



The housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Wales

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Wales has received little attention in research or policy development. In response to this, SPARK Research was commissioned by Stonewall Cymru and Triangle Wales, with funding from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), to explore the range of housing needs and problems facing LGB people living in Wales and to identify examples of good practice among housing service providers. To achieve these ends, the research involved a self-selecting sample of LGB people who had experienced housing problems and a variety of housing service providers.

KEY FINDINGS

Housing problems/housing needs experienced by LGB people in Wales

- Harassment in and around the home was the most prolific cause of housing problems and the most significant factor in the need for lesbian, gay and bisexual people that took part in this research, to move home. Problems of harassment occurred across all tenures, which ranged from verbal through to physical abuse and tended to escalate over time. Members of the local community, such as neighbours or youths perpetrated the most common form of harassment experienced by the LGB participants involved in this research.
- Homophobia was a significant cause of housing problems, where it manifested within the home, particularly in the form of rejection from family members, being forced out of the family home, ostracised by family members or

being physically attacked by a family member. This was shown to have particular implications for young LGB people who were dependent on their parental/guardian unit for housing as well as financial, material and emotional support. The data makes clear that young LGB people are vulnerable in this regard.

- The research showed that such was the lack of resources and help available, many participants had no option but to leave their home in order to avoid further harassment and homophobia. Some, however, did not have the finances to do this and the majority was reluctant to leave their homes in any case.
- Tenure specific housing problems were particularly salient. Those LGB participants in shared housing or renting privately experienced problems around sharing communal areas, being accepted by flatmates and landlords, and having a lack of privacy. All of which impacted on their quality of life.
- Homelessness and living in insecure accommodation increases levels of vulnerability for LGB people, reducing the likelihood of seeking assistance. This was largely influenced by fear of rejection, secondary victimisation and low self-esteem.
- The majority of LGB participants involved in this research did not seek or receive assistance from statutory or voluntary housing support services. This was identified to result from two main factors. Firstly, a reluctance to approach mainstream services for fear of discrimination was shown to also instil a reluctance to disclose sexual orientation, which served to prevent the full nature of housing problem becoming known and a misdiagnosis of

needs. Secondly, there was a lack of knowledge about LGB specific support services in Wales. Both LGB people and mainstream service providers displayed the latter.

- LGB participants involved in this research stressed that their initial contact with a service provider was a significant influence on the degree of confidence they had in disclosing their sexual orientation.

Issues raised by housing service providers

- The majority of local authorities and housing associations that took part in the study demonstrated interest in delivering services specifically to LGB people but few had detailed knowledge of the needs and expectations of this group or access to suitable training.
- The dearth of information on the housing-related needs and experiences of LGB people in Wales is sustained and reinforced because few services monitor access, applications or services by sexual orientation. The quantity of LGB people and the types of services accessed by LGB people, therefore remain unknown.
- Sexual orientation issues are not mainstreamed into housing provider policies or practices. While, commonly, sexual orientation appears as part of a statement on equality of opportunity, very few housing providers participating in the study provided guidance to their staff or customers on how to treat sexual orientation issues. This leads to a vacuum in guidance, delimiting the ability of service providers to recognise, handle and respond effectively to housing problems linked to someone's sexual orientation.

- Lack of monitoring acts as a barrier to developing understanding of the scale and nature of LGB housing need, and hence providing appropriate responses.
- Direction and guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government was identified by housing providers as a way of prioritising the mainstreaming of equality to incorporate the housing needs of LGB people into the policies and practices of Welsh social landlords.
- Specialist LGB services have an important role in disseminating their specialist skills and knowledge as a means of assisting mainstream housing advisors with service delivery.
- Service providers recognised opportunities to learn from policy development in other equality areas, such as race equality.
- The WAG and Supporting People makes clear that there are certain practices, pertaining to LGB housing needs, that should already be being carried out. The findings show that this is not necessarily happening.

Recommendations derived from the research... ...for housing providers

- Awareness training should be undertaken by all housing service providers and should serve a three fold purpose: to raise awareness of the housing issues, problems and needs faced by LGB people in Wales; to deal with LGB clients in a sensitive manner, equip service providers with knowledge of appropriate language to use and so on; to make housing service providers aware of specialist LGB services in Wales.

- Improving staff understanding of LGB housing need through training courses and practical guidance should be set in a comprehensive corporate policy framework on sexual orientation.
- All housing service providers should state and demonstrate a zero tolerance policy against homophobia.
- All housing service providers should monitor access to housing services by sexual orientation, including housing allocations, transfers, waiting lists, and anti social behaviour cases.
- All service providers should consider what preventative action they could take to meet LGB housing need, which should include reviewing existing policies and practices to identify whether the full range of services are open and accessible to LGB people.
- All housing service providers should develop working relations with LGB organisations to identify how best to improve services and open up consultation processes to the LGB community.
- Sensitive allocation policies should be established to ensure that people are safe and secure in their home and not placed in a threatening environment.
- To ensure tenancy security, all housing service providers need to ensure that the rights enjoyed by opposite-sex couples are also provided to same-sex couples.

...for the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

- The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) should ensure that the statutory duties that local authorities have towards equality issues are enforced.
- The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) should support the development of LGB consultation fora to enable the views of LGB people to contribute to policy development and service delivery.
- The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has a role in raising the profile of lesbian, gay and bisexual housing needs at a national level and across service providers.



I • INTRODUCTION

The housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Wales have received little attention in research or policy development. In response to this, SPARK Research was commissioned by Stonewall Cymru and Triangle Wales, with funding from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), to explore the range of housing needs and problems facing LGB people living in Wales and to identify examples of good practice among housing service providers.

This report presents the findings on the housing problems and needs disclosed by a sample of LGB participants who had experienced housing crisis. The report further identifies the role service providers – such as local authorities (LA), housing associations (HA) and other services, including the Police and LGB specific agencies – can have in meeting the housing needs of LGB people in Wales. The findings are supported by evidence from existing literature.

1.1 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of the research were to:

- Discern the key causes of housing crisis and housing need related to the sexual orientation of LGB people in Wales
- Identify effective service provision to LGB people in Wales who experience housing crisis
- Elucidate the statutory and regulatory requirements Welsh social housing providers are obliged to meet in relation to LGB people
- Provide recommendations for changes to the policy and practices of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), local authorities (LA), housing associations (HA) and other service providers that would help to better meet the housing needs of LGB people in Wales
- Identify ‘good practice’ in addressing the housing needs of LGB people and preventing housing crisis, which could be promoted to Welsh social landlords
- Suggest possible changes to secondary legislation and to regulatory requirements as well as suggestions to petition changes in primary legislation.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This research was instigated by the recognition that a comprehensive analysis of the housing needs of LGB people in Wales does not exist. A consequence of which is the inadequate recognition of LGB people and their housing needs in policy or service provision.

To set the primary research into context and to help with the development of the research tools, a literature review of

relevant work was carried out, as was a review of legislation that affects the approach service providers can take to meeting the needs of LGB people¹.

To contextualise the findings presented in this report, it is necessary to make clear the point of departure from which the approach, research strategy and research tools, developed. This necessarily requires acknowledgement of the literature that aided the preparation of this study. There is currently a dearth of literature and research pertaining to LGB housing problems and needs, which is applicable to or reflective on both within and beyond the Welsh context.

Key points that arose from the literature review² that had particular application to the development of the research strategy included:

- *LGB people constitute an ‘invisible’ and ‘hard-to-reach’ population*

Existing literature made explicit that LGB people constitute a relatively invisible and ‘hard-to-reach’ population, particularly for research purposes (Dapp et al 2001, McManus 2003). In addition, literature derived from housing research demonstrated that focussing on LGB people in housing crisis compounds difficulties in recruiting participants (see Dunne et al 2002, O’Connor and Molloy 2001). All literature makes clear that the difficulties involved in researching LGB people principally centre on issues of access and invisibility. Issues relating to invisibility and difficult to reach populations are salient to the Welsh context, particularly with respect to rural areas, which have been noted for rendering LGB people geographically isolated with further consequences of personal/social isolation. This had particular salience to the research strategy devised (see section 1.3).

The research questions were in-part informed by the findings of Stonewall Cymru's reports (2003, 2004). Stonewall Cymru (2003) provided a snapshot of life in Wales, focussing on LGB people's experiences and attitudes. The report was succeeded by an audit of existing services and a service needs assessment (Stonewall Cymru 2004).

These consecutive studies demonstrated that there exists a diverse LGB community in Wales and identified the existence of a limited number of specialist LGB advice and support services. Stonewall Cymru (2004), however, showed that access to specialist services was low, and that more could be done to develop and support specialist services. It also demonstrated the inconsistency of mainstream service delivery, whereby quality depended on the level of understanding of individual officers on sexual orientation issues, rather than a robust comprehensive policy framework within which all providers worked. With respect to these findings, this research sought to identify good practice from mainstream service providers, consider the role of specialist providers and consequently propose how to optimise the use and effectiveness of existing services with respect to LGB housing needs.

- *The experiences of housing problems/needs identified in previous research*

Research that has looked at the housing problems and needs of LGB people, has shown that the role sexuality can play is complex (see Dunne et al 2002, Lemos and Crane 1994, O'Connor and Molloy 2001, Smith and Calvert 2001, Turnbull 2001).

Research and literature has shown that housing problems and needs can arise for LGB people as a result of intolerance and

homophobia, which can manifest in a variety of ways, from rejection from family and/or friends to harassment and violence from family, house-sharers, carers, landlords, neighbours and local people (see Dunne et al 2002, O'Connor and Molloy 2001, Smith and Calvert 2001, Turnbull 2001). Such sources of homophobia and intolerance have been shown to create housing problems and needs and in some cases directly or indirectly force an LGB person to leave their home. This research was concerned with building on this data, but with a Welsh focus.

Literature made clear that homophobic harassment, verbal abuse, physical violence, bullying and so on were highly prevalent among the experiences of LGB people, and were significant contributory factors in the creation of housing problems and housing needs (see Dunne et al 2002, Lemos and Crane 1994, Morrison and MacKay 2000, O'Connor and Molloy 2001, Stonewall Cymru 2003, Turnbull 2001). This data was a particular influence on this research, and measures were taken to explore the extent to which harassment, violence or bullying influenced a person's security of housing, the extent to which these feature as causes or contributions to housing problems and the ways in which a housing problem can be accentuated by such factors. The application of this line of enquiry, however, went further to consider the extent to which and the ways in which housing service providers were able to respond to housing problems that are caused by homophobic harassment. This point of departure further provided a platform from which to identify how the attitudes (or perceived attitudes) of generic society can create barriers that prevent access to, or the take up of mainstream housing services by LGB people.

Housing problems and needs for LGB people have also been

discussed by previous literature in relation to housing or support service providers. Discrimination and homophobia from housing service providers and other service users was shown to compound the housing problems faced by LGB people. It was also shown that there was reluctance among LGB people to approach mainstream service providers for assistance with their housing problems and an insecurity preventing the disclosure of sexual orientation for those that do access mainstream service providers because of a fear and anticipation that discrimination and homophobia would ensue (Lemos and Crane 1994). Housing problems have also been shown to arise – or be compounded – for LGB people when service providers do not have adequate understanding to recognise and address the problems and needs presented (McLean and O'Connor 2003). This data informed the research questions and measures were taken to explore the extent to which LGB people engaged with housing and support service providers, the nature of reception they received, whether they disclosed their sexuality and if applicable, the reasons for refraining to do so in addition to exploring the extent of understanding, policies and practices service provider demonstrated with regard to housing problems and needs faced by LGB people.

1.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

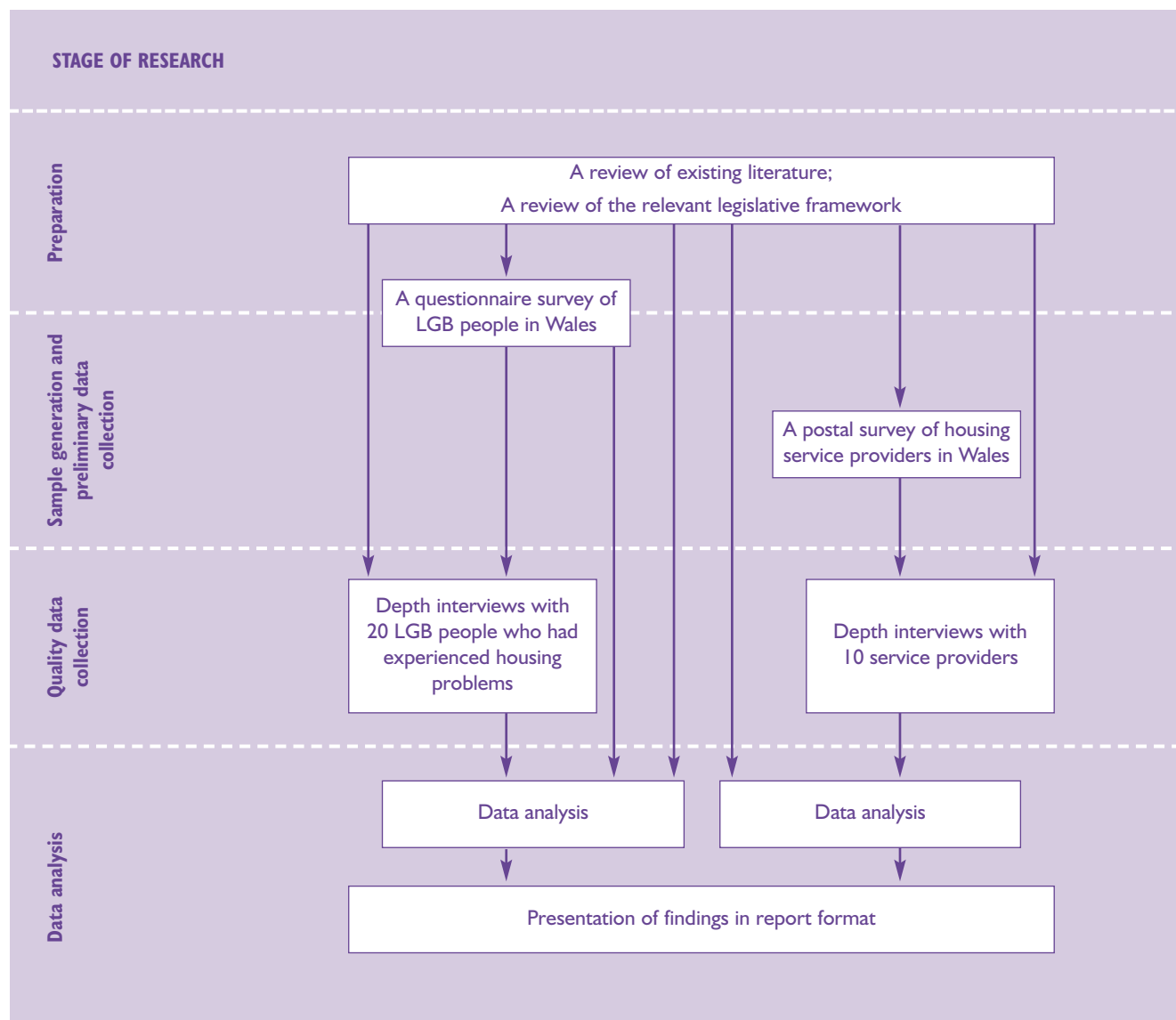
To meet the aims of the research (as set out in section 1.1) the research strategy followed two discrete agendas. The first was concerned with understanding the types of the housing problems and needs faced by a sample of LGB people and the second focussed on the roles, policies and practices of a sample of housing service providers. Both aspects of the research strategy involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. In summary they included:

A review of existing literature (see Appendix 1)

To help set the research into context, and to learn from earlier research work, a literature review was carried out at the beginning of the research process. This phase sought to review the current literature in order gain a detailed understanding of and identify what has been established as constituting 'good practice' to meet the housing and support needs of LGB people. The literature review built on existing reviews already undertaken for the commissioning client.

A review of the relevant legislative framework (see Chapter 2)

A review of relevant legislation was undertaken, particularly concentrating on the housing policy context in Wales to help set the scene for the research. In considering the housing needs of LGB people in Wales and the policies and procedures of social landlords' in relation to this group of people, there was also a review of the legislative requirements and the equalities debates currently being debated in the public policy arena.



A questionnaire survey of LGB people in Wales

A survey was disseminated amongst LGB people across Wales. It was designed to identify a sample of LGB people who had experienced housing problems. Fifty-seven survey respondents self-identified that they had experienced a housing problem.

Depth interviews with 20 LGB people who had experienced housing problems

Follow up, one to one depth interviews were conducted with 20 LGB people who had identified their experiences of housing problems on the questionnaire survey. The purpose of the depth interviews was to explore the nature and cause of each individual's housing problems in detail.

A questionnaire survey of service providers

Questionnaire surveys were disseminated by post among a variety of service providers, including all 22 Welsh local authorities, which generated a response from 12; a sample of 35 Welsh housing associations that achieved a response from 17; and in addition to this phase of the strategy a further questionnaire survey was disseminated among a sample of Welsh voluntary sector organisations, which achieved 9 responses.

Depth interviews with 10 service providers

Depth interviews were conducted with 10 service providers that had responded to the postal survey. The interviews involved representatives from local authorities, housing associations and other voluntary sector agencies.

The diagram left, is an illustration of how the research strategy operated.

The diagram illustrates that once reviews of relevant literature and legislation had been completed the research strategy divided into two discrete agendas for the purpose of data collection. The first focussed on LGB people in Wales who had experienced housing problems and the second concentrated on housing service providers within Wales. These are discussed in turn.

1.3.1 RESEARCHING HOUSING PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY LGB PEOPLE IN WALES

1.3.1a Creating a research sample

To discern a sample of LGB people in Wales, who had experienced housing problems, it was necessary to employ means of recruitment that were suitable for widespread dissemination among the wider LGB population in Wales³.

A quantitative questionnaire survey was indiscriminately disseminated among, and made accessible to LGB people across Wales. It was primarily designed to elicit respondents who had experienced housing problems, but also served a secondary purpose by posing generic questions to obtain views from the wider LGB population, on what specific services were needed for LGB people in housing need.

The quantitative questionnaire survey was devised and distributed widely during August/September 2004 and January 2005. As lesbian, gay and bisexual people are a very hard-to-reach group for research purposes, a wide net was cast for responses. Methods included:

- The survey was advertised widely through posters in local service provider offices, including GP surgeries
- Flyers were circulated to a range of organisations, including those on the Triangle and Stonewall Cymru mailing lists
- Flyers were distributed at public events, including Cardiff Mardi Gras

- Flyers were put on display at Triangle Wales and Stonewall Cymru offices
- Existing networks, including internet forums were used to advertise and distribute the questionnaire survey
- The questionnaire survey was made accessible online through the SPARK research website and through links with Stonewall Cymru website
- A press release was produced to coincide with the launch of the questionnaire survey in August 2004 and was circulated among interested media, including the gay and mainstream press
- The research team attended the Cardiff Mardi Gras and directly asked people to participate in the survey
- The survey was available in English and Welsh
- A freephone line was made available to request a copy of the survey
- People were asked to encourage their friends and peers to participate in the survey

The questionnaire survey was presented as quantitative, but included open-ended questions that generated qualitative data from those respondents that had experienced housing problems. The survey generated 161 responses, 57 of which disclosed information directly relevant to the experience of varying degrees of housing problems. Twenty of these fifty-seven respondents further participated in an in-depth qualitative, exploration of their experiences.

