

Deaf and LGBTQ+

A Q&A event for Deaf people with LGBTQ+ identities to gather and learn more about each other's experiences of sexuality and gender identity



Hosted by Leah Francisco (*Deaf and LGBTQ+ Community Activist*) and Jules Stapleton Barnes (*Community Development Worker, LGBT Health & Wellbeing*)

Guest Panelists: Joseph Dunn, David Ellington, Abigail Gorman, Jamie Rea.

BSL Interpreters: Kitty Taylor-Brown, Katharine Terrell.

Event date: Saturday 1 August 2020 **Event location:** Online (Zoom)

BACKGROUND

LGBT Health first hosted a similar discussion event specifically highlighting the needs of LGBTQ+ Deaf people, in 2018. A clear outcome was the need for safe spaces for LGBTQ+ Deaf people to meet each other, while exploring and sharing their lived experiences. Along with the commitment to providing safe social spaces, was the acknowledgement that organisations like LGBT Health should do more to be accessible to LGBTQ+ Deaf people. BSL interpreters are now used in events whenever possible, basic BSL training has been provided for events volunteers and we continue to provide opportunities for LGBTQ+ Deaf people to have their say.

AUDIENCE & PROMOTION

It was important to work with a host and partner that could help guide and inform our discussion and continue to help us reach the wider Deaf LGBTQ+ community. Co-host Leah Francisco shared the event within her own personal networks and on UK Facebook Deaf and LGBTQ+ groups and pages which contributed to a successful turn-out.



Deaf and LGBTQ+ event
LGBT Health and Wellbeing · 158 views · 1 month ago

It was also essential that we provided accessible promotional material in British Sign Language (BSL). Co-host Leah filmed an event description in BSL which was uploaded to LGBT Health's YouTube page, included on the Eventbrite event page and shared on LGBT Health's social media pages.

INTERPRETERS

There was a definite requirement to engage with BSL interpreters with the right skills for this event.

Interpreters comfortable with Queer content, sensitivity towards (and knowledge of) appropriate LGBTQ+ terms and labels, and the willingness to learn from the panel and audience. Adaptability to translate on an online platform (Zoom) was also required.

On the challenges of using a translator as a Non-binary Trans person:

“

Some interpreters don't understand what I'm saying or get confused.

JOSEPH DUNN,
PANEL MEMBER

GUEST PANEL

The panel of Deaf and LGBTQ+ community members and activists Joseph Dunn, David Ellington, Abigail Gorman and Jamie Rea shared their personal experiences of how it feels to be LGBTQ+ in Deaf spaces, Deaf in LGBTQ+ spaces, and the importance of spaces that affirm both.

A question and answer session followed the discussion with questions submitted from event attendees to each of the panel.



On coming out as a Lesbian as a Deaf person:

“

I felt like I was split in two - I had to figure out a way of combining these two identities.

ABIGAIL GORMAN,
PANEL MEMBER



On how BLM has impacted his sense of identity and language:

“

Being Black, Gay and Deaf I didn't know which order they'd go in... but because of BLM, I now say I'm Black first.

DAVID ELLINGTON,
PANEL MEMBER



Panelist
David Ellington

EVENT REFLECTION

Co-host Leah Francisco reflects on the event:

"It was really lovely to see so many people attend this event. It was great to see that Deaf and LGBTQ+ individuals had a safe signing space to talk about anything and ask panelists questions. It was a great experience hearing all panelists stories and learning from them. I am sure it was the same for everyone.

It felt like I received a strong sense of connection and support from this event. I think it is important for them to have a safe space and be able to talk and ask about anything. I hope there will be more events like this in the future as these events provide a valuable source of education and support from LGBT Health, especially from Jules and the volunteers team.

A lot of Deaf and LGBTQ+ people are missing a lot of information and education around LGBTQ+ issues because for most English is not their first language. We need to consider providing more representation and visibility of Deaf LGBTQ+ people to all BSL users. As the founder of Deaf Rainbow Scotland Facebook group, I realise that I need to organise more social Zoom events for this diverse group to prevent isolation."

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

There were twenty four event attendees with all but two of those based within Scotland. Words used to self-describe attendees' identity on an online word cloud included Non-binary, Queer, Bisexual, Gay, Agenderflux, Agender, Demigraysexual, Female She/Her, Male. A post-event feedback poll question "How has the event impacted you today?" showed 88% of the respondents felt more able to take part in LGBTQ+ community activities in the future.



NEXT STEPS

A recurring theme was that there is a distinct separation between the Deaf community and the LGBTQ+ community. Typically, a deaf person is not assumed to have an LGBTQ+ identity and the LGBTQ+ community excludes Deaf people who are LGBTQ+ as little effort is made to enable communication. How do we start to build cohesion between the two? What else have we learned from this event?

Co-host Leah Francisco responds:

From this event I could see myself there is a need for more:

- Access to information in BSL
- BSL access at Pride events (not just in speeches)
- Support provision in BSL for Deaf and LGBTQ+ communities
- LGBTQ+ training to Deaf Community and BSL interpreters
- LGBTQ+ education at schools in BSL
- Deaf and LGBTQ+ visibility in Queer spaces
- Deaf and LGBTQ+ representation in the Arts

On trying to find a place to fit in:

“

There's two different communities - Gay and Deaf.

JAMIE REA,
PANEL MEMBER

On the reality of being Gay and Deaf and accessing community:

“

I have these two different hats I take on and off.

DAVID ELLINGTON,
PANEL MEMBER



USEFUL LINKS

<http://deafgbtqiqa.org.uk/>

Information, support, advice, resources and representation for Deaf people who identify within the LGBTIQ community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9YBWX1EZUE>

Event promotion video in BSL with Co-host Leah Francisco.

<https://disabilityarts.online/magazine/opinion/queer-and-deaf-lynn-stewart-taylor-and-david-ellington-chat-filmmaking-in-bsl/>

Guest panelist David Ellington chats with Disability Arts Online about recent improvements in Queer and Trans Deaf representation in the UK in film.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1454239438028454/>

Scottish Deaf Network Facebook page.

www.lgbthealth.org.uk

LGBT Health & Wellbeing website.

