



# Fife LGBT Community Needs Assessment Summary Report



## Background and methodology

This is the summary report of a Community Needs Assessment carried out by LGBT Health and Wellbeing (known as LGBT Health) from October 2014 to September 2015. LGBT Health is a community development initiative that promotes the health, wellbeing and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland.

The aim of the Fife needs assessment was to build a greater understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of LGBT people in Fife. To this end, LGBT Health sought direct feedback from individuals about their experiences of being LGBT and living in Fife, including their relationships with their local communities and with services.

The needs assessment was carried out in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders in Fife and through extensive community participation. It was targeted at people who live in Fife and who self-identify as LGBT. As part of the needs assessment we carried out a survey, which ran from June to August 2015, and received 148 responses. Responses were received from right across the diverse LGBT spectrum and from across Fife, with 1 in 4 respondents living in rural parts of Fife. The age range of respondents was from 13 to 68.

We also conducted 12 interviews with LGBT people who live in Fife but access LGBT Health's services in Edinburgh. Quotes from these interviews are used to illustrate the report's findings.

## Key findings

### Section 1: Being out at work and at home

*“ I want to be out, but I've heard so much homophobia and transphobia from my colleagues that I feel unsafe being out. ”*

Despite considerable improvements in social attitudes, and greater legal protection, LGBT people in Fife are often still not able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves. Instead, LGBT people are frequently forced to hide who they are for fear of negative reactions and treatment, impacting negatively on their mental health and wellbeing.

#### The workplace

*“I feel comfortable being out but I don't always feel safe. I do get the occasional derogatory comment from colleagues but I try to not to let it bother me.”*

- 1 in 3 respondents are not out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to any of their work colleagues
- 1 in 10 respondents (9%) feel that their LGBT identity is not respected or not at all respected by their colleagues.

#### Neighbours

*“I moved away from Fife to be as far away from the people in my street who used to harass me for being a lesbian. There were also no visible support networks or spaces to go to.”*

- 2 in 3 respondents are not out to their neighbours about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 1 in 4 respondents (22%) feel their LGBT identity is not or not at all respected within their neighbourhood, and a further 1 in 3 (34%) feel they do not know if it is or would be respected.

#### The local community

*“One neighbour is very homophobic. He has made comments about myself and my partner in the street and was about to hit me in an argument he had started and then made terrible comments.”*

Whilst the survey did not specifically ask respondents about their experience of hate crime or harassment, quite a number of respondents referred to incidents they had experienced in their local community, which ranged from verbal comments to sustained harassment and intimidation.

## Section 2: Connecting with other LGBT people

*“ My counsellor referred me to a group in Edinburgh when I told her that I wanted to meet other LGBT people and that I was feeling lonely. I struggle to find funds in order to travel from Fife to Edinburgh, otherwise I would come more often. ”*

Due to the lack of LGBT-specific social activities or venues, LGBT people in Fife have very limited opportunities to connect with others. This lack of peer contact and support has a negative impact on health and wellbeing, and often leaves LGBT people isolated and without a space to be themselves.

### Contact with other LGBT people

*“Moved to Edinburgh to be closer to better services and support. Lived in Kirkcaldy, Fife and was very, very isolated in being LGBT.”*

- Most respondents (86%) reported that they would like to have more contact with other LGBT people
- 3 in 10 respondents (28%) never or rarely have contact with other LGBT people in Fife
- The majority of respondents (82%) want to more connections with LGBT in Fife.

### Barriers to establishing social connections

*“No social scene in Fife, so if you want to meet other LGBT people you need to go to Edinburgh, which means time and expense. Public transport doesn't always feel very safe, especially at night.”*

- Over half of respondents (61%) gave lack of local social opportunities as the main reason they did not have more contact with other LGBT people
- 1 in 5 respondents (21%) attend LGBT groups, activities and the commercial gay pub and club scene outside of Fife.

Further significant barriers to establishing social contact with other LGBT people, each reported by a significant number of respondents, were: being too shy (35%); not knowing how to (28%); travel costs (25%); travel times (21%).

### Need for local social opportunities

*“The most important thing for me would be to have somewhere to meet other transgender people in a safe and friendly environment, within the limits of my travel capabilities and at convenient times, so that I could have more opportunities to “be me” and relax.”*

- 3 in 4 respondents (74%) are interested in attending social events in Fife
- 3 in 4 respondents (73%) are interested in a regular social group in Fife.

When asked what they would hope to get out of these LGBT-specific activities the majority of respondents reported all or most of the following benefits: making friends; improving their general wellbeing; talking about shared experiences; a safe space to be themselves.

## Section 3: Experiences of services

*“ I’m constantly looking for [LGBT affirmative] signs that this service will be ok and that I won’t have to fight another fight. ”*

LGBT people in Fife experience disadvantage when using health and support services, with services often failing to recognise and meet their needs. There is a strong need to provide LGBT-specific information and support in Fife, as well as for mainstream services to address the often well-founded fear of negative reactions and treatment, by addressing practice and by proactively indicating that they are LGBT-friendly.