It is important to state that the achieved sample is not statistically representative of LGB people in Wales. Non-probability methods were used. The sample was self-selecting in that respondents opted into the survey. The sample, therefore, can only be indicative of LGB needs not a demonstration of them.

The questionnaire survey was anonymous, but for those respondents that had self-identified experiences of housing problems, there was an option to provide contact details if they were willing to take part in an in-depth interview. This information was however excluded from the database into which the survey responses were entered, thereby maintaining anonymity of questionnaire survey respondents. All questionnaire survey responses were entered into SPSS and analysed.

1.3.1b Generating qualitative data on the housing problems experienced by LGB people in Wales

Follow up, one-to-one depth interviews were conducted in Wales during October and November 2004, with twenty LGB people who had identified their experiences of housing problems on the questionnaire survey.

The selection of participants for in-depth interviews was made on the basis that they represented a broad range of housing experiences and incorporated experiences and views from single LGB people, LGB couples, from a variety of Welsh locations and across different tenures. There were participants from urban Wales, rural Wales, and from each of the regional districts in Wales.

The purpose of the depth interviews was to explore the nature and cause of each individual's housing problems, their experiences of solving their crisis, and views on the role of service providers in meeting their needs. A topic guide was agreed with the client prior to the interview stage of research, which aimed to direct the conversation during the interview.

With only one exception (a participant who preferred a telephone interview), depth interviews were face-to-face and held in the participants' home at a time that convenient to them. All interviews tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Each transcription was analysed using a matrix map. A matrix map sets out issues by themes, enabling a detailed picture to be built up across the client group on what issues they faced, how they tackled them and whether their situation was unique or whether there were similarities with other cases.

1.3.2 RESEARCHING LOCAL AUTHORITIES, HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

1.3.2a Postal survey of housing service providers in Wales

In parallel with the questionnaire survey disseminated among LGB people in Wales, postal surveys were distributed to all 22 local authorities, 35 of the largest housing associations, according to stock size, operating in Wales and 37 voluntary sector service providers in Wales.

The surveys sought to gain an understanding from Welsh local authorities, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations policies and practises, how they impacted on LGB service users and where possible, the surveys sought to identify examples of good practice. The base questions for each survey were the same, with the survey adapted to ensure that it was relevant to each survey group. The survey was available online, and could be emailed to the research team.

Completed questionnaire responses were received from the following:

- Local Authorities – 12 completed questionnaire responses
- Housing Associations – 17 completed questionnaire responses
- Other Voluntary Organisations – 9 completed questionnaire responses

The staff that completed the questionnaire were from a variety of grades, and included Directors, Heads of Housing, Diversity Officers, Housing Strategy Officers and Policy Managers.

The survey was a combination of quantitative and qualitative information. Where possible the data was entered into SPSS to enable comparisons across types of service provider. However, due to the open nature of many of the questions, a qualitative approach was taken to analyse the detail of a respondent's answer. As the number of responses was small (38 in total) the task of comparing qualitative answers was not too onerous, yet it was large enough for common responses to be identified and logged.

1.3.2b Stakeholder depth interviews

Once surveys were returned from local authorities, housing associations and voluntary organisations, 10 were selected for depth interview. Stakeholders were selected on the basis of their location in Wales and their broad demographic make up. In total, three local authorities, three voluntary sector organisations and four housing associations were interviewed during November and January 2005.

The interviews held with stakeholders was intended to provide a more in depth understanding of how local authorities, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations policies, practices and procedures impact on LGB services users. Interviews further enabled an exploration of the reasons for policy development, or lack of policy development specific to LGB community members.

Interviews were approximately 45 minutes to an hour in length and with the exception of two, all were carried out via the telephone. As with depth interviews of LGB participants, the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed using a matrix mapping approach. The interviews were not given in confidence, although interviewees had the opportunity to speak off the record where they felt it appropriate.



(1) See Appendix 1 and Chapter 2, respectively.

(2) See Appendix 1 for the full literature review.

(3) Refer to Appendix 1 for a discussion on the issues and difficulties involved in researching LGB people, particularly those in housing crisis.

2 • THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

This chapter reviews the legislative framework in which Welsh local authorities and housing associations provide housing services. It outlines the housing context and then considers wider legislative influences, such as the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Civil Partnerships Act 2004. The aim of the chapter is to provide a basic, contextual understanding of the overall legislative environment in which housing service providers operate, and is not intended as a comprehensive review.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Although devolved government was introduced in Wales in 1999, creating the Welsh Assembly Government, legislation passed by the UK Parliament remains applicable to Wales.

The basic framework of the law is set down in Acts of Parliament. These often provide scope for the Secretary of State for Wales to make rules and regulations in secondary legislation to ensure that the legislation is adapted appropriately for any particular Welsh circumstance. It is these powers that the Welsh Assembly Government assumes.

The Government of Wales Act (1998) sets out the statute that established the National Assembly for Wales, in which the Welsh Assembly Government operates. Section 120 (1) of the Act places duties and functions on the National Assembly for Wales. It reads, “[t]he Assembly shall make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that its functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people”.

This has been a key motivator in developing equality of opportunity in Wales. Chaney and Fevre (2002) in their review of the early implementation of the Act, state that real

change is taking place, but that there needs to be continued political will if lasting change is to occur.

The Assembly reflects the Equality Duty in its guidance and regulations to local authorities on housing matters. Ministers have emphasised that it is important that a hierarchy of equality is not created and that all equality strands are considered equally. Consequently providers of housing must ensure that the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people are recognised alongside the needs of other minority groups.

2.2 WELSH HOUSING POLICY

2.2.1 National Housing Strategy

Welsh housing policy is guided by the National Housing Strategy ‘Better Homes for People in Wales’ (2001), which sets presents a vision for housing backed up by a national action plan.

■ Vision for Housing in Wales

“We want everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable, housing: to be able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families.” (p8)

Chapters I and J of the National Housing Strategy both cover issues of equality and inclusion, in relation to meeting the needs of specific groups, and in tackling homelessness. The Assembly expects equality of opportunity to be “ingrained in all policies and guidance” (p91). The Strategy does not recognise LGB people as a specific needs group, focusing instead on issues around mental health, disability, race and age. However, a full commitment to equality of opportunity implies that sexual orientation would be recognised as a potentially relevant dimension to consider.

The Strategy also recognises the importance of access to housing advice, and where necessary to specialist housing advice (p15), which, although not stated implicitly, could cover advice to lesbian, gay and bisexual people. While funding is being made available for independent housing advice services in Wales, there is acknowledgement that access in some areas, including some rural areas remains limited.

The National Housing Strategy dovetails with the Supporting People Strategy ‘Guidance to Local Authorities on the arrangements for the implementation and Administration of Supporting People in Wales’ (February 2003). Along with the commitment to fair treatment for all, the Supporting People guidance recommends sensitive planning, to include meeting the specific needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people (p55). It suggests that services can be developed as distinct services within projects or as separate services. The guidance goes on to suggest that Supporting People Planning Groups (who are responsible for identifying and meeting local needs) should seek ways to include members of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community.

2.2.2 Local Housing Strategies

The National Housing Strategy (2001) set the vision from which individual local authorities were required to develop Local Housing Strategies. The aim of the Local Housing Strategy was to meet the needs of the diverse communities living within each local authority's jurisdiction.

Several key requirements form the basis of local housing strategies, which should be:

- Based on a robust assessment of housing need and demand, addressing the requirements of all housing tenures
- Framed within the wider context of the authority's Community Strategy and consistent with other corporate strategies and plans
- Developed in conjunction with relevant stakeholders through local housing partnerships under the leadership of the local authority
- Subject to wide-ranging consultation at draft strategy stage, ensuring that all sections of the local community have an opportunity to communicate their views
- Monitored and reviewed by the local authority in conjunction with local partner organisations

2.2.3 National Homelessness Strategy

As part of the Welsh Assembly Government commitment to eradicating the need for rough sleeping, the National Homelessness Strategy (March 2003) was designed to complement and reinforce the aims of the National Housing Strategy (2001) in Wales. The introduction of the National Homelessness Strategy (March 2003) was supported by the

'Code of Guidance for local authorities on allocation of accommodation and homelessness' (April 2003), both of which mention the need to provide appropriate services to LGB people, is intended to have a positive impact on service provider approach to monitoring services by sexual orientation, and on the type of services made available to LGB people who are homeless or in housing need.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual housing needs receive recognition within the National Homelessness Strategy. Chapter 12 refers to lesbian, gay and bisexual people as disadvantaged groups experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. The Strategy emphasises that while specific services may be needed for disadvantaged groups, mainstream services should also be available to meet the needs of these groups.

The National Homelessness Strategy acknowledges that young lesbian, gay and bisexual people are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and that while sexual orientation is not always the sole or primary cause of homelessness, social attitudes can complicate and compound the experience of homelessness for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Through the strategy the Assembly "require local authorities to consider the specific needs of lesbians, gay and bisexual people in their Local Homelessness Strategy" (p32).

In addition the 'Statutory Code of Guidance for local authorities on allocation of accommodation and homelessness' (April 2003) emphasises the need to meet diverse community needs and to ensure equality of opportunity in service delivery. Section 4.88 of the Code, relating to allocation of homes, identifies lesbian, gay and bisexual people as one of the diverse groups whose needs should be met.

■ *Statutory Code of Guidance for local authorities on allocation of accommodation and homelessness.* *Section 4.88*

"Local authorities and their partners should ensure that allocation processes take account of any particular difficulties experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people such as homophobic harassment" (p34)

Similarly in the Statutory Code as it relates to dealing with homelessness, lesbian, gay and bisexual people are identified as a particular group who may have specific needs.

■ *Statutory Code of Guidance for local authorities on allocation of accommodation and homelessness.* *Section 8.63*

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people: Experiences of stigma and harassment very often cause and exacerbate the problems of homelessness, and access to specialist advice may be needed. Further advice on assessing these needs may be obtained from Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Forum Cymru" (p71)⁴

The Code recommends that local authorities work with partners to identify and provide specific services, such as advice and representation, where needed. It also recommends that local authorities should plan on lesbian, gay and bisexual people seeking advice on homelessness or prevention of homelessness, and hence be prepared to have relevant advice available (p83). This implies that a degree of training and raising awareness among housing advice staff should be undertaken. As part of the Code, housing organisations are required to take steps to identify any unfair discrimination, which includes monitoring equal opportunities at each stage of the allocation process as well as ensure that tenants are aware of their rights under equal opportunities legislation to lodge complaints of discrimination.

2.2.4 Regulation of housing associations

Welsh registered social landlords⁵ own 52,000 homes (Welsh Housing Statistics 2004), which are regulated and part-funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (under section 46 of the Housing Act 1988 and paragraph 5 of Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1996). The Assembly introduced the Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales on 1st April 2005 (replacing the Regulatory Requirements). Section 2.3 of the Code sets out a fundamental obligation that housing associations must fulfil in relation to equal opportunity.

■ Section 2.3.1 of the Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales

“Associations should actively promote respect for diversity and equality of opportunity, work towards the elimination of discrimination in all their activities, and promote good relations between people of different racial groups.”

The Code provides guidance on how the Assembly will judge whether housing associations are meeting their fundamental obligations. Issues pertaining to sexual orientation are included in the assessment, in the following terms:

- Evidence of compliance with sex discrimination legislation
- Promotion of equality and tackle discrimination through housing activities such as allocations, housing management, resident involvement and as employers
- Tackling unfair discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation

There is an expectation that housing associations will have clear equal opportunities policies and associated action plans to help them achieve their fundamental obligations.

2.3 OTHER RELEVANT LEGISLATION

2.3.1 Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act (1998) signalled a major shift in the way UK public bodies worked within the UK. It introduced:

- Convention rights and responsibilities that form a common set of binding values among public bodies and the public, throughout the United Kingdom
- A requirement that public bodies must incorporate human rights principles when they make decisions about individuals' rights
- A requirement that human rights must be reflected in all public policy development

In particular, Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) provides an individual with the right to protection from discrimination in relation to all the other rights guaranteed under the Convention. Individuals are entitled to equal access under those rights and cannot be denied equal access to them on the grounds of status.

Article 14 states clearly that sexual orientation is an 'impermissible ground of discrimination.'

Local authorities are public bodies under the Act and consequently are required to consider Convention Rights in all cases. The Act also covers bodies such as housing associations where they carry out public functions on behalf of a public body, and they are therefore required to abide by its principles to ensure that the housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people are met and not discriminated against in the allocation of, delivery or management of social housing.

The following box presents an example of how the Human Rights Act 1998 has manifested with respect to LGB rights and housing. This is relevant to this research because it illustrates the standards that are increasingly coming to fruition for LGB people and their rights in the housing sector.

The case of Ghaidan v Mendoza, saw the right established for same-sex couples to succeed to a tenancy in the event of the death of a partner. Mr Mendoza had lived with his partner for thirty years, yet when his partner died his landlord refused to accept him as his partner and took him to court. Human rights arguments were presented and the court held that:

- *References in legislation referring to 'living together as husband and wife' had to be read under the Human Rights Act as including Article 14*
- *Sexual orientation was now clearly recognised as an 'impermissible ground of discrimination'*
- *Courts would not defer to Parliament where there were issues of discrimination that have 'high constitutional importance'.*

The Mendoza case was the first major gay human rights case and the first case in which the Court of Appeal used the Human Rights Act to rewrite previous legislation. It follows an earlier House of Lords judgement, Fitzpatrick v Stirling Housing Association, in which the Court ruled that a same-sex partner could be considered to be a member of the tenant's family but did not say that they had the same rights as 'husband and wife'.⁶

2.3.2 The Civil Partnerships Act 2004

The Civil Partnership Act became law on 18 November 2004. From December 2005, the Act enables a new legal relationship of civil partnership, which two people of the same sex can achieve through registration. It provides same-sex civil partners with certain benefits, equality of opportunity and parity of treatment in a wide range of legal matters with those opposite-sex couples who enter into a civil marriage.⁷ Important rights and responsibilities accrued from forming a civil partnership include:

- A duty to provide reasonable maintenance for your civil partner and any children
- Assessment for child support and tax and benefit purposes in parity with that experienced by opposite-sex marriages/unions
- Equitable treatment for the purposes of life assurance
- Employment and pension benefits
- Recognition under intestacy rules
- Access to fatal accidents compensation
- Protection from domestic violence; and
- Recognition for immigration and nationality purposes

Of particular importance to local authorities and housing associations, the introduction of civil partnerships will provide lesbian, gay and bisexual couples in a registered civil partnership, with the right to tenancy succession following the death of one partner. In practice it will help to providers to recognise and provide for same sex couples and to promote data collection and monitoring based on sexual orientation.

2.3.3 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 expanded the definition of ‘associated persons’ to include same-sex cohabiting couples. This has enabled same-sex cohabitants to apply for occupation orders under section 36 and section 38 of the Family Law Act 1996, creating parity with the rights enjoyed by opposite-sex cohabitants. It has also enabled the application for non-molestation orders by virtue of being a cohabitant, rather than being part of the same household as the respondent. Housing organisations must ensure that their domestic violence policy does not exclude same sex couples, and provides appropriate services for them.

2.3.4 Criminal Justice Act 2003

“The Criminal Justice Act 2003 provides increased sentences for assault involving or motivated by hostility based on disability or sexual orientation in England and Wales.” (www.stonewall.org.uk).

Hate crime has been defined by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) “a crime where the perpetrator’s prejudice against any identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised.”⁸

In addition the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) published a policy statement on homophobic crime in 2002 (CPS Annual Report 2002-2003), aimed at sending a zero tolerance message on hate crime and to increase confidence of the criminal justice system among victims. The statement makes it clear that homophobic behaviour will be prosecuted effectively through the Criminal Courts. The CPS followed up the statement by holding a conference in February 2003 in Cardiff that discussed ways to narrow the justice gap within certain crimes, including homophobic crime.

Service providers need to be aware of the policy statement to ensure that users of their services that may be victims of homophobic hate crime are empowered to report the incidents and that homophobic behaviour will not be tolerated.

2.3.5 Removal of Section 28 from the Local Government Act 1988

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, was concerned with the ‘prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material’. The box below illustrates Section 28 as it appeared in the Local Government Act 1988.

28. – (1) The following section shall be inserted after section 2 of the [1986 c. 10.] Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition of political publicity) –

2A. – (1) A local authority shall not –

(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;

(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease.

(3) In any proceedings in connection with the application of this section a court shall draw such inferences as to the intention of the local authority as may reasonably be drawn from the evidence before it.

(4) In subsection (1)(b) above “maintained school” means,–

(a) in England and Wales, a county school, voluntary school, nursery school or special school, within the meaning of the Education Act 1944; and

(b) in Scotland, a public school, nursery school or special school, within the meaning of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

(http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880009_en_5.htm)

Section 28 created a great deal of confusion. Local authorities in particular were unclear as to what services they could provide for LGB members of their communities. This had detrimental implications on not only the provision of public services, including housing and support services, but also on the ways in which homophobic discrimination was tackled and addressed.

Section 28 was repealed in July 2003 and when the Local Government Bill received Royal Assent in September 2003, Section 28 was removed from the statute books. The legacy, however, is such that many people, including service provider, remain unaware that it has been repealed.

2.3.6 Equality in Employment Legislation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Statutory Instrument No. 2003/No. 28/27) came into effect in December 2003. The regulations translated the EU Directive 2000 into domestic law, making it unlawful to discriminate in relation to employment and training in relation to sexual orientation. In short, from December 2003, it has been unlawful for any employer to discriminate against employees and potential employees because of their sexual orientation⁹. The Regulations are protections against direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

2.4 Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)

In November 2004 a proposal for a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) was announced. The intention is that the CEHR will incorporate six equality strands including sexual orientation, gender, race, religion and belief, disability and age and offer a cross-stranded approach to tackle multiple discrimination. The Government's White Paper – Fairness for All: A new Commission for Equality and Human Rights – published on 12 May 2004, states that among the fundamental objectives of the CEHR is “the creation of a

new institutional framework to overcome discrimination and advance equality and human rights in our society, bringing together in one body responsibility for equality, human rights and good relations between and within communities”(8)¹⁰. The aim of the CEHR then, is to address and challenge discrimination, create a fairer, more inclusive, cohesive and prosperous Britain and champion equality, diversity and human rights, and promote good relations between communities that is based on mutual respect and understanding¹¹.

While there are concerns about the potential effectiveness of the CEHR, and the advantages and disadvantages of grouping together diverse equality needs, the inclusion of sexual orientation as a distinct equality issue is valuable. Aside from the proposals for the CEHR the legislative situation presents a hierarchy of equality issues, whereby sexual orientation equality issues do not have the same legal protection that other equality issues are permitted.

