolised by ‘loud mouths’, rather than a genuine opportunity to improve local

services. Local citizens will quickly disengage from engagement efforts that are not seen to get results and effect real change.

Organisations should be clear from the outset about what participants can expect, and what the organisation expects from the engagement.

- Ask participants what they want to get from their involvement and what barriers might stop them from contributing fully
- Acknowledge where services might not have been inclusive in the past and demonstrate how the organisation has changed its approach as a result
- Explain what you intend to do – there may be a degree of cynicism that this is just a ‘box-ticking exercise’ rather than a genuine attempt to improve services – and it is important to dissipate this concern
- Be realistic about timescales. You will need to explain that change won’t happen overnight

Letting local gay citizens set the agenda

 **The information will always be better and more valued and appreciated if it’s trusted and really owned by the community.** Kath Browne, Brighton University

 **It didn’t strike me as something that would be taken very seriously.** Amelia

 **Consultations often seem a bit woolly as to their purpose.** Jamie

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people tell Stonewall that engaging and involving local citizens will only be effective if that work is being led by the citizens themselves. Local people need to feel they have the opportunity to raise problems and provide solutions that will be considered and addressed by organisations.

Organisations should involve the lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group in determining how often the views of local gay people should be sought. Participants in advisory groups and public meetings should also have a role in setting the agenda and topics for discussion as this will help organisations gain a deeper understanding of which issues are a priority for the community.

Organisations should therefore provide a structure that's firm enough to reassure participants that their views are taken seriously but which is not so rigid that it makes members feel their input is being controlled or limited.

Holding public meetings, panels and forums

 **If you ask a closed question, you're going to get a closed answer. But if you ask an open question, you're likely to get better information.** Lucy Malarkey, Gentoo

The way that face-to-face engagement events are facilitated has a significant impact on the quality and value of the information they capture. Many organisations find that using an independent facilitator enables individuals to be more open about their experiences or opinions. This is particularly important for gay people, many of whom may be concerned about 'outing' themselves to their local service providers. However, if the organisation is facilitating the event itself:

- Avoid loaded or closed questions, such as those that only allow a 'yes' or 'no' answer, and always give people the time and space to properly express their views
- Try to keep the tone constructive and stress that participants are part of the solution and there to help the organisation to improve things
- Remind participants how important their involvement is. Stress the expertise that they bring and how this will help tailor services to suit local citizens
- Try to avoid particular individuals or issues dominating proceedings. Work constructively to use people's suggestions, criticisms and opinions to open debate within the group

Handling criticism and complaints from local citizens

“ Sometimes there’s a fear of letting in critical comments and opinions but our approach is that complaints are a good source of consultation. It’s about being open and not defensive. Nicky Griffiths, Manchester City Council

“ You have to be prepared to hear negativity, but you also have to be in a position to show how you’re going to change that into positive outcomes. Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police

Organisations should be prepared for criticism from local lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens, particularly in the early stages of engagement. People who’ve been excluded and feel their voices have not previously been listened to may initially respond to engagement opportunities with frustration. It’s important to recognise that even if challenging, this response represents progress because this group is now communicating with an organisation for the first time. If participants are critical:

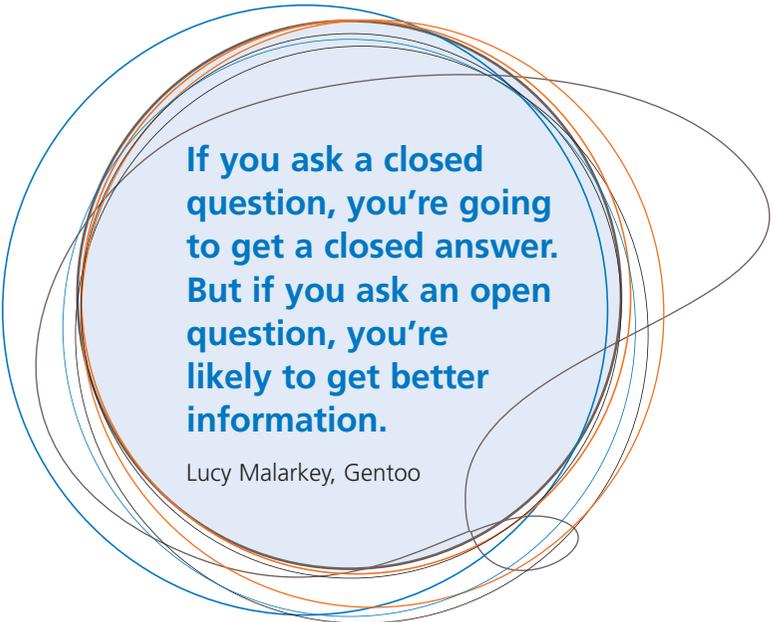
- Acknowledge people’s criticisms and listen to their concerns
- Demonstrate how the organisation is changing for the better
- Explain how being involved in the process can help solve the problem
- Try to manage expectations about what can and can’t be achieved by engagement and how long this may take

