



**DIVERSE
SEXUALITIES**

Celebrating our differences



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Introduction

This handbook is part of Brent Council's commitment to promoting good community relations. It is designed to raise awareness, highlight recent legislative changes and help foster greater respect and understanding between people of all sexualities, in all communities.

It informs staff about aspects of life for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, gives updates on recent changes in the law, explains some of the history and culture of the LGBT community and gives a comprehensive guide of contacts and resources for further information.

In terms of sexuality, we know a great deal about the lives of heterosexual people. But we know very little about the hidden community of LGBT people living in our midst.

In Brent, it is estimated that around 10 per cent of our residents may be from the LGBT community. Since the early 1970s, the community has struggled to win equal rights under the law and campaigned hard to make its voice heard in the fight against hate crimes.

Many positive changes are happening to secure equal rights for LGBT people. In 1996, the European Court of Justice ruled that discrimination in employment against transsexuals was illegal. The Human Rights Act 1998 means that discrimination against LGBT people can be challenged more easily in UK courts.

Since the introduction of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people, are now protected by employment legislation. Civil partnerships will give legal rights and responsibilities to same sex couples, where they have had no legal protection before.

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February 2005
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Brent Council's Diversity Statement says:

"Brent Council is committed to ensuring that the services we provide are relevant to the needs of all sections of the community and that our workforce represents the people we serve... Brent Council undertakes to work closely with local people, businesses, employers, voluntary and community groups and our other partners to build a more tolerant, compassionate, and respectful place in which we can all live and work."



www.brent.gov.uk

2: Sexuality and gender identity

Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of every human being. Most people are born as clearly male or female and grow up in a world where heterosexuality is the norm. They develop sexual feelings for the opposite sex, and expect to settle down with one partner and have children together. This kind of relationship between men and women is enshrined in law and celebrated every day in marriage ceremonies throughout the world.

But not all people are heterosexual. Lesbians and gay men are sexually attracted to people of the same sex, and bisexual people are attracted to both men and women.

The term 'transgender' covers both transsexual and transvestite people. Transgender people are uncomfortable in their birth gender. Some transgender people conform to the roles expected of them and live in their birth gender. Some resolve their situation by living in two identities, for instance depending on whether they are at work or in a less formal setting. Some are also in same sex relationships. Others undergo gender re-assignment surgery and other treatment.

Although the handbook is not primarily about gender identity or transgender issues, it does contain important information about the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and other signposting.

Whilst there is no definitive estimate, the government believes that up to six million people who live in the UK are lesbian, gay or bisexual. The government also estimates that around 5,000 transgender people live in the UK, although transgender people estimate they number up to 500,000.

In London boroughs such as Westminster, Lambeth and Islington, which have many LGBT businesses and services, as many as one in four residents are thought to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people are part of every community. They are from black and minority ethnic communities, disabled communities and all faith groups.

Many LGBT people hide their sexuality because of cultural and religious reasons. Those who are 'out', or declare their sexuality or gender identity, may face homophobic (hatred or fear due to homosexuality), biphobic (hatred or fear due to bisexuality) or transphobic (hatred or fear due to transexuality) discrimination from their family, friends and employers. Many experience hate crimes from neighbours and strangers.



The photographic montage on this page shows heterosexual couples on their wedding days

3: History and culture of the LGBT community

The history of the LGBT community is a hidden history. This is because lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people have had to live with being labelled as criminals for many hundreds of years.

Between 1533 and 1867, the death penalty was the mandatory punishment in the UK for sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex. Tens of thousands of gay men had their lives ruined by criminal prosecutions under the legislation. Sex between women was never outlawed and Queen Victoria is famous for considering that it was not possible.

Oscar Wilde, the famous Irish writer, is probably the best known prisoner who suffered under these repressive anti-gay laws. He was sentenced in May 1895 to two years' hard labour for his love affair with Lord Alfred Douglas.

During the last century, many thousands of lesbians, gay men and transgender people were treated with drug therapy and aversion therapy for mental illness in an attempt to 'cure' them. Following many experiments, the psychiatric profession has changed its views. In 1974, homosexuality was removed from the official list of mental disorders by the American Psychiatric Association.

Oscar Wilde



Bessie Smith



The Wolfenden Report, published by the government in 1957, recommended that sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex in private should no longer be a criminal offence. Ten years later, following much debate and many more criminal prosecutions of gay men, the Sexual Offences Act 1967 was finally introduced. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 finally removed sexual offences that criminalised gay men from the statute books.

Some LGBT history archives are now accessible on the internet. They are a rich source of information about LGBT people who have lived extraordinary and ordinary lives. LGBT History Month, initiated by *Schools Out!*, took place for the first time in February 2005. The achievements of the diverse LGBT community will be celebrated each year during this month, just as the achievements of the black community are celebrated in October each year during Black History Month.

Many people are surprised to learn that people they are familiar with and may regard as heroes or leaders in their field are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Their personal lives, which often shape their professional work, are ignored or hidden in histories, exhibitions and biographies.

Lesbians, in common with heterosexual women, are frequently hidden from history. The lives of black lesbians are even more hidden. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia E. Wieringa's book, "Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices across Cultures", brings together a set of essays about same-sex relationships among women in India, Polynesia, Latin America, Native North America and southern Africa.

Tom Cowan's book published in 1996, "Gay Men and Women Who Enriched the World", contains essays on many well-known lesbians, gay men and bisexual people including Alexander the Great, Sappho, Leonardo da Vinci, Tchaikovsky, Gertrude Stein, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Bessie Smith, Alan Turing, Leonard Bernstein, Benjamin Britten, James Baldwin, Andy Warhol and Rudolf Nureyev.