The detail of the function, role and remit of the CEHR is currently being developed by a Task Force, made up of specialist advisors. The Chief Executive of Stonewall is a Task Force member, along with others who have an interest in sexual orientation issues and diversity.

However, there is a growing movement within society who would like to see the introduction of a Single Equality Act, with powers to implement and act to ensure equality for all. For example the Commission for Racial Equality, Stonewall and members of the Equality and Diversity Forum (www.edf.org.uk) would all like to see a Single Equality Act. A single Act would prevent a hierarchy of equality, and bring together complex strands of existing equality legislation. Stonewall Cymru, in their response to the proposals for a CEHR, stated:

“Sexual orientation equality issues do not have the same legal protections that other equality issues have... LGB people still have no statutory protection from discrimination in the provision

*of goods, facilities and services... without a harmonised legislative framework, preferably through a **Single Equality Act**, the CEHR will be less effective and there will be confusion for stakeholders.”¹²*

(4) The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Forum Cymru is now Stonewall Cymru.

(5) Registered social landlord (RSL) is the technical or legal name for a social housing provider registered with the Welsh Assembly Government. Most RSLs are housing associations but trusts, co-operatives and companies may also qualify and throughout the report the generic term housing association is used to capture all registered social landlords.

(6) For more information on these cases see: <http://www.lawreports.co.uk/civnovc0.2.htm> and http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/partnership/housing/default.asp

(7) For more information on this Act see: <http://www.stonewall.org.uk>

(8) This quote was taken from Stonewall's website: http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/violent_hate_crime/default.asp

(9) See *dialog (2003)* for details of these regulations. See Stonewall (2004) for guidelines for employers.

(10) http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/project/consultation_govtresponse_nov2004.doc

(11) http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/project/consultation_govtresponse_nov2004.doc

(12) Paragraph 4 Government White Paper – Fairness for all: A new Commission for Equality and Human Rights: Stonewall Cymru response: August 2004.



3 • RESEARCH PARTICIPANT’S DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates the profile of the 57 LGB participants that disclosed the experience of housing problems on the initial questionnaire survey distributed to LGB people in Wales.

The chapter illustrates the sample profile by self-identified sexual orientation; age; the tenure of a participant when they experienced housing problems; current tenure; and commentary also reflects upon issues of ethnicity, (dis)ability and a participants’ first language.

3.2 OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 1 illustrates the profile of LGB survey respondents that disclosed housing problems in terms of their self-identified sexual orientation.

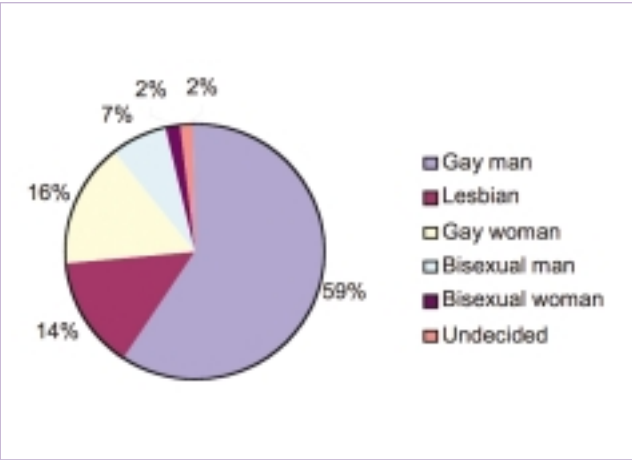


Figure 1: Profile of LGB participants by sexual orientation
Base no: 57

Figure 1 shows that 59% of participants self-identified themselves as a gay man compared to 30% who self-identified as either a lesbian or gay woman. The lower than anticipated figure for lesbians parallels research elsewhere which shows that lesbians and gay women are even harder to reach, for research purposes, than gay men (see for example the Scottish Executive’s mapping of services undertaken in 2004/5, see also Morrison and Mackay 2000, O’Connor and Molloy 2001, Patrick and John 1999).

Figure 2 illustrates the profile of LGB survey respondents that disclosed housing problems in terms of their age.

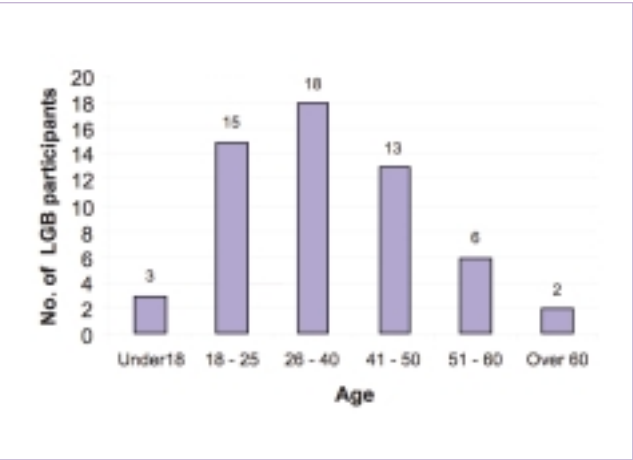


Figure 2: Profile of LGB participants by age
Base no: 57

Figure 2 shows that there was a diverse age profile among the research participants. LGB people across the age spectrum had experienced housing problems. Significantly, however, 32% of the LGB participants that disclosed housing problems were under 25 years old. The implications of the benefit system, creating and compounding vulnerability to housing problems for LGB people under 25 is discussed in later chapters.

Ethnicity

Thirty four (59%) of the sample defined themselves as White British and a further 32% defined their ethnic origin as Welsh. The remaining 8% self-identified as other ethnic origin groups, including Irish, European and mixed race. Unfortunately the numbers are too small to analyse in any further detail.

Disability

Sixteen (28%) of the 57 respondents with housing problems classified themselves as having a disability. Of the 16 people in the survey who said they were disabled, 11 identified as gay men.

Language

The majority of the sample (88%) stated English was their first language, the remaining 12% identified their first language as Welsh.

Intimate relationship status

Housing problems were not confined to single LGB people. Twelve (21%) LGB participants that disclosed housing problems also had children, who were affected by their housing situation. Gay men were proportionately as likely to

have childcare responsibilities as lesbian/gay women. There was a mix of single parent families and same sex couples with children, for example eight same sex couples had children and five single gay men had children. The majority of those with children were over 41 years old.

3.3 HOUSING CIRCUMSTANCES

Housing problems, experienced by LGB participants, occurred across all tenures, as Figure 3 below illustrates.



Figure 3: Tenure at the time housing problems occurred

The single most common tenure for respondents at the time they experienced their housing problems was in the parental/guardian home. Half of all young LGB participants (9 out of 18) under 25 years old were living with their parents/guardians at the time their housing problems occurred. Among the under 25 age bracket there was also disproportionate representation among those in hostel accommodation or in

university halls of residence. Eight out of the 12 LGB participants who identified themselves as owner-occupiers at the time they experienced their housing problems, were over the age of 25.

The questionnaire also inquired into the current tenure of LGB participants who had experienced housing problems (see Figure 4). While for some participants their housing problems were concurrent with the research period, others talked retrospectively about housing problems they had experienced in the past. For some participants, therefore the tenure in which they experienced their housing problems was the same tenure and indeed for some the same house, that was also identified as their current tenure. The profile data however showed that participants who had housing problems in the past, particularly those whose housing problems had occurred in the parental/guardian home, were more likely to own their current tenure, and less likely to still remain in the parental/guardian home.

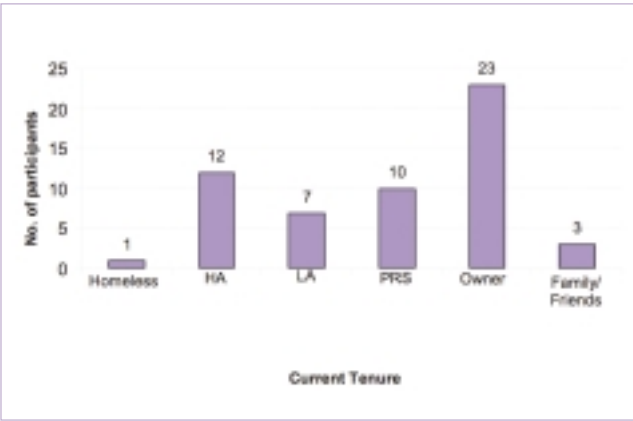


Figure 4: Current tenure
Base no: 56

The profile data showed that social landlords played a significant role in housing those LGB people who had experienced housing problems while living in the private rented sector. Of the ten private renters who experienced housing problems, at the time of the research four had moved into social rented accommodation. Four had remained in the private rented sector and two had become owner-occupiers.

Four out of the five HA tenants who had housing problems were still HA tenants, while one had since become an owner occupier. Of the eight LA tenants who had a housing problem, four were still LA tenants, three had become HA tenants and one had moved into the private rented sector. Social landlords had provided accommodation to four of the fourteen of those participants who had experienced problems within their parental/guardian home. However the majority, seven, had bought their own property, while just two remained in the parental/guardian home.

The profile data also showed that those participants who were owner-occupiers at the time their housing problems occurred tended to remain owner-occupiers. Of the twelve owner-occupiers, there was one exception who had moved into the private rented sector.

4 • RESEARCH FINDINGS: THE CAUSES AND NATURE OF HOUSING PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY LGB PARTICIPANTS

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire completed by fifty-seven LGB participants who disclosed the experience of housing problems. This chapter, however, lends itself to thematic analysis, particularly drawing on case study material gathered from in-depth interviews conducted with twenty participants from the LGB sample¹³.

This chapter looks specifically at the type of housing problems the participants' experienced and explores the triggers for the housing problems discussed the events that took place and the outcomes.

4.1 THE CAUSES AND NATURE OF HOUSING PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY LGB PARTICIPANTS

Each participant had experienced one or more of the following housing problems:

- Homelessness
- Domestic violence
- Relationship breakdown
- Harassment in or around the home
- Pressure to move out of the home
- Financial difficulties in maintaining the home

The housing problems had generally been caused by the negative behaviours, reactions, actions and attitudes of other people towards their lesbian, gay or bi-sexualities.

4.2 NEGATIVE REACTIONS, ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF OTHER PEOPLE TOWARDS LGB SEXUALITIES

The experiences disclosed by the LGB research participants made clear that the disclosure, exposure or assumptions made about their lesbian, gay or bi-sexuality was a significant, if not sole, trigger to their housing problems. Participants were clear in their opinion that another's negative response to their sexual orientation had played a role in creating or contributing to their housing problem. In cases of being rejected by the family, and forced to leave home, and in cases where neighbours were overtly homophobic, the link is clear to see.

For many participants, the disclosure, exposure or assumptions made about their lesbian, gay or bi-sexuality brought about negative behaviours, reactions and actions from a variety of people including family members, neighbours, work colleagues and employers. LGB participants experienced verbal abuse, physical abuse, intimidation, ostracism, rejection and being made to feel uncomfortable in the home. In some cases the chronic and extreme nature of the abuse or intimidation led directly to participant's becoming homeless.

Table 1 shows that twenty-four out of the fifty-seven participants (42%) identified that their neighbours' reactions and actions towards their sexuality, played a significant role in creating and/or sustaining their housing problems. Neighbour abuse, harassment and/or intimidation was the most frequent cause of housing problems among gay men and women over 40. Only one participant under 25 reported having a housing problem caused by a neighbour while three reported housing problems due to the negative reaction of other community members, such as young people.

Source of negative reactions and actions towards a participants sexual orientation	No. of participants
Neighbours	24
Family	17
Local Community	17
Friends	10
Housemates	8
Work Colleague	8
Landlord	4
Employer/Teacher	4

Table 1: Source of negative reactions and actions towards participants' sexual orientation

Source: 57 respondents – the numbers add up to more than 57 because participants were able to tick more than one option

Seventeen participants identified their housing problems to have a direct relation to the negative reactions and actions precipitated by family members. This was the experience of almost half of all participant's under the age of 25. However, negative reception from family members was experienced by participants across the age spectrum. Five participants (29%) were over 40 years old and the remaining four (24%) were between 26 and 40 years old.

Family breakdown was a common cause of housing crisis among the LGB participants where one or more family member had issued a particularly negative reaction towards the disclosure or exposure of the participants' sexuality. Housing problems that arose in this context ranged from the experience of tension and discomfort in the home, verbal abuse, rejection and

direct homelessness as well as homelessness implicitly forced onto a participant because they feared physical violence.

Negative reactions from friends and housemates were also reported as a cause of housing problems. Participants described experiences of intimidation, harassment and/or ostracism from friends and housemates when they became aware of the participants' sexual orientation, oftentimes creating a situation where the participant was no longer able to continue living in the same accommodation. Within the research sample, gay men were shown to have experienced more problems with friends who issued homophobic reactions to their sexuality, compared to the lesbian/gay women within the sample.

Several participants expressed shock at the vehemence of rejection they had experienced from their friends and other people they had disclosed their sexuality to. The following quote illustrates this point:

"I've had friends since primary school, right though comprehensive school, and then when I realised my own sexuality I went to them first, before I went to my parents. Overnight they just had nothing to do with me."

(Young gay man, small town in Mid Wales).

There was a consensus expressed from those participants who had lived in both urban areas and smaller towns in Wales that attitudes within smaller towns were more negative than in larger urban areas. The following quote illustrates this point:

"You take it for granted that it's okay to be gay in a world that's homophobic really. And then when you move back to a community you've come from, and you are isolated, and you realise just how hostile the world really is."

(Gay Man, living in an urban area in North Wales)



4.3 HOMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT

Homophobic harassment was a particular and prolific manifestation of the negative reactions and actions experienced by the LGB participants in this research. Examples of harassment in or around the home included:

- Verbal abuse
- Graffiti
- Vandalism to property and possessions
- Burglary
- Physical assault
- Arson

The LGB participants that took part in this research made clear that harassment, which was homophobic in nature, was the main cause of housing problems, housing crisis and the most significant cause of the need to move or leave home.

Homophobic harassment occurred across all tenures and was experienced both within and outside of the home. Perpetrators were most commonly identified as either neighbours or young local people. Experiences of harassment ranged from verbal abuse to physical violence and damage to property and possessions. Participants also made it clear that the homophobic harassment they experienced was rarely a one-off incident, but rather ongoing with the propensity to escalate over time.

Participants described how their experiences of homophobic harassment had significant and detrimental effects upon both their emotional well being and quality of life. The complex effects of harassment were explained by one participant who was fearful of leaving his home but simultaneously felt vulnerable and scared in his home:

“It got to the point where I would just go home as late as possible, just stay out until 4:00am... literally not have the TV on, not

have the lights on... I was absolutely petrified that if they knew I was in, it would be a nightmare.”

(Gay man living in an urban area in South Wales)

Homophobic harassment was discussed by several participants as an experience that spanned a number of years and escalated over time, starting with verbal abuse, often by young people or an individual neighbour, moving to more constant verbal abuse with the potential for physical violence. One participant described how verbal abuse from young people in the area he lived escalated into physical assault:

“They hit me about the head and everything, on the doorstep itself... I fell backwards into my home, and they came in after me, saying queer bastard and so on...”

(Disabled gay man living in a small town)

Incidents of homophobic harassment were rarely instigated by a sole perpetrator, but rather a number of perpetrators. One participant, for example, explained that he had become the target of anti social behaviour by local people. He explained that Police involvement acted as a catalyst for the threats and harassment, cumulating in vandalism, graffiti and attempted arson from several different gangs of youths.

The perception that there are anti-gay attitudes among some young people was a concern raised by a number of LGB participants. Youths were discussed as a particular source of homophobic harassment, intimidation and as a significant contributory cause of housing problems for some of the LGB participants. The case study below illustrates the experiences of a couple that took part in the in-depth interview stage of this research.

Their case illustrates clearly how the anti-gay attitudes and behaviour of youths within their local area detrimentally affected their housing and their everyday lives.

■ Case Study 1. Bryony and Alice

Bryony lived in her previous home in a small village since the mid-1980s. Bryony identified her housing problems to have begun when her elderly neighbours died and relatives of the neighbour acquired the tenancy. Bryony and Alice began to suffer abuse based around the issue of being same sex parents. However, Bryony emphasised that the difficulties she suffered were set in the context of a number of overlapping prejudices which were exacerbated by the poverty of the area in which she lived. She identified cultural barriers between the indigenous Welsh speaking population and the non-Welsh speaking population and other groups such as hippies and university students.

Bryony and Alice suffered abuse from two main sources. A gang of 15-20 children would persistently chant ‘lesbian’ at them, throw eggs at the windows, put dog excrement and burning paper through the letterbox and tie the front door shut. Bryony and Alice explained that they would take it in turns to try to talk to the children and their parents. The second level of abuse came from adults which as well as verbal abuse included the persistent vandalism of their cars. Bryony and Alice described several occasions when they hid in their home and did not put the lights or the television on, so as to avoid the abuse.

The reaction of the Police was varied. Initially the assistance was poor, their situation and complaints were not taken seriously and dismissed. Following further abuse, however, the Police obtained a harassment order against the neighbours. Attempts were made to record the vandalism by setting up CCTV but this effort was impeded by the neighbours who positioned wrecked cars to block the cameras.

Bryony’s only recourse was to move and it took time for her to build the resources to do so.

Bryony stressed that local schools have an important role to play in educating young people about different sexual orientations, which was a sentiment shared by many other participants. Generally it was felt that schools failed to

address the issue. There were instances disclosed by research participants, where they or other LGB people had approached a local school in an attempt to resolve ongoing harassment but had not received a positive or helpful response from the school.

British Crime Surveys¹⁴ have shown that the anticipation and fear of crime, harassment or physical assault, can be as detrimental to a person's well being as an actual experience of crime, harassment or physical assault. The findings from this research parallel these assertions. LGB participants demonstrated that the fear and constant anxiety of the potential to be threatened, harassed or assaulted because of their sexual orientation does have a significant impact on personal well being.

4.4 TENURE SPECIFIC HOUSING PROBLEMS

Some housing problems were tenure specific while others were tenure neutral, such as homophobic harassment, which was experienced in all tenures.

Tenure specific housing problems that were discussed by participants included for example, problems in shared housing around sharing communal areas, being accepted by other house sharers and landlords, and having a lack of privacy, which impacted on participants' quality of life.

Within the research sample, four gay men reported having housing problems because of the negative reactions of house-sharers.

The following case study illustrates Jo's experience to show how homophobic harassment and in her particular case, transphobia, within shared housing created a situation where the participant had no choice but to leave the accommodation as a matter of haste.

■ Case Study 2. Jo

Jo is a bisexual male to female transsexual, whose housing problems became particularly profound while she was in shared housing as a student at University. Jo experienced verbal abuse and harassment from other tenants in her Halls of Residence. The harassment was transphobic and Jo felt intimidated while she lived in the Halls, particularly when a University-based religious society tried to show her the 'error of her ways'.

Although there was a LGB society at the University, Jo felt that some of its members were hostile to transsexuals. Jo was in a situation where she could not continue living in the Halls because of the harassment she endured and as a result was forced to move out of the Halls and sought a flat shared with other LGB people.