### Health services

*“I was a patient in the hospital in a gynae ward and they asked my sexuality and for the rest of the hospital stay treated me badly. I heard nurses outside the door saying don’t go in there and examine her she is a lesbian, she might like it.”*

- 1 in 4 respondents were not out to their GP (26%) or sexual health services (29%)
- 1 in 3 (34%) were not out to mental health services.

### Social services and other support providers

*“I had to complain because my housing officer made a homophobic statement. He asked if I flaunted my sexuality because of the hassle I was having with my neighbour.”*

- Half of respondents (48%) using housing services are not out to their service provider
- Nearly half (43%) of those using social services are not out; moreover a significant minority (14%) who are out report their sexual orientation or gender identity is not respected within this service
- Over a third of respondents (40%) using (non-LGBT) voluntary sector services are not out.

### Need for LGBT-specific information and support

*“I would like online information, such as sexual health, including the chance to talk to someone anonymously.”*

*“I feel very lonely [in Kirkcaldy]. There is nowhere to go and meet people here, nowhere for LGBT people. It would be great to have services in Fife, to be able to meet other lesbians, make friends, get support, somewhere where I can feel comfortable.”*

3 in 4 (75%) respondents report they wanted to have access to LGBT-specific information in relation to health matters and support services:

- 2 in 3 respondents (66%) want LGBT-specific information about mental health and wellbeing; this was the case for almost all respondents who reported that they had a mental health condition
- Half of respondents (52%) want information relating to sexual health
- Half of respondents (52%) want information about community safety and hate crime reporting
- The majority of transgender respondents (83%) want more information regarding gender reassignment.

The in-depth interviews with individuals who live in Fife but currently travel to Edinburgh to use LGBT Health’s services demonstrate a strong need for local LGBT-specific and LGBT-friendly services.

## Conclusions and recommendations

This LGBT Community Needs Assessment looks at the needs and experience of LGBT adults in Fife and aims to be a springboard for action in this area. It is hoped that the report will inform mainstream health and social care providers and commissioners, community planning, housing, community safety and other stakeholders. It suggests a range of ways in which the health and wellbeing inequalities experienced by LGBT people in Fife can be addressed.

Fife's Health Inequality Strategy (Fife Health & Wellbeing Alliance, 2015) uses a 3 themes approach to reducing health inequalities. This has been used as a framework for recommendations for the partners, to help those planning and delivering services and support across Fife to better recognise and meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

### Creating healthier places and communities: being out

**Despite considerable improvements in social attitudes, and greater legal protection, LGBT people in Fife are often still not able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves. Instead, LGBT people are frequently forced to hide who they are for fear of negative reactions and treatment, impacting negatively on their mental health and wellbeing.**

- Ensure LGBT people are able to live openly and feel comfortable and safe to be themselves within their local communities and workplaces
- Support LGBT people to build connections and supportive LGBT and other social networks within their local communities
- Encourage LGBT people to identify what impacts on their health and wellbeing and participate in developing solutions, including around promoting community safety and addressing harassment and hate crime
- Provide a range of support services locally for LGBT people and support transport to key services provision further afield, such as the Gender Identity Clinic in Glasgow
- Support LGBT people to engage in decisions about what happens locally affecting their lives
- Support communities to be more welcoming to LGBT people.

### Supporting healthier lives: being connected

**Due to the lack of LGBT-specific social activities or venues, LGBT people in Fife have very limited opportunities to connect with others. This lack of peer contact and support has a negative impact on health and wellbeing, and often leaves LGBT people isolated and without a space to be themselves.**

- Be aware of the range of wider social factors that cause isolation, impact on health and limit the life chances of LGBT people
- Create local social opportunities for LGBT people to meet peers and improve their health and wellbeing
- Build skills, resources and knowledge within LGBT communities to enable individuals to create sustainable social opportunities and networks.

## Changing the way organisations work: being supported

LGBT people in Fife experience disadvantage when using health and support services, with services often failing to recognise and meet their needs. There is a strong need to provide LGBT-specific information and support in Fife, as well as for mainstream services to address the often well-founded fear of negative reactions and treatment, by addressing practice and by proactively indicating that they are LGBT-friendly.

- Provide services that are sensitive to the inequality, discrimination and disadvantage LGBT people face
- Make it easier for LGBT people to access services by ensuring provision is inclusive and welcoming, and addresses the needs of LGBT people
- Develop staff skills and knowledge around the diverse needs of LGBT people and the specific issues that affect their health and wellbeing
- Ensure LGBT people have access to LGBT-specific information and tailored support to improve their health and wellbeing
- Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of LGBT workers through policies and practices that promote respect of diversity and support individuals to be themselves
- Consider how policies, plans and decisions impact on the health inequalities of LGBT people.

### Further information

For information about the services, programmes and activities LGBT Health and Wellbeing delivers please visit our website: [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk)

This summary document and the full Fife LGBT Community Needs Assessment Report are available in PDF format on our website in the 'Online resources' section.

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