Polari - The secret language of the LGBT community

Polari was an underground slang language used by lesbians and gay men until the mid-1960s to protect themselves from homophobic abuse and criminal prosecution. Polari was drawn from many words used in various languages, including Italian, Romany, Shelta, Yiddish, rhyming slang and back slang. Some Polari words also crossed over into Cockney rhyming slang, like 'scarper' (run away) and 'savvy' (to understand). Other familiar Polari words include 'fantabulosa' (excellent), 'naph' (bad), 'ogle' (eye), 'troll' (walk), 'nish' (no, or stop) and 'bevvy' (drink). Back slang is about saying words backwards, for instance 'riah', which means 'hair'.

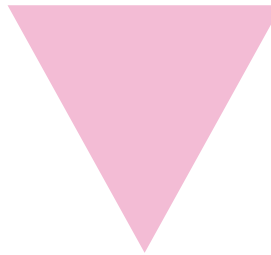
Anyone listening to the classic radio comedy series, Round the Horne, (originally aired between 1965 – 1969 and now transmitted on BBC7), would have heard a lot of Polari spoken by Julian and Sandy, played by Kenneth Williams and Hugh Paddick. Julian and Sandy often greeted each other by saying "How bona to vada your eek!" which literally means "How good to see your face!" While to an extent it played to stereotypes, this was probably the first time gay men had appeared so prominently in the mainstream media.

Few LGBT people speak Polari today because the community is determined to assert its rights to fair treatment in every sphere. The need for a secret language has declined and it has now become a topic of academic study.

Symbols of the LGBT community

The LGBT community uses a number of symbols to represent pride, solidarity and struggle against oppression, discrimination and persecution. Some are widely used and easily recognised.

The **Pink Triangle** is one of the most widely-recognized



symbols used by the LGBT community, representing gay rights and the continuing struggle against oppression and persecution. The Pink Triangle was originally used by the Nazis to identify gay men, who were one of many groups sent to concentration

camps for extermination in gas chambers. A yellow Star of David with a pink triangle sewn on top was used to identify Jewish gay men. Much of the history written about World War II makes no reference to the extermination of gay men, disabled people, Gypsies, and other minority groups hated by the Nazis.

The Nazi regime is thought to have murdered up to 100,000 gay men. When the war was finally over, gay men who survived were not freed by the Allies but remained in prison to serve out their sentences. Unlike other camp survivors, they were treated like criminals as a result of Paragraph 175, the infamous German anti-gay law that remained in force until 1969.

In December 2000, the German parliament apologised to the LGBT community for the persecution of gay men and lesbians under the Nazi regime, and for the "harm done to its homosexual citizens up to 1969" as a result of Paragraph 175. For many LGBT people today, the pink triangle represents pride, solidarity, and a determination never to allow another holocaust.

In 2001 Berlin appointed its first openly gay mayor, Klaus Wowereit, who stated: "The signal from this election is that Berlin is a tolerant city, an international city, and it doesn't matter which skin colour or religion or life a person has". Things have changed and Berlin is now seen as one of Europe's most gay-friendly cities.

The **Rainbow Flag** was designed by Gilbert Baker, a San Francisco artist, as a community symbol that could be used year after year. Baker worked with a team of volunteers to hand-stitch and hand-dye two huge prototype flags to fly in the 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. The original flags had eight stripes, and each colour symbolises an aspect of the community: red for life; orange for healing; yellow for sun; green for nature; blue for art ; indigo for harmony; violet for spirit; pink for sexuality. When the flag was mass produced the colours had to be reduced to the six stripes we see today: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet.



The **Bi Pride Flag** was introduced in late 1998 by Michael Page. The three-colour flag uses pink, blue and purple to symbolise attraction to the same sex, the opposite sex, and both sexes.



The **Red Ribbon** is worn by many people on 1st December each year to commemorate World Aids Day. It is also used as a symbol of solidarity and a commitment to the fight against AIDS. The Ribbon Project was conceived in 1991 by Visual AIDS, a New York-based arts charity that aims to recognise and honour people who have died or are dying of AIDS. It has inspired many other ribbons, such as the pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness.



The **Broken Rainbow** is used to symbolise domestic violence, which for a long time was only reluctantly accepted as being an issue for the LGBT community. It was designed by Phil Duscovitch-Davis and used to inaugurate the first UK conference on same-sex, homophobic and transphobic domestic violence, which took place in London in 2002. The Broken Rainbow symbol is now used in many European countries.





No place for prejudice
0800 731 7434

UK Lesbian & Gay
Immigration Group

TUC
trade unions
pride
for LGBT

STOP
MURDER
MUSIC
OUTRAGE!

PRIDE PARADE 10

pcs
Public and Commercial Services

TUC
trade unions
pride
for LGBT

4: Diversity of the LGBT community

It is impossible to know the exact numbers of heterosexual or LGBT people in the UK since people are not asked to describe their sexuality, even in the national census. This lack of information makes it very difficult to plan services that are appropriate to the needs of the large and diverse LGBT community. As a result of community pressure, many authorities are consulting LGBT people and groups about ways of including the community in monitoring and consultation exercises.

LGBT people are often invisible in most London boroughs, including Brent, because there are few LGBT services, community resources or commercial facilities. LGBT people do not always feel safe to identify themselves as part of the community when using mainstream services. The council, together with its community safety partners, is working hard to improve the confidence of the LGBT community. We are determined that all of our services and employment opportunities are available to all the communities we serve, without exception.

Coming out

Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people are ordinary people, living ordinary lives in every diverse community. Many have children and other dependents. Increasing numbers of LGBT people from all communities are finding the confidence to 'come out', that is to declare their sexuality in an open fashion. However, some people find it easier than others to identify themselves as LGBT within their community.

Professional, social and religious pressures and powerful family traditions mean that LGBT people from all communities often stay in the closet. Some have sexual relationships with members of their own sex but do not see themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Many get married, living their lives externally as heterosexual people. This situation causes them immense difficulty and personal conflict.