A second example of tenure specific housing problems disclosed by the participants of this research derived from rejection by family members whilst the participant was living within the parental/guardian home and was dependent on family members for financial, emotional and material support. The experience of participants whose housing problems were rooted in the parental/guardian home ranged from being directly forced to leave, ostracised by family members, physically attacked by a family member to situations where a tense and deeply uncomfortable atmosphere caused the participant to leave home. The following participants' quote describes how disclosing his sexuality provoked abrupt and direct rejection from his parents. The event led directly to his housing crisis.

"I told my parents I was gay and they basically said you can leave the house now, we don't want to know."

(Young gay man from a small town)

A third example of tenure specific housing problems relates to the experiences discussed by participants who lived independently, in either private renting, social renting or as owner-occupiers. They related experiences of housing problems that derived from relationship breakdown and domestic violence, which in some cases caused a participant to become homeless. Other housing problems specific to independent living that were disclosed reflected geographical and personal isolation.

Housing problems specific to the social rented sector centred on the response of a landlord to harassment or the threat of homelessness. Some LGB participants made clear that felt that service providers did not understand or take on board their specific problems and needs and that they felt alienated by policies and practices upheld in the social rented sector, which led to feelings of victimisation.

4.5 APPROACHES TAKEN BY LGB PARTICIPANTS TO TACKLE THEIR HOUSING PROBLEMS

Participants in this research discussed a number of approaches they had taken in attempt to tackle their housing problems. An individual participants' approach reflected the nature of their specific housing problem, their ability to access informal support and professional advice, their knowledge of support services as well as their perception of service providers, such as the local authority, housing associations and the police.

Thirty-two participants approached a service provider for assistance with their housing problems, while twenty-five participants relied solely on finding their own solutions. There was evidence that individuals negotiated with family members; talked to neighbours to seek a solution; sought alternative accommodation in the private rented sector; accessed informal networks; or just lived with their housing problem.

Approaches included:

- Negotiating with those people who had issued negative reactions and actions towards the participants' sexuality, such as family members
- Talking to neighbours in an attempt to resolve the problem affecting their housing situation
- Seeking alternative accommodation
- Approaching their landlord for help
- Approaching the local authority for help
- Contacting the police
- Seeking advice and assistance from voluntary agencies
- Approaching local schools to see if they could influence the behaviour of local young people

Table 2 below illustrates examples of action and outcomes across tenures.

Conflict in the family home
Siblings negotiated on behalf of the gay person with other members of the family to diffuse immediate tension
Could not afford to get out of the family home so had to muddle through
Moved out of the family home and no longer talks to one or both parents
Private landlord
Made regular contact with the landlord complaining about flatmates
Got in touch with the university housing office that helped terminate their contract and helped them find somewhere else to live
Avoided communal areas
Social landlord
Went to a solicitor and negotiated with the housing association to re-house them
Moved out over night and the local authority re-housed the person

Table 2: Examples of actions and outcomes to housing crisis by tenure

Where housing problems had arisen because participants had 'come out' to family members, several participants had sought to reason with their family in an attempt to be accepted and reconcile differences. Several participants mentioned the role that siblings had in supporting them, including providing temporary lodgings while in negotiation with parents. Participants explained that reasons for wanting to build bridges with family members, while often including a desire to remain living in the family home, was more concerned with avoiding ostracisation and re-establishing oneself as a valued member of the family.

Participants who were living independently demonstrated a desire to stay in their homes, and not be forced to consider moving to another home or another area. The variety of approaches adopted to tackle the housing problems experienced by this faction of the research sample included directly approaching perpetrators of harassment and abuse and seeking assistance and support from services such as the police.

As an extreme solution to housing problems and often as a last resort, some participants felt they had no choice but to move their home. Where finding alternative accommodation at short notice had failed, the result was homelessness, and several participants had become homeless as a result of someone reacting negatively to their sexual orientation.

4.6 EFFECTS OF HOUSING PROBLEMS ON LGB PARTICIPANTS

The effects of the housing problems experienced by the LGB participants were vast and diverse, with serious knock-on effects. Those disclosed included:

- Fear of leaving the home
- Suicidal thoughts or actions
- Stress, sleeplessness
- Loss of self esteem
- Mental health problems, including nervous breakdowns
- Strain on existing personal relationships
- Loss of employment
- Dropping out of the education system

It was not uncommon for participants to feel isolated, lonely, anxious and distressed, both during and as a result of their housing problems. Participants disclosed the experience of depression, stress, nervous breakdown and even attempted suicide. The following quote illustrates one participants' experience:

"I ended up being medicated on anti-depressants and I didn't want to commit suicide but I didn't want to be alive either. It was just too painful to go through it all at the time."

(Gay man from North Wales in his 50's)

Several participants disclosed that they had experienced mental health problems as a result of trauma, anxiety and stress caused by the experience of homophobia and housing problems. In one case this led to a nervous breakdown and consequently economic inactivity.

Research findings show that the combination of homelessness, harassment and ostracism accentuates the vulnerability of the individual and therefore increases the likelihood of experiencing

health problems. One gay woman stressed that the harassment she experienced from people in her local area was linked to her increasing mental health problems.

Housing problems, particularly those that derived from on-going harassment were discussed by some participants in this research, to put a strain on personal relationships with friends and partners, even those who had been together for a long time. The following quote is an example of this:

"With all this going on, he would shout at me and I would shout at him. Well he ended up leaving – we were together for eight years. In the end he just said, I've had enough and I'm off. I was just left there on my own."

(Gay man under 40)

Several participants also stressed how their housing problems had impacted negatively on other people, examples included:

- Children of LGB participants also endured a degree of the harassment their parents suffered, which was noted to cause stress and affect performance at school
- Where LGB participants were forced to leave an area, they were no longer able to provide support to other members of the community
- Non-problematic neighbours would suffer due to the harassment, abuse, vandalism, other negative behaviour and so on that occurred in the proximity

Participants also talked about more positive outcomes of their housing problems, where for example, the experience had provided motivation to establish support services.

Examples included:

- Setting up a police support group for the council
- Get involved in campaigning for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights
- Get involved in services supporting young people

(13) All participants have been given pseudonyms and all details that might be a source of identification have been either removed or changed.

(14) The British Crime surveys are available at:
<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/bcrsTitles.asp> and
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hosb1801.pdf>

5 • RESEARCH FINDINGS: ACCESS TO SERVICES

This chapter presents findings on the extent to which lesbian, gay and bisexual participants involved in this research accessed support services when they faced housing problems, their expectations and their experiences of those services. The chapter considers a variety of housing and non-housing related services that are both LGB specific and mainstream.

5.1 TYPES OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

When considering service providers, this research distinguished between those that specifically serve the LGB community and those that are mainstream services. The latter included local authority housing departments, housing associations and housing advice services that were not LGB specific.

It was not necessary in this research to map the range of services – be they specialist or mainstream – that could be potentially accessed by the LGB community. This task was effectively undertaken by Stonewall Cymru (2004). The Count Us In report (Stonewall Cymru 2004) annotated a variety of LGB specific services in Wales to illustrate that these were primarily staffed by volunteers and aimed at advice, support and social facilities. Some services targeted a particular LGB groups such as deaf LGB people (Dragons Club) motorcycle enthusiasts (Gay Bikers) or young people (GYL project) or themes such as mental health (Mind Out Cymru) or safe sex (MESMEC).

In relation to housing there is only one specialist LGB organisation in Wales – Triangle Wales.

■ Good Practice Example

Triangle Wales offers help, advice and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in housing need across Wales. The services include a helpline, one-to-one mentoring and floating support which is available to LGBT people of all ages. A supported accommodation service, which consists of four self contained flats in a converted house, is also available to LGBT people between the ages of 16 and 25, who have appropriate support needs. Referrals can be made in person by the young person or through other agencies.

Triangle Wales is currently negotiating nomination rights with housing associations for move on accommodation and has compiled a list of ‘gay friendly’ private landlords for LGB people looking for accommodation.

5.2 LEVEL OF ACCESS

Over half of the LGB research participants (56%) had accessed a housing service when their housing problems occurred. These services included local authority homelessness departments and advice centres. The remaining 44% of the LGB participants involved in this study did not approach any housing service when in housing need. No information was collected on the reason why this group did not use services, but this is an important question that would form part of a future research project.

Table 3 shows that the most commonly accessed services were those of housing associations. This was primarily in the form of accommodation and for existing tenants, advice on how to manage housing problems, such as neighbour harassment. It was not necessarily the case that only existing HA tenants

accessed housing association services, people in other tenures looked to HAs for help. For example, four HA tenants sought assistance from housing associations, alongside four private renters and four people who were living with family or friends. Six LA tenants also accessed HA services.

Service	No of LGB participants who have accessed services
Housing association	22
Local authority	21
Advice centre	8
Hostel accommodation	7
LA homelessness department	6
Supported housing project	4
Day centre	1
Care home	0
None of the above	25

Table 3: Services used by LGB people in housing need
Base number: 57: column two equals more than 57 due to the option of being able to tick more than one service accessed

Relatively few LGB participants (8) had accessed an advice centre, and while the figures were very small they showed that those using advice centres were disproportionately participants living in the private rented sector.

5.3 LGB PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

5.3.1 Housing providers

Twenty-eight LGB participants commented on whether they felt that the local authority, housing association or other voluntary agency they had approached understood their needs. Half said that the service provider had understood their needs while a half thought that they had not.

A number of factors influenced LGB participant's experience of services including:

- The office environment in which they reported their housing problem (e.g. an open plan office put people off identifying their sexual orientation)
- First impressions of the responsiveness and understanding of front line staff towards housing problems associated with sexual orientation
- Previous experience of using a service and experience of secondary victimisation.
- The effectiveness of the action taken (i.e. if action resolved their housing problem)

Participants that accessed more than one service experienced different levels of understanding, as the following quote illustrates:

"Most services endeavoured to understand the specific problems I had and might experience because of my sexuality. But some were ignorant or plainly unwilling to consider the influence of my sexuality on my housing situation and needs."
(Young Gay man under 25 living in urban South Wales)

Those who felt that service providers did not understand their needs can be further divided into two categories: those who had disclosed their sexual orientation to the service provider and those who had not. For those who had not disclosed their sexual orientation there were various reasons given that pivoted on fears over how the service provider might react and the potential for discrimination and a reduced service as well as the perception that a service provider would simply not understand the participants' situation.

For those participants that had disclosed their sexual orientation to a service provider there was a general consensus that they faced a lack of understanding rather than experienced direct and intentional discrimination. The following quote encapsulates this consensus well:

"They weren't homophobic, they just didn't understand my housing needs – that I did not want to share a room with a man."
(Gay man commenting on living in a hostel)

The lack of understanding received from some service providers extended to a complete mis-diagnosis of the housing crisis and needs in one participants' case. Case study 3, below, illustrates Tom's experience of a local authority that did not recognise or accept that Tom's homelessness situation was a direct product of his need to flee same-sex domestic violence.

■ Case Study 3. Tom

Tom is a gay man whose housing problems begun whilst he was a university student living with his boyfriend. Tom suffered domestic violence, which caused a nervous breakdown and necessitated admittance to hospital. When discharged Tom returned to his home town, but was forced to flee to Scotland when his previous boyfriend found him. Rather than return to his home town as advised by the police and homelessness worker in Scotland Tom then fled to a friend's house in Wales.

Tom stressed that the council did not initially take into account his experience of domestic violence until his social worker attended a meeting with the council some time after his original application. His experience of the 19 housing association to which he applied was complicated by the lack of understanding with regard to same-sex domestic violence. Tom explained that one housing association was clear in their disbelief that a gay domestic violence would exist.

Tom has since been housed by a housing association. He explained that it was a 'practical advantage' revealing that he was gay to this particular housing association because their policies make specific reference to the needs of LGB people in housing crisis. Tom's housing officer also took seriously his request for security in the housing he was offered.

Tom's case shows the clear importance of having housing officers who are aware and believing of issues relating to LGB people. This case also points to significant findings that relate to the lack of awareness, understanding and service provision available to people who experience same-sex domestic violence, particularly men. Needs to be awareness training and provisions in services and support.

Eight participants stated that they had experienced discrimination from a service provider. One participant explained that the hostility of the individual staff member culminated in the service provider focussing on blaming the participant for 'being gay' and ignoring the presenting housing needs. Another participant explained that they felt accused by the service provider, of playing the 'homophobic harassment card' to secure housing.

There were a number of common factors that influenced whether a person felt that the service provider was responsive and provided an effective service. These included:

- Personal perception of the level of understanding a service provider had with regard to LGB issues
- The physical office environment/ location
- The response by the initial staff member dealing with the individual
- Organisational response to claims of homophobic harassment
- The effective use of policies such as Anti Social Behaviour policies and allocation policies

First impressions of an organisation had a big impact on the perception of lesbian, gay and bisexual people accessing services. For example the physical office space influenced whether a person felt confident enough to disclose their sexual orientation. Public notices stating no tolerance of homophobic behaviour or equality of opportunity lead people to feel that they were in a safe environment and able to talk to someone about their housing needs. However, if the environment was open plan this could make it difficult to talk openly, for fear of being overheard by other clients.

Similarly the first contact with staff within an organisation made a significant impression as to whether the person felt safe to disclose their sexual orientation. Some received a

very positive response from staff in terms of listening in a non judgemental way, while others felt that there was a lack of comprehension as to their housing problems. A middle aged gay man stated:

"I said I was gay and I've got two kids and they just looked at me as if to say, you know this man is completely off his head."

The study found that there was a significant level of frustration among the LGB participants that had received different levels of service from different members of staff within the same organisation. This finding mirrors assertions made in Stonewall Cymru's (2004) 'Count Us in!' report that highlighted the differential attitudes and levels of understanding and awareness that could exist among staff within any one organisation. There were occasions where people had been treated very well during their initial contact but then had either been passed to someone else who didn't appear to have the same level of concern or interest. Participants in the research demonstrated little confidence that all staff within any one mainstream organisation/service would view or approach issues around sexual orientation with equal levels of awareness, concern, empathy and so on. The following quote illustrates this point:

"You tell someone you're gay and that person may be very sympathetic, but the next person who you're dealing with may not and it will go against you."

(Young Gay man from a small town in Mid Wales)

A significant proportion of the LGB participants involved in this research also made clear a feeling of frustration in relation to the effectiveness of action taken by organisations to assist in solving a housing problem. The following summarises sources of frustration disclosed by the participants:

- Their situation was not taken seriously despite evidence of homophobic harassment creating feelings of helplessness and enhancing vulnerability
- There was not enough support for the individual experiencing the housing or harassment problem
In one case the organisation suggested that the victim should move rather than deal with the perpetrator
- Homophobic perpetrators were not dealt with (that is they were not questioned about the incident/s or were not penalised because of their actions)



The following case study illustrates the experiences of Kate and Cerys, whose housing problems were not effectively tackled by the organisations they approached for assistance. They suffered homophobic harassment and violence to their persons, property and possessions.

■ Case study 4: Kate and Cerys

Kate and Cerys live together in private rented accommodation. Kate and Cerys both experienced harassment, abuse and homophobic taunts while they were living in separate houses also. Their cars were vandalised, they suffered thefts from their homes they were barged down steps and on one occasion Cerys's arm was shut in a train door.

Kate and Cerys had particular problems with a family living opposite Kate's home. They were given a direct line to the police sergeant whom they called two to three times a week because of the harassment they suffered. The police responded quickly but the couple did not always make clear that the attack was homophobic. They felt the police may lose patience if it was felt they had to respond to the women's calls for help simply to avoid allegations of institutional homophobia.

Kate and Cerys contacted the council who suggested that since they were not council tenants, they should simply move. They did not seek rehousing through the council because they had heard that the same house was always allocated to single sex couples and was a target for homophobic abuse. They felt their only option was to leave the area.

Some LGB participants explained that housing providers they had approached had suggested that their housing problems were the responsibility of the individual, and therefore did not offer the type and level of support required. For example, there was an onus on the individual to monitor incidents of harassment, which some found daunting, difficult and frustrating. LGB participants expressed such circumstances in terms of feeling like they had not been believed or taken seriously.

5.3.2 Policing

In cases where housing problems were linked to harassment, a number of respondents had involved the police. Some had gone direct to the police, while others had gone to the police via their landlord, typically a housing association or local authority. Participants welcomed police intervention where it had helped resolve the harassment. As with other service providers there was experience of having a good response from individual police officers but feeling more let down by the follow up action and the organisational bureaucracy involved (e.g. the level of responsibility placed on the individual to prove harassment claims).

The following case study illustrates how homophobic harassment and violence can impact on a persons' housing and in turn how the police and housing providers – where applicable – have a role to play in resolving the problems caused by such experiences.

■ Case study 5: Harry

Harry is an 'out' gay/bisexual man who has lived in the same house for 20 years. Originally owned by the council Harry bought the house but sold it back to the housing association when he became unable to keep up the mortgage repayments.

Harry suffered verbal abuse from his neighbours, which was homophobic in nature and in November 2002 his front door was kicked down he was physically attacked by a group of youths from the estate where he lived. The police caught those responsible for the assault, but Harry suffered post-traumatic stress and was referred to Victim Support. Harry felt that Victim Support did not understand the issues relating to his sexual orientation and the implications of the homophobic nature of the assault.

A neighbourhood mediation service attempted to help Harry tackle the verbal abuse he endured from his neighbours. A newly appointed housing officer from his housing association, supported Harry's request for the inclusion of the neighbours names on a homophobic police register. The police eventually cautioned the neighbours after Harry demanded his right under the Human Rights Act. Harry stressed his belief that the police only acted as a result of his continued pressure.

The research found that the decision a participant made over whether to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation when engaging with the police on initial contact was influenced by both the type of harassment experienced and the individual participants' perceptions about how the police might respond. A lesbian couple from North Wales explained:

"Well there was no proof it was homophobic, apart from if they shouted something like lesbian, dykes. If it was just targeting the house we wouldn't say that was homophobic because there was no evidence... At first we didn't want to create more problems for ourselves by saying we think this is homophobic."

As illustrated earlier (see section 4.3) harassment that may originate as verbal abuse can escalate over time and for some participants their experience of harassment spiralled into physical abuse of person and/or property. The police requirement for quantifying evidence in harassment cases was described in terms of creating barriers and preventing the acceptance or progression of cases where harassment was principally verbal in nature. Where physical evidence was limited participants described the action taken by the police as limited, causing frustration and distress. There were, however, cases where an LGB participant highly commended the attitudes, reactions and actions of the police. The case study below illustrates this sentiment.

■ Case Study 6: Rose

Rose lives with her partner Karen in council housing in rural Wales. They have five children between them.

Rose and Karen were transferred to their current housing after having suffered sustained homophobic harassment by gangs of youths. Initially Rose did not have sufficient points to qualify for transfer but a new housing manager awarded the couple maximum discretionary points in view of the homophobic harassment they were suffering and how it was affecting their children.

Rose praised the police as 'absolutely wonderful and supportive'. However, neither the police nor the council could advise her where to seek advice or support for homophobic harassment. Rose explained that the council acknowledged her situation as the first case of homophobic harassment that had been brought to their attention.

Rose and Karen were keen to establish that they were being transferred to an area where they would not be harassed again. The council's response to their anxiety was to assure them that there were no known problems of homophobia recorded by the housing officer or police.