Managing resistance

Organisations may sometimes need to justify work to engage with local gay people. The broader local population may not always understand the value and importance of engaging with and responding to the requirements of local gay people or other specific communities. In some cases people may misread it as ‘special treatment’ for gay people. It’s important for organisations to respond robustly to this type of resistance.

When responding to these concerns organisations should be clear that:

- All local citizens are encouraged to engage with local services and contribute views about how they can improve
- Local gay residents are tax-payers just like everyone else
- Engagement is about developing more efficient services that give value-for-money for all local tax payers
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people can genuinely face discrimination and barriers to accessing public services. If organisations do not address this they will be failing in their responsibilities to local people and may be acting unlawfully
- Engaging with local gay people and responding to their requirements is not about special treatment. This is a way of proactively ensuring that gay people can contribute too



If you ask a closed question, you're going to get a closed answer. But if you ask an open question, you're likely to get better information.

Lucy Malarkey, Gentoo



SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

6

“ Consultation can't be seen as a finite thing. It's not something you do and then it's done for a while. It's about creating an opportunity for dialogue that's then embedded so there's always some kind of forum and opportunity for discussion and communication. It's about linking the consultation to that joint responsibility to work together.

Nicky Griffiths, Manchester City Council

“ It's absolutely crucial when the community highlight particular areas of concern that you go back a month later and tell them what you've done about it. If you haven't been able to resolve it, you must tell them what the difficulties were.

Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police

“ Rather than trying to convince the whole community at once, it's more about creating a snowball effect. You need to convince a few key members and then let them convince the next person and the next person. Kath Browne, Brighton University

Many organisations that have developed effective structures for engagement feel that community involvement is a process that builds momentum over time. With each engagement activity organisations will refine their methods. For this reason organisations should manage their own expectations about the levels of response they will get when initially engaging with the wider local lesbian,

gay and bisexual population. As visible actions are taken in response to issues raised, greater numbers of local people will become involved.

“ You need to be able to point to things you’ve done. Not just making changes but getting the fact those changes have been made back out to the community as well. Showing that small change and saying you want to make more will help engage more people.

Kath Browne, Brighton University

“ The more people see positive benefits from getting involved, the more likely they are to continue and the more likely new people are to get involved. Hassan

To maintain momentum and continue engagement it's important that once key requirements are identified, either by the advisory group or through wider engagement, steps are quickly taken to address the issues. These follow-up initiatives might include:

- Updating policies to remove any discriminatory or exclusive procedures that were identified through engagement
- Developing targeted marketing, advertising or outreach activities to promote services to local gay people
- Developing tailored services that respond to the requirements of lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Improving training for frontline staff to ensure they are inclusive of lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Further and more detailed engagement, such as a focus group, on specific issues to get additional information on areas identified by the initial engagement
- Developing key public commitments to address specific issues raised in engagement
- Identifying other public services locally or nationally that may have begun to address the issues raised by engagement
- Seeking specific tailored advice from local organisations and organisations like Stonewall on how to address issues raised in engagement

Evaluating the engagement

In order to learn from and improve future engagement it is important to evaluate, monitor and review your engagement activities. Alongside more formal mechanisms this can also be achieved through ongoing dialogue with the advisory group and local citizens. An important role of a lesbian, gay and bisexual advisory group is to act as a 'critical friend' offering ongoing evaluation of an organisation's work.

It is also important for the advisory group to continually evaluate their own role. An organisation hosting advisory group meetings may want to ask the group at the end of each meeting whether they felt it was successful and whether they would have changed anything about the way the group works.