David and Phil

David is a disabled gay man and has lived in Brent for 22 years. He says "I came out to family and friends 24 years ago and the experience was almost wholly positively accepting". Phil is David's boyfriend. Phil says "I didn't really need to come out to my family – when I was ready to, they already knew and were positive about it". Neither Phil nor David has had any adverse reaction at work through being gay. This is a photograph of David and Phil at the recent family celebrations for David's 50th birthday. © Photo - David

When members of the LGBT community come out they are making a statement that is both brave and assertive. LGBT people often risk losing everything when they come out. Many know that the consequences of making such a public statement may be hostility and violence.

LGBT people find solidarity and empowerment through meeting in social and community groups. They also come together in groups that reflect their various cultural and faith communities.

Imaan, for instance, is a social support group for LGBT Muslims, and a forum for discussing and exploring related religious, cultural and sexual identities.

The Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group was founded in 1972 when 190 people attended a public meeting to set up the new organisation. The group has just celebrated its silver jubilee with events attended by people from all over the world.

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement supports individual lesbians and gays and prays for an inclusive church. They hold regular meetings, a women's weekend and a carol service. Catholic Mass is celebrated every fortnight, sponsored by the Roman Catholic Caucus of the movement.

Regard is the national organisation of disabled LGBT people, working to integrate LGBT issues into the mainstream disability movement. The organisation is determined to challenge all forms of discrimination against disabled members of the community, including negative attitudes amongst LGBT people and lack of access to pubs, clubs, political and social events.



Although coming out is liberating, it is important to understand that it may also carry risks for individuals. Whilst most people are friendly and welcoming to LGBT people, some are hostile.

Even when LGBT people are 'out', it does not mean they are out to everyone. They may have told family members or friends and not told work colleagues or associates. Conversely, they may have told work colleagues but not family and friends. This may be because of the fear or reality of discrimination, and the threat of violence and ostracisation.

Young people may be attacked and evicted from their family homes when they tell family members they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Many face violence and homophobic bullying at school and on the street. The 1995 *Queer Bashing* survey by Stonewall reported that 38 per cent of LGB people under the age of 18 years experienced homophobic domestic violence and abuse from parents and family members.

In March 2003, Sigma Research published its report into the 'Prevalence of Domestic Violence among Lesbians and Gay Men'. Of the 3,302 women and men who took part in the research, 22 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men had experienced domestic violence and abuse from a same sex partner. More than 80 per cent of these women and men had not reported the abuse to police; and 18 per cent of the women and 22 per cent of the men were in fear for their life.



Although some families express great hostility to their newly-out relative, many LGBT people find their families are reconciled to their sexuality once they have had some time to understand and learn about the community. Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, or FFLAG, is an organisation that has helped many parents and families to understand and support their lesbian gay and bisexual members.

Coming out might be difficult but it is also an immensely liberating experience. Many lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people describe it as like being re-born. They no longer feel weighed down by the difficulties of not acknowledging their sexuality to others or even to themselves. They are free to discuss their life and loves with others in ways that heterosexual people take for granted. And, most importantly, they can feel part of the LGBT community that celebrates a shared history and culture.

Outing an LGBT person

The fact that you know someone is a lesbian, gay man, bisexual or transgender person does not give you permission to tell others.

You must never out an LGBT person to someone else without their permission. Outing without permission may cause someone considerable harm and this may not be obvious to you. For instance, you may out someone to their family or neighbours when investigating homophobic hate crime or school bullying.

You should always be discreet and sensitive and should never discuss someone's sexuality with other people without their express permission.

Caroline Jones and Michael Verrier

Caroline Jones and Michael Verrier are founder members and co-chairs of Broken Rainbow LGBT Domestic Violence Service (UK). Caroline has been out as a lesbian for many years and lives with her partner in London. She is a mother and grandmother. Michael came out as gay in his teens. He is also a grandfather and lives in London with his partner. Photo©2004 Sunil Gupta

Hate crimes

Some people have an irrational fear of LGBT people. When this fear is translated into negative action against lesbians and gay men it is called homophobia. When used against bisexual people it is called biphobia. When used against transgender people it is called transphobia.

People manifest their fear of LGBT people in many ways, from verbal abuse to violent attack and even murder. Such incidents are often grouped together as homophobic hate crimes. Hate crimes are unacceptable and are challenged by many people and organisations across the UK.

As with racism and sexism, any form of discrimination against the LGBT community is unacceptable to Brent Council and any complaints of this nature will be thoroughly investigated.

The LGBT community was one of the targets of David Copeland's nail bombing campaign in London in 1999. He targeted Brixton and Brick Lane, where ethnic minority members are found in large numbers and the Admiral Duncan, a gay pub in Soho.

When arrested by police, he said he wanted to start a race war by creating a backlash from the communities. When the first nail bomb exploded in Brixton, 50 people were injured. Thirteen people were injured by the Brick Lane bomb. The third nail bomb went off in the Admiral Duncan. Three people were killed, a pregnant woman, her husband and their friend. A further 76 people sustained injuries, including extensive burns and amputations. Copeland was arrested the following day and received six life sentences when tried at the Old Bailey.

Copeland's campaign had precisely the opposite effect to the one he intended. Communities pulled together in solidarity. Partnerships between the communities, police services and local authorities were strengthened in Brent and elsewhere. The LGBT community worked with the Metropolitan Police Service to establish the LGBT Advisory Group, which has helped to change the way the police work with the community and investigate homophobic hate crimes and domestic violence.

Levels of unreported hate crimes are high across the UK. The

Stonewall survey, *Queer Bashing*, found that one in three gay men and one in four lesbians experienced at least one violent homophobic attack during 1990-1995. Few had reported the crimes to the police.

In 2000/01, 25 homophobic hate crime incidents were recorded in Brent. Increasing the reporting of homophobic hate crimes is a priority for Brent Community Safety Partnership, a joint body comprising representatives from the council, the police and their partners.

