

# LGBT Mental Health Capacity Building Project

## Impact report



### Introduction

This report aims to share the learning from a pilot LGBT Mental Health Capacity Building Project that was delivered during 2014-2016. This small scale pilot followed on from the successful 3 ½ year LGBT Mental Health Demonstration Project that we delivered during 2010-2013.

Funding from the Scottish Government enabled both of these projects to focus on the barriers that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face in accessing mental health services as well as promoting good practice within mainstream mental health services.

The most recent pilot provided practical advice and support to mainstream providers to explore ways that they could become more culturally competent in meeting the needs of LGBT people who use their services.

This report highlights what the pilot delivered as well as learning gained from this.



### Aims of the Project

The pilot project aimed to work with a small number of statutory and third sector mental health providers to support the development of more accessible and responsive services for LGBT people.

#### 3 Project strands

LGBT Self-Audit Tool

LGBT Mental Health Awareness Training

Ongoing Support for Organisations

The project aimed to build an evidence base around practical steps service providers can take to improve the experience of mainstream services for LGBT people and how best to support that developmental journey.

A key part of this pilot was to engage with a range of mainstream mental health providers in order that they were supported to develop their practice.

This support was offered through three interlinked activity strands:

- **The LGBT Audit Tool:** A practical accessible tool, developed as part of the original demonstration project that enables providers to systematically examine and improve their practice in relation to LGBT inclusion. <Z:\LGBT Mental Health Project\Demonstration Project\Audit Tool\MH-Audit-Tool-FINAL-May-2015.docx>
- **LGBT Awareness Training:** Bespoke capacity building mental health focused training
- **Support for Organisations:** provision of bespoke capacity building support to mental health providers to enable them to work through the Audit Tool and identify action that would enhance and demonstrate their LGBT inclusive practice

## Barriers to accessing services

Lack of specialist services mean that the primary means of support for LGBT people experiencing mental health needs is mainstream statutory and voluntary sector services. The Equal Access Report (published in Nov 2012 in conjunction with CAPS) saw that time and time again many LGBT people can be reluctant to seek support from mainstream services resulting in them not receiving the vital mental health support that they need.

Our findings in the **Equal Access Report** and on-line survey that supported it, demonstrated that there is still much to be done to ensure that people have a positive experience of accessing mental health services. Part of this work is to lessen the gap between perceptions of those working in mental health services as to how LGBT inclusive they think they are, compared to the actual experiences of many LGBT people using services. This report and work undertaken within our advisory group has directly influenced the content of the development of the audit tool.

‘In my previous experiences with mental health professionals, people had often linked my sexual orientation to my mental health conditions and both had felt like labels’

Individuals reported a range of unmet needs such as: not accessing mental health services in relation to a long-term mental health condition due to past discrimination by mental professionals; mainstream services not feeling ‘safe’; not being accepted for who they are (in relation to LGBT identity); no counsellors or counselling services stating they are ‘trans inclusive’; not being able to ‘come out’ to GP and therefore not being able to ask for services; judgments and assumptions from mainstream mental health providers.

Evidence suggests that LGBT people report being **worried about discrimination** when accessing mainstream mental health services.

- 76% of LGBT people are not confident they would be treated with respect in mainstream services and are.
- LGBT people are **5 times less likely to use services** than their peers
- Due to the lack of widespread monitoring of sexual orientation and gender identity within mental health services **LGBT people and their needs remain largely invisible.**

However, despite this clear need, since the ending of the Demonstration Project, the only LGBT specific mental health services for adults in Scotland have been based in Edinburgh at LGBT Health and Wellbeing, the Headspace Project and a Counselling service. Recently LGBT Health has launched a further Mental Wellbeing Project for LGBT people in Glasgow and this includes group work, peer support, 1:1 support and counselling.



## Overview of Pilot organisations

Four organisations were asked to work with us as pilot organisations to represent a range of service provision. We hoped that this would provide valuable evidence for the on-going learning around the issues faced as well as further developing and establishing forums for good practice. The providers we worked with were:

- **Glasgow Association for Mental Health (GAMH):** An independent charity established as one of the principal providers of mental health services in Greater Glasgow. GAMH provides more than 200 hours of community based support every week to people in Glasgow.
- **NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Mental Health Services:** We worked with a number of practices and teams across the city.
- **Edinburgh Napier University Student Support Services:** Student support services which provide advice, support and counselling to students.
- **The Care Inspectorate:** We connected with care inspectors of older adult homes.

## Our work with pilot organisations

### Glasgow Association for Mental Health

The initial focus at GAMH was on training key members of staff. In conjunction with the Head of Training we identified gaps in knowledge, skills and awareness across different projects.