Reporting back



People get very frustrated if you ask them a question and then don't tell them what you did as a result. Mary Evans, Brighton & Hove City Council



Consultation needs to be meaningful and not disappear into a void. It has to be a two way street. If we give our opinions we need to know they're taken seriously and receive feedback. Graham



The event was really good but I've no idea what has come from it! Rupa

It's vital to provide feedback to local citizens involved in any engagement exercise about what action was taken as a result. People need to feel their contribution was valued and keeping them abreast of subsequent developments is a vital part of making them feel they have an important role in the engagement. Maintaining a steady flow of publicity about the good work that has resulted from the consultation is a good way to manage the relationship and keep the community onside.



Organisations should:

- Continue regular communication with local people to maintain momentum, keep them involved and attract new participants
- Publicise any actions that result from the organisation engaging with local citizens
- Use every opportunity to communicate this via local media and the internet

If the organisation was unable to resolve an issue raised through engagement with local citizens, it is important to acknowledge this and to explain why the situation hasn't been addressed.

Organisations should also thank people who've given up their time. Some organisations have developed a system of awards to recognise particularly significant contributions from local citizens.

“ I give people feedback saying if I haven't delivered it, these are the reasons why. I try to keep people informed and show that I'm incorporating as many ideas that they have as possible. That's how I try and set the tone. Dax Ashworth, Southwark Council

“ Updates on news and activities via Facebook and Twitter would encourage me to contribute. Aysha



7 TOP TEN TIPS

1 Establish a **robust business case**. This will help persuade managers, colleagues and the broader population that local people can help shape the services they pay for and receive by solving problems and contributing to greater efficiency. Clearly defined aims, benefits and outcomes are essential. How do you know what services are really needed by different people if you don't ask?

2 **Research and plan in advance**. Engaging local citizens should come right at the start of a project and an advisory group can help organisations establish if, when and how they should engage more widely. Ensure that the issues you're consulting on are relevant to gay people: asking questions that are not relevant to gay people's everyday lives disengages people, erodes trust and damages the credibility of future efforts.

3 Explain the purpose to staff and service-users. **Be very clear about the scope** and purpose of the exercise and communicate not only what you wish to find out but also what can and can't be changed as a result.

4 Work in partnership with other local service providers to **set up an advisory group of local gay people**. A small, representative body can help to guide your work by acting as a critical friend, offering advice and expertise and pointing organisations in the right direction in their efforts to engage local gay people more broadly.

- 5** Ensure you **communicate clearly** and simply with participants. Any documents to be considered should be in plain English and for clarity you should focus any engagement activity on just two or three simple themes or key questions.
- 6** Consider using a number of **different approaches** that enable local citizens to engage. Different methods of engagement will be appropriate to different groups within the local population. Some gay people may not want to 'out' themselves by attending a public meeting. Avoid loaded or closed questions and facilitate all engagement activities to ensure the tone remains constructive and positive throughout.
- 7** After any engagement activity **thank the participants** and feed back any resultant changes. Try to tackle the issues raised by the exercise but if this is really not possible it is vital that you explain the reasons.
- 8** Remember that the lesbian, gay and bisexual population is diverse. It includes people from a wide range of backgrounds. Try to include a properly **representative selection of citizens** in any exercise that you conduct and be prepared to make an investment of time and money in order to reach people from under-represented groups and enable them to contribute.
- 9** Work in partnership with other local service providers to **save resources** and **avoid duplication**. Local citizens will be more willing to engage on a number of issues at the same time. Local councils, health trusts, police forces and other local services that work together to develop inclusive consultation find the process less expensive and time consuming and get better data as a result.
- 10** Don't forget the **practicalities** such as venues, timing and refreshments. Ensuring engagement exercises are well-resourced and facilitated will demonstrate an organisation's true commitment to engagement.

Stonewall Consult

Stonewall Consult provides tailored services and solutions in sexual orientation equality and diversity across a range of Stonewall activities. Our consultants empower organisations to create positive change and innovation that makes a real difference to lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens and employees. Through Stonewall Consult organisations can gain access to the expertise of Britain's national lesbian, gay and bisexual charity and an array of good practice from Stonewall's numerous private and public partners. For more information on Stonewall Consult please visit www.stonewall.org.uk/consult

Workplace Equality Index

The Workplace Equality Index (WEI) is a free audit tool that allows organisations to benchmark their performance in terms of equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. Completing the WEI allows organisations to assess what they need to do to improve their workplace for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and to consider what impact this will have on the organisation more broadly.

For more information on the WEI please visit www.stonewall.org.uk/WEI



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**HOW TO
ENGAGE
GAY PEOPLE
IN YOUR
WORK**