The borough's Community Safety Partnership audits crime and disorder in the borough and also audits services provided to victims of homophobic hate crime. Currently 0.1 per cent of all crime reported is related to homophobic hate crime. Third party reporting systems are also being developed so that people can go to other agencies apart from the police to report hate crimes.



Rachael Hopkins

Rachael Hopkins is chair of Rubicon and co-chair of the LGBT Advisory Group to the Metropolitan Police Service. Rachael is a lesbian who lives in Hertfordshire with her partner, Susanne. Rachael has worked with many organisations over the past 10 years, helping them to change their perceptions of transsexual people.

Bob Hodgson

Bob Hodgson is co-chair of the LGBT Advisory Group to the Metropolitan Police Service. Bob is a gay man and a former deputy Head Teacher. He lives in London with his partner.

Photos ©2004 Sunil Gupta

Stereotypes

LGBT people often face a difficult process when coming to terms with their sexuality. Some LGBT people are aware of and identify with their sexuality from an early age, as do many heterosexuals. Others identify with their LGBT sexuality later, sometimes well into their adult lives.

There are many unhelpful and wrong stereotypes associated with being an LGBT person. Some of the more common stereotypes are as follows:

- Lesbians are perceived as being violent and aggressive, or as acting like men. In fact, lesbians are as diverse in their behaviour and appearance as heterosexual women.
- Gay men are portrayed as being effeminate and weak. As with lesbians, gay men are as diverse in their behaviour and appearance as heterosexual men.
- Transgender women are assumed to be men in dresses.



Linda Bellos and her grandson

Linda Bellos is a community activist who lives with her partner in London. She is a mother and grandmother. In the 1980s, Linda was vice-chair of Black Sections in the Labour Party and the first Council Leader in the UK to come out as a lesbian. In 2002, she won the Black Gay Community award in recognition of her contribution to the Black LGBT community.

Photo – courtesy of Linda Bellos

5: Living and working in Brent

This chapter gives a voice to members of these groups who live, work and attend schools and colleges in Brent. There are several LGBT groups in Brent: The Northwest London Lesbian and Gay Group, Mosaic Youth and the LGBT Staff Forum for council workers. Contact details for the groups are in the Resources section at the end of this booklet.

Northwest London Lesbian & Gay Group

(Formerly Harrow & Brent Lesbian & Gay Group - HBLGG)

Roger Coulson, Chair of NWLLGG says: "Northwest London Lesbian & Gay Group (NWLLGG) is proud to be the longest established LGBT social group in London. The group was started in 1971 by a handful of lesbian and gay members who actively campaigned for lesbian and gay rights. In the last few years, our membership has widened and our involvement within the local community has increased. We are proud of our long history; and proud that we have been organised and run by the LGBT community for over 30 years.

"NWLLGG meets weekly and has a busy and fun social activities calendar operating throughout the year. The committee is elected by and from our membership.

"The original emphasis of the group was on campaigning for the basic human rights of lesbian and gay people. The core activities of the group have now developed into providing a friendly, non-pressurised atmosphere, away from the expensive and sometimes daunting commercial gay scene. People can come along and meet other local lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people. We want to transform our local "LGBT population" into a genuine "LGBT community".

"One of our main strengths is that we are open to everyone: We welcome men and women of all sexualities, ages and backgrounds; and this is reflected in the current membership.

"We have only received external funding over the last three years. We have started to receive



North West London Lesbian and Gay Group

(formerly Harrow and Brent Lesbian and Gay Group)

Founder Member Alex Bruce and current Chair Roger Coulson cut the HBLGG 30th Anniversary Birthday Cake. © Photo - M. Goldberg

recognition and financial help from statutory bodies such as the Primary Care Trust. We are becoming increasingly active in the life of the local community – networking with other community groups as well as providing training, assistance and advice to the police service, the health trust and other organisations.

"Recognition and assistance from local authorities will help the group to grow and engage fully with all sections the community. Lesbian, gay, straight, bisexual and transgender – whatever our sexuality - we all live our lives in the same borough, earn our living, pay our taxes, go to the pub, the library and the cinema in the same way!

"Mutual awareness within the local community is increasing and hopefully greater understanding and respect will be the result."

A flyer for the Northwest London Lesbian & Gay Group. At the top is a colorful rainbow arc. Below it, the text "GAY or LESBIAN?" is written in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Underneath that, in smaller white text, it says "Friendly and fun, social group in North West London welcomes gay men, lesbians and bisexual people of all ages & backgrounds." The phone number "07941 707884" is displayed in large yellow digits. At the bottom, it says "NW LONDON LESBIAN & GAY GROUP" in white, followed by the website "www.nwlgay.com" in yellow.

Mosaic Youth

Mosaic Youth, which has over 250 members, was set up three years ago by Brent's Youth and Voluntary Sector Support Service and is for young lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and questioning people aged 25 and under.

Mosaic Youth run a regular social group every Friday evening, they provide one-to-one support and run an information website. There is also help with day-to-day practicalities like housing benefit problems or work issues. Help is also available with personal situations like coming out and dealing with homophobic bullying at school.

Since the summer of 2003, Mosaic Youth has run a number of exciting projects, including a Summer Film Project where members made four short films with Delerium Films. Two films raised awareness of HIV/AIDS among young people of all sexualities and two promoted Mosaic as a London LGBT youth group.



Neil Young

Neil has been member, volunteer, part-time worker and full-time manager of LGBT youth projects for over 10 years, including starting Brent's LGBT youth project, Mosaic Youth, in 1999. He was born and grew up in Wembley. Neil now runs Freestyle London for the Consortium of LGBT organisations. Freestyle London is a London-wide project bringing together young people, youth workers and the powers that be. It gives young LGBT people a chance to speak for themselves, inspire others and challenge lazy stereotypes about their lives. In spare moments Neil walks his dog, does street dance and bakes exceedingly fine cakes.



Neil Young

Photo courtesy of
Neil Young



Mosaic Youth also ran the Rainbow Art Project and celebrated Valentine's Day with a New Roman'tick party.