LGBT Health developed a bespoke half day training focusing on:

- LGBT Awareness (including definitions)
- LGBT Mental Health Inequalities
- Barriers to Accessing Services
- Practical actions/next steps to removing barriers

The training was delivered on 2 occasions to team members at a range of different levels across services ranging from Senior Practitioners, Assistants, Project Workers, Administrators and Senior

Management. The trainings were well received and participants identified concrete actions they could take to ensuring their services were more culturally competent and accessible to LGBT people.

In both trainings most participants began exploring what their current practice and perceptions were around LGBT inclusive practice. Through the course of the training they began to understand the barriers LGBT people may face in accessing their services. Participants gained an understanding of the advantages to providing a safe space to allow people to disclose their LGBT identities, to enable them to provide holistic services.

*“As a result of the training I will work to find a way to ask people about their LGBT status so that they know it’s safe to disclose to me, and so that I can then ensure I am providing a support service that best meets their needs.”*

*I” believe I now will be more aware of different needs and feel I have the knowledge to better support individuals.”*

## **Audit Tool**

A short-term working group was formed consisting of the CEO, a Senior Development Worker and Training Manager. The group spent a half day with the Service Manager at LGBT Health and worked through key sections of the Audit Tool together, and developed a practical action plan for taking some of the items forward.

The process identified many areas of strength, including: Staff being supported to develop awareness of working with LGBT clients, services generally being safe for LGBT clients, some policies and procedures were inclusive and relevant and some services had made steps to promote LGBT services. Areas for improvement included: lack of monitoring of LGBT identity, not including questions on assessments relating to LGBT identity, staff being unaware of LGBT service providers and organisations, and better promotion of LGBT inclusion.

## **Impact**

As a result of the project **GAMH has taken steps to be more visibly welcoming to LGBT people** (including having LGBT Helpline posters and programmes in reception areas and including rainbow on new leaflets). To showcase their inclusivity GAMH held a stall at Glasgow Pride.

**Staff are more aware of the needs of LGBT service users** and staff report **having more comfortability and awareness in working with LGBT people**, including having better understandings of definitions and terminology. **Information sheets** including resources on where to go for more information were **distributed** on the organisational intranet, and a resource database was updated to include local LGBT support services.

Although GAMH recognised the need to monitor for LGBT identities, due to commissioning and statutory requirements altering monitoring proved too difficult in the short term, though it remains an organisational goal in the near future.

Finally, **a longer-term relationship has been developed between GAMH and LGBT Health** whose affect will cascade to the different services. GAMH have requested annual training and discussions are underway with the Carers Project to jointly deliver a session.

## NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

We worked closely with NHSGG&C Mental Health Services to deliver training and provide advice and consultation to a wide range of practitioners. We identified the need for staff at all levels to receive awareness raising training. Previous complaints of poor service (including assuming someone's sexual orientation, addressing someone by the incorrect gender, and attributing mental health needs to someone's sexual orientation) were at all levels – psychologists, primary care staff and receptionists.

**Bespoke LGBT Awareness training was developed for different teams and delivered over the course of 6 months.** This included 5 trainings at Treatment Rooms and 2 bespoke trainings as part of an LGBTI Master Class at Rowanbank and Leverndale Hospitals.

Overall, **81 staff members took part in the trainings.** Staff from all levels took part in the trainings including:

- Psychologists
- Nurses
- Specialist mental health nurses
- Receptionists
- GPs
- Equality managers
- Support workers.

The training covered:

- LGBT Awareness, including definitions and language
- Trans specific cultural competency, including health inequalities
- Mental health inequalities and barriers to accessing service.
- Scenario based problem solving specific to the workplace. Often this was based on real-life situations they had encountered.
- Good practice, including developing action plans to make steps to improve inclusivity and services

The trainings were catered for different audiences – for example, some staff had very little LGBT awareness whilst others were interested in furthering their inclusive practice. **98% of participants rated the training as very useful or useful in their practice and indicated that it would have an impact up on their work.**

*"I feel much more equipped to support LGBT people. I now have the resources I need to take forward issues I had experienced previously.*

*"Knowing what words people use to describe themselves helps me to provide a more welcoming service."*

## Impact

Evaluation was captured by pre and post training evaluations, and with the support of a Master's student on placement in the Health Improvement Team.

In the evaluation a number of people indicated that although they thought they used correct language and had good awareness, during the training they realised that they still had a lot to learn.

Many people identified tangible and unconscious barriers that LGBT people may be facing in accessing mental health services and suggested that **as a result of the training they would take practical steps to remove barriers when possible.**

It was acknowledged that many barriers may be institutional in nature such as lack of monitoring around sexual orientation or gender identity and it is therefore important that organisations look at overall practice and systems as well as individual practice if an inclusive environment is to be achieved.

This project helped open doors to services we wouldn't ordinarily reach. We know there are problems with lack of LGBT awareness & poor service, and this has offered the opportunity to finally address them.

Actions that were taken forward included:

- Being more visibly welcoming (including having LGBT service/leaflets available)
- Using non-gendered language
- Knowing where to refer people for specialised support
- Avoiding assumptions about gender & sexuality
- Engaging in on-going training, learning & development
- Knowing what LGBT organisations to consult for ongoing advice

The training 'opened doors' for further discussions and trainings. LGBT Health continues to advise various practitioners and practices in NHSGG&C Mental Health Services in their ongoing LGBT-inclusive practice development.

Napier University Student Support Services undertook the Audit Tool process with the support of LGBT Health & Wellbeing. LGBT Health and Wellbeing's role was to offer support to enable the effective use of the audit tool as well as providing a 'critical friend' to those completing the tool.

Napier undertook a departmental survey to assess good practice and areas for development to inform the work of the Audit process. Following the survey a progress meeting was held to review the survey and the scores from the self-audit. Although many of the staff had already received some form of LGBT awareness training, there was a recognition that it was some time ago and that knowledge around trans and non-binary identities needed updating. The audit process and follow up meeting helped to shape the training to ensure that it met the specific needs of the department.

## Impact

A training was delivered at practitioner level and attended by staff ranging from counsellors, psychologists, head of departments and disability service advisors. The training focused on trans awareness and problem-solving safe space challenges.

Creating a safe space is seen as a key element of making an overall inclusive environment. It is important that those using services know that the space should be safe for them to be themselves and that any behaviour that makes people feel excluded or unsafe will be challenged. A Safe space creates an environment that people feel welcomed, respected and comfortable to be themselves. Examples of a statement of the "Safe Space" was given to staff and this was then used to develop their own statement which in turn has been adopted by the whole team.

*"Everyone who attended the workshop has been able to take away information about LGBTI issues and discrimination and really useful information that will help us to deliver a much better, safer more welcoming service to our students."*

As a result of the training and Audit Tool work **the department developed a Safe Space commitment** that is displayed in all counselling rooms, in the offices, and distributed through the university's intraweb.

**The safe space commitment is available for all students to access through the student portal.** They have also **made steps to ensure LGBT inclusivity is clear on publicity**, including adding information to their website and developing a LGBT network.



## The Care Inspectorate

Bespoke training was delivered to a group of Care Inspectors at a national training day in Perth. As the training group's area of work was within older people's care homes, we took the opportunity to co-deliver this a member of our LGBT Age Reference Group (a group of older LGBT community members who work to increase visibility of older LGBT people).

The full day training aimed to:

- Improve awareness of the needs of older LGBT people
- Improve knowledge of language relating to gender identity, sexual orientation and confidence of workers in talking about them
- Increase understanding of the mental health needs of LGBT people
- Create an awareness of the issues that older LGBT people face in accessing services
- Support the creation of strategies for improving inclusivity

The event was fully booked and training was delivered to 16 Inspectors and Associate Inspectors from teams across the country. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many people starting the training saying they didn't have the language to ask about LGBT identities and ending the day with the confidence to ask relevant questions.

*“My newly gained knowledge will enable me to be more inclusive and not exclusive through ignorance.”*

The training highlighted some systemic barriers, including the lack of questions around sexual identity and gender expression as part of routine inspections. A small working group was convened and have been developing suggestions for better inclusive practice.

## Overall delivery of training within pilot

### Training in Numbers

**8** LGBT Mental Health Awareness **trainings** were delivered

**156** professionals took part in the trainings

96% of participants found the trainings useful or very useful for their work



## Next steps

Although funding for the pilot LGBT Mental Health Capacity Building Project ended in October 2016, organisations involved in the work committed to continuing to develop their LGBT inclusive practice.

We have seen that there is huge scope for further work to develop LGBT inclusive capacity building learning within mainstream organisations. Whilst some organisations can at times find it a challenge to commit significant time to developing this given other challenges they may face is clear that there is an appetite for organisations to do this and be supported to do this.

The organisations we worked with in this pilot have all made very positive inroads to developing their LGBT inclusive practice and we wish to thank them for their time and contributions. We will continue to advise the pilot organisations on LGBT inclusive practice.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing has built valuable relationships and will continue to explore ways to support other organisations seeking this type of external support.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing will continue to deliver a comprehensive and multifaceted range of programmes that promote wellbeing and build the confidence, resilience and social capital of individuals and communities and will continue to share any learning from this work with organisations.

The Audit Tool continues is available for download and we will continue to promote the use of the tool and other resources to organisations across Scotland.

## Further information

For general information about this project or our overall range of services contact Stacey Webster (Head of Services) [stacey@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:stacey@lgbthealth.org.uk)

For more information about our mental health services in Glasgow please contact our Service manager Kelly Minio-Paluello [kelly@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:kelly@lgbthealth.org.uk).

For more information about our mental health services in Edinburgh please contact our Service manager Annette Rae [annette@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:annette@lgbthealth.org.uk)

For more information about LGBT Health and Wellbeing or to download any of our publications or resources please visit [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk).

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