LGB participants within the research sample described the nature and form of police action that had been employed in cases of homophobic harassment. These included:

- Verbal warning to perpetrators
- Taking statements from perpetrators and other witnesses
- Taking steps to issue Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) in conjunction with the local authority
- Taking perpetrators to court
- Installing CCTV to monitor/deter harassment

5.3.3 Access to lesbian, gay and bisexual specific services

Only five LGB participants had accessed a service specifically aimed at lesbian, gay and bisexual people when they were experiencing housing problems. This figure reflects the lack of LGB specific services available within Wales and the general lack of knowledge about the LGB specific services that do exist amongst both housing service providers and LGB communities. Four of the five participants that had accessed LGB specific services were living in social housing at the time and the fifth participant was living in the private rented sector.

The LGB specific services accessed by LGB participants in this research included:

- Triangle Wales (a project that provides housing advice and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Wales)
- Shelter advice helpline (a service established in partnership with Triangle Wales)
- Student LGB groups within higher education
- Local LGB youth groups

There is a lack of information available about the specialist LGB services that are established in Wales. When asked who they would approach for assistance when facing housing problems, a small minority of the LGB participants identified a specialist LGB housing service. Those that did, identified Triangle Wales.

Several participants explained that they had tried to find out about LGB specific services when their housing problems occurred, but had difficulties in finding information on those that exist. The following quote illustrates this:

"They [the LA] do know a lot more people who they can get in touch with now... Because we said to them, are there any support groups for people who have been through this or are going through this, are there gay people themselves that can get in touch with [with us] and say, look, we've been there. No, none."

Of the participants that had been aware of the telephone helpline (previously run via a partnership between Triangle Wales and Shelter), some expressed that they had refrained from using the service for fear that their identity might be exposed.

Geographical as well as personal isolation – the latter, which is associated with a lack of knowledge and availability of LGB resources – were also salient barriers that prevented some participants accessing LGB specific services. The following quote illustrates the experiences of a participant who experienced both geographical and personal isolation:

"Where I lived there was no services for gay and lesbian groups at all. I didn't know anyone that was gay. So I wasn't able to enquire about it. I didn't have a way of finding out about it. It was all just very awkward and I was too scared, in one way, to phone up the [local] helpline."
(A young gay man from rural north Wales)

Among those participants who had successfully accessed LGB-specific housing services, the consensus was that it was a useful resource. However, LGB specific housing services were recognised as urban-centric and catering well to young LGB people who were recognised among the LGB participants as likely to migrate to urban areas to explore their sexuality. Provision of LGB specialist housing services in rural areas, however, was recommended as an equally necessary resource, but which would have to address issues such as extensive catchment areas, funding, staff and volunteers to sustain such services, and having to ensure ease of access for people living in rural locations.

The depth interviews with LGB participants made it clear that specialist LGB services were better able to communicate with LGB people. This is because specialist LGB services establish a commitment to gaining the specialist knowledge necessary for understanding the issues faced by LGB people and are empathetic to these. Such services tend to develop internal support and infrastructure appropriate to address the issues associated with LGB housing problems/needs and tend to be staffed (including volunteers) by LGB people, this suggests that service providers will be non-judgemental with respect to service users sexual orientation, which enables service users to open up to the provider without fear. Specialist LGB housing services should be valued for their specialist knowledge and utilised by other service providers, as a resource.

■ **Good Practice Example:** ***Triangle Wales mentoring service***

Triangle Wales runs a mentoring service that offers one to one support for young LGB people to see them through key life events. The mentors are volunteers from the LGB community so they can draw upon their own life experiences to offer practical help.

The mapping exercise conducted by Stonewall Cymru (2003, 2004) shows that there are marked variations in how each region is served by LGB specific services and that the services available tend to be run by volunteers on a limited and often minimal budget. The point of note is that LGB specific services often lack the funding, support and resources to establish and sustain the necessary services. With regard to addressing LGB housing needs, there is no emergency accommodation specifically designed to accommodate LGB people in Wales and specialist supported accommodation exists for only four LGBT people aged 16-25. This is part of Triangle Wales' project and is, like all other services offered by Triangle Wales to LGBT people facing housing problems in Wales, not large enough to meet the quantity or diversity of demand.

6 • POLICY AND PRACTICE

This chapter explores how social landlords’ housing related policies and practices affect the delivery of services to LGB people. The chapter discusses the extent to which LGB issues are integrated into the housing function and highlights any gaps. It is based on evidence gathered through a postal survey of social landlords, where all Welsh local authorities (LAs) and 35 Welsh housing associations (HAs) were asked to participate. Twenty-nine organisations responded (12 LAs and 17 HAs). Following the postal survey, ten depth interviews were conducted with representatives from responding LAs and HAs to explore issues in more detail. Findings from these interviews are also illustrated in this chapter.

A final source of findings presented in this chapter derived from survey responses from nine voluntary sector organisations that were included in this research specifically because they demonstrated an interest in LGB issues.

6.1 CORPORATE POLICIES

All the social landlords involved in this study operated equal opportunities and harassment policies, with the majority also having allocations, housing referral and domestic violence policies. Table 4 shows the diversity of policies operating within the social rented sector, of the sample involved in this study.

Policy Area	No of LAs	No of HAs	Total No of organisations
Equal opportunities	12	17	29
Harassment	12	17	29
Eviction	8	15	23
Housing allocations	10	16	26
Housing referrals	10	14	24
Domestic violence	8	11	19
Dignity at work	2	7	9
Cultural sensitivity	3	2	5
Other	1	3	4
Base number	12	17	29

Table 4: Equality and housing policies

The extent to which sexual orientation is covered within each policy varied across social landlords. On the whole policies were designed to be all encompassing, so while addressing equality of opportunity issues as a principle within the policy, there was little practical information on LGB issues. A typical example is shown here.

■ Example

“The Council is committed to ensuring that no member of the public, elected Member, job applicant, employee, agent, contractor or other third party is discriminated against, either directly by the Council or indirectly, because of their gender, ethnic origin, nationality, preferred language, disability, age, religious or political beliefs, marital status or sexual orientation.”

The research found that few all-encompassing policies make specific reference to lesbian, gay and bisexual issues (see Table 5). The knock on effect of this is that few policies provide detailed guidance to staff on the particular issues facing lesbian, gay and bisexual people or guidance on how to deal with the situation sensitively.

Policy Area	No of LAs	No of HAs	Total
Equal opportunities	8	13	21
Harassment	6	11	17
Eviction	1	1	2
Housing allocations	5	8	13
Housing referrals	2	3	5
Domestic violence	2	3	5
Dignity at work	0	3	3
Cultural sensitivity	0	2	2
Other	1	3	4
Base number	12	17	29

Table 5: Policies that make specific reference to sexual orientation

Table 5 illustrates that sexual orientation was most consistently referred to in equal opportunities and harassment policies. In general housing associations appear to have more developed or integrated sexual orientation policies than many local authorities.

With the introduction of the National Homelessness Strategy and the Statutory Code of Guidance to local authorities on allocations and homelessness, there has been initiated a shift in emphasis within policies on issues of LGB interest. This is because the Strategy and the Code specifically mention the need for service providers to meet the needs of LGB people in housing need.

This research has shown how the housing needs of LGB people can be influenced by their sexual orientation and in particular by the harassment or discrimination experienced because of their sexual orientation. It is essential, therefore, that social landlords provide sexual orientation awareness training and support within their policies and procedures to assist staff on the ground. Evidence from the study showed that some organisations raised the profile of sexual orientation issues by including references to sexual orientation within all their policies and providing more detailed practical guidance where appropriate.

An example of good practice is illustrated below:

■ **A HA domestic violence policy stated:**

“The policy acknowledges that violence can also occur within gay relationships and states that the [association] is careful not to discriminate on any such basis in the implementation of policy.”

To address the issue of ‘invisibility’ that shrouds LGB people, their issues and their needs, there has to be greater awareness and understanding among staff at all levels. One local authority explained that while senior managers were ‘tuned into equality issues’, such as sexual orientation, front line staff may simply not consider the issue on a day to day basis.

“I think staff at a strategic level are more aware of potential need, for example, than the front line – I doubt whether in the course of their everyday work they’re fully aware... I guess you need to prompt people to think about these issues themselves. Some people just don’t recognise them.” (LA)

Raising sexual diversity awareness and understanding among frontline staff is especially important, because, as this research has shown, the initial contact a LGB service user makes with a service provider has a significant impact on whether they feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation.

The mainstreaming of sexual orientation into all policies provides a sound basis for staff engagement. Training and reminder sessions can raise awareness and assist in treating clients sensitively. The above quote clearly demonstrates the importance of making LGB people feel at ease so that they are given the confidence to explain the relevant context to their housing problem.

■ **Good Practice Example: SOVA CYMRU (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action – New Deal North Wales)**

SOVA has in some detail, mainstreamed sexual orientation within their Equal Opportunity policy. Both paid staff and volunteers are required to demonstrate a commitment to and an understanding of its implications before beginning work with the organisation. Training for all staff is included as part of the induction process and is monitored and revisited frequently to ensure that service delivery to the lesbian, gay and bisexual community is sensitive and addresses the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual service users.

The majority of housing organisations involved in this research explained that they were satisfied that their all-encompassing policies covered sexual orientation implicitly. However, one housing provider stated that all policies were due to be revised to ensure that sexual orientation issues were covered more comprehensively than at present.

It was expressed by several housing organisations that sexual orientation was only one of several equality strands that social landlords must take into consideration, and that if each strand were to have its own policy it would be a bulky and complicated system to implement and monitor, hence the preference and satisfaction with all-encompassing policies.

However, there was some acknowledgement of the danger that an all-encompassing policy might provide little guidance on sexual orientation issues. In particular the danger that the translation of corporate policies into practice could lead to sexual orientation issues not being recognised or picked up. One local authority commented:

“Although we have a corporate equal opportunities policy... it’s actually bringing that through into the more day-to-day operational stuff... there is often that gap in the middle which means that it doesn’t quite follow through.”

Housing provider views are likely to be influenced by their awareness of whether and how sexual orientation can lead to specific housing needs. There was no consensus among social landlords as to whether LGB people had specific housing needs. This research, however, may go some way has shown that there are circumstances where the actions, reactions and attitudes towards lesbian, gay or bi-sexualities can create specific housing problems and needs.

Another factor influencing the housing provider approach was the perceived position of the Welsh Assembly Government on issues around sexual orientation. The following quotation from a LA representative explained:

“If it becomes part of the Welsh Assembly regulations or anything else, and there is a strategy or something in place, then all of a sudden it becomes everybody's business... that's the difference I think.” (HA).

However, the Regulatory Code for housing associations, produced by WAG does state that WAG will look for evidence from housing associations as to how they are meeting the fundamental objective of equality of opportunity, which includes looking at how they deal with unfair discrimination due to sexual orientation. This suggests that the implementation of the code could be reinforced to ensure that policy and practice are in unison.

6.2 MONITORING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Monitoring sexual orientation of service users is a direct way of identifying the extent to which LGB people access services. It is a starting point for accessing need. Out of the twenty-seven social landlord survey respondents, only four – 2 LAs and 2 HAs – monitored service delivery by sexual orientation or monitored the sexual orientation of applicants to the service.

■ Good Practice Example: Swansea Youth Single Homeless Project (SYSHP)

Swansea Youth Single Homeless Project monitors its clients by sexual orientation. A positive outcome of identifying sexual orientation of clients is that clients can choose to have a lesbian, gay or bisexual support worker, which in turn engenders confidence within the individual young person. Due to the openness of the organisation, clients asked for the establishment of a LGB service user group, to assist in providing feedback on the organisation's policy and practice consultation exercises.

The good practice example illustrated above demonstrates that monitoring by sexual orientation can have positive benefits for both the client and the provider. If the provider is aware of the specific needs of the client then they are better placed to meet those needs. If the client knows that the provider understands their specific needs, they are more confident accessing the services available, as the fear of rejection or discrimination are dispelled.

6.3 WORKING IN AN EQUALITIES ENVIRONMENT

The postal survey disseminated among social landlords provided an opportunity for the representing respondent to discuss the equality and diversity environment in which they operate. Concerns were raised over difficulties and barriers within the work space/environment that impede meeting the needs of LGB people. In particular, the requirement to offer an all-inclusive service has caused some housing service providers difficulties in addressing or prioritising LGB issues/needs. The following quote illustrates this point:

“We have an obsession about being fair to everybody... you have to promote equality as the purpose rather than an interest group or a particularly discriminated group.” (HA)

The following quote illustrates the concern raised by one HA that using equality and diversity mechanisms did not ensure that the housing needs of LGB people were met.

“There is a danger that identification of another disadvantaged group in isolation will result in undermining the importance of equality overall – and it will be seen as ‘another initiative’.” (HA)

There was also recognition that recently other equality issues, for example race, had been prioritised (partly due to national policy developments, including the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001), and therefore had the effect of eclipsing the wider equality agenda. One HA representative explained:

“There has been a huge focus on race issues in the last few years and that has taken precedence.” (HA)

However, others felt that there were transferable lessons between different needs groups and that could benefit lesbian, gay and bisexual people. For example one provider mentioned that focusing on race issues, and developing a black and minority ethnic strategy had included researching the client group, setting targets and milestones and developing monitoring mechanisms to check on progress. The strategy helped to focus the organisation. A similar approach could be used to improve services to LGB people.

6.4 THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Nine voluntary organisations that demonstrated an interest in, or provided services to LGB people, took part in the research via a short survey. These voluntary organisations were not social landlords.

As with the social landlords, the voluntary organisations that took part in this research, had equal opportunities policies and like social landlords, their policies were corporate in nature and all-encompassing, rarely raising sexual orientation

as a specific issue. Only three of the nine specifically referred to sexual orientation in their equal opportunities policy.

The research also found that the views expressed by the voluntary organisations were similar to social landlords, specifically was the impression that the housing needs of LGB people would be similar to other groups. Where specific needs were identified they centred around access to support in cases of harassment.

A number of suggestions were put forward as to how to improve services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, Developing allocation policies that were responsive to the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people (e.g. not offering accommodation in an area known for anti social behaviour) was seen as one way in which service could be improved. In addition, sending a clear message to the local community about zero tolerance to homophobia and more practical support in the form of access to lesbian, gay or bisexual support workers, was also seen as a way to improve service delivery across the provider spectrum.

■ **Good Practice Example:** **Swansea Youth Homeless Project**

Homophobia among clients is actively and creatively challenged in a number of ways:

- At the interview stage, levels of discrimination are evaluated and talked through. If the potential client demonstrates homophobic views and is unprepared to address these, they are not taken into the project
- The tenancy agreement makes clear that homophobia towards clients and staff members will not be tolerated, whether it is from a client or a guest of a client
- LGB clients are empowered by the guarantee that they will be protected from, as well as supported in addressing any homophobic behaviour they face
- Posters advertising LGB services (e.g. helplines, health services, peer support groups, social events) are displayed in communal areas. Magazines, including LGB-interest, are available to be borrowed
- Where homophobic attitudes or behaviour are displayed, staff take swift action against the perpetrator, who will risk eviction or being banned from the building if not a tenant

6.5 HOUSING PROVIDERS' UNDERSTANDING OF LGB HOUSING NEEDS

This research has thus far shown from the interview data and survey responses from the LGB participants that LGB people can face housing problems and present housing needs that are specifically reflect on their sexualities, principally in terms of the negative reactions, actions and attitudes of other people. From the postal survey, eighteen out of twenty-nine social landlord representatives were of the opinion that LGB people did not have specific housing needs that differentiated them from other housing needs groups. These survey respondents

were among those that asserted their existing policies and practices were adequate in addressing any potential housing need a LGB person may present (see section 6.1). There was significant reliance among housing providers on an assumed equality of opportunity in the way they delivered services. This research, however, has shown that this is an ineffective position to assume as it means that specific needs of LGB people may go unrecognised and unmet, increasing the risk of social exclusion for this group.

Almost half social landlords (6 HAs and 5 LAs) recognised that LGB people had specific housing needs. The specific needs identified included sensitivity in which LGB cases were dealt with. The most prevalent specific need identified, however, centred on the need to have sensitive allocation policies that allowed LGB people to be housed in safe areas, and communities where the threat of harassment was minimised. These providers recognised the vulnerability to harassment LGB people face, and in particular the vulnerabilities associated with being LGB and homeless. The following quote aptly illustrates this awareness:

“Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are particularly vulnerable – partly due to the prejudice that they face and experience that they face in accessing support and housing but also because many young people find themselves in poor quality housing, having been thrown out on the street or made to feel uncomfortable in their own homes.” (HA)

Housing organisations that provided representatives for depth interviews also recognised the need to provide sensitive support services to any person suffering homophobic harassment. This could include support and appropriate joint working between the social housing team, anti social behaviour team and the private rented sector teams within an organisation.

Other specific housing needs were identified as: the need to ensure parity of treatment in terms of tenancy rights, for example same sex couples succession rights; and the need to

ensure that the office environment was safe and welcoming, encouraging disclosure of sexual orientation where it was relevant to an individual's housing problem. These two specific needs were also identified by service users as important in improving service delivery to LGB people.

There was also a suggestion from housing providers that they needed the resources and discretion to be able to offer LGB same sex couples properties that were perhaps larger than they technically needed (i.e. provide a two bed property to a same sex couple). This was suggested as a measure of precaution, safety and protection for LGB same sex couples because it would make it less easy for neighbours and such like to assume the sexual orientation of the residents according to the number of bed rooms in the accommodation they were allocated.

Such specific issues raise again the question over simple reliance in an overarching Equal Opportunities policy. The findings suggest that it would be good practice to identify specific LGB needs in all corporate policies. This would help more housing staff to adopt a more sensitive approach to dealing with LGB needs.

The findings suggest that in addition to amended policies and procedures, a training strategy is required in order to meet the housing needs of LGB people. Specificity in policy development can only come through guidance or experience, and some service providers, who acknowledged that they had little experience in this area thought it would be useful to raise awareness among social landlords, which in turn would help improve policy coverage.

"It would be really helpful to raise the awareness within the sector of the housing difficulties faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people." (HA).

The issue of secondary victimisation, that is discrimination at the point of approaching the service provider for assistance, was not recognised as a potential barrier to accessing

services by service providers. This suggests that service providers are unaware that LGB people do not expect to have their needs met and thus do not present as such (this was an issue raised by LGB participants – see section 5.3). There, was however, some acknowledgement that existing cultures, rather than direct or intentional discrimination, can produce institutionalised discrimination within organisations.

6.6 TRAINING ON LGB ISSUES

No HA or LA that took part in this study had provided training on LGB needs to staff members. However, most provided equal opportunities training that covered sexual orientation. In addition several mentioned that they also provided diversity awareness training to staff at all levels, and that this included issues around service delivery and sexual orientation. Training and general raising of staff awareness around LGB issues is an essential element in improving service delivery.

One provider said that while no LGB training was currently available it would be something that they would like to have access to in the future.

6.7 HOUSING PROVIDERS' KNOWLEDGE OF LGB COMMUNITY GROUPS

There was limited knowledge among social landlords about LGB community groups in their areas. Most commonly Triangle Wales and Stonewall Cymru were mentioned, as being specific groups that landlords would contact for advice and support when approached by an LGB service user.

