

APPENDICES

- I. Plan for the focus groups
- II. Notes from the focus groups
- III. Posters produced to advertise the groups
- IV. Online questionnaire
- V. Acknowledgements



LGBT Focus Groups

Outline Plan

Each session will last for approximately 60 minutes and groups will be made up of varying numbers, however, no more than 8 persons. Tea, Coffee & Biscuits will be provided, to be there when people arrive, and not to be taken away until everyone has left.

Introduction

- Who I am and that I am gay.
- What the focus groups are, how the session will operate, that comments will be documented, where the documentation will go, and hopefully achieve.
- Iterate that no names will be recorded; only numbers, so comments will be anonymous.
- Equal opportunities statement and respecting each other.
- Note that everyone here is either LGB or T, say that following on, you may introduce yourselves by name if you wish.

Session

- Go through the theme headings of
 - 1) Living in Devon
 - 2) Receiving services from the Council
 - 3) Working for DCC
- Let the group guide the discussion, broadly talking about the subjects they feel strongly about.
- Key words to think about: discrimination, barriers, understanding and ignorance, attitudes, heterosexism, inclusive environment, safe space, scene, LGBT awareness, community leader.

- Questions to think about:
 - 1a) What difference does being LGBT make to your experience of living in Devon?
 - 1b) Is the community an accepting and inclusive one?
 - 1c) Is there anything going on for LGBT people? Should there be?
 - 2a) Do you find being LGBT has any bearing on you receiving services from the Council?
 - 2b) Does DCC lead the community in inclusive provision for LGBTs? Should it?
 - 3a) Is DCC a sound equal opportunities employer?
 - 3b) Are policies on paper adequate to create a safe environment for LGBT employees?
 - 3c) Is the organisational culture and are people's attitudes different to LGBTs? (Positive/Negative)
 - 3d) Do you feel there is adequate support for LGBT employees? Do you need it?

Concluding the session

- Reiterate anonymous nature of comments and what happens with information now.
- Talk about new employee network.
- Thank people for taking part.

Resources

- Flip chart and pens.
- Copies of DCC Policy on Equality for LGBT People.
- Handout and pens.
- Chairs in circle.
- Tea, coffee & biscuits

LGBT Focus Group Meeting 1

**Summary of meeting held on Friday 3rd October 2003
at 12:05pm in the Conference Suite, Larkbeare House**

Present: David Watson (Chair), 9 participants.

Introduction:

David introduced himself and set out how long the meeting would last, anonymity of participation in the group and who he was. David also drew attention to where to follow the progress of the groups and that the environment for the meeting would remain a safe space for all.

Living in Devon discussion:

- Isolating
- Not many LGBTs
- Prejudice about other things, e.g. racism, = fear for homophobia
- Ignorance
- Close and small community (Hovis esque) everyone knows everything
- HETEROSEXISM
- Uncertainty about buying magazines, e.g. GayTimes, compared to London or Manchester
- Gay people aren't overt in Devon, gay things aren't, e.g. businesses, scene
- Schools don't talk about it
- Want to go out without being afraid (holding hands with partner etc.)
- Not proactive on gay issues, e.g. pride
- Scene is poor
- If not scene, what?
- Youth and social groups needed, presently alienating
- Attitudes to LGBTs outdated
- It's Devon!

Receiving services from the County Council discussion:

- Objections to gay people and relationships, e.g. Doctors and sperm donation
- Acceptance of gay couples lacking
- Gay couples and foster care, some members of Social Services equating lesbianism with paedophilia.
- Inconsistency between directorates
- Library provision, e.g. queer theory and lifestyle resources
- Kids in schools not finding out about LGBT, homophobic bullying
- Not able to come out in school environment

- Need for LGBT youth groups
- HETEROSEXISM
- Everyone assumes you're straight until proven otherwise
- Different in places like London or Manchester
- Council way ahead of private sector
- Forms being filled in, e.g. lack of 'Ms' as an option, why ask about 'marital status'? Why relevant?
- Clumsy behaviour from service providers around gay people
- Education needed for service providers – making sure they are 'with it'
- Fewer services for tax, e.g. less likely to use schools, more likely to live alone vis-a-vie Council tax

Working for DCC as an employee discussion:

- Feeling of invisibility
- Provision for partners, e.g. pensions
- Assumptions by colleagues
- HETEROSEXISM
- Have to 'come out', LGBTs as proactive in challenging status quo/default, have to tell
- Ask then I'll tell attitude, not feeling as if one has to come out vs. why rock the boat attitude and fear
- Diversity training = race (perhaps disability) but rarely LGBT
- LGBT not covered in induction training
- No sexual orientation question on Equal Opps form, DCC doesn't care?
- No support groups
- Prejudice attitudes in some places
- Blokes vis-a-vie lesbians 'phwoar' factor
- Grape vine – only have to come out to one person and everyone knows
- Older people with outdated attitudes
- Inquisitiveness from some or scared of insulting
- 'Gay' as a scary word
- Office culture, e.g. conversations and questions about 'normal' nuclear family
- Socialising outside of work and joining in difficult
- Alienating conversations, 'out' of the loop
- Some kind of LGBT network?
- Some people thinking that equal opportunities means treating some people better than others
- LGBT peoples role as a corrector of language, challenger, battler (its hard to challenge)
- Gossip and covert uncertainty/prejudice 'only having a laugh'
- Serious policy to views/action/practice/education gap, people saying what they think they should say

- Duty of care contradiction in providing services vs. looking after employees
- JTE policy not in induction pack
- Is policy being taken seriously?
- This exercise will be a teller – where does it go? What happens with feedback?

At being shown the JTE Policy on Equality for LGBT people:

Out of the 9 participants, 3 were aware that the policy existed, and only 2 had actually read it.

There was disquiet about a number of the commitments noted in the policy, not least regarding acknowledging same sex relationships vis-a-vie services and benefits akin to their heterosexual counterparts (Pensions). As well as comments about how the policy worked in practice.

Other points raised:

- There was a general enthusiasm for some kind of LGBT pride festival in Devon.
- All members of the group expressed an interest in finding out more about a DCC LGBT employee network.

Closing comments:

David thanked everyone for their participation in the groups and reiterated that feedback would remain anonymous. He also directed people to the website to follow the progress of the focus groups and said that there would be more information about the LGBT employee network soon. He noted that UNISON presently operated an L & G group for information.

Meeting closed at 1:35pm

LGBT Focus Group Meeting 2

**Summary of meeting held on Monday 13th October 2003
at 12:05pm in the Conference Suite, Larkbeare House**

Present: David Watson (Chair), 8 participants.

Introduction:

David introduced himself and set out how long the meeting would last, anonymity of participation in the group and who he was. David also drew attention to where to follow the progress of the groups and that the environment for the meeting would remain a safe space for all.

Living in Devon discussion:

- Depends on where in Devon one lives/frequents
- Different for those who were born here compared to moved here
- Exeter is more tolerant than Plymouth
- Small villages
- Some accepting and some not
- Scene is small and shrinking rapidly
- Have no idea how many gay people there are
- Invisible
- Where's the gay section in Waterstones gone?
- Companies with gay people working there tend to offer more tailored to gay customers
- Lack of provision for young gay people
- Nothing going on for gay people in Devon – but that's fine?
- Gay pride festival
- For nightlife, go to Bristol/Swindon!
- Intolerance not commonplace for gay people, more so race and asylum (as can hide LGB?)
- Sense of disillusionment with LGBT events/nights out

Receiving services from the County Council discussion:

- Not really an issue
- 'Like the quiet life'
- City centric provision?
- Homophobia – no clear message as to how much
- LGBT publications are mostly aimed at men
- Work could be done around people's perceptions
- But conscious of friction due to demands (v.interesting!)
- Legal partnership status, recognising same-sex couples
- Safety issues for gay people
- Young people experience more difficulties
- No where to meet other gay people

- Support service for isolated young gay people
- Feeling like their the only one/ fear/ information lacking/ uncertainty
- Mini bus for isolated communities

Working for DCC as an employee discussion:

- Provision for same-sex couples, recognition, especially in pensions (also unmarried heterosexual)
- Inconsistencies with wills, named as recipient but pension co. can still overrule in favour of blood relative
- Local Govt pension scheme excuse used – financial reasons
- Managers are supportive – should tell them
- Some covert homophobia rather than overt
- Coming out in job interviews: f*%k it! If it's a homophobic environment then don't want to work there anyway
- In schools, people just rude!
- DCC are trying on equal opps
- Need a shake up though, corporate commitment to equality, policy to practice
- Some slagging off gay people
- Small work areas
- 'gay things' always come to you in the office, they wouldn't do that if race was the factor – a resource
- Ripple effect of gay people in work environment
- Heterosexism a factor
- Lack of awareness of gay people's existence
- Office culture – it's ok to make jokes about gay people
- Joking comments
- JTE policies, lack of publicity and awareness – it's extremely unlikely staff know about these policies
- How are the policies monitored? Nothing is done
- Not a supportive environment
- Service refusal, didn't know about at all and suspect others don't, duty of care dilemma
- Questions about marital status and reality of next of kin
- Council should take a strong view on equality and prejudice
- This exercise will be a teller – where does it go? What happens with feedback?

At being shown the JTE Policy on Equality for LGBT people:

Out of the 8 participants, only 1 was aware that the policy existed, and that same 1 had read it.

There was disquiet about a number of the commitments noted in the policy, not least regarding acknowledging same sex relationships vis-a-vie services and benefits akin to their

heterosexual counterparts (Pensions). As well as comments about how the policy worked in practice.

Other points raised:

- All members of the group expressed an interest in finding out more about a DCC LGBT employee network.

Closing comments:

David thanked everyone for their participation in the groups and reiterated that feedback would remain anonymous. He also directed people to the website to follow the progress of the focus groups and said that there would be more information about the LGBT employee network soon. He noted that UNISON presently operated an L & G group for information.

Meeting closed at 1:30pm

LGBT Focus Group Meeting 3

**Summary of meeting held on Thursday 13th November 2003
at 12:05pm in the Arlington Room, Larkbeare House**

Present: David Watson (Chair), 2 participants.

Introduction:

David introduced himself and set out how long the meeting would last, anonymity of participation in the group and who he was. David also drew attention to where to follow the progress of the groups and that the environment for the meeting would remain a safe space for all.

Living in Devon discussion:

- Comments made in the pub
- Feel 'lucky' that my local community is an accepting one
- But know there's inevitable going to be some grief over being gay
- Fear of what's going to be said
- Not had many problems in Devon: indifferent or can't be bothered, masked as progressive, gay culture is hidden
- Gay scene = small, abuse when leave the pub, scared
- No networks here compared to other areas
- Nothing going on for LGBTs in Devon
- These focus groups 1st I've heard of anything going on in Devon for LGBTs, difficult to make contacts with limited social scene
- Businesses treat badly: window company 'is the man of the house in?' 'there is no man!', Insurance: partner's name - same sex shocker, discussion about AIDS risk in earshot
- Heterosexism

Receiving services from the County Council discussion:

- Constantly having to explain oneself
- Straight by default - heterosexism
- Service providers assume everyone's married/got kids, need training to counter
- Have to explain situation against automatic assumption that a partner would be opposite sex
- Elderly people receiving care and care homes, perceive difficulty due to prejudice that may exist, the stigma about being gay
- Health service: when partner in accident, not allowed in as not 'next of kin'. Parents ended up making decision about turning off life support machine (but patient hated parents). Also no rights over where buried

- Have to make a will to ensure partner is included, same sex partnerships just need to be recognised
- When pregnant partner not let in as assumption would be opposite sex, after explanation professionals continued to quiz about sexuality
- Pension rights – serious issue
- We have no rights! Just have to hope all is ok, but get so used to having no rights that we end up being grateful when we have some
- Not a community leader as doesn't seem to be a very political organisation in that respect
- Needs to get own house in order anyway – not an equal opps employer, not consequently influencing others
- Does have a responsibility as one of biggest employers

Working for DCC as an employee discussion:

- PENSION a big issue, so much money paid in, financial situation depending on it – discrimination!
- Not an equal opps employer, pensions alone are enough to trash image
- Equal opps seems to just mean, less grief in the workplace, rather than genuine equality
- Diversity seems to mean race in this organisation
- Money and resources devoted to race but other areas sidelined as 'need to be seen to be doing work on race'
- Needs to be a community leader 'we are an equal opps employer' but DCC isn't! More like 'we are friendly but we're not gonna educate people' Prejudice starts in the playground – DCC's role as education authority
- Colleagues comments 'I thought she was normal'
- Overtly not much homophobia, covertly, who knows?
- Ignorance and not hate motivated homophobic comments, not challenged, even by managers
- Coming out in the office = difficult, especially for young people (not safe space then?) Some would rather people didn't ask, easier, can't be asked to explain all the time
- All the gay stuff always comes to me
- Am the spokesperson for the gay community!
- Office culture: questions about 'are you married?' repeatedly
- Forever having to correct everyday chit-chat, awkward questions – if this is what the professionals are saying, what about the receptionists
- When new employee starts, just think 'here we go again!'
- Other members of staff gossiping, spreading the word for you
- Policy annoys participants, unless policy to action, is useless
- Support for LGBTs – there isn't any

- Sometimes feel like the only gay employee, well, I am in my section!
- Nice just to have a safe space to talk about who you are/experiences, especially for youngsters/newcomers

At being shown the JTE Policy on Equality for LGBT people:

Out of the 2 participants, none were aware that the policy existed, and consequently none had read it.

The policy 'annoys' participants. There was disquiet about a number of the commitments noted in the policy, not least regarding acknowledging same sex relationships vis-a-vie services and benefits akin to their heterosexual counterparts (Pensions). 'Well do it then!' As well as comments about how the policy worked in practice. Confronting 'unlawful' discrimination is not a commitment to confront all discrimination – in reality end up not confronting anything. Is it in the starter pack? On notice boards? Should be.

Other points raised:

- All members of the group expressed an interest in finding out more about a DCC LGBT employee network.

Closing comments:

David thanked everyone for their participation in the groups and reiterated that feedback would remain anonymous. He also directed people to the website to follow the progress of the focus groups and said that there would be more information about the LGBT employee network soon. He also responded to some questions about why the Pension scheme did not cover same-sex partners and the new Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations.

Meeting closed at 1:20pm



LESBIAN

GAY

BISEXUAL

TRANS

Would you be prepared to share your experiences with us?

We are running a series of **confidential focus groups** to find out what our LGBT employees think of living in Devon, receiving services from the Council, and working for us as an employer.

*“DCC is committed to eliminating homophobic prejudice and discrimination. It is also committed to the principles of individuality and diversity...
...the Council will ensure that in carrying out its duties lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people are given equal and unprejudiced treatment.”*

[From the DCC Policy on Equality for LGBT People]



Contact

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[T] 01392 382260

[E] DevonLGBT@hotmail.com

[W] www.devon.gov.uk/lgbt

For more information or to take part

David is an LGBT employee and all
contacts will be treated in **confidence**



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Do you want to join your LGBT community at work?

If you would be interested in joining a **network for LGBT employees** for sharing experiences, mutual advice and support, and of course socialising, please get in touch!

*For more
information...*

Go to www.devon.gov.uk/lgbt

**Or contact David Watson on
[T] 01392 382260**

[E] DevonLGBT@hotmail.com

Please note when contacting David that he is an LGBT employee and all contacts will be treated in **confidence**



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CONFIDENTIAL focus groups for DCC employees



Justice Through Equality

LGBT Focus Groups Online Questionnaire

This is a confidential questionnaire and your answers will add to the information we are gaining from our physical focus groups.

The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to fill in, although you may wish to consider some responses for longer. There are 21 questions in all.

Key

DCC: Devon County Council / LGBT: lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans

Questionnaire begins

1. Please indicate by selecting which of the following statements apply to you:
 - a. I am an employee of Devon County Council
 - b. I am based at the County Hall campus
 - c. I am based in the County, not at County Hall

The following questions relate to your experience of living in Devon.

2. Does being LGBT make a difference to your experience of living in Devon? i.e. does it matter?
 - a. Yes – all the time
 - b. Yes – sometimes
 - c. No – not at all
3. If you answered 'yes' to question 2, please expand below:
 - a. [box to insert response]
4. Do you think the local community in Devon is an accepting and inclusive one for LGBT people?
 - a. Yes – all the time
 - b. Not all the time
 - c. No – rarely or never
5. If you answered 'not all the time' or 'no' to question 4, please can you give some examples of why you feel like this:
 - a. [box to insert response]
6. Is there anything going on for LGBT people? i.e. events/festivals/activities/scene.
 - a. Yes – loads of things
 - b. Yes – a bit

- c. No – nothing at all
7. Should there be more going on for LGBT people?
- a. Yes – I'd like to see more of all sorts of things
 - b. Yes – the scene could be better
 - c. No – there's enough going on as it is
 - d. No – I don't need things specifically aimed at LGBT people at all so don't want to see anymore.

The following questions relate to the services provided by the County Council.

8. Does being LGBT have any bearing on you receiving services from the County Council?
- a. Yes – it affects every aspect of me receiving services
 - b. Yes – sometimes it plays a part
 - c. No – doesn't make any difference whatsoever
9. If you answered 'yes' to question 8, please tell us a little about why it has a bearing:
- a. [box to insert response]
10. Do you think DCC leads the community in inclusive provision for LGBT people? i.e. does it set a good example to the rest of the County?
- a. Yes – I would like everyone dealing with the public to behave as DCC does towards LGBT people
 - b. In some ways it does and in others it doesn't
 - c. No – I am not happy with the example DCC sets
11. If you answered 'in some ways it does and in others it doesn't' or 'no' to question 10, please can you give some examples as to why this is the case below:
- a. [box to insert response]
12. Do you think DCC should be leading the community in this area?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

The following questions relate to working for DCC.

13. Is DCC an equal opportunities employer?
- a. Yes – in every way
 - b. Yes – in most respects
 - c. No – there are significant areas where it fails

d. No – not at all, the organisation demonstrates no commitment here

14. If you answered 'no' to question 13, or would like to expand, please do so below:

a. [box to insert response]

15. Are you aware of the DCC policy on Equality of LGBT people?

a. Yes

b. No

16. Is your working environment a safe one for LGBT employees?

a. Yes – in every way

b. It varies

c. No – I feel intimidated or unsafe

17. If you answered 'it varies' or 'no' to question 16, please tell us why you feel this way below:

a. [box to insert response]

18. Are people's attitudes to LGBT people at work positive or negative? Both in terms of management and colleagues.

a. Yes – I don't experience any negative attitudes from anyone

b. Some people can have issues with it.

c. No – people react badly to LGBT people.

19. If you answered 'some people have issues with it' or 'no' to question 18, please explain a little about your experiences in the working environment:

a. [box to insert response]

20. Do you feel DCC provides adequate support for LGBT employees?

a. Yes – it does

b. Yes – because it doesn't need to provide any specific support

b. No – it doesn't

21. Would you be interested in joining an LGBT employee network if one existed at DCC?

a. Yes

b. Maybe

c. No

Questionnaire ends

Please click on the button below to confidentially send your responses to us.

[SUBMIT]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Remember that your participation in this process will be kept confidential. If you wish to follow the progress of these groups, you can do so online at www.devon.gov.uk/lgbt. You can also find out more about the LGBT employee network pilot here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been undertaken without the involvement of a number of parties, to all of whom the County Council is most appreciative.

My particular thanks must go to:

- ❑ All the participants, LGBT employees of DCC for their involvement in the focus groups, online questionnaire or one-to-one interviews.
- ❑ The Intercom Trust, Dr Michael Halls for his initial and ongoing support with the project, Paul Roberts for his considered counsel.
- ❑ UNISON, Yacob Cajee for his help and advice at the start of the project, and the ongoing support he has provided throughout.
- ❑ The UNISON L&G Representative for DCC for her support.
- ❑ Angela Welch and Heather Barnes for having the vision to commission this project, Angela Welch individually for her exceptional line management and support throughout.