



Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender experiences in Somerset

Somerset Social Care Services: Our recommendations

December 2012

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) people in Somerset were asked for their views about social care and health services. We have looked at the views of over 250 people and come up with the following recommendations for social care in Somerset.

Three Simple Changes

There are three very simple changes that services can make which would improve the experiences of LGB&T people in Somerset.

Change 1:

Use positive images:

Display posters, or other media, in public spaces, especially reception areas, which include positive images reflecting LGB&T everyday lives.

Change 2:

Display a mission statement:

that includes the 'Protected Characteristics' in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Change 3:

Mind your language:

Use language that includes everyone. When you use words like "husband/wife" and "boyfriend/girlfriend" you are making assumptions about people. Use more inclusive language like "partner".

For more information about these recommendations or for a copy of the full report, telephone 0844 800 4425 or email info@diversitytrust.org.uk.

What should social care services in Somerset do to improve services for LGBT people?

1. Display a 'LGB&T Friendly' logo

Create and display an LGB&T friendly logo for social care services, especially for frontline services. Display this in public spaces, especially in reception areas.

2. Train your staff

We've developed training especially for health service staff in Somerset. Find it at www.diversitytrust.org.uk.

3. Always remember a 'Person-Centred Approach'

Our understanding of equality and diversity has changed. Previous best practice was considered to be: 'treat everyone the same' - but this approach doesn't properly recognise diversity. A more individualistic, person-centred approach is now considered better equality practice.

4. Set up Specialist LGB&T services

LGB&T specialist services ensure that a culture of safety and inclusion is made available to all. In particular, there is a need for specialist residential homes for older people, particularly with dementia. Other specialist services that respondents mentioned were advocacy and befriending.

5. Use LGB&T Champions

Ensure leadership in LGB&T issues by having an LGB&T Champion at all levels, from social workers to Councillors. LGB&T role models really help to ensure all LGB&T people feel safe, included and represented.

6. Establish staff Support Groups

Establish support groups for LGB&T staff.

7. Improve LGB&T Community development

Comprehensive LGB&T community development and engagement is urgently required. Where groups exist, such as 2BU for young LGB people and the Somerset Lesbian Network, these communities are thriving. There are significant gaps, including but not limited to groups and resources for young Trans people, Trans women, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Disabled and Older LGB&T people, as well as (non HIV and sexual health) resources for Gay and Bisexual men.

8. Monitor your monitoring

You need to know about your customers to make sure that your services are reaching all parts of the community. Make sure that your monitoring is compliant with the 'Protected Characteristics': Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

9. Do more research

We need to find out more about the social care needs of protected groups within LGB&T communities, for example, the needs of older, BME and disabled LGB&T - as well as specific studies about Trans social care experiences and concerns.

The  Diversity Trust

 



In our own words...

LGB&T experiences of social care services in Somerset

“Having moved here five years ago I was shocked at how little services, support groups, and information there was, and still is, for LGB&T people living in Somerset. Being a founding member of Somerset Lesbian Network I am aware of the social isolation, loneliness, and poor mental health this brings to individuals. Local support groups need to be better funded and supported to develop across this very big county.”

Lesbian, age 55

“Our social worker that was assigned to us was fantastic, really pragmatic in her approach and the sexuality element of things didn’t feature unless it needed to be considered in an appropriate and positive way. So we couldn’t thumbs up enough for that.”

Lesbian, aged 42

“I had a bad experience with a social worker, a really bad experience. They normally take you out once a month where we’ll go to a café and stuff like that. It was one of my new social workers and we went to a café and she started asking me about boys. I told her that I was gay. She was very homophobic to say the least and, coming from a social worker, it was poor. I didn’t expect it. I was 14 at the time.”

Focus Group participant

“Can you imagine that I end up in some institution or some situation where I can’t talk about my life?”

Focus Group participant

“I’d like to be assured that provision will be available for my partner and myself to live in a care home together in the same room. If alone, for my sexuality not to be an issue in any way and for true inclusion to be in place. For there to be consistency in place.”

Lesbian, age 58

“Would I be comfortable in a nursing home as an openly gay man? Who knows.”

Gay man, age 37

“When I was first diagnosed with HIV I had a lot of social service care. There was a person who was allocated to the HIV population in the county and it was their job to go round and check that people had everything they needed. That has gone.”

Gay man, 63

“Things have improved over the years and I think they will continue to do so. I think we must continue to ensure that people – regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity – are treated with respect and dignity which is what we all want when we use a health or social care service.”

Lesbian, age 50

“We need a bigger awareness in social care services of LGBTQ issues.”

Lesbian, age 21

