



Stories

Update: Community Consultation to develop a Local Action Plan for the LGBT Community

Updates Thursday, 17 November 2016

Ageing Better in Birmingham is currently looking at the underlying causes of isolation within our 4 priority communities (LGBT, Carers, Sparkbrook and Tyburn) ; to reduce isolation now and to prevent others becoming isolated in the future. To undertake this work, the programme is creating a Local Action Plan with each priority community to understand the causes of isolation and to explore potential solutions; so the Ageing Better Programme is able to implement activities to address these causes.

The programme has worked with older adults within the LGBT community to start the process of co-designing the content of the Local Action Plan. This has been achieved through an online survey, face to face consultation and the creation of an older adult steering group facilitated by Birmingham LGBT. This information represents the [initial findings](#) of this work for review by members of the community as part of an **ongoing process of consultation**.

[Initial Consultation findings:](#)

[Causes of isolation for Older Adults within the LGBT Community in Birmingham](#)

Older LGBT people in Birmingham have told us that:

- There are many members of the older LGBT community who become isolated once their partner passes away. Some individuals do not have any other family connections other than their partner and it can be a very isolating experience when a partner dies. Older LGBT people are less likely to have children and/or may not have the support that having children can offer in later life. Often the friends that people have are considered to be as important as family ties.
- Older LGBT people are dispersed across the city and can be isolated within the communities where they live. Fear of prejudice and homophobia can prevent people connecting with others locally within their community. It is sometimes difficult to find out what LGBT specific activity is happening but also knowing that local community activity is LGBT friendly and open to all.
- Taking the first step out of isolation to meet new people can be hard. Building the confidence to meet new people if you have been isolated, is a difficult process to go through.
- It is more difficult for older members of the LGBT community to meet new people because many meeting places, events and festivals cater only for the younger LGBT generations. Older LGBT people have described a feeling of ageism within the community and that all too often LGBT community activities revolve around a highly commercialised club and bar scene and youth dominated action.
- Isolation in older LGBT people is not in the public consciousness. More needs to be done to make people aware of the specific causes of isolation for older LGBT people and what can be done to reduce isolation to encourage more people to take that first step to connect with others.
- Many of the causes of isolation are no different to older people from all backgrounds. However, feelings of isolation can be exacerbated by consciousness of being part of a minority group.
- Causes of isolation are also service delivery related. Often health and social care services are heteronormative. Members of the older LGBT community have shared experiences of a having to go back into the closet when accessing health and care services. There is a lack of LGBT specific 'care skills', a lack of LGBT awareness, lack of LGBT provision in care and residential care, stereotyping and assumptions regarding sexuality and experiences of homophobia and prejudice.

[Outcomes for the LGBT Community in Birmingham:](#)

1. Increased social connections within the LGBT community.
2. Increased confidence to create connections across all communities.
3. Change perceptions and educate staff and residents to prevent prejudice within care homes and Health & Social care services.
4. More visible and open LGBT friendly activities and services for older people in Birmingham.
5. Increased knowledge about causes of isolation and methods to prevent an older LGBT person from becoming isolated and to raise awareness of the older LGBT community across all generations.

[Key activities and solutions identified by older LGBT people in Birmingham](#)

[Solution 1: Ageing with Pride](#)

To achieve outcomes 1, 2, 4, 5.

Ageing with Pride will raise awareness of isolation within the LGBT community and bring the issue into public consciousness, both across generations within the LGBT community but also across all communities within Birmingham. Ageing with Pride will aim to:

1. Encourage conversation and raise awareness of the issues that older people face to younger generations within the LGBT community and across Birmingham.
2. Work with commercial LGBT assets to raise awareness and campaign for age friendly activities run for and by the LGBT community.
3. Work with community buildings and local activities to actively publicise LGBT friendly activities and groups across Birmingham.

Ageing with Pride will work to campaign and raise awareness, ensuring that isolation within older LGBT people is an issue that is within the public consciousness when discussing LGBT issues. It will also highlight that the current older generation are the first to be openly part of the LGBT community, which means that being older and part of the LGBT community together is something that is a relatively new issue within the community itself. The Ageing with Pride programme will utilise volunteers wherever possible to achieve the above aims, with an organisation in place to support volunteers to achieve this.

The following activities are proposed to meet these aims:

[An intensive 'Ageing with Pride' campaign throughout Birmingham](#)

This will include personal stories about living with isolation as an older LGBT person, raising awareness of this issue. These will be publicised regularly through LGBT specific publications but also through Birmingham wide media such as the Birmingham Post and Mail to campaign around the issues and causes of isolation. The campaign will highlight positive human interest stories about coming out of isolation to encourage others to take the first step. It will also highlight what it is like to be an older member of the LGBT community. An LGBT specific publication for older adults will be produced; ran largely by volunteers across all platforms (both print and digital) and will tap into all generations to highlight this issue.

[Ageing with Pride in Action](#)

Part of this will work with the organisers and sponsors of Birmingham Pride to incorporate the needs of the older LGBT generation within the parade and associated activities. This will either run separately or in conjunction with the Birmingham Pride parade. This will celebrate the contribution of older people within the LGBT community and explore people's experiences and share these with younger generations. The activity will aim to become sustainable through strengthening relationships with commercial sponsors and organisers for Birmingham Pride to incorporate older people's needs into future activity. Ageing with Pride in Action will work with current LGBT activities across generations to raise awareness of isolation in older adults and mobilise the community to take notice of this issue, inspiring existing activities to become more age friendly and tailor their activities to suit their interests, skills and hobbies.

As well as focusing on LGBT specific activity, Ageing with Pride in Action will seek to identify LGBT friendly activity within local communities. Local activities and groups that declare themselves as LGBT friendly will be advertised through the campaign to raise awareness of locally based activity for those who may be isolated. Those listed through the campaign can voluntarily sign up to the Ageing with Pride values (including a discrete logo to publicise at their venue) to increase confidence amongst older LGBT people that local activity and groups are LGBT friendly.

[Ageing with Pride Ambassadors](#)

Ageing with Pride Ambassadors will be volunteers who will act as the first point of contact for older LGBT people who wish to engage with both LGBT led activity and local community activity. They will offer a welcoming introduction, enabling members of the community to take their first steps out of isolation. The ambassadors will be trained by an organisation/agency to enable them to befriend and help older LGBT people engage and make new connections across Birmingham. The Ambassadors will also work with and encourage existing LGBT led activity to become more age friendly.

[Ageing with Pride Steering Group](#)

A steering group will be formed to oversee both the Ageing with Pride Campaign and Action. This steering group will be supported by an agency and will be constituted of older LGBT people, who will be passionate about this issue and driving the Ageing with Pride agenda forward. It is envisaged that the steering group will act as the central point for Ageing with Pride, encouraging others to take the first step out of isolation and ensure that all activities within Ageing with Pride are working together to achieve the desired outcomes.

[Solution 2: Raising awareness and training within the Health and Social Care sector](#)

Outcome 3

To challenge perceptions and educate staff and residents to prevent prejudice within care homes and Health & Social care services, a series of conferences and training suites will be designed by members of the LGBT community. These will be piloted in the first instance with several health and social care providers. Whilst benefitting the older population, this solution will take a whole generation approach to prevent feelings of isolation and prejudice when accessing health and social care services for future generations.

This solution will contain the following activity:

- The creation of a 'good practice guide' developed by members of the LGBT community, who have experienced prejudice within health and social care services. This will mainly be aimed at staff to educate their residents in care homes to increase understanding, where members of the LGBT community have often felt like they have had to 'go back into the closet' due to fear of prejudice.
- Equalities awareness in care homes and residential settings. This will be developed in conjunction with older LGBT people and care providers to raise awareness of equalities and prejudices that older LGBT people have experienced.
- A one day training course for Health and Social Care providers, developed on the experiences of older LGBT people, to be developed as a continuing professional development course.
- Strengthening relationships with Health and Social Care providers to raise awareness and increase understanding of the issues that older LGBT people face when accessing health and social care.

[Next steps:](#)

If you would like to comment on these initial findings, please email ageingbetter@bvsc.org

These initial findings will eventually form the basis of a detailed project plan through continued consultation, which will be widely published in January 2017.



Blog Search

Twitter

Ageing Better in Birmingham @ageingbetterBHM

We commissioned @SustransWMids to deliver Age-friendly Tyburn, a project looking at the built environment as a factor of #socialisolation.

They're issuing 10 recommendations on how to create an #AgeFriendly environment

TOMORROW 12-1pm
eventbrite.co.uk/e/age-friendly...
@BVSC



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