



Securing equality

How health services can meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people

How health care services can meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. This is a summary of the LGB service requirements and how you can adapt your service to achieve a 'level playing field'.

Stonewall Cymru in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) have recruited and trained 5 LGB community researchers to research lesbian, gay and bisexual people's experiences of accessing health services in North and Mid Wales and identify some steps for making them more appropriate and sensitive to the needs of LGB people.

For the *Inside-Out Project* the UCLAN Centre for Ethnicity and Health's Community Engagement team brought their Community Engagement model into Wales for the first time and developed skills and knowledge within the LGB community by recruiting and training community researchers to research this issue of specific concern to the LGB community.

What changes would you make if you could influence the delivery of health services?

we asked LGB people in North and Mid Wales this question and their answers can be listed as:

★ **Same treatment for all:**

"I look forward to the day when I don't have to come out as not being heterosexual. Its about time we all got individual tailored services for who we are not who we are not."

"My experience has been positive, both personally and for my late partner, who received both excellent health care and good emotional support during a long battle against cancer. I never felt marginalised or treated differently because of our relationship. I was automatically consulted and we were both

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treated with great respect. Perhaps if this approach to patient care, that is automatic respect whoever you may be, was more widely practised the experiences of health provisions to the LGB[T] community at large would improve."

★ **Awareness, training and education for health staff on sexual orientation issues:**

"Train people up on LGB[T] issues. Stop the fear that people are either going to insult us or that we are going to 'come on' to them - primarily doctors and nurses."

"Contraception was offered quite forcibly and it became quite awkward once I came out and no alternative advice was given"

"health staff and admin staff to be more understanding of LGB issues / and lifestyles and use appropriate language / wording and more tact."

★ **Literature on same-sex sexual orientation:**

"Show us more in posters and the media. I have never seen an NHS image that showed two men or women together its always those stupid gender symbols instead."

"I would appreciate all literature / treatment and health questioning to be aimed at the LGB[T] community as well as heterosexual."

"Dispel myths about smear test for lesbians and other medical care specific to sexual orientation."

★ **Equal treatment of partners/ family of choice:**

"would like them [same-sex partners] to be treated as equally and informed as well as heterosexual partners."

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Over half LGB people had disclosed their sexual orientation ('come out') whilst accessing a health service, but half of these felt that this had changed the attitude of the health care provider. Experiences ranged from a less friendly atmosphere to staff being embarrassed or judgemental.

Over half reported receiving care or treatment as a positive experience but the examples given, ranging from 'being treated for the illness', a lack of negative reaction to 'coming out' to partners being treated equally to heterosexual couples, demonstrate a low expectation of positive experiences.

10% thought they had received inappropriate health advice for their sexual orientation. Inappropriate advice despite having 'come out' was given on contraception, whether to have a cervical smear test and pressure to have a HIV/AIDS test.

A high majority of LGB people said they would register their same-sex partner as their next of kin. The reasons given for not doing so were fear of discrimination, fear of the treatment being affected and lack of confidence that their sexual orientation would be kept private.

Many people said they would feel more confident in accessing health services if the health care professionals gave equal status to same-sex relationships in their literature and culture.

Solutions and outcomes

- ★ **Train all healthcare staff (including administration and domestic staff) on sexual orientation issues both in health care and equality of treatment.** Work with NHS LGB staff networks on ways to promote equality and respect for LGB people.

Expected outcomes:

- An attitudinal shift to disclosure of sexual orientation

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- Appropriate access to health care needs of LGB individuals
- ★ **Improve the recognition, acknowledgement and treatment of same-sex sexual orientation as an identity.** Monitor to find out if you've got it right, not just to see if you have LGB service users.

Expected outcomes:

- LGB person would feel more confident in accessing health services

- ★ **Increase access to specific sexual health services for LGB people.**

Expected outcomes:

- More GUM clinics, more often in more places for both lesbian and gay people.

- ★ **Accept the right of a patient to nominate their same-sex partner or person of choice as their next of kin**

Expected outcomes:

- LGB person would feel more confident in accessing health services

- ★ **Support and work with LGB community researchers / interacters to consult with lesbian, gay and bisexual people on your service provision.**

Expected outcomes:

- Appropriate access to health care needs of LGB people

This leaflet draws upon community led research focussing on lesbian, gay and bisexual people's experiences of accessing health services in North and Mid Wales. Community Researchers in North Wales were Kimberley Cook, Gareth Davies, Stiwart Edwards, Craig Semple, Lowri Williams and Shirley Ann Williams.

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The *Inside-Out Project* was managed by Stonewall Cymru and the University of Central Lancashire Centre for Ethnicity and Health and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Project's work was also supported by the NHS Wales Centre for Equality and Human Rights.

The full report of the *Inside-Out Project* research, and details of the UCLAN Community Engagement model are available from Stonewall Cymru's bilingual website **www.stonewallcymru.org.uk**

For further information:

www.stonewallcymru.org.uk see the **Information Bank section** for:

Counted Out 2003 – First survey of LGB people in Wales

Count us in! 2004 – Report on community support provision and needs of LGB people in Wales

Stonewall Guidelines for Employers – The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2004)

Diversity Champions Scheme - a good practice forum for employers to promote LGB equality in the workplace.

Information Bank Health section explores the specific health care needs of LGB people

www.lgbthealthscotland.org.uk Scotland's Inclusion (LGBT Health) Project