The telephone helpline recently set up by Triangle Wales in South Wales was also mentioned as a resource by some service providers. However, the extent to which service providers can guide LGB people to this resource will depend on whether LGB people feel that they can disclose their sexual orientation to the service provider in the first place.

While the majority of social landlords did not have links with LGB specific services, a number expressed an interest in knowing what services were available, while others identified activities within their organisation that helped them open up links with LGB services. Examples of developing relationships with LGB specific groups included:

- The authority's trade union, Unison, has links with LGB groups that also liaise with South Wales police, via regular multi agency forums
- Corporate equality officers have links with LGB groups and meet through the North Wales policy diversity forum
- Corporate equalities forum with a sub group considering LGB issues
- Homelessness section liaises with Triangle Wales, including displaying their leaflets in homelessness reception area
- The issue is under investigation as part of the Supporting People Operational Plan

6.8 INVOLVING LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN SERVICE POLICY AND DELIVERY

None of the social landlords involved in this study had carried out specific consultation with LGB service providers or community groups to inform their housing policies and practices. Several mentioned that there had been a range of consultation exercises as part of the development of the Local Housing Strategy and that there were likely to have been LGB people involved in the consultation. However, no sexual orientation monitoring had occurred and it was impossible to determine if LGB views had been discussed or taken on board. One LA mentioned that their corporate equality forum, with its LGB sub-group was one way of reflecting LGB need in policy development.

A housing association had taken a stall at the Cardiff Mardi Gras in recent years in an attempt to learn more about the needs of LGB people and to raise awareness of their services to the community. However, apart from this there had been no direct LGB consultation.

■ **Good Practice Example: Stonewall Cymru forum**

As part of its planned activities for 2005-2008 Stonewall Cymru plans to establish four regional fora across Wales. The fora will take part in consultation and inform local authorities and other service providers of LGB service delivery needs. This will enable LGB people to have a formal voice within service delivery and planning and enable service providers to better understand LGB needs and inform their policies and practices.

The study found that LGB groups were not consulted for various reasons, including a general lack of awareness among service providers of lesbian, gay or bisexual issues, along with a lack of a voice from within the community to raise the importance of consulting with this group. The following quote illustrates this point:

“No, we wouldn’t know where to begin. It’s never been considered an issue. The needs of this group have never been flagged up. With hindsight, this is probably why we’ve never done any consultation.” (HA)

The fact that LGB people can be hard to reach was also raised (an issue raised in the literature review see Appendix I). The following quote illustrates the experience of one local authority that had been proactive in identifying LGB people as a diversity group to be considered explicitly in their Housing Strategy. However, in going out to consult, no LGB groups or forums could be identified for consultation, and therefore the council were unable to assess local need or obtain the views of local LGB people.

“We’ve tried to be proactive in identifying what the needs of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community are – we’ve gone out to consult but we’ve hit a bit of a brick wall. There don’t seem to be any local community groups that work in this area.” (LA)

This particular LA stressed that they would welcome guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on how to consult with LGB communities as well as accessing more information on the housing needs of the community. The Stonewall Cymru initiated fora are designed to address this need.

6.9 THE GAP BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE

It is clear from this chapter and the experience of respondents detailed in this and previous chapters that there is a gap between policy and practice. On the one hand local authorities and housing associations have written equalities procedures that cover sexual orientation (but policies which might not expressly mention LGB issues). On the other hand the experiences of respondents point to a lack of empathy, and a lack of awareness of the issues relating to LGB people in service delivery. This is compounded by the lack of systematic monitoring on sexual orientation. It is very difficult to monitor how successful equality policies are if data relating to service delivery, take up and deficiencies are not collected.

7 • WORKING TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT

The preceding chapter demonstrated that there are gaps in the knowledge and policies of service providers in how to meet the housing needs of LGB people. Earlier chapters demonstrated the range of housing needs experienced by LGB people, and the impact this has on an individuals' well being and perception of service providers.

This chapter draws together earlier findings and highlights ways in which services could be improved. Ideas and suggestions within this section are from both service users and service providers.

7.1 WHAT SERVICE USERS WANT

Forty-two LGB participants who had experienced housing problems expressed an opinion on how services could be improved to better meet their needs. An additional forty-seven LGB respondents to the initial survey (but who had not experienced housing problems) offered comments on how services might be improved. All comments are considered in this chapter.

In summary, service users want to be able to access the same services as others in housing need without fear of rejection or being discriminated against, either overtly or covertly. They desired a consistency of service regardless of which staff members they deal with and they want recognition that their sexual orientation can make them vulnerable when they are in housing need. The data is presented according to age group.

Twenty-two young people under 25 commented on ways to improve services, including:

- Provide/improve temporary accommodation for young LGB people
- The provision of LGB/LGB-friendly landlords young LGB people can seek housing with
- Provide sensitive advice to people in housing need, including advice on legislation
- Provide safe areas for young LGB people to live
- Provide a helpline or specialist HA, and advertise their existence
- Staff should be sensitive and know how to deal with the needs of young LGB people

The following is an example of where service provision is well established to recognise and address the needs of LGB people:

■ SOVA (*Supporting Others through Volunteer Action*) *New Deal in North Wales*

SOVA run a mentoring programme for New Deal Clients, some of whom are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Mentoring sessions are based on face to face meetings, with confidentiality being stressed. Staff also emphasise that the service is designed to suit clients' needs. Staff and volunteers are trained in equality issues and are made aware that it is organisational policy to treat everyone equally.

SOVA finds that people do 'open up' and talk about their sexual orientation and any problems they have associated with it. SOVA encourage people to be open about who they are, supporting people by telling them that they have rights like everyone else. It finds that it deals with sexual orientation issues among other issues people in the New Deal area are facing, such as unemployment, relationship breakdown and harassment.

The thirteen people over 50 who commented, reflected some of the issues raised by young LGB people, such as specialist lists of landlords, and a specialist housing association. They also raised issues around:

- Changing social attitudes towards LGB people
- The role of the government in promoting equal rights for all
- Clear inclusion of LGB issues in all housing policies

Across all age groups LGB people wanted to receive the same degree of service delivery as other users.

In terms of social housing provision service providers and service users raised five key issues:

- The need for sensitive allocation policies, to ensure that people are safe and secure in their home and not placed in a threatening environment
- The need to have the same rights as opposite-sex couples was seen to be important in terms of tenancy security
- Monitoring allocations by sexual orientation to assess whether lesbian, gay and bisexual people are accessing housing
- Involving lesbian, gay and bisexual people in policy development
- More lesbian, gay and bisexual staff working for service providers

The following is an exemplar of good practice identified through this research:

■ **Good Practice Example:**
Pembrokeshire County Council

Pembrokeshire County Council is in the process of revising its tenancy agreement to include specific mention of sexual orientation. This is part of its drive to mainstream the issue of sexual orientation. For example, the Council has Introductory Tenancy Scheme that are aimed at preventing and tackling anti social behaviour among its tenants. There is a clear message coming from the council that certain behaviour, including homophobia, will not be tolerated, and that the retention of a tenancy depends on adhering to good behaviour.

On issues beyond direct housing services or advice, LGB people saw value in local and central government and others in raising the awareness of the rights of LGB people, as well as promoting equality in service delivery. This could be done through media in the offices of housing services providers as well as through campaigning, advertising in addition to more sector specific guidance. This would send a message to the general community that harassment would not be tolerated, as well as giving confidence to the LGB community that their needs will be taken seriously.

Using existing anti social behaviour powers was also seen as a sensible approach to highlight commitment to tackling harassment of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. It also provides an opportunity for service providers to give support to victims and tackle perpetrators.

In terms of the wider housing market (including the private sector) the following suggestions were made:

- Develop a list of lesbian, gay and bisexual friendly landlords
- Central and local government should look at ways of supporting existing specialist agencies, such as Triangle Wales, to enable the project to reach a wider audience, including community and service providers
- Where there are no lesbian, gay and bisexual specific agencies, funding should be provided to create services, this could include setting up a further specialist housing association or supporting existing services such as Triangle Wales
- Provision of specialist services for the community, including a Welsh lesbian, gay and bisexual ombudsman, a specialist housing association that has access to resources and can act as an advice service accessible to all across Wales
- More provision of outreach work to make efforts to raise awareness within the lesbian, gay and bisexual community of the services on offer

The following is an exemplar of good practice identified through this research:

■ **Wales and West Housing Association**

Wales and West housing association carries out outreach work with the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. The main forum for this work is its stall at the Welsh Mardi Gras. The event is an opportunity for the association to promote its services to the lesbian, gay and bisexual community and also an opportunity to learn about the housing issues facing lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

This outreach work complements other strands of the association's approach to equality, which includes the requirement that all tenant forums adhere to the equal opportunities policy that prohibits discrimination. It also complements the role of the organisation's Diversity officer, whose role is to champion lesbian, gay and bisexual issues at a strategic policy level, alongside the delivery of diversity training.

The rest of this section looks in more detail at some of the suggestions raised by both service users and service providers, for improving service delivery and provision.



7.2 INCREASE LEVELS OF AWARENESS

The consensus among LGB participants that took part in this study was that if levels of awareness over sexual orientation were increased among housing providers, the effect would be positive on how services were made accessible and delivered to LGB people.

“A better understanding of gay issues, and to see us a vulnerable section of community similar to that of black and minority ethnic communities.” (Gay man)

Raising awareness among service providers, however, is three-fold:

- Awareness training must be provided on the issues and needs faced by LGB people in housing crisis
- There needs to be an increase in awareness of existing specialist services and support resources available and accessible to LGB people
- Raising awareness also must extend to incorporate training on how to manage LGB clients in a sensitive and supportive manner, which might include advice on appropriate language and so on

The need for housing providers to understand the potential vulnerability of lesbian, gay and bisexual people was seen as paramount among the LGB participants, and was identified as something that at the time of the research was not always appreciated. Increasing awareness would primarily be delivered through training staff on sexual orientation issues. There is a role here for the small number of organisations that provide training and awareness raising on LGB issues to mainstream organisations. The research found that social landlords have corporate equality training for staff, which can touch on sexual orientation issues, though often does not provide detail on LGB housing needs. To comply with the Welsh National Homelessness Strategy sexual orientation should be included in equalities training but evidence from interviewing service

providers made clear that this was not the case. The following quote illustrates this point:

“We do a lot of training that is very much based on equality of opportunity, tackling issues such as disability, race. But, interestingly, there is nothing specific about lesbian, gay or bisexual issues. That tends to be wrapped up in the general, how we must treat all people equally.” (LA)

The findings from data gathered from the social landlords that took part in this study, showed that there was recognition of the importance of increasing awareness of LGB issues. Representatives from social landlords made reference to the following:

- Better promotion of existing information on LGB housing issues, e.g. dissemination of national research reports
- Guidance on what housing issues LGB people face
- Increased partnership working between mainstream and specialist LGB providers
- Standardising information collected across landlords on sexual orientation (i.e. comprehensive sexual orientation monitoring across all service delivery areas, including complaints, ASB cases and harassment cases)

Practical outputs of increased awareness could include evidence of the following actions:

- Listening to the evidence of the lesbian, gay and bisexual person before deciding what action to take
- Ensuring service providers offices/ advice centres are safe places to approach
- Encouraging service providers to ‘think outside the box’ in terms of advice and support they provide to the lesbian, gay and bisexual community
- Consulting lesbian, gay and bisexual people on policy development and on policy assessment
- Recognising the importance of understanding and confidentiality when dealing with lesbian, gay and bisexual people with housing and related problems

7.3 IMPROVE POLICIES

In terms of improving policies, the following were identified as being in need of change by the LGB participants in this research:

- Allocation policies
- Anti social behaviour policies
- Equal opportunity policies
- Explicit anti-homophobia policies
- Support policies

The research findings showed that social landlords were aware that allocations policies needed to be sensitive to the needs of LGB people, and there was seen to be room for improvement in ensuring equal opportunities policies fully addressed LGB issues.

The impact of improved policies and effective training should lead to an organisation that is seen to be fair and open with

all. The following quote was from a gay man who was seeking assistance from a social landlord. He made clear the positive effect improved policies and training can have on both access and the delivery of services to LGB people:

“When I walked into the office the housing officer was very welcoming, totally non-threatening and everything I said she understood... it was the fact that somebody was actually taking my circumstances into consideration and realising that gay men [have problems] as well as heterosexual women and men... it just seemed like something she had come across before or something that she was prepared to believe, something she knew happened and she knew was a problem.”

7.4 LESBIAN, GAY OR BISEXUAL STAFF

A number of service users thought that if they had been able to talk to a member of staff who was lesbian, gay or bisexual, this could have had a positive impact on their experiences. The general view was that it would lead to an increase in confidence, reduce feelings of isolation and relieve stress. It was perceived that these staff members would not be judgmental and would deal empathetically with the person involved.

Alternatively having an officer who specialised in lesbian, gay and bisexual issues as part of their job was seen as a potential way forward to improving service delivery. The following quote aptly surmises this sentiment:

“If there was someone who, as part of their job, dealt specifically with homeless lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and they had the specific understanding and in-depth knowledge of issues affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people that would have been helpful. If you could be referred to them and they could guide you through.”

7.5 GATHERING EVIDENCE

This research found that monitoring sexual orientation is not the norm among social landlords in Wales. This means that the number of LGB people accessing services is unknown. This in turn makes it hard to assess whether needs are being met at even the most basic level. At the same time service providers recognise the importance of quantifying needs as part of developing packages to meet those needs. For example a local authority commented:

“Priorities are hugely towards evidence base aren’t they? It’s very much based on evidence. You need that evidence before you can actually move this issue forward... particularly in relation to housing need.”

Similarly a housing association, while recognising that there was a lesbian, gay and bisexual community in the area they worked, stated:

“... in terms of statistics and data they’re completely invisible. It’s not that there is no need, it’s just that the need has never been counted – we’ve never been made to count it and therefore we can continue to pretend that it’s invisible.”

There is also an opportunity to gather evidence from existing service users in terms of evaluating complaints about services or as part of service user feedback initiatives. However, as little sexual orientation monitoring is carried out within service provider organisations, the reliance would be on the individual to raise their sexual orientation and its links to their feedback in any complaint or feedback form. This is not likely to happen very often, if at all, given the concerns about service providers’ attitudes and understanding about lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

7.6 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working between LGB specific organisations and social landlords is currently limited due to the lack of capacity for specialist agencies to cover all-Wales; the lack of awareness of specific agencies by social landlords; and the restraints on the capacity and resources of existing specialist agencies. Developing proactive partnerships, such as diversity training and joint training on advice giving, is a way of improving service standards.

Where partnership working has been developed to improve service delivery to LGB people it has tended to be the development of relationships between the police and social landlords, and health services and social landlords. Partnerships with the police are more likely where harassment plays a part in creating housing need, while partnerships with health organisations are likely where the individual has mental health needs alongside their housing needs.

Stonewall Cymru and Triangle Wales were the two organisations most likely to be known by other service providers as representing the interests of gay, lesbian and bisexual people at a national level. Where sexual orientation issues had been considered within a partnership it tended to be as a consequence of existing partnerships focused on meeting the housing needs of other groups, e.g. young people. The following are two examples that illustrate the importance of partnership working with organisations working at ground level.

■ Good Practice Example: Citizens Advice Cymru

Citizens Advice Cymru encourages its local branches to make contact and work in partnership with local lesbian, gay and bisexual groups to learn more about local lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in order to be able to signpost their lesbian, gay and bisexual clients appropriately. In developing these partnerships at a local level, national Citizens Advice Cymru policies can also be informed against a backdrop of localised issues and concerns.

■ Good Practice Example: Cadwyn Housing Association

Cadwyn housing association runs a supported housing project for young homeless people in partnership with the Church Army. A Church Army staff member regularly visits known lesbian, gay and bisexual nightspots to talk to potentially homeless or vulnerable young lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This raises awareness of the supported housing project to the lesbian, gay and bisexual community, and can give young people the contacts they need if they find themselves in a housing crisis.

This good practice demonstrates that partnerships do not always need to be between a lesbian, gay and bisexual specific service and a mainstream service provider, but can be between any two or more interested and committed partners.

Many respondents questioned why the capacity was not there and spoke of the frustration that they had experienced in their attempts to assist lesbian, gay and bisexual clients with specific support needs. In larger urban areas, housing associations and the voluntary sector groups spoke of knowing about some sector specific support services but also the difficulty in getting access to them.

“They’re never advertised as such. Usually you just stumble over them. They come and go and they’re often difficult to actually find when you do find out about them. They often keep funny hours... It’s almost as though they don’t want you to find them.”

7.7 INFLUENCE THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Lesbian, gay and bisexual participants in this research highlighted that there were opportunities to tackle discrimination and homophobia in the wider society in Wales.

Suggestions included:

- Educating school children about sexual orientation
- Working with the media to reduce negative stereotyping
- Promoting lesbian, gay and bisexual services within the wider community
- Challenging public perceptions of lesbian, gay and bisexual people

The following quote makes clear that challenging discrimination and homophobia that exists within generic public opinion is an important step towards recognising and addressing the support needs of LGB people:

“If we can get across to the general public that being gay is not this that and the other, we’re not going to molest your children, just get the message that gay people are okay, and the only way to do that is to talk.”

Housing providers also saw the promotion of how their policies affect LGB communities as a positive way they could raise awareness among LGB communities on the services they offer.

The following is an exemplar of good practice identified through this research:

■ **Good Practice Example:** **Wales and West Housing Association**

Wales and West Housing Association have a Dignity at Work policy. The policy outlines how the association will deal with any form of discrimination in the workplace. The policy is set within a legal framework of protection of rights.

The policy is accessible through the association’s website, and it acts as an indicator to the wider community that the association takes equality seriously. This in turn can encourage LGB people to feel confident when they approach the association for help with a housing problem.

7.8 THE ROLE OF THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

A number of local authorities and housing associations suggested that guidance and advice on how to provide effective services to LGB people would be useful. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations, were seen as vehicles to assist social landlords. The following two quotes illustrate this point

“It becomes easier to push these issues to the forefront if you’ve got something to hang onto like... we’re required to do this by law... or, this is an Assembly Directive initiative.” (LA)

“There needs to be more of a driving force from the assembly – that and training is essential and I think is the most effective route for policy to become practice.” (LA)

Suggestions for action by the Welsh Assembly Government include:

- Developing a lesbian, gay and bisexual action plan, along the same lines as the recent black and minority ethnic action plan that has been developed
- Clearer direction to social landlords on mainstreaming lesbian, gay and bisexual housing issues
- Supporting the creation and development of LGB consultation fora
- Developing clear guidelines on how to include lesbian, gay and bisexual people in service planning and delivery
- Encouraging sexual orientation monitoring and reporting
- Setting lesbian, gay and bisexual targets for housing providers
- Monitoring and evaluating in relation to strategies and policies (i.e. Supporting People)

The National Homelessness Strategy and the Statutory Code of Guidance to local authorities on allocations and homelessness are good starting points for social landlords to adopt an approach that is inclusive of LGB issues. There is however, an expectation, that if social landlords are to take responsibility for addressing the issues detailed in this research, that there will be cost and time implications. Funding and guidance will be needed.

8 • CONCLUSIONS

This report has explored the housing problems experienced by sample of lesbian, gay and bisexual people living in Wales. While the sample was not statistically representative of the LGB community in Wales it provides an insight into needs that have not been previously researched. The research has shown that LGB people living in Wales experience a range of housing problems. These problems can be to varying degrees influenced by their sexual orientation.

The housing needs experienced by LGB participants relate to traditional measures of housing need such as overcrowding, living in damp conditions or in a property in disrepair. Within traditional housing needs assessments there are likely to be LGB people experiencing these traditional problems but whose sexuality remains hidden. In this study housing needs were primarily socially based. LGB participants experienced housing problems due to rejection by family members, harassment by neighbours and local community members, and by discrimination from flatmates, colleagues and employers. The manifestation of these problems was seen in homelessness, living in temporary accommodation and experiencing harassment in or around the home. Not all LGB participants sought assistance from housing providers, such as local authorities or housing associations, with some attempting to sort out their housing problems either alone or with assistance from informal networks, such as family members or friends.

Where assistance was sought from housing providers it ranged from re-housing through to assistance in harassment cases. There were mixed views as to the effectiveness of assistance from service providers, with staff attitude and

follow through action by the organisation being key in determining whether a LGB participant thought that they received a good service. Not everyone was willing to disclose their sexual orientation to a housing provider, from fear of a negative response or discrimination. Lack of disclosure means that housing providers remain unaware of all the influencing factors in a housing needs case, which can accentuate the potential for social exclusion among LGB communities.

The impact sexual orientation has on an individual's housing problem depended on the nature of the housing problem. Housing providers recognised that LGB people may have specific housing needs, but they are less likely to be specific in terms of requiring certain forms of physical accommodation, with needs more likely linked to the need for sensitive allocation policies and responsive staff with knowledge of LGB issues.

Homophobic harassment by members of the local community or being rejected by family members because of sexual orientation had a clear impact on a person's housing problem. Indirect discrimination, such as youths intimidating residents or employers victimising a person due to their sexual orientation can be more difficult to determine. This can lead to stress, depression, housing crisis, nervous breakdown or suicidal actions.

Where stress and depression, due to not being accepted by family, friends, employers or the local community, contributed to housing problems the links are more tenuous, although the perceptions of the LGB participants were that these factors played a major part in their housing problem. Housing providers also recognised the potential vulnerability of LGB people in housing need and the stress associated with the fear of being harassed.

LGB people in housing need can feel isolated, vulnerable and in fear of their personal safety. Homelessness and living in insecure accommodation increases levels of vulnerability, while at the same time reduces the likelihood of seeking assistance. This is largely influenced by fear of rejection, secondary victimisation and low self-esteem. The result is social exclusion for LGB people, as providers are unaware that their services are inaccessible, and hence do not address the needs of this group. Hence the importance of sending out a positive message to the LGB community that service providers do want to provide good services to all members of the community.

Housing problems linked with harassment were non-tenure specific, needing a non-tenure specific response. However, social landlords, local government, central government and key agencies, such as the Police, have a key role in working in partnership (including using anti social behaviour legislation) to tackle homophobic harassment evident within some local communities within Wales. The existing multi-agency forums that some local authorities are involved in with the police and other agencies are a good starting point for joint working on tackling harassment.

LGB participants were at their most vulnerable, when they were homeless or in temporary accommodation. It was also when they were most vulnerable that they were also least likely to seek out support. The reluctance to seek support at this time came from a fear of rejection and further discrimination. The National Homelessness Strategy from the Welsh Assembly Government, and its specific references towards meeting the advice and support needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, should be focused on by housing providers to encourage the promotion of specific services for vulnerable LGB people.

Social attitudes impact on LGB peoples opinions and views about how society regards them. This in turn impacts on their approach to seeking out services they may need, including housing services. Where there is a fear of rejection or an anticipation of discrimination, people in housing need are likely to be reluctant to seek help or to identify their sexual orientation. This may compound their housing problem and accentuate their vulnerability, and means that their needs remain unmet. Housing providers acknowledged that their level of knowledge on LGB housing need was limited, and that without hard evidence planning future services could be difficult. Sharing information, joint training and further research are all seen as ways to raise awareness and hence improve service delivery among service providers.

Social landlords are committed to equality of opportunity, but there is a gap between policy and practice. Policies do not detail the specific issues affecting LGB communities. Equality training is commonplace, though the extent to which sexual orientation issues are covered varies across organisations. This, alongside the perception that equalities policies and harassment policies are all encompassing and capture the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, might have led to complacency among service providers.

There is evidence of good practice in Wales striving to ensure that lesbian, gay and bisexual people receive a comparable service with other service users. This good practice, alongside lesbian, gay and bisexual people's views on how to improve the service need to be explored in more detailed and transferable lessons spread throughout all areas of Wales.

Experiences with service providers were mixed with specialist LGB providers being thought of more positively than mainstream housing providers. Reasons for this derive from the fact that LGB specialist services have a commitment to gaining the specialist knowledge and develop the understanding and approaches required to address the housing and support issues experienced by LGB people. This knowledge should be both valued and used as a resource by other housing service providers.

Relatively few LGB participants in this research had accessed an advice centre, and while the figures were very small they showed that those using advice centres were disproportionately participants living in the private rented sector. Future research would benefit from looking into why people in the private rented sector may not consider accessing statutory housing services due to perceptions of ineligibility for social housing or fear of receiving a negative response, therefore making access to an impartial advice centre an important source of support for those people.

Welsh local authorities have a duty to assess the needs of their population, which by inference means LGB people. This cannot be done properly without monitoring and policies that are clearly implemented rather than being purely paper based. There is a role here for the WAG and the Welsh Audit Office in ensuring that local authorities and housing associations are carrying there duties properly in this area. The WAG's aim within the National Homelessness Strategy to support the provision of independent advice centres that can cater for specific needs is to be welcomed, as an important resource for LGB people.

9 • RECOMMENDATIONS

The report makes a number of recommendations aimed at housing providers, the WAG and generic recommendation. These are discussed respectively:

9.1 HOUSING PROVIDERS

- Local authorities and housing associations should monitor, where practical, access to housing services by sexual orientation to identify the extent to which LGB people access their services. This would include monitoring homelessness applications, applications for housing via the housing waiting list, and by monitoring harassment and anti social behaviour cases among existing tenants. This might mean including a box on monitoring forms so that people can self-identify as LGB. While it is recognised that there might be a low response rate to such monitoring (because of people not wishing to or having the confidence to self-identify) it is an important first stage in beginning to understand and meet the needs of LGB people.
- Local authorities, housing associations and other agencies should consider what preventative action they could take to meet LGB housing need. For example the Triangle Wales telephone advice line could be more widely advertised and promoted, with funding from local housing providers. There is scope to develop the telephone advice line as a source of support to families who are finding it difficult to accept their son or daughter's sexual orientation as well as providing valuable support to individual LGB people in housing need.
- Specialist LGB housing services should be valued for their specialist knowledge and utilised by other service providers, as a resource. Specialist LGB services do, however, have an important role in assisting mainstream housing advisors with service delivery and in particular getting the support ethos correct. If mainstream services were to access the

skills and knowledge of LGB services (through training and placements) service delivery would improve.

- Awareness training should be undertaken by all housing service providers and should have a three fold purpose: to raise awareness of the housing issues, problems and needs faced by LGB people in Wales; training on how to deal with LGB clients in a sensitive manner, equipped with knowledge of appropriate language to use and so on; and finally, training should also make housing service providers aware of specialist LGB services that exist in Wales.
- Preventative action by local authorities and housing associations could also include reviewing existing policies and practices to identify whether the full range of services are open and accessible to LGB people. This could include reviewing the way in which people report housing need (i.e. the physical office environment) or the way in which staff handle LGB housing need (i.e. through effective training and raising of awareness).
- Housing providers should state and demonstrate a zero tolerance policy with respect to homophobic harassment.
- At the point they sign a contract, tenants of social landlords should be made aware of the commitment to zero tolerance of homophobic harassment. Anti social behaviour policies should also reflect zero tolerance towards homophobic harassment. An explicit message should be sent out to all tenants about the unacceptability of harassment and victimisation.
- Housing providers have a responsibility to encourage community cohesion, and any community development and capacity building that is carried out in local neighbourhoods must embrace all members of the community. Where people meet people from different backgrounds, but where they have a common focus, such as helping with community sustainability, it can have a

great effect on building bridges between different members of the community.

- Nomination agreements for housing association lettings should be negotiated that will enable LGB people to be housed in association accommodation in accordance with equality policies.
- Further research should be carried out to enhance understanding of the impact of housing problems for lesbian, gay and bisexual people's children. This could include working in partnership with education authorities and social services departments.
- First impressions are crucial and housing providers can improve their profile with the lesbian, gay and bisexual community by reviewing how their office public space reflects their commitment to confidentiality and equality. Open plan reception areas can put people off discussing their housing problem in full, and hence influencing the initial response by the service provider.
- Clear indications to individuals of an organisation's commitment to treating everyone fairly, such as posters on equalities, can influence a person's sense of security and increase levels of trust when they approach a service provider for assistance.

- Service users need to feel confident that they will be treated consistently regardless of which members of staff they come into contact with over the course of tackling their housing problem. This means that local authorities and associations need:
 - To review the effectiveness of existing policies as they relate to meeting the needs of LGB people
 - Consistent training on equalities for staff across the organisation
 - Clear policies on tackling homophobic harassment
 - Equality and diversity personal performance indicators
 - To set internal standards for their staff, for example by having clear statements on zero tolerance of homophobia within the organisation
 - Work to reach LGB people to inform them of the range of services available and highlight that they are sensitive to LGB needs
 - Develop sensitive allocations policies.
- LGB participants expressed that they had refrained from using services for fear that their identity might be exposed. Housing service providers must advertise and guarantee confidence and anonymity.
- Practices tackling anti social behaviour need to be evaluated, including seeking the views of LGB clients or LGB community groups, to gather their views on the effectiveness of the policy. These need to be more sensitive to LGB user needs.
- Organisations should seek feedback from service users on how they are performing, with explicit questions relating to how well they performed in dealing with any lesbian, gay and bisexual service users.

- Social landlords could develop working relations with lesbian, gay and bisexual agencies to identify how best to improve services and open up consultation processes to the LGB community.

9.2 THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that it follows through its statements towards equality in its National Homelessness Strategy and Statutory Code of Practice on allocations and homelessness. This includes requesting evidence on how local authorities are incorporating equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in local service delivery and tackling unfair discrimination.
- The Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Audit Office should ensure that the statutory duties that local authorities have towards equalities issues are enforced.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should work in partnership with local government and voluntary agencies to explore and enhance the role of LGB specific services. This could take the form of exploratory research, with a focus on service user involvement, to identify how the further development of lesbian, gay and bisexual services would add value to the services available to people in housing need.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should support the development of LGB consultation fora to enable the views of LGB people to have a say in policy development and service delivery.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has a role in raising the profile of lesbian, gay and bisexual housing needs at a national level and across service providers. This could take a number of forms including:

- A corporate statement on its own commitment to meeting the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Reflecting sexual orientation issues within its own policies and procedures, including requiring equalities data from service providers
- Providing guidance on inclusion of sexual orientation in service provider corporate policies
- Performance indicators for organisations
- Developing a bank of good practice on how sexual orientation is covered in policy and practice, highlighting positive outcomes where evident
- Monitoring how service providers are mainstreaming sexual orientation issues within policy and practice.

9.3 GENERIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is an opportunity for social landlords to work more closely with the Police and other agencies to provide the support and response required by lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This could include assessing the feasibility of a specialist resource targeted at lesbian, gay and bisexual people (e.g. Victim Support staff specialising in advice to LGB people).
- All service providers should improve networks between themselves to share information on how to best reflect and meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This could include a best practice forum, and greater sharing of information between local authorities, housing associations and specialist agencies.
- Training should be provided to all staff to raise awareness and ensure that they can demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of people who have housing problems due to the identification of their sexual orientation.

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II • APPENDIX I

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researching lesbian, gay and bisexual people

Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people constitute what has been described as a hidden and 'hard-to-reach' population, particularly for research purposes (Dapp et al 2001). The difficulties involved in researching LGB people therefore, principally centre on issues of access and invisibility, which have knock-on implications for those research projects that require achieving a sufficiently large sample that can be deemed representative of the wider LGB population (McManus 2003).

Recruiting LGB people to participate in research projects requires that people are not only accessible by the research strategy – i.e. that they are not socially or geographically isolated – and that they are comfortable and confident in disclosing their sexuality for the research purposes, which often involves disclosure to strangers.

McLean and O'Connor (2003) advise those wanting to enhance participation in LGB research to emphasise anonymity and confidentiality, to use creative recruitment methods and to make the aims and potential benefits of the research absolutely explicit.

McManus (2003) reviews methodological approaches appropriate for researching LGB people and suggests that recruitment of LGB research participants, through social venues and organisations can cause a bias towards less isolated, younger and mobile people. She continues that while use of the internet has emerged as a viable and effective LGB research tool, she warns researchers to be aware and acknowledge the possible bias and exclusions, this method might also incur.

Research-based literature make very clear the difficulties of recruiting LGB people for research purposes, particularly those in housing crisis (see for example, Dunne et al 2002, O'Connor and Molloy 2001). Dunne et al, who were concerned with LGB youth described their sample as a "particularly invisible and vulnerable sector of the homeless population" (104) and the processes of accessing and interviewing participants as a "complex and sensitive task" (ibid). O'Connor and Molloy (2001) also found the recruitment of young homeless LGB people "generally problematic" (4), because the chaotic nature homelessness provoked in their young LGB participants lives made it difficult to contact them and to commit to an interview time. Where O'Connor and Molloy (2001) had anticipated the use of snowball techniques to generate more young LGB participants, they found their established participants' isolation and broken social networks often made this difficult. O'Connor and Molloy (2001) found the most successful way of making contact with their research group was through voluntary and statutory organisations, who liaised with the young people, explained the research to them, and acquiring their permission to allow the researchers to contact them. This, however, proved a time-consuming exercise and required the co-operation and support of key individuals, organisations and service providers that were willing to act as gatekeepers.

Sexual orientation and housing problems/needs

There is a dearth of research and literature on the housing problems and needs faced by LGB people¹. The research that has looked at the housing problems and needs of LGB people, however, has shown that the role sexuality can play is complex (see Dunne et al 2002, Lemos and Crane 1994,

O'Connor and Molloy 2001, Smith and Calvert 2001, Turnball 2001). These studies have shown that a person's lesbian, gay or bi- sexual identity can play an important role in triggering housing problems and creating certain housing needs. Lemos and Crane (1994), however, make clear that being lesbian, gay or bisexual does not in itself represent a housing need. O'Connor and Molly (2001) further this assertion and stress that it would be wrong to suggest that lesbian, gay or bi-sexualities cause housing problems, but rather it is the intolerance and unpredictability of other peoples reactions, actions and attitudes towards these sexualities that are the root of housing problems and needs. The range of housing issues disclosed by LGB participants from previous research projects include eviction from the family home or rented accommodation, homelessness (from sleeping rough through to insecure housing arrangements), problems that reflect co-habitation and succession rights, harassment and abuse from neighbours and landlords and discrimination from housing service providers.

Research and literature has shown that housing problems and needs can arise for LGB people as a result of homophobia, which can manifest in a variety of ways, from rejection from family and/or friends to harassment and violence from family, house-sharers, carers, landlords, neighbours and local people (see Dunne et al 2002, O'Connor and Molloy 2001, Smith and Calvert 2001, Turnball 2001). Such sources of homophobia and intolerance have been shown to create housing problems and needs and in some cases directly or indirectly force an LGB person to leave their home. Particularly salient among O'Connor and Molloy's (2001) research sample of young LGB people, was homelessness caused by rejection from family and friends upon 'coming out'²/disclosing their lesbian or gay sexual orientations. O'Connor and Molloy (2001:27)

asserted that “[t]he clearest link between sexual orientation and housing crisis among young lesbians and gay men is when a young person leaves home as a result of intolerant or negative reactions to their sexuality”. In addition, Blake (2004) and Connexions (2003) have both acknowledged that young LGB people often find themselves homeless once they have come out as lesbian, gay or bisexual because friends and family may disown them. O’Connor and Molloy’s (2001) sample also demonstrated that the fear and anticipation of a negative reaction from family and friends caused participants to conceal their sexuality for fear of rejection and violence and in some cases, participants felt compelled to leave home before their sexuality became known. Connexions (2003) explored the emotional and psychological strain young LGB people can experience when coming to terms with lesbian or gay sexual orientations in an un-supportive environment. Connexions (2003) make clear the impact such a situation can have on a young LGB persons’ self-esteem, emotional development, friendship and family networks and the potential for housing crisis.

Older LGB people have been shown to be vulnerable to intolerance and rejection from their families. The little UK research that does exist demonstrates that rejection by grandchildren and elder abuse is not uncommon (Turnbull 2001).

Housing problems and needs for LGB people have also been discussed in relation to housing or support service providers. Discrimination and homophobia from housing service providers and other service users was shown to compound the housing problems faced by LGB people. It was also shown that there was reluctance among LGB people to approach service providers for assistance with their housing

problems because there was a fear and anticipation that discrimination and homophobia would ensue (Lemos and Crane 1994). Dunne et al (2002), Smith and Calvert (2001) and Turnbull (2001) illustrate the problems in hostels, emergency accommodation, sheltered housing and residential homes experienced by LGB people. Other issues which have been documented include the denial of a mortgage or insurance, ill treatment from housing providers and mortgage lenders and assault in their own home (McManus 2003).

Young vulnerable people who have been rejected by friends and family may also face homophobia from housing services (Connexions 2003). While the housing crisis may not have been a result of a person’s sexual orientation, homophobia in services, from either staff or users, could aggravate the difficulties faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people, making it more difficult for them to access appropriate help and support (McLean and O’Connor 2003, O’Connor and Molloy 2001). This in turn is likely to shape a person’s view of support services and increase a reluctance to access them.

Housing problems also arise – or are compounded – for LGB people when service providers do not have adequate understanding to recognise and address the problems and needs presented. McLean and O’Connor (2003) reported that during focus groups carried out in Scotland with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisation representatives, it was felt that very little was known about the community’s housing needs or about the nature or extent of homelessness therein. There is a link here with issues of monitoring the sexual orientation of service users, which is to date and uncommon practice. Lemos and Crane (1994) argue that even where sexual orientation is monitored for within housing and advice services, low numbers of LGB people presenting

themselves in need of housing and advice services must be treated with caution. They stress that it can not be assumed that LGB people do not present in large numbers that there is no specific housing need within this community. Evidence suggests, rather, that it is more likely that this community are simply reluctant to use mainstream housing services, or that they are insecure about disclosing their sexual orientation when they do approach such service providers (Lemos and Crane 1994).

The young LGB participants in O’Connor and Molloy’s (2001) study demonstrated that they were more likely to access specialist LGB support provision during their housing crisis. Provisions included services that were either exclusively lesbian and gay housing services, or services for lesbians and gay men which were hosted by generic organisations. O’Connor and Molloy (2001) found that where LGB-specific schemes were over-subscribed, the young LGB people in their research sample were forced to approach mainstream services. Problems emerged for the young people concerned when homophobia existed within the service, either from staff, or from other service users, and when staff were not responsive to this. The research noted that some agencies that acknowledged the issues faced by LGB service users, liaised with lesbian and gay service organisations to provide advice and support on housing issues.

Service providers must not only acknowledge the LGB community, but must also recognise that it is not homogenous and that diversity exists within that community just as it does with any other (Morrison and MacKay 2000). With respect to older LGB people, for example, Turnbull (2001) found that while very little information exists about ill health and health care for this group, housing provision is a concern which

emerges repeatedly. Evidence shows that the needs of older lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals and couples are rarely acknowledged by those who run supported and residential housing for older people.

Brown (1997) urges planners to consider the physical growth of the LGB scene and to acknowledge the increasing visibility of lesbian, gay and bisexual commercial ventures. The creation of space for minority groups and their acceptance by others allows those groups to continue different lives within the mainstream. The same message could apply to housing providers. Research has shown that older lesbian, gay and bisexual people have highlighted the need for separate sheltered accommodation to cater for their unique needs (Turnbull 2001).

Research citing the under-representation of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community in the social rented sector, may suggest that the group is over-represented in the private rented sector (Roger and McVeigh 1999). Guidance urges social landlords to carefully review their services and development and design plans, to ensure that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are not being excluded or find the prospect of social housing an unattractive one. Issues for consideration were suggested to include location and security. Roger and McVeigh (1999) recommend consultation with local LGB groups, and working with the local authority and community bodies to promote good practice in meeting the housing needs of the local lesbian, gay and bisexual population.

Morrison and MacKay (2000) found that while some providers of social housing have recognised equalities issues pertaining to ethnicity or poverty, few have specifically considered the needs LGB people. They suggest that in terms of personal and community safety, there is potential that strategies designed to tackle racial hatred could be adapted to protect LGB people. Guidance from Dapp et al (2001) reiterates the fact that authorities should deal with abusive behaviour towards LGB people on the same basis as

for racial harassment. Morrison and MacKay (2000) also reported that some service providers demonstrated an 'indifferent' attitude towards LGB people, and had not consulted with LGB people over gaps in service provision. The research clearly demonstrated a flaw in the knowledge and practices the service providers had in relation to LGB people and a general lack of understanding in relation to how LGB people use existing services.

Failure to recognise LGB relationships exacerbated difficulties in accessing safe, secure and affordable housing (Lemos and Crane, 1994). Under the new Housing Bill and the Civil Partnerships Bill this should no longer be the case. Guidance from the National Housing Federation (Roger and McVeigh 1999) urges social landlords to treat emergency applications for housing from people homeless due to homophobic harassment with an equal priority to cases of homelessness caused by sexual or racial harassment.

Harassment and discrimination

The basis for most literature concerning the LGB community, and the identification and exploration of that community's needs, experiences and aspirations derives from the recognition that society operates in a way which tends to uphold heterosexual relationships and lifestyle as the norm, and stigmatises other sexualities. This has been described as 'heterosexism' (Morrison and MacKay 2000, Turnbull 2001), and offers a more sophisticated and complex explanation of an ideology, which discriminates against, marginalises and excludes LGB people than the term 'homophobia', which implies a clinical explanation based on fear of homosexuals or homosexuality. Heterosexism is based on bias and denial (Brown 1997).

Morrison and MacKay (2000) place the primary responsibility for changing heterosexist-centred social attitudes, at an institutional level. It is their contention that 'cultural heterosexism' is perpetuated by society's principal social and

cultural institutions, including the religious, legal, education and housing systems and the mass media in addition to 'psychological heterosexism', which is expressed through the attitudes and actions of individuals. The institutional bases, including housing, have a responsibility to raise the visibility of LGB sexualities, through, for example policy or services literature.

Discrimination that has heterosexist or homophobic roots shares a complicated relationship with harassment. Lemos and Crane (1994) define harassment of lesbian, gay and bisexual people as "deliberate interference with the peace, comfort or safety of any person because they are, or are assumed to be, lesbian or gay."

Homophobic harassment can include verbal and physical abuse, threats and attacks, graffiti and damage to property and has been shown to be a prolific cause of housing problems faced by LGB people (see Dunne et al 2002, Lemos and Crane 1994, Morrison and MacKay 2000, O'Connor and Molloy 2001, Turnbull 2001). Morrison and MacKay (2000) found that almost one third of violent incidents or harassment reported by gay men in Edinburgh occurred in or near their home, indicating a clear link between safety and housing. This study found that violent victimisation, harassment and discrimination as a result of sexual orientation are endemic to the lives of most gay men.

Sexty (1990) made clear that councils did not always accept harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation as grounds for leaving home, so LGB people were at risk of being deemed intentionally homeless and refused accommodation. More recent literature suggests that this is still the case. Morrison and MacKay (2000), for example, reviewed Edinburgh housing associations' policies on violence and harassment and found that this issue was only seen in terms of physical assault from outsiders and consideration had not been given to more subtle forms of violence or harassment from other residents, family members, visitors or staff.

While housing association policies on equal opportunities appeared to be inclusive of LGB sexualities, policies on violence or harassment generally were not. The researchers found it hard to convince some housing associations to give further consideration to these issues, as without hard evidence they were reluctant to address them.

The issues of under-reporting of homophobic harassment are highlighted by Lemos and Crane (1994), who emphasise the need for housing providers not to assume there is not a problem simply because it has not been reported to them. They note that reporting homophobic incidents adds a further complication for LGB people, who have to officially reveal their sexual orientation, thus leaving themselves potentially open to further abuse by the agencies which are supposed to be protecting them. This is known as secondary victimisation.

Despite the campaigning of LGB organisations, discrimination faced by LGB people is often unacknowledged. This, combined with the difficulties of incorporating sexual orientation in the policy agenda have been discussed elsewhere (see Misra 1992). Dapp et al (2001) have argued however, that social attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people are slowly changing, which has been increasingly reflected in recent legislative developments such as the Equality in Employment (2003) and the Civil Partnership Act (2004) (see chapter 2). Such changes, suggest that local authorities and their partners will have been made more aware of sexual orientation issues and be given responsibility to act. The duty to promote equality, as set out in Section 120 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 has initiated increasing political and financial support for initiatives that seek to promote equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people (Stonewall Cymru 2003). This research contributes to raising awareness and providing tools for responding to this changing environment.

Vulnerability, LGB people and housing problems/needs

Exploration of wider determinants of housing crisis, have made clear that homophobic bullying, leading a double-life and post-traumatic stress following homophobic assault can impact on the mental health of an individual. Organisational representatives involved in previous research have asserted there exists a lack of specific services to address vulnerabilities, such as mental ill-health and substance misuse/dependency among LGB people (McLean and O'Connor 2003, McManus 2003).

Vulnerabilities that relate to chronic housing crisis, specifically homelessness are exacerbated for LGB people, who have often lost significant support networks following the disclosure of their sexual orientation (O'Connor and Molloy 2001). Studies have shown that having to carefully manage the disclosure/concealment of sexual orientation – for reasons evading harassment, discrimination and violence – can compound the trauma of homelessness as it is a demand in addition to the practical difficulties of finding a place to sleep, keeping nourished, managing the dangers of substance misuse, sexual exploitation and so on. O'Connor and Molloy (2001) found that the loss of support can reduce young LGB persons ability to deal with the trauma of homelessness, which recurrently led to them being homeless for longer, and thus more vulnerable to danger.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people may find that they are discriminated against for reasons other than their sexual orientation, which can compound their vulnerabilities to housing problems. Issues such as race, gender, disability or HIV status may all play a part in a housing crisis (Lemos and Crane 1994).

Implications of cultural constraints

Social landlords are urged to recognise that all ethnic communities contain lesbian, gay and bisexual peoples (Roger and McVeigh 1999). O'Connor and Molloy (2001) found that intolerance of sexual difference, within some cultures can be a major cause of housing crisis for young lesbians and gay men. The desire to escape an impending arranged marriage, for example, was shown to cause a young LGB person to either run away, or disclose their sexuality to their family and face rejection.

That young LGB people from black and minority ethnic communities often face strong pressure about their sexuality is a concern. It is also of concern that these same individuals may also suffer racism from within LGB communities and support agencies (Connexions 2003). There are also possible implications for LGB people within a faith context. Turnbull (2001) cites unsympathetic clergy as an issue for older LGB people. Across all faith groups there are a range of attitudes and responses to lesbian, gay and bi- sexualities. It is possible that cultural prejudice cuts not only across cultural ethnicity contexts, but also more broadly in the lives of gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

It is important to ensure that the diversity of the LGB community is reflected when undertaking research. There is very little sexual orientation research within ethnic minority communities, despite the discrimination they may face, and the difficulties they may encounter in terms of reconciling their sexual orientation and their ethnic and racial identity (McManus 2003).

Good practice and recommendations from existing literature

Roger and McVeigh (1999) recommend that social landlords should work with local authorities and other agencies to identify and assess the needs of LGB people, so they are recognised and prioritised along side other groups in need. They further urge these bodies to recognise that current research in this field is limited, especially at a local level, and to consider commissioning research to assess their own current contribution to meeting the housing needs of this group.

The Local Government Association (Dapp et al 2001) encourages local authorities to support the creation of lesbian and gay employee groups; to encourage openness about sexuality; to acknowledge same-sex relationships; to advertise vacancies in the gay press and to have equal opportunities policies that specifically mention lesbian, gay and bisexual people. These are steps which will impact positively on the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, as well as on the LGB communities they serve. With respect to housing, they highlight the risk to lesbian, gay and bisexual tenants of harassment and victimisation. All authorities should have a harassment policy for their tenants, which includes procedures for dealing with abusive behaviour towards lesbian, gay and bisexual tenants.

Roger and McVeigh (1999) also made a series of specific recommendations to social landlords with respect to sensitively managing situations that involve homophobic violence or harassment, supporting households which experience this, as well as acting sensitively in cases of the death of a same-sex partner or same-sex relationship breakdown. They emphasise the promotion of participation of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in tenants' associations and other participatory fora, and the need to take action to prevent tenants voicing discriminatory views, which may discourage lesbian, gay and bisexual tenants from participating. Blake (2004) suggests the

need for more training among all agency workers, and the suggestion of training specifically for housing workers arose during discussions for research by McLean and O'Connor (2003) and Connexions (2003).

In exploring the creation of inclusive housing and homelessness services, O'Connor and Molloy (2001) highlight the need for the monitoring of clients' sexuality, sexual orientation awareness training for staff and users, and the development and implementation of equal opportunities policies which embrace the equal and safe treatment of lesbians and gay men within services. Misra (1992) emphasises the importance of monitoring sexual orientation in order to evaluate effectiveness of services and Smith and Calvert (2001) strongly recommended to local authorities to include questions on sexual orientation in workforce attitude surveys and service user satisfaction surveys. Roger and McVeigh (1999) also recommend funding equalities training for tenants' associations.

Morrison and MacKay (2000) offer a series of recommendations to ensure that gay men are served by police, local authorities, housing providers and employers who have a common understanding of and a commitment to tackle gay men's experience of violence and harassment. These are aimed at service providers, stakeholders and central government, and are grouped broadly into policy and strategy issues, provision of information and awareness raising, the provision of training, the development of inter-agency work, liaison with the gay community, the general development of services and monitoring and quality issues.

Underpinning the recommendations of Morrison and MacKay (2000) is a belief that real change will only be brought about when gay men, as individuals and as a community, feel able to share experiences and participate in the development of services and strategies. This is echoed by O'Connor and Molloy (2001) and Lemos and Crane (1994), who place an emphasis on a shifting of societal attitudes to make life more tolerable for LGB people.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LITERATURE INCLUDED ABOVE:

Blake, S. (2004) 'Section 28 gone at last! Meeting the needs of young gay men', in *Working with Young Men*, volume 3, number 1. January. p 31-33.

This article examines the implications of the repeal of Section 28 which enshrined prejudice and discrimination towards gay men and lesbians in English and Welsh law by making it illegal for local educational authorities to 'intentionally promote homosexuality as a pretend family relationship. The article identifies, in light of the repeal, ideas for change, in particular, to address a 'culture of invisibility.'

Brown, J. (1997) 'The lesbian and gay communities: reconciliation in the built environment – a planning obligation' *Working Paper 41*. University of Newcastle.

This working paper seeks to show how relevant the lesbian and gay communities now are to many urban planning authorities. It reflects that some practising local authority planners may not be aware of lesbian and gay communities within the population they serve and describes the features of the lesbian and gay community, and argues that these communities are now more relevant than ever to planners. The paper argues that as lesbian and gay communities have become more established, they are developing physical and spatial expressions of this stability on the built environment through their clustering and visibility.

Connexions, (2003) *Information and guidance on engaging young lesbian, gay and bisexual people*. Connexions National Service Unit.

This guidance seeks to raise awareness of lesbian, gay and bisexual issues affecting young people to encourage good practice within the Connexions service and their partnership organisations.

Dapp, P, Gupta, D, Hardie, R. (2001) *Supporting inclusive communities: lesbians, gay men and local democracy – guidelines for local authorities.*

Local Government Association.

This guidance discusses the developments in government policies, the duty of Best Value legislative changes, precedent court cases and social trends which have required local authorities to engage with the lesbian and gay community. The document discusses how the needs of lesbians and gay and bisexual people could be integrated into the activity of local authorities through equality policies, delivering Best Value, consultation and statutory planning, community development and employment practices. It highlights key issues affecting specific services, including housing.

Lemos, P and Crane, G. (1994) *Tackling discrimination against lesbians and gay men: a good practice guide for housing associations and voluntary organisations.*

National Federation of Housing Associations.

This good practice guide aims to assist housing associations ensure that gay and lesbian tenants, applicants for housing, and staff members do not suffer discrimination in applying for housing or other services. It provides guidelines to ensure that these groups are not denied employment opportunities, and have the chance to participate in running such organisations as housing associations. The guide covers discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, harassment in housing, access to housing, terms and conditions of tenancy, recruitment and selection, equality at work, terms and conditions of employment and influence and participation in the operation of the housing association.

McClean, C. and O'Connor, W. (2003) *Sexual orientation research phase 2: the future of LGBT research – perspectives of community organisations (Social justice).*
Stationery Office. Edinburgh.

This research examines policy areas where lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgender (LGBT) research is lacking and considers the types of research that are needed to explain barriers to research on LGBT issues in Scotland. The report suggests that the active involvement of LGBT people and organisations in the creation of the research agenda is essential and that more effective dissemination of research and recommendations is key to maximising the value of research conducted on LGBT issues.

McManus, S. (2003) *Sexual orientation research phase 1: A review of methodological approaches (Social justice).*
Stationery Office Bookshop, Edinburgh.

This review focuses on the issues of definition and classification of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. It addresses research matters including sampling, methodology, interview and analysis techniques as well as reporting and ethical considerations. It lists and briefly discusses large-scale data sources available in the UK and the United States and reviews research coverage of different policy and topic areas. The review also examines achieving diversity and inclusiveness in the research process.

Misra, A. (1992) *Equal Opportunities in Housing Associations: Are you doing enough?*
National Federation of Housing Associations.

This report presents the results of a survey of housing associations and their equal opportunities policies. It assesses lettings policies, employment, and contracting to ethnic minorities; women; people with disabilities; and lesbians and gay men. It describes nine examples of practice in housing associations and highlights the priorities for action in policy statements and for each of the target groups.



Morrison, C. and MacKay, A. (2000) *The experience of violence and harassment of gay men in the city of Edinburgh. The Stationery Office.*

The purpose of this research was to promote a gay community perspective on community safety and to help inform the provision of services to the gay community in Edinburgh. Having undertaken individual interviews, the research examines the attitudes of gay men, the police and the local authority. It highlights the importance of workplace discrimination, harassment and violence and responses to it. The research also discusses the position of housing associations, gay community based agencies and community service providers and makes recommendations and provides a series of appendices, dedicated to recent developments in England/Wales and internationally.

O'Connor, W. and Molloy, D. (2001) *Hidden in Plain Sight: Homelessness amongst Lesbian and Gay Youth. National Centre for Social Research.*

This research examines the causes and natures of homelessness amongst lesbian and gay young people. The research was predominantly undertaken in four cities (Bristol, Glasgow, Leeds and London) with lesbians (17), gay (15) and bisexual (1) people aged between the age of 16 and 24 and explores the patterns and causes of homelessness experienced by young lesbians and gay men. The research looks at the nature of the young people's homelessness and examines the young people's use and experience of different types of housing and homelessness services, including the barriers they experienced. Looks at issues central to the provision of housing and homelessness services to young lesbians and gay men, and discusses strategies for future provision.

Rogers, N. and McVeigh, J. (1999) *Equality in housing: guidance for promoting equality and tackling discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. National Housing Federation.*

This guidance supplements the Federation's Equality in housing: a code of practice, which was published in February 1998. It sets out the principles which it believes should underpin equality policies and provides a practical framework to review housing association's own approaches to achieving equality for lesbians, gay and bisexual people.

Sexty, C (1990) *Women Losing Out – Access to Housing in Britain Today. Shelter.*

This report examines women's access to housing in Britain and examines the effects of policies in 1990 on women's ability to obtain suitable housing. In particular, it examines the specific problems of different groups of women – black and ethnic minority women, disabled women, lesbian, single women and older women. It also discusses the disadvantages associated with low incomes and poor employment prospects for women. The study presents the findings from a case study in Salford which examined the effect of privatisation on women's access to housing on the Trinity estate, two thirds of which was sold to private developers in the early 1980s.

Smith, A. and Calvert, J. (2001) *Opening doors: working with older lesbians and gay men (service development resource pack). Age Concern.*

This good practice guide seeks to provide advice for individuals or organisations interested in developing services for, or working with, older lesbians or gay men. The guide sets out the principles of good practice in working with older lesbians and gay men and looks at how to develop an inclusive organisation into a gay and lesbian affirming organisation through specific or adapted services, training and consultation.

Turnbull, A. (2001) *Opening Doors: The Needs of Older Lesbians and Gay Men. Age Concern*

The literature review surveys recent and current literature regarding the needs of older lesbians and gay men in order to support the development of a coherent strategy by Age Concern England for their work with and on behalf of older lesbians and gay men. The research reviewed does not differentiate between gay men and women and largely reflects the experiences of those living in large urban communities in the USA and reflects the experiences of white, well educated, affluent individuals.

(1) *A comprehensive review of literature relevant to exploring the causes and experiences of homelessness amongst lesbian and gay youth was undertaken as part of 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Homelessness amongst Lesbian and Gay Youth' published by the National Centre for Social Research (O'Connor and Molloy 2001).*

(2) *'Coming out' is the term used by LGB people to describe their experience of self-discovery, self-acceptance of their sexual orientation and their decision to share this with others when and how they choose (Connexions 2003). Coming out is a continual, life-long process, rather than a single disclosure.*

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