Mosaic Youth membership is very diverse. The project is peer-led and they organise activities and away-weekends, run workshops and offer training and volunteering opportunities.

There is also a resource library, with books, videos, magazines and leaflets, together with lots of information about other lesbian, gay and bisexual community projects. All Mosaic Youth services are free and confidential.

Members stay in touch by email or phone, or sign up for text alerts on the web site to keep them in touch with activities.

'All Dragged Up and Nowhere to Go'

Neil Young and Joel Korn

This photo was taken at an event run by Mosaic Youth and Terrence Higgins Trust to mark World AIDS Day 2003.

Photo courtesy of Neil Young

Brent Council LGBT Staff Forum

The council's LGBT Staff Forum was launched in September 2004. The forum aims to increase awareness of LGBT people and culture within Brent Council, and foster a more positive attitude towards LGBT staff. It aims to meet four times a year, and gives LGBT members of staff advice and support regarding any concerns they may have around their employment with Brent. It hopes to emulate the success of Brent's other staff forums (Disabled, Black and Minority Ethnic, and Women's staff forums) in terms of empowering staff and keeping LGBT issues on the corporate agenda.

Mike Evans is a council worker, a Brent resident and member of the LGBT Staff Forum. He said: "I am 45 years old and I came out around 10 years ago. I would generally class myself as openly gay. Coming out wasn't particularly easy but the fact was that I was accepting myself as I really am, as a gay man. Coming out gave me a real sense of confidence that I hadn't experienced before.

"I've found most people supportive and accepting. But around my own neighbourhood, which is an ex-council estate in Willesden, there is an element of homophobia, which mainly manifests itself as taunts from local kids who obviously have no respect for minority lifestyles. These have usually been ignored, but on some occasions there have been more aggressive encounters.

Once, myself and my partner were punched several times in the local pub just because we kissed. This is very sad, because it is an attack on your personality, which takes some time to get over.

"Why is it that because you are in a minority, the majority view seems to be non-accepting? This is something that I find hard to understand. I've never gone around "straight-bashing"!

"My colleagues at Brent are very accepting, although I don't make a point of being flamboyant about my sexuality. To me it's a personal thing, and does not often have a valid place during the normal work routine. However, I would never feel that I had to hide my sexuality either.

Brent has always valued the best in its diverse population, and it is good that this aspect of its diversity is now becoming officially recognised. I hope that this positive trend can continue."

Caroline Moore, a council worker and Deputy Chair of the LGBT Staff Forum says: "On my application form to Brent I wrote of my involvement with LGBT groups, and when this was reacted to positively, it made me want to come to Brent.

"I got involved in setting up the staff forum because I felt that Brent should show its commitment to LGBT staff in the same way it does for the other minority groups. I hope that it will empower staff and keep LGBT equality on the corporate agenda."



Mike Evans works for Brent Council and is a member of the LGBT Staff Forum.

Caroline Moore works for Brent Council and is Deputy Chair of the LGBT Staff Forum

Photo ©2004 Sunil Gupta

6: Legislation

Introduction

Until the 1960s, when minimal steps were taken to relax the law, it was a criminal offence for gay men to have same-sex relationships. Since then, there have been gradual law reforms that now include equal employment rights and an equal age of consent for gay men with heterosexual men and women. More law reforms are on the way. It has never been a criminal offence to be a lesbian. This does not mean that lesbians escape prejudice and discrimination. In many ways, lesbians are more invisible in the eyes of the law and service providers.

Brent Council wants to ensure that its employees from all diverse backgrounds, including lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people, feel welcome and safe in their workplaces. The council wants its workforce to represent the diversity of the communities it serves, and to feel motivated to deliver excellent services to people from all communities. This chapter highlights important new equality legislation that helps to ensure this happens.

Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 means improved equal rights for every person living in the UK. The Act has already made some difference to the LGBT community, which continues to seek equal rights under UK law. The Act enshrines the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, and convention rights are now enforceable through UK courts.

The government is planning to establish a Commission for Human Rights and Equality. One of the commission's first tasks will be to review all legislation to ensure it does not discriminate against any section of society, including the LGBT community.

Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 clarify UK law relating to gender reassignment. They are in place to prevent discrimination against transgender people on the grounds of sex in pay and treatment in employment and vocational training.

The effect of the regulations is to insert into the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 a provision which extends the Act to include discrimination on gender reassignment grounds. Thus, discrimination on grounds of gender reassignment constitutes discrimination on grounds of sex, and is contrary to the Sex Discrimination Act.

Employers who breach the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 in respect of discrimination on gender reassignment grounds will be liable in the same manner they would, for example, for discrimination against a woman on grounds of sex.

Further information

The **Gender Trust** offers information and support to transsexual people, as well as management guidelines on employment issues. Website: www.gendertrust.org.uk

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

(Based on *Sexual Orientation and the Workplace*, Acas Guide, April 2004)

On 1 December 2003, the Government introduced new equality regulations to protect people from discrimination in the workplace on grounds of sexual orientation. On 2 December, separate new regulations also came into force to protect people from discrimination in the workplace on grounds of religion or belief. Legislation is also in place to protect people against discrimination on grounds of sex, race, disability and gender reassignment.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 make it unlawful to discriminate against workers because of their sexual orientation. They ensure that people can no longer be denied jobs or dismissed because of prejudice; that complaints about harassment can be dealt with quickly and effectively; and that everyone has an equal chance of training and promotion, whatever their background. The regulations define sexual orientation as:

- Orientation towards persons of the same sex (lesbians and gay men).
- Orientation towards persons of the opposite sex (heterosexual).
- Orientation towards persons of the same sex and the opposite sex (bisexual).

The regulations apply to all employment and vocational training. They include recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training. In summary, the regulations make it unlawful on the grounds of sexual orientation to:

- Discriminate directly against anyone – that is, to treat them less favourably than others - because of their actual or perceived orientation.

