Inclusive Service Delivery

Darren Kent – Foster Carer
Su Downes – Social Worker
Championing Diversity

- Sheffield City Council is a member of The Diversity Champions Scheme since 2004 – proud to be a top 100 employer and striving to improve with each submission.
- Actively using the Workplace Equality Index – shows a measurable commitment to the LGBT community.
- Stonewall Education Champions since 2009 – supportive of new initiatives, such as the development of a schools toolkit to tackle HBT bullying.
- Developing new LGBT guidance & policies – for example the Gender Identity & Re-assignment Policy which support employees with aspects such as changing name, uniform (if in a uniformed service), and time off for medical appointments.
- Consistently promoting awareness across the council – for example, the campaign to encourage the reporting of hate abuse.
- Supporting LGBT employees, embeds inclusion across the organisation, and in turn supports the organisation’s interface with the community.
Visibility in a Fostering & Adoption context

- Recruitment activities are actively inclusive of LGBT communities, and this includes:
  - ‘Myth busting’, and the importance of the quality of communication at the first point of contact between ‘service user’ and organisation.
  - Attending and promoting community events such as Pride and Pinknik.
  - Using Social Media effectively and linking with diversity partners online.
  - Advertising reflects LGBT diversity.
  - What works? Keeping your profile present in communities.
One of our foster carers at Pinknik. Shared on our Facebook page.
Examples of our advertising campaign, reflecting LGBT families fostering. This has worked well for us, and as part of being a member of The Diversity Champions, we receive advice and feedback from Stonewall, and we are moving towards a new campaign where we will use ‘real’ people.
One of our LGBT families, talking about their journey to become foster carers.

This video is embedded in our main promotional DVD which goes out to everyone interested in fostering. The stories are also on ‘youtube’ & Facebook, & the fostering service website.

This keeps LGBT inclusion at the heart of our service.
One of our new adverts, using willing foster carers, who volunteer to be part of promotional materials. Reflecting also, multiple identities, and how a service can be present in, and reach out to, a range of communities.
Needs & support

• Ground up, LGBT led support groups – the fostering and adoption service promotes & supports LGBT carers to meet and form new networks and allies.

• We have helped to make LGBT networks stronger, within services, by joining voices – for example, getting the LGBT foster carers and adopters together.

• Working with our diversity partners – for example, we pay for New Family Social membership for our carers, and also invite diversity partners to speak in the support groups.

• Forming positive working relationships – building trust between ‘service users’ (noting how foster carers are both users of services and fellow professionals!) and front line staff, and the organisation. Actively reflecting on what information we ask people to share with services, and being mindful of barriers to trust.
Further thought...

- **Personal / professional interface**: a point where two systems, organisations, groups meet and interact. Reflecting on how important it is to embed inclusion, diversity and equality in everyday contact, and at a strategic level. To this effect, Sheffield City Council has encouraged the participation of young LGBT representatives in key meetings; Sheffield City Council has also supported and funded a new transgender group in the city, and reviewed how residential services meet the needs of LGBT service users, amongst other initiatives.

- **Questions of identity in accessing services** – looking at the fostering and adoption process as an example, and being mindful of what we ask ‘service users’ to share about their own identity / stories, and how this makes them feel. Being aware that in different areas of their lives, they may be more ‘out’ than others, and taking steps to support service users and understand ‘where they are at’ and respecting this.
• Out in the workplace? Following on from the previous point, our Survey outcomes show that 51-58% of employees may be out in their place of work, and how we must be sensitive to the barriers to declaration. Promoting the use of the Stonewall ‘What’s it got to do with you?’ leaflet, to help employees and service users declare their identity needs, and develop services that meet the diversity of LGBT communities.

• Visible role models – are fabulous we all agree, yet it can raise complex questions. Balancing this with respecting individual choice not to be a role model – for example within a small population of LGBT foster carers, who may or may not wish to be on a promotional materials posted all around the city! Balancing also the needs around confidentiality within service provision.
Using child friendly books with foster carers and adopters to promote inclusion of different kinds of families.

‘It’s Okay to Be Different’ by Todd Parr