- Discriminate indirectly against anyone – that is, to apply a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular sexual orientation unless it can be objectively justified.
- Subject someone to harassment. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, having regard to all the circumstances, including the perception of the victim.
- Victimise someone because they have made or intend to make a complaint or allegation or have given or intend to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.
- Discriminate against someone, in certain circumstances, after the working relationship has ended .

Further information

Acas has produced practical workplace guidance on the regulations. Guidance is available on their website at www.acas.org.uk

Acas operates a telephone helpline (telephone 0845 747 4747 or textphone 0845 606 1600). The helpline provides information and advice across a wide range of employment issues.

It also runs an advice line for employers - Equality Direct - (telephone 0845 600 3444 or textphone 0845 606 1600) offering good practice guidance on fairness in the workplace.

The full text of the regulations is available on the Her Majesty's Stationery Office website at www.hmsso.gov.uk

Gender Recognition Act 2004

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gives transsexual people legal recognition in their true gender and ensures that they are afforded all the rights and responsibilities appropriate to that gender. The act also safeguards the privacy of transsexual people wherever appropriate. It is a criminal offence for any council staff to disclose information about the gender identity of colleagues or service users unless specific permission is obtained. There are few exceptions to this rule.

Gender Recognition Panels will be established under the Act to determine applications for legal recognition. Successful applicants will be able to demonstrate to legal and medical panel members that they have, or have had, gender dysphoria; that they have lived for at least the last two years in their acquired gender; and that they intend to do so until death.

Successful applicants will be issued with a gender recognition certificate and will have the right, from the date of recognition, to marry in their acquired gender and be given birth certificates that recognise the acquired gender. Transsexual people will be able to obtain benefits and state pension just like anyone else of that gender.

More information about the Gender Recognition Act can be found on the Department for Constitutional Affairs website at www.dca.gov.uk.

Repeal of Section 28

Section 2A of the Local Government Act 1986, commonly known as Section 28, was repealed in 2003 in England and Wales and in 2001 in Scotland. Section 28 was legislation that caused distress to LGBT people and their families throughout the UK. The legislation stopped local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality'. It also labelled gay family relationships as 'pretend'.

According to Stonewall, the existence of Section 28 caused confusion and harm. "Teachers were confused about what they could and could not say and do, and whether they could help pupils to face homophobic bullying and abuse. Local authorities were unclear as to what legitimate services they could provide for lesbian, gay and bisexual members of their communities."

FFLAG, the organisation of Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, reports in its 2004 newsletter that:

- 80 per cent of LGB adults experienced homophobic bullying in schools.
- 74 per cent of those adults played truant to escape the bullies.
- 82 per cent of teachers were aware of such bullying.
- In spite of this, only 6 per cent of schools have anti-bullying policies that refer to homophobic bullying

Education for All is a joint campaign developed by Stonewall, FFLAG and LGBT Youth Scotland and supported by government Ministers. The campaign works with national and devolved governments, local authorities, and the education, voluntary and community sectors to develop and implement an action plan across the UK to ensure that:

- All LGBT young people can fulfil their potential.
- All schools and education systems can deal appropriately with homophobia and LGBT issues.

Tackling homophobic bullying is part of the Department for Education and Skills' drive to tackle all forms of bullying. The Anti-Bullying Charter for Schools refers to identifying different kinds of bullying, including homophobic bullying. This is endorsed by Brent schools.

More information about the campaign against homophobic bullying can be found on the Teachernet website at www.teachernet.gov.uk.

Age of Consent – Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000

From January 2001 the age of consent was equalised for everyone - gay men, lesbians and heterosexuals. The age of consent is 16 in England, Wales and Scotland, and 17 in Northern Ireland.

In 1967, when gay sex was partially decriminalised, the age of consent for gay men was set at 21 compared to 16 for heterosexual people and lesbians. This inequality was enshrined in legislation to reflect society's general disapproval at the time of same sex relationships.

In 1993, Stonewall began organising the first major campaign for an equal age of consent. It took eight years of lobbying by LGBT people across the UK and a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that the unequal age of consent was discriminatory, before the age of consent was equalised for everyone.

Tenancy rights

Since a decisive Human Rights case in 2002, same sex tenants have been entitled to the same tenancy succession rights as heterosexual tenants.

Antonio Godin-Mendoza lived for thirty years with his partner, Hugh Walwyn-James, in a flat in west London. When Mr. Walwyn-James died, the landlord wanted to use the Rent Act 1977 to end the statutory tenancy. The Court of Appeal ruled that, under the Human Rights Act 1998, same-sex couples should not be discriminated against and should have the same tenancy succession rights as heterosexual couples.

In a landmark ruling, Lord Justice Buxton said that the words in legislation "as his or her wife or husband" would also have to mean "as if they were his or her wife or husband". He also said that, under Article 14 of the Human Rights Act, "Sexual orientation is now clearly recognised as an impermissible ground of discrimination."

Prior to this ruling, LGBT people often faced eviction when their same sex partner died.

Civil Partnership Act 2004

The Civil Partnership Act received Royal Assent in November 2004. Adults in same sex relationships are entitled to a new civil status as 'registered civil partners' if they are not closely related, in existing marriages or registered partnerships. Same-sex partners can register their partnerships from late 2005. Civil partnerships are not the same as gay marriage but, as with marriage for heterosexual couples, they carry a set of legal rights and responsibilities.

The act provides same-sex couples who form a civil partnership with equal treatment in a wide range of legal matters with those of opposite-sex couples who enter into a civil marriage.

Important rights and responsibilities will flow from forming a civil partnership, helping same-sex couples to organise their lives together. Provisions in the act include:

- A duty to provide reasonable maintenance for your civil partner and any children of the family;
- Civil partners to be assessed in the same way as spouses for child support;
- 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;
- Recognition for immigration and nationality purposes.

Before the Civil Partnership Act was passed, same sex couples faced a range of serious problems. For instance, divorce laws did not apply to same sex couples and this often caused immense difficulties for arranging child residence, maintenance and support, and for agreeing property divisions. When a partner was in hospital, their same sex partner had no automatic right to be consulted about medical treatment. Although they paid into

the same pension fund as heterosexual people, surviving same sex partners were denied pension rights which are due only to married couples. When a same-sex partner died, the survivor could not register their partner's death since their relationship was not legally recognised. Inheritance tax rules meant they often had to sell homes shared for many years to pay tax dues not payable by married survivors.

Jacqui Smith, the Minister for Equality, said of the Act:

"This is one of the most significant pieces of social legislation the government has introduced. The Civil Partnership Act sends a clear message that we value and support the contribution committed same-sex couples make to each other and to our society.

"A loving relationship, whether of opposite-sex couples or same-sex couples, benefits society as a whole and I am delighted that this act is now on the statute book.

"I hope this act will help create a more equal society. It opens the way to respect, recognition and justice for those who have been denied them for too long."

Source:

Women and Equality Unit at

www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

Opposite:
A Happy Couple., photographed at Pride London 2004.

Photo ©2004 Pam Isherwood



7: Resources and sign-posting

Brent Organisations

Brent Council has a comprehensive website, with many useful links.

Telephone: 020 8937 1200

Minicom: 020 8937 1993

Website: www.brent.gov.uk

Brent LGBT Staff Forum

The forum aims to increase awareness of LGBT people and culture within Brent Council and foster a more positive attitude towards LGBT staff.

Email (chair): mark.burgin@brent.gov.uk

Email (deputy chair): caroline.moore@brent.gov.uk

Northwest London Lesbian and Gay Group – NWLLGG

(Formerly Harrow & Brent Lesbian & Gay Group - HBLGG). Meets every Monday evening in NW London, near Preston Road.

Postal address: NWLLGG, PO Box 649, HA3 OLE

Telephone: 07941 707884

Website: www.nwllggay.com

Mosaic Youth meets every Friday.

Postal address: c/o Brent Youth Service, Bridge Park, Brentfield, Harrow Rd, London NW10 0RG

Telephone: 020 8838 2376

E-mail: info@mosaicyouth.org.uk

Website: www.mosaicyouth.org.uk

NATIONAL and LONDON ORGANISATIONS

There are many LGBT organisations operating on a national and London basis. A few are listed below.

Albert Kennedy Trust provides housing advice, mentoring and supported lodgings for young LGBT people who are homeless or living in a hostile environment.

Telephone: 020 7831 6562

Website: www.akt.org.uk

Beaumont Society is a support network for transsexual people. The society also promotes better understanding of the conditions of transgender, transvestism and gender dysphoria in society.

Telephone: 01582 412 220

Website: www.beaumontsociety.org.uk

BIG UP Group is a group at the **Gay Men Fighting Aids** organisation who have come up with novel ways of promoting sexual health within the black gay community.

All BIG UP Group campaigns and actions are designed, planned, and carried out by positive, negative, and untested volunteers of both genders.

Telephone: 020 7738 6872

Broken Rainbow LGBT Domestic Violence Service (UK) is a UK charity that works with the community and mainstream agencies to change the situation for LGBT people facing domestic violence from partners, ex-partners and family members. Broken Rainbow also runs an LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline Service.

Helpline for survivors: 020 8539 9507

Helpline for agencies: 020 8558 8674

Minicom: 020 8539 9521

E-mail: mail@broken-rainbow.org.uk

Website: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays UK (FFLAG)

is dedicated to supporting parents and their gay, lesbian and bisexual sons and daughters. FFLAG offers support to local parents groups and contacts, in their efforts to help parents and

families understand, accept and support their lesbian, gay and bisexual members with love and pride.

Telephone: 01454 852 418

Website: www.fflag.org.uk

Freestyle London is dedicated to supporting LGBT youth and anyone working with young people across London. Freestyle is developing an LGBT youth parliament and youth work forum, web site, directory of London LGBT youth services as well as carrying out research and supporting events and projects.

Website: www.freestylelondon.org.uk

Gay Data is a new listings service for London's LGBT communities. This service provides practical information about non-commercial services in London. The Mayor of London supports this initiative, which has been established in conjunction with Gay to Z Directories Limited. Gay Data is currently hosted, maintained and updated by the Gay to Z team.

Website: www.london.gov.uk

Gender Trust is a registered UK charity that helps adults who are transsexual, gender dysphoric or transgender, who seek to adjust their lives to live as women or men, or to come to terms with their situation despite their genetic background.

Telephone: 01273 234 024

Helpline: 07000 790 347

Website: www.gendertrust.org.uk

Imaan is a social support group for Muslim lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, those questioning their sexuality or gender identity and their families, friends and supporters.

Telephone: 07958 690 156

E-mail: info@imaan.org.uk

Website: www.imaan.org.uk

Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group is primarily a social group, not a religious one. Religious events are run along liberal lines. Membership is open to Jewish men and women who are gay, lesbian or bisexual and has a wide age range, including people from many different backgrounds. Non-Jews and non-gay guests are welcome.

Postal address: BM JGLG, London, England, WC1N 3XX

Website: www.jglg.org.uk

Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement encourages fellowship, friendship and support among individual lesbian and gay Christians through prayer, study and action, wherever possible in local groups, and especially to support those lesbians and gay Christians subjected to discrimination. They offer a national network of local groups, counsellors, pen pals, publications, conferences, mail order service and newsletter. Groups include under-30s, Evangelicals, Roman Catholic Caucus, Methodist Caucus, United Reformed Church Caucus. Postal address: LGCM, Oxford House, Derbyshire St, London, E2 6HG

Website: www.lgcm.org.uk

LGBT Advisory Group to the Metropolitan Police Service is a voluntary group of LGBT people working with the police at New Scotland Yard on all aspects of the work of the Metropolitan Police as it impacts on the diverse LGBT community.

Telephone: 07952 970813

Website: www.lgbtag.org

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard aims to provide an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people from all backgrounds throughout the United Kingdom.

Helpline: 020 7837 7324

Website: www.llgs.org.uk

London Friend exists to promote the social, emotional, physical and sexual health and well-being of LGB people and those who are unsure of their sexuality.

Telephone: 020 7833 1674

Website: www.londonfriend.org.uk

Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) is a worldwide Christian fellowship open to all and founded in the LGBT community. The nearest MCC meets in Trinity URC Camden, Buck Street, London, NW1 8NJ.

Postal address: BM/MCC, London, WC1N 3XX.

Website: www.mccnorthlondon.com

Press for Change is a political lobbying and educational organisation, which campaigns to achieve equal civil rights and liberties for all transgender people in the United Kingdom, through legislation and social change.
Website: www.pfc.org.uk

Queery is the LGBT community-driven on-line directory with listings and links for services and resources, support and information across the UK. See the website at www.queery.org.uk

Queer Youth Alliance was founded in 1999 by and for LGBT young people.
Website: www.queeryouth.org.uk
Telephone: 07092 031 086

Regard is the national organisation of disabled LGBT people, campaigning for an equal sexual and social life for disabled LGBT people.
Telephone: 020 7688 4111
Minicom: 020 7688 0709
Website: www.regard.org.uk

Rubicon is a support group providing advice and support to transsexual people, including those experiencing domestic violence.
Telephone: 020 8252 2623

Safra Project works on issues relating to LBT women who identify as Muslim religiously and/or culturally. It is run by and for Muslim LBT women.
Website: www.safraproject.org
Postal address: P.O. Box 35929, London N17 0WB

Schools Out! campaigns on LGBT issues as they affect education and those in education.
Telephone helpline: 020 7635 0476 or 01582 451 424
Website: www.schools-out.org.uk

Stonewall works to achieve legal equality and social justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people.
Website: www.stonewall.org.uk

Stonewall Housing Association provides housing advice and supported housing for lesbians and gay men.
Advice line: 020 7359 5767
Main office: 020 7359 6242
Website: www.casweb.org/stonewallhousing/

TRADES UNIONS

The TUC has a listing of the many trades unions that give information and advice on LGBT issues and have LGBT groups and networks. These include Unison, TGWU and the NUT. You will find the listing in the Equality section of the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk/equality

LEGISLATION and GUIDANCE

The **Women and Equality Unit**, part of the Department of Trade and Industry, is responsible for promoting and realising the benefits of diversity in the economy and more widely. This includes taking forward proposals on civil partnerships and the future of the three equality commissions. The unit develops policies relating to gender equality and ensures that work on equality across government as a whole is co-ordinated.
Website: www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

For information and a leaflet on the **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003**, see the Employment Relations section of the Department of Trade and Industry website at www.dti.gov.uk

For **acts of parliament**, search the stationery office website at www.hms.o.gov.uk

For **bills before parliament**, other information and links, the UK Parliament website is an excellent resource at www.parliament.uk

For information on the **Sexual Offences Act 2003**, see the Home Office, Justice and Victims Unit at www.homeoffice.gov.uk

ARCHIVES and REFERENCES

The London School of Economics holds the **Hall-Carpenter Archives** (HCA), named after the lesbian and gay authors, Marguerite Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943) and Edward Carpenter (1844-1929). The archives are the largest source for the study of lesbian and gay activism in Britain. The HCA includes the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive, which contains 80,000 press cuttings that cover all aspects of gay life from the 1930s to the present.

Website: <http://hallcarpenter.tripod.com>

Lesbian Archive and Information Centre (LAIC) is based in Glasgow Women's Library. LAIC has Britain's largest and most significant collection of materials about lesbian lives, history, activism and achievements. The collection reflects the diversity of lesbian experience.

Website: www.womens-library.org.uk

The Knitting Circle is the website of the Lesbian and Gay Staff Association of South Bank University. The site has resources on lesbian and gay issues with special emphasis on higher education. Information includes art, biography, business, dance, drama, education, fashion, film, government, history, law, literature, media, music, photography, poetry, popular culture, psychology, science, sociology, sports, theatre, and other related topics.

Website: <http://myweb.lsbu.ac.uk/~stafflag/>

BOOKS

Tom Cowan, (1996), "Gay Men and Women Who Enriched the World", Alyson Publications: ISBN 1-55583-391-8

Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia E. Wieringa, (1999), "Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices across Cultures", Columbia University Press: ISBN 0231112610

Paul Baker, (2002), "A Dictionary of Polari and Gay Slang", Continuum: ISBN 0-8264-5961-7

Glossary of terms

Biphobic	Hatred or fear of bisexuals and bisexuality	Lesbian	A woman who is sexually attracted to other women
Bisexual	A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women	Outing	This happens when the sexuality or gender identity of an LGBT is declared by someone else. Outing is wrong and can have very negative consequences for an LGBT person
Coming out	When an LGBT person declares their sexuality in an open fashion	Straight	Another word for heterosexual
Gay community	A term used to describe the community, but felt by many LGBT people to be non-inclusive	Transgender	A broad term that includes people temporarily changing their gender and appearance. It also includes transsexual people.
Gay man	A man who is sexually attracted to other men	Transphobic	Hatred or fear of transsexuals and transexualism
Heterosexual	A person who is sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex	Transsexual	A transsexual person has a deep conviction to present in the appearance of the opposite sex. This may include changing name and identity to live in their true gender. Appearance may be changed by hormone and cosmetic treatment, and by surgery.
Homophobic	Hatred or fear of homosexuals and homosexuality		
In the closet	When an LGBT person does not wish to declare their sexuality openly, usually because they fear prejudice and discrimination from others		
LGBT	An inclusive term for the diverse community of